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## First Selectman's Corner



Norm Needleman  
First Selectman

*Dear Essex Friends  
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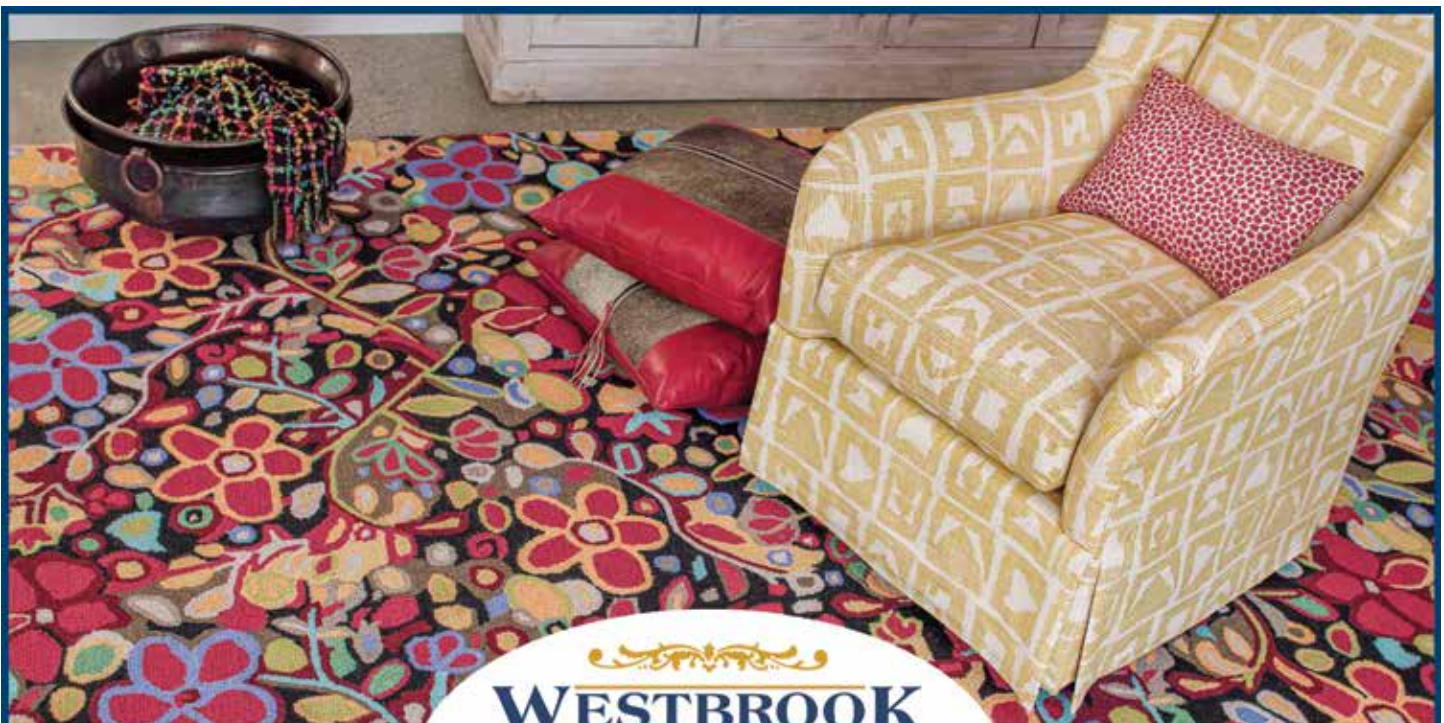
**Happy New Year!** Before we review our community news, I would like to thank the residents of Essex for your ongoing support. I love overseeing the Town's affairs and am honored to continue to serve you as First Selectman. Our Town is fortunate to be on sound

financial footing and we have built a core staff of professionals in every area of municipal operations and services. Those services are reinforced by selectmen who are experienced municipal managers, Stacia Libby and Bruce Glowac. I will continue to work with them every day to make certain that Essex continues its positive momentum.

This year, the Board of Finance dedicated the 2022-2023 Annual Report to the Essex Historical Society and the Essex Land Trust in recognition of completing the Follow the Falls project. This collaborative effort, seven years in the making, is a detailed history of this community and its connection to the Town's Falls River watershed. Copies of the report are available at the Town Hall or you can view it on the Town website at [www.essexct.gov](http://www.essexct.gov).

Preparation for the 2024-2025 annual budget is underway. Letters have gone out to Town schools, departments, boards and commissions and they will soon be compiling and submitting their requests. Our goal is to continue to meet your needs and expectations with the highest levels of service, while keeping expenditures low. The schedule of budget meetings has been posted on the Town website. Budget meetings are open to the public, and we hope you will attend. The Board of Finance has overall responsibility for the budget process and will submit a final budget for the approval of residents at a Town Meeting, currently scheduled for May 13, 2024.

*Continued on page 5*



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You will notice that property values have increased. Please DO NOT expect your taxes to increase in proportion to the increase in your assessment. The grand list has gone up significantly and because of that we're hoping for a decrease in the mill rate which will be set in May 2024.

As always, I encourage you to contribute to the safety of all drivers and pedestrians this winter season. Please wear seatbelts, drive safely, make sure your tires are in good shape, be alert to icy road conditions and drive within the speed limit. Prepare your homes and cars for the winter weather and be equipped for emergencies. Kindly clear your sidewalks of snow as soon as possible after storms so pedestrians can walk safely, clear of traffic. If you see something that needs to be repaired, contact our Public Works Department at 860-767-0715.

With the price of utilities still high, please remember those less fortunate at this time of year. If you have the means to give, consider reaching out to a friend or neighbor directly. Otherwise, please contact Mary Ellen Barnes in our Social Services Department and donate to the Town's Social Services Special Assistance Fund. Your donation will be used

to help with financial emergencies for Social Services clients' families, by providing rental deposits, utility bill assistance, fuel assistance, school supplies, food & clothing, and holiday presents for children. Your gifts, both large and small, are imperative for us to achieve our mission of helping the many in need in our community. Donations should be mailed to Town of Essex Social Services Assistance Fund, 29 West Ave, Essex, CT, 06426.

To stay up to date with what's happening in our community, I encourage residents to sign up for the Essex News quarterly email newsletter and the emergency notification system, Safer Essex. You can subscribe to both services by going to our Town website at <https://www.essexct.gov/home/pages/online-services>. These Town resources are invaluable to staying informed.

*On behalf of all of us at Town Hall, I wish you a very happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year!*

**Norm Needleman**  
First Selectman



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## Assessor's Office



### Tax Relief – Persons Totally Disabled or Over Age 65

The Assessor's Office accepts applications for the State of Connecticut Circuit Breaker program between Feb 1 and May 15 annually. Under this program, the State of Connecticut pays a portion of your tax bill ranging from \$150 to \$1,250. There is no requirement to re-pay the state.

To qualify for the program a person must be totally disabled or over age 65 at the end of the previous calendar year (2023). The total allowable qualifying household income, including Social Security benefits, changes yearly.

The total allowable qualifying income for the calendar year ending 2023 is: \$53,400 for a married couple and \$43,800 for a single person.

The amount of tax relief is a sliding scale based on the total qualifying income. For example, a married couple with an annual

qualifying income of \$29,000, may be eligible for assistance from the State of up to \$1,000. The \$1,000 would be taken off their tax bill.

Once eligible for the State program, a person/couple is also qualified for the Town of Essex matching benefit. Using the example above, the tax bill could be reduced by a maximum of \$2,000.

If you or someone you know, might meet the requirements for this benefit, please have them come to the Assessor's Office at Town Hall with their SSA 1099, and proof of any income earned in the previous calendar year or a copy of their most recent tax return.

We look forward to the opportunity to assist you.

