INSIDE: The URI football team looks to make history this fall.

Fall 2026

SHORE Life



FEATURING

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SHORE Life

Vol. 1 No. 6

from the publisher of
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© Southern Rhode Island Newspapers

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Shore Life magazine is distributed for free, eight times per year (March, April, May, June, July, August, September, November) by The Independent / Southern Rhode Island Newspapers, P.O. Box 232, Wakefield, RI 02880. For editorial or advertising guidelines, visit SouthCountyLifeMagazine.com, call 401-789-9744, or email sclife@independentri.com

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Distribution by Special Delivery

In good Spirits

Beer drinkers rejoice! You've waited all year for the return of your autumn-themed favorites and South County's breweries have you covered with returning favorites and beloved events.

Story by Rob Duguay

The air is getting crisp and the leaves are beginning to tumble to the ground with hues of red, yellow, and brown. This is fall in South County and with the change in weather comes various seasonal varieties. This is especially true with the breweries around the region, who are providing cozy atmospheres to imbibe in a beer or two.

Tower Hill Brewing, located within the South County Commons in South Kingstown, is getting ready for the season in a big way. This includes a popular brew with a peculiar name, a unique cocktail, and a wide array of events and happenings.

"We have monthly and recurring events along with special events all throughout the fall," says Christy Simons, Tower Hill Brewing's General Manager. "We just recently released our 'Oktowerfest' märzen, which has been a huge hit. We also have a whole line of seltzer cocktails that have really been a game changer for us as we cannot serve hard alcohol, so that's been exciting. Our products are always a wide variety from light lagers to a very dark imperial stout and everything in between. We have amazing IPAs, pale ales, ambers, and sours, and then on top of that, we have fantastic reasons to come to the brewery."

"One of the recurring events we have is a sea shanty singalong, which is a big, fun party," she adds. "We also have line dancing and trivia, we have a jam band that comes in every Wednesday, we have monthly dueling pianos shows, we have live music every Saturday night, and I can go on and on. We have some Halloween things coming up too, so people can keep their eyes peeled on our social media, which is very active with our calendar, our new





brews, and things that are coming out as far as our product and our happenings at the brewery."

Over on 1117 Kingstown Road, Whalers Brewing Company always has a vibrant taproom, but things are being taken to a whole new level. This includes a few special beers along with a one-of-a-kind gathering catered to adults.

"Things to look out for in the taproom this fall are our 'Pumpkin Beer' that's coming out this October, our apple pie sour ale known as Piesces, and a 'Grown-Up Book Fair happening on November 12," a spokesman from Whalers mentions. "Besides those, we have trivia night every Wednesday, live music every Friday, and food trucks on the weekends."

Titled Barn Brewery, which is located on 1 Helmsley Place in a scenic area of Exeter, has a bunch of events happening on the premises. This includes a film screening, a party to ring in the spooky time of year, and a wide range of drinkable offerings.

"For fall events, we have a movie night on September 26 featuring Jurassic Park on the giant screen in our lower field, so bring a blanket or lawn chair and enjoy a screening of the movie," Brad Smith, who is Titled Barn's Marketing Manager, says about the coming weeks. "We will be hosting our second Oktoberfest on October 10, which features a stein holding competition, food vendors and live music and it was a lot of fun last year. We also have a Halloween party and costume contest on the 31st featuring prizes for best dressed in multiple categories. We have some major beers that come out in the fall, notably Farm to Fest, our märzen along with Jack, our pumpkin beer, and Drip, our annual wet hop IPA brewed with fresh hops straight from the fields. Rather than going through the typical drying process, we brew with these whole cone, wet hops within 24 hours of being harvested in order to capture the unique flavor that only wet hopping can provide.

"Drip is available only once a year during hop harvest, so we encourage people to enjoy this beer while it lasts," he adds. "Farm to Fest is a phenomenal beer, one of my favorites we make, and I love that it signals the change of seasons here in New England as the nights get cooler. Pouring a beautiful copper color, it showcases deliciously layered toasted malt notes with a subtle sweetness that finishes crisp. I love it on cool nights around a crackling fire. Add to that, we'll be bottling



our barrel aged BlackJack beer shortly for release soon."

In Westerly on 63 Canal Street, Grey Sail Brewing has an Oktoberfest of their own happening on October 11 from 12-8 p.m. featruing beverages including Autumn Winds Fest Bier, Headless Oarsmen Pumpkin Ale, and various fall inspired cocktails along with live music from The Vagabonds, a steinholding competition where the winner becomes regional champion due to the brewery being a qualifier venue for the United States Steinholding Competition, and a yodeling competition where the winner gets a stein.

"Oktoberfest is a great reason to celebrate community with our Grey Sail family," says Grey Sail Brewing co-founder Jen Brinton. "That is what we have always been about: bringing people together over good beer and good times. There's something so charming about doing that in the fall, which is such a special time to be in Southern New England. We love seeing people settle in with a stein in hand, raise a glass with friends, listen to some live music and enjoy the day together in the taproom and beer garden. It's a day that feels quintessentially Grey Sail, and we're excited to welcome everyone to the brewery on October 11."

LEFT Taylor Benton, the lead bartender at Tower Hill Brewing, mixes a blueberry-lemonade hard seltzer. ABOVE Empty cans for the "Farm to Fest" beer are ready to be filled at Tilted Barn Brewery. The seasonal brew can been seen in all its glory at right.
Photos: Michael Derr

Quite the Scene

Back by popular demand, Wickford Art Association's Fall Art Fair returns to Gooseneck Vineyards this month to showcase the best and brightest work of local artists, with chill vibes.

Story by Stephanie Bernaba

The Wickford Art Association brings its tremendously popular Fall Art Fair back to Gooseneck Vineyards on Saturday, October 24 and Sunday, October 25, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The event takes place at 1340 Tower Hill Road in North Kingstown and is free and open to visitors of all ages.

The fair began last year as a one-day event, born out of the association's search for a way to partner with a local business while staying lower-key than the Wickford Art Festival. That first event drew 43 artists and a strong turnout, and both the vineyard and association were pleased with the result. Gooseneck asked to bring the event back for a second year, and both parties agreed that extending to two days made sense. Beyond the fair, the Wickford Art Association runs a gallery with exhibits that rotate every four to five weeks and supports scholarship programs for local student artists.

This year's fair features 75 invited artists. Most of the exhibitors are juried members who show at the Wickford Art Festival, though the association also invited a handful of artists whose work would fit well with this event's relaxed format. Heather Schold, the association's new Director, who came on in March, said the goal is a manageable afternoon of art shopping.



"I think this is something that really has legs to continue," Schold said.

Artists will set up outdoors across two tented areas, a marquee tent already used by the vineyard and a second tent recently added in the field behind the tasting barn. Erin





McManus, Gooseneck's hospitality manager, said the vineyard made a few changes this year based on last year's turnout, including expanded parking and the addition of that second tent.

"A secondary tent has been put in our field so that guests can enjoy walking around the vendors, seeing their artwork, and then go in for some shade and some drinks," McManus said. "Obviously at Gooseneck, we really want to showcase our wine."

Gooseneck will offer its usual wine tastings and food trucks, including Vetrano's Pizza and Artisan Bites, as well as music, throughout the weekend. Schold said guests will be free to roam about the property. This year, the fair falls on URI's Family Weekend, which organizers expect will bring additional foot traffic.

Gooseneck is also introducing a new pour made specifically for the occasion, an "Artisan Series" Cabernet featuring a label designed by Wickford Art Festival artist Cate Brown, depicting what McManus believes is Second Beach in Newport. The vineyard's sangria, made with its Wickford White, a nod to the winery's original location, remains a house favorite.

Among the artists exhibiting is Ian Mohon of West Greenwich, a juried Wickford Art Association member who works in acrylic on canvas and wood panels. Mohon joined WAA last year and was recently juried in. This is his first year participating in the Gooseneck fair, though he has shown at the main festival for five years, at the Providence Art Club, and in the traveling veterans' art exhibit Journey Onwards at the Salmagundi Art Club in New York.

Mohon's work includes pet and animal portraits, garden scenes, and abstracted landscapes. He hand-paints Victorian-era wallpaper patterns into many of his backgrounds and, on wood panel pieces, skips sealing the wood so the paint soaks in, highlighting the wood's natural grain. He uses other tricks to create or enhance texture in many of his pieces.

Also exhibiting is Larisa Martino of Cranston, a member of the Wickford Art Association's Board of Directors and a contemporary mixed media artist working in abstract and figurative styles. Martino has been an exhibiting festival artist since 2019 and has served on the board for nearly six years. She was a volunteer helping mark out the vineyard fields for last year's fair but was unable to attend as an exhibitor due to a prior commitment.

Martino trained in textiles, and her skill is spotlighted in her layered work, which incorporates lace, glazes, inks, crystals, and construction tape and glue on canvas, glass, and metal.

"I like to play around with different textures," Martino said.

She is creating new, smaller pieces on wood specifically for this year's fair and will also bring existing inventory, including pieces from her figurative angel collection and a larger abstract tapestry, to demonstrate her range. Given the URI Family Weekend crowd, Martino plans to emphasize smaller, easily transportable work, including hand-drawn, signed original cards starting at $10, alongside pieces priced up to $3,800.

Martino also takes commissions and runs an open studio and gallery space in Cranston, where she hosts an annual open house and sends a quarterly newsletter to collectors.

