



# The Gardiner Gazette

Winter 2011 - Issue #9

A call to community ...

Free ... please take one

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *In an effort to help more Gardiner residents get acquainted with town government, this column will feature different town officials in each issue.*



## Maureen Gallagher, Tax Assessor

by Barbara Sides

With all the concern about property values, the life of an assessor can't be an easy one. Nevertheless, Gardiner

Assessor Maureen Gallagher is a pleasure to talk to about a job she thoroughly enjoys. "The part I find most satisfying is the assistance I can offer taxpayers to navigate a complex system," Maureen says. Maureen provides that assistance five days a week at the Gardiner Town Hall.

Maureen began her career in Gardiner in 2005 as Confidential Secretary to then Supervisor Carl Zatz; transitioned into the assessor's office in 2006, when she served as clerk to Gardiner's last elected assessor Minke Kwak; and continued under Joy Mazzetti, Gardiner's first appointed assessor. Maureen became Acting Assessor when Joy left in 2010. Currently, Maureen is working toward State Certification, a requirement for her permanent appointment to the job, and when that is complete will work towards the additional requirement of certification from the Institute of Assessing Officers.

The information Maureen has at her fingertips is reassuring. "Data [on properties] in Gardiner is very good and the data, to a great extent, determines the accuracy of the assessment," Maureen explains. Gardiner may be in line for a revaluation within the next year or two. The cost of that revaluation, when it occurs,

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Acey Barton, Douty Bevier and Art Wood in front of the Bordens Creamery in Gardiner, date unknown. (Photo courtesy Joan Decker)

## The Asa Barton House

by Marc B. Fried

The fall issue of The Gardiner Gazette reported on the old house at the corner of Steve's Lane and Dusenberre Road, acquired by the Town of Gardiner in a tax sale in 2009. When the title clears the Town will have to decide what to do with the house. The following article was submitted by Marc Fried and is a revised, shortened version of an article that appeared in the Ellenville Journal (now the Shawangunk Journal) on Nov. 29, 2007. It is reprinted with permission.

In the summer of 1960 I worked full time on Dick Borcharding's dairy farm on Phillies Bridge Road. I was 16, and the only other hired hand, a part-timer, was a small, wiry man of 68 named Asa Barton. "Acey" was a bachelor, who lived in the small, old house at the intersection of Dusenberre and Steve's Lane.

Acey was a hunchback. As I later learned, he'd developed this condition at the age of 15, not long after falling out of a tree next to

Asa Barton...continued page 4

## Volunteer Of The Highest Order: Greg Finger

by Irwin Cantor



**Editor's Note:** On December 13th, as The Gardiner Gazette was being readied for press, Greg Finger passed away after a valiant battle with a long illness. As a tribute to him, we decided to print this article as it would have appeared if he were still with us.

In this season of giving, it is fitting to profile someone who has made a practice of giving to his community in every season. Observe those who sit on the community groups constituted to improve life in Gardiner, like

the Open Space Commission, and you will find Greg Finger among the members. If you had followed the deliberations of our previous Town Board, you would have found that the voice of balance and compromise was often that of Councilman Finger. Look on the emergency response front and there, most definitely, you will find Greg: fighting fires, serving multiple terms as fire chief and, ultimately, rising to a twelve-year stint as Fire Commissioner. In fact, a social chat with Greg at his home is typically accompanied by the background crackle of the pager streaming updates on emergencies that he unfailingly tracks. Moreover, it is Greg you are most likely to hear in the firehouse instructing future Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) in the life-saving techniques needed by first responders. It is probably in this role of EMT mentor—training others to serve selflessly—that Greg has built one of his most important contributions as a volunteer.

Greg does not shirk from serving in any capacity on behalf of Gardiner's residents. Over the years he has led discussions on the threat of wild fires, with concrete suggestions on how homeowners might lessen that threat; he has helped ease

disputes roiling around the town library; most recently he has presided over an informative and sometimes contentious discussion during the Save Working Farms event (see related article, "Support for Gardiner's Farms," page 9). He is highly esteemed in the community by all who know of his long service to the people of Gardiner and continues to garner awards, such as the fellowship in his name recently bestowed by the Center for Constitutional Rights, for raising volunteer service to the level of a calling. To Greg, the word "neighbor" has always meant more than simply the folks across the road. [click to go back ...](#)

## Gardiner's Agricultural Heritage: Dressel Farms

by Laurie Willow

**Editor's Note:** This is the first in a series of articles about Gardiner's working farms.

It was 87 years ago that a newly married couple named Fred and Beatrice Dressel left a small dairy farming town in central New York to seek their fortune in the Hudson Valley. In 1923, Fred and Beatrice became the farm managers of the Ruloff and Ada Dubois Farm on Route 208. Ruloff and Ada Dubois were a childless couple who owned 150 acres that had passed down from the original settlers in the 1700's. There was a small dairy, but the cash crops for the business were apples and sour cherries. The Dressels flourished on the farm, had two children, one of whom, Roderick (Rod), was destined to carry on the farm for the Dressel family.

In 1941, Ruloff Dubois passed away. The Dressels continued to manage the farm for Ada DuBois until she, too, passed away in 1956. It was then that Fred and Beatrice purchased the farm from the DuBois' estate, and only a year later that Roderick graduated from SUNY Cobleskill College of Agricultural and Technology with a degree in pomology, the study of growing and marketing fruit. He also brought home his bride, Ethel, who had graduated from Cobleskill with a degree in business.



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In 1959, the Dressels built their first cold storage unit. They rented land from the surrounding neighbors to plant fruit on Route 208 and Phillies Bridge Road. Eventually, the land was purchased and the farm is now over 500 acres. The business has entered the fourth generation of Dressels. Rod and Ethel's two children are both growing fruit. Joy and her husband and their three children run Crist Brothers Orchards in Walden. Rod Jr. and his wife, Deborah, and their son, Tim, work the home farm as the third and fourth Dressel generation farming the land.