**Jessica Sypher, CCMAII**  
Assessor

*Wishing you a happy & healthy 2024!*

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# Town Clerk's Office

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## Welcome to Centerbrook, Essex and Ivoryton

Jami Supsic	57 Pond Meadow Rd.	Ivoryton
Charles A. & Diane L. Lewis	19 Heron Pond Rd.	Essex
Aurelia Fasano Brogan & James J. Brogan	125 Main Street	Ivoryton
Timothy M. & Lisa B. Ghriskey	17 Riverview Street	Essex
Elsie Odishaw	18 Rachel Lane	Ivoryton
Steven Demelis	27 North Main St., Unit 4	Essex
Tanya Cutolo	123 Main Street	Ivoryton
Izabela Tomkiewicz & Christian Ferrer	21 Harbor View South	Essex
Vicki & Scott Williams	88 North Main St.	Essex
Deidra Baum	3 Nutmeg Lane	Essex
Susannah Childress Scally & Michael P. Scally	57 Walnut Street	Ivoryton
Theresa A. Cadrain	27 North Main St., Unit 8	Essex
Daniel & Andrea Drechsler	69 West Avenue	Essex
Anthony Del Cervo & Jenny K. Pretty	91 Bokum Road	Essex
Christopher N. & Katherine A. Schwint	38 N Main St., Unit 16	Essex
Louis H. & Joanne C. Knotts	46 Crosstrees Hill Road	Essex

## Loss of Residents and Friends

### September

Charles Junius Fox  
Lillian V. Lorello  
Larry Timmerman  
Earl E. Goodwin  
Alison H. Hughes  
Mary L. Herel  
Sylvia M. Stebbins  
Suzanne T. Wood

### Donald P. Shildneck

Sharon D. Hardgrove  
Carol E. R. Newsome  
Valerie W. Bulkeley  
Robert E. Claffey  
John V. Zuppe  
Beatrice C. Appell  
Matthew J. Craig

### November

Linda Clark  
Jeanette I. Netsch  
Richard Van Wyck Buel

### December

Nelson C. White  
Madge MB Bennett  
Carolee Cannata  
Barbara A. Stillwaggon  
Daniel G. Proteau

Respectfully submitted,  
**Yvonne Roziak**  
Assistant Town Clerk

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Christine Gemelli  
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Kevin Geysen  
860.805.0000



Colette Harron  
860.304.2391



Donn Holland  
860.227.4737



Leslie Holland  
860.575.5144



Joe Kelly  
860.287.1222



Teri Lewis  
860.227.7913



Yolanda Lowe  
860.463.5596



Susan Malan  
860.767.5011



Matt Merritt  
860.729.2290



Roger Parkman  
203.676.1061



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860.581.3838



Tina Rupp  
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Kathy Schellens  
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# Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission – Identifying Wetlands

Wetlands and watercourses are indispensable natural resources and are legally protected in Connecticut. But how do you know if your property contains a wetland area?

Winter or summer, it's relatively easy to identify a stream, river, or pond by the presence of water or ice. Other wetland areas, however, may not be obvious! What then?

Without taking a step outside, you can find out if your

property is in a known wetland area by visiting the Town of Essex homepage [www.essexct.gov](http://www.essexct.gov). A click on the GIS Mapping button will take you to their online mapping portal. Zoom in on the map and locate your property. Click on the Themes button on the top right, then select State and Town-delineated wetlands from the menu. The overlay will show if your property falls in a known wetland area.

While all wetland areas are legally protected, not all have been



Skunk Cabbage emerging in spring.

formally identified. The Town of Essex is continually updating the map with new data.

A walk around your property will provide some clues to its status. Wetland plants are adapted to live in soils that are saturated for part of the year.

In early spring, pungent skunk cabbage, a wetland native, is one of the first plants to emerge. Cattails, reeds, Joe Pye weed, NY ironweed and sphagnum moss are other plants commonly seen

in wetlands. Wooded wetlands contain trees and shrubs such as red maple, white cedar, fir, spicebush, and native highbush blueberry.

Ultimately, Connecticut legally defines wetlands based on soil observations performed by a soil scientist. Wetland areas and the 100 feet review area that surrounds them are protected by law.

If you plan a building or landscaping project, please contact Carey Duques, Land Use Official [cduques@essexct.gov](mailto:cduques@essexct.gov) to learn whether you need to file a Wetland permit application.



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# Essex Elementary School Foundation

## Essex Elementary School Foundation Announces \$50,000 in Grants to Essex Elementary School

The Essex Elementary School Foundation (EESF), supported by the residents and community of Essex, has approved over \$50,000 for enrichment programs offered at Essex Elementary School (EES) to supplement the school's budget.

New grants for the 2023-2024 school year include a **School Author Visit**, aimed at encouraging students to read and write through an in-depth look at the book writing process. The **One School, One Book Program** is helping to build a school community of readers. This program will provide a book for each student to read aimed to reinforce reading, increase parent involvement and help bridge the home-school connection. Through the **Red Supreme Dance Program**, students will participate in three days of dance instructions that incorporate lessons about self-esteem, the importance of having fun and developing a healthy lifestyle through movement, dance and music. Participating student's families can attend an after-school hours performance on Family Night. **S.E.L. Books** will enable the purchase of an impressive 40-book collection for each first-grade classroom to support Social Emotional Learning.

Supplemental to the new grants is a continued commitment to existing programs, including collaboration with the **Essex Historical Society** which provides a comprehensive **Historian in Residence** program to learn about the rich history of Essex,



EES 2nd and 3rd grade students gain a deeper understanding of China's customs while observing Chinese Acrobats thanks to the EESF Justus W. Paul World Cultures Program.

Centerbrook and Ivoryton. The **CT Audubon Society's Roger Tory Peterson Estuary Center (CAS/RTPEC)** will return for a **Scientist in Residence** program for K-6 students and teachers and the **Connecticut River Museum** will work with the Essex Elementary School grades 4-6.

Additional grants for 2023-2024 will include the **Summer Math Passport Program** where grades K-6 will be inspired to solve grade-level specific math problems around town. Other annual grants and programs include **Lego Engineering, 3D Printing Makerspace afterschool programs** and programming in the recently constructed **STEM Lab**.



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\*Source: SmartMLS, 1/1/19-12/19/23, total transactions by agent, Essex; all properties listed or sold by agent

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# Kayak Launch Inaugurated on Mill Pond

**A** new kayak launch has been installed in Ivoryton's Falls River Park (located on Falls River Drive). The site is the only public accessed point for exploring Mill Pond, a 59-acre impoundment created by the dam located behind Centerbrook Architects facility. While access to the pond was always possible, the new facility makes it much easier for paddlers to launch and return without some of the challenges experienced up to now.

The project was spearheaded by land trust Preserve Management Director, Leif Owens. Over the years, there has been an increase in shore erosion at the current launch site off the parking area. The new floating dock and launch helps protect the shoreline and improves accessibility for boaters and fishermen. The improved accessibility will also enable us to expand educational programs on the Mill Pond.

The kayak launch was officially inaugurated on August 12 with a planned outing to explore Mill Pond. Attending festivities were Cynthia Clegg, President &



*Continued on page 13*

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CEO and Thayer Talbot, Vice President & Chief Operating Officer of the Community Foundation of Middlesex Country, which provided a generous grant (from the Guilford Savings Bank Charitable Fund, the Phyllis M. McDowell Fund for the

Environment, the Sherry and Herb Clark Family Fund, and the Whelan Family).

On inauguration day, Essex Land Trust President, Jeff Croyle, led some thirty kayaks and canoes on a leisurely paddle of the Mill Pond, which included circumnavigating Jean's Island.

## The Mill Pond Story

**M**ill Pond in Ivoryton and Centerbrook goes back to the early 1700s when a dam was installed to power a grist mill. The Falls River, which originates its journey as an outflow of Messerschmidt Pond in Westbrook, provides year-round flow as it drains the watershed to the west of Ivoryton.

As a recreational resource, Mill Pond provides ample opportunities for fishing, canoeing, and kayaking. Residents who live along its edge are also able to enjoy its diverse natural environment. The present-day condition of Mill Pond is directly attributable to the successful effort since 2002 by an informal voluntary collection of neighbors known as the Friends of Mill Pond.

Michael Delouchry, chair of the Friends of Mill Pond, coordinates efforts to treat various types of weed infestations resulting in a wonderful natural resource for all to enjoy. The Friends of Mill Pond Steering Committee has done an outstanding job in managing this effort and in securing funds from Mill Pond waterfront property owners and others. As one of the abutting landowners, the Essex Land Trust participates in the stewardship of this valuable neighborhood asset.

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\*Source: William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty 2022 Awards Recognition, Essex Brokerage

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# PUBLIC WORKS **Winter is Here**

It is the primary goal of the Public Works Department to make the Town roads passable during storm events, minimize the hazards caused by slippery road conditions, and help restore safe traveling conditions throughout the Town as soon as possible after each winter storm. This often involves drivers working long hours in hazardous driving conditions to ensure our safety on the roadways. We ask for your cooperation and patience during these times in order to have a safe season for all.

Residents should keep in mind that snowplows are designed to remove snow from the roadway to the edge of the road. It is likely that the plow will leave behind a windrow of snow in front of driveways. Residents are responsible for removing this snow.

**PRIVATE PLOWING** - Depositing of any snow from private driveways into the public streets is prohibited. This practice is dangerous and impedes the Town's snow removal process. This includes piles pushed across the street and the windrows that are created in the street. Homeowners are responsible for the actions of their contractors.

