



# The Kimball Farms Observer



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June 2026



Photo by Nathan Smith / Courtesy BSO

The lawn at Tanglewood will once again welcome legions of music lovers.

## Tanglewood: An Exceptional Summer Awaits

By Steven Ledbetter  
*Observer Contributor*

THE TANGLEWOOD BROCHURE for 2026 is chock-full of events—richer and more varied than at any time in my memory (which goes back to the 1980 season). Surely this is partly due to the upcoming celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

The Popular Artists Series, which typically takes place before and after the BSO’s tenure at Tanglewood, has expanded. This

year, additional concerts are scattered throughout the summer; look for them on most Tuesday nights.

And there are special lectures and other informative programs, most presented in the Linde Center (TLI), which has already made Tanglewood a place for year-round events. Every Friday morning at 10:30 there is a series of lectures under the title “Arts and the Rule of Law” (July 3 to August 14), beginning with “How music gives the rule of law a voice.” Other weeks deal with

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## Profiles In Care Winners

By Linda Griffin  
*Observer Contributor*

SEVEN Kimball Farms employees won 2026 Profiles In Care awards, presented annually by Integritus Healthcare. The awards honor employees of all Integritus facilities who exemplify the company’s core values of integrity, compassion, excellence, teamwork, and stewardship, a statement said, adding that recipients are nominated by residents and their family members, coworkers, or supervisors. Three are from the Life Care Center on Walker Street, and four are from the Nursing Care Center on Sunset Avenue.

### *At the Life Care Center*

Liesl Carlson, executive assistant, has myriad responsibilities, from event coordination to managing budgets, overseeing capital projects, and ensuring efficient supply use.

“Her stewardship and attention to detail reflect a deep respect for resources and residents,” the nomination stated.

One of her accomplishments has been resolving long-term

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**Tanglewood**, *continued from page 1*

Shostakovich's problem with censorship; protest music; copyright issues in popular music, and more.

For a variety of interests, there will be a series of training sessions on how to use the camera on your cell phone at the Main Gate every Saturday at 11 a.m. The Audubon Society will offer tours of the amazing specimen trees on the Tanglewood grounds at 10 a.m. on Thursdays. The concerts range from the BSO's classical performances to several Pops concerts, as well as jazz programs and the weekly symphonic concerts by the Tanglewood Music Center (mostly on Monday nights), featuring a senior guest conductor who both leads a major work and coaches the conducting Fellows. There are many concerts of chamber music, too, by the BSO performers and the TMC Fellows on instruments and voice.

Most of the concerts are marked in the brochure to link them to the themes of the summer: a star for concerts related to our nation's history ("*E Pluribus Unum*: From Many, One"); a square ("Faith in Our Time"), or a triangle ("Where Words End: Music and the Natural World").

The annual Festival of Contemporary Music (July 23–27) is curated this year by the Finnish composer and conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen. Works include music by "those we have lost too soon," Meta Music ("music about other music"), and a program devoted to "the next generation," which happens to consist entirely of women composers.

Yo-Yo Ma is curating a packed week of daily concerts and events on the theme "We the People: Our Shared Past, Present, and Future" (August 1–9), including square dancing on the Tanglewood lawn!

Since 2026 is the centennial year of Martha Graham's dance company, Tanglewood is presenting several programs in conjunction with Jacob's Pillow, including a piece jointly commissioned by the BSO and Jacob's Pillow in a program that includes Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring*, probably Graham's single best-known ballet. Other dance-related concerts are grouped in "Music & Movement" from Au-

gust 10 to 17. TLI 101 offers a presentation about music and dance on July 9 at 4 p.m. in the Linde Center.

Even after describing all these events, I have barely mentioned the "standard" concerts that occur each week at Tanglewood—BSO concerts on Friday and Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoons, the chamber music concerts on Thursday evenings, and many other performances, lectures, master classes, etc., lavishly sprinkled over the calendar. But I want to mention a few special programs, which hardly touch the surface.

On July 5, the BSO will perform the world premiere of Philip Glass's 15th Symphony, which was commissioned by the Kennedy Center for the same weekend, but which Glass withdrew after President Trump renamed the center after himself, offering it to Tanglewood. Les Arts Florissants, a Baroque ensemble directed by William Christie, will perform a masterwork of the French Baroque composer Marc-Antoine Charpentier on July 15. The Boston Camerata presents "Free America!" (July 16), music related to the Revolution. Scenes from John Adams's *Nixon in China* will be offered on July 17, with Renée Fleming and Thomas Hampson. Andris Nelsons will lead a concert performance of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, an opera that is probably the funniest and the most humane in the entire repertory, on August 1. The TMC Orchestra with TMC vocalists will present excerpts from seven American operas (August 10). The Pops presents its annual tribute to John Williams, with specially edited film scenes and music (August 15). The Silkroad Ensemble, with Rhiannon Giddens, presents a recital on August 20. As usual, the BSO's part of the Tanglewood schedule will end with Beethoven's 9th Symphony on August 23.

