



# It's Happening Here

## TORRINGTON'S NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 6 • JULY 2021

# WELCOME...



Progress is in the air. This month I wish to highlight the progress made with our Brownfield properties that scatter throughout Torrington.

The City of Torrington is proud of our strong industrial heritage and industry-leading manufacturing companies that still call Torrington home. In the 19th Century, our economy flourished through the power of the Naugatuck River and the Naugatuck Railroad. Torrington produced various metal products, including needles, brass, hardware, bicycles, and tacks. The 1980s marked the de-industrialization of the Naugatuck River Valley and the wholesale exodus of manufacturing companies from the United States, leaving many of Torrington's industrial complexes shuttered. With the absence of environmental regulations, these properties were left with contamination and blighted conditions that made it difficult (if not impossible) to repurpose. Over the past several years, the City has worked closely with State and Federal agencies, property owners, and developers to revitalize these properties.

One of the most recently completed projects is the new addition to the Torrington Savings Bank. Torrington Savings' needed to expand from their current space and saw the perfect opportunity in the old dry-cleaning building on 18 Mason Street. With the help of State grants secured by the City of Torrington, the bank could clean up the site from years of contamination and begin construction. The three-story addition is now complete and is a perfect addition to Torrington's downtown district.



Another project that has been in the works is Torrington Riverfront at 100 Franklin Street. The City utilized state and federal grants to complete the necessary remediation work on this site last month. This work made way for a mixed-use development that includes 60 apartments, approximately 1,100 square feet of retail space, and a portion of the Naugatuck River, now under construction. We are very excited about the final results of this long-awaited project. We cannot wait to see this neighborhood in our downtown come to life.

In July, the State of CT Department of Economic and Community Development awarded the City of Torrington a \$200,000 grant to help with the further assessment efforts on the former NIDEC property on 100 Franklin Drive. Together with the Nidec America Corporation, we hope to produce a redevelopment strategy, solicit developer interest and develop a customized remedial action plan for the 7.6-acre site.

Currently, the Torrington Company's Field Street office is complete and in use. Now is the time for the owner to focus their resources and attention on the Standard Plant on Elm Street. While nothing is set in stone yet, if the work done at the property on Field Street indicates what is to come, it is sure to be exceptional. Stay tuned, as we expect that there will be some significant improvements with this site over the next year or so.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT

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Sincerely,

*Rista Malanca*

Director of Economic Development

# SUPPORTING OUR YOUTH FOR OVER 40 YEARS

Founded in the early 1980s, the Torrington Police Activities League, Inc. has been a critical component of giving our youth an alternative to crime, violence, and substance abuse.

**The Torrington Police Activities League promotes character development and self esteem while building positive relationships among children, our police officers, and the community.**

Officer Don Newkirk, who retired from the force in 2002, initiated the Torrington Athletics League and began by supporting the local midget football league that would play in Fuessenich Park. PAL would bring an ambulance to be on standby at each game, and the police would staff the ambulance. As the years went on, PAL expanded its operations to a travel basketball team for boys.



**TORRINGTON PAL**  
POLICE ACTIVITIES LEAGUE, INC.



**Chris Smedick**  
Executive Director - PAL

PAL originally started in New York City as a local Boxing League, and communities across the US saw the importance of community policing and involvement. Torrington's PAL group is associated with the National Police Athletic League. Over the years, the Torrington Police Athletic League wanted to be more inclusive with their name because they were doing more in the community outside of sports. Therefore they renamed themselves the Torrington Police Activities League to include all activities they offered while still keeping the same acronym.

Initially, the travel team used to be the old Varsity Alumni Club led by Frank Russo and Andy Pace. They ran for a few years until they could no longer support it, and the local Elk's Lodge stepped up and took control of the league. Elks ran the program for a few years, as did the THS Alumni. They could no longer bear the team's responsibility, and PAL decided to take complete control of the team and became fully involved with basketball. The Basketball league has become a successful program that runs for 11 months year-round. PAL offers two clubs with varying levels that anyone can participate. The Travel program is designed for athletes who can compete at a higher level within the field. The City League is the revamped

Varsity Alumni Club. Any kids who want to play from grades kindergarten up to high school are welcome to participate. The City League has a low registration rate, but PAL offers scholarships to those who can't afford it. **"If you need a scholarship, we will give you a scholarship no questions asked,"** says Chris Smedick, executive director of Torrington PAL. Chris does not want to deny a child the opportunity to participate in any summer camps or other programs that PAL offers throughout the year.

