

# ObserverOpinions

## Our Views



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## Spring cleaning for Earth Day

Opening day for trout fisherman was last Saturday. Southington parks are already dotted with small groups of kids practicing baseball and softball for the upcoming seasons.

April seems to be the month that most of us start making our way outdoors, so it’s a good time to remind everyone that we should do what we can to take care of our town and its environment. Perhaps that’s why officials around the world selected April as the month for Earth Day celebrations when the annual event started back in 1970. It’s currently celebrated by more than 193 countries each year.

This year’s Earth Day event is this Saturday, April 16, so if you are looking for something to do this weekend to celebrate it, there are plenty of events in the area.

If the town’s forests are your focus, the Open Space and Aquisition Committee is celebrating the day with a special meeting at 9:15 a.m. at Crescent Lake. They plan to do an educational walk through the largest open space parcel in town to discuss the timber harvest and wildlife habitat restoration project on the property.

Over the past two years, the open space committee has worked with students and faculty from the University of Connecticut to develop an assessment and management plan for the woodland open space surrounding the Crescent Lake recreational site. Their special meeting is an opportunity to speak with the forester overseeing the project and view the progress of the plan’s implementation as it relates to forest management practices, invasive species management, and beneficial wildlife habitat creation.

If the water is more your focus, the Quinnipiac River Watershed Association is holding its spring river cleanup on Saturday, April 16. The Southington event will be focused on the mainstem of the Quinnipiac River (if enough people show up, they may spill into some of the smaller streams and wetlands).

It’s not too late to join them. The local cleanup will be coordinated by Steve Theriault. He can be reached at (860) 302-8099 or stevetheriault@snet.net.

If this weekend doesn’t fit into your hectic schedule, don’t worry. The Southington Land Trust will be hosting their Earth Day cleanups on Saturday, April 23, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at a number of locations throughout town.

They will be removing invasive plants on the local rail-trails. Cleanup volunteers are meeting at the Burritt Street entrance at 9 a.m.. Bring gloves and clippers as they try to clear as much as possible during the cleanup.

The Land Trust will also be holding a cleanup on the Quinnipiac River, beginning at the Raya Clinic parking lot on Lazy Lane. Show up with boots and be prepared to work alongside the river. If you want to help out, contact Carol Langley at (860) 877-4449 or at cosmical14@yahoo.com

Last, but not least, volunteers will be removing invasive plants along Wedgewood Road and replacing them with native flowers. The group will meet at 9 a.m. at the wooded area just past 172 Wedgewood Road. Contact Val Guarino at (860) 378-4481 or at bths62@gmail.com if you are interested.

We hope to see you out there.

## Taking a hard and frank look at the heroin epidemic

As I sat in the Bristol Hospital Hughes Auditorium one evening and looked around the room, reality hit: heroin addiction can affect ANYONE.

Sponsored by Wheeler Clinic and Bristol Hospital, the “Community Conversation on Opiate and Heroin Use and Misuse” event was well-attended by individuals and families from all walks of life. Whether they were recovering addicts or knew someone who is/was addicted, heroin made an impact on the audience in some way. The event, in my eyes, marked the first of countless discussions that the community will have about heroin addiction.

Many were actively engaged throughout the entire event, asking questions to a six-member panel that informed the public about everything from the kinds of resources available to how to support those struggling with addiction. Some even shared personal stories of how heroin affected their own lives or the lives of their loved ones.

It doesn’t matter whether you come from a broken or stable family, how much money or education you have, and what race/ethnicity you are. Addiction can happen to anyone during his or life.

And the data affirms that.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that heroin use has increased among men and women as well as different age groups



### Lisa Capobianco Observations

and income levels. Since 2010, heroin-related overdose deaths have more than tripled, and from 2013 to 2014, heroin overdose death rates increased by 26 percent, with more than 10,500 people dying in 2014, according to the CDC.

Connecticut is no exception. The state reports that the number of people who have fatally overdosed on heroin or a combination of heroin and other drugs has dramatically increased over the past three years from 174 in 2012 to 415 in 2015.

Even more alarming is that the heroin entering the U.S. today is not only cheaper, but also more powerful.

Although I never knew anyone personally who struggled with drug abuse, I can only imagine how difficult it is to stop using.

For Rebecca Allen, senior pro-

gram manager of Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery, addiction was something she did not fully understand. A heroin addict for 10 years, Allen said every time she injected the drug into her arm, she knew she was risking her life, but “just didn’t care.”

Her story was one that could resonate with many who have faced addiction.

She won the battle with addiction, and has been in recovery for 18 years now. Her story served as a beacon of hope at the event, where she was one of the panel members.

It was incredible to hear Allen’s story, but my heart still sank for those who are still struggling with heroin addiction... as well as for those who never made it.

Whether you open up a newspaper or turn on the news, stories about the rising heroin epidemic is everywhere. As our society becomes more aware of the data, more and more people are responding. Besides Bristol, other cities and towns in Connecticut have held their own forums on heroin abuse. Most recently, U.S. Senator Chris Murphy visited various communities throughout the state to learn more about how he could improve federal efforts to address addiction in Connecticut, meeting with patients, health profes

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## Don’t worry, we’re testing our tankers

We can all, hopefully, agree that water is an important ingredient for extinguishing a fire. In the past, I have talked about water supply and how important it is, for example, to shovel out your hydrants in the winter, so we can have rapid access to this critical part of our plan.

But what do we do when there isn’t a hydrant anywhere to be seen? When our water supply is solely limited to what we have in the tanks on our trucks? The fires are no less dangerous if they are far from a hydrant, nor do they burn more slowly. So the answer is to find a way to bring water in large quantities to the fire. The only way to do that efficiently enough to be successful is to use tankers.

A fire department tanker is essentially a fire engine with a large water tank on it. Tank sizes on these engines range in size from 1,000 gallons of water all the way to over 6,500 gallons. The vast majority of tankers range in capacity from 2,000-3,500 gallons.

There are some small areas of Southington that do not have fire hydrants close enough to them for us to effectively use, so we do have a need to shuttle water to the scene in those areas. Over the past couple of years, we have worked to drastically



### Glenn Dube Fire Department News and Notes

increase our department’s mobile water supply capability. We have done this through working far more closely with our neighboring departments than we ever have before.

New partnerships have been built, old ones renewed and expanded. It has been an overwhelmingly positive experience to work more closely with our mutual aid partners.

As with any new team or with any new process, it is practice that makes perfect. And mobile water supply, known as a tanker shuttle, is a skill with many moving parts that needs to be practiced. To that end, in early March we held a drill using all of Southington’s engines to practice

shuttling water in the Winding Ridge Road neighborhood. While shuttling water with engines that only hold 500 gallons is not practical for a house fire, it was a great chance to get in some technique work—batting practice if you will.

On Sunday, April 24, we will again be back on Winding Ridge Road to practice—only this time we will be hosting our mutual aid departments that are on our tanker team. Several area towns will provide tankers to join our tanker, Engine 22, to practice moving a large volume of water, the kind of tanker shuttle we will need in the event of an actual fire.

Think of this as a late spring training game, one that gets us ready for anything we will encounter on opening day. So if you see us out and about in the Winding Ridge Road-Mount Vernon Road area on Sunday morning April 24 there is nothing to worry about. It is simply a dress rehearsal to make sure we are ready for a show that, admittedly, we hope never opens.

Have a safe spring, and if you are traveling for vacation remember to pick hotels with sprinklers, travel safe, and enjoy yourselves.

Glenn Dube is a lieutenant in the Southington Fire Department.