

NEWINGTON NOTES



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Cornelius, Community and Camaraderie— A Winning Connection

In the days leading up to November 6th, the entertainment media was all abuzz with anticipation awaiting the premier showing of the new “Peanuts Movie”. Shopping malls featured bigger-than-life posters of the “Peanuts gang”, the internet showcased various reviews about the authenticity of the animation and there were [trailers to whet movie-goers appetites](#).

Hype abounded, and who better to capitalize on hype, than our very own Bill DeMaio, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation. As the momentum started to build, the pieces just seemed to fall into place.

For starters, the “Peanuts Movie” was co-written by Craig and Bryan Schulz (Schulz’ son and grandson, respectively), along with former Newington resident, Cornelius Uliano.

Born and raised in Newington, Uliano attended John Wallace Middle School and graduated from Newington High School and the Greater Hartford Academy of Arts. During his school career he connected with high school teacher (now retired) Deb Scorzato.

Through her involvement with the high school Drama Club, Deb got to know Neil very well, and continues to follow him on Facebook. She says, “He was an actor who was very creative and interested in film making”.

So when Uliano began writing and producing screenplays in our local area, Deb assisted him with the costuming. Over the years the two have remained friends—earning Deb a special invitation to the November 5th private showing of the Peanuts Movie for family and guests at Trinity College.



During a casual conversation with Bill DeMaio, Deb conveyed this amazing Peanuts/Newington connection. Deb also mentioned that Neil and his family had strong ties to the Extravaganza—an event near and dear to Bill since the Extravaganza was originally his creation.

So, armed with all of this knowledge, a tie-in to the Extravaganza and Bill’s abundance of energy and enthusiasm—the obvious next step was to contact Neil asking if he would be willing to fly-in from California to make a cameo appearance at a premier showing of the Peanuts Movie on November 6th. Without hesitation, Neil graciously accepted the invitation.

After some research and several calls, in a bold move, Bill rented the entire Bow Ties Cinema in Hartford...prior to selling a single ticket! He contracted with the theater to sell tickets for \$10 with part of each sale earmarked for louder, higher and more colorful shells at the 2016 Extravaganza. Within two days all 417 seats were sold out!

With logistics out of the way, the real fun began. Bill and his staff brainstormed all kinds of crazy notions including contests and raffle ideas. Attendees were all encouraged to bring their favorite Linus blanket, dress up like Charlie Brown, or bring a photo of their dog to enter in the Snoopy Look-A-Like contest. Local merchants donated prizes and Neil arrived with 100 posters of Peanuts and the gang—which he personally autographed and then gave away.

When the doors opened at 6:30 PM on November 6th, Bow Ties Cinema had been transformed into a magical movie destination. All attendees received a “Charlie Brown” hat. Adults and young folks radiated excitement and enthusiasm. The event was an upbeat intergenerational blend of guests, relatives and residents all coming together to celebrate and share a young man’s success. The staff from the Parks and Recreation Department were certainly on top of their game that night!

The real winners from this event are all of our Newington residents. You will enjoy a bigger and better 35th Annual “Life Be In It” Extravaganza that will take place on Saturday, July 16, 2016. But what you probably aren’t aware of is that the Parks and Recreation Department raises all the Extravaganza money through local donations and fundraisers. Absolutely no taxpayer money is used to offset this cost.



The Peanut's Gang...



...And "Our" Gang



Bill DeMaio chats as Neil autographs a poster to be given away at the Movie Premiere.



Steve Woods proclaims November 6th as Cornelius Uliano Day.

Yankee Ingenuity Leads to Yurts

The Newington Challenge Course (NCC) was conceived in 1995 by Ken Freidenberg, retired Human Services Director, with a vision and a \$50,000 grant from the Greater Hartford Jaycees Foundation.

Ken says, "I had experience with courses in other communities and thought it would be a great training resource for building team skills and leadership development for youth and adults."

Ken's brainchild remains under the administration of the Human Services Department advocating the same goal of fostering confidence and team building through noncompetitive games, group problem solving exercises, climbing activities, and other adventure techniques aimed at creating trust, communication and listening skills.

With a central philosophy of "Challenge by Choice", the NCC continues to thrive. Participants are encouraged to set their own goals and participate at a physical level that works best for them. The course consists of high and/or low elements. Low elements take place on the ground or only a few feet above the ground. High elements are usually constructed in trees or made of utility poles and require a belay for safety.

