

# THE **MONTHLY TEA**

The Official Monthly Newsletter for  
Employees of the Town of Bloomfield



**APRIL 2025**  
**VOLUME 16**

## **SPRING INTO WELLNESS**

REFRESH, RECHARGE, AND THRIVE THIS SEASON



Prioritizing your health, wellness, and mindfulness isn't a luxury, it's essential. Cultivating these areas directly impacts your daily life, boosting energy, sharpening focus, and reducing stress. A balanced life leads to improved mental clarity, stronger physical resilience, and a greater sense of overall well-being. Investing in your personal health and mindfulness practices is an investment in your productivity, happiness, and long-term success.

### **Health & Wellness Tips:**

- **Mindful Movement:** As days shorten, prioritize daily movement. Even 15 minutes of gentle stretching or a brisk walk combat seasonal sluggishness. Mindful movement connects you to your body, reducing stress and boosting mood. Consider indoor activities like yoga or Pilates to stay active when the weather turns.
- **Nourish with Seasonal Foods:** Transition your diet with the season. Incorporate root vegetables, hearty grains,

and warming spices. These provide sustained energy and support your immune system. Locally sourced produce offers peak nutrition and helps your body adapt to temperature changes. Try incorporating seasonal soups and stews.

- **Establish a Sleep Routine:** Seasonal changes disrupt sleep patterns. Maintain a consistent sleep schedule to regulate your circadian rhythm. Create a calming bedtime routine, dimming lights and avoiding screens before sleep. Prioritizing rest enhances mood and energy levels, crucial for managing seasonal stress.

- **Practice Stress-Reducing Techniques:** Utilize mindfulness and breathing exercises to manage seasonal stress. As routines shift, incorporate short meditation sessions or deep breathing into your day. These techniques promote relaxation and mental clarity. Consider journaling to process emotions and reduce anxiety related to seasonal adjustments.

## **APRIL IS VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION MONTH**

Volunteering weaves the essential threads of community, transforming isolated actions into a powerful tapestry of collective care. It's a bridge that connects individuals, fostering empathy and understanding while addressing critical needs. Beyond the tangible benefits of service, volunteering enriches the lives of those who give, offering a sense of purpose, belonging, and the profound satisfaction of making a real difference. In a world often driven by individualism, volunteering reminds us of our shared humanity and the strength found in unity. It's a tangible expression of our commitment to building

a more compassionate and equitable society, where everyone feels valued and supported.

In communities like Bloomfield, the opportunities to contribute are as diverse as the residents themselves. Start by exploring local organizations that align with your passions, whether it's supporting the library, assisting at the senior center, or participating in environmental cleanups. Check the town's website or community bulletin boards for volunteer openings.

## MESSAGE FROM THE TOWN MANAGER

Hello Team Bloomfield,

It's officially Spring, welcome April! As we embrace this season of renewal and refocus, this is a time to refresh our goals, recommit to our values, and embrace new opportunities. Spring reminds us that growth comes with patience and persistence, and as a team, we continue to build a stronger, more vibrant community together.

This month, we recognize National Volunteer Month, celebrating those who give their time and energy to making Bloomfield a better place. If you volunteer in any capacity, whether through mentorship, community service, or local initiatives, know that your contributions are deeply appreciated.

April is also Earth Month, a perfect time to reflect on sustainability efforts within our town. From small actions like reducing waste and conserving energy to participating in our upcoming events:

- Community Clean-Up Day on Saturday, April 26th
- Hawk Hill Ribbon Cutting Event on Sunday, April 27th
- Spring Shred & Electronics Recycling Day on May 17th

Let's all do our part in keeping Bloomfield green and thriving.



Thank you for your continued dedication and hard work. Let's use this season of renewal to refocus on our goals, support one another, and embrace the fresh energy that spring brings.

Wishing you all a productive and refreshing month!

One Team, One Fight!

Warm Regards,  
Alvin D. Schwapp, Jr.  
Town Manager

## FY 2026 BUDGET UPDATE

The Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) budget process continues to unfold as Town Council deliberations are underway. Town Council deliberations are the final step prior to voting on a budget to be adopted at the Annual Town Meeting.

This continues to be one of the most challenging budgets in recent history as both the Office of the Town Manager and the Town Council are looking to keep taxes low, despite a state-mandated revaluation that was conducted in October, and the growing costs of goods and services.

Be assured that the Office of the Town Manager and the Finance Director have been working diligently with department heads to find ways to lower the tax burden, while continuing to provide the high levels of service that the Town of Bloomfield offers.

Why does this matter to you? The budget impacts staffing levels, equipment, program funding, and even the tools you rely on to do your job effectively. Staying informed ensures you understand the bigger picture and how changes may affect your department. Plus, your input matters! Whether through department meetings or budget discussions, your insights can help shape a budget that supports the work we do for our community.

