

THOMPSON VILLAGER

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Putnam Middle School hosts Young Entrepreneur Showcase



Jason Bleau

Ezlynn, Lillow, Adelaide, three of the young vendors at the Young Entrepreneur Showcase, present their decorative goods for sale.

BY JASON BLEAU
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

PUTNAM — Putnam Middle School hosted the second annual Young Entrepreneur Showcase on Nov. 14, allowing local students to learn proper etiquette of selling their goods to prospective customers.

The event is organized by the Putnam Middle School PTO and serves to bridge the gap between Putnam Middle School students and the community while allowing the children to learn from more experienced vendors who set up shop throughout the day.

Jamie Thompson, President of the Putnam Middle School PTO, said the event was conceptualized to allow students some hands-on experience during one of the busiest times of the year – the holiday giving season.

"We came up with a code of conduct that the kids could look at for greeting customers, welcoming smiles, answering questions, selling from their own space, and learning how to make change for people," said Thompson. "Really, we help them understand how to present their best product with pride and putting their best foot forward. We want them to be proud of their work and how they present that to the community."

That community connection is at the heart of it all because it's not about making money, but about teaching children how to properly interact with consumers and brings the public in to see what Putnam Middle School is all about.

"This is our future. These kids are going to be our community, so getting them to realize they are part of something bigger than themselves is an important lesson from this day," said Thompson.

Only two years in, the event is still very much growing, but there is promise that the Young Entrepreneur Showcase will grow into an annual tradition – one that allows the children to understand the larger world around them and also help continue to make Putnam Middle School an ever-more-present part of the community at large.

Local speech-language pathologist's educational clock named among USA TODAY's Best Toys and Games of 2026



WOODSTOCK — A Connecticut speech-language pathologist, author, and entrepreneur is celebrating national recognition for a product created to help children better understand one of life's most important skills: time.

Mindy Hudon, M.S., CCC-SLP, co-owner of Achieve Speech & Language Services in

Woodstock and creator of the Bee A TimeKeeper® clock, has been recognized as

one of USA TODAY's Best 2026 Toys & Games.

Turn To TOYS *page* A8

Putnam Kia unveils all-new state-of-the-art dealership expanded service facility



Courtesy

From left to right-
Selectman Mike Bogdanski, Selectwoman Gloria Marion, Craig Gates, Denny Gates, Mayor Barney Seney, Deputy Mayor Scott Pempek.

PUTNAM — The Gates group proudly announces the opening of their latest dealership. Putnam Kia, a staple of the local automotive community located at 157 Providence Pike, proudly announces the debut and grand opening celebration of its brand-new, expanded sales, service, and parts facility.

Spanning 50,000 square feet of modern architectural design, the new multi-brand campus—home to Putnam Kia and its Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, and RAM family—is designed from the ground up with the customer experience in mind.

The upgraded location features:

An Expansive Glass-Front Showroom: Showcasing the latest lineup of Kia sedans, hybrid options, and all-electric vehicles like the Kia EV6 and EV9.

A Modernized Service & Parts Department: Engineered with expanded service bays, high-efficiency equipment, and a comfortable customer lounge complete with an internet bar, coffee, and snacks.

Enhanced Digital & Customization Tools: Interactive areas allowing drivers to build and tailor their vehicles on-site alongside dedicated finance and delivery areas.

"We are thrilled to officially open the doors to

Turn To KIA *page* A8

Killingly Intermediate School awarded $226,000 grant to expand after-school opportunities for students

KILLINGLY — Killingly Public Schools is proud to announce that Killingly Intermediate School (KIS) has been awarded a $226,000 Connecticut 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) Grant to support and expand after-school programming opportunities for students. The highly competitive state grant will provide funding over a three-year period, with the potential for renewal for an additional three years, creating a sustainable framework for enriching academic, enrichment, and student support opportunities beyond the traditional school day.

The Connecticut State Department of Education recently announced more than $15 million in grant awards statewide to expand access to high-quality after-school programming. The award secured by Killingly Intermediate School represents a significant investment in the educational success and well-being of students and families in the Killingly community.

The grant application was developed through a collaborative partnership between KIS and Monitor My Health, a nonprofit organization focused on long-term health and wellness outcomes for youth and communities. School and community leaders worked together to identify opportunities to expand programming while addressing the needs of students and families.

"This award is outstanding news for our students, families, and community," said Paul Haughey, Superintendent of Killingly Public Schools. "The 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant provides an incredible opportunity to expand meaningful learning experiences beyond the school day while supporting the academic, social, emotional, and personal growth of our students. We are grateful to everyone who contributed to securing this funding and look forward to working collaboratively to ensure these resources have a lasting impact on the students we serve."

The expanded program will provide students with access to academic enrichment, hands-on learning activities, youth development opportunities, and additional supports designed to help students thrive both in and out of the classroom. As part of the grant requirements, the program will also include a summer learning component exclusively for middle school students.

Matthew Sierakowski, Principal of Killingly Intermediate School, credited the success of the application to strong partnerships and a shared commitment to students.

"This grant is a tremendous accomplishment for our school community and reflects what is possible when people come together around a common goal," said Matthew Sierakowski. "We recognized the need to preserve and expand opportunities for our stu-

Turn To GRANT *page* A8

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Hellstar notches another week of wins

MIAMI, Fla./NEW HAVEN — Hellstar continued its impressive season last Tuesday night, defeating the Cold Hearts 82–69 in an OTE league matchup in Miami to secure its 10th win of the season.

Hellstar was led by a standout performance from Jalen Taggart, who poured in 30 points while knocking down seven of his 11 attempts from beyond the arc. Taggart also contributed seven rebounds and three assists, providing a spark on both ends of the floor.

Bright Delves added 16 points, five rebounds and six assists, while Antoine Caughman Jr. chipped in 17 points and six rebounds to help pace the Hellstar offense.

Siy Siaisiai contributed five points, nine rebounds and two blocks, while Zack Dawson finished with four points and five assists. Ant Pannell added four points, seven rebounds and two blocks, and Jason Nistrio made an impact defensively with seven rebounds and three blocks.

Isaac Olaniba recorded two points, three rebounds and two steals, Ty Grudzien finished with two points, four rebounds and four steals, and Amayas Hall-Chiari added two points.

Following the victory, head coach Tom Espinosa praised his team's effort and competitiveness throughout the contest.

"Great win tonight. Proud of the boys and how we competed for 36 minutes," Espinosa said.

The win moves Hellstar to 10–2 on the season, continuing its strong run in OTE league play.

Hellstar delivered one of its biggest wins of the season Wednesday night, knocking off nationally ranked high school the City Reapers, widely regarded as the most talented team in OTE, by a score of 87–75 in Miami.

The victory moves Hellstar to 11–2 on the season and into third place in the OTE standings!

"What a win! So many guys stepped up tonight," head coach Tom Espinosa said. "We scored 34 baskets and of those 34, 23 were assisted. Also, we won the rebounding battle and outscored them by 30 points from points off the bench. You only beat teams like this when you play together."

Zack Dawson and Antoine Caughman Jr. led the scoring effort with 20 points apiece. Dawson added seven assists and four rebounds, while Caughman contributed six rebounds.

Jalen Taggart chipped in 16 points, providing another key scoring option, while Bright Delves delivered an outstanding all-around performance with 11 points, 11 assists and five rebounds.

Siy Siaisiai added eight points, five rebounds and two blocks, while Jason Nistrio contributed four points, four rebounds and three assists. Ant Pannell finished with four points and four rebounds, Ty Grudzien added two points, and Isaac Olaniba contributed two points and six rebounds.

With its record now at 11–2 and sitting third in OTE (4-2), Hellstar appears to be building momentum at the right time, sending a clear message to the rest of the league that it can compete with—and beat—the league's best.

Hellstar plays again tomorrow in New Haven starting at 3:40 vs Hargrave Military Academy (VA).

Hellstar continued its impressive run Friday at the National Prep Showcase in New Haven, defeating Hargrave Military Academy of Virginia, 96–74, to earn its fifth consecutive victory and improve its overall record to 12–2.

Hellstar delivered another dominant offensive performance, putting up 96 points against a talented Hargrave squad. The balanced scoring attack, strong playmaking, and defensive presence helped Hellstar control the game from start to finish.

Jalen Taggart led Hellstar with 22 points, while Zack Dawson put together an outstanding all-around performance with 20 points, four rebounds, and eight assists. Antoine Caughman Jr. added 19 points, five assists, and six rebounds, continuing to make an impact on both ends of the floor.

Ant Pannell contributed eight points, eight rebounds, and four blocks, while Siy Siaisiai finished with seven points, seven rebounds, and three blocks. Isaac Olaniba added five points, five rebounds, and two blocks, and Jason Nistrio chipped in four points, six rebounds, and a block.

Bright Delves facilitated the offense with eight assists, while KelBron Clement and Luca Tignanelli each added three points. Ty Grudzien finished with two points and four assists, and Amayas Hall-Chiari contributed three rebounds and three assists.

The victory marks Hellstar's fifth straight win, bringing its record to an impressive 12–2 as the team continues to build momentum through the National Prep Showcase.

Hellstar will return to action tomorrow in New Haven, with tip-off scheduled for 10:40 a.m. The matchup will be the team's final game before heading into Thanksgiving break.

That impressive run continued Saturday morning at the National Prep Showcase, earning an 88-71 victory over Massanutten to head into Thanksgiving break on a six-game winning streak.