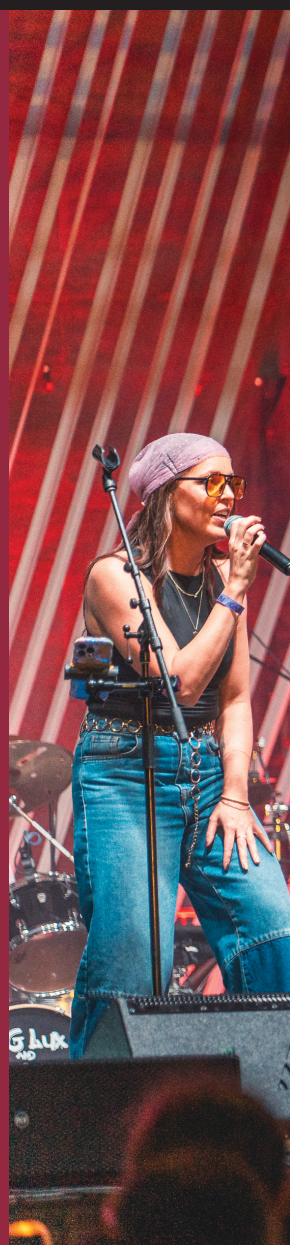
The event is free and family-friendly, and both organizers hope it will become a fall tradition.

After a successful test run last year, Wickford Art Association's Fall Art Festival returns October 24-25 at Gooseneck Vineyards in North Kingstown. Confirmed artists for this year's festival include Larisa Martino, whose painting titled "Girls Night Out" is shown above left, and Ian Mohon, whose work can be seen above right.
Photos Courtesy: Gooseneck Vineyards (left), Larisa Martino and Ian Mohon.

STRING THEORY

For South County's Kevin Lowther, AKA Big Lux, finding success in music is two parts talent, one part timing.

Story by Stephanie Bernaba



Though Westerly resident Kevin Lowther trained as a violinist from a young age, he developed his signature hip-hop fusion style completely on his own. A West Philadelphia native, Lowther — known professionally as Big Lux — later studied at West Point, where he observed that "no one was playing any music." Driven to perform despite the lack of a music scene and musical peers, he began developing a dynamic solo act. His musical trajectory gained further momentum during a military assignment in Korea, where a fast-paced, unforgiving street music culture taught him to captivate audiences on the move.



Lowther returned to Rhode Island in 2019 and serendipitously built his following through a punishing run of gigs, an unexpected viral moment with a music-loving beluga whale at the Mystic Aquarium, and a subsequent appearance on The Kelly Clarkson Show. He now performs both as a solo violinist and DJ, and with his full band, Big Lux and the Hype.

Lux's ambitions extend well beyond the stage. Through Next Up Music Incorporated, a nonprofit he established, he empowers emerging local talent by providing platforms like the Watch Hill concert series, the Next Stop Music Festival in Wilcox Park, and a newly formed collaboration with New London's Garde Arts Center. Beyond his creative work, he cofounded the Westerly Anti-Racism Coalition and is awaiting his Rhode Island Bar exam results, with the goal of providing legal representation to fellow artists, local small businesses, and nonprofit organizations.

Q: What's your favorite song to play?

A: "Probably 'Killing Me Softly,' the Fugees' version. And there are a couple things about it. One, I love playing music that different audiences can identify for different reasons. Lots of older people know the Roberta Flack version. And I think one of my favorite examples of this is the song 'Beggin" because there's the Frankie Valli version that the old, old kids know. There's a Madcon version that millennials might know. And then there's this Måneskin version that Gen Z knows because it came out maybe five years ago. Amazing song, but every generation has a different take on it. And so I love playing songs like that, which mean different things to different people. I'd say 'Killing Me Softly' is the best example of it."

Q: Who are your biggest musical influences?

A: "I was really fortunate I came of age during a time when we had 'America's Got Talent' just starting up. And I got to watch some string players — Nuttin' But Stringz, I think, was on season two. It was two black guys who were classically trained. Both of them had gone to Juilliard,



but they were playing hip-hop as a duo. And then we had Lindsey Stirling, I think, in season four. And you really got to see what a solo violinist could be capable of with all this production behind her. So I got to see that it was possible, number one. And then I brought my violin with me all over the world. YouTube came along. I started to see more and more violinists posting things on YouTube. I got inspired by guys like Lee England Jr. and the Mad Violinist, both of whom I got to play with later in life."

Q: Where do you love performing the most?

A: "So, right now, my favorite place to perform is on Block Island. Spring House Hotel. They have an immaculate lawn with amazing views of the ocean. And it's a family show where parents bring their kids. It's the most beautiful cross-section of life in the most beautiful setting."

Q: What's a great memory from your early days of performing?

A: "Shows were really fun, especially in Westerly at the time with all my friends, family, extended friends, and classmates. I had an album release party at the Knickerbocker that was insane. At the end of it, they were like, 'Yeah, we didn't hire enough staff for this. We didn't realize who you were...'"

Q: Do you sing in addition to playing the violin?

A: "I sing and rap. And you see more of that with the band."

Q: What's your go-to post-show snack?

A: "I hate to say Taco Bell, but if I'm out late, and I'm coming back home, and it's the only thing open, it ends up being Taco Bell. When they brought the Mexican pizza back, I was like, 'There we go!'"

Q: What's next for Big Lux?

A: "I am planning to do some touring in the spring of 2027. I'm very excited about it. I don't have all of the dates yet, but our anchor show is going to be at the Garde Arts Center in New London."

A RUN TO REME

Story by Ellis Santoro

There's a reason the University of Rhode Island keeps winning football games.

Other programs see their best players leave through the transfer portal at their first opportunity in search of an upgrade. Not the Rams.

It's a testament to the way head coach Jim Fleming built his program. His best players want to be in South Kingstown, not leave it. It's translated to a Rhode Island football renaissance with Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) appearances in 2024 and 2025.

Even as major stadium renovations have the Rams playing outside of South County this fall, the trip up to Pawtucket's Centreville Bank Stadium is worth it. A loaded roster gives the Rams a realistic goal of having their best season in program history.

"There are different stories with each individual," said the 67-year-old Fleming, now in his 13th season with URI. "The common denominator is that the players know our program. They know for certain as people and as players that we're going to use them the right way and we're going to treat them the right



EMBER

The URI football team is better than ever but, this fall, will ask more from its fans than ever before. Don't take this team for granted. Success like this is hard to come by.



ABOVE URI's Marquis Buchanan races past Central Connecticut's Devon Anderson for a touchdown during the Ram's FCS playoff win over the Blue Devils last fall. **LEFT** URI quarterback Devin Farrell led the Rams with 3,745 yards passing and 24 touchdowns last fall. Both Buchanan and Farrell are expected to be key contributors to a URI team looking to compete nationally this season.
Photos: Michael Derr

way. And we really look at it like: Where else would you rather go to school than the University of Rhode Island?"

It's the type of success story that nobody except Fleming saw coming.

Since its inaugural season in 1895 — when the program frequently lost to area high school teams — there's been a significant lack of winning done by the Rams. They found a strong run of success culminating in conference championships in 1984 and 1985, but that gave way to a 39-year playoff drought. Multiple one-win seasons and a winless campaign led to rumors in the early 2010s that URI might cut the football program entirely — a move that ultimately didn't happen.

Fleming took over in 2014 and expressed his confidence that the program would win football games under his leadership. It seemed overconfident for a coach taking on a losing program. Then, he started his tenure with seasons of 1-11, 1-10, 2-9 and 3-8.

Finally, signs of a turnaround started to show. The program has posted a winning record every year since 2021. URI has gained attention in the FCS national rankings. It's an unbelievable reversal for a program that used to be a national laughingstock.

The success doesn't appear to be slowing down any time soon, either. All the winning has brought more eyes and financial contributions, such as a $2 million gift this past February by URI football Hall of Famer Mark S. Cruise and his wife Sue Cruise, which went toward various causes including a new endowed scholarship program.

It's taken until now, but the program is in its golden age.

"If you're a winning football team, you've got a better chance to retain your football players. It's a sad statement, but it's true," Fleming said. "I think at the end of the day, there's a common level of respect throughout our program and for each other for the understanding that we all give everything that we can to the common cause, which is winning."

URI's best players are examples of that. Quarterback Devin Farrell is in his fourth year with the program and third year as the starter, and all he's done is win football games. Providence native Marquis Buchanan is in his fifth year at URI and has become one of the best wide receivers in the entire FCS. Case Mankins, son of former Patriots all-pro Logan Mankins, is still with the Rams for his fourth season.

"Some of the guys also had opportunities to leave," Buchanan said. "We kind of talked as a collective group, we thought it was the best decision to come back and make a run, because you don't get the same opportunities if you just leave."

Superstar linebacker A.J. Pena was a big example entering last season. Pena initially transferred away to Memphis of the FBS — viewed as an upgrade — but changed his mind and transferred back to Kingston just in time for the season.

Pena exhausted his eligibility after the 2025 campaign, which he ended only six sacks behind the all-time FCS record. An NFL prospect, he went undrafted before attending a minicamp with the Baltimore Ravens. Then, with an ongoing nationwide court battle about allowing the high school class of '22 a fifth year of NCAA



University of Rhode Island football players head to the locker room following a recent scrimmage at Meade Stadium.

eligibility, Pena once again returned to Kingston to prepare for the 2026 season, despite not knowing if he'll be allowed to play.

"Maybe it's just destiny," Pena said about why he keeps returning to the Rams. "Maybe it's some dark magic or something like that."

The players want to be there, and so do the fans. Meade Stadium has averaged about 5,000 in attendance per game since 2021. That's still only around middle of the pack for Coastal Athletic Association and FCS teams.

There will be a big difference this year. Due to renovations to Meade Stadium, which cost about $42 million, the Rams are playing 45 minutes north of campus in Pawtucket at Centreville Bank Stadium, home of Rhode Island FC. The soccer setup will be converted to a football field on game days, with a capacity of 10,500.

It won't be ideal for South County residents or URI students. Rather than walking from their dorm to the stadium, students must drive through Providence traffic or take a fan bus. URI is banking on the idea that new fans from central or northern Rhode Island who usually don't travel into South County will fill the seats. If the Rams win football games, they could make a ton of new fans.

