

OrangeLife

WINTER 2024 ISSUE #29

MAGAZINE





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Submit Photos and Ideas

To be considered for photographs for our cover (seasonal)
and ideas for articles featuring the people and business
community of Orange, submit to: asliby@OrangeEDC.com.



On the Cover

A view of the Wepawaug Reservoir along Derby
Avenue, located beyond the falls that flow over
the dam and into the Wapawaug River. On Page
17, read about the history and the house on the
falls that is being rebuilt to the specifications of
the Alling Inn.

Photo: Paula Severino

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ORANGE
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Publisher's Letter



I am pleased to present the 29th edition of *OrangeLife* Magazine. In this issue, we are excited to celebrate businesses who have longevity in the town, so we have incorporated a Business Milestones feature. Please let us know if your business will have a milestone anniversary and we may feature it.

I always love hearing about the history of the town and there's a bit of history in a few articles. The house on the falls is about a new house being constructed by a restoration contractor to the specifications of the Alling Inn. One of the specifications is that he plans to reuse the bricks from the original fireplace to construct the new chimney and part of the foundation.

Speaking about fireplaces and chimneys, another trace of history is mentioned within the article about the Orange Conservation Commission. While hiking at the Howard Brooks Wepawaug area, you may stumble upon remnants of an old stone fireplace and chimney, which was once part of a cabin that stood in that location belonging to the Neal family in the 1900s.

Lastly you could say there is a bit of history in the Orange Volunteer Fire Association article, just with the fact that they are celebrating a huge milestone this year. It will be a big year for them, because not only are they celebrating their centennial, but they will host the Connecticut State Firefighters Convention in September. Events are planned for both, and the public is invited to celebrate.

Enjoy and have a wonderful holiday season!

ANNEMARIE F. SLIBY

Executive Director, OEDC

*When visiting any of the businesses that have advertised or that are featured, please let them know you saw their ad or article in *OrangeLife*. As always, I want to thank our advertisers, and First Selectman James Zeoli, the Orange Economic Development Commission, and the Orange Economic Development Corporation for their support.*

A festive winter-themed advertisement for the PEZ Visitor Center. The background is blue with white snowflakes. In the center, the PEZ logo is prominently displayed above the words "VISITOR CENTER" in large, bold, blue letters. Below that is the phone number "203-298-0201". Surrounding the central text are several PEZ candy characters dressed in winter gear: Santa Claus, a snowman, a gingerbread man, a reindeer, an elf, a polar bear, and a yellow character holding a sign that says "OPEN 7 DAYS!". There are also various PEZ candy packages scattered around. In the top right corner, there are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, along with the handle "@pezcandyusa". In the bottom left corner, there is a circular seal that says "CANDY MADE IN THE USA". At the very bottom, the address "35 Prindle Hill Road, Orange" and the website "Shop at PEZ.com" are written in large, bold, blue letters.

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Late Nights and Community Bonds Lead to Success

WRITTEN BY: ALYSSA DAVANZO

Crafting comes naturally to Nicole Papadopoulos. From her teenage years working at Party City in Orange, to customizing her own dream bridal shower and wedding, she always found joy in party planning and hands-on creations.

"I grew up surrounded by my mom's artistic spirit. Every year she created a different Christmas ornament from scratch, and she passed her creative talents on to me and my sister," Nicole said. "I used to design and sell wedding invitations, and even today, my basement is stocked with every craft supply under the sun."

HOW IT BEGAN

Although Nicole's career was deeply rooted in the corporate world, she discovered her creative outlet as the 'Spirit Headmaster' for her daughters' Parent Teacher Organization at Peck Place. With a knack for collaborating with vendors and sourcing high-quality products at the best value, Nicole began wondering how she could turn her passion into a side business. In

March 2020, she launched a screen-printing venture called Midnight Creations, inspired by her many late-night crafting sessions.

"I struggle with ADHD and feel the need to move constantly," Nicole said. "When beginning this project, there were many nights in a row when I stayed up until all hours, experimenting with new graphics and searching for unique objects to print on. The name just made sense."

The business faced a challenging start during COVID, but Nicole quickly adapted by printing colorful children's masks with initials and school names. She expanded her reach and strengthened her local connections through the Orange Community Farmers' Market.



Photo: Paula Severino

Owner, Nicole Papadopoulos.

"I made a lot of friends as a vendor, and I learned that people love to shop local," Nicole said. "When COVID slowed down, customers began asking if I sold other products. That motivated me to partner with nearby schools and businesses to create custom t-shirts, hoodies, personalized cups, hats – you name it."

A SHOP EMERGES

By the summer of 2024, Midnight Creations USA had grown significantly, and Nicole opened a storefront at 200 Boston Post Road in Orange. The shop offers printed apparel, embroidery, and promotional items. When customers enter, they are greeted by custom



Photo: Paula Severino

The storefront with screen printed and embroidered products on display for a quick purchase or an easy reorder.

merchandise featuring Amity High School and Town of Orange logos, with pre-order options available.

"The support from the communities of Orange, Woodbridge, and Bethany has been incredible," Nicole said. "With both of my daughters now attending Amity, it's special to have a presence there – I promise them I'm not spying! We print items on-site and have even become a major supplier for branded merchandise, expanding our customer base into New York City."

In addition to custom orders, Midnight Creations offers 'paint and print' parties on weekends for small groups of children or adults.

"For our first party, a group of five to seven-year-olds drew hearts and beaches on pieces of paper, and we applied their sketches to t-shirts," Nicole said. "They took home their creations as party favors. This is a memorable way for people to come together, roll up their sleeves and flex their imagination."

ORANGE ROOTS

As an Orange resident since she was 11, Nicole says that she values the town's tight-knit sense of community.

"I went to Turkey Hill School, met my husband at Amity, and now we live across the street from his parents," Nicole said. "Without my family, none of this would've been possible. I love everything about Orange like the gatherings and concerts on the town green, and I can't go to CVS without running into someone I know. I may not be a city girl, but I consider myself a proud 'town girl,' and that will never change."

For those considering taking a risk or starting their own business, Nicole offers a piece of advice.

