



Covid-19 Early Scenes



Photos by Teddi Kopcha

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President's Message

"I know that this is the right decision but I am so upset, Thank you for all your help." This is the message I received from Maggie Masselli, our senior volunteer, when I told her that we had to cancel the tea that she and her friend were doing to contribute to the Society. This was only one of the disappointments for her at the end of her outstanding high school career (see page 7). I remember her message often and the maturity in those few words. It is a message that we all need during this time.

The world of the Society changed rapidly as event after event was cancelled. The decisions were made with the thought of protecting our volunteers and our community. We had a wonderful year in 2019 and were planning for a great 2020 when we entered a world of upheaval, uncertainty and anxiety. However, we have learned from the study of history of mankind that the resilience, courage and inspiration emerging during the worst of times will help us overcome the challenges that we now face.

The Society is grateful that we could continue the restoration of the working kitchen due to the determination and expertise of project manager, Edward Armstrong and the generosity of the Scoville Family Charitable Fund. We used all local businesses with this project to help the economy in our area. We are also proud of the AASLH award.

The record breaking support of our Annual Appeal helped tremendously to overcome the many financial losses this year. We hope that on June 21, 2021 we can hold our major fundraiser, the Home Tour, which was cancelled this year. We are grateful that all participants this year have committed to next year. We have major repairs not done this year that must be done next year.

At our Annual Meeting Carol Rzasa and Leslie Mastrianna were elected to the Board of Trustess. We welcome these Old Saybrook residents who care so much about the quality of life in Old Saybrook and we look forward to their involvement with the Society.

With wishes to you that we have the fortitude to live in these times and that better times will soon be coming,

Marie

Former Student Volunteer Shares Her Covid-19 World

Hi! My name is Liv and I am studying abroad. Not for a semester or a year, but full-time for the next three years. I am a first year Musical Theatre major training at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London, England.



The decision to study on another continent for my full-time education wasn't an easy one. However, after many auditions and receiving amazing offers from other incredible stateside universities where I could hone my craft, I knew my heart belonged in London.

Central is an exceptional school with world-class training, boasting an impressive list of famous alumni, but what really sealed the deal for me was the humanity in the audition room. The panel was interested in getting to know who I was and what I brought to the table, not just what they could mold me into, to make me "marketable".

After accepting my place, finding a flat and securing my student visa, I was off to jolly old Londontown! I experienced two fantastic terms of rigorous training, making friends, seeing West End shows and exploring my new city. My 18 classmates hail from England, Scotland, Ireland, Argentina, Australia and the U.S. We take the majority of our classes together, except for our individual singing lessons. With a small class we got to know each other pretty quickly, as did our tutors. Our tutors critique us in front of the class, which allows us to learn from each other. We are a supportive group, and even our challenging individual "aha" break-through moments were felt collectively. As a company, we depend on each other to be present in order to achieve our goals.

Being in England makes traveling to other countries so much more accessible. Unfortunately, training 10-12 hours a day, 5 days a week, prevented me from traveling much during term, which was disappointing. However since our term dates and holidays differ from U.S. schools, our spring break is 4 weeks long! I was excited for my spring break plans - visiting friends in Scotland and then a trip to France with my family.

Sadly, just before the final week of second term, my class received an email saying that the school term had abruptly ended a week prematurely due to growing concerns over COVID-19. Just like that, our remaining assessments and presentations were out the window. We were all devastated, but after the initial shock had dissipated, another worry needed its way into my brain. Like other countries, the United Kingdom would soon go into lockdown, as France had already done, and the U.S. was initiating a travel ban from Europe. I saw all my spring break plans fall apart before my eyes, and a narrow window for going home was closing rapidly. I had to make a choice - should I stay or should I go? Although I have a great support network of family friends and contacts in the U.K. and Europe, the anxiety of an "indefinite timeline" of the situation compelled me to fly back home to the United States before additional travel restrictions went into effect. Fortunately, securing a flight and re-entering the states went smoothly and now I'm home (and staying home) until further notice.