Farming for the Dressel family is not a hobby, it's a business. At any given time, employee count ranges between 25 people in winter and 60 people during peak season. In farming, the business is susceptible to weather, available labor, government regulation, media rumors, community support and a host of other variables. As Rod says "the best fertilizer a farmer can leave on the land is his footprint."

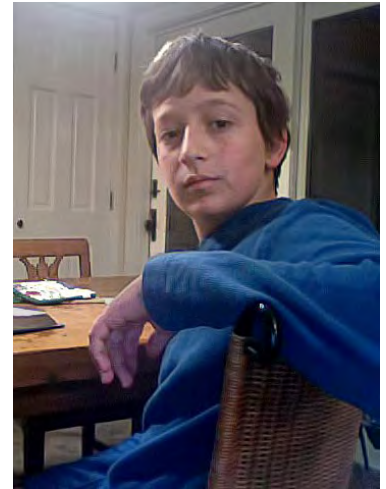
When asked how the community could help Dressel Farms remain farmland, Rod talked about the vast amount of government regulation that strangles the small farmer with paperwork, and which is going to get worse (see related article, "Food vs. Safety," page 10). Rod feels that talking to our local representatives about this problem could help. A community

commitment to preserving farms is helpful, too, because farms generate a lower demand for public services and have a positive effect on our tax base (see related article, "Support for Gardiner's Farms," page 9).  
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## Fun Things To Do in Gardiner (If You're NOT OLD)

by Ben Hayes

**Editor's Note:** *Gardiner resident Ben Hayes is in the Eighth Grade at New Paltz Middle School. The Gardiner Gazette encourages articles by youthful contributors. If you'd like to write on a topic of interest, please contact us at [gardinergazette@earthlink.net](mailto:gardinergazette@earthlink.net).*



What is there to do for teens in a small town like Gardiner? Much of the time, if they aren't getting food or going to someone's house, many young people and teens don't see anything to do in Gardiner. In reality, there are some great opportunities for fun.

The first, most obvious place for teens to go would be Majestic Park. It has a full basketball court, a play structure for littler kids, a wide-open field, a pond with fish that you can feed, and some swings as well. If you are a skateboarder, Majestic Park has its own skate park. On its own, Majestic Park is a great place to hang out, but there are several events that happen there throughout the year. In the fall each year, Gardiner Day happens at the park. It is extremely festive, with lots of activities for kids, great food, and amazing fun. In the summer, a great option for kids is Gardiner Rec. The kids go there for a few hours during the day, do sports,



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*Fun...continued page 15*

**Asa Barton**, from page 1

McKinstry's general store in Gardiner (now Hi-Ho Home Market & Antique Center), a tree he'd climbed while showing off to some girls. To the end of his days he reportedly believed the fall had been the cause of his disfigurement, though I'm informed by a physician that the timing was probably entirely coincidental. In his younger years, Acey was manager of the creamery in Gardiner. It was his best and most important job, and it was a job and time to which he often referred.

Working together, we took in the hay, dug quack grass out of Dick's vegetable garden and labored with scythes or "bush hooks," keeping briars and saplings in check along the stone walls and fence rows that bordered the fields and pastures of Dick's farm. Once, while working far from the house, we uncovered a small concrete monument marking the route of the old 1910 Catskill Aqueduct, a project Acey had worked on while still in his teens. When we returned from the fields with a wagon load of hay, I'd climb up into the haymow while Acey tossed the bails, one at a time, onto the elevator, pausing till I'd returned from stowing the previous bail. It was about 120° in that mow, and the task usually came near the end of a summer afternoon. Lifting that Last Bail off the wagon, he would sometimes exclaim, "I was lookin' for this one, and it took me the whole pile before I finally found it!"



Dick didn't quite trust Acey to drive the farm tractor, especially as the Wallkill Valley Railroad ran through the property, though trains came through only twice a day. "I guess he's afraid I'll exceed the speed limit," I remember Acey lamenting. But even that much of a complaint was rare. Acey was a good-natured man, a country rustic who'd last been down to New York City some 40 years earlier. He would occasionally quote the words of some American folk hero: "America loves a humbug" I recall him saying, words he attributed to P. T. Barnum, who he told me once charged people a nickel to see "a vehicle able to travel without benefit of beast or steam power." The nickel rewarded the gullible with a view of a wheelbarrow.

Down in the ten-acre lot across the railroad track, one day early in the summer, something must have reminded Acey of a doggerel he had gleaned from an old cylinder-type recording, played on a hand-cranked Victrola he still possessed. We paused from work and he recited the poem from memory. It was too long for me to memorize on the spot, but I always remembered the gist of the story it told, as well as the first and last line (which was the story's punchline). And I always regretted that I'd never prevailed upon Acey to repeat it slowly so I could write down the words.

The years passed. Acey passed away. In my twenties and early thirties, I would stop by the farm now and then to visit Dick (by then retired) and chew the fat. Dick passed away in 1979. More years passed. In 1998, chatting with my neighbor about the olden days, I learned to my surprise that he knew Acey Barton. Or did he? The man he knew lived in the very same house, but my neighbor was quite certain he was still alive. We finally figured out the individual in question was the nephew of the Acey I had known. Not long afterward, I stopped by the house and knocked. A man in his late 70s finally came to the door. "Are you Acey Barton?" I inquired. "Well, I might be," he said, with a hint of a cautious smile. Here was I, practically a youngster by comparison, and my next words must have been very unexpected: "I was a friend of your uncle."



We had a nice talk of half an hour's duration and finally I asked him about the old hand-cranked record player and cylinder recordings. Was that something he still had in the house? "No, all that stuff was given away or gotten rid of after my uncle died," he said. Driving home, I realized that now I would never be able to recover the words to that poem. And then it dawned on me that I had all the information I needed to rewrite the poem myself.

The County Deed Record shows Acey had acquired the house and property in 1918, and deeded it to his nephew in 1967, which I believe was shortly before he died. I do hope the Town of Gardiner decides to preserve and restore the Acey Barton House. If so, and if there's some sort of ribbon-cutting, I could probably be talked into reciting what I call "Acey's Poem" to those assembled!

