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Issue No. 13  
Summer 2024



Great Island  
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on Great  
Island

# A Great Awakening

Next Steps for  
Great Island

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## Letter to Our Readers |



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Dear Readers and Residents of Darien,

Welcome to our summer issue and its celebration of things we enjoy most during the warmer months. Chief among these is the added time we get to spend outside, and what better lead for this than a cover story about Great Island, the 60 acres of mostly open space the town purchased last year?! Perhaps, like us, you've already heard much about it, especially with the intensifying buzz about what we might do with this gem that accompanied its opening to the public last March. So much we thought we knew. So much we didn't, especially about how we get to weigh in as residents of Darien on what we will do with Great Island, and about Reed Hilderbrand, the crackerjack firm the town hired to lead us in the master planning needed to ensure we do our best with this unique property. We hope you enjoy this deep dive into Great Island as much as we did.

Speaking of summer pleasures, be sure to check out what Wee Burn Country Club Head Golf Pro Sam Wiley has to say about finding mental toughness on the golf course, and the tips from Linda Stephens about staying hydrated in summer. Scott Condon of Leary's Liquor Cabinet contributed a fun Tequila Tutorial. Local author Tessa Wegert wrote a terrific column about the art of writing solo and the community she

has found in it. Many thanks to all of these locals for sharing their wisdom in these pages ...and also to Dorothy Shergalis, president of the Cherry Lawn Community Gardens, and the other gardeners there who so generously opened up to tell us about this town treasure. Another favorite in this issue—the *Giving Back* column: It's about how a group of families came together to give land to the Darien Land Trust. Now preserved in perpetuity, it's a forever gift for all seasons. Capping off our salute to summer is *Summer Outside*, a collection of offerings from local businesses well-positioned to help you make this summer the best ever.

Shining brightest in this issue however are our advertisers who make it possible for us to produce this magazine for you. To this great group, we are pleased to welcome Molto Ristorante! Here's to a fantastic summer!

**PAMELA DEY VOSSLER**  
Editor-in-Chief

**CARL TRAUTMANN**  
Founder & Publisher

Correction: In the *House Tour* column in our Spring/Summer '24 issue, we stated that Mather Homestead was given to the town. It was not. It was gifted to the public by way of the Mather Homestead Foundation, a non-profit organization which was formed to own and steward the property.



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COVER STORY | cover and above photos by: BAMBI RIEGEL | riegelpictureworks.com

## A Great Awakening Next Steps for Great Island

“There will never be ‘the right time’ in your life to do a great thing. You must create that time and greatness will follow.” Such is the story of Great Island, the 60-acre property Darien bought last year, and all that’s teed up to happen with it in the months ahead. Find out more here.

COVER IMAGE: Seated (FROM LEFT): Bruce Ferguson, Lori Bora, Mark Adiletta, standing (FROM LEFT): Jeff Taebel, Mike Burke, Dan Kolakowski, Monica McNally, Kipp Visi, MISSING: Jim Palen  
ABOVE (FROM LEFT): Bruce Ferguson, Dan Kolakowski, Monica McNally, Jeff Taebel and Mark Adiletta with Great Island bathhouses in background

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- For editorial or content ideas and feedback, contact [pam@darienmagazinct.com](mailto:pam@darienmagazinct.com)



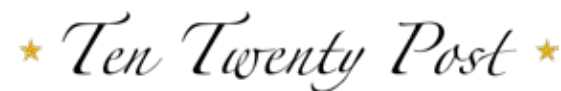
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*Darien MagazineCT.com inspires, educates and expands minds through stories about Darien residents, influencers, organizations, business owners, charities and more. We uncover the gems in our midst and look at the familiar in new ways, to take you deep into the community we call home.*

**SUMMER CONTRIBUTORS**

*Special shout out to our local contributors this issue:*

- Sam Wiley - Wee Burn Country Club**
- Scott Condon - Leary's Liquor Cabinet**
- Tessa Wegert • Linda Stephens**
- Sue Okie and the Darien Land Trust**

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Founder & Publisher  
**CARL TRAUTMANN**

[carl@darienmagazinct.com](mailto:carl@darienmagazinct.com)



Editor-In-Chief  
**PAMELA DEY VOSSLER**

[pam@darienmagazinct.com](mailto:pam@darienmagazinct.com)



Director of Photography  
**BAMBI RIEGEL**



Art Director  
**KIRSTEN NAVIN**

*In Memoriam*



Co-Founder  
**IRENE M. TRAUTMANN**

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Darien, CT 06820.

# The Game Within the Game:

## Finding Mental Toughness on the Golf Course



"I was hitting it great on the range..." "Why can't I take my driving range swing to the golf course?" If you have ever uttered these words, this article is for you.

### HOME ON THE RANGE WITH BLOCK PRACTICE

The range comes first. Whether following a lesson or during regular stops in your never-ending quest to improve, the driving range, with its opportunities for Block Practice with a conscious mind, is key.

Block Practice with a conscious mind means hitting the same club with intention and awareness at the same target over and over with no changes. This is critical when you are working on a swing thought and trying to incorporate it into your golf game. Block practice with a conscious mind is also

very helpful in identifying your "miss patterns." Amateur golfers rarely miss long of the hole. That's because most golfers make club selections based on how far they hit their best shot with that particular club, rather than their typical shot. Once you know that your miss will most likely fall short of the hole, determine if it tends to be left or right of the flag. When you understand your miss patterns you can make the necessary adjustments.

Because the driving range is almost always flat and the golf course is anything but that (except for the teeing ground), I recommend seeing if you can find some uneven ground from where you can hit. Sometimes facilities have an uneven lie training aid to best simulate on-course conditions.

*continued on page 10*

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# Mind Set |

## ROUTINE REWARDS

Golf is one of the few sports we play where the ball is not moving so we tend to settle into a more static stance ...and then we start thinking ...and overthinking, as we go through our mental checklist. Whether you are trying to break 100, 90, 80 or win the club championship for the first time, a consistent routine on full swings and in the short game will help ease your mind from the nerves that can come with overthinking, and give you confidence that your hard work and practice will be there for you on the course when you're under the gun. However, like your strokes, developing and perfecting a routine that will be effective on the golf course requires repetition and practice.

