



Columbia

VIEWS

Volume 8 • Issue 1
Spring 2024

Your Hometown Connection • Columbia, CT



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With the new year, I would like to take this opportunity to say that I am proud of our town and the work we have accomplished as a community. I would also like to thank every employee, commission, and committee member for all the work they do for the town. The future is bright for the Town of Columbia, and I look forward to continuing my service to the town as your First Selectman.



Highlighted below are some of the projects that were started in 2022 and completed and 2023. In addition, we've highlighted some 2023 projects, American Rescue Plan projects and important activities.

- Nine-hole disc golf course that weaves along the outside of Rec Park. The course is family friendly for both beginners and disc golf enthusiasts.
- The tennis court got a makeover expanding the size of the court, a new base and resurfacing, new tennis court lines and pickleball court lines, new posts, fencing, and netting.
- Two new pickleball courts were added to the refurbished tennis courts with moveable nets. The third pickleball court was completed by mid-summer.
- The Lions Club Pavilion at Rec Park received some much-needed sprucing up of the gables.
- We enjoyed the Summer Concert Series at Rec Park under the new pavilion with four great bands and food trucks.
- Important safety changes to state roads were completed to the intersection of Route 66 and Hunt/West St. and the elimination of passing zone by the Main Moose on Route 66.
- Major road and culvert projects were completed for Erdoni Rd., Whitney Rd., and Hennequin Rd. Paving of portions of Cards Mill Road were completed.
- The Town of Columbia met the requirements of a designated HEARTSafe community. This designation recognizes our community's commitment to provide improved cardiac response and care to our community utilizing the "Chain of Survival" of early 9-1-1 access, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, defibrillation, and advanced care. A 24-hour access defibrillator was installed at Rec Park.
- The Town of Columbia Volunteer Fire Department (CVFD) was awarded through the Assistance to Firefighter Grant/FEMA \$136,000 grant for the purchase of self-contained breathing apparatus (SCUBA). This

equipment protects firefighters from toxic fumes. In addition, CVFD received an award of \$250,000 to go towards a new replacement for their 1989 forestry vehicle. This is important to improve our ability to protect our growing Mono Pond State Park.

- The Horace W. Porter School Indoor Air Quality Improvement Project was approved through referendum to provide complete design work for Indoor Air Quality System and related renovations and improvements for the Horace W. Porter School. The town has submitted for a state construction grant to help offset 52% of the approved project.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) projects that were completed included:

- Construction of the Department of Public Works new office building. The building has a conference/training room, DPW Director's office, and another work station area for a foreman. There is a break-room, locker room with sinks, toilets and a shower and an ADA non-gendered restroom with a shower.
- Recreation Park saw the completion of the new pavilion, handicap bathrooms, storage for the Recreation Department, Little League, and Soccer League. As well as grading and milling of the parking lot, gate installation to prevent cars from going behind the concession stand, and the installation of guardrails in front of the girls' softball field.
- HVAC and exhaust system upgrade to Columbia Volunteer Fire Department building.
- HVAC Systems for the Town Hall and Murphy House.

In 2024 the projects that we are looking ahead to include:

- Newly launched Snow Removal Grant Pilot Program for seniors 55 and older or disabled that have an emergency need to have their driveway snowplowed and/or walkway cleared.
- Sixteen electric vehicle charging units have been installed in six locations in Columbia and will be completely up and running by February.
- Installation of new generator at the Beckish Senior Center.
- Boathouse and pavilion replacement will be completed.
- Installation of HVAC air and heat into Yeomans Hall.
- Upgrades to the bathrooms at the Murphy House at the Town Beach.

Happy New Year to all and please be safe.

