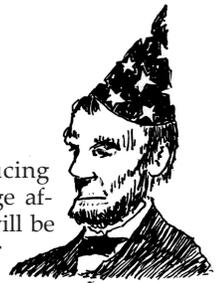


CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 32 : NUMBER 1 FEBRUARY 2022



Planning a Future for CCS

About 50 years ago the Cornwall Board of Education took a hard look at the way rural schools in Vermont dealt with declining enrollments. Cornwall Consolidated School was in the middle of one of its cycles of decline and the board felt it would be instructive to see how the schools up north managed under similar conditions.

What they found was that the Vermont schools had learned to adapt, adjusting class sizes by combining grades for example, while continuing to meet state and federal requirements. The character of the schools and their meaning to their communities never changed.

Cornwall's board took these examples to heart and over the intervening 50 years has fine-tuned the art of adapting. Now and then enrollment drops so low that questions of sustainability crop up: should CCS be closed? Should it be merged with a neighboring school like Kellogg in Falls Village? These have never been popular solutions and they aren't today.

Every year Cornwall gets a look at its future when the New England School Development Council (NESDEC) produces its enrollment survey for the town. In a handful of charts, past, present, and future num-

bers at CCS are displayed for the town's planners. Recent history at CCS has shown how bumpy that trend line can be. For example, in 2016-2017 the population dropped 17%, well below 100 students, and two years later shot up 22% as family relocations caused by Covid-19 began to be felt.

NESDEC cautions that the estimates closest to the present are the most reliable and the Board of Education has taken that to heart. Board Chair Emilie Pryor said, "We discussed the report in our board meeting but there was hesitation embracing those distant inflated numbers."

The reason for caution is a projection that by 2031-2032 the enrollment at CCS will be 307, higher than it's ever been. How this is to come about is a mystery. The demographics in Cornwall resulting from Covid-19 have brought a gratifying increase in the number of students, but births in town remain fairly steady.

One macabre inference might be that NESDEC expects a whole generation of elders to die out and that their houses will be

sold to young, reproducing couples. Or maybe a large affordable housing estate will be built here with a similar result.

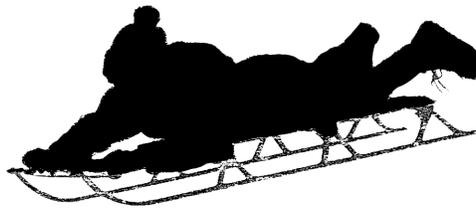
Whatever really will happen won't become clear for another seven or eight years. Meanwhile, CCS continues to adapt and thrive. —Lisa L. Simont

Affordable Housing Adopted

With housing at the top of its list of goals for the upcoming two years, the Cornwall Board of Selectmen kicked off 2022 with a unanimous vote to adopt the Cornwall Affordable Housing Plan at the year's first public meeting on January 4. In introducing the vote, First Selectman Gordon Ridgway noted "the need for a coherent, practical, local approach to making more housing available to more people," particularly in the face of rising housing costs and shrinking housing availability.

The plan is also required by the state of Connecticut. Cornwall aims to create a total of 30 new housing units by 2026 (10 units each of affordable housing, rental units, and attainable senior housing). The Cornwall Affordable Housing Plan Steering Committee developed the plan over the course of the past year, a process that included three pub-

(continued on page 2)



FEBRUARY 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 ● ■ Inland Wetlands/ Water Courses Meeting 7:00 pm Zoom ■ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Zoom	2	3	4	5
6	7 ■ Region One Board of Education Meeting 6:30 pm Zoom	8 ● ■ Waste Water Committee 5 pm Zoom ■ Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting 7 pm Zoom ■ Housatonic River Commission 7:30 pm Zoom	9	10	11	12 ■ Prof. Jim Fishman and Gregory Galloway Crime Fiction of the 30s and 40s 5 pm Zoom
13	14 ■ Park & Recreation Meeting 6:30 pm Zoom	15 ◆ Deadline: March Chronicle Copy ■ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Zoom	16 ○ ■ Board of Education Meeting 4:15 pm Zoom ■ Emergency Preparedness Forum 7 pm Zoom	17 ○ ■ Cornwall Conservation Commission Meeting 10:30 am Zoom ■ Board of Finance Meeting 7 pm Zoom	18	19 ■ Joel Simon Author Talk 5 pm Zoom
20	21 PRESIDENTS' DAY	22	23 ● ◆ Region One ABC Committee 7 pm Central Office	24 ◆ Senior Trip to Connecticut Flower & Garden Show 9 am-3 pm UCC Parish House Parking Lot	25	26 ◆ Artist Reception: Nick Jacobs - 4 pm Library
27	28 ■ ZBA* 7 pm Zoom	This Month: Wednesdays: ◆ Drop in Playgroup, 10:30-11:30 am Library; Thursdays: ◆ Afterschool Art Program, 3:30-5 pm Library		■ Event Online ◆ Event In Person		