**MAILBOX DAMAGE** - During the winter season it is inevitable that some mailboxes will fall victim to winter's forces. Residents are advised of the importance of proper placement and anchoring of mailboxes and support posts to prevent damage from snow removal operations. Mailboxes should be securely fastened to a

sturdy post which is sufficiently anchored in the ground to resist the impact of plowed snow.

A mailbox or post that is pushed over or damaged as a result of snow or slush coming off a snowplow is considered a winter hazard, and the Town will not replace the mailbox or post.

If it is determined a mailbox is struck by a Town snowplow, not the snow coming off the plow, the Town will reimburse the owner for a basic support post and a basic mailbox up to seventy-five dollars (\$75.00). Payment will not include costs other than materials and will not cover the cost of decorative wood or metal posts or decorative mailboxes.

The Town will do its best to assist residents with the replacement of mailboxes deemed to have been struck by a Town snowplow as time and circumstances allow. The First Selectman or his designated representative is authorized to use reasonable discretion in resolving disputes involving unusual circumstances.

Residents are responsible for keeping their mailboxes clear for mail to be delivered.

**TRASH CANS** and recycling bins should never be placed in the road. If a plow truck hits them because they are in the road the Town will not be held responsible for replacing them.

*Continued on page 14*



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**INVISIBLE DOG FENCE LINES** within the Town's right of way are not the Town's responsibility if they are damaged during snow plowing or any other kind of removal of snow from roads.

**ANY SORT OF SPRINKLER HEADS, etc.** within the Town's right

of way are not the Town's responsibility if they are damaged during snow plowing or any other kind of removal of snow from roads.

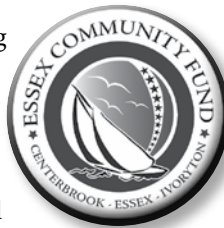
The Town will not be held responsible for any damage that is in the Town owned portion of your property. Questions and concerns during snow and ice storms should be directed to the Department of Public Works at 860-767-0715. After-hours calls may be directed to voicemail and will be checked periodically. Please call 9-1-1 for all emergencies.

**Ryan Welch**  
Public Works Director  
rwelch@essexct.gov

## Essex Community Fund

For More Information about ECF, visit our website at [www.essexcommunityfund.org](http://www.essexcommunityfund.org).

The weather has cooled but our local non-profits are heating up for the upcoming winter months. They have been working hard to continue to assist our residents in need: improving, expanding, helping, and supplying goods and services. **YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT of their** valuable work is what makes the Essex community such a wonderful place to live. ECF is proud to support our local non-profits and their programs that include, but are not limited to: **food for those in need; keeping seniors safe, healthy and nourished; urgent mental health services, and community outreach and assistance programs.**



Program (FAP) is an ongoing program available to residents who meet the funding criteria. This year is already seeing an increase in requests for assistance. Please consider joining this year's challenge. Donations can be made through our website at [www.essexcommunityfund.org](http://www.essexcommunityfund.org) or by mail at Essex Community Fund, PO Box 614, Essex, CT 06426. Notate on your donation that it is for FAP. Thank you to Mary Ellen Barnes, Essex Social Services Director, for overseeing this important program.

**Mark Your Calendar** and come out for the annual Essex Ed Parade happening on January 28th.

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### This winter, there is plenty to bring you in from the cold at the Essex Library!

*Are your ears red?* We've been listening to you! We encourage our patrons to voice their suggestions, and we diligently work to implement these ideas into our services. By doing so, we aim to foster a sense of ownership and collaboration, ensuring that the library remains a valuable resource. We view input not just as a request but as a partnership in building a vibrant and responsive community hub.



With the start of 2024, the Library extended its hours on Thursday evenings to 8:00 pm. These additional hours allow us to offer our full spectrum of library services, including teen and adult programming and meeting spaces, after work and school hours.

Registering for our programs has become a lot more convenient with the launch of a calendar program on our website, [www.youressexlibrary.org](http://www.youressexlibrary.org). Register for our programs at your convenience from the device of your choice. You'll receive a confirmation of your registration and can opt for a text or email reminder before the program date. We want to make it as easy and convenient as possible for you to take advantage of all the programming we offer.

Popular recurring programs continue throughout the winter, including Wiggle Worms for our youngest patrons ages 0-3; Story Time A-Z, Pre-school STEAM, and Future Artists for ages 3-5; and STEAM Saturday and Kids Create for school age children. These age-appropriate programs introduce literacy and social skills and foster an enjoyment of learning and reading that can last a lifetime. Stop by on February 3 for Bring Your Child to the Library Day. For this special day, our Children's Librarian, Miss Nicole, is celebrating the theme of kindness with musical help from Miss Margie.

During the winter school break, the entire family is invited to introductory lessons on playing the ukulele. These all-ages programs on February 20 are sure to dispel the winter chill and bring some tropical warmth to the Library. On April 3, the whole family has an opportunity to create a lotus lantern and learn about Korean history and culture.

Highlights in our adult programming include an author talk

with Luanne Rice on February 10. In conversation with author Deborah Goodrich Royce, Luanne will tell us about her new book, Last Night. The 2024 series of Great Decisions discussions returns on January 29, with special thanks to co-sponsor Southeast Connecticut World Affairs Council. On March 16, start your celebration of Saint Patrick's Day at the Essex Library. We will be hosting the trio Entwined for their performance of Give Me Your Hand: A Celtic Music Celebration.

*There's a lot more going on throughout late winter and early spring at Essex*

*Library. Keep an eye on our website for updated programming and new book information or come by the Library and let our staff tell you all about it. We look forward to seeing you!*



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- 15 Beach View Avenue Old Saybrook \$1,250,000
- 63 South Main Street Essex \$1,075,000
- 59 Old Post Road Clinton \$275,650
- 160 Old Ponsett Road Haddam \$570,000
- 9 Essex Glen Drive Essex \$710,000
- 46 Dennison Road Essex \$616,000
- 96 Boston Post Road Madison \$635,000

- 65 Main Street #39 Essex \$382,500
- 150 Ocean View Avenue Mystic \$800,000
- 19 Heron Pond Road Essex \$1,140,000
- 17 Riverview Street Essex \$3,250,000
- 27 North Main Street Essex \$355,000
- 73 Liberty Street Madison \$1,530,000
- 65 Main Street #22 Centerbrook \$412,000
- 190 Wildcat Road Madison \$800,000
- 1 Park Avenue Mystic \$700,000
- 38 North Main Street #16 Essex \$335,000
- 46 Crosstrees Hill Road Essex \$4,900,000
- 26 Prospect Street Essex \$1,450,000



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## Announces 2024 Season

2023 was certainly a roller coaster year with sellout performances, more dreaded Covid attacks and an appearance on national television. Big year for a little theatre! This year, Ivoryton Playhouse will open a new season with something for everyone – plays for the young and the young at heart; shows for beach bums and book worms as well as classic hits from the 60s and 70s and 80s with a healthy dollop of nostalgia!

April 4th sees the opening of **EVERLY – The Music of the Everly Brothers** created by Ben Hope and Eric Anthony. One of the first 10 artists inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, The Everly Brothers were pioneers of country rock with hits like “Bye Bye Love,” “Wake Up Little Susie” and many more. Runs through April 21.

It’s London, 1944 – come and join MGM star Marian Ames and her all-girl band in **SWINGTIME CANTEEN** as they entertain the troops with laughter, tears and great songs from the 40s including “Sentimental Journey,” “Apple Blossom Time” and “A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square.” Runs through June 9.

Based on the beloved 1988 MGM rom-com, **MYSTIC PIZZA** is a new musical about three working class girls who navigate the complexities of life, love and family in a small-town pizza joint in our very own Mystic, CT. The infectious score features megahits of the 80s and 90s – “Girls Just Wanna Have Fun,” “The Power of Love,” “True Colors” and “Nothing’s Gonna Stop Us Now.” Runs June 27-July 28.

*Continued on page 18*



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most loved Buffett classics such as "Cheeseburger in Paradise," "Margaritaville," "It's Five O'clock Somewhere" and many more. Runs August 8- September 8.

**Alabama Story** opens on October 3. Political foes, star-crossed lovers and one feisty children's author, Garth Williams, inhabit the same page in a Deep South of the imagination that brims with humor, heartbreak, and hope. Inspired by true events, runs October 3-20.

Take an unexpected blizzard, add a sprinkling of slapstick, and a pinch of Dickens' Christmas Carol. Stir in a little romance and a festive song, top it off with holiday magic and you get a new family tradition called **GOD BLESS US EVERYONE!** Conceived and directed by Jacqueline Hubbard – runs November 14-December 15.