Chris Smedick is the current executive director of Torrington PAL. Before being on the board of directors, he served 36 years in the Torrington Police Department. Chris retired from the force in 2018 as Deputy Police Chief and transitioned to PAL, keeping the same vision Officer Newkirk saw 40 years ago. Chris was also part of the original team that founded the PAL initiative in Torrington and has seen this organization grow from its beginnings. Currently, PAL is located on the first floor of One Torrington Office Plaza, which was generously given to them by one of their significant donors, the PAC group in Torrington. The PAC group owned the office

# SUPPORTING OUR YOUTH FOR OVER 40 YEARS



building and provided a better space for PAL to call their headquarters. Before 2018, PAL was located in a small office room at the Torrington Police Department. A small room at the Memorial Coe Park Civic Center and Chris also shared his dining room table to hold meetings and conduct the business of PAL. The new space needed repairs and upgrades, made possible by the generous donations of sponsors and the time volunteer workers gave to fix up the office space. Chris's hope for the suite is to allow for programs to be held in it and enable the community to enjoy the area just as much as he has.

Chris saw the pandemic had caused them to stand still on what they would usually offer kids throughout the year. PAL was unable to raise funds during the eleven months of COVID. However, the lack of fundraising did not affect the organization as they were able to endure that period of uncertainty.

**Chris is now glad that the vaccine is available to all adults and has begun to operate their summer programs in full swing.**



Chris feels the community has always supported their initiative and the programs they have to offer. Chris believes they need to improve their transparency as an organization when the distance between the community and police is more distant than ever before.

**As Police officers, we are not used to touting what we did because it was obvious.**

Chris feels the community has always supported their initiative and the programs they have to offer. Chris believes they need to improve their transparency as an organization when the distance between the community and police is more distant than ever before. "As Police officers, we are not used to touting what we did because it was obvious." With social media and the ability to reach a whole community with a touch of a button, Chris had to hire interns this year to help them keep PAL up to date. The interns also help with the image issue that plagues all police organizations. Still, Chris believes they have improved on what they have learned and will keep striving to be more open with the community they serve.

Overall, the community in Torrington has been great towards PAL. Chris is thankful for the support from local businesses that give generously to help make many programs possible. PAL's sponsors have provided an excellent opportunity for kids to be exposed to different activities other than sports. An example of this is PAL's collaboration with ED Advanced. They are a wonderful group that helps kids improve their learning skills to succeed in their academics. The National PAL group awarded about \$20,000 in grant money to help them continue their after-school program at the middle school. Officers visit the school from time to time and help with this program.

Due to the pandemic, PAL lost the opportunity to raise funds for the organization. In a typical year, PAL would hold three fundraisers spread out throughout the year. The annual golf tournament has had tremendous participation every time, a gala, which was first introduced in 2019 during Valentine's day, and in years past, PAL has hosted a Lobster Fest. This year, Chris and his team wanted to get the local children and their families involved.



That is why they came up with Summer Fest, a two day summer experience for the whole family.

The festivities kicked off with the PAL Cruise Night sponsored by Royals Garage, where they displayed a full lineup of classical cars for people to check out. Then, while that's going on, down by E. Main Street at Torrington Plaza, PAL brought in a carnival to set up for the two day event, where kids and their families enjoyed various rides, games, and food.

Dress for Success kicked things off Saturday morning with a Back to School Backpack and supplies giveaway on Franklin Street Plaza. Torrington Public Schools and Baraco, an adult day care center, organized this event. "Kate puts it all together for all grades kindergarten through twelfth grade," says Chris about the excellent work Kate Adams, director of Baraco in Torrington, has put into Dress to Success and the local children of Torrington. The backpacks were generously donated by people in the community and local businesses. On July 17th, PAL parked their bus out in front of Walmart and collected the donated supplies needed to fill each backpack with the necessary materials for kindergarten to high school.

**Last year, we had to stop one hour early because the people of Torrington had stuffed the bus entirely with school supplies.**



**Summer Fest is a tribute to Torrington and their kindness and generosity.**



As Kate and the people from Torrington Public School handed out the backpacks, several social services were also present to provide information and assistance to those in attendance. Those who were present include the Torrington Youth Bureau, YMCA, New Opportunities, FitTogether, and many more.

