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# Discover Salisbury

In this special section, we are highlighting some of the people, places and ideas that shape daily life in Salisbury. From new additions like Lakeville Books and Roaring Brook Florist to the creative energy of Riga Yoga and Geary Contemporary, and from essential conversations around childcare and affordable housing to the enduring draw of Lime Rock Park, these stories reflect a community in motion. Profiles of the people working behind the scenes to connect, support and inspire offer a closer look at what makes this town so special. Together, these stories present a snapshot of a town and a region grounded in both tradition and forward momentum.

—Natalia Zukerman, *editor*



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# From infants to after school, Salisbury has kids covered

From as early as 6 weeks old through elementary school, Salisbury offers a robust network of child care and after-school enrichment programs for local families, staffed by seasoned educators and teachers.

For infants and toddlers, Housatonic Child Care Center (HCCC) has long served as a staple of early childhood care in the Northwest Corner, drawing families from neighboring communities in Connecticut, New York and Massachusetts.

HCCC Director Tonya Roussis said the entire program is “extremely intentional.” Teachers use a structured but flexible approach designed to support development at every stage. Learning begins in the infant room with sensory and motor skill development and continues throughout a student’s time at the center.

“We really follow the children’s interests,” Roussis

said. “If something isn’t working, we shift.”

As spring gets underway, a gardening study is sprouting for toddler and preschool students.

“They plant, watch things grow, take care of them and eventually get to pick them,” Roussis said.

The program runs year-round, with summers focused on outdoor play and trips through town, including to Scoville Library.

As children enter Salisbury Central School, families have access to two nonprofit programs operating out of the school: SOAR and EXTRAS.

SOAR Enrichment, now in its 25th year, offers a wide range of after-school workshops and experiences designed to expand learning beyond the classroom.

“We’re here to give kids opportunities they might not have in the classroom,” said Lauren Brown, executive

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PHOTO BY ALY MORRISSEY

Students in EXTRAS enjoy the start of spring on SCS’s playground.

director of SOAR.

Programs range from woodworking and Lego robotics to theater productions and science partnerships, including a girls science club with the Flying Cloud Institute.

“It’s really a unique program,” Brown said. “A lot of schools try to emulate us, but it’s hard to do.” The program is popular, she added, enrolling 80 to 100 students each session — nearly a third of the school.

EXTRAS, a separate nonprofit program, provides daily after-school care and summer programming.

Director Alex Baker, a Salisbury Central School alum, said his path has come full circle. He is celebrating his fifth year as director of EXTRAS but his 20th in child care.

Now in its 38th year, the program focuses on both structured activities and child-led exploration.

“I think the town of Salisbury should be very proud to have a longstanding, affordable child care program that’s been aligned with the school for this long,” Baker said.



**A student in SOAR’s woodworking enrichment makes a toolbox.**



PHOTOS BY ALY MORRISSEY

**Students bedazzle books and sip tea during a SOAR enrichment.**



BY SALLY HAVER

# Geary brings contemporary art to the heart of Salisbury



PHOTO BY JACK GEARY

Geary Contemporary moved from Millerton to Salisbury bringing contemporary art to the center of town.

Geary Contemporary recently moved from Millerton to 14 Main St. in Salisbury and opened Feb. 22 with a well-attended show that led to early sales, owner Jack Geary said.

“We were thrilled. The whole upper floor was filled with attendees. The Everything Events Co. supplied not only an amazing array of hors d’oeuvres, an open bar and a three-piece band. People stuck around, looked at the art, spoke with Alan Prazniak, the artist, and took notes.”

The first show runs through April 12. After that, Geary Contemporary will mount two art fairs, in Chicago and New York City, before returning to Salisbury to open an all-sculpture group show from May 23 to July 5. “We’ll be showing the works of two artists from our roster, Sun You and Will Corwin,” said Geary. “We’ll also be adding two excellent sculptors to round out the exhibit, Russell Maltz and Pooneh Maghazehe.”

