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SPRING/SUMMER 2016

STORMING THE PALACE

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On the cover: Waterbury's Palace Theater in all its restored glory
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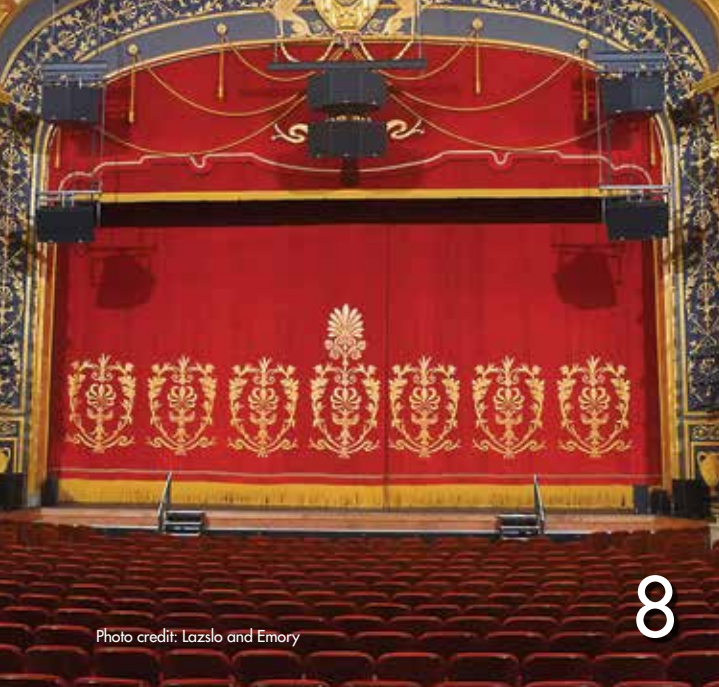


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Welcome

TO OUR SPRING/SUMMER 2016 ISSUE OF *DECADES*!

We at the Hoffman Auto Group hope you're as excited about each new issue of our lifestyle magazine, *Decades*, as we are. The magazine is our chance to reach out to our customers past, present and future—not just about cars but on a variety of topics we hold dear.

We have a lot of great articles for you to check out in this issue, thanks to our hardworking contributors. In one major feature, written by Melinda Tuhus and photographed by Nick Caito, we take a detailed look at how Hartford is evolving, and why it's becoming an increasingly attractive place to live. In another major feature, written by Lily Fisher, we examine Connecticut's farm-to-table movement and how it benefits everyone from farmers to consumers to even college students.

In our cover story, frequent cultural contributor Christopher Arnott guides us through the renovation and history of Waterbury's Palace Theater, one of Connecticut's most glorious landmarks. New contributor Jennifer Supernaw serves as our guide to the various trucks available at Hoffman's dealerships, as trucks seem to be becoming the new cars. And in our Snapshots section contributed by various staff, we update you with good news items happening within the Hoffman Auto family.

Another frequent contributor, Lynn Fredricksen, contributes a pair of articles to this issue. In one, she describes the good work of the Waterbury Police Activity League, which receives generous support from Hoffman Auto's new BMW dealership located in Watertown. In the other, she tells landlocked Hartford-area residents about the incredible variety of water parks in easy 90-minute reach of the capital city.

But that's not all. In our Details section, Robert Bailin presents quirky tidbits about interesting new automotive technology, while in our Happenings section he offers an exciting array of events that may help your upcoming spring/summer be the best ever. Making it all look great is our creative director, Kate Dawes.

If you're not already a customer of Hoffman Auto Group, we look forward to introducing our family to yours.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL MUSTO

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Hoffman DECADES

VOLUME XI, Number 1

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Keeping Kids Warm and in School at SAND Elementary

In the spirit of the recent holiday season, 50 students from SAND school in Hartford received the gift of warmth in the form of brand new winter jackets, hats and gloves. The jackets were purchased from Burlington Coat Factory with funds generously donated by the Hoffman Auto Group, the Julio Lozada Foundation Inc. and Reigning Halo.



Thank you for your many years of service!



Hoffman Celebrates Employee Longevity

Every year, the Hoffman family personally recognizes employees in each dealership for the years of service they have accumulated with the company. Hoffman also uses the occasion to welcome and officially recognize employees who joined the company within the last year. Employees who have served an impressive 40 years with the company are even awarded a new vehicle of their choice. This year, Hoffman Auto Group celebrated 32 employees with five years of service, nine employees with 10 years, six employees with 15 years, two employees with 20 years, one who has been with Hoffman for 30 years, and one amazingly nearing a half century of service with 45. We value the growth and development of every employee at each stage of his or her career, which results in a high level of expertise and skill to pass on to our customers.



Hoffman Hosts 2016 Lexus RX 350 Launch Party

On December 15, Hoffman Lexus hosted a festive holiday event to present the newly redesigned Lexus RX. Customers joined the Hoffman Lexus team at Infinity Music Hall in Hartford to celebrate red carpet style. Guests had the opportunity to look closely at the all-new RX and learn more about its redesigned features. After dining on delicious fare from Infinity Hall Bistro, Hoffman customers were treated to an incredible show from The Sounds of Frank and all the legendary hits of Frank Sinatra.

Body Shop Employees Show Support for Fellow Employee

Working at Hoffman Auto Group feels like family, so when someone needs encouragement and support our employees rally around him or her. Employees at the Hoffman Auto Body Shop in Avon/West Simsbury grew goatees to demonstrate their camaraderie and support for shop foreman, Bob Perron, during his fight against cancer. We are happy to report that he has finished treatment and is recovering wonderfully.





Honda Against Hunger

Hoffman Honda and the Connecticut Honda Dealers (represented by Matthew S. Hoffman, Treasurer/Secretary on the left; partnered with Foodshare (James Arena-DeRosa, President and CEO, pictured right) in a first-time event called *Honda Against Hunger*. Employees and customers of Hoffman Honda, as well as our fantastic community partners, joined together to donate non-perishable food items which helped feed working families in Connecticut. Thank you to all who joined with us in this successful food drive!

Visit foodshare.org to learn more about how you can help in the fight to end hunger.



Hoffman BMW of Watertown Ribbon Cutting with Waterbury Regional Chamber

BMW of Watertown, owned by the Hoffman Auto Group, recently marked its grand opening at 699 Straits Turnpike. Participating in the ribbon-cutting ceremony were, from left: Zachary R. Hoffman, sales manager; Susan Lane, manager of corporate reputation and community outreach; Matthew S. Hoffman, vice president; I. Bradley Hoffman, co-chairman; Watertown Councilman Joseph Polletta; Jeffrey S. Hoffman, co-chairman; Town Councilman Louis D. Razza; Jonathan T. Hoffman, manager of fixed operations; Lynn Ward, president and CEO of the Waterbury Regional Chamber and the Watertown Chamber of Commerce; and Town Manager Robert M. Scannell. For information, visit www.bmwofwatertown.com



Hoffman Auto Group Provides Ongoing Customer Technology Events

In our continuing commitment to provide value-added information for every Hoffman customer, each Hoffman Auto Group dealership hosts technology events throughout the year. These events provide our customers with additional tips and insight for maximizing the use of the ever-improving technology in their new vehicles. While customers dine on a casual, catered meal, they are introduced to our service teams, management and other personnel. For a schedule of all events, please check the individual Hoffman websites hoffmanauto.com and drivenct.com or Hoffman Facebook page for your brand of vehicle.

www.hoffmanauto.com



Fifth Grade Students Participate in STEM Program

When the fifth grade students of Maria Sanchez School needed a lift, Hoffman Auto Group came through. Hoffman provided bus transportation for both classes to attend a week-long STEM program. Students were exposed to a variety of hands-on activities in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Some of their favorites included interacting with a 3D solar system, going on a helicopter and cargo plane simulator, and testing Newton's Laws. Students learned the importance of teamwork and tolerance, performed community service, explored nature, and climbed out of their comfort zone on The Discovery Center's rock wall.

DETAILS

By Robert Bailin



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STORMING THE PALACE

By Christopher Arnott

Waterbury's Palace Theater began as a movie house. Then it became a concert hall. Now it's a performing arts center.

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So it's only fitting that the Palace's 2016–2017 Broadway season is overrun with musicals that are based on famous movies, some of them composed by rock stars. The season opens October 7–9 with *Dirty Dancing*, based on the 1987 Patrick Swayze/Jennifer Grey classic. It's followed December 6–11 with *Kinky Boots*, adapted by Harvey Fierstein and Cindy Lauper from the British comedy about a failing shoe factory that retools to serve the footwear needs of drag queens. On February 24–26, the Palace offers the recent Broadway reworking of the made-for-TV musical Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Cinderella*. Another Rodgers & Hammerstein classic, *The Sound of Music*, arrives March 7–12. The Broadway series concludes April 7 & 8 with the rocking Irish romance *Once*, in which the cast doubles as a lively band.

