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For Our Town From Our Town

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Volume 32 No 7 February 6, 2026

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TOTOKET TIMES

Deadline		Publication Date	
February	13	February	20
February	27	March	6
March	13	March	20
March	27	April	3
April	10	April	17
April	24	June	1
June	8	June	15



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Table of Contents

Editorial	Page	3
School	Page	4
Sports	Page	5
Community	Page	6
Church	Page	5
Recreation	Page	7
Classified	Page	8

Totoket Times is mailed free to all town residents.
If you wish to discontinue contact 203-410-4254.

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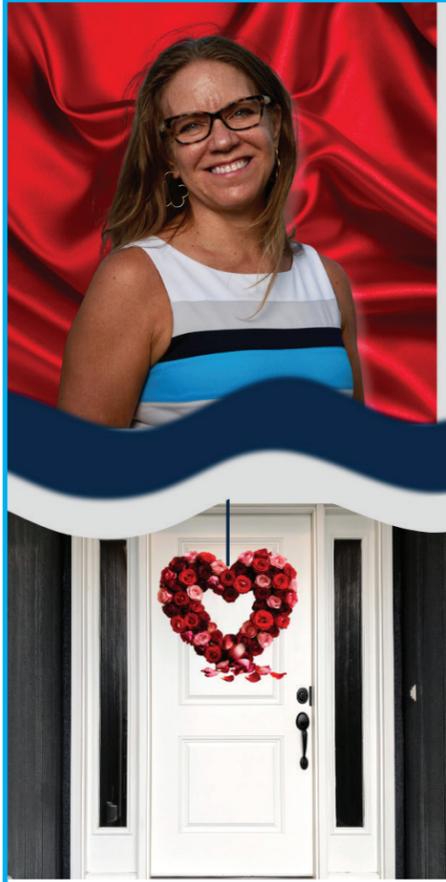
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State Representative Vincent Candelora Nine Years Ago, a Colleague Warned Us About Facial Recognition. We Should Have Listened.



In 2016, my colleague State Rep. Tami Zawistowski of East Granby gave a prescient speech on the House floor about facial recognition technology in retail stores. She was describing a bill that would require businesses using it to notify customers.

The House Chamber is a noisy place, and it can be hard for speakers to know whether their words are sinking in.

Nine years later, that issue—and its intersection with artificial intelligence—is at the top of the agenda for many state lawmakers, myself included. Nationwide conversation has bloomed about the role AI algorithms play in government decisions. Should child services agencies rely on algorithms to determine placements? Should government use them in grant awards?

And increasingly, the concerns hit closer to home: our wallets and our privacy.

I'm troubled by a world where grocery stores price everyday staples using AI-driven algorithms—charging more for milk at 6 p.m. when workers are heading home than at 10 a.m. That's not dynamic pricing; it's exploitation. Worse still is the prospect of facial recognition software scanning what you're wearing and adjusting prices accordingly. Expensive handbag? Your chips could cost more. That's not science fiction—it's the direction we're heading.

In mid-January, I attended a massive trade show in New York City hosted by the National Retail Federation. AI and facial recognition were themes woven throughout.

If you follow national news, you know there's tension between states and the federal government overregulating these technologies. Washington wants to prohibit states from adopting their own rules, citing concerns about a patchwork of regulations. States want the freedom to chart their own course. I understand both perspectives, though I lean toward states setting their own destiny.

That tension exists within Connecticut, too. Over the last few legislative sessions, members of the General Assembly have tried to put guardrails around AI. But the governor has sided with Washington's argument—worried about that patchwork and concerned that regulation could stifle innovation in technologies that could benefit a state like ours, where education, science, and technology are hallmarks.

That standoff has prevented action. But we may be reaching a breaking point.

This session, I'm introducing a bill addressing AI-driven dynamic pricing in grocery stores. My aim is to advance the dialogue and protect consumers from practices that feel more like price gouging than innovation.

Those who follow the legislature know that progress on complex legislation can be a slow burn. But whenever I think about this issue, I remember Rep. Zawistowski's warning from nine years ago.

None of us could have foreseen how fast this technology would develop. Rep. Zawistowski's bill never became law—but her early warning is a reminder that the time to act is usually sooner than we think.

Rep. Vincent Candelora
House Republican Leader
86th Assembly District
North Branford, Durham, East Haven,
Guilford

Let's Be "Frank"

Well, brother, I need to tell you I am a lucky man. In last week's letter, I talked about my house fall, and what I thought would be a week or so out of commission is turning into much more than that.

