

**INNOVATION:** 10 Great Connecticut Biotech Advances

# Hartford

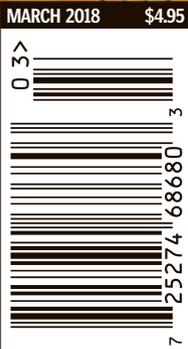
## 100 DISHES

**New  
Energy**  
Downtown  
Ripple  
Effect

**A Dining  
Bucket  
List**

Things You  
Should Try  
And Why

**In Our  
Midst**  
Doug  
Glanville's  
Garage  
Of Dreams



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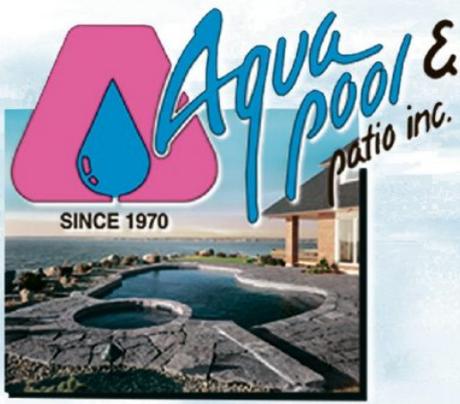
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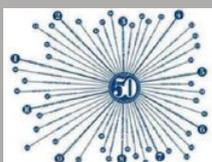
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# CONTENTS



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## UP FRONT

- 6** ♦ Bach's music, performed by a percussionist in a distillery? That's right.
- 7** ♦ Take a Quick Dip ... into the comfort zone, into a parade crowd, into a forum about the press.
- 9** ♦ In Our Midst columnist Rand Richards Cooper visits former MLB star Doug Glanville's garage.
- 10** ♦ Kiss & Tell: How soon should you tell a date that you're newly sober?

## JAVA

- 12** ♦ People, pictures and parties with a purpose.

## CALENDAR

- 16** ♦ The arts in March: In like a lamb, out like a lion. Christopher Arnott's best bets for entertainment.
- 20** ♦ It's dragtime in Hartford. Frank Rizzo catches up with veteran drag performers Bianca Del Rio and Jamison Stern, who both perform here this month.

## PEOPLE

- 22** ♦ This month's Greater Hartford Players run some very eclectic museum collections. Plus, we've also compiled a list of many more to visit.
- 26** ♦ Deborah Gaudet, the Wadsworth Atheneum's curator of film and theater for the past 29 years, is optimistic about the big screen's future.

## FEATURE

- 28** ♦ New apartments, UConn's new campus and other developments around

downtown have begun to have a ripple effect.

## SAVOR

- 32** ♦ Connecticut may be a small state, but it's a foodie's nirvana, says Frank Cohen. Here's our Connecticut dining bucket list of 100 things you have to eat — guilty pleasures and culinary chefs-d'oeuvre.
- 40** ♦ What matters in a restaurant is consistency. Division West Bistro & Bar shows much promise but better up its game.
- 44** ♦ Vietnam Restaurant in Elmwood hasn't adopted the low-end pho or banh mi model of most Vietnamese restaurants in the state. It's a rare treat.
- 48** ♦ Hankering for the vibrant cuisine of Puerto Rico? Head to the Caribbean Restaurant in Meriden.

## HEALTHY LIVING

- 58** ♦ There's a biotech renaissance going on in Connecticut. Rebecca Lurye and Stephen Singer take a look at 10 great advances, from retinal implants and spinal cord repairs to cutting-edge vaccines.
- 67** ♦ Tick-borne disease is becoming a year-round problem in Connecticut.

## EDUCATION

- 70** ♦ Trinity College, the city's oldest institution of higher education, is strengthening its embrace of its urban setting, with a modest new downtown presence and other initiatives. Some say perceptions of Hartford are changing.

**74** ♦ Connecticut Explored has repurposed some of its content for an elementary school audience, publishing "Where I Live: Connecticut" as a textbook and e-book. A fifth-grader is one of the contributing writers.

**76** ♦ A collaboration of Connecticut educators leads to the creation of a U.S.-style prep school in China.

**78** ♦ Local authors of children's books talk about what it takes to write for kids: Resist the urge to teach a lesson, don't write down and do tap into your own childhood memories.

## HOME LIVING

- 82** ♦ If walls could talk, Jennifer Lotstein would listen. She has become passionate to learn the history of the historic 1870 house on Charter Oak Place that she has renovated over the past four years.
- 86** ♦ Remodeling a closet can be a game-changer that optimizes space, lifts your spirits each morning and helps you lead a more orderly life.

## TRAVEL

**88** ♦ A visit to One World Trade Center, the 9/11 Memorial & Museum and the Oculus is both exhilarating and haunting.

## LAST WORD

**98** ♦ Sarah Wesley Lemire thrilled at hitting every roller coaster and amusement park ride she could and indulging in all those fair food favorites — that is, until the day her iron stomach let her down.

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## MUSIC IN GREAT SPACES

# ‘Bourbon And Bach’

Litchfield Distillery To Host Percussionist Doug Perry

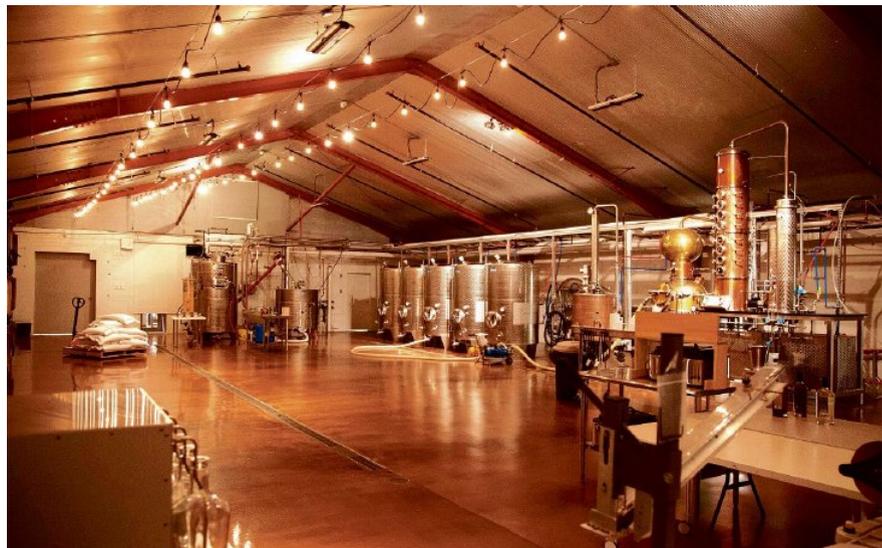
By **KELLY VAUGHAN**

**D**oug Perry is accustomed to performing in unconventional spaces. He once arranged and played a variety of minimalist composer Steve Reich’s music at a dance club in Brooklyn. Another performance brought him to a used video store. For Perry, marching to the beat of his own drum is just part of the job. When Waterbury Symphony Orchestra asked him to be a part of its Music in Great Spaces series, Perry says he readily agreed.

He will perform a solo recital, titled “Bourbon and Bach,” March 24 at 6:30 p.m. at Litchfield Distillery in Litchfield. Not only is the venue unconventional, but the experience itself will be rare for him. “As a percussionist, I don’t get a ton of opportunities to play solo. This is a really unique and exciting opportunity.”

Waterbury Symphony Orchestra, now celebrating its 80th season, has organized similar ad hoc events in previous years, but Music in Great Spaces is the first formal series.

“The idea,” says the orchestra’s executive director, Robert Cinnante, is to take music “beyond the concert hall and into a space in our region that is architecturally and/or



TONY VENIGROVE



Litchfield Distillery, top; Doug Perry on the xylophone in a still from a music video.

historically significant. To take that a step further, I think it’s even more exciting when we can book at a space where music is not typically performed.”

Other venues in the series included the Mark Twain House, Five Points Gallery in Torrington, St. Michael’s Church in Litchfield and

St. John’s Cathedral in Waterbury. “Bourbon and Bach” is the series’ final event.

“You wouldn’t necessarily think about a concert happening in a distillery ... ideally, it will engage new patrons while offering novel experiences to our existing ones,” Cinnante says.



Perry, 30, plans to perform Bach's Cello Suite No. 3, which he has transcribed for percussion. "I wanted to do something more warm and social ... to showcase a moment when one might drink bourbon. I ended up choosing the third cello suite for its jovial feeling." Perry, who lives in New Haven, also has teamed up with Yale-trained composer Natalie Dietterich to create an original piece for the event — a song titled "Distill" that utilizes six bottles filled with various bourbon ingredients to create distinct soundwaves.

Litchfield Distillery was founded by brothers Dave, Jack and Peter Baker in 2014. Guests will also be able to taste the distillery's own spirits while listening to Perry's cross-genre experimentation. Jack Baker notes that the distillery — "an old manufacturing building that we've restored" — is "an open space but filled with beautiful distillery equipment, shiny tanks and wooden whiskey barrels. All those kinds of tools lend themselves to this percussive composition that they've put together."

Perry said the orchestra wanted him to perform Bach and also to key off the unusual performance space in some way.

"I thought a lot about the metal in the [distillery]. I'm turning towards some music that pulls from the minimalist or post-minimalist world to reflect the industrial side of the process. Those are things that I would distill from a space when I am preparing for a performance."

Cinnante hopes the event will acquaint younger generations with the symphony. "Sometimes people are introduced to the symphony through these casual, more intimate gatherings... With this particular concert, we want to create an intergenerational audience. I think it's a good experience for younger people, to come and enjoy the concert and break down that barrier between entertainment and enrichment."

*Tickets are \$35 in advance and \$45 at the door. [waterburysymphony.secure.force.com/ticket/#showdates](http://waterburysymphony.secure.force.com/ticket/#showdates)*

## QUICK DIP

Shake, Rattle And Roll Around Town

### Comfort Zone

Last winter the word we learned was "hygge" (rhymes with hula) — the Danish concept of creating comfort and contentment in a cozy sanctuary. Sipping warm beverages, enjoying home-cooked meals with friends, cuddling in front of a fire. Turns out that we seem to take to the idea quite naturally. Sperling's BestPlaces recently ranked Hartford as seventh among America's 50 metro areas in its scoring of America's "Top Hygge Cities." [bestplaces.net](http://bestplaces.net)



### In Stitches

Want to learn how to design a perfect quilt or dye fabric that is more advanced than backyard tie-dye? At Stitches United, March 23 to 25 at the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford, crafters will have the opportunity to learn new skills or master their favorite textile art.

The convention includes formal classes and a retail market for hobbyists and professional crafters alike. Tickets range from \$12 to \$24. [knittinguniverse.com/stitches](http://knittinguniverse.com/stitches)

### Walk Of The Irish

Irish eyes will be smiling March 10 at the 47th annual Greater Hartford St. Patrick's Day Parade. Hosted by

The Central Connecticut Celtic Cultural Committee, the parade celebrates the contributions Irish-Americans have made in and around the capital city. The parade kicks off at 11 a.m. at the state Capitol on Capitol Avenue, heads up to Main Street, then turns on Asylum and leads to a — well, virtual — pot of gold at the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Arch. [irishamericanparade.com](http://irishamericanparade.com)



### Press In The Present

How can the public navigate hard news in this era of #fakenews, Twitter, media bias and information overload? What's the future of investigative journalism? What's the state of local journalism? What about the prickly relationship between the press and the presidency, and challenges to freedom of the press? These questions are the focus of The Connecticut Forum's program "The State of Journalism and The News," March 16 at The Bushnell, hosted by the Hartford Courant Media Group. Panelists are David Fahrenthold, Hugh Hewitt and Joy Reid, with WNPR's John Dankosky moderating the discussion. Tickets range from \$15 to \$100. [ctforum.org](http://ctforum.org)



STEPHEN DUNN

Doug Glanville, the former MLB star who played for nine years in the big leagues, with the Phillies, Cubs and Texans, has an eclectic collection of personal baseball memorabilia stored in the attic over the garage at his West End home.

## IN OUR MIDST

# Garage Of Dreams

## Doug Glanville's Collection Of Baseball Memories

By **RAND RICHARDS COOPER**

**W**e're in a dark and dusty room over a garage in Hartford's West End. Watch your head, my host says, pointing to low rafters. Boxes are piled everywhere. Boxes full of baseball memorabilia.

Doug Glanville has items you won't find in your typical fan's collection. That's because he was

there, a nine-year big-league outfielder with the Phillies, Cubs and Texans. We're searching for a memento he describes in his book, "The Game From Where I Stand." In 1999, after future Hall of Famer Wade Boggs got his 3,000th hit and knelt to kiss home plate, Glanville grimaced about the yuck factor, commenting to a sportswriter that if someone put a picture of supermodel Tyra Banks on home plate, he might kiss it. Days later he received in the mail — from

Banks herself — a home plate with her photo printed on it, and a flirty note: "You don't have to wait until your 3000th hit."

"I know she's up here somewhere," Glanville says, rummaging. He pulls up a panoramic photo of jam-packed Enron Field in Houston, on its first-ever opening night, and points to the figure at the plate. "That's me, lead-off guy. I got the first hit and first stolen base in the history of Enron Field."

He digs out assorted other relics, but no Tyra. Over the years he's gotten rid of a ton of stuff, he says. "I didn't want a shrine to my career."

Modesty is perhaps not what you'd expect from someone whose MLB stat sheet includes a year like Glanville had in 1999, when he batted .325, had 204 hits and stole 34 bases. Then again, Glanville wasn't a typical MLB player. Son of an educator mother and psychiatrist father, he got an engineering degree from Penn, becoming the first African-American Ivy League grad ever to play in the bigs. "At first it was a negative — you know, 'You ask too many questions,' or 'You think you have all the answers.'" He laughs. "How can you think you have all the answers if you're asking too many questions?"

In conversation Glanville exudes the low-key acuity that has graced his post-baseball career. The former centerfielder has worked as an analyst for ESPN, and he's currently commuting to Philadelphia to teach a communications class at his alma mater. Over the past decade, he has written a series of op-eds in *The New York Times*, candid and insightful commentaries on a range of sports topics.

The writing, he says, connects him to his late father, who was passionate about poetry and ideas, and who died during Glanville's career — passing away on the same day Glanville had his thousandth hit, a career milestone. The son put that baseball in his father's coffin, and memorializes him in a moving epigraph to his book: "To my father, the angels' therapist, still counseling from the heavens."

There are a lot of memories in Glanville's garage of dreams. He doesn't have the ball he hit for a home run off his childhood idol, Dwight Gooden, but he kept other touchstones. Reaching into a box, he pulls out a Nike baseball spike — Michael Jordan's, from the year he played minor-league ball. "We played against each other in the Southern League. I actually even played basketball against him." It may surprise fans to learn that



STEPHEN DUNN

Glanville's collection includes cleats worn by Michael Jordan in the year he played baseball, the glove Glanville used on the cover of his book, and signed bats.

ballplayers themselves are fans, too. From a red bag Glanville produces a dozen bats signed by major stars. Sammy Sosa, Derek Jeter, Juan Gonzalez. "I got all these in the last year of my career," he explains.

March is the waking-up season in baseball, and 13 of them have passed since Doug Glanville last emerged from a ballplayer's winter hibernation to don a uniform. The career of a pro athlete enacts the drama of youth, aging and decline right before our eyes, compressed to a dozen or so years. Glanville's first *Times* essay, in 2008, evoked the insecurity that shadows an aging player. "There is a tipping point in a

player's career where he goes from chasing the dream to running from a nightmare," he wrote. "It is a downhill run and it spares no one." For him, it began with a torn tendon, running out a ground ball. "All of a sudden," he wrote, "I felt old."

Having failed to find the Tyra Banks home plate, we descend from the garage and head for the bus stop at the corner, to meet Glanville's son and daughter, returning from school. He and his wife, Tiffany, have four kids, ranging in age from 2 to 9. It is a sweet and saving reminder that while baseball is short, life is long; in sports terms Glanville is already history, but as a Dad, he's still a rising star.



## KISS & TELL

# Newly Sober And Wondering When To Reveal That Fact

By **TERESA M. PELHAM**

Dear Teresa,

*I am a recovering alcoholic and also actively dating. At what point do you think I should reveal this information to someone I meet, either online or in person?*

— Sober in Simsbury

Dear Sober,

My first reaction is that you'd want to put it out there right away to weed out anyone who'd be anything less than supportive. But then again, do you want your recovery to define you? That's a tough one. Good thing we've got an expert to help.

Judith Rosenberg, a Newington-based licensed psychologist, says the decision to be upfront about your recovery should depend on how confident you feel about your sobriety.

Above all, she says, you've got to keep your focus on being well.

"Your recovery always has to be your top priority," she says. "It's your well-being. We get into relationships ideally to support ourselves, so we would want someone to be supportive of our recovery."

You're actually at a bit of an advantage getting into a relationship now, as opposed to being with someone who might not embrace your decision to work at becoming sober.

"Recovery is such an important part of a person's life," says Rosenberg. "You can't get close to someone unless you share that information about your recovery. You can use it as a way to screen out people who you wouldn't want to be dating anyway."

Dear Teresa,

*I know it's late but I'm hoping you're still awake. I just returned from a really good third date (a nine-hour date!) with a woman I met on Match.com. In my world, the third date usually*

*means sex, and this time was no exception. (It really was quite awesome, and I hated to leave but I have an early flight in the morning.) Although we've been talking about getting serious and not doing any more online dating, I came home and went online only to see her Match profile read "Online Now!" How could she go from saying that we're going to date exclusively to checking out other guys so quickly?*

— Crushed in Canton

Dear Crushed,

I'm trying very hard to not get all judge-y on you, but don't you see the hypocrisy in your words? You went online, too! Why is it OK for you to keep on looking for Ms. Right while you expect her to close her online dating accounts ASAP?

Clearly, you are not ready to settle down, and neither is she. And that's fine. Just try to be honest with each other.

But something tells me there's something more to this, and it's really more of a symptom of the myriad dating options presented to us every time we open our laptops.

Karenna Alexander, a Norwalk-based matchmaker and dating coach, says she's met many daters who can't wait to get off online dating. They aren't doing it because it's fun, they are doing it because they know it's a means to an end.

"It can feel like going to the dentist," she says. "They really want to find a significant other who they have a connection with, and can't wait to delete their dating profiles and apps."

However, there is a segment of the population out there that feels like a kid in a candy store with online dating, she says. It's like when you make a big purchase and then can't quite stop shopping and checking to see if you can get a better deal.

"It can be very tempting for online daters to log back into their online dating profiles to see who emailed them, even after they have found a great match," she says.

"I do notice that he said they'd been talking about getting serious and not doing any more online dating," she adds. "To me, that doesn't sound like a firm 'Let's delete our apps, take our profiles down and be exclusive.' It sounds like when he was discussing it with her, he was dancing around the topic of being exclusive."

In other words: Are you on the market or off?

*Teresa M. Pelham is a Farmington-based writer — not a certified or registered anything — and is the middle-person between you and free relationship advice. Please send your anonymous love-related questions to [LoveNotes@HartfordMag.com](mailto:LoveNotes@HartfordMag.com) or email Teresa at [tpelham@comcast.net](mailto:tpelham@comcast.net).*





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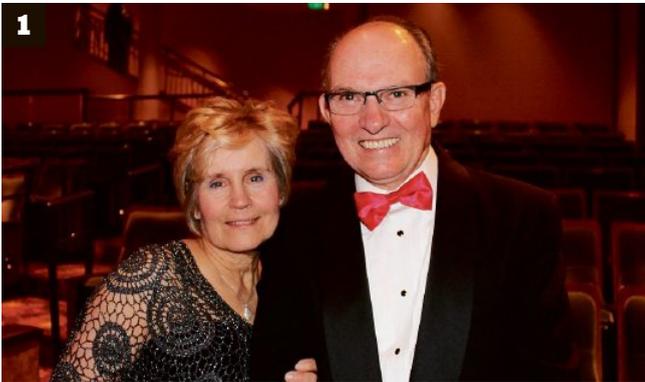
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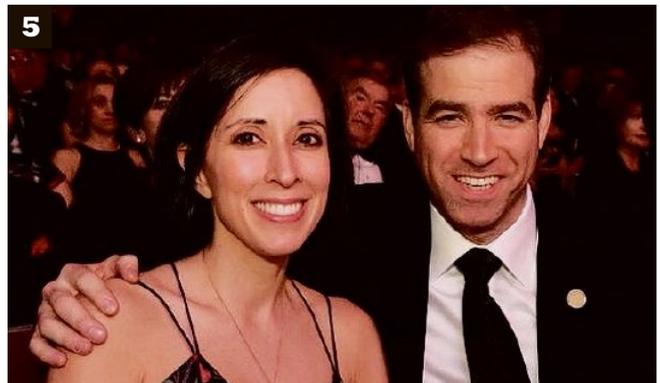
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# JAVA



## Black & Red Gala

**1.** Among the 1,100 guests at Hartford Hospital’s annual Black & Red Gala, a benefit for its Heart & Vascular Institute, were Dr. Paul Thompson, co-physician-in-chief of the Heart & Vascular Institute, and his wife, Camilla Thompson; ♦ **2. Bimal Patel**, president of Hartford Hospital and Hartford HealthCare’s Hartford region and senior vice president of Hartford HealthCare; ♦ **3.** and Lokesh and Yezenia Nigam of Middletown. [Photos: Amy Ellis] ♦ **4.** A highlight of the event at The Bushnell was a performance by Tony Award-winning actress Idina Menzel, who surprised the crowd when she invited people to join her on the stage to sing a verse from her mega-hit “Let It Go,” from the movie “Frozen,” including ♦ **5.** Hartford Mayor **Luke Bronin**, pictured with his wife, **Sara Bronin**. [Photos: Sean Patrick Fowler]



## Red, White & Chocolate

**6.** Hundreds enjoyed an evening of wine, chocolate and cheeses from area distributors and businesses at the United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut’s fifth annual Red, White & Chocolate tasting at the Pond House Cafe in Elizabeth Park. Among those in attendance were, from left, **Tara Spain**, vice president and COO of the Travelers Foundation; **Allison Holzer**, founder and chief inspiration officer of Inspire Corps; **Tisa Rabun-Marshall** and **Ashley Born**, co-chairs of the event; and **Paula Gilberto**, president and CEO of the United Way. [Photo: Alex Syphers]



*We welcome your submissions. Please send photos with captions to [nschoeffler@hartfordmag.com](mailto:nschoeffler@hartfordmag.com)*

## Beyond Words

**7.** The Hartford Public Library honored the late Sharon O'Meara, former director of community investment at the Hartford Foundation of Public Giving, with its Carolina M. Hewins award at the Beyond Words gala. Among those attending were, from left, **Greg Davis**, president of the library's board of directors; **Cheryl O'Meara**, who accepted the award for her wife; **Judy Rozie-Battle**, senior vice president of community investments for Hartford Foundation for Public Giving; and **Bridget Quinn Carey**, CEO of the Hartford Public Library. [Photo: Alex Syphers]



## Mark Twain Award

**8.** Author **Bill Beverly**, second from right, was awarded the Mark Twain Voice in American Literature Award — an award presented to the author whose book best embodies an American voice as Twain established — at the Mark Twain House and Museum in Hartford. Among those at the ceremony were, from left, Twain House board member **Roger Michel Jr.**; **Pieter Roos**, Twain House and Museum executive director; novelist **David Baldacci**, a trustee of the Twain House; Beverly, and author **Stuart Nadler**. Beverly received the award for his novel “Dodgers,” and finalists Nadler, for “The Inseparables,” and Don DeLillo, not pictured, for “Zero K.” [Photo: Alex Syphers]

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## Muslim Diaspora

**9.** Trinity College Associate Professor of International Studies **Janet L. Bauer** received a Fulbright Global Scholar grant for her research project, “The Social Geographies of Islam in Diaspora: Race, Gender, Generation, and Place.” On the Trinity faculty since 1984, Bauer specializes in the ethnography of mobility and gender in Islamic societies. Her research is taking her to Trinidad, Tobago, Canada and Germany this academic year. [Photo: Nick Caito]



## Warm Coats In A Cold Winter

**10.** Best Cleaners wrapped up its ninth annual Coats for Connecticut campaign, with a record-breaking 18,298 coats and jackets collected in eight weeks at Best Cleaners’ 12 locations. The coats were cleaned and donated to Salvation Army centers and shelters around the state. Pausing during a delivery to the Salvation Army center in Hartford were, from left, Best Cleaners’ Coats for Connecticut team members **Gary Reynolds, Shawn McCann, Laura Mullaly, Kevin Mullaly, Scott Franco and Norm Ravagnani.**



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## MARCH

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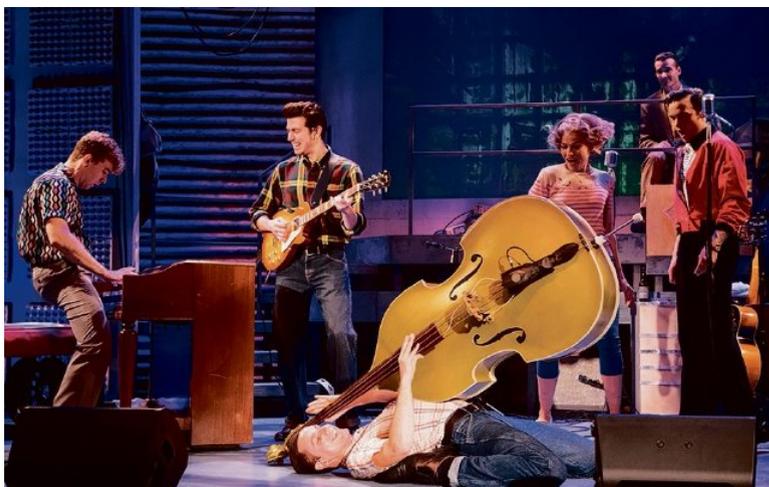
# CALENDAR

*March has been known to come in like a lamb. “Agnus” is the Latin word for lamb. “Agnes of God” is playing at a theater in Stratford starting March 1. If March comes in like a lamb, it’s predicted to go out like a lion. There’s a hit by Carl Perkins called “A Lion in the Jungle.” A musical revue of wild, woolly hits by Perkins and other rock pioneers is in Waterbury March 30. Beware the arts of March.*

By **CHRISTOPHER ARNOTT**

### Thanks A Million

The rock and roll musical “Million Dollar Quartet,” which dramatizes a pivotal night in the careers of Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash, barreled through Connecticut umpteen times on tour. Then local productions began to appear, in Ivoryton and Waterbury and elsewhere. The “Million Dollar Quartet” found at The Bushnell, 166 Capitol Ave., Hartford (860-987-5900, bushnell.org) on March 8 is, amazingly, yet another national tour. On March 30 at the Palace Theater, 100 East Main St., Waterbury (203-346-2000, palacetheaterct.org), those same four rock legends are feted in the tribute concert event “One Night in Memphis.”



BILLIE WHEELER

### The Quinn Crowd

The great comic raconteur Colin Quinn brings his latest social-satire monologue, “One in Every Crowd,” to Infinity Music Hall, 32 Front St., Hartford, on March 10.



### Gorgeous Georgia

“The Legend of Georgia McBride” is a contemporary comedy by Matthew Lopez, a playwright generally known for darker, heavier works like “The Whipping Man” and

“Reverberation.” It involves an Elvis Presley impersonator who finds a new calling as a drag queen.

March 15-22 at TheaterWorks, 233 Pearl St., Hartford. 860-527-7838, theaterworkshartford.org.



DIANE SOBOLEWSKI

Jamison Stern will play a drag queen in the comedy “The Legend of Georgia McBride” at TheaterWorks in Hartford.



### Standing Pat

It's the month with St. Patrick's day in it. Celtic enticements include the dance spectacle "Rhythm of the Dance" March 14 at the Palace Theatre, 100 E. Main St., Waterbury (203-346-2000, palacetheaterct.org), and concerts at each of the two Infinity Music Hall venues (866-666-6306, infinityhall.com): Enter the Haggis, March 3 at 32 Front St., Hartford, and Celtica-Pipes Rock, March 23 at 20 Greenwood Road West, Norfolk.

### Kristin In Concert

The dynamic Broadway diva Kristin Chenoweth does her concert act March 24 at 8 p.m. at Jorgensen Auditorium, UConn. Musical roles that Chenoweth has originated include Sally in "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" and Glinda in "Wicked." She also starred in major revivals of "The Apple Tree," "Promises, Promises" and "On the 20th Century." 860-486-4226, jorgensen.uconn.edu.

### What's The News?

The latest high-powered Connecticut Forum panel discussion is "The State of Journalism and the News" with David Fahrenthold (of The Washington Post and CNN), Hugh Hewitt (of the Salem Radio Network) and Joy Reid (of MSNBC), moderated by John Dankosky (of Connecticut Public Radio).

Wonder if they'll talk about President Trump? March 16 at 8 p.m. 166 Capitol Ave., Hartford. 860-987-5900, bushnell.org.