Benevolent and foresightful royal entity that it is, the Palace already knows what metamorphosis is in store for its 2017–18 season: the theater will become an opera house, with an exclusive two-week Connecticut premiere engagement of the newest national tour of the Andrew Lloyd Webber classic *The Phantom of the Opera*. It's a major coup for the Palace, which a couple of seasons ago also nabbed the Connecticut premiere of the first national tour of the Disney musical *Newsies*.

Again, fitting. Opera and newspapers are dismissed as relics of another era, just as grand old theaters have in many cities, having been razed and replaced by multiplex cinemas, nightclubs or (gasp!) office space. But just as *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Newsies* have given us a new take on operas and papers, the Palace continues to show how relevant and vital an “old-fashioned” theater can be.

For 94 years, the Palace has been a shape-shifting, ephemeral hall that exists for whatever entertainment form rules in a given era. When the building opened as a movie and vaudeville palace in 1922, a *Waterbury Republican* news story deemed it “surely is the finest in the state and . . . one of the most perfect in the country.” It was said to have cost a million dollars to construct, an astounding amount at the time.

Some of the brightest stars of their time played the Palace, names so big that they still resonate today: Eddie Cantor (known now as a recurring character on HBO's *Boardwalk Empire*), Frank Sinatra (the 100th anniversary of whose birth set off a global celebration

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last year), magician Harry Houdini (subject of numerous musicals and Broadway shows), the Andrews Sisters and the McGuire Sisters (inspiration for slews of cabaret revues), Louis Prima (“King Louie” in Disney’s original animated *The Jungle Book* and one of the great Las Vegas lounge entertainers of all time). These are the immortals who inspire modern-day theater producers to create musicals about them: shows based on Sinatra, Prima and the Andrews Sisters have all played another Waterbury theater, Seven Angels in Hamilton Park.

In the '70s, the Palace hosted the likes of Alice Cooper, Frank Zappa, Pink Floyd, Genesis, Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen. A jazz festival in 1972 featured the bands of Lionel Hampton, Gene Krupa, Maynard Ferguson, Count Basie, Buddy Rich and Woody Herman. Within a few weeks of each other in the spring of 1978, you could have seen Aerosmith, Charlie Daniels Band, Elvis Costello and The Kinks at the Palace. It was at this theater in 1975 that The Ramones, in one of the punk rock pioneers’ first big outside-New York gigs, were pelted with bottles by a crowd that had come for headliner Johnny Winter. Queen played “Bohemian Rhapsody” for the first time in America here.

You can make some fascinating connections among those who performed at the Palace in its first few decades and those who’ve been there in recent years. Hoagy Carmichael was both a movie star (appearing in *To Have and Have Not*, *The Best Years of Our Lives* and a dozen other movies) and the composer of dozens of pop standards. He sang

“Stardust” at the Palace. Willie Nelson, a pop star/film star of a whole different era and attitude, recorded a hit version of “Stardust” in 1978 and played the Palace in 2005. Pearl Bailey played the Palace; decades later, so did Aretha Franklin.

Old Palace: Vaughn Monroe (“Riders in the Sky: A Cowboy Legend”). New Palace: Kenny Rogers (“The Gambler”).

Old Palace: Harry Houdini. New Palace: Cirque Illumination.

Old Palace: Victor Borge. New Palace: “Weird Al” Yankovic.

Old Palace: Jackie Gleason. New Palace: Garrison Keillor.

Old Palace: Trumpeter Charlie Spivak. New Palace: Saxophonist Kenny G.

Old Palace: Pink Floyd. New Palace: The Pink Floyd Experience tribute band.

There’s a clear break between those “new” and “old” phases. The Palace has had its imperial conquests, but it also had a “sleeping beauty” period. The theater’s CEO Frank Tavera explains that the Palace was “dormant 15 years, due in part to fire damage but also due to a changing entertainment environment.” The Palace was besieged by civic centers in other cities. “Rock and roll houses like ours were not big enough anymore.” Tavera, who had worked at Hartford’s Bushnell for a decade before helping resurrect the Palace, steered the venue towards a new life as “a performance arts venue and community arts center. The idea of more community involvement was very deliberate. We have to engage our community and invite them in often.”



The Palace entrance, before and after

When the Palace reopened just a dozen years ago, it connected some of the strands of its legacy by inviting Tony Bennett, who had been the last major artist to appear at the Palace in the 1980s, to appear at its grand reopening in November of 2004. "It was a bookend to the dark days," Tavera says.

In its heyday(s), the Palace was part of a thriving neighborhood of theaters and department stores. "In the 20th century, this was a very heavy retail area," Tavera relates. "It was also a theater district. The Palace is the last one standing. It's also the biggest. We needed to use it to change the footprint of downtown." The Palace had to be a destination.

The restoration and rejuvenation of the Palace has made it a gleaming beacon in the night. "It's fun for us to watch the evolution of the zip codes," Tavera says, the data on how far audience members have traveled to catch a show at the Palace rather than elsewhere.

A typical evening at the Palace starts with you already in a good mood, since you probably had no trouble parking—either on the streets around the theater or in the large parking garage behind it. As you enter the Palace, you can't help but marvel at the grandeur of the place. One

spacious lobby area leads into another. The renovations of 2003 still shine and glow.

You'll find lots of people helping you prepare for the show that's about to start—ushers, bartenders and refreshment-sellers, T-shirt and merchandise vendors—but you'll also likely meet some community volunteers raising funds for local charities, or just raising awareness for other events in the area.

Once you enter the auditorium, you can take a moment to stroll the wide aisles, luxuriate in the comfortable seats, gaze up at the high ceiling



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and appreciate the sheer magnitude of the Palace. It's a warm, welcoming theater that also happens to be huge.

The shows themselves aren't limited to those Broadway tours. This spring and summer brings contemporary R&B/Soul stars Angie Stone & Lyfe Jennings May 21, the "Disney in Concert: Magical Music from the Movies" orchestral tour May 22, reggae star Don Omar June 11 and Soundgarden frontman Chris Cornell in a solo show June 26. Then there are the locally generated events: a jazz series for each season (the spring edition still has East Coast blues icon James Montgomery coming up on May 20 and internationally renowned Connecticut-based jazz flutist Ali Ryerson on June 3). The annual "Are You Dense MusicFest," held by the breast health awareness organization Are You Dense?, brings Las Vegas Elvis impersonator Justin Shandor to the Palace on June 18.

The Waterbury Palace is a spangling entertainment venue and also a valuable community gathering place. It stands as an inspiration for the young performers and artists who study at the Waterbury Arts Magnet School next door. It shows what Waterbury has to offer today, reminds

The Grand Foyer, before and after



us of the city's glorious past, and demonstrates an uplifting spirit of change, growth and perseverance.

"This industry is incredibly competitive," Tavera says. "To secure the national tour of *Newsies* before it went to Hartford, to get *The Phantom of the Opera* before anyone else for 2017, those are real feathers in our cap. This is still an emerging market."

And if there's one thing the Palace Theater knows about, it's emerging, and reemerging. **H**

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Is Hartford Enjoying a

Our Capital City's Progress and Challenges

By Melinda Tuhus

Connecticut's capital finally seems to be coming into its own. What began a decade or two ago with some innovative proposals—like Riverfront Recapture to reconnect the city to the Connecticut River, from which it had been completely cut off by superhighways—has blossomed into what some are calling a full-fledged renaissance of some long-neglected neighborhoods, led by some exciting projects such as the creation of a National Historic Park on the grounds of the former Colt factory. Hartford commuters now have more reasons outside work to visit Hartford, while Hartford residents have more reasons to stay close to home and explore their own backyard. The changes are also bringing more permanent residents with disposable income into the city center.

"In the mid-'90s, you had the Rowland Six Pillars program that brought some new housing and redid the G. Fox building, which now houses Capital Community College, among other things," says longtime Hartford journalist and city-watcher Tom Condon. "The CT Science Center, the Convention Center—it was a three-quarter billion dollar investment in the city in the '90s and that started things going. And then there was a component of that that invested the state's money in the city, now called the Capitol Region Development Authority, and that has triggered a whole new wave of housing, in downtown mostly."

Hartford's previous mayor, Pedro Segarra, championed building a stadium to lure to Hartford the Double-A minor league baseball team, the New Britain-based Rock Cats, rechristened the Yard Goats. It was a controversial proposal, partly because Segarra called on the state for financial help (which he called a "user tax") and partly because of disagreements between developers and the city. Due to open in May or possibly June, the stadium was phase one of a three-part development plan called Downtown North (DoNo).

Perhaps not the most auspicious acronym, DoNo has attracted a lot of concern. Fred Carstensen, director



Renaissance?

of the Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis at UConn, ran the numbers and says the baseball stadium by itself would have been “a huge loser. What made it work for Hartford was the whole \$350 million development. We argued that what was critical was that you needed to do all of it. If they have a reasonable size grocery store, retail and housing, then it would generate enough new economic activity and property tax revenue that it would work.”