My leg is so swollen that I can only walk with a walker and that's only to and from the bathroom. Because of the internal bleeding my iron and blood levels are low so I am taking Iron pills, eating liver and onions and spinach (I'm Popeye to sailor man). But mobility is still rough and they're telling me it could be 2 to 3 months. Even though in two weeks my only travels have been to or from the bathroom and the bedroom. I realized how lucky I am.

Brothers from the Knights of Columbus Council 6801 have reached out continuously to ask me if I need anything. Brothers and sisters from the North Haven, Sons and Daughters Of Italy have done the same as my church family from Saint Anthony's and my friends and neighbors from different areas have all reached out or even made phone calls just to keep my spirits up.

And as you know, to have a wife like I do is simply one of God's greatest gifts in life. If I were her, I would've put a pillow over my head two weeks ago.



So when I sit here feeling sorry for myself and a phone call or a text message pops up. I realize how I am better off than most and how lucky I am. My just turned teenage grandson has volunteered to help me edit the Totoket Times if needed and help his Mema pick it up from the printer and deliver it to the post office.

So I am grateful to all of my friends and family and thankful for the wonderful life I have.

See you soon,



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The publisher assumes no responsibility for typographical errors. In the event of an error, the publisher will issue a credit adjustment on only the incorrect portion of the advertisement, as well as a retraction in the next issue.

Letters to the editor...

This paper encourages all readers to voice their opinions and comments. The Totoket Times is not responsible for erroneous information or statements in letters to the editor. Letters should be as brief as possible.

All letters must be signed. A telephone number should be included and no personal attacks.

This paper reserves the right to edit all letters.

All letters should be addressed to :

The Editor

P.O. Box 313, Northford, CT 06472



For the Health of it...

Love Yourself Healthy!



Each February my health & wellness message centers around self-love. “Be your own best Valentine,” I typically say. As corny as it may sound, to me it’s both appropriate and important! Love is in the air and there’s no need to wait for Cupid to send some in your direction. The self-love I’m referring to is self care. I’m not talking about spa days, although that can be nice too, but that’s more self-comfort, an occasional treat. What I’m referring to are simple yet powerful tools that can be used frequently and consistently once we give ourselves permission to do so.

By the time late winter rolls around, many of us feel like we’re powering through with very little steam. The holidays are behind us, New Year motivation has faded, and spring still feels a bit out of reach. Unfortunately, this final stretch of winter is often when the immune system is most vulnerable. Shorter days, colds that seem never ending, flu season, disrupted routines, and cumulative stress, can all take a toll. However, self-care, which is self-love at its finest, can be the perfect antidote for an immune system boost.

The best news is, this can be accomplished without extreme measures or perfection. In fact, the most powerful strategies for immune system support are rooted in consistency, especially when motivation is running low.

There are many subtle immune system challenges this time of year. We tend to move less, get less sunlight, and spend more time indoors. Stress hormones tend to stay elevated after a busy or emotionally demanding season, and sleep quality often suffers due to schedule disruptions or lingering fatigue. By late winter, the immune system isn’t necessarily weak, it may just be tired. This is where self-care becomes an absolute necessity.

Before you protest that self-care is indulgent, take a moment to consider who loses if you don’t win with your health? With a shift in perception you will see that it’s both basic and essential. The immune system depends on signals from the nervous system, hormones, gut, and cardiovascular system. When these systems are chronically stressed or under-supported, immunity follows suit.

What you need is to team up with a few strong self-care allies that can make a real difference during winter’s final stretch:

1. Prioritize Sleep

Sleep is not only one of the best immune boosters available, it’s free! During deep sleep, the body produces cytokines, proteins that help fight infection and inflammation. If your sleep has been inconsistent, focus on small improvements: consistent bedtimes, keeping bedroom cool & dark, and limiting screens (yes TV too) before bed. (As always, progress and consistency matter more than perfection).

2. Nourish and Hydrate

Nutrients are needed for the immune system to function properly. Choose whole foods like colorful vegetables, fruits, lean proteins, healthy fats, and warming comfort foods such as soups and stews.

Although we tend to think about hydration more in warmer months, dry winter air and heated indoor spaces can quietly cause dehydration, affecting everything from energy levels to mucus membranes (which capture intruders like germs and are often referred to as the first line of immune defense).

3. Gentle, Consistent Movement

Exercise supports immune health, but more isn’t always better. Long, intense workouts when you’re already stressed or running on little sleep can backfire. Again, aim for consistency: walking, strength training, yoga, or mobility work. Movement improves circulation, reduces stress hormones, and supports cardiovascular health, all of which indirectly benefit immunity.