Don't miss the most exciting, entertaining, and affordable theatre on the shoreline! Subscriptions are on sale now. Single tickets go on sale March 1, 2024. [www.ivorytonplayhouse.org](http://www.ivorytonplayhouse.org) or 860.767.7318.

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# Tri-Town Youth Services



## Truly Led by our Youth

If you haven't heard, Tri-Town Youth Services started a youth-led, community-based leadership program called Youth Action Council which is for students in grades 6, 7, and 8 coordinated by the Director of Positive Youth Development, Faith Sprigg. Members attended a pizza party open house in September, submitted applications if they were interested, and were able to attend their first monthly planning meeting in October. This program will run in alignment with the academic calendar and a new set of YAC members will join at the beginning of the next school year, making space for other youth to take on leadership roles.

As a completely youth-led program, YAC members were challenged to come up with their mission statement, on which they workshopped and came to a unanimous agreement. Their mission is to make our community a better place by helping others. YAC's first initiative that they planned as a group was to collect non-perishable donations that were distributed to the town

pantries, along with raising money for gift cards for the holidays.

The youth in Chester, Deep River, and Essex have so many wonderful strengths and are incredible resources when opportunities to learn and grow are provided outside of school and at home. Through the Youth Action Council, they are learning how to work with their peers, design their initiatives, gain confidence, and learn how to talk and interact with members of our community.

***"What is clear from research on resilient youth- youth who have become healthy adults in spite of adversity- is the significant role played by the opportunity to experience somewhere in their lives a caring, nurturing environment which encourages their active participation in meaningful activities"***  
(Benard, 1990).



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# Essex Historical Society

## A Peek into New Acquisitions

When the word 'history' is inserted into your organization's name, as it is with Essex Historical Society (EHS), most people think you handle 'old stuff' all day. This statement can be true, except that we use "objects" or "collections" to describe our donations. EHS serves as the steward of the town's three villages by safeguarding over 7,000 historic objects at Hills Academy or Pratt House, which we use to teach, exhibit, tour or share, in many of our programs, stories or online features. A peek into some of our newest acquisitions may surprise you at the variety of the stories they tell.

EHS received a beautiful, provenanced artwork this year with the donation of the portrait of Sarah Hayden (1774-1834). For decades, her portrait hung in the front, northwest chamber of the Ebenezer Hayden II house on Main Street at the corner of Novelty Lane. Captain Bill Cook, a member and good friend of EHS as well as the former steward of the Hayden House, facilitated the portrait's donation as the house passed from a former owner to its heirs. Sarah married one of the town's leading merchants, Ebenezer Hayden II, and raised eight children. Her portrait may be close to 200 years old as she is



The circa 1830 portrait of Sarah "Sally" Hayden was recently donated to Essex Historical Society.

depicted in her later years wearing a modest white lace bonnet and somber dress, with a steady gaze and a resolute expression.

Sometimes we receive items that excite our collections team by their local significance or unique craftsmanship. When a donor gave us a sharp photograph of the Filippi family standing in front of their home on Pond Meadow Road circa 1920, we realized we now owned EHS's earliest image of Ivoryton's Italian neighborhood. Another object purchased at an antiques store and then donated to EHS was a "Forget Me Not" album of poetry compiled by a young Frances Munger of Essex and written by her friends (1857-1863), creating beautiful

and intricately drawn images on each page. We marveled at the skill and precision to compose each page as a work of art, speaking volumes about the girls' education.

EHS also received much more modern items, such as a board game depicting the area businesses of the 1980s, known as "Valleyopoly." Another donor brought us two giant scrapbooks featuring local news clippings from the 1980s and 90s - THOSE will be history someday!



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Filippi House on Pond Meadow Road, Ivoryton. Circa 1920

And a year does not go by without several people donating dozens of photos or slides from the Falls River Flood of 1982.... for which we express gratitude.

Interested in learning more about EHS's collections? Stop by Hills Academy, 22 Prospect Street, Essex, during our open hours on Tuesday and Thursday mornings or by appointment. Your membership helps us care for the Town's historic collections, [www.essexhistory.org/](http://www.essexhistory.org/) become-a-member, please support our important work! For more on our year-round programs and events, please visit our website [www.essexhistory.org](http://www.essexhistory.org) or follow us on Facebook or Instagram. Thank you!



## FISH (Friends in Service Here)

FISH was founded locally in 1970 to provide free rides to medical appointments for residents of Essex, Deep River and Chester. The officers for 2024 are Henry May, President; Mary Samburg, Secretary; Barbara Ryan, Treasurer; Jack Frost, Driver Recruitment; Tia Smith, At Large; and Bob Mountz, At Large. Dispatchers are John Heiser, Pat Callahan, and Tony Carrano. Tony is also our scheduler.

The volume of free rides given has continued to increase to 65 to 75 per month, close to the pre-pandemic number of rides. FISH has recently added 7 new drivers to help with the increase in rides.

The FISH Annual Meeting was held November 16, 2023, at Essex Meadows. Guests included FISH drivers, former drivers, spouses, friends, and some people from financial supporters including the Community Foundation of Middlesex County, the Essex Community Fund, and the Rotary Club of Essex.

The modest FISH budget is funded by grants from the Essex Community Fund, the Community Foundation of Middlesex County, the Rotary Club of Essex, the Essex Savings Bank, the Deep River Community Health Committee, the Town of Chester, the Town of Essex, and other organizations, as well as by contributions from our drivers, riders, and friends.

**Henry May, Driver and President**

## Essex - Community Listings

### HOUSES OF WORSHIP

All Saints Episcopal Church..... (860) 767-1698  
 First Baptist Church..... (860) 767-8623  
 First Congregational Church ..... (860) 767-8097  
 St. Teresa of Calcutta Church..... (860) 767-1284  
 St. John's Episcopal Church..... (860) 767-8095  
 Trinity Lutheran Church ..... (860) 767-0228

### CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Ancient Order of Weeders..... (860) 767-2700  
 Democratic Town Committee..... (860) 767-1973  
 Community Foundation of Middlesex County .... (860) 347-0025  
 Tri-Town Cub Scout Pack 13.....(860)-558-2121  
 ..... tritownpack13@gmail  
 Essex Board of Trade..... (860) 767-3904  
 Essex Boy Scouts of America..... (860) 304-9027  
 Essex Community Fund..... (860) 304-2751  
 Essex Cub Scouts of America ..... (860) 790-0681  
 Essex Garden Club ..... (973) 809-6832  
 Essex Historical Society..... (860) 767-0681

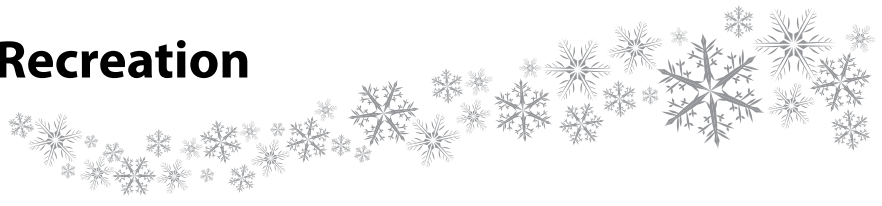
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 Essex Land Trust.....info@essexlandtrust.org  
 Essex Little League..... www.essexlittleleague.org  
 Essex Veterans Memorial Hall ..... (860) 767-8892  
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 Ivoryton Company of Fifers & Drummers..... (860) 767-2237  
 Ivoryton Village Alliance .....info@ivorytonalliance.org  
 Lower Valley Visiting Nurses..... (860) 767-0186  
 Republican Town Committee..... (860) 262-0226  
 SCORE Mentors ..... (860) 388-9508  
 The Shoreline Soup Kitchens ..... (860) 388-1988  
 Tri-Town Youth Services Bureau..... (860) 526-3600  
 9 Town Transit ..... (860) 510-0429

### SCHOOLS

Essex Elementary School..... (860) 767-8215  
 John Winthrop Middle School..... (860) 526-9546  
 Superintendent..... (860) 526-2417  
 Valley Regional High School..... (860) 526-5328



# Essex Park & Recreation Department



**Mission Statement**  
*Creating Community through People,  
Parks and Programs!*

*We have several new programs and special events planned for the community and we hope to continue our mission of providing recreational facilities and programs for the growth and enhancement of Essex. As always, we appreciate the support of the Essex residents and many community groups and organizations that make our operations a success.*

## Essex go Bragh Irish Parade

Park and Recreation is planning the annual Essex Go Bragh (translated as Essex Forever) Irish Parade & Festival, to be held Saturday, March 23, 2024. Essex Park and Recreation has named Essex Resident and Park and Recreation Commission member Anthony Mosa as the 2024 Essex go Bragh Grand Marshal. The event will feature an Irish-themed parade down Main Street into the heart of Essex Village. All Essex residents and community organizations are encouraged to get involved. You are welcome to walk in the parade and if you are not Irish, then be Irish for a day! Full event information will be posted on our website.