Team members experience a sense of commitment, support and cooperation as they plan strategies together. The mission is always that individuals have a sense of belonging, and that together they can achieve the goal.

All activities are facilitated by Newington's professionally trained and certified staff who utilize special skills and techniques to make each experience safe, meaningful, and FUN.

Since its beginning, the challenge course has concentrated on outdoor programs—obviously at the mercy of New England's seasonal weather. Last year the staff decided that if they had a dedicated enclosed facility they could enhance and expand the program to include more indoor activities.

One solution was to wait and see if and when Town Hall might be improved to accommodate this need.

The other option was for the Human Services staff to brainstorm and research other possibilities...which guided them to the discovery of a structure called a yurt.

Hmm—what is a yurt you ask? A brilliant, low-cost, environmentally friendly solution to the problem at hand!

NCC Manager, Rik Huggard had previously come across yurts in northern Vermont while leading a high school adventure club on an overnight winter camping excursion. While somewhat new to Connecticut, the traditional yurt was an ancient, portable shelter used for centuries by Central Asian nomads. Though generally classified as a tent, the modern adaptation of this ancient shelter is a lightweight, state-of-the-art version that delivers structural integrity, longevity and low maintenance.

From simple cabins...



...To exotic luxury!

A yurt is much stronger and more weathertight than a tent. Its circular structure has a durable fabric cover with an inner layer of insulation. There is a tension band and wood frame with a lattice wall and framed door. Yurts have minimal impact on the environment and can be easily disassembled and relocated. This flexibility allows them to be used in a wide variety of applications from simple cabins to fully furnished retreats. The best way to understand a yurt is to [watch a video](#).

In September, a 24-foot yurt (funded by the Human Services Department) was delivered and set up on the site of the Newington Challenge course. While still not fully functional, finishing touches are expected to be in place by spring.

About six months ago, Lowe's informed Human Services Director, Karen Futoma, that her department was the recipient of a

"I had experience with courses in other communities and thought it would be a great training resource for building team skills and leadership development for youth and adults."

Ken Freidenberg,
Human Services Director (Retired)

Lowe's Heroes grant. Lowe's generously pledged to underwrite the cost to polyurethane the wood

floor and to purchase and install a wood-burning stove. Shortly thereafter, she learned that Newington Eagle Scout, Austin Caracciolo, was going to build and install a surrounding deck with a handicapped accessible entrance ramp.

Fast forward twenty years from the NCC's inception and marvel at how Yankee ingenuity and inventiveness has provided a simple solution to a practical problem. Kudos to the Human Services Department!

Rik Huggard's credentials include a B.S. degree in eco-psychology and adventure education. He has been with the Human Services Department since 2006.



Remembering our Fallen Heroes

Morrill Worcester, owner of Worcester Wreath Company of Harrington, Maine, was a 12 year old paper boy for the *Bangor Daily News* when he won a trip to Washington D.C. His visit to Arlington National Cemetery left a lasting impression on the youngster which followed him throughout his life and successful career in business. His cemetery visit was a reminder that his good fortune was largely due to the values of this nation and the veterans who died defending these values.

In 1992 as the holiday season was winding down, Worcester Wreath Company found themselves with a

surplus of wreaths. Remembering his boyhood experience at Arlington, Worcester decided to turn this surplus into an opportunity to honor fallen veterans.

With help from Maine's Senator Olympia Snowe, plans were soon underway for these wreaths to be placed on the older gravesites at Arlington—a section of the cemetery that had been receiving fewer visitors with each passing year. As plans evolved, others heard about the project and volunteered their services. A local trucking company provided transportation to Virginia, community members decorated the

wreaths with hand-tied red bows, while State officials organized the



wreath-laying at Arlington Cemetery.

This annual tribute quietly continued for several years with many volunteers and organizations joining the movement along the way. The turning point was in 2005 when a photo of the

tombstones at Arlington, adorned with the wreaths and covered in snow, circulated around the internet bringing national attention to Worcester's project.

Suddenly Worcester Wreaths started receiving thousands of requests from people around the country who wanted to help at Arlington, folks who wanted to create a similar project at their National and State cemeteries, and from others who simply wanted to say thank you and to share their stories.