That'll be a one-year arrangement. The renovated Meade Stadium is slated to open for the 2027 season. The bleachers opposite the Ryan Center were demolished and will be rebuilt as a much wider grandstand with a new plaza area behind it.

What that shouldn't be is an excuse to avoid the trip to Pawtucket. The Rams entered this season ranked No. 7 and 8 by the major FCS polls. They're expected to contend for a national championship.

Before the current run of success, the Rams hadn't been in that national-contender conversation since the 1984 and 1985 seasons, when they won a playoff game but lost in the next round both times. In 1986, the Rams went 1-10, which kicked off their dark ages.

Many comparisons can be made between the current group and the teams of the mid-1980s. In the exact same way, each of the 2024 and 2025 Rams won a playoff game and lost in the next round.

What's certain is that this year's team won't go 1-10. The key players stuck around despite opportunities elsewhere. It gives the Rams another shot at achieving their best season in program history.

"People have got to know that we play ball up in this area of the country," Fleming said. "We've got to play it well and we've got to play it at a national level."



A GOURD CAUSE

Peace Dale Congregational Church's Pumpkins for a Purpose began as a simple fundraiser. Now, it's a staple of fall in Southern Rhode Island.

Story by Bill Seymour

Lori Olsen Filiberto came for a pumpkin and left with something else.

She had brought her daughter Laurel, then a University of Rhode Island freshman, to the Peace Dale Congregational Church's annual fall pumpkin patch. The man running sales asked where they lived, then asked Laurel what she was studying.

"We both left with our pumpkins and a smile on our faces," Filiberto said in 2023, but more importantly, an observation came. "My daughter commented on how people like him can really make your day," she said.

The man was Wally Young. For more than a decade, he has run Pumpkins for a Purpose on the church lawn, sending more than $100,000 to a homeless shelter down the road. He started it because a check lacked purpose.

"I know that me sending $100 wasn't going to be enough. I had to do something," Young said in 2023.

Starting his 11th autumn of conversations, these show a man whose answers barely change. In 2019, taking cash and cards from a line of customers, he gave the shortest version.

Young is committed to helping people in his community through many projects beyond selling pumpkins to

About 150 volunteers helped unpack, sort and display 49,000 pounds of pumpkins and gourds for Peace Dale Congregational Church's 10th annual Pumpkins for a Purpose last fall, which raised funds for Welcome House. This year's drive begins September 27. *File Photo: Laura Paton*

help the homeless. At 82 years old and pushing back against health issues, Wally Young could be considered "giving" personified, say friends and others who know him.

"I love doing it, number one, and it's a lot of fun, and it's for a great cause. It really gives me a purpose," he said in a recent interview, echoing a 2019 comment, "It's for a great cause...I think we really help a lot of people by doing it."

Entering the 11th Year

This story looks back on the 11 Wally years of him wearing his orange "Mr. Pumpkin" hat on the green-turned-orange church where thousands of pumpkins arrive the last week of September to be sold for Halloween.

Peter Pezzelli, that 2019 day, was on the Welcome House board and stood in the patch hunting the largest pumpkin he could find.

"There are people living in our community who are living outside our community. They need some place to go and have no place to go," Pezzelli said, "Wally is the go-to man for them."

The next year the pandemic arrived, and Young reorganized rather than canceled, scrapping the hand-to-hand line for a forklift. More than 3,000 pumpkins came off the truck from a New Mexico Native American reservation that annually supplies them to the church. Its mission has long been support of the Welcome House homeless shelter.

"I'm surprised at how steady and strong the business has been so very early this year," Young said in 2020 as the pandemic rose but didn't kill his pumpkin patch.

Kerry McCarty, a church member working the rows that day, framed why she came.

"What's important is helping out the Welcome House. They are the hands and feet of Jesus on the earth, and we are here to help them," McCarty said.

By 2021 the patch had its own gravity. Buyers were arriving before the truck could pull away.

"Before the truck could get out of here after being unloaded, we started selling them," Young said that year.

Part of what he built is simply fun. There is no scale in the patch, just a plastic tape wrapped around each pumpkin until it stops.

"The tape goes up to $50, but we've never had a $50 pumpkin," Young said in 2021.

"Our pumpkins measure in dollars, not in inches, and that is very unique," he said the following year as sales grew.

He recites the stock like a shopkeeper, from tennis-ball size to giant, and remembers who wants the strangest of it.

"I want the five ugliest pumpkins you have," Young recalled in 2022 one woman requesting every year.

"I love the people and you get to meet people in this



Wally Young, a parishioner at Peace Dale Congregational Church, has spearheaded the church's "Pumpkins with a Purpose" fundraising pumpkin sale every fall.
File Photo: Michael Derr

community...and I love to talk," Young has said year after year.

The patch supplies him strangers with no agenda, which he treats as the payment.

Pumpkins and Happiness

"One thing I like is that nobody is grumpy when they buy pumpkins. Everyone is happy. There's no talking about Jim Jordan or what is going on in Gaza," Young said in 2023.

He stays in weather that empties the lawn. One rainy Saturday he worked all day with four high school students earning National Honor Society credit.

"I enjoyed just being with them and talking. It was fun, and especially connecting to their lives," Young said in 2023.

The Rev. Fred Evenson, the church's pastor, has watched him work each autumn.

"If you've ever seen the Peanut's legend of the Great Pumpkin, that's kind of what Wally reminds me of. His spirit looms large as he blesses our community with God's love through the pumpkin patch that carpets the church grounds," Evenson said three years ago.

The work extends past October. Young sits on the church's mission board, previously served on the Welcome House board, and with his wife, Sylvia Blanda, runs the church's twice-weekly free "Dinner Table" meal program.

Leslie Pierini is a Wally Young booster. "I served with Wally on the board of the Welcome House. Wally is a huge advocate for our homeless neighbors … He's a good soul," she added.

By 2024 the unloading had become a civic event drawing nearly 200 people, including police and fire personnel. South Kingstown Police Chief Matt Moynihan showed up in shorts and a T-shirt.

"This is great. The people here are doing what they can to help others," Moynihan said, standing in line, passing one pumpkin after another in a hand-to-hand transfer of thousands from the delivery truck to the lawn.

Young's own explanation that year needed four words. "Who doesn't love a pumpkin," he quipped as he always did.

Evenson watched the line cross the lawn and reached for an image. "It's a bucket brigade of love in the shape of a pumpkin," Evenson commented.

Scott San Antonio of Wakefield, a volunteer since the first year, measures the decade now of pumpkins for a purpose by the truck.

"The lines have grown, the trucks have gotten bigger, and the amount of pumpkins we sell every year has gotten bigger. That's a real testament to what Wally and his whole team, and the church as a whole, have done," San Antonio said last year.

Stephanie Nowell, president of the Warm Center board, said visibility matters as much as money.

"It brings awareness to our scope and our mission, and it's nice to see community members out here actively supporting the organization," Nowell offered last fall.

Young is exacting about the proceeds. Last year alone the church sent $18,000, and he insists on naming the Navajo growers as a second beneficiary.

"All goes out," Young said in a 2025 interview. "Nothing is kept. So all of this is totally volunteer for the community by the church and community members," he said.

What he thinks it accomplishes has never been primarily financial.

"I love it. I love doing it. The big thing here — it gives a lot of awareness that we have a homeless shelter and (that) we must have homeless people in this affluent community," Young said back in 2020.

"It means that people like to come together as a community and do something that's important, worthwhile that they believe in," he repeated again in 2025 like a salesman, but he needs no pitch.

Those in the area know he's the real deal. But reality has its punishing sides.

His eyesight is fading. This past August he had an aortic valve replacement. Yet, in an interview this month, he showed nothing fading about his enthusiasm. Once asked whether he would ever step back, he paused.

"Oh, probably," Young said last year, then smiled. "But we have plenty of help too. And I'll be out here every day."

He maintained that stance just a month ago. The sentiment about him was once declared by Karen Hawkins in feelings many people have expressed.

"The greatest pumpkin man in our town, thank you, Wally," she said.

Write to Bill Seymour, a freelance writer, at independent.southcountylife@gmail.com.



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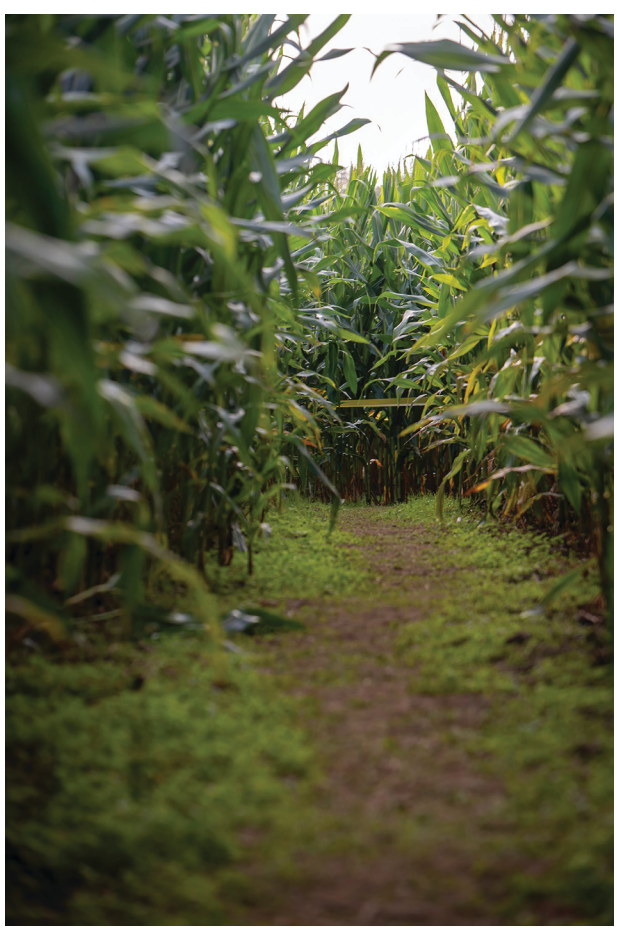
It's apple-picking season! No, wait. It's pumpkin-picking season! OK. It's both. Now, where should you go? In South County, the only thing more bountiful than the harvest are your options for finding the best this season has to offer.