*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

(continued from page 1)

lic forums and subsequent revisions. The final version incorporated one new strategy—addressing the need to keep pressure on the state for modernized and simplified water supply and septic requirements.

So, what's next? The plan calls for the creation of a housing commission to keep efforts on track and coordinated, including establishing and administering a housing trust fund to help finance home repairs and down payments. The plan also calls for a housing coordinator to assist individuals with housing needs. The Board of Selectmen will be appointing members to the commission and a coordinator, likely after the town budget is completed this month.

As for the strategies that require amendments to Planning and Zoning, according to Chair Anna Timell, the committee's first priority is completing the ongoing clean-up of existing regulations to make them more accessible and user friendly, including grouping like regulations, adding definitions for clarity, and providing links to relevant statutes as needed. She expects that process to take most of 2022, with affordable housing taken up at the end of the year. No formal decisions have yet been made by the committee, but it's expected that regulations related to accessory apartments will be up first. Timell says that when the time comes, all changes will be handled "one amendment at a time, with a public hearing for each."

If you're interested in serving on the housing commission or as housing coordinator, please reach out to the Board of Selectmen at cwselectmen@optonline.net. According to Ridgway, "there's plenty of work for individuals to do if they're interested in helping with housing advocacy."

—Meg Tansey

From Pirandello to The Pickwick Papers

When he is not performing at Saint Marks in the Bowery, or in other progressive churches, or at the Berlin Theatre Festival, or in Paris or Italy, or off Sardinia on Asinara, island of the white donkeys, or storming the barricades, actor Tom Walker has for 25 years been reading to us on Boxing Day. These readings are, he says, "theatrical in a traditional way," and they come to Cornwall's traditional and non-traditional people of the (as the late Marie Prentice called it) "Pewter Ghetto."

So how did this begin? It was Lisa Simont who suggested it to her friend Tom, choosing the British "Boxing Day"—the day after Christmas—as the date. Usually Tom performs it in the North Cornwall Church (most recently, alas, by Zoom).

His original literary advisor was Spencer Klaw, and the rules were that he choose good literature that could be read in under an

hour. (Once, when a reading threatened to be longer, Jeremy Brecher called from the back of the church, "Cut it short!" and Tom, ever sensitive to the audience—and to the fact that a blizzard raged outside—complied.)

Favorites have been Dickens ("He wrote a lot of Christmas stories, much in demand back then"), Thurber, E. B. White, *The Wind in the Willows*. "I wanted to read some Hemingway, but so many of his stories are about alcoholism, adultery, and murder that I chose fishing."

Tom is an original member of the Living Theater, and is now also its archivist. For over 45 years he has espoused and exemplified its principles and promise: the avant-garde, pacifism, anarchistic revolution, jazz-beat free speech, nonviolence—what Al Pacino, in a tribute, called "high political theater...a hot, breathing, pulsating, vibrant experience." This may seem a far cry from his performances in Cornwall of Mole and Ratty and *The Thirteen Clocks* and *Winnie the Pooh*. But wait! How about the feisty Toad in his motor car? Or that subversive Golux? The dreamer Walter Mitty? Or that activist Charlotte writing, "SOME PIG?"

We lucky folk have had that vibrant experience too, tamed though it may be. In Tom's readings, the words leap from the page; he creates with them a world elsewhere. And it is appropriate that he brings these gifts on Boxing Day, a time, originally, for bringing gifts to the poor. We are the richer for them.

—Ella Clark

Don't Look Down

It is August and I am looking at the end of the world. At my feet, on the ground, in the woods. Here in Cornwall. Or maybe what I imagine the end of the world could look like through a *Mothra vs Godzilla* lens. It's the Asian jumping worm.