"This business has made me a better person. Before, I was a mom of two who had a hard time finding a sense of purpose. Now, after my corporate work week ends, I get to transform into a different person from Friday at 5:30 PM through Sunday evening. It's important to have a passion outside of work, and



Nicole using an embroidery machine to stitch the Amity logo onto a hat.

I've made mine something that I can share with my kids."

Midnight Creations accepts customers by appointment only. Call 203-903-7575, follow the company on Facebook or visit midnightcreationsusa.com to view offerings and request a quote. ■

The advertisement features a woman on the right wearing a blue bow, a blue shirt, and striped overalls, holding a blue spray bottle and making an 'OK' hand gesture. On the left is a cartoon character of a girl with red hair holding a broom. The background is a mix of red and blue with white stars. Text is overlaid on the red background.

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Duck Donuts Taking Flight in Orange

WRITTEN BY: ALYSSA DAVANZO

If you could design your perfect donut, what would it look like? Would it include strawberry icing with graham cracker crumbs and hot fudge on top? At Duck Donuts, which will open soon at 350 Boston Post Road in Orange, the possibilities of coatings, toppings and drizzles are endless as you craft the donut of your dreams.

“We call it the Disneyland of donuts,” said Robert El-Hage, who co-owns Duck Donuts with his business partner, Chris Cassese. “As soon as you come in, you’re greeted with a smile, and the customizable experience makes everyone feel like a kid. As this Duck Donuts location is the first in Connecticut and only the second in New England, we’re proud to bring a fresh and fun concept to this family-friendly town.”

HOW IT CAME TO BE

Robert and Chris first connected in 2010 while enrolled in the management program at People’s United Bank. Their business partnership officially began in 2019 when they opened North of Havana Cigar & Lounge in North Haven. The idea for Duck Donuts came to Chris during a family vacation in the Carolinas, where a local resident recommended it as a must-visit breakfast spot.

“We passed by the shop two days in a row, and the line was around the corner,” Chris said. “We ended up standing in line, and it was well worth the wait. My kids were blown away by the flavor combinations, and they loved seeing the donuts made fresh right in front of us. The best part was the quality of the donuts – the texture and unique flavors were outstanding. The signature vanilla cake donuts are freshly made the moment customers order. It’s impossible to eat just one.”



Photo: Paula Severino

Owners, Robert El-Hage (left) and Chris Cassese (right).

Duck Donuts was named after the charming town of Duck in North Carolina’s Outer Banks, where one of its first shops opened in 2007. Since then, the brand has grown to over 200 locations nationwide. With unique donut flavors like blueberry lemonade, French toast, maple bacon, and coconut island bliss, there’s something to satisfy every sweet tooth on the menu.

After thoroughly researching the company and speaking with Duck Donuts franchise owners across the country, Robert and Chris were confident it would be a successful business venture.

“As part of our training, we worked at a Duck Donuts in Pennsylvania, and it was a cool learning experience,” Chris said. “We were fully immersed in all aspects of the business – sometimes working at the register, other times making donuts with the toppings. There’s a ledge right above the glass, where kids would peer over, eyes wide, as they watched the conveyor belt of donuts. When families came in, they knew they would leave the shop feeling happy and entertained.”

A CREATIVE MENU

The Duck Donuts menu not only includes made-to-order donuts and

pre-made dozens but also features a variety of coffee beverages, donut ice cream sandwiches, and milkshakes.



Photo: Duck Donuts

S'mores shake with a s'mores donut on top.

"There is a lot of testing involved in research and development to find out which flavors are the most popular with customers," Robert said. "For Shark Week in July, Duck Donuts offered a beach-themed dozen with gummy shark candies and other beachy toppings. The franchise creatively incorporates the donut concept into many of their offerings.

For example, you can get a donut on top of a milkshake."

SOCIAL MEDIA

The business has a strong social media presence on Facebook, X, and Instagram, allowing customers to subscribe to QuackChat via text and be the first to receive exclusive offers.

"Duck Donuts has established its own community of micro-influencers," Robert said. "My son sent me a clip of a well-known food influencer on TikTok reviewing a Duck Donuts, and he gave it a high rating. We'll also have a localized Facebook page focused on the Orange community, and we're excited about the micro-influencer opportunities because Connecticut is home to many foodies."

Above all, Robert and Chris look forward to listening to feedback from customers and creating their own unique concoctions that the community will love.

"My 11-year-old daughter wants to become a store manager one day



Photo: Duck Donuts

Sausage, egg, and cheese on a maple drizzle, chopped bacon donut.

and is a big fan of unicorns. I have a feeling that a unicorn donut might be coming out soon," Chris said. "What I love most about Duck Donuts is that it's a business built around creativity and happiness. Food is a byproduct. People today want to be wowed, impressed, and get value for their dollar. Here, you get all of that and more."

For more information or to order online, view their website at duckdonuts.com/orange/. ■

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The History of the House on the Falls

WRITTEN BY: GINNY REINHARD

It's a familiar sight to see the waterfall on Derby Avenue, with water spilling down from the Wepawaug River and the Regional Water Authority's reservoir. The River, which flows from Woodbridge to Long Island Sound, was once the mode of travel for the Native Paugussetts. What you don't see is history, history being recreated in the Alling Inn. Yes, an inn.

The Derby Turnpike Company was formed in 1798, and they determined that the "road now leading from Derby landing to York Street is extremely bad, hilly, crooked and rough so as to be almost impassable for teams and carriages" which is noted in the petition made to the General Assembly. With permission, the roadway began with certain requirements, such as its width of 18 feet to be laid over good, level land but there was a condition that where rocks or other obstruction prevailed, it would be allowed to be narrower.

HISTORY REPEATED

Just adjacent to the falls is a house, looming to the sky. It's the original Alling Inn being rebuilt to the specifications of the original tavern. The Regional Water Authority was the previous owner and owns many houses along local waterways with custodians watching over the public reservoirs. The "house on the falls" went vacant and was put up for auction. Wess Corjec and

his wife Cornelia won the bid. With his passion for history but with the guidance of several historical experts, the house was found to be unsafe. The house, without heat, became subject to moisture, cold and hot temperatures, ideal for insects to freely eat away at the structure.