**There are a lot of free things that we do that we don't tout, but it's for the kids that we do what we do.**

Throughout the rest of the day, a three-on-three basketball tournament was in full motion as teams from various age groups competed against each other. The Warner Theatre opened their doors for the first time since the pandemic showing two free movies on their

big screen. Kids Play provided tons of fun-filled activities for kids of all ages. A Zumba class was offered to those wanting to get fit on main street and the Forbes Flyers showed off their skills for all to see.

In the words of our mayor,

**"The 'kid-focused' Summer Fest was a tremendous success! Families and friends rediscovered the good old-fashioned block party that creates fond memories of growing up in Torrington."**

For more information visit [torringtonpal.org](http://torringtonpal.org) to learn more





**Edward Goad**  
Principal

# A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE



**St. John Paul the Great  
ACADEMY**

Before changing its name to St. John Paul the Great Academy, Torrington was home to four Catholic schools, representing the four Catholic Churches.

St. Francis was the first school to open in 1890 and was later replaced by its current modern building in 1961. St. Peter was the second school to open in 1956 and in 2007 merged with St. Francis and closed its campus on St. John Place. In 1923, Sacred Heart opened its school and, after 59 years, closed its doors in 1982. And finally, St. Mary was the last of the Catholic schools to open in 1961 but closed its doors in 1984. A decline in enrollment caused the majority to close down and leave only one standing with the years.

In 2018, Father Emmanuel Ihemedu moved to Torrington to pastor the newly established parish that merged the four churches within the Catholic community. One of the very first tasks has the head pastor was to close St. Peter/St. Francis School, but Fr. Emmanuel refused, stating the parish's future lies with the children, and ending the school meant risking the parish's future as a whole. Thankfully, enrollment in the past three years has gone up from 81 students to almost 170 for the upcoming school year.



**Krystal Wall**  
Co-President  
Home and School Association



**Susan Borla-Cook**  
School Board Chair



Fr. Emmanuel believes every child should have the opportunity to this particular type of education.

**"We are the last [catholic] school standing in Litchfield County,"** said

Susan Cook, Chair of the School Board. A mother came to her last year and told her, "I need this school." The mother expressed how much she wanted her child to continue at St. John Paul the Great but could not afford the \$20,000 tuition cost every year. Fortunately, the school uses a "just" tuition model, which provides help to families who might not have the means to send their children to private school. The school witnessed increased enrollment during the pandemic as more parents sought to give their children a more personalized learning experience. Last school year, St. John Paul was only closed during snow days; every other academic day, the school was open.

The school runs pre-k starting at three years old up to grade 8. The current Teacher to Student ratio is 1:20, allowing the teacher to have a one-on-one

experience with each student. The school is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. St. John Paul the Great also stands out as being only one of three STREAM academies within the Archdioceses of Hartford and the only STREAM school in Northwest Connecticut. The academy boasts innovative arts, science, music programs, and a stellar academic program to suit each student's learning style and pace. Students are challenged academically, inspired artistically, and enlightened spiritually in a stimulating environment nurtured in the Roman Catholic faith.

Edward Goad, principal of St. John Paul the Great, saw the pandemic gave the school a much-needed push to enter into the 21st century of education.

**"When COVID hit, I had to ensure students would continue to receive fantastic education, an education we promised our families that enrolled here."**

The school could enroll every student into a google classroom account where the teacher would post all the student's assignments, and students had access to Google Meets. Google Meet allowed face-to-face learning with each student. Students are allowed time to work on their assignments and then ask questions to the teacher. **"It was great for 21st Century learning, but we also want to provide that pen and paper access to it as well."**

"COVID was horrible, but it pushed us to get to the next level," say's Mrs. Cook. Principal Goad was able to secure a grant to get chrome books for every student and many other needed upgrades to the technology used in the school. The coding and robotics program will be introduced as an excellent program for all the grade levels starting this year. With the new technology and digital applications like Define Learning, a project-based curriculum enables students to go beyond the standard pen and paper memorization routine. Still, it pushes each student to do hands-on learning. Every Friday will be set aside for Academy Time, where students will have the opportunity to do STREAM education and hands-on, project-based learning with other students. This day will involve the student to have to engage in multiple curriculums at once to achieve the set outcome. The school is looking forward to what the next few years have in store for them.