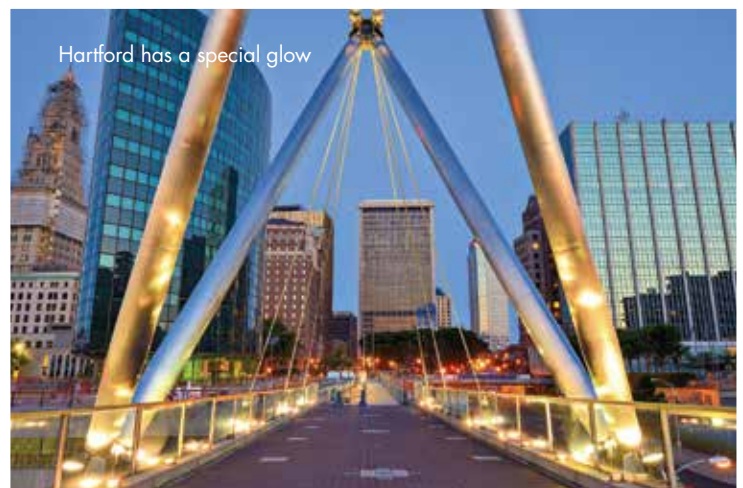
The analysis foresees almost 1,800 construction jobs and 1,100 permanent jobs after completion of the entire project, generating personal income in Hartford County between \$100 million and \$150 million, depending on the number of special events held at the stadium.

The problem, city councilor Larry Deutsch notes, is that phases 2 and 3 are stalled.

“The issue was and is that there were three or four development corporations that bid on getting long-term leases for very little money with the idea that it would contribute to the grand list. The stadium would be the spark to attract further development. Phases 2 and 3 are supposed to be for mixed-use development, to include fancy retail chains; also a supermarket because people say it’s a food desert—there’s no place to shop for food within walking distance; and residential

apartments in 4-story buildings. The new housing was to attract millennials. For 20 or 30 years, it’s just been empty parking lots adjacent to the center of the city.”

Meanwhile, other positive developments are evolving. Riverfront Recapture keeps growing. The Founders Bridge Promenade crosses the



Hartford has a special glow



Joe Boyle, 23, just signed a lease extension on his studio apartment at the Colt Building. This apartment is his first away from his native Norfolk.

"I went to the University of Hartford, so these were my stomping grounds as a commuter. There's great restaurants in Hartford," he said.

"With work I can't beat the commute," said Boyle, who frequently bikes to his job at Aetna, where he works on individual and public health exchanges. "I'm only two minutes away on any given day."

highway and connects Hartford to East Hartford, and to the river itself, and several parks have opened along its shores. Mortensen Riverfront Plaza, at 300 Columbus Boulevard, is the heart of the Riverfront park system, including a stage and seating for an audience up to 2,500. It's the venue for numerous summertime activities, including fishing tournaments, concerts and fireworks. The Greater Hartford Jaycees Community Boathouse hosts all kinds of public and private events, from a rowing program to conferences to private gatherings like weddings.

Two river cruise lines—Hartford Belle Cruises and Lady Katharine Cruises—depart from Mortensen Riverfront Plaza and Charter Oak Landing. They offer an opportunity both to enjoy the Connecticut River—New England's longest and one of its least industrialized—and appreciate the Hartford skyline from a unique vantage point.

In 2015, another major project took a giant step forward when Congress voted to create a National Historic Park on the grounds of the Colt firearms factory in the Coltsville section of Hartford. Colt served through much of the 19th century as an incubator for cutting-edge industrial production and its Colt .45 appeared at the side of many a frontier lawman, including a modified version that inspired the Marty Robbins ballad "Big Iron" on his hip.

The park boundaries include factory buildings, a church, a park,

and the former residences of both the owners and their workers. The National Park Service (NPS) will renovate two one-story buildings comprising 10,000 square feet from the mid-19th century—all that remains of the original factory. The renovation would include offices, a visitor's center and artifacts and exhibits that would tell Coltsville's story. The NPS also wants access to the East Armory, topped by the iconic blue "Onion Dome" visible from I-91. The dome, the complex's most salient feature, will soon be a drawing card for the thousands of hoped-for visitors to come and explore an important piece of American history. The conversion is expected to take several years, relying more on private, state and city than federal funding.

Larry Dooley runs Colt Gateway, a private development in Coltsville that includes apartments, office buildings and schools in some of the armories and factory buildings. "Colt Gateway is active reuse of the Colt armories," he says. "We're renovating the east side of the armory right now—the one with the dome. There are ten buildings. We have 129 apartments that are all leased, all market rate." Dooley says his company has finished six of the buildings and is working on the seventh. He's donating the two old buildings to the National Park Service for a visitors' center and museum.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the complex is that it houses two so-called "Sheff schools"—magnet schools that have been established by the Capital Region Education Council to combat the racial segregation of the city's schools.

Coltsville is part of the area organized into CSS-CON, the Coalition to Strengthen the Sheldon and Charter Oak Neighborhoods, a traditionally low-income neighborhood with its share of urban problems. Lynn Ferrari is president of CSS-CON, and has lived in the neighborhood for decades. In the mid-19th century, it was brownstones and tenements, surrounded by industry. She says CSS-CON has existed for about 35 years. "When the state designated NRZs

[Neighborhood Revitalization Zones], we became one. I think one of our successes is that we've developed strong relationships with developers who want to come into the neighborhood."

She says there were some initial developments that happened in the early 1980s, then everything just stopped for years. What got it going again was the redevelopment around 2000 of Dutch Point, low-income housing owned by the Hartford Housing Authority (HHA) which had deteriorated since its construction 50 years earlier. "HHA wanted to put in suburban-type houses and we said no, it has to be higher density."

Collaborating with the HHA, CSS-CON wrote a \$20 million Hope VI [federal] grant to build a mixed income project. "It's a combination of apartments and homeowner buildings, with front porches. It's mixed income but mostly low-income. Many Dutch Point residents came back," Ferrari says. She adds that the neighborhood has recently seen the redevelopment of two other low-income housing projects.

The Corporation for Independent Living (CIL) recently built what Ferrari calls "beautiful town homes" on an empty lot that are income-limited (up to 80% of median income or about \$125,000). "CIL also took over the Capewell Horse Nail Factory project that needed financing to come together. That happened last year, and they are in the process of

converting Capewell into 72 apartments with a 20 percent low income requirement.” She says in the last few years a total of 2,000 new apartments have opened downtown. CRDA—the Capital Region Development Authority—has filled a funding gap to enable these projects to go forward.

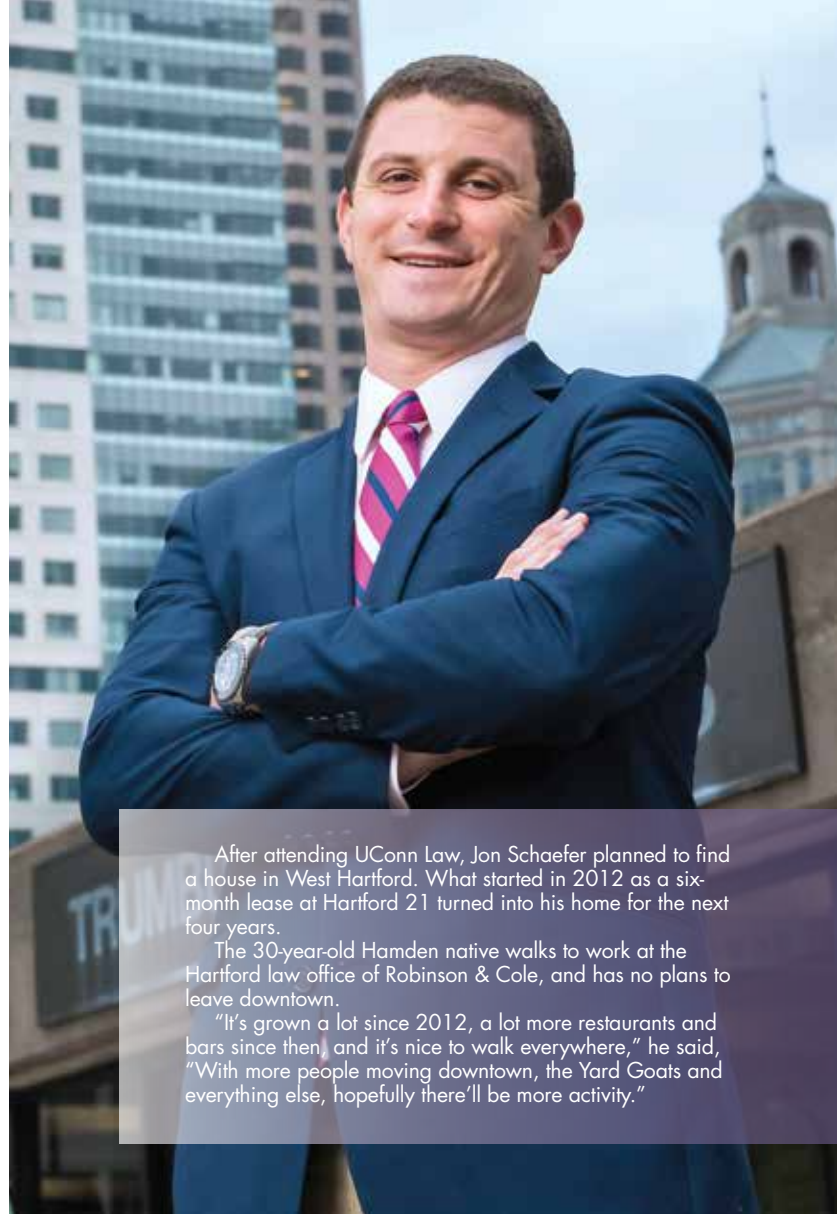
“We’re starting to get coffee shops and restaurants and all kinds of plans for things,” says Ferrari. “We have totally new zoning regs that I think are world-class. A couple years ago we put in a historic preservation ordinance. I’ve lived on Charter Oak Place for 34 years and seen a lot of changes happening, but the buzz now is palpable. We have a new mayor who’s bringing in some of the brightest and best people to make this happen. The sense of community downtown is amazing. We have a group of people that have breakfast every single Sunday; everyone is totally involved in downtown development, historic preservation. I just don’t think you’d see that in a suburb.”