## RANDOM PRACTICE

Now what? You have your swing. You know your miss patterns. You've developed a routine. How do you get into what elite athletes call the "Flow State" where you start to transfer the conscious technical training into more subconscious swinging. Without this transfer, you end up playing golf swing, rather than golf. Enter what I call Random Practice. As opposed to Block Practice, Random Practice focuses on quality over quantity of golf balls hit on the driving range, chipping green, practice bunker and putting green. Random, as the name suggests, involves changing clubs and targets more frequently. It doesn't have to be with every ball hit but this is also where you can begin to incorporate your pre-shot routine.

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER WITH PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

The last leg of the process to unlock your peak play on course is what I call Performance Practice—games and challenges. Performance Practice involves using your full routine; changing your club and target with every ball; and trying to "win" your way off of the range or the putting green. I have accumulated a number of these games and challenges from many different places over the years. Here are a few:

- **Spiral drill for putting:** Begin one foot away from the cup and spiral out a total of 12 golf balls moving each ball one foot farther from the hole. (See image top right.) Track how many you can make in a row or overall. Keep a record and aim to break it the next time you do this drill.
- **Jordan Spieth ladder drill:** Start by placing the first of nine golf balls 15 feet from the hole. Then place another every three feet back from the cup up to 39 feet. Place a club three feet behind the hole. (See image bottom right.) This creates a safety zone from the front edge of the hole up to three feet past. Up to 30 feet, give yourself a par for anything inside the safety zone, a bogey for shots short of the cup or if the ball hits your club, and a birdie for a hole out. Once



you get to 30 feet, the safety zone for a par expands to one foot short of the hole. Keep score in relation to par. The challenge is to beat it the next time you practice.

- **Full swing golf course simulation:** Play your favorite course on the driving range by identifying boundaries of the fairways of that course in this practice space. Hit your tee shot and track whether or not it would have landed in the fairway (around 30 yards wide). Hit a second shot at a "green" or target. Knowing your miss patterns, was your second shot successful and did it miss on the correct side? Do this 18 times, simulating each of the different holes on your favorite course. Journal your rate of success and try to beat it the next time you play this game.

Practice does not make perfect. Practice makes permanent. Perfect practice makes perfect. The more engrained you make your routine, the stronger mentally you will be when the pressure is on. But remember always, in golf, as in life, you get what you give and don't be too hard on yourself when life's demands take you from working on your swing. Accept the gifts of this game however they come your way. ♥

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# Tequila Tutorial

The days are getting longer, and the sun is shining brighter—summer is here! These hot days deserve refreshing drinks. What better time to talk TEQUILA?!!!

Tequila is the healthiest and tastiest spirit you can imbibe, made from the fermented sap of blue agave and subjected to two separate distillations. There are several ways to enjoy it, but for the purpose of this tutorial, we are looking to highlight the best tequilas for margaritas and for sipping on their own (neat or on the rocks).

**Espolòn Blanco:** The perfect tequila for a traditional margarita! It is unaged so it never touches an oak barrel which allows it to maintain the pure and vibrant flavors of the agave plant. A margarita made with Espolòn Blanco is exactly what you think of when you think margarita. Price: \$37.99



## MARGARITAS



**Herodes Mezcal Artisanal Reposado:** One of my personal favorite ways to enjoy a margarita is with a mezcal. It adds the ideal balance of smokiness to the sweetness of the agave and citrus tartness of the lime. The Herodes Mezcal Artisanal Reposado gives you this pleasant smoke flavor without masking the other flavors in the margarita, and the fact that it is aged to a reposado makes for an exceptionally smooth drinking experience. Price: \$24.99

**La Gritona Reposado:** This was the hardest addition for me because I very much feel like this one could be on the sipping list as well. This aged tequila is not only extremely smooth, delicious and would make for an excellent upscale margarita, but it is also the first ever distillery in Mexico owned and run exclusively by women. This tequila is an absolute must try! Price: \$49.99



**Tanteo Jalapeño:** With spicy margaritas rising in popularity, the Tanteo Jalapeño is a must for anyone who's looking to add a little heat to their summer sipping. It is a 100% blue weber agave blanco tequila infused with locally-sourced, fresh jalapeños. The heat and pure flavors of the peppers are perfectly balanced allowing for a full-flavored spicy margarita that provides just enough heat without going overboard. Price: \$39.99

## SIPPERS



**Arette Reposado:** This six-month aged, budget-friendly reposado has the perfect balance of sweet and oaky flavors from its barrel-aging process which makes it an excellent sipper. This is a great summer alternative for bourbon lovers. Price: \$56.99



**Mayenda Blanco:** When you think about sipping on a tequila, usually a blanco doesn't come to mind. Most tequilas that are considered sipping tequilas are thought to be aged to reposado or añejo, but the Mayenda Blanco is an exception. This is, without a doubt, one of the most polished blancos on the market. Its exceptional flavor makes it a highlight on this list. When this particular tequila was first brought to the store, I was blown away with its flavor profile and remarkable smoothness. With virtually no after bite, this is one of the only blancos that can be enjoyed neat, in a glass straight from the bottle, without ice. If there is any tequila on this list that I'd urge you to try, it is this one. Price: \$64.99



**Clase Azul Reposado:** If you're entertaining this summer and really want to take the party to the next level there is no better way to show off than displaying this beautifully hand painted bottle. The tequila is more than just a pretty bottle though. It has a sweet, buttery aroma with hints of vanilla, caramel and oak. On the palate, you'll notice a balance of sweet and spicy notes, with flavors of cooked agave, with flavors of cinnamon and pepper. This is the tequila to get if you truly want to treat your guests and yourself. Price \$159.99

**Mijenta Reposado:** This tequila is unfiltered which enhances its unique flavor. It is aged for six months in American white oak, French acacia and French oak casks that allow for a more a mature and fuller expression and a beautifully long finish. Price: \$69.99



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** For information about tequilas not listed here, Scott is standing by to help at Leary's Liquor Cabinet, 186 Heights Road, across from the Noroton Heights train station. All prices listed are from Leary's Liquor Cabinet.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY LEARY'S LIQUOR CABINET

# A Great Awakening

*Next Steps for Great Island*

**BY PAMELA DEY VOSSLER**

PHOTOS BY: BAMBI RIEGEL  
RIEGELPICTUREWORKS.COM

“There will never be ‘the right time’ in your life to do a great thing. You must create that time and greatness will follow.” The author John A. Passaro wrote that. He could very well have been talking about Great Island, the 60-acre property opposite Ring’s End Bridge the town purchased in May ’23 from Ned Steinkraus and his siblings. They are the most recent descendants of the family that has owned it since 1902. →

*GIAC members in front of the Gilded Age mansion on Great Island. FRONT (FROM LEFT): Jeff Taebel, Lori Bora, Monica McNally, Kipp Visi, BACK (FROM LEFT): Dan Kolakowski, Mark Adiletta, Mike Burke, Bruce Ferguson, NOT PICTURED: Jim Palen*

♥ Thank you Palmer’s Market for sponsoring our cover feature.