“We’re usually at the gallery every weekend,” said Geary, referring to himself and his wife, Dolly Bross Geary, joint owners. “If we’re away, our knowledgeable gallery assistants will be on site to welcome visitors.”

The gallery is open Friday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. The public is invited to come in, view the artwork, and ask questions.



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# Salisbury recreation director serves residents of all ages

Lisa McAuliffe's job spans the ages. As the town's director of recreation and senior services, she leads programs for young children all the way up to senior citizens.

Sitting in her office at the Town Grove, where the windows of the large meeting room look out over the beach and Lake Wononscopomuc, McAuliffe spoke about all that comes under her purview. Her enthusiasm is a clue to her success.

A native of Hull, Massachusetts, she has always enjoyed sports. "I'm a dyslexic kid," she said, proud to wear it as a badge of honor to show how those with the learning issue can succeed. "Sitting still was never good for me. I found success in movement. Those of us with dyslexia learn to navigate the world in differ-

ent ways and push through things that are hard."

McAuliffe earned a bachelor's degree in physical education from Springfield College and took a job as athletic director at Camp Sloane in 1992, which is what brought her to the Northwest Corner. She stayed there until 2002, by which time she had married her husband, Paul. She then was an emergency room tech at Sharon Hospital before taking on her current position in 2005. She juggled her jobs while raising two sons, Jack and Colin, who is known as "Zim."

In 1998, she became an EMT on the Salisbury Volunteer Ambulance Service and continues to serve. "That has given me a connection to the community," she said. That's also true of her connection to Housatonic Valley Regional High School, where in the past she coached field hockey and volleyball and continues to coach swimming.

McAuliffe rattled off the list of recreational offerings and expressed her gratitude for being able to provide so many opportunities for the community, including swim and tennis lessons, a swim team, sailing, kayaking and paddleboarding in the summer months. She also works with the Extras after-school and summer camp program at Salisbury Central School. There is also pickleball, soccer, basketball, public skating and flag football for all ages.

The senior programs are strong: exercise class, lunch program, knitting group, pingpong, tai chi, among others. She is especially pleased that an AARP income tax program is conducted, in which 150 to 175 seniors from around the region take part. McAuliffe is also a Choices counselor for Medicare, helping those navigate the often complex road to securing the best plan.

Noting she finds helping seniors very rewarding, she pointed to a bouquet of flowers. "That was given to us by someone whose taxes we did. She was so appre-

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PHOTO BY RUTH EPSTEIN

*Lisa McAuliffe*



# Lakeville

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# A sweeter Main Street

For 15 years, the house at 343 Main St. in Lakeville sat empty. For a time, it had housed the China Inn restaurant. Before that, it was host to the Apothecary Shop — a pillar of Lakeville’s mid-century commercial traffic. But recent years have not been kind to the 150-year-old building, and by 2023, weeds had grown around the once-proud facade.

That all changed last May, when Bill Colgan and his Grassland Dessert Cafe opened for business.

“It has always been my dream to open a place where memories that last a lifetime are made,” he said.

The triumph is twofold: 343 Main has been restored to its former glory, with additional improve-

ments like a wraparound porch, high-backed booths, elegant pendant lighting, ample parking and a backyard with a swing. Then there is the cafe itself. The menu offers a panoply of indulgent treats: in addition to ice cream, gelato, sundaes and smoothies, the space makes good on its titular promise by doubling as a coffeeshop where creative lattes, matcha, and açai are available.

Grassland has done more than simply reinvigorate this space. The dessert shop has given Main Street a much-needed destination, no matter the season. But with their second spring around the corner, Grassland’s future looks sweeter and sweeter.



PHOTO BY GRAHAM CORRIGAN

The spacious and inviting interior of Grassland Dessert Cafe.