When it’s completed later this year, Capewell will offer one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments at market rates ranging from \$1,150 for a studio to \$2,600 for a three-bedroom. And, like the blue “onion dome” in Coltsville, Capewell will have its own iconic showstopper—a Romanesque tower. It’s a mixed-use development, with 5,000 square feet of ground-level retail or office space.

But these positive changes are also resulting in new challenges for Hartford’s low-income residents. Chris Doucot sees the flip side. Since 1993, he has been living and working with like-minded activists in two Catholic Worker houses of hospitality, St. Martin de Porres and St. Brigid, where they try to live the values they believe Jesus taught, ministering to the city’s poorest residents.

“Housing takes every penny... As prices go up, folks are forced into the first-ring suburbs... What people really need is jobs.”

Another sure sign of resurgence is the city’s Innovation Destination: Hartford, a gathering place and support platform for entrepreneurs that features special programs (e.g. for women entrepreneurs) and contests. Another is co-working and entrepreneurial hub reSET, which stands for Social Enterprise Trust. The building, at 1429 Park Street in the Parkville section, is 6,000 square feet on two



After attending UConn Law, Jon Schaefer planned to find a house in West Hartford. What started in 2012 as a six-month lease at Hartford 21 turned into his home for the next four years.

The 30-year-old Hamden native walks to work at the Hartford law office of Robinson & Cole, and has no plans to leave downtown.

“It’s grown a lot since 2012, a lot more restaurants and bars since then, and it’s nice to walk everywhere,” he said, “With more people moving downtown, the Yard Goats and everything else, hopefully there’ll be more activity.”



The Hartford riverfront in full swing

floors and offers “hot desking,” in which freelancers in various fields find any available space to work, as well as programming for entrepreneurs.

“We do Impact Challenge, a several-month process that culminates every fall,” says Emily Walsh, reSET’s public relations and marketing consultant. “We give cash grants to the most promising social enterprises.” The 2015 winner of the Impact Challenge was a small company, Fresh Farm Aquaponics, which combines raising aquatic animals with hydroponics, or cultivating plants in water. “They want to make Hartford a city that feeds itself, and that’s because in Hartford there is a lack of healthy, affordable food. There are very few supermarkets. They also go into classrooms to work with teachers to integrate the system into the curriculum.”

Walsh says reSET is for entrepreneurs of all stripes, in every industry. “Sometimes freelancers work for a company in another city or another country, even.” She says Parkville is a burgeoning community. “It was lower income for a very long time and today it’s a very diverse community racially and economically, with a lot of artists.” It’s just one of many signs that Hartford is starting to come into its own. **H**

The Farmer in

The Impact of Connecticut's Farm-to-Table Movement

By Lily Fisher

To borrow a phrase, it takes a village to run a restaurant. Customers interact most frequently with the front-of-the-house staff, including hosts, bartenders and servers. Behind the scenes, the chef, cooks and prep staff keep the kitchen humming. Outside forces such as the food suppliers and wine and spirits distributors also factor into the mix.

In recent years, restaurants have welcomed another key player into the fold—the local farmer. These hard-working masters of the land produce not only fruits and vegetables but also meat, poultry, eggs and dairy products. Chefs always look for the best ingredients to inspire their menus, but their creations are that much better, they say, when the building blocks are grown on Connecticut soil and picked at the peak of freshness.

The farm-to-table movement has had a positive impact on Connecticut's restaurants and farms, affecting both business and culinary aspects. Chefs use seasonal ingredients daily and plan special events such as wine dinners and dinners on the farm (see sidebar).

Farmers can count on restaurants as another outlet

for selling their harvest in addition to roadside stands, farmers' markets and wholesale clients. And restaurant-goers, particularly those who like to know where their food originates, prefer to support those eateries that promote local ingredients.

Alex Province, a Hartford resident and contributor to The Food Schmooze public radio show who eats out frequently, seeks out restaurants that support local farms. He finds that, aside from food that tastes better and fresher, the practice speaks volumes to the kitchen's commitment to quality in all aspects of the dining experience. To Province, it shows that the "restaurateur that is going out of their way to source locally is probably fussy about other important components of their business, [such as] cleanliness, ethics, seasonal menu [and more]."

the Dell

Restaurant chefs and the rise of farmers' markets and seasonal roadside stands have helped to promote the work of the state's farmers and the benefits of local foods.

"People are more aware of local products and what's available," says Linda Piotrowicz, state Department of Agriculture bureau director who joined the agency in 2006. "Interest has increased. When I started, [local farm to chef] was still relatively novel, but it's not anymore. Now, it's not unusual to see a local restaurant carrying local products, and the people eating in those restaurants are more aware of local foods."

What started informally as Piotrowicz's mandate to encourage the use of more Connecticut-grown products in restaurants became the Farm-to-Chef Program, which has about

400 to 500 dining venues and farms in its database, she says. The CT Farm-to-Chef Week, during which participating restaurants offer seasonal menus using local ingredients, has helped promote the Connecticut-grown concept and shows some of the economic impact of the chef and farmer relationship.

Based on information shared by the dining venues and farmers participating in the 2015 CT Farm-to-Chef Week, the agriculture department estimated that the restaurants, cafeterias, healthcare facilities and other food service operations served more than 54,000 meals and purchased \$50,587 in ingredients for the week.

Chefs want to work with the freshest and best ingredients, but they also know "that the added bonus is you're keeping money in the community and supporting a local business," says

Joseph O'Grady, farm manager of Holcomb Farm in West Granby, a 367-acre, non-profit working farm.

Nunzio Corsino, owner of Four Mile River Farm in Old Lyme, which produces pasture-raised beef and eggs, sells beef cuts directly to consumers through his farm shop or at farmers' markets but is thankful for his restaurant customers. Three to four restaurants buy ground beef from him year-round, and that business, Corsino says, "helps tremendously" with cash flow, particularly in the winter when there are fewer farmers' markets. Mention of his farm's name on restaurant menus also helps his business. "The restaurants who buy from us, they advertise our name," he says. "For me to pay for that advertising—I couldn't afford it."

Chefs are not only interested in

Refinement on the farm

Photo courtesy of Max Catering & Events

Dish from a Millwrights farm-to-table dinner held at Rosedale Farms in Simsbury in conjunction with Jeffrey Lizzotte of ON20 (photo: Ellis Parker)



quality but diversity, and farmers have responded by planting unusual items, sometimes in response to a chef's request. "There always will be farms that stick with staples—they grow cucumbers and tomatoes and peppers—but there's a lot more diversity now," Piotrowicz says. "There are smaller farms that are looking for that niche, and they're the ones at the market that have [something unique]. Chefs have a 'field day' when they can find new and unusual products."

Metro Bis chef-owner Christopher Prosperi has found specialty items at Young Farms in East Granby, where owner Dale Young produces dried beans, corn and wheat for grinding into flours and maple syrup in addition to vegetables. "He does all sorts of neat stuff," says Prosperi, who has also asked Young to grow certain varieties of peppers and squash. "I like [this farm] because it's not just zucchini and tomatoes."

Even those staples taste better, however, when they are picked fresh in season. "We were able to grow some sustainable crops, like tomatoes all the way through October," says Rob Maffucci, owner of Vito's Restaurant Group in Hartford, whose family farm in South Windsor supplies his three restaurants with fresh produce. "[Native tomatoes] make such a big difference in the flavor of a Caprese salad or a fresh ragù."



At the height of the abundant growing season, about 90 percent of the produce used in Metro Bis' kitchen is locally grown, but Prosperi dreams about the winter spinach that he buys from Holcomb Farm. "The spinach gets better in the cold weather," he says. "It's sweeter, and [customers] actually notice that it's sweeter."

Restaurants are not the only eateries to participate in the Farm-to-Chef Program and buy local ingredients. Food service institutions including hospitals, public school systems and colleges also have bought into the farm-to-table movement.

"There is a big push in higher education to serve more local foods in the dining halls," Piotrowicz says, adding that state and federal guidelines apply to the farms that sell to schools. "We've had more schools participate in farm-to-school every year."