4. Manage Stress with Intention

Chronic stress suppresses immune function by increasing cortisol levels. While we know eliminating stress isn’t realistic, regulating how we respond to it is powerful. Breathing exercises, time outdoors, journaling, prayer or meditation, and setting boundaries around your time all count as immune-supportive behaviors. Sometimes the most impactful self-care is simply saying no.

Since February is also heart health month, it’s notable to mention that immune health and heart health are deeply connected. Inflammation, circulation, sleep quality, stress levels, and lifestyle habits influence both systems. These are all added benefits without extra effort. Even small actions like walking after meals, reducing ultra-processed foods, or practicing gratitude can positively impact both your heart and immune system.

This season is about more than just dodging a cold or the flu. It’s about listening, adjusting, and supporting the body so it can do what it’s designed

North Branford Rotary Seeking Nominations for 2026 Service Above Self Awards



Pictured Left to Right 2023, 2024 & 2025 Honorees: Dave Palumbo, Steve Torino, Al Rose, Mary-Ellen Dilella, Ashley McClain, Kerry Haynes, William DellaCamera, Randall Chittendon, Daniel Armin.

The North Branford Rotary Club is proud to recognize individuals who make a meaningful difference in the North Branford community through our Service Above Self Award.

This award honors individuals who actively help others, demonstrate meaningful humanitarian service, and whose efforts have had a positive impact on our community and beyond.

Nominations are now open.

Community members may submit individual nominations by visiting NorthBranfordRotary.org or through the Service Above Self post on our Facebook page at facebook.com/northbranfordrotaryclub. Nominations are submitted online using a form that requests basic information about the nominee, along with detailed examples of how the individual exemplifies the Rotary motto, *Service Above Self*. To be considered, nominations should include specific and thorough descriptions of the nominee’s service and contributions.

The deadline to submit a nomination is April 24, 2026, so please act quickly.

Each year, the Rotary Club receives many strong nominations, making the selection process challenging. If you nominated someone in a previous year who was not selected, we encourage you to nominate them again for consideration.

We look forward to learning more about the remarkable individuals in our magnificent town who consistently go above and beyond to make the Town of North Branford—and the world—a better place.

Questions?

For more information about the award or nomination process, please contact:

- NorthBranfordRotary@gmail.com
- Committee Chairperson Melinda Fonda at 203-988-0883
- Club President Anne Merola at 203-988-2898

Save the Date: The Service Above Self Award Dinner honoring our 2026 recipients will take place on Thursday, June 18, 2026 at 6:00 PM at The Woodwinds.

Tickets will be available beginning May 5, 2026 through our website, Facebook page, or directly from any North Branford Rotarian.

to do. Strengthening the immune system now can help you avoid getting sick, minimize symptoms if you do, and set the tone for how you enter into spring. So go ahead, give yourself some love. And remember self-care isn’t selfish, it’s actually strategic. As winter winds down, those small, steady choices can be exactly what carry you into the next season feeling healthier, stronger, and more resilient. Spring may not be in the air just yet, but it’s coming. How you care for yourself now can make all the difference in how you feel when it shows up!

February challenge: Consider choosing one small self-care habit to focus on over the next several weeks. Whether it’s committing to a consistent bedtime, adding more whole foods to your meals, taking a daily walk, or carving out five minutes of quiet each day. Consistency wins over intensity.

Let me know what you’ve chosen at joann@wellnessfusion.net. I love your feedback and comments so do keep them coming. This article is here for you, For the Health of it!

If you need guidance, support, or practical tools to help explore evidence-based lifestyle resources, connect with a wellness professional who can help you to create sustainable habits that last throughout every season.

**The Northford-North Branford Women's Club,
GFWC**

Is Accepting Scholarship Applications

The Connecticut Federation of Women's Clubs has announced two scholarships that are available to Connecticut women pursuing advanced courses of study at Institutions of higher learning. Awards are granted based on future promises, scholastic ability, and financial need.

The Dorothy E. Schoelzel memorial scholarship has a maximum award of \$2,000. Candidates must have completed three or more years of undergraduate work in an accredited institution with a 3.0 average or higher in the field of Education.

The Phipps scholarship has a maximum award of \$1,000. Candidates must have completed two or more years of undergraduate work in an accredited institution with a 3.0 average or higher toward a bachelor's or post graduate degree.

Completed applications, including general and personal information, a financial statement, instructor/employer references, and official transcript of at least the most recent two years of undergraduate or graduate work must be received by February 10, 2026.