The win pushes Hellstar's record to 13-2 on the season, capping an impressive stretch of basketball in which the team won six games in eight days while traveling from Boston to Miami and back to New Haven.

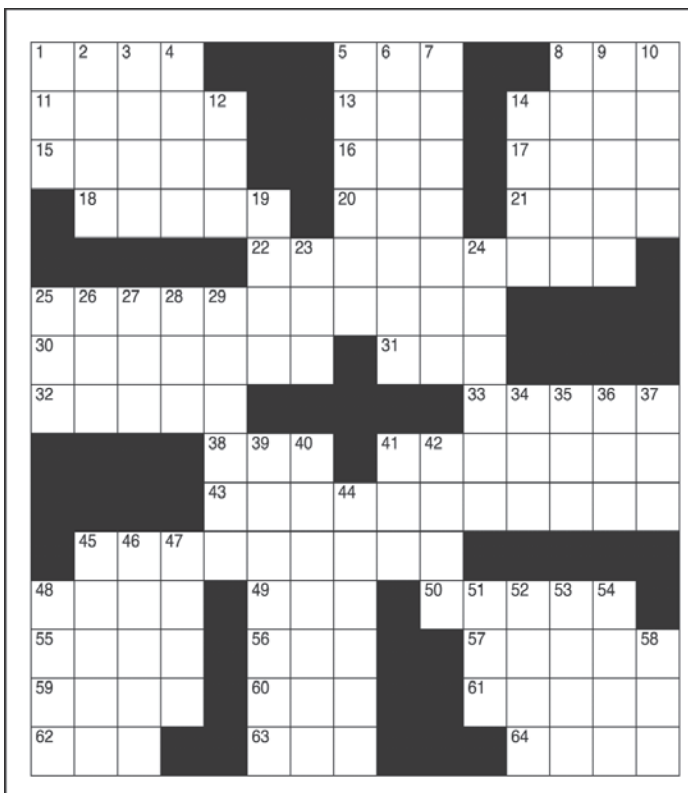
Hellstar was led by a pair of 22-point performances from Zack Dawson and Jalen Taggart. Dawson added four rebounds and four assists, while Taggart finished with five rebounds.

Antoine Caughman contributed 11 points and five rebounds, while Ant Pannell added nine points, five rebounds and five blocks. Isaac Olaniba finished with eight points, seven rebounds and two blocks, and Jason Nistrio chipped in six points, four rebounds and two blocks.

Ty Grudzien delivered an all-around performance with four points, six rebounds, four assists and three steals. Bright Delves contributed two points, five rebounds and seven assists, while Siy Siaisiai added two points, five rebounds, three assists and three blocks. Amayas Hall-Chiari rounded out the scoring with two points and three assists.

Head coach Tom Espinosa praised his team's effort following the win.

"We just won 6 games in 8 days. From Boston to Miami to New Haven. That's not easy to do. I give the kids so much credit for battling like they did this weekend," said Espinosa.



CLUES ACROSS

1. Insect feeler
5. Central processing unit
8. Part of (abbr.)
11. Typical
13. Tall, rounded vase
14. __ Alto, California city
15. Lustrous, velvet-like fabric
16. "Fresh Prince of __ Air"
17. Hebrew calendar month
18. British surgeon who discovered bone disease
20. Agreement between debtor and creditor (abbr.)
21. Elongated part of anatomical structure
22. Acts slowly on
25. Keeps a little too safe
30. Greek seaport
31. "Baba O'Riley" rockers
32. Vision
33. Potassium nitrate in mineral form
38. Midway between northeast and east
41. Not a pro
43. Give a new look
45. Sensational
48. Nobel Prize-winning physicist
49. Annoy constantly
50. Vaccine developer
55. Lying down
56. Type of language (abbr.)
57. Flat-bottomed boat
59. Smallest or slightest
60. Bind
61. Speeds
62. The products of human creativity
63. Consume food
64. Ancient Greek sophist

CLUES DOWN

1. A young canine
2. As fast as can be done
3. Soviet moon probes
4. Sharp spasm of pain
5. One who adheres to a specific art movement
6. Show parts of
7. Unfasten
8. San Diego ballplayer
9. Santa
10. Rocky peaks
12. "Matt Houston" actor Horsley
14. A written agreement between two sides
19. Beginning to end (abbr.)
23. Greek goddess of the dawn
24. Not written in any key
25. Organized missions
26. Seven
27. Work unit
28. Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!
29. Broadway legend Bernadette
34. Belonging to a thing
35. Vietnamese offensive
36. Bitterly regret
37. Make a mistake
39. Newborn child
40. A combined landmass
41. Satisfaction
42. Hilly peninsulas in Denmark
44. Young swine
45. Type of sword
46. Siskel's partner
47. Brood of pheasants
48. Hindu model of ideal man
51. Suitable in the circumstances
52. La __ tar pits
53. Unstressed-stressed metrical foot
54. California wine country
58. Badly

PUZZLE SOLUTION

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Holiday pies available through Senexet Grange

WOODSTOCK — As the end of 2026 approaches, the holidays include happy family celebrations. One of the many cherished forms of celebration is the family meal. Whether you enjoy a turkey, ham or other family meal tradition, there is always room for dessert. It is also a tradition for the members of Senexet Grange in Woodstock to bake and sell handmade pies using their time-tested recipes. These pies will remind you of meals at your grandmother's house. The ingredients are simple but blend deliciously.

Pies available

Our apple pie is the most popular with our customers. Skip peeling and cutting the apples and rolling the dough! We will do it for you! We also offer traditional pumpkin and hearty blueberry pies.

Try something new and join our dedicated customers return year after year to buy our pork pies. These savory pies are baked and frozen before sale so that the customer can warm them in the oven whenever they want. Many buy more than one pie to store in the freezer for later.

Please consider including a Senexet Grange pie (or several pies) in your holiday plans. Look for our ad in the Shopper's Guide and on our Facebook page—Senexet Grange|Facebook. You can also send an email to grange40ct@gmail.com or call Lillian at 860-974-1053. Please order Thanksgiving pies before November 20th and Christmas pies before Dec. 19. Let us make your holidays happy!

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New history of Woodstock released



WOODSTOCK — For the first time in 100 years, a new detailed history of Woodstock has been published to commemorate the 340th anniversary of the town. "Woodstock 340: A Collection of Engaging Bits of History and Tradition" is written by local author and historian Charlene Perkins Cutler.

Cutler noted that "At the time Woodstock celebrated its Tercentenary (300th) in 1986, there were about 5,300 people living in the town. Now there are closer to 8,300. When I listen to people at town meetings and public hearings, I realized that newer residents lack knowledge of Woodstock's past and, unfortunately, have no way to access past histories. Most are out of print and do not circulate from local libraries. In my opinion it is difficult to make decisions about Woodstock's future if one does not know about its past. That is why I have written 'Woodstock 340.'"

Cutler's volume is not a typical history book. It is not arranged thematically or chronologically. It is a series of stories, randomly sequenced, about some of Woodstock's history. The author prefers to use the term story, as opposed to chapter.

"Chapters are meant to be read, understood but not designed to be repeated. Stories, true stories like those contained in this volume, are meant to be read, understood, and passed along, retold and kept alive," explains Cutler.

Woodstock 340 contains information and images that have never been published. It is 8.5 x 11, soft bound volume of 266 pages that was professionally designed and printed in full color. There are a total of 240 photos and illustrations (163 color, 77 black & white). The book contains images from 14 well-known museums and archives, as well as those from people in the Woodstock community.

The author is a historian and writer who has worked with historical and cultural resources for more than 45 years. She served as the administrator of Roseland Cottage for seven years and was the president of the Woodstock Historical Society. Cutler was the governor's appointee to the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Commission. After being the executive director of several museums, she began a consulting service focusing on advancing nonprofits throughout New England. Cutler has authored and edited numerous articles, publications, and books. Ms. Cutler was the first executive director of The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor, building the organization from its beginning. She ended her professional career as the executive director of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. She has lived in Woodstock and has been learning of its history for 55 years.

Woodstock 340 is available at Echo Farm, 1051 Route 169 in Woodstock, at various library events the town, and through Green Corn Press, greencornpress340@gmail.com.

Bracken Memorial Library announces upcoming book clubs, winter festival activities

WOODSTOCK — Bracken Memorial Library has announced a series of upcoming activities for late November and December, including a cookbook club, a literary discussion and participation in the townwide Winter Festival.

The library's Cook the Book Book Club will meet Saturday, Nov. 21, at 11 a.m., featuring recipes from "Magnolia Table," a cookbook by Joanna Gaines. The program offers cooking enthusiasts an opportunity to explore recipes from the popular collection while sharing their interest in food and cooking with fellow participants.

The library will be closed Thursday, Nov. 26, in observance of Thanksgiving.

Activities will resume in December with the library's regular Book Club meeting Saturday, Dec. 5, at 10 a.m. Participants will discuss "A Gentleman in Moscow" by Amor Towles.

The bestselling novel follows Count Alexander Rostov, a Russian aristocrat who is sentenced to house arrest in Moscow's grand Metropol Hotel following the Russian Revolution. Set against decades of political and social change, the novel explores themes of friendship, resilience and finding purpose in unexpected circumstances.

The discussion offers readers an opportunity to share their interpretations of the novel, examine its characters and themes, and connect with others who enjoy literature.