Steven M. Everett, First Selectman
severett@columbiact.org
860-228-0110

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Cover photo by Katarina Turgeon

2024 VIEWS Magazines Schedule

2nd Q/24

COLUMBIA: Ad Deadline 4/5/24
Mailed Week of 5/6/24

HEBRON: Ad Deadline 5/3/24
Mailed Week of 6/4/24

3rd Q/24

COLUMBIA: Ad Deadline 7/5/24
Mailed Week of 8/5/24

HEBRON: Ad Deadline 8/2/24
Mailed Week of 9/9/24

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Presidential Primary

- April 2, 2024 at Horace W. Porter School, 6–8pm
- Only voters registered in the party which is holding the Primary may vote. So only registered Republicans can vote in the Republican Primary and only registered Democrats can vote in the Democratic Primary.
- If you are not currently registered to vote, mail in registrations must be postmarked by March 15, 2024 or you can register in person until noon on April 1, 2024.
- If you are NOT currently affiliated with a political party (registered as Unaffiliated), you can enroll via mail. Registration cards must be received by March 15, 2024 or you can register in person until noon on April 1, 2024.
- To register, go to voterregistration.ct.gov or contact our office.

Early Voting

- All early voting will be held at Yeomans Hall
- Early Voting dates are March 26, 27, 28 & Sat March 30th from 10:00am-6:00pm

Did you know?

There is a difference between Independent and Unaffiliated. The Independent Party is a recognized minor party in the state of Connecticut. Whereas, Unaffiliated means you are not registered in any party.

Please check our Registrar of Voters page on the town website or contact our office for more information.

Registrars of Voters
 Karen Butzgy, *Democratic*
 Gayle Mulligan, *Republican*
 (860) 228-6843 x113
 registrar@columbiact.org

Homeowners program

The Homeowners program will start accepting applications again as of February 1, 2024. If you are already in the program, you will receive a letter from us reminding you to file. If you are not already in the program, you will need to bring a copy of your 1040 income tax forms for 2022 to our office once they are completed or all your income information if you do not file income taxes. We cannot accept paperwork before February 1st. If you have any questions, feel free to call us at 860-228-9555.

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Permanent absentee ballots

An elector with a permanent physical disability, who is unable to appear in person at their poll on Election Day, may file an absentee ballot application along with a doctor's certificate (on letterhead) with the Town Clerk. This will place the elector on the Permanent Absentee Ballot list. A copy will be forwarded to the Registrar of Voters so that the permanent status can be noted on their registration. Throughout the year, for any election, primary or referendum, the Town Clerk will automatically mail an absentee ballot to the elector as soon as they become available. Please contact our office if you have any questions.

Births • Deaths • Marriages

Certified copies of vital events such as births, deaths and marriages are available from the Town Clerk. A request application and positive identification are necessary to obtain a certified copy. There is a fee of \$20.00 for each certified copy requested.

Probate Court

Probate Court for Columbia is located in Manchester at 66 Center Street. Michael M. Darby is Probate Judge. If you have any questions, you can call their office at 860-647-3227, Monday thru Friday from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Dogs

If you are new to Columbia and have not registered your dog with us or you have a new dog that is at least six months of age, please contact our office. You will need an updated rabies vaccination certificate and a spayed/neutered certificate, if applicable, to license your dog.

Fishing and hunting

Sports licenses for 2024 are available for purchase in the Town Clerk's office and on the DEEP website. The DEEP invites you to go to their website <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP-CT-Outdoor-Guides> for downloadable PDFs of their fishing and hunting guides.

The Town Clerk's office is fully open to the public. We are here for those services you might need – Recording and Searching of Land Records, Certified copies of Vital Records, Marriage licenses, Dog Licenses, Transfer Station stickers, Fishing and Hunting licenses, etc.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at (860-228-3284).

Robin M. Kenefick, *Columbia Town Clerk*
Gail C. McGrath, *Columbia Assistant Town Clerk*

BUILDING & LAND USE DEPARTMENT

When considering or starting new projects in your house or around your property, please remember to check with the Building & Land Use Department to see if there are any required permits.

If you decide to sell your home, potential buyers are more likely to get an approved mortgage when upgrades or improvements to the house or property have been accurately documented (permitted, inspected, and have been issued a certificate of approval/occupancy).

It is important to know what inspections are required and to follow up with your contractor (if using one) to

making sure inspections are scheduled as needed, especially the final inspection. It gives peace of mind knowing the work has been completed in accordance with State Building Codes. Keep in mind that permits having no activity for 6 months can expire and may have an additional permit fee if they are reactivated to proceed with and complete the project.