GIAC members, FROM LEFT: Bruce Ferguson, Dan Kolakowski, Monica McNally, Jeff Taebel, Mark Adiletta with Great Island bathhouses in background

It was a generational opportunity requiring a breathtaking boldness not often found in municipal government—a confidence born of the kind of certainty possessed by people who see beyond their lifetimes to deliver what we often come to value most.

Though the purchase was widely supported, it was Monica McNally who grabbed hold of the idea to secure Great Island for the town while First Selectman in 2022. With Darien’s ongoing commitment to acquiring open space, as outlined in the 2016 Town Plan of Conservation and Development and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, it had come up before. But in 2016, when the family first put it on the market for \$175 million, the price was too high. By 2022, the price had dropped to \$100 million and Monica was sitting on the steps of Ned’s home on Brookside Road, talking to his dog while waiting for him to return so that she could ask him to extend the offer deadline to give the town a chance to get in on the bidding.

“When I heard about it, there wasn’t a lot of time to respond,” explained Monica who credits the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance Chair Jim Palen and the Representative Town Meeting (RTM) for championing the idea with her and speeding the process to purchase. Usually these types of things take many, many months to make their way through our system of governance. For Great Island, from offer to an accepted bid of \$103 million, it was just two months.

Then came nearly a year of due diligence and a sharpening of pencils that brought the price to a final \$85 million—testimony to the meticulous care paid by our elected town leaders to the spending of public money.

“It was a big decision to acquire Great Island. Even bigger was the effort to negotiate the acquisition, expertly led by Monica McNally and Jim Palen,” said First Selectman Jon Zagrodzky. “I believe the result has been well worth the effort. We have an incredible property that residents will be able to enjoy in so many ways.”

And when you add open space to a town, as this does, property values rise in general, according to Monica, which benefits owners when they eventually sell. But the costs associated with Great Island will add to the tax burden.

“Yes, the debt associated with the project will have annual carrying costs, but not so much that they impair our ability to fund our other spending priorities,” Jon said. “To be clear, we remain committed to having the very best schools, parks, roads, police and fire protection and other important services. We can maintain this excellence while still working to make Great Island the finest municipal property on the East Coast,” he continued.

Coupled with the transparency and detailed communication with all town decision makers that marked every step of the process, the sale was finalized in May 2023.

When you see Great Island, you will understand our effusion: You *will* be blown away. We can just about guarantee it.

“The property is just so special. On every visit I become more excited about the possibilities and feel gratitude just to be able to enjoy its majesty,” said Parks and Recreation Commission Chair Lori Bora.

If you’ve been there since it opened to pedestrians in March, you already know Great Island is that... well ...*THAT*

*continued on page 18*



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LEFT: *Great Island equestrian complex,*  
 ABOVE: *GIAC members at the beach cottage on Great Island,* FROM LEFT: *Kipp Visi, Mike Burke, Jeff Taebel, Lori Bora, Dan Kolakowski, Monica McNally, Mark Adiletta, Bruce Ferguson.*  
 Missing: *Jim Palen,*  
 RIGHT: *View of Green's Ledge Light from Great Island*



...you fill in the superlative. It's what you'll be asked to do starting this September as part of next steps for it. That's when outreach for public input begins, led by Reed Hilderbrand, the landscape design company the town chose in June to help us map out what we will do with this extraordinary tract. (If your jaw hits the ground when you walk Great Island, prepare to keep it there when you see the firm's portfolio—a showcase of their experience balancing preservation of historic structures with environmental conservation while accommodating new community activities and factoring in everything from the magnificent to the mundane including bathrooms, signage and a place to wash your hands and more.)

Everyone will have a chance, many chances in fact, to weigh in on what we hope for Great Island—online, in public forums, in workshops and other ways yet to be determined. Because, despite the conjecture and possibilities you may have heard tossed around for this great space, no decisions have been made about what will happen there, beyond steps taken to open the Island to residents and widen the road leading on to the property which will occur later this fall.

"The important thing to know is that it's a clean slate,"

said Monica, now chair of the Great Island Advisory Committee (GIAC), the nine-member group authorized by the town last summer to prepare the property for public access and create a usage plan.

GIAC is comprised of five elected members of town government including Monica who gave up her post as First Selectman to lead GIAC though she remains on Darien's Board of Selectman. The other four are Jim Palen, Lori Bora, Selectman Mike Burke and RTM member Mark Adiletta who is also GIAC Vice Chair. The four resident members of GIAC chosen last fall from 45 applicants are Daniel Kolakowski who spent his career in construction management, working on projects including the Hudson River Park Trust, the new LaGuardia Airport and the Brooklyn Bridge Park Corp., Bruce Ferguson, a software CEO who serves on the board of the Darien Athletic Foundation and is a past president of the Darien Library Board, Kipp Visi who brings a deep background in financial management and reporting, and Jeff Taebel who served as the Houston-Galveston Area Council's director of community and environmental planning for 35 years before moving to Darien in 2022 to be closer to his grandchildren.

It is an all-star, all-volunteer group that has worked qui-

etly, collegially and tenaciously behind the scenes most of the past year to get residents on to the property and identify then engage Reed Hilderbrand.

That search began with a request for qualifications last January. The response was robust. The best of the best wanted in on the job.

"We had 16 very high quality, world-renowned firms respond," said Monica.

