



They passed with flying colors.

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News

Our Turn: Staff Picks

Advocate editors & writers share their own "Best Of New Haven" categories and winners.

By New Haven Advocate staff and freelancers

Comments (0)
Thursday, May 15, 2008

Every year we sit down with dozens of Best of New Haven winners, the culmination of a long and fruitful dialogue with our readers which brought about their well-deserved victories. We meet florists, tanning professionals, doctors, restaurateurs, shoe repairmen...and yet, despite the extraordinary diversity and accomplishment we witness year in and year out when compiling these exhaustive Best Of volumes, we inevitably find ourself thinking that something is missing. Amazing as it seems, there are still gaps to fill, more fine Elm Citizens to place on pedestals.



MIKE SEMBOS PHOTO

His name is Jim Morcaldi, and while most days he's the only street musician, we're all thankful that he's good at what he does.

Here, see what we mean:

Best Bedside (Table) Manner

Physicians, read thyselfes! Two wise old area doctors penned books in the last year belying the old joke that M.D.s' writing is illegible. Former Yale New Haven Hospital Chief of Surgery Arthur Baue's volume is the more practical: *Doctor, Can I Ask You a Question?—Your Health Care Questions Answered* (XLibris) is a no-nonsense compendium of helpful, healthful information that's more good-natured consultation than reference guide. Among the questions Baue asks and answers: "Is chocolate good for me?," "Is stress all bad?," "How do I know if I am a hypochondriac?," and my favorite from the "Malpractice" section: "What if something went wrong but I ended up being OK?"

Sherwin B. Nuland is a writing, feeling physician in the Anton Chekhov mold. His new collection of essays, *The Uncertain Art—Thoughts on a Life in Medicine* (Random House), brings a working medical perspective to everyday situations and uncommon environments—such as what it's like to be a doctor watching a play when someone calls out "Is there a doctor in the house?" This is a comparatively light read, especially when the comparison is to Nuland's *How We Die* or *The Art of Aging*. Here's how he opens his unambiguously titled "Scatological Medicine:"

Who remembers Serutan? In ads that began to appear about 75 years ago on billboards and public transportation and in the pages of periodicals, it was touted as "Nature's Aid to Elimination!" The very name of the anticonstipation medicine was "Nature's" spelled backward, a disclosure made in the text of every ad. As a boy who frequently rode the New York subways in the 1930s and 1940s, I used to wonder what physiological failure awaited me a few decades hence that would require a patent remedy described as having been developed specifically for use "after 35." At the age of 9 or 10, I tried to guess which of the dour commuters sitting near me had failed to take their Serutan that morning.

—Christopher Arnott

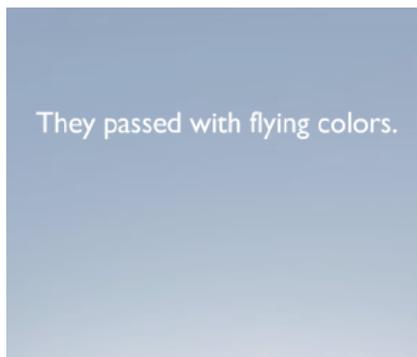
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By New Haven Advocate staff and freelancers
05/15/2008

Free Fallin'

New Haven Register circulation takes a troubling plunge.
By Laura Yao
05/08/2008

Mock the Vote!

From our Best Of New Haven poll, your picks to run for governor, president and mayor of New Haven in our topsy-turvy instant runoff mock election.
By Advocate Staff
05/08/2008

Cops and Copper

High metal prices fuel an underground trade of stolen scrap.
By Jim Motavalli
05/08/2008

Nosy New Haven: Expelling Bee

Suspend disbelief and read about New Haven's troubling record on school discipline.

All the
Hottest
Entertainment
Discounts,
All in One
Place.