PHOTOS BY GRAHAM CORRIGAN

Outdoor seating to enjoy ice cream on warm summer evenings.



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A flagger waves the green flag as cars accelerate onto the track during a race at Lime Rock Park.

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# Lime Rock Park: a 70-year tradition of racing

Lime Rock Park has been part of Salisbury for nearly 70 years, where the typically quiet Northwest Corner at times gives way to the sound of race cars on one of the country's oldest tracks.

Opened in 1957 on the site of a former limestone quarry, the 1.5-mile course has remained largely unchanged.

"There hasn't been a lot of changes since it opened, and that's what makes it pretty unique," said Amy Greenway, a spokesperson for Lime Rock Park.

Unlike many modern racing venues, Lime Rock has no grandstands. Fans sit on grassy hillsides, often with sweeping views of the course.

"It's very unusual — there's no seats," said Matt Cleary, who also represents Lime Rock. "For a road course, you usually just see a little section of it, but here you can see most of it."

That closeness extends beyond the viewing experience. A general admission ticket typically allows access to much of the facility, including the paddock.

"You can go into the paddock, meet the drivers up close," Greenway said. "It's a very intimate racetrack compared to others."

That atmosphere has helped build a loyal following over generations. The track has hosted some of the sport's biggest names, including Paul Newman, and remains a place where fans return year after year.

"People have stories about meeting drivers when they were kids," Greenway said. "Then they bring their own families. It's become a generational experience."

Last year marked the first time in decades that NASCAR returned to Lime Rock, drawing more than 20,000 attendees over a two-day weekend — the largest crowd in the track's modern history.

"It was the largest event we've had in modern times," Greenway said.


The park is also known for its marquee annual events.

The Historic Festival remains one of the track's signature traditions, spanning five days leading up to Labor Day. The event blends vintage racing with a strong community component, highlighted by a 17-mile parade of historic cars that winds through Salisbury and surrounding towns.

The parade, held on the Thursday before Labor Day, typically features up to 120 rare and vintage vehicles and draws residents along the route. Throughout the weekend, the park showcases historic race cars, including early 1900s Indy cars, rare prototypes and vehicles that are sometimes displayed publicly for the first time.

Behind the scenes, the track has also been evolving. A new ownership group took over in 2021 with a focus

*continued on page 14*





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## ... Lime Rock Park

continued from page 13

A new ownership group took over in 2021 with a focus on preserving its legacy while expanding its role in the community. Skip Barber, a Northwest Connecticut resident who owned the track for nearly four decades, remains involved as a minority partner and advisor.

“This is a beautiful place, which is important to the sport,” Cleary said. “There’s very much a preservationist intention in the new ownership team to make sure it stays a racetrack.”

Part of that effort has included rethinking how the property is used beyond racing.

“The racetrack isn’t just a racetrack — it’s a park,” Greenway said.

That shift has led to a broader lineup of events, including charity fundraisers and seasonal gatherings, many of them free and open to the public.

“There are a lot of opportunities to experience the track without racing going on,” Greenway said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LIME ROCK PARK

A young fan reaches out to greet a driver.