Next, the committee painstakingly pared those 16 firms to six then added to the countless hours they'd already spent on this to lead each of the finalists on tours of the Island, collect, categorize and answer the almost 100 questions they asked, review their proposals and conduct in-depth interviews and reference checks.

Selecting the final six firms wasn't easy. Landing on just one was even harder.

"We were very fortunate to have multiple proposals from several of the country's most respected landscape design firms. It was hard to choose just one as they were all exceptional," said Bruce Ferguson.

But, in the end, Reed Hilderbrand displayed artistic vision, a commitment to the environment, a depth of experi-

ence in successful public outreach and consensus-building, and a standout passion for the project.

"Reed Hilderbrand stated this would be a dream job for them, and the passion and effort represented in their proposal backed this statement up," said Kipp Visi who grew up in Darien and returned here with his wife in 2015.

"We are deeply moved by landscape," said Reed Hilderbrand Principal Beka Sturges, head of the firm's New Haven office and Great Island project lead. "We're always looking for where there is a sort of particular moment in a landscape, the kind of landscape that just really connects with people—that's inspiring," she added.

"I very much appreciated RH's enthusiasm from the beginning as well as their proximity to Darien and their experience with local projects and regulations," said Dan Kolakowski.

As importantly, according to Monica, Reed Hilderbrand brings a keen sensitivity to the financial aspects of the project along with expertise in the range of ways we might pay for the plan we produce.

"I appreciated them being able to see the possibilities and incorporate the beauty and the ecological and preservation elements of the project," said Monica, "but they also have



the practical application, the ability to get the plan over the finish line,” she continued.

The request for public input is the beginning of Phase I of a four-phase plan. It also includes developing a Vision Plan.

“This initial stage with the information gathering and community input is the crucial first step to what will likely be a long development process,” said Mark Adiletta.

In Phase II, the Vision Plan will be turned into a Master Plan and Concept Design which will balance what the community wants with financial feasibility, including identifying funding sources such as grants, public-private partnerships, individual philanthropy and more, not just for any building and renovation we do but also to cover operation and maintenance costs. This, along with Phase I, is projected to take approximately a year, Monica estimates. Phase III and IV involve preparing to build then bidding and construction, with timing to be determined by the scope of work. Reed Hilderbrand will lead us through Phase I and II for a negotiated fee of \$1,425,000 which includes \$45k for contracting land use consultant Redniss & Mead to serve as a liaison between Reed Hilderbrand, GIAC and the Department of Public Works to ensure smooth communication and coordination. This appropriation was approved by the RTM at their June 17th meeting.

“Reed Hilderbrand has a deep bench with expertise in all of the different areas that will be needed to successfully develop the Master Plan,” commented Jim Palen. “In addition, they have proven experience working with committees such as GIAC to thoughtfully and efficiently gather and analyze public input to help our committee insure that we are

developing a long-term plan that matches with that of our residents,” he added.

But before we can share what we want preserved, conserved, removed or re-imagined on Great Island, we must know what we have.

Owned by generations of Zieglers, beginning with William Ziegler, Sr., the baking soda magnate who bought Great Island in 1902 but died just three years later, and continuing with his son William Ziegler, Jr. who shaped much of what we find there today, then on to the generations that followed, Great Island arrives to us now, its past on nearly-untouched display:

- The flora, fauna and original contours of meadows and woodlands, shoreline and outcroppings—as pristine in some places as they were centuries ago.
- A world class equestrian complex, including an 18-stall granite stable commissioned by William Ziegler, Jr., an avid polo player and owner of racehorses including *Bounding Home*, winner of the 1944 Belmont Stakes. Designed in 1913 by Rafael Guastavino, the stables feature his famous Tile Arch System, used also in Grand Central Terminal, Carnegie Hall and the U.S. Supreme Court building in Washington D.C., to name just a few of the iconic structures in which his work appears.
- The polo grounds, riding rings and 14 acres of trails – home, along with the stables, to now deceased Bill Steinkraus, a five-time Olympic show jumper who won a Gold Medal in 1968 in individual jumping. His wife, Helen (Sis), a competitive dressage rider, was the daughter of William, Jr.
- A 39-room main house, one of America’s last family-

owned Gilded Age mansions. It was built by William, Sr. in 1905. In 1927, William, Jr. remodeled it, hiring Addison Mizner—the best-known American architect in the 1920s widely credited with transforming Palm Beach—to do the work.

- Approximately a mile and a half of shoreline, including beaches, a beach cottage, bathhouses, a jetty – installed to create a swimming area even at low tide and also to protect the sand adjacent to it from erosion, a boat house and a yacht basin complete with deep water dock able to accommodate a 50-foot yacht (but home these past 35 years to Marine 34, the firefighting and rescue boat operated by the Noroton Fire Department)—all built by William, Jr., as was nearly every stone structure on the Island.
- The white marble statuary. Commissioned by William, Jr., *Platonic Love* was completed by sculptor John Gregory in 1936 and *Romantic Love* was completed by sculptor Mario Korbel in 1939. Currently valued at \$425,000, the statues were gifted by Eric, Philip and Ned Steinkraus to Darien when they sold the property to the town.
- An original 19th century structure that pre-dates the Ziegler’s ownership by 100 years which is now part of a farmhouse beside the stables; a caretaker’s house with an 86-foot long underground root cellar and a four-bedroom,

three-bathroom house built in 1928 for the nanny of William, Jr.’s children.

- A carriage house with echoes of a turntable that allowed multiple carriages to be pulled indoors and parked on either side of it.
- A stone amphitheater of retaining walls built for soil stabilization and used as stairs to the main house.
- ...and a squash court even, used now for storage.

It’s a lot to take in, a lot to evaluate. The possibilities are mesmerizing. Visiting it feels a bit voyeuristic, the way it sometimes does when you first occupy a new home, until you make it your own which is what GIAC, with guidance from Reed Hilderbrand, is helping us do now.

“We are so fortunate in Darien to have the ability to recognize generational opportunities and seize them,” said Mike Burke. “The hands of town leaders and volunteers have brought us to this launch point. It will take all of us in Darien however to help Great Island realize its best future. So, participate.”

“I encourage everyone to visit Great Island and to take advantage of the opportunities for public input during the development of the Vision Plan,” agreed Jeff Taebel.