On Saturday, Dec. 12, Bracken Memorial Library will participate in Woodstock's townwide Winter Festival, joining the community's seasonal celebration.

The library will maintain its regular Saturday hours from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., while the townwide festival is scheduled to run from noon to 5 p.m.

The December events provide opportunities for residents to enjoy both literary activities and the community's holiday festivities as the year draws to a close.

Residents interested in participating in the book clubs or visiting during the Winter Festival are encouraged to contact Bracken Memorial Library for additional information about programming and participation requirements.

Thompson approves exemption for spouses of deceased veterans

BY JASON BLEAU
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

THOMPSON — The Thompson Board of Selectmen has approved an exemption allowing the spouse of a deceased veteran to benefit from a state rule that allows them to inherit their tax incentives for their service to their country.

Thompson's selectmen briefly discussed the request on Nov. 5 after First Selectman Nick Donohue said he was approached by a woman whose husband, a veteran, had passed away. According to a statute from 2024, spouses of deceased veterans can inherit tax breaks once their significant other passes away but excluded anyone whose spouse passed away before the statute was enacted wasn't grandfathered.

Town Assessor Paul Hopkins explained the situation to the selectmen in detail.

"The state went in and modified the language, and they said from the point of the adoption forward if a veteran were to pass the spouse would receive that benefit," said Hopkins. "What it didn't account for was for those veterans that had passed prior to the adoption of this new ordinance so what would end up happening is those people where the veteran passed away prior to Oct. 1, 2024, they would not be entitled to that benefit. So, in part of that language change, the state put a clause in that the town could adopt the language to allow these surviving spouses to receive their spouse's veterans benefit on an ongoing basis."

Both Donahue and Selectman Larry Consiglio said it was an easy decision to allow the exemption.

"This is an opportunity to do what's right and further move on how not only Thompson, but how the United States should act towards veterans and especially disabled 100 percent total veterans," Donahue said.

"Since the state changed the ordinance, it's tough to penalize that one person that fell through the cracks from the untimely death of their spouse, a veteran," added Consiglio. "It's one person, but if it were two people or three people it still wouldn't matter. I think if it's 20 people, I don't think it would matter – We can't penalize people. It's not their fault."

Donahue and Consiglio cast affirmative votes for the exemption while Selectman Geoffrey Bolte was absent for the meeting.

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Quiet Corner Al-Anon group meets Wednesdays

WOODSTOCK — An open Al-Anon meeting meets at the East Woodstock Congregational Church every Wednesday from 7:30-8:30 p.m.

The Quiet Corner Al-Anon Family Group is open to anyone affected by alcoholism, family or friend. Any enquiries can be directed to 860-634-3271.

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in Thompson

Thursday, December 3, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

Access the Meeting & Learn More:
portal.ct.gov/DOTThompson0141-0159

The purpose of this meeting is to provide the community with an opportunity to learn about the proposed project and allow an open discussion of any views and comments concerning the proposed improvements. A Q&A session will immediately follow the presentation.

Originally constructed in 1965, this project will replace vital structural components of the existing bridge to extend its service life and improve safety for all roadway users.

Right-of-way impacts are not anticipated.

Construction is anticipated to start spring 2029, depending on funding, possible future right-of-way acquisitions, and permits. The estimated cost is $6 million with 80 percent Federal funds and 20 percent State funds.

The public can submit comments and questions during two-week public comment period following the meeting. Comments and questions can be submitted by Thursday, December 17, 2026, to **DOTProject141-159@ct.gov** or (860) 594-2020.

ACCESSIBILITY

The recording will also be posted following the meeting in CTDOT's public meeting playlist at **portal.ct.gov/ctdotVPIMarchive**. Non-English language closed captioning will be available on Zoom and YouTube.

For audio only, call(877) 853-5257 with Meeting ID 810 8949 4418. Project information can be mailed within one week by contacting Brianna Ritacco at **Brianna.Ritacco@ct.gov** or (860) 594-3205.

Individuals with hearing/speech disabilities can dial 711 for Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS). Request language assistance from CTDOT's Language Assistance at (860) 594-2109 at least five business days before meeting.

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A little clock with a big lesson

There is something particularly satisfying about seeing an idea developed in a small Connecticut town earn recognition on a national stage. When that idea also has the potential to make life easier for children, parents and teachers, the achievement becomes even more meaningful.

That is the case with Mindy Hudon of Woodstock, whose Bee A TimeKeeper clock has been named among USA TODAY's Best 2026 Toys & Games.

Hudon, a speech-language pathologist and co-owner of Achieve Speech & Language Services in Woodstock, has spent more than three decades helping children develop important skills. Her experience led her to recognize a problem that many adults probably overlook: Children are constantly being asked to understand time before they fully grasp what time means.

Think about how often a parent tells a child there are five minutes left before bedtime, or a teacher announces that an activity will end in 10 minutes. To an adult, those instructions seem perfectly reasonable. To a young child, however, five minutes can be an abstract concept with little meaning.

We expect children to follow schedules, wait patiently, complete tasks and move from one activity to another. Yet we sometimes forget that understanding the passage of time is a skill that must be learned.

Hudon recognized that challenge and decided to do something about it.

Her Bee A TimeKeeper clock uses a colorful bee on the minute hand and a snail on the hour hand to illustrate how time moves. The bee travels faster, while the snail moves slowly. It is a simple concept, but one grounded in years of professional experience and an understanding of how young children learn.

What makes this accomplishment noteworthy is not necessarily the clock itself. It is the thinking behind it.

Too often, innovation is associated exclusively with computers, complicated technology or multimillion-dollar research laboratories. Yet some of the most useful inventions begin when someone working directly with people notices a recurring problem and asks whether there might be a better solution. That kind of practical creativity deserves recognition.

Hudon first developed her clock as a do-it-yourself resource in 2017. What began as an idea drawn from her professional experience eventually became a manufactured educational product, earning recognition from Creative Child Magazine in 2025 and now a place on a national list of outstanding toys and games.

There is also an important lesson here about the value of experience. In a culture that frequently celebrates the newest technology and the youngest entrepreneurs, it is worth remembering that innovation often grows out of decades spent mastering a profession. Hudon's understanding of executive functioning and childhood development gave her the insight to identify a need that might otherwise have gone unnoticed.

Her work also reminds us that educational tools do not have to be complicated to be effective. Sometimes a familiar object, presented in a different way, can help children understand something that previously seemed confusing. And the benefits of learning to manage time extend far beyond childhood.

Planning ahead, anticipating changes, organizing responsibilities and managing frustration are skills that remain important throughout life. Helping children begin developing those abilities at an early age can give them greater confidence and independence as they grow.

For Woodstock and the surrounding communities, Hudon's recognition is another reminder that meaningful ideas can originate anywhere. A small-town business can produce something with national relevance. A local professional can turn years of experience into a resource that reaches families and classrooms far beyond Connecticut.

There is no need for a towering corporate headquarters or a prestigious metropolitan address to make a difference. Sometimes, all it takes is a thoughtful observation, the determination to solve a problem and the patience to turn an idea into something useful.

Hudon's achievement deserves congratulations, not simply because her invention received national attention, but because it represents the best kind of innovation: one that begins with understanding the needs of others.

For children learning that time does not stand still, a bee and a snail may prove to be remarkably effective teachers.

And for the rest of us, they offer a worthwhile reminder that even the simplest ideas can have a lasting impact.

OPINION

Opinion and commentary from the Quiet Corner

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The people have spoken, and if the Republicans are smart, they'll listen

To the Editor:

Our incompetent president continues to be an embarrassment around the world. While he was overseas schmoozing with his favorite dictators for photo-ops and having his ego stroked, his dysfunctional cabinet was busy back home pointing fingers and bumping into each other. As the country suffered through multiple technology breakdowns wreaking havoc nation-wide, Trump said "I don't take any responsibility" — really?

Just like in the first Trump presidency, the rats are jumping off the sinking ship and fighting among themselves. Even Elon Musk, who caused so much destruction with "DOGE," now claims he's not MAGA and "feels foolish" for all the millions he wasted on the midterms. Most Americans are feeling a lot worse than just foolish, and they spoke out loudly in the voting booth. If the Republican leadership is smart, they're listening.

TODD PATRIE
POMFRET CENTER

In other news, Mr. DeLuca yells at newspaper clouds

To the Editor:

It's always refreshing to see that what we know as internet edgelords didn't begin with the Internet.

Mr. DeLuca should learn a few more things about the Democrats, besides whatever bits and pieces he learns to ham up a letter to the Editor.

Democrats won in more conservative parts of the country because Donald Trump dropped the ball with his fake populism. His biggest flub was Iran and fuel prices. Usually fuel prices and their effect on everything else aren't really attributable to the president because of how powerful our private sector is, but if you pick fights and fail to win them, as happened with Iran, you insert yourself into the equation and destroy the usual political plausible deniability.

Donald Trump Made America Expensive Again, and voters responded in kind.

I don't expect these newly-seated Democrats to all be purple-haired pronouns nuts spending every waking moment looking for things to explode about and throw hissy fits. First, as Republicans gladly point out when it suits them, conservative Democrats have been a thing before, and still are, though the mainstream media doesn't cover them as much. If you actually listen to people like AOC instead of instantly making her the punchline you'll hear progressives crying about corporate Democrats, showcasing the big tent nature of the party that has been the case for a long time.