Even listing all these things, I have mentioned only a small number of the extraordinarily interesting offerings at Tanglewood for 2026. Your best bet is to stop by the Tanglewood box office near the Main Gate, pick up a brochure there, and check out your own possibilities.

President's Letter

## Summer Break, Summer Dining

June is here! The gardens are in bloom, the leaves are out, and we are thinking about places to go and things to do this summer. The Residents Association as well as the *Observer* will be on a much-needed summer break from meetings and publications. Our activities will resume in September. Meanwhile, some of our committees will continue to meet over the summer. Enjoy the break, everyone.

Our patios are now open for the summer for your dining pleasure. The patios off the dining room and Pub are available for lunch and dinner when the weather is nice. The Garden Patio near the raised garden beds is open for resident picnics; you can sign up in the Office to reserve the space for your friends and family to join you.

We began the month of May with a Residents' Association meeting attended by the Lenox Superintendent of Schools, Dr. William Collins. We were pleased to present him with a \$3,000 scholarship check to be used for graduating seniors, a product of our successful Residents' Fund Drive in March. We also donate to the Lenox Police and Fire departments, as well as the Lenox Library. An additional but separate scholarship fund allows us to give grants to employees who are attending nursing school, and we issued \$5,000 checks to three recipients. A separate fund drive will occur in the fall, to recognize our staff for their outstanding service to all of us.

A Newcomers Brunch was held on May 13 and attended by 11 recent or upcoming residents, as well as officers, councilors, and members of the administration. New residents always have a million questions, and this was an opportunity to fill in some of the blanks.

Have a wonderful summer.

— Pat Steele, President,  
Kimball Farms Residents Association

Editor's Desk

## Observer Highlights

Much has changed since last June's issue. Bill Kittler officially replaced Sandy Shepard as executive director of Kimball Farms Life Care and Rob Straznitskas has replaced Bill as administrator of Kimball's Nursing Care Center. Pat Flinn, who reported both stories, became an *Observer* associate editor, joining Kathie Ness.

Linda Griffin, a new resident with her husband, Freling Smith, has been a valuable contributor on Kimball's memory-care program, first covering the panel discussion in March and then taking us inside LEP in May. Many readers told us how much they learned from Linda's reporting.

Bruce Bernstein celebrated his 90th birthday in February with a Dartmouth College trip to Antarctica, a repeat of one he made on his 80th to the Arctic, this time without a recreational plunge into the sea. Way to go, Bruce!

This is the last issue before our annual summer break. We'll be back in September. In the meantime, contact us by email at [kfobserver235@gmail.com](mailto:kfobserver235@gmail.com) or leave a message at (413) 637-7179.

— Charles Bonenti,  
Observer Editor

**OBSERVER MISSION**

*The Kimball Farms Observer is written by and for the residents of Kimball Farms. Our mission is to enlighten, connect, and entertain Kimball residents.*

**EDITOR**

Charles Bonenti

**ASSOCIATE EDITORS**

Kathie Ness & Pat Flinn

**EDITORIAL STAFF**

Linda Griffin, Mary Misch, Irene Goldman-Price

**COLUMNISTS**

Stephanie Beling, Mary Misch

**PHOTOGRAPHERS**

Charles Bonenti, Stephanie Johnson

**CONTRIBUTORS THIS ISSUE**

Bruce Bernstein, Patricia Gazouleas, Linda Griffin, Nancy King, Steven Ledbetter, Jean Rousseau, Pat Steele, Laird White

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Email: [KFObserver235@gmail.com](mailto:KFObserver235@gmail.com)

Phone: (413) 637-7179

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technical challenges in the auditorium. Liesl's "persistence and creativity transformed frustration into seamless functionality," the nomination said. It concludes that Kimball Farms Life Care is "fortunate to have Liesl... a solution-focused leader whose efforts elevate experiences for everyone."

**Kestrel Padgett**, dietary assistant, is said to bring an infectious energy to her role.

"She sings menus instead of reading them, turns routine service into playful moments," her nomination said. Coworkers say she is "endlessly upbeat" and that she "approaches her work with genuine excitement."

