

COMPASS

Your Guide to Tri-State Events

June 13, 2024



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The Sharon Playhouse honors Bobbie Olsen at its annual Spotlight Gala

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COVER: BOBBIE OLSEN AND THE PLAYHOUSE YOUTH BY JUSTIN BOCCITTO

Summer is in view

In this special edition of Compass, we're celebrating the closing of spring as the full summer season begins to ramp up in Litchfield, Dutchess, and Berkshire County. Arts institutions have had major milestones and parties, but there's still plenty to look forward to, like the packed upcoming season at The Sharon Playhouse. Some of the spectacular stars and even the talented directors took to the stage at The Playhouse's gala event to offer a taste of what's to come.

COMPASS

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PHOTO BY NATALIA ZUKERMAN

Mary Howard and Louise R. Black at their home in Millerton.

COMMUNITY: NATALIA ZUKERMAN

A Millerton love story

As we celebrate Pride Month, the love story of Mary Howard and Louise R. Black stands as a testament to the power of love at any age. The couple found each other later in life through the unlikelyst of places: Match.com.

Louise R. Black was born in Astoria in 1939 and raised in Elmhurst, Queens. "It was a great place to grow up," she recalled. "A lot of people from foreign countries. We just had so many friends from all over." Mary Howard was born in Alexandria, Virginia in 1942 and spent her formative years in Endicott, NY. Her life has taken her through Washington, D.C., Eugene, OR, and Mount Vernon, NY, where she lived for 31 years and ultimately met Louise.

In 2002, they both joined Match.com, a platform that neither initially embraced with enthusiasm. "I met a lot of females that I just thought were not interesting at all," said Louise. But upon reading each other's profiles, something clicked. Mary shared, "I wrote an ad that said I don't care whether they're tall or short, fat or skinny. I'm looking for somebody who has some genuine interests of their own that they're pursuing." Louise added, "And I said pretty much the same thing." Their connection was immediate, leading to a memorable first date at an Indian restaurant, an establishment they frequented during the years they lived together in Louise's apartment in White Plains.

Before meeting Louise, Mary had been married to a man for 30 years. "And happily married," she added, noting that she had always harbored feelings for women. "I had had feelings for women from a very young age," Mary explained, "and the marriage was, frankly, over and done with." Mary and her ex-husband, whom she met as a doctoral student at the University

of Oregon, had a daughter together and are still very good friends. Their daughter, who lives in Brooklyn, married a woman and Robert, her ex, conducted the ceremony.

Of her daughter's sexuality, Mary shared, "My husband and I both just understood that that's what was happening from a fairly young age for my daughter. She never, you know, made a declaration about it. That's how it was. It all seemed very natural." She added, "And the gal that she's married to now is really very delightful."

"I love her ex-husband," Louise added. "We all get along so fabulously well."

Mary and Louise's affinity for the Hudson Valley runs deep. Mary, who spent 30 years as a sociology professor at Brooklyn College, conducted extensive research in the area. "The Hudson Valley was kind of the cradle of civilization in many ways," she noted. Louise's family owns an island above Saratoga Springs in Fort Edward and the family would spend time up there in the summers when she was little. "It's 7 1/2 acres and it has a house on it and now my nephew lives across the river." The couple still go visit from time to time even though the nephew has really "made it his man cave," laughed Louise. Though she spoke of the house fondly, her memory is scarred by the significant environmental degradation from GE's pollution. Beginning in 1947 and continuing until 1977, GE intentionally dumped approximately 1.3 million pounds of highly toxic polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) into the Hudson River from Fort Edwards and the neighboring plant in Hudson Falls (now closed). GE also polluted the soil and groundwater under its plants and in the surrounding communities. Louise recalled, "I was about 7 or 8 years old, and I walked out the door of the old house

Independence has always been important to both Mary and Louise but as they age, they find they need one another in new ways that deepens their bond.

and the river was pink. I screamed for my father, and he explained that it was pink because ‘those are all dead fish belly up.’ GE didn’t close the plant for several years and Louise experienced the “pink” water phenomenon several more times. “It was really sad because we swam in the river, we’d bathe in the river, wash our hair in the river. It was all so wonderful.”

