

Hoffman DECADES

WINTER 2015

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John Gallagher
"Leave it
better
than you
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Please see page 5 for details



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On the cover: University of Hartford Men's Basketball coach John Gallagher. Photo by Tony Bacewicz



Welcome

TO OUR SPECIAL WINTER 2015 ISSUE OF *DECADES*!



At the Hoffman Auto Group we have never been content to stand on our laurels or simply conduct business as usual. We're always looking for ways to increase our relevance and improve your customer experience. Thus, it is with a great sense of pride we announce the addition of the marquee brand BMW to the already extensive Hoffman portfolio.

It's our pleasure to introduce BMW of Watertown, primarily servicing the Litchfield, Greater Waterbury and northern New Haven areas, but offered of course to our loyal customer base throughout Connecticut. The entire Hoffman family, and our "family" of employees, is excited to bring our award-winning sales and service to our new Watertown location. Our leadership, passion, dedication and daily motto "Driven by trust" will now extend to our new BMW brand. We look forward to offering an extensive selection of new and pre-owned inventory and impeccable service at unbeatable prices, our philosophy since 1921.

We have so much more to tell you in this rousing new edition of our lifestyle magazine, *Decades*. Our cover story, by new contributor and photographer Tony Bacewicz, is about fiery University of Hartford Men's Basketball coach John Gallagher (but Bacewicz finds time to check in with University of Hartford Women's Basketball coach Jennifer Rizzotti as well). Arts writer Christopher Arnott delves into the 40-year history of Westfarms Mall. Photographer and food writer Nick Caito tells us where the best restaurant breakfasts in our readership area can be found. Tireless contributor Lynn Fredricksen does double duty, with a feature looking at how Connecticut helps its war veterans and a lifestyle piece on amazing innovations in home technology. Our editor, Ellis Parker, reviews the much-ballyhooed, all-new 2016 Lexus RX. Finally, Robert Bailin contributes our Details column and our Happenings calendar.

Remember that Hoffman has a long tradition of auto industry history and success achieved by placing its customers first. If you're not already a customer, we look forward to introducing our family to yours.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL MUSTO

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Hoffman DECADES

VOLUME X, Number 2

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Hoffman Auto Group Helps Acquire New Horse Trailer for Vietnam Veteran

Hoffman Auto Group proudly joined together with the local community to honor Vietnam Veteran, Richard (Rick) Kowalker, with the presentation of a new horse trailer after his became damaged beyond repair. Mr. Kowalker's story is one of service, trials, triumph and honor. He has honored over 700 fellow veterans at their funerals with a "riderless horse" which was an honor bestowed upon President John F. Kennedy. In a grand act of compassion and honor, the local community joined together by raising funds which were matched by Hoffman Auto Group in order to purchase and decorate a new \$8,000 trailer so he would have safe and reliable transportation to continue his mission to provide the riderless horse honor for at least 1000 veterans. Read the full story at DrivenCT.com.

Value-Added Videos for Our Customers

Hoffman Auto Group produces informational YouTube videos, highlighting new vehicles, key features, helpful hints and much more. The world is trending toward video and we are determined to stay ahead of the curve by providing our current and future customers an easy way to learn more about their vehicles. From tips on navigation systems to a full demonstration of a new model, we have something for everyone. We also encourage viewers to comment on the videos and suggest other topics for us to work on. Take a look today and let us know your thoughts. Visit <http://bit.ly/HoffmanAutoGroupYouTube>.



Hoffman Auto Group Donates Ford Truck to Habitat for Humanity

The Hoffman Auto Group donated a 2015 Ford F-150 to support the mission of Habitat for Humanity. We are pleased to support an organization that empowers low-income families to change their lives and the lives of future generations through homeownership opportunities. Home recipients contribute 150 hours of "sweat equity" in their future residence. Over 200 homes have been built in the Greater Hartford area with many more planned in the future. Get involved with a build and help support the local community. Learn more at HartfordHabitat.org.



Matthew Hoffman Named One of Automotive News' 40 Under 40 Retail

Automotive News announced its national "40 Under 40 Retail": men and women recognized in the automotive industry across the nation as "up-and-comers" who have demonstrated their ambition, expertise and growth plans for this generation and beyond. Hoffman Auto Group is proud to announce Matthew S. Hoffman, Vice President/Dealer Principal, has received this prestigious honor. Leading the charge, Matthew oversees four of the 12 Hoffman brands with a commitment to exceptional customer service and a vision toward the 10th generation of the Hoffman family. Read the press release and see video footage from *Automotive News* here, <http://bit.ly/MHoffman-Autonews>.



Cub Scouts Get Prepared in the Event of a Flat Tire

Fourth grade boys from the Roaring Brook School Cub Scouts Pack 274, known as the NOVA Patrol, are prepared to help in a roadside emergency. Hoffman Honda Service Manager Dwight Dery and Shop Foreman & Dispatcher Craig Pomeroy instructed the scouts in the exercise of changing a tire on a new Honda Fit. They were shown where the spare tire and jack were located in the trunk of the car and received instruction on the important steps to ensure safety. "It is a pleasure to open our doors at Hoffman Honda to the Scouts and assist in building their knowledge about vehicle maintenance and safety," states Dery. "Our motto is 'Be Prepared' and we appreciate the guidance and instruction provided by Dwight and Craig at Hoffman Honda who graciously hosted our Pack," stated Karen Morris, Cubmaster, RBS Cub Scouts Pack 274. Hoffman Honda congratulates the boys of Cub Scouts Pack 274 for attaining their "Handyman" pins as a result of their participation at our service department. See the full story at DrivenCT.com.



Hoffman Announces Opening of New BMW Dealership

For nearly 100 years the Hoffman family has provided high-quality choices to the families of Connecticut for vehicle sales, parts, service and auto body. We are proud to announce the addition of our newest franchised dealership—*BMW of Watertown*. Designed for unforgettable performance, BMW's sleek style and thrilling power make it a legend in the automotive industry. We know the BMW brand will be a wonderful addition to our family and to yours. Visit us today at BMW of Watertown located at 699 Straits Turnpike in Watertown or at bmwofwatertown.com.

Another Successful Audi quattro Cup for Hoffman Audi

Held at the picturesque Hartford Golf Club, nearly 100 golfers enjoyed the full day of sun while competing for the title. Winners Dave Maloney and Frank McDonald represented Hoffman Audi at the Audi quattro Cup National Finals on August 27–30 at Kiawah Island off the coast of South Carolina.



Taking Our Support to New Heights with Komen Connecticut

October was National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and in 2015 Hoffman Auto Group donated a portion of all sales to Komen Connecticut in support of *Rappel for the Cure*. Between 2005 and 2009, Connecticut had the highest incidence of breast cancer in the U.S., and our commitment is to support the community in ways that significantly impact lives. On October 16, breast cancer survivor and manager of corporate reputation and community outreach for Hoffman, Susan Lane, rappelled over State House Square with other thrill-seekers to raise money and awareness for services and research. Komen funds \$1 million annually for breast cancer education, screening and treatment services, much of which focuses on low-income, underserved women, to help reduce late-stage diagnosis and mortality. Learn more at komenct.org.

Hoffman Celebrates Employee Longevity

Every year the Hoffman family personally recognizes employees in each dealership for their years of service with the company, with special gifts being given for anniversaries in five-year increments. 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 and one who has been with Hoffman for 30 years. In addition to showing appreciation for their dedication, employees who are new to the company within the last year are welcomed and officially recognized. Employees who have been with the company for 40 years are awarded a new vehicle of their choice. To date, five employees have received vehicles and one current employee nears 50 years of service. We value the growth and development of every employee at each stage of his or her career, with longevity bringing a high level of expertise and skill to pass on to our customers.



Hoffman Audi Employees Encourage and Support Special Olympics Athletes

On Sunday, May 17 at the picturesque Loomis Chaffee School in Windsor, 758 Special Olympics athletes participated in track & field as well as aquatics events in the 2015 Northern Time Trials. Athletes, along with over 100 Unified partners from the participating schools, competed in order to place in the upcoming games. Over 500 dedicated volunteers support the athletes, and assist with event preparations, athlete staging, timing and much more to ensure the event runs smoothly for all in attendance. "We have proudly supported the Special Olympics for many years," remarked Jeffrey S.

Hoffman, Co-chairman, Hoffman Auto Group, "and believe it is important to give back to our community in ways that impact the quality of life for those around us." Nearly 60 Hoffman Audi employees and their families enjoyed the opportunity to return, once again, to cheer and encourage the hundreds of athletes. The oath of the Special Olympics athlete is "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt." Join us next year! Learn more at DrivenCT.com.