In 2006 Wreath Ceremonies were observed in Connecticut at the Veterans Cemeteries in

Middletown, Rocky Hill and Darien. Newington held their first ceremony at West Meadow Cemetery in 2008. Because the gravestones in West Meadow are flush with the ground, laying and securing a wreath at each headstone is almost impossible-- and would be invisible with snow on the ground. Instead, the Newington Wreath Ceremony displays seven ceremonial wreaths at the Veterans Monument representing each branch of the service: Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, Merchant Marines and POW/MIAs.

Local Boy and Girl Scout troops have participated in Newington's

ceremony since its inception. This year's Eagle Scout project, undertaken by Jacob Sirois and Austin Matteson, was to install taller flagpoles with markers indicating each branch of the service while giving the ceremonial wreaths more prominence and visibility.

The annual wreath-laying ceremony is held simultaneously throughout the country on the second or third Saturday in December. Sponsored by the American Legion Post 117, this year's ceremony was conducted at Noon on December 12th at the West Meadow Cemetery Veterans Monument.



Remember, Honor, Teach. Remember the fallen. Honor those who serve and their families, and teach the future generations about the sacrifices made to preserve our freedoms.



Barbara Crede is the local contact for Newington's participation in Wreaths Across America.

What is a Veteran's Wreath?

Last year the volunteers from Wreaths Across America laid over 700,000 memorial wreaths at 1,000 locations in the United States. One wonders where all the balsam fir comes from?

Currently Worcester Wreath Company has about 5,600 acres of balsam fir tip land under development. The tipping process begins in late October continuing through the second week in December. The trees are never cut down during tipping—a pruning process that encourages more growth.

A veteran's wreath is a symbol of honor, respect and victory and is constructed by wrapping 10 balsam fir tip bouquets onto a circular ring adorned with a red bow. The evergreens symbolize longevity and endurance. The red bow is for great sacrifice; the forest scent represents purity and simplicity, and the circular shape is for eternity.

The veteran's wreath is made even more special when you realize that many of the balsam fir trees from which the tips are harvested hold replica dog tags and pictures of fallen heroes. These mementoes are placed on the tree by family members or a volunteer from Wreaths Across America on behalf of a family who requests the tree tagging opportunity.

Each wreath is made of 4.2 pounds of balsam fir tips. With a goal this year to cover all the headstones in Arlington National Cemetery and beyond, 4 million pounds of brush will be harvested.

Worcester Wreath Company employs a total workforce of 450 people during the season including about 100 tippers out harvesting the land. With some of the fastest wreath makers in the world, production setup can produce as many as 22 wreaths per minute.

[Click here](#) to learn how to sponsor a veterans' wreath.



EAGLE SCOUTS

Eagle Scout is the highest achievement or rank attainable through the Boy Scouts of America program.

In addition to a lengthy review process, the necessary requirements can often take years to fulfill. Requirements include at least 21 merit badges. The Eagle Scout must demonstrate Scout Spirit—an ideal attitude that Scouts around the world are supposed to show based on adherence to the Scout Oath and Law.

Attainment of this prestigious designation includes an extensive service project that the Scout plans, organizes, leads, and manages. Over the years, members of Newington Troop 347 and Troop 355 have attained the rank of Eagle Scout by completing these impressive projects directly beneficial to the Newington community.



TROOP 347 - NEWINGTON EAGLE SCOUT PROJECTS

<u>YEAR COMPLETED</u>	<u>NAME OF SCOUT</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT</u>
2003	Stuart Porell	Trail & Boardwalk clean-up & improvements--Churchill Park
2003	Christopher Ham	Bird House--Eddy Farm Church Street
2004	Kevin Majewski	Cedar Mountail trail upgrades--Humane Society
2005	Andrew Swanson	Create course elements & shed shelving at Challenge Course--Milk Lane
2007	Chris Manke	Memorial Garden--Martin Kellogg Middle School
2007	Greg Pietrycha	Repairs & upgrades to shed at Challenge Course--Milk Lane
2007	Andrew Glass	Nature trail upgrade--behind St Mary's Church
2008	Josh Murphy	Repair exterior & landscaping at Battered Women's Shelter
2008	William Donahue	Create garden outside Newington High School Cafeteria
2008	Kyle Longchamps	Repair elements & create storage bins at Challenge Course--Milk Lane
2008	Dan Cronin	Entrance garden--Martin Kellogg MS
2008	Jonathan Page	Beautification landscaping--Grace Episcopal Church
2009	Billy Pollack	New course elements at Challenge Course--Milk Lane
2009	Stephen Cronin	Canopy and elements improvement Challenge Course
2011	Gaven Donahue	Ramp entrance/landscaping--American Legion Hall
2011	Bryan Gionfriddo	Bat Houses Churchill Park
2012	Steve Cowell	Bird Houses at Challenge Course--Milk Lane
2012	Andrew McCarter	Swim Team recognition board--Newington High School
2012	Benjamin Page	Fencing & landscaping at Old Cemetery--Church Street
2012	Patrick McCarthy	Create blind maze at Challenge Course--Milk Lane
2012	Adam Pietrycha	Ladder racks & shed repair at Challenge Course--Milk Lane
2012	Evan Field	Repair & paint – Firehouse #3--Chapman Street
2014	Jacob Sirois	War Memorial Flag Poles-- Willard Ave Cemetary
2015	Austin Matteson	Repair& paint doorways at Historic Firehouse--Main Street