Go ahead and chuckle. I also chuckled a few years ago when I first read about this vile underground disaster in a brochure being handed out at the annual Mad Gardeners symposium. I couldn't imagine that a worm would be that much trouble. But that whitish ring around its body—I had seen that before. And the tell-tale mound of what looks like coffee grounds, but is actually the humus layer of soil digested and expelled. Worm poop. I had also seen that.

This was spring of 2020. A lot of us were gardening that first summer of Covid, buying plants, trading plants. I was continuing my decade-long effort to resuscitate our woods, cutting and poisoning bittersweet and burning bush, pulling up a never-ending supply of garlic mustard and bittercress. And reaping the rewards of working in the woodland—the sweet and musky scent of the humus floor, the spring ephemerals that spontaneously arise once the in-

Welcome

Genevieve Betty Dinneen
to Elizabeth and Garrick Dinneen

Finley Michael Heaney
to Danielle and Steve Heaney

Kiva Boynton Meneau
to Darcy Boynton and Theophile Meneau

Goodbye to Friends

David Chamberlain Heininger
Joy Setton

Congratulations

Lydia A. MacDavid and Jacob K. Tomeny
Lisa C. Rivard and Thomas J. Kearns III

Land Transfers

Joseph Marchetti to Aaron S. Pequignot and
Ingrid K. Nordskog, land with all buildings
thereon at 176 Kent Road, for \$150,000.

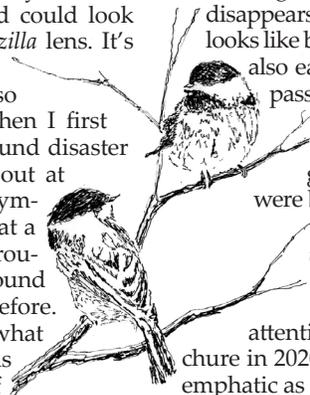
vasives are cleared. No jumping worms here, thankfully.

I was counting on them staying on the other side of the stream where the house and the plant beds are. If I saw one, I would squish it thoroughly with my boots, suppressing my nausea. But as spring became summer, the creatures started appearing with frequency and I began investigating online.

The most important thing you need to know is there is currently nothing that will get rid of, or stop, the spread of Asian jumping worms. So, let me get to the punchline: When you see one, kill it immediately. When mature, they can lay up to 60 eggs without needing a sexual partner to procreate. By August there might be as many as 25 per square foot writhing just under the surface of the soil or under leaves or mulch. The topsoil containing the nutrients for woodland plants disappears, every inch replaced by what looks like brown Dippin' Dots. The worms also eat the precious mycorrhiza that pass nutrients between trees and they spread heavy metals in its place. And as a final coup de grace, they release seeds that were buried in the soil—the ones that can germinate in the depleted soil seem to only be weeds. More garlic mustard.

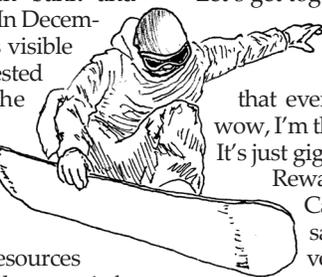
I wish I had paid more attention to that Mad Gardener brochure in 2020. I wish someone had been as emphatic as I am now. During that year the worms jumped the stream and made their way into the woods, abetted by the abundance of rain. They were everywhere, hatching and eating the soil, turning it into poop. By August I could barely walk in the woods; the smell of worm excrement was overpowering. And my thoughts turned to the future: would the trees, the shrubs and plants in the woods survive the destruction of their food source year over year? Will this 5 x 1/2-inch nemesis be the animal that takes down the human race?

The worms finally died sometime in late



October, by which time every inch of soil in about seven acres of stream bank and woodland had been affected. In December the erosion on slopes was visible as rain washed away the digested earth crumbles left by the worms. I won't know until spring how the plants will respond to the sludge that this mess will turn into once the snow melts.

There are many online resources on the worms but most offer the same information. This is one that is specific to our area: bit.ly/jumpingworms. Read and weep.