Story by Stephanie Bernaba

Every October, South County's farms kick into high gear, sharing their harvests amidst a backdrop of golden hues. These farmlands (and farm stands) can check every box on your fall bucket list, offering food, atmosphere, and entertainment. Below is a season's worth of picking, browsing, and family fun across the region, along with hours, contact information, and the special events worth checking out.

Narrow Lane Orchard

Owners Stephen and Sharon Grenier bought this 30-acre orchard in 2004 to save it from development, and it has since grown into one of South County's most popular pick-your-own spots. The orchard offers more than 20 varieties of apples, as well as peaches, nectarines, blueberries, kiwi berries, and blackberries. Visitors fill their own peck bags (10-12 pounds, enough for up to four pickers) or half-bushel bags (20-22 pounds), then can wander a mile-long nature trail and take photos with McIntosh, the orchard's eight-foot wooden sasquatch. Apples run through peak season into October, with pickable varieties changing week to week.



LEFT Shickasheen Farm in West Kingston offers a variety of pumpkins and gourds every autumn. **ABOVE LEFT & RIGHT** Benjamin Beauchemin, 7, left, Aimee Sklarz, 9, and Charlie Taylor, 4, all of Warwick enjoy picking apples at Narrow Lane Orchard during a recent visit. RIGHT Clark Farms's Matunuck location offers some of the season's best attractions, including a renowned corn maze that's well worth your time.
Photos: Michael Derr (left, above), Clark Farms (right)

The farm stand sells fresh apple cider, jams, and honey alongside seasonal fruit, and the orchard has recently begun offering a small pumpkin patch. Narrow Lane is a lower-key alternative to South County's festival-style farms, better suited to a quiet afternoon of picking than a full day of activities.

Address: 213 Narrow Lane, North Kingstown, RI 02852
Phone: (401) 294-3584
Website: narrowlaneorchardri.com
Hours: Thursday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (subject to change; call ahead)

Spring Hill Sugar House

Better known in late winter for its maple syrup demonstrations, this 22-acre Richmond farm run by the Fountain family shifts gears every fall for pick-your-own pumpkins and a corn maze with a new theme each season. Visitors can walk into the field and cut a pumpkin right from the vine, or shop for pre-picked pumpkins and gourds stacked in baskets around the farmstand. Opening weekend, the weekend of October 19, features Farm Fest, with farm-related attractions for the whole family.

Fresh-pressed apple cider is sold throughout the fall, and the farm's maple syrup, its original claim to fame, is available year-round.

Address: 522 Gardiner Road, Richmond, RI 02892
Phone: (401) 788-7431 (cash or check only)
Website: Spring Hill Sugar House on Facebook
Hours: Weekdays, noon to 5 p.m.; weekends and holidays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., during the fall season (fields and corn maze close around 4:30 p.m.). Opens for the season on October 19.

Manfredi Farms

Three generations of the Manfredi family have farmed this Westerly property, known locally as "The Corn Place" for its roadside sweet corn stand. In the fall, it becomes a seasonal destination centered around an eight-acre corn maze and pumpkin patch. Pumpkins are available to pick or buy, and a petting area allows visitors to feed donkeys, goats, sheep, geese, ducks, chickens, and a Scottish Highland cow.



Weekend hayrides run throughout the season, and the farm stand sells fresh produce along with jarred products like apricot, peach, and pumpkin butter. Play and picnic areas give families space to linger, and a banquet area on the property hosts private events. Visit the farm's Facebook page for October hours and festival dates.

Address: 59 Dunns Corner Road, Westerly, RI 02891
Phone: (401) 471-0073
Website: manfredifarms.com
Hours: Monday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturday, 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Fry Farm

Fry Farm, run by Jessica and Joe Procopio, has been in Jessica's family for nearly 350 years. The family moved away from dairy farming after Jessica's grandfather's death and began focusing on pick-your-own offerings, including flowers and pumpkins.

Beyond weekend hours, the farm hosts its Fall Fest over Columbus Day weekend, featuring live music, Moniker Brewery, hayrides, the pumpkin

patch, and a lineup of vendors. For updates on monthly food truck nights, seasonal offerings like Christmas trees, and schedule changes, follow their Facebook page.

Address: 2233 South County Trail, East Greenwich, RI 02818
Website: Visit Fry Farm on Facebook
Hours: Weekends, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., through Oct. 31 (occasional extended hours possible; check Facebook)
October 2026 events: Fall Fest, Oct. 9–11

Pezza Farm

Family-owned and operated for more than 75 years, Pezza Farm offers two locations in Rhode Island. The East Greenwich location serves as a farm stand and garden center, offering mums, pumpkins, gourds, fall decor, and fresh-baked pies, tarts, and cookies.

To enjoy Pezza Farm's classic fall attractions, guests can visit their Johnston location at 2279 Plainfield Pike. The petting zoo is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. every day except Wednesday. "Feed the Herd" hayrides, where riders can stop and feed the cows during their trip, happen on weekends and holidays. And guests can make their own scarecrows any time during operating hours. The farm store is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information and to make reservations, visit the farm's website.

Address: 2657 South County Trail, East Greenwich, RI 02818
Phone: (401) 398-1062
Website: pezzafarm.com
Hours: Daily, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

More to Explore

The Farmer's Daughter

Best known as a garden center, The Farmer's Daughter becomes one of South County's most popular fall destinations with its annual Fall Harvest Festival, running September 19 through October 31 with activities available weekends (10 a.m.–4 p.m.) and some midweek as well; hayrides, a corn maze, a straw bale maze, a pumpkin dunk tank, a barrel train, an obstacle course, and a scavenger hunt keep kids busy for hours, and every child who completes the scavenger hunt receives a mini sugar pumpkin. Seasonal decor adorns two of the farm's shops this year, featuring the wildly popular Halloween House along with an autumn-themed back shop. Visitors can grab specialty drinks and lattes from Red Tail Coffee on-site, sample local bites from food trucks present every festival weekend, or stop by the classroom on any October weekend for a $15 "Succulent Pumpkin Pop-In" to craft a succulent-adorned mini pumpkin. Check the farm's website for the full autumn class lineup.

Address: 716 Mooresfield Road, Wakefield, RI 02879
Phone: (401) 792-1340
Website: thefarmersdaughterri.com
Hours: Daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Fall Harvest Festival activities run weekends, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.)

Shickasheen Farm

Primarily a garden center and gift shop, Shickasheen leans into fall with hands-on craft classes, though it has recently enhanced its seasonal presence with Instagrammable fall decorations. Its wreath-making and centerpiece classes, using fresh evergreens and natural materials, are among its most popular offerings and generally run into the holiday season, with current dates posted on the farm's website. The gift shop and greenhouses stock seasonal plants, mums, and fall decor.

Address: 3798 Kingstown Road, West Kingston, RI 02892
Phone: (401) 308-2067
Website: shickasheenfarm.com
Hours: Daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Carpenter's Farm

A fifth-generation Matunuck farm stand best known for its sweet corn, Carpenter's Farm adds a daily corn maze and weekend hayrides out to its pumpkin patch each fall, along with an October Fall Festival featuring sack races, a corn pit, a hay tunnel, pumpkin bowling, pumpkin painting, and live music on Sundays. Along with beef burgers and festival weekend treats, the farm stand features farm-made honey and maple syrup, fresh produce, and homemade baked goods.

Address: 520 Matunuck Beach Road, Wakefield, RI 02879
Phone: (401) 783-8958
Website: carpentersfarmstand.com
Hours: Daily, 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. (call ahead in October for festival-specific hours)

Clark Farms

Clark Farms' Matunuck location goes all out every fall with a corn maze that Yankee Magazine named the Best in New England, plus weekend hayrides, a petting zoo, a mountain slide, pedal go-karts, a children's zip line, and a rotating lineup of live bands. This year's Fall Fest runs from mid-September through November 1, with the corn maze open daily. This year, the farm will celebrate "250 Years of Farming in Rhode Island." Clark's Canteen sells hot dogs, hand-cut fries made from farm-grown potatoes, and other snacks, and the attached garden center stays open for browsing even after the maze closes.

Address: 2984 Commodore Perry Highway, Matunuck, RI 02879
Phone: (401) 783-8844
Website: clarkfarms.com
Hours: Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (corn maze and Fall Fest hours vary; check clarkfarms.com)

Planning the Day

Though other areas of the state have long dominated the autumn spotlight, South County stands out as an exceptional fall destination. Take the opportunity to discover a few new farms this fall. Whichever spots you plan to visit, be sure to gather the family, find some comfortable shoes, and grab a camera for the plentiful photo ops.

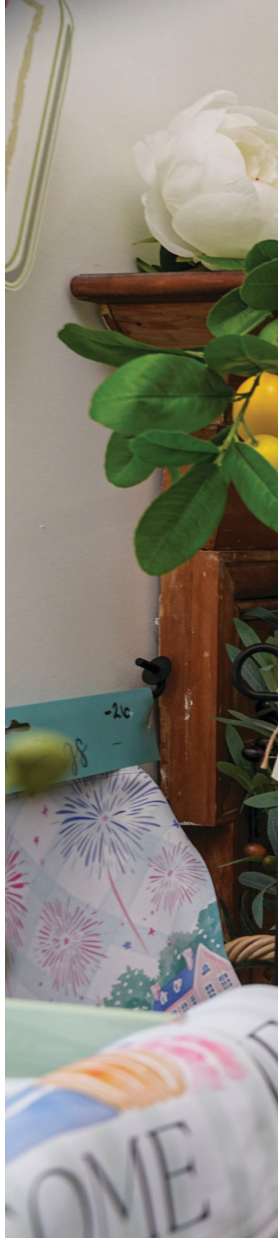
Hours, dates, and prices are subject to change. Call ahead or check each farm's website or Facebook page before visiting, especially for October festival weekends.