Influencers, talk show hosts, and podcasters, however, do not make their money from getting everything right. They make their money from getting other people to send them money. If that means painting the Democrats with a broad brush, it's a small price to pay to make a living off of their listeners and viewers. It'll never change the reality though, that the party's internal feuds point to the mixed bag of viewpoints that render Republicans' one-size-fits-all view of their opponents as irrelevant.

We can talk about welfare deadbeats and handouts all we want. The bottom line is the richest country in the world throws money around the world for petty little causes. It can afford to take care of its own people. America is already great. The people out their sweating simply don't benefit enough from it.

JAY GERHART
PUTNAM

The things we carry home

CORNER OF KINDNESS
By CHIP

Thanksgiving has a way of sneaking up on a person. One minute, we're complaining about the heat; the next, we're wondering whether the turkey will fit in the oven and why a bag of groceries costs about as much as a decent used car once did.

I've celebrated enough Thanksgivings to know that the holiday changes as we get older. When you're a kid, it's about the food, the cousins and the possibility of getting away with a second piece of pie. When you're raising a family, it's about getting everybody fed without burning the rolls or losing your patience.

And when the children are grown, as ours are now, you begin to realize that the most important things about Thanksgiving aren't necessarily the things on the table. They're the things people bring with them.

I'm not talking about the green bean casserole or the pumpkin pie, although I certainly wouldn't turn either one away. I'm talking about the habits, stories and little pieces of family history that somehow survive from one generation to the next.

My father was never much for long speeches. He came from a generation that believed a man could express an entire paragraph with a nod of his head. But Thanksgiving was one occasion when he seemed to relax a little. He'd settle into his chair after dinner, loosen his belt a notch and listen to the conversation around him. Every so often, he'd offer some observation that was either surprisingly wise or so dry that it took the rest of us a minute to realize he was joking.

I find myself doing more of that these days. The listening, I mean. My jokes still need work.

Our daughter is away at college, and our son has his own life and responsibilities. Getting everybody together requires a little more coordination than it once did. There are schedules to consider, traffic to deal with and the occasional last-minute change of plans. When they were little, all we had to do was tell them to put on their coats.

Of course, back then, it took 20 minutes to find the coats.

But there's something wonderful about watching your children grow into adults who bring their own experiences and opinions to the dinner table. They don't necessarily see the world the way we do, and that's probably a good thing. Sometimes I learn something. Sometimes I discover that I'm hopelessly behind the times. And sometimes I sit there wondering how the little boy who once needed help tying his shoes became a grown man who knows more about half the things we discuss than I ever will.

Around Northeast Connecticut, Thanksgiving still has a familiar feel. Some families will gather in the same homes they've visited for decades. Others will travel between Putnam, Thompson, Woodstock, Killingly and places farther away, trying to fit several celebrations into one long day. There will be people working holiday shifts, families making do with smaller gatherings and folks who find this particular season a little harder than they expected. That's worth remembering, too.

Not every Thanksgiving looks like a greeting card. Sometimes there's an empty chair. Sometimes money is tight. Sometimes the family doesn't agree on much of anything beyond the fact that somebody made excellent mashed potatoes. And sometimes, the holiday turns out perfectly fine even when nothing goes according to plan.

I've come to believe that one of the best things we can give our families is permission to have an imperfect holiday. The turkey doesn't need to look like something from a magazine. The house doesn't have to be spotless. Nobody needs to apologize because the gravy came out a little thin.

If the people you care about are sitting around the table, you've already gotten the important part right. And if someone can't be there, there's always a telephone call, a message or a plate saved for another day.

I suppose what I'm most grateful for this year is the chance to keep adding to the family story. Another holiday, another collection of conversations, another opportunity to hear the same old stories and maybe discover something new about the people telling them.

Years from now, I doubt anybody will remember whether the stuffing was a little dry. But they might remember who sat beside them, who made them laugh and who insisted on sending them home with enough leftovers to feed a small army.

That's what we carry home from Thanksgiving.

Well, that and three mismatched plastic containers, two pieces of pie and somebody else's serving spoon.

And if that spoon happens to be ours, we'd appreciate getting it back before Christmas.

Letter submission policy

Letters to the Editor must include the author's name, address, and a daytime phone number for purposes of verification in order to be considered for publication. Only the author's name and the town in which they reside will be published. Letters submitted without all of the required information will not be accepted.

It is the sole prerogative of the Editor to determine whether a submission satisfies our requirements and decency standards, and any submission may be rejected at any time for any reason he or she might deem appropriate.

The Quiet Corner in Thanksgivings gone by



KILLINGLY AT 300
MARGARET WEAVER

Are you interested in copies of old photos of Putnam? The Aspinock Historical Society is giving away bundles of ten calendars from 1994-2004 or single calendars during that time frame. Stop by their archives on the second floor of the Putnam Town Hall. Call 860-963-6800, ext. 300 or 301 for additional information. The photos can be given new life with crayons, acrylics, etc. or can be used in collages.

ROCHAMBEAU. Plainfield Historical Society. Wednesday, Dec. 2, 6:30 p.m. Plainfield Senior Center, 482 Norwich Rd. (Route 12), Plainfield. Society president Ruth Bergeron will share her extensive research on American Revolution General Rochambeau's march through Plainfield (the Rochambeau Trail). Free and open to the public.

A Christmas Carol-A Ghost Story of Christmas. Putnam Public Library, Wednesday, Dec. 9, 6-7:15 p.m. Performed in costume and read by Michael Langlois. Be transported to Victorian London and rediscover this most famous of holiday stories. All are welcome.

I hope everyone has had a very enjoyable Thanksgiving. Since it's late November, I thought I'd see what was happening in this area a number of years ago at that time. The Thursday, Nov. 30, 1876 issue of the Windham County Transcript provided a glimpse into Thanksgiving time 150 years ago. (Keep in mind that Thanksgiving varied and was not always the 4th Thursday of November. From 1863-1939 it was generally celebrated on the last Thursday of that month. The fourth Thursday date went into effect in 1942 during the presidency of FDR.) Under County Locals the lead entry was, "Fowl business this week in all parts of New England." "Many a person should remember today they were poor once and may be again, and that their poor neighbor may not have a chicken's wing for dinner unless they send it to them (p.2). "Turkeys are selling for 20 cents per pound."

"The outside of Music Hall building (the present Killingly town hall) is completed, the staging has been removed, and the structure stands forth in magnificent proportions---'a thing of beauty' that will be a joy so long as it shall stand. The tower receives a little criticism---in all other respects there is universal praise. And it is gratifying to hear that the stockholders will receive a fair compensation for the money they put into it. … the hall is to be elegantly frescoed, and the whole building piped for gas. Let us give thanks today for the near completion of Music Hall Block." (p.2)

"Mr. Rathbun is putting in two of Fuller and Warren's furnaces into Music Hall building. These heaters seem to be simply perfect. We don't see how anything can be made to excel them. The one in our house continues to work like a charm." (p.2)

"From East Killingly---The Free Will Baptist church in this place, not having the fear of council or Sanhedrim before their eyes, opened the doors of their church to the Rev. Mrs. C. D. Holmes of Burrillville, R.I., who occupied

Turn To KILLINGLY *page* A5

KILLINGLY

continued from page A4

the pulpit of said church the last four evenings of last week, and also upon the forenoon of last Sabbath. Mrs. Holmes is a member of the sect denominated Quakers, but say that her brethern of that sect call her rather 'fast' signifying that she has, to a large extent, outgrown the eccentricities peculiar to members so that society…"(p.2)

I usually enjoy the ads as much as the little tidbits and was not disappointed with this issue of the Transcript. E. C. Buck's Emporium of Fashions in No. 1 Ely's Block, Danielsonville, in addition to being "the headquarters for Millinery and Fancy Dry Goods, Trimmed and Untrimmed Hats and Bonnets," was advertising "Human Hair! Largest stock! Lowest Prices. Ranging all the way from $1.00 for a 24-inch Switch (real hair) to $12.00 and $15.00 according to length and quality." That was a lot of money in 1876! I was very curious to see what it would cost today.

An AI summary provided the following: "Spending $12 on human hair switches in 1876—the equivalent of roughly $378 to $385 today—was a substantial luxury purchase typical of mid-to-upper-class Victorian fashion. Historical Context & Value:

Why they were needed: In 1876, fashionable hairstyles featured elaborate, towering chignons, thick braids, and cascades of curls that required far more volume than most women's natural hair could provide. What $12 bought: Real human hair switches (long tresses tied at one end to be braided or pinned into natural hair) were imported and costly. Basic switches started around $3 to $5, while $12 bought a set of high-quality, long, or difficult-to-match switches—especially lighter shades like blonde, auburn, or gray, which commanded much higher prices than dark brown or black. Relative cost: Because $12 was nearly a full week's pay for a skilled male worker (and even more for a working woman) in 1876, spending that amount on hairpieces represented a major investment in personal appearance."

Now, I turn to a much more recent year which I'm sure many of you will recall---1956. A new trade school was in the works. Recall that the one in Putnam had been severely damaged by the Flood of 1955. The Thursday, November 29, 1956 Windham County Transcript front page carried the following: "The Citizens Consulting committee for the Harvard H. Ellis Regional Technical School met Monday evening at the Killingly Memorial school to hear progress reports on the new school project. Committee chairman, A. Morrison Ennis of Brooklyn conducted the session. Alton P. Aldrich, director of the Putnam Technical school who is acting as local representative for the state department of education during the development of the new building gave a report on the site development and the preliminary plans…Mr. Aldrich pointed out that the present athletic field is to remain as the school athletic field and will be available to other schools and organizations as a community service. The new building and adjacent parking area will be constructed to the north of the athletic field…". Do any of you recall attending football games on this old athletic field? If so, please share memories.