For more about Great Island, visit [darienct.gov](http://darienct.gov). ♥

**MOLTÒ**  
RISTORANTE

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MAP COURTESY TOWN OF DARIEN

# The Art of Writing: Community Counts

**W**e've all heard it said: Art is a lonely endeavor. The artist in question could be a painter, composer, or novelist, but the impression is always same.

They work alone.

In some ways, that's true. Five years into my career as an author, I can attest that about 90 percent of my time is spent in a self-imposed state of solitary confinement, conversing with fictional characters while I wear the finish off my laptop keys. There's the drafting of the books, which takes months, but as soon as that's done it's time for revisions, editing, proofreading, plotting the next novel, and writing articles and essays to help promote the new release. Make no mistake, there's an entire team of publishing professionals involved every step of the way, but even when writers embark on developmental edits or collaborate with a co-author, we always return to our desks solo.

That doesn't mean we have to be lonely.

I don't think I fully understood the importance of the writing community until my first mystery—*Death in the Family*—hit the shelves. It was February of 2020, and I was brand new to the author life with very few contacts and even fewer writer friends. Three weeks later, the pandemic shut down the libraries and bookstores where



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY TESSA WEGERT

*Connecticut authors Lynne (Liv) Constantine, Tessa Wegert, and Wendy Walker talk thrillers at a Darien Library event.*

I'd planned to meet readers and my peers, and I found myself navigating the complex publishing ecosystem on my own.

Like many people at that time, I turned to social media, hoping it would make me feel connected to the world beyond my front door. On Instagram, readers bonded over books that were helping them cope with anxiety and stress by providing a figurative escape—and right there, in the comments, were the authors, engaging in

conversations while posting positive book reviews of their own. Even as they struggled to meet deadlines during their most intense period of isolation yet, they befriended and supported other authors online, and I found myself wanting to do the same.

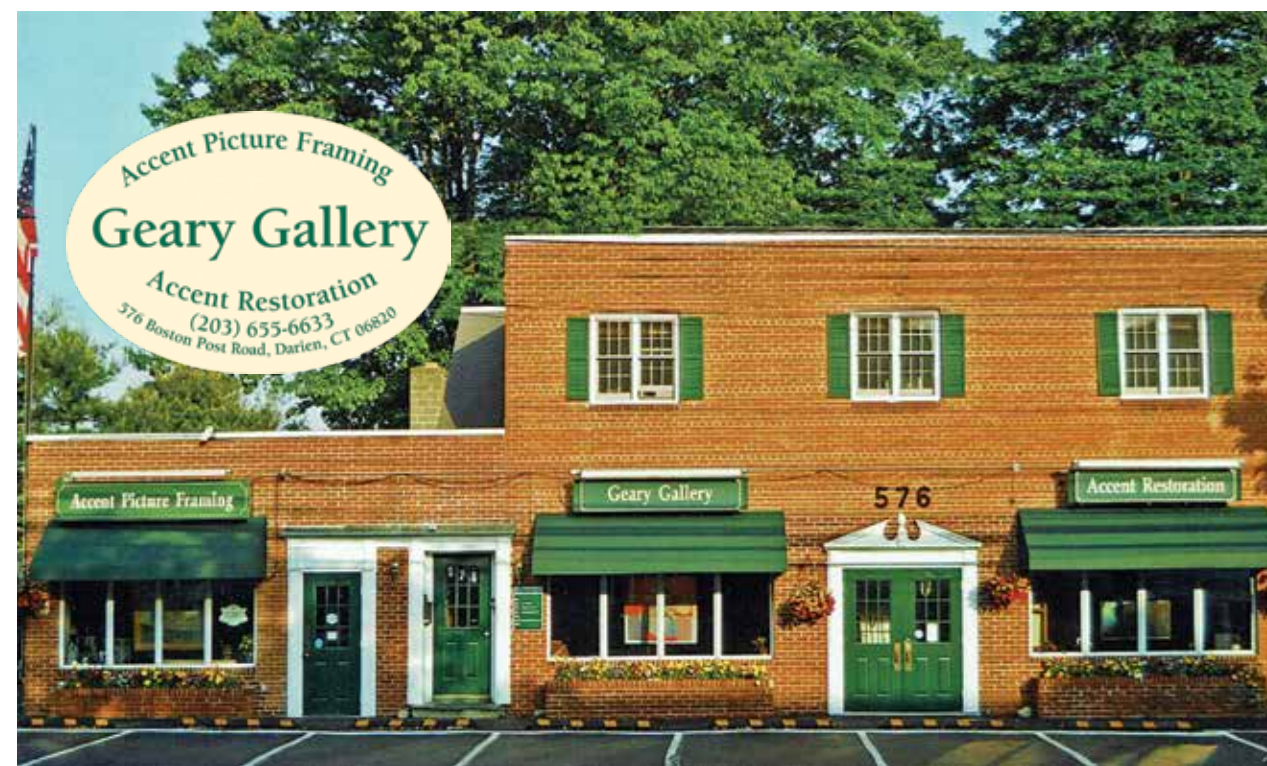
When the bookstores and libraries reopened, we authors were ready. We drove, sometimes for hours, to our new friends' book launches to show our support. We interviewed each other at local independent bookstores to spread the word about our newest novels. Our desire for contact and mutual encouragement took us to writing conferences, where we'd meet still more authors and discuss opportunities to collaborate. From a coffee shop in Darien, fellow Connecticut thriller author Elise Hart Kipness and I launched Sisters in Crime CT, the first-ever Connecticut chapter of the national writing organization Sisters in Crime.