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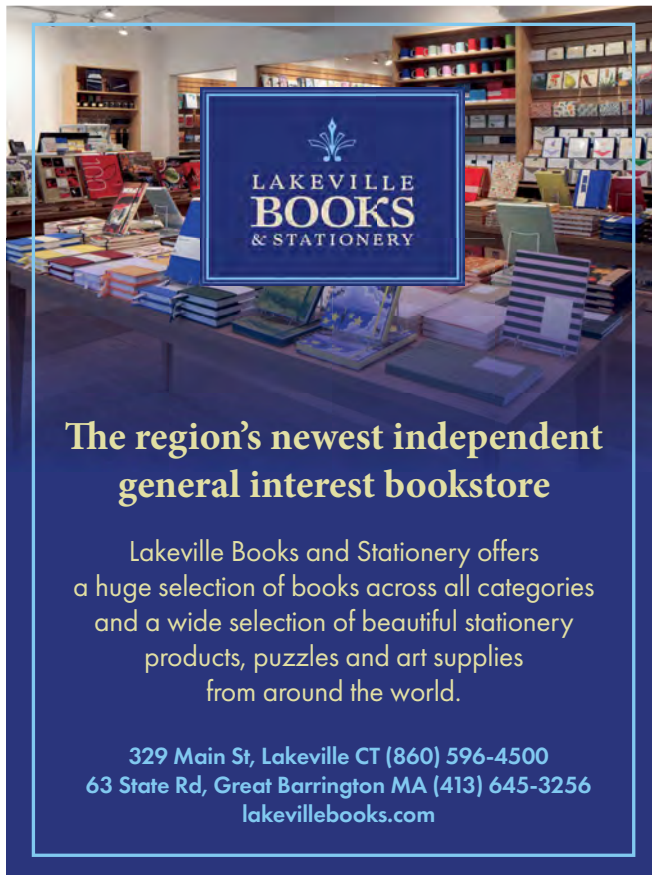
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A driver celebrates his victory with a burnout while waving the checkered flag.

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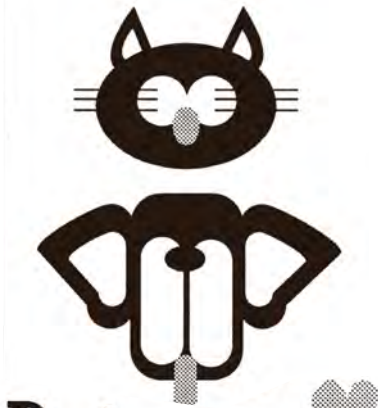


  
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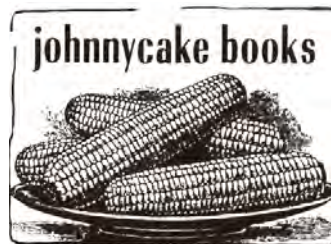
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PHOTO BY PATRICK L. SULLIVAN

Sunny skies prevailed for the Holley Place groundbreaking ceremony. From left: Michael Sweeney of Torrington Saving Bank; Rocco Petitto of QA+M Architecture; Peter Halle, Salisbury Housing Committee president; Salisbury First Selectman Curtis Rand; State Rep. Maria Horn (D-64); Connecticut Housing Commissioner Seila Mosquera-Bruno; Jocelyn Ayer, director of the Litchfield County Center for Housing Opportunity; Kathleen Amonte of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston; Jim LaRosa of LaRosa Building Group.

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# Affordable housing arrives in Salisbury — but is it enough?

With the recent groundbreaking at the forthcoming Holley Place complex and several other projects in the works, Salisbury is making headway in bringing affordable options to an increasingly cost-prohibitive housing market.

“It’s been a long journey,” said Salisbury Affordable Housing Commission Chair Jennifer Kronholm Clark, noting that the project has been in development for a decade. “We’re really, really happy to see it finally coming to fruition.”

Elsewhere in town, Salisbury’s housing organizations are working to bring in affordable rental and homeownership opportunities. The SAHC recently approved \$200,000 from the town’s affordable housing fund to aid in the renovation of an 1850 home on Bostwick Street that will provide three rental apartments. A project that built four new single-family

affordable homes on Perry Street and Undermountain Road has already brought in two young families, while sales are being finalized for the remaining two.

“They’re really excited that they’re able to put down roots,” Clark said of the recent arrivals, explaining that one of the SAHC’s major goals is to provide options specifically designed for first-time homebuyers.

Despite the progress, Clark said much more is needed. In 2017, the state mandated that any town with less than 10% of its housing stock deed-restricted as affordable could have a developer override local zoning to build affordable housing. Clark said she would rather the town do it itself.