—Dee Salomon

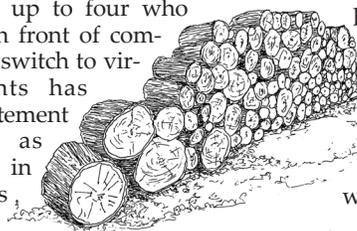
Giggles and Smarts

In many ways life in the hinterland is a mirror image of what is going on in the big world. Even when it comes to ideas about what makes for great entertainment. So, if you miss the Westminster Dog Show, a competition of pedigree and breeding, you can still enjoy the Great Country Mutt Show of Cornwall, a celebration of, and for, our much-beloved canine pets. The Ag Fair has its cow chip bingo, which is much more exciting than the state lottery.

Although, if you want to be a millionaire, just like so many people who participate in game shows, you might be out of luck. Yes, Cornwall has Trivia Night, a great equivalent of all those many television programs that come and go and therefore get reinvented every decade or so. But winning in this event doesn't get you money. To the contrary. When puzzle masters Gary Steinkohl and Casey Cook started their quiz show under the umbrella of the Cornwall Association with 50 participants grouped in competitive teams of up to eight at the library in April 2019, it was conceived as a fundraising event. You had to pay to get in. It didn't curb the enthusiasm one bit. A few participants turned it into a bring-your-own team dinner. "Some actually showed up with china and tablecloths and candles," says Gary, the association president. The biggest turnout happened when the community room at Trinity Retreat Center in West Cornwall was packed with almost 100 contestants, ready to answer a wide array of questions.

A recent rendition in January was drifting towards a range of domestic and international matters instead ("In what state is the geographic center of the 48 lower states?") and included questions about the upcoming Winter Olympics.

The pandemic brought a halt to the in-person format, with the exception of smaller groups of up to four who gather in homes in front of computer screens. The switch to virtual Zoom nights has dampened the excitement somewhat. Not as many people join in as before. But, says



Steinkohl, "It's about the best we can do. Let's get together while staying apart."

With one proviso only (because you no longer need to pay a fee): "Our motivation is that everyone has fun as compared to, wow, I'm the smartest of the group tonight. It's just giggles, laughs, and smarts."

Rewarding for the hosts as well, says Casey Cook. "One of the biggest satisfactions for us is when we reveal the answer. Everyone hears everyone else's reactions. A whole bunch of 'yeahs' when they got it. And a number of 'Oh, I should have gotten that.'" For Cook, it's obvious. "I think that is one reason why people enjoy it."

And there is your answer to all of it.

—Juergen Kalwa

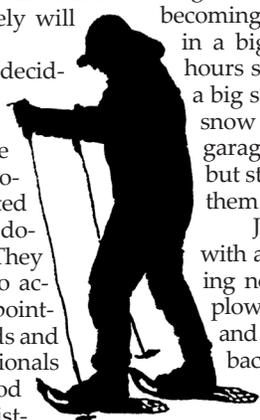
Kudos for Community Service

Lifelong residents Pat and Jerry Blakey found donating blood to be an extremely worthwhile cause. As the late Scoville Soule described it in a 2009 *Chronicle* article: "For purity of motive it's hard to conceive of a simple act of good will that beats donating blood for the benefit of someone the donor doesn't even know or most likely will ever know."

In the late 1990s, the Blakeys decided to make it easier for town-folk to carry out this magnanimous gesture by persuading the Red Cross to deploy its Bloodmobile to their sparsely populated area by guaranteeing enough donors to make it worth the trip. They set up the UCC Parish House to accommodate the number of appointments they had made with friends and neighbors as well as the professionals who would be taking the blood and the generous volunteers assisting in the whole process.

Over time, drives have been held three or four times a year and the Blakeys' work continued as they posted signs and passed out flyers to encourage walk-in contributors. They coordinated the events with the Red Cross, greeted everyone at the door, fed them while they were there, thanked them as they left, and cleaned up once they were gone. With the Covid pandemic, the whole business moved to Trinity Retreat Center because additional space was needed for social distancing, but UCC has maintained sponsorship.

Now Pat and Jerry have decided it is time to step back from the process and let someone else take charge. That person or persons have not yet come forward, but hopefully the community will not let the Blakeys' hard work go to waste and someone will take up the mantle. It may not be easy to surpass the tantalizing chicken and cranberry sandwiches with which donors were enticed, but the



warm atmosphere of a community gathering should not be hard to sustain.