Being boarded up gives the house the feeling of its eventual doom, but it is hiding the past, the past with its windows intact and central door in its original place with as much of the interior that could be saved. The gable ends will house its two interior chimney stacks which at one time served eight fireplaces and a smoker oven in the attic. One of the rooms, between the front and back, had an interior window allowing for use as a taproom. This was, as we know, an inn....an inn built with the hopes of travelers between New Haven and Derby Landing staying the night. But alas, that did not happen.

The Alling family is associated with several mills along the Wepawaug,



Photo: Paula Severino

Restoration contractor, Wes Corjec, in front of the construction of the new house where the Alling Inn once stood.



Photo: Orange Historical Society



Photo: Orange Historical Society

Original Alling Inn (left) and Alling Inn during restoration (right).

south of the Inn, becoming prominent businessmen who in 1880 produced about 7,500 pairs of hose per day with 250 workers at its Paugussett Mill. As the mills disappeared, in the 1900s, the New Haven Water Company purchased much of the Alling property, north and south of the turnpike.

The Inn had a central hall plan with an entrance that led to a giant and magnificently carved stairway, curving to the second floor. Two rooms were located on either side with the back of the rear room leading down to a kitchen area and a pantry. The house was originally clapboarded but during its life, in the 20th century, it was shingled with modern material as well as the wood roof being replaced.

As a restoration contractor with credentials far and wide, Wess is bringing the Alling Inn to life. He has devoted his time to the house every day keeping its history in mind with today's standards which he follows with the help of the Orange and Regional Water Authority officials.



Photo: Orange Historical Society



Photo: Paula Severino

The original staircase as it was in the Alling Inn (left) and new construction of the house (right).



Photo: Orange Historical Society



Photo: Paula Severino

The original bricks (right) from the chimney/fireplace (left) of the Alling Inn will be reused on the new chimney and will also cover the foundation in the back of the house.

You will soon see it reappear at the falls on the Derby "Turnpike."

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The house is historically significant for a number of reasons. It was a good example of a late, 18th century to early 19th century inn with many intact details both structurally and decoratively. The mantels had a variety of styles including a wooden Federal period example in the left front room and a carved Italianate mantel in the right front room. The aforementioned curved stairway weighs in as a Greek Revival addition. It is also important to know that the house showed evidence of being adapted to modern uses with the blocked off service stairway in the rear and basement fireplace abandoned.

Finally, its importance also lies in the connection to Derby Avenue, which I have noted with its original name, Derby Turnpike. Given the fact that not three or so miles down the road, there was a toll station, making it a turnpike, thus demonstrating that the Inn was a link to the other businesses nearby....the Alling mills and the Paugussett Mill.

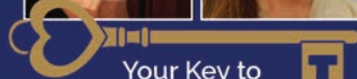
For information, contact the Orange Historical Society at 203-795-3106. Other historical facts can be found on their website orangehistory.org. ■



Photo: Paula Severino

The new construction overlooking the water company property with the original shed to the right.

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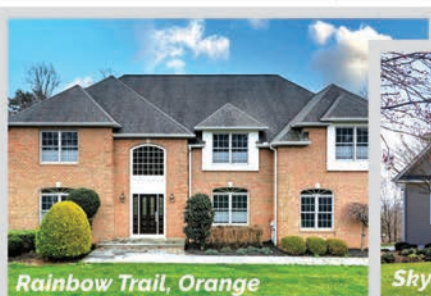
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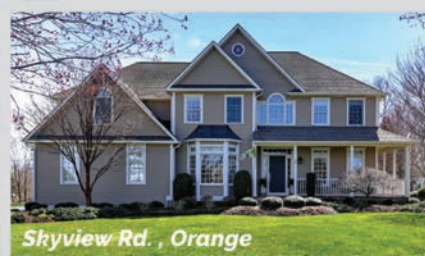
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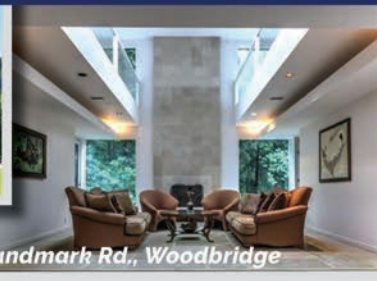


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The Family at the Heart of the Orange Mart and Deli

WRITTEN BY: CHRISTINA LEVERE

Thomas John Watson, former chairman and CEO of IBM, once said: “To be successful, you have to have your heart in your business, and your business in your heart.”

The statement perfectly embodies the entrepreneurial spirit of the Patel family, who have operated the Orange Mart and Deli for nearly 25 years and consider the community as family.

The Patels’ journey began in 2000, when Harry and his brother used to drive past the then-vacant pharmacy on Orange Center Road.

“They asked many times if it was for lease, then one day, the owner called and said he was ready to lease the space,” Harry’s daughter, Selly, said. “That’s when my parents decided to take on adventure and open the Orange Center Convenience store.”

A ROCKY ROAD AHEAD

Harry and his wife, Alu, had little to no business experience, nor did they have an easy road ahead. Alu was nine months pregnant with Selly. Harry had emigrated to the United States from India, where he had grown up in a rural village. He was an architect who liked to sculpt, and he knew more about farming and agriculture than invoices and balance sheets.

“They started from scratch,” Selly said. “We worked 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day,” Harry added. “We were so tired, we used to get fast food and just eat and sleep,” Alu said. “My father was sleeping under the sink between shifts to rest,” Selly said. “There used to be a little room for me to nap.”

The family lived in Milford but after Selly’s brother Romi was born in 2002, the Patels moved to Orange, where

they rented a home with family, so they could be closer to the store. “It was getting busier,” Alu said. “People started asking for sandwiches, so we started the deli.”

A MOVE SOUTH

The Patels ran the store until 2009, when a new adventure called them to South Carolina. They sold the store and made the move, quickly realizing, however, it wasn’t a good fit. Even though they had suffered financial losses in both states, they moved back to Connecticut.

The Orange Center Convenience store now belonged to someone else, so Harry sought out a different opportunity. They purchased a convenience store and deli in Milford and ran that for five years. Once again the South beckoned. In 2015 they sold the store in Milford and prepared to move.

Then, fate took a horrible turn.