One family member recalled how "reassured she felt on her mother's very first night, watching Kestrel sing the menu, keeping drinks filled, and quietly making sure a steak was cut just right."

This caring, heartfelt attention to residents was said to embody Integritus's core values of compassion, teamwork, and integrity.

**Donna Lucido**, dietary assistant, goes far beyond her primary role in dining services, her nomination said. She is the "heart behind Kimball Farms' festive spirit — transforming spaces into vibrant celebrations that lift residents' and staff members' moods."

Donna creates thoughtful holiday displays across campus, volunteering not only her time and talent, but often items from her personal collection. Her nomination recites several examples of her thoughtfulness, including a surprise celebration when a coworker became a U.S. citizen. It commends her "vigilance and care for residents' well-being," such as when she observed a resident having a breathing problem and reacted quickly and compassionately to summon aid.

**At the Nursing Care Center**

**Zara Rankell**, certified nursing assistant, "exemplifies... compassionate, person-centered care," her nomination said. "Her dedication goes far beyond routine tasks — she creates meaningful experiences that enrich residents' lives."

Zara is known for her ability to personalize care. She learns each resident's preferences. For example, she creates elegant, unique hairdos for a resident who loves styling her hair.

Her nomination said that "Zara's patience and empathy transformed lives," citing a case in which a resident who had refused bathing aid trusted Zara enough to accept help, "thanks to her gentle approach and respect for privacy."

"Kimball Farms... is proud to have a caregiver whose

compassion, creativity and initiative set the gold standard for excellence," her nomination concludes.

**Brian Salice**, environmental service assistant, "is the definition of reliability and heart," his nomination says. "His role ensures a safe and clean environment, but Brian's impact reaches far beyond his job description—he brings comfort, joy, and peace of mind to residents and families every day."

Brian's nomination continues to cite his dependability and kindness, relating a situation in which he eased a resident's mind by caring for her plants for an entire month.

"Brian also builds personal connections," it said. "He chats baseball with John, a devoted Yankees fan, and even brought him a Yankees pin from a game." During Baseball Day, Brian and John wore matching uniforms, creating a memory John will never forget.

**Melanie McGrath**, a cook, was cited for her ability to transform "dining into an experience of comfort, connection, and joy. Her culinary skill is matched only by her compassion, making her an indispensable part of the care team. Melanie's approach to food goes beyond nutrition—it's about creating moments that matter."

Melanie's nomination relates several examples of this philosophy, including her immediate preparation of a longed-for Swiss and mushroom omelet for a hospice patient, and the weekly baking of a chocolate cake for a resident with fond memories of childhood Sunday dinners.

"She also uses food to foster cultural connection," the nomination continued, and "has organized hands-on cooking sessions, from homemade gnocchi for an Italian-born resident to rustic bread baking for a retired local baker—creating joy, purpose, and community. Melanie McGrath exemplifies person-centered care through creativity and heart."

**Mieko Abe**, a certified nursing assistant, "brings an unmatched level of energy and compassion to her work," her nomination said, adding "Her presence lights up the unit, creating an atmosphere of positivity that resonates with residents and staff alike."

Mieko's approach to care was said to be rooted in responsiveness and genuine connection. A resident called Mieko "the gold standard" and urged "recognition for her thoroughness and kindness." The nomination went on to say her "work ethic and joyful spirit make her a cornerstone of the care team. She not only meets physical needs but nurtures emotional well-being, turning routine care into moments of comfort and hope."

## Backstage Tour of Kimball's Kitchen

By Patricia Gazouleas  
*Observer Contributor*

I LIKE TO COOK and I like to eat, so when a tour of Kimball Farms' kitchen was offered, I signed up in a hurry. Mike Paglier, the food-service director, was our guide. He must enjoy his work because he has been here for 23 years. It was only his second job after he finished culinary school.

A genial host, Mike has lots of stories to tell, such as the one about the fire started by a candle left burning at night. The fire department, police, ambulance service, and Red Cross all responded. Mike was proud of the way his staff made a big breakfast for all who had come to save us.

We also heard about the days Kimball Farms took picnics to Tanglewood. The kitchen provided chairs, tables, and fried chicken with all the trimmings for a lawn party. It must have been quite an undertaking. I am not surprised that it is no longer done, but would have enjoyed it.