Fahrenthold



Hewitt



Reid



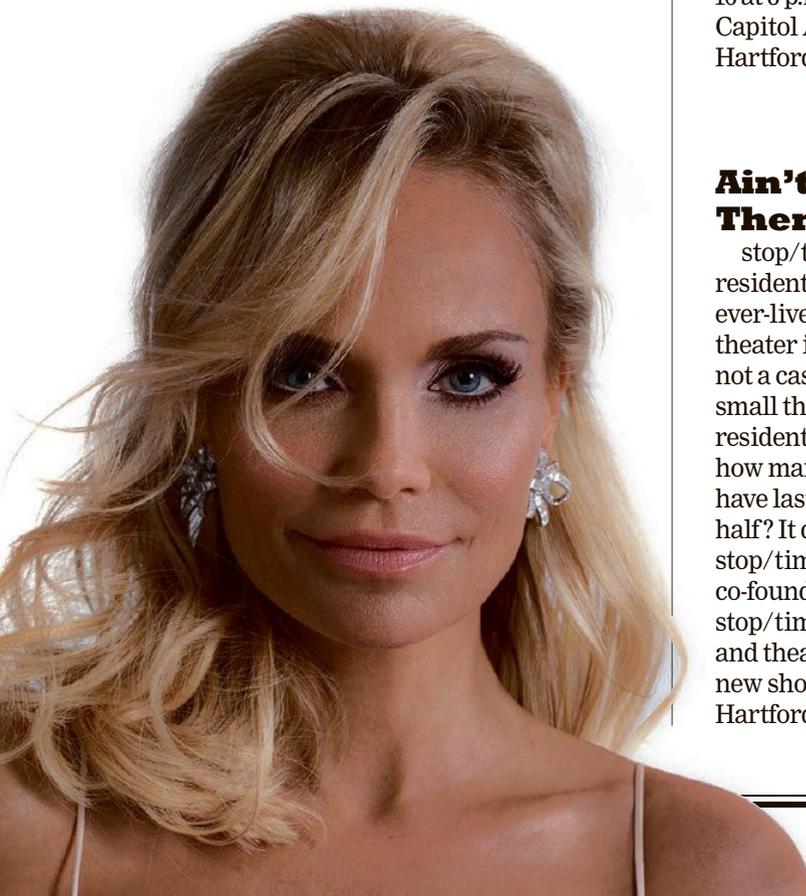
Dankosky

### Ain't No Stopping Them Now

stop/time dance theater is the resident theater company of the ever-lively Playhouse on Park theater in West Hartford. This is not a casual thing. How many small theaters do you know with resident dance companies? And how many of those relationships have lasted for a decade and a half? It doesn't hurt that



stop/time's founder and choreographer Darlene Zoller is also the co-founder of the playhouse. That also shows her range. stop/time's stuff is modern and danceable, but it's also conceptual and theatrical. The company celebrates its 15th anniversary with a new show March 14-25 at Playhouse on Park, 244 Park Road, West Hartford. 860-523-5900, playhouseonpark.org.



**Et Tu?**

“Julius Caesar,” with its “Ides of March” caveat, may seem more appropriate, but there’s nothing wrong with “Much Ado About Nothing.” New Britain’s Hole in the Wall Theatre is doing the comedy March 16 through April 7. 116 Main St., New Britain. 860-229-3049, hitw.org.

**For The Love Of God**

“Agnes of God” is a respected, if sensational, 1979 drama by John Pielmeier about a young nun who gives birth and says it was an immaculate conception. The play premiered at the O’Neill Theater Center in Waterford. Square One Theatre, which uses the black box theater at Stratford Academy, 719 Birdseye St., Stratford, is staging “Agnes of God” March 1-18. 203-375-8778, squareonetheatre.com.

**Remaining Civil**

The Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Suzan-Lori Parks has a special fascination with the Civil War. It has informed her works “The America Play,” “Topdog/Underdog” and now the epic “Father Comes Home from the Wars Parts 1, 2 & 3,” which will be performed March 16-April 7 at the Yale Repertory Theatre, 1120 Chapel St., New Haven. The production is special because it reunites Parks with director Liz Diamond, who staged some of the playwright’s earliest plays over 20 years ago. 203-432-1234, yalerep.org.



# Hartford

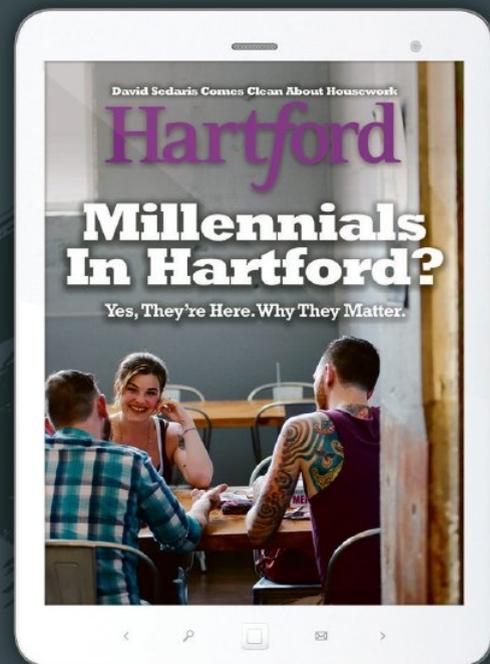
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**PERFORMING**

# Dragtime In Hartford

Talking With ... Bianca Del Rio  
And Jamison Stern

By **FRANK RIZZO**

**T**he stilettos will be clicking aplenty in downtown Hartford this month. Beginning March 16, TheaterWorks' presents "The Legend of Georgia McBride," about a straight man who turns to drag for his livelihood.

On March 22, Bianca Del Rio, winner of the sixth season of "RuPaul's Drag Race", will be performing at The Bushnell's Belding Theater.

We talked separately with Del Rio (aka Roy Haylock) and actor Jamison Stern, who starred in "La Cage Aux Folles" at Goodspeed and who plays a veteran drag performer in the TheaterWorks comedy.

## **Bianca Del Rio**

*Bianca, your show coincides with the new edition of "RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars." Any advice for these contestants?*

**BDR:** Only that you should have tried to win the first time so you don't have to do it a second time. But really, it's a great opportunity for several of my friends who are brilliant and funny to get a second chance — or, in Shangela's case, a third.

*Describe the experience of being on the show.*

**BDR:** You're in this weird dream where you never know what's going to happen. I assumed my season that Adore [Delano] was going to win because she cried a lot and had all those emotions, where I didn't. I just sat back and stared at people, being hateful.

It's a very grueling situation because we're doing it day

Bianca Del Rio  
(aka Roy  
Haylock), winner  
of the sixth  
season of  
RuPaul's Drag  
Race.



to day as opposed to week to week. And a lot of the young queens were distracted because they take away your phones and laptops. But it was different for me. I'm old enough to have lived at a time when I didn't have either so I was good. I took a nap as old people do.

*Where does your strong confident personality come from?*

**BDR:** I think it's because my family hates me — and so does everyone else — so you just build a big wall, but not the one that Trump wants, where you go, "Look, what you say about me doesn't matter because I've heard it all before, dealt with it and now I'm done with it." You just roll with the punches.

There've been many people on the program who are gorgeous and beautiful, but they don't have much to offer — no offense to them. Well, it is an offense to them. But they don't realize that there's more to life than [just winning]. That wasn't my plan. Whether I won or not, it didn't matter: [Being on the show in itself] was an opportunity and you have to run with it.

Listen, there are moments in my life when I was working in a club where there were five people in the audience and now there's 2,900 people and that's pretty amazing. The reality I'm feeling is how [expletive] insane this ride is.

*Much of your act is based on insult comedy.*

**BDR:** If I didn't wear a wig, I'd be called a hateful fag. Because I wear a wig, what I say is called hysterical. So it's the packaging that lets you get away with everything.

*Where does Roy leave and Bianca enter?*

**BDR:** That's a bit esoteric question but basically it's not necessarily that, "Oh, I'm a woman now." Look, I'm an actor but [the persona] is also an extension of myself. I'd be a liar if I said what I say or do is not who I am. It's a huge part of it. But in terms of becoming this character, this is me. And it's my job.

*How long will you doing the job?*

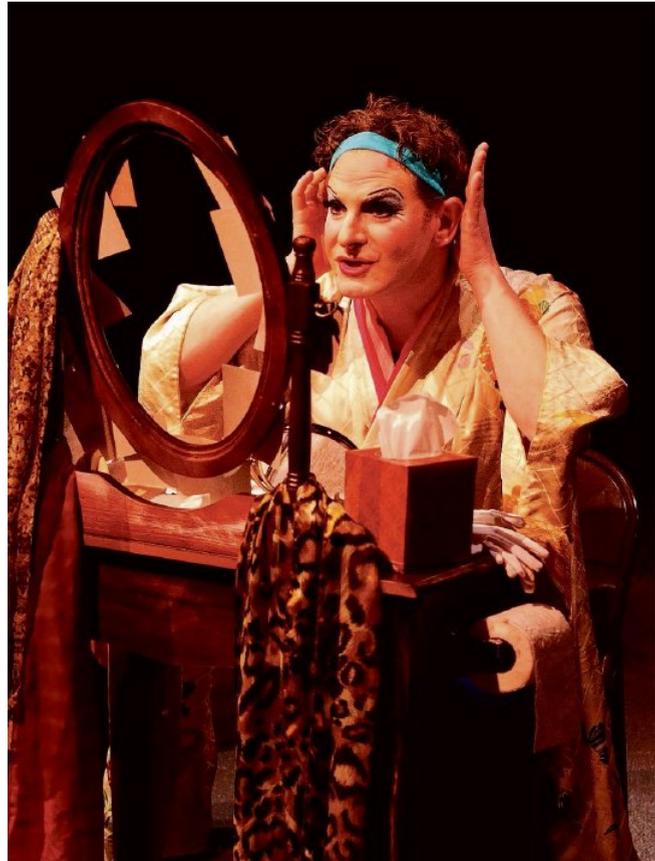
**BDR:** I just know I'm not going to be doing it forever. I'm 42 and don't want to be 65 with 10 assistants propping me to the spotlight. That's not my future.

## Jamison Stern

*Can straight men do drag?*

**JS:** I think sexual preference doesn't have anything to do with it. It requires being in touch with both sides of the male and female that's in all of us. And drag is about being inclusive. Some of their greatest episodes of Drag Race is when they bring in the crew guys or the fathers of the contestants and do them up.

Drag is for everyone to find their fiercest persona. I think what RuPaul is trying to do for the world is allow people to find their inner drag queen, their tiger who lives inside them to help them through this insane world we live in.



PROVIDED BY GOODSPEED

Jamison Stern, here in "La Cage Aux Folles" at Goodspeed, will play a drag performer in "The Legend of Georgia McBride."

*How does your drag stack up?*

**JS:** I've never done drag off stage where it hasn't been part of theater. It's still a play and you have to know the human being is under all the glamour and glitz, the man under the makeup. But I see drag performers as heroes really. They're brave and fearless and I see them as warriors of joy. I wouldn't even attempt to compete in that world.

*How do you become transformed in the process?*

**JS:** For me, it starts slowly. In drag you literally wipe your entire face away as you glue down your eyebrows and put at least two different shades of contour and base on. From there you start creating a face on top of that. Then it's the wig, shoes and the lipstick — in that order. Putting on lipstick feels like it's just the most feminine action. Didn't we all grow up seeing our mothers do this freshen-the-face action? You can put on as much eye makeup and your hair can be as big as you want, but if you're a man in drag and you go out without lipstick, you're not going to look like a woman.

*Who is your favorite RuPaul drag performer?*

**JS:** Bianca. I love her to death. She's in a category by herself. She doesn't lip synch and do "numbers" which is such a great kind of finger in the air. Talk about being a brave warrior.

## PLAYERS

# Eclectic Collections

*This March, take an indoor excursion with our Greater Hartford Players. They will intrigue, inform and inspire you with their eclectic museum collections.*

By **CAROL RIORDAN**

Photographs by **JONATHAN OLSON**



### John Bell

DIRECTOR, BALLARD INSTITUTE AND MUSEUM OF PUPPETRY

A regular performance series introduces visitors to the magic of puppetry. "Puppetry allows for all sorts of fantastic possibilities," says John Bell. Forums with guest artists cover topics such as sports mascots. The collection includes 3,000 puppets from around the world. "There are shadow puppets, rod puppets, marionettes, hand puppets, water puppets, masks and bunraku-style figures." The museum will highlight 1930s American puppetry in March. "We have marionettes by Rufus and Margo Rose from Waterford. They did Howdy Doody on television."

### John Ellsworth

DIRECTOR, VINTAGE RADIO AND COMMUNICATIONS MUSEUM OF CONNECTICUT

"The sound reproduction is so much better than the digital sound of today," says John Ellsworth of the museum's crank Victrolas, jukeboxes and vacuum tube radios. Visitors can use a 1950s recording studio. Early computers are up and running. "Kids are amazed by Lunar Lander, one of the first computer games." There is a working telephone switchboard and the museum has introduced early cell phones. Workshops are designed for all ages. "We've had a 92-year-old build a crystal radio." Communications equipment and parts will be on sale at the museum's April swap meet.





### **Terry Dagradi**

CURATOR, CUSHING CENTER,  
YALE UNIVERSITY

“Dr. Harvey Cushing is considered the father of modern neurosurgery,” says Terry Dagradi. He meticulously documented his cases. “We have about 450 jars of brains and specimens in the center.” Journals trace the evolution of his techniques. “He wrote a thousand words a day.” His rare medical book collection dates back to 1450. “We have a first edition Copernicus signed by Edward Hubble.” Dagradi selected and printed photographs of Cushing’s patients from 15,000 glass-plate negatives. “The suffering, the surprise, the tragedy — all of it is there.”



### **Richard L. Newman**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AMERICAN  
MUSEUM OF TORT LAW

Tort law benefits society by revealing wrongdoing and imposing penalties. “We want people to appreciate the benefits of disclosing and deterring bad conduct,” says Richard Newman. Exhibits cover tobacco and asbestos litigation, the Ford Pinto, the Erin Brockovich case and more. “Donald v. United Klans of America put the United Klans of America out of business.” There is a gallery of dangerous toys and programming such as “#MeToo: Sexual Assault is a Tort.” Illustrations are by Matt Wuerker. “He won a Pulitzer Prize for his political cartooning.”



### **Vivian F. Zoë**

DIRECTOR,  
SLATER MEMORIAL MUSEUM

Vivian Zoë displays a brooch and enameled plaque by Frank Gardner Hale. “He was one of the most important jewelers in the American Arts and Crafts movement.” The museum covers 350 years of Norwich history. “Around the World on the Yacht Eleanor” tells the story of the Slaters’ world tour. The renowned plaster cast collection has full-size replicas of the world’s greatest artworks. “The Pietà, Venus of Milos and Winged Victory of Samothrace are popular.” In March, look for selections from the 74th Annual Connecticut Artists Juried Exhibition.

## MORE MUSEUMS

# Take The Grand Tour

By **CAROL RIORDAN**

**N**ow that you've made your first stop on a tour of all things fascinating, continue your journey with more captivating collections that present a unique point of view. History museums will take you inside the lives of firefighters and police, popes and showmen. Artifacts tell stories of the fifes and drums that called citizens to arms and the tools that built America. Popular culture is our great escape, taking us through a fantasy world of cartoons and comics, carousels, PEZ candies and classic horror movies. Then take a break from all things civilized with the natural world to see the ultimate collection — all creatures great and small, and all things bright and beautiful.

### HISTORY

#### The Barnum Museum

820 Main St., Bridgeport  
203-331-1104  
barnum-museum.org

#### Connecticut Fireman's Historical Society

230 Pine St., Manchester  
860-649-9436  
thefiremuseum.org

#### Connecticut State Police Museum and Educational Center

State Police Mulcahy Complex  
294 Colony St., Building #7, Meriden  
203-440-3858  
cspmuseum.org

#### Custom House Maritime Museum

150 Bank St., New London  
860-447-2501  
nlmaritimesociety.org

#### Henry Whitfield State Museum

248 Old Whitfield St., Guilford  
203-453-2457  
cultureandtourism.org

#### Institute of Living

Myths, Minds, and Medicine  
200 Retreat Ave., Commons Building,  
Hartford  
860-545-7665  
instituteofliving.org/about-us/myths-  
minds-medicine

#### Ireland's Great Hunger Museum

Quinnipiac University

3011 Whitney Ave., Hamden  
203-582-6500  
ighm.org

#### Knights of Columbus Museum

1 State St., New Haven  
203-865-0400  
kofcmuseum.org

#### Mattatuck Museum

144 W. Main St., Waterbury  
203-753-0381  
mattmuseum.org

#### Museum of Connecticut History

State Library and Supreme Court Building  
231 Capitol Ave., Hartford  
860-757-6535  
museumofcthistory.org

#### New Haven Museum

114 Whitney Ave., New Haven  
203-562-4183  
newhavenmuseum.org

#### Prudence Crandall Museum

1 South Canterbury Road, Canterbury  
860-546-7800  
ct.gov/CCT

#### U.S. Coast Guard Museum

U.S. Coast Guard Academy  
Waesche Hall  
31 Mohegan Ave., New London  
860-444-8511  
cga.edu/campus.aspx?id=679

#### Windham Textile and History Museum

411 Main St., Willimantic  
860-456-2178  
millmuseum.org

### ARTIFACTS

#### American Clock and Watch Museum

100 Maple St., Bristol  
860-583-6070  
clockandwatchmuseum.org

#### Buell Tool Museum

Clinton Historical Society  
103 East Main St., Clinton  
860-669-2148  
clintoncthistory.org/tool-museum

#### D'Elia Antique Tool Museum

21 Brook Road, Scotland  
860-456-1516  
deliatoolmuseum.com

#### Lock Museum of America

230 Main St., Terryville  
860-480-4408  
lockmuseumofamerica.org

#### The Museum of Connecticut Glass

John Turner House  
North River Road at Route 44, Coventry  
860-633-2944  
www.glassmuseum.org

#### The Museum of Fife and Drum

62 N. Main St., Ivoryton  
860-767-2237  
companyoffifeanddrum.org/museum

### POPULAR CULTURE

#### The Barker Character, Comic and Cartoon Museum

1188 Highland Ave., Cheshire  
203-272-2357  
www.barkermuseum.com

**The Gertrude Chandler Warner  
Boxcar Children Museum**

1S. Main St., Putnam  
boxcarchildrenmuseum.com

**The New England Carousel  
Museum**

95 Riverside Ave., Bristol  
860-585-5411  
www.thecarouselmuseum.org

**PEZ Visitor Center**

35 Prindle Hill Road, Orange  
203-298-0201  
us.pez.com/pages/hours-and-location

**Witch's Dungeon Classic Movie  
Museum**

98 Summer St., Bristol  
860-583-8306  
www.preservehollywood.org

**THE NATURAL WORLD**

**Audubon Center at  
Glastonbury**

1361 Main St., Glastonbury  
860-633-8402  
www.ctaudubon.org/glastonbury-home

**Burlington State Fish Hatchery**

34 Belden Road, Burlington  
860-673-2340  
www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?A=2696&Q=535814

**Connecticut Museum of  
Mining and Mineral Science**

Connecticut Antique Machinery  
Association  
31 Kent Cornwall Road, Kent  
860-927-0050  
www.ctamachinery.com

**Connecticut Science Center**

250 Columbus Blvd., Hartford  
860-520-2160  
ctsciencecenter.org

**Copernican Observatory and  
Planetarium**

Central Connecticut State University  
Copernicus Hall, Room 211  
1615 Stanley St., New Britain  
web.ccsu.edu/astronomy

**Joseph Seward Museum of  
Natural and Other Curiosities**

Connecticut's Old State House

800 Main St., Hartford  
860-522-6766  
cga.ct.gov/osh

**Glastonbury Planetarium**

Glastonbury East Hartford Elementary  
Magnet School  
628 Hebron Ave., Building 2, Glastonbury  
860-652-7925  
www.glastonburyplanetarium.org

**Meigs Point Nature Center**

Hammonasset Beach State Park  
1288 Boston Post Road, Madison  
203-245-8743  
www.meigspointnaturecenter.org

**Van Vleck Observatory**

Wesleyan University  
96 Foss Hill, Middletown  
860-685-2130  
www.wesleyan.edu/astro/events

**White Memorial Conservation  
Center and Nature Museum**

80 Whitehall Road, Litchfield  
860-567-0857  
whitememorialcc.org

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Deborah Gaudet, curator of film and theater at the Wadsworth Atheneum, with one of the museum's original film projectors. It's not used much anymore but is still fully operational.

JONATHAN OLSON

## **CLOSE-UP**

# DEBORAH GAUDET

Museum's Film Curator Optimistic About The Big Screen's Future

By **DONNA LARCEN**

**D**eborah Gaudet has been the keeper of a legacy for the past 29 years.

She is the curator of film and theater at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, the nation's oldest public art museum.

"I have always loved film," says Gaudet, whose French Canadian parents settled in Wethersfield, where she grew up with two brothers. "We didn't have a lot of money, so for the first 10 years of my life going to the drive-in theater was a big deal and a big treat and that's where I fell in love with cinema."

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## “Every audience reacts differently, and I love that.”

**Deborah Gaudet**

When she was a young teen she read Margaret Mitchell’s “Gone With The Wind.”

“I went to see the movie at the old Cinema City in Hartford,” she says. “That was transformative. What I had read on the page was translated so beautifully to the big screen. Scarlett O’Hara and Rhett Butler were just as I pictured them. Later my mother let me go see “The Godfather,” my first R-rated movie. It blew me away. I just began seeing everything I could. One of my first foreign films was here as a teen at the Atheneum. I could also armchair travel at the movies, and that nurtured my other love, travel.”

In 1929, under its legendary director, A. Everett “Chick” Austin, the Wadsworth Atheneum was the first museum to screen foreign, experimental and popular films, seven years before the practice began at the Museum of Modern Art.

The Atheneum’s multipurpose Avery Memorial Theater opened in 1934 and hosted choreographer George Balanchine’s School of American Ballet in Hartford, the opera “Four Saints in Three Acts” by Gertrude Stein and Virgil Thomson with an all-black cast, and a retrospective of works by Pablo Picasso. Stein talked about her paintings and Salvador Dali gave a lecture about his surreal art there. The walls of the Art Deco theater became the canvas in 1938 for dreamy murals by Dutch artist Kristians Tonny.

“Every time I walk on that stage, I think of its history,” says Gaudet, who created the modern era of performance under the tutelage of then-director Patrick McCaughey, who saw potential in a young events planner.

The theater was in disrepair, and through contributions from Aetna and Loctite, it was restored and renamed Aetna Theater in 1992. After a national search McCaughey

appointed Gaudet and told her to create a film program.

His faith panned out. Today, Gaudet runs a robust film schedule, consults with curators to pair movies with ongoing exhibitions and plans Art After Dark, a series of after-hours events involving food, drink and performances. She also screens classics with live music and dinner outdoors in the courtyard, which is a popular warm-weather date night for younger visitors. And she looks for films with a food theme, so the Atheneum’s café can prepare a menu based on a movie’s meals.

In these days of streaming, iPads and video on demand, Gaudet remains optimistic about the big-screen experience.

“There is an immersive quality to being in a theater,” she says. “You’re sitting with an audience and reacting with them. No small screen can do that.” The group experience can make comedies funnier or sad scenes more poignant, and “every audience reacts differently, and I love that.”

This season Gaudet is pairing films with the “Gorey’s Worlds” exhibition, running through May 6. On March 3 she will show “Gorey: A Film by Christopher Seufert,” a new documentary about the legendary writer and artist Edward St. Vincent Gorey, famous for his Edwardian-inspired pen-and-ink drawings, theater productions and book cover illustrations. The films “Coraline,” “Corpse Bride” and “Lemony Snicket’s A Series of Unfortunate Events” will be paired with tours of the exhibition.

She also has reached out to Hartford Stage to partner on a Murder Mystery Night on March 9, during the run of “Murder On the Orient Express,” because of Gorey’s affection for Agatha Christie.

Gaudet is friendly with the other like-minded venues in the city, and says with Real Art Ways, Trinity’s Cinestudio, and the reimaging of

the old Cinema City into the Bow Tie Palace 17, “Hartford is a good movie town.”

She credits Andy Rossetti, who managed her favored childhood haunt, the old Cinema City, and James Hanley, manager of Cinestudio, as mentors. Jeanine Basinger, film professor at Wesleyan and curator of its archives, “has always introduced me to many films, and is always a phone call away.”

Gaudet has also booked her share of film celebrities, pitching filmmaker John Sayles to come to Hartford after meeting him at a Greek film festival, landing quirky writer/director John Waters twice, and hosting stars Polly Bergen, Olympia Dukakis, Ellen Burstyn, Jill Clayburgh, and critic Rex Reed for nights at the theater.

She spotted the work of Ava DuVernay and showed her indie film “Middle of Nowhere” just before her breakthrough film “Selma.” “We are working on getting her here,” says Gaudet. “She’s directed for Disney now on ‘A Wrinkle in Time,’ so you know she’s a big player.”

Gaudet is grateful to Joyce and Andrew Mandell, founders of Data-Mail, for their financial support the last nine years, which has given the film program more stability.

Gaudet, who has lived downtown twice, in the busy 1980s, and the much quieter 1990s, says she has great hope for Hartford as she sees more people on the streets around the Atheneum with the renaissance of new housing, Front Street businesses and the opening of the UConn downtown campus.

“I think we’re on the verge of a great revitalization. I’m seeing younger people coming to the films. We need that new energy.”

*For more on the Wadsworth Atheneum’s film program: [thewadsworth.org/events/films](http://thewadsworth.org/events/films)*



PATRICK RAYCRAFT

It's lunchtime at The Kitchen at the Hartford Public Library near the new UConn Hartford campus. The cafe invested in a new counter area, furniture and outlets to accommodate an uptick in business with a mix of UConn students, faculty and staff.

## NEW ENERGY

# Downtown Ripple Effect

The Building Blocks Are Coming Together, City Leaders Say

By **KENNETH R. GOSSELIN**

**T**here's a brighter luster on downtown Hartford these days.

Hundreds of new apartments are now being leased in formerly blighted buildings; a minor league ballpark is heading into a second season with

strong ticket sales expected; and development finally could come to a wasteland of parking lots near the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts.

The goal is to assemble a complicated puzzle of schools, entertainment, the arts, public transportation and housing to form a vibrant, cool city where companies

and their employees — especially millennials — want to be.

Fears of a city bankruptcy are waning, and city leaders say the building blocks are now coming together.

"We are starting to feel that revitalization that has eluded us for so long," Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin recently told a gathering of



BRAD HARRIGAN

The Thomas Hooker Brewery at Colt is expanding in the South Armory, including a private event space and a cafe. Below, is the existing tap room.

the business community. “There’s a new energy.”

Here are five development projects that are making a difference:

**Colt Gateway**

Samuel Colt and his widow, Elizabeth, built a booming gun manufacturing business in Hartford — and now a new generation of housing, education and commercial space is under the onion-shaped, blue dome.

In one of the complex’s renovated buildings, the South Armory, the Thomas Hooker Brewing Co. opened a tap room late last summer, seeing 129 leased apartments and businesses with 1,200 employees a ready-made market.

Hooker has already expanded, adding private event space that hosted more than a dozen events in the past holiday season. And now, the brewery has ventured into the food business for the first time, taking over cafe space. The cafe will serve the tap room, residents, workers and other walk-in customers.



“There’s a built-in customer base here that’s underserved,” said Curt Cameron, the brewery’s owner. “We’ve been profitable out of the gate, and I can only see it getting better.”