Best Doomed Building in the City

"Prefabricated" and "temporary" in every official University description of it, the building designed by Centerbrook Architects that presently houses the **Department of Political Science at Yale** (8 Prospect Place, New Haven, just off Prospect Street between Trumbull and Sachem) has won critical notice from the American Institute of Architects, the Metal Construction Association and others. Assembled using 21 separate structural units, the obvious diner similes are simply too crude, especially when the identifying neon sign in the front window is out of order. There is more about it of a vintage Airstream trailer at high speed, caught in stop motion. But for all its glory—and attendant delight—it is living on borrowed time. Its removal, though not imminent, is inevitable, given the University's plans for what will be two new residential colleges in the immediate vicinity. Perhaps it will be sold off to some moneyed admirer for \$1 and the price of transportation.

—*Stephen Vincent Kobasa*

Best Green Gathering

Chat about sustainability, conservation, green building, carbon finance and the like over cheep beers: **New Haven Green Drinks** gatherings are held on the third Wednesday of each month from 6-8 p.m. at various bars around the Elm City. It's a chance to network, meet like-minded greens or just hit a new happy hour with some eco-friendly faces. The vibe is informal yet informative. There are no fees (you just shell out a little green for your drinks), the bars often put out free snacks, and it's totally cool if your drink of choice is something other than booze. Organizers Debra Lombard and Justin Elicker arrange the location and guest speakers; to get on the mailing list, send an email to newhavengreendrinks@gmail.com. The next Green Drinks is May 21 at Cafe Nine (250 State St., New Haven, 203-789-8281) with beer specials (plus a bonus: bartender Freddy B.'s beloved vegan buffet) and guest speaker Daniel Schaefer of Invested Citizens (investedcitizens.org).

—*Kathleen Cei*

Best Lawn Ornaments

Gnomes and flamingos are commonplace, but the metal menagerie on **Marvelwood Drive** in New Haven, with creatures out of both nature and fantasy, turns one front lawn into a unique showcase of sublime junk. And in the weeks before Halloween, at the same location, there is a chorus line of blue-jeaned legs kicking in the air.

—*Stephen Vincent Kobasa*

Best Mailbox

Who didn't smile the first time they saw **R2D2** chillin' on the sidewalk on Broadway (outside the ex-York Square Cinemas)? He's adorable. It's good to see the U.S. Postal Service has a sense of humor and good taste in robots.

—*Mike Sembos*

Best Dill Destination

Sure, **CitySeed Farmers Market** (cityseed.org) is a place to buy locally grown and sometimes organic veggies.

Sure, if you're looking for hearty baked goods you can stroll this Wooster Square side street and find cookies and breads galore. CitySeed is designed to link farmers to buyers, cutting out the middle man while keeping everything fresh.

By The Nose
05/08/2008

Marshalling Moolah

Politically-connected state marshals rake it in from New Haven's car towing program, but that's not the half of it.

By Betsy Yagla
05/08/2008

The Best Of New Haven 2008

The Best of New Haven just keeps getting better.

By Advocate readers
05/07/2008

Best of the Rest: What We Were Missing

Your personal picks for best alderperson, best graffiti, best place to have sex in public, and much more.

By Advocate Staff and Readers
05/07/2008

But we actually enjoy it as a destination even if all we want is the small-farm brined dill/garlic pickles. CitySeed is more than a farmers' market—it has developed into a local meeting place, a good old-fashioned marketplace where neighbors meet, catch up, chat and leave the Blackberrys—the smartphone, not the fruit—at home.

—Joshua Mamis

Best New Haven Watchdog Group

Don't you hate those people that complain about city government but offer nothing in terms of real solutions? **New Haven Citizens' Action Network** (known by the uplifting acronym NHCAN) are not those people. The group's a loose collection of self-appointed citizen watchdogs (including Jeffrey Kerekes and Mona Berman, pictured) that offers alternatives to the city's budget, with line-item-specific recommendations for how New Haven can cut costs, while still keeping intact all the services we rely on city government for. See nhcan.org.