The Building & Land Use Dept. is open Monday through Wednesday 8am-4pm, Thursday 8am-6pm, and Friday 8am-Noon. Call 860-228-0440 or email us at LandUse@columbiact.org.

COLUMBIA CARDLESS HOLIDAY FUND

The following people made donations to the Columbia Cardless Holiday Fund 2023. The fund sponsored by the Columbia Congregational Church and is used year-round to help Columbia residents. We thank them for their generosity in helping their neighbors in need.

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Jackie Kittle | Velvet Welch | Anonymous donor |
| Narkowitz Family | Anonymous donor | The Pearce Family |
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Happy New Year from the Beckish Senior Center! Remember, age is just a number, and it's never too late to embrace a new chapter in life. Here's to a year filled with joy, discovery, and shared moments with our friends and family. Seniors from all areas are joining the center, and creating new friendships, discovering new talents, and staying healthy in a fun and manageable way. Our ping pong group is one of the biggest I have seen in a while. Our massage therapist, Susan, is extremely popular and appointments fill up fast. Robin Barros is our new Reiki Master offering Body, mind & spirit hands on therapy every Thursday. Our activities are going strong, gearing up for our trips starting on May 1, 2024, going to the Boston Old Town Trolley Tour with time at Quincy market. Looking for a longer trip? We have an escorted America's Music Cities, New Orleans, Memphis & Nashville on September 15th-22nd 2024. Check out our newsletter for more trips and current info.

This past Thanksgiving holiday, we had a special meal with the Columbia All-Stars playing their music with a wonderful luncheon served by TVCCA. In December, we hosted an Italian style special meal catered by Ted's Supermarket. Entertainment with DJ Bob playing traditional Christmas music, music trivia and many line dancers entertaining every-

one! I was even out there dancing with everyone, enjoying the festivities. This was one of my favorite days of the year, being able to dance and enjoy the day with all of you!

The Columbia Arts Council, the "Plein Air Artists" are exhibiting at the Beckish Senior Center in January and February. This is a free exhibit, open to the public Monday through Friday 8am to 3pm. Please call the Beckish Center at 860 228-0759 for the best viewing hours. A reception will be held on February 14th from 1:00-3:00PM for the "Meet the Artists" after the Special Valentine's Day Luncheon.

If you wish to join our community art group, please contact the Columbia Arts Council by calling the Beckish Senior Center and leaving a message for Flo with your contact information, or email Kim Kordonowy at Kim@kordo.org.

AARP Tax preparations will be every other Thursday, starting February 1st. Sessions be every other week until March 28th from 9 am to 1 pm. Please call the center at 860-228-0759 to reserve your time. An intake form will need to be filled out and brought to your appointment as well as your last year's tax return. Forms must be filled out completely or you may have to reschedule your appointment.

Continued on page 8

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SENIORS ON THE GO

Winter is here and I hope that we are all looking forward to the spring season coming soon. In the meantime, the Columbia Seniors' Organization has some activities to keep your mind and body in motion. During the month of February, we will show movies each Thursday at 1:00. We feature a selection of oldies, more recent favorites and newer selections. And you can't have a movie without popcorn and snacks. Come and enjoy!

In the month of March, we are featuring the return of our Chili Cook-off. On March 19th at 12:00 you can share your unique and tasty version of chili. There will be judging with prizes given out. Then we will all enjoy a chili lunch together. See the Gem newsletter for information on how to enter and more specifics about this event.

In April we have our annual Spring Tag Sale. It will be held on April 20th from 9:00 - 2:00 at the senior center. We are always grateful for the donations and help that you all offer. If you are downsizing or spring cleaning, we are a great place for you to donate your items. We will be collecting items for the two weeks before the sale. We can also use help in setting up, working the day of the sale, or cleaning up. If you are interested, please call

Sheran Smith at 860-228-9543 or check at the senior center. We will feature the general sale, some plants, a bake sale and lunch from our kitchen.

Some of the other activities that happen on a regular schedule here at the senior center are bridge, set back, mahjonn and pool, exercise and fitness classes, line dancing, quilting, senior book club, movies, women's group, and wood carving. The senior center is a very busy place (thank you Bernadette) Please consider joining us in whatever capacity that you can. Together we will all learn, socialize, be active and enjoy our time together here in Columbia.