Currently, there's an air of uncertainty as to how to approach next term. Thankfully, it has not been canceled and scheduled to resume after spring break. Like many U.S. schools, our classes are planned to be online. But the similarities end there. I'm not sure when I will be able to return to the United Kingdom. With travel bans and international travel not recommended, most airlines have limited or canceled most of their flights. The five hour time difference will make it arduous to be present for live classes, and how exactly does online learning for performance-based majors work anyway? Acting and Musical Theatre is collaborative by nature. We've spent the past two terms working together on duologues, duets, ensemble singing and dancing. Collaboration is embedded within the fabric of our course.

Our school administrators and teachers are taking this time to figure out what the next term will look like. In the meantime, while many of my U.S. college friends are busy with their own online classes, I'm in limbo being on spring break for the next few weeks. So I find myself trying to balance and enjoy this time with my family; while working to maintain focus on what I learned during my time at Central. I am using this time for growth by exploring other works and speaking with other artists.

Covid, continued from page 2

Many students complain they “don’t have time” for anything outside of schoolwork. Now, with more time than ever before, I get to expand my rep book, read more plays, participate in online readings with artists I’ve never worked with, and immerse myself in other genres of literature I haven’t had the opportunity to read in the past. WhatsApp and social media is great to stay connected with my friends abroad. The internet is a great source for movie recommendations, as well as online fitness and dance classes. Finally, my family and I spend quality time together having movie nights and going on long walks (6 feet away from other people!).

I worked summers at a professional regional theatre. Right now, they are uncertain of when they are opening for this season, if at all. With all this being said, I’m taking this time to put family first and cultivate my craft within the confines of my home.

Olivia has returned to London and we wish her well.

“It is through art that we will prevail and we will endure. It lives on after us and defines us as people.” - Rita Moreno

Two Spectacular Donations

Amelia Hotchkiss Sheffield’s writing desk dated 1824. It is made of high quality wood, has splendid original hardware and is signed by Amelia Hart Sheffield. This piece was donated by a direct descendant of Robert Chapman, one of the first settlers of Saybrook Colony and will be displayed in the Hart House dining room.

Oil on canvas of John Winthrop Jr., a gift of artist and Society member Marek Sarba. It is displayed with the Winthrop memorabilia in the Hart House.



Covid Poem

by Patricia O'Brien
Old Saybrook Poet Laureate



With the arrival of Corona Virus and its topsyturvy impact on our lives, I along with all my family, friends, neighbors... the world... struggle to find our place in the chaos and challenges to our routine, our work, our socialization .. our loves and our lives.

Coming to the poem, *Awake*, helped me appreciate the surprising gifts offered when our busy routines are interrupted or even rendered unimportant... when we have more opportunities to tune into the world around us... when we are fully awake to the gifts of our surroundings, whether the light playing on the marsh grass behind your house, the wave from your neighbor strolling past your house, the surprising spring return of pansies in the flower box on your porch.

Thanks for the chance to share this poem with you. I like to think in this unprecedented time, there are poems just everywhere, waiting for you to discover them.

Awake

Despite my bamboo blind
clattering up, despite my elbow
seeking my fallen strap

to send it to my shoulder’s
angled quest, despite my eyelids,
aflutter with my window’s

close offer of a sparrow’s
still curiosity, she and I stare
each other into the speck of this hour,

neither she nor I adding anything
but the slender tether we allow. I,
awake to how the sparrow

and I are in it
together. She, awake,
and without a word about it.

Inquiries

We have received a number of fascinating inquiries over the past few months from people interested in Saybrook history.

John T. Chapman from Avoca, Australia was interested in learning more about his Chapman ancestors. His namesake, John Thomas Chapman, left New York hurriedly in 1857 and fled to Australia on the Red Gauntlet after a "misdemeanor" in Seneca Falls, NY. According to Mr. Chapman "while his actions have obviously shamed the family, as he has been left out of the Chapman Family Chronicle, our line here in Australia has him to thank".

Althea Hunt was trying to find obituaries for some of her ancestors. We were able to locate large obituaries in our copies of the New Era newspaper for Alfred and Amelia Johnson. According to his obituary, Alfred was "affectionately called 'Dad' by the hundreds of children who passed through the Deep River Grammar School in the 32 years (1915-1947) in which he was their soft-voiced, kindly janitor".

Hank Guidone wanted information about

gravestones he had found in an old house. We were to identify Grace Ann Redfield, Rebecca Leffingwell Morgan and the children of George and Hannah Ely Elliott as the likely owners. All are buried in Indian River Cemetery in Clinton. Hank was able to contact the Clinton Cemetery Association in hopes of returning the gravestones to their original homes.