Students at the University of Connecticut, Storrs campus, are aware of local farms and the quality foods they produce, says Robert Landolphi, culinary operations manager of the dining services department. "The kids want to know where their food came from," he says. "They're very interested. If we can get a product locally, that comes first, and it gives us a chance to market ourselves to the students."

Flat-screen televisions in the dining halls list the names of the farms that supply produce to UConn.

UConn's dining services department is the "largest user of Connecticut-

grown produce in the state," Landolphi says. Last year, the school spent \$250,000 for Connecticut-grown or -produced foods, and more than \$600,000 at regional farms within a 250-mile radius of Storrs. "We find that the majority of times, [buying local] is not that much more expensive."

One farm that supplies UConn's kitchens with fresh produce doesn't have to travel far to make deliveries. Spring Valley Student Farm is located on campus and staffed by students. The farm grows produce for the dining services department—and, more specifically, Chuck & Augie's, a full-service restaurant run by dining services—as well as for a farmers' market on campus. Eleven students live in campus housing on the farm



and devote 10 hours a week to tending the garden and engaging in community outreach, says farm manager Julia Cartabiano, who holds a master's degree in plant science from the school. Cartabiano meets with the Chuck & Augie's chefs to plan what the garden will produce during the growing season.

UConn's Landolphi believes that restaurants and food service operations will continue to increase the amounts of locally-produced foods, both harvested-fresh and prepared foods, in their kitchens. "It's something we must do if we want to preserve Connecticut farmland, and we have to educate people about the quality and quantity," he says. "In the long run, it will sustain our state."

Chefs want to work with the freshest and best ingredients... Adopting a very European approach, some may even start their own gardens, like Debbie Lepri shown in her garden behind Trattoria da Lepri in Ellington and with the resulting salad.



(photo: Ellis Parker)

(photo: Ellis Parker)



Jonathan Rapp,
owner of **River Tavern** in Chester,

started a trend in 2007 when he bought an old, fire engine-red truck and turned it into a mobile kitchen where he prepared dinners served in the fields of local farms.

More and more chefs are buying into the farm-to-table movement and featuring locally-grown foods on their daily menus. The bounty doesn't end with fruits and vegetables, however. Meat and poultry, fish and seafood, dairy products and artisan cheeses, and specialty ingredients such as dried beans, cornmeal, flours and prepared foods are available from local farms and food producers.

The following is a list of some restaurants that incorporate local ingredients into their menus and promote the use of local foods. Some of these restaurants also sponsor harvest dinners at the farms they support with their business. For more information about the Farm-to-Chef Program and the CT Farm-to-Chef Week when restaurants and food service operations offer special menus of locally-sourced foods, visit www.ctfarmtochef.com or the Facebook page, www.facebook.com/CTFarmtoChef/.

Dinners at the Farm are hosted by **River Tavern** of Chester. An orchard fruit cocktail and hors d'oeuvre plus a tour precede a multi-course dinner served al fresco. White Gate Farm in East Lyme and Barberry Hill Farm in Madison, which supply ingredients to the restaurant for its regular menu, provide the setting. Information: www.dinnersthefarm.com.

www.hoffmanauto.com



Fall Harvest Farm Dinner, hosted by **Vito's Restaurant Group**, South Windsor. Rob Maffucci, owner of Vito's by the Park in Hartford, Vito's by the Water in Windsor and Vito's Pizzeria in Wethersfield, prepares a five-course meal on his family's farm. Information: vitosct.com.

Max Restaurant Group chef Scott Miller oversees a series of farm dinners from spring to fall at local farms. The evening begins with a wine or beer tasting, depending on the menu and theme, and a farm tour followed by a meal inspired by the day's harvest. Information: www.maxcheftofarm.com.

Firebox Restaurant, Hartford. The farm-to-table philosophy is "at the core of who we are," says this city restaurant's website. The kitchen incorporates local produce, meat, honey, cheese and seafood into its menu and daily specials. Firebox's kitchen staff buy ingredients from multiple farms in Connecticut, including the inner-city garden at Billings Forge, just steps away from the restaurant. Information: www.fireboxrestaurant.com.

Zinc, New Haven. Chef and co-owner Denise Appel buys from local farmers and scouts the CitySeed Farmers' Market to create menus, including the multi-course Market Menu offered June through October. Information: www.zincfood.com.

Millwrights Restaurant, Simsbury. Chef-owner Tyler Anderson uses locally or regionally grown ingredients whenever possible to create his "inspired New England cuisine." Information: www.millwrightsrestaurant.com.

Metro Bis, Simsbury. Depending on the season, up to 90 percent of the produce delivered to the bistro's kitchen is raised and harvested on local farms. Chef-owner Christopher Prosperi's menus, including the monthly cookbook author/wine dinner series, reflect his collaboration with local farmers. Information: www.metrobis.com. **H**



It's Water Parks in Hartford

Easy Reach of

By Lynn Fredricksen

Nothing brings out the kid in people quite like playing in water. Luckily, with several water parks within driving distance, even folks in land-locked Hartford can easily make a splash.

In addition to being fairly near, these parks—all 90 miles or closer—offer a wide variety of features to amuse toddlers, seniors and everyone in between. They're also geared to satisfy everyone from thrill-seeking daredevils to those who would rather relax by basking in tranquil pools of still, cool water.

"We distinguish ourselves as a family park," says Ron Gustafson, director of marketing and public relations for Quassy Amusement Park in Middlebury. "We fill this niche market."

Like Lake Compounce in Bristol, Quassy has recently added water attractions, in particular a major expansion in 2013 with a \$6 million project on the horizon that will double the park's sliding capacity, Gustafson says.

Without exception, each park possesses unique qualities. In Portland, Laura Loffredo serves as director of marketing for Brownstone Exploration & Discovery Park.

"We're the only outdoor adventure park," says Loffredo. "We want people to get out from behind their computers and get outside again."

Indeed, at Brownstone patrons do not simply sit on a ride—instead, they have to earn it.

"We're a sports adventure park. If you're going to zip line, you're going to have to climb for it," Loffredo says. "You're going to work for your reward. Our sports are good old-fashioned fun in a safe environment where everyone can try them from beginners to more experienced levels."



The BulletBowl raft ride is one of three new slides added in 2013 at Splash Away Bay waterpark. Quassy Amusement & Waterpark virtually doubled the size of the water attraction with a number of additions that year.

Another unique aspect of Brownstone is the fact that, because it's in an old historic quarry, the water there is about 10 degrees warmer than water elsewhere, Loffredo explains.

"We're also one of the only parks that allow you to bring your own food," says Loffredo. "We've got relaxing things like canoeing and the beach, all the way to extreme sports like jumping off a cliff."

At Ocean Beach Park in New London, general manager Dave Sugrue is proud to call the park an "old school park" because of its beautiful beach. In fact, the beach is so notably beautiful, last year the Boston Globe featured it as a Best Beach in New England.

"They picked us because the water is

clean, but we don't have those heavy waves, so we're safer for little kids," Sugrue says. "Our beach is wide and we have a half-mile-long boardwalk."

The beach at Ocean Beach is composed of very fine sand—something they call "sugar sand"—which is ideal for building sand castles, Sugrue points out.

"Everything we do is trying to enhance the family's experience," Sugrue says. "Our intent is to keep everyone safe."

While the water is certainly a great reason to visit Ocean Beach, the folks there are also very focused on entertainment. Much of that takes place on the boardwalk: classic cars on Mondays; beach blanket movies on Tuesdays; a magician on Wednesdays; a sock hop on Thursdays; a full lineup of tribute and local bands on Fridays; and Old School Kids' Night on Saturdays with entertainment that includes a bicycle stunt show, a trampoline act, dancers, an aerial act and a contortionist.

"There's always something fun here," says Sugrue.

Die-hard thrill seekers might want to head to Agawam, Mass. where Jennifer McGrath serves as communications manager for New England's largest water park, Six Flags New England.

"We have a 500,000-gallon wave pool, 33 water slides and a seven-story water slide complex," says McGrath, who describes it as "excessive."

"You stand on a piece of plexiglass that shoots out from underneath you," McGrath explains. "You're going at full speed and it's about four seconds for that straight-down, seven-story drop."

The Typhoon water coaster is also unique in that it uses a pump system to propel participants upward.

"That's a unique concept in a water park," says McGrath. "You're sitting in a raft with two other people and you plummet down. Then it propels you up."