BECKISH SENIOR CENTER

Continued from page 7

Please see the Gem, the Beckish Senior Center's newsletter at <https://www.columbiact.org/senior-services/page/beckish-senior-center-newsletters> for more information.

Bernadette Derring

*Director, Senior Services & Transportation
Municipal Agent for the Elderly*




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Tap Into Nature

Connect with nature at AHM during Hebron's Maple Festival! Join us Saturday March 16th and Sunday March 17th. Stop by AHM's building at 25 Pendleton Drive in Hebron to experience birds of prey, a maple syrup demonstration, and much more fun for all ages!

Concert

Planning is underway for AHM's Spring Concert, which is scheduled for Saturday, May 18th, 2024. This concert series helps to raise funds that benefit AHM programs and services for the children, teens, young adults, families, and seniors of Andover, Columbia, Hebron, and Marlborough.

Visit ahmyouth.org/fundraisers-events/spring-concert/ to stay up to date on all the details.

Family Resource Center

AHM's Family Resource Center (FRC) serves families with children ages birth - 5. Our FRC offers fun programs

year-round including First Steps in Music, Messy Hands, Play and Learn, and Tumble and Roll.

Health Matters

AHM's Winter & Early Spring program brochure is now available, and registrations are officially open! We are excited to bring our communities many fun and exciting activities and programs, including Youth Theater, Wreath Making, and a Valentine's Day Kids Yoga Bash! View our program at: <https://ahmyouth.org/>

QPR & Narcan Training

AHM is hosting two QPR and Narcan Sessions. Training will include: The Good Samaritan Law, support information and resources, and warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to respond. Participants will receive a QPR (Question, Persuade, Respond) training booklet and a 2-dose supply of Narcan. Upcoming sessions will be held on Monday, 2/6/24 and Monday, 4/1/2025. There is no charge for this training. Registrants must be 18+. Please visit ahmyouth.org for more information and to register.



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FIRE MARSHAL

Midwinter Checkup

We are in the middle of the heating season, so now is a good time to do a safety check on all of your heating devices. All combustibles should be at least 36" away from any heating source. Chimneys, power vents, and make-up air systems must be clean and clear for proper operation. Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors should be tested to make sure they are in working order. Any alarm or detector that is over ten years old should be replaced entirely. Lastly, all ash should be disposed of properly. Always ensure ash is extinguished and placed outside safely away from combustibles. Please feel free to contact the Land Use Department with any questions at 860-228-0440.

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

We at Friends of the Library hope you all had a wonderful holiday season and are ready to make 2024 spectacular! To start of the New Year, we would like to remind you of our upcoming Book Sale (weather pending of course):

Friday, February 9, 5-8 pm - members free, non-members \$5

PORTER PALS

Preschool Lottery Registration

If you have a child who will be turning 3 or 4 years old by September 1, 2024 and would like them to be considered for the lottery, please go to www.hwporter.org and click on Preschool Pals Registration in the middle of the page. Then please click on Preschool Lottery Form and complete the form. Registration for the lottery will close at 3:30pm on Wednesday, March 27, 2024. We will be holding the lottery on Thursday, March 28, 2024. If your child will be turning 5 prior to September 1, 2024, then your child is eligible for Kindergarten and not Preschool. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Deborah Dupuis at (860) 228-0585.

Saturday, February 10, 9am-3pm free to all

Sunday, February 11, 11am-3pm free to all

We are at the Chapel on the Green next to the Library and in front of the Town Hall. Hope to see you all there!

Laurie Rogers, *Friends of the Library*



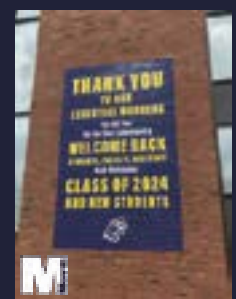
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Spring Will Bring Back Local Crops

While plenty of farms operate year-round, many are seasonal businesses that are only open to the public during the warmer months of the year. As winter slowly melts into spring, it's a great time to think about planning for summer foods from our area farms. Several farms operate Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, that provide affordable weekly access to high quality produce and meats through an up-front investment from the customer or member. This early investment in a small farm acknowledges the commitment that farmers make to raise their crops, their work in keeping agriculture an active part of Columbia and the importance of healthy nutrient dense foods for our bodies. Farms with CSA programs will generally sell farmshares in the winter and spring, in advance of harvests and CSA distributions beginning in June.