—Andy Bromage

Best One-Wheeled Fad

As the home of the first bicycle patent, New Haven may be the birthplace of the two-wheeler, but it's the bicycle's half-brother—the unicycle—that's taken the city by storm recently. Unicyclists have been popping up like crocuses this spring, with more and more New Haveners climbing on the wobbly ride. David Streever, the founder of **Elm City Unicycling** (elmcityunicycling.com), is the man behind the spike in unicycle usage. In January, he discovered six unicycles for sale on Craigslist, enlisted five friends to buy them, and ECU was born. Membership has exploded in the last four months and the group now holds two weekly rides and is planning a unicycle performance for the Arts and Ideas Festival. Streever says he travels by unicycle for all his errands around New Haven. Watch for him and his one-wheeled brethren teetering through town this summer.

—Thomas MacMillan

Best Place to Awkwardly Eavesdrop on a Conversation

Ever notice how the conductors on **Metro North trains** apparently don't have a private intercom? How the only way the guy in the rear car can talk to the one in the front is over the same loud-speaker they use to talk to passengers? Well, listen up. You can hear some quirky chatter over the PA, giving you the feeling you're overhearing something you shouldn't. From a recent trip: "It's gonna be a long day. I can feel it already."

—Andy Bromage

Best Upper Crust 3 a.m. Sandwich

At 3 a.m., there are few places in town to get a good sandwich. Even Mamoun's is closed by then, so with 24-hour availability it's **Gourmet Heaven's** time to shine (15 Broadway, New Haven, 203-787-4533; 44 Whitney Ave., New Haven, 203-776-0400). Sure, everything seems to cost a little more than it might elsewhere, but with last call well in the past and an empty stomach making its presence known, the wee hours are no time to haggle over prices.

Lucky for you, a little creativity at the deli can still produce a tasty sandwich with a fairly reasonable price tag. They'll probably look at you funny when you order it, but stick to the plan: You need a brie sandwich with lettuce, tomato, salt, pepper and olive oil. No meat, no condiments, nothing fancy, just cheese on bread. Trust me on this one.

—Mike Sembos

Best Proposal for an Anti-War
Monument

If you took this piece, "Octopus" by **Mark Williams**, fashioned it in three dimensions some 20 feet high, kept the colors and placed it on the Pentagon's lawn, they might just close up shop.

—*Stephen Vincent Kobasa*

Best Reason to Fear Zombies

The Egyptian-style gateway to **Grove Street Cemetery** (grovestreetcemetery.org) warns us, "The Dead Shall Be Raised." Yet so far we've managed to avoid a major Elm City zombie attack (Zombie Fest 2007 notwithstanding). So far, locking the gates at night has been enough to prevent an uprising, but it's only a matter of time before Zombie Roger Sherman or Noah Webster are spotted trudging down York Street feasting upon ripe Yale brains. It's like waving a Porterhouse in front of a pit bull. Who could blame them after the way we've allowed both the Constitution and the English language to be raped during our lifetimes?

—*Mike Sembos*

Best Spot to Be Attacked by or Pooped On by a Flock of Seagulls

The top floor of **Temple Street Garage** (corner of Temple & Crown sts., New Haven).

—*Betsy Yagla*

Best Spot to Be Pooped On by
Pigeons

In front of the **Squillo Smoke Shop** (965 State St., New Haven), where they're fed daily.

—*Betsy Yagla*

Best Vibrations

Stand on the **Water Street bridge** (Water St., New Haven) over the railroad tracks, by the State Street junction, as a train passes underneath. It's awesome.