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## A Wood Turtle Welcome to the Neighborhood

by Laura Heady, Biodiversity Outreach Coordinator Hudson River Estuary Program, NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation / Cornell University

When I moved from New Paltz to my Gardiner apartment over four years ago, I immediately sized up the habitats that surrounded my new home. Forest across the road...perfect for owls, woodpeckers, and warblers. Fields in the back...excellent for courting woodcocks and foraging foxes. Creek out front...probably inhabited by northern two-lined salamanders and other amphibians. I felt as though I had landed in a biodiverse hotspot—my kind of place! But what sent my wildlife radar into overdrive was the connected landscape of forest, field, and creek. Was it possible I would have wood turtles as neighbors?!

The wood turtle (*Glyptemys insculpata*) is a semi-aquatic species, spending part of its life cycle on land and part in the water. It requires different habitats, and needs to be able to move safely from one habitat type to another. In the summer, wood turtles feed in forests and fields; in the winter, they hibernate in creeks; and in the spring, they are typically found in streamside habitats and can utilize a home range area that includes up to a half-mile stretch of stream corridor.

Wood turtles are medium-sized, brown turtles with bright orange, yellow, or red skin on the neck, forelimbs and tail. The species is distinguished by its upper shell (carapace), on which each scale (scute) resembles a sculpture of low, ridged pyramids—thus the species name *insculpata* or “sculpted.” The lower shell (plastron) is mostly yellow, with large black blotches on the outer, posterior corner of each scute that form a pattern unique to each individual. They begin breeding at around 14-18 years of age, and can live to about 50-60 years old. Wood turtles are known for their “stomping” behavior while searching for food. They stomp their front feet to create vibrations underground that resemble rainfall and draw earthworms to the surface—where they quickly become the wood turtle’s next meal.

So, was I correct that I might be living in wood turtle habitat? On a June evening in 2007, on my way to the composter, I froze in my tracks—there in the grass was a female wood turtle! Looking for a place to dig her nest, she must have been attracted to the exposed soil in a recently-excavated part of the yard. I slowly sat down and, keeping very still, watched as she searched for the perfect nest site. Unfortunately, most wood turtle nests are dug up and destroyed by opportunistic predators like raccoons and skunks, which eat reptile eggs and easily coexist with humans.



Wood turtle crossing a Gardiner road in August 2009. Photo: Laura Heady.

Other threats to wood turtles include mortality while crossing roads and agricultural fields, and the fact that they are collected as pets or for commercial trade. With all these challenges to their survival, it's no wonder they are listed as a Species of Special Concern in New York.

What can we do? Use caution while driving, mowing and farming during seasons of active movement by wood turtles. If you see a turtle crossing the road (and it's safe for you to cross), pick up the turtle and move it to the other side *in the same direction* it was traveling. Don't be tempted to take it home for a pet! And most importantly, help to educate your family, neighbors, landowners, and community leaders so that Gardiner can continue to provide habitat for the wood turtles that live here, and for their hatchlings which will emerge from underground nests next fall.

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## Business As Usual

This column features two Gardiner businesses per issue.

### GunxCrossFit, The Anti-Gym

by Peter Beuf

Back when the long season of rock climbing and road biking was winding down, I found myself thinking of the cold weather, short days and dearth of fresh vegetables that lay ahead. It was December of 2009 and I was no longer inspired by my fitness regimen that included rowing and weight lifting in the privacy of my home. My wife had recently told me about a local gym called GunxCrossFit that had small classes and was run by a man who had a different approach to fitness. I was skeptical of gyms; they struck me as crowded, dirty, boring and time consuming. I needed a change, so I tagged along with my wife to a class at GunxCrossFit.

Peter Nathan's GunxCrossFit, located on Albany Post Road in Gardiner, is the anti-gym. His facility is housed in a barn, which is appropriate for the activities that are performed there. CrossFit is an international organization started by Gregg Glassman, who developed a philosophy of training based on data. He has compiled statistical information on the safety, efficacy and efficiency of exercise routines for the past 25 years, resulting in a prescription for fitness that he has summarized as "constantly varied, high intensity, functional movement." He achieves this through weight training and power lifting (squats, push-press, bench press), gymnastics (pull-ups, handstands, pushups), various jumping exercises and rowing. All of the workouts that CrossFit trainers develop and put into practice are scalable—they can be modified for all fitness levels from Olympic athletes to couch potatoes.

Participants around the world share information about this "sport of fitness" via the Internet. Routines are developed, tested and modified by students and trainers. Peter, the owner of GunxCrossFit and the primary instructor, has been coaching athletes and non-athletes for 25 years. He has an M.A. in Physical Education from NYU and an M.Ed. in applied Physiology from Columbia University. He is a gifted teacher who provides individual attention to his students. The workouts consist of a warm-up such as jumping rope or rowing and

stretching. Students then practice a weight lifting skill such as squats or dead lifts and then begin the workout of the day (WOD). The WOD is often timed and usually consists of three to five sets of three exercises that take between five to twenty minutes to complete. The routines are intense, exhausting and rejuvenating. For more information visit [www.gunxcrossfit.typepad.com/gunxcrossfit](http://www.gunxcrossfit.typepad.com/gunxcrossfit) or call Peter Nathan at 908 433-9155.



Peter Beuf at GunxCrossFit. Photo courtesy Peter Beuf

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## **Artscapes Landscaping: Creative Outlet and Successful Business**

by Barbara Sides

The origin of Artscapes, Tony Osborne's landscaping business, is a four-generation Gardiner story. While growing up in Manhattan, Tony spent summers and weekends in Gardiner with his mother, step-father and sisters. They worked on his grandparents' farm, rode horses and swam in the Walkill River. His beloved grandmother, Letitia Echlin, was a major influence and her garden became an early classroom and studio. She and Tony's grandfather, Francis Echlin, head of neuro-surgery at Lenox Hill Hospital, bought the farm on Crispell Lane more than 60 years ago. "He wanted a place where his wife and children could go, where they would love the land and where they would be safe," Tony explains. Tony's grandfather was seeking a refuge—a place to relax and de-stress from his long hours in surgery. That refuge eventually became his grandson Tony's home, his touchstone, and an inspiration for all that was to follow.