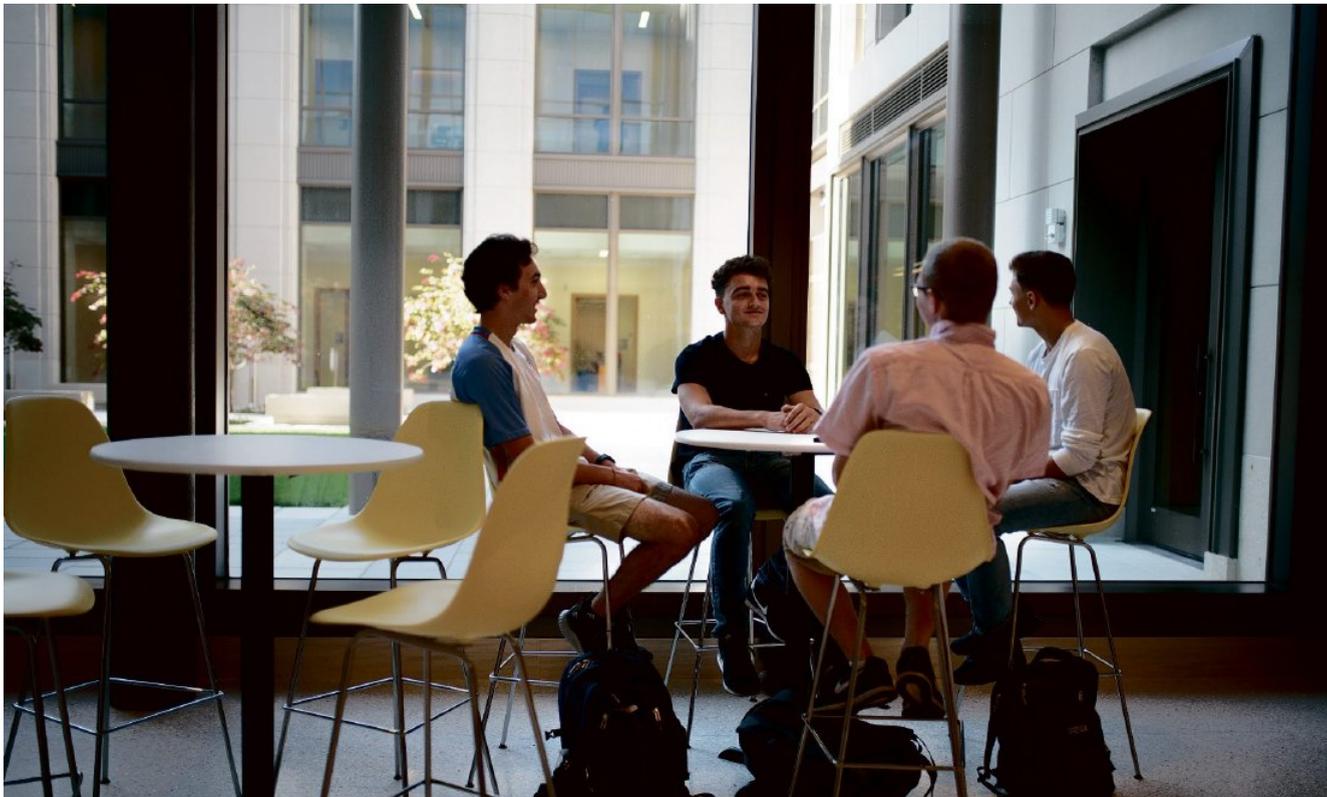
Cameron also is keeping a close eye on a proposed renovation of nearby Dillon Stadium for

professional soccer.

“If you’re the first guy in and can sustain a business plan,” Cameron said, “then we’ll be established when they open.”

**777 Main**

When it was built in the 1960s, the



MONICA JORGE

Tyler Piecewicz, Ethan Hushin, Adam Skawinski and Alex Labella, left to right, were among the 2,300 undergraduate and graduate students at UConn's new downtown campus on the first day of classes last August, plus more than 200 faculty and staff.

26-story office tower at 777 Main — across from the Old State House — was praised for its modern architecture. But when the last bank moved out in 2011, the tower stood vacant for three years, a painful, dark void in the city skyline.

Today, after an \$85 million conversion, the tower's 285 apartments are 90 percent occupied, at last count.

The leasing has not gone unnoticed around the corner by the Camera Bar, a fixture on Asylum Street for six decades.

"I wouldn't say all of a sudden we're a metropolis, but I think there's definitely an uptick in the foot traffic out there," Aaron Goldenthal said. "On Saturdays, you definitely see more people walking."

Goldenthal's father, Richard, bought the shop 21 years ago after working there for years, so Richard Goldenthal has seen plenty of changes. Today, the Goldenthals operate the shop, and they see foot traffic as essential to bringing the city back to life.



NANCY SCHOEFFLER

Residents of 777 Main add foot traffic.

"I see a lot more younger and retired people walking, so that's a great demographic," Richard Goldenthal said.

Richard Goldenthal said the Camera Bar still depends heavily on customers from the surrounding suburbs, but he's seeing an

increasing number of patrons from 777 Main.

## UConn Downtown Campus

The University of Connecticut's new, \$140 million campus at Front Street combines the classic, 1920s Hartford Times facade with a 21st-century college complex.

The much-heralded opening last fall brought 2,300 undergraduate and graduate students into the heart of the city, plus more than 200 faculty and staff.

Restaurants saw a new marketing opening and some, like The Kitchen at Hartford Public Library, moved quickly to woo the college crowd.

The Kitchen added a second counter area, more furniture and outlets for laptops and phone charging. The restaurant's Wi-Fi also got an upgrade.

Becky McGuigan, executive chef at The Kitchen, said the restaurant is seeing a good mix of UConn students, faculty and staff. But she said she

would definitely like to see more students, especially during evening hours on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

“There seems to be quite a few professors doing office hours and little groups of students between classes,” McGuigan said. “We’re continuing trying to get the word out because, I think, so many of the students are located in the UConn building and they don’t know we are here.”

The Kitchen is planning promotions for the spring and are looking at their menu offerings, McGuigan said.

“We’re really noticing that the students are looking for snacks, some fancy coffee, lattes and that people are really interested in health foods. so we’re investigating that to make sure we have a good mix of products,” McGuigan said.

### Goodwin Hotel

The Goodwin Hotel once booked Mick Jagger and Cher as guests.

But the boutique hotel on Asylum Street — its ornate, terra cotta facade a reminder of the Victorian Gilded Age when it was built — stood empty for nearly a decade.

Last year, after a multi-million dollar renovation, the doors once again opened.

Jordan Polon, executive director of the Hartford Business Improvement District, said the hotel’s return is certainly a boon to the local economy.

But the reopening also does something else: It fills in a “visual gap” for pedestrians as they walk from attraction to attraction in the city, helping to pull downtown into a cohesive whole. At night, she said, the Goodwin is lit along the uppermost floor, casting an amber glow on architectural details.

“Aesthetically speaking, it looks and feels more alive,” Polon said. “The building always has been this jewel. There’s breath in it and life on that corner.”

After the abrupt closing late last year of the hotel’s French restaurant, the Goodwin’s ambitions to become the place to see and be seen have been rejuvenated by well-known chef



PATRICK RAYCRAFT



CLOE POISSON

The renovated Goodwin Hotel, at top, helps pull downtown into a cohesive whole. The former Capewell Horse Nail factory, above, renovated into fully leased Capewell Lofts, is changing perceptions of the Sheldon/Charter Oak neighborhood.

Tyler Anderson’s plans to create the Spanish-themed Porrón & Piña there, opening in mid-April.

### Capewell Lofts

For two decades, the decaying Capewell Horse Nail Co. factory was a hulking presence in the Sheldon/Charter Oak neighborhood, masking other redevelopment successes in the area.

Now, Capewell Lofts, a \$27 million conversion of the factory into 72 apartments, is being counted as a redevelopment highlight.

“That has totally changed the neighborhood and the perception of the neighborhood,” said Lynn

Ferrari, a resident since the early 1980s. “We feel like we are part of downtown, but now we look like we are.”

Ferrari, vice president of the Coalition to Strengthen the Sheldon/Charter Oak Neighborhood, said the success of Capewell — now fully leased — is better balancing the incomes in the neighborhood and creating ties to it.

Ferrari likes to tell the story of one Capewell resident who picks up trash on nearby streets in the morning.

“There are more and more people who live in the neighborhood that care about the neighborhood,” Ferrari said.



## CONNECTICUT BUCKET LIST

# 100 DISHES

*Sweet and savory, these guilty pleasures and culinary chefs-d'oeuvre top our list. Connecticut may be a small state, but it's a foodie's paradise.*

*These 100 items should lead true foodies to nirvana.*

By **FRANK COHEN**

### Greater Hartford

**Paella de la casa at Costa del Sol, Hartford** — Teeming with clams, mussels, shrimp, chicken and chorizo, this Galician-owned restaurant's paella de la casa sets the Connecticut standard.

**Fresh tomato summer pie at Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana, multiple locations** — Pepe's lovers can't wait for summer for this pizza made with fresh Mozzarella and fresh tomatoes marinated in olive oil, garlic and herbs that tastes like a vegetable garden exploded in one's mouth.

**Burnt ends at Bear's Smokehouse, multiple locations** — Although Bear's sauces are great, you may forget about them while eating his tender, fatty, flavorful burnt ends with their delicious bark.

**Mustard BBQ salmon at Restaurant Bricco, West Hartford** — The highly caramelized, mustard BBQ, cedar-planked organic salmon melts in your mouth.

**West Coast burger at b Restaurants, multiple locations** — While many burger joints lack imagination, Plan B's West Coast burger with a fried egg, avocado and kalamata olive mayonnaise is an inspired combination.

**Pike quenelles at A'Vert, West Hartford** — At this wonderful French brasserie, try its pike quenelles in a sumptuous, crayfish-based sauce Nantua.

**Konkan crab at INDIA, West Hartford** — Prasad Chirnomula's delicate Konkan crab, served in a

coconut-lemon sauce over beet patties, is inspired Indian cooking.

**Bar bites at Wood-n-Tap, multiple locations** — These perfect sliders are made with Black Angus ground beef, American cheese, pickle and honey mustard.

**Tableside Caesar at Carbone's Ristorante, Hartford** — Carbone's still makes the extra effort to connect with its customers by doing a delicious tableside Caesar.

**Tomatillo gazpacho at Artisan, multiple locations** — The tomatillo gazpacho at Artisan in West Hartford features a moat of green chilled soup surrounding an island of delicious Maine crabmeat topped with avocado sorbet.

**Offal at Belvedere, New Britain** — The offal at Belvedere is anything but awful, especially its perfectly perfumed beef tripe soup, rich blood sausage and beautifully seasoned chicken livers.

### What Great Dishes Are On Your Own CT Bucket List?

Take pictures as you give our choices — or your own — a try (and don't just yelp if we've missed your favorites). Then share your Bucket List picks on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook with the hashtag **#CTBucketList**. We'll publish the best pictures in our May issue.

**Top row:** Tomatillo gazpacho at Artisan; Burnt ends at Bear's Smokehouse; Paella de la casa at Costa del Sol; heirloom tomato pie at Dish. **Second row:** Casuela de mariscos at El Pulpo; "Dirt" wings at J. Timothy's Tavern; cheeseburger at Shady Glen; feijoada at West Side Tavern. **Third row:** Roasted cauliflower at Zohara; Clams DeMayo at Biagetti's; Lithuanian coffee cake at Claire's Corner Copia; Jack Daniels' wasabi wings at Dew Drop Inn. **Fourth row:** Falafel at Mamoun's; lobster roll at the Lobster Shack; trout at Kala; Bufalina pizza at Bufalina. **Fifth row:** Bar bites at Wood-n-Tap; risotto and scallops at Bin 300 World Bistro; doughnuts at Dottie's Diner, and Lobster Bomb at Ford's Lobster

**The Dogfather at Woody's, Hartford** — Who can resist this mutt of a dog that, with marinara sauce, roasted peppers and Mozzarella, fuses two culinary traditions, tastes delicious and makes you laugh—it's the dog you can't refuse.

**Orange ravioli at Peppercorn's Grill, Hartford** — These housemade ravioli filled with ricotta, spinach and orange rind in a sauce of fresh orange, butter, sage and Parmigiano-Reggiano are utterly lovely.

**Bacon flight at Cure, Unionville** — Housemade bacon is an art form at Cure, where flavors include honey applewood, pastrami, roasted garlic and black peppercorn, and Frank's red hot.

**Margherita pizza at Harry's Bishops Corner, West Hartford** — Arguably the best capital-area pizzeria that doesn't have Elm City origins, Harry's serves a classic margherita — a red pie with extra sauce, fresh Mozzarella, fresh basil, Asiago and EVOO.

**Heart attack burger at Republic, multiple locations** — This burger fashioned from domestic Kobe beef, foie gras, black truffles, a brioche bun and a truffle demi-glace dipping sauce is worth its stratospheric price tag.

**Spaghetti alla chitarra at Osa, Middletown** — Great sourcing, skill and imagination are revealed in the spaghetti alla chitarra with smoked tomato sauce, roasted eggplant, olive crumbs, Tapping Reeve cheese and marjoram.

**Filet of beef Wellington at Present Company, Tariffville** — It's hard to resist the retro pleasure of filet with truffled mushroom duxelles in puff pastry finished with a classic bordelaise sauce.

**Rotisserie chicken at The Rockin Chicken, Hartford** — The rotisserie chicken served at The Rockin Chicken is wonderful, especially with the three pastel-colored sauces in squeeze bottles.

**Tapioca custard at Millwright's, Simsbury** — The whimsical tapioca custard reveals all the flavors of clam chowder, but in counterintuitive form.

**Whole roasted cauliflower at Zohara Mediterranean Kitchen, West Hartford** — Order the whole roasted cauliflower with pine nuts, pomegranate, tahini and schug for its flavor, enjoyability and sheer audacity.

**Pork rillettes appetizer at The Cook & the Bear, West Hartford** — The crispy pork rillettes, served over fried green tomatoes and drenched in sauce choron and chopped scallion, represent the best of this restaurant's highbrow-lowbrow fusion.



STEPHEN DUNN

The Baja fish taco at bartaco in West Hartford, left, along with pork belly and chicken tacos.

**Squirrel fish at Shu, West Hartford** — This crunchy, deep-fried, mostly boneless fish preparation with pine nuts, pork, green beans, corn and carrots in a fruity housemade sauce offers brief respite from Shu's mostly hot and mouth-numbing flavors.

**Shaved Brussels sprouts salad at Harvest Wine Bar, multiple locations** — This salad of shaved Brussels sprouts mounted on a Parmesan risotto cake and dressed in a truffle vinaigrette has inspired a number of imitators.

**Smoked wings at Taino Smokehouse, Middletown** — Taino Smokehouse's marinated, smoked and deep-fried wings could easily make you forget that city south of Niagara Falls.

**Dirt wings at J. Timothy's Taverne, Plainville** — J. Timothy's is justifiably famous for originating "dirt wings," which are fried and sauced, then fried and sauced again, making them more caramelized and crispy but still juicy.

**Jamón Mangalica at Barcelona, multiple locations** — Chewy, fatty, teeth-tingling jamón Mangalica, an Ibérico ham thinly sliced from the leg of a wooly breed of Hungarian pig, is a true bucket list item.

**Crispy chicken biscuit sliders at Park & Oak, West Hartford** — Park & Oak has fun interpreting Southern cooking, with its crispy chicken biscuit sliders topped with pickles and pepper jam a perfect snack.

**Prime rib at Max Downtown, Hartford**—Max is now offering slow-roasted prime rib with pastrami-spiced, bone-in short rib, a hellaciously good combination.

**Sunday buffet at River's Edge Bistro, Unionville**—A bucket list activity, not item, Connecticut's best (and least known) Middle Eastern restaurant makes it possible to experience most of its astonishing menu in one fell (or full) swoop.

**Baja fish taco at bartaco, West Hartford**—Many of the taco combinations are winners, but especially the spicy, tempura-battered cod with chipotle slaw and cilantro.

**Wagyu Maximus at Max Burger, West Hartford**—The Wagyu Maximus features an eight-ounce American Wagyu patty with Twain cheese, mushroom, caramelized onion, lettuce, tomato and zesty mayo on an artisan roll.

**Feijoada at West Side Tavern, New Britain**—West Side Tavern's version of feijoada, the national dish of Brazil, a stew of black beans, smoked pork, smoked beef and sausage, is terrific.

**Pork in pipián sauce at El Nuevo Sarape, Hartford**—This Frog Hollow gem offers tender chunks of pork in a flavorful pipián sauce accompanied by rice, beans and salad.

**Brussels sprouts at Firebox, Hartford**—Firebox's Brussels sprouts are charred in a soy caramel sauce and finished with Marcona almonds and chili oil.

**White Sicilian Pizza at Jerry's Pizza, Middletown**—You have to call ahead because the special dough needs time to rise, but Jerry's White Sicilian pie with just spices, oil and anchovy is delicious and different.

**Cazuela de mariscos at El Pulpo, multiple locations**—The cazuela de mariscos is a seafood stew abundant with fish, scallops, calamari, mussels and potato in a rich seafood broth.

**Sfogliatelle at Mozzicato de Pasquale Bakery & Pastry Shop, multiple locations**—Mozzicato's sfogliatelle are crunchy, shell-shaped treats filled with mandarin orange-flavored ricotta filling.

**Guacamole at Agave Grill, Hartford**—Agave Grill's tableside preparation includes avocado, serrano chile, pico de gallo, cilantro, lime and optional corn-and-black-bean salsa or fresh mango.

**Pasta primavera at Primavera Pub, Hartford**—Pasta primavera usually means vegetables, but at this welcoming Portuguese eatery it denotes its signature dish, which is loaded with flavor and good fresh



LAUREN SCHNEIDERMAN

Konkan Crab is made with jumbo lump crab in a coconut lemon sauce at INDIA in West Hartford.

seafood.

**Cheeseburger at Shady Glen Dairy Stores, two Manchester locations**—The burger meat isn't special, but the hat-sized piece of fried American cheese is so popular that some people order it by itself.

**Nacho changuito at Chango Rosa, Hartford**—Tex-Mex and barbecue combine in the nacho changuito with chips, guacamole, jalapeños, Bear's bbq sauce, salsa verde, muchos quesos and optional choice of brisket, pulled chicken, pulled pork or burnt ends.

**Heirloom tomato pie at Dish, Hartford**—A Dish standard, the heirloom tomato pie is a slice of pastry crust filled with slow-roasted tomato, Mozzarella, basil pesto and Liuzzi ricotta.

**Pork egg rolls at Lan Chi's Vietnamese, Middletown**—Crispy egg rolls stuffed with ground pork, onion and carrot are delightful in house dipping sauce with fresh chopped peanut.

**Sweet potato scallion cakes at 21 Oak, Manchester**—Flavors found in this customer favorite include sweet potato, scallion, ginger, lemon, avocado, cashew crema, brown rice and sautéed vegetables.

**Sweet Piggy sriracha-and-maple-glazed bacon at 75 Center, Southington**—A sweet-and-spicy soy glaze coats thick bacon strips, served hanging like laundry.

**Dipper sundae at A.C. Petersen Farms, multiple**

**Locations**—The formula is simple: your favorite ice cream flavor, your choice of gourmet topping, fresh hand-whipped heavy cream and a cherry.

**Pork gyro platter at Ambrosia Mediterranean Cuisine, Cromwell**—Pork chops broiled slowly on the donner apparatus are served with tzatziki sauce, two pita breads, French fries and Greek salad.

**Double Trouble burger at Artisanal Burger Company, Manchester**—Twin 5-ounce beef patties with American cheese, bacon, lettuce and tomato are squeezed between two grilled cheese sandwiches.

**Ravioli at Arugula Bistro, West Hartford**—The ravioli may vary at Arugula, but they're always worth seeking out.

**Yuki tuna, salmon and yellowtail salad at Asahi Japanese, Rocky Hill**—This terrific sushi salad is actually included in Asahi's all-you-can-eat sushi deal.

**Vegan BBQ boneless ribs at Black Bamboo, West Hartford**—Here's a vegan alternative that will please most carnivores, too.

**Fonduta at Bin 228 Panini & Wine Bar, Hartford**—The fonduta, simple perfection for the lactose-tolerant, is melted Fontina and truffle essence.

**Louisiana gumbo at Black Eyed Sally's, Hartford**—This authentic gumbo will stick to your ribs and have you singing "Polk Salad Annie."

## Greater New Haven

**Cheeseburger at Louis' Lunch, New Haven**—Louis' iconic burger is ground fresh daily from a proprietary five-meat blend, cooked to personal temperature on the original cast-iron grills and served sans condiments on toast. For a medium-rare burger with cheese, tomato and onion on toast, order "one cheese works."

**Plain Italian tomato pie at Sally's Apizza, New Haven**—Because no one's red sauce is better than Sally's, go with this simple classic; hold the Mozz, but fresh garlic and grated Parmesan are appropriate additions.

**Duck cassoulet at Le Petit Café, Branford**—This exceptionally meat-focused cassoulet with roasted duck breast, Armagnac duck sausage, applewood smoked bacon and flageolet beans will knock your socks off.

**Two-way rabbit at Olea, New Haven**—Experience two rabbit preparations in one: a confit leg and bacon-wrapped loin in a Rioja red wine sauce.

**Bufalina pizza at Bufalina, Guilford**—Score a seat



STEPHEN DUNN

The Filet Cognac is topped with lobster and Gorgonzola cream sauce at Goodfellas Restaurant in New Haven.

at Bufalina's popular counter and order the bufalina pie with buffalo Mozzarella, San Marzano tomatoes and basil.

**Crystal roll at Wasabi, Orange**—At this "poor man's Nobu," enjoy a crystal roll with tuna, salmon, yellowtail and avocado on the inside, white tuna and different varieties of tobiko on the outside.

**White shrimp pizza at Roseland Apizza, Derby**—Perhaps a physicist can explain how a New Haven-style, thin-crust pizza can hold up to roughly a dozen enormous shrimp without collapsing.

**Cupcakes at Erica OBrien Cake Design, Hamden**—These are simply Connecticut's best cupcakes, frosted with an ideal ratio of buttery buttercream frosting to cake.

**The lobster roll at Lobster Shack, Branford**—Our favorite warm, buttery, lemony, Connecticut-style lobster roll is the Lobster Shack's, available as a quarter-pound or, better yet, the "Whaler" with a half-pound of picked lobster meat.

**Wings at Dew Drop Inn, Derby**—This now-gentrified biker bar serves wings that are fresh, crisp and juicy, and come in dozens of imaginative flavors like maple butter bacon and mango pineapple habanero.

**Clams DeMayo at Biagetti's, West Haven**—When Biagetti's isn't slammed, customers in the know request the clams DeMayo, cherrystone clams in their shells stuffed with scallop and shrimp doused in garlic, seasoned breadcrumbs and white clam sauce.

**Guava and cheese Danish at Bread & Chocolate, Hamden** — Of its many great treats, Bread & Chocolate's best is its croissant pastry topped with the famous Latin combination of guayaba y queso.

**Filet Cognac at Goodfellas Restaurant, New Haven** — Chef-owner Gennaro "Gerry" Iannaccone's signature, a steal on Ladies' Night, is his grilled CAB tenderloin topped with portobello mushroom and picked lobster meat and finished with a Gorgonzola cream sauce.

**Mashed potato and bacon pizza at BAR, New Haven** — The mashed potato and bacon pizza is one of those unlikely sounding combinations that works perfectly.

**Three-man boat at Sono Bana, Hamden** — The three-man sushi boat overflowing with sushi and sashimi is a miracle of design in its beauty and balance.

**Fresh clam white pizza at Zuppardi's, West Haven** — At Zuppardi's, which originated in New Haven in 1932, shucked-to-order littleneck clams are baked on fresh dough with a mix of garlic and spices and served with lemon wedges.

**Grilled cheese at Caseus Fromagerie & Bistro, New Haven** — For its grilled cheese, Caseus stuffs thickly sliced, Lupi's Bakery rye with a half-pound of "our best melting cheeses."

**Chocolate éclair at DiSorbo's Bakery, Hamden** — Outside of the delicate coffee éclairs of France, the best you'll find anywhere is DiSorbo's richly chocolate frosted, pastry-cream-filled chocolate éclair.

**Trout at Kala Bistro, North Haven** — This casual sibling of Spanish temple of gastronomy, Olea, scores big with its skin-on trout fillet in a Dijon mustard sauce with lyonnaise potato and shallots.

**Sky Highs at Katz's Deli, Woodbridge** — Katz's Sky High sandwiches are served on rye with coleslaw and Russian dressing and come in pairings like corned beef and tip tongue or pastrami and chopped liver.

**Tortelli di zucca at L'Orcio, New Haven** — Perhaps New Haven's most authentic Italian establishment, the handmade butternut squash mousse-filled ravioli in a butter sage sauce with Pecorino Romano are wonderful.

**Gnocchi with lamb at La Tavola Ristorante, Waterbury** — In chef-owner Niccola Mancini's skilled hands, housemade ricotta gnocchi aren't so much the base as just another ingredient tossed with braised lamb shank, portobello mushroom, roasted



FRANK COHEN

The cheeseburger at Louis' Lunch in New Haven is served with tomato and onion on toast.

tomato and baby spinach.

**Falafel sandwich at Mamoun's, New Haven** — Mamoun's has been serving open pita sandwiches, brimming with crunchy falafel ball, salad ingredients and tahini dressing, since Gerald Ford was president.

**Coquilles Saint-Jacques at Union League Café, New Haven** — A truffle sauce puts Union League's coquilles Saint-Jacques with black trumpet mushrooms and celeriac purée over the top.

**Hummel dogs at Glenwood Drive-In, Hamden** — There's no better place to order a great grilled Hummel dog, which you can then prepare exactly as you like it at the fixings station.

**Chowder-style Icelandic cod at Shell & Bones, New Haven** — Chef Arturo Franco-Camacho is especially gifted with seafood and soups, and his Icelandic cod merges the two as the moist, flaky fish is served in an incredible clam broth with potato, bacon, corn, leek and light cream.

**The PLT at Meat & Co., New Haven** — Just as adjacent 116 Crown broke new ground with its craft cocktails, sibling Meat & Co. has broken new ground with gourmet sandwiches like its PLT with porchetta, arugula, tomato confit and paprika aioli.

**Risottos at Bin 300 World Bistro, Wolcott** — Bin 300 is justifiably famous for risottos like its rock shrimp and sweet pea; wild mushroom, prosciutto di Parma and white truffle oil; and Parmesan and sweet butter risotto.

**Lithuanian coffee cake at Claire's Corner Copia, New Haven**—Of a great assortment of indulgent cakes, the Lithuanian coffee cake (with buttercream frosting added) is undoubtedly the most popular.

**“My mother’s chips” at Viron Rondo Osteria, Cheshire** — These thin crosscuts of eggplant and zucchini flash-fried and served with tzatziki sauce are highly addictive.

**Rodizio at ID Brazil, West Haven**— Some are cheaper and some are fancier, but no churrascaria delivers better flavor on its grilled meats sliced tableside, which include top sirloin, brisket, lamb, chicken hearts and numerous other delights.

**Hot-headed cowgirl roll at Miya's Sushi, New Haven** — At this sushi joint decades ahead of its time, the hot-headed cowgirl roll is a coconut-covered creation with vegan cashew cream cheese, papaya, wild burdock, pickled radish and hot peppers.

**Apple strudel at The Watch Factory, Cheshire**— Pretty much a one-man operation, chef-owner Markus Patsch's apple strudel is exemplary, with beautifully layered apple filling perfect pastry.

**Hot oil pizza at Colony Grill, multiple locations** — This Fairfield County-based pizza group sells unique thin-crust pizzas, of which the best representative is the hot oil pizza garnished with a few little “stingers.”

## And Farther Afield

**Torchio pasta course at BALLO, Mohegan Sun** — Although it doesn't show on the menu, you can always order an appetizer serving of housemade pasta torchio cooked in a wheel of aged Italian grana and finished with fresh shaved black truffle.

**Poached lobster and avocado salad at Arethusa al tavolo, Bantam** — Arethusa's lovely lobster and avocado salad with pinwheels of pink grapefruit is not only delightful but a perfect magazine cover item.

**Fried oysters at Café Routier, Westbrook** — Café Routier's fried oysters set the standard with their perfect breading, juicy interior and chipotle rémoulade.

**Pepe La Pew burger at Jack Rabbits, Old Saybrook** — Jack Rabbits brilliantly tops a CAB patty with grilled apple, applewood smoked bacon and Brie cheese.

**Grilled bacon appetizer at Joseph's Steakhouse, Bridgeport** — You might struggle with your steak after ordering the extra-thick grilled bacon appetizer, which pairs tremendously well with the Peter



MICHAEL MCANDREWS

The hot oil and stinger pizza at Colony Grill.

Luger-style steak sauce.

**Lobster roll at Lobster Landing, Clinton** — Poached in butter with a hint of lemon, one of Connecticut's best lobster rolls can be found at this quaint, friendly harborside eatery.

**Kampachi crudo at Winvian, Morris** — Chef Chris Eddy's kampachi crudo with peach, watermelon, verbena and yuzu vinaigrette is simple understated elegance.

**Lobster bomb at Ford's Lobster, Noank** — Ford's takes a bread bowl, toasts it lightly and fills it with half a pound of buttery lobster meat, over which most customers opt for an additional ladle of lobster bisque.

**Tableside châteaubriand at VUE 24, Foxwoods** — Perfect for couples, VUE 24's retro tableside châteaubriand, with chef's accompaniments and a trio of sauces, is well worth the drive and expense.

**Doughnuts at Dottie's Diner, Woodbury** — Folks say you have to go early if you want to be assured of getting some of Connecticut's best doughnuts, and they're at their best when they're still warm anyway.

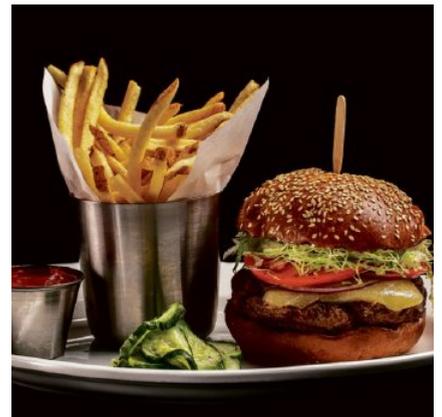
**Tagliatelle at Oyster Club, Mystic** — The handmade tagliatelle, with a ragù of prime beef, pork, tomato, vegetables, cream, parsley and Parmigiano-Reggiano, will spoil you for most pastas.