TROOP 355 - NEWINGTON EAGLE SCOUT PROJECTS

YEAR (BOARD OF REVIEW DATE)	NAME	PROJECT
2004	Christopher Schumacher	Cleaned wooded section & installed benches for nature learning area--Ruth Chaffee School
2004	Devin Lavery	Built playground at special education pre-school--Hartford
2005	Christopher Demilia	Cleaned and landscaped neighborhood park--Lamp Lighter Lane
2005	Brendon LaChance	Landscaped and repaired drainage; painted playgroud equipment, created and installed park sign-- Starr Park
2005	Patrick Winslow	Created picnic area, built & installed BBQ--Grace Episcopal Church
2005	David Birdsall	Upgraded & painted Youth Room--Church of Christ Congregational
2006	Tomas Marsan	Built shelves for food pantry--New Britain Church
2006	Brian Barnicle	Built kiosk; developed and posted trail map--Young Farm
2006	Paul Schumacher	Built pigeon coup to teach students about carrier pigeons--4H farm
2007	Ivan Schwanda	Cleaned parking lot; restriped parking spaces; repaired window wells--Church of Christ
2007	Adam Rosencrantz	Renovated instrument storage area; developed filing system for sheet music--NHS Music Room
2008	Kyle Jones	Created Prayer area: installed brick patio & statue; sold bricks to raise money--Holy Spirit Church
2008	Timothy Lapierre	Cut back vegetation and overgrowth, repaired boardwalk--Churchill Nature Trail
2009	Matthew Raineault	Installed new flags, cleared overgrown brush & weeds--Iwo Jima Memorial
2010	Brendan Sunshine	Painted murals & game boards, refurbished playground--Ruth Chaffee School
2010	Travis Francis	Raised funds to create & install memorial stone for fallen Newington officer; repaired walking path near monument, & repaired monument when defaced by vandalism.
2010	Daniel Schumacher	Repaired window culverts, cleaned & repainted out-building, created garden area--Church of Christ
2011	Brian Dunn	Created new parking area using telephone poles, spread gravel & planted flower box dividers--Churchill Park
2012	Kevin Cornell	Blazed & marked nature trail (including tree identification markings)--Anna Reynolds School
2012	Nicholas Stamm	Blazed trail, created waterside classroom area & crossing for boggy area--Mill Woods Park, Wethersfield
2012	David Karpf	Rehabed preschool/daycare: emptied building, painted entire facility; converted storage area into useable classroom--Town of Newington
2014	Michael Schumacher	Removed over-growth from hiking trail, added wood chips & built benches for scenic rest areas along trail--Mill Pond
2014	Joshua Mendelsohn	Developed books-on-tape for several favorite childrens' books to assist in childhood literacy
2014	Jared Therrien	Raised funds to assemble & deliver school backpacks for students in need filled with calculators & supplies
2014	Adam Seguro	Built boat storage rack for 10 kayaks; performed maintenance at Newington Challenge Course
2015	Collin Stamm	Installed ground repeating radio allowing folks to listen to air traffic radio inside their cars on AM radio
2015	James Mouthaan	Installed central flag pole with lighting & flags on each Veteran's residence--Victory Gardens

Bill's Benevolence Benefits Newington

Twenty-five years ago, with a \$180,000 grant awarded to the City of New Britain, Bill DeMaio fashioned an RFP (Request for Proposal) seeking bids for a software system to assist the Parks and Recreation Department.