Kim Tyler's friend's 3-year-old child appeared to be experiencing past life memories. We tried to see if we could locate the house in the Old Saybrook area that the child described in detail as his home in an earlier life.

Ciana Malchion, a researcher for a New York Times writer, was seeking information on the Old Leatherman for an upcoming article.

We have a number of inquiries we are still working on. Does anyone know anything about Newbegin House which was apparently near the mouth of the Connecticut River in Old Saybrook or about the meaning of the term "a share of fish weirs and whales" in old deeds?

What's Happening in the Archives

Newest Contributions

- Oil Painting of John Winthrop the Younger
Painted and donated by **Marek Sarba**
- Teapots, wick snippers, snuff box **Laurel Friedman**
- Framed map: Cornfield Point Beach Club
Rhonda Forrestal, Deep River Historical Society
- Kaolin clay pipes, bought at James Pharmacy 1960's
Richard Bourn, Jr.
- Doll House and furniture created for Peter DuVernet
before 1886. Used by DuVernet, Bushnell and
Denison families. **Jennifer Cody**
- 3-Drawer Mahogany Writing Desk, inscribed
"Amelia Hart Sheffield of Saybrook Conn. May
25, 1824" **Donated by direct descendant of Robert
Chapman.**
- Framed telescope (lighthouse) with picture booklet,
"Lighthouse Keepers, 1902"
**Created by Bill Reid and donated by Donald
Brewer**

Library

- Old Saybrook Gazeteer of Place Names
Old Saybrook Land Use Department
- Denison Genealogy, Supplement (1963) **Tedd Levy**
- Old Saybrook High School Yearbooks, 2014-2016
Richard Bourn
- Notebook Collection of Obituaries, 1843-1903
Amelia Hotchkiss Sheffield
- A History of Old Saybrook Libraries **Louise M. Tietjen**
- Manual of Congregational Church of Old Saybrook,
1859 **Bay County Library, Panama City, FL**
- "Ingham Chronicles Gone West"
Donated by author, **Lloyd Ingham**
- Booklet: "Lady Alice Apsley Boteler Fenwick"
created and donated by **Bonnie Penders.**
- "Murdock, from Limerick, Ireland to Watsonville,
CA" authored and donated by **Carol Harris**

Student Volunteers

Aliana Castor



Throughout my years attending Old Saybrook High School, I have become fortunate enough to become involved both inside and outside of the school. When reflecting on my accomplishments over the last four years, I am thankful for serving as a Board of Education

student representative, an editor-in-chief for the school newspaper, a volunteer at the Old Saybrook Historical Society, a co-captain for the girl's cross country team, a mentor within the internship at the Shoreline Medical Center, and a co-chair for the Superintendent and Principal's Advisory Committee. Additionally, I have earned the ACTFL Seal of biliteracy for the french language. Outside of school, I have earned the President's Volunteer Service Award, been chosen to be part of the State Student Advisory Committee on Education, and become an integral part of the town's Encourage, Empower, Engage group. Most recently, I began training to receive my EMT certification. Looking into next year, I will be attending Quinnipiac University as part of their Entry-Level Master's Physician Assistant program.

Speaking more specifically about the Old Saybrook Historical Society, I am appreciative to have had the numerous opportunities that this position as a volunteer has provided me. From marching in the Torchlight parade to helping out with events to simply giving tours and helping around the Hart House, I have been able to truly embrace the importance of learning and teaching others about the history of our town. As a freshman, I began learning the history of each room, each person, each item. For the following summers, time spent at the Hart House consists of telling others about the history I have absorbed. Overall, I think my favorite part of volunteering with the Historical Society has been aiding with the events we have been able to host. I enjoy meeting other members of the Society as well as our town all while working with the other volunteers and Mrs. McFarlin to help the event run smoothly. In closing, I simply wish to express my appreciation for both Mrs. McFarlin and the other members of the society who have been able to share their passion with all of the volunteers while simultaneously teaching us the significance seeking out the history of those that used to be.

Jampel Dorjee



When I was in middle school, my older brother would go into raptures about the experiences he had volunteering with the Old Saybrook Historical Society. I remember him saying things like "you will meet incredible people" and "you will have great experiences."