**Mango sorbet at Peaches N Cream Ice Cream, Litchfield** — This sorbet tastes so real one expects it to have the life-sustaining properties of the tropical fruit itself.



# MAX

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## A TASTE FOR EVERY TASTE





LAUREN SCHNEIDERMAN

Charcuterie with crostini, pickled onion, prosciutto, pepperoni, truffle salami and apple slices at Division West Bistro & Bar in West Hartford.

## REVIEW

★★★

# DIVISION WEST BISTRO & BAR

By **SPENCER CALDWELL**

I was so tantalized by Division West Bistro & Bar during my grand opening visit in early September that I champed at the bit for enough time to pass so I could review it. The atmosphere was compelling, a sleek modern design with the front space benefiting from windows that opened to the street, the bar area designed to corral an effervescent crowd, and the rear seating enjoying windowed views of the kitchen. The staff was jazzed. The food and drink we tried —

Idaho rainbow trout with fingerling potatoes, oven-roasted tomatoes, Kalamata olives and capers in a crab butter sauce.



**36 LaSalle Road, West Hartford • 860-955-9034 • [divisionwestbistro.com](http://divisionwestbistro.com)**

imaginative cocktails, small plates (pork belly, ground beef sliders, roasted cauliflower and prosciutto flatbread) and mini-desserts — seemed promising.

But savvy restaurateurs know what matters isn't a restaurant's capability so much as its consistency. Midway through my first review visit on a Monday night in late December, I was so concerned by the kitchen's performance that I wanted to give it a chance to "right ship" and thus allowed our sassy server Sam, bantering like the bartender she normally was, to glimpse my reporter pad and even inquired whether the head chef was on the premises. Executive chef Jimi

Brahimi, a Max Restaurant Group veteran who is co-owner with general manager and Peppercorn's Grill veteran Ermal Caushi, was working in his office, unaware his seemingly lone chef was in the weeds.

What had gone wrong to that point? Despite the restaurant being nearly empty, our meal featured interminable gaps between courses, as if we were caught in a darkened tunnel whose exit grew ever more distant. Temperature control (and I don't mean the doneness of proteins) was a huge problem. In one course, grilled octopus (\$12) with chorizo, cannellini beans and a splash of lime yogurt arrived sufficiently hot, but

braised short rib tortellini (\$10), delicately fashioned by the chef's mother, sat so long their short rib jus was congealing. Three chintzy slices of sesame-seeded seared rare tuna (\$9) with wakame, soy-ginger dip and wasabi had all the charm of something that came straight from the fridge — as they clearly did.

Even apart from temperature, some starters seemed vastly better than others. New England clam chowder (\$7) and cauliflower chowder (\$6) were thick, creamy, coarse, heavy, '70s-style renderings. America has moved on. After recently enjoying a number of great, locally sourced, versions, Division West's baby kale salad (\$10), with Gala apple



Grilled octopus over cannellini beans, chorizo and mache, paired with a lime yogurt sauce.

wands, kohlrabi (not ready for prime time), goat milk Cheddar and a creamy Meyer lemon vinaigrette, was a stark reminder that kale used to be, and still can be, an ingredient to be overcome. Unwatched kitchens take shortcuts, and our grilled flatbread (\$9), so different from opening day, featured a crust clearly cooked beforehand, to which garlic cream, ricotta, prosciutto (that you couldn't bite through), arugula and aged balsamic were added later, instead of just the last two ingredients, preventing flavors from melding.

After the chef was alerted, our dining experience improved dramatically. Served over fingerling potato, roasted tomato and kalamata olive, splayed left-and-right fillets of Idaho rainbow trout (\$24) were topped with a great crab butter sauce and crispy capers. A special of 28-day-aged, bone-in New York strip (\$36) showcased beef that was nicely fibrous, simply seasoned and perfectly cooked, accompanied by wonderful mac & cheese and wilted spinach.

Our made-in-house desserts — a luscious Valrhona Caramélia mousse (\$8) with an espresso brownie base finished with toffee bits and passion fruit sauce, and a terrific warm apple-and-pear crostata (\$7) with candied walnuts (overkill), vanilla gelato and bourbon caramel sauce — also impressed. So my working theory was that as long as the chef was sufficiently involved and the kitchen adequately staffed, the food was apt to be great.

Later, I was forced to modify that theory. On my second visit, when the restaurant was quite busy and there was a noticeable team at work in the kitchen, we still found the food inconsistent (although at least nothing was sent out cold). A generous slab of pork belly (\$8) served over parsnip purée and ringed with herb oil was right on point, as were beautifully fashioned butternut squash ravioli (\$8) in a sage brown butter sauce with toasted almonds. A beet salad (\$10) with roasted beet, greens, fresh ricotta and basil in a beet vinaigrette was a worthy effort,

and roasted cauliflower (\$8) topped with slender cucumber crescents, a lemon aioli and fresh mint soared. Steamed mussels (\$9) with white wine, roasted garlic, tomato and chorizo were tasty, as were the prosciutto, pepperoni, truffle salami, pickled onion and crostini of a small charcuterie board (\$12).

But when I gave the soups another chance, I found cream of broccoli (\$6) slightly better than its predecessors but still awfully coarse. And fried calamari (\$8) with cherry peppers and a roasted pepper aioli was a complete misfire, the tentacles adequately cooked but many of the rings hard and crunchy.

A roasted half chicken (\$22) with goat cheese-mashed potatoes, sautéed mushrooms and pan jus was

exceptional. But then I made a rookie error, ordering the kitchen's last whole red snapper (\$27) instead of the fish I liked less that was replacing it. One pays for such mistakes. The skin didn't crisp, the eyes were sunken, the flavor a tad off — the fish showed signs of having languished in the freezer too long.

Desserts featured a nicely perfumed carrot cake (\$7) with toasted coconut and cinnamon crème anglaise, plus a delightful lemon and raspberry bombe (\$7) with a raspberry blondie base.

Within a block of Division West are three Max restaurants, three Doro restaurants, two Grant restaurants and countless others. If this restaurant hopes to thrive, it must up its game.



Butternut squash ravioli in a sage brown butter sauce with toasted almonds, above; dulce de leche cheesecake with a graham cracker crust topped with whipped cream and caramel brittle.

LAUREN SCHNEIDERMAN



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Filet of flounder is marinated with hoisin sauce, ginger, onion, tomato, mushroom and bean threads at Vietnam Restaurant in West Hartford.

LAUREN SCHNEIDERMAN

## SIDEDISH

# VIETNAM RESTAURANT

By **SPENCER CALDWELL**

**I**ronically, during the late 1980s and the 1990s, when I was mourning the disappearance from the Connecticut restaurant landscape of midrange Vietnamese eateries like Truc Orient Express in Hartford, Chez Bach in Branford, The Orchid in Old Saybrook and Indochine in Greenwich, the 1988 opening of

Vietnam Restaurant in Elmwood somehow escaped my attention. Well, it's never too late, I guess.

To my knowledge, Connecticut has never had any restaurants that served the kind of high-end, Neo-Vietnamese food that once made Ana Mandara in San Francisco, owned by Don Johnson and Cheech Marin, my favorite Vietnamese restaurant in America (with the arguable exception of the recently closed

Good Elephant in Chester). Most of Connecticut's Vietnamese restaurants have adopted the low-end pho and/or banh mi model. That makes the rare Vietnamese restaurant that hasn't a real treat.

Squeezed between Goldberg's Deli and Radigan's Barber Shop, Vietnam Restaurant is BYOB, making it convenient that Harvest Wine & Spirits opened across from it a few years ago. I

1131-B New Britain Ave., West Hartford ♦ 860-236-7893 ♦ [vietnamrestaurantct.com](http://vietnamrestaurantct.com)

don't recommend crossing on foot in high traffic, though. Beer is my foil of choice with Vietnamese food.

Owned by Xuan Phan, Vietnam Restaurant offers 14 soups, with phos in the distinct minority. My American-born first date and I enjoy an eggy asparagus spear and crab thread soup (\$2.95) that was an '80s and '90s staple. My Vietnamese-born second date, owner of Pho Madison, pounces on the wonton with yellow noodle soup (\$8.50), her personal favorite.

Vietnam Restaurant's menu terminology can be a little confusing. Fresh Vietnamese ravioli (\$4.95) are what most people would call summer rolls, with shrimp, sliced pork and other goodies peering through their translucent rice-flour wrappers. Wonderfully crunchy and delicate Vietnamese egg rolls (\$4.50) are what most folk would call spring rolls. The dipping sauce for the former is a housemade hoisin-peanut sauce, for the latter a housemade sweet-and-sour fish sauce.

Nuoc mam is a term sometimes used for unadulterated fish sauce, sometimes for the multi-ingredient dip based in fish sauce. This dip also accompanies perfectly cooked, triangular, deep-fried shrimp rolls (\$4.95) additionally stuffed with cellophane noodles and vegetables. But most fun among the starters might be the fried wontons (\$4.95), crisp folded triangles filled with pork, which my Vietnamese friend teaches me to dab with peanut sauce and wrap in Thai basil, mint and lettuce.

Disappointments are few and far between. Anyone as fond as I of the turmeric-tinged, rice flour pancakes called banh xeo, typically filled with ingredients like chicken (\$11.25), pork (\$11.25) or shrimp (\$12.95) plus bean sprouts and other vegetables, will find Vietnam Restaurant's brittle and flavorless, their fillings insufficient compensation. My date explains that, being from more southerly Vietnam, she adds coconut milk to hers, but this restaurant probably uses water. The other disappointment is the desserts — often not a strong suit at Asian restaurants. Chocolate (\$2.50) and



Above, shrimp rolls, below, an appetizer of fresh Vietnamese ravioli served at Vietnam Restaurant in West Hartford.

LAUREN SCHNEIDERMAN

coconut cakes (\$2.50) turn out to be commercial rectangular cuts, when most Asian countries produce variations on the latter: Rambutan and pineapple (\$2.95) on ice turns out to be canned, when both fruits are frequently available fresh in Asian markets.

But there are so many positives to Vietnam Restaurant. Minor quibbles do little to derail the pleasures of shaken tofu (\$12.95, we wonder if it's frozen tofu) in soy-vinegar sauce over watercress, and crispy noodles with mixed seafood (\$12.25, I've never loved the carved squid). Roasted duck (half \$15.95, whole \$27.95) is done what I'd call Chinese-style — perfumed with five-spice powder, hacked and served with a slightly sweet soy-vinegar sauce. Crispy fried whole sea bass (MP \$19.95) is also terrific, the skin crunchy outside,

soft inside, and scented with nuoc mam (in the broader sense).

There's a wonderful four-style beef dinner for two (\$39.95) that I think would make a charming date, with two generous orders of beef ball soup (normally \$8.50 x 2), two orders of superbly marinated garlic beef (normally \$4.95 x 2), shaken beef (normally \$14.95) over watercress and soy-vinegar sauce, and vinegar beef fondue (normally \$15.95). Do the math. Again with the disclaimer that I'm not much for cooking my own food at restaurants, the last involves dunking one's own prepped meats and vegetables in liquid over a flame, dunking clear rice flour wrappers in hot water and assembling one's own delightful wraps to order. It's so much fun I take the wrappers and other leftovers and make my wife a special treat when I get home.

# Restaurant Guide

## AVON

### Amici Italian Grill

**Italian** • Classic Italian food served in an upscale dining atmosphere. Homemade sauces and creative pasta dishes. Lunch and dinner daily. 401 West Main St., 860-677-7089, amiciitaliangrill.com. \$\$

### da Capo

**Italian** • da Capo offers Old World family-style dining. Its authentic, New York-style, thin-crust pizza is made from a recipe found in Little Italy in the early 1900s. Lunch and dinner daily. 5 East Main St., 860-677-5599, dacaporestaurant.com/avon. \$\$, ★★★½

### First & Last Tavern of Avon

**Italian, Pizza** • Opened in 1936 just inside the Hartford town line, First & Last Tavern initially gained a following for its pasta sauce, but later cemented its reputation by adding award-winning, coal-fired, brick-oven pizza. Visit the Avon location for Italian specialties and a great happy hour. 26 West Main St., 860-676-2000, firstandlasttavern.com. \$\$

### The Lime Bar & Grill

**American** • Family-owned bar and grill. The kitchen is open every night until last call. Lunch W-Su, dinner daily, happy hour M-F. 136 Simsbury Road, 860-674-1700, www.limebarct.com. \$\$

### The Local Grill

**New American** • The Local Grill combines a kick-back-and-relax neighborhood vibe with an ambitious gastropub menu worthy of any top-shelf eatery. Happy hour specials M-F in the bar. 152 Simsbury Road, 860-404-5810, www.thelocalgrillavon.com. \$\$

### Max-A-Mia

**Italian** • Romantic lighting, a charming patio and a colorful menu with Tuscan flair. Try the Max-a-penne, the wood-fired half-chicken or the full chophouse selection of meats. Lunch M-Sa, dinner daily, brunch Su. 70 East Main St., 860-677-6299, maxrestaurantgroup.com. \$\$\$, ★★★

### Moe's Southwest Grill

**Casual** • Moe's mission is to bring the

highest quality ingredients to every guest, every day, everywhere. See website for additional locations. 385 W. Main St., 860-269-6106, www.moes.com. \$

### The North House

**American** • Exceptional American cuisine inspired by, and sourced with, the ingredients of New England. Open 7 days a week for lunch, brunch, dinner and happy hour. Formerly the Avon Old Farms Inn. 1 Nod Rd., 860-404-5951, www.thenorthhouse.com. \$\$\$, ★★★½

### Seasons Restaurant at Avon Old Farms Hotel

**Continental/American** • From fresh seasonal menus, a sumptuous country breakfast, an impeccable business luncheon, an incredible gourmet dinner and our lavish Sunday Brunch. 279 Avon Mountain Rd., 860-269-0240, www.avonoldfarmshotel.com. \$\$\$, ★★★

### Toshi Izakaya

**Japanese/Sushi** • Bright and open, Toshi serves traditional Japanese kitchen and seasonal izakaya dishes as well as sushi. Try the Toshi roll filled with tuna, salmon, eel and avocado. Lunch and dinner daily. 136 Simsbury Road, 860-677-8242. \$\$

## BANTAM

### Arethusa al tavolo

**Progressive American** • Under talented chef Dan Magill, Arethusa al tavolo has been a destination restaurant and showcase for Arethusa Dairy Farm products since its June 2013 opening, earning universal plaudits for its progressive American cuisine. 828 Bantam Road, 860-567-0043, arethusaaltavolo.com. \$\$\$\$ ,★★★★

## BERLIN

### Sliders Grill & Bar

**American** • Combines a casual dining experience with an energetic atmosphere. The menu includes a variety of fresh foods, including award-winning wings. Lunch and dinner daily, kitchen open until midnight. 197 Episcopal Road, 860-829-9292, slidersgrillbar.com. \$

## BLOOMFIELD

### Carbone's Kitchen

**Italian** • Chef Vinnie Carbone's casual Italian eatery, Carbone's Kitchen offers excellent and innovative cuisine. Open 7 days a week. 6 Wintonbury Mall Road, 860-904-2111, www.carboneskitchen.com. \$\$\$, ★★★

### Ginza Japanese Cuisine

**Japanese** • Great meals, a sushi bar, live hibachi shows, three tatami rooms and a full takeout menu. Lunch and dinner M-Sa, dinner Su. 14 Wintonbury Mall, 860-242-8289, ginzajapanese.com. \$\$\$

### Republic Gastropub

**Gastropub** • A vibrant urban gastropub specializing in craft beers, boutique wines, small batch bourbons, and single malt scotches. The ever-changing menu features small plates, unique burgers and traditional favorites. 39 Jerome Ave., 860-216-5852, RepublicCT.com. \$\$\$, ★★★

### Tapas Mediterranean Grille and Bar

**Mediterranean** • Hip and bohemian, Tapas serves authentic Greek and Mediterranean food as well as Spanish-style tapas. The blackboard items change. Try the four tapas shrimp, artichoke hearts, zucchini and crab baked over ricotta. Lunch and dinner daily. 854 Cottage Grove Road, 860-882-0756, tapasonline.com. \$

### Thai Palace

**Traditional Thai** • A sophisticated eatery bringing traditional Thai-style food with Manhattan flair. Vegetables are this restaurant's trademark, with a large variety of excellent combinations. The pineapple shrimp is a particular favorite. Lunch and dinner daily. 18 Wintonbury Mall, 860-242-6363, thaipalacecuisine.com. \$

## BRISTOL

### The Willows Restaurant at the DoubleTree Hotel

**New American** • With its modern design and stylish aesthetic, this contemporary restaurant serves creative new American

#### Cost of average dinner entrée:

\$ less than \$12  
 \$\$ \$13-18  
 \$\$\$ \$19-24  
 \$\$\$\$ over \$25

#### Previously reviewed restaurants have a star rating:

poor ★  
 fair ★★  
 good ★★★  
 very good ★★★★  
 outstanding ★★★★★

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cuisine focused on farm-fresh ingredients. An extensive selection of boutique wines from around the globe. 42 Century Dr., 860-584-7663. doubletreebristol.com/dining.aspx. \$\$\$, ★★☆☆½

## CANTON

### **Buon Appetito**

**Italian** • Despite its storefront location and Vietnamese chef-owner, Buon Appetito is known for its excellent Italian food. The eggplant rollatini demonstrates culinary sophistication, while the four varieties of risotto illustrate that a willingness to be nontraditional pays off. Dinner Tu-Su. 50 Albany Tpke. (Route 44), 860-693-2211. \$\$\$

### **Dish n Dat**

**American** • A family-friendly modern diner with good comfort food, plenty of choices and something to make everyone happy at any time of day or night. Anytime breakfast options, burger bar and kids' menu. Lunch and dinner daily, breakfast Sa-Su. 110 Albany Tpke. (Route 44); 860-693-4927, dishbarandgrill.com/dathome. \$\$

### **Feng Asian Bistro and Hibachi**

**Asian Fusion** • Feng Asian Bistro offers a unique cross between family-oriented and fine dining. A touch of elegance and sophistication with generous portions. Feng offers sushi as well as hibachi. Lunch M-Sa, dinner daily, brunch Su. 110 Albany Tpke. (Route 44), 860-693-3364, ginzacorp.com/fengcanton. \$\$\$, ★★☆☆

### **The Green Papaya**

**Thai/Laotian** • The culinary essences of Thailand and Laos are expertly presented in this cozy restaurant. The menu offers home-cooked dishes with meat, chicken, pork and seafood, or vegetarian with traditional vegetables and sauces. Lunch Tu-Sa, dinner Tu-Su. 160 Albany Tpke. (Route 44), 860-693-9322, thegreenpapayarestaurant.com \$\$\$

### **La Trattoria**

**Italian/American** • La Trattoria is known for its hospitality, attentive staff and dedication. With a cozy and romantic dining room, the restaurant features live jazz every Friday. Lunch M-F, dinner daily. 21 Old Albany Tpke. (Route 44), 860-673-5000, latrattoriact.com. \$\$\$, ★★☆☆

### **Saybrook Fishhouse**

**American/Seafood/Steak** • Four dining areas with their own cozy fireplaces make this a comfortable restaurant. Try the shrimp scampi, crab cakes or baked stuffed shrimp. There are also plenty of items to satisfy even the pickiest land-dwellers. Lunch and dinner daily. 460 Albany Tpke. (Route 44), 860-693-0034, saybrookfishhousecantan.com. \$\$\$

## CHESHIRE

### **Bella'Gio Ristorante**

**Italian** • Family-owned restaurant serving modern Southern Italian cuisine and cocktails crafted by a mixologist. Enjoy housemade dishes on the patio with nightly live entertainment or try out the new bar area. Lunch and dinner, 7 days a week. 835 W. Main St., 203-439-9175, bellagioc.com. \$\$\$

### **Viron Rondo Osteria**

**Italian** • Simple, local, fresh, expertly prepared food in an inviting and lively atmosphere. Everything from wood-fired pizza to fish stew to aged steaks and plenty else. Lunch and dinner, 7 days a week. 1721 Highland Ave., 203-439-2727, vironrondoosteria.com. \$\$\$, ★★☆☆½

## COLLINSVILLE

### **Lisa's Crown & Hammer Restaurant & Pub**

**American/Gastropub** • Located in historic Collinsville in an old train depot, this quintessentially quaint New England Tavern



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# CARIBBEAN RESTAURANT

By **FRANK COHEN**

**A**s our hermanos y hermanas in Puerto Rico rebuild in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria's devastation, I recall how beautiful that island paradise is, how friendly its people and how vibrant its cuisine. No Puerto Rican joint I have found in Connecticut captures the breadth of that cuisine, but Caribbean Restaurant in Meriden, opened by German Rosario and his wife Rosa Valle in early 2000, makes a good starting point. Valle came to the U.S. mainland from Aguada on Puerto Rico's west coast in 1998 and met Rosario, who owned Palmas Restaurant in Meriden. In 2012, they moved the restaurant and changed its name.

Caribbean Restaurant has a takeout area with prepared foods in the front and a larger dining area with menu service primarily for cooked-to-order meals that we elect in the rear. Everything is made from scratch, Valle tells me afterward, except the blood sausage (imported from western Puerto Rico) and the Jamaican patties ("imported" from Restaurant Depot). We enjoy flavorful fried empanadas, one filled with ground beef (\$1.75), the other with lobster (\$3.25). We also relish alcapurrias (\$1.75), torpedo-shaped fritters filled with ground beef, the lighter hued made from yuca, the darker from green banana. We even order three fresh salads: shrimp (8 oz., \$8.25), bacalao (8 oz., \$3.25) and chicken gizzards (8 oz., \$3.25).

For our main dishes, I savor sautéed steak and onion (\$12.25) with house salad and tostones dipped in mayo-ketchup, while my companion digs into "trifongo"



FRANK COHEN

Caribbean Restaurant in Meriden serves sautéed steak and onion with tostones and sliced tomatoes.

— mofongo made not just with mashed green plantain but also with sweet plantain and yuca, for an extra dollar — with garlic shrimp and chicken broth (\$13.25). The trifongo is actually served in the mortar-like pilón it's made in, a pestle impression left in it dramatically. We finish with a wonderful creamy coconut custard (\$2).

But as we leave, we're already plotting our return. We observe a working crew with overflowing combo plates of stewed chicken, rice and beans (\$8.25) — and feel a twinge of jealousy. We also want to try whole red snapper (\$16.25), fried pork chops (\$10.75) and the meat-filled green plantain sandwich (\$10.25 with fries) known as jibarito, its origin contested between Chicago, Puerto Rico and Venezuela. Periodically, Caribbean Restaurant also offers oxtail, goat and rabbit, a reminder of the great bounty typical of this beleaguered island.

**235 Pratt St., Meriden • 203-440-6002**

offers a traditional pub menu focused on fresh local ingredients prepared using homemade recipes. Lunch and dinner daily, bar open late every night, live music on weekends. 3 Depot St., 860-693-9199, crownandhammer.com. \$\$

## EAST HARTFORD

### **Roma Restaurant**

**Italian** • Home of Capi di Roma Marinara Sauces, since 1982 this family-owned restaurant has been serving fresh, high-quality Italian foods. Specialties include chicken Parm, eggplant Parm, hand-tossed brick-oven pizzas, daily soups and breads. 358 Burnside Ave., 860-282-0298, capadiroma.com. \$\$

## EAST WINDSOR

### **Roberto's Real American Tavern**

**Multicultural** • Casual dining redefined in a warm and welcoming atmosphere in a historic 1784 homestead, with an extensive and fun multicultural menu. Blackboard specials, cocktail menu, 18 craft beers on tap. Event rooms. Lunch and dinner daily, brunch Sa-Su.. 31 S. Main St. (Rt. 5), 860-370-9888, robertosct.com. \$\$

## FARMINGTON

### **4 Eat & Drink**

**Tapas** • Bar and tapas restaurant offers premium wines, bottled beers, rotating

craft beers on draft, and signature cocktails in a fun and cozy atmosphere. Every dish made from scratch using best possible ingredients, including local when in season. Happy hour M-F. 838 Farmington Ave., 860-255-7674, 4restaurantsct.com. \$\$

### **Cugino's of Farmington**

**Italian** • Fine Italian cuisine focusing on pasta, veal, chicken and fresh seafood entrées in a casual family atmosphere. Lunch and dinner daily. 1053 Farmington Ave., 860-678-9366, cuginosrestaurantfarmington.com. \$\$\$, ★★★★★

### **Cure Restaurant & Bar**

**New American** • Grassroots restaurant serving New American cuisine in a modern

rustic atmosphere. Local farm sustainable menu combined with a special mixology program. Reservations recommended. Open 7 days a week, happy hour, Sa-Su brunch. 55 Mill St., Unionville, 860-321-7821, curerestaurantct.com. \$\$\$, ★★½

### **Lotus Grill Vietnamese Restaurant**

**Vietnamese** • Unforgettable Vietnamese dishes, including rice vermicelli and pho. Lunch and dinner daily. 979 Farmington Ave., 860-676-2255, lotusgrill.com. \$\$

### **Piccolo Arancio**

**Rustic Northern Italian** • Dim lighting and white linens add romance to this charming restaurant, which offers a bar and a banquet room for private parties and functions. Ravioli all'arancia, stuffed with spinach and ricotta and served with an orange-sage sauce, is a customer favorite. Lunch M-F, dinner M-Sa. 819 Farmington Ave., 860-674-1224, piccoloarancio.com. \$\$\$

### **Wood-n-Tap**

**American** • Casual American fare including burgers, steaks, salads, sandwiches, pizza and pasta. Patio and café room overlook Kettle Lake. Gluten-free menu available.