Interested in the creativity of food preparation, and with dreams of opening a restaurant, Tony moved up to Delhi where he earned an Associate's degree in Restaurant Management in 1981. He was spending an increasing amount of time rock climbing in New Paltz and it was here that his interests evolved. He entered the fine arts program at SUNY New Paltz, graduating with a BFA in Sculpture and Metalsmithing in 1987. The formidable and gifted Kurt Matzdorf, founder of the department, was one of Tony's first teachers and mentors. Kurt advised Tony to "always have your eyes open and look at history and what's come before." It was the incredible natural forms—the texture, the lichen, the cracks in the rock that Tony carefully "looked at" while rock climbing, and it was those forms that so heavily influenced his sculpture and, eventually, his landscapes. "All those experiences in the studio made me think bigger, become more creative," he adds.

Armed with two diplomas and seeking to earn a living, Tony turned to what he knew best—the land, rock, and plants. In all of these he saw beauty, and his fifteen-year-old business, Artscapes Landscaping, became a creative outlet as well as a business. "I wanted to paint or sculpt on the ground and it's been a great way to make a living." But moving rocks that weigh many hundreds of pounds is physically demanding and, looking to the future, Tony decided to explore yet another creative venture. He

enrolled in a design program at SUNY Ulster. Here he studied graphic design and 3D software modeling under Sal Ligotino with an eye toward product design in the future. He has praise for the program



Tony Osborne and a bridge abutment he constructed. Inset, one of his ceramic bowls. Photos courtesy Tony Osborne

that, Tony explains, provides "real world" experience. The head of graphic design, Sean Nixon, instituted a program that invites local business owners and non-profits to come in and have the young student designers create a logo, tri-fold brochure or packaging—for free. The real world interaction provides wonderful experience for the students, while the businesses benefit from the expertise of a respected design department.

Reflecting on his many creative endeavors, Tony muses, "We're lucky if we have the opportunity to make things beautiful, whether food, landscapes, sculpture. It's all part of the same circle. The satisfaction that you get from that is unsurpassed." To enjoy some of that beauty including examples of Tony's sculpture, visit the Artscapes website at [www.artscapeslandscaping.com](http://www.artscapeslandscaping.com).

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## **What's your Opinion?**

### **Take Our Survey: Should The Town Establish A Dog Park?**

by Nancy Cass

The Town of Gardiner is mostly rural, and the majority of homeowners live on more than three acres...plenty of land for the canine companion to roam, so a conversation has been playing over and over in my mind as I write this: "Why in the world would Gardiner need a dog park?" "I don't want my taxes going up to support the upkeep of a dog park!" "What good would a dog park do for the town?" However, I for one would like to see Gardiner establish an off-leash dog park. Dog parks are non-existent in Ulster County, and

*Dog Park...continued page 16*

### **NEW PALTZ TRAVEL CENTER**

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## Just A Bite ...

*This column reports on exemplary offerings from area restaurants.*

### Lombardi's Has Got The Dough

by Carol O'Biso

On a busy day, Lombardi's Restaurant makes hundreds of pounds of yeast dough—three different kinds—for their bread, pizza and focaccia. Even on a slow day, they make at least 50 pounds, and we should all be very glad. Go there now. Buy a loaf of their peasant bread—a 10" loaf with thick, hearty crust and a delicious chewy, elastic interior full of air holes. When you cut into this treasure you'll feel as if you're in a trattoria overlooking Saint Peter's in Rome. I love to bake bread myself, and when asked, owner Paul Foti said he could share his mother-in-law's recipe for the bread, but then he would have to kill me or his mother-in-law would kill *him*. Ah well. I prefer to live, and since this big loaf costs only \$3.95, I'll keep buying it from Lombardi's. For those who like a lighter crust, there is also the "ring loaf" (also \$3.95), equally delicious and somewhat resembling a very large bial.

In our household, we've discovered that we can jazz up a meal by bringing home an order of Lombardi's fantastic garlic bread, and when we sit down and eat at the restaurant, I am a very, very happy person if I get their focaccia and an antipasto platter (salami,

fresh mozzarella, mushrooms, artichoke hearts, etc., in a very generous serving at \$11.95 for the small and \$13.95 for the large). Focaccia, an Italian flat bread baked with your choice of herbs, garlic, tomato or other toppings, is like a cross between bread and pizza and ranges in price from \$8.95 to \$14.95, depending on what you want on it. There are a lot of focaccias in the world, most of them largely uninspired, but the Lombardi's version manages to have just the right springy consistency on the inside, with just the right crunch to the crust. The pizza dough, too, is a cut above—crisp and delicious, with only the freshest ingredients as toppings—and their take-out pies range from \$6.50 for a 10" personal, to \$12.50 for an 18" large.



Rich Regino, one of the chefs at Lombardi's, with a sampling of their daily bread.

*Photo courtesy Paul and Angela Foti*

My Sicilian taste buds require a bit more oil than most, and if you decide to eat in, the folks at Lombardi's are always happy to bring some extra extra virgin to the table.

All in all, the focaccia and the antipasto feed two of us (with hearty appetites) and leaves enough to bring home; all for under \$35, even if I treat myself to their nifty wine sampler.

Lombardi's has an extensive menu of traditional and innovative Italian dishes, but that's a story for another day. Meanwhile, head over to the corner

of Route 44/55 and Bruynswick Road and order something—anything—made of dough. (Re-opening from holiday break on January 27th; thereafter 4pm-9pm Monday through Sunday; closed Tuesdays; 845 255-9779)

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## Support For Gardiner's Farms

by Kathy Hudson

On the evening of November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the meeting hall of the Gardiner Reformed Church was the scene of a lively conversation about one of Gardiner's most precious assets: farms and farmland. About 60 people came to hear from speakers Bob Taylor of the Wallkill Valley Land Trust and David Haight of American Farmland Trust, and to share information and ideas about why we need our local farms and how we can support them.