Fast-forward to this year, and nurturing the crime fiction writing community remains a top priority. I can't speak about artistic communities beyond my own, but I can tell you that despite all those hours spent in seclusion, writing doesn't have to feel like marooning oneself on a remote island. Com-

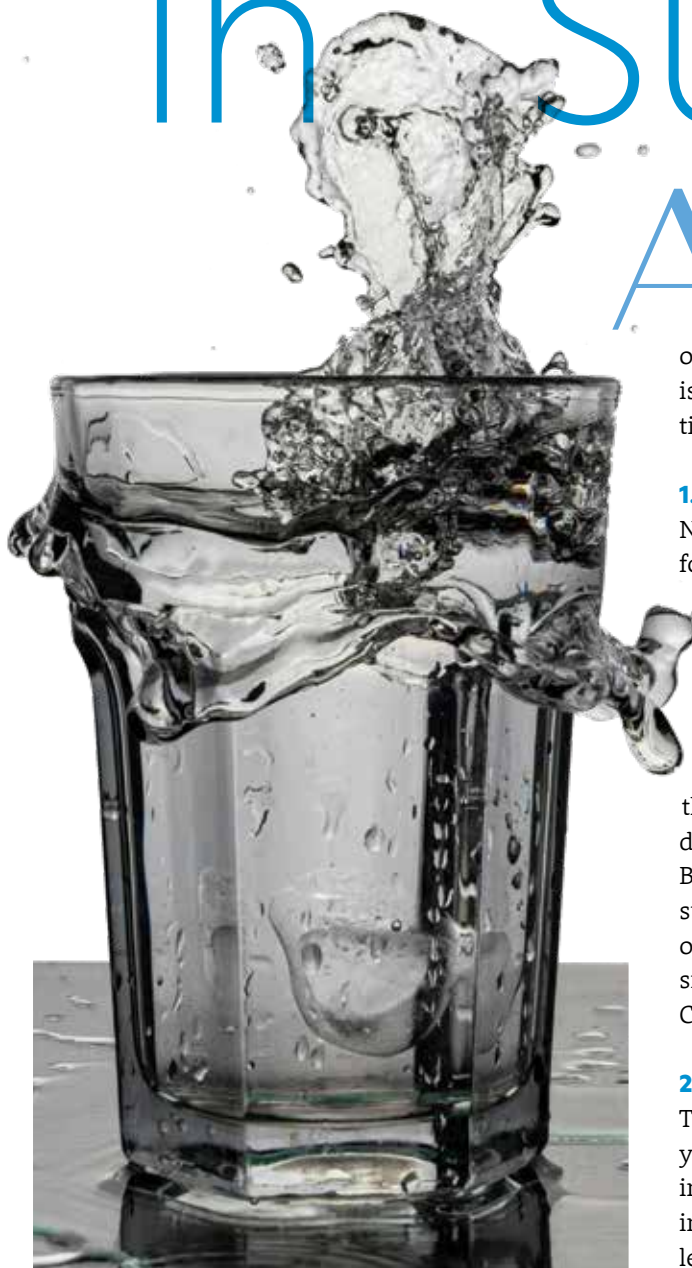
munities exist both online and off to support authors at every stage of their careers, and maintaining strong connections only helps to make us stronger writers. We may live many states—and even countries—apart, but our respective time spent in isolation only brings us closer together.

If you're a writer looking for a community of your own, check out Sisters in Crime CT ([sinconnecticut.com](http://sinconnecticut.com)) and International Thriller Writers/ITW ([thrillerwriters.org](http://thrillerwriters.org)), and find me on Instagram at [@tessawegert](https://www.instagram.com/tessawegert).

Raised in Quebec and now based in Darien, CT, **TESSA WEGERT** writes the popular Shana Merchant mysteries, which include *Death in the Family*, *The Dead Season*, *Dead Wind*, *The Kind to Kill*, *Devils at the Door*, and the upcoming *The Coldest Case*. Her books have received starred reviews from *Publishers Weekly* and *Shelf Awareness* and have been featured on PBS and NPR Radio. Tessa is the co-founder of Sisters in Crime CT, a writing community for all crime fiction authors, and currently serves on the board of International Thriller Writers (ITW). She also teaches classes in mystery and thriller writing at Fairfield County Writers' Studio. Learn more about her books at [tessawegert.com](http://tessawegert.com).



# Staying Hydrated in Summer



As the sun beats down and temperatures soar in summer, staying hydrated becomes more crucial than ever. Not only is proper hydration essential for maintaining good health, regulating body temperature to keep you cool and supporting overall bodily functions, dehydration can lead to a host of health issues including heat exhaustion, heat stroke and impaired cognition. Here's how to stay hydrated and healthy this summer.

## 1. DRINK PLENTY OF WATER.

Not surprisingly, drinking plenty of water throughout the day is the foundation for staying hydrated. Water helps replenish the fluids you lose through sweating and keeps your body functioning optimally. Aim to drink two to three liters of water per day; more if you are spending time outdoors, engaging in physical activity or find yourself sweating more than normal.

If you are partaking in intense physical activity (including swimming!) or prolonged exposure to heat, you may need more than just water to stay hydrated. Consider adding an electrolyte drink with sodium and potassium such as Hydration Aminos by Bioedge.\* Coconut water is also good. However, for both, check the sugar content. Steer clear of anything with more than 3 to 5 grams of sugar per serving. Whenever possible, opt for a lower sugar version. Seasoning food moderately with pink Himalayan sea salt or Celtic salt helps with hydration too.

## 2. CARRY A REUSABLE WATER BOTTLE.

This helps you ensure you sip water throughout the day, whether you're at work, running errands or having fun outside. Opt for an insulated water bottle to keep your water cool and refreshing, even in the sweltering heat. Also, make sure your bottle is glass or stainless steel and BPA-free. Never leave plastic water bottles in a hot car or drink from them if they have been exposed to heat. The plastic toxins leach into the liquid and have been known to cause health issues over time.

## 3. SET REMINDERS TO DRINK WATER.

As important as we may know it is to drink water, in the hustle and bustle of daily life, it can be the last thing we do! It's crazy, right? So,

set reminders on your phone or use a hydration tracking app to prompt you to drink water at regular intervals throughout the day. TIP: I fill my water bottles in the evening for the next day. In the morning, I line them up on my counter so I know when I've reached my intake for the day.

## 4. EAT WATER-RICH FOODS.

In addition to drinking water, you can boost your hydration levels by consuming water-rich fruits and vegetables such as watermelon, cucumbers, cantaloupe, strawberries and oranges. In fact, lettuce, celery, zucchini, bell peppers and tomatoes all contain about 90% water. These water-rich fruits and vegetables will not only help with hydration and keep you cool in summer, they will also give you essential vitamins and minerals.