This impactful experience has led Louise to be particularly mindful of the environment as she tends to the gardens at their home in Millerton. The couple have planted numerous trees, native plants, and butterfly bushes and would never dream of using pesticides. About their move from White Plains, Louise shared, “I had always been in apartments, and I decided I wanted to live in a house. So, we came up and we had a lot of fun riding around up here.” The couple knew they wanted to be near the river but weren’t yet set on a town. Every time they came up to look at properties, however, they ended up at Irving Farm in Millerton to regroup.

“We’d have coffee, and we’d cross things off our list,” Mary said.

Louise added, “I finally said to Mary, ‘You know, we keep coming back to this town every time, maybe we should go look at that house again.’” The couple purchased their house in Millerton in 2007.

Their life in Millerton is full of creativity and community. Louise paints, while Mary crafts handmade birdhouses. In her professional life, Louise was a gym teacher and athletic director at Scarsdale High. “I was the first woman straight out of college that they ever hired,” she shared. But her passions have always extended beyond sports to painting, dancing, singing, and acting. The couple now participate in local art shows and open studios and take care of the upkeep of their home themselves. “This horseshoe neighborhood is just incredible,” said Louise, describing the welcoming community they’ve found on their street and in the village. As of now, their plan is to stay in their house and if need be, hire caregivers to come in and help. “Right now, we still do all the work out here with a young man who comes every Thursday. He does

the stuff that’s impossible,” said Louise. “He spends four hours and he’s tall,” Mary laughed.

The couple had a commitment ceremony in Provincetown, Massachusetts in 2009 but they haven’t legally married. Louise shared, “I would like to have done that because I haven’t been married, but Mary wasn’t for it.”

“As a sociologist, I know that signing all those legal papers has an effect on people,” Mary laughed. “Things are not the same after and if you are like we are, you know, we’re reasonable, we discuss with each other what we want or don’t want and that kind of stuff. And then there’s no need, it seems to me.”

The couple have joint and separate accounts and a will delineating the

legal rights for their shared property. Said Louise, “We are in a situation where we can provide adequately for ourselves, and we don’t require assistance.”

Independence has always been important to both Mary and Louise but as they age, they find they need one another in new ways that deepens their bond. For years, people have called them “The Divas” including their friend, the singer, Suede. “She called us that first,” said Louise. “We have it on our license plate! And then we also have...” Louise paused and turned to Mary for help remembering. “What do we have on our other license plate?”

“MaLou,” said Mary with a smile. “You know. Mary and Louise.”



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FILM: MIKE COBB

The 18th Annual Berkshire International Film Festival

The 18th Annual Berkshire International Film Festival began on Thursday, May 30, and ended on Sunday, June 2. (BIFF) features films, events, and special guests annually in Great Barrington and Lenox, Massachusetts. The festival gathers industry professionals and fans for a four-day celebration.

This year's lineup featured documentaries, narrative features, short films, and an animated shorts selection for kids with stories from all over the world and Berkshire-based stories. To handle increased growth, the festival expanded to the Lenox Town Hall.

Founder Kelley Ryan Vickery worked for the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts for nearly five years as the press manager and spent the next 10 years overseas

where she worked for art museums, as a photographer, and as a gallery owner.

"My then-husband and I were living in Singapore. We came to the Berkshires, saw Jacob's Pillow, and fell in love with the area. Initially, we had a summer home, but then I decided to settle here. I was going through a divorce and needed a job. I talked to a family friend who started the Denver Film Festival and was inspired. I felt like we have so many amazing things in the Berkshires, but film wasn't really celebrated, so I thought there was a need. BIFF was born in 2006 and was immediately embraced by Great Barrington and the owner of the Triplex Cinemas. I created my own thing. It's been a great journey," she explained.