The reward for this investment is a weekly share of what is harvested at that time of the year. The contents of that share change every week and is the beauty of a CSA program and eating locally. It is a wonderful way to learn about seasonality and how precious and delicious a green bean is in July, how a watermelon drips with sweetness in August, and how absolutely delicious carrots can be in November. Farms that produce meat have seasonal variations too. For many people that are new to local seasonal eating, the flavors are mind blowing!

Farms in Columbia are supported by UConn Extension's Grown Connected marketing campaign, dedicated to farms in the northeastern part of the state. You can find a list of our farms at www.grownconnected.org The Columbia Conservation and Agriculture Commission also works to highlight our town's farms and farmers, which plays a significant role in our history and our present.

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WELCOME!
FEBRUARY – APRIL HAPPENINGS:

Services 10 AM Sundays with Rev. MaryAnn Purill
Church School during service every Sunday
Bible Study Thursdays 10:30 AM
Men's Game Dinner Saturday Feb. 17th

EASTER Services: Sunrise at Camp Asto Wamoh
March 31st 10 AM Easter Celebration Service

Community Breakfasts monthly on the 2nd Saturday
Simple Sustainance Soup, Bread, Pierogis on the 4th Sunday

For details check out our webpage: Columbiacongregationalchurch.org

In addition to providing our students and families with a welcoming environment and excellent education, H. W. Porter School places a strong emphasis on creating and maintaining a safe school environment. We were fortunate to welcome Joe Marsh as our first Armed School Security Officer to our school community at the beginning of the current school year. Mr. Marsh is a Columbia resident with deep connections to our town and school. Mr. Marsh is a retired State Trooper from the Connecticut State Police with more than twenty years of service. He worked at Troop K in Colchester that serves 12 towns, including Columbia.

As our School Security Officer Mr. Marsh monitors traffic at the beginning and end of each school day. During the school day he monitors the school grounds and address any safety concerns that may arise. Just as importantly, Mr. Marsh serves as a positive role model and helps to forge positive relationships with students and law enforcement officers. Mr. Marsh plays an important role in developing our school safety plans and assists with all school safety drills. Like most schools in Connecticut, Porter has a wide range of safety technology and practices including our locked exterior doors and the technology that

Continued on page 13





HEBRON VETERINARY HOSPITAL

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Dr. Jaime DeLeon

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It has been a year since the Town acquired the 3.6-acre parcel on Hop River Road, now known as the Hop River Mills Preserve. With two hundred years of water-powered industrial use beginning in 1715, the site has many stories to tell. An ad from the Windham Herald of 1796 describes many of the activities present there in the 18th century, some of which included, “A Saw mill, grift mill, fulling mill, and iron works.”



When the Town got the property, it was so overgrown that its remaining features were all but invisible. This stone headwall was one of the few items still showing above ground. After a year of work by a number of volunteers, most of the vegetation has been removed revealing more above ground features, and readying the site for a GPR (Ground-Penetrating Radar)

survey to show what remains below the surface.

When the Town receives the GPR Survey report, the Hop River Mills Committee will begin to lay out plans for the next year - some archaeological work to reveal the footprint of the old mills, a start on a trail with interpretive signage to guide visitors through the site, and preparation of areas for passive recreation activities such as fishing and picnicking.

Volunteers to help with this work are gladly welcomed. No prior experience needed. To find out more, contact Ann Dunnack (860 228-3992 or anndunnack@gmail.com) or Joan Hill (860 228-2849 or

jmhill003@gmail.com) And keep an eye out for future updates in the Views as this site is readied for the public to enjoy.

PORTER SCHOOL

Continued from page 12
allows us to control entrance into the building and cameras and communications devices that allow us to monitor and address any potential safety challenges in the building. However, we have heard from many members of the school community how reassuring it is to always have an Armed School Security Officer present during school hours to enhance the safety of our students and staff members.