"Santa's On the Way. Santa Claus will make his first appearance in Danielson this Friday, November 30 and he will be on the street from 4 to 8 p.m. to greet his many admirers. Each Friday following until Christmas he will be on hand at the same hours."

"Members of the Killingly Planning commission have voted approval to the ordinance creating a non-commercial zone in the much-discussed Pleasant avenue district in Dayville, and from publication of the ordinance on page 5 of this week's issue of the Transcript, the law will take effect on December 14. Stemming from the circulation of a petition filed with the commissioner of state police and signed by several hundred citizens of Dayville and other parts of Killingly, the ordinance was created from opposition to the construction of a drive-in theater in the vicinity of Dayville Four-Corners in the area of the. new Dayville school (Killingly Central School)…"

If you were living here at the time, do you remember the drive-in controversy?

Do you remember the name of the major league umpire who came from Killingly? "Frank Dascoli to Talk on Baseball for Fellowship. Frank Dascoli, umpire in the National baseball league, will be the guest speaker at the next meeting of the Baptist men's fellowship, to be held at the church Monday evesning, December 3, beginning at 6:30 o'clock. Mr. Dascoli will describe his experiences in the big league and will conduct a question and answer period following his talk" (p. 10). Dascoli was a major league umpire from 1948 to 1961 and umped over 2050 games including 3 World Series and 2 All Star games. (AI). If you are interested in more information, you will find much on the internet.

"Turkey Whist Held by St. Anne Ladies. A highly successful Thanksgiving whist was held November 20 by the Ladies of St. Anne of St. James church in the parish hall. Turkeys were awarded to the highest scores, with chickens going as consolation prizes, and cakes and rabbits being awarded for special prizes. (Imagine winning a rabbit! Live?? Or ready for the big meal?). With 36 tables in play, Mrs. Flora Proulx turned in the highest score." (p.10). I'd like a lesson in whist since it was frequently played in days gone by. I'll have to read up on it.

Margaret M. Weaver Killingly Municipal Historian, November 2026. For additional information email me at margaretmweaver@gmail.com or visit the Killingly Historical Center at 196 Main Street Danielson Wednesday or Saturday 10 a.m.-4 p.m. or call 860-779-7250. Like us at Facebook www.facebook.com/killinglyhistoricalsociety. For Windham County Transcripts visit killingly.historyarchives.online courtesy of the Killingly Public Library. For Putnam Patriots and Windham County Observers visit the home page of the Putnam Public Library and look on the right hand column for links. If you are out of this area, check to see what papers your public library has available. For Online Land Records go to Search IQS.



Courtesy

On Tuesday, Nov. 17, Ed DeLuca presented Mr. William Pearsall, Historian for the Aspinock Historical Society, with the latest edition of Shoreliner magazine, a publication of the New Haven Railroad Historical and Technical Society. In that edition was the story "The Night Local out of Hartford" and the recollections of (then) Putnam resident, Mr. Edward R Rainey, who was the "fireman" on that train. The local serviced customers along its route from Hartford to Willimantic, then to Pomfret and Putnam (and return) prior to the flood of 1955. On the east side of the railroad bridge that once crossed over Kennedy Drive was a freight yard and the switch for Wyckoff Steel. Mr. Rainey, in recalling doing switching moves over that trestle, said, "When that north wind blew through there in the dead of winter, it seemed like the coldest place in the world."

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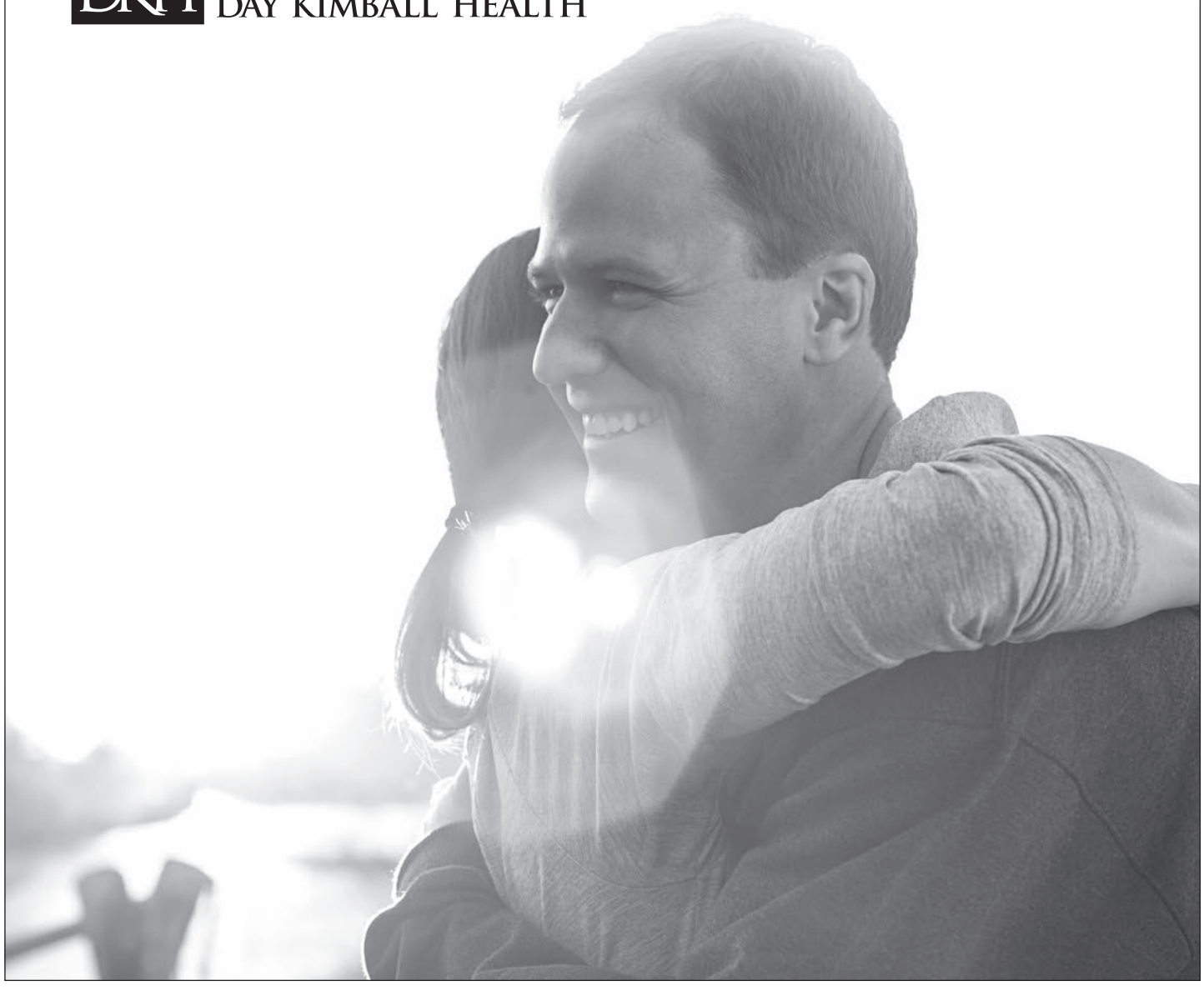

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Celebrate community & holiday spirit at Saint Nicholas Victorian Fair



POMFRET — The holiday spirit is alive and well in northeastern Connecticut; so are community spirit and real-time engagement. Want to connect or reconnect in person with neighbors and friends? Interested in supporting your neighbors in need? Head to the annual Saint Nicholas Victorian Fair in Pomfret on Saturday, Dec. 5 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. (snow date Dec. 12) at Christ Church in Pomfret, one mile south of the Vanilla Bean on Route 169.

The Saint Nicholas Fair is known for holiday gifts at great prices, many handmade. In addition, profits from the Fair are donated to area charities and agencies. Enjoy good company, shop local and give back to your community for the holidays this year.

Can't make it in person? The Online Silent Auction runs Nov. 21 to Dec. 2. Last year, the Silent Auction raised over $10,000 to support community outreach. Auction items include gift certificates donated by local businesses, vacation destinations and numerous other items to bid on. The auction link new.biddingowl.com/christchurchpomfret goes live Nov. 21 at noon and closes on Dec. 2 at noon.

The in-person Saint Nicholas Fair features holiday gifts for everyone on your list! This year, themed gift booths include baked goods, homemade chocolates, crafts, toys, cheese, holiday plants and wreaths, vintage jewelry, "Give It Again" items, and the Bottle Board. The Pet Supplies and Family Games Booths are new this year. Luncheon will feature chicken salad and soup, which can be pre-ordered for takeout on the online auction website. There's also a "Thank You Basket Drawing" featuring four themed gift baskets valued from $140 to over $300. Every $5 donation made at www.christchurchpomfret.org/ (St. Nicholas Fair link) receives 15 tickets entered in a drawing held on Dec. 5 at 1 p.m. You don't need to be present to win.