—Bill Goulet

Riding the Plow

I spent most of January 8 plowing snow in East Cornwall with Jim Vanicky, a seven-year veteran of Cornwall's road crew. When I met up with Jim at the town garage at 8:30 A.M., he had already been driving since 7 the night before, as had the rest of the town crew: brother Rick Vanicky, John Malahan Jr., foreman Don Reid, and 19-year veteran Stephen Clarke.

Outside, the blizzard was in full force, as it had been all night. Most of the time drivers drive alone, day or night, and the men were looking forward to company and help from the selectmen. We selectmen were all there, and my ride that day with Jim would be spent chiefly wiping condensation from the inside of the truck's windshield so that Jim could see to plow. How the drivers had managed alone, at night and with visibility zero, was difficult for me to imagine.

Don Reid came to fuel up while I waited for Jim to put chains on. I asked Don how long a driver could operate a truck before becoming exhausted. Don allowed as how, in a big 1978 storm, he had driven 37 hours straight before coming in. During a big storm, if there is a lull, Cornwall's snow crew may sleep sitting up at the garage. They once had a cot to sleep on, but state regulations took it away from them.

Jim had been driving a truck fitted with an angle plow, but he was switching now to one which had a roll-back plow that could throw snow higher and further off the road. Once we were back on the road, I looked out the window as the big roll-back curled snow to the right like a bow wave. Four passes with the plow were needed to clear each road to a full two-lane width. The last passes, to my unpracticed eye, seemed to graze mailboxes and guardrails. Jim's accuracy was uncanny. "I plow by feel more than sight," he told me.

Frequent hazards faced by drivers are people on skis, parked cars, and kids on sleds, or kids playing in snowdrifts. "It would really help us if people kept a close watch on their kids when the plows are out," Jim said.

Once when I put my windshield-wiping cloth down, I spotted a white glove tucked down next to Jim's seat, and I asked him what it was for. "Steve calls it his Michael Jackson glove," he said, laughing. "The hydraulic unit for the sander gets so hot you can't touch it with your bare hand."

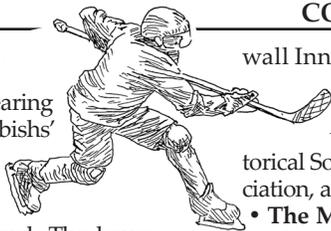
We broke two bolts on the plow frame just before noon on Great Hollow Road. Jim made a temporary fix, but we had to return to base to do the thing properly. Then we went out again.

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At about 3, after clearing drifting snow beyond Kubish's farm, we turned right to clear the long push to Harriet Clark's and got stuck in Harriet's dooryard. The house, buried in snow to the windowsills, afforded a warm refuge from the storm while we waited for Rick Vanicky and his truck to pull us out. Inside we sipped hot coffee and ate Christmas cookies in a kitchen that seemed lost in time, while we listened to Harriet, 101 years old last fall, tell us about what real snow had been like when she was young.

—Earl Brecher (Reprinted from February 1996 issue, back when we had real snows.)



Cornwall Briefs

- **High-speed fiber optics** will soon be deployed to the town by Optimum Altice as an investment to reinforce its commitment to rural areas, Cornwall being one of the first, in the hope of gaining residents' loyalty and support and retaining their patronage. Capable of delivering broadband speeds of up to 10 gbps, the state-of-the-art system would cost around \$5 million if the town (i.e., taxpayers) were footing the bill instead of Altice. The proposed locations of three equipment cabinets are slated for the public rights-of-way on Great Hill Road, Furnace Brook Road, and Sharon Goshen Turnpike. Altice will soon send out notices to the surrounding properties, and residents will be given 30 days to provide feedback before installation begins.
- **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds** will total \$403,085 for Cornwall over two years, roughly half each year. Guidelines for use of the funds require a pandemic-caused loss or other related connection. The committee established by the selectmen has already received a number of applications and plans to make awards on a rolling basis. At its first meeting on January 18, 11 awards totaling \$104,000 were made, in amounts ranging from \$3,000 to \$15,000, to applicants who thus far had completed the necessary paperwork. Recipients included: the Cornwall Child Center, Corn-

wall Inn, Hughes Library, United Church of Christ, Northwest Connecticut Arts Council, Little Guild, Greenwood Counseling, Cornwall Historical Society, Housatonic Valley Association, and the Cornwall Library.