Over the years the festival has

grown and has featured cinematic giants such as Martin Scorsese, actress and Berkshire resident Karen Allen ("Raiders of the Lost Ark") as well as local filmmakers. When asked what makes the festival unique to the area, Vickery explained, "We've featured local filmmakers like Diego Ongaro whose film "Down With The King" was shot here in the Berkshires. You can attend the festival and spend a whole day here. Great Barrington is an amazing, walkable town that has so much to offer."


A key aspect of the festival is the interaction between filmmakers and their audience. Whether through workshops, moderated conversations, or question-and-answer forums, BIFF sheds light on the art of filmmaking.

"Filmmakers and audiences love

each other; it's really what creates the sense of all of us coming together and exchanging ideas and conversations with stories. People want to know more. They need that Q&A. That's inherent in what we do," Vickery said.

Film director Susanna Stryon has twice had films in BIFF. Her documentary short My Father's Name is the intimate story of one woman's attempt to uncover the truth about her father's participation in a lynching and premiered at BIFF this year. About the festival, she said, "BIFF is one of the most fun festivals. Kelley and her team go out of their way to make filmmakers feel comfortable and valued. The Filmmakers Summit for the two days before the festival is an incredible opportunity for filmmakers to get to know each other and

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Actor Freddie Gibbs in “Down With The King,” which was filmed in Berkshire County and screened at BIFF.



FILM STILL BY VISIT FILMS

discuss industry issues.”

Over the years, BIFF has grown steadily, which has been a pleasant surprise for Vickery.

“Never did I think I’d still be here after 18 years. We started small in 2006, and now we’re Lenox. We’ve bounced back to pre-Covid numbers. More

filmmakers come than ever before, and the growth has been incredible. It culminates in these four days, but now we’re year-round with films every month in Lenox, Great Barrington, and Stockbridge,” Vickery said.

To find films, Vickery goes to other festivals like Sundance to scout talent.

Filmmakers also submit their work for consideration, which has allowed BIFF to expand its global reach.

“We have distribution partners and deep relationships with different companies. We probably waded through 1000 films and chose 80. We work with all the big film companies in the

US but also European Film Festivals. We get a lot of amazing content from international companies,” Vickery said.

“We bring the world to the Berkshires with international films. It’s amazing and a lot of fun,” Vickery added.

Books & Blooms Cornwall Garden Weekend

Friday, June 21 | 6pm

“Why Water Lilies? Claude Monet and the Art of the Garden”

A presentation by Ann Temkin, the Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Chief Curator of Painting & Sculpture, MoMA

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PHOTOS BY JUSTIN BOCCITTO

Left, Tricia DeSario, Molly Model, and Michelle Lemon performed at the Sharon Playhouse Spotlight Gala live show. Above, The Playhouse's creative team, Carl Andress, Michael Kevin Baldwin, and Rod Christensen paid tribute to gala honoree Bobbie Olsen.



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THEATER: ALEXANDER WILBURN

Joy at The Playhouse

The Annual Sharon Playhouse Spotlight Gala cast their theater light upon a worthy honoree this year: Bobbie Olsen, Bobbie Olsen, former president of The Playhouse board and namesake of a well-known location, The Bobbie Olsen Theatre, where residents pack the seats each summer to see the mainstage production plays and musicals. Held on Saturday, June 1, the dinner, cocktail, and musical review at the Olsen Theatre was a celebration of all she has contributed to keeping live theater active and alive in Sharon, even in the darkest days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Bobbie Olsen is an incredible supporter of not just this theater, but this community,” said Sharon Play-

house Artistic Director Carl Andress. “She supports the Sharon Playhouse in her leadership, and in the beauty of her person-hood. We’re just so grateful that she’s been in our lives and that she continues to be such a good friend to the theater, Sharon Playhouse, and the theater in general.”

The musical tribute opened — and true theater fans will know what follows — none other than a “Company,” the title song from Stephen Sondheim’s 1970 musical that begins with the chant of “Bobby, Bobby, Bobby, Bobby!” With lyrics adapted/parodied by Michael Kevin Baldwin’s husband a Playhouse performer Will Nash Broyles, The Bobbie Olsen tribute medley was sung by “Bob-

“Bobbie Olsen is an incredible supporter of not just this theater, but this community.”