All proceeds from the Saint Nicholas Fair are allocated for outreach programs, including TEEG, the Access Agency, Day Kimball Hospital Hospice, ARC Eastern Connecticut, Habitat for Humanity, Community Kitchens of NECT, Daily Bread, St. Francis of Assisi Food Bank and more.

Questions? Call 860-315-7780 or email office@christchurchpomfret.org. Christ Church is located at 527 Pomfret St. To learn more, visit ChristChurchPomfret.org or follow them on Facebook at @christchurchpomfretct.

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Parking is located across the street from Clark Chapel.
Refreshments will follow in Hard Auditorium.

Watch the livestream at pomfret.org/live.

TOYS

continued from page A1

While Bee A Time Keeper® is an educational time management tool rather than a traditional toy, its colorful design and playful critters make learning engaging and approachable for young children. Its inclusion in USA TODAY's annual list of 124 standout toys and games recognizes its unique combination of creativity, educational value, and child-friendly design.

This national recognition highlights a product born from Hudon's professional experience working with children and her passion for making the passage of time

easier for them to understand.

The Bee A TimeKeeper® clock was designed to support children of all abilities age 3-8, at home, school and beyond. By making time expectations visible, it can help children have smoother transitions, plan ahead, know what's coming next and participate more independently in daily routines. The goal is not simply to teach children to read a clock, but to help them develop the skills to manage their own time.

Hudon described that this recognition brings national attention to a product with a distinctly educational purpose.

"Although the clock has a playful design, it is not simply a toy, it is a visual

teaching tool developed with the growing and developing brain in mind, helping children to see and feel the passage of time," she said.

For Hudon, the idea came from more than 30 years of experience as a practicing speech-language pathologist specializing in executive functioning, particularly time management. She recognized that children are often expected to follow adult expectations around time. Children can struggle to understand and comply with language like, "You have 10 minutes left," "You need to wait for 20 minutes" or knowing when it is time to stop and move on to something new.

"I wanted to create a child-friendly tool that would make time visible for young learners of all abilities to build essential time management and self-regulation skills," said Hudon.

"My training in executive functioning has shown me firsthand how important it is for children to see and feel the passage of time, to gently guide them through transitions, tasks, daily routines and to know what is coming next."

Hudon originally developed the clock as a do-it-yourself resource in 2017,

and it has since become a manufactured product used by families, teachers, therapists, and childcare providers. The clock has been awarded the 2025 Creative Child Magazines Educational Product of the Year.

A different way to understand time

The Bee A Time Keeper® clock uses the familiar numbers 1-12 on an analog clock, with a unique visual approach.

"There is a Bee on the minute hand and a Snail on the hour hand, because bees move faster than snails like minutes move faster than hours," explains Hudon. "This simple visual distinction helps children connect the movement of the clock hands with the experience of planning their time."

It provides a visual way to prepare them for time expectations. Rather than simply learning to read a clock, children begin developing an awareness of time that they can apply throughout their day.

The clock supports skills that extend well beyond telling time, including planning, organization, transitions, and emotional self-regulation.

"At home, parents and grandparents can use it to help children prepare for daily routines, understand how much time remains for an activity, and anticipate what comes next. In classrooms, childcare settings, and therapy sessions, it provides

a consistent visual reference to support children's need to know what is expected and what is coming next," said Hudon.

The goal is to help children become self-managers: able to anticipate, plan, transition, and take a more active role in managing their own time.

"An analog clock can offer something a digital clock cannot: a visual representation of time moving. By watching the bee travel around the clock and seeing the snail move more slowly, children can begin to connect the concept of time with something they can see," said Hudon.

Recognized by professionals in the field

The educational value of Bee A TimeKeeper® clock has also been recognized by professionals who work extensively in executive functioning and time management.

Marydee Sklar, educator and author of the Seeing My Time® program, shares, "The Bee A Time Keeper® clock is, simply put, the perfect foundation for teaching little brains to connect to the function of an analog clock. In my decades of work teaching executive functioning skills, I know the analog clock is an essential tool to support people with time awareness and time management. I'm getting at least three of them: one for my grandson, one for his play school and one for my house for those grandchild sleepovers."

Julie Miller, Preschool Teacher & Owner of Executive Functioning Success discusses, "The Bee ATimeKeeper®, is more than a clock. It is a curriculum that introduces the young brain to time. As an early childhood educator I use this clock in my classroom. My students are drawn to it and love that it is placed at their eye level and they can hold it. The bright characters act as friendly markers for daily events such as outdoor playtime, snack breaks, and dismissal time. This clock should be a part of every young learner's environment."

For Hudon, the USA TODAY recognition is both a personal milestone and an opportunity to share a resource that may benefit families and educators beyond Connecticut. She hopes the clock will encourage more conversations about time awareness and the importance of helping children understand not just what time it is, but how time moves and what that means for their daily lives.

About Mindy Hudon

Mindy Hudon, M.S., CCC-SLP, is a speech-language pathologist, author, and creator of the Bee A Time Keeper® clock. She is co-owner of Achieve Speech & Language Services, LLC, in Woodstock, and author of "Kodi's Adventures: How I Learned to Defeat the Time Snatcher," published by the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA Press).

For more information, visit https://beeatimekeeper.com/ to learn more about the Bee A Time Keeper® clock and its educational benefits.

For information about Achieve Speech & Language Services, visit AchieveCTSLP.com.

KIA

continued from page A1

this new chapter for Putnam Kia," said dealership management. "Our goal has always been 100 percent customer satisfaction. This new facility allows us to serve our neighbors in Putnam, Thompson, Brooklyn, and surrounding communities across Connecticut and Massachusetts with a faster, brighter, and more welcoming environment."

To mark the milestone, Craig and Denny Gates recently hosted a community ribbon-cutting ceremony in collaboration with the Putnam Business Association and Northeast CT Chamber of Commerce, featuring local networking and a charitable toy drive supporting the Putnam Family Resource Center.

GRANT

continued from page A1

dents when previous funding sources were no longer available. Through our partnership with Monitor My Health and the dedication of many individuals who supported this effort, we are now positioned to offer expanded programming that will benefit students for years to come. We are excited to begin implementation and create new opportunities that engage, inspire, and support our learners."

The district has identified Dr. Jessica Alferi, a seventh-grade English Language Arts teacher and certified aspiring administrator, to serve as the program's site coordinator. District leaders will work closely with state and community partners to begin implementation and ensure the program aligns with district goals and expectations.

On behalf of the Board of Education Susan Lannon, Chairperson, Killingly Board of Education, expressed enthusiasm for the opportunities the grant will create:

"This is a wonderful investment in our students and their futures. Every opportunity we create beyond the classroom helps our students discover new interests, build confidence, and reach their full potential. This grant will not only expand those opportunities but also provide meaningful support for our working families. On behalf of the Board of Education, I want to thank Principal Sierakowski, Dr. Alferi, the KIS team, Monitor My Health, and everyone whose dedication and collaboration made this possible. This is a great example of what we can accomplish when we come together for our kids."

District leaders will convene key stakeholders in the coming weeks to review implementation plans, staffing considerations, program offerings, and operational requirements associated with the grant.

"This is exactly the kind of work that advances our mission of ensuring every student has access to opportunities that prepare them for success," added Superintendent to Schools, Palu Haughey. "We look forward to sharing more details with families and the community as the program develops."

The Connecticut 21st Century Community Learning Centers program supports the creation and expansion of high-quality after-school, before-school, and summer learning opportunities that improve academic achievement and provide enrichment experiences for students attending high-need schools.

About Killingly Public Schools

Killingly Public Schools serves the students and families of Killingly, Connecticut, and the surrounding communities of Windham County and is committed to providing high-quality educational experiences that inspire lifelong learning, foster student achievement, and prepare all learners for future success.

www.VillagerNewspapers.com

How to stay within budget when hosting for the holidays



Family and friends are a big part of the holiday season. Countless people reunite with family and friends between late November and early January, and many even host loved ones during this festive time of year.

Hosting loved ones during the holiday season can fill a home with love and laughter. Hosting can save guests the cost of staying in a hotel, but it can put a strain on hosts' finances at a point in the year when budgets may already be stretched thin. Thankfully, there are many ways to stay within budget when hosting for the holidays.

• Trim the guest list. Rising food costs have been a topic of discussion for much of the year, so hosts can anticipate spending more to feed their guests in 2026. The Economic Research Service reports that food-at-home costs increased by roughly 3 percent between June 2025 and June 2026, and the cost of holiday season staples like beef and veal experienced particularly large price swings. The ERS also notes that food prices tend to spike each December due to increased demand. Hosts can combat rising food costs by trimming their guest lists to include only family and close friends.

• Shop in advance. While food costs tend to spike in December, many holiday season staples can be purchased in advance and frozen. Beef, chicken, veal, and other main courses can be purchased prior to December and stored in the freezer. This can help hosts avoid rising food costs and also offers a way to spread out hosting-related costs so hosts are not spending extra money on food during a time of year when they also need to shop for gifts and possibly even spend on travel.

• Request that guests help to share the cost. Hosts may handle the cooking, but that does not mean they need to provide everything. Ask guests to bring snacks, desserts, and beverages. Sharing food and beverage responsibilities saves hosts money and many guests would love to pitch in.