When you enter the kitchen from the dining room, the storage area is to the right. First is the pantry, a room with shelves filled with commercial-sized bags and boxes of rice, sugar, pasta, and crackers, as well as cans and jars of beans, tomato sauce, and salad dressings. Most dressings are Ken's brand, but the house dressing with avocado oil is made here.

After the pantry comes the cold room, where meat, milk, cheese, and such are kept. I did not go in since I don't like the cold.

The business side of the kitchen is all state-of-the-art steel appliances gleaming with cleanliness. They are arranged so people can stand side-by-side to work in a line like a first-class restaurant. Dishwashers have their own area. Mike told us silverware goes through the wash three times so knives and forks are not just clean, but fit for surgery.

The kitchen staff works in shifts to prepare the 350 meals served every day in four different locations. Although the same menu is offered at lunch

and dinner, the two meals are not prepared at the same time. Dinner is prepared in the afternoon. Most food is delivered a few times a week, but salad fixings come in fresh every day.

The menu year is broken into three "seasons," and within each it rotates every four weeks. This means seasonal items and holiday foods are fitted in at appropriate

times. It also means that certain seasonal items may turn up every four weeks—such as the pumpkin pie I saw on the menu in April. We are entering the summer rotation now, which means hamburgers will be on the menu.

We visited the Pub, too. It is a separate operation with its own diner-type kitchen and menu of casual foods. The Pub was created out of what had once been the physical-therapy room for the nursing home. That facility moved off-site some years ago and Mike claimed the space for a different kind of dining experience.

Last thing on the tour was my favorite: the open freezer for ice cream. It looks just like an ice cream shop with tubs in a row containing about eight different flavors. There is always chocolate and vanilla and always one sugar-free choice and one fruit sorbet.

Sitting on the stove behind the ice cream station is a large pot of homemade fudge sauce keeping warm. I know that the food service was set up with people like me in mind, because I can have ice cream every day.



Photo by Stephanie Johnson

*Executive Chef Rich Powers supervises other cooks and cooks himself.*

## Hiking With a Handicap

By Nancy King

Observer Contributor

NEED the help of a walker, a rollator, or even a wheelchair? No problem. You *can* experience nature on scenic wooded trails nearby that are fully accessible.

Start with Parsons Marsh on Undermountain Road near Tanglewood. Bring binoculars if you can. The half-mile-out-and-back trail begins on a packed gravel path through a meadow with some rusty farm implements and areas where invasive species such as bittersweet and multiflora rose are being cleared. Soon you come to a small pond with a picnic table nearby where you can snack and enjoy the scenery.



Photo by Nancy King

*Reed Hand, with rollator, and Paul Nesbit on a Pleasant Valley Sanctuary trail.*

flowers of spring, its flowers are long gone.

When there, I had the path all to myself. The boardwalk is only wide enough for one wheelchair, but there are three pullouts, one with a bench, where one can pass another. At the end, you view Parsons Marsh itself from an observation platform. I found it

You may see a duck or two and hear the *hur-rumph* of a bullfrog and babbling water where the pond drains.

Farther on, a wooden boardwalk takes you through an upland forest, then wetlands where you will see huge bright leaves of skunk cabbage. Being the first wild-

eerily quiet, just the gentle lapping of water in the reeds and the whirring of swallows darting like a spray of arrows. A red-winged blackbird swayed on a straw-colored reed calling *O-ka-lee, o-ka-lee*. I used my binoculars to look for the resident pair of swans, but they were not back yet.

There are three short accessible trails in Great Barrington. One starts at the Lake Mansfield swimming area; one begins at the Olympian Meadow baseball field and follows the Housatonic River behind Searles Castle; and the Berkshire Natural Resources Council's Thomas and Palmer trail is across from Koi restaurant on the road to Butternut. Stockbridge has its accessible Mary Flynn Trail, which begins at the Park Street cul-de-sac, crosses a suspension bridge over the Housatonic, and goes through the woods between the railroad and the river.

The crown jewel of accessible trails in the southern Berkshires is in Mass. Audubon's Pleasant Valley Sanctuary. I walked it in late afternoon. The sun was low, giving the landscape a golden glow. The trail is 0.8 miles roundtrip, part gravel and part boardwalk along a beaver pond. One section is a massive upheaval of giant tree roots, the damage of an 80 to 90 mph microburst in 2019. A circular gravel path leads to the other side of the pond through a hardwood forest of oak, mountain ash, and black cherry trees with views of Lenox Mountain.

