Spotlight on Middlebury



Enjoy November hikes

By JANINE SULLIVAN–WILEY

Looking back, I have often written about hiking in the month of November. Late fall is such a perfect time to get out on the trails! The weather is cool enough that there is no danger of getting too hot. But it's also not too cold for even the tender souls among us. It's a Goldilocks month. With a few layers, good sturdy shoes (rocks and roots abound), and maybe a hat and gloves, it's time to get out there.

The Middlebury Land Trust has trails from short (around Lake Elise) to long. The Clark Preserve has multiple trails and connects to Flanders' Hetzel Preserve for longer options. The Sperry Preserve has many trails that are easy to follow, especially the white trail that loops from Sperry House to Sperry Pond. That can be lengthened by adding side treks on the blue, yellow and red trails. The network of trails in the Peterson Preserve can be happily wandered for hours with its connections to adjoining options including the Larkin Bridle trail, trails connecting with those in Naugatuck and those on the Army Corps of Engineers property. Interested folks can go to the Middlebury Land Trust website, click on "maps" and then "trails" and check out those options as well as Crest and Tuttle Woods options.

One of the great joys of being out on these trails is being immersed in nature. The sounds are fewer as most birds have decamped to warmer climes. But you just might see a deer or even a coyote. Certainly, you can spot their scats. Those are the kinds of things I love to experience when out hiking. Sadly, recently that is not all people have experienced.

Litter, or destruction of trails, trees, benches or signs can taint these beautiful preserves and lovely trails. Here I pine for earlier times when I feel there was more communal responsibility. People seemed to consider the well-being of others more. If you littered, someone would give you the side eye or say something (without fear of this endangering themselves.) Parents had no problem calling out bad behavior in the neighbor's kids (and that kid's mom would back up the neighbor – not deny that their child could possibly misbehave.)

The Middlebury Land Trust properties are monitored and maintained by volunteers. They trim, clear and pick up litter. But there are only so many volunteers, and there are a LOT of trails! Which brings me to my hope (and hearing sentiment in this town, I do have hope). If every person who hikes the trails, or enjoys relaxing on a bench would feel as much care and responsibility for others as for themselves, it would be better for us all. The trails would always be more clear (folks moving branches out of the way), clean (no littering and even picking up the stray bit), and preserved (no one would dare destroy a bench – others wouldn't accept or allow it). A dream, but a nice one. And an outcome for which we could all be very thankful.

Meanwhile, happy hiking! You can contact this writer at jswspotlight@gmail.com. Visit the Middlebury Land Trust on Facebook or the website at middleburylandtrust.org.

Left: Vincent Vanderputten and Kira Sullivan-Wiley with their children, Lukas and Alia, follow their father and grandfather, Kent Sullivan-Wiley, up the trail to Larkin Pond in November 2025. They treasure their family hikes. (Janine Sullivan-Wiley photo)

It Happened in Middlebury

Westover nurse becomes a hero

By KEVIN CASEY and DR. ROBERT L. RAFFORD

This past year, we have been sharing our original research in this column, primarily about the military role of France in shaping our nation. However, through the centuries that have passed since that time, both of our close nations have assisted each other numerous times. This was especially true of World War I (1914-1918), when, of 4.7 million service members who served in that war, an estimated 117,000 Americans gave their lives in France and neighboring countries. Another close friend, Canada, sent more than 600,000 Canadians into that war, including almost 3,000 female nurses in the Canadian Army Medical Corps.

Approximately 56 Middleburians served in the "war to end all wars." However, absent from our town lists of veterans is the name of Margaret Bradshaw Horncastle. While she spent only a short time here, she nevertheless honored our town by her service in World War I.

Margaret was born on December 2, 1885, in New Maryland, New Brunswick Province, Canada, to James and Mary Lucy (McMurtrie) Horncastle, farmers, the sixth of 12 children. In 1907, she immigrated to the United States, and by 1910 she had become a nurse in training at the Anna Jacques Hospital in Newburyport, Massachusetts. The hospital, the gift of Miss Anna Jacques (1800-1885) of neighboring Newbury, was founded in 1884, and by 1904 had a new building. After graduation, Margaret came to Connecticut and began serving as a school nurse at the Westover School. Then the World War broke out.

Margaret joined the Massachusetts General Hospital unit of the United States Army Nurse Corps on June 30, 1918. She shaved five years from her birth year, so official records list her birthday as December 2, 1890, instead of the correct 1885. After serving in the base hospital at the newly established Camp Dix (now Fort Dix) in New Jersey, she was assigned overseas in August to Army Base Hospital 55 in Toul, France, on the Western Front.

That hospital was organized to care for sick and wounded soldiers, and from 1918 to 1919, they treated almost 4,500 patients. She was relieved from active duty in May 1919. For her service on the front lines, Margaret was awarded the prestigious French Croix de Guerre by Marshal Ferdinand Foch, Supreme Allied Commander of the Western Front, for bravery under fire in June 1919.

Following the war, Margaret lived in New Rochelle, New York. Her career centered on child and pre-natal health, for which she became well known, later diversifying to other specialties. Her example as a nurse inspired others, such as her niece, Margaret S. H. Bishop, who began nursing studies at St. Luke's Hospital, New York, in 1927. Throughout the 1930s, Margaret sought to help the poor and underprivileged, working alongside such agencies as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. She continued as a public health nurse in the 40s and 50s in New Rochelle. In 1955, a newspaper story included a photograph showing her helping to provide booster shots for the Salk vaccine.