## 5. AVOID EXCESSIVE CAFFEINE AND ALCOHOL.

While it may be tempting to reach for an iced coffee or refreshing cocktail on a hot summer day, it's essential to consume these beverages in moderation. Caffeine and alcohol can have a diuretic effect, causing you to lose more fluids

and increase the risk of dehydration. If you do indulge, be sure to balance these beverages with plenty of water.

Your body will always tell you when you are not adequately hydrated and you need to listen to it. One sign is the color of your urine. Clear or pale yellow urine is a sign of proper hydration, while dark yellow or amber-colored urine may indicate dehydration. To give yourself the best shot at staying hydrated, start each day with one liter of clear, filtered water, and remember: Don't wait until you feel thirsty to grab for some H2O. If you're feeling parched, you're already starting to get dehydrated so be proactive and drink before you feel thirsty.

In good health, Linda

**LINDA STEPHENS**, M.S. Nutritionist, Darien Resident and Owner, Linda Stephens Fitness, LLC. My virtual door is always open if you want to discuss your health concerns and goals. You can schedule a complimentary call with me through my website at [www.lindamstephens.com](http://www.lindamstephens.com).



Linda Stephens Fitness offers comprehensive nutritional planning to help you achieve your personal wellness goals. We work with individuals, athletes and families. We believe in being proactive about your health because your health is your responsibility.

[www.lindamstephens.com](http://www.lindamstephens.com)

Ladies, please join me LIVE in September on 9/18, 9/25, and October on 10/2 & 10/9 at Hayvn in Darien, CT for Midlife Mastery. You will learn how to navigate midlife and beyond to live long and strong!

**HAYVN** For more information, please email me: [lindaifbbpro@gmail.com](mailto:lindaifbbpro@gmail.com). Hayvn is located at 320 Boston Post Rd Suite 180, Darien, CT 06820

\*Hydration Aminos by Bioedge is free of dyes, colors and fillers. It's a clean way to stay hydrated and it's safe for kids (half a does for children under 15 years old). To order, visit [bioedgesciences.com](http://bioedgesciences.com). For 10% off, use my code: LSTPEHENS.

PHOTO BY NICOLAS RUIZ ON UNSPLASH



**Nielsen's Florist and Garden Shop**

With planters like these from Nielsen's Florist and Garden Shop dressing up your outdoor space, you may never come back inside! Customized to what you love, Nielsen's plant designers work with you to create containers authentic to your style and the spaces you seek to accessorize. Find Nielsen's at 1405 Post Road, 203-655-2541, niensensflorist.com. Pricing varies.

Ahhh summer ...and the opportunities it gives us to convene outside over meals and conversation, cocktails and camaraderie, on special occasions or just because. For all you need to make this summer outside the best ever, look no further than these great local retailers.

**Palmer's Market**

Looking to keep summer meals easy? Look to Palmer's Market at 264 Heights Road. Savory or sweet, they have you covered with sides like this Summer Couscous & Quinoa Salad and treats like this pink velvet cupcake (and so much more!) from their Gourmet to Go foods and made-from-scratch bakery. Shop in person or order ahead at 203-655-2077 or palmersdarien.com. Pricing varies and they deliver!



**Ten Twenty Post**

When the summer outside you seek is anything you need not conjure yourself, Ten Twenty Post awaits. With expanded outdoor seating, its best-anywhere oysters and summer specials such as gazpacho and fresh crabmeat, it never disappoints. Find them at 1020 Post Road, 203-655-1020.

**Sur La Table**

What better than frozen drinks to put the fun in summer outside? With Sur La Table, now in Darien Commons at 106 Heights Road, there's no need to cross town lines for the gear you'll need to pull off all manner of summer food and drink fun. Shown here: Vitamix A3500 Ascent Series Blender, \$699.95 and recycled glass margarita glassware, \$13.95 each.



# Summer outside



**The Town Cellar**

Champion of smaller producers, family-owned wineries, distilleries and craft brewers who focus on great farming and skip the common additives found in most commercial beverages, The Town Cellar breaks the mold to deliver special in every bottle. Find them and their great selection of best beverage picks for summer like those shown here at 1089 Post Road, 203-655-1031. Pricing varies.

**Season's Too**

What's summer outside without a great place to gather? For a full range of the best brands in outdoor seating choices, including this Kingsley Bate table and chairs, and skilled artisans equipped to store, clean and repair existing outdoor furniture of all types as well, check out Seasons Too, 836 Post Road, 203-655-8444. Pricing varies.



**Darien Sport Shop**

Light your table in style with these handcrafted, luxury Italian Meloria spherical candles. Made in Livorno using techniques perfected over seven generations of this family-owned business, these lacquered candles set the stage to make any occasion a ball! Find them at the Darien Sport Shop, 1127 Post Road, 203-655-2575. Check store for pricing.



**Darien Butcher Shop**

Why not a new twist on your backyard BBQ this summer with burgers made from ground bison, elk and venison? You'll find all this and more at the Darien Butcher Shop, 13 Grove Street. They also have bison hot dogs – and best cuts of all the regular stuff, if you're game for less adventure. Pricing varies.

**Ring's End**

Keep it chill on the hottest days – your drinks at least – with this YETI Tundra cooler from Ring's End at 181 West Ave. Yes, you'll find it there, along with a full line of YETI drinkware – and anything else you might need to create your perfect outdoor space. To order online, visit ringsend.com. Cooler price: \$300





# Rooted in Place

**A**t Cherry Lawn Community Gardens, the roots run deep, no matter how long you've been lucky enough to have one of the 60 plots located here. The passion for dirt, growing things and hard work that exist in these gardens add up to immense satisfaction guaranteed to provide the kind of grounding from which all things feel possible.

Do it alongside like-minded others as the gardeners here do, regardless of how much else you may or may not have in common, and you wind up with the kind of community nearly all of us seek, whether we know it or not.

Cherry Lawn Community Gardens connect the old and young as families come together across generations to carry a plot (and so much more!) forward for an aging or ailing relative challenged to conjure the bending, stooping and pretzeling of body parts necessary to keep the weeds back, prune the perennials, plant the annuals and tend it all.

The Gardens are glue for dual-working parents in demanding professional jobs, like the couple who carved out a reading nook beneath a charming arbor amidst the plants for their four young children—a place for memorable, sustaining time together.