Emma and Rob Phaneuf, co-owners of Shickasheen Farm in West Kingston, add pumpkins to the farm's pumpkin house display on a recent afternoon.
Photo: Michael Derr

SUGAR, SPICE & EVERYTHING'S NICE

The summer sun may have set but South County is just heating up with the arrival of fall. No matter what you're into, there's so much for everyone to see and do in Southern Rhode Island this autumn.

Story by Morgan Rizzo, Photography by Laura Paton



As the beaches slowly quiet and the crisp autumn air fills in, fall in South County has arrived. Morning walks are met with warm crewnecks and a hot iced pumpkin latte instead of summer's iced drinks. The leaves are slowly turning from their bright greens to fiery shades of red, orange, and yellow.

"Fall is a great time to visit South County Rhode Island because summer lingers longer here, and it's quieter with summer visitors long gone," says Faye Pantazaopoulous, creative director of the South County Tourism Council. "The weather is crisp and cool, but can also be unseasonably warm sometimes, so you can still get outdoors and go to the beach, go hiking, biking, and bird watching as the migratory birds start heading out."

While many travelers think of heading North for the ultimate fall experience, South County is filled with local family-owned farm stands, orchards in full bloom of crispy Granny Smiths, and coastal boutiques swapping bathing suits for jeans and sweaters. Here's how to explore everyone's favorite season of fall in South County.





For Coffee Lovers (Westerly)

Nothing says fall better than a pumpkin spice latte. Westerly's coffee scene is bustling with homemade syrups, fresh pastries, and perfect brews. Locals' favorite, Junk n Java crafts specialty drinks year-round including fun latte flavors like cinnamon bun and cookies n cream. Their cases are packed with delicious muffins, doughnuts, and bagels, perfect for snacking on in their







There's no shortage of great local stores to visit for your fall decor needs, like Farmgirl's Front Porch in North Kingstown, which was in full autumn mode on a recent afternoon thanks to shop associates Charlotte Billings, left, and Elloise Gavitt, above.

comfy couches with friends or at a table working from home.

This fall, the coffee shop is bringing back its house-made pumpkin ganache, which goes perfectly with a coffee, latte, or chai. Additions include a banana maple sea salt shaken espresso, an apple butter matcha, a spiced pear chai, and a ginger cake praline fog. "Fall is my favorite menu to make since it's always the most anticipated," says Emma Steele, barista at Junk n Java. "Even more so, many of the quintessential fall flavor profiles are earthy with warm spices and pair beautifully with coffee and chai. It's a great time to experiment and find something new and fun that people look forward to each year."

STICK + FIN, inspired by the coastal travels of owners Brian and Chiyoko Samuelson, offers refreshing juices, smoothies, and acai bowls year-round. Their bruschetta toast on sourdough with avocado, tomato, feta, onion, garlic, and balsamic glaze is a fan favorite, and guests can never go wrong with a party bowl (oats, banana, apple, cinnamon, maple, granola). This fall, STICK + FIN is bringing back velvety pumpkin lattes and spiced coffees alongside house-made apple pastries. The team works to complement every sip and bite, crafting them for the beauty of the fall season.

For a Farm Adventure (South Kingstown)

Grab your favorite checkered flannel and head to a classic New England farm filled with a variety of juicy apples, pumpkins of all shapes and sizes perfect for carving, and animals grazing among the hay. "Fall is full of many activities to partake in," says Pantazaopoulous. "Farms are in full harvest mode with corn mazes, hot cider, and apple cider doughnuts."

Carpenter's Farm Stand is the definition of local shoppers' fall paradise. With five generations, the local family-run farm offers fresh produce, farm-raised beef and pork, and delicious bakery goods. Open through Thanksgiving, visitors can make a full dinner with sausage and rib-eye steak accompanied by their famous Carpenter's corn and their apple peach pie for dessert.

Another farm inspired by family, The Farmer's Daughter captures a fall day perfectly. Sarah Partyka grew up on a farm and stayed connected to the land through her grandmothers, who taught her to garden. The Fall Harvest Festival, held on weekends through the end of September and into October, offers corn mazes, hay rides, obstacle courses and more for families to enjoy. The greenhouse is decked out with pumpkins galore, gourds, and fall decorations to add to your seasonal house decorations. This year, The Farmer's Daughter is offering succulent-topped heirloom pumpkin classes on select mornings and evenings from September through November, giving participants a unique opportunity to create a fall centerpiece.





Serendipity in North Kingstown remains a popular spot to visit for locals and visitors alike in the fall. At top, Seredipity shop owner, Melissa Beckwith helps out a couple of customers who came to shop from Hartford, Connecticut on a recent afternoon. At center, Ann Clasby and Theresa Wolk traveled from Raynham Massachusetts to shop Wickford Village and make a stop at Seredipity on a recent afternoon.

For Fall Shopping (North Kingstown)

Like a scene out of Gilmore Girls, Wickford Village is a quaint and historic seaside village perfect for a day of shopping. "Wickford Village comes alive the week before Halloween for Wickford Wicked Week," says Pantazaopoulous. "Check out the Witches' paddle boarding in the harbor, sip and shop, look at the special spooky shop window displays, and don't miss the Horrible parade!"

The picturesque streets are decorated with pumpkins, and store windows

represent their best fall clothing and artwork, perfect for browsing. For something sweet and made with love, Seacoast Sweets has everyone's favorite nostalgic penny candy to assemble your own bag. Their chocolate patties are a must-buy and perfect for a fall birthday gift, with flavors like peanut butter, coconut, s'mores, and peppermint.

Fall means it's time to bring out the scarves and sweaters, and The Mermaid's Purl sells high-quality yarns and kits for crafters to bring out their needles to make clothing for the cold months ahead. The shop is filled with a rainbow of colorful yarns in different weights and fibers like alpaca and cashmere. Keep an eye on their website for different class offerings throughout the fall.

The store name speaks for itself: Farmgirl's Front Porch, where handcrafted wreaths are inspired by the fall season. Whether it's a front door wreath, a stunning table centerpiece, or a front porch fall basket, there's beautiful home decor waiting to be brought home. This fall's collection includes a fall pomegranate wreath, a fall blush peony basket, and a blue velvet pumpkin wreath.

For a Cozy Place to Stay (Narragansett, Wakefield, Westerly)

To feel like it's still summer, The Surf Shack: Bar, Restaurant & Hotel offers a coastal stay with bright, colorful rooms, and a rainbow of surfboards greeting guests outside. Their on-site restaurant and bar offer delicious Rhode Island-inspired fare, from fresh seafood to innovative cocktails inspired by each season.

For a cozy vibe, the Admiral Dewey Inn, a 1989 late-Victorian bed and breakfast in Wakefield is the perfect choice. The twelve guest rooms make guests feel right at home with coastal charm and modern amenities. In Westerly, the Margin Street Inn sits on six acres along the Pawcatuck River, with each room uniquely decorated. The porch is perfect for a glass of wine, watching boats go by at the end of the season and taking in the crisp fall air.

"You can find great off-season deals while also enjoying a more peaceful vacation experience," says Lisa Konicki, president of the Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce. "Fewer cars, fewer people, and more value for your dollar — fall is absolutely the most wonderful time to visit our region."

For Fall Foliage Walks (All towns)

Arguably one of the best parts about visiting South County at the peak of the fall season is the changing of the leaves. Whether driving along winding roads, biking paved paths, or hiking wooded trails, the trees take on a kaleidoscope of beautiful colors.

Nestled in the heart of downtown Westerly, Wilcox Park is the best spot for walking, letting kids run through the grass, and taking in the beautiful array of trees and flowers. It's perfect for grabbing a book from the Westerly Library and sitting on a bench or picnic blanket under the trees for some reading. "Fall offers the best time to visit, as the weather is ideal, the shoreline is less crowded, and the changing colors of the leaves are truly beautiful," says Konicki.

For a more wooded trail, Ninigret Park is a 227-acre park with salt marshes, walking trails, and a playground. Immersed in the colorful trees are trolls from the Rhode Island Troll Trail: Erik Rock and Greta Granite. The trolls, made by world-renowned artist Thomas Dambo, are crafted from recycled natural materials, including wood and shells, complementing their setting in Ninigret Park.



Located in Hopkinton, the Ell Pond Preserve is a stunning hiking trail through the forest with views of Long Pond. The trail is considered rather challenging with giant rock formations, stone steps, and a long footbridge. Along the trail, the foliage is at its peak, and hikers can even spot turtles, frogs, and other woodland animals.

For more information about where to stay, shop, play, and enjoy the best fall foliage in South County, Rhode Island, visit southcountyri.com.

There are plenty of must-see local farms in South County for those who want to get in touch with nature this fall, including Carpenter's Farm Stand, The Farmer's Daughter, Highland Farm (pictured above) and The Stand at Whaley Farm. All offer a variety of seasonal attractions and farm-fresh meats, produce and dairy items you can't find anywhere else.

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THE YEAR OF THE YARD

South County homeowners are rewriting the rules of outdoor living spaces, one high-end upgrade at a time

Story by Stephanie Bernaba

Homeowners in South County are upgrading their outdoor areas into complete living spaces, featuring gourmet kitchens, integrated sound systems, resort-style water features, and lighting that can transform any Tuesday night into an unforgettable evening. The investment is genuine, the products are more advanced than ever, and local experts confirm that the time to start planning a project for next summer has already arrived.



The Kitchen Outside Your Kitchen

Outdoor kitchens have moved from luxury novelty to an expected feature in any serious backyard renovation. Liz Quinn, landscape designer at Grandscapes in Wakefield, has watched demand steadily surge — with no signs of slowing — since the pandemic.