—Carl Andress, Sharon Playhouse Artistic Director

bie’s Angels” a group of six made up of Ricky Oliver, Michael Siktberg, Jeff Raab, Trica DeSario, Molly Model, and Michelle Lemon. The Angels also performed Broyles-penned versions of songs from “Kiss Me Kate” and “Rent.”

“We wanted to honor Bobbie by recreating numbers or creating new numbers from titles that had been on the main stage when she was president of the board,” Andress said.

The evening also included stand-out performances from talents like Danny Drewes, who will return to

the mainstage this summer after last year’s “Something Rotten!” to star in “Rock of Ages” and “The Prom,” as well as Julia Murney (“Wicked” on Broadway and the U.S. national tour), a powerhouse vocalist who will take the director’s chair for “You’re A Good Man, Charlie Brown” and two-time Tony Award and four-time Drama Desk Award nominee Kate Baldwin who will also star in “The Prom.”

As Andress described the upcoming summer at The Playhouse “It’s a season of joy.”



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PHOTO BY PATRICK L. SULLIVAN

The catch of the day for the Tangled column of the week.

TANGLED LINES: PATRICK L. SULLIVAN

Research and development

Fishing trips are rarely straightforward propositions. Over 52 years of flicking the baited hook, I have learned not to make plans with rigid schedules, because something always goes awry.

Last week I traveled deep into the wilds of Greene County, N.Y., for some research and development with my fishing guru Gary.

This meant remembering where his house is.

In that part of the world, there is a Route 23, a Route 23A, and a Route 23C.

I have often wondered why the geniuses that assign numbers to roads couldn't just call them Route 23, Route 24, and Route 25.

Maybe a sequential clump of numbers is too easily confused. How about Routes 23, 47 and 59?

Luckily Gary's neighbor has hung a gigantic American flag a couple doors down.

Whoops, there's the flag, turn around.

R&D project A was a town reservoir. I'm not going to name the town because everything about this adventure was highly irregular.

Acting on intelligence gleaned from unusually reliable sources, we drove past a series of increasingly unpromising signs.

First we were warned to keep out. Then it was no hunting, fishing, trapping or trespassing for any reason. Then the signs returned to the general "keep out" theme.

We finally got to a gate. It was open. There were two men talking about something.

Gary went over to them. He conversed with one. He returned.

"We're good," he said. He had been talking to the water supply boss, who

said it was fine if we parked outside the gate, out of the way, and walked up.

"It's only about a quarter mile," said Gary.

Of course it was mostly uphill, and not a gentle grade, either.

At the midway point, we heard yelping and hollering from the deep woods.

Two men emerged. They did not look outdoorsy. They looked out of shape and frustrated. (I am, after all, a highly trained observer.)

They had lost two chihuahuas. The dogs had been in the woods all night. The plan seemed to be to stumble around the woods in haphazard fashion yelling variations on "Here doggy!"

There didn't seem to be anything we could do so we soldiered on, eventually reaching a large pond of sorts which was the reservoir that supposedly held big rainbow trout.

We tried, but it was windy and squishy and I was wearing a pair of boat shoes, handy enough in the right context but next to useless here.

I caught two bluegills. Gary caught a shiner.

On the way back the rescue team had located one dog. The other one had gone silent. I suggested opening a can of the ripest dog food available, on the theory the rich scent might overcome the dog's terror.

The R&D continued at Lake Colgate, which is really more of a pond, created by damming up the East Kill. There is another impoundment about a mile upstream, and in between is a nice-looking bit of stream that should contain brook trout.

There is another impoundment about a mile upstream, and in between is a nice-looking bit of stream

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PHOTO BY PATRICK L. SULLIVAN

The guru in action in his natural habitat: the slow wait by the watery depths.

that should contain brook trout.

On this day it contained shiners and nothing else.

