

# Nutfield News



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Serving the Derry Area

## Election Places Married Couple on Opposite Sides

ROBIN RESPAUT  
NUTFIELD NEWS

After 16 years of marriage, John and Betsy Burtis find themselves bickering more than usual.

The squabbling tends to go like this: one will mention something about the current political climate or a recent news headline, the other will counter with a retort, then they will both fall into silence, staring intently at each other with unyielding defiance.

John Burtis calls himself a conservative; he dropped his loyalty to the Republican Party when U.S. Rep. Dennis Hastert took control of the U.S. House of Representatives. Betsy Burtis is a team leader for the Barack Obama campaign in New Hampshire.

After years of feeling noncommittal toward a presidential candidate (she voted

for Ross Perot, an independent, and the Green Party's Ralph Nader in previous elections), Betsy has finally found a candidate that excites her.

"What I've been impressed with since he started was the power of 'we.' He's incredibly inclusive. It's a team effort," she said.

Obama's message of unity speaks to her on many levels. A training and development coordinator in a hospital, Betsy said the Democratic presidential candidate "lives and breathes the qualities" she values.

More specifically, she is attracted to Obama's stances on a woman's right to choose. "That's a huge deal-breaker for me," she said.

To show her support, Betsy, a cheerful woman, has thrown herself into Obama's campaign. Two nights a week, she arrives at the local

Obama office with enough enthusiasm and stamina to call nearly 50 people. She's lucky if she speaks with five of them.

On the weekends, she returns to the call center and also stands at the Derry traffic circle, energetically waiving Obama signs at the passing vehicles.

"I'm usually very cynical about politics," she said as she sat at her kitchen table in Derry. "But he (Obama) hasn't grown up with a silver spoon in his mouth. He has faced struggle, race issues and life in a single-parent home. He's truly the very first candidate that I have ever felt good about."

During a recent conference call, Obama told the state's team leaders, "This is not just my election. This is your election," she recalled.

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## Positive Attitude, New Ideas Keep Interest High in Pinkerton Store

ROBIN RESPAUT  
NUTFIELD NEWS

Seniors David Brophy and Joe Stella bounce around a small, makeshift school store, pointing out the stacks of T-shirts, water bottles, deflated helium balloons and a heap of day-old, wrapped cookies on a countertop.

Their business motto is to keep a positive attitude, and they display it with exuberance.

That is because the boys are in charge of Pinkerton Academy's campus store, a small nook located down the hall from the cafeteria, where students line up to

purchase Otis Spunkmeyer cookies straight from the oven, steaming cups of coffee, school clothing and snacks for later.

During the four lunch periods when the campus store is open, the line of students extends out the door.

Pinkerton's campus store has been in operation for decades, but this year, it has a fresh look.

"We've brought in all the Pinkerton colors and brand new cabinetry. It was our idea for the shelves and for the cases to be this way," said Brophy, the student store manager.

"We always try to keep things moved around, so

they are different when students come in," said Stella, continuing Brophy's sentence. "We have music to motivate people. Our main goal is to keep a positive attitude and to have fun."

Marketing and Business Management teacher Jenn Sheffer took responsibility for the campus store this year and encouraged its facelift.

"We wanted the focus to be a retail learning laboratory," said Sheffer, who previously taught business and accounting at Pinkerton.

In Scheffer's two marketing classes, each a double period of class time, junior

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Arborist Scott Davis gathers bags full of seeds from a rare American chestnut tree at Ballard State Forest. The seeds will be protected in a cold storage unit over the winter, then planted at a tree farm in Peterborough during the spring.

Photo by Chris Paul

## Chestnut Tree at Ballard State Forest Yields Hope for Future

ROBIN RESPAUT  
NUTFIELD NEWS

On a crisp, early October morning, four environmentalists tromp along a wooden path in Derry's Ballard State Forest, en route to a rare sighting.

Kendra Gurney, the New England regional science coordinator for The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF), has come to collect the pollinated seeds of a true American chestnut tree, hidden

along the backside of Ballard Pond. The tree, which somehow managed to survive a blight that killed nearly 40 billion of its fellow species, will now become part of a national revival effort.

Before it was referred to as "Nutfield," this area of central, southern New Hampshire was once known as the "Chestnut country," after the abundance of American chestnut trees that grew there. Unlike Chinese, Japanese and

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# Annual Draw Down Slated to Begin at Beaver Lake

**ROBIN RESPAUT**  
NUTFIELD NEWS

It may seem like Beaver Lake is sinking into the ground, but it is just the Derry Public Works Department's annual lake draw down. Residents with boats in the

water are reminded to remove the vessels.

Beaver Lake Improvement Association President Rob Tompkins said the draw down, which generally increases the shorefront outside of his house by a couple of feet, begins after

Columbus Day.

While the water may take a few weeks to lower significantly, Tompkins advised that all owners should remove their boats beforehand.

The boat ramp is located off Route 102.

Derry Public Works

crews open Meadow Dam, located off Martha Drive, for about a month before closing it in advance of when the water freezes for the winter. Tompkins said the town wants the marshy meadow in front of the dam, near East Derry Road, to fill for the

winter in order to help preserve wildlife habitats.

The water flows into Beaver Brook, which travels through Derry, Windham Londonderry, Hudson and into the Merrimack River.

Once the lake is lowered, Beaver Lake homeowners

have the opportunity to clean and rake their shorefronts. Any major work requires a permit from the state.