She generally recommends custom builds over premade kits because they offer superior durability and are more aesthetically pleasing. Her team typically incorporates premium materials like Unilock pavers, thermal bluestone, and natural stone veneers, as well as RCS gas grills. While a standard paver-block setup typically starts at $12,000, high-end projects, including higher-end materials, can drive the total costs into the $30,000 to $45,000 range.

For homeowners who wish to further upscale their outdoor cooking space, a pair of nationally available products is worth considering. The True Caliber Signature Rockwell is a freestanding grill with a 360-degree walk-around design and a fully retractable disappearing lid that slides beneath the cooktop. It features three 20,000 BTU Crossflame burners, over 600 square inches of active grilling surface, a sapele wood base, and a marine-grade aluminum body built from 300-series stainless steel. It is available in 96 color-hardware combinations and can be found locally through Wickford Appliance.

For cooks drawn to the precision of pellet technology, the recteq X-Fire Pro 825 is the only dual-mode pellet grill on the market with a temperature range of 225 to 1,250 degrees Fahrenheit, effectively functioning as both a smoker and a high-heat searing grill in a single unit. It retails for $549.99. Homeowners who prefer a cleaner, fuel-free option should consider Kenyon Grills, manufactured in Connecticut, which are electric, smokeless, and flameless. Kenyon grills are UL-listed for indoor and outdoor use and are available in built-in and standalone configurations.

Quinn advises homeowners to think strategically when allocating their renovation budgets. She says vertical elements like seating walls and fireplaces deliver the most immediate visual payoff.

"Spend your money there," she said, "because that's your immediate eye catcher."

Mixing materials is another move she consistently recommends.

"I like to try to mix the paver product in with the natural stone, and I feel that it adds a nice dynamic feature to any backyard."

Her bottom line on quality is equally direct.

"There's nothing worse than spending this money to get this dream backyard that you want that doesn't last."

One notable shift Quinn has observed is a preference among clients for raised paver or stone patios over traditional wooden decks. For homeowners who prefer the low-maintenance durability of a composite surface, Fiberon Promenade PVC decking is engineered specifically for moisture-rich coastal environments, resisting salt air and harsh weather while offering a slip-resistant surface that mimics painted wood without the upkeep. It is an especially practical choice for coastal properties.

Sound, Light, and the Technology of Ambiance

A stunning outdoor living area looks best under the right light and sounds infinitely better with a quality audio system. John Miceli, owner of Castle Hill Audio Video in Stonington, Connecticut, has been wiring South County backyards for exactly that purpose, and he makes a compelling case for treating AV and lighting as design elements rather than afterthoughts.

"If you're spending the money to have a professionally landscaped backyard, sound system and lighting is pretty much pinnacle," Miceli said. "It really transforms it because everybody looks at it during the day and says, 'Wow, that's a really nice space.' But once the sun goes down, you need something to enhance that look."

Castle Hill Audio Video is a dealer for Coastal Source, a brand Miceli considers among the best in outdoor audio. Coastal Source makes bollard speakers (round units that sit at ground level) as well as wall-mounted speakers designed to install at a 45-degree angle in an alcove or flush against a surface. At roughly four inches deep, they barely protrude, keeping their visual footprint minimal. A companion subwoofer rounds out the sound in a way that compact portable speakers simply cannot replicate.

For video installations, Miceli regularly recommends 65-inch or larger outdoor-rated screens. He collaborates with landscape designers early in the process to find the ideal location, whether that means viewing from a covered pergola or pool deck. Rather than creating a standalone configuration, he typically links the backyard into the existing audio system as an additional zone, all managed via a mobile app.

Castle Hill offers its clients the very best in lighting. Ketra, a division of Lutron, produces color-adjustable LED systems that allow homeowners to shift the mood of a space via an app, from warm and intimate to vivid and festive.

A middle-of-the-road quality package for outdoor AV and lighting starts at around $10,000 for homeowners starting from scratch.

Miceli is direct about cutting corners in AV projects.

"If you don't spend the money up front, you're just going to keep spending the money," he said.

Castle Hill also extends Wi-Fi networks to outdoor spaces and installs cameras for homeowners who want security around pools or gates.

For homeowners unsure about committing to full outdoor sound systems, Castle Hill offers in-home demonstrations. The company leaves a demo system at a client's home for a weekend to try. He notes that the clients' responses afterward are almost always the same.

"Usually by the time they've played with it for a little bit, it's, 'Can you leave this here until our stuff comes?'" Miceli said.

Once clients experience a professional sound system around a pool, he explained, portable Bluetooth speakers no longer seem like appealing options.

The Water Journey Starts Here

In the heart of North Kingstown, Quinn Camp, the proprietor of Pool and Spa by WhitePine and WhitePine Outdoors at 1051 Ten Road, frequently astounds newcomers with the depth of its offerings. Aside from pools and spas, WhitePine builds outdoor kitchens, installs louvered pergolas and screen systems, and offers specialty shade products like marine-grade Shadow Spec umbrellas. Camp describes his company's purpose in terms of a larger goal.

"We got into hot tubs and pools a number of years ago because we saw that was generally people's first interest in backyard renovations," Camp said. "And so our goal is to help people start the water journey and then develop the rest of their backyard along the way."

WhitePine carries two main hot tub lines. Welles Hot Tubs is a European acrylic brand for buyers undertaking larger backyard renovations who want a permanent installation. Acrylic tubs in his showroom range from approximately $11,000 to $25,000, with most purchases totaling around $15,000. These units generally require electrical permitting and a concrete pad or base preparation.

The company's biggest seller, though, is the Softub, an American-made portable unit manufactured in New Bedford, Massachusetts, by former NASA scientists around 40 years ago. Made from structural foam, units weigh about 80 pounds, run on a standard 110-volt household outlet, and can be placed on any level surface indoors or out.

"It weighs about 80 pounds, so you can roll it and move it anywhere you want," Camp said. "It's one of the only hot tubs that won't void the warranty as well if you decide to move it."

Softubs range from $5,750 to $9,500.

WhitePine's construction division can handle everything from basic delivery and placement to a full A-to-Z backyard design-and-build.

"If you take a picture of a person's backyard, we can help design and build and provide the product as well," Camp said.

The Right Time to Call

All three local experts offer the same piece of advice for anyone feeling the pull of inspiration. To be ready for next summer, the time to start the conversation is now. Landscape design plans, AV system integration, and permitting for larger structures all take time, and the most in-demand contractors fill their spring calendars sooner than most homeowners expect.

For projects that are well-defined and straightforward, turnaround can be faster than anticipated. Miceli notes that once a design is approved, many AV installations begin and wrap within one week. Camp can place a Softub the same day with minimal site preparation. Quinn's hardscape crews work year-round thanks to the open-grade base installation method, meaning a fall project is not out of the question.

The backyard is now considered an extension of the home, a space that reflects a family's lifestyle and is worth the investment. Today's options, such as outdoor speaker systems or recessed fire pits, make outdoor design exciting for South County homeowners. The only question is where to start.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Grandscapes, 61 Tuckertown Road, Wakefield, RI 02879, (401) 210-2067, grandscapesri.com
- Castle Hill Audio Video, 201 N. Main St., Stonington, CT 06378, (860) 599-1234, castlehillaudiovideo.com Serving North Kingstown, South Kingstown, Narragansett, and surrounding South County communities.
- Pool and Spa by WhitePine/WhitePine Outdoors, 1051 Ten Rod Road, North Kingstown, RI 02852, (401) 386-3417, poolandspabywhitepine.com Showroom visits by appointment only.

Liz Quinn, the landscape designer for GrandScapes, talks about the patio and outdoor kitchen that she designed for a customer's home in Portsmouth. *Photo: Michael Derr*

A LATTE TO LOVE

New North Kingstown coffee shop is prioritizing third-place spaces and building community, one coffee cup at a time

Story by Rachel Philipson

At North Kingstown's Bucket & the Bean, coffee and community go hand-in-hand.

Stella Adam, Bucket & the Bean owner, said third-spaces for casual meetups are becoming less common, but she feels the coffee shop atmosphere lends itself perfectly for both tasty drinks and quality conversations. She wants her new shop to be a space to foster camaraderie.

"You sit down and want to drink with your friends at night at a bar but why not do that same thing in the morning with coffee," Adam said. "In my mind at least, it's the same type of connection of you gathering because there is something to gather around — the beverage, the scone [or] the pastry."

Bucket & the Bean opened in March 2026. Despite only being a few months into the new brick-and-mortar endeavor, Adam said her vision of social connection is becoming a reality.

"It's been fun every week," Adam said. "I've been meeting new locals from the neighborhoods we are around. We already have people who are our established local regular customers, which we love to see."

The idea for the shop originated from Adam's college days in Maine, where she and her now husband met. The couple frequently went to small, locally owned coffee shops, admiring how the owners created a cozy environment for patrons. Adam said the original plan was they would open a coffee shop that doubled as a community hub in their retirement.

After Adam graduated in 2023, she moved to Rhode Island for a job. This job was not a good fit and was becoming a mental toll. This sparked a realization that she didn't have to wait until retirement to be happy with her career.

"I wasn't even down to talk to people [or] interact with my community at all," Adam said. "We were like 'We can start this dream early.'"

She launched a mobile coffee cart in May 2025, going to farmers markets and private events. Adam said she got a positive response from the community and thoroughly enjoyed bringing coffee to the Rhode Island community. The next step was to open the storefront.





Finding the right location was critical to ensure it could become a gathering place. Adam ended up selecting their current location because it is on a major road that will generate local and tourist attraction alike during peak summer months, as well as being situated near multiple small neighborhoods.

"It's in the center of community, not necessarily the center of a town, but it's the center of community spaces," Adam said.