We tracked it down to where it merges into the lake, and I caught another bluegill which was sitting in about three inches of water making faces at me.

I showed him.

The good thing about riding around with Gary is his catalog of amusing anecdotes and vivid character sketches. Also cigar smoking is allowed.

This time I learned about Cowboy George. A Brooklynite, George found himself in New Mexico, where he developed a taste for garish, stage cowboy attire.

Upon his return to Brooklyn, he developed the theme, with a twist.

George was also a cross-dresser. And a cocaine dealer, with a sideline in illegal guns.

Gary once asked him why he liked dressing like Dale Evans.

“When that buckskin hits my

thighs, the years just melt away,” George replied.

Back in Phoenicia, I convened with my nomadic attorney, Thos., who was ensconced at the Woodland Valley Campground nearby.

I’m not sure how we got on the subject, but he explained his “layered defense” for personal protection that does not involve a firearm. His travels take him all over the place, and carrying a gun just isn’t practical for legal reasons.

The first item is pepper spray.

The second is a gas mask. “One of those World War One things, I want it to be terrifying.”

And the third is a spear.

He explained he had returned a custom made spear to the Japanese maker. It wasn’t pointy enough.

“I’d do more damage hitting someone with the handle.”

Thos. further explained that sometimes he finds himself bivouacking in less than ideal circumstances.

Thos. saw “The Texas Chainsaw

Massacre” at a tender age, and it left a lasting impression.

One Florida campground reminded him of the film enough that after talking with his new neighbors for five minutes, he got back in the car and left, without unhitching the camper or even stopping at the office to get his 15 bucks back.

Some fishing did get done on this trip.

Woodland Valley Creek is a major Esopus tributary and for 60 years or so, the Woodland Trout Fund (which sports the easily misconstrued acronym WTF), has planted brown and brook trout on Memorial Day weekend with a smaller stocking in July.

There is excellent access to public water downstream, and the WTF has a long-standing arrangement with the homeowners in the valley that trespassing for the purpose of fly-fishing is allowed.

The years have not been kind to the stream. Hurricanes and floods have reconfigured the streambed several

times and left exposed clay banks. Forests of knotweed have eliminated cherished pools and runs.

And the new generation of homeowners are not as accommodating as their predecessors.

Nonetheless, it is where I learned to fish, and I always chip in. I try to catch my first Catskill trout of any given year in Woodland, with a bamboo rod and a dry fly.

That didn’t happen this year. I was unfaithful and hit the Beaverkill, Schoharie and a couple of others first.

But I did chuck a Chubby Chernobyl into the pool where my late father caught his last trout, and a feisty brown obliged by smacking it hard.

I used a Phillipson bamboo rod, seven feet for five weight, which my father gave me as a college graduation present.

Other kids got fancy cars, or a seat on the board, or a months-long trip to Europe.

But I’m still using the rod. So who got the better deal?

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ART: JENNIFER ALMQUIST

NWCT Arts Council: Arts Connected

The Northwest Connecticut Arts Council (NWCT Arts) recently held Arts Connected, their first fundraiser, at the Spring Hill Vineyard in Washington, Connecticut. The evening celebration, a combination of Fellini movie, carnival, and Renaissance Fair, featured an aerialist from Matica Circus in Harwinton, and a flame and flow performer out in the courtyard under the stars. Momix, based in Washington Connecticut, under the artistic direction of founders Moses Pendleton and Cynthia Quinn, also performed. Two dancers wore Jeff Koons-style inflated red dog suits, and Momix dancer Jared Bogart wafted through the space wearing an immense, two-stories tall silk fan. Persian calligraphic painter Alibaba Awrang created a community work of art, while Ameen Mokdad, a violinist from Iraq, made music with Hartford's Cuatro Puntos Ensemble. A young musician, Adelaide Punkin, performed an original song from the balcony of the vast space, while a giant puppet from Sova Dance and Puppet waltzed through the festivities. DJ Arvolyn Hill from Kent spun the tunes, an African drum circle set the rhythm, and there was abundant food and drink for the gathered crowd.