Beginning in January, Paul Calafiore, a retired State Trooper from the Bureau of Criminal Investigations and an officer Mohegan Tribal Police will be joining Porter. This will allow Mr. Marsh and Mr. Calafiore to each serve as part-time armed school security officers ensuring that we always have one officer on duty each day school is in session.

SAXTON B. LITTLE LIBRARY



Saxton B. Little Library
319 Route 87 | Columbia | 860-228-0350
Mon, Fri & Sat 10am-5pm | Tues-Thurs 10am-8pm

The Saxton B. Little Library hosts a wide variety of regular programs every month, free and open to all!

DROP-IN PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS

- Fiction Book Group (2nd Tues. @ 6:30pm), Nonfiction Book Group (4th Tues. @ 6:30pm), Sip & Stitch Book Group (last Wed. @ 1:30pm), & Cookbook Club (bimonthly on a Wed. @ 6:30pm)
- Columbia Stitches - knitting and crochet group, Wednesdays from 2:30-4:00pm
- Feature Film Fridays - screenings of new release & classic movies, many Fridays at 1:00pm
- Columbia Writing Connection - writers group held twice per month

EVENTS FOR KIDS

- Baby Bees lapsit program - Fridays at 10:30am for birth to 24 months. Drop in!
- Story Time - Tuesdays at 10:30am for ages 2-5. Drop in!
- Three book groups - Mother-Daughter Book Club, Middle Grade Book Club, and Teen Book Club
- Drawing Club - practice your drawing skills through fun prompts and projects, ages 5+
- Little Hands Art Workshops - quarterly process-art programs for ages 18 months to 4 years

But wait, there's more! We also have special events each month for patrons of all ages!

To learn more about all your public library has to offer, stop in to see us, or visit us online at columbiactlibrary.org!

Saxton B. is Fine-Free!

860-228-0350
columbiactlibrary.org

Over the past few months, I have been getting to know the Saxton B. Little Free Library, its staff, and the Columbia community. What a great town! The support for the library is just fantastic. As a way to make the library more accessible to all, we've decided to do away with the practice of charging overdue fines on library materials. This is a growing practice among public libraries, as it helps make the library more equitable and reduces barriers to our services, materials, and programs. Of course, we still want our materials back when they are due - but, more importantly, we'd love to see your smiling faces more often!

Julie Styles, Library Director

Columbia Scouts BSA Troops 162B and 162G are hoping you are having a good winter. With luck we are having some- but not too much snow. Thank you everyone that was able to brave the chilly night for the Lions sponsored Gazebo Lighting and carol sing-your food donations were greatly appreciated by the Columbia Pantry at the Beckish Senior Center.



We would really like to thank all of the town residents and local businesses for supporting us the last 2 years while our Troop fundraised for our trip this past summer to Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico. We are happy to report that all 15 youth and 5 adults who made the journey succeeding in hiking well over 60 miles over 11 days in the back-country. There were some groans on the train ride home... but more story/picture sharing and not too much- "are we there yet?"

I would also like to praise a few of our scouts for completing three Eagle Projects in 2023; installed in the doorway of the Senior Center is a combined Eyeglass/Hearing aid collection box, near the Horace Porter playground is a Dr. Rookey Memorial Garden, Completed but not available for use until after winter- a new Rain Collection barrel at West St/Utley Hill Cemetery for watering plants and newly laid seed. Some of the scouts' final Eagle rank paperwork is in process at this time- and hopefully returned by this publication!

In December our scouts were able to stay in an Appalachian Mountain Club cabin and hike about 6 miles thru a dusting of snow and thick fallen leaves - gorgeous views. Finger's crossed January's outdoor campout will not be knee deep snow- however that is absolutely possible for

our February trip to Northern Maine to meet up with sister Troop. We aim to camp each month, letting scouts work on rank advancement and merit badges at their own pace. If this sounds like something of interest to you, please visit BeAScout.org -enter your Zipcode and select Scouts BSA for ages 11-17 or CubScouts for K-5. New youth and adult welcome, always!