DETAILS

By Robert Bailin

Relaxor® In-Seat Massage & Heater

The Relaxor RC64H In-Seat massager is a luxurious, comfortable, quiet and professionally installed addition to any or all seats in your vehicle. It features eight individual massage motors (4 in seat cushion, 4 in seat back), lumbar heat in high (60°C) or low (40°C) temperature, auto-shutoff mode, programmable vibration intensity and speed, and ergonomic design for long-distance driving to relieve stress and increase alertness. Includes a user-friendly hand control with LED indicators that controls 4 massage zones with Select, Wave, Pulse and Zigzag functions. Starting at \$249. www.relaxor.com.



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\$33.18 at Amazon. (Aluminum pans, 3 for \$3.30.)
www.roadproonthego.com.



Air Spencer CS-X3 Car Air Freshener

Decidedly the most non-technical gadget we've featured in this column, the CS-X3 (Cassette Spencer Project No. X3 – Mirage Fragrance of High Quality), direct from Japan, is made from high-quality plastic with a smooth, sleek, black and blue finish, topped with a brushed metal CS-X3 emblem. The inner scent cartridge is a refillable cassette featuring a sliding louver to adjust the strength of the unique "Squash" candy-like scent that is best described as "awesome." \$11.99. www.squashair.com.



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"Leave It Better Than You Found It"

—University of Hartford Men's Basketball Coach John Gallagher

By Tony Bacewicz

Photos by Tony Bacewicz

"How you do one thing is how you do everything." That's one of John Gallagher's guiding concepts for coaching basketball as well as playing the game of life. His University of Hartford Hawks Men's Basketball team enters the 2015-16 season just 15 wins away from setting an all-time school record for wins in a four-year period. But Gallagher says he refuses to motivate his players by setting that, or any number, as a goal, and takes a big picture approach to coaching.

Hartford Hawks Men's Basketball has done well under Gallagher since he came aboard as head coach in 2011. He took the team to its first ever NCAA Division I post-season appearance in 2012-13, and then backed it up with a winning season in 2013-14. Although last season was an off-year on the court, Gallagher is proud that his team embraces his holistic approach to coaching and his players continue to succeed in the classroom with a team average GPA of 3.0. "The number isn't a concern for me but striving for excellence is. How you do one thing is how you do everything," says Gallagher who adds, "I'm really concerned about the student-athletes' approach to life. . . This is a disciplined experience combined with excitement and energy. Great things can happen."

Experiencing the excitement and energy of basketball began for Gallagher at age five when his father took him to an NCAA game at UPenn's Palestra, still known today as the Cathedral of College Basketball. Without looking at notes, he can tell you that the gym seats 8,722 fans, and he can vividly remember the days when streamers tossed from the stands filled the air after each team made its initial basket.

Gallagher also remembers the joy of playing Catholic Youth Organization basketball in his hometown of Broomall, Pennsylvania on Saturday mornings and coming home to watch the Big East game of the week on afternoon television. The experience of playing for a great coach came a few years later. Gallagher recalls, "I played [at] Cardinal O'Hara High School for legendary coach Bud Gardler, the same high school coach that Geno Auriemma had. Bud was a great source of inspiration on how the game is supposed to be played."

Gardler imparted two key concepts of the game that are still fresh in Gallagher's mind today. "First, know your strengths and hide your weaknesses, and number two. . . taking care of the ball and getting great shots is the key to a good offense."

University of Pennsylvania head coach Steve Donahue is also cited by Gallagher as a mentor. "I like the way Steve teaches offense. You're focused on grit and playing the right way. He is 10 years older than me. He's one of my mentors and has been a great influence on how we conduct business. It's not really about anybody else—it's just about being better than ourselves every day. Just continue to get better."

Perhaps the most influential coach in Gallagher's professional career to date has been Fran O'Hanlon, former head coach at Lafayette College, where Gallagher worked as an assistant coach before serving University of Hartford in the same capacity from 2006-08. "Everything that is great or special in life has great structure. Whether offense or defense, there is a way you go about things. He's a scientist and basketball is a science for him. He views the game way differently than anybody else. There are so many neat things I learned from him and one of them is 'The smaller the detail, the greater the value.' He brought so much detail to teaching that we use in our program today."

One of those key details is footwork. "From an offensive standpoint, footwork is so important. . . to how you catch and when you're shooting," according to Gallagher.

Another key detail, now part of every practice, is the single-line ring around the coach that players must fall into at the start of each session.

"We line up in a circle before practice. Hands behind the back. . . It takes me 45 seconds to see who's having a bad day, and before it took me 45 minutes. . . Ninety percent of their day is written all over their

LEAVE IT BETTER THAN YOU FOUL



Coach John Gallagher in the lounge area of the new men's locker room in front of the "History Wall"

faces and shoulders in their body language. That's something that Fran O'Hanlon really brought to the table."

Having every student-athlete present in body and mind from the start of practice is essential, says Gallagher, and a brief intervention often gets an individual player back on track. "I may bring him to the side and have a general conversation with him, and then just sort of let him talk and figure out if there is a two-minute remedy for it. And then try to get him to understand that we've got to build a little mental toughness here because not everybody's having a great day every day.

You've got to finish the job. One of the big things in coaching is embracing the bad days so we can turn them into good."

Another core guiding concept that Gallagher picked up from coach O'Hanlon is spelled out and prominently displayed on the locker room wall. It carries meaning well beyond respect

for the condition of the room, says Gallagher. "One of Fran O'Hanlon's great lines is, 'Leave it better than you found it.' That's something we focus on every day. What does it refer to? The game. Life. Yourself. Academics. Spirituality. Everything you encounter in life, you want to leave it better than you found it. We don't talk about spirituality. That's something you have to build in yourself. But I think everybody's actions speak louder than words and how you conduct business as a leader affects how people view your team and view you."

Walking in to the newly renovated men's locker room feels like stepping into the Hartford Hawk's Basketball Hall of Fame. Your eyes are immediately drawn to the big-as-life, full-color action photos that make up the floor-to-ceiling mural that Gallagher calls the "Excitement Wall." Former Hawks star Vin Baker can be seen driving toward the action, while Jaret von Rosenberg takes a shot at the basket. The largest image, which is of the post-game celebration after the big quarterfinals win against Binghamton in 2014, projects the feeling of excitement throughout the room. "This is also the recruiting wall. You should

feel the energy in that picture," says Gallagher.

Prominently posted atop the opposite wall, so it can be seen by every player heading back to the dorm, is that O'Hanlon quote, "Leave it better than you found it." Below it is what Gallagher calls the "History Wall," which is composed of enlarged historic photos in classic black and white. Here, a photo of the Hawks' first NCAA Division I team is enshrined alongside pictures of top scorers Baker, Joe Zeglinski and Peter Egan, as well as the first squad that Gallagher recruited. "You have great players, the history and tradition of our program, and we want our players to feel that every day," says Gallagher.

Creating the new locker space, complete with four rocker chairs for gaming or lounging and a kitchen for quick meal preparation, was key to showing support for the student-athletes committed to the program. According to Gallagher, "The locker room has helped with recruiting, and it's helped with the program. Guys want to be in the gym. They stay in the locker room, they lounge around, and then go out after practice and shoot. If you have a place that guys don't want to hang around, they



Coach John Gallagher shows graduate manager Ben Farmer a strategy on the marker board in the new men's locker room

go back to their room and fall asleep. This gives them an opportunity to relax. It builds great camaraderie and chemistry."

Behind the scenes is an ongoing team effort that many fans may never be aware of, and Gallagher is quick to acknowledge that he does not carry the ball alone. "I can make this a very good program. I can't make it a great program. That's up to the administration and the people behind me. The reason I feel so excited about being here at the University of Hartford is the people behind me. Kelvin Sampson at the University of Houston has a saying, "Coaches make good programs, administrators make great programs." After being a head coach, I know exactly what he means. How the student-athlete experience is treated affects everything."

Jumping in to carry the ball on the locker room renovation project was Gallagher's newly recruited boss, Anton Goff. During their initial conversation just after Goff was named Director of Athletics in May of 2014, Goff recalls asking, "What do you need to take the program to the next level?" Gallagher responded, "We need a first-class locker room that our kids can call home and... will impress the kids we want to recruit." Goff began the fundraising

effort just days after he signed on, and ran the weekly meetings with Gallagher and student-athletes where every detail was attended to. The administrative team, led by Goff, turned coach Gallagher's vision into a reality over the few short months of summer break, just in time for the season schedule to begin.