NWCT Arts is one of 8 regional Arts Councils designated by the Connecticut Office of the Arts, a branch of the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). The mission of NWCT Arts is to "elevate the role of the arts to build community and economic vitality." The NWCT Arts was founded by Amy Wynn in June of 2003 in collaboration with the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation and the Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce.

Brian Boye, Litchfield County resi-

dent, Vice President at Nike Communications, NWCT Arts board member emphasized "Our goal with Arts Connected was to highlight the rich tapestry of artists that live and work in our community. We are blessed with such a diverse range of talent, from world-class dance ensembles like Momix to incredible visual artists like Stace Dillard who work solo in studios across our 25 towns. I am thrilled that we were able to feature more than 80 local artists in a variety of formats throughout the event. Our art gallery featured more than 60 artists and we had live performances from musicians, calligraphers, DJs, drummers, photographers, dancers, aerialists, and singers. It was such a joy to witness the community coming together to celebrate all this talent."

Steph Burr began her time as Executive Director of NWCT Arts in the heart of the Covid pandemic. A fierce advocate for artists, Burr had to immediately shift gears to create the NWCT Artist Emergency Relief Fund to aid local creatives through the hardship caused by COVID-19. NWCT Arts raised funds to support artists in financial distress. 51 artists from 13 towns in the region applied for help; arts educators, performing artists, musicians, commercial artists, fine artists, and artisans who depend on craft fairs and farmer's markets to sell their wares. 73% of the applicants were not receiving unemployment and 31% of those applying were housing insecure. Burr is also an artist who lives in Torrington.

For 20 years, the Arts Council has been advocating for artists and the creative process in our region. They empower, facilitate, network, collaborate, and secure funding for local arts initiatives. Burr knows it is still hard for new arts organizations, and art-



PHOTOS BY JENNIFER ALMQUIST

Matica Circus duo from Harwinton, Connecticut performing at NWCT ARTS Connected event in May

Cinderfella is a fire and flow performer from Naugatuck, Connecticut. He performed at NWCT ARTS Connected, a celebration of the arts at Spring Hill Vineyards in Washington, Connecticut.

ists, to achieve lift-off. Funding for the arts has been cut back by the State to pre-pandemic levels with no adjustment for inflation. Burr would like to see greater advocacy from more established artists and organizations to help emerging artists get on their feet.

Board member Boye said, “We want to raise the profile of the Northwest Connecticut Arts Council, which typically works behind the scenes to ensure that artists and arts organizations can continue to thrive in our 25 towns. We’ve learned over the past few years that the arts are a major economic driver here. When we have a thriving arts community, people will visit our towns, shop in our stores, eat in our restaurants and stay in our inns. In 2022, the non-profit arts and

culture industry generated more than \$30 million in economic activity in our community. But there are a lot of challenges artists face to live and work here. Our mission is to ensure that there’s a network of support for them. We know that access to their work brings joy to us individually, but it also positions our region as a cultural destination that has a positive economic effect that benefits everyone.”

NWCT serves the towns of Barkhamsted, Bethlehem, Burlington, Colebrook, Cornwall, Falls Village/ Canaan, Goshen, Hartland, Harwinton, Kent, Litchfield, Morris, New Hartford, New Milford, Norfolk, North Canaan, Plymouth, Roxbury, Salis-

Continued on next page

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... NWCT Arts

Continued from page 13

bury/Lakeville, Sharon, Thomaston, Torrington, Warren, Washington, and Winchester/Winsted.

Sunday Fisher, chair of the board of directors, lives in Sherman and is an operational strategist after decades working in the retail world. “Northwest Connecticut is truly a special place, renowned as a sanctuary where artists have historically come to create and find inspiration. It’s my hope that our region be recognized as a vibrant hub for all forms of art. At the Council, we are deeply committed to honoring our rich history as stewards of this artistic legacy while also forging paths that ensure the arts not only survive but thrive. Balancing these roles is essential to fostering an environment where the arts can flourish and enrich our community for generations to come.”