## Essex Eggstravaganza

Our annual egg hunt will be held on Saturday, March 30, 2024, at 10:00 am at Grove Street Park. The Eggstravaganza is open to children birth to second grade. Join the Easter Bunny for story time at Essex Town Hall Auditorium at 9:15 am and plan to arrive for the egg hunt 15 minutes early as we will begin at 10 am sharp.

## Parks Update & Highlights...

- Winter may be upon us, but we are already planning park updates and maintenance for Hubbard Park, Grove Street Park, and the tennis courts to commence early spring 2024.
- Thanks to the Ivoryton Business Alliance, the Ivoryton Green was in full splendor with Ivoryton Illuminations for the holidays and was featured on the Today Show as were other Town holiday venues. The Main Street Park gazebo was also decorated for holidays and holiday greens have been placed around Town, through the efforts of the Essex Garden Club.
- Our Grove Street Tennis Courts & Lower-Level Lot at Viney Hill Brook Park is closed for the winter season and will re-open in the spring.

# Helping Our Community Thrive...



Through support for local nonprofits who make our towns a little better every day...

Through partnerships with businesses who want to make a difference...

Through volunteers who reach out and give a hand up...

Through community members who put their hearts and dollars to work for a better today, and brighter tomorrow for all.

Help make a difference where you live, work or play. Call us at (860)347-0025. Or visit us at [MiddlesexCountyCF.org](http://MiddlesexCountyCF.org).



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**Live Local. Give Local.**

## In the Works for Spring 2024

- Boating Certification Course
- Running Rams Track & Field
- Tennis Stars
- Jr. Warrior Basketball
- Engineering
- Cooking with Kids
- Yoga and so much more



Our Summer Concerts, Programs, & Camp Schedule will be posted online in February.

## Park and Recreation Commission Members

*Brette Fitton, Chair*

*Tony Mosa*

*Caroline Fields*

*Dan Needleman*

*Christopher Perry*

*John Bean*



The Parks and Recreation Commission welcomes the opportunity to help you with issues involving the Department and our Community. The public is invited to attend our meetings, held quarterly at 5:30 pm at the Town Hall. Please see the Town Meeting Calendar for 2024 dates.

## Department Staff

Park and Recreation Director **Mary Ellen Barnes**  
860-767-4340 x110 mbarnes@essexct.gov

Park and Recreation Assistant **Tim LaChance**  
860-767-4340 x148 tlachance@essexct.gov

## Contact Us!

We welcome hearing from you on our programs, parks, and the operations of our department. Remember to visit our website for updated announcements, program information, online registration and to view our brochure: go to the Town website [www.essexct.gov](http://www.essexct.gov), click "Departments" click "Park and Recreation."



**Join us on Facebook to hear about our department and interact with our friends.**

# ESSEX TOWN HALL

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Maria Lucarelli, Assistant	x112	mlucarelli@essexct.gov
Alyson Finnegan	x145	afinnegan@essexct.gov
<b>ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICE</b>		
Caroline Fountain, Assistant ACO	x160	cfountain@essexct.gov
<b>ASSESSOR</b>		
Jessica Sypher, Assessor	x124	jsypher@essexct.gov
Karen Abercrombie, Assistant	x123	kabercrombie@essexct.gov
<b>BUILDING DEPARTMENT &amp; FIRE MARSHAL</b>		
Keith Nolin, Building Official	x117	knolin@essexct.gov
David Mesite, Assistant Building Official		dmesite@essexct.gov
John Planas, Fire Marshal	x146	jplanas@essexct.gov
Darcy Roper	x144	droper@essexct.gov
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**WWW.211.ORG/#**

## (Sailing Masters of 1812)

### Join the Essex Ed Fan Club!

It's cold and it's dark, and there's snow on the ground.  
A large jolly fellow will soon come around.

No not dear old Santa. He's gone till next year.  
It's time for a Groundhog to spread some good cheer.

In spite of cold climates, which we cannot tame;  
No weather can stop him. He comes just the same.

Ed dresses in secret, there's no need to rush.  
He wants to surprise us; his costume hush-hush.

Fans come from quite near, and they come from quite far.  
Some travel on foot, and some travel by car.

Kids cheer and they shout and they romp all about.  
The Groundhog is near; Ed is practically here!

We play lively music; fur caps on our heads,  
To welcome our Groundhog. To greet Essex Ed!

With pots and their pans and their ladles and spoons;  
Fans clang a loud welcome, to rival our tunes.

With furry hand puppets and ludicrous hats.  
Some think we're all crazy; they think we're all bats!

Then pictures with Ed, snapped with those we hold dear,  
Will keep us all smiling, till Ed comes next year.

So, come meet our Groundhog. You'll love if you do.  
You'll be an Ed convert! You'll be a fan too!

For 44 years, Essex Ed, our famous and photogenic Groundhog, has come out of hibernation to greet his fans and to take his place of honor at the head of Main Street to welcome pilgrims old and new to Essex. Whoever invited Essex Ed to town over 40 years ago is an absolute genius. It is such simple, silly fun that it is positively brilliant. What better way to shake off the winter doldrums, than to grab your noisemakers and join the great gathering of groundhog groupies to greet Essex Ed and discover what costume he shows off this year?

I know, I know. When you first tell people about leaving your warm home to go out on a cold winter day to greet a very, very large, costumed groundhog by wearing a furry hat and banging



pots and pans together, a few will give you a blank stare, scratch their heads, and ask: "Why would you want to do that?"

Truth be told, when you describe it like that, who can blame them? In order to understand what the excitement is all about, you need to see firsthand the welcoming spectacle for the larger than life "Essex Ed." It's like the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade (only a little bit smaller). It is so much more fun to be in the middle of it.

We invite anyone who has never met Essex Ed, to join the huge throng awaiting the arrival of Essex Ed, and experience the infectious anticipation. It's always a big secret as to what Ed will be dressed as. What will he be this year? In the past, Ed has dressed up as Elvis, as Witch hazel, as a firefighter, as Beethoven, as one of the Beatles, as a Sea Captain and Essex Edna dressed as Princess Leia from Star Wars, just to name a few over those 44 years.

When Essex Ed finally appears, the crowd goes wild! Everybody cheers and bangs their pots and pans in a deafening crescendo to welcome Ed! As The Sailing Masters lead Essex Ed up Main Street, the spectators all join the



***When Essex Ed finally appears, the crowd goes wild! Everybody cheers and bangs their pots and pans in a deafening crescendo to welcome Ed!***

procession, adding to the joyful clamor, and modeling their finest groundhog attire. There are furry groundhog hats, groundhog crowns, groundhog stocking caps, as well as groundhog hand puppets; including one spotted banging a miniature pot and spoon.

Once Essex Ed is ceremoniously installed at the head of Main Street; let the photo ops begin! Everyone wants their picture taken as they take turns getting up close with Ed!

We guarantee that anyone who experiences the magic of Essex Ed for the first time will be signing up to be Life Members of the Essex Ed Fan Club. We

don't have jackets. But we do have hats!

The Sailing Masters of 1812 have the pleasure, the privilege, the honor and distinction (not to mention the just plain fun) of escorting Essex Ed up Main Street. If you would like to be at the heart of "Everything Essex," including welcoming Essex Ed on his annual journey, the Sailing Masters invite you to "Come Aboard!" No previous musical experience required. You can choose from fife, snare drum, bass drum, and color guard (carry a flag). **For more information, please call Vicki at 860-212-1606 or email: captainvicki1812@gmail.com.**



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# COMMUNITY MUSIC SCHOOL

## COMMUNITY MUSIC SCHOOL AT 40!

**CMS celebrated its 40th Anniversary** in style on Oct 14, 2023, with a concert that will not soon be forgotten! Broadway music director/pianist extraordinaire (as well as Essex native, current Lyme resident, and CMS board member) **Todd Ellison** arranged and presented a fantastic star-studded evening of music for a sold-out crowd at the Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center in Old Saybrook. Broadway stars **Christopher Sieber, Marissa McGowan, Klea Blackhurst, and Norm Lewis** each wowed the audience with solo and ensemble selections, accompanied by Todd (piano) and CMS faculty members **Tom Briggs** (drums) and **Matt McCauley** (bass). It was such a treat for all in attendance to experience the incredible artistry and energy of these top artists in an intimate venue. Other highlights included a wonderful rendition of "Send in the Clowns" performed by CMS trombone student **Annamarie Mueller**, congratulatory video greetings from **Amanda Kloots, Jane Lynch, and Barry Manilow**, and the premiere of a short film *CMS at 40 Years* created by Addie Keyworth and Fallyn Belisle under the guidance of Chris LeQuire of Valley (HS) Media. Thanks to Todd Ellison and Friends for this special evening that was historic for



CMS 40th Anniversary performers backstage at the Kate (left to right): Norm Lewis, Gavin Lodge, Annamarie Mueller, Christopher Sieber, Todd Ellison, Klea Blackhurst, Marissa McGowan, Matt McCauley, and Tom Briggs.