Goff speaks highly of Gallagher and his relationship with him. "We have a great synergy," says Goff, who describes Gallagher as "intelligent, energetic, passionate and caring."

Goff adds, "He makes it about the student-athlete... That's huge for me as an athletic director and as a supervisor, that my coaches are caring more about the student-athletes than about themselves."

Gallagher says his job often seems "like flying a plane at 30,000 feet." He describes his assistant coaches as "my conduit between 30,000 feet and ground level." Assuming an assistant coach position in June 2015, von Rosenberg is the newest member of the coaching team. He first connected with Gallagher while playing as a student-athlete for the Hawks from 2006-09. He stayed in touch over the years while working as an assistant coach for college teams in his native Texas.

Today, he says that working for coach Gallagher at his own alma mater is a dream come true. "He trusts in his players and really cares about the relationships he builds," says von Rosenberg, adding, "They get what they need to be successful for the next 40 years of their lives."

Assistant coach Tom Devitt first met Gallagher at a basketball summer camp sponsored by Boston College in 1994. "I was struck by his energy and enthusiasm. Even back then it was very infectious." Devitt came on board in the summer of 2013, and now knows Gallagher well both on and off the court. "He is one of the warmest human beings to walk on the planet. He is very devoted to his faith and his family. If you have a coach that embodies those qualities, so much more than basketball is going to be passed on in the program."

Devitt recalls the early discussions on the new locker room design where Gallagher took a special interest in the display of inspirational phrases. According to Devitt, Gallagher's philosophy of coaching, and living life, is summed up by the coach's favorite line, "Leave it better than you found it." **H**

Rizzotti Has University of Hartford's Women's Basketball Headed in the Right Direction

Jennifer Rizzotti continues to refine her coaching game plan every year, and 2015-16 is no different. As head coach of the University of Hartford Hawks Women's Basketball team, she has guided the team to five conference tournament championships in the past 12 years and six NCAA tournament appearances. She recalls that coaching the women's team was a great fit for her from the start. "I've always been a leader on the court from the point guard position, so it was a natural transition coming into coaching and taking the helm at a young age."

Rizzotti had her work cut out for her in the first years of coaching and credits mentors like Athletic Director Pat Meiser for helping guide her vision of a successful program to fruition. "I had to be really hands on and really patient with turning a program that had never really had a ton of on the court success or academic success."

It has been tough going on the court in recent years, but Rizzotti is proud to point out that the program she crafted for her student-athletes sets them up for success that will carry them well beyond graduation day. "It's not the easiest of times, but we're three for three with our senior class last year. One is playing overseas, one got a graduate assistant position in coaching and one is in communications in the Northeast Conference. As a coach, you feel like you're succeeding when you put them in a position to have something to turn to right out of college. That's not as easy as it sounds these days."

Looking forward, Rizzotti welcomes the continual professional growth required to inspire her student-athletes to succeed on and off the court. "I certainly feel like it's a new beginning for me. We have a new breed of



Hawks Women's Basketball head coach Jennifer Rizzotti in her office.

players. It's a different culture with kids growing up nowadays, and I've really had to reflect on how I'm relating to them and how we've had to change our recruiting process to fit their lifestyle. We're really rebooting our culture and trying to find a way to get back up to the top."

Connecticut Supports its Veterans

By Lynn Fredricksen

People throughout the region have found unique ways to champion the cause of those who selflessly served in our armed forces—regardless of their own veteran status.

From parades, to events, to founding advocacy groups, the enthusiasm for our nation's veterans is varied and covers just about every need a veteran could possibly have.

"It's important for me and our radio stations to promote taking care of our veterans when they come home," says Renee DiNino, Director of Community Affairs for iHeartMedia in Connecticut, one of the sponsors of the Vets Rock event that took place on Veteran's Day at Mohegan Sun Resort & Casino. "We can never do enough to help our veterans. We need to have the same enthusiasm when they come home as we do when we're sending them off."

Like DiNino, Susan Lane, Manager of Corporate Reputation and Community Outreach for Hoffman Auto Group, looks forward to supporting events that help veterans. Hoffman Auto Group donated \$4,000 to help Richard Kowalker, a Vietnam veteran who made the news this summer after his horse trailer was ruined while he was on his way to a funeral. Undaunted, the dedicated Kowalker, who regularly attends funerals for veterans with his riderless horse, started walking from Durham to Willimantic, a distance of some 45 miles.

Lane is also pleased that the Connecticut State Veterans Memorial is under construction at Hartford's Minuteman Park. "It's almost done," Lane says. "Currently, there is no memorial in our state that recognizes all veterans."

She is also very impressed with a group called Til Duty Is Done (tdid.org). Founded by U.S. Army veteran Justin Nash, the organization is an advocacy group that works on behalf of veterans, whatever their needs may be.

After suffering some structural ligament and nerve damage, which he explains is something that happens when a person falls down hills and gets bounced around in vehicles, Nash, who served as an infantry officer and led an infantry platoon in Afghanistan, returned home in 2004. He married for the first time about a month later. Soon after, he had surgery and did his best to recover from his injuries.

"I was unable to recover the way I hoped," Nash recalls. Thus, about a year later he was medically discharged and found himself in the uncomfortable position of having to watch his men deploy without him.

"That was harder than leaving with them," says Nash, who also suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

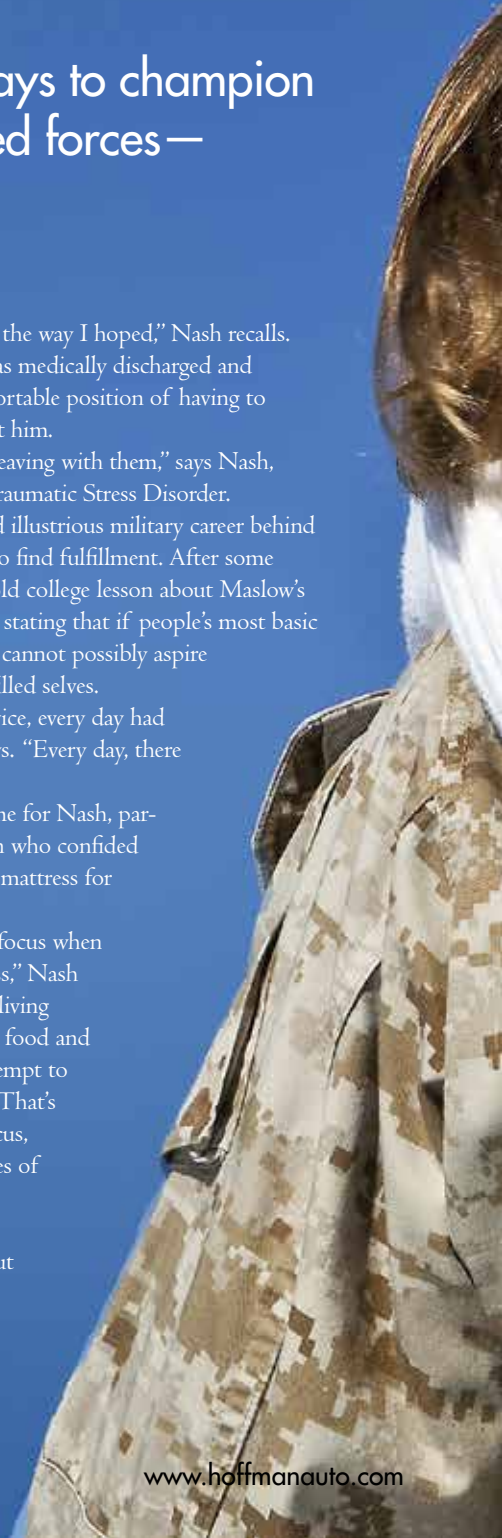
With his purposeful and illustrious military career behind him, Nash found it difficult to find fulfillment. After some time, he took comfort in an old college lesson about Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, a theory stating that if people's most basic needs are not being met, they cannot possibly aspire to be their best and most fulfilled selves.

"When I was in the service, every day had an express purpose," Nash says. "Every day, there were life or death decisions."

Maslow's theory hit home for Nash, particularly after he met a veteran who confided in him that he slept on an air mattress for want of a decent bed.

"How can this guy even focus when he's sleeping on an air mattress," Nash asks. "If I don't have a stable living environment and know I have food and a place to live, I can't even attempt to achieve the next highest level. That's where I thought we would focus, and bring that back to the lives of our veterans."

That's when he started working with a group of about a dozen veterans to establish his organization. A key part





Military man shares tender moment with his daughter.

of it is that any veterans who work with Til Duty Is Done will be required to create a plan and identify some core life goals they need to achieve. They will be held accountable for that plan, Nash explains.