“It’s in our best interest to get there ourselves and in a way that supports how the town wants to grow,” she said.

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# A lot to discover at Lakeville Books

Family-owned Lakeville Books has survived its first New England winter, and a year into operations, business is booming.

“It’s been wildly successful beyond our expectations,” said Darryl Peck, co-owner and founder, along with his wife, Ann. Their youngest daughter, Alice, is the store manager, while their eldest, Caroline, has recently returned to the Northwest Corner and is taking over programming duties at both the Lakeville store and an additional location in Great Barrington that opened in December despite a slow, cold season.

“This was certainly a learning curve for me,” said Peck, who has worked a lifetime in retail but never through a New England winter. Still, “we couldn’t be more thrilled,” he said.

The business carries 10,000 titles in each store but primarily specializes in first-rate stationery products and large-format illustrated books on architecture, home design, gardening, photography and cooking — in other words, coffee-table books.

“I think we currently have 600 cookbook titles for sale in Lakeville,” Peck said. “It’s really kind of unique for a small independent bookstore to have that depth of selection in those large-format categories.”

Peck said that above all, the community bookstore brings much-needed serendipity and surprise to a retail world that has become dominated by online ordering.

“What a well-curated bookstore does is allow people to discover,” he said. “I would like to think that on any given day, the majority of people walking into our stores leave with something they didn’t expect to buy when they walked in the door.”

Lakeville Books is located at 329 Main St. and is open 7 days a week. Monday - Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.



PHOTO BY ALEC LINDEN

There are 10,000 titles inside Lakeville Books & Stationery on Main Street.



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# Anytime blooms: Roaring Oaks' self-serve flower market blends convenience with care

On a recent Saturday morning, sunlight filtered into a small, self-serve flower station at Roaring Oaks Florist, where buckets of fresh-cut stems and neatly arranged bouquets lined shelves, ready for customers stopping in on their own time.

Owner Terrence Miller paused to reflect on the first year of the self-serve concept, tucked beside the shop's main entrance at 349A Main St. The idea, he said, was simple: expand access and offer added convenience for customers needing flowers outside regular store hours.

The grab and go bouquets are available from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week, including Sundays when the main floral shop is closed.

"It's been a bit of trial and error — figuring out what works and what doesn't," Miller said.

The self-serve space allows customers to browse at their own pace and complete purchases digitally, with the area monitored by security cameras.

For added convenience, shelves hold glass vases, note cards and rolls of colored ribbon, as well as extra stems of greenery, also for sale, for those looking to create a custom arrangement.

The setup caters to early risers, late-day shoppers and anyone in need of a last-minute bouquet — whether for a dinner invitation, a forgotten occasion or a spontaneous gesture.

The first year, Miller said, has come with a learning curve. Most customers move quickly through the process without any problem, but on occasion a customer might fail to take the time to read the keypad instructions and become flustered.

"The system is not perfect," he said. "But we hope people understand we are doing our best to provide added convenience and service."

Still, convenience, Miller emphasized, does not come at the expense of quality.

"We pride ourselves on still giving out the same quality of flowers we have over here," he said, as he returned to the main shop, located next to The Boathouse.



PHOTO BY DEBRA A. ALEKSINAS

**Owner Terrence Miller holds a bouquet of fresh flowers inside the self-serve market at Roaring Oaks Florist on Main Street in Salisbury.**

That standard requires constant attention by staff. Selections in the self-serve area are rotated regularly to ensure freshness, with many stems cut and arranged the same day. Delicate blooms are kept cool inside refrigerated glass cases.

Business was blooming on the recent Saturday visit. The main floral shop space reflected the rhythm of the growing season — shelves and floor space filled with potted tulips, an abundance of oversized blue hydrangea plants in full bloom, and a mix of cut flowers.

Soft light moved across the room, catching crystal suncatchers and illuminating garden-themed items gracing the shelves, giving the space both a practical purpose and a quiet charm.