AN UNFORTUNATE INCIDENT

“The day of Valentine’s Day, at 4 a.m., we heard a large boom in the garage,” Selly said. “When my dad opened the door there was smoke.”

A short circuit had started a fire. The Patels had moments to evacuate the house, including Alu’s parents. They stood outside — barefoot — in the ice and snow and waited for the firetrucks.

“We had cold sores on our feet,” Selly said. “Everything was lost.”



The Patel family proudly standing in front of their store on Orange Center Road, (left to right), Romi, Harry, Alu, and Selly.

For one year, the family struggled. Selly was in high school; Romi was in middle. They had no income. They shared one car. There was a zero balance in their bank account.

“Our neighbors took us in,” Selly said. “We stayed with family in Milford and Meriden, off and on. It was a very stressful time. But we survived. My parents felt like, okay, it’s not in God’s work for us to move out of this state.”

STARTING OVER AGAIN

So the Patels rolled up their sleeves and got back to work, this time purchasing a corner store in Derby with funds borrowed from family.

“It was completely run down,” Selly said. “We started from scratch again. My parents rebuilt it from the ground up. It helped us get back on our feet. My dad did the best he could to care for us.”

The Patels ran that store for another five years, but they never forgot the Orange Center Convenience store. Alu cried every time she passed it. She had raised her children there. The family had become a part of the community. "I literally grew up in the store," Selly said.

As fate would have it, in 2018, the owner of the plaza contacted Harry to inform him that the store was available. The Patels reclaimed the keys and, having to replace everything inside, essentially started from scratch once again, renaming the store to Orange Mart and Deli.

Business was slow at first. They ran the two stores but with no other employees, it wasn't sustainable. When Covid hit, Harry decided to sell the store in Derby. They survived the pandemic as best they could, eventually becoming busy enough that expansion could be an option.

THE SPACE NEXT DOOR

"I kept asking my dad about opening liquor store in the space next door,"

Romi said, but Harry was concerned about taking on the expense and responsibility of a liquor permit, as well as renovating the space.

"We didn't know if we could handle the hours and stress of an additional store," Romi said. "It was a family decision to go for it."

The Patels opened Orange Wine and Liquor in summer 2024. Romi, with a background in computer science, manages the store on a daily basis and plans to continue doing so. The Patels hired an employee to help on the weekends so Harry and Alu can take a break. Selly plans to use her college degree and medical background to pursue other interests.

It's clear that no matter who is manning the counter, the store will always have a place in the Patels' hearts.

"A lot of people in town support us in the best way they can," Romi said. "On a day-to-day basis, we recognize everyone who comes through the door. With the liquor store, we're



Photo: Paula Severino

Selly and Alu (front) with Harry and Romi (back) in their recently opened liquor store.

seeing new faces. People are glad to hear it's run by us."

"It feels like we were meant to be here," Selly said. "We need the community as much as they need us. My dad never turns down anyone if they're a dollar short. We look at everyone like a family member."

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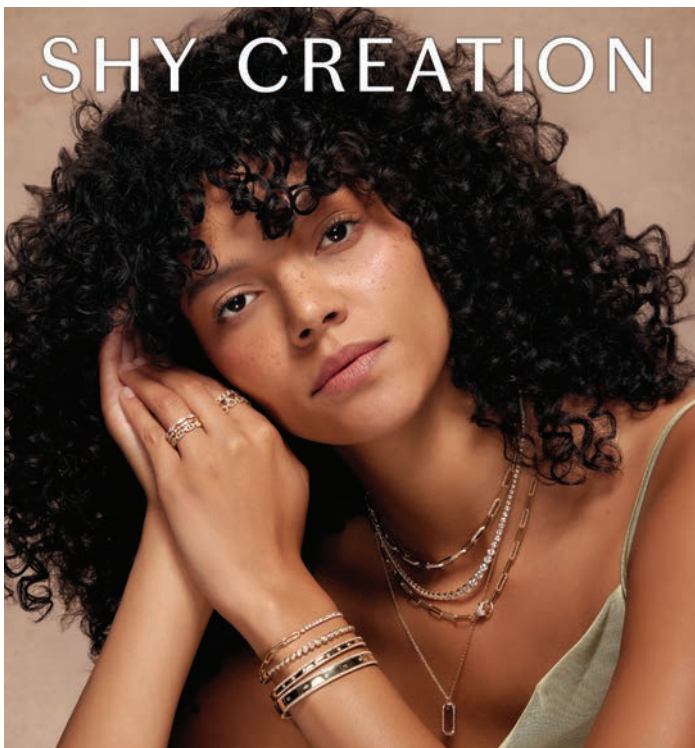
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Enhancing the Appeal of the Town's Open Space

WRITTEN BY: MADELINE ARAGON

Analyzing the needs of the Town of Orange's open spaces is the main focus of this dedicated group of volunteers. Installing safety railings, new granite steps, walkways, and fencing; updating signage, creating an informational kiosk, and beautifying the areas with new plantings are all projects the Orange Conservation Commission have implemented this year to the town's magnificent open space.

The Orange Conservation Commission (OCC) is made up of a group of volunteers whose main goal is to maintain over a thousand acres of trails in the open space areas of Orange. The group meets monthly to discuss future projects, put plans in place, discuss funding, plan events, and much more. Members of the group include Sharon Ewen (Chair), Cathy Anderson (Vice Chair), Chantelle Bunnell, Sharon Kahara, Scott Somerville, and Donna Wesolowski.

RACEBROOK TRACT

The OCC, under the leadership of Chairman Sharon Ewen, has recently unveiled a new trail head, featuring granite steps and railings. A local company was called to install the steps as part of its ongoing efforts to enhance the natural beauty and accessibility of the region.



The new granite steps recently installed at Racebrook Tract.



Sharon and her husband Jim Ewen, along with OCC members are the visionaries behind the successful implementation of various projects. Sharon is responsible for ensuring that projects are completed efficiently and on time, as well as securing the necessary funding to make them a reality.

In addition to the new granite steps, a sign was installed at the entrance to the Racebrook Tract, identifying the area. The commission utilized the remaining funds leftover from previous projects to finance the fabrication and installation of the sign.