Several years later, I can truly attest to the validity of what he told me. My time at the historical society – from being a docent at the Hart House to working as an archivist in the Archives Building – featured some of the most indelible moments of my teenage years. I improved upon my communication skills and learned how to more effectively contribute to an organization. I also developed a great love for history which has not only allowed me to better appreciate the community around me, but has led to an academic yearning towards social studies. I will forever hold a debt of gratitude for how kind and welcoming the Old Saybrook Historical Society was to me, and I will remain deeply appreciative to the many congenial mentors that I met along the way. From the moment I entered Old Saybrook High School, my main goal was to pursue as many of the passions that I could. As I look back on my high school experience, I am grateful that I prioritized my own interests rather than stressing on any superfluous matters. At the high school, I was involved in the school newspaper (where I, along with Ali Castro, served as co editor-in-chief), the math and quiz bowl teams (where I led as a captain), the jazz band (where I played saxophonist), the athletic programs (where I was a three sport athlete and photographer), and the drama club (where I designed lights). Out of school, I served as one of two student representatives to the Old Saybrook Board of Education, as an intern for the Old Saybrook Town Planner, and as a resident scholar for the Leadership Enterprise for a Diverse America. All these experiences have shaped me into the person I am, and I am fully grateful for the abundance of opportunity available at Old Saybrook High School. Next year, I will be attending Princeton University where I plan on studying

Student Volunteers

economics or political science with certificates in Asian American Studies and finance. Because of the liberal arts curriculum in place at Princeton, I will be exposed to a diverse array of topics across many disciplines which will promote academic curiosity and exploration. Looking forward to the future, I am more than excited to dive headfirst into the extensive history and elite academics that the university has to offer.

Maggie Maselli



Throughout high school, I was very involved with music programs. I played the French horn in the school band and joined the Shoreline Youth Symphony Orchestra outside of school. Last year, I attended the New England Music Festival for

my French horn, and this year I attended the Southern Region Festival. I was a member of both Treble Choir and Chamber Singers. This year I was the Vice-President of the Drama Club. I choreographed our musicals for 3 years, and had roles in all the performances. This year I had planned to be the Co-Captain of the tennis team. Outside of school, I completed my 16th year of ballet training. In 2018 I danced in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade with the Spirit of America. I was a member of E3 for 4 years, a peer to peer drug awareness and prevention program run by Youth and Family Services. We prepared many presentations for our peers on making good decisions as well as the harmful effects of vaping. Last year I attended the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) conference. There I attended many seminars on drug prevention and spoke to Representative Joe Courtney about the vaping issues I have observed at school.

Next year, I will attend Hamilton College. I plan to double major in physics and music. I have passions for both science and the arts and I am thrilled to have the opportunity through a liberal arts education to study both.

One part of my high school career that has always been special to me was my years at the Hart House and volunteering for the Historical Society. I remember being in 8th grade and learning that I could serve as a docent at the Hart House. I was so excited to have such an amazing opportunity to give back to my Old Saybrook community. My time at the house

was so rewarding. I learned so much about the history of our great town that I would never have learned had I not volunteered. I loved giving tours and sharing the Harts' story with all the visitors. I loved as well guiding and training the new volunteers and helping them learn everything I had. I had planned to host a tea party this spring, with the help of Carissa Schilke, to benefit the Hart House and the Historical Society. We hoped to share our love of history while hosting a fun, social event. I cannot wait to see what the high

Carissa Schilke



Throughout high school, Carissa has been very involved in her community both in and out of school. She is on the track team, where she throws discus, javelin, and shot put. She also manages the boys basketball team. Carissa has participated in both of these

activities since her freshman year. Carissa has been involved in 4 theatre productions, where she has both been an actor, and a stage manager. Carissa is attending Bard College this year to study French and Film. Volunteering at the Hart House has helped Carissa discover a passion for history, and a closer connection to her community. History is an important part of any community, and being able to share that with others is something Carissa loves so much about volunteering. She is so glad that she has been involved all 4 years of high school, and she can't wait to visit!

