

VIEWPOINT

SLICES OF NORWALK / Rita Papazian

A Natural Progression

I first met Rosie Haas a few years ago at a farmer's market in Norwalk where she was selling her natural products from her company, Natural Neighborhood. As an advocate for incorporating natural and healthy products into your lifestyle, Haas had been selling her products online and through home party sales.

Since the founding of her company a few years ago, Haas has been approached by numerous people asking if her products are available for fund-raising. Sensing the interest in selling natural products for fund-raising, Haas took the next step with her business. She has founded Fundraise Naturally, a division of Natural Neighborhood. She calls this step a "win-win" experience, not only for herself as an entrepreneur but also for area organizations such as scout troops, sports groups and nonprofits to raise money by selling products that, as she says, "contribute to the health of the community."

Fundraise Naturally offers a catalog of organic soap products, pet shampoo and non-toxic cleaning

products that goes along with Gov. M. Jodi Rell's mandate for state institutions to switch over to chemical-free cleaning products. She also sells non-toxic candles made with pure essential oils and organic soybean oil rather than petroleum wax.

I can relate to the importance of this type of candle, especially this time of year, when so many households are burning candles. They look beautiful, but then my eyes start to tear and my throat gets a little restricted.

Last week, Haas attended the state Department of Education's conference on "Moving into Action: School Wellness Policy Implementation and Promotion." The conference was designed to help schools learn strategies to promote healthy eating, physical activity and student wellness.

Susan Fiore, the state's nutrition education coordinator, has indicated that fund-raising with natural products is another element in the master plan to clean up the school environment.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, under its National School

Lunch Program, mandated that each school district develop a wellness policy by the start of this academic year. The policy must address nutrition education, physical activity and other school-based activities. Now, school districts must determine ways to implement the policies, and that is the reason for the conference and for Haas' attendance at it.

Healthy fund-raising was among the conference topics, which also included "Engaging Families as Partners in Student Wellness," "Using School Wellness Councils as a Tool to Promote Community Engagement," "Nutrition Everywhere: Teaching Across the Curriculum" and "Bringing the School Community Onboard with Wellness."

Haas said people at the conference were very surprised to learn about the natural alternatives available for fund-raisers. She said many people were interested in presenting the concept of fund-raising naturally to their PTA organizations.

What I find interesting about this concept of Fundraise Naturally is

the awareness the product line brings to changing lifestyle habits and the reason for it. Healthy eating and living affects everyone, individually and as a community. It takes the community together to effect change. We often think that as individuals we can't influence anything, but that is not true.

Former Vice President Al Gore's movie "An Inconvenient Truth" embraces the role that each of us needs take and should take to save this environment, and our buying natural products is a step in the right direction. Selling natural products also brings awareness to the public, especially the children, who raise monies for their respective scout, sports and school organizations. Wouldn't it be nice not to have to buy the cookies and the candy, or even the magazines and wrapping paper?



Larry Plesent, the owner of Vermont Soap Organics of Middlebury, Vt., is one of Haas' suppliers. He discovered Vermont when he was still a teenager and eventually moved there from Long Island. On his Web site he notes, "Crossing the Connecticut River on the bridge out of Claremont something happened. It was like passing through a force field, something felt very different between those two shores. A change came over my attitude as well. Everything felt right. A feeling of coming home after a long absence."

His comments certainly apply to this feeling of natural living and to this holiday season.

Rita Papazian is a free-lance journalist who has covered Norwalk issues extensively. E-mail can be sent to her at ritapap@comcast.net.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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earthquakes?

Maybe they were caused by Fred Flintstone driving a prehistoric SUV!

ROLLO GIANNINI
NORWALK

Parking Problem Has Worsened

In response to a recent article that indicates LAZ Parking and City Hall have finally solved the Webster Street parking problem: That of course is bogus to be very sure. It is worse because they have now eliminated validation by the restaurants after 6 p.m. every day of the week.

This of course curtails pick-up-take-out business to a large degree. And this does not allow us to validate customer parking after 6 p.m., which is our prime time for business.

When it is necessary to create revenue to pay the high Norwalk tax bill, rent in the thousands, utilities, maintenance, wages, insurance, food costs, and general expenses, there is a decided loss to business.

Mr. Knopp, the former mayor of Norwalk, did indeed create a very poor costly plan for the Webster Street parking lot. City Hall must consider the business sector that keeps SoNo alive and well. This of course is unfortunate in that their only concern is to have LAZ Parking Authority create money, regardless.

It is so wonderful to see that SoNo has developed into a great area to shop and visit with all of the retail stores and restaurants that attract good healthy business. City Hall and LAZ Parking do not add a positive element to this situation.

Thank you for the opportunity to express another view.

A.J. SENESE JR.
NAGOYA RESTAURANT
SOUTH NORWALK

A Great Deal Of Historic Value

Making the Fodor Farm a historic district would be an asset to the city. The area has a great deal of historic value; it was primarily farmland. Beside Fodor Farm there were several others in the area,

Trinly, Gettner and Reynolds, and each played a big part in the history of Norwalk. Together, they employed many of the ancestors of our local residents - at least up until World War II.

There are a few of us left that can remember the men pitching hay and the cows drinking from the stream of water that runs through the Fodor property and the back field where the Hungarian Baptist Church held its summer picnic.

The Trinly Farm had rows and rows of greenhouses where they grew American Beauty roses and cows lined up waiting to be milked and the big black bull in his pen.

The Gettner Farm had its sheep, goats and chickens, and you could buy eggs.

The Reynolds Nursery and Garden Center, originally was located on Scribner Avenue, where you could buy apple cider in the fall and Christmas Eve get a tree for a dollar. The present owner is V.J. Deorio located on Richards Avenue.

The Fodor Farm property should be made a historic district and should be controlled by the Historical Commission, when you consider how the city managed the South Norwalk Library over the years.

Selling the houses to private individuals would be a total disaster, before the ink could dry. These houses would become multi-dwelling with all the options at their disposal such as P&Z and ZBA, no matter how tight the deed restrictions are. In all probability someone is standing by waiting for the decision to sell to be made.

Why not take one of the houses, the one that has the most to offer, restore it to the state standard of rehabilitation and make a culture tourist attraction - open by appointment only on advance notice. Grant money could sustain it, if kept at low key. This very feasible project could become a disaster left in the hands of city government. Our Common Council has enough to deal with. They don't need the pressure of pleasing department heads and developers.

L. BERARDINO
NORWALK

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