"I felt like I was back in my element again," Nash says. "I was again surrounded by like-minded individuals. That sparked Til Duty Is Done. I thought I needed to do something that gives me meaning again."

In the true spirit of Maslow, Til Duty Is Done aims to help veterans move to a higher level of self-actualization by ensuring their basic needs are met.

"I had lost all those opportunities to do that and it became very hard. I spiraled out of control," Nash says. "This just makes sense." Based in Cheshire, Til Duty Is Done aims to help move veterans up the levels of self-actualization, Nash explains. He adds that he got the idea for the name because it was his class motto.

"Each class has to come up with a motto that rhymes with the year," Nash says. "It has to have some meaning, so we came up with 'Til Duty Is Done Class of 2001.'"

While he describes his experiences in Afghanistan as "the best of times and the worst of times," Nash took great pride in spending countless days and hours preparing for a mission, likening it to training the way an Olympic athlete trains for competition.

"Then, to see my men in action and the way they responded to the enemy was absolutely breathtaking," Nash says. "The worst is being in a foreign land, facing somebody who is attempting to kill you, that can become quite challenging and stressful to say the least."

As far as DiNino is concerned, she is pleased to help promote events and programs that support veterans. But still, she would like to see more.

"For those suffering from PTSD, suicide is a big problem," DiNino says. "We lose 22 veterans each day to PTSD."

DiNino suggests that screenings should be part of veterans events, as they would help promote awareness so veterans would know they could get help.

"Our veterans need us," DiNino says. "They just need us at all points of their service to our country."

U.S. soldier in wheelchair salutes American flag.

Currently, Til Duty Is Done has numerous volunteers who help with events. The organization seeks more volunteers, preferably those who have also served.

"Our mission has changed," says Nash. "We first went out and focused on obtaining a property and bringing veterans to it."

But because that was so time consuming, Nash shifted the organization's focus to developing more community-based programs utilizing case managers who would function as squad leaders and work with a small team of veterans to ensure they're on the path to achieving their goals. "That might mean creating a budget, establishing a checking account and beginning to create some credit," Nash explains. From there, that person could start a job search, pursue an education and do whatever else he or she needs to do to reach a better place in life.

Nash's program has caught the attention of many, but in particular retired Brigadier General Joseph T. Perkins, who served in the U.S. Marine Corps and the Connecticut Army National Guard.

Perkins, who returned home from Vietnam in 1966, quickly availed himself of the educational opportunities available to all veterans.

"Everybody always says you've got to go to college," Perkins says. "I say, why not make the blue collar trades that this country needs badly? The electrician, the plumber, it's the blue collar guys who built this country. That's what a lot of Justin's program is all about. He's looking at the guys who want that blue collar training, and I applaud his efforts."

Nash maintains that while Til Duty Is Done aims to provide a benefit, he has no intention of walking away after he does so. His group has already helped a veteran and is now seeking additional case managers. He anticipates one day having case managers on staff.

"We're very excited to have this community-based program," he says. "In not much time we will be soliciting to add members to our Board of Directors."

Nash's group has also partnered with Hiring Our Heroes, a veterans advocacy group aimed at helping veterans find gainful employment, as well as Suiting Warriors, a veterans advocacy group geared to

providing veterans with professional attire to help them feel confident as they look for work.

Nash, who hails from a long military line, has found an unexpected pleasure in his service—a closer kinship to his grandfathers. “Both of my grandfathers are WWII vets,” Nash says. “One of my grandfathers had been sitting in silence since he returned. As I was at West Point, he started to talk a little more. Then with my going to combat, he really talked about his time in Iwo Jima and Okinawa.”

Of course, something many veterans need is employment. Lane says Hoffman Auto Group participated in a veterans career fair at Rentschler Field in East Hartford on November 11. “We hire veterans,” Lane says. “We want to let veterans know that Hoffman wants to provide gainful employment to those who have faithfully served our country.” *H*



Veterans Speak:

For Army veteran Curtis Thalken of North Haven, being stationed in Germany from 1996 to 2000 was an eye-opening experience.

“Stress was to be expected,” says Thalken, who retired in 2008 as a full colonel. “Actually, I think it was probably safer than some of the later deployments. The Taliban didn’t expect us to come in as fast as we did. We did some scary things, but everybody came back with all their fingers and toes so that made it a little easier.”

Retired Brigadier General Joseph T. Perkins served as a Marshal for the Veterans Day Parade in Hartford. Held on November 8, the parade has earned its stripes as the largest salute to veterans in New England and one of the largest nationwide. It attracted more than 3,000 veteran marchers, who wended their way through more than three miles of downtown Hartford streets.

“I am one of the lucky ones,” says Perkins, who served in the U.S. Marine Corps and the Connecticut Army National Guard. He was on active duty in Vietnam from 1965 to 1966. “I came home and met my son who wasn’t quite six months old.”

Perkins maintains he didn’t pay much attention to people who said they agreed or didn’t agree with the war.

“I was treated like a guy who did service to his country,”

Perkins says. He adds that he sympathizes with those who were not as fortunate. “It’s at the forefront for anybody who has lost a leg or arm,” Perkins says. “It’s a serious thing and it’s going to affect them for the rest of their lives.”

A former Deputy Commissioner and Acting Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs, Perkins has seen it all.

“When you deal with some of the things they’re dealing with, it’s tough,” Perkins says. “It’s not easy to understand, but you have to put yourself in their position and you can’t really do that unless you’ve been there and done that.”

Perkins is grateful that veterans have the opportunity to get an education due to their service, something he was pleased to pursue. “I did take advantage of the education,” Perkins says. “I came home and went to college. I had a great career as a state trooper.”

Perkins admits that even though 50 years have passed since he was in Vietnam, things like Agent Orange still run through his mind every once in a while.

“I came out without any injuries or aftereffects, but it’s on my mind,” Perkins says. “Thank God I have not had any symptoms to this day and I have not had to use or ask the VA for any assistance.”

Westfarms Mall: The Next

By Christopher Arnott



Here: Westfarms Mall 2015,
Right: Westfarms Mall 1970s

A shopping mall doesn't just present us with stuff to buy. It shows us how we shop. It's a snapshot of what we need and how we need it. Teenagers need new clothes, and next week they'll need new ones all over again. Couples need engagement rings, and before long they'll need furniture. Computers need to be upgraded. So does skin care. You need shoes—for work, for home, for sports, to be stylish, and of course for walking around a mall.

Westfarms currently has eight different places where you can buy "Luggage and Handbags." It lists two dozen stores under the category "Men's Fashions" and twice that many under "Women's Fashions."

Over the remarkable span of 40 years, shops such as Tape World, Musicland and Sight-Sounds have yielded to entertainment devices that don't require a turntable, cassette deck or even a DVD player. Westfarms boasts an Apple store, a Microsoft store, a Sprint store, a T-Mobile store, a Verizon store, and a GameStop, plus the gadget-friendly Brookstone, putting the lie to the idea that those who spend a lot of time online shop exclusively online.

Dining choices range from pretzels and burgers to California-style pizza, a Tuscan Grille and a slew of places to get a gourmet cup of coffee or tea.

When Westfarms Mall opened on October 14, 1974, there were 15 stores, with 80 more still under construction.

40 Years



If you opened a mall—and people are still opening malls nowadays—you'd have every store ready to go at the same time, for a maximum splash. And you wouldn't close on Sundays.

But Kevin Keenan—who had a cleaning job at Westfarms when it first opened and is now the General Manager—recalls that “malls were still fairly new. It was somewhat of a novelty. It was fine to open with a dozen or so. Now, you'd want to open with 100.”

There were plenty of reasons to be excited about that first portion of Westfarms opening up. Westfarms, you see, was a Taubman Company mall. In the mid-'70s, the Michigan-based company had been around for

nearly a quarter of a century and was recognized as a major innovator in “retail environments.” Taubman's first mall had been North Flint Plaza, which opened in Flint, Michigan in 1953. The company's website boasts that “in the decades since our founding, the name Taubman has become synonymous with retail productivity and planning excellence.” Founder Adolph Alfred Taubman, who died this past April at the age of 91, was not just a real estate developer but a mall theorist who coined



*"When you walk through,
it doesn't feel like a
41-year-old shopping center."*

the phrase "threshold resistance" to describe the psychology of why a consumer might not enter a store.

At the same time that Taubman was reading Westfarms in 1974, it was also working to create another of its greatest hits, New Jersey's The Mall at Short Hills.