• Simplify at the bar. Alcohol prices do not necessarily experience the same dramatic spike in cost as food come the holiday season. But spirits can still be expensive, and prices can always rise. When planning the drinks menu for a holiday party, hosts can emphasize simple and less expensive beverages like beer and wine. Cocktails might be a go-to for some people, but they often require multiple ingredients in addition to the more costly spirits like whiskey and vodka.

Hosting for the holidays can make the season more fun but also more expensive for hosts. These strategies and more can help hosts stay on

6 holiday party essentials

"The most wonderful time of the year" is often filled with opportunities to celebrate. Thanksgiving, Christmas, Chanukah, and New Year's Eve ensure November and December are dotted with plenty of social gatherings.

According to the Barlow Market in California, socializing offers many potential health benefits, including stress reduction, immune system improvement and positive neurological effects. But being a party host can be stressful if one is rushing around trying to figure out what they need to make a gathering successful. These six party essentials can add a lot to any holiday gathering.

1. Theme: The first order of business is to narrow down a theme for the party. Holiday parties can be built around a certain tradition or even tied to a favorite Christmas song. Additional themes can focus on something fun, like everyone wearing red flannel or ugly sweaters. Once the theme is set, planning the smaller details is much easier and can guide decisions regarding decorations and even party favors.

2. Great food: Guests tend to arrive ready to eat, drink and be merry. Good holiday hosts will have a spread that would be sufficient to feed all of Whoville. Snack platters will warm up everyone's appetites, particularly if dinner will be served later. A charcuterie board filled with cheeses, cold meats, crackers, grapes, nuts, and dips is an easy starter. When it comes to the main course, a buffet of catered foods might be easier on party hosts. Having a vegetarian meal on hand, as well as something gluten-free, is a thoughtful way to ensure every guest has something to eat.

3. Festive playlist: In addition to offering delicious foods, party hosts will want to entertain guests. One way to ensure that guests feel comfortable is having music playing in the background, which sets a fun and inviting atmosphere. Go-to playlists should be festive without distracting from the conversation. Instrumental or jazzy options can fit the bill. Those planning on a sing-a-long component of the evening can then choose other songs for later in the evening. Services like Spotify, Amazon Music and Apple Music offer plenty of curated lists to keep the tunes going all night long.

4. Decorations: Decorations also help to create a festive atmosphere. Fairy and string lights are always great for establishing a cozy and festive mood. They also provide ambient lighting after the sun goes down. Use lights to highlight key zones, such as the snack and drink area. Additional decorations can include backdrops with fun party hats and props for picture-perfect moments.



5. Signature cocktails/mocktails: Guests may be interested in toasting to the holidays with a spirited drink. Party hosts can create a signature cocktail to cut down on the amount of alcohol and mixers needed. Then they can have staples like red and white wine, beer, or canned vodka-based drinks at the ready. Cocktails can be transformed into booze-free mocktails for guests who don't plan to imbibe.

6. Extra seating: Hosting may require removal of some of the larger pieces of furniture in a home and replacing them with folding chairs and bistro tables.

The holiday season is filled with entertaining opportunities. Ensuring the essentials are in place will make events that much more festive.

Paws Cat Shelter hosting Holiday Bazaar

PUTNAM — Paws Cat Shelter is hosting a Holiday Bazaar on Saturday, Dec. 5 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Putnam High School cafeteria, 152 Woodstock Ave., in Putnam. More than 40 vendors with crafts, gifts, raffle baskets, baked goods and more.

Paws is a non-profit, all volunteer organization caring for the cats of our communities. For more info or how you can donate, contact Paws at 860-315-1228.

East Killingly VFW to host eighth annual Christmas Toy Drive Party Dec. 5

DAYVILLE — The East Killingly Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4908 Auxiliary and the Defenders will host their eighth annual Christmas Toy Drive Party on Saturday, Dec. 5, from 1 to 4 p.m., to benefit the Tommy Toy Fund.

The event will take place at VFW Post 4908, located at 1035 North Rd. in Dayville.

Community members are invited to attend and bring a new, unwrapped toy to contribute to the holiday collection. The donated toys will benefit the Tommy Toy Fund, helping provide Christmas gifts for children during the holiday season.

A potluck buffet will also be available during the gathering, giving participants an opportunity to enjoy food and fellowship while supporting the charitable effort.

Now in its eighth year, the annual toy drive brings residents together in the spirit of holiday giving, offering a way for individuals and families to help brighten Christmas for children in need.

The event is hosted by the VFW Post 4908 Auxiliary and the Defenders of Charity.

Residents wishing to participate are encouraged to bring an unwrapped toy to the VFW between 1 and 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5.



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Guidance in Your Time of Need.



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OBITUARIES

Francis John Graves



Francis John Graves passed away on Friday October 30, 2026, at Hartford Hospital after a brief illness. He was born in Putnam, CT on August 8, 1950, son of the late John Graves, Jr. and Jeannette (Hubert) Graves. Frank was a 1968 graduate of Killingly High School. He enlisted in the US Navy, serving as a seaman over five three-month tours on multiple nuclear submarines. He went on to work as a welder for 27 years spending 18 of those years at Electric Boat in Groton.

Frank volunteered himself to be an organ donor and was a volunteer fireman for the South Killingly Fire Company, a true testament to his giving nature. He was an avid sports fan, his favorite teams including the Red Sox, Patriots and UCONN Men's & Women's basketball teams. He very much enjoyed the outdoors and spent a lot of time observing nature and wildlife. Frank always had a dog, or two, or five and he had a knack for being able to name any and all years, makes, and models of classic cars that he came across.



Frank is survived by his son Jason Graves, his significant other Jean Henning, his brother Stephan and wife Judith as well as loving nieces and nephews and his special friend Angie Nowakoski and her family. Besides his parents, he was predeceased by his daughter Lindsay and brother Kenneth Graves.

A graveside service with full military honors will take place in Holy Cross Cemetery in Danielson in the spring of 2027. tillinghastfh.com

Katrina M. Leighton
1998 – 2026



Katrina M. Leighton, age 28, entered into eternal rest far too soon on October 24, 2026, at her home in North Hollywood, CA. Born in Woonsocket, RI, she was the beloved daughter of Dwight and Sharon (Saravara) Leighton.

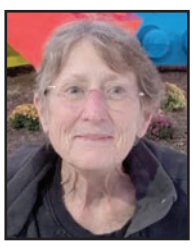
Katrina grew up in Woodstock, CT, deeply enveloped in the love of her family and her Catholic faith. She was a 2016 graduate of Woodstock Academy and went on to attend Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio. While at Franciscan, she was a proud member of Rosa Mystica and the Alpha Phi Delta sorority as a "sweetheart " and special member of the fraternity and is fondly remembered as the "mother" of the digital media labs at both Woodstock Academy and Franciscan University.

A self-employed media influencer, Katrina shared her vibrant energy with the world. She loved the strategy and fun of video games and puzzles. She was an avid traveler who explored destinations both nationally and internationally. Katrina was happiest when surrounded by nature, whether she was camping, adventure-climbing, or simply doting on her beloved dogs.

Katrina was predeceased by her cherished sister, Alexandria Leighton. She is survived by her loving parents, Dwight and Sharon Leighton; her brothers, Adam and Kevin Leighton, both of Woodstock, CT; her sister, Cassandra Leighton of Thompson, CT; and her maternal grandmother, Janet Saravara of Hopedale, MA. She also leaves behind many extended family members and friends who loved her dearly and now entrust her to the infinite love, mercy, and compassion of our Heavenly Father.

A celebration of life will be held at a future date. Please keep Katrina and her family in your daily prayers, rosaries, and masses.

Cynthia M. (McBride) Iwanczuk
November 11, 1950 – November 15, 2026



Putnam, CT – Cynthia M. (McBride) Iwanczuk, 76, of Sabin Street, passed away on Sunday, November 15, 2026, after a courageous battle with pancreatic cancer. Born in Dayton, OH, to the late Homer and Patricia (Woodward) McBride, she was the loving wife of Ihor "Iggy" Iwanczuk for more than 54 years.

Cynthia was defined by her strength of spirit and her love of nature, especially birds and flowers. A lifelong supporter of the arts and an artist herself, she amassed a sizable collection of Marjolein Bastin art, along with a large library of beloved children's books, including those by her favorite author, Jan Brett. She enjoyed watching movies, especially Star Wars and E.T., and listening to music of all genres, including The Beatles, Queen, The Cult, and Extreme. Cynthia will always be remembered for her impeccable penmanship and her fervent passion for decorating her home for every season. Petite in stature, she had an enormous heart, and she shared that love with family and close friends.

In addition to her husband, Cynthia is survived by her son, Adrian Iwanczuk of Putnam, CT; her daughter, Ilka Iwanczuk of Lawrence, KS; her sister, Cherilea McBride of Dixfield, ME; her brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Ernest and Daria Lomas; her nephew, Adam Lomas; and her nephew, David Lomas, and his wife, Karen, and their children, all of NJ. She was also predeceased by her sister, Andrea (McBride) Rawson.

Cynthia also held a special place in her heart for Tara Perron, Rosenette Bowen, Autumn Allard, Susan Srednicki, Rebecca Weidele, and especially for her grandpuppy, Kneesaa.

Her family invites friends and neighbors to remember her in their own way, whether by feeding the birds, planting flowers, or decorating for the changing seasons.

In accordance with Cynthia's wishes, there will be no wake or funeral. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to an organization focused on pancreatic cancer research, to Hartford Healthcare Hospice, or to Matulaitis Nursing Home of Putnam, CT.