The application may be obtained by visiting the Northford-North Branford Women's Club website at www.northfordnbwomensclubgfwc.org.

For further information, contact Rose Lynch at 203-483-8395.

THEY MAKE US PROUD

Eric Izzo, Tanner Izzo, & Gianni Sommo were named to the Dean's List at Roger Williams University in Bristol, RI.

Nathan Tranquilli and Emma Yacono were named to the Dean's List at Eastern Connecticut State University in Willimantic, CT.

Conor Grant, Rachel Pepe, Chelsey Shatto-Renz, Alexander Astorino and John Curran were named to the Dean's List at Southern New Hampshire University in Manchester, NH.

Benjamin Stegina was named to the Dean's List at Springfield College in Springfield, MA.

Robert Mullins was named to the Dean's List at Assumption University in Worcester, MA.

Catherine Pollack was named to the Dean's List at Nichols College in Dudley, MA

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The Town of North Branford is looking for residents to serve on a Charter Revision Commission.

The Town Charter is the document that sets the basic rules for how our local government works. The Charter defines the roles of the Town Council, the Town Manager, and other elected and appointed officials. The Charter Revision Commission will review the Charter and consider whether changes should be recommended to better serve the community.

Possible topics for review include:

- The structure and organization of Town government
- The duties and powers of elected and appointed boards, committees, commissions, and positions
- How the Town budget is developed and approved

Commission members will meet regularly over the next several months to study the Charter, discuss possible updates, and gather public input. The Commission will make recommendations for changes to the Town Council as allowed under Connecticut law.

Applicants must be residents and registered voters of the Town of North Branford. No special background is required, but an interest in local government and community service is important. Per Section 10-3 of the Town Charter, members of the Charter Revision Commission may not serve on other boards, committees, and commissions concurrently.

Residents interested in serving should complete the application at www.northbranfordct.gov/195/boards-commissions, submit a letter of interest, and a brief résumé by 12PM on February 13th, 2026 to gcox@northbranfordct.gov, in person at the Town Manager’s Office by mail to:

Office of the Town Manager
909 Foxon Road
North Branford, CT 06471

For more information, please contact Acting Town Manager Rory Burke at (203) 484-6000 or rburke@northbranfordct.gov. The Town of North Branford encourages residents with a wide range of backgrounds and viewpoints to apply.

Rory Burke
Acting Town Manager
Town of North Branford
909 Foxon Road
North Branford, CT 06471
(203) 484-6000



Recycling News

You should have received a Light Blue 2026 Recycling/Trash Card in your last issue of the Totoket Times. Please keep this card handy all year. It has important dates and information that you will need concerning your trash pickups and what can be recycled.

If the card was missing or you misplace yours, there will be copies at both libraries, public works, STW Community Center and Town Hall. You can also download a copy from the town website or from the North Branford Community Pride Facebook page.

Scrap Metal Pickup will be the week of April 6th.
The Electronic Waste Drop-Off will be on April 18th where we will be taking most electronics, mattresses and propane tanks, all for free.
Bulky Waste pick up will be the week of April 20th.



North Branford Police Department has a prescription drop box located in the lobby.

These boxes collect any unwanted prescriptions (pet prescriptions also) 24-7.

Please share this information with all your friends and neighbors.



Many beauty supply stores have partnered with Pact to reduce the amount of hard-to-recycle beauty packaging, like tiny tubes and caps. Most cosmetic packages end up in landfills, are incinerated or littered.

Look inside the entrance for this collection box that collects these tiny packages that are too small for your normal curbside recycling.

The Pact Collective has more information about what can be dropped off.

www.pactcollective.org/the-packaging-problem or www.pactcollective.org/ultaxpact

Are you interested in getting involved on a town committee
Does it upset you when you see littering?
Do you wonder where the trash goes and how recycling works.

The Solid/Hazardous Waste and Recycling Committee is looking for new members.

The new year is full of possibilities and we could use some fresh ideas. Please contact the Town Manager’s office if you are interested.