Here are some highlights of regional water parks:

- **17.9 miles from Hartford** – Brownstone Exploration & Discovery Park, 161 Brownstone Avenue, Portland, CT. 866-860-0208. Swimming, snorkeling, zip line, cliff jump, rope swing, fly over water, wakeboarding, kayaking and scuba. www.brownstonepark.com
- **19.1 miles from Hartford** – Lake Compounce, 186 Enterprise Drive, Bristol, CT. 860-583-3333. Features include: Croc-O-Nile; Clipper Cove; Mammoth Falls; Tunnel Twists; Bayou Bay; Lights Out; Riptide Racer; and Anchor Bay. www.lakecompounce.com
- **27.8 miles from Hartford** – Six Flags New England, Route 159, 1623 Main Street, Agawam, MA. 413-786-9300. Hurricane Harbor Water Park offers: Adventure River, a relaxing 1,000-foot raft cruise; Big Kahuna, maximum velocity raft rides; Bonzai Pipelines, with a trap door to a 257-foot, 40 mph

plummet; Commotion Ocean, wave pool; Monsoon Lagoon; and numerous attractions for younger children. www.sixflags.com/newengland

- **35 miles from Hartford** – Quassy Amusement Park, 2132 Middlebury Road, Middlebury, CT. 1-800-FOR-PARK. Splash Away Bay Water Park includes: Saturation Station; Tunnel Twisters; BulletBowl; FreeFALL Extreme Bodelslides; Fish Pond; Quassy Beach; and Slide City for younger children. www.quassy.com
- **39.2 miles from Hartford** – Dinosaur Place at Nature's Art Village, 1650 Hartford-New London Turnpike, Montville, CT. 860-443-4367. Featuring New England's largest splash pad. naturesartvillage.com
- **52.5 miles from Hartford** – Ocean Beach Park, 98 Neptune Avenue, New London, CT. 860-447-3031. In addition to a sugar sand beach, features include: Pool; Water Slide; Spray Park; and nightly

entertainment on the half-mile-long boardwalk. www.ocean-beach-park.com

- **72.8 miles from Hartford** – Breezy Picnic Grounds Waterslides, 520 Northwest Main Street, Douglas, MA. 508-476-2664. Attractions include swimming in Whittin Reservoir and numerous water slides. breezysummer.com
- **77 miles from Hartford** – Splash Zone at Chelsea Piers, 1 Blachley Road, Stamford, CT. 203-989-1000. Attractions include a 6,000-square-foot splash zone and three pools. www.chelseapiersct.com
- **81 miles from Hartford** – Berkshires Water Park at Bousquet Mountain, 101 Dan Fox Drive, Pittsfield, MA. 413-442-8316. Fun offerings include 6 Water Slides and a kids' activity pool. www.bousquets.com/summer
- **87 miles from Hartford** – Splashdown Beach, 16 Old Route 9 West, Fishkill, NY. 845-897-9600. Attractions include the new six-story tall Arctic

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- **88.3 miles from Hartford** – Great Wolf Lodge New England Indoor Water Park Resort, 150 Great Wolf Drive, Fitchburg, MA. 978-343-9653. Multiple attractions include: 84-degree climate controlled park; Thrill Rides; Water Slides; Zero depth, entry playgrounds for younger children; Fort Mackenzie; Howlin' Tornado; River Canyon Run; Wolf Tail; Alberta Falls; Totem Towers; Otter Run; and Slap Tail Pond. www.greatwolf.com/new-england 



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TEN HOFFMAN TRUCKS TO GET YOUR PULSE RACING

By Jennifer Supernaw

Whether they are used to haul materials and equipment to worksites or just to cruise around town, trucks are everywhere. It has been said that trucks are the new cars. Many customers who stop in at Hoffman Auto Group to test drive trucks in their inventory are surprised at how much they have to offer.

What impresses people most is how luxurious the ride is in a modern truck. Many customers comment that trucks handle and ride as easily and smoothly as a mid-size sedan. They are astounded by the way trucks hug corners and say the plush ride feels more like a sedan than what they expected from a truck.

This performance is due to major improvements that have

been made to trucks in recent years. Vehicles have been upgraded with tuned suspensions and stronger and more rigid frames that make them much easier to handle and more comfortable to drive. Factor in improved fuel economy and lower gas prices—and people who never considered trucks an option are increasingly turning to them as their vehicles of choice.

2017 FORD RAPTOR

Who's going to score a Raptor? The 2017 Ford Raptor is a special production pickup sold by a special vehicle team at Hoffman.

Dealerships are given limited numbers of the trucks to sell, and some don't get any at all. Hoffman has been allocated two for the entire model year. This is a vehicle that is intended for truck enthusiasts and collectors who want a vehicle that stands out from the competition.

The Raptor will be released in fall 2016 under the new Ford Performance banner. Both the SuperCab and SuperCrew versions will come with an advanced 3.5-liter V6 EcoBoost engine with twin turbochargers, fuel injection and a 10-speed automatic transmission. The Raptor will have a new aluminum block and updates to the fuel system, cylinder heads and internals for enhanced performance demanded by discerning drivers. Here's a truck that will turn heads!





2016 FORD F-150

Going once... The popular Ford F-150 was redesigned for 2015 with a major improvement. The steel body was replaced with an all-aluminum body made from military-grade aluminum. That lightened the F-150's weight by about 700 pounds, resulting in a more impressive payload capacity and better fuel economy.

The body was changed from a full frame to a NASCAR-style front clip. That means that if the truck is involved in a head-on collision, the clip portion can be replaced, rather than the whole frame.

When it comes to engine size and performance, the old way of thinking was "bigger is better." With the F-150, however, that's no longer true. The 3.5-liter EcoBoost can deliver better fuel economy and towing capacity than the bigger 5.0-liter.



2016 FORD F-350

Sold to the discerning individual with their hand raised! The 2016 Ford F-350 gives drivers a choice of a 6.2-liter gasoline V8 engine or a turbocharged 6.7-liter diesel V8. Both have a 6-speed automatic transmission.

The F-350 comes equipped with several standard safety features, such as four-wheel antilock disc brakes, traction and stability control, trailer sway control, hill start assist, side curtain airbags and an SOS post-crash alert system. It's offered with the same cab configurations and trim levels as the F-250.



2016 FORD F-250

Going twice... The 2016 Ford F-250 Super Duty delivers exceptional performance. It comes equipped with a choice of a 6.2-liter gasoline V8 or a 6.7-liter turbocharged diesel V8. Both versions come with a 6-speed automatic transmission and rear- or four-wheel-drive.

The F-250 offers drivers a choice of three cab options: a two-door regular cab, a four-door extended cab (Super Cab), and a four-door Crew Cab. The 2016 Ford F-250 is available in five trim levels: the base XL, the mid-level XLT, the upscale Lariat, the luxury King Ranch and the luxury Platinum.

Like the F-150, the F-250 has a new all-aluminum body that delivers improved fuel economy and towing capacity. That change has allowed the 2016 F-250 to outperform its predecessors and is one of the main reasons why drivers choose the F-250.



2016/2017 FORD SUPER DUTY

Who's ready for this kind of duty? The Ford Super Duty is a line of powerful and versatile trucks that includes the F-250, F-350, F-450, and F-550 models. They are larger pickups with heavier-duty body-on-frame steel ladder frames, axles, springs, brakes, transmissions, engines and other components than older models.

The F-250 and F-350 use the same model frames for both the two-wheel-drive and four-wheel-drive versions. This makes it easier to convert a Super Duty truck from two- to four-wheel-drive than other models. The F-350's chassis cab and the F-450's and F-550's frames and suspensions are the same in the two- and four-wheel-drive models.

The 2017 Super Duty features a tougher frame made from 95 percent high-strength steel and an aluminum body. The frame and drive train were strengthened with fortified drive shafts, axles, brakes, and a four-wheel-drive transfer case. The newest Super Duty weighs up to 350 pounds less than previous models.



2016 TOYOTA TUNDRA

Who can conquer the frozen tundra? The full-size 2016 Toyota Tundra pickup offers excellent off-road performance with a powerful 4.6-liter V8 engine. It also has an optional 5.7-liter V8 and 6-speed automatic transmission.

The Tundra has a large double cab with traditional rear doors and an optional extra-large CrewMax cab. The upper trim levels have a larger gas tank designed for long trips and standard integrated trailer brake control. The 2016 Tundra offers bold styling with several body styles and bed lengths. All trim levels feature upgraded electronics and user-friendly technology.

The top selling point of the 2016 Tundra is its sleek body style, which was redesigned for the 2014 model year. It also features a stereo that is easier to use and a TRD (Toyota Racing Development) Pro Package.



2017 TOYOTA TACOMA

Whose scores are right off the tachometer? The 2017 Toyota Tacoma is lighter and tougher than its predecessors. The body utilizes aluminum and carbon fiber to cut back on weight and deliver better performance and fuel economy. It looks like the previous generation, but the wheelbase is larger, resulting in a roomier cabin. The newly redesigned motor in the 2017 Tacoma delivers increased horsepower, torque and fuel economy for impressive performance.

Toyota added a Limited version to the 2017 Tacoma with an electronically controlled locking rear differential. It comes with optional multi-terrain CRAWL control so powerful the truck can dig itself out if buried in sand.



2016 NISSAN FRONTIER

Who's ready to tame the frontier? The 2016 Nissan Frontier features the same design popular with truck enthusiasts since 2004. This mid-size pickup comes equipped with a choice of a 2.5-liter 4-cylinder engine or a 4.0-liter V6. The 2016 Nissan Frontier is available in two body types: extended cab (King Cab) and Crew Cab. Buyers can also choose from five trim levels.