Services for Cynthia are entrusted to Gilman Funeral Home. Friends and family are invited to share memories and condolences in the memorial guestbook at www.GilmanAndValade.com.

Judith "Judy" Madeline (Hatch) Poulin



Judith "Judy" Madeline (Hatch) Poulin passed away on November 4th 2026 at St. Josephs Living Center in Windham CT.

Judy was born on July 18th 1946 in Winchester MA to the late Harold and Madeline (Ida)(Larabee) Hatch.

Judy is survived by her devoted husband of 56 years Maurice Poulin her children Kimberly Poulin-Gilman, Richard Poulin, Lynn Poulin (Thomas) and her grandchildren Marissa Poulin, Grace Gilman, Deven Delaney and Matthew Delaney. She is also survived by her step mother Eleanor Hatch and her siblings Sandra (Hatch) McDonald, Michael Hatch (Susan), Mathew Hatch (Lori), Kris Hatch and Mary (Willow) Hearth. She was predeceased by her brother William Hatch and an infant brother.

Above all else, family was the center of her life. She shared an especially close and loving bond with her grandchildren, who brought her endless joy and were among her greatest blessings. She treasured every moment spent with them and took immense pride in watching them grow.

Her love for children extended far beyond her own family. She devoted her professional career to working with children, making a lasting difference in the lives of so many through her compassion, patience, and dedication. Helping children learn, grow, and thrive was not simply her profession, but a reflection of who she was.

Judy had a lifelong love of camping, embracing the beauty of nature, the peacefulness of the outdoors, and the memories made around the campfire. She also loved gathering around the table for board games and card games, where laughter, friendly competition, and togetherness were always part of the fun. She was talented and creative with her hands, finding happiness in sewing, knitting and crafting, creating special gifts with care, patience, and love.

Calling hours took place Wednesday November 18th from 4 to 6 pm at Smith and Walker Funeral Home, 148 Grove Street, Putnam CT. A private interment of her ashes will be held at a later date.

Donations in Judy's memory may be made to any local soup kitchen to honor of her many years of devoted service to this cause.

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LEGALS

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
ESTATE OF
Constance M Thomas (26-00450)

The Hon. Gabrielle Labonte, Judge of the Court of Probate,District of Northeast Probate Court, by decree dated November 10, 2026, ordered that all claims must be presented to the fiduciary at the address below. Failure to promptly present any such claim may result in the loss of rights to recover on such claim.

Elyssa A. Foley, Clerk

The fiduciary is:
Diana J Fishwick
c/o WILLIAM J MONTY, LAW OFFICE W MONTY, 930 ROUTE 169,, P.O. BOX 266, WOODSTOCK, CT 06281
November 27, 2026

Legal Notice
Town of Putnam
Public Hearing
December 7, 2026

The public is hereby notified and warned that a Public Hearing will be held in Room 109 of the Putnam Municipal Complex at 200 School Street, Putnam, CT on Monday, December 7, 2026 at 6:30 in the evening for purposes of discussing the proposed purchase of real estate located at 8 Quinebaug Avenue and 140 Quinebaug Avenue, Putnam, CT from Sylvia Hankins, Trustee for the sum of $110,764. A copy of the proposed purchase and sale agreement is on file in the office of the Town Clerk and is available for inspection during normal business hours.
November 27, 2026

Legal Notice
Town of Putnam
Notice of Special Town Meeting
December 7, 2026

The Electors and Citizens qualified to vote in Town Meetings of the Town of Putnam, Connecticut, are hereby notified and warned that a Special Town Meeting of said Town will be held in Room 109 of the Municipal Complex at 200 School Street, Putnam, CT on Monday, December 7, 2026 at 6:45 in the evening for the following purposes:
1. To choose a moderator for said meeting.
2. To determine the wishes of those present and eligible to vote at town meetings of the Town of Putnam with respect to approval the proposed purchase of real estate located at 8 Quinebaug Avenue and 140 Quinebaug Avenue, Putnam, CT from Sylvia Hankins, Trustee for the sum of $110,764.
A copy of the proposed purchase and sale agreement is on file in the office of the Town Clerk and is available for inspection during normal business hours.
Dated at Putnam, Connecticut this _th day of November, 2026.
Town of Putnam, Its Board of Selectmen
Norman B. Seney, Mayor
J. Scott Pempek, Deputy Mayor
Rick Hayes
Gloria Marion
Michael Paquin
Roy Simmons
Michael Bogdanski
Attest:
Town Clerk November 27, 2026

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
ESTATE OF
Brenda M Trudeau (26-00443)

The Hon. Gabrielle Labonte, Judge of the Court of Probate,District of Northeast Probate Court, by decree dated November 10, 2026, ordered that all claims must be presented to the fiduciary at the address below. Failure to promptly present any such claim may result in the loss of rights to recover on such claim.

Elyssa A. Foley, Clerk

The fiduciary is:
Eddie Coolbeth
c/o GABRIEL HENRY CUSANELLI, 66 SANDERSON STREET, NEW HA VEN, CT 06511,
November 27, 2026

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
ESTATE OF
Beatrice Gotsis (18-00476)

The Hon. Gabrielle Labonte, Judge of the Court of Probate,District of Northeast Probate Court, by decree dated August 18, 2026, ordered that all claims must be presented to the fiduciary at the address below. Failure to promptly present any such claim may result in the loss of rights to recover on such claim.

Brenda Duquette, Chief Clerk

The fiduciary is:
Socrates Gotsis
c/o GEORGE A LAW, LAW OFFICE OF GEORGE A. LAW, 595 MAIN STREET, PORTLAND, CT 06480
November 27, 2026

Dunn Marketing moves into new office, launches new Web site, earns Silver Davey Award



KILLINGLY — Dunn Marketing LLC has moved into a larger office at 142 Main St. in Killingly, launched a new website and earned a Silver Davey Award, three milestones that reflect the agency's steady growth into one of northeastern Connecticut's leading marketing firms.

More room for the team, and for clients

The new office sits right downstairs from the agency's former home on Killingly Main Street and offers more than double the space. It gives Dunn Marketing's growing team room to work side by side, along with a larger, more comfortable meeting space that is better equipped for client meetings and working sessions.

"Our team has grown, and the way we work with clients has grown with it," said Laura Dunn, founder, CEO and chief brand strategist of Dunn Marketing. "We wanted a space where a client can sit down with us, spread out and really work through a plan together. Staying on Main Street mattered to us, too. This community is home."

A new dunnmarketing.com

This month, Dunn Marketing also launched a new website at dunnmarketing.com. The site features expanded client case studies and new information on how the agency serves organizations in life services sectors such as healthcare, law, nonprofit organizations, and finance.

"Before someone picks up the phone, they want to know we understand their world," Dunn said. "A behavioral health nonprofit and a wealth management firm have very different audiences and very different rules. The new site shows the work we've done for both, and the results behind it."

Silver Davey Award for Trudeau Center film

Also this month, "60 Years of Transforming Lives & Creating Bright Futures at Trudeau" earned a Silver Davey Award in the 2026 Film/Video Non-Profit category. The film, produced by Dunn Marketing with J. Russo Productions, celebrates six decades of the J. Arthur Trudeau Memorial Center's work with children and adults with developmental disabilities, and the families, staff and community who make it possible. The Davey Awards honor small teams and independent creators producing strong work on limited budgets. Entries are judged by the Academy of Interactive and Visual Arts (AIVA). The 2026 competition drew thousands of entries from boutique agencies, in-house creative teams, small production companies and independent creators.

"Telling a story that meaningful was an honor from the first interview to the final cut," said Marci Seney, PCM®, CDMP, vice president of client services at Dunn Marketing. "Our whole team felt that responsibility in every frame. This award really belongs to the people who let us into their lives and trusted us with their stories."

A growing record of national recognition

The Davey Award is Dunn Marketing's eighth national honor in three years. Earlier in 2026, the agency earned three Communicator Awards of Distinction, also judged by AIVA: one for its brand refresh of The Prue Law Group, P.C., and two for its work with WHZ Strategic Wealth Advisors, recognizing a financial services TV commercial series and a white paper.

In 2025, Dunn Marketing received three Communicator Awards. Its Trudeau Center 60th anniversary video earned an Award of Excellence, the program's highest honor, and Trudeau's "We Create Bright Futures" billboard campaign earned an Award of Distinction. A third award recognized the agency's campaign for WHZ.

In 2024, Dunn Marketing's "Serve, Don't Sell" content marketing campaign for WHZ won a Gramercy Institute Financial Content Marketing Award, sharing the Personal Investing, Business-to-Consumer category with Vanguard.



Courtesy

Putnam Rotary Club President Martha Paquette, left, gives Rotarian Roberta Rocchetti, Interact advisor, a donation of $500. This will get the Putnam Rotary Club's Interact Club bell ringing off to a good start. Bell ringing fund-raising for the Salvation Army is a decades-long tradition for the Interact Club. The Interact Club members will be ringing bells from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Nov. 27, Nov. 28, Dec. 5, 12 and 19 at both entrances of the Putnam Stop & Shop and Putnam Walmart. They will also be at the Putnam Price Chopper and Putnam Supermarket. Rocchetti said this is the only fund-raiser the local Salvation Army office has. The money stays local and is used for rent assistance, fuel and utilities assistance, shelter and other social services for people in the northeastern corner of Connecticut.

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