But the crowds that once flocked to malls for the latest bestselling books and records are now likely to go to the Apple store or a cellphone provider shop to get a device on which to download their music or reading materials.

When Westfarms opened on the West Hartford/Farmington line (hence the mall's memorable name) in October, 1974, the anchor stores were J.C. Penney, G. Fox & Co. and Sage Allen & Co. J.C. Penney is still there. G. Fox became Filene's, then Macy's. Lord & Taylor arrived amid major fanfare in the 1980s. It was followed with equal fervor by Nordstrom in 1997, part of a full-scale mall renovation.

Westfarms felt upscale from the start, but got more so. When Nordstrom came in, so did Tiffany & Co. and Louis Vuitton.

There was another Westfarms transformation in 2008, when the mall's once-

iconic, center-court fountain was replaced by a Starbucks. One of Westfarms' distinctions, what sets it apart from so many other malls, is its conscious choice not to have a Food Court but instead position a variety of restaurants and food vendors evenly throughout the mall. "A lot of malls have food courts," Kevin Keenan says, "but the idea at Westfarms was to spread the food out, so that the customers could explore parts of the mall they might not otherwise go to. It was very intentional on our part and has been successful for us."

There's a legion of mall-lovers online who look back nostalgically at their local malls on such blog sites as Pleasant Family Shopping, Dead Malls and the Mall Hall of Fame. One such blog, The Caldor Rainbow (thecaldorrainbow.blogspot.com), is written by thirtysomething consumer Nicholas DiMaio, who grew up in Farmington. In several separate posts, DiMaio waxes eloquent about Westfarms, at one point contrasting the mall as seen in a postcard shortly after it opened with how it looked when he was writing in 2007: "A postcard of a mall you say? Well, here's a testament to lost times and how much shopping malls and centers were the pride of American culture when my generation's parents

were my tender age. [...] Kids today! They just don't appreciate these climate-controlled centers of past!"

DiMaio deconstructs the postcard image store by store, noting, for example, how "Worth's, with a groovin' brown facade and flower-shaped bulb-lighting must've catered to the hip crowds and the nearby The Gift Showcase; both with the swanky script writing have since become many things in its subdivided form; once a maternity outfit and Polo Company Store but now all home to a generational revival, Abercrombie & Fitch."

Memories of Westfarms take many forms. Keenan, who's witnessed changes at the mall from its earliest days through its 40th anniversary and many phases of renovation, likes to place it in context of what the entire world was like back in the 1970s. "Gas was 55 cents a gallon, and we're just coming out of a gas crisis, so it had been even less. You could buy a new automobile for \$3,700. Rubik's Cubes were a big deal. Nixon had just resigned. The Rumble in the Jungle was happening." Indeed, that famed George Foreman-Muhammad Ali boxing match in Zaire occurred the same month that Westfarms opened.

Other noteworthy events from October, 1974: John Lennon released his *Walls & Bridges* album a few weeks before Paul McCartney & Wings unleashed its new single “Junior’s Farm.”

Those vinyls were surely on prominent display in all the mall record shops. The Watergate trial began October 3, and was what many people were watching on their mall-purchased TVs . . . when not tuning in to ballgames such as the one on October 2 where Hank Aaron hit his 733rd home run.

“I don’t think shopping malls changed as drastically as other things,” Keenan says, placing Westfarms in cultural context. “The changes are more subtle. We had more ‘mom and pop’ stores in the old days,” he says, meaning that there were more local family-owned small businesses. But that’s true just about everywhere.

“All the changes at Westfarms,” Keenan continues, “were based on consumer demand. The consumer insists on change.” The mall has embraced such change, not just with regular renovations but by gaining a reputation for “firsts.”

“We had the first Apple store in Connecticut. We still have the only Nordstrom’s. That’s just two examples. It’s how we maintain our stature. We bring new and unique retailers into the market.”

Some new faces at Westfarms (which don’t happen to be “firsts”) include Lululemon Athletica, North Face and the Footlocker spin-off House of Hoops.

Among the old guard at the malls—stores which numbered among the hallowed “first 15”—are Michaels Jewelers and J.C. Penney.

Keenan has not only enjoyed the changing faces of the mall himself, he’s seen firsthand how others have been transformed

by Westfarms. “It’s one of the fun parts of my job,” the General Manager says: “Staying current, keeping up relations with the merchants. I’m a property manager, but this is a retail property, and I enjoy talking to the merchants and the customers.”

Now, as much as it did in 1974, a mall offers comfort, convenience and community. “Successful shopping centers are successful because they’re creating an overall experience,” Keenan declares. “They ensure that you have a good time. There’s plenty of free parking. It’s never too hot or too cold. It’s properly landscaped and well-maintained.”



Westfarms Mall lounge area, 1970s

If that sounds like some utopian science fiction community from a Hollywood movie, that’s because Westfarms really does care about the future. The next 40 years are as important to the mall as the last 40 have been. And don’t think, despite all the doomsaying about everybody buying everything online now, that Westfarms doesn’t expect to be having celebrations in 2055.

“Today, technology is changing everything,” Keenan believes. “The way we live and the way we shop. We need to be aware of the customers’ ability to not only communicate with us but about us. Everybody

has a voice out there now. The millennials are hyperconnected. I walk through the mall every day, and 60 percent of the people have a device in their hand, and they’re doing something on it. There are invaluable opportunities now for retailers to communicate with their customers.

“You can walk by The Gap today and you will get a text message from The Gap telling you about the sales they have inside. Some stores have what they call a ‘virtual mirror,’ where you can try on new outfits using a photo on your phone.

“The challenge is to embrace that technology. The customer comes to the mall much better prepared. Retailers tell me that there is much less browsing these days, and more destination shopping.”

Still, there’s the warm familiarity of the Westfarms that Connecticut has known and loved for over 40 years. “It’s fundamentally similar to the way it looked when it opened,” Keenan says with pride. “We don’t put bells and whistles on the store itself. We want retailers to be the star. For 2016, we’ll have another list of

great retailers. We never rest on our laurels. We work hard to stay relevant.”

Westfarms has just completed two years of renovations, but they’re the kind of renovations that make sure that each store is the right size and in the right place, or that the center court seating is comfortable. “What we’re focused on,” Keenan declares, “is customer amenities. At the end of the day, it’s all about the merchants and their customers.

“When you walk through, it doesn’t feel like a 41-year-old shopping center.”

No, Westfarms feels like the place you’ll still want to shop 41 years from now. *H*

Westfarms Mall was part of an important Connecticut Supreme Court decision on freedom of speech rights on private property. After the National Organization for Women was granted an injunction to circulate petitions at the mall, other groups sought the same opportunity—including the Ku Klux Klan and an anti-Semitic group. The state Supreme Court ultimately sided with Westfarms’ argument that the mall was private property and could control who could assemble there.

The decision noted that, “This court has never viewed constitutional language as newly descended from the firmament like fresh fallen snow upon which jurists may trace out their individual notions of public policy uninhibited by the history which attended the adoption of the particular phraseology at issue and the intentions of its authors. The faith which democratic societies repose in the written document as a shield against the arbitrary exercise of governmental power would be illusory if those vested with the responsibility for construing and applying disputed provisions were free to stray from the purposes of the originators.”

Review and Comparison Test of the All-New 2016 Lexus RX

By Ellis Parker



The arrival of the all-new 2016 Lexus RX crossover has been hotly anticipated. After all, Lexus, the luxury division of Toyota, is the carmaker that invented the luxury crossover market and still outsells all 16 of its competitors by a combined two to one margin. But other manufacturers have upped their game during the life of the last model, making industry observers wonder how the much-ballyhooed 2016 Lexus RX would answer them. The answer is, with guns—or at least spindle grill and LED headlamps—blazing.

No 2016 Lexus RXs were available at any dealership as we were headed to press. To get my hands on one, I joined a throng of Lexus sales consultants from dealerships across the Northeast for a training and driving session in the huge parking lot across from Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts, one of 16 stops this progressive manufacturer would make across the country during its 2016 Lexus RX Launch Tour. On a chilly, blustery, overcast fall day, using a fleet of 60 of these never-before-glimpsed vehicles, we put the Lexus RX, including the F Sport version (now available standard and hybrid), through a series of accelerations, automatic stops, slalom courses and other real-life tests. We were provided demonstrations of many of its systems and comparison tests scrutinizing three of the Lexus RX's top competitors, including the Acura MDX, the BMW X5 and the Mercedes-Benz GLE, driving home for me what a great car and tremendous upgrade from the previous RX this model is and how much confidence Lexus has in it.