CMS and our community both musically and as a very successful fundraiser that will help sustain the school's future! Thanks to all who attended and supported CMS, and to headline sponsors **The Bauman Family Foundation, Whelen Engineering, Bluewater Millwork & Construction, Essex Meadows, Carter Gowrie, Jeffrey Mehler CFP, Middlesex Health, and Reynolds Subaru.**

The school's Spring 2024 semester begins January 29. It provides lessons on every instrument and voice (taught by its 24 professional artist faculty members), *Music Together*® early childhood classes, ensembles including String Orchestra, New Horizons Band, Acoustic Classic Rock Ensemble, Flute Ensemble, Studio 24 Vocal Performance Class, and a Musical Theatre Cabaret class for teens. Details about the popular summer *Broadway Bound* music theatre programs for youth will be announced soon.

**More information about the Community Music School and how to participate in its programs can be found by visiting the school at 90 Main Street in Centerbrook, on the internet at [www.cmsct.org](http://www.cmsct.org), or by phone at (860) 767-0026.**

## The Latest from the Essex Tree Committee

The Essex Tree Committee had another successful year which closed out at our last meeting of the season in October 2023. The Tree Committee has 4 meetings per year typically in March, April, May, and October, at which we review the plans for the planting season and discuss the general health of the town's trees, any other tree-related news, and environmental impacts.

The mission of the Essex Tree Committee [ETC], established in 1990, is to inventory, preserve and replace our priceless resource

of street trees. Funding for the plantings comes from the Town, grants, and private donations.

The Tree Committee is run by Chairman Augie Pampel, [Essex Tree Warden], and up to 6 members appointed by the Board of Selectman to serve for terms of 3 years. There is currently a budget from the Town General Fund as well as a sinking fund comprised of donations to support the mission. The sinking fund can be used to replace individual trees, but also for special projects.



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In the spring of 2023, the Tree Committee procured and planted 11 trees: 1 Styrax [Replacement], 3 Redbuds, 2 October Glory Maple [1 a Memorial Tree], 4 Red Sunset Maples, and 1 Red Oak.

One of the Red Sunset Maples was planted at Essex Elementary School in partnership with the Essex Land Trust. Fred Weber Landscape Design and Build and Bartlett Tree Experts were also present for the annual Arbor Day ceremony.

The ETC will consider possible planting sites and varieties over the winter and prepare and finalize the new planting list beginning in March. The goal is not only to replace trees in town that are taken down, add attractive trees to empty sites, but to provide diverse trees with beautiful structure. It should be noted that the ETC can only plant on town property, not private or state

property. However, the committee and Tree Warden do consult with homeowners and Eversource to try to achieve the best possible outcome when trees are slated for removal or planting.

It is now more critical than ever that we protect, preserve, and replace the trees that become diseased or stressed on our own properties as well as our beautiful town trees.

Residents are welcome and encouraged to donate to the Tree Committee and can request a memorial tree be planted. Memorial plaques are in Town Hall and list the trees that have been given since 1992 as memorial trees or just given to the Town of Essex.

More information may be found on the Tree Committee's page on the Town website. <https://www.essexct.gov/tree-committee>

## Trees Planted in 2023



Oak tree at the corner of Ingham Hill

<i>Location</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Tree Species</i>	<i>Notes</i>
#35 Main Street Essex	1	Styrax	Replacement
#1 Laurel Road Essex	3	Redbuds	New
#25 Kings Lane	1	October Glory Maple	Memorial Tree
West Avenue Essex	1	Red Sunset Maple	New
Bokum Road	1	Red Oak	New
#7 High Street Essex	1	Red Sunset Maple	Replacement
Corner of Clark Lane And Maple Avenue	1	October Glory Maple	New
EES	1	Red Sunset	New Maple
#3 New City Street	1	Red Sunset	New Maple

### Millions of Tree Planting Dollars to Help Cool our Cities

Cities like New Haven are receiving grants to increase the number of trees they plant.

In 2023, the first tree to be planted (a lacebark elm) began the \$3 million effort to plant an additional 2,500 trees under a federal program. The city and the Yale-affiliated Urban Resources Initiative [URI] are partners in the program, which will use money from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program to double the number of trees the city plants, from 500 to 1,000 a year for the next 5- years.

Grant funds also include a planning grant to develop a long-term strategic vision and management plan for New Haven's urban forest.

Urban forests — the forests and green spaces in cities and towns — have, on average, temperatures that are 2.9 degrees Fahrenheit lower than unforested urban areas, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

The goal is to significantly expand New Haven's urban tree canopy —focusing on schools, city parks, and neighborhood disparities; creating more shade to reduce the "heat island" effect that has

increased due to climate change, mitigate air pollution, and improve the overall quality of life.

Local residents volunteer with the Urban Resources Initiative, encouraging neighbors to take responsibility and make sure the trees survive and thrive. Volunteers may pick their own trees from 60 species. URI workers check on a tree one, two and five years after it is planted. After the last positive benchmark, the tree "graduates" and is no longer monitored. The program has planted nearly 11,000 trees in New Haven since 1995, with an average survival rate of over 90%. It can take 10 years for trees to provide shade, depending on the species. The trees the Urban Resources Initiative plants are usually around 7 years old.

The city's outreach publicity informs residents that trees are unique in being able to remove carbon from the atmosphere, absorb rainwater and provide shade and cooling, while making neighborhoods nicer, healthier places to live.

Another source of funding is the Nature Conservancy [providing over \$2 million.] Other cities receiving tree planting grants include: Norwalk, Stamford, Stratford and Hartford.

# Hydrilla, The (nearly) Invisible Invasive

By Jim Denham



**W**e are accustomed to hearing about the impact of invasive plants and trees and how they affect the diversity and health of the environment. And there are many, to name just a few of the more familiar ones, such as Japanese Barbery and Knotweed, Multi-flora Rose, Autumn Olive, Privet, Oriental Bittersweet, and Tree of Heaven. Plant invasives are readily visible, reasonably easy to identify and, in many cases, there are clearly identified strategies to combat them, although none are easy and require a persistent effort over time.

Allow me to introduce you to a nearly invisible invasive plant which is spreading exponentially in Connecticut: **Hydrilla** (*Hydrilla verticillata*). Although first reported off the coast of Mystic in 1987 on Mason Island, it was found in two lakes on the mainland in 1989. Hydrilla was first identified in the Connecticut River near Glastonbury, CT in 2016 and has since spread to Essex. It has also spread into the river's many coves, tributaries, and boat basins.

Hydrilla (also known as “water thyme”) first appeared in the United States in the early 1950s, primarily in Florida. Its appearance at that time is believed to be due to its use in the aquarium trade and its subsequent release into Florida waterways. It has spread rapidly and is now present in at least 28 states.

## What is its impact

Hydrilla is considered extremely aggressive and can outcompete native and invasive species. It is a perennial with five whorled leaves which are finely toothed, around the stem. A submersed perennial herb, Hydrilla is rooted, with long stems that branch at the surface where growth becomes horizontal creating dense, thick mats. Significantly, the Connecticut River hydrilla is unique from other known hydrilla strains, as it is genetically distinct. It is different in that it can have as many as 11 whorled leaves and does not spread by producing potato-like tubers, which may be a benefit in controlling its spread. The plant's biology is largely unknown at this time.

It grows in a wide variety of water and water temperatures and can grow under extremely low light conditions, unlike most native aquatic plants. Hydrilla grows very rapidly (it can double

its biomass every two weeks in summer) and has no natural predators or diseases to limit its population. Dense infestations of hydrilla can shade or crowd out all other native aquatic plants, alter water chemistry, cause dramatic swings in dissolved oxygen levels, increase water temperatures, and affect the diversity and abundance of fish populations.