—*Brian LaRue*

Best Street Musician

That **Harmonica Guy in Front of the Yale Center for British Art** (corner of Chapel & High sts., New Haven) is pretty good, right? Armed with just an acoustic guitar and a harmonica, I'd rather listen to this guy play than most major label clowns. His name is **Jim Morcaldi**, and while most days he's the only street musician, we're all thankful that he's good at what he does. The other day, he played me a killer version of "I've Just Seen a Face" with the melody played on harmonica (as usual), which brightened up my day about 30 percent. The CDs he's selling contain all originals worked up with a full band, if you were wondering.

—*Mike Sembos*

Best Tattered Poster

It grimaces out from **Bruegger's** brick wall on Grove Street near Whitney Avenue, the image more defaced than a year ago, with graffiti added. There has been no attempt to discover its maker or purpose. The mystery is everything.

—*Stephen Vincent Kobasa*

Best Van Gogh to Come

Not that New York City is as far away as say, Amsterdam, but you have to admire the undoubtedly intense negotiations that led to Van Gogh's iconic "**Starry Night**" and his nearly-as-famous "**Cypresses**" making their New England debut at the Yale University Art Gallery, some 110 years after they were painted. The paintings will get a side-by-side display at the gallery (1111 Chapel St., New Haven, 203-432-0600) June 15 through Sept. 7. "Timed tickets" allow Van Gogh-goers to schedule their star-gazing within a quarter-hour interval.

—*Christopher Arnott*

Best Vegan Vibes

On Monday nights, bartender **Freddy B.** (who also plays keyboards with I.N.I.T.Y.) cooks up a tasty spread of free vegan food at Cafe Nine (250 State St., New Haven, 203-789-8281, cafenine.com), starting at 6 p.m. As part of Monday's "Conscious Reggae Vibes" theme, Freddy B. warms up the happy hour crowd with a delicious meatless buffet, some Luciano tunes and his great smile; at 8 p.m., DJ SeeLove keeps the vibes going, spinning 'til 10 p.m., when the Nine's weekly Beatnik 2000 eclectic open mic kicks in.

Freddy B. notes how Monday's menu ties in with meatlessmonday.com, a national campaign promoting the health benefits of eating veggie; and he's happy to introduce meat-free dishes to those who may not have tried soy-based "meats" and tofu before, so that the term "'vegan' doesn't scare people," says Freddy. A few of his crowd-pleasing favorites include Jamaican jerk tofu (super flavorful with pineapple, peppers, onions and spices) over coconut rice; BBQ tofu; and veggie hot dogs and beans. Monday's beloved buffet became such a hit, he's started serving it on Wednesdays, also at 6 p.m. Too humble to call himself a "chef," Freddy B. describes his cooking as "homestyle," and encourages folks to try some meatless magic themselves.

"Use your own family recipes, replace the meats with veggie meats and have fun with your cooking." Peace!

—*Kathleen Cei*

Best Wind Tunnel

Windy days can be annoying. Umbrellas turn inside out. Hats roll and tumble down the street. Meticulously combed hair flies astray.

In some places, the wind is amplified to the point where it's no longer annoying, it's just comical. One of my favorite such places is in the **passageway next to Bank of America** on the New Haven Green connecting Church Street to Orange Street.

You know, the one with the trippy sculpture? When it's windy outside, it's super-ridiculous-crazy windy in there. Get a good seat around the corner and watch as each pedestrian reacts to the sudden, shocking weather phenomenon.

—*Mike Sembos*

Best Best-Kept Secret Salsa

You've got to ask for **Habanero Salsa at Bulldog Burrito** (320 Elm St., New Haven; 203-495-8600, bulldogburrito.com) because it doesn't come automatically with any burrito. It's not even on the menu. Owner Jason Congdon hides that kick out of sight but will be happy to include it in your dish. Depending who made the last batch, the heat level can be anywhere from a few drops of forehead sweat (pretty hot) to an all out scramble in search of water (extremely hot). When the staff is feeling sinister they can make a particularly harsh version and amuse themselves by watching us writhe in pain. Or pleasure, depending on who you ask. Either way, plan on finding a bathroom within the hour.

—Mike Sembos

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