- **The Materials Innovation and Recycling Authority (MIRA)** in Hartford has yet to sign an agreement to continue receiving our town waste and ship it elsewhere after it officially closes in June. Estimated future payments amount to 15% over current costs.
- **Covid** has been spotlighted on the selectmen's agenda since March 2020. Omicron infection rates here and statewide are currently high, even though vaccination rates are also high. Volunteers are busy distributing test kits and masks from the state. Email cornwalltestquestions@gmail.com with questions or to request either one. Up-to-date Covid-19 information is on the town website. Also, free test kits are available from the federal government here: covidtests.gov.
- **The Food and Fuel Fund** paid out nearly five times as much in December as it had a year earlier to help residents meet essential needs. Support from donations is lagging behind increased demand. Consider helping at P.O. Box 97, Cornwall. —Bill Goulet

Events & Announcements

The Assessor's Office is accepting applications for the Elderly and Totally Disabled Homeowners Program. Applicants must be at least 65 years old or 100% disabled and a homeowner in the town of Cornwall. The income limit for this program is \$38,100 for single persons and \$46,400 for married couples. The filing period is February 1 to May 15, 2022. Please contact the assessor's office for an application. Phone: 672-2703; email: cwlassessor@optonline.net.

At the Cornwall Library

Join Gregory Galloway and Jim Fishman via Zoom on Saturday, February 12, at 5 P.M. as they discuss detective novels of the 30s and 40s, as well as Greg's newly published noir crime novel *Just Thieves*. Registration required at cornwalllibrary.org.

Joel Simon will discuss his book *We Want to Negotiate: The Secret World of Kidnapping, Hostages and Ransom* via Zoom on Saturday, February 19, at 5 P.M. Simon was the executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) from 2006 to 2021. His writing on media issues has appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Guardian*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. He is a regular columnist for *Columbia Journalism Review*. Un-

der his leadership, CPJ was honored with the Thomas J. Dodd Prize in International Justice and Human Rights, a News & Documentary Emmy, and the 2018 Chatham House Prize. His book, *The New Censorship: Inside the Global Battle for Media Freedom* was published in 2014. Registration is required via the Cornwall Library website.

The Cornwall Association presents an emergency preparedness forum via Zoom on Wednesday, February 16, at 7 P.M. Cornwall's Emergency Management Director Diane Beebe will discuss how to prepare you and your family to manage through and after an emergency. Planning for an emergency may just save your life! More info and details at cornwallassociation.org.

Cornwall Park and Recreation Senior Trip to the Connecticut Flower and Garden Show 2022, will be Thursday, February 24, from 9 A.M. to 3 P.M. Meet at the UCC Parish House parking lot. \$20 per person. Limited seating. RSVP by February 18 to Jen Markow at prcornwall@gmail.com. Call or text 860-480-0600.

Art in Cornwall

"The Isles of Langerhans: Views of Cornwall," a collection of Nick Jacobs's photographs of Cornwall landscapes, will be on view and available for sale beginning with an opening reception on February 26, at 4 P.M. at the Cornwall Library. Covid restrictions will be in place for the opening. Registration is required. See the Cornwall Library website for details.

Mark Wilson's show "Mutable" will be on display until February 22.

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CORNWALL CHRONICLE

cornwallchronicle.org

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Cold February Ahead

For what it's worth (and who knows the answer to that) the Farmers' Almanac is predicting that February this year will be "a season of shivers." So, stir up the fire and get your hand out of its mitten long enough to write the Chronicle a nice check. Thanks!

THE CHRONICLE NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

We hope you enjoy this on-line edition of the Cornwall Chronicle. Remember that all our revenues come from readers like you, and we need your help to continue producing this electronic edition along with the print edition. If your contribution is \$15 or more, we'd be glad to mail the print edition to any out-of-town address. Please mail your tax deductible gifts to: Cornwall Chronicle Inc. PO Box 6, West Cornwall, CT 06796. Comments, letters and news may be E-mailed to the publishers at: info@cornwallchronicle.org