***Kids are having fun and learning at the same time, which is such a great model***  
**- Principal Goad**



Mrs. Cook wishes and hopes that the school becomes highly sought after a waiting list becomes the new normal for them one day. They are now working hard towards that goal, get the word out that they have a story to tell, and want to share it with you. Mrs. Cook feels the community is starting to fall in love with the school once again. When she joined the school board, the board told Mrs. Cook not to speak about the things going on within these walls. "But I told them, you have to say what's going on behind these walls." Getting the word out about the school was a challenge last year. While driving down Main Street in October, Mrs. Cook saw many storefronts were vacant and got the idea to fill them up with pumpkins. Although the pumpkins

did not raise any money for the school, they did, however, raise awareness that the school was alive and open. When the Christmas season came around, Susan Strandel, who is on the board, lives in Goshen and asks if Action Wild Life would allow the school onto the property for a drive-thru Christmas presentation. The event was a huge success, and the board saw the benefit of doing community-based fundraising.

**Unless the community does not become emotionally attached to us, they are not going to support us.**





Krystal Wall, Co-President of the Home and School Association, expressed how their school community is no longer within Torrington but Litchfield County. We have to branch out and share our story with the community around us. "So they know it's not just another building that they drive by on the main street."

This year, the school board has initiated an Alumni Association. This committee comprises St. John Paul the Great Academy alumni and its predecessors Sacred Heart School, St. Francis of Assisi School, St. Mary School, St. Peter School, and St. Peter/St. Francis School. The group's primary objective is to support the academy through fundraising, promotion, and volunteerism. They have also revamped the existing Home and School Association. The school has also started to offer a curriculum-based before and aftercare program for students with working parents. Students are required to finish their schoolwork before they are allowed to part take in other activities.

The school will end all parent-based fundraising and focus on doing more community-based fundraising. This year, the school will be holding its second annual golf tournament titled, Four the Children. All proceeds will go to benefit the academy. Next year, and include a junior section for kids who wish to be involved. This tournament will be in partnership with Torrington PAL.

For more information on the school, visit their website at [www.stjohnpaulthegreatacademy.org](http://www.stjohnpaulthegreatacademy.org)

## TORRINGTON TWILIGHT EXPRESS!

Hop aboard and enjoy a scenic train ride to Torrington on our Torrington Twilight Express! These excursions will take you up the Naugatuck River Valley, over the famed Thomaston Dam, and through the woods to Torrington! Passengers on these trains will not only get to enjoy a trip on the northern part of our line, but will also have a chance to depart the train and spend 2 hours in Torrington to grab dinner, walk around, and enjoy what downtown has to offer on a summer evening!

### Itinerary:

- 4:30 pm: Depart Thomaston Station**
- 5:15 pm: Arrive at Torrington Water St platform**
- 7:30 pm: Passengers visiting Torrington re-board train**
- 7:45 pm: Depart Torrington**
- 8:30 pm: Arrive at Thomaston Station**

*Note: The Torrington Water St platform is .2 miles and a 5 minute walk from Main St.*





# CITY OF TORRINGTON CT Police Department

## TPD JULY MESSAGE

WILLIAM R. BALDWIN JR.

Chief of Police



The meteorological summer of June, July and August, is the time of year that many of us can't wait for as we put the cold winter months behind us. The lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer, the favorite season of so many where kids get a respite from school, and families go on their long-awaited vacations to get away from it all and spend some good quality time with family and friends. Picnics, ice cream, swimming pools and just hanging out on the deck or front porch are some of the favorite past times of summer. The key ingredient of summer, is the hot sun and soaring temperatures and it is this subject of this months newsletter that I want to talk about especially when it comes to our pets.

Did you know that temperatures inside a hot vehicle can reach well over 140 degrees on a hot day when outside temperatures are in the 90's? It doesn't have to be that warm outside for a car to become dangerously hot inside. Even with an outside temperature of 70, the interior of a motor vehicle can reach 115 degrees within an hours' time. On an 85-degree day, temps can climb over 100 degrees in only 10 minutes and can jump to 120 degrees in a half hour. Even with the windows of a vehicle opened a crack it doesn't eliminate the danger of heatstroke or death.

According to the animal legal defense fund, companion animals die every year because they are carelessly left in a hot car for a period of time while the pet owner leaves them behind to do some errands. Animals have a very different mechanism in the way that they cool themselves. It is quite different from humans. It is very difficult for our pets to regulate their body temperatures that makes them extremely vulnerable to heatstroke which can lead to death. Dogs and cats cool off primarily by panting, not by sweating, and their internal systems can become overwhelmed quickly leading to distress.