More than a convenience, the self-serve model has become an extension of the floral business itself — one that meets customers where they are, whenever they arrive.

# SVAS serves Salisbury around the clock

Salisbury residents can sleep soundly knowing the Salisbury Volunteer Ambulance Service is there for them morning, noon and night, 365 days a year.

Jacquie Rice, who has served as chief for many years, has been a member of the squad since she was 18 and remains as passionate about helping her neighbors as ever.

Rice holds a bachelor's degree in physical education and health from Southern Connecticut State University and a master's degree from Springfield College, along with graduate coursework in math and science at San Diego State University and Wesleyan University. She taught in San Diego before returning to Housatonic Valley Regional High School, her alma mater, where she has taught math and now teaches health and serves as the swimming coach. She is also the town's director of

**“A lot of us on the squad grew up here, and it’s our way of giving back to the community.”**

*Jacquie Rice, chief of SVAS*

emergency management and teaches courses for parks and recreation programs.

“A lot of us on the squad grew up here, and it’s our way of giving back to the community,” she said.

SVAS was started in 1971 by a group of residents in response to an automobile accident. The effort was led by W. Rees Harris. Dr. Peter Reyelt of Sharon Hospital conducted Red Cross classes and training for volunteers, and emergency calls were routed through the switchboard at the White Hart Inn. Many remember the voice of Olive Dubois, who diligently fielded the calls.

Rice emphasized the generosity of the community, which has allowed for the purchase of ambulances, equipment and the squad’s headquarters across the road from the White Hart Inn. She also highlighted the Franny Fund, named for the late Frances Yerkes, a squad member and nurse at Noble Horizons, who left money to offset training costs. That has proven immensely helpful in recruitment, as certification courses for becoming an EMR or EMT are expensive. Classes are offered free by SVAS to Salisbury residents and at a reduced cost to those from the region.

SVAS raises all its own funds, taking nothing from the town’s budget. Rice said many on the board of directors are financially savvy and have helped make sound investments. The squad has been able to purchase needed equipment to respond to a wide variety of incidents, including trail and water rescues. They answered close to 650 calls last year.

The squad has 50 members, ranging from seasoned veterans to newcomers, and Rice said there are 16 new members working toward EMR certification.





PHOTO BY RUTH EPSTEIN

Jacquie Rice is chief of the Salisbury Volunteer Ambulance Association.




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# At the White Hart Inn, community is on the menu

The White Hart Inn in Salisbury has welcomed guests since 1806. The 16-room inn features artwork by Jasper Johns, Frank Stella and Donald Baechler. Chef Paul Pearson oversees its three dining rooms, taproom and the café, which has become a local gathering place.

Sam DeGiacomo manages Provisions at the White Hart Inn. The café and general store is hopping most days, serving breakfast and lunch.

“Gabby Rios is the creative behind Provisions,” said DeGiacomo. “She has been here five years as head chef. Sarah Alexander is the pastry chef.”

DeGiacomo began as a barista nine years ago and estimates Provisions produces 300 orders per day in the summer, divided evenly between takeout and dine-in service.

The seven-person Provisions team produces cappuccinos, herbal teas, sandwiches on baguettes, soups, vegetable salads, cold drinks and pastries made in-house, including scones, croissants and chocolate chip cookies.

Pizza is served every Wednesday from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. year-round, with a wood-fired oven outside producing Neapolitan-style pies. It often becomes a block party

on the lawn, with about 200 pizzas made per night.

DeGiacomo added, “The food is always great, but I expect us to go above and beyond. It is important that my team likes each other. The owners of the White Hart Inn are awesome. They let us create and trust us to run the place the way it should be — which is a community-driven space.”

Assistant Manager Emma Osbourne added, “We cater to weddings, rehearsal dinners/parties, corporate events, birthdays, baby showers and celebrations of life.”