Bucket & the Bean has weekly events as a way for community members to be fellow like-minded individuals. During "Tabletop Tuesdays," attendees are encouraged to bring a game or play one of the many games the shop has. Adam said her friend group enjoys playing board and card games, usually playing at one of their homes. She realized that other people share their love of board games and may not have local friends to play with or simply just want to meet new people. "Tabletop Tuesdays" has been growing steadily since its launch and Adam sees it continuing to thrive.

"People are making connections and making genuine friends through this and it's a ton of fun for us to see," Adam said.

"Beans & Skeins," a Wednesday afternoon crafting session, allows people to bring their latest crafting project and talk to fellow crafters. Adam said she has witnessed people ask others for advice — a true sign of connection.

"It's a time to come, grab a warm drink, pastry and chat while you work on a project," Adam said.

In addition to the weekly get-togethers, the shop has been hosting special events, including a sourdough class where participants received sourdough starters and were taught how to make a loaf and how to maintain their own starters. Bucket & the Bean also works closely with the Wickford Run Club sponsored by Vital Fitness Testing by providing cold brew shots after meet-ups.

Adam even views the shop's menu as a way to promote her community values. Bucket & the Bean is a multi-roaster shop, meaning they get a variety of different roasts from various local roasters to be used for their black coffee via the pour-over method.

"We can highlight different roasters as we find them and as they find us," Adam said.

If black coffee is not to someone's liking, Bucket & the Bean also offers various coffee options, matcha, tea and chai. Adam said the team likes to experiment with flavors, like a recent bakery-themed menu in the spring. One of the bakery flavors was a raspberry danish latte as part of a larger collaboration with coffee shops around the world stemming from the Minnesota shop Little Joy Coffee.

One notable quirk of the menu is Lactaid, a lactose-free milk, as one of the alternative milk options. Adam, who is lactose intolerant herself, said it is a small, but impactful, conscious choice to be more inclusive.

"I love seeing people get excited when they see Lactaid milk on the menu — that's a little sparkle in my day," Adam said.

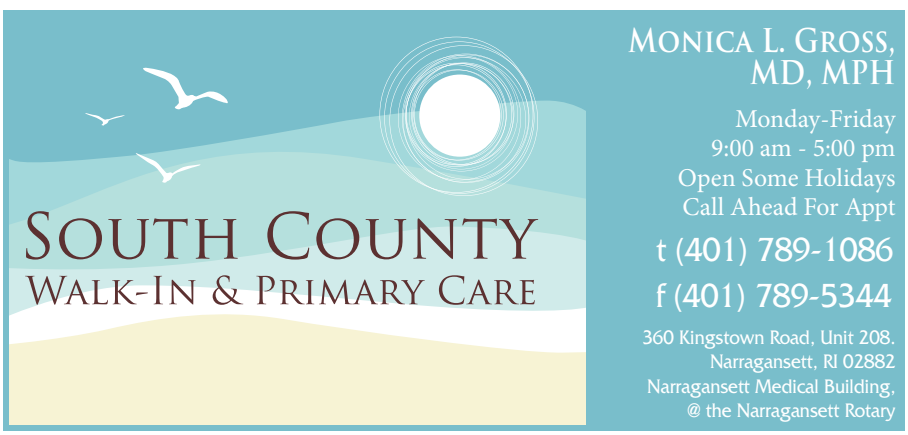
Looking ahead, Adam hopes to expand the one-off event offerings and bring back her mobile coffee cart. She said the cart will allow her to be in the community in different ways, channeling the coffee shop's origins.

It might be unknown what the future holds, but no matter what happens, Adam said everyone who enters Bucket & the Bean will be greeted with a smile and be excited to invite them into a caring environment.

"I hope that by visiting, you leave happier, have a great drink or pastry or food that you love [and] that will brighten your day up a bit," Adam said. "If you stay for an event or stay for a game night, or a crafting group, you will meet people and leave with new connections, new friendships, [and] new knowledge."

Bucket & the Bean is located at 679 Boston Neck Road in North Kingstown. For up-to-date information, visit @bucketandthebean on Instagram and Facebook.

AT LEFT TOP Stella Adam, owner of Bucket & the Bean, uses the "pour over" method to provide her customers with the freshest tasting coffee.
Photos: Michael Derr





SEPT. 25

Manhattan Short Film Festival — Event. 7 p.m. $10 General Admission. Jamestown Arts Center, 18 Valley Street, Jamestown. 401-560-0979. jamestownartcenter.org.

Pat Barone — Live Music. 7 p.m., Oak Hill Tavern, 565 Tower Hill Road, North Kingstown. 294-3282, oakhilltavern.com.

Genesis-Seconds Out — Concert. 7:30 p.m., $26.75-$34.98. Courthouse Center for the Arts, 3481 Kingstown Rd, West Kingston. 401-782-1018. courthousearts.org.

Nick Casey — Live Music. 8-11 p.m. $10 online, $15 door. The Charlestown Rathskeller, 489a Old Coach Road, Charlestown. thecharlestownrathskeller.com.

Dance Night at the Knick — Event. 8 p.m. $17. The Knick Music Lab, 35 Railroad Ave., Westerly. unitedtheatre.org.

Jaws — Film Screening. 8 p.m. $25 admission per car. Misquamicut Drive-In, 316 Atlantic Ave. Westerly. Mbadrivein.com.

Wannabe-A Spice Girls Tribute — Event. 8 p.m. $35. The United Theatre Black Box Auditorium, 5 Canal Street, Westerly. unitedtheatre.org.

Dudemanbro w./ Special Guest Nena Belen — Live Music. 9-11:59 p.m. $22.50 4-Pack General Admission Discount. $24.66 General Admission. 21+. Ocean Mist, 895 Matunuck Beach Rd, South Kingstown. oceanmist.net.

SEPT. 26

Breakfast Talk — Event featuring historian Robert A. Geake, giving a presentation on 'Early Reparations in the Wake of the Revolutionary War: The Struggle for Widows and Heirs of Patriots of Color for Recognition and Reward." 9:30 a.m. coffee and refreshments, 10 a.m. presentation. Free for members, $10 for non members. Smith's Castle. 55 Richard Smith Drive, North Kingstown. 294-3521. smithscastle.org.

Joel Beauchemin — Live Music. 7 p.m., Oak Hill Tavern, 565 Tower Hill Road, North Kingstown. 294-3282, oakhilltavern.com.

Manhattan Short Film Festival — Event. 7 p.m. $10 General Admission. Jamestown Arts Center, 18 Valley Street, Jamestown. 401-560-0979. jamestownartcenter.org.

Billy Gilman: 25 Years of Hits & Showstoppers — Event. 7:30 p.m. $35. The United Theatre Black Box Auditorium, 5 Canal Street, Westerly. unitedtheatre.org.

John Mellencamp-Paper in Fire — Concert. 7:30 p.m., $25.50-$35.50. Courthouse Center for the Arts, 3481 Kingstown Rd, West Kingston. 401-782-1018. courthousearts.org.

Los Lonely Boys with Lisa Morales — Concert. 8 p.m., $70-$77. Greenwich Odeum, 59 Main Street, East Greenwich. 401-885-4000. greenwichodeum.com.

Riverhead Lumber Fundraiser — Event. 8 p.m. $25 admission per car. Misquamicut Drive-In, 316 Atlantic Ave. Westerly. Mbadrivein.com.

Steve Smith & The Nakeds — Live Music. 8-11 p.m. $10 online, $15 door. The Charlestown Rathskeller, 489a Old Coach Road, Charlestown. thecharlestownrathskeller.com.

Booty Vortex- Boston's Finest Disco and Funk Band! — Live Music. 9-11:59 p.m. $21.42 4-Pack General Admission Discount. $24.66 General Admission. Ocean Mist, 895 Matunuck Beach Rd, South Kingstown. oceanmist.net.

SEPT. 27

Rock-Kin'-On — Live Music. 4-7 p.m. Free. The Charlestown Rathskeller, 489a Old Coach Road, Charlestown. thecharlestownrathskeller.com.

Sunday Funday with The Senders — Live Music. 4-7 p.m. $5 cover. Ocean Mist, 895 Matunuck Beach Rd, South Kingstown. oceanmist.net.

Roots Music Stomp — Event. 6 p.m. $12. The United Gallery Events Space, 5 Canal Street, Westerly. unitedtheatre.org.

SEPT. 29

Ocean Mistics – Dave Howard — Live Music. 5-8 p.m. No Cover. 21+ Only After 8 p.m. Ocean Mist, 895 Matunuck Beach Rd, South Kingstown. oceanmist.net.

OCT. 2

Manhattan Short Film Festival — Event. 7 p.m. $10 General Admission. Jamestown Arts Center, 18 Valley Street, Jamestown. 401-560-0979. jamestownartcenter.org.

Silk Road — Live Music. 7 p.m., Oak Hill Tavern, 565 Tower Hill Road, North Kingstown. 294-3282, oakhilltavern.com.

Jackson Browne-Running on Jackson — Concert. 7:30 p.m. $29.84-$40.12. Courthouse Center for the Arts, 3481 Kingstown Rd, West Kingston. 401-782-1018. courthousearts.org.

Damn the Torpedoes: A Tribute to Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers — Concert. 8 p.m., $46-$52. Greenwich Odeum, 59 Main Street, East Greenwich. 401-885-4000. greenwichodeum.com.

OCT. 3

Marie Claude — Live Music, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Java Madness, 134 Salt Pond Road, Wakefield. javamadness.com.

Raise A Glass — Event. 4:30-6 p.m. $50. Smith's Castle. 55 Richard Smith Drive, North Kingstown. 294-3521. smithscastle.org.

Manhattan Short Film Festival — Event. 7 p.m. $10 General Admission. Jamestown Arts Center, 18 Valley Street, Jamestown. 401-560-0979. jamestownartcenter.org.

Tangent — Live Music. 7 p.m., Oak Hill Tavern, 565 Tower Hill Road, North Kingstown. 294-3282, oakhilltavern.com.