What makes this trail a gem is its signposts. For people with low vision, there are explanations in braille and a code to scan that connects you to an audio tour. There are even shapes to feel: a frog, a swallow, acorns, a piece of glacial ice, and a sample of schist, the base rock of the Berkshires.

Berkshire Natural Resources Council has published a brochure called *Berkshire County Trails for All*, with directions, brief descriptions, and photos. Copies are displayed near the bridge. To quote *Berkshire Eagle* columnist Lauren Stevens: "Happy Trails to you!"

## Bringing Up Gustavo

By Jean Rousseau  
Observer Contributor

GUSTAVO was born to become a service dog. His story began at Canine Companions, a training program specializing in providing service dogs to people with disabilities. Half Labrador, half Golden Retriever, he is one of approximately 500 puppies born at their regional breeding facilities every year. At about 6 weeks, the puppies are placed with willing parent trainers; together, dog and trainer are thereafter referred to in the trade as a "pair."

Gustavo is very well travelled for a 4-month-old (at press time) puppy. Born in Santa Rosa, California, he was flown to Dallas via San Francisco, thence to Pittsburgh and on to Boston (shoulda been Pittsfield), back to Pittsburgh, and finally to Pittsfield to meet Stephanie Beling, his owner/trainer for the next year and a half.

Stephanie, with full support from her companion Tad Evans, has taken on a considerable responsibility. Tad is formally designated as co-puppy raiser. In addition to all the usual tasks of puppy raising, Gustavo came with a 16-point checklist of special service dog skills that he must master in his 18 months with them. A bright and agreeable pup, Gustavo is

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*He has to become completely reliable at those skills, attentive and immune to distractions.*

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well on his way already, but he has to become completely reliable at those skills, attentive and immune to distractions.

Why take on such a challenge? Stephanie loves dogs. She grew up with two boxers. As an adult, she got a Border Collie as soon as she could fit it into

her busy life in medicine. Her second dog, Chelsea, turned out to be naturally born to search and rescue work, so she and Stephanie became part-time assistants to the Berkshire Search & Rescue Team. She brought her third dog, Duke, a big rescue mix, with her to Kimball Farms in 2014. After Duke's demise a few years ago, Stephanie realized that she wanted another dog, but thought a lifetime commitment would ultimately be difficult, both for her and for the dog. Thus the decision for a satisfying but time-limited arrangement with the dog's future well mapped out. An ad for Canine Companions in *Seeing Eye Dog* magazine caught her eye. She contacted them and after considerable discussion they mutually agreed to Gustavo's adoption.



Photo by Lily Wayne

*Gustavo interacts with his owner/trainer Stephanie Beling.*

What's ahead?

After a year-plus of loving care and constant training with Stephanie and Tad, Gustavo will be evaluated for his capacity for specialized training in assisting people with specific disabilities. If he passes (most do), he will go to one of six Canine Companions-associated facilities for 6 months of special training for a specific disability situation, and then on to a long life of loving care and satisfying work.

There are only happy endings here: the young dogs that don't qualify after the initial training, or after specialty training, find a home as a pet: either with a willing original trainer or with someone on Canine Companions' waiting list.

## Swimming to Set a Record

**By Bruce Bernstein**  
*Observer Contributor*

I'VE BEEN a competitive swimmer most of my life, including high school and college. Being part of a team has been meaningful to me and some of those relationships have continued for decades.

I participated in the formation of the Masters Swim Program in NYC in the early 1970s and remained active in it ever since. Masters Swimming is for 18 and older beginners, elite swimmers, and triathletes. It offers coached workouts to improve



Courtesy photo

*Bruce casts a winner's smile after the meet.*

fitness and technique with an option to participate in pool or open-water competitions.

When the Kilpatrick Athletic Center pool opened at Simon's Rock College in Great Barrington in 2000, I was an early member and joined what became the PaceMakers Masters Swim Team. Four days a week I warm up for a half hour, then

work out with the team for an hour. Afterwards, we meet for lunch to stay involved.

Bill Meier, our coach, was recognized as "2025 U.S. Masters Coach of the Year." He and I share the same birth date, February 4, although 25 years apart. We joyfully celebrate it each year at the Great Barrington Bagel Shop with a large group of Pacemakers.

The New England Masters Swim Championship at Harvard University is our major spring event. The meet lasts four days and draws about 1,000 contestants. Swimmers are grouped by age: 30 to 34, 35 to 39, and so on. For the March 2026 event, Bill and I

aged up into new categories, with me entering 90 to 94 and he 65 to 69.