The OCC was fortunate to receive a grant from The Orange Foundation, which was then utilized to install a fence around the parking lot. This addition had a significant impact on the entrance area, as the fence served as clear guidance for drivers to know exactly where they should park. This added security and organization

to the area, enhancing the overall experience for visitors.

The group had ambitious plans to replace the Howard Brooks wooden walkway by making it accessible to people with disabilities and turning it into an educational pathway. However, despite submitting a proposal to the State of Connecticut, the project was unfortunately rejected.

HOWARD BROOKS WEPAWAUG

The OCC has also undertaken a new project to celebrate the Howard Brooks Wepawaug open space, which involved installing a kiosk sign that provides a detailed account of the area's history and significance. The idea for this project was sparked by the town's recent 200th anniversary celebration. Sharon and Mike Ross (who volunteers his time as a consultant on varied projects), proposed that a kiosk be installed in the parking lot, featuring a map that outlines the different trails and includes historical information about the Wepawaug area. The kiosk serves as an important educational tool, offering visitors a glimpse into the rich history of the area while also helping them navigate the various trails. This project is just one example of the commission's commitment to preserving and promoting Orange's open spaces.

In addition to the kiosk, the commission is planning to install



Remnants of the 20-foot chimney and fireplace (right) that once stood in the Neals' family cabin (left).

another sign near the chimney, which was once attached to a cabin owned by the Neal family, who were farmers in the early 1900s.

To further enhance the open space, the commission has also planted three dogwood trees at the entrance, creating a warm, inviting atmosphere for visitors.

TURKEY HILL PRESERVE

The commission has also been active in improving the Turkey Hill Preserve. Jim Ewen carefully constructed a 26-foot walkway, transporting each piece uphill using

his tractor. As part of a community service project, two students from Amity High School, Connor Bunnell and Christian Luciano, walked each piece downhill, covering a distance of 200 feet to place them on the trail.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of commission members, local volunteers, and young participants like the high school students, significant progress has been made to the accessibility of the Turkey Hill Preserve. These improvements will not only benefit the local community but also contribute to the preservation

and protection of the area's natural resources for future generations.

The group has worked tirelessly to implement a number of projects aimed at improving and enhancing the area. They have also planned for future projects, such as a walkway for people with disabilities and educational walkways. The commission's hard work and dedication have resulted in a positive impact on the town and its visitors, who can now enjoy a safer and more scenic environment.

The OCC remains committed to their mission of enhancing the natural beauty and accessibility of the area and continues to work towards future projects that will further improve the town's environment and resources. With the support of the community and the dedication of its members, the commission looks forward to the positive impact they will have on the Town of Orange for generations to come.

For information visit orangectconservationcommission.com or email to orangeconscomm@gmail.com. ■

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Physical, Emotional and Mental Education in Orange

WRITTEN BY: JOSEPH WEATHERED

“I am strong - I am brave - I can do this!” This affirmation begins and ends each class the newly opened KidStrong, a science-based kids training program, holds. The national chain recently opened a location in Orange, located at 185 Boston Post Road in the Hitchcock Plaza. According to their website, the program seeks to help parents raise strong, confident, high-character kids.

“KidStrong is a milestone accelerator,” remarks general manager Dominic Basile. “We focus on three pillars of development: physical, character, and brain development. There is neuroscience involved with our programming, so while the kids are getting warmed up on the mat, they go into a stimulated state which puts their brains into an optimal condition to take on new information. We capitalize on this to teach the curriculum and programming all throughout class while they are doing physical activity like obstacle courses and ninja courses, among others.”

FOUNDATIONAL FITNESS

With an age range from walking to 11 years old, KidStrong offers programs



Jack Dimatteo (Assistant General Manager), Dominic Basile (General Manager), and Sam Testa (Senior Operations Specialist) in their affirmation pose.



Photo: Paula Severino

One of the rooms where training classes are held using various equipment.

that are tailored to the age and development of each group. “The younger groups of kids under four years old are parent based, so the parents are on the floor with them,” said regional director Lori DiMatteo. “We coach the parents alongside of the kids so they can be there for individual support as well.”

“We use functional, foundational fitness; as we increase our heart rate and our oxygen rate, it ignites the brain,” DiMatteo additionally remarked. “We get the fitness function going and then we build the cognitive development by having the children focus on one of our screens at the time in which their brains are completely ignited, which helps build new neurons in the brain. When the kids come back the next week, those new neurons are still there, so we do

it again and build upon those neurons. They eventually see success in school with focus because we are wiring their brains properly.”

After the affirmation, each class begins with a simple warmup consisting of an organized run around the mat. Along with other exercises involving corrective movements, the students then complete obstacles that include ninja courses, box jumps, stabilization movements, balance movements and core workouts. KidStrong also runs competitions at the end of each class. An example of a competition are tire flip relay races which Basile says “work on social skills and teamwork in competition.”

ACHIEVING GOALS

“I think it is important to teach the kids how to win and how to lose,”

says Basile. “A lot of kids these days react in a manner that doesn’t serve them best when they do lose. As long as they are putting the effort in, they can achieve their goals and win down the road. It’s not about winning right now; what matters is to continually put that effort in to achieve what your goal is. When they lose, it is to have them feel the emotions they are experiencing and help them develop the behavior to react different in the future in a way that will better suit them.”

According to DiMatteo, KidStrong’s curriculum is written at the headquarter level, with a team of experts consisting of doctors of physical therapy, occupational therapists, exercise physiologists, gym teachers, personal trainers, and medical doctors.

“To begin the process, we start out by having a 20-to-25-minute phone conversation to get to know the child because every kid is going to be different,” remarks Assistant General

Manager Jack DiMatteo. “We get to know them; the value we can bring for each individual child is the first step. After our conversation, the child will come in for a 45-minute trial class to see how they will react.”

With their recent opening in Orange, Basile remarked that “we have been able to meet a large amount of people from the community and getting to know them and develop those relationships has been important to all of us. We have loved being able to meet the families and create new relationships.”

Along with the scheduled programs, KidStrong follows the Town of Orange school calendar, which allows them to do pop up camps for school holidays and starting next summer, will include full summer camps. KidStrong also does birthday parties which Basile says that “nobody parties like KidStrong parties.”