For more information about recycling in North Branford you can check out North Branford’s Recycling Committee’s website: <https://www.northbranfordct.gov/245/SolidHazardous-Waste-Recycling-Committee> or our Facebook page: North Branford CT Hazardous Waste & Recycling Committee

Thank You for Your Participation



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CORN BLUEBERRY PANCAKES

FEB. 10
8:30AM - 10:30AM

STW COMMUNITY CENTER

REC & READ

Join our Parks and Rec staff for a monthly story time and activity geared towards children ages 0-4 years. This 45 minute program will include a short story read out loud and an activity to match. *Each child will get to take home a copy of the book!*

February 18, 2026 - 10:15 - 11:00am - \$5
STW Art Room - Ages 4 and under

Please register by 2/16/26

INDOOR FIELD HOCKEY WINTER CLINIC

STW COMMUNITY CENTER GYM/CAFE - FEB 5 - 26
GRADES 1-5 - 5:30-6:30PM - \$40 RES/\$45 NR

Instructor: Cheryl Canada, Connecticut Field Hockey Hall of Fame recipient, Former Division I Associate Head Coach, USA Field Hockey Level II Accreditation, CPR and First Aid Certified

COOKIES WITH A COP

Tuesday, February 17
4:00 - 5:30pm
STW Community Center

Cookies with a Cop is a community program aimed at fostering trust and open communication between residents and local law enforcement. Participants share cookies and hot cocoa while asking questions and connecting in a relaxed setting. This program encourages meaningful conversations and builds stronger relationships. It's a sweet way to strengthen community ties and mutual understanding.
Kindly register by 2/13

SENIOR CENTER - MOHEGAN SUN BUS TRIP

Monday, February 23 - 8:00am - 4:00pm
\$20 res / \$25 nr

If you are meeting at the STW Community Center, we will be leaving at 8:00 a.m. Departs Mohegan at 2:30pm.
Please register by 2/17

CHAIR YOGA

February 17 - April 7 - 10:30 - 11:30am
\$45 res / \$50 nr

Instructor: Sharon Bailey
Chair yoga is a gentle form of yoga that is done while sitting and using a chair for support. Chair yoga helps build strength, improve coordination, and promotes relaxation, reduces stress.
Please register by 2/6

SNOW TUBING

Spend a Thursday night snow tubing with friends at Powder Ridge! Dress for fun in the snow with snow pants, jacket, gloves and hat.

Transportation, tubes, and helmets are provided. Grades 6-8

February 26, 2026 - \$45res/\$50nr
Register by: 2/20

Departs from STW: 4:15 pm
Returns appx: 8:30 pm
Chaperoned by Parks & Recreation staff

Waivers for snow tubing are required and must be filled out and signed by a parent or guardian in order to participate. The waiver can be found under the program information.

LUNCH BUNCH

John & Maria's Pizzeria-Restaurant in East Haven
February 25, 2026
12:00 - 2:00pm

Lunch Bunch is back! Join us for lunch (pay on your own) at John & Maria's Pizzeria-Restaurant in East Haven! Kindly register by 2/18

VALENTINE'S DAY LUNCH

Feb 12, 2026 12:00pm \$5
STW Gym/Cafe

Strawberry cream cheese french toast casserole, sausage, hashbrowns & dessert Please register by 2/6

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"Keenan Funeral Home was truly amazing and very attentive to all of our needs. Thank you Keenan, for being there in our most painful time."
"I truly cannot say enough how grateful my family and I are to Keenan for their exceptional service. From the moment we met to make arrangements to the actual service, they were great. There was no financial pressures, our limits were respected, and everything was said outright."
"Beautiful and peaceful space, staff was very kind and sympathetic... Their kindness will not be forgotten."

Scan below to visit our website!!

United States Power Squadrons®
For Boaters, By Boaters

NEW HAVEN SAIL & POWER SQUADRON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:
Squadron Education Officer Peter DePascale 203-671-2420
Membership Nancy Miller 203-815-9385

AMERICA'S BOATING COURSE

New Haven Sail & Power Squadron, part of America's Boating Club, will hold an eight-hour America's Boating Course in two 4-hour sessions on Sat., Mar. 7 and Sat., Mar. 14 at Essex Veterans Memorial Hall, 3 Westbrook Rd., Centerbrook. Class runs from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. In addition to basic boating, the course will also include personal watercraft operation. Successful completion of this course and the proctored exam satisfies Connecticut's state licensing requirements and allows students to buy the \$50 license.

All students must go to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection website and Online Sportsmen Licensing to obtain their free Connecticut Conservation ID number in advance of the class. Go to <https://ct.aspirafocus.com/internetsales> to obtain the number unless you already have a number from a fishing or hunting license.

All students must register by March 1. The class will cost \$60 per person. Prospective students should pay and register at www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/americas-boating-course or text Peter DePascale at 203-671-2420.

New Haven Sail & Power Squadron (NHSPS), is a 501(c)(3) non-profit educational organization dedicated to making boating safer and more enjoyable by teaching classes in boat handling, navigation, and related subjects. For information on NHSPS, go to: www.nhsps.org.