Maddie Sheahan



Over the past four years, I've served as a Volunteer Firefighter in Old Saybrook, I was the president of the OSHS Interact Club, Vice-President of Student Government, Secretary of the Superintendent-Principal Advisory Committee, President of Perfect Pals, and of course an Old Saybrook Historical Society Student Volunteer. As a student volunteer, I've

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soaked in an incredible amount of history about Old Saybrook and have been so lucky to be a part of such a wonderful group of volunteers and mentors. There has been no better way to spend my summers in Old Saybrook and I'm so grateful for all the knowledge I've gained from this experience. Next year, I will be attending the University of Florida on a NROTC Scholarship and I will be studying Aerospace Engineering. I will graduate an Officer of the United States Navy through the Navy ROTC program.

Sydney Smirnow



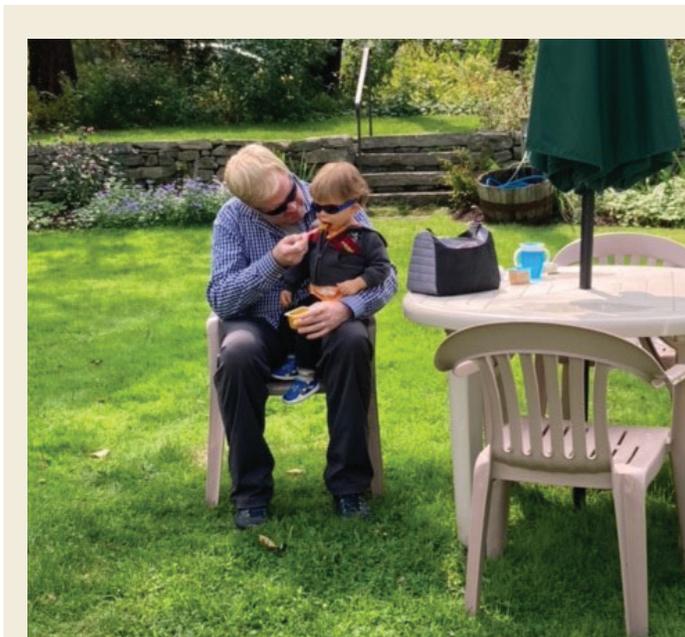
I was involved in Goodwin Buddies which is an after school homework club at our elementary school. I was involved in the indoor and outdoor track. My future plans are to attend Eastern Connecticut State University and study early childhood education with a Spanish

major in the fall. I loved being an OSHS volunteer I got to meet a lot of cool people and learn a lot of cool things about the Town's history.

Bravo to Our Project Managers



Tedd Levy - was presented a Certificate of Appreciation for his dedicated and outstanding work as project manager of the grant from the American Battlefield Protection Program - National Park Service "Siege & Battles of Saybrook Fort" (1636-1637).



Reverend Charles Hamill from the Grace Church and his son Owen having a picnic in the Hart House gardens.
Photo by Carin Roaldset



Edward Armstrong - was presented a Certificate of Appreciation for his dedicated and outstanding service as project manager of renovations to the working kitchen, funded by the Scoville Family Charitable Fund.

Photos courtesy of Barbara Harms

The Hart House Heritage Gardens

Well tended gardens are generally happy places. So it's no surprise that the statewide, Covid-19 virus quarantine prompted many people to put their energies into planting a garden this year. Though they may have found weeding to be a chore, still they were rewarded with attractive flowers and lots of healthy vegetables.

Everywhere you looked, from Main Street to private yards, Old Saybrook flourished with nature's gifts this summer.

The Society's garden behind the General William Hart House Museum was definitely part of the seasonal beauty. From early spring until late fall, our small group of talented volunteers met weekly to maintain its stunning appearance.

This summer the Hart House garden was a quiet retreat. Some were walking their dogs; some wanted the name of a particular flower or herb; some came with little children to catch sight of a butterfly or hummingbird or to dance under the sprinkler heads; some came simply to sit and reminisce.

There were regular mid-day visitors who brought a bagged lunch, so we set up three umbrella tables in the "Dingle" for them to use. Everyone seemed to enjoy the peaceful ambience of the garden.

On July 23rd, the Old Saybrook Garden Club held their summer meeting at the garden. All attending wore masks and carefully maintained proper social-distance. It was a happy occasion, as most members had not seen each other since the quarantine began.

Bonnie Penders, our herbalist, is also a member of the garden club. Bonnie gave an informative talk and tour of the three specialty herb beds she has developed since joining the Hart House gardeners.