“The arts are a powerful economic engine for our region and are very worthy of expanded investment,” said Burr. “Our nonprofit arts organizations connect our communities and help define our culture. They also attract substantial revenue to the local economy and support many jobs and small businesses. It is no easy feat to do both.” NWCT Arts is working closely with the Connecticut Department of Tourism as the arts are responsible for increased tourism in the region.

Our state representative Maria Horn agrees with Burr. “Arts and culture are a defining part of the Northwest Corner for those who live here and those who visit the region. Communities like ours that support arts and culture not only enhance their quality of life—they also invest in their economic well-being. We know

this because we’ve studied it.”

Stephen Gass, former President of sesamestreet.org, and vice board chair said, “When I was asked to join the board of the NWCT Arts Council, I said ‘OK’ with one condition: the organization embraces the idea that our area’s sustainability does not rely solely on caring for our environment. Rather, given the countless ways the arts can feed our collective souls, fuel curiosity, create shared experiences, and critically serve as economic drivers, we champion the idea that the arts are essential to our well-being. Just as environmental sustainability requires that we think beyond a town’s borders, the NWCT Arts Council’s 25-town purview provides the ‘big picture’ perspective that helps ensure a rich, far-reaching, and fertile arts and culture landscape for us all.”

Executive Director Burr, whose dream for NWCT Arts is to provide equity in the arts, reiterated their underlying credo, “As an arts organization, we work to put the voices that are most unheard at the forefront to empower the movement toward creative justice. The arts are a human right and bring us together to celebrate cultural diversity. Everyone deserves access to art and culture, to be included, and to feel a sense of belonging. We are dedicated to serving the needs of everyone regardless of race, age, physical or mental ability, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or economic status.”

Burr, “Our plan is grounded in the belief that the arts have the power to transform lives and communities, and that by supporting artists and the creative process, we can create a more vibrant and prosperous region. I am so grateful for the support of our board, staff, and stakeholders. I am confident that together we can achieve our vision of a region where artists can thrive, and everyone can experience the arts.”

NWCT Arts recognizes the positive impact the arts have on our mental health. Access to arts and culture is a universal human right, meeting both a social and psychological need. Jackie Armstrong, an educator at MOMA, said “Art can harness the healing power within each of us and help bring us into community with one another. When in front of an artwork, we are connected to the artist and to others who have experienced it. And connection, to us and others, is at the core of art and healing.”

Board chair Fisher continued, “As we reflect on the success of our first annual fundraiser, we’re filled with optimism about the future of the arts in Northwest Connecticut. This event has crucially boosted our ability to provide artists with the everyday tools they need to flourish. Our aim is to elevate the arts across the towns we serve, emphasizing not only their role in fostering community connections but also their significant impact as an economic driver. Looking ahead, we envision a partnership where municipalities seamlessly invest in arts and culture, ensuring every resident has access to these enriching experiences. Our first annual event marks a pivotal step towards making that dream a reality.”

Burr summed it up, “Our plan is grounded in the belief that the arts have the power to transform lives and communities and that by supporting artists and the creative process, we can create a more vibrant and prosperous region. I am so grateful for the support of our board, staff, and stakeholders. I am confident that together we can achieve our vision of a region where artists can thrive, and everyone can experience the arts.”

How can people help the NWCT Arts Council? They currently have eighty paid members. Information on how to join or support them and listings of future arts events can be found by going to www.artsnwct.org

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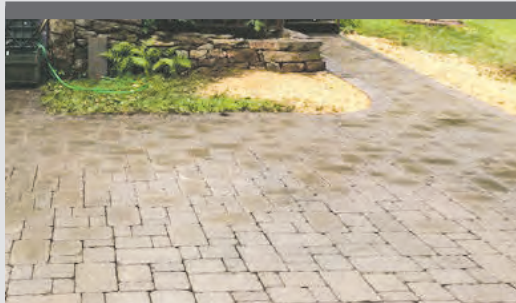


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