HORACE W. PORTER SCHOOL

**HORACE W. PORTER SCHOOL
KINDERGARTEN
REGISTRATION**

Horace W. Porter School will be accepting registration for students entering Kindergarten for the upcoming 2024/2025 School year, beginning on January 8, 2024

Children who will be 5 years old on or before September 1, 2024*, are eligible for registration. Parents are asked to register by completing the online [Kindergarten Registration Form](http://hwporter.org) on our website at hwporter.org

*EFFECTIVE FOR THE 2024-25 SCHOOL YEAR, CONNECTICUT HAS CHANGED ITS KINDERGARTEN AGE CUT-OFF DATE TO SEPTEMBER 1ST (PREVIOUSLY, IT WAS DECEMBER 31ST). IF YOUR CHILD'S BIRTHDAY FALLS BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 2, 2024- JANUARY 1, 2025, AND YOU WISH TO SEND YOUR CHILD TO KINDERGARTEN, PLEASE SUBMIT A WRITTEN REQUEST TO PRINCIPAL KARA LEVENDUSKI. A DEVELOPMENTAL ASSESSMENT WILL THEN BE SCHEDULED FOR YOUR CHILD.

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Town of Columbia Food Bank

For Columbia residents in need of non-perishables and to check availability of toiletries, please contact Katie Wilt at 860-228-1008 to make an appointment.

Snow Removal Grant Pilot Program

If you are a Columbia resident who is a senior 55+ or disabled and have an emergency where you needed to get your driveway and or walkway snow plowed and are having trouble paying the bill please contact Columbia Social Services at 860-228-1008 or kwilt@columbiact.org to apply to the Pilot Snow Removal Grant Program.

Income eligibility is 60% of CT's state median income (household of 1 is \$41,553 and household of 2 is \$54,338)

Required documentation includes gross income (or current Energy Assistance approval), proof of age or disability, completion of the application and release, and invoice from a vendor with a W-9. Household must be willing to share why the service was needed as part of the application.

Heating Assistance

The State of CT Energy Assistance Program: Applications for the 2023-24 energy assistance program are underway. This program is available regardless of heating source. Gross income cannot exceed \$41,553/year (single) and \$54,338 (couples). There is no asset limit. Documentation needed: last four weeks of gross income and utility bills, as proof of rent/mortgage. If you are receiving cash assistance or SNAP you can provide benefit documentation instead of proof of income. If you are new to the program DSS requires your Identification and Social Security cards for everyone in the household as well as income and utility bills.

To apply please contact Katie Wilt at 860-228-100/ kwilt@columbiact.org or visit https://portal.ct.gov/DSS/Economic-Security/Winter-Heating-Assistance/Energy-Assistance---Winter-Heating/How-To-Ap-ply?gclid=EAlaIQobChMI8fCk44LOgQMVLPLjBx1NwAY-hEAAAYASAAEgKzB_D_BwE.

Operation Fuel: Operation Fuel is targeting a start date of January 8, 2024 to begin accepting applications for assistance with utilities or heat. Historically, Operation Fuel have also assisted households that may be slightly over income for Energy Assistance. Please visit their website for the most current information and to apply <https://operationfuel.org/gethelp/>

Senior Wellness Series

“The More You Know” Wellness Series meets every second Friday of the month at the Senior Center. This free program has covered topics such as integrating hope into our thoughts when we feel concern, coping strategies when feeling stress, how to keep an open mind when communicating, tips on talking to a loved one who may be misusing substances. We are building a community that believes in “being kind to your mind” and “mental health is just as important as physical health.” Come join us!

To make suggestions, share ideas or get involved in future prevention work for the Town of Columbia please contact Katie Wilt at 860-228-1008 or kwilt@columbiact.org.

Holiday Cheer

If you are a Columbia resident of any age who is experiencing a financial hardship around the holidays please reach out to Katie Wilt at 860-228-1008 or kwilt@columbiact.org to learn more about potentially receiving a holiday basket of food. Baskets are possible through the work of volunteers and donations.

COLUMBIA VOLUNTEER SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAM

We would like to express our thanks for the generous support of local families through the Columbia Volunteer Social Service Program. Through your donations and gifts, we were able to share holiday meals, food gift cards and gifts with 24 children, their parents, and 27 seniors.

In addition to donations and gifts, we would also like to thank the volunteers who shopped for gifts, wrapped them, helped with sorting, distribution, and delivery to the families. This would not have been possible without all of you.