The late Greg Finger, then Chair of Gardiner's Open Space Commission (OSC, see related article "Volunteer of the Highest Order: Greg Finger," page 2), introduced the speakers and moderated the discussion that followed. Speakers talked about the efforts of their organizations to protect farms and farming locally and across New York State, sharing their knowledge and experience in the process. Many of Gardiner's farms, including Dressel's, the Kiernan Farm, Half Moon, Tantillo's, Four Winds and Wright's, were represented and there was active participation by farmers and other community members in the discussion portion of the evening.

David Haight, head of the New York office of American Farmland Trust, who also farms with his wife in Clinton County, described how agriculture is a driver for rural economies like Gardiner's—encouraging tourism, providing jobs, growing food and protecting our water. He explained how farmland generates a lower demand for public services. For every tax dollar paid to local government, farms require \$.40 in services, while developed land requires \$1.20 in services. As a result, development of farmland results in higher property taxes for all residents, while farmland preservation keeps everyone's property taxes down. David made the point that this does not mean there should be no residential development in rural towns, but that it is important to maintain a balance between development and farmland preservation, which will contribute to lower taxes for all.

Also discussed was the fact that a growing interest in buying fresh, local food, often organic, is also driving purchases at local farms and farm markets. Farm markets are drawing people who care about what they eat, where it comes from and how it is produced. A number of farmers voiced their hope that members of Gardiner's community would more frequently choose to buy their food at local farm stands rather than the supermarket. While locally grown food may be more expensive than the supermarket apple imported from China, there are hidden costs associated with food imported from thousands of miles away. As one farmer opined, "you get what you pay for."

The OSC hopes to host more community meetings to encourage open discussion of the value of preserving open space and farmland for both current and future residents of Gardiner, and to explore available options that will ensure open space and farmland are not lost. As David Haight pointed out at the November 10th meeting, many communities south of Ulster

County have lost that opportunity because "the concrete was their last crop."

The Commission is hoping to move forward in the near future with another grant application to support a local farm, the Hess Farm on Sand Hill Road. The Commission has asked the Gardiner Town Board to indicate whether it would be willing to support such an application. The Town Board deferred that discussion to their meeting on January 11, while the OSC gathered additional information requested by the Board. If the Board gives this project a green light, the OSC is prepared to move forward quickly in order to meet the application deadline of March 1.



*Pumpkin pickers at Jenkins Leuken this fall. Photo: Phil Underdown*

The OSC encourages community members who are in support of the Town's efforts to preserve open space and farmland in Gardiner to make their views known to the Board by coming out to the Town Board meetings at which the OSC's proposed projects will be discussed. If the OSC is allowed to move forward, its members are dedicated to pursuing their late chair Greg's goal—to make certain that the Kiernan Farm will be the first successful farm preservation project in Gardiner, with more to come.

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## Food vs. Safety

by Nadine Lemmon

**Editor's Note:** As *The Gardiner Gazette* was going to press, a new food bill called the Food Safety Modernization Act had been passed by the Senate and was on its way to the House. By the time you read this, it may well be law, and that will be sad; while the bill attempts to be prevention-oriented, many are concerned that it could have disastrous impacts on our local producers and alternative health products.

In 1906, Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*—a gruesome book about the working and sanitary conditions of Chicago's meat-packing industries—led to drastic changes in the regulation of the food system, including the establishment of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Unfortunately, food safety laws haven't been updated in 70 years, even though big agriculture has radically reconfigured how food is produced, distributed and consumed.

*The Jungle*'s modern-day equivalents, such as Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* and Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, have highlighted drastic problems with our current food system, and pressures on legislators in Washington have grown with each mass food recall. The FDA, which is tasked with inspecting our food, has limited capacity for inspections—some producers are inspected every 10 years, some not at all—and a lot of bad food is slipping through. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that each year millions are made sick and thousands die because of e-coli and salmonella poisoning.

The Food Safety Modernization Act, estimated to cost \$1.4 billion over five years, expands the FDA's resources and authority to regulate food producers and processing facilities in an attempt to prevent bad food from ever getting to your plate. The act won't apply to meat or poultry; they are regulated by the Agriculture Department, which has always had more oversight capabilities than the FDA. The new Act attempts to address how crops are raised, harvested, and brought to market by:

- requiring large producers to keep detailed safety plans and adhere to stricter standards
- establishing a tracing system for food
- giving the FDA the power to quarantine a problem area
- granting the FDA mandatory recall authority
- establishing stricter standards on imported foods
- creating a \$500 annual registration fee to help pay for costs

Rural legislators were quick to point out that the initial draft of the bill would have caught many smaller, family-owned businesses in a regulatory nightmare they could hardly afford. The outcry led to the Tester-Hagan Amendment that exempts farms that have

\$500k or less in sales, and sell a good portion locally—so now the law won't affect farmer's markets, CSA's, or smaller farmers.

However, according to two Gardiner apple farmers, Mike Boylan, who runs Wright's Farms, and Rod Dressel of Dressel Farms (see related article, "Gardiner's Agricultural Heritage: Dressel Farms," page 2), this amendment won't help medium-sized farms like theirs, or those of many other apple growers in the Hudson Valley. This one-size-fits all approach will drastically impact their operations with burdensome requirements, mountains of paperwork, and increased costs. Not surprisingly, big ag companies actually protested the Tester-Hagan amendment, saying all producers should be similarly regulated, knowing full-well that only the big boys can afford to play by these rules.

Tanya Marquette, a Gardiner resident and alternative health activist, is also concerned that the law will impact vitamin and supplement producers. The Alliance for National Health has pointed out how this amendment is weak, and Marquette stated that it creates huge loopholes that will give the FDA legal cover to shut down small producers. Americans spend the same amount on naturopathic as allopathic remedies, so again, the big players would love to take a chunk out of that market. Marquette stated "This law is part of an international effort to standardize how we eat and take care of ourselves—that's what we're battling."