What's new about this fourth-generation model of Lexus' best-selling vehicle that singlehandedly created the luxury crossover segment? Just about everything. Let's start with the unapologetically bolder external styling. The prior model was certainly attractive, but tame by comparison to the racier 2016. In the new Lexus, the spindle grill has been accentuated and standard LED headlights (or available premium triple-beam headlamps) sharpened to give the appearance of a sentient beast about to spring. Factor in a floating roof design that dips in the rear, flared rear fenders and a flowing beltline, and the RX's fluid lines



can give the illusion it's in motion even when it's stationary.

The RX's sportier looks and sleeker styling don't come at the expense of the interior. It has been a while since I've stepped into a new vehicle and been as impressed with its combination of functionality and comfort. The RX is configured with two seats in the front and three in the rear, which feature a 40-20-40 split, a fold-down armrest with retractable cupholders, a central pass-through and are now power-folding. Ease of access, leg room, head room and visibility score well from every seat despite the more tapered exterior. Seats are comfortable yet supportive. With superior design and classy materials, the interior seems sleek and uncluttered. It's flush, not overflowing, with amenities that seem logically designed and in easy reach.

The cabin clearly reflects the RX's increased commitment to driver engagement, with a center stack canted toward the driver. The level sightline of most of the dash provides a stabilizing visual. Slight adjustments

to driver seat height and the angle of the driving column have resulted in a sportier seating posture. There's an improved, color,

heads-up display in the driver glass and an available 12.3-inch monitor with full-screen map atop the center stack.



The RX's powertrain is also peppier than it was in the previous model, with a new 3.5-liter DOHC 24-valve V6 that provides 295 horsepower and 267 pound-feet of torque. Several features have been added to improve power and/or efficiency, including direct injection, a variable intake system and an eight-speed automatic transmission. Normal, Eco and Sport modes are available on every version. It's rated for 20 MPG in the city, 28 on the highway.

Increased body rigidity, a large front stabilizer to minimize body roll, MacPherson strut front suspension and a double wishbone rear suspension all improve the RX's driving performance. Where past editions might have felt a bit insulating, the steering now feels ideally connected to the road. All of this comes without sacrificing the smooth, quiet ride for which Lexus has become famous.

In a review of this length, we can't begin to scratch the surface of all the appealing features that come standard or are available in the 2016 RX, like its touch-free rear door, voice command and the available retractable

panoramic moonroof, but suffice it to say that the vehicle comes with a nice array of amenities that can be enhanced even further. Demonstrating its commitment to safety, Lexus has packaged its top active-safety systems—Dynamic Radar Cruise Control, Pre-Collision System with pedestrian

detection, Lane Departure Alert, Lane Keeping Assist and Intelligent High Beam Headlamps—for the RX at a lower price than such systems are typically offered in other luxury models.

So, and this is where we prove the impartiality of our car reviews, you're



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wanting to know how the new Lexus RX compared with the three aforementioned worthy competitors? When one factored in everything—exterior styling, interior functionality, driver engagement, luxury feel, performance, safety and economy—it was at or near the top of every category, and when averaged out, the clear winner. Yes, the Acura MDX was slightly faster off the line, but it didn't corner terribly well (I hit my only orange cone driving the MDX through the slalom), the seats weren't as supportive, the styling seemed a bit retro, and what lacrosse mom or soccer dad could possibly need more get-up-and-go than the sporty RX provides? Yes, the BMW X5 offered a smidge more road feel than the RX, but perhaps too edgy for some and the tradeoff seemed to be a more austere interior feel. And yes, the Mercedes-Benz GLE may have been a tad more luxurious, but its interior didn't seem as well thought out and its road performance lagged in several areas.

Looking as if it might have skipped a generation, the bolder and more sophisticated



RX reflects Lexus' new commitment to luring younger, more performance-oriented buyers to the brand. With its statement-making external styling and greater dedication to driver engagement, the new RX is more revolution

than evolution. To the doubtless consternation of its competitors, the leading seller in the luxury crossover segment has taken a great leap forward—and all for a price increase of less than \$1,000. *H*

IT'S TIME FOR LUXURY TO BE MORE EXPRESSIVE.



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Best Breakfasts. Period

By Nick Caito

Photos by Ellis Parker

Morning meals in Connecticut may not have the pizzazz of a *Portlandia* brunch or the cultish following of a Jersey diner, but plenty of people here like to start off strong with the most important meal of the day. From the breakfast row on Manchester's Main Street to waterfront bacon and eggs down at the shoreline, the Nutmeg State has plenty of greasy spoons and upscale contenders vying for our hearts and stomachs. Here are 15 of our favorites.

■ Bella's Café

896 Whalley Ave., New Haven
203-387-7107

Open Tues.–Fri. 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.,
Sat. & Sun. 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The owner of Bella's Café came from a line of restaurateurs before opening her own eatery. With a flair for the Italian (like the Palermo Omelet of sausage, peppers, onions, Asiago cheese, and an arrabbiata sauce), a hint of Creole (the Shrimp & Grits served in a cast iron skillet has earned a following), and an ever-changing weekend brunch menu, popular Bella's Café has been serving breakfast in New Haven's Westville neighborhood for 15 years.

■ Blue Plate Kitchen

345 North Main St., West Hartford
860-906-1419

Open daily for breakfast at 7 a.m.

Blue Plate Kitchen quickly became an area favorite after its 2014 opening, to the point that calling ahead is recommended for weekend breakfast and brunch service. Daily specials like an Ooey Gooey Cinnamon Roll complement malted Belgian waffles, Challah French toast, and Cheddar grits at this restaurant devoted to "modern comfort food" with a focus on fresh, local and sustainable ingredients.

■ Chez Ben Diner

927 Center St., Manchester
860-649-4011

Open daily 6 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Sure, Chez Ben has stuffed French Toast and the usual gamut of breakfast items, but let's face it—you're here for the poutine. This Canadian-

American diner specializes in the gravy-and-curd-covered fries from our neighbors to the North. Their dozen preparations include Philly Poutine (steak, mushroom and onion), Chili Cheese Dog Poutine and the Breakfast Poutine, which swaps French fries for home fries and adds two scrambled eggs and a choice of breakfast meat.

■ Chip's Family Restaurant

321 Boston Post Rd., Orange 203-795-5065
1301 Silas Deane Hwy., Wethersfield
860-757-3500

57 Monroe Tpke., Trumbull
203-590-3331

525 Tunxis Hill Cut Off, Fairfield
203-332-3370

775 Main St. S., Southbury 203-586-1258
All locations open daily 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

The first Chip's Family Restaurant opened in the town of Orange in 1966, but in the last decade four more locations have opened around Connecticut, including the most recent in Southbury. At Chip's, one thing is for sure: pancakes are king. In addition to its menu selections (variations like bacon pancakes, coconut crunch, and s'mores), Chip's has a "build your own" option with more than two dozen options. That's a lot of pancakes!

■ Cosmic Omelet

485 Hartford Rd., Manchester
860-645-1864

Open Mon.–Sat. 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., Sun. 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Cosmic Omelet's selection of egg-wrapped goodness is simply mindboggling, from the McOmelet (ground beef, onions, ketchup,

mustard, American cheese and pickles) to Miss Piggy's Junk in the Trunk (pulled pork, onions, Cheddar and BBQ sauce). If you can imagine it, Cosmic can put it in an omelet. Add bacon, cheese and ranch dressing to any order of hash browns for a great flavor to match the high calorie count.

■ Cristy's

1261 Boston Post Rd., Westbrook
860-399-4211

Open Mon.–Sat. 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.,
Sun. 6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

A 1952 Schwinn Panther bicycle mounted on the wall greets patrons of this luncheonette in the quaint town of Westbrook. Cristy's is popular with locals and boasts a menu of more than 40 types of pancakes. There's also a proper focus on coffee, as customers pour from full carafes and a coffee bar offers espresso and flavored lattes.

■ Harvest Café & Bakery

1390 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury
860-658-5000

Open Mon.–Sat. 6 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.,
Sun. 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Tucked into a strip mall on Simsbury's Hopmeadow Street, Harvest has won numerous accolades for its breakfast. Even by name, dishes like Luscious Lemon Crepes or Heavenly Stuffed Banana Bread French Toast sound simply divine. Despite an ear of wheat as its logo, Harvest also caters to the gluten-free crowd with two dedicated menu pages. The restaurant also houses a full bakery, with every variety of cookie, muffin, or pie, plus custom cakes for any occasion.