As police chief, one of my responsibilities is Animal Control which falls under my authority and department within our city. As a city we should be very grateful for the hard work and dedication that our busy animal control officers do on a daily basis answering calls for service related to domesticated and wild animals that roam our city. Every summer season, we as a police department answer numerous calls for service as it relates to animals being locked in a parked hot vehicle. In 2020 our animal control and police officers answered 65 calls related to pets locked in cars. In 2021, year to date, we have answered 29 such calls. Fortunately, no animals were injured related to any of these calls.

So, what do we do when we see an animal locked in a hot car. First, you are encouraged to try and locate the owner and call for assistance by dialing 9-1-1 and to wait until help arrives. One of my animal control officers or a patrol officer will respond. Take down the car's make, model, and license plate number. If there are businesses nearby, notify their managers or an employee and ask them to make an announcement to find the car's owner. Many people are unaware of the danger of leaving pets in hot cars and will quickly return to their vehicle once they are alerted to the situation.

If possible, determine if the car is unlocked and let the animal out of the vehicle. If the animal looks like it is in dire crisis, you can take extreme measures to rescue the animal. Still, to take drastic action such as breaking a car window, you must be sure that the situation is urgent for the animal's life. The State of Connecticut has protections for such actions under the Good Samaritan law, which protects persons from liability upon entering a vehicle. An individual can use no more force than reasonably necessary under the circumstances to enter a vehicle to remove an animal from imminent danger of severe bodily injury. It is always a good idea for the professionals to rescue the animal as I don't want to see anyone bitten or attacked by a dog.

It is also important to note that persons who leave their pets in their cars can face a criminal charge of Cruelty to Animals, a class D felony.

This summer, whether you are traveling with a pet or not, please be extra alert to animals in distress—your vigilance can save a life. Learn more about summer pet safety [here](#) and download our [infographic](#) to remind your family and friends about the dangers of leaving animals in hot cars.

I would ask local store managers, shopping malls, restaurants, and other businesses to post signs asking customers not to leave their pets in their cars while shopping or dining. A considerable part of the solution to this problem is raising awareness. You can click on the link below to print out a sign reminding your customers of their need to be mindful of their pets.



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

And finally, while my message this month is about pets in hot cars, I, unfortunately, have to remind everyone not to leave their child in a hot car. It may seem silly that I am even bringing this up, but every year we hear of a child's death resulting from being left in a hot car. On average, 38 children under 15 die each year from heatstroke after being left in a vehicle. Nearly every state has experienced at least one death since 1998. In both 2018 and 2019, a record number of 53 children died after being left in a hot vehicle. Connecticut has experienced five such deaths since 1998. These deaths are five too many. At the same time, these tragedies may have resulted from nothing more than a non-intentional horrible accident. We need to constantly be reminded of the passengers we have in our vehicles, whether they be our beloved pets or a child.

As I conclude, I wish everyone a very safe summer season. Be responsible and respectful of all that you do. As always, never be hesitant to report any suspicious activity to the Torrington Police Department.

**“DEDICATED PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE”**

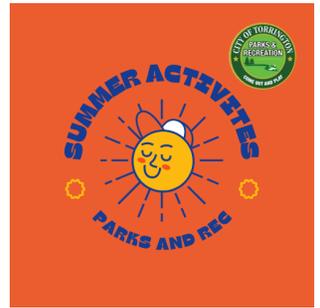


**CITY OF TORRINGTON CT  
Police Department**

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# SUMMER PROGRAMS

TAP ICONS FOR MORE INFO.



# BUSINESS RESOURCES



U.S. Small Business Administration



**BETSY PAYNTER**  
SMALL BUSINESS OUTREACH  
CONSULTANT



TAP TO EMAIL



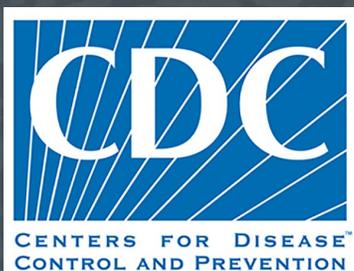
TAP TO CALL

## SBA Restaurant Revitalization Fund

# COVID-19 RESOURCES



Hartford  
HealthCare



TESTING  
FOR  
COVID-19



COVID-19  
VACCINE

## State of CT COVID-19 Guidelines