Many commentators have stated that, while it's high time to address the problems with the system, this law doesn't address the consolidation of the food supply, nor the negative impacts of industrial agriculture. The question remains: How do you feed 300 million Americans...safely? Will paperwork make our food safer?

We may be too late to voice our opinions and keep this bill from passing into law, but if we want our local farms and food producers to survive, we'll have to fight for more amendments.

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## Record Attendance At Classics Under the Gunks

by Laurie Willow

The Fifth Annual "Classics under the Gunks" car show this past October had perfect weather, not to mention record entries and attendance. This was a true community event sponsored by local businesses and organized and run by local volunteers. The lead sponsor was Ulster Savings Bank, and the trophy sponsor was Ireland Corners Garage.



"Classics Under the Gunks" donation check presentation at Ulster Savings Bank's Gardiner branch - (clockwise from lower left): Leitha M. Ortiz-Lesh (Attorney at Law), James Ridgeway (President, Gardiner Fire Department), Kathy DeLano (Ulster Savings Bank, Gardiner Branch Mgr.), Todd Comerford (Partner, Ireland Corners Garage), John Martin "Marty" Kiernan, Jr. (Co-owner, Kiernan Farm and The Blueberry Inn on Kiernan Farm), Thelma Kiernan (Co-owner, Kiernan Farm and The Blueberry Inn on Kiernan Farm), Colleen Rifkind (Gardiner Fire Department & Tiger Lily Jewelers), Cynthia Dates (Ulster Savings Bank, Branch Supervisor), David Wingfield (Center, Car Show Founder and Owner of Hudson Valley Boundaries, Inc.)

According to car show founder and organizer, Dave Wingfield, and co-founder, Brian Stiscia, this year's event tallied over 400 show cars and 1,000 spectators. Special thanks were given to the many vendors, volunteers, Gardiner residents and the local business community that made it successful. Wright's Farm furnished the stage decorations. The Alexander, Stiscia and Wingfield families were everywhere. The Kiernan's provided a beautiful location. Prizes were provided by local businesses,

including Minnewaska Lodge, Tuthilltown Distillery, Uptown Attic, Jenkinstown Day Spa, Wells Fargo, Lombardi's, and Tiger Lily Jewelers. WRWD radio was also on the grounds, offering giveaways and promoting the show on the air.

At the end of the day, more than \$12,500 was raised. The top 100 trophies were awarded by Ireland Corners Garage along with two Best of Show trophies, Best Paint, Best Engine, People's Choice and Club Participation. All the proceeds were donated to the Gardiner and Shawangunk Fire Departments and the Gardiner Association of Businesses. The presentation was made at the Ulster Savings Bank in Gardiner. More than \$42,500 in donations has been raised since the show's inception five years ago. Visit [www.classicsunderthegunks.com](http://www.classicsunderthegunks.com) for more information.

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## Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge: A Hidden Treasure

by Nadine Lemmon

In my conversations around town, I've been surprised to find out how few people know about the Shawangunk Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge. Of course the spectacular cliffs of the Shawangunk Ridge grab all of the glory, while this unassuming flat field is a hidden gem in our midst. Maybe I shouldn't let anyone know; then again, I think you should know.

This is a 566-acre preserve, just beyond Gardiner's southern border, on Hoagerburgh Road in Shawangunk. When I first moved to Gardiner (in 1994), I heard about the property from the man who mowed my lawn—he talked of UFOs hovering over it, and a secret underground tunnel that went to Stewart for covert military operations. My favorite was a story about a burning shed on the property; when the fire department arrived the shed had a stream of people coming out of it—way more than could possibly have fit in the building. Maybe that's true,

*Grasslands...continued page 12*



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## Grasslands, from page 11

but the official history is that in the 1940s, the military acquired the land as a satellite training field for Stewart Airport. They brought in tons of dirt, filled the wetlands and transformed it into the Galeville Airport. The land was decommissioned in 1994 and then transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1999; Fish and Wildlife is charged with protecting and managing the property, with a specific goal of protecting its biological diversity.



A view of the Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge. Photo: Phil Underdown

With the explosion of development in the Hudson Valley in recent years, the nesting, feeding, and foraging habitats of grassland birds have been vastly diminished, and currently, there are several threatened and endangered species that frequent the property—Bobolink, Savannah sparrow, Grasshopper sparrow, Upland Sandpiper, Northern Harrier and Short-eared Owl. Across the country, grassland birds have declined precipitously over the last 30 years, more than any other group of North American birds. In New York State, this refuge has been identified as one of the top 10 areas for grassland birds.

The interesting tid-bit is that grasslands tend to quickly revert to shrubs, and then trees. In order to maintain the area for wildlife, the fields need to be constantly mowed—either by animals or

tractors. To keep it wild, we need to keep it managed. Recently, the management of the property has been mired in controversy. Last year, it was granted \$799,000 in stimulus funds to improve the drainage and cover the runways with dirt—thus expanding the available grasslands by 30 acres. At first, the project was fingered by some as a symbol of stimulus waste, and then, some months after the restoration began, the Department of Environmental Conservation issued a stop-work order—citing the contractor with inadequate erosion controls and a process that was potentially damaging the sensitive habitat. Given the rules and regs of the day, moving tons of dirt is not as easy as it used to be.

The Grasslands need a friend. Marie Springer, head of the *Friends of Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuges*, has been cheerleading from afar, in Sussex NJ, but would like to get a Friends group up and running locally. She told me that “this place will be awesome—for both humans and birds,” once it gets beyond the bureaucracy. If you’re interested in helping to get such a group started please contact me: [nadine@gunk.org](mailto:nadine@gunk.org); 255-4374.

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A photograph of a snowy winter scene with evergreen trees. The trees are covered in snow, and the ground is also covered in a thick layer of snow. The sky is overcast.