The Nissan Frontier comes equipped with several standard safety features. Drivers who are concerned with safety can benefit from four-wheel disc brakes, electronic traction and stability control, airbags, and an optional backup camera and rear parking sensors.

2017 HONDA RIDGELINE

Who's that ascending the ridgeline? Available in June, the 2017 Honda Ridgeline's exterior has been redesigned for drivers who wanted a sleeker and more aerodynamic look. It will also feature class-leading interior space. The new Ridgeline promises to deliver superior on-road performance, handling and ride quality, and will be powered by a 3.5-liter V6 engine.

The 2017 Ridgeline will have the only 4-foot-wide bed in a mid-size pickup, big enough to haul a stack of 4 ft. x 8 ft. plywood if you are planning a home improvement project. It will also feature the industry's first truck-bed audio system, perfect for listening to music while tailgating at a game.



2017 NISSAN TITAN

Who's quite the Titan? The new half-ton 2017 Nissan Titan pickup has undergone a significant redesign. The Titan and its predecessor, the Titan XD, have completely different chassis, the Titan's being significantly smaller. Otherwise, the look of the 2017 Titan is very similar to the Titan XD.

The 2017 Titan has a powerful 5.6-liter V8 engine and a 7-speed automatic transmission. A gasoline-fueled V6 engine is also available.

The 2017 Titan impresses in both rear-wheel-drive and four-wheel-drive configurations. It is available in a choice of three cab sizes (Crew, King, and Single), three bed lengths and five trim levels (S, SV, PRO-4X, SL and Platinum Reserve). *H*



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Hoffman Auto Group Aids the Waterbury Police Activity League

By Lynn Fredricksen

"The greatest use of a life is to spend it on something that will outlast it."

The words of the late philosopher and psychologist William James (1842–1910) still ring true today, particularly when it comes to the driving forces behind the Waterbury Police Activity League (PAL). With support from Hoffman Auto Group and the commitments of a dedicated police department and mayor, PAL is destined to influence future generations.

"That quote epitomizes what PAL is all about," says mayor Neil O'Leary, who is credited with revitalizing the program when he was serving as Waterbury's police chief 10 years ago. "The foundation has been laid. Five, 10 or 30 years down the road, those programs are in place and should always remain in place."

When Hoffman Auto expanded to Watertown with a BMW dealership, they looked to see where to put their generosity to best use. They soon discovered PAL and immediately recognized its merits.

"When researching an organization to support with our new BMW of Watertown location, I was impressed by the available programs, partnership with law enforcement and dedication to the community of the Waterbury PAL," says Susan Lane, manager of corporate reputation and community outreach for Hoffman Auto.

"The commitment of the Waterbury Police Department, volunteers, parents and the youth is what makes them successful. Not only do kids have a variety of activities to enrich their lives but there are homework assistance and job readiness programs, culinary, gardening as well as a partnership with Special Olympics Unified Sports."

Added I. Bradley Hoffman, co-chairman, Hoffman Auto Group: "We are proud to partner with the Waterbury Police Activity League. The impact PAL has on the lives of thousands of local youth and on the community is truly impressive. I have spent considerable time observing the program and witnessed firsthand how beneficial it can be. We are looking forward to supporting our newest partner in the years ahead and to being part of the continued success of its life-changing programs."

As an organization, PAL dates back to the 1960s and originally functioned as a Police Athletic League. Its goal has always been to help young people reach their full potential by promoting partnerships between youth, law enforcement officials and the community. Due to a shortage of funding, the organization lost some momentum and by the 1980s had nearly disbanded. But with a career of police work under his belt, O'Leary had seen too many times the looks of horror on children's faces as they watched police officers take a beloved parent, sibling or grandparent out of their home in handcuffs.



PAL has more than 30 programs for youth.

"I had a whole career arresting bad guys," says O'Leary. "So we did a complete shift to try to find ways to help children. It's generational. When you arrest a person, usually that person's parent or grandparent made it into the system. We're trying to avoid that generational pattern." Thus, he revisited PAL. Also, knowing that not every kid is athletic,

he thought it would be best to have it morph into the Police Activity League and involve youngsters in other worthwhile, yet not necessarily athletic, activities.

"Building relationships with those kids has meant all the difference in the world to them," says O'Leary. "The program took off like a rocket ship. The first year we had 80 kids. The second year we had more than 1,000. Now, we have more than 4,000."

PAL officials are pleased with the results they're seeing. "We've changed a lot of young lives," O'Leary says. "Our youth crime is low and it continues to be low. Our police officers are not just seen as law enforcement to our youths, they're seen as mentors and friends. We're way ahead of many communities."

O'Leary went on to praise current officers and police chief Vernon Riddick for their dedication to the program.

"The Hoffman Auto Group is committed to making a difference in the communities where we live and work," says Jeffrey S. Hoffman, co-chairman, Hoffman Auto Group. "It is the right thing to do and it feels good to help others. We are fortunate to have a successful business and look forward to building strong and lasting connections in the Greater Waterbury community with our BMW of Watertown dealership."

Deputy police chief Fred Spagnolo currently serves as president of the local PAL. He enthusiastically came on board during the early revitalization stage and, like O'Leary, he saw the need for some changes.

"We saw that PAL would be better as a not-for-profit, so whatever happened in the city could not impact the organization—such as funding being stripped," Spagnolo explains. "We also recognized we weren't going to be able to go this alone, we needed community partners. The other thing we felt was that it would be a benefit to our partners and sponsors to give them the ability to donate to us and give them some tax benefit."



PAL engages Waterbury youngsters' minds as well.

In the early days, O'Leary and Spagnolo worked closely with teachers to help identify the most at-risk children. "We were looking for kids who were at the lowest point in their lives," O'Leary says.

According to Spagnolo, one of the biggest issues teachers were having was children who came to school unprepared or disruptive or both. Thus, Homework Haven was born. "We have a police officer

and four teachers who come in and target the most underperforming schools," Spagnolo says. "We have 40 kids involved with this program in second to fifth grade."

In addition to partnering with the schools, PAL also works closely



Exercise is most beneficial to Waterbury's growing youth.

with the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, Waterbury Youth Services and others to help provide youngsters with as many benefits as possible, Spagnolo says.

"We spread out to 30-plus different programs," says Spagnolo. "We've got culinary classes, golf, traditional seasonal sports, summer employment programs with more than 300 kids, cheerleading, taekwondo—you name it and we probably have our hand in it."

There's even a culinary program that brings professional chefs into the PAL commercial kitchen to teach the kids about safe food handling and preparation. A landscaping and industrial arts program has numerous youngsters gardening and building, Spagnolo says.


"We've purchased a 12-classroom school," says Spagnolo. "We did this all in a zip code of the city that was blighted and had the highest violent crime in the city."

Because all of this comes with a \$1.4 million a year price tag, everyone involved with PAL recognizes it would never be possible without corporate sponsors. "Without folks like Hoffman Auto Group and many others in the greater Waterbury area, we would be unable to provide this programming and mentorship for our children," Spagnolo says.

Lifelong Waterbury resident Catherine Smith is thrilled with the work PAL is doing in her community. So thrilled, in fact, she is chairman of the PAL 10th anniversary celebration slated for June 14 at Waterbury Country Club.

"PAL has all those key indicators that are so important to the Hoffman family," says Smith. "Their philanthropy is so genuine and so real. PAL is the actualization of Mayor O'Leary's dream. This

is why this community is thriving."

To learn more about Waterbury PAL, visit www.waterburypal.org. To learn more about Hoffman Auto Group, visit www.hoffmanauto.com. To purchase tickets for the 10th anniversary event, call 203-598-0644. 

HAPPENINGS

By Robert Bailin

During the warm weather months, Connecticut is host to a variety of special events—from street festivals and art shows to major concerts and sporting events. Here is a sample of events that may be of interest to you:



June 10-25. "The International Festival of Arts & Ideas." The 21st annual International Festival of Arts & Ideas

is a 16-day extravaganza of performing arts, lectures and conversations that takes over theaters and open spaces in New Haven each June. More than 80% of Festival events are completely free! Events include the U.S. premiere of the National Theatre of Scotland's musical play *Our Ladies of Perpetual Succour*; Kyle Abraham's *Abraham.In.Motion* dance company; the clown troupe *Acrobuffos'* wind-and-music-powered creation *Air Play*; concerts by George Clinton and his Parliament Funkadelic band; Lila Downs; the Bang on a Can All-Stars with Polish jazz scene ensembles Marcin Wasilewski Trio, Piotr Damasiewicz Quintet, and Obara International Quartet; and dozens of other shows, exhibits, talks and concerts. See website for events calendar. Ticketed events: \$35 and up. Various locations downtown, New Haven; 888-ART-IDEA; www.artidea.org.

June 15-19. "Cirque du Soleil – OVO." OVO is a headlong rush into a colorful ecosystem teeming with life, where insects work, eat, crawl, flutter, play, fight and look for love in a non-stop riot of energy and movement. When a mysterious egg appears in their midst, the insects are awestruck and intensely curious about this iconic object that represents the enigma and cycles of their lives. Wednesday–Friday, 7:30pm; Saturday, 4pm & 7:30pm; Sunday, 1:30pm & 5pm. \$35–\$154. *XL Center, One Civic Center Plaza, Hartford*; 860-249-6333; www.xlcenter.com.