Two are teaching gardens with a focus on the



From left: Marcus Vesligaj, Susan Murphy, Nancy Dziama, Linda Kinsella, Carin Roaldset, Bonnie Penders, Joanne Goduti



purpose of herbs in colonial life. One of these is the Lady Fenwick Garden. It contains herbs especially used for the personal needs of women. The third is planted with culinary herbs, as useful for cooking today as they were in 1700.

Bonnie and Susan Murphy, one of our new gardeners, shared the weekly task of gathering culinary

herbs to give to the Shoreline Soup Kitchen.

We are fortunate to have Master Gardener, Joanne Goduti, who works alongside new volunteers while they get to know the garden.

Carin Roaldset, a local artist and photographer, created a large, colorful garden of old fashioned perennials at the entrance to the exhibit gallery.

The children's garden, called Sally's garden for the young niece of

General Hart who lived with the Hart family, is tended with a grandmother's touch by Nancy Dziama. She has tucked small animal painted stones under flowers for children to find.

In the Marianne Pfeiffer Wildflower Garden (named in honor of its creator), there are many native plants as well as our treasured persimmon trees. Unfortunately, during the August 4th tropical storm, Isaias, the four tall trees heavy with persimmon fruit were whipped about by gale-force winds causing one of the trees to break in two and had to be removed.

Because of the pandemic most events were cancelled this season. However, we were able to hold a lunch for last year's auction winner of a "Hart House Garden Lunch". On a beautiful day this September, Barbara Harms and her guests enjoyed a delicious lunch prepared and served by the gardeners.

Linda Kinsella, Keeper

Working Kitchen Renovations Completed

The working kitchen renovations, courtesy of the Scoville Family Charitable Fund, are complete.

OLD

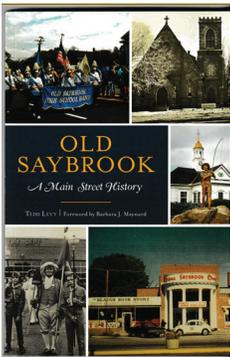


NEW



Photos courtesy of Edward Armstrong, project manager

New Publication: Main Street History



Main Street in this distinctive New England town is the place to meet your neighbors, get a coffee, do your shopping, watch a parade, attend a concert, worship, vote or volunteer. It's all here and reflected in a new publication, "Old Saybrook: A Main Street History," by Tedd Levy with a forward by former First

Selectwoman Barbara J. Maynard.

Here are the stories of the people who could be your neighbors. Here is the humorist who organized residents to buy land and build a town hall. Here

is the story of how the Monkey Farm got its name, the night-time parade that draws thousands, the heartwarming account of the shopkeeper who sent penny candy to students with good grades, and how the ladies divided Main Street.

Along this wide street that attracts residents and visitors are small shops and restaurants, historic homes, a noted theater, the Town Hall and green, a fire station, churches, and the historical society. It's all here where history comes alive, on Old Saybrook's Main Street.

Copies are available in local shops for \$21.99 or visit the Historical Society website for special price offer to members and non-members for a limited time.

Award for Achievement in Historic Preservation



Photo by Tedd Levy



Wayne Harms, chair of the Preservation Award Committee, presenting OSHS Preservation Award to Louis Bombaci, Church trustee.



Carl Fortuna, First Selectman Old Saybrook, congratulated the Church for its preservation efforts.

Photos by Barbara Harms

The Society is pleased to announce that the recipient of this year's award is The First Church of Christ in Old Saybrook.

Major projects, programs and actions that have and continue to make contributions of historic preservation to the Town were reviewed, The church was selected by the committee, officers and trustees of the Society for its longstanding commitment to historic preservation, conscientious stewardship of its facilities and historic items in its care as well as the South Green. We specifically noted the recent outside restoration/painting of the historic Church building. The award is presented at our Annual Meeting.



Jane Montanaro, Executive Director, Preservation CT, Speaking about the preservation efforts of the First Church of Christ in Old Saybrook.



The Old Saybrook Historical Society

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Photo by Carin Roaldset



Our entry into the scarecrow contest created by trustee Katie Toolan...from the "Wizard of Oz" the wicked witch with Toto flying above the yellow brick road.