■ Hidden Kitchen

705 Boston Post Rd., Ste. C4, Guilford
203-458-7806

Open Thurs.–Sun. 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

2341 Foxon Rd., North Branford
203-315-0099

Open Mon. & Wed.–Fri. 6:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.,

Sat. & Sun. 6:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

More than just a name, Hidden Kitchen is tucked into the back corner of a commercial building and can be very easy to miss. Those who find it discover a family-run restaurant serving up solid takes on the breakfast classics. The blueberry pancakes are a customer favorite. After seven years in business the owners have opened a second, less hidden location on Route 80 in North Branford.

■ J.A.M.S.S.

1522 Boston Post Rd., Old Saybrook
860-510-0839

Open Mon.–Sat. 6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.,

Sun. 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

J.A.M.S.S., an acronym for the owners' children, has built a reputation for having an eclectic breakfast. The Happy Pig (Texas toast topped with home fries, eggs, pulled pork, jalapeño and Cheddar), Duck Benedict (with rare duck breast) and a veggie egg white flatbread on naan give a glimpse of a menu that certainly runs the gamut.

■ Kitchen Little

36 Quarry Rd., Mystic
860-536-2122

Open Mon.–Fri. 6:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.,

Sat. & Sun. 6:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For breakfast with a view, Kitchen Little can't be beat. The restaurant is quintessential Connecticut, with a sweeping view of Mystic

Harbor from its new home at the Mystic River Marina on Mason's Island. Several menu items draw on a Portuguese influence with chouriço and linguica sausages, while the Mystic Melt gives a nod to its location with egg, crab meat and cream cheese on toast. You can't go wrong with the Lobster Eggs Benedict, either.

■ Landmark Café

867 Main St., Manchester
860-432-7344

Open daily 7 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

There's no hiding this eatery's flair for the Southwest. The restaurant's Cajun hollandaise sauce plays a prominent role in dishes like the Louisiana Chicken Omelet (caramelized onion, peppers, cheese and chicken), the Colorado Benedict (with ham, peppers and onions), and even the Breakfast Pizza Quesadilla. Go Southwest, young man!

■ m&m Bistro

315 Trumbull St., Hartford
860-240-7222

Open Mon.–Fri. 6:30 a.m. to 10 p.m.,

Sat. & Sun. 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Take a solid corned beef hash and make it Benedict, then tack on a smoked salmon plate or

maybe a breakfast sandwich on naan, and it's a recipe for breakfast in downtown Hartford. Sure, it may be located on the first floor of a Hilton hotel, but the influx of visitors and



Lobster Eggs Benedict
at Kitchen Little in
Mystic



overnight businessmen could also be the reason m&m Bistro offers a daily breakfast buffet that few can resist.

■ O'Rourke's Diner

728 Main St., Middletown, 860-346-6101

Open daily 6 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

This classic diner, nearly 75 years old, couldn't be stopped when a catastrophic fire struck

in 2006. It was rebuilt within a year after a great outpouring of community support and picked right back up with its Irish specialties. O'Rourke's is a must-visit for fans of Eggs Benedict, while its Irish Soda Bread French Toast, topped with homemade jams and clotted cream, constitutes a truly decadent and delicious breakfast.

■ The Pantry

2 Mechanic St., New Haven

203-787-0392

Open Mon.—Sat. 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., Sun. 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

This cozy breakfast haven in the East Rock part of New Haven is perhaps best known for its rich, icing-covered cinnamon roll pancakes. As for those looking to avoid the glory of a sugar high, opt for the California Benedict, which adds avocado and tomato to the classic, or for an egg scramble with jerk tofu, onion and spinach. Consider pairing either with some of the best onion rings anywhere.

■ Stir the Pot

142 North Rd., East Windsor

860-386-6726

Open Tues.—Fri. 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.,

Sat. & Sun. 7 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Stir the Pot's daily menu puts a twist on breakfast with favorites like Tanner's Buffalo Chicken Omelet and spinach popovers. But weekend specials are where the restaurant really mixes things up. Cannoli Pancakes? Sure. Chicken Cordon Bleu Waffle? Why not? Mango Mojito French Toast? It's five o'clock somewhere. *H*



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After Smartphones, Smart Homes!

By Lynn Fredricksen

After curling up with a good book and a sleepy puppy on your lap, the last thing you want to do is get up.

Until recently, that's what you had to do if you wanted to adjust a thermostat, change a movie or make a cup of tea. But in recent years, home technology has evolved far beyond entertainment systems to protecting your valuables and loved ones.

Concerned about an elderly parent who lives alone? Technology can let you know if he or she has wandered off—or hasn't gotten out of bed. It can also let you know that your school-age children have arrived home safely—and alert you if they've brought home a crew of friends.

"For the last decade, there has been a lot of talk about home automation and it never took off until now," says Garret Cook, who owns Cyclone Home Systems.

Part of the reason for the recent increased popularity is that security camera prices have become highly affordable, starting at less than \$100.

According to Cook, home automation has become a crowded arena. Thus, there are competing technologies that may appear the same but aren't. As a result, at Cyclone Home Systems, they have narrowed things down to two systems: Control 4 and Alarm.com.

Control 4 involves higher end audio-video equipment and home healthcare systems that are more for the audiophile who is preoccupied with quality.

"That person is not going to have four-inch speakers in their kitchen," Cook says. "They're going to have full-blown sound. They can hit a button that says 'Motown.'"

Control 4 can be used to activate drop-down speakers hidden in the ceiling, or control lighting to set a mood, or adjust room temperature, or even turn on a popcorn machine. "It's pretty amazing," says Cook.

Alarm.com is more about products and services, according to Cook. "These wireless protocols set up mesh networks to piggyback off the next," he explains. "You might have a camera that communicates



with a light bulb that controls a door lock."

Because some systems are compatible with one another and others are not, Cook notes that an expert should determine which ones will work in your home. This is imperative if a homeowner already has one or two components. "If they're starting from scratch, we'll design it to exactly what they need," Cook says.

Using sensors in an alarm system, Alarm.com can automate nearly anything. "Think lights, plugs, garage doors, thermostats," Cook says. "What's really cool about Alarm.com is it's managed

by an off-site server and based on rules that you set up. It's a lower cost entry into automation."

Cook explains that with smartphone technology, a homeowner can set up "geo fences" with various triggers. For example, it can be programmed to turn off all the lights and turn down the thermostat if there's no one there. And when it knows a homeowner is on the way home, it can turn on lights and turn up the thermostat so the house is toasty warm—all based on where his or her phone happens to be.

"You can program it so that when you're a mile away from your house going in one direction or another, it can trigger something," says Cook.

As an added convenience, security systems can be programmed with temporary PIN numbers for people doing work in your home. Plumbers or other workers can let themselves in using temporary assigned PINs, then when they have completed their work and left the premises the system will relock itself and cancel their temporary PINs.

While pendants are available, often people don't want to wear them, Cook says. "We have sensors that you can put under mattresses and chairs and if an elderly parent lives alone, using motion sensors you



can set up rules based on what their day would be. If those patterns aren't followed, such as if they're not out of bed by 9 a.m., you can get an alert," Cook explains.

Similarly, if a door opens in the middle of the night, that can trigger an alert that an elderly parent has gone wandering, he says.

"All these systems can be set up to do live stream video so that it will pick up if somebody is at the front door and drops off a package," Cook says. "You can press a button on your phone and see who is in your kitchen."

At Comcast, Regional Marketing Director Brian Ferney is quick to laud the new XI operating system.

"It's a new way to interact with television," Ferney says. "It's something most of our customers can get at no additional cost."

XI offers its users a whole new way to search for their favorite television shows and movies. Instead of scrolling through different channels, XI users search by a title, the name of an actor or a genre, and it will shortlist those things.

"It has some of the most advanced search engines built into it," Ferney says. "For my daughter, I can go into the 'kid' section or 'family.' She saw *Grease* and she liked it, so I can call up *Grease* and it will show me what else is like it."

Ferney notes there is a depression of sorts that falls over people when their favorite television show ends. XI helps people find similar programming. To take it a step further, XI has a voice-activated remote where the user can say the name of the movie and it will come up.

"It changes the way you interact with TV," Ferney says.

A voice-activated remote can also help make life easier for senior citizens or others who have difficulty punching in channel numbers and remembering which channel carries which programming.

"You can just hold down the button and say, 'ESPN,'" Ferney says. "It makes it so much easier to interact."

Cloud-based Xfinity Home is one of Comcast's newest services. It's all about manag-

ing your most valuable asset—your home—using smartphone technology. With it, you can control your home thermostat from a remote location, get a text message announcing your child is coming through the door when expected, turn interior and exterior lights on and off, and more.