June 18. "Klingberg Vintage Motorcar Festival." Celebrate Father's Day weekend in style at the 24th annual Vintage Motorcar Festival! Featuring a traditional antique car show plus a special Concours d'Elegance display of truly vintage, pristine and rarely seen automobiles, and a Concorso display of classic and exotic automobiles. Wayne Carini of Velocity's "Chasing Classic Cars" serves as Grand Marshal, along with his daughter, Lindsay. Fabulous vintage music and oldies, entertainment, good food and children's activities make this a fun-filled day for the entire family. Proceeds benefit Klingberg Family Centers' programs serving children and families across Connecticut. Saturday, 9:30am–3pm. \$15, Seniors \$10, children 12 and under free. *New Britain Rock Cats Stadium*,

635 South Main Street, New Britain; 860-832-5526; klingbergautoshow.org.

June 20. "18th Annual Burton C. Hoffman Golf Classic." To benefit the Burton & Phyllis Hoffman Foundation, founded in 1999, which continues to give back to the Greater Hartford Community. The foundation inspires and encourages the community to join in acts of giving back while supporting the arts, health/medicine, education and general social well-being. For sponsor information call 860-658-3585 or contact: The Burton & Phyllis Hoffman Foundation, PO Box 280292, East Hartford, CT 06128. Monday, 11am–7:30pm (rain date Tuesday, June 28). *Tumble Brook Country Club*, 376 Simsbury Road, Bloomfield.

June 24–September 20. "Bye Bye Birdie." Put on a happy face! Army-bound rock star Conrad Birdie's farewell appearance in Sweet Apple, Ohio is the talk of the town. But it's a teenage crisis for new "steadies" Hugo and Kim: she just won the chance to give Birdie one last kiss before boot camp. Kids, parents and show folk collide in the Goodspeed debut of the hip-swiveling musical comedy set at the dawn of the sensational '60s. Bring the entire family to discover



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we've got a lot of livin' to do! Wednesday, 2pm & 7:30pm; Thursday, 7:30pm; Friday, 8pm; Saturday, 3pm & 8pm; Sunday, 2pm & 6:30pm. \$34-\$79. *Goodspeed Opera House, 6 Main Street, East Haddam; 860-873-8668; www.goodspeed.org.*

June 25–September 25.

"The Human Touch."

The Human Touch features major works by national and international contemporary artists in a beautiful and thought-provoking celebration of people and diversity. Though works range in size and media, each artist centers on the body as subject. From portraits, to telling stories through pictures, to more experimental means and angles, the artists evoke themes and ideas that are common to the human condition.

Wednesday–Friday, 11am–5pm; Saturday–Sunday, 10am–5pm. Adults \$15, Seniors \$12, Students (18+ with school ID) \$5, Youth (under 18) Free. *Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 600 Main Street, Hartford; 860-278-2670; www.thewadsworth.org.*

Roland Fischer, Untitled (L.A. Portrait)



June 30–July 1. "The Naked Magic Show." The world's boldest and cheekiest magic show is coming to Hartford for two nights only! The Naked Magic Show features magic, mirth and more than a touch of mayhem as these two hot and hilarious magicians say "abracadabra" and take magic to a whole new level. Left without sleeves or pockets, their saucy magic is baffling and entertaining, bringing a new meaning to "now you see it." Good magicians don't need sleeves and great magicians don't need pants. Thursday, 7pm; Friday, 7pm & 9:30pm. Adults \$39.50–\$69.50. *Belding Theater, The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts, 166 Capitol Avenue, Hartford; 860-244-2999; www.bushnell.org.*

July 1–29. "Talcott Mountain Music Festival." Pack a picnic, attend with family and friends, relax under the stars and enjoy Friday summer evenings with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra under Music Director Carolyn Kuan and distinguished guest conductors. July 1: Celebrate America; July 8: Starlets – The Women of Song; July 15: Appalachian Spring; July 22: A Tribute to Ray Charles, Motown, and Beyond; July 29: Faithfully – A Symphonic Tribute to the Music of Journey. Friday, 7:30pm. \$5–\$45. *Performing Arts Center at Simsbury Meadows, 22 Iron Horse Boulevard, Simsbury; 860-987-5900; hartfordsymphony.org.*

July 8–10. "Enfield Fourth of July Town Celebration."

Yankee Magazine considers this one of the biggest and best 4th of July celebrations in New England. This three-day event features a parade, 1K and 5K road races, softball games, community tables, a crafts fair, basketball tournaments, a teen zone with a Battle of the Bands, and several big musical acts. Everything wraps up with a spectacular fireworks show that's not to be missed! Friday–Sunday. Free (tokens required for food and beverage purchases). *Town Green, Enfield Street, Enfield; 860-402-7932; enfieldcelebration.org.*

July 17. "Fidelco Ride for Independence."

Rev up your engine for the 6th annual Ride for Independence to benefit the Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation. This family-friendly motorcycle fundraiser offers something for everyone. The day begins at Gengras Harley-Davidson in East Hartford where participants embark on a police-escorted ride through the scenic Farmington Valley. The ride ends with a barbecue lunch, live music and demonstrations at the Fidelco Foundation in Bloomfield. Sunday, Noon–3pm (Registration starting at 9am). Rider with or without passenger \$40, Non-riders \$15 (children under 12 free). *Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation, 103 Vision Way, Bloomfield; 860-243-5200; www.fidelco.org.*



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July 18. "Full Moon Evening Cruise." Join us aboard RiverQuest and take a relaxing evening cruise on the lower Connecticut River, departing from Eagle Landing State Park in Haddam. This will be a cruise to nowhere, timed so that, weather permitting, we will see the full moon rise. Observe how beautiful the river is at twilight; see local wildlife and various points of interest including many beautiful homes. Bring your picnic basket and favorite beverage. Monday, 6pm–8:30pm. Age 12 and older, \$35. *Connecticut River Expeditions, Little Meadow Road, Haddam; 860-662-0577; criverquest.com.*

July 29–September 4. "A Sign of the Times – A New '60s Musical." 1965. The pulse of a changing era lures Cindy from Middle America to the swirl of Manhattan. Unexpected friends, lovers, careers and conflicts are all a subway ride away in a pop-fueled new musical featuring songs made famous by Petula Clark and other hit-makers of the day. Forget all your troubles, forget all your cares—go "Downtown" and find out who you are! Wednesday, 2pm & 7:30pm; Thursday, 7:30pm; Friday, 8pm; Saturday, 3pm & 8pm; Sunday, 2pm & 6:30pm. \$54–\$59. *The Norma Terris Theatre, 33 North Main Street, Chester; 860-873-8668; www.goodspeed.org.*

August 1–7. "Travelers Championship." For one week, the golf world turns its attention to the Travelers Championship, a world-class golf experience and family-friendly event. It is one of the PGA Tour's most well-attended events with 156 players, a \$6.6 million purse and \$1.188 million winner's share. Daily pre-round events include the Opening Ceremony, the Players Pro-Am, Family Day, the Celebrity Pro-Am, a Celebrity Mini-Golf Tournament and a Powerstation Events Concert Series after play. Since its inception in 1952, Connecticut's PGA Tour event has donated more than \$33 million to charities in the surrounding community. Monday–Sunday, all day. \$28–\$95, kids 15 and under free with a ticketed adult, senior (60+) discount available. *Tournament Players Club at River Highlands, 1 Golf Club Road, Cromwell; 860-502-6800; www.travelerschampionship.com.*

August 19–27. "Connecticut Open." The Connecticut Open is a WTA event that leverages the excitement of world-class women's tennis to benefit the community and maximize support for women's, youth and other causes in Connecticut. It will feature competitions that include WTA qualifying, singles and doubles. The Connecticut Open will also welcome four American tennis greats, Andre Agassi, John McEnroe, James Blake and Mardy Fish for two evenings of tennis. Kid's Day (Sunday) is a fun-filled day of music, court games, giveaways, autograph sessions and appearance by WTA Tour pros. Tickets start at just \$13 for children 14 and under. The first 1,000 kids receive a cool goody bag. See website for gate opening and match starting times. Daily tickets \$7–\$65. *Connecticut Tennis Center at Yale, 45 Yale Avenue, New Haven; 855-464-8366; www.ctopen.org.*

August 20. "Riverfront Dragon Boat & Asian Festival." The Riverfront Dragon Boat and Asian Festival celebrates its 16th year with a free family-friendly event offering a unique celebration of Asian culture highlighted by the exciting sport of dragon boat racing, and is considered one of the Top 10 Dragon Boat Festivals in the United States. Festival highlights include authentic Asian music and dance performances, food and merchandise vendors, an Asian beer garden, martial arts expo, arts and crafts for the kids, and more. Saturday, 8am–4pm. Free. *Mortensen Riverfront Plaza, 300 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford; 860-713-3131; riverfront.org/dragonboat.* **H**

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