The Doors-Crystal Ship — Concert. 7:30 p.m. $32.92-$43.21.Courthouse Center for the Arts, 3481 Kingstown Rd, West Kingston. 401-782-1018. courthousearts.org.

Monophonics — Event. 8 p.m. $30. The Knick Music Lab, 35 Railroad Ave., Westerly. unitedtheatre.org.

Ruthie Foster — Concert. 8 p.m., $42-$54. Greenwich Odeum, 59 Main Street, East Greenwich. 401-885-4000. greenwichodeum.com.

The Soul Rebels w./ Special Guests Funky Dawgz — Live Music. 9-11:59 p.m. $30.06 General Admission. 21+. Ocean Mist, 895 Matunuck Beach Rd,

South Kingstown. oceanmist.net.

OCT. 4

Breakfast with Elephants — Live Music, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Java Madness, 134 Salt Pond Road, Wakefield. javamadness.com.

Dan Moretti & Brazilia — Live Music. 6 p.m. $24. The United Gallery Events Space, 5 Canal Street, Westerly. unitedtheatre.org.

OCT. 6

Ocean Mistics – Sam Gentile — Live Music. 5-8 p.m. No Cover. 21+ After 8 p.m. Ocean Mist, 895 Matunuck Beach Rd, South Kingstown. oceanmist.net.

Jazz On A School Night Open Jam — Event. 7 p.m. Free. The Knick Music Lab, 35 Railroad Ave., Westerly. unitedtheatre.org.

OCT. 8

A Golden Opportunity: Reimagining Scup — Event. 6 p.m. Free. The United Gallery Events Space, 5 Canal Street, Westerly. unitedtheatre.org.

Tell Me Lies: A Tribute to Fleetwood Mac — Concert. 8 p.m., $44-$49. Greenwich Odeum, 59 Main Street, East Greenwich. 401-885-4000. greenwichodeum.com.

OCT. 9

Luna C. — Live Music. 7 p.m., Oak Hill Tavern, 565 Tower Hill Road, North Kingstown. 294-3282, oakhilltavern.com.

Aquarius-60s Superband — Concert. 7:30 p.m. $28.81-$39.09.Courthouse Center for the Arts, 3481 Kingstown Rd, West Kingston. 401-782-1018. courthousearts.org.

Dance Night at the Knick w./ The Knickerbocker All Stars — Event. 8 p.m. $17. The Knick Music Lab, 35 Railroad Ave., Westerly. unitedtheatre.org.

Jeffrey Lewis — Concert. 8 p.m., $27. Greenwich Odeum, 59 Main Street, East Greenwich. 401-885-4000. greenwichodeum.com.

Grateful Dub + Roots of Creation w./ Cote Percussion — Live Music. 9-11:59 p.m. $24.66 Two Pack-General Admission Discount. $26.82 Four Pack General Admission Discount. $30.06 General Admission. 21+. Ocean Mist, 895 Matunuck Beach Rd, South Kingstown. oceanmist.net.

OCT. 10

Jaime Caniglia — Live Music, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Java Madness, 134 Salt Pond Road, Wakefield. javamadness.com.

Salt Marsh Opera Presents Rusalka — Event. 3 p.m. $52-$60. The United Theatre Black Box Auditorium, 5 Canal Street, Westerly. unitedtheatre.org.

Movies on the Meadow: 1776 — Film Screening. 6:30 p.m. Smith's Castle. 55 Richard Smith Drive, North Kingstown. 294-3521. smithscastle.org.

Berger Boys — Live Music. 7 p.m., Oak Hill Tavern, 565 Tower Hill Road, North Kingstown. 294-3282, oakhilltavern.com.

Zeneth — Live Music. 9-11:59 p.m. $19.26 General Admission. 21+. Ocean Mist, 895 Matunuck Beach Rd, South Kingstown. oceanmist.net.

OCT. 11

Gran'Pa J — Live Music, 11 a.m.-1







p.m. Java Madness, 134 Salt Pond Road, Wakefield. javamadness.com.

Sunday Funday with Steve Smith and the Nakeds — Live Music. 4-7 p.m. $5 cover upon entry. Ocean Mist, 895 Matunuck Beach Rd, South Kingstown. oceanmist.net.

Salt Marsh Opera Presents Rusalka — Event. 5 p.m. $52-$60. The United Theatre Black Box Auditorium, 5 Canal Street, Westerly. unitedtheatre.org.

OCT. 13

Ocean Mistics – Johnny Blue Horn — Live Music. 5-8 p.m. No Cover. 21+ After 8 p.m. Ocean Mist, 895 Matunuck Beach Rd, South Kingstown. oceanmist.net.

OCT. 14

Michael DePaola Literary Salon & Open Mic — Event. 7 p.m. The United Gallery Events Space, 5 Canal Street, Westerly. unitedtheatre.org.

OCT. 15

Dan Kelly of Fortunate Youth w./ Special Guest Even Keel — Live Music. 9-11:59 p.m. $24.66 General Admission. 21+. Ocean Mist, 895 Matunuck Beach Rd, South Kingstown. oceanmist.net.

OCT. 16-NOV. 15

Figure It Out — Art Exhibit. Wickford Art Association, 36 Beach Street, North Kingstown. 401-294-6840.

OCT. 16-OCT. 25

Proof — Live Theater. 7:30 p.m. performances on Oct. 16-17, 21-24; 2 p.m. performances on Oct. 18, 25. $20 Faculty, Students, Senior Citizens; $22 General Public. The University of Rhode Island Theatre Department, 105 Upper College Road, Kingston. https://web.uri.edu/theatre.

OCT. 16

Opening Reception: Imprint and Playback — Event featuring a presentation of work from RISD Movement Lab Fellows. 5:30-7:30 p.m. Free. Jamestown Arts Center, 18 Valley Street, Jamestown. 401-560-0979. jamestownartcenter.org.

Paul Vaccaro — Live Music. 7 p.m., Oak Hill Tavern, 565 Tower Hill Road, North Kingstown. 294-3282, oakhilltavern.com.

Led Zeppelin & Van Halen- Zephalen — Concert. 7:30 p.m. $27.78-$32.92.Courthouse Center for the Arts, 3481 Kingstown Rd, West Kingston. 401-782-1018. courthousearts.org.

Winslow-Most Authentic Eagles Tribute — Event. 7:30 p.m. $38-$45. The United Theatre Black Box Auditorium, 5 Canal Street, Westerly. unitedtheatre.org.

OCT. 17

The 345s — Live Music, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Java Madness, 134 Salt Pond Road, Wakefield. javamadness.com.

Just Cuz — Live Music. 7 p.m., Oak Hill Tavern, 565 Tower Hill Road, North Kingstown. 294-3282, oakhilltavern.com.

Chicago Total Access — Concert. 7:30 p.m. $29.84-$36.01.Courthouse Center for the Arts, 3481 Kingstown Rd, West Kingston. 401-782-1018. courthousearts.org.

An Evening with Keller Williams — Live Music. 9-11:59 p.m. $35.46 General Admission. 21+. Ocean Mist, 895 Matunuck Beach Rd, South Kingstown. oceanmist.net.

OCT. 18

Glenn Dewell & friends & more — Live Music, 12-5 p.m. Java Madness, 134 Salt Pond Road, Wakefield. javamadness.com.

Autumn Arts Open House — Event. 1-4 p.m. Free. Jamestown Arts Center, 18 Valley Street, Jamestown. 401-560-0979. jamestownartcenter.org.

Sunday Funday with Heavy Rescue, Jamies Junk Show — Live Music. 4-7 p.m. $5 cover upon entry. Ocean Mist, 895 Matunuck Beach Rd, South Kingstown. oceanmist.net.

OCT. 20

Ocean Mistics – Willie J. Laws Jr. — Live Music. 5-8 p.m. No Cover. 21+ After 8 p.m. Ocean Mist, 895 Matunuck Beach Rd, South Kingstown. oceanmist.net.

OCT. 21

Sofia Warren Author Talk/Signing for the Film Nerds — Event. 6 p.m. $6 Talk Only Ticket for 1 adult and 1 child; $22 Talk Ticket for 1 adult and 1 child plus a copy of Film Nerds Book. The United Theatre Main Cinema, 5 Canal Street, Westerly. unitedtheatre.org.

OCT. 22-NOV. 14

All Media Open Juried III — Art Exhibit. South County Art Association, 2587 Kingstown Rd, Kingston. southcountyart.org.

OCT. 22

Noite Brasileira: Ian Coury Trio & Works by Joao Luiz Rezende — Event. 8 p.m. $7.18 Students, $28.52 Seniors/RIGG Members, $33.85 General Admission. The United Theatre Black Box Auditorium, 5 Canal Street, Westerly. unitedtheatre.org.

OCT. 23-NOV. 14

Night of the Living Dead Live — Live Theater. 7 p.m. performances on October 23-24, 30-31, November 6-7, 12-13. $12.50-$47.50. Contemporary Theater Company, 327 Main Street, Wakefield. contemporarytheatercompany.com.

OCT. 23

Two Rads — Live Music. 7 p.m., Oak Hill Tavern, 565 Tower Hill Road, North Kingstown. 294-3282, oakhilltavern.com.

Tom Petty Refuge — Concert. 7:30 p.m. $29.84-$40.12.Courthouse Center for the Arts, 3481 Kingstown Rd, West Kingston. 401-782-1018. courthousearts.org.

Sam Grisman Project — Event. 8 p.m. $35. The United Theatre Black Box Auditorium, 5 Canal Street, Westerly. unitedtheatre.org.

Steve Earle: Alone Again Tour: Solo & Acoustic with Joelton Mayfield — Concert. 8 p.m., $72-$82. Greenwich Odeum, 59 Main Street, East Greenwich. 401-885-4000. greenwichodeum.com.

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Weds, Dec 9 12–1pm	**LUNCH & LEARN** 10 Steps to a Successful Remodel

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