"The one I love is the thermostat," Ferney says. "It's partly out of laziness. If I'm sitting on the couch and start feeling like I should crank up the A/C a little bit, I can just pull my smartphone out of my pocket and do it without getting up."

The same feature allows homeowners to turn down their thermostats when they're away during the day and then turn them up again when they're on their way home from work.

"Also, with a smartphone you can control a lot of devices, like different appliances, for example," Ferney says. "Or, if you're traveling and you want to make it seem like somebody is home, you can turn the lights on and off."

The only bad news is you'll still have to get up and make your own tea—at least for now. **H**

HAPPENINGS

By Robert Bailin

Greater Hartford hosts a variety of special events throughout the year — 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.

Through December 27. "A Christmas Carol — A Ghost Story of Christmas." The magic of Charles Dickens' heart-warming classic returns for its 18th season. Come see Connecticut's favorite family holiday tradition and spend some time with Bob Cratchit, Tiny Tim, Ebenezer Scrooge, Jacob Marley and the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future as they bring *A Christmas Carol* to life on stage. 7:30pm evening and 2pm matinee performances, see website for details. \$25–\$85; \$15 off for student seats. *Hartford Stage, 50 Church Street, Hartford; 860-527-5151; www.hartfordstage.org.*

Through January 1. "Holiday Light Fantasia." A two-mile light show that transforms Goodwin Park into a drive-through wonderland of holiday spirit with a beautiful collection of more than 1 million lights. Whimsical holiday scenes, familiar characters and local tributes shine bright in larger-than-life lighted scenes and 200 individual displays. Lighted animations celebrate not only Christmas, but Hanukkah, New Year's and Three Kings Day, benefitting the Channel 3 Kids Camp. Sunday–Thursday, 5–9pm; Friday–Saturday, 5–10pm. \$15

per car (cash only). *Goodwin Park, 1130 Maple Avenue, Hartford; 860-742-2267; www.holidaylightfantasia.org.*

December 15–29. "North Pole Express." Board the locomotive-powered sleigh for a magical nighttime journey to the North Pole. Every coach becomes a stage for a live, musical performance of *The Night Before Christmas*. Celebrate the spirit of the season with Santa and Mrs. Claus, sing-a-longs, hot chocolate and sugar cookies. Traditional event highlights include a trip to the North Pole to pick up Santa and Mrs. Claus, trackside displays, and each child meets with Santa and receives a small gift. Children are invited to wear their favorite pajamas. December 15–23 and 26–29, 5pm, 5:30pm, 7pm, 7:30pm. Coach \$32, First Class \$65. *Essex Steam Train, 1 Railroad Avenue, Essex; 860-767-0103; www.essexsteamtrain.com.*

December 19. "Holiday Cirque Spectacular." Hartford's holiday concert classic just keeps getting more "Cirque-tacular!" Bring the entire family to enjoy your favorite seasonal music, as Carolyn Kuan conducts the HSO, while Cirque de la Symphonie performs on and above the stage. Breathtaking

aerialists, mind-boggling contortionists and jaw-dropping jugglers will have you awestruck. Experience the magic of this ultimate holiday extravaganza! Saturday, 3pm & 7:30pm. \$25–\$82. *William H. Mortensen Hall, The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts, 166 Capitol Avenue, Hartford; 860-244-2999; www.hartfordsymphony.org.*



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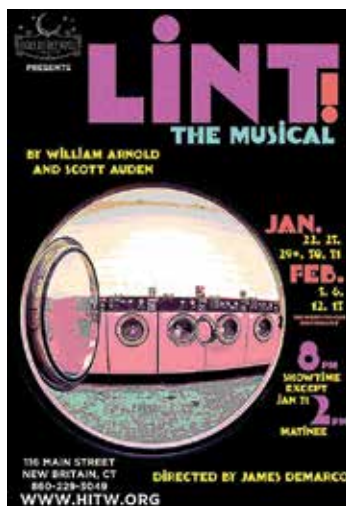
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December 31. "First Night Hartford." Hartford's premier New Year's Eve event, now celebrating 27 years! First Night is a celebration of the New Year through the arts. It is an alcohol-free, family-friendly, public celebration that marks the passage from the old year to the new with art, ritual and festivity. The day is a multicultural, artistically unique, New Year's experience with countless professional musicians, artists, performance groups and exhibits that inspire thousands of people of all ages to attend each year. The day includes two spectacular fireworks displays at 6pm and midnight in Bushnell Park, along with free ice skating until 1am. See website for a complete schedule of events and locations. Wristbands/buttons: Adults, \$12; ages 3–15, \$3. *Downtown Hartford*; 860-727-0050; www.firstnighthartford.org

January 8. "World's Largest Ski & Snowboard Lesson." Powder Ridge is participating in The World's Largest Ski & Snowboard Lesson as our ski and snowboard coaches introduce you to a great winter sport while making an attempt at the Guinness record! For this special event, you'll need to call Powder Ridge to make your reservation. This is not ONE giant lesson but many beginner lesson groups—with ski or snowboard—all taking place here at the Ridge. We are going after four records:



largest single-venue ski lesson, largest single-venue snowboard lesson, largest multi-venue ski lesson and largest multi-venue snowboard lesson. Friday, 10am. \$79 and up. *Powder Ridge Mountain Park & Resort*, 99 Powder Hill Road, Middlefield; 866-860-0208; powderridgepark.com.

January 9–10. "The 31st Annual Connecticut Bridal Show." The Connecticut Bridal Show Expo

is the largest bridal show on the East Coast and quite possibly in the country. With a proven format of combining fashion shows with a huge vendor presence, our bridal shows offer couples the unique opportunity to shop for every facet of their wedding needs in one location. Saturday–Sunday, 11am–5pm. \$12. *Connecticut Convention Center*, 100 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford; 860-563-2111; jenksproductions.com/ctbridal.html.

January 22 – February 13. "Lint! The Musical." Phoebe's got a problem. . . No matter where she goes, no matter what she does, she is constantly finding herself in a musical. Phoebe tries to escape by taking a job in a laundromat. Everything is fine until one day Phoebe looks up and sees the audience, the lights, everything. Biz, Fab, and Cheer—three muses—rise up out of the washers and explain to Phoebe that there is no escaping this musical until she finishes the show and follows the rules to get there. Reluctantly, Phoebe enlists the help of Gary, a pathetic cuckold who was just minding his own business. Jack and Jill enter and the race to finish the musical begins. Friday–Saturday, 8pm. General admission \$25, seniors and students \$20. *Hole in the Wall Theater*, 116 Main Street, New Britain; 860-229-3049; www.hitw.org.

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February 5-21. *"Boeing Boeing."* Bernard, living in Paris, is engaged to Gabriella...and to Gloria...and to Gretchen. With his housekeeper reluctantly playing romantic air-traffic controller, he successfully juggles three gorgeous flight attendant fiancées. But when a new double-speed Super Boeing arrives and changes flight schedules, we quickly learn that one woman is all Bernard can handle! Fasten your seatbelts for this Tony Award-winning comedy. Thursday, 7:30pm; Friday-Saturday, 8pm; Sunday, 2pm. \$24-\$29. Little Theatre of Manchester at Cheney Hall, 177 Hartford Road, Manchester; 860-647-9824; www.cheneyhall.org



February 18-21. *"The 35th Annual Connecticut Flower & Garden Show."* The Convention Center will be transformed into a breathtaking event for the floral and garden enthusiast. Gorgeous landscape exhibits constructed by some of the most talented landscape designers in Connecticut. The award winning landscape exhibits occupy over an acre within the Convention Center Exhibit Hall. Landscapes in full bloom with lush green grass and fragrant flowers continue to amaze attendees each year. The Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut incorporates their Standard Flower Show on the exhibition floor. Thursday, 10am-7pm; Friday-Saturday, 10am-8pm; Sunday, 10am-5pm. Adults, \$16; ages 5-12, \$4; under 5, free. Connecticut Convention Center, 100 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford; 860-844-8461; www.ctflowershow.com.

February 27. *"Janet Jackson: Unbreakable World Tour."* Music icon, multiple GRAMMY® Award -winner and multi-platinum-selling artist Janet Jackson brings her highly-anticipated Unbreakable World Tour to the XL Center. The Unbreakable World Tour will return one of this world's most influential entertainers back to the live stage in support of her upcoming album due out this fall. The first single from the new album, "No Sleep," has already entered the Top Ten on the Urban AC and Billboard Hot R & B Songs charts, only two weeks after being released. Saturday, 8pm. \$45.95-\$125.95. XL Center, One Civic Center Plaza, Hartford; 860-249-6333; www.xlcenter.com. **H**

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