For information contact KidStrong via their website at kidstrong.com/start/orange-ct or call: (475) 318-7080. ■



Photo: Paula Severino

Dominic Basile in front of “the Rig” which is used for different programs using tires, ropes, and monkey bars to gain strength and lateral movement.



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WRITTEN BY: TASHA MEISENHEIMER

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The agency is dedicated to helping aging loved ones continue to live where they wish, with the assistance of caregivers who have exclusive training and receive special certification.

Located at 109 Boston Post Road, Suite 204, the Orange office serves as a hub for their state-of-the-art training center. Here, caregivers are provided ongoing, hands-on training. One-of-a-kind in the industry, Senior Helpers is a clinician-owned and operated non-medical home care agency with a remarkably talented team that includes multiple care coordinators, recruiters, and medical professionals such as an RN and ARNP, all dedicated to delivering exceptional care.

OWNERS' BACKGROUNDS

Co-owner, Tim Francis, brings a profound sense of service to the agency. A board-certified physician assistant, Tim's experience as a first responder during the September 11th attacks, exemplifies his own

deep commitment to helping others. Reflecting on his journey, Tim says, "Owning Senior Helpers allows me to serve another group of heroes—our nation's military service members." The agency, in fact, works closely with the VA, providing home care for veterans throughout the state.

Strategic co-owner, Jack Yeung, has a personal connection to the mission. Having watched his mother face the challenges of aging, Jack recognized the critical need for reliable home care solutions. "This experience highlighted the tremendous value in a field where solutions are scarce. Witnessing these struggles firsthand, I saw an opportunity to make a significant impact," Jack shares. Beyond Senior Helpers, Jack owns eight pharmacies and eleven restaurants, each business rooted in a commitment to excellence and community service.

Jack believes there is a profound sense of fulfillment in delivering personalized solutions in an industry that is increasingly becoming impersonal. It's about making a tangible difference, ensuring that care remains compassionate and patient centered. Senior Helpers is determined to bring assistance and innovation to geriatric care, safeguarding the support and dignity that seniors deserve.

Three years ago, Tim and his wife, Melissa, relocated to Connecticut from Florida, bringing with them two decades of experience in patient management. Excited by the opportunity to partner with Jack, Tim is committed to serving the senior population with his medical expertise and dedication.



Photo: Paula Severino

Co-owner and Physician Assistant, Tim Francis.

PARTNERSHIPS

Tim and his team have notably established invaluable partnerships with senior care specialists, creating a robust network that greatly benefits their clients. These alliances include Unity and Reliant Pharmacies, ensuring free delivery of medications and prepackaged medication sets for those clients who choose to utilize these pharmacies. Additionally, through PACT Home Care, seniors can receive home-based primary care, allowing clinicians to manage patients in the comfort of their own homes. Senior Helpers also maintains relationships with moving companies that specialize in assisting seniors who transition to new living environments, hospice services, and senior care placement specialists, providing comprehensive support for every aspect of their clients' needs.

Their long-term vision is to become the premier home care provider in the region and to partner with



Photo: Paula Severino

The training room is referred to as 'The Center of Excellence,' where employees and caregivers are trained.

more assisted living facilities who share their desire for the provision of excellent senior care. Currently partnered with some of the most prestigious assisted living facilities in Connecticut, they aim to expand their reach, forging partnerships with more communities who seek to have trustworthy home care services. Melissa's work with PACT Primary Care and Tim's extensive medical experience in southwest Florida, have given them a deep understanding of the culture and standards of these communities.

Senior Helpers also actively participates in local events and initiatives to enhance the quality of life for seniors in the community. Tim remarks, "As proud members of the Orange Chamber of Commerce, we are deeply integrated into the fabric of our local area."

INSURANCE

Remarkably, as of July 1, 2024, Senior Helpers has partnered with Medicare Part B on a national level.



Tim Francis (left), with Administrative Manager, David Kahn (center) and Recruiter, Meghan Koskelowski demonstrating how caregivers are trained to use the Hoyer lift which aides in moving patients from one place to another.

This groundbreaking development means that a senior with a Dementia diagnosis and Medicare Part B is now eligible for home care services. Tim invites anyone with questions about this new opportunity to contact him directly for more information.


Senior Helpers really stands out as more than just a business; it is a

home care agency with a devoted team of compassionate professionals committed to providing the highest quality of personalized care for the aging community.


For additional information, please call 203-349-2676 or visit their website: seniorhelpers.com/ct/fairfield/ ■

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Neighbors Helping Neighbors for 100 Years

WRITTEN BY: ANNEMARIE SLIBY

The upcoming year marks a special milestone for a group that has been keeping families safe in Orange since 1925. This dynamic group, the Orange Volunteer Fire Association, is made up of extraordinary volunteers who respond to fire service calls no matter the day or time.

These incredible members drop whatever it is they're doing to assist in emergencies and hazardous situations, working side-by-side with their peers to protect the lives and property in the town. It truly is "neighbors helping neighbors," a slogan the Association coined in 1925.

STRICTLY VOLUNTEER

Many don't realize the Orange Volunteer Fire Association (OVFA) is a volunteer-based organization, which means that firefighters do not get paid to perform these services and those firefighters also have careers or are students earning degrees.

In addition to service calls, which include structure fires, activated fire alarms, carbon monoxide alarms, motor vehicle accident extrication and clean up, and hazmat; the OVFA is also responsible for fire prevention, education, training, and fundraising. Calls average over 600 per year, and each member accomplishes up to 2,000 hours of service, training, and fund raising each year.

The town provides a stipend for operational costs in the amount of \$190,000 annually. To cover additional expenses, the OVFA seeks donations and hosts various fundraising events, such as boot drives, a pancake breakfast, and the annual Fireman's Carnival, which began in 1927 and is their major fundraiser.

According to Fire Chief Vaughan Dumas, the OVFA plans to invest in six new air packs totaling \$54,120, which



will replace outdated equipment this year. Dumas mentioned the upgrade is essential for the safety of our firefighters, and he emphasized the importance of self-contained breathing apparatus (SBA).

"It is the most important and widely used tool in fire service today and will significantly enhance the safety and effectiveness of our dedicated volunteers as they protect our community," said Dumas.