Margaret retired from nursing in October 1959, at the age of 73, after 35 years of service in the New Rochelle Department of Public Health. At a dinner in her honor, she was praised for "her contribution to public health nursing and true exemplification of professional nursing service" ("The Standard-Star," New Rochelle, N.Y.).



The French Croix de Guerre. In June 1919, one-time Westover nurse Margaret Bradshaw Horncastle was awarded this prestigious medal by Marshal Ferdinand Foch, Supreme Allied Commander of the Western Front, for bravery under fire during World War I. Horncastle served on the front lines. (Wikipedia photo)

In 1962, she was badly injured by an automobile in New Rochelle, sustaining three compound fractures of her right leg, and was treated at New Rochelle Hospital. She recovered, and moved home to New Brunswick, Canada, where she died on May 9, 1973, age 87. She is buried in the Saint Mary the Virgin Anglican Church Cemetery in New Maryland, New Brunswick, in her family plot.

Bob Rafford is the Middlebury Historical Society president and Middlebury's municipal historian. To contact the society, visit MiddleburyHistoricalSociety.org or contact him at president@middleburyhistoricalsociety.org. Your membership and support are welcome.

CHEAPR changes

(HARTFORD) – The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) announced the standard incentive level for the popular Connecticut Hydrogen and Electric Vehicle Purchase Rebate (CHEAPR) program changed effective October 15, 2026. The CHEAPR program offers incentives to Connecticut residents who purchase or lease an eligible new or used battery electric (BEV) or plug-in hybrid electric (PHEV) vehicle from a licensed Connecticut automobile dealership or original e-quipment manufacturer.

Effective October 15, the standard incentive for new battery electric vehicles increased to $1,500 from $1,000. Demand for CHEAPR rebates skyrocketed in 2025 during the lead up to the loss of the federal tax credit on October 1, 2025, and as a result, DEEP reduced the amount of the standard rebate. Since the federal tax credit expired, CHEAPR rebates have dropped by 50%. Several factors, including tariff impacts and manufacturing costs, caused that drop. Returning to the $1,500 standard rebate helps address part of the gap created by federal policy changes. With high gasoline prices, CHEAPR incentives can make cleaner, more affordable transportation choices available by reducing the upfront costs of BEVs.

The Rebate+ incentives, which provide additional incentives for prequalified low- and moderate-income families, will remain at current levels while DEEP considers other program improvements. Significant interest in Rebate+ remains with demand slightly ahead of last year.

"With gasoline and diesel prices at all-time highs, it's more important than ever that the CHEAPR program continue to meet Connecticut drivers where they are," said DEEP Acting Commissioner Emma Cimino. "Connecticut's CHEAPR rebate remains a popular incentive that has helped almost 28,000 drivers get behind the wheel of an EV and benefit from lower fuel and lifetime maintenance costs."

EVs can be CHEAPR over the long term when considering the "total cost of ownership" or "TCO." TCO includes upfront costs such as purchase price, taxes and registration fees; recurring costs such as fuel, maintenance, repairs and insurance; and end of ownership costs that reflect depreciation in the resale value of the vehicle.

BEVs will likely cost less over the long run for those who purchase used vehicles and hold onto them for a while. They are inherently more efficient than internal combustion vehicles because more energy goes to moving the vehicle and less is wasted as heat, and electricity is usually less expensive than gasoline when used as a transportation fuel (e.g., at Connecticut's retail electric rate and assuming average efficiency of 3.5kWh, fueling with electricity is equivalent to paying about $2.66/gallon). EVs require less maintenance (no oil changes, water pumps, timing belts, etc.), and their brakes last longer because BEVs use regenerative braking technologies.

CHEAPR provides a cash rebate at the Point-of-Sale to Connecticut residents who purchase or lease a new eligible vehicle costing up to $50,000 from a licensed Connecticut new car dealer. Incentive levels fall into two buckets: "Standard" and "Rebate +." All Connecticut licensed drivers are eligible for the standard incentive. To be eligible for Rebate +, a Connecticut licensed driver must be prequalified and either meet income thresholds, participate in an identified list of income qualified programs, or reside in either a distressed municipality or an environmental justice community. The Rebate + incentive is awarded in the form of a voucher, so applicants must preapply to ensure eligibility.

As of October 15, 2026, the Standard incentive for a new battery electric vehicle was $1,500. The Rebate + incentive for a new battery electric vehicle will be unchanged at $3,000. This award is issued in addition to and stackable with the Standard incentive, so the new total incentive will be $4,500. The Rebate + incentive for a new plug-in hybrid vehicle will be unchanged at $1,500 and is awarded in addition to the Standard $500 incentive, for a total incentive of $2,000.

The Rebate+ program also offers incentives for used BEV and PHEV vehicles. These voucher-based incentives remain unchanged at $5,000 and $3,000, respectively. Keep in mind the Rebate+ requires preapproval to ensure eligibility. Find more information at portal.ct.gov/deep/air/mobile-sources/cheapr/cheapr---home.

For more information, visit the CHEAPR Website.

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