I signed up for three events in my new age group: the 50-yard freestyle, the 100-yard breaststroke, and the 50-yard breaststroke. In past years, I'd focused on longer freestyle events, but recently I felt deep exhaustion after just a few laps, so I thought I could only manage shorter ones. However, I did notice that no one in my new age group had ever swum the 100-yard breaststroke. If I completed it, I would set a new record. That possibility persuaded me to try. I practiced for several months, without success. I'd often be exhausted after 75 yards.

My first event was the 50-yard freestyle, which I won. Next came the 100-yard breaststroke, which I started without knowing if I could finish. Many team members were there, cheering me on. I was determined not to let them down, and I swam the first 50 yards with less fatigue than I'd ever felt in practice. Although my hearing has diminished, I could hear my teammates shouting. Their voices motivated me to finish, knowing I was setting a New England record for the first time in my life. I climbed out jubilant.

I still had the 50-yard breaststroke to swim the following day. Again, the team gathered at the pool to root for me. When I got to the turn, there was our assistant coach, Eric Johnson, urging me on. I finished as a meet official announced that I had broken the previous record. I could hear teammate Dewey Wyatt saying that I beat it by five seconds. I was amazed at having completed my swims and set two records.

When I was younger, I thought of swimming and running as individual sports, but I've come to see that if you want to keep training, you need to have caring people around you. The older I get, the more challenging fitness activities become, but having good people surrounding me and encouraging me keeps me going.

# The Healing Power of Touch

By **Stephanie Beling, MD**  
*Observer Columnist*

TOUCH is the first language we learn and, in many ways, the last we lose. Before sight sharpens or words form, the newborn knows the world through skin—warmth, pressure, rhythm. In premature infants, this language is not simply comforting; it is life-shaping.

In neonatal intensive care units, the practice of gentle, sustained skin-to-skin contact—often called kangaroo care—has transformed outcomes. Premature babies who are held against a parent’s chest show improved weight gain, more stable heart rates and breathing patterns, better temperature regulation, and shorter hospital stays. Growth is not merely a matter of calories; it is influenced by the nervous system’s sense of safety. Touch quiets stress responses, lowering cortisol, while promoting the release of growth-supporting hormones. Even brain development is affected, with evidence suggesting improved sleep organization and, later, cognitive and emotional outcomes.

As infants grow, touch remains central to healthy development. A child held, rocked, and reassured is not being indulged but regulated. Physical affection—hugging, holding hands, a reassuring pat—helps organize the developing brain. It anchors attachment, fosters trust, and builds the scaffolding for emotional resilience. Children deprived of consistent, nurturing touch, as tragically documented in some institutional settings, may show impaired growth despite adequate nutrition—a phenomenon sometimes referred to as “failure to thrive.” The body, in a sense, does not flourish in isolation. Touch also teaches boundaries and empathy. Through playful roughhousing, a child learns

limits; through comforting touch, they learn care. These early experiences become internalized, shaping how one gives and receives affection across a lifetime.

Yet as we age, touch often recedes from daily life. Older adults, especially those who live alone, may go days without meaningful physical contact. This absence is not trivial. Loneliness and sensory deprivation can contribute to depression, cognitive decline, and even increased mortality. Gentle touch,

whether a hand held during conversation, a hug from a loved one, or therapeutic touch in caregiving settings, has measurable benefits. It can lower blood pressure, reduce anxiety, and improve mood. In patients with dementia, touch may reach where words cannot, providing reassurance and a sense of presence. There is dig-

nity in touch. For older adults who may feel increasingly invisible, a simple, respectful physical connection affirms personhood. It says: you are here, you matter.

We are fortunate to live in a community that allows pets, for they provide far more than companionship. A dog leaning against a leg, a cat curled in a lap, or the simple act of stroking soft fur offers reassuring physical touch. This contact can reduce loneliness, ease anxiety, lower stress, and create a comforting sense of connection and belonging.

In a culture that often prioritizes independence and productivity, touch is often overlooked. Yet, from the fragile premature infant struggling to gain weight, to the child learning the contours of safety and love, to the older adult navigating solitude, touch remains a quiet but powerful determinant of well-being. It is the most human of medicines—without cost, without prescription, and yet profoundly therapeutic.