As a result of its pervasiveness, Hydrilla populations have caused economic, environmental, and ecological damage. Due to its competitive nature, Hydrilla creates monocultures, an area dominated by a singular species, rather than having a balance among many species, like in a normal ecosystem.

Mechanical removal is not a permanent solution since fragments can float away and transplant themselves. Other efforts to control Hydrilla involve herbicides, the introduction of grass carp, and insects such as weevils. These are costly and need to be tailored to the specific environment being treated. However, once an aquatic site is infested, eradication of hydrilla is very difficult.

## Efforts by the State of Connecticut

To attack the hydrilla problem, Connecticut has created the Office of Aquatic Invasive Species as part of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. This office was created in 2022 after being promoted by the General Assembly's Environmental Committee, which is co-chaired by State Representative for Chester, Deep River, and Essex, Christine Palm. The Office will address how hydrilla causes ecological and economic harm, pursue different research and removal projects in the Connecticut River, and offer methods of prevention.

In addition, the U.S. Army Core of Engineers will lead a demonstration project to determine the effectiveness of herbicides registered for aquatic use by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to safely reduce and control the spread of the Connecticut River hydrilla. The project will investigate hydrilla's growth patterns, water exchange dynamics in the Connecticut River, and evaluate herbicide efficacy in laboratory conditions in 2023 to guide operational scale field demonstrations of herbicide efficacy in 2024.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will be developing site-specific treatment plans for the Connecticut River in the summer of 2024. The use of aquatic herbicides will be considered. There are several safe, well understood, and effective herbicides that are available for use.

**What you can do**

Boaters can play an important role in mitigating the spread of Hydrilla and are urged to clean, drain, and dry their boats every time they leave the river. This applies to all craft including kayaks, canoes, etc. To learn about DEEP’s program to halt the spread of

this invasive, which is devastating our waterways, go to: <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Fishing/General-Information/Aquatic-Invasive-Species>.

As residents of the lower Connecticut River valley, we need to be aware of the effects of this pernicious invasive. It can and will affect the quality of what has been referred to as one of the “Last Great Places in the Western Hemisphere.” If this invasive cannot be controlled, the hard-won efforts to clean up the Connecticut River, providing a wonderful recreational resource not to mention a source of economic benefit, will suffer unforeseen consequences.

**News from the Riverfront at the Connecticut River Museum**

RiverQuest: Get out on the water to experience the solitude of winter and the joy of eagles.



In 1972, over a bowl of clam chowder, Tom Stevens—historian, former director of the Mystic Seaport and Deep River resident—declared Steamboat Dock to be “the most historic property on the Connecticut River.” Two years later, the challenge of converting a commercial venue into a museum took shape. This year, the Connecticut River Museum honors its 50th anniversary and all who played a role in shaping the museum we know and love today. We hope you will join the revelry when you visit the Museum, take a cruise, and share your story as part of our Oral History Project. Visit our events page for details on upcoming 50th anniversary dates and to find a link to story recording platform. Share your memories of the Connecticut River or respond to one of the prompts on our website. We want to hear from you!

*Continued on page 31*



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Continued from page 29

With winter winds still blowing, don't miss your chance to see the 30th annual Train Show featuring nearly 30 feet of track created by Steve Cryan. It will be on view through February 18. Every year is a different layout and this year there are two versions of the I-Spy scavenger hunt.

Between February 9 and March 17, 2024, the Museum will host Winter Wildlife Eagle Cruises aboard RiverQuest. With a heated interior and complimentary binoculars, this is an amazing time to be on the water. Enjoy the solitude of being aboard the only boat on the river and experience the majesty of eagles soaring overhead and caring for their young. Plus, count the number of other species you encounter on these unique cruises.

The Museum is a great place for kids – and the young at heart.



River Tales: A new program for explorers ages 4+

Join us for a new monthly program for explorers 4+ called River Tales which features a story, a craft, a scavenger hunt, and a prize. We also have regular programming for homeschooled students and sensory friendly mornings for young people. Plus, our popular summer camp for adventurers ages 6-11 returns from July 1 to August 9, 2024. Camp registration is open now so be sure to save your spot.

The start of a new year is often a reflective time. As we think back to the engaging, thoughtful, and exciting programs of 2023 we want to extend out thanks to you: to the folks who supported our work, who visited, who brought out of town guests, who became Members, and so much more. Our 50th anniversary is a testament to this longstanding support.

Thank you to each person who has contributed to the Connecticut River Museum. And, as we look ahead, please consider this an invitation to join us at future events – cruise on RiverQuest, sail on Onrust, enjoy Shanties & Sails and Thursdays on the Docks this summer, and bring your family to explore all the Connecticut River Museum has to offer. We can't wait to see you.



**Connecticut River Museum**

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# Sustainable Essex News

**Food scrap composting in the Region 4 Schools is progressing!** Students at all Region 4 Schools are placing their lunch leftovers into composting bins and diverting them from the waste stream.

**Reminder!** Free food scrap drop off at the Essex Transfer Station.

Although the end of the year festivities are behind us, there will be lots of entertaining done for Valentine's Day, Mardis Gras and more. Keep your food scrap bucket handy for your guests to dispose of their food waste, paper towels, and soiled uncoated paper in.

### Battery-Powered Landscape Equipment Demonstration

Essex residents sampled battery-operated leaf blowers, mowers, string trimmers and chain saws at an Essex Land Trust and Sustainable Essex event in November. Use of battery-operated equipment reduces harmful exposures to noise and exhaust, protecting the operator and the environment.

Our **Annual Sustainable Essex Holiday Toy Swap** at the Essex Elementary School on Nov. 18 provided a wonderful opportunity for the community to donate outgrown toys, games, puzzles, and children's books. Kids of every age

had fun choosing toys to bring home.

As part of our ongoing **program for reducing plastics pollution within the environment**, Representative Christine Palm shared tips on how to advocate for environmental policies at the state level. Testimony can be written or in-person. <http://www.housedems.ct.gov/Palm>

Sustainable Essex has been awarded an **Energize CT Community Partnership Grant** from **Eversource**. The grant's goal is to introduce the Eversource Home Energy Solutions program to residents. The program helps homeowners, renters, and landlords identify energy-saving improvements, rebates, and incentives. Watch for more information in the coming months.

### Sneaker Fundraiser ongoing

Support Sustainable Essex and protect landfills by bringing sneakers *in any condition to the recycling collection box in the lobby of Valley Shore YMCA.*

**Are you interested in helping Essex be as sustainable as possible? We are looking for volunteers! Our greatest need now is help with our public communications and social media. Contact [susxct@gmail.com](mailto:susxct@gmail.com).**



First Selectman Needleman and residents at the Battery Powered Lawn Equipment Event



Essex residents try out battery powered leaf blowers

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## ESSEX GARDEN CLUB - Why We Do What We Do

Two missions of the Essex Garden Club are the promotion of educational experiences to help the next generation appreciate and preserve our environment, and civic beautification.

The Essex Garden Club's scholarship program fulfills the first goal - promotion of education experiences - and this year, the Club is again offering \$5,000 scholarships. Eligible applicants include high school seniors and undergraduate or graduate college students, who are residents of Centerbrook, Essex or Ivoryton, CT, and are pursuing studies related to the environment in an accredited two-year or four-year college program. Prior year recipients are also encouraged to apply.

Environmental Studies may include Earth and Environmental Science, Ecology, Environmental

Engineering, Environmental Humanities, Environment Justice, Environmental Law and Public

Policy, Environmental Toxicology, Forestry, Geology, Horticulture, Renewable Energy or Urban

Ecology. Closely related subjects such as Agriculture, Natural Resources, Biology, Land

Conservation, Landscape Design, and Nursery Management are also considered. Applicants in any field of study or intended major may also apply, as long as the student has a demonstrated



commitment to contributing to preserving and enhancing the environment and intends to use their educational experience to further develop that commitment.

Application forms and further details are available at [essexgardenclubct.org](http://essexgardenclubct.org) and at the Essex and Ivoryton libraries. The deadline for receipt of completed applications is April 21, 2024.

The Club funds our scholarship program not only through our well-known May Market but also by some pop-up sales such as the recent sale of decorated fresh wreaths and swags, gifts and holiday table arrangements. That sale brought in almost \$6,000! Thank you so much to all who supported us.

Decorating the Town for the holidays is a great example of civic beautification. Each November, Club members cut greens from their gardens and from the gardens of generous neighbors, and spend a morning decorating the window boxes and planters of the Town Hall and the merchants, the Silent Policeman and the Gazebo in Town Park, contributing to Essex being named one of "The 30 Most Magical Christmas Towns in the U.S." by Country Living Magazine.