The town's Public Works Department will also engage in any maintenance work abutting the lake at that time.

## Chestnut

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European chestnuts, the species most commonly seen today, the American chestnut was a forest hardwood tree, often chosen during the 20th century because of its straight grain for barn beams, fence posts, furniture material and railroad ties.

Under the U.S. Forest Service and with chapters in every state along the eastern seacoast, TACF is attempting to bring back the American chestnut by breeding the few surviving trees with a blight-resistant hybrid. The project will take years to complete, but if successful, will enable the TACF to reintroduce a tree that once dominated forests from Maine to Georgia.

The tree in Ballard Forest is over a foot in diameter, but Gurney cannot estimate how old it is. She assumes it is the sprout of another tree that once grew there but has since died. The tree reaches nearly 60 feet in height, reaching with its neighboring oak trees for that spot of sun above the break in the leaves.

The area surrounding the

tree is spotted with spiny, brown balls resembling circular sea urchins. Most of the spiky chestnut seeds are not pollinated, but in the tree's swinging branches are brown paper bags full of bright green, fertile seeds.

An arborist named Scott Davis scales the tall oak tree next to the chestnut, and like a human squirrel, launches himself into the highest branches of the American chestnut. He collects the bags full of seeds, which will be protected in a cold storage unit over the winter, then planted at a tree farm in Peterborough during the spring.

In July, Gurney and Davis repeated this acrobatic feat when they pollinated the pure American chestnut with the hybrid pollen. The pollen is one-eighth blight-resistant Chinese chestnut. Environmentalists believe Chinese chestnut trees harbored the blight into this country. While the Chinese chestnut is an orchard tree and displays few of the physical characteristics of the American chestnut, the two can be bred to produce a blight-resistant hybrid.

Of the hybrid seeds grown in Peterborough next

spring, each will be infected with the blight to determine resistance. Only the highly resistant trees (approximately 3 percent) will be chosen to breed again. The goal of each TACF state chapter is to create 20 strains of blight-resistant American chestnut.

"We're looking for the trees that have the resistance necessary to survive and the characteristics that we're looking for," said Gurney, who also pollinated four trees from Vermont and one other from New Hampshire this summer.

The blight that destroyed American chestnut trees is an airborne virus that cuts off the flow of nutrients within the tree, eventually choking it. The blight only affects adult trees, so American chestnut sprouts are typically spotted in forest undergrowth.

"It's hard to believe something so small can bring down something that big," said Taylor Sawmill caretaker Robert Spoerl, gesturing toward the towering American chestnut.

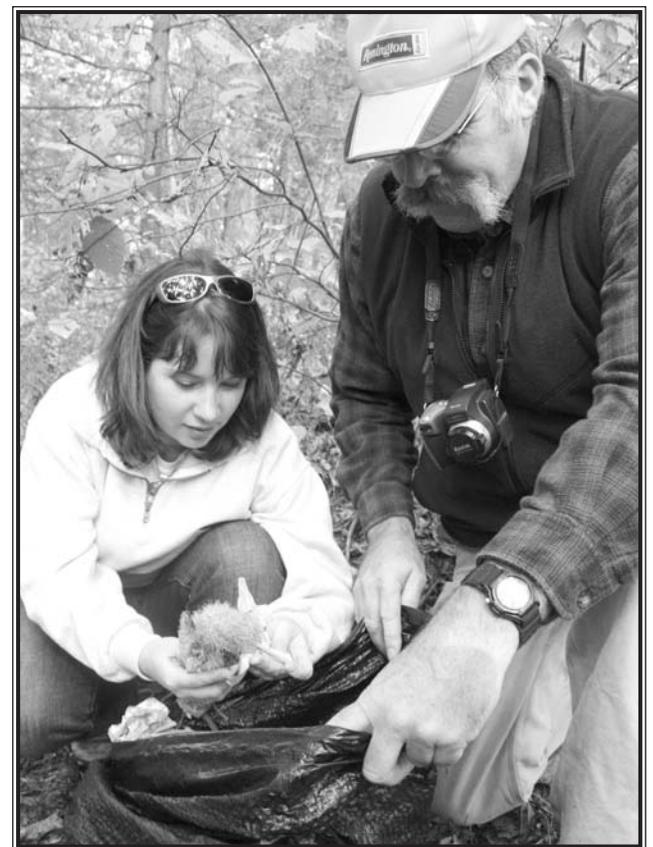
Spoerl, who lives on Ballard Pond within Ballard State Forest, said he watched the American chestnut bloom from across

the water this summer.

"When this sucker is in bloom, it flowers a lot," he said, suggesting that the best way to locate other American chestnuts across the state would be via aerial images taken during the week the trees are in their white flowering splendor.

Until then, Spoerl plans to watch over the hidden American chestnut, admiring its stealthy presence from across the pond.

Tree admirers who believe they have found a rare American chestnut of their own should send a freshly cut, 5-inch twig sample with attached leaves to Kendra Gurney, New England Regional Science Coordinator, Northern Research Station U.S. Forest Service, 705 Spear St., South Burlington, Vt. 05403. Mail the fresh twig cuts between two pieces of cardboard and not in a plastic bag.



Kendra Gurney with the U.S. Forest Service and Taylor Sawmill caretaker Robert Spoerl examine spiky chestnut seeds taken from the American chestnut tree at Ballard State Forest.

Photo by Chris Paul



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