Vermont Systems, Inc. (VSI) out of Essex Junction, Vermont was the lowest qualified bidder. But as Bill and his staff began working with the program they realized that there were many deficiencies—cheaper is not always better. Not to be deterred, Bill contacted the company President, Giles Willey, seeking a way to improve the software system the City had purchased.

With Bill agreeing to help write the programming updates, the two men partnered to create RecTrac, a fully integrated recreation management system.

Shortly after RecTrac was operational, Bill attended a national conference in San Antonio where he was asked to talk about his success with RecTrac. As fate would have it, there was a Colonel in the audience who was looking for a program to track recreational activities throughout the entire Air Force.

Ultimately Vermont Systems won the bid for the entire military system catapulting the company from a “mom and pop” operation



to a key industry player. As payback for Bill's assistance in helping VSI to write a better software system, VSI gave RecTrac to the City of New Britain without charge.

For years the Newington Parks & Recreation Department has been searching for a viable automated software system to track program registrations, facility reservations, inventory control, equipment maintenance, and a financial interface for billing, invoices and statements.

So when Bill came on board, this challenge was easily overcome. Once again Bill contacted Vermont Systems and spoke to Bob Willey

(Giles' son) and was once again given the same professional courtesy—the RecTrac software, installation and training... all for free! And moving forward, VSI has agreed to give the Town a 50% discount on the annual maintenance fee. According to Bob Willey the entire package is valued at close to \$75,000.

There are eleven modules in the software package, half of which have already been installed. As the needs of the department grow and expand, Bill will be given access to the additional modules without cost.

Bill's willingness to assist a small computer company turn a mediocre software system into a successful endeavor is another example of his “can do” attitude. How beneficial that Bill's benevolence and determination from twenty-five years ago is now benefitting the Town of Newington.



Bike Lanes

Although Americans have been riding bikes for more than a century, today's cyclists still continue to struggle to gain respect and a safe place to ride. This struggle is so pervasive that history professor and author, James Longhurst has written a book entitled, “Bike Battles: A History of Sharing the American Road”. In his book he states that road rights is an extremely polarized,

centuries-old battle between cyclists, motorists and pedestrians.

Longhurst 1870 in the it was horse Later on



begins his saga in pre-auto years when carriages v. cyclists. classism and racism

were rampant throughout society fostering a very negative stance toward cycling. These and other clashes have followed us through history cultivating a conflict over who is and isn't welcome on our roads. Who knew?

Longhurst contends that road-sharing solutions are challenging--involving city planners, politicians and residents. Arguments persist over bike lanes, bike-share programs, law enforcement and public safety. Longhurst maintains that these road-sharing clashes should not be viewed as battles, but as solvable environmental policy problems.

One solution is to establish conventional bike lanes which are designated by white stripes, a bicycle symbol and appropriate signage. Bicycle lanes create a separation between bicyclists and automobiles increasing a cyclist's comfort and confidence on busy streets, and visually reminding motorists of the cyclist's

right to the street. Bike lanes can provide a safety benefit as well by narrowing the roadway to encourage slower motor vehicle speeds.

Today, traffic engineers maintain that car lanes no longer have to be so wide. Some of this width can be converted into a dedicated bike lane. And if this conversion is timed with regular road maintenance and re-paving, the only additional expense could be paint for bike lane striping—thus providing a very inexpensive and cost-effective infrastructure improvement.

Town Planner, Craig Minor is hoping to install bike lanes on some Newington roadways using a State grant to offset the expense.

Craig plans to gather public input and assistance in identifying roads in Newington that are wide enough to accept a bike lane focusing on roads that provide a destination to "somewhere".



*A shared-lane marking or **sharrow** is a street marking placed in the travel lane to indicate where people should preferably cycle.*

Newington Awarded a \$470,000 Grant

The Town of Newington has been awarded a \$470,000 grant from the Department of Economic and Community Development which the Town Planner will use to administer Phase VI of the Town Center improvements.

With safety as the key goal, upgrades include new curbing—potentially from East Cedar Street to Lowrey Place depending on the material selected. Trees and new sidewalks will be installed at the intersection of Lowrey Place and Constance Leigh Drive creating a safer environment for pedestrians.

Meetings with the consulting engineer are now underway. Construction is expected to begin in the spring. BSC Group from Glastonbury is the engineering firm who will design and oversee the project.