Lunch, dinner and late-night daily, brunch Su. 1274 Farmington Ave., 860-773-6736, woodntap.com. \$\$

## GLASTONBURY

### **2 Hopewell**

**American** • Sophisticated yet casual, and all about the food. This neighborhood bistro offers a whole new way to dine, converting natural ingredients into eclectic dishes you won't find elsewhere. Dinner Tu-Su. 2 Hopewell Road, 860-633-9600, 2hopewell.com. \$\$\$

### **Bricco Trattoria**

**Italian** • Sophisticated Italian fare and friendly polished service in an environment with the comfort of an Italian farmhouse or vineyard home has made Bricco Trattoria an area favorite. Dinner daily. 124 Hebron Ave., 860-659-0220, billygrant.com/bricco-trattoria. \$\$\$, ★★½

### **Char Koon**

**Asian Fusion** • Char Koon offers a fun menu of pan-Asian delights in a cozy environment. Try the signature dish, the Char Koon special noodles, or the tom yam soup. Lunch and dinner daily. 882 Main St.,

860-657-3656, charkoon.com. \$\$

### **J. Gilbert's**

**American** • With a warm comforting atmosphere, this restaurant prides itself on its award-winning service and fine dining. The steaks are Mesquite wood-fired for extra taste and the Georges Bank Scallops and the Maryland-style crab cakes come highly recommended. Happy hour and dinner daily. 185 Glastonbury Blvd., 860-659-0409, jgilberts.com. \$\$\$, ★★½

### **Max Amore**

**Italian** • A romantic destination, where the house specialties are the Max-a-penne and the pan-seared sea scallops. With a bar and private room for parties and functions, Max Amore has an upbeat vibe you'll find hard to resist. Lunch M-Sa, dinner daily, brunch Sa-Su. 140 Glastonbury Blvd., 860-659-2819, maxrestaurantgroup.com. \$\$, ★★★

### **Max Fish**

**Seafood** • Max Fish is an eco-friendly gem serving a selection of seafood items, free-range chicken, beef entrées and vegetarian meals. Try the signature raw bar towers. Lunch M-Sa, dinner daily. 110



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maxrestaurantgroup.com. \$\$\$

### Plan B Burger Bar

**American** • Burgers, beer, beef and bourbon. An extensive list of bottled beers, sorted from lightest to darkest, and a dozen or more American Craft beers on tap. Over 50 boutique bourbons. Award-winning burgers are all-natural, certified-humane and fresh-ground. Lunch and dinner daily. 120 Hebron Ave., 860-430-9737, planbburger.com. \$\$

### Rooftop 120

**Progressive American** • Hip and stylish yet comfortable and inviting, Rooftop 120 showcases chef Marc DiGalbo's imaginative seasonal cuisine and the inventive cocktails of master mixologist Tyler Devecchis. Open Tuesday-Saturday at 4:30 PM, happy hour everyday, private parties. 120 Hebron Ave., 860-430-9989, rooftop120.com. \$\$\$, ★★★★★

### Sakura Garden

**Japanese** • This Japanese steakhouse offers traditional Japanese cuisine with a twist, adding touches of French cooking. Sushi, sashimi, noodle entrées, hibachi dinners, and especially, our crowd-pleasing Chilean sea bass and beef negimaki. Lunch M-Sa, dinner daily. 120 Hebron Ave., 860-430-5600, sakuragardencuisine.com. \$\$\$

### Siam Glastonbury

**Thai** • Siam Glastonbury offers authentic Thai food plus a full bar. A family-friendly restaurant, where every meal is specially prepared for each diner. 45 Welles St. (with another location in Hartford), 860-659-8511, siamglastonbury.com. \$\$

### Tisumi Sushi

**Japanese, Sushi** • Tisumi Sushi provides a relaxing atmosphere to enjoy a great variety of high quality sushi, all made fresh daily. Tisumi also serves hot, flavorful kitchen dishes, like Japanese noodle soups, tempura, teriyaki and hibachi. Lunch M-F, dinner daily. 2850 Main St., 860-430-2826, tisumisushi.com. \$\$

## GRANBY

### @ The Barn

**Steakhouse/Seafood/Raw Bar** • An American steakhouse & wine bar offering fresh seafood, a raw bar and small plates. Full-service bar, upstairs lounge, multiple dining areas, three-season patio. 10 craft beers on tap, discerning wine list, amazing cocktails. Open Tu-Sa for lunch & dinner, Su for brunch & dinner. 17R E. Granby Road, 860-413-3888, atthebarngranby.com. \$\$\$, ★★★★★

## HARTFORD

### Agave Grill

**Modern Southwest/Mexican** • Festive Latin American-themed hangout with handmade Mexican decorations. Guacamole made at your table. Lunch M-Sa, dinner daily, brunch Sa and Su. 100 Allyn St., 860-882-1557, agave.com. \$\$

### Bear's Smokehouse

**Barbecue** • Topnotch Kansas City barbecue from pitmaster, rising culinary star and competitive eater Jamie "The Bear" McDonald. Lunch and dinner daily. 25 Front St., 860-785-8772, bearsbbq.com. \$\$

### bin 228

**Italian** • Wine bins line the walls of this casual, funky restaurant with a cozy urban vibe. It has a bar, and even outdoor dining. Beef carpaccio, the imported cheese plate and the coppa panino are recommended. Lunch M-F, dinner M-Sa. 228 Pearl St., 860-244-9463, bin228winebar.com. \$\$, ★★★★★

### Black-Eyed Sally's BBQ and Blues

**BBQ/Cajun/Creole** • Live blues Wednesday through Saturday nights add further atmosphere to this restaurant known for its incredible Cajun and Creole flavors. Relaxed and casual, the crowd here enjoys the jambalaya and racks of ribs. Lunch M-F, dinner M-Sa. 350 Asylum St., 860-278-7427, blackeyedsallys.com. \$\$

### The Capital Grille

**Steakhouse** • Renowned for hand-cut, dry-aged steaks, fresh seafood and an award-winning wine list. Complimentary valet service available after 5 p.m. Lunch M-F, dinner daily. 44 Front St., 860-244-0075, thecapitalgrille.com. \$\$\$, ★★★★★

### Carbone's Restaurant

**Italian** • Venerable Carbone's is elegant and cozy, with specialties such as its vitello cuscinetto. The third-generation ownership and staff is friendly and accommodating. On-site private parties and functions. Lunch M-F, dinner M-Sa. 588 Franklin Ave., 860-296-9646, carbonesc.com. \$\$\$

### City Steam Brewery

**American** • Weekends are hopping (pun intended) at City Steam. Between live music in the dining room and laughs downstairs at the comedy club, there's plenty of fun and food for people of all ages. Lunch and dinner daily. 942 Main St., 860-525-1600, citysteam.biz. \$\$

### Costa Del Sol Restaurant

**Spanish/Mediterranean** • Long-time ownership by beloved Galician restaurateur

Pepe Feijoo guarantees the authenticity of this Spanish standout renowned for its seafood and paellas. Elegant ambiance, with tapas bar, sun rooms, patio, private function room and even a small market. Lunch Tu-F, dinner Tu-Su. 901 Wethersfield Ave., 860-296-1714, costadelsolrestaurant.net. \$\$\$, ★★★★★

### Dish Bar & Grill

**Modern American** • Great upscale comfort food and urban industrial chic in the former Sage-Allen department store. Large bar in lounge includes a raw bar, main dining room a dessert bar. Signature dishes include salmon Wellington and chips over fish. Lunch M-F, dinner and late dining daily. Valet parking W-Sa evenings. 900 Main St., 860-249-3474, dishbarandgrill.com. \$\$\$

### Feng Asian Bistro

**Pan Asian** • Sushi bar, cocktail lounge and 150-seat dining room. Featured dishes include miso-glazed Chilean sea bass and Shanghai braised short rib. The sushi bar menu runs from traditional staples to bold new combinations. Lunch M-F, dinner daily. 93 Asylum St., 860-549-3364, fengrestaurant.com. \$\$\$, ★★★★★

### Firebox

**Farm to Table** • The Firebox philosophy — the best food travels the shortest distance from farm to table — combined with classic techniques and innovative thinking makes for a highly enjoyable dining experience. Lunch Tu-F, dinner Tu-Su, brunch Su. 539 Broad St., 860-246-1222, fireboxrestaurant.com. \$\$\$, ★★★★★

### Max Downtown

**Continental** • Impeccable service, award-winning food and an elegant atmosphere. Newly redesigned. Continental menu, from raw bar to Tuscan salad to swordfish to chophouse classics. Max's also offers takeout, delivery and nightly valet parking. Lunch M-F, dinner daily. 185 Asylum St., 860-522-2530, maxrestaurantgroup.com. \$\$\$

### ON20

**American/French** • Sophisticated atmosphere with stunning river and city views. The menu features incredible seasonal cuisine prepared by highly creative chefs. Special events by request. Lunch M-F; bar W-Sa; Dinner W-Sa. 1 State St., 860-722-5161, www.ontwenty.com. \$\$\$, ★★★★★

### Peppercorn's Grill

**Italian** • At this upscale Italian restaurant, the menu includes traditional favorites like osso buco and spinach-ricotta ravioli, and there are tempting daily specials. Save room for Valrhona cake served with hazelnut gelato. Lunch M-F, dinner M-Sa.



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357 Main St., 860-547-1714,  
peppercornsgill.com. \$\$\$

### Republic at the Linden

**Gastropub** • From the Mill Restaurant Group, a vibrant city gastropub specializing in craft beers, boutique wines, small batch Bourbons and single malt Scotches. The ever-changing menu features small plates, unique burgers and traditional favorites presented with artistic flair. Happy hour Su-F, lunch M-F, dinner daily. 10 Capitol Ave., 860-310-3269, republicct.com. \$\$\$, ★★★★★

### Salute

**Italian** • Upscale Italian food served in a contemporary setting with an energetic ambiance. Dinner daily, lunch M-Sa. 100 Trumbull St., 860-899-1350, salutehartford.com. \$\$\$, ★★★★★

### Ted's Montana Grill

**American** • Ted's made-from-scratch menu is known for its premium hand-cut steaks and gourmet burgers. The menu also offers crab cakes, cedar plank salmon, daily soups, seasonal vegetables, and house-made desserts. Lunch and dinner daily, happy hour M-F. 35 Front St., 860-692-1167, tedsmontanagrill.com. \$\$\$

### Tisane Euro/Asian Café

**American** • Unwind outside on the patio or in the comfortable interior with one of 40 unique martea-nis. Pair it with one of the imaginative salads, wraps, grilled flatbreads, noodle bowls or plates. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. 537 Farmington Ave., 860-523-5417, mytisane.com. \$\$

### Trumbull Kitchen

**Continental** • An Asian-infused menu plus fabulous happy hour selections like mini cheese calzones and veggie pizzas. Trendy urban atmosphere, with leather walls, a chic and colorful bar, and a smaller loft dining room enclosed by French doors. Lunch M-F, dinner daily. 150 Trumbull St., 860-493-7417, maxrestaurantgroup.com. \$\$\$

### USS Chowder Pot IV

**Seafood** • Classic prime rib, Maine lobsters and other seafood is the formula at this capacious seafood restaurant serving the area for two decades. Lunch and dinner daily (dinner menu only all Su). 165 Brainard Road, 860-244-3311, chowderpothartford.com. \$\$\$

### Vaughan's Public House

**Irish** • Smoked salmon, tender corned beef and Glenkerry potatoes. Homemade Irish cream, signature Irish coffees, the finest single malts and dozens of memorable ways to fill a pint glass. The pub's authentic

hand-crafted furniture and décor were hand-carried across the pond. Lunch and dinner daily. 59 Pratt St., 860-882-1560, irishpublichouse.com. \$\$

### VIVO Seasonal Trattoria

**Tuscan** • Contemporary Mediterranean flavors derive from the finest market-fresh seasonal ingredients. Many dishes are prepared in the restaurant's wood-fired ovens. Try the beef carpaccio with lemon parmigiano aioli. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. 200 Columbus Blvd., 860-760-2333, vivohartford.com. \$\$\$, ★★★★★½

### Wood-n-Tap

**American** • The original Wood-n-Tap serves casual American fare, including burgers, steaks, salads, pasta, pizza and sandwiches. Two beautiful back rooms for private functions make this a favorite for parties. Gluten-free menu available. Lunch, dinner and late-night daily, brunch Su. 99 Sisson Ave., 860-232-8277, woodntap.com. \$\$

## MANCHESTER

### Adam's Mill Restaurant

**Continental/American** • Located in a restored, 130-year-old paper mill, this restaurant's elegant charm lends itself to weddings, showers and banquets. Burgers, signature salads, wraps, baked stuffed shrimp and daily prime rib. Vegetarian and gluten-free menus. Lunch and dinner daily, jazz brunch buffet Su. 165 Adams St., 860-646-4039, theadamsmill.com. \$\$\$

### Artisanal Burger Company

**Gourmet Burgers/Creative American** • By the owners of Treva and A'Vert, handcrafted burger patties, great craft beer selection and 13 large flatscreen TVs in the bar. Burgers, beer, bourbon, sports. Lunch and dinner daily. 1436 Pleasant Valley Rd., 860-644-0046, artisanalburgercompany.com. \$\$

### Cavey's

**Italian/French** • Cavey's offers elegant décor, top-notch service and extraordinary food. The upstairs features hearty Northern Italian cuisine, complete with homemade pastas, cheeses and desserts, while the downstairs is thoroughly French, offering modern twists on classics. The wine cellar is stocked with 15,000+ bottles. 45 E. Center St., 860-643-2751, caveysrestaurant.com. \$\$\$, ★★★★★

### Maggie McFly's Restaurant

**American/Pub** • Maggie McFly's mission is to provide guests with an all-around incredible dining experience, with a variety of food and beverage options made fresh

from local ingredients. Menu items available for customers with gluten sensitivity and other dietary restrictions. Lunch and dinner daily. 194 Buckland Hills Road, 860-432-8255, maggiemcflys.com. \$\$

### Market Grille

**American Grill & Bar** • A vibrant American grill offering everything from signature burgers and house-made pastas to fresh seafood and hand-selected steaks. A large selection of American-made spirits, craft beers and domestic wines. The patio overlooks the Hartford skyline. 110 Buckland Hills Dr., 860-644-1011, MarketGrillCT.com. \$\$\$, ★★★★★½

## MIDDLEFIELD

### Fire at the Ridge

**American** • Handcrafted dishes by Season 6 "Hell's Kitchen" runner-up Kevin Cottle accompany breathtaking views of the slopes at Powder Ridge. In addition, the Ridgeside Tavern serves casual New England favorites with locally brewed beers and craft cocktails. 99 Powder Hill Rd., 860-852-5444, fireattheridge.com. \$\$\$, ★★★★★½

## MIDDLETOWN

### Amici Italian Grill

**Italian** • Classic Italian restaurant with an upscale dining atmosphere. Homemade sauces and creative pasta dishes abound. Lunch and dinner daily. 280 Main St., 860-346-0075, amiciitaliangrill.com. \$\$

### El Pulpo & Tapas Bar

**Spanish/Mediterranean** • The cuisine of Spain, with other Mediterranean as well as Latin American influences, served in an elegant setting, plus a great porch. Dinner Tu-Su, lunch Tu-F, Su. 46 Melilli Plaza, 860-788-7525, elpulpotapasbar.com. \$\$\$

### Esca Restaurant & Wine Bar

**Italian** • Unpretentious exterior conceals a fine dining ambiance and first-rate Italian food and wines. Half-priced wine bottles on Mondays. Outdoor seating. Lunch M-Sa, dinner daily, happy hour M-F. 437 Main St., 860-316-2552, escact.com. \$\$\$, ★★★★★

### First & Last Tavern of Middletown

**Italian/Pizza** • First & Last Tavern initially gained a following for its pasta sauce, but later cemented its reputation by adding award-winning, coal-fired, brick-oven pizza. 220 Main St., 860-347-2220, firstandlasttavern.com. \$\$

### Forbidden City Bistro

**Contemporary Upscale Chinese** • The

menu offers authentic Chinese cooking from across all of the country's regions. Ethnic fish dishes are a house specialty. A simple, yet elegant, décor keeps the ambiance contemporary and inviting. Lunch and dinner daily. 335 Main St., 860-343-8288, forbiddencitybistro.com. \$\$\$

**Luce**

**Italian •** Traditional Tuscan cuisine with modern American flair in a sophisticated atmosphere. Award-winning dishes employ only the finest ingredients. Luce has one of the most extensive wine lists available. Enjoy outside garden dining in the summer. Catering also available. 98 Washington St., 860-344-0222, www.lucect.com. \$\$\$

**Tuscany Grill**

**Italian Fusion •** Serving fine Italian fare since 1995, the emphasis here is on creative specials, a large selection of pastas, distinctive entrées, desserts and fine wine selection. Lunch and dinner daily. 120 College St., 860-346-7096, tuscany-grill.com. \$\$\$

**NEW BRITAIN**

**East Side Restaurant**

**German •** With some of the best

sauerbraten and wiener schnitzel around, East Side serves authentic German food in a rollicking traditional atmosphere. Friendly staff, hearty portions, beer garden. Lunch Tu-Sa, dinner Tu-Su. 131 Dwight St., 860-223-1188, eastsiderestaurant.com. \$\$\$

**NEWINGTON**

**Rooster Company**

**New American •** Rotisserie chicken forms the backbone of an affordable, fun, highly creative eatery. Dinner daily, lunch M-Sa, Su brunch. 1076 Main St., 860-757-3969, roostercompany.net. \$\$\$, ★★☆☆

**Ruth's Chris Steak House**

**Steakhouse •** Expect to be pampered at this upscale steakhouse. In addition to its famous steaks, the menu offers chicken, seafood and vegetarian entrées plus an array of New Orleans-inspired appetizers. Dinner daily. 2513 Berlin Tpke., 860-666-2202, ruthschris.com. \$\$\$\$, ★★☆☆

**ROCKY HILL**

**Chuck's Steak House**

**Steakhouse •** Family-owned and -operated

for 40+ years, the Rocky Hill location offers mouthwatering steaks and seafood and a phenomenal salad bar. Recent renovations include new hardwood floors, updated bar and an expanded outdoor dining area with a firepit. 2199 Silas Deane Hwy., 860-529-0222, chucksrockyhill.com. \$\$\$

**The Common House Kitchen & Bar**

**New England •** You'll always find a delicious meal at The Common House Kitchen & Bar at Sheraton Hartford South Hotel. The innovative chef creates the ultimate dining experience with farm-to-table concepts and a diverse menu sure to appeal to all palates. 100 Capital Blvd., 860-257-6000, commonhousehartford.com. \$\$\$, ★★☆☆

**Dakota of Rocky Hill**

**Steakhouse •** Sizzling hand-cut steaks, ocean-fresh seafood, hearty homemade Swedish bread and an award-winning Sunday brunch. 1489 Silas Deane Hwy., 860-257-7752, dakotarockyhill.com. \$\$\$

**SIMSBURY**

**Abigail's Grille & Wine Bar**

**Continental •** A crackling fire, leather chairs, creaky staircases and a fabulous



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wine bar define this historic New England tavern. Its fine-dining menu includes raw bar, pasta, steak, chops and rotisserie meats. An upstairs tavern offers more casual dining and big-screen TVs. Lunch M-F, dinner M-Sa, brunch Su. 4 Hartford Road, 860-264-1580, abigailgrill.com. \$\$\$

### Evergreens at the Simsbury Inn

**American** • Elegant preparations of beef, seafood, poultry and pasta. Award-winning Sunday brunch. At dinner, the oven-roasted duck breast over wild mushrooms and sweet onions and a sun-dried-tomato-and-barley risotto is a favorite. Lunch Tu-F, dinner Tu-Sa. 397 Hopmeadow St., 860-651-5700, simsburyinn.com. \$\$\$

### Metro Bis

**American** • Located in the Simsbury 1820 House, this bustling bistro by chef Christopher Prospero and “Wife of the Chef” author Courtney Febroriello features sophisticated flavors, with delicious soups, salads, seafood, steak and poultry in unexpected combinations. Lunch and dinner M-Sa. 731 Hopmeadow St., 860-651-1908, metrobis.com. \$\$\$, ★★★½

### Millwright’s Restaurant & Tavern

**New England** • Tyler Anderson, a semifinalist for James Beard Foundation Northeast Chef, uses premium ingredients to create “New England cuisine with a twist.” The stunning food is matched by precise and efficient service and served in a bucolic setting in the historic grist mill on Hop Brook. 77 West St., 860-651-5500, millwrightsrestaurant.com. \$\$\$\$ ,★★★★

### Plan B Burger Bar

**American** • Burgers, beer, beef and bourbon. An extensive list of bottled beers, sorted from lightest to darkest, and a dozen or more American Craft beers on tap. Over 50 boutique bourbons. Award-winning burgers are all-natural, certified-humane and fresh-ground. Lunch and dinner daily. 4 Railroad St., 860-658-4477, planbburger.com. \$\$

### Present Company

**New American** • Simsbury native and James Beard Foundation nominee Jeffrey Lizotte teams with veteran restaurant manager Tom Gale to offer some of Connecticut’s most innovative dining. Dinner Tu-Sa. 2 Tunxis Road, Tariffville, 860-658-7890, presentcompanyct.com.

\$\$\$\$, ★★★★★

## SOUTHINGTON

### Cava

**Italian** • Experience elegant Italian dining in a romantic Old World setting. Try signature scallops with prosciutto, English peas and sage in a sherry sauce with cavatelli or a daily special. Sample from a list of 100+ fine wines. Friendly and knowledgeable servers. Lunch and dinner daily. 1615 West St., 860-628-2282, cavact.com. \$\$\$, ★★★½

## SOUTH WINDSOR

### Bear’s Smokehouse

**Barbecue** • Topnotch Kansas City barbecue from pitmaster, rising culinary star and competitive eater Jamie “The Bear” McDonald. Lunch and dinner daily. 454 Ellington Road, 860-785-8772, bearsbbq.com. \$\$

### Burton’s Grill

**American** • Upscale casual dining with American cuisine and atmosphere. Try the marinated Mediterranean salad, the Burton’s cordon bleu or the lobster & rock

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shrimp pasta. Lunch and dinner daily. 100 Evergreen Way, Suite 100, 860-432-4575, burtonsg grill.com. \$\$\$

**The Mill on the River**

**Continental** • This romantic restaurant is perched atop a working mill and waterfall, making it popular for special occasions. Try the pecan salmon or the redfish nouvelle. Lunch M-F, dinner daily, brunch Su. 989 Ellington Road, 860-289-7929, themillontheriver.com. \$\$\$

**WEST HARTFORD**

**Arugula**

**Mediterranean** • The open-to-view kitchen allows diners to watch their meals be prepared. Constantly changing eclectic menu, includes Mediterranean bistro fare like wild mushroom & rosemary lasagna and filet mignon of tuna. Delicious house-made soups and desserts. Lunch Tu-Sa, dinner Tu-Su. 953 Farmington Ave., 860-561-4888, arugula-bistro.com. \$\$\$

**A'Vert Brasserie**

**French** • From the ownership of nearby Treva, wonderful French fare by talented chef Scott Damboise served in a festive environment. Lunch and dinner daily. 35A

LaSalle Road, 860-904-6240, avertbrasserie.com. \$\$\$, ★★★★★

**Barcelona**

**Spanish/Mediterranean** • This restaurant and wine bar includes a stylish lounge and spacious patio. Its kitchen prepares tapas like herbed goat cheese with wild mushrooms or garlic shrimp, along with entrées like paella or parillada. Lunch M-Sa, dinner daily. 971 Farmington Ave., 860-218-2100, barcelonawinebar.com. \$\$\$, ★★★½

**Black Bamboo**

**Chinese** • Authentic menu, fresh ingredients and friendly service delivered by Sonny Chen's staff. Lunch and dinner daily. 844 Farmington Ave., 860-236-8888, myblackbamboo.com.

**Blue Plate Kitchen**

**American** • Offering upscale modern comfort food with a focus on fresh, local and sustainable ingredients. Full bar, craft cocktails, draught wine, great beer selection. Breakfast and dinner daily, lunch M-F, brunch Sa-Su. 333-3 N. Main St., 860-906-1419, bpkwesthartford.com. \$\$

**Fleming's Prime Steakhouse**

**& Wine Bar**

**Steakhouse** • Fleming's offers romantic lighting levels, luxurious seating, creative steakhouse fare and an award-winning wine list. Dinner daily. 44 S. Main St., 860-676-9463, flemingssteakhouse.com. \$\$\$\$, ★★★★★

**Grants**

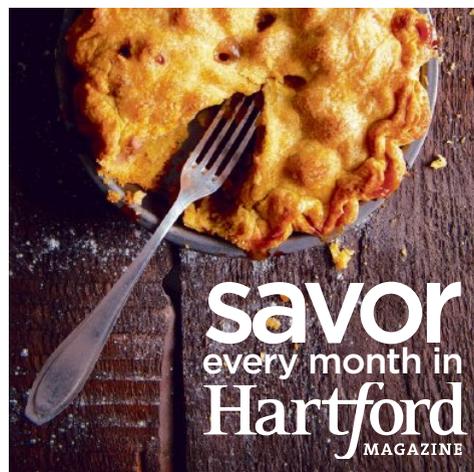
**American/Mediterranean** • This elegant but casual European bistro with a relaxing and convivial bar area provides gourmet Mediterranean-style dining. Takeout service for those on the go. Catering for private parties. Lunch and dinner daily, brunch Su. 977 Farmington Ave., 860-236-1930, billygrant.com. \$\$\$, ★★★★★½

**Harry's Bishops Corner**

**Italian** • This famous thin-crust pizza is guaranteed to satisfy real pizza aficionados. With more than 20 topping choices on the menu, patrons can be creative. Harry's also offers specialty pies such as shrimp florentine and excellent salad options. Lunch and dinner Tu-Su. 732 N. Main St., 860-236-0400, harrysbc.com. \$\$



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**Harry's Pizza**

**Italian** • Beloved by residents, this upscale pizza restaurant has a warm atmosphere, great food and a friendly, knowledgeable staff. The original Harry's Pizza is a great place to take the family for wonderful food in a comfortable setting. Breakfast Sa-Su, lunch Th-Su, dinner daily. 39 S. Main St., 860-231-7166, harrispizza.net. \$\$

**INDIA**

**Indian** • Master chef Prasad Chirnomula brings his flair with modern Indian fare and locally sourced ingredients to this handsome new space in Blue Back Square. Lunch and dinner daily. 54 Memorial Road, 860-726-4103. indiawesthartford.com. \$\$\$, ★★★★★

**Max Burger**

**American** • This Max family eatery takes casual food seriously. Providing comfort food with Max flair, it offers every type of burger imaginable, including turkey, tuna, lobster and Kobe beef. Popular dishes from other Max locations round out the menu. Lunch and dinner daily. 124 LaSalle Road, 860-232-3300, maxrestaurantgroup.com. \$\$, ★★★★★

**Max's Oyster Bar**

**Seafood** • Muted colors and an understated atmosphere place the emphasis squarely on the food. A full menu of seafood favorites, including paella and lobster, is buttressed by a well-stocked raw bar. Pasta, chicken and steak. Lunch M-Sa, dinner daily, brunch Su. 964 Farmington Ave., 860-236-6299, maxrestaurantgroup.com. \$\$\$, ★★★★★½

**McLadden's Irish Publick House**

**Irish** • This cozy, traditional pub and restaurant promises true Irish warmth and hospitality for those seeking a comfortable, laid-back atmosphere. Enjoy authentic Irish beers, delicious comfort food, and a great time with friends. Lunch and dinner daily, brunch Sa-Su. 37 LaSalle Road, 860-231-8773, mcladdens.com. \$\$

**Murasaki Japanese Restaurant & Foods**

**Japanese** • The place to go for authentic Japanese cuisine. Take advantage of outdoor seating as you indulge in sushi or sashimi or salmon teriyaki. Lunch Tu-Sa, dinner Tu-Su. 23 LaSalle Road, 860-236-7622, murasakijapaneserestaurant.com. \$\$\$

**Park & Oak**

**American** • Focuses on classic American comfort food, incorporating regional favorites while using responsibly sourced local ingredients. Committed to providing the highest quality food, beverage, service

and atmosphere for a reasonable price. Dinner daily, lunch M-Sa. 14 Oakwood Ave., 860-310-2099, parkandoakrestaurant.com. \$\$

**Plan B Burger Bar**

**American** • Burgers, beer, beef and bourbon. An extensive list of bottled beers, sorted from lightest to darkest, and a dozen or more American Craft beers on tap. Over 50 boutique bourbons. The award-winning burgers are all-natural, certified-humane and fresh-ground. Lunch and dinner daily. 138 Park Road, 860-231-1199, planbburger.com. \$\$

**Pond House**

**American** • Comfortably nestled in the midst of beautiful Elizabeth Park, the Pond House offers a fine dining menu, cocktail menu and wine list. The menu is also available for takeout and catering. Private party space is available. Lunch and dinner Tu-Sa, brunch Sa-Su. 1555 Asylum Ave., 860-231-8823, pondhousecafe.com. \$\$\$

**Prospect Cafe**

**Eclectic/American** • A renovated West Hartford landmark that is trendy and casual, with a fresh, locally-sourced menu — no freezer or microwave. 24 beers on tap, crafted cocktails. Live music. Seasonal patio. Lunch and dinner daily, happy hour, brunch Sa-Su. 345 Prospect Ave., 860-519-1048, prospectcafehw.com. \$\$

**Restaurant Bricco**

**Italian** • Energetic and festive, Bricco's dining room and bar are always bustling. The rustic space is contemporary yet casual, and the menu offers unforgettable dishes like oven-baked rigatoni and cedar-planked salmon. Outdoor seating is also available. Lunch M-Sa, dinner M-Su. 78 LaSalle Road, 860-233-0220, restaurantbricco.com. \$\$\$, ★★★★★

**Savoy Pizzeria & Craft Bar**

**Italian/Pizza** • This Max Group restaurant in everything but name offers Neopolitan pizza, salads, sandwiches and share plates. Lunch and dinner daily. 32 LaSalle Road, 860-969-1000, maxrestaurantgroup.com. \$\$\$

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**Afghan** • Those unfamiliar with Afghan food are in for a culinary adventure. Vividly colored Afghan rugs and tapestries adorn the dining room. Each dish is cooked with a unique marriage of spices. Gentle yogurt sauces create a mild and spicy karma. Lunch M-Sa, dinner daily. 36 LaSalle Road, 860-231-8400, afghancuisine.net. \$\$\$

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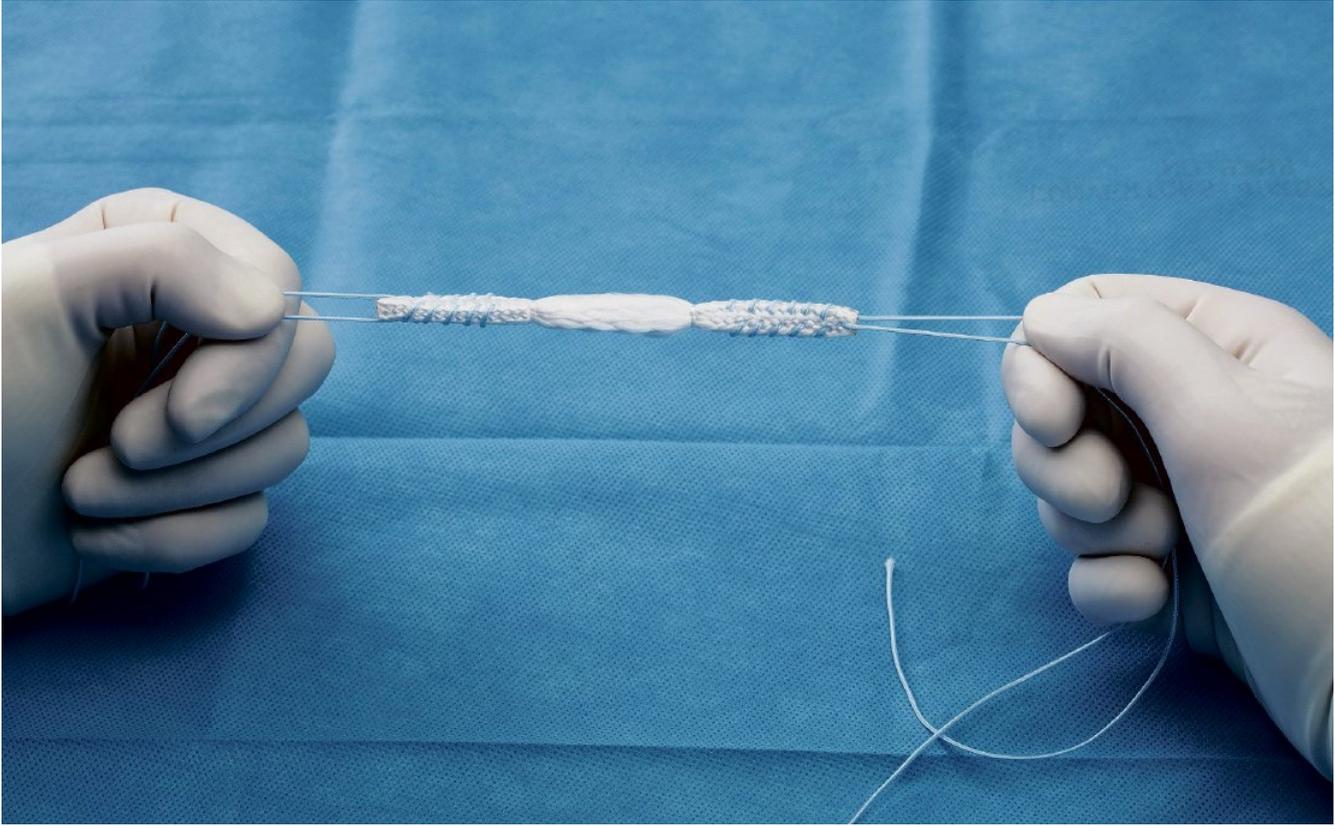


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PROVIDED BY BIOREZ

This synthetic ligament, developed by BioRez in New Haven, acts as a prosthetic for torn and ruptured ACLs and then remodels itself as new tissue. The device is going through clinical trials.