Events coming up at the Inn include Salisbury Handmade which will hold its juried spring market on the lawn of the White Hart Inn on May 9. For the past 20 years, the group has gathered artists and craftspeople to showcase handmade work.

On Wednesday, May 13, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., the White Hart Speaker Series welcomes author Cynthia d’Aprix Sweeney, who will discuss her latest novel, “Lake Effect.”

For more information and reservations, visit [whitehartinn.com](http://whitehartinn.com)



PHOTO BY JENNIFER ALMQUIST

The team at White Hart Provisions. From left to right: Jack Ireland, Lili Culbreth, Sam DeGiacomo, Luke Jones, Finbar McCormic.



PHOTOS BY JENNIFER ALMQUIST

**Details of the interior of Provisions.**

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BY GRAHAM CORRIGAN

# Riga Yoga fosters connection

If you're in need of some movement medicine, consider a visit to Riga Yoga, the new Salisbury studio founded in 2022. In addition to traditional yoga modalities, the studio offers Pilates, prenatal and gentle flows for beginners. It has also begun hosting special events like sound baths and classes that include acupuncture.

There's something on offer seven days a week at Riga Yoga. Classes usually last between 60 and 75 minutes, and they take place on the smooth hardwood floors at 15 Academy Rd. The studio is also available to rent for private events.

For founder Nina Embiricos, Riga Yoga has expanded to serve a larger purpose. "We're not just a yoga studio anymore," she said. "It's really a community place where people can cross-pollinate and support each other."



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**Nina Embiricos, founder of Riga Yoga.**



PHOTOS COURTESY NINA EMBIRICOS

**Riga Yoga offers classes seven days a week.**

# Something for everyone at Scoville Library

Karen Vrotsos runs adult programs at the Scoville Memorial Library in Salisbury, and her approach is straightforward.

She taps into the broad experience and talent of people in town to create programs that encourage community.

One example is artist Pieter Lefferts' ongoing "Drawing Skills & Mixing Color" class, which was in progress when Vrotsos was interviewed. Participants all knew one another and were having a good time as Lefferts moved around the room, offering encouragement here and a practical tip there.

Vrotsos said she is open to all sorts of suggestions for programs. She particularly likes events that are multigenerational.

"We had adults who didn't expect to be folding origami

**"We had adults who didn't expect to be folding origami cranes with kids, and they really enjoyed it."**

*Karen Vrotsos,  
director of adult programs*

cranes with kids, and they really enjoyed it," she said.

A writing workshop Vrotsos started has been going on for almost three years.

"Now it's mostly self-led," she said.

This year marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and the library has been hosting events centered on Russell Shorto's book "Revolution Song."

There are also food-related events that bring in people who might not otherwise visit.

On April 18, Mike Harney of Harney & Sons Fine Teas will speak about tea, global colonization and the resistance that sparked the American Revolution. The program will also cover Salisbury's tea connections, what it's like to run a tea business today, and will include a tea tasting.


Vrotsos and her husband, David Rogers, bought a home in Salisbury five years ago and moved from New York City to live there full time three years ago. Their son, George, is in the Navy and stationed in the San Diego area.


Her background is in education and publishing, but she is versatile.

"I even taught aerobics," she said.

She said her experience working with urban community leaders and faculty at Columbia and Barnard, as well as running events for Columbia, has been useful in her role at the library.

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PHOTO BY PATRICK L. SULLIVAN

**Karen Vrotsos, director of adult programs at the Scoville Memorial Library in Salisbury.**

Local organizations are eager to partner with the library on events, she said.

“There is such a high level of engagement.”

She also credited the Friends of the Scoville Library and its book sales with providing funding for programming and giving her a free hand.