It is a place where people of all ages from opposite ends of town who would not otherwise meet bond over the best ways to hold weeds at bay, fertilize (as long as it's organic—that's all that's allowed in the Gardens) and coax along all manner of things, as well as share plants. It is a place to grow things when there's too much shade in your own yard, not enough space, or you have no yard.



**TOP:** *Cherry Lawn gardeners (from left): Emily and Sally Kirby, Dorothy Shergalis, Jim Brewer, Nick Sortori, Nicole Rivard, Elaine Scott, Tricia Connelly and MaryLouise Morgan*  
**BOTTOM:** *Allison Hansen and her two-year-old Hadley, second and third generation community gardeners*

Established by the Garden Club of Darien in the early '70s on town-owned property in the northwestern part of Cherry Lawn Park, the community gardens became a town program when the Club relinquished it in 1975 to a team of volunteers who see to all the chores required to keep the Gardens running smoothly. They have run it autonomously under the town's umbrella since then. Gardeners pay \$30 annually to the town for water, electricity and some other administrative support. They do the rest.

A Coordinating Committee led by Dorothy Shergalis, who

has been president since 2011 and worked a plot since shortly after moving to Darien in 1977, sits atop it all. The other members of this leadership group are Jim Brewer – vice president, Tricia Conley – secretary and Elaine Scott – treasurer.

"We have a wonderful committee," said Dorothy.

Under this group, there's a boss of wheelbarrows and carts, others for hoses; still others see to the fountain generously installed for a nominal fee by Fox Lane Builders to keep the birds away from the tomatoes in droughts and happily hydrated in any weather. It was a volunteer (Pam Shear) who painted the beautiful sign over the entrance to the gardens. There's a volunteer in charge of the fence that surrounds the approximately .8 of an acre on which the plots are staked out, another for the plots, someone else for the shed in which shared tools are kept, one for chips and mulch and a chief of even the bulletin board.

Every gardener also participates in a clean-up day each year and is responsible throughout the growing season for keeping the weeds down on the pathways to the north and east of their plot. They must start their garden by the middle of May, put it to bed by the end of October and keep weeds to 25% or less of their garden. There are inspections.

Despite the rules, "It's very informal here," insists Dorothy,

as it can be only when everyone pitches in with such a shared willingness to do their part as they do at these Gardens.

While there are 40 people currently on a wait list for gardens, plots do occasionally turn over—four last year, though some years it's only one.

The gardeners here plant raspberries (more than 100 bushes in one garden alone!) and rhubarb, sweet peas and squash, broccoli, romaine tomatoes and basil, poppies, peonies, zinnias, loofah and more, with each garden as unique as the grower behind it.

"That's the joy of gardening here," said Dorothy. "It's not uniform. You can do your own thing. It's not bureaucratic. There's no formula," she added.

The Gardens mark time with connectivity and continuity, as the five rosebushes in Dorothy's garden so clearly attest. There's one for each of her grandchildren—now ages 11 to 19, born of her three children who grew up in Darien as Dorothy cultivated her plot in Cherry Lawn. The variation, beauty and permanence of these Gardens are enough to make even the brownest thumb itch—this place to connect, to create, to belong ...with many ways to grow.

To learn more about the Gardens, visit [darienct.gov/1534/Cherry-Lawn-Community-Gardens](http://darienct.gov/1534/Cherry-Lawn-Community-Gardens). ♥

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Photo: Mindy Briar | Gown: Suzanne Neville | Tuxedo: J.Hilburn



FROM LEFT: Sue Okie, her brother D. Seeley Hubbard and Woody Spurgeon with Darien Land Trust Executive Director Elizabeth Mathus, at the recently-donated property on lower Raiders Lane

## A Gift for All Seasons: A Family Legacy of Land Preservation on Delafield Island

Earlier this year, the Darien Land Trust received a gift of land on Delafield Island donated by multiple generations of Darien families focused on protecting fragile wetlands and important migratory bird habitats. The land features dramatic cliffs of exposed ledge and wetlands packed with native species.

The 3.42 acre stretch of land on lower Raiders Lane was given to the Darien Land Trust by Edward V. Spurgeon, F. Anthony Zunino, William N. Hubbard III, D. Seeley Hubbard and Suzanne Hubbard Okie. The property, which is mostly wetlands, was purchased from Elizabeth Delafield Zunino and Suzanne Arguimbau Hubbard Davis in the 1950s to protect its wetlands from being filled in and sold as buildable lots.

Land preservation continues to be a core value of these families, as evidenced by their work with local land trusts. Both Suzanne Arguimbau Hubbard Davis and Edward V. Spurgeon, known as Woody, were trustees of the Darien Land Trust. F. Anthony Zunino, known as Tony, was a

founding member of the Kent Land Trust in 1989 and served as its president for seven years. Both Woody and Tony are grandsons of Edward Delafield, who originally owned all of Delafield Island. Seeley Hubbard was a trustee of the Darien Land Trust and after moving to Rowayton, became president of the Norwalk Land Trust, where he is still a trustee.

This land provides a vital habitat for numerous native birds, including the Great Horned Owl, Pileated Woodpecker, Great Blue Heron, Bufflehead Duck and the Belted Kingfisher. Native trees that thrive on the property include Sweet Gum, White Oak and Red Maple. Native plants now preserved there include the cattail (rarely found anymore in Darien), Wild Geranium, Blue Flag (Wild Iris), Cinnamon Fern and Swamp Rose. Every spring, these wetlands come alive with the chorus of peepers (pond frogs).

With this gift to the Darien Land Trust, these acres, where the British came ashore during the Revolutionary War, are now preserved and protected forever. ♥

## Around Town |

Darien Junior Sailing Team (DJST) instructors returning for Summer '24 of this longstanding town program at Weed Beach. FROM LEFT: Owen Miller, Roman Gagliardi, Ronan Mirsky, Jack Whipple, Nick Funkey, Lucas Prince and Ali Meyer. DJST offers classes for beginner, intermediate, advanced and older novice sailors ages 8 to 15. Three sessions. Spots still available. Find out more at [dariansailing.org](http://dariansailing.org).

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY: DJST



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