## INNOVATION IN CONNECTICUT

# 10 Great Biotech Advances

From Retinal Implants and Spinal Cord Repairs To Genomic Sequencing And Cutting-Edge Vaccines

By **REBECCA LURYE** and **STEPHEN SINGER**

### BioRez

ACL prosthetic replaces itself with new tissue

It's a familiar sight for even the most casual sports fans.

A player is cutting across the field when he or she plants a foot wrong and crumples to the ground, hands flying to an injured knee.

The aftermath of a torn or ruptured ACL is just as familiar to medical professionals, who have come a long way since first operating on the weak and finicky ligament in the 1970s.

Now, the latest innovation is coming out of New Haven.

Tissue regeneration company BioRez has developed a synthetic graft that regenerates the ACL and fully remodels itself into new tissue.

The engineered ligament can heal and remodel similar to tissue grafts from the patient or a cadaver, but cuts down on the time spent in the operating room. It also spares

patients the initial and potentially lasting pain of taking a graft from their own hamstring or the tendon that connects the kneecap to the shin.



**ROCCO**

“The problem for a patient is that causes quite a bit of pain,” said BioRez CEO Kevin Rocco, adding that some people experience nerve damage, loss of function and other issues at their second surgical site. “You don’t have a lot of spare body parts so it’s pretty resourceful on the part of surgeons, but if there was a method that you didn’t have to sacrifice patient tissue, surgeons would want to do that.”

BioRez, originally called Soft Tissue Regeneration Inc., is part of the growing field exploring how to regrow bone, ligament and cartilage tissue inside the body.

Its synthetic ligament uses a porous structure, or scaffold, made of a biodegradable material to reconstruct the ACL during surgery. Cells from within the patient’s knee and bone marrow then use the scaffold to reform a bridge of tissue connecting the femur and tibia.

Over time, the fibers of the scaffold breaks down, leaving only the patient’s new tissue behind to create a new ACL.

Clinical trials that began in 2013 inspired some changes to the technology, contributing to a new patent the company filed last March, Rocco said. A second-generation prosthetic will begin clinical trials in early 2019.

“We want to take the time and really try to get it right,” Rocco said. “We want irrefutable evidence that demonstrates our product is the compelling choice for the future of ACL reconstruction.”

## LambdaVision

Retinal prosthetic may restore vision in age-related blindness

A cloudy, purple substance being grown in a Farmington lab may be the key to the first hardware-free retinal prosthetic for people blinded by macular degeneration.

Unlike designs on the market today, LambdaVision’s retinal implants don’t use special glasses or electrodes that send electrical pulses into the eye. They’re thin, flexible membranes, like a contact lens for the back of the eye, made from a naturally-occurring protein.

The substance, called bacteriorhodopsin, can convert light into energy. It does this so efficiently, and with such perfect timing, that some scientists argue it’s alive, though LambdaVision co-founder Bob Birge, a University of Connecticut chemist, is not among



PETER MORENUS

LambdaVision CEO Nicole Wagner pipettes in the lab at the UConn Cell and Genome Sciences Building in Farmington.



LAUREN SCHNEIDERMAN

Susan Mockus, associate director of Clinical Genomic Market Development, center, is surrounded by her Clinical Knowledgebase team — from left, clinical analyst Cara Statz, senior software engineer Dan Durkin, clinical analyst Sara Patterson, and clinical scientific curator Taofei Yin at The Jackson Laboratory in Farmington. The Clinical Knowledgebase is a tool that helps clinicians, researchers and patients identify the most pertinent information related to a tumor.

them.

Bacteriorhodopsin is a protein that forms naturally on a rugged, saltwater microbe called *Halobacterium salinarum*, a single-cell organism that has lived on Earth for 3.5 billion years.

When light passes through the eye and hits the prosthetic, the proteins should start firing and trigger the eye's still-healthy nerve cells to communicate with the brain.

"It is an amazing protein," said Birge. "It does essentially everything we need."

Birge's operation is now under the leadership of two former students, President and CEO Nicole Wagner and Director of Operations Jordan Greco.

Each of LambdaVision's prosthetics starts with a scaffold made from polyester fibers. They are dipped into the purple protein solution, air-dried for a few seconds,

then dipped again and again, about 200 times, to create lens-like membranes about 1 millimeter thick.

It takes two to three days for each of LambdaVision's three robotic stations to finish one of the pliable prosthetics, which are about a tenth the size of a contact lens.

The procedure to implant the device is a lot like feeding a model ship into a glass bottle — the surgeon has to make a very small hole in the eye, roll up the lens, slip it through and unravel it against the back wall of the eye, over the damaged retina.

The first round of animal studies finished at the end of 2017, and early this year, the company began studying whether the implants are working in rats.

It will take at least two to three years for the product to be tested on humans with macular degeneration and another disorder that causes blindness, retinitis pigmentosa.

## Clinical Knowledgebase

Jackson Laboratory's cancer genetics database

Susan Mockus, the Jackson Laboratory's manager of curation, designed a database that lets doctors quickly pinpoint genetic information on cancer.

Her work was in response to a cumbersome approach to picking information from a national database with as many as 20,000 to 30,000 pieces of information on a common gene.

"One of the bottlenecks is the tons of information that come out on tests," she said. "How do we look at all that information and figure out what's important?"

Mockus heads the Farmington research lab's Clinical Knowledgebase, which helps oncologists and clinical researchers

better communicate to help patients find the best treatments. The Knowledgebase helps find clues about how best to treat cancer by giving doctors the tools to quickly find information. Jackson Lab calls it a search engine for cancer research.

The data show clinical trials, available treatments that have succeeded and new technologies being used in the lab. The result allows doctors to find research in the lab on a specific mutation as it's published and apply the information to their patients' care — which Mockus said has “real-time impact on health care.”

“It's not looking for a needle in a haystack,” she said.

Launched in June 2016, the database has about 21,585 unique users including oncologists, researchers, patients and others. More than 79 percent return.

Mockus said she designed the system on a napkin shortly after arriving at Jackson Lab four years ago.

Now, she said, “I'm a little bit better. I keep notes on my phone.”

## ReNetX

Working to reverse spinal cord injuries

In the developing spine and brain of a fetus, thread-like nerve fibers grow fast and far as weeds.

Bundles of these fibers form nerves, our pathways for transmitting signals of sensation and motion to and away from the brain. But our ability to grow these fragile threads starts to decline at birth and worsens from there, meaning injuries to the spinal cord nearly always cause permanent damage.

In an effort to reverse spinal cord injuries, a Yale-based company has found a way to turn nerve fibers loose and let them grow — or, in this case, regrow — as they do in early development.

ReNetX, formerly Axerion, in New Haven plans to start its first human clinical trial late this year with tetraplegics, pending approval from the FDA. If successful, it may be tested next as a therapy for glaucoma and then stroke damage.

The key is blocking a protein called Nogo, or neurite outgrowth inhibitor, which acts like weed

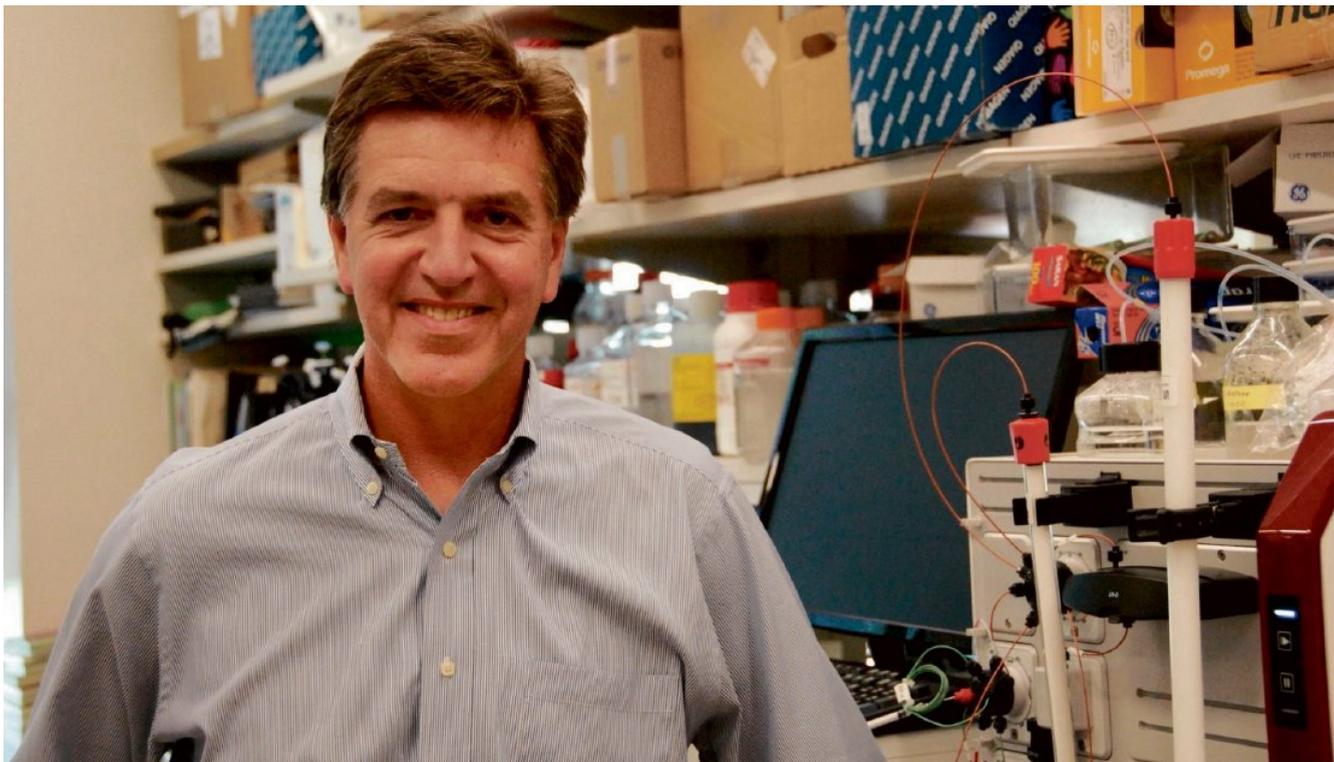
control — it stops nerve fibers from sprouting and overrunning our well-manicured central nervous systems.

But when a spinal cord injury occurs, we want those nerve fibers to grow. ReNetX is developing a Nogo receptor decoy to do this.

A Cambridge company, BioAxone BioSciences, is working through human clinical trials of a similar drug called Cethrin, which would be applied immediately after an injury. But ReNetX would be the first to address chronic spinal cord injuries, those that haven't improved in months or years.

ReNetX has seen promising results in its animal studies. Rats with injured spinal cords had better mobility and control of their limbs after treatment.

“If we get it to a trial and if the trial's successful, it opens up a huge number of doors to all kinds of additional therapies and multiple diseases,” said Stephen Strittmatter, the company's founder and science advisor, who is also a Yale neurology and neuroscience professor.



REBECCA LURYE

Stephen Strittmatter, a neuroscience and neurology professor at Yale University and founder of ReNetX.

## Butterfly Network

Jonathan Rothberg puts ultrasound technology on a chip

Jonathan Rothberg is known in Connecticut's bioscience community as a "serial entrepreneur." Among the companies he's launched was 454 Life Sciences, which brought to market the first new method for sequencing genomes in more than 35 years.

The Guilford businessman and researcher, who has founded companies valued in the billions of dollars, said he developed 454 because he wanted to sequence his son's genome quickly.

He said he made a sensor on a chip, which, instead of seeing light as in a camera, saw ions to do DNA sequencing. On a \$99 chip a bacterial genome could be sequenced, and for \$1,000 a human genome could be sequenced.

Rothberg is credited for improving access to gene sequencing, a key step in the process of finding cures to disease, by significantly bringing down the cost.

Rothberg, who has studied biology and chemical engineering, cited the Nobel Prize-winning physicist Jack Kilby, who was behind the integrated circuit that put the components of a computer on a single chip. Instead of using semiconductor chips, Rothberg relied on a single glass substrate on which he sequenced DNA.

"You could put all the components of a computer on a single chip," he said.

Among the products he's developed is the Butterfly Network, which puts a camera on a chip to significantly upgrade ultrasound images of the human body. He raised more than \$100 million to finance the business.

"It was the fastest and easiest to raise money," he said. "I have a good track record."

Rothberg said his company will sell hundreds of thousands of the cameras on chips, which will be priced at less than \$2,000. That will give about 40 million people access to ultrasound, he said.

"It's not just ultrasound, but a window into the human body,"

Rothberg said.

## Cyltezo

A first biosimilar for Boehringer Ingelheim

Humira and Cyltezo — two drugs that are almost exactly the same but not — are designed to provide the same anti-inflammatory treatment but are made in completely different ways.

The first, Humira, is what's called an innovator drug, a new and original therapy. The second is what you get when the patent on that innovator drug expires and a competitor manages to recreate the formula on its own: a biosimilar.

And this one, Cyltezo, was developed in Fairfield County.

Cyltezo, approved by the FDA in August to treat arthritis, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis and plaque psoriasis, is the first biosimilar developed by Boehringer Ingelheim, a global pharmaceutical company that based its U.S. subsidiary in Ridgefield in 1971.

Biosimilars, which are the



PETER CASOLINO

Jonathan Rothberg of Butterfly Network, standing, brings in experts from different fields to work with him in his Guilford lab.

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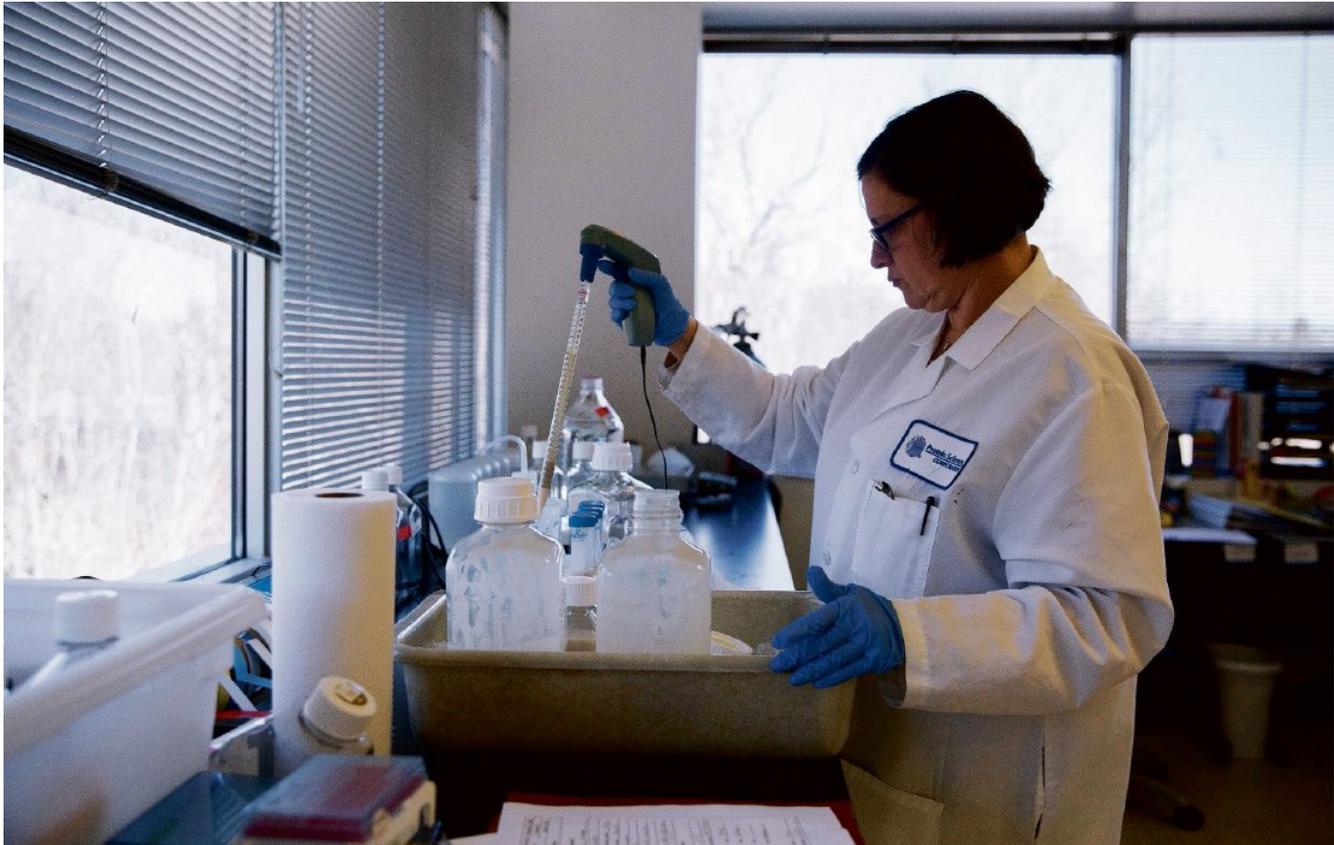


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LAUREN SCHNEIDERMAN

Elena Feshchenko works on production process improvement at Protein Sciences, which developed FluBlok, an egg-free flu shot.

equivalent of generics for drugs derived from biological materials, are a booming area in the drug industry. A 2015 Deloitte report estimated that the market for these drug copies will reach \$25 billion to \$35 billion by 2020, up from \$1.3 billion in 2013.

Customers stand to save millions of dollars as more patents expire and more biosimilars are approved, bringing down costs.

Chicago-based AbbVie's Humira, for instance, did \$16 billion in sales in 2016, the year after its patent expired, but may only make \$6 billion off the drug in 2022, according to drug industry publication FiercePharma.

Ivan Blannarik, senior vice president and head of biosimilars at BI, said the approval of Cyltezo marked an important step toward the company's goal of providing new and affordable treatments.

"Chronic inflammatory diseases collectively affect 23.5 million people in the U.S., and Cyltezo has the potential to deliver significant

benefits to many of these individuals," he said.

While BI's products are developed by multiple teams in U.S. and international offices, the company, which is headquartered in Germany, said its Ridgefield research center contributed significantly to Cyltezo and several other drugs in the company's portfolio of 20 medications.

## Sema4

Advanced genetic screening

Sema4, a Branford company that does advanced genomic testing, began last summer as part of the Mount Sinai Health System in New York. Its name is a play on "semaphore," a device that sends signals.

The company generates DNA sequencing to provide guidance to doctors about cancer, inherited disorders in newborns, such as Tay-Sachs disease, and other conditions.

By mining data, information can be incorporated into predictive models that can help doctors make decisions about a patient's treatment, said CEO Eric Schadt.

The industry is "very wide open with a lot of emerging players," he said.

Sema4 offers an oncology panel that analyzes 207 regions of the genome to give researchers insights about the genetic profile of each tumor, including an analysis of 50 key cancer genes. Schadt said he sees cancer on a "a spectrum of very, very complex conditions."

Sema4 and California Cryobank, the worldwide leader in frozen donor sperm and egg banking, recently announced a collaboration to bring genetic screening to sperm donors using Sema4 testing.

It's intended to provide a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the risk of passing any of 281 inherited diseases onto a child — through a blood sample.

The objective to mining data is to

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bring together the best medicine for the patient, Schadt said. “Can you match the right drug to the right patient at the right time? That’s the goal.”

## Flublok

Protein Sciences’ flu vaccine

Protein Sciences Corp. in Meriden developed and produces Flublok, a flu vaccine made from cell cultures, rather than eggs, which the FDA approved in 2013.



cox

Manon M.J. Cox, chief executive officer, said hazards associated with the flu are often ignored.

“A lot of people don’t realize it’s a dangerous virus that kills people,” she said, adding, “Flublok is a different product.”

Flublok is available only through doctors, though a prescription is not necessary. Because it is not made in eggs, Flublok is safe for individuals with egg-related allergies.

Cox said studies have shown that Flublok is more effective than other vaccines because it has no active ingredients that could affect vaccination.

“That data is not well known among people administering the vaccine,” Cox said. “You have to demand you want Flublok.”

The development of Flublok has been more than 25 years in the making, she said. More than 100 people have been involved in the research and development of the vaccine, she said.

Its advantages include a higher content of antigens, which are capable of inducing an immune response, and has potentially superior ability to provoke an immune response for the elderly and immune-compromised.

Flublok’s manufacturing platform requires less lead time, allowing regulators more time to make accurate decisions on flu responses, Protein Sciences says.

In 2015, Connecticut gave Protein Sciences a boost by putting Flublok

on the approved list for the 200,000 public employees, retirees and dependents on the state’s health plan.

Sanofi, a French health care company, bought Protein Sciences last summer for \$750 million. It said the acquisition will allow it to broaden its vaccine portfolio.

## Soliris

Alexion’s blood cell-saving orphan drug

When Leonard Bell founded Alexion in 1992, he wanted to develop drugs for some of the most common conditions in the United States.

The Yale researcher and cardiologist experimented with one drug he hoped would help heart bypass surgery patients. Then he tested a different treatment on arthritis. Finding it no more effective than other drugs on the market, he tested it on lupus, an immune disorder less common than heart disease or joint inflammation but still affecting 16,000 new patients a year.

Again, it was no more help than other approved treatments.

What this drug did cure, Bell found, was a rare blood disorder called paroxysmal nocturnal hemoglobinuria, which strikes only one in a million people, causing symptoms that range from flu-like symptoms to kidney disease and deadly blood clots.

Alexion had stumbled upon an orphan drug, one that would go on to sell for hundreds of thousands of dollars per patient a year.

“It was the best key for the lock,” Bell said in 2007, the year the FDA approved Soliris.

In patients with PNH, blood cells lack a certain protein that protects them from attack by the body’s immune system. Soliris, which is derived from living cells, blocks the part of the immune system that destroys the vulnerable blood cells.

Soliris, which took 15 years and \$800 million to develop, has come under sharp scrutiny for its astronomical price tag — a single year’s treatment can reportedly cost up to \$700,000 — and its business

practices. In September, the company announced its plan to move to Boston while retaining about 450 employees in New Haven.

Despite those controversies, the success of Soliris has continued. The drug is now an approved treatment for atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome, another potentially fatal blood disease that can cause severe organ damage, and for the rare immune disorder Generalized Myasthenia Gravis.

Alexion has since developed Strensiq, which treats a metabolic disease leading to defective bone mineralization and skeletal abnormalities, and Kanuma, for patients with a buildup of fats in tissue cells that can lead to liver and cardiovascular disease.

## Protac

Arvinas targets cancers by degrading a specific protein

Arvinas Inc. has produced a treatment that the New Haven startup says may address 75 percent of targets that are “undruggable.” Right now, it’s developing a new class of drugs targeting prostrate and other cancers.

Protac, or Proteolysis-Targeting Chimera, works by getting a cell’s system of ubiquitin, a protein that regulates systems, to degrade and remove disease-causing proteins. The lead program targeting prostrate cancer is expected to be in trial later this year.

Arvinas also is targeting a receptor for breast cancer, with a test expected this year, said Sean Cassidy, chief financial officer.

He credited Craig Crews, a professor of molecular, cellular and developmental biology and professor of chemistry at Yale University, for his work in developing Protac. “Craig had a fantastic idea on how to degrade proteins,” Cassidy said.

Cassidy said that by operating in New Haven, Arvinas has access to Yale, the Yale Science Park and the growing biotech industry along the shoreline.

“A little renaissance is going on in the bioscience community,” he said.

**LONG-TERM CHANGE**

# Tick Season All Year

## Numbers And Infection Rates Have Surged In Recent Years

By **MELINDA TUHUS**

**I**t's a safe bet that with the frigid temperatures and deep snow cover of early winter 2018, you would have been very unlikely to be bitten by a tick while hiking (or snowshoeing or skiing) in the woods or while chopping firewood in your yard. But experts say that's a temporary reprieve from the longer-term change that has rendered "tick season" a year-round phenomenon.

Goudarz Molaei is a medical entomologist and vector biologist who is in charge of the

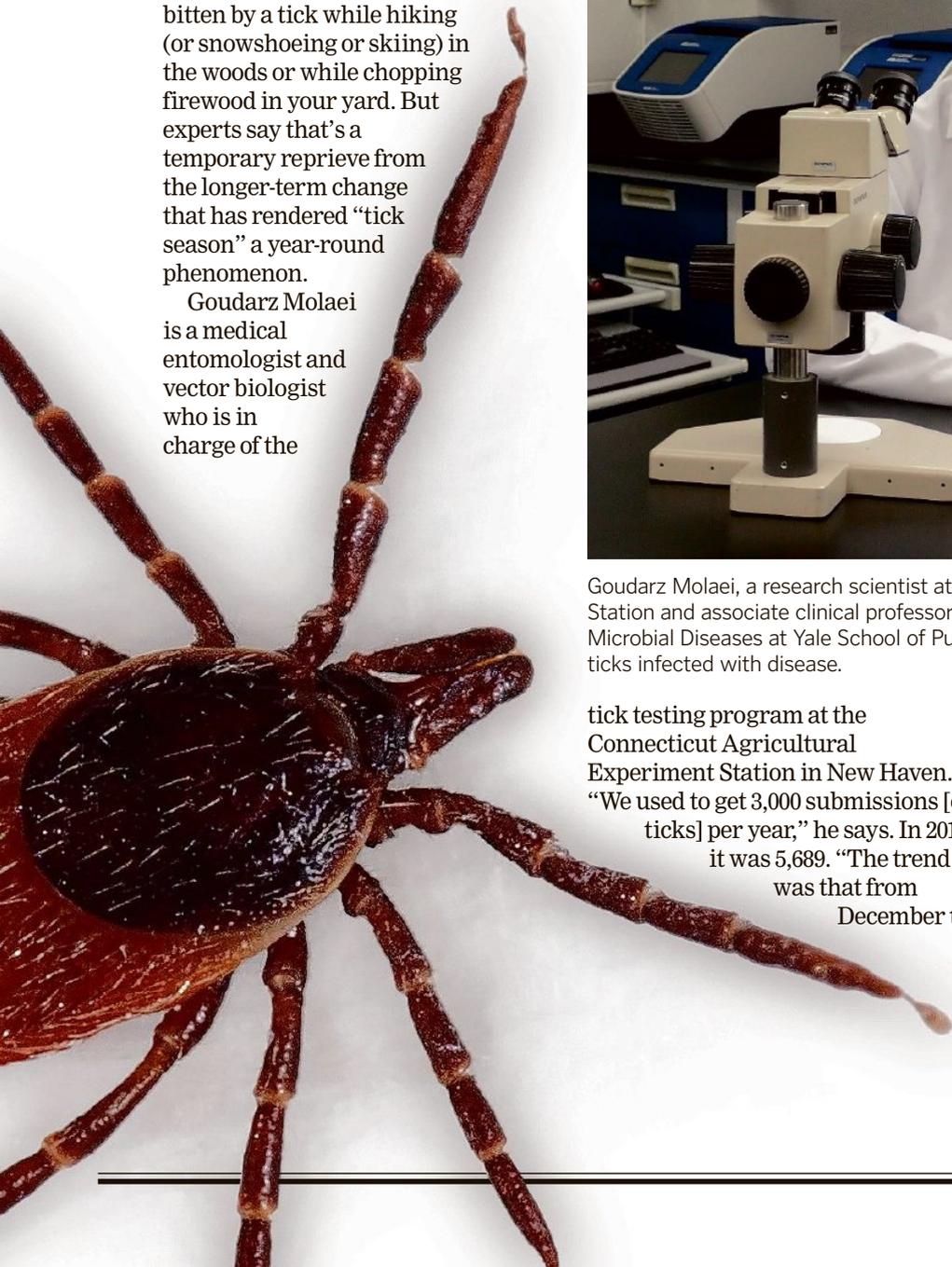


Goudarz Molaei, a research scientist at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station and associate clinical professor with the Department of Epidemiology of Microbial Diseases at Yale School of Public Health, has seen a year-round increase in ticks infected with disease.

tick testing program at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station in New Haven. "We used to get 3,000 submissions [of ticks] per year," he says. In 2017, it was 5,689. "The trend was that from December to

the end of March or mid-April we'd get a couple every month, but last year [2016-17] we got 800 ticks during the slow season."