Donations were made by: The Columbia Volunteer Fire Department, The Columbia Lions Club, The Columbia Leos Club, Horace Porter School Staff, The Columbia Congregational Church, Saint Columba, The Holiday Giving Tree, The Cardless Holiday Fund and many, many generous Columbia residents past and present. Our hearts have been touched by your readiness to fill the gap where it needs to be filled. We will continue doing outreach throughout 2024.

Debby Smith and Nancy Millerd

COLUMBIA LIONS CLUB

The final months of 2023 were busy ones for the Columbia Lions.

The Columbia Lions Scholarship Raffle concluded on November 17, 2023, and netted roughly \$2,900, enough to fund two scholarships for 2024, each worth \$1,200. The Club wishes to thank everyone who purchased a ticket, and we appreciate their patience as we interrupted their errands at the Transfer Station to make our sales pitch.

In September, two new Lions were inducted into the Club, Tom and Sharen Peters, who reside in Mansfield. Tom and Sharen elected to join the Columbia Lions because they have long-standing ties to the town, and Tom's father, George Peters, was one of the founding members of the Club in 1955.

Two students at Horace W. Porter School were selected as winners of this year's Lions International Peace Poster Contest. Ethan Roach (grade 7) is the 1st place winner, and Callie Tremblay (grade 6) took 2nd place. The theme of this year's contest is Dare to Dream, and the young artists were encouraged to create an image that represented their vision of a world filled with harmony and joy. The artists were guided through the process by Kat MacDonald, Porter's hard-working and talented fine arts instructor. Porter's winners will be entered into a district-level competition

and could possibly move on to the national and international competition. Later in the year, these winners will be given prizes for their achievement by the Columbia Lions.

The Lions were able to obtain from Amazon boxes of excess inventory for distribution to charitable organizations. The boxes included, among other items,



socks, toiletries, toys, pet food. Working in conjunction with the Beckish Senior Center, these items were boxed and delivered to roughly 30 families here in Columbia. This project was spearheaded by Lion President Matt Sternat and Center Director Bernadette Derring.

Become a Lion! The Lions need new members and fresh ideas. If you are interested in joining, send a note to Lion VP Wes Burnham (wesleyburnham2000@yahoo.com) or Lion Mike DiRaimo (md6966@gmail.com).

COLUMBIA LEOS

Greetings from the Columbia Leos! Our hope is that everyone is healthy and enjoying the new year! This is starting to be our busy season! In January we started our fuel assistance fundraising. We encourage, if you're able, to consider helping The Town of Columbia Fuel Assistance Program. Any money we collect will go to that fund and is for Columbia residents. You can also write a check made payable to The Town of Columbia and indicate in the memo "Fuel Assistance." Look for us on the second Saturday of the month in January and February at The Congregational Church Breakfasts. Come to breakfast to share fellowship (and awesome omelets and waffles!) to learn how you can help us out.

Our other big news is that The Columbia Leo's Annual Variety Show is just around the corner! Save the date: April 27, 7 PM at Yeoman's Hall. We'll have some awesome talent and a really good time! Tickets can be purchased in advance by contacting Leo Adviser Jim Blair. Contact info below! If you're interested in becoming a sponsor or an advertiser, we'd love to hear from you! Proceeds will

go to Camp Rising Sun, Relay for Life, among others. Our past shows have been really successful in that we've been able to help these worthy causes! Big shout out to our talented performers, sponsors, advertisers, and ticket buyers. We couldn't do it without you!

The Leos added six new members this year! Amazing! And of course, we're always looking for others who would like to work in your community, meet new people and be part of the largest service organization in the world, Lions International. Our only requirements are that you must be between 12-18 years of age and be a Columbia resident. The Leos meet in the Porter Band Room on the first and third Mondays at 6:30 PM. Please contact Mr. Blair by phone or email listed below to provide accurate meeting days and times, as they are subject to change. We'd love to have you sit in on a meeting!

The Columbia Leos would like wish everyone a safe, happy, healthy New Year!

Lion Jim Blair, Advisor
860-428-2916 • Jbland15@earthlink.net

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