A DOUBLE CELEBRATION

The new year will bring an abundance of events the OVFA has organized in celebration of their 100th anniversary. A series of events planned will begin in March with a Tequila/Bourbon Tasting (scheduled for March 19th) and conclude in December with a Centennial Anniversary Gala. Additional events still in the planning phase are a pizza contest and car show.

In conjunction with this amazing milestone achievement, the OVFA will also host the 142nd Connecticut State Firefighters Convention from September 12th to the 14th. Each year, one of the 169 towns of Connecticut hosts the convention, where firefighters from around the state share camaraderie and pride, attend meetings, accept



awards, and celebrate the service of Connecticut firefighters.

Chief Vaughan Dumas boasts, "This is the first time Orange will host the convention and it is quite an honor, and we are especially excited to celebrate our 100th anniversary at the same time."

The convention will bring hundreds of firefighters and spectators into town, who will be staying at local hotels. Events planned for the September weekend include luncheons, a dinner dance, and a parade, scheduled for September 14th at noon.

PUBLIC INVITED

This will not only be an exciting year for the OVFA, but for the town as well. Residents are invited to attend any of the events planned in celebration of both milestones, aside from the firefighters' convention.

Dumas states, "We are all very excited for the upcoming year and look forward to seeing the Orange community at our events."

For more information, to buy tickets, or sponsorships, check the OVFA website at orangevfd.org or send an email to ovfd@orange-ct.gov. ■

ROTARY CLUB of ORANGE

12TH ANNUAL

THANKSGIVING DAY
TURKEY TROT



RACE DAY
REGISTRANTS
WELCOME

8:00 AM Start
November 28, 2024
High Plains Community Center, Orange, CT
www.rotarycluboforange.org



5th Annual

Holiday Farm Market and Craft Fair

Outdoor Event

Thursday, November 21, 2024 • 3:30 – 6:30

Under the Pavilion at High Plains, 525 Orange Center Road, Orange

**Shopping, Food Trucks, Sweets, Holiday Music
& Selfies with Santa!**

Scan for a full list of vendors



Questions, call (203) 891-1045

*Start your Holiday Shopping and Visit your
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*Jewelry, soaps, candles, essential oils, honey,
crafts, bread, cupcakes, cookies, and more!*



Business Milestones

Congratulations to these Orange businesses who celebrated milestones this year. We wish you continued success in the years to come.



F&W Equipment - 164 Boston Post Road

85 Years

Founded by Harold O. Funk, F&W Equipment originally began in New Haven in 1939 and moved to Orange in 1955. Family-owned and operated, F&W provides equipment, parts, and service solutions to builders and contractors and is proud to operate with a 3rd generation. The Funk family pictured l to r in 1965: 2nd generation Roger, 3rd generation baby Jim, Roger's wife



Mary, 1st generation Harold, and Harold's wife Elizabeth. Smaller image: Their current location built by them in 1964.



Knight's Inc. - 286 Boston Post Road

70 Years

Knight's, Inc. sells and services outdoor power equipment and has been at the same location in Orange for 70 years. Founded by Frank and Doris Knight (John and Fred's parents), Knight's is family-owned and operated, with the 3rd generation recently taking the reins this year. Pictured from l to r: Bryan, Greg, Lynn, Fred,



and John Knight, and Josh Ruas. Smaller image: The building as it was in 1954.



Ultimate Image - 312 Racebrook Road

40 Years

Ultimate Image, owned and operated by Gina DeRosa, opened in 1984 by Gina's father, John DeRosa. Pictured l to r, back row is Dawn Guidetti, Tammy Napoli, Nicole Gullo, Patrick Reynolds, Tracey Papel, and JoAnn Tafuto. Front, left to right: Laura Arruga and owner, Gina DeRosa. Also in separate image are pictured Gina's parents, Nettie and John DeRosa in 1998.



Arnel Family Chiropractic - 233 Boston Post Road

30 Years

Dr. Jeffrey Arnel opened his chiropractic practice in Orange in 1994. He is Board Certified by the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners in both radiology and clinical assessment and treatment. He uses adjusting techniques such as Thompson Drop Table, Sacro-Occipital Technique, and Diversified full spine.



New England Spine & Disc - 391 Boston Post Road

15 Years

Dr. Richard Carpenos, a chiropractor for over 35 years, opened this unique practice in Orange in 2009. He uses state-of-the-art technology to provide non-surgical solutions to correct the root cause of pain without drugs, surgery, or injections. Some therapies include decompression, shockwave, and laser using various technology.



Take a Moment to Treat Yourself to Self-Care

WRITTEN BY: TASHA MEISENHEIMER

Take a Moment, located in Firelite Commons, encourages its clients to do just that; take a moment to unwind and relax. In a busy world, many times self-care gets put on the back burner. Their main objective is to provide a space for clients to relax, destress, and refocus on a healthy state of wellbeing all within a 30-minute session.

The owner, Nestor Kaplan, has 20 years of healthcare leadership experience and witnesses how clients can suffer mentally and physically. The lack of access and affordability of therapies inspired him to start his own business where clients would be able to use self-care devices to combat chronic pain and discomfort. Kaplan himself suffers from a bulging disc in his spine and a vein injury that led to a pulmonary embolism and edema of his leg. These lingering conditions are uncomfortable and painful. As a husband and father of two active children, taking heavy sedatives was not an option. By using self-care devices, Kaplan can manage his symptoms, live a better life, and not be dependent on prescription sedatives.

This holistic path led Kaplan to become a certified Vibroacoustic Therapeutic Practitioner, implementing a noninvasive technique through audible, harmonic soundwaves and vibrations to ease acute and chronic pain. This gentle inner body massage helps relieve stress, anxiety, and pain. Take a Moment offers vibroacoustic therapy, which is FDA approved to help proliferate blood circulation, decrease pain, and increase mobility. They offer an inharmony sound lounge device that provides a catered catalog of vibroacoustic and musical meditation therapy sessions.



Photo: Take a Moment



A few of the services Take A Moment offers - top, left to right: LightStim Red Light Facials, Normatec Leg Compressions, and bottom, left to right: 4D Massage Chairs and the InHarmony Sound Lounge.