## Some Writing Worth Reading

By Mary Misch

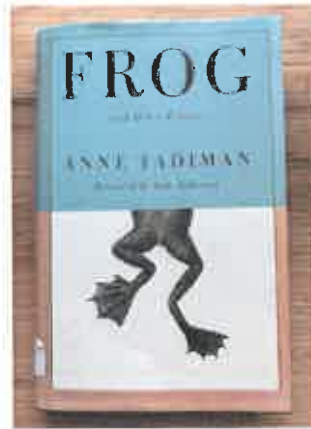
Observer Columnist

ANN FADIMAN, daughter of a literary dynasty, has had the good fortune to publish many essays in books and periodicals. Her latest book is titled *FROG and Other Essays*. The first of seven pieces, called “FROG,” chronicles the life span of a mail-order tadpole, from hatchling to geriatric 16-year-old African clawed frog. Interspersed are glimpses of Fadiman’s daughter, son, and husband, who becomes the default caretaker of the kitchen aquarium holding the frog known as Bunky.

“We were nice enough that we were committed...to keeping Bunky alive for the long haul.... We just weren’t nice enough to make his life worth living,” Fadiman reveals.

The second essay I refuse to discuss, except that it seriously devalues a poet I admire, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The third, called “My Old Printer,” gives a whimsical history of the author’s evolving setups of computers and printers. It was initially printed in *The Yale Review*.

The fourth essay, “All My Pronouns,” is an ap-




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*The first of seven pieces, called “FROG,” chronicles the life span of a mail-order tadpole.*

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propriate mélange of ideas. It begins with an empathic history of M, a student at Yale, where Fadiman has taught nonfiction writing for many years. First taking up *they/them* pronouns, then a feminized appearance, the student progresses to a *she/her* identity. Graduating with major honors, M exclaims, “Anne! You’ve known me through all my

pronouns!” After that anecdote come too many pages about prescriptive versus descriptive grammar. Fadiman brings things to an end with a terse quote from a student, “Language changes.”

“Screen Shares,” the fifth essay, first appeared in *WIRED* magazine. It is a touching account of the campus shutdown and the ragged beginnings of Zoom classes, as what the author discreetly calls

“the coronavirus” is raging. One student says that both of his parents are infected. From the families of 12 students, there are three deaths. Final essays about personal identity are kept confidential. Fadiman states, “I’ll say merely that some of the Identity essays deal with the pandemic, and some do not.”

The sixth essay, “South Polar Times,” first appeared in *Harvard Review*. It came about because Fadiman, long interested in polar explorations, obtained a review copy of the London Folio Society’s facsimile edition of 12 issues of a newsletter produced by Robert Scott’s Antarctic expeditions. She took months to study the variety of writings— “The serious poetry was godawful”— and the exquisite hand-colored illustrations. At the end, Fadiman quotes from farewell letters left by Scott and two others who “died of starvation, scurvy and hypothermia.”

The last essay, “Yes to Everything,” is a poignant account of a student, Marina Keegan, described by Fadiman as a “Nimbus of angry energy.” In an email, Marina mentions “hoping to *stop* the death of literature.” In another (my favorite) she says, “COLERIDGE! Thank you.” Fadiman reports, “Five days after Marina graduated magna cum laude...[she] was killed” in a car rollover. She tells how a book containing Marina’s body of work becomes a best-seller, and closes with, “She would want to be remembered because she’s good.”

The Fadiman book, *FROG*, is in our library.

## Transplanted to Bloom

By Laird White  
Observer Contributor

IF MY HUSBAND hadn't had three back operations resulting in painful, incurable neuropathy, plus our being old, we wouldn't have moved from our big, beautiful, historic house into an unknown retirement home called Kimball Farms. All we knew was that Kimball was a collection of attractive white buildings, somehow connected to each other, filled with extremely mature people.

This move was a physical and psychological leap into an unknown future. Meetings with our young friends lessened as did long drives, and now, having to eat early in an arena-size dining room filled with snow-white heads (oops, just like mine!) was a tough change. I told my husband that I felt like the drooping potted plant on our sitting room table—dry from lack of sun and rain and only curable if planted next to others in the live earth outside. His reply was that I needed more exercise to get my mind into a more positive seat, so I decided to walk each day from our far-away apartment to the front desk.