*Through My Eyes*

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## Our Energy Future: The Tipping Point

by David Straus, Professor Emeritus in Chemistry, SUNY New Paltz

We have been warned of an impending climate crisis for the past 25 years, and our temperatures have been rapidly increasing for the past 40, with the vast majority of climatologists attributing this to the increased burning of fossil fuels to run our increasingly complex society.

The earth absorbs solar energy and reradiates much of it back to space, where some of the heat is absorbed by atmospheric constituents, particularly carbon dioxide, resulting in a warmer atmosphere, and a warmer earth. In 2009, we produced eight billion tons of carbon dioxide and this is increasing by about 150 million tons per year. Our atmospheric carbon dioxide is now 385 parts per million (ppm), up from 285 ppm at the start of the Industrial Revolution 200 years ago.

The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that by 2050, atmospheric carbon dioxide will be over 450 ppm. The result? Annual global temperature will increase by 5.5°F (and 8-11°F by 2100), and we have all heard about the catastrophe that will ensue: a 40-foot increase in sea level; much arable land plunged into long-term drought; increased precipitation in coastal areas; increased frequency and intensity for coastal storms; acidified seas (from absorbing carbon dioxide) and so on. In short, the environmental changes would be vast, widespread and very rapid; many species of both plants and animals would become extinct.

The IPCC calls 450 ppm a "tipping point." Below that, we can take action to prevent reaching 450 ppm. If we exceed 450 ppm the temperature increase will be inevitable. And, the closer we get to the "tipping point," the more difficult and costly remedial actions will be.

But maybe another factor will aid our staying below the "tipping point," and that will be cost. All of our fossil fuels are, really, nothing more than stored solar energy. Hundreds of millions of years ago, bacteria decomposed dead plants and animals, producing methane (natural gas) as their metabolic end product. Over time, deep underground, the methane, through high temperatures and pressure, made our present deposits of petroleum and coal, while some of it remained natural gas, which always accompanies the coal and oil.

The process, of course, continues, but fossil fuels are called "non-renewable resources" because we are using them much faster than nature can produce them. Analysts have estimated the remaining lifetimes of our supplies of fossil fuels and conclude that we are now at "peak oil"—over half of what was available has been produced and used. In the 1980s, it was estimated that U.S. coal supplies would last 300 years at then rates of use, but those rates have increased greatly and its present lifetime is probably less than 100 years. So, while

we will never literally run out of fossil fuels, when 80% or so of a resource has been consumed, it will be so expensive that it will no longer be a viable option.

That's a effective self-limiting factor, but what will we do then to support 9 to 12 billion people? We must phase-out our use of fossil fuels to avoid the carbon dioxide "tipping point" and the exhaustion of those resources. We have always used solar energy; wind farms, wave turbines and ocean-thermal gradients have all been suggested, and some are already used. Nuclear reactors, widely used for electricity, have also been suggested as alternates to fossil fuels, but it must be remembered that nuclear power depends on a non-renewable resource (uranium) and disposal of the highly radioactive fission products has not been resolved. Biofuels have also been suggested, but unless agricultural wastes are the source, they will require the use of arable land which would be more important for food production.

All alternatives to fossil fuels will come with pros and cons and many adjustments will have to be made, but the net result is that we must reduce our use of fossil fuels as we increase these alternate sources. The transition period, when both are used, will last two to three decades after which use of fossil fuels will be very low and we will be dependent on renewable sources. Meanwhile, we must immediately move to conserve energy! Insulate; drive less; move to a high mpg car; lower your thermostat in the winter and raise it in the summer; buy locally grown food. Do all the things you know will lower your energy use.

Finally, become political. Hopefully, we can avoid the carbon dioxide "tipping point" and our children and grandchildren may live happily at a high (but different) standard of living. If we can't do this, then our progeny may see ecological catastrophe.

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## Gardiner's 2011 Budget

by Ray Smith

November's public hearing is when residents usually focus on the Town's budget, but the process starts in August and, as Supervisor Joe Katz says, "There's not a day between mid-August and final approval when I don't spend some time on the next year's budget."

In August, Town department heads develop departmental budgets that are discussed with Joe. Each department head then meets with the Town Board to explain and defend the proposed budgets. From these meetings, the Town Board develops a tentative overall budget. This is further debated until a preliminary budget is prepared for discussion at the public hearing.

Here's how the final 2011 budget shapes up against the final 2010 one: Gardiner's 2011 budget totals \$2,767,416. That's an increase of 1.6% over 2010's budget. Of the total 2011 amount, \$1,789,740 (65%) will be raised by taxes. The balance of \$977,676 will come from various Town revenues plus \$150,000 from unallocated funds on the Town's balance sheet.

Not surprisingly, personnel and related costs (salaries, health, retirement and other benefits) constitute the largest amount in the Town's 2011 budget—\$1,458,110 or 53% of the 2011 budget – the same percentage as in the 2010 budget.

No Town employee received a raise in 2010 and no raises are planned for 2011. Each of the four Town Board members will take a cut of \$1,000 for 2011, from \$6,250 per year to \$5,250. The Supervisor's annual salary has been \$39,000 since at least 2009. In 2011, total compensation costs are budgeted at \$934,547, a decrease of \$43,339 compared to the year before.

For employee health insurance, the Town gets annual bids from suppliers. Co-pays, deductibles and other aspects of the plan "change all the time," Joe says. Total Town health insurance and other benefits in 2011 are budgeted at \$392,055 an increase of \$12,999 (3%) from 2010.

The Town is required to participate in the State's retirement plan for municipal employees. Accordingly, we are billed by the

state each year, from New York Comptroller calculations, based on recommendations of the Retirement Systems Actuary. We have no control over those charges or any appeal. Total retirement costs for the Town in 2011 will be \$131,508, an increase of \$35,508 (37%) over those in 2010.

Minnewaska Lodge makes payments in lieu of taxes to Gardiner under an agreement currently calling for 50% of the actual tax rate in 2011. Thereafter, Minnewaska will be paying taxes at the full rate. Mohonk Preserve is a tax exempt organization but a significant property owner in Gardiner. The Preserve made a donation of \$4,000 to Gardiner in 2010, increased from \$3,500 in 2009. Joe plans to discuss with the Preserve larger future donations.