For years the big concern has been Lyme disease — named for the Connecticut town where it was first identified and now spread through most of the country. But Molaei says recently his team has started testing for two additional pathogens carried by the deer tick: babesia and anaplasma. He says 32 percent of the ticks tested are infected with Lyme,



10 percent with babesia and 5 percent with anaplasma.

Molaei says several factors have contributed to the surges in both the number of ticks and the infection rate, which averaged 27 percent for 2011-2016, and was 32 percent in 2017: the boom and bust cycle in the production of acorns, which are eaten by the white-footed mouse that is a host for the deer tick; and what he calls an “over-abundance” of deer in the state, so the combination of more mice and more deer provides ticks with plentiful blood meals. When those ticks bite humans they may transmit one or more of these diseases.

Other factors include changes humans have made to the landscape in vegetation and habitat fragmentation, climate change and increased awareness of tick-borne diseases among people, which contributes to more diagnosis.

Molaei predicted if the cold were sustained for a few months, “this



spring we will see less abundant ticks.

[But] that doesn't mean we won't have ticks. Ticks [survive over the] winter; however, harsh and sustained cold has an impact on survival rates.” He did say that this winter his lab was not receiving as many ticks as it did in the past two winters.

Dr. Marjorie Golden is an infectious disease specialist at Yale New Haven Hospital.

“We definitely saw much more tick-borne disease this year than we have in the past,” she says. “That includes Lyme and pathogens for babesiosis and anaplasmosis. Most people with babesiosis would get better with no treatment at all, even though some get very sick, and it can be life-threatening.”

Golden says anaplasmosis responds quickly and completely to antibiotic treatment, with no record

of chronic infection.

“I think the most important take-home message is that clinicians need to keep thinking about tick-borne disease past the summer,” she says, “Early diagnosis, especially for Lyme, seems to relate to better outcomes.”

She says patients who present with a rash in the wintertime might be misdiagnosed and treated for cellulitis, “which won't help with the tick problem.”

As far as prevention, Golden says wearing long pants and long sleeve shirts and hats to guard against ticks is easier in the cold months than on hot summer days.

“And continue to do tick checks. If you find an engorged tick that has been attached for more than 24 hours, adults can take a one-time dose of Doxycycline — recommended by the Centers for Disease Control — and it's very effective. For children,” she adds, “get the tick, have it tested and monitor the child.”



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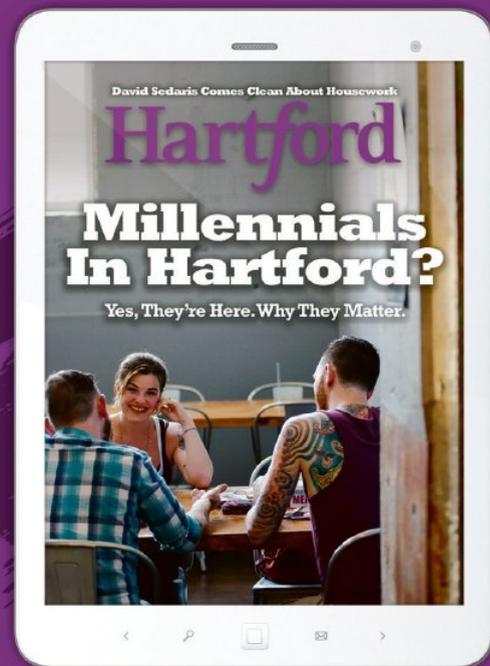
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BRAYAN DUARTE

In a class on drones offered through Trinfo Café, Jack Carson, left, and Zaiyah McKenzie-Henderson, students at Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy, talk with Trinity students Brayan Duarte and Anastasija Mensikova. Duarte shot the picture from a drone.

## STRENGTHENING TIES

# Trinity And The City

College's Downtown Liberal Arts Action Lab To 'Grow Organically'

By **DAVID HOLAHAN**

**O**ne of the many questions about Hartford's future is: Will it ever become a vibrant college town? A related question is how big a role Trinity College, the city's oldest institution of higher education, will play in that quest.

Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin acknowledges that the city does not have a dominant university, as New Haven and Providence do, but he adds, "We do have a pretty

large student count if you look at all the colleges and universities that are located here, between Trinity College, and now UConn, and Capital Community College, as well as the University of Hartford." UHart is in West Hartford, although a portion of the campus is in Hartford.

The combined enrollment of Trinity, UConn's downtown campus and Capital is roughly 8,500, although only Trinity's 2,190 students are boarders. By comparison, two of New Haven's four institutions of higher learning top that total: Yale with 12,300 and

Southern Connecticut State University with 10,400.

When Trinity was founded in 1823, Yale had been Connecticut's only college for 122 years. In 1878, Trinity moved out of the center of Hartford, from the site where the state Capitol now stands, to a bucolic hilltop more than a mile away. Still, it remained the most important institution of higher learning in the city, even if the relationship between the two sometimes has been tentative if not standoffish.

But in recent years, even as it increasingly has engaged with the city, Trinity has lost its dominant position. Both Capital Community College and the University of Connecticut now have downtown campuses with more students than Trinity.

But Trinity is establishing its downtown roots. The college is renting space at 10 Constitution Plaza for a modest satellite campus that for now accommodates about 20 Trinity and Capital students participating in its new Liberal Arts Action Lab.

The program, which began in January, brings together faculty and students from both colleges to work with community groups to research local challenges. From among 11 research proposals submitted last fall, five were selected.

The projects range from investigating the eviction process, mapping blight in the city, and helping arts organizations leverage their strengths, to determining how best to communicate the importance of PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) and how to engage immigrant and refugee parents with their children's education. Community partners include the Connecticut Fair Housing Center, Community Solutions, HartBeat Ensemble, the Hartford Court of Common Council and the Open Communities Alliance, and Hartford Public Library's Immigrant Youth Project.

"We are going to let it grow organically," Trinity President Joanne Berger-Sweeney said of the downtown presence. "We also will have some innovation makerspace there for our students. We want to see



PROVIDED BY TRINITY COLLEGE

Trinity students, from left, Max Eichner and Haley Dougherty, and Capital Community College student Michael Barlowski talk on Jan. 23, the first day of Trinity College's Liberal Arts Action Lab, about the research projects they will tackle.

how it works before we make larger and larger plans."

Trinity has made significant strides in connecting with the city since the 1990s — partnering with a developer to build student housing that remains on the city tax rolls; helping to improve neighborhood housing; establishing a Learning Corridor near campus where the college interacts with three Hartford schools, including the Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy, whose students take college courses.

Trinity also created the Trinfo Café, a computer center near campus that provides 22 computer stations, wifi access and instruction to local residents free of charge. The college also pays the fare for students to ride CT Transit buses to get around the city; only about one in five students has a car on campus.

Robert Cotto, director of urban educational initiatives at Trinity, said that currently there are "about 40 different partnerships" between the college and the city. In addition, some 20 college courses involve student engagement with Hartford. Jason Rojas, who is Berger-Sweeney's chief of staff and also a Connecticut state representative,

said of his boss, "She has brought a new energy and the will for Trinity to become an active neighbor and a renewed vigor for connecting with the city's neighborhoods."

Bronin agreed with that assessment: "I think that the current

## College And University Enrollment

### Hartford

Capital Community College: **3,282**

UConn Hartford Campus: **3,100**

Trinity College: **2,192**

### Near Hartford

University of Hartford (West Hartford): **6,700**

Goodwin College (East Hartford): **3,550**

St. Joseph College (West Hartford): **2,330**

CCSU (New Britain): **12,000**

Manchester Community College: **6,800**

leadership at Trinity seems very committed to building a stronger partnership between the college and the city, and we look forward to continuing to work with President Berger-Sweeney to accomplish that.”

But old habits and perceptions die hard, and some observers say Trinity’s embrace of Hartford is not all it could be, that the college’s engagement most often takes the form of an academic or social service exercise: such as, how can Trinity examine urban problems or help its downtrodden host city. There seems to be little celebration of the nearly 200-year-old relationship, some faculty members believe.

Several people, on and off campus, pointed to the college’s website as Exhibit A. The fourth menu item under “Student Life” is “Campus Safety;” There is no comparable link there for “Greater Hartford,” which is another click away, buried under “Events & Activities.” The page “About Trinity” makes no mention of Hartford at all.

Yale’s website, by contrast, puts New Haven front and center, describing it in a prominent headline as “a great place to live, work and visit.”

Trinity alumni who still live or work in Hartford offer some perspective on how the college has changed in recent decades in its relationship with its host city.

Jose Ramirez is a 2008 Trinity graduate who returned to the city six years ago and is developing “Hartford Lofts,” a \$1.4 million apartment project downtown. He said that engagement is a two-way street: “For its size, I think Trinity is definitely involved. As for the student body interacting with the city for commercial or entertainment purposes, that’s where the students and the cities’ commercial entities could do a better job attracting more patronage.”

Jeffrey Devereux is a 2012 Trinity grad and also a Hartford businessman. “I had a car and a bike on campus so I got out into the city more than most,” he said. “I definitely wouldn’t call Hartford a college town back then, but things



PROVIDED BY TRINITY COLLEGE

Trinity created Trinfo Café, above, a computer center near campus that offers free community classes; a sign in the window of the new downtown Liberal Arts Action Lab, a partnership between Trinity and Capital Community College.

have changed and I think will continue in that direction.”

Devereux said that students tend to stay “up on the hill” for a variety of reasons, including the perception by some that Hartford is not an entirely safe or compelling destination. He added that the 100-acre campus is a self-sufficient community that makes trekking downtown unnecessary.

Jonathan Cabral, Trinity class of 2004 and a current Hartford resident, said that the perception of Trinity as the aloof college on the hill was fair a dozen years ago, and that many students only left campus to go to the airport.

“I think that perception is less fair today,” Cabral said. “The new president seems to be much more active, and the college wants to be engaged with the city. It takes time.”

Pablo Delano, Trinity professor of fine arts, knows how much time it can take. He and other faculty members advocated for the creation of a Center for Caribbean Studies for 20 years before it became a reality in 2016, with the blessing of Berger-Sweeney. He is the co-director of the center, whose goal he described as establishing “a deep and reciprocal relationship with the city’s Caribbean communities, one that is mutually beneficial and celebratory.”

The center has begun to use the new downtown campus as a venue for events that engage both Trinity



students and local residents.

“We enjoy the city,” Delano said. “To us it’s not just a place where we happen to be, but a place we enjoy. We participate in local activities; we eat in local restaurants; we shop in local stores.”

Other observers point out that by becoming more engaged with its urban setting, Trinity helps itself as well as the city. Michael Freimuth, executive director of the Capital Region Development Authority, believes that it is in Trinity’s interest to embrace its urban setting.

“I think Trinity is going to play more of a role in Hartford. The trend nationally is for colleges to be more urban-focused, in part, because that is what prospective students are demanding and also because it is closer to the labor force.”

Berger-Sweeney, who became Trinity’s first female and African-American president in 2014, is a big fan of Hartford and gets around town — whether to a play at Hartford Stage or to take in a Yard Goats’ game. She led a contingent of 150 from Trinity to Dunkin’ Donuts Park last summer and threw out the ceremonial first pitch.

“I love the culture and the ethnic restaurants,” she said, adding that one of her and her husband’s favorite destinations is Piolin Restaurant, which serves Peruvian fare and is a 15-minute walk from campus.

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Bobby Shipman, a fifth-grader at Tarriffville School in Simsbury, has contributed to a new kid-friendly Connecticut history e-book and textbook.

MARK MIRKO



## A SENSE OF PLACE

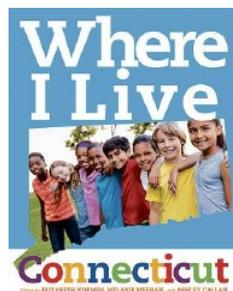
# Young Historians

New Book Brings State's History Alive For Schoolkids

By **MATTHEW BRODERICK**

**E**lizabeth Normen didn't set out to write for third-graders. When she launched Connecticut Explored, a quarterly magazine that explores the state's history and cultural heritage, 15 years ago, her target audience was educated, culturally active adults interested in history, preservation, decorative arts and antiques.

But when the state created new social studies teaching guidelines in 2015 — which called for a greater focus on Connecticut's history, economy, civics and geography — Normen saw not only an opportunity to share her love of history with a younger generation, but also to meet a



growing demand among Connecticut elementary educators who, she says, struggle to find age-appropriate state history resources for their students. Many publishers use national history with a bit of Connecticut [history] in there," she says.

So Normen, working with curriculum specialists, teachers, historians and the Connecticut Council for Social Studies, decided to repurpose her Connecticut Explored content for an elementary school audience. Last August, Normen published "Where I Live: Connecticut," an

80-page, nine-chapter book about the people, places and events that have shaped Connecticut's history.

Nearly 20,000 printed copies of the book have been distributed to roughly one-third of the state's school districts. Normen's goal is make the book available in all 169 Connecticut towns.

"We also have an electronic version of the book because many classrooms [in the state] provide access to computers or tablets," says Normen, who is also developing a My Town section of the website so students and teachers can learn about local history.

"I think it's really important for children today to have a sense of place and rootedness, and state and local history can help provide that," Normen says. In fact, one of Normen's contributing writers Bobby Shipman is a history-loving fifth-grader at Simsbury's Tariffville School. Shipman has written articles for Normen's website about historical figures Benedict Arnold and Ethan Allen.

"The challenge is to make history interesting for people," says Bobby, who is working on a new story about the history of the Farmington Canal. "It can't be just a list of facts; the best history is always written like a story."

Bobby's school principal, Scott Baker, says the emphasis on reading and math at the elementary level can sometime crowd out social studies a bit.

"I hope by making history more readable and fun for



MARK MIRKO

Elizabeth Normen developed the kid-friendly Connecticut history e-book and textbook, distributed free to nearly half the public school third-graders in the state.

students, we encourage students like Bobby to be curious and ignite a fire to learn independently," Baker says.

"They say history repeats itself, but we can learn a lot from history and find solutions to modern-day problems with history," Bobby said. "That's why history is important to learn."



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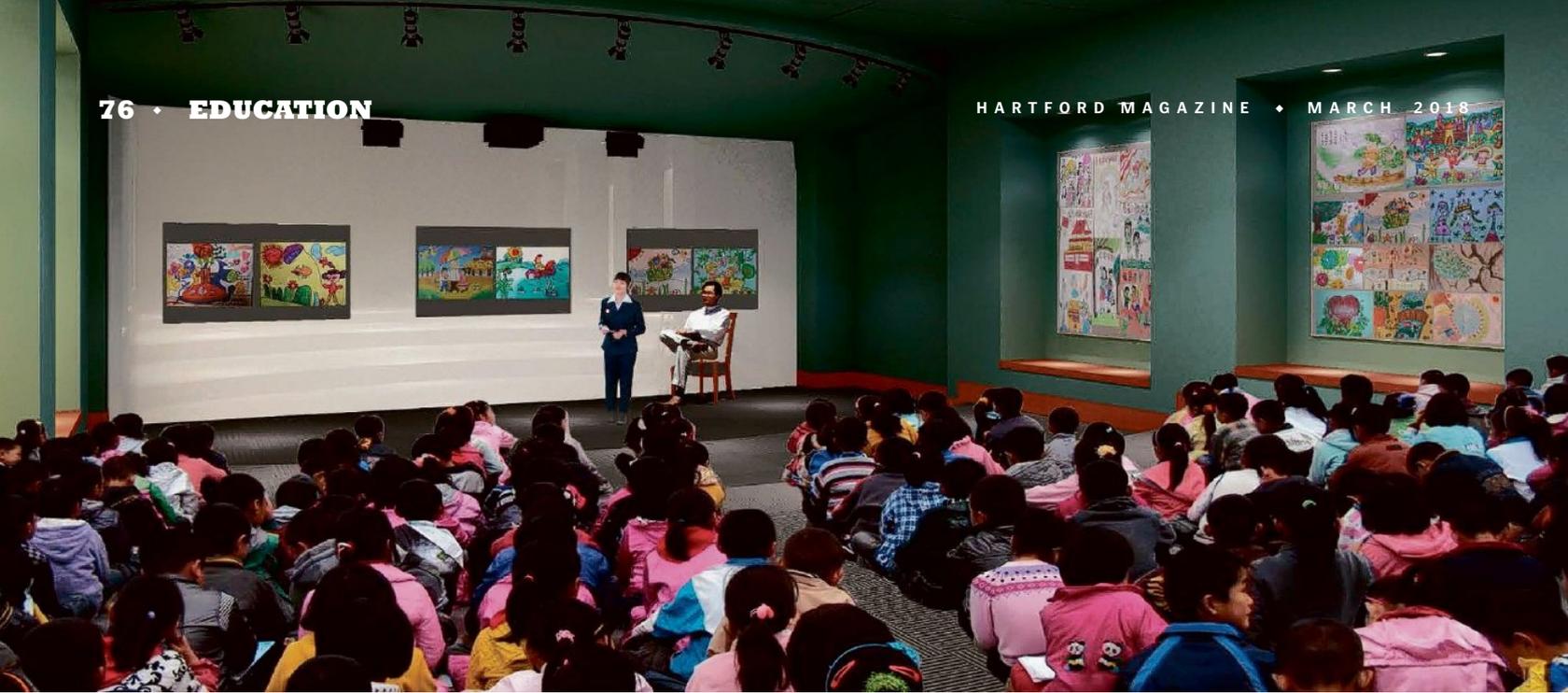


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A lecture classroom at Keystone Academy in Beijing, designed by Centerbrook Architects in Essex.

## KEYSTONE ACADEMY

# Exporting Education

## Creating A U.S.-Style Prep School In Beijing

By **DAVID HOLAHAN**

**I**t is a new, unusual and little known export from Connecticut, which is sending its educational expertise halfway around the world to the most populous country on earth.

The People's Republic of China is, in essence, importing elite prep schools — with the help of two Connecticut residents, Edward Shanahan and Malcolm McKenzie, former heads of school respectively of Choate Rosemary Hall in Wallingford and The Hotchkiss School in Lakeville. Centerbrook Architects in Essex is also working in China, designing modern classrooms for new private schools.

For more than a decade affluent Chinese families — many of whom were restricted by law to having one child — have been sending their high school and even middle school children abroad to be educated: an estimated 30,000 annually to the U.S., upwards of 1,000 to Connecticut alone. Many continue on to American colleges — where more than 350,000 are enrolled, a third of all foreign students in the U.S.

These globe-trotting scholars — the Chinese dub them “sea turtles” for their long-distance wanderings — are

away from their families and their culture for 10 months a year, often for a decade or more. In the end, some never swim back home and become permanent ex-pats.

That's where the idea of importing prep schools sprang from: to enable Chinese students to get the benefits of a western secondary school education without leaving home.

“Sending their only child abroad at a young age is a dear price for these parents to pay,” Shanahan said. “We tell them that their children can get a Choate education at home. We'll bring the faculty to them. Parents there are aware of the big names in both American boarding schools and in the college world.”

In 2011 a Chinese businessman who was familiar with Choate approached Shanahan, who was retiring that year, to help establish a private K-12 academy in Beijing. Shanahan in turn recruited McKenzie to be the head of school and enlisted Centerbrook Architects, a firm known for its work on independent school campuses, to design classrooms and other interior spaces.

The result of this international collaboration is Keystone Academy, a day and boarding institution that opened in 2014; it now educates 12,000 students with a capacity for 6,000 more. McKenzie, who recruited several

Hotchkiss colleagues to join him at Keystone, said that the current enrollment is more than 90 percent Chinese students, but the goal is to have a three-to-one ratio of indigenous to foreign students, the latter typically being the offspring of foreign officials or businesspeople living in the capital region.

Keystone's international curriculum is dual language immersion, meaning some classes are taught in Chinese and others in English so that students must be, or quickly become, conversant in both languages.

Shanahan is president of the Keystone Board of Trustees.

This ambitious project has spawned spinoffs. Shanahan is working with Three W International, an American company that is building combination day/boarding schools in what he terms "second tier Chinese cities" with populations in the 7 million to 8 million range.

The firm also helps to enroll thousands of international students in American secondary schools and colleges.

The company is building two schools, as yet unnamed: one is K through 12 and set to open later this year in Changzhou, a coastal city 680 miles south of Beijing; the other is a grade 6 to 12 school in Bohai, a two-hour drive from the Chinese capital.

Shanahan said the company "would like to do more than a school a year once we get the prototype under our

belt."

Centerbrook Architects also has moved on to other educational projects in China through its Keystone contacts. "We are designing the interiors for a new conference center at Wenhua University as well as the K through 8 Union School, both in the city of Wuhan," said Mark Simon, a founding principal of the firm. Wuhan is 500 miles west of Shanghai.

Chinese education is moving away from a traditional rote learning approach that has long been out of fashion in the West, according to Simon, who is designing modern educational spaces to accommodate the new philosophy of experiential learning that encourages students to take a more active role in the classroom.

The independent school building boom in China is part of a much larger infrastructure expansion, according to Simon: "My general impression is they are overwhelming us in the quantity of construction by tenfold; you can't believe how much stuff they are building — roads, railroads, airports, huge housing complexes, retail, everything. These are 21st-century facilities. They are in such a hurry to build a middle class."

McKenzie sees Keystone Academy as a role model: "There are only a few schools quite like us, but there is great interest in what we are doing. I suspect that the number will grow quickly."



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PATRICK RAYCRAFT

Matthew Dicks, a fifth-grade teacher at Wolcott Elementary School in West Hartford, is also the author of several children's books.

## **A LOVE OF BOOKS**

# Writing For Children

Tapping Into One's Own Childhood Memories Is Key, Authors Say

**By ALIX BOYLE**

**A**nyone who's ever read "The Snowy Day" by Ezra Jack Keats knows firsthand the power and wonder of children's literature. Connecticut is home to a number of children's authors who aim to solve problems — large and small — between the pages of their books. But writing for kids is not as easy as it looks, they caution. Resist the urge to teach a lesson, don't write down, and do tap into your own childhood memories

before you sit down to create the next classic.

Fifth-grade teacher Matthew Dicks of Newington is best known for "Memoirs of an Imaginary Friend," a novel that deals with the weighty topics of child abduction and autism spectrum disorder. While originally written for adults, teens love "Memoirs," which has crossed over into the young adult book market and has been published in 25 countries.

Now, Dicks is working on "The Cardboard Knight," his first book for younger kids that draws directly on a childhood encounter with a not-so-nice cat.

"I go to war with Prudence the cat," Dicks recalls. "I created a cardboard suit of armor to keep the cat from scratching us. I remember cutting the cardboard in my basement. I was in a situation where there was no adult around, so I solved the problem myself."

Remembering your childhood is key to writing for kids — kids want to hear a voice that is like their own — and having conversations with siblings can help fill in the details.

"My brother disagrees," Dicks says. "He says he built the suit of armor."

As for Prudence the cat? Who won?

"I like to think of it as a draw," Dicks says. "I used the sword on the cat. She left us alone after that."

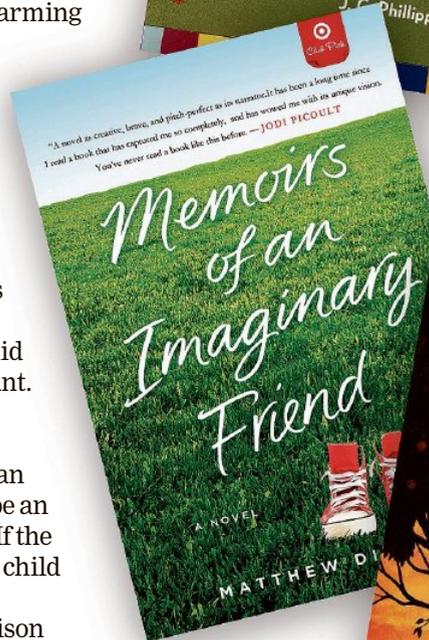
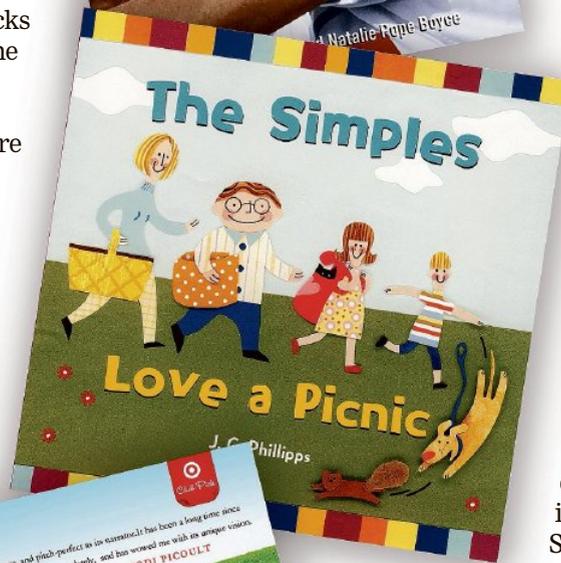
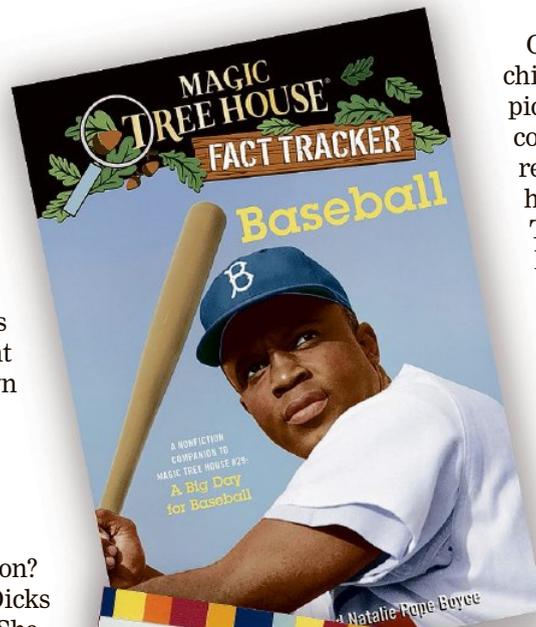
Persistence and the ability to whittle a story down to its essence are two attributes that J.C. Phillipps of West Hartford says are essential for success in the children's picture book market. Her latest title, "The Simples Love a Picnic," is a cute story about all the complications, like an ant attack, that arise when a family tries to go on an outing.

An artist as well as an author, Phillipps created her charming illustrations out of cut paper, including an impressively realistic Ziploc baggie made from clear tape and tissue paper.

"Everyone thinks they've got a picture book in them," Phillipps says. "I think having a realistic idea of what a kid wants to read is important. Try not to write for the parent or teacher; think about something a kid can relate to. There's got to be an adventure in some way. If the lesson is prominent, the child may not be interested."

Leslie Connor of Madison believes that children's books need the same depth of emotion as books for adults.

"You have to give them heart and hope," she says. "You can't talk down to them. You've gotta BE that 12-year-old by tapping into your own memories. Write for yourself at that age."



Connor has written every genre of children's book from young adult to picture books, but finds herself most comfortable with middle-grade readers. She can especially relate to her most recent protagonist in "The Truth as Told by Mason Buttle," a learning disabled 12-year-old whose best friend is found dead in Mason's family orchard.

"I gave Mason way deeper problems than I had. But I always felt I was missing lessons in the classroom, and I couldn't make people understand that," she says. "I would have taken a lot of comfort from Mason's story."

Mary Pope Osborne is the author of more than 100 kids' books including 56 books in the wildly popular Magic Tree House series. The books appeal to kids just learning to read chapter books. She writes at home in Goshen, with two Norfolk terriers and a small mixed breed dog at her feet.

The stories center on Annie and Jack, whose magic tree house transports them to adventures in faraway lands or periods of history. Osborne is currently working on a story set in a Roman legion camp in the Second Century.

"I grew up on military bases with a twin brother, a younger brother and an older sister,"

she says.

"Imagination fueled our play and we were each other's best friends. We made forts and created worlds all the time. That's not very different than what I'm doing today. I don't write down, but write from the point of view of a little boy in a magic tree house."