Every year, as part of our Holiday Party, club members bring non-perishable food items or checks for the Shoreline Soup Kitchens and Pantries. This year, 211 pounds of food were donated and delivered to the Food Bank, along with checks to the value of \$1,775. This amount will be generously matched by the Gowrie Group for a total of \$3,550!

### SAVE THE DATE FOR 2024 MAY MARKET



Essex Garden Club members have reluctantly bedded their sleepy plants for a long wintry slumber, anticipating a beautiful plant awakening in time for the May Market on May 11, 2024. Although winter is imminent, the May Market planning effort is already underway. May Market planners exhibit a "springtime mindfulness" as they prepare and anxiously await the return of spring. Winter, that less than desirable season, simply provides them with the time

required to get ready for the big event, May Market Day.

In early spring, club members will conduct "plant digs" throughout the community, resulting in a collection of lovely, thriving plants to sell at May Market. These plants, curated by our team of experts, will be of high quality and offered at a fair price. Historically, Friends of the Essex Garden Club have supported May Market by donating beautiful plants from their gardens. If you have lovely plants to spare, consider donating them by contacting us at [essexgardenclubct@gmail.com](mailto:essexgardenclubct@gmail.com). Remember, pruning and splitting those backyard perennials helps to maintain plant health and beauty.

More information about the May Market will appear in the next edition of Essex Events. Many shopping options will be available for May Market attendees, including home décor, accessories for women, plant gifts galore, lots of "treasures," and that hugely popular garlic salt.

May Market always attracts our loyal friends, as well as new friends, who look to our experienced Essex Garden Club gardeners to help jumpstart and enhance their home gardens. So, save the May 11th date on your calendar and "Think Spring." In the meantime, treat yourself by reading a good gardening book from our local library and remember that you do not have to have a "green thumb" to enjoy the upcoming 2024 May Market!



Photo provided by  
Bradford Gaiette

**Trees in the Rigging was back this year and bigger than ever with a full day of holiday fun!**

Together with the Essex Historical Society and Safe Harbor Dauntless & Essex Island, the Connecticut River Museum was pleased to reinvigorate this classic event. This year they had made plans to expand the celebration! Starting at noon, inside the Museum, there were craft projects for kids. On the North Deck, there was a Holiday Fair with many treats to enjoy and attendees didn't want to miss Steve Cryan's 30th Annual Train Show on the 3rd floor! Later that evening, visitors could also celebrate the season by participating in the traditional lantern-lit carol stroll

from Essex Town Hall to the Connecticut River Museum where spectators were invited to bring their own lanterns or flashlights. After that visitors were invited to check out the dazzling displays created by local boaters during the Boat Parade.

Trees in the Rigging is a production of Connecticut River Museum, Essex Historical Society, Safe Harbor Dauntless, Bradford W. Gaiette and The Gaiette Family, and participating boaters and groups from throughout our community.



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## 11 Shoreline Towns Fund New Truck for Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries



Photo credit  
Laura Matesky  
Photography

Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries (SSKP) announced the delivery of a new truck, generously funded with equal contributions of \$10,000 each by all 11 towns served by SSKP: Essex, Chester, Clinton, Madison, Old Saybrook, East Lyme, Lyme, Old Lyme, Killingworth, Westbrook, and Deep River.

This new truck has 20% more space for food, a refrigeration system to keep food safe, and a motorized lift-gate to ease the

burden of loading and unloading on SSKP's hard-working volunteers and staff. This special community-wide effort was made possible through town funds from ARPA-R or the "American Rescue Plan" allocated in response to negative economic impacts of the pandemic.

*Continued on page 36*

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**Let's build, together.**

The official presentation of the new truck occurred Friday, December 15 at Grace Episcopal Church in Old Saybrook, which hosts an SSKP lunch each Wednesday and donates space for the organization's offices.

"This new truck is the culmination of support from all eleven towns in the SSKP region," said Amy Hollis, Executive Director of Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries. "It represents dedicated individuals who strive to make a way for all to have basic needs met. In a year when we hoped to see need lessen, we've instead seen need increase. Through our 5 pantries and 8 meals sites, we are on track to share almost 2 million pounds of food this year. This new truck enables SSKP to continue sharing food and fellowship through our community. My heart overflows with gratitude for the collaborative efforts that ensure our neighbors have access to food. Thank you!"

**About Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries:**

Founded 34 years ago in 1989, Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries provides food and fellowship to people in need and educates the community about hunger and poverty, serving the Connecticut shoreline towns of Essex, Chester, Clinton, Madison, Old Saybrook, East Lyme, Lyme, Old Lyme, Killingworth, Westbrook and Deep River.

# FOOD DONATIONS

**Non-perishable food can be donated at times convenient to you.** A good rule of thumb when considering making a food donation is to ask yourself if you would eat it, feed it to your children, or serve it to your Mom. If you answer yes -please know we will gladly accept it with a grateful heart and open arms. (\*Please no expired foods.)

Just leave us a message at **860-388-1988**. During the week we will return your call within 24 hours to schedule a time for you to deliver food to a location near you.

**Westbrook Pantry**  
Saint Mark's Roman Catholic Church  
222 McVeagh Road  
Westbrook, CT

**Old Saybrook Pantry**  
First Church of Christ in Saybrook (Congregational)  
366 Main Street  
Old Saybrook, CT

For additional locations & times visit: [shoreslinesoupkitchen.org](http://shoreslinesoupkitchen.org)



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# Sister Cities Essex Haiti



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Despite the difficulties throughout much of Haiti, we are glad to report that our town of Deschapelles is calm and all programs we support are running well.

The library greets young and old daily with programs that range from reading groups to Robotics practices, to opportunities to participate in workshops for those entering adulthood, and experience writing and performing short theatrical pieces with positive messages.

Our tennis program continues to have regular lessons twice a week. Recently we received funds for extra training for the advanced players. The Tennis Program held an in-house competition as the country-wide tournaments have not been held for almost two years.

Our music program's director has emigrated to Canada. His star pupil took over, and when he is not at university he returns to Deschapelles to instruct the many musicians. He recently had a four-

month hiatus, a result of some stoppages in the university programs due to the overall situation in Haiti. Currently, travel around the country is not safe, there's inflation, it's difficult getting money from banks and food distribution is unsteady. Deschapelles is affected. We hope that this situation will change soon and all of Haiti can return to the positive country that it can be.

We are proud that all our librarians and coaches have continued and added positive programs during this time.

We are grateful to all who have supported our efforts which give hope and positive activities to the community.

We are proud of our coaches and librarians who have been able to continue and add to programs that we helped them begin.

*Jenifer Grant*

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# The Essex Foundation Kicks Off 'Donate For Daffodils' Campaign

*Expands Beautification Efforts to Centerbrook and Ivoryton*

**The Essex Foundation** has kicked off a 'Donate For Daffodils' campaign to help fund further expansion of its town beautification project. Previous plantings of over 30,000 bulbs have put Essex on the map as a daffodil destination each spring. This November additional daffodil bulbs were planted at two Essex Land Trust sites along the Falls River and Main Street – at Stanley Park in Centerbrook and at The Millrace in Ivoryton. Sullivan Lawn Service was hired for the installation. Funding for the bulb purchase and planting services was made possible by donations made by local individuals and businesses.



**THINK SPRING!** Sullivan Lawn Service crew members, Jose Portillo (foreground) and Victor Munoz keep their eye on the prize - the planting of daffodil bulbs in Stanley Park along the Falls River in Centerbrook, thanks to the efforts of The Essex Foundation and community donors.

Church in Essex Village. Community members are encouraged to help spread more spring sunshine and 'Donate For Daffodils' in an amount of their choosing, online at [TheEssexFoundation.org/Donate](http://TheEssexFoundation.org/Donate), or by mailing a check payable to: The Essex Foundation (with Daffodils in the memo area), PO Box 64, Essex, CT 06426.

The Essex Foundation, Inc. is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to making a difference in the lives of Essex residents by providing funding for needs not met by other organizations or sources. The Foundation

Over the past few years, The Essex Foundation's daffodil project has included plantings on Route 154 at the intersection of route 153 across from the Essex fire station; along West Avenue at Sunset Pond; and on Methodist Hill below First Congregational

relies on donations from individuals, businesses, and other community groups to fund special needs and community projects that benefit Essex residents. More information can be found online at [www.theessexfoundation.org](http://www.theessexfoundation.org) or by emailing [contact@theessexfoundation.org](mailto:contact@theessexfoundation.org).



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