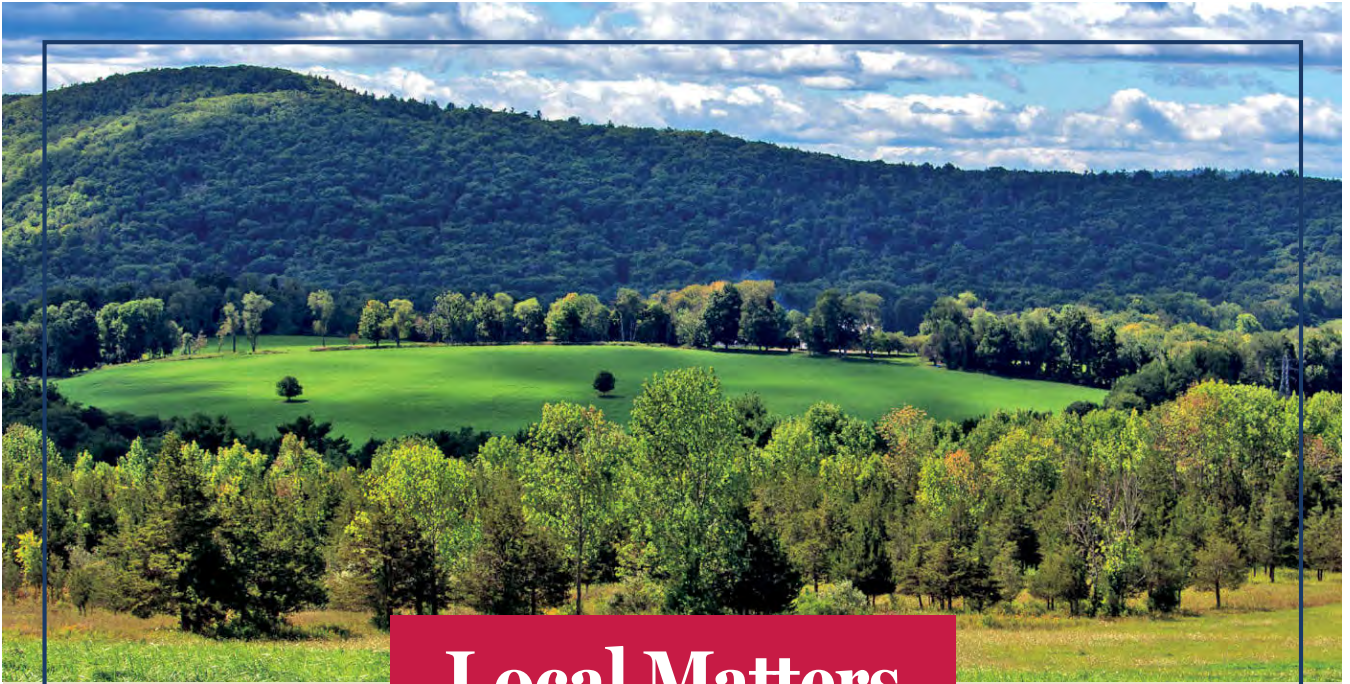
More health care-related events are in the works, including Medicare education, outreach from Visiting Nurse & Hospice of Litchfield County, and a program with East Mountain House, a hospice in Lakeville, that is still being developed.

Vrotsos said library director Karin Goodell is “very supportive,” and she frequently teams up with children’s librarian Kyla DeRisi on events.

A big part of the job is fielding recommendations and ideas from patrons and trying to make them work.

Looking ahead to next year’s Salisbury Reads events, Vrotsos said a theme centered on Salisbury’s natural environment may be productive.

“So if people have recommendations, let me know,” she said.



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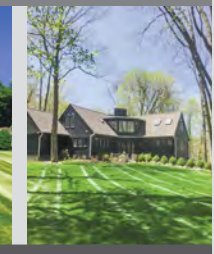
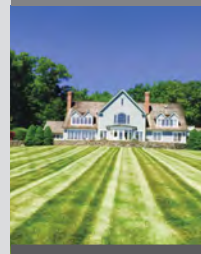
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