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## CHARTER OAK PLACE

Artist Tracks Down The Highs And Lows Of Her 1870s Home

# House With A History

By **NANCY SCHOEFLER**

In late 2013 artist Jennifer Lotstein and her husband, Richard, bought a five-story brick house on historic Charter Oak Place in Hartford that was under foreclosure. “It was a disgusting mess,” Lotstein recalls. “It was the eyesore of the street.” The couple had built their previous homes, in Burlington and Tolland, and weren’t daunted by the extensive renovation they were taking on. But it was a large house — about 5,000 square feet, nearly twice the size of their Burlington home — and it was nine months before they could move in. Now they live in the gracious Victorian home’s upper three stories, with two apartments tucked in back on the two lower levels down the slope.

In the course of the renovation, Lotstein became passionate to learn about the history of the house and its previous residents. It was built in 1870 by Asa Cook, who invented several machines for making wood screws and whose Asa S. Cook Co. manufactured screws, bolts, vises and other machines. Before starting his own company, Cook had worked at Colt’s West Armory and was a friend and





LAUREN SCHNEIDERMAN

The dining room was originally the second parlor in the stately Victorian house on Charter Oak Place. Jennifer Lotstein, below, and her husband, Richard Lotstein, bought the house four years ago and have renovated extensively.

colleague of Francis Pratt, who later co-founded Pratt & Whitney. Cook's wife and Pratt's wife were sisters.

Lotstein has Hartford Courant news clippings that tell of tougher times in the history of her house. In 1925, an automatic pistol that Charles Kielbowicz said he didn't know was loaded went off in the kitchen, wounding a relative of his wife. As the Depression set in, the Kielbowicz family took in more and more relatives, and the house was gradually broken up into a boarding house and many small apartments. The living room, an airy room with high ceilings and ornate stenciling, had been divided into a three-room apartment. One 1931 resident hanged himself in jail after being locked up for drunkenness. In the 1970s there was a huge fire, and the original carriage house was destroyed.

By the 1980s, the house was boarded up and the city was ready to demolish it.



Fortunately, Lotstein says, it was purchased in 1982 by a couple who were instrumental in Hartford's revival — Rory O'Neil, who was the CFO at Travelers and a founder of Riverfront Recapture, and his wife

Nancy O'Neil, who had a master's degree in historic preservation from Columbia School of Architecture. Lotstein happened upon O'Neil's name when she was researching Victorian houses and noticed a



LAUREN SCHNEIDERMAN

The kitchen, above, was completely remodeled, with the floor in acacia, cherry cabinets and pressed tile backsplash. Jenifer Lotstein created the stained glass window. The renovated master bath, below, blends modern features with Victorian style.

picture of a room in a book that she realized was in her own house. She was able to get in touch with O'Neil.

At that point, Charter Oak Place "was a grim street of boarded up buildings," Nancy O'Neil wrote in a detailed letter to the home's next owners, which she shared with Lotstein. "Yet even in its desolate condition, a lingering sense of grace and beauty remained."

O'Neil noted the distinctive look of the house, with its sharp Gothic styling combined with a mansard roof and irregular massing. "I've never seen another one like it in Hartford."

The letter that O'Neil wrote to the subsequent owners detailed the home's history and her renovation project. Those next owners were Richard Huber, the president of Aetna, and his wife Roberta, who bought the house in 1995, and then several other houses on the street.

"We're just city people," Huber



said in 1996, when asked why he chose to live in the struggling neighborhood. "The idea of suburban living is abhorrent to us. The fun of the city is the city."

But after the Hubers sold the

then-elegant Victorian home in 2004, it again fell into serious disrepair.

### **'That's The House'**

It was when their third child headed to college that the Lotsteins

decided to move to the city. The couple spent several weekends walking the neighborhoods. When they saw the inviting street that winds up the hill to Charter Oak Place, they decided to walk up it, and spotted the house with the foreclosure notice.

“That’s the house,” Lotstein says she told her husband, but when they first went inside, she thought, “No way.”

The house hadn’t been winterized after it was foreclosed on in 2012, and many pipes had burst. The wallpaper was peeling, some of the ceilings were falling down, and the fireplace mantels were black. And outside, the yard was just dirt, Lotstein says, with a walkway of fake grass. “It was a blight.”

But her husband mouthed the words, “I want to live here.”

She says she never thought she would want to live in an old house, but she couldn’t stop thinking about it.



LAUREN SCHNEIDERMAN

The fireplace in the living room of the house, which was built in 1870.

“It was a big leap,” Jennifer Lotstein says. “People are scared of spontaneity, but it all worked out. It

took a lot of work.”

The Lotsteins transformed the kitchen, using acacia wood on the floor, cherry cabinets and a pressed tin ceiling and backsplashes, as well as a stained-glass transom window that Jennifer created. The kitchen opens to a balcony that overlooks an orchard of fruit trees the couple planted in back, with help from the KNOX Foundation.

The rectangular staircase to the top floor adds to the sense of airiness and light; there’s a skylight at the top.

Lotstein, a potter who also creates quilts, mosaics, paintings and photographs that are seen throughout the house, says renovating an old house leads to many puzzles and mysteries: How were walls originally configured? What were these knobs used for? What kind of newel post used to be on the banister?

“It was a constant discovery,” she says. “The house was a great creative project.”

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# Closet Renovation

Design Update Helps  
Lead To A More  
Orderly Life

By **CAITLIN COLLINS**

**T**he idea of any home renovation makes me cringe. My husband and I are not especially handy, so the same words always seem to come up in our “to do or not to do?” debates: long, painful, expensive, disruptive. For us, it comes down to one thing: Will it be worth it? We recently decided to upgrade two closets for more storage space and better organization, and the results are in: total game-changer.

“Storage space in many homes is at a premium,” said Mike Pendergast, founder and owner of Great Closets of New England in West Simsbury. “Older homes were built without a lot of thought on closet space and even today, I’ve been in new homes where buyers didn’t realize the lack of closet space until they moved in. Most people will admit that the amount of clothes and ‘stuff’ they have is more than they need, but they still want it and want it accessible.”

Pendergast works with a small manufacturer who developed an all-wood closet product to compete with the industry-standard particle board component, which he said gives him a unique value proposition. Closet projects typically take one to two days, and he has expanded his business to include pantry, laundry, garage and mudroom spaces, in addition to



Before And After: Avon resident Scott Glenney's closet remodel



Molly Rutledge of Simsbury says her remodeled master bedroom closet has made her home life more productive and organized.

traditional closets.

The complaints he most often hears from inquiring customers: “My closets are too small!” “I can’t find anything in my closet!” “It’s too hard to keep organized!” “My wife has too many clothes!”

Anything here sound familiar?

Besides space optimization and organizational gains, a well-designed closet can have a positive effect on one’s mindset and mood.

“I find that the more organized my closet tends to be, the better my own well-being is,” said Heather Grahling, founder and owner of Vivid Hue Home in Farmington. “To me, a well-designed closet is one that is organized while embracing your individual style.”

Although closet design is mostly centered on functionality, Grahling explained that this doesn’t mean style needs to be sacrificed.

“I have a board [in my closet] where I place inspirational quotes or fashion trends that I love,” she said. “I utilize open space with my children’s artwork. It’s fun to get dressed in the morning and be greeted with a colorful whimsical picture.”

Grahling explained that it is important to maximize your closet space from floor to ceiling. Beyond investing in the right structure and storage containers, she also recommended decluttering your closet every season and shared two tricks.

“The first: I keep a garbage bag in

my closet and when I think I’m ready to donate an item, I toss it into the bag. At the end of the season, I revisit what’s in the bag. If I haven’t missed the item or pulled it back out, it’s safe to discard,” Grahling said. “The second: I turn all of my hangers with the hook-side facing out [incorrectly]. When I pull an item to wear, I return it to the closet hanging correctly. At the end of the season, any items still hanging ‘incorrectly’ are those I haven’t worn all season and, again, are good candidates to get rid of.”

Two clients of Great Closets of New England walked through their recent closet renovations and the effects they have had.

Molly Rutledge of Simsbury wanted to upgrade her home’s master closet. The setup was a familiar one: one long rod for hanging clothes and two large shelves above the rod to stack clothes. She disliked the unused, wasted space. Her renovation included more hanging space, more shelving, shoe storage and a few flat top surfaces for jewelry, wallet, keys, etc.

“The closet renovation has definitely made my home life more productive and organized because it is now so much easier for me to quickly put clean laundry away or find the specific piece of clothing or accessory that I am looking for,” said Molly. “This in turn allows me to have more time for enjoying other things in life. I wouldn’t hesitate to do

it all over again.”

Scott Glenney, a Realtor in Avon, explained that he recently had the closets in his newly constructed home renovated to replace poorly organized wire racks.

“We completely start and end our day in a different, more pleasant way,” he said. “Our walk-in closet went from a place where we stored some of our clothes to the place where we store most all of our clothes. It changed into a changing room complete with a lit, framed mirror, sectional benches, drawers, hanging space, tie racks, belt racks, jewelry boxes, shoe shelves and valet.”

Beyond his personal experience, he said that as a Realtor he is often consulted on home renovations and modifications, mostly regarding resale value.

“Although it is a case-by-case basis whether or not upgrading the closets — specifically in regards to selling the home at that moment — will achieve a return on investment, there is no doubt that when upgrading a closet for your own enjoyment, you can rest assured it adds value and appeal to your home should you decide to sell in the future,” Glenney said.

Whether you hire a professional builder or capitalize on one of the many DIY options at places like Home Depot, The Container Store or Lowe’s, facing a well-organized closet seems to be a great way to start and end the day.

One World Trade Center, formerly known as the “Freedom Tower,” and Oculus.

SARAH WESLEY LEMIRE



## EXHILIRATING AND HAUNTING

# GROUND ZERO

Visiting One World Trade Center, The 9/11 Memorial And Oculus

By SARAH WESLEY LEMIRE

From high atop One World Trade Center, the New York skyline stretches into the horizon, and iconic sights like the Brooklyn Bridge and Statue of Liberty look like scenery pieces from a hobby train set, as do the boats that chug along the Hudson River far below.

Rising a symbolic 1,776 feet above lower Manhattan, the 104-story tower officially opened in November 2014 as part of the newly rebuilt World Trade Center complex.

The massive structure, originally dubbed the “Freedom Tower” prior to its renaming in 2009, took nearly a decade to complete after the horrific events of Sept. 11, 2001. It’s the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere and sixth tallest in the world.

Home to high-profile tenants including Moody’s and Condé Nast, the top floors of One World Trade Center ([onewtc.com](http://onewtc.com)) are occupied by One World Observatory, an exhilarating tourist attraction.

Without divulging spoilers, the 47-second ride aboard one of the observatory’s “Skypods” is a meteoric, ear-popping ascent, and worth doing more than once, as the floor-to-ceiling “view” changes depending on the time of day.

After arriving on the 102nd floor, visitors are given a brief video presentation before a dramatic reveal provides them with their first glimpse of what they came for: unparalleled, panoramic views of the city.

“On a clear day, guests are able to



SARAH WESLEY LEMIRE

The entrance to the 9/11 Memorial & Museum features tridents salvaged from the North Tower.

see up to 50 miles away,” said Keith Douglas, managing director of One World Observatory. “Some say you can see the curvature of the earth.”

For an additional \$15, guests can purchase the One World Explorer iPad experience, an interactive tool that helps identify significant landmarks, along with providing their history and information.

And observatory concierges are also available to help visitors better understand what they are looking at.

“When visiting One World Observatory, we invite guests to engage with our Skyline Concierges, who conduct hourly presentations and are always available to help guests locate landmarks, and share their insider’s knowledge about New York City’s rich history, diverse culture and upcoming events to check out while you are in town,” Douglas said.

With paid admission, guests can dine or imbibe high above the city at one of its three eateries which include One Café, a casual food court; One Mix, which offers wine, spirits and small plates with no reservations required, and One Dine, a fine-dining restaurant that accepts reservations.

Being one of the city’s biggest tourist attractions, lines for One World Observatory are often considerable, especially during peak vacation times. To shave off some of the expected wait time, purchase tickets online ([oneworldobservatory.com](http://oneworldobservatory.com)) ahead of time.

Standard admission starts at \$34 per person and goes up to around \$67 depending on whether you want to spring for a VIP tour or priority admission, both of which offer express, skip-the-line benefits.

## The 9/11 Memorial & Museum

Occupying eight of the 16 acres of the World Trade Center site, the 9/11 Memorial & Museum ([911memorial.org](http://911memorial.org)) opened to the public on May 21, 2014, and honors the 2,983 victims of the 2001 and 1993 terrorist attacks, their loved ones, as well as survivors, first responders and rescue workers.



EVAN JOSEPH IMAGES

A sunset view from One World Observatory in One World Trade Center.

Housing more than 60,000 items in its collection, the museum displays 900 of them to help create a meaningful remembrance of the lives lost, their stories and an understanding of the events that unfolded on September 11 and on Feb. 26, 1993.

Located within the original World Trade Center site, visitors descend below ground into the dimly lit museum by staircase, passing two steel tridents salvaged from the façade of the North Tower and erected in a sunlit, glass atrium.

It is sobering, evoking at once both tragedy and divinity, a feeling that resonates during much of the two hours it typically takes to experience the museum and its exhibits.

For anyone old enough to recall the 9/11 attacks firsthand, going through the museum is a haunting reminder of some of America’s darkest hours.

Among the exhibits is a historical perspective that presents a chronological look at the events of 9/11, a memorial gallery exhibition commemorating the victims of both terrorist attacks, as well as artifacts including airplane fuselage, the “Ladder 3” fire truck, an elevator motor from one of the towers, and a preserved clothing store window with its merchandise still covered in ash.

Raw and emotional, the experience can be overwhelming.

However, there are also reminders of hope, heroism and the numerous

selfless acts performed during and after the attacks.

The Survivors’ Stairs, a remnant of the World Trade Center stairs originally located on Vesey Street, served as a route to safety for many people during the 9/11 attacks. They are permanently housed at the museum and stand as a powerful symbol of the survivors and their stories.

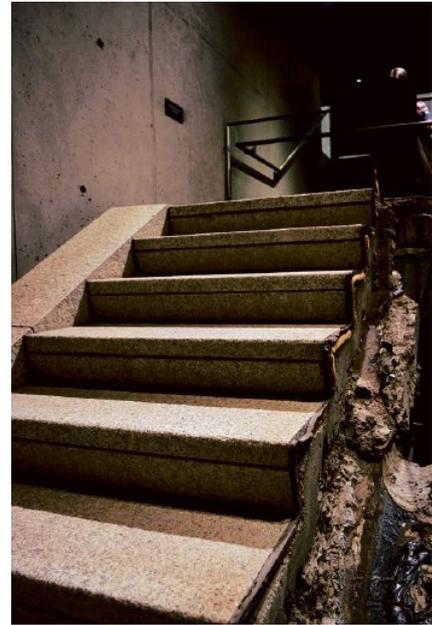
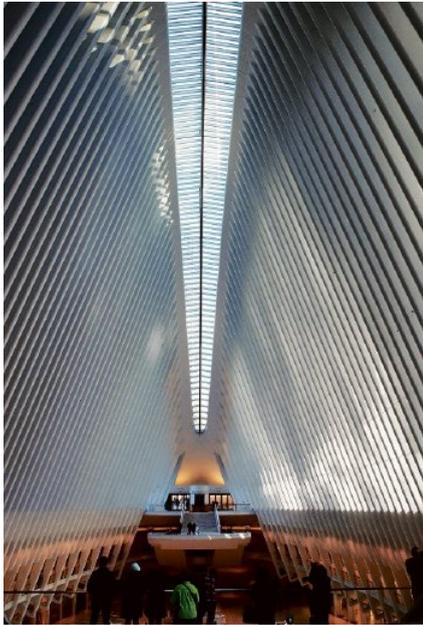
And located in the museum’s cavernous Foundation Hall, is the slurry wall, one of the original World Trade Center’s massive retaining walls that withstood the 9/11 attacks, and now represents determination in its scale and endurance.

Outside, on the Memorial Plaza, two enormous pools designed by Michael Arad and Peter Walker, entitled “Reflecting Absence,” are set in the footprints of the twin towers.

Each pool measures roughly an acre, and has a 30-foot waterfall on all sides, which all but obliterates the city’s noisy din in the rush of water. It’s both transcendent and aching, as the names of the nearly 3,000 victims are inscribed along the sides.

As requested by victims’ loved ones, many of the names are inscribed adjacent or next to friends, relatives or colleagues in what is called “Meaningful Adjacencies,” rather than alphabetical order.

Each morning a rose is placed on the names of the men, women and children who would have celebrated a birthday, paying them tribute, and



SARAH WESLEY LEMIRE

The soaring interior of the Oculus, left, and at the 9/11 Museum, the “Last Column” and the “Survivors’ Stairs.”

allowing visitors to honor them as well.

Among the grove of white oak trees in the museum plaza area stands a Callery pear tree surrounded by a protective, metal barrier:

The “Survivor Tree” as it’s known, was discovered at Ground Zero in October 2001. Burned, severely damaged, but still alive, the tree was removed and rehabilitated by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation.

In 2010, it was returned to the site. Now healthy and strong, the tree stands as a symbol of rebirth and survival.

As part of a program that began in 2013, seedlings from the Survivor Tree are sent to communities across the world that have endured tragedy as gesture of hope and healing. Past recipients include Boston, Paris, San Bernardino, Orlando and Newtown.

Several guided tours of the museum and memorial are available ([911memorial.org/tours](http://911memorial.org/tours)), as well as a handful of downloadable audio guide apps that include stories of 9/11 and the recovery at Ground Zero, offer self-guided pathway itineraries, and a history guide that’s age-appropriate for children ages 8 to 11.

## The Oculus

Newly opened in 2016, the World Trade Center Transportation Hub ([panynj.gov/wtcprogress/transportation-hub.html](http://panynj.gov/wtcprogress/transportation-hub.html)), located beneath the Memorial Plaza, with its above-ground “Oculus” is hard to miss, as the white landmark, with its remarkable architecture, juts out distinctively from the ground.

Embraced by some critics, and maligned by others (not unlike the Eiffel Tower, and that seemed to work out alright for Paris), the Oculus is a state-of-the-art hub that serves more than 250,000 commuters daily, and draws millions of visitors from all over the world.

Designed by architect Santiago Calatrava, the Oculus, with its giant, spiny ribs, is meant to evoke the image of a winged dove.

The architecture is undeniably extraordinary, especially on the inside, where the cavernous, main hall feels like a cross between an ethereal cathedral and something out of the Stanley Kubrick film “2001: A Space Odyssey.”

Measuring at approximately 800,000 square feet, the hub is the most integrated network of pedestrian connections in the city, connecting visitors to 13 different subway lines, the PATH railway

system, the Battery Park City Ferry Terminal and the 9/11 Memorial & Museum among other destinations.

The Oculus is also home to the Westfield World Trade Center shopping mall ([westfield.com/westfieldworldtradecenter](http://westfield.com/westfieldworldtradecenter)), which features more than 100 retailers offering everything from fashion and beauty outlets to technology and entertainment.

There are also plenty of eateries, both casual and upscale, with more planned restaurant openings on the horizon.

The 9/11 Ground Zero Tour ([911groundzero.com](http://911groundzero.com)) is one option for visitors seeking to experience One World Observatory, the 9/11 Museum & Memorial and the Ground Zero area in a single day.

The 90-minute tours, operated by knowledgeable locals, offer the history of Ground Zero, along with stops at St. Paul’s Chapel and the Firefighters 9/11 Memorial wall. Tickets also include expedited entry into the 9/11 Museum & Memorial, and admission to One World Observatory starting at \$99 for children and \$109 for adults.

The 9/11 Ground Zero Tour is also available without observatory and museum tickets, and starts at \$30 for children and \$35 for adults.



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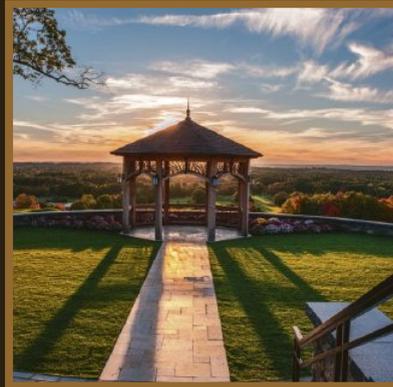
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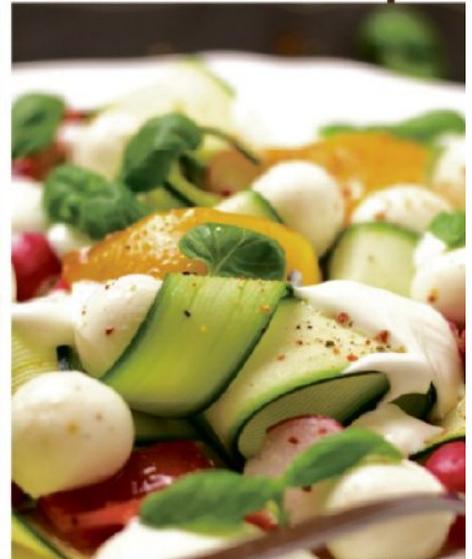
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## The Acura TLX is a Dream Drive

It comes as a bit of a surprise to realize that Acura's most popular sedan, the TLX, is now in its fourth year.

The TLX was, from the beginning, a sound package. The arrival in 2018 of the TLX V6 A-Spec should pique the interest of buyers seeking a sportier car with the choice of front- or all-wheel drive.

Setting this model apart are its tuned chassis and wheel and tire upgrades, meant to enhance the car's sporting credentials. This is reinforced with some unique styling touches, including modifications to the front grille and some rear-end upgrades that include a gloss-black deck lid spoiler and smoked LED taillights.

Inside, the front seats feature more bolstering and a thicker rim for the leather-wrapped steering wheel. Gauges have red highlights.

We've been impressed by both of the engines that power the TLX. The 206-horsepower, 2.4-liter is peppy and fuel-efficient. The 290-horsepower V6 is notable for its refined power. The four-cylinder motor uses an efficient dual-shaft eight-speed automatic transmission and comes only with front-wheel drive. Dual shaft automatics are generally not known for their smoothness, but this one is an exception, thanks in part to its use of a torque converter coupling between the engine and transmission.

The V6 is offered with a nine-speed automatic that has been recalibrated for a more refined feel. V6 buyers can take either the standard front-wheel drive or all-wheel drive. Front-wheel drive models with either engine use Acura Precision All-Wheel Steer, or P-AWS, which features independent left and right rear-wheel toe angle control to enhance handling precision, low-speed maneuverability, and high-speed stability.

Our last outing in a V6 TLX proved that this engine could serve as the poster child for V6 perfection. It's smooth, powerful, flexible, and even reasonably

economical. Excursions toward the motor's 6,800 rpm redline produced only a sporting snarl. The nine-speed automatic shifted well on wide-open-throttle runs but dithered when it was time to downshift for added punch when passing or merging. Sixty miles per hour arrived in six seconds flat.

The ride in the TLX is composed, quiet and comfortable over just about any surface. The car feels solid on rough pavement, even big potholes. Handling is good. While it's not a sports sedan, the TLX is fun to drive. It feels balanced and secure. We look forward to trying the A-Spec.

The front seats are very comfortable. While the back seat cushions are supportive, the space is tight for adults. The trunk is roomy, but its lid is small, a common problem today. It makes it difficult to get some items into the trunk. The rear seat backs are split and fold to expand the cargo room.

Optional features that were included on the last TLX car we reviewed were the Advance and Technology packages. In addition to several convenience features and a good-sounding 10-speaker ELS audio upgrade with HD radio reception, this package now also includes navigation, blind spot, and rear cross-traffic alert warnings as well as rain-sensing wipers and smart entry. All of these items, and more, are standard in the new A-Spec trim level.

Standard on all models are an effective lane-keep assist system that will actually steer the car through corners, and adaptive cruise control, which keeps a preset distance from the car ahead and will even apply the brakes to avoid a collision.

While these devices are a safety net for the driver – they do not substitute for driver alertness – their presence suggests that fewer drivers of TLXs with this equipment should leave the road or crash into the car ahead. These systems do not work under all conditions

and the driver remains the most important safety component in this and all other cars.

We were enthusiastic about the four-cylinder TLX right after Acura introduced the vehicle in 2015. The V6 with its "super handling" all-wheel drive, which can direct torque individually to the rear wheels to aid cornering, was even better. Adding to the TLX's appeal is a surprisingly low starting price for a car that competes in the entry-level luxury field.

The Acura TLXs we've had in the past were a dream to drive. The optional safety systems lent a level of semi-autonomy to its operation. These now come standard, including active cruise control and lane-keep assist. Blind-spot warning with the rear cross-traffic alert system is optional on the four-cylinder and base V6 models for 2018 but come on the new A-Spec.

The TLX is not overly roomy, and the central controls for the infotainment and climate systems, with the Honda-Acura dual-screen setup, is complex. The seats are supportive but low. That of course means that a shorter driver will have her visibility limited at intersections, and it can make getting in and out of the car a bit of a challenge, especially if the car is parked close to a curb. Fuel economy is good, however. We averaged 27.8 miles per gallon with a V6 all-wheel drive review car.

**2018 Acura TLX: Starts at \$33,000 plus \$950 destination charges.**

<b>Engines:</b>	2.4	3.5	A-Spec
<b>HP:</b>	206	290	290
<b>Torque:</b>	182	267	267
<b>EPA FWD:</b>	23/33	20/32	20/30
<b>EPA AWD:</b>	N/A	21/30	20/29

## LAST WORD

# Sick Flags

By SARAH WESLEY LEMIRE

I've always loved rides. I was the kid who'd stand on tiptoes at the "You-Must-Be-This-Tall-to-Ride" sign, and then sob at the entrance when I didn't meet the height requirement for the roller coaster.

Pretty much all my childhood birthdays were spent at Valleyfair, a wholesome, milk-drinking, Midwest amusement park not far from where I grew up.

The ritual was always the same. My mom would drop me and my friends off in the morning, then return at an agreed-upon time to pick us up.

Most years, I'd conveniently "forget" when that was, and hit each ride at least one more time before finally meeting her in the parking lot, where she sat wild-eyed and seething after waiting for hours in our unairconditioned car.

Articulating each word through clenched teeth, a skill I still hope to master one day, she'd promise that I was never, ever, going back; something that would slip her mind until the following year, when I'd do it all over again.

Unwavering in my devotion to theme parks, I eventually honeymooned at Disney, and once my kids were old enough, they, too, were indoctrinated.

Unfortunately, however, somewhere between the age of 25 and having to eat dinner before dark, my tolerance for rides, of any kind, evaporated into thin air; not unlike my eyesight, ability to recall movie titles, and a distinguishable waistline.

I discovered this on a sweltering July day back in the early 2000s, after taking our young daughters to spend the day at Six Flags.

It started off well enough.

We walked around, watched the kiddie shows and did the usual stuff.

Being ride enthusiasts, my husband and I even took a few solo turns on the big roller coasters between taking the kids on the more family-friendly amusements.

And, just because I could, I indulged myself in a few of my favorite fair delicacies, including a couple of frozen Cokes, pepperoni pizza, chocolate Dippin' Dots, fried dough, part of a burger and a handful or two of my daughter's uneaten fries.

It was on The Balloon Race, a seemingly innocent ride in which occupants enjoy soaring "up, up and away" in a colorful, faux, hot-air balloon, that whooshes round, round, round and around, and around, and around, again, that I realized I wasn't feeling so good.

Swaying slightly as I disembarked, I signaled to my husband, telling him in a panicked whisper that I was at DEFCON 1 on the nausea scale, and without immediate intervention, it was going to be nuclear.

A frantic, gift shop search produced an unexpected miracle: a travel-sized pack of Pepto-Bismol, which, all things considered, should probably be sold in bulk near the corndogs and upside-down rides.

Somehow I managed to choke down the chalky pills in hopes of averting disaster.

But I was too far gone.

A sainted martyr in Keds, I reassured my husband and kids that I was fine, insisted they go on a few more rides and told them to meet me at the car.

Queasy, stumbling and sweating profusely, I barely made it past the park gates.

Unable to go any further, I

succumbed and stretched out on the sidewalk next to a garbage can.

I lay immobilized for what seemed like hours as people walked by, looking at me suspiciously as they dumped their empty soda cups into the trash.

Sometime later my husband and kids arrived, and nearly kept going, thinking I was some unfortunate patron who'd indulged in a-few-too-many at the beer tent, before recognizing the orange shirt and jean shorts I'd left the house in that morning.

They helped me to the car, and we began the hour-long ride home.

Five minutes in, we had to pull over into a grassy, church parking lot filled with folks just getting out of a service.

I crawled to a shady spot under a tree while my husband nervously stood a few feet away, unsure of Spouse-Sick-In-Church-Grass protocol, and the kids cried in the car.

A couple sitting at a nearby picnic table hastily collected their belongings and moved to another spot.

In a testament to my rock-solid constitution, I succeeded in keeping the contents of my stomach from becoming a public exhibition, and eventually made it home.

I'd like to say that I learned a valuable lesson that day about the inherent dangers of mixing Dippin' Dots and balloon rides, and never made the same mistake again.

But I hate to lie.



*Sarah Wesley Lemire is an avid football fan, helicopter parent, movie queen, and travel junkie. Originally from Minneapolis, she has spent the last two decades trying to lose her Midwestern accent. Follow her on Twitter@swlemire*

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