DEVICES AND THERAPIES

A variety of self-service devices are offered at Take a Moment. For example, the Normatec leg compression boots are the newest no hose design. The Normatec boot mimics the body's natural muscle pump through a rhythmic inflation and deflation process which leads to improved lymphatic drainage and increased circulation of lower extremities. Also on site, are 4D

massage chairs which significantly boost health by relieving muscle tension, improving circulation, and reducing stress. These chairs imitate a professional therapist by enhancing relaxation and mental clarity while promoting better sleep and overall balance.

The spa provides red light therapy using LightStim Propanels, to help with anti-aging acne treatments and

pain relief. A professional grade LightStim sheet masque is provided which softens fine lines, wrinkles, and eases redness. For clients who want to target specific areas of their body, these propanels can be easily adjusted to fit anywhere on the body.

Lastly, the spa offers a HaloOne salt therapy device which swiftly releases 3% pharmaceutical grade saline solution. This helps the client to breathe purposely and increases oxygen flow through the blood.

MEDITATE AND DESTRESS

Take a Moment offers a tranquil, inviting space with warm earth tones speckled with pops of green to ease the mind and promote serenity. Both the 4-D massage chairs and the vibracoustic sound lounge are in private rooms intended for one individual. These are ideal places to meditate and destress. The Orange location provides plenty of parking and easy access to the Boston Post Road and I-95.

SESSIONS AND PACKAGES

Kaplan believes that the self-service tools provided are easy to use. He explains, "We carefully selected devices that can help busy individuals who sometimes can't spare a minute. They can come in two to three times a week for 30-minute sessions that truly make a



Take a Moment
TOUCHELESS THERAPY

difference in their overall health." At Take a Moment no promises are made to help cure or eliminate any chronic conditions. The self-service devices are intended to assist clients in managing their symptoms; and the

spa provides an oasis of tranquility and privacy.

Take a Moment recently opened this month. There are a total of five employees working to assist clients. Consumers will have the option of choosing from a la carte sessions, groups of sessions, and several membership packages which offer a significant discount.

Self-care is an important part of living a healthy and happy life. There is no time like the present to make a change for your wellbeing. Dedication 30-90 minutes a week will uplift your mood, balance your mind and body, and reduce nagging discomfort and persistent pain. Please consider taking a moment for yourself.

Hours are Monday through Saturday 10 am-7 pm and Sunday, 11 am-6 pm. Appointments can be made online at TakeaMomentNow.com. For questions or any additional information, send an email to info@takeamomentnow.com. ■

HELP US CELEBRATE!



ORANGE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

100 Years of Neighbors
Helping Neighbors



SCAN FOR
MORE INFO

Advertising & Sponsorship Opportunities!

Various sponsorship opportunities from \$25 to \$2,000 will be available to support events, as well as a book that will be published commemorating the milestone.



Calendar of Events

WRITTEN BY: MARY BIALY

November 21: Holiday Farm Market and Craft Fair

Pavilion at High Plains Community Center, 525 Orange Center Road, 3:30 pm – 6:30 pm, rain or shine.

A variety of farm, food, and craft vendors, food trucks, holiday music and selfie station. Free admission and parking. Contact Orange Economic Development at 203-891-1045 for information or check farmmarketorange.com for a list of vendors.

November 25: Tyler City Presentation

High Plains Community Center, 525 Orange Center Rd., 1:00 pm
Orange Historical Society's presentation on the history of Tyler City. For more information, visit orangehistory.org, find on Facebook, or call 203-795-3106.

November 28: 12th Annual Rotary Club of Orange 5K Turkey Trot

High Plains Community Center, 525 Orange Cntr. Rd., 8 am start
To register and for more details go to rotarycluboforange.org.

November 29, December 1, December 8: Annual Craft Fair

The Party Barn at Maplevue Farm, 603 Orange Center Road, 10 am – 3:30 pm

Handcrafted vendors throughout both days for your holiday shopping. For more information contact maplevuefarm87@gmail.com. The event will be canceled if it rains.

December 7: Annual Holiday Festival and Tree Lighting

Orange Town Green, Orange Cntr. Rd. / 205 Meetinghouse Ln.
Start with Cookie Walk and hot chocolate 3 pm, tractor parade starts its journey at 4:30 at Fred Wolfe Park and arrives by the green at 5:30, tree lighting begins at dusk. The Academy Museum and Stone-Otis House Museum offering free tours at 2 – 6 pm, Rain date Sunday December 8th. Visit orange-ct.gov or orangetractorparade.com.

December 8: Music on the Green

Orange Congregational Church, 205 Meetinghouse Lane, 4 pm
The Amity Choir with the Handbell Concert and Carol Sing.

December 14, 21, 28: The Stone-Otis House Museum Holiday Store

615 Orange Center Road, Open Daily Noon – 3 pm

January 1: Chilly Chili Run 5K Road Race

High Plains Community Center, 525 Orange Center Road, 10:15 am start.

To register and for more information go to hitekracing.com.

March 19: OVFA's Bourbon/Tequila Tasting

Orange Cigar Lounge, 311 Boston Post Road, 6 pm

Enjoy fine spirits, live jazz by Jay Rowe, food, and cigars with members of the Orange Volunteer Fire Department (\$100 tickets are limited). Go to website orangevfd.org for more information.

April 5: Taste of the Past

Orange Congregational Church, 1 pm – 3:30 pm

Hosted by the Orange Historical Society. Food tasting event of Colonial times organized by the Orange Historical Society. For more information, check orangehistory.org.

May 24: Race Brook School Food Truck Festival

Orange Fairgrounds, 525 Orange Center Road, 4 pm – 8 pm

Such a delicious way to start Memorial Day Weekend! For more information, find on Facebook at [RBSFoodTruckFest](https://www.facebook.com/RBSFoodTruckFest).

ORANGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY EVENTS

The Academy Museum

605 Orange Center Road Open every Saturday 10 am - 3 pm
The 2nd floor S.N.E.T. Exhibit is open the 4th Saturday of each month 10 am - 3 pm.

Bryan-Andrew House Museum Tour

131 Old Tavern Road Open Sunday's 1 pm - 3 pm (\$4)
Hearth-cooked dinners by request call: 203-795-3106.

For additional information visit orangehistory.org

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