The Town owns twenty-three properties. Several have dedicated uses (e.g. town offices, transfer station, rail trail) but others might be considered surplus. During 2011, the Town Board will be reviewing the properties with an eye towards disposition of those which might better be turned into cash for other town needs.

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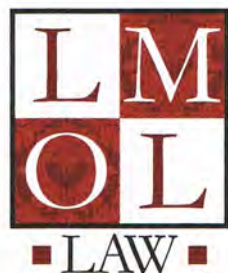
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**Fun**, from page 3

crafts, and go on field trips.

On Main Street in Gardiner, during the spring, the Cupcake Festival occurs. It happens right on Main Street, and they block off the road for it. Thousands of cupcakes are made, and men and women with all kinds of businesses in Gardiner set up booths with information about their business, delicious cupcakes are sold, there is live music, donkey rides and a cupcake baking contest that anyone can enter. It is a very fun occasion and thousands of people enjoy it every year. And any time of the year, Main Street can be a great place to stop for pizza, ice cream or baked goods.

The Gardiner Library is one of the best libraries you can find. It is relatively new, as it has only just been upgraded from what used to be a much smaller building, and has one of the best collections of literature for teens available. With an entire section devoted to just young adults, one can easily find a book to enjoy. They are constantly getting new books, so they have a wide range of books, from brand new, to old classics. There's lots of space, and everyone is welcome, so you can bring a friend and make an afternoon out of it.

One of the best things to do in Gardiner is go on the Rail Trail. The Rail Trail is a dirt road stretching for several miles and crosses right through Gardiner. It used to be a railway for trains. You can take your bike, and ride all the way to New Paltz, or just walk with a friend. When there is snow, you can cross-country ski. It is very scenic, and there are several cool landmarks to get to. There are bridges, forests, and several roads, so you can stop any time you like.

The Rail Trail goes right past the library, so be my guest, take a bike ride to the library, check out a book, and stop by the market for some hot chocolate and a cookie.

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## Dog Park, from page 7

dog owners travel great distances to visit one just so their pets can socialize with other canines. I've traveled all over the United States with my dog and specifically search out communities with dog parks or dog-friendly establishments.

Our Town Board and many community members actively promote our hamlet and encourage residents to come into town to take advantage of what it has to offer. I believe that a dog park in Gardiner would not only attract our own dog-owner residents, but also others from surrounding communities.

Most dog parks are fenced, with a separate play section for large and small dogs. Some have a "Pay as you Play" honor system, but most are free and supported by the community's Parks & Recreation Department. Some parks have equipment, such as jumps and tires, while others are just fenced space. I've been to dog parks that have no fences, and ones that have lakes, pools and even entire beaches designated for dogs.

I know that everyone is watching their dollars and the last thing I would want to impose on our town is increased taxes to support a dog park. Personally, I would be willing to pay a little extra for my dog's license to support a fenced-in dog park. Others I've talked to would be okay with "Pay as you Play." Majestic Park, the land around the Transfer Station, or the ball field adjacent to Town Hall are all possible locations. What do you think? Go to [www.thegardinergazette.bbnw.org](http://www.thegardinergazette.bbnw.org) and take the survey, or mail your answers to the following questions to us at P.O. Box 333, Gardiner, NY 12525:

- Would you like to see a Dog Park established in Gardiner? If no, please tell us your concerns about it....
- Do you own a dog?
- Would you be willing to pay a fee to use a dog park? If yes, would you like it to be a "Pay as you Play" honor system, or would you be willing to pay a little extra for your dog license to support it?
- Do you think a Dog Park should be supported by the Parks & Recreation Department?
- Would you like a fenced-in area, or would you prefer to have just a designated space for dogs to play?

- Where would be a good place to have a dog park?
- Would you like to volunteer your time to help establish one? If yes, please provide your contact information (e-mail or phone number).
- Do you have any other thoughts concerning a dog park?

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## Tax Assessor, from page 1

is partially reimbursable by the State. Maureen adds, "People should welcome 'revals,' because it makes the evaluation process more equitable."

"What To Do If You Disagree With Your Assessment" is a pamphlet available at [www.orps.state.ny.us](http://www.orps.state.ny.us). You can also visit that website for information about Grievance Day, which is May 24, 2011, or you can call the Assessor's Office at 255-9675, extension 104 or 105 and speak to Maureen or her assistant Monique Morano.

Since last year, changes have been made to the New York State School Tax Relief program, known as STAR. Basic STAR is available to all homeowners on a primary residence, with no age limit, but now with an income limit of \$500,000. You need only apply once. Enhanced STAR is available if you are over or turning 65 in 2011 and your adjusted gross income is under \$79,050. The Senior Exemption is available for those 65 and older with incomes under \$34,400 (this exemption applies to school and property tax). The Veteran's Exemption is available if you or your spouse served during a wartime period and, finally, the Cold War Veteran's Exemption is available if you served from 1945 – 1991 and receive no other veteran's exemption. Forms are available online at [www.orps.state.ny.us](http://www.orps.state.ny.us) or at the Assessor's Office. All exemptions must be filed on or before March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011.

Maureen leaves us with a caution: mass mailings have gone out to residents of Kingston and Plattekill claiming that

recipient's assessments are much higher than those of their neighbors. For a \$99 fee, an offer is made to help the taxpayer grieve their property assessment.

Maureen wants tax payers to know that the information they need to compare their assessments is available free of charge at the Assessor's Office and says, "Our job here is to assist tax payers. First, I can look over the assessment of a property and determine if I can lower it. The tax payer can then decide to accept my findings or proceed to grievance to have the information reviewed by the Board of Review." Maureen adds, "People today have great concerns brought about by our troubled economy. I try to make the assessment process more understandable."

Gardiner's taxpayers are in good hands.

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## Gardiner Gazette

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