Photo by Charles Bonenti

*Laird White finds congenial writing spot at a corridor crossroads.*

I am a writer and for some reason I need to hear life nearby to be happy writing on my good friend, "Laptop." One day when I was taking my daily walk down the long hallways that connect all areas of Kimball Farms, I came upon a small table and chair

in the middle of a cozy spot where three halls wove themselves into a friendly circle. I had my file of unfinished poetry, sat down, and began to work. Suddenly, I heard someone say "Hi, Laird." I looked up, and standing there was a woman I'd recently met but, damn, couldn't remember her name. I apologized to her. She smiled and said, "Don't worry, I forget all the time." She then sat down in the chair across from me and we talked. During our time together, four or five people walked by, stopped, and chatted with us. Our talk covered many subjects, some fun, some not. All of them real. That was the beginning of more comfortable days. Not full-bloom days,

but those when I felt myself in a new piece of physical and psychological land. Now, on some days, my mind and body are watered by a wash of Sparkling Memories. On other days, my mind and body grow a newfound leaf of life. I've been transplanted. I'm hoping to rebloom.

### June Trips

**Tuesday, June 2**

**Bus 1:30 pm**

Tour of Lenox

Narrated by Adelene Quigley

**Sunday, June 7**

**Bus 1:45 pm**

Barrington Stage

*Driving Miss Daisy*

**Sunday, June 7**

**Bus 12:15 pm**

Mahaiwe – Met Opera

Gabriela Lena Frank's

*El Último Sueño de Frida y Diego*

**Tuesday, June 9**

**Bus TBD**

Tentative 2nd Tour of Lenox

**Thursday, June 18**

**Bus 9:30 am**

Walkway Over the Hudson

Poughkeepsie, NY

**Sunday, June 28**

**Bus 1:15 pm**

Barrington Stage

*The Zionists: A Family Storm*

## Birthday Wishes

### Nineteen residents celebrate birthdays in June.

There is a 21-year spread between the youngest and oldest celebrants.

June birthdays belong to: Joyce Angeli, Joanne Sampliner, Terry Weaver, Anne Hutchinson, Archie Gold, Dick Reece, Lee Clark, Tad Evans, Terence Cronin, Claire Mahoney, Ileen Cohen, John Cheney, Ursula Ehret-Dichter, Patricia Gazouleas, John Horton, Gladys Richardson, Leo Goldberger, Joy Kaufman, and Helen Taylor.

### Twenty-two residents celebrate birthdays in July.

There is a 24-year spread between the youngest and oldest celebrants.

July birthdays belong to: Ann Dorfman, Leslie Curtis, Margot Yondorf, Stephanie Johnson, Sheila Keator, Jay Conklin, Penny Noepel, Zoë Dalheim, Mary Taylor, Mary Buhr, Enid Michelman, Doris Shampang, Jack MacKenzie, Chris Magee, Karen Rhinehart, Freling Smith, Donald Zaentz, Peggy Braun, Elizabeth Stevens, Loretta Fugman, Elenore Selin, and Richard Freiberg.

### Twenty-three residents celebrate birthdays in August.

There is a 17-year spread between the youngest and oldest celebrants.

August birthdays belong to: Sheila Smith, Nancy King, Valerie Cloutier, Turbi Smilow, Marc O'Brien, Amy White, Joel Curran, Terry Shea, Susan Wojtasik, Natalie Boyce, Maddie Heintz, Marcia Brolli, Alan Rubin, John Atkinson, Joy Gold, Ariela Wichler, Karel Fisher, Peter Frost, Claudia Wells, Lavinia Meeks, Roy Aibel, Mary Lee Ledbetter, and Ernst Rosenberger.

*Happy Birthday to each of you!!*

## In Memoriam

**Diane Vogt**

November 16, 1946 to April 25, 2026

**Jean E. Green**

August 10, 1930 to May 15, 2026

## June Events

**Monday, June 1 • 7 pm**

Speaker Series

Auditorium

**Tuesday, June 2 • 4 pm**

Marc Lendler, Declaration of Independence

Auditorium

**Thursday, June 4 • 7 pm**

The Eagles Band, Trombone Ensemble

Auditorium

**Monday, June 8 • 7 pm**

All About Soccer, Alan Rubin

Auditorium

**Wednesday, June 10 • 7 pm**

Regie Gibson, Massachusetts Poet Laureate

Auditorium

**Thursday, June 11 • 11 am**

Workshop with Regie Gibson

Auditorium

**Thursday, June 11 • 7 pm**

Fred Moyer Jazz Trio

Auditorium

**Tuesday, June 16 • 7 pm**

Radio Roundup

Auditorium

**Wednesday, June 24 • 3:30-5 pm**

Art Show Opening

PineHill Connector

**Wednesday, June 24 • 7 pm**

Gamelan Lebdo Budoyo

Auditorium

**Thursday, June 25 • 7 pm**

The Zinks, Corey & Mason Zink

Bluegrass Country Music Duo

Auditorium