*The budget process affects us all, so let's stay engaged and work together to keep Bloomfield moving forward!*

### BUDGET SCHEDULE

*All sessions are in Town Hall Council Chambers unless otherwise noted. All meetings will begin at 6:30 pm.*

**Tuesday, April 1** - Council Deliberation/Action (Part 1)

**Wednesday, April 2** - Council Deliberation/Action (Part 2) (if needed)

**Thursday, April 3** - Council Deliberation/Action (Part 3) (if needed)

**Monday, May 5** - Annual Town Meeting (Location: TBD)

**HR HAPPENINGS**

**Invest in a shared sense of service™**

**RETIREMENT QUESTIONS ANSWERED!**

**A MISSION SQUARE REPRESENTATIVE WILL BE AVAILABLE ON-SITE IN APRIL 2025.**

**KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR INBOX FOR MORE DETAILS AND SCHEDULING INFORMATION.**



## **HAPPY ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS' DAY**

As we commemorate National Administrative Professionals Day on Wednesday, April 23, 2025, we acknowledge the essential support you provide to every facet of our operations. The Town of Bloomfield recognizes the diverse and evolving roles of our administrative professionals, who consistently go above and beyond to ensure the smooth functioning of our departments. In a rapidly changing public sector environment, your adaptability and expertise are more critical than ever. We have navigated uncertainties together, adapting to new technologies and processes, and your steadfast commitment has been invaluable.

This season of renewal invites us to reflect on the importance of your role in fostering a positive and productive work environment. Your ability to anticipate needs, streamline processes, and facilitate communication is essential in enabling us to serve our residents effectively. We encourage you to embrace the spirit of spring by continuing to innovate and collaborate, sharing your insights and ideas to drive continuous improvement. Your feedback is crucial in shaping the culture and direction of our organization, and we are committed to listening and acting upon it.

Let us approach the coming months with enthusiasm and optimism, focusing on building a stronger, more resilient community. Your dedication to excellence and your unwavering commitment to serving our residents with integrity and compassion are deeply appreciated. The Town of Bloomfield values your contributions and recognizes the vital role you play in our success. Thank you for your unwavering support and dedication.



## MINDFULNESS & WORK-LIFE BALANCE

### Mindfulness & Focus Tips:

#### *Start with Breath Awareness:*

- Begin each workday with a few minutes of deep, conscious breathing. This anchors you in the present and sets a calm tone.
- During stressful moments, pause and take three slow, deep breaths to regain focus.

#### *Single-Tasking:*

- Resist the urge to multitask. Focus on one task at a time, giving it your full attention.
- This increases efficiency and reduces the feeling of being overwhelmed.

#### *Use the 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique:*

- When feeling overwhelmed, use this technique. Name 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste. This helps to bring you back to the present.



### Work-Life Balance & Stress Reduction Tips:

#### *Set Clear Boundaries:*

- Establish clear boundaries between work and personal time. Avoid checking emails or working outside of designated hours.
- This is especially vital in our connected world.

#### *Prioritize Self-Care:*

- Schedule regular self-care activities, such as exercise, hobbies, or spending time with loved ones.
- Taking care of your well-being is essential for maintaining balance.

#### *Utilize Local Resources:*

- Take advantage of Bloomfield's natural beauty and community events. Spend time in local parks, attend community gatherings, or explore local walking trails.
- Connecting with the community can be a great stress reliever.

#### *Learn to Say No:*

- Don't over commit yourself. Learn to say no to tasks or requests that will overload your schedule.
- Protecting your time and energy is crucial for balance.

## Prioritizing Self-Care: Relax, Recharge, and Unwind

In today's fast-paced work environment, taking time for self-care is essential for maintaining both mental and physical well-being. Whether it's setting aside a few moments for deep breathing, enjoying a DIY spa night at home, or simply going for a peaceful walk, small acts of self-care can make a big difference. Practicing

mindfulness, stretching, or unwinding with a good book can help reduce stress and improve focus, making you feel more energized and productive. Remember, self-care isn't selfish—it's a necessary investment in your overall health and happiness. Take a moment today to relax, recharge, and prioritize yourself!

## HAIL WELCOME TO THE TOWN OF BLOOMFIELD



### New Employee Biography



#### ROMANO TUCKER

**Media Relations & Communications Specialist**  
**Strategic Communications & Government Affairs**

**March 12, 2025** - We are pleased to welcome Romano Tucker to the Town of Bloomfield's Strategic Communications & Government Affairs Department as a Media Relations & Communications Specialist. Romano has graciously shared his expertise across various departments, including as a temporary Administrative Aide II in Senior Services, a temporary Administrative Clerk II in Social and Youth Services, and currently as the Communication Specialist at S.C.G.A. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Connecticut.

**"**I'm thrilled to join the Town of Bloomfield as the Media Relations and Communications Specialist. I'm excited to connect with the community, share important stories, and ensure that everyone stays informed and engaged. Looking forward to building meaningful relationships and supporting Bloomfield's growth! -Romano **"**

**WELCOME TO TEAM BLOOMFIELD!**



### New Employee Biography



#### CHRISTINA MERCADO

**Library Assistant I**  
**Library Services**

**March 10, 2025** - We are pleased to welcome Christina Mercado to the Town of Bloomfield's Library Services Department as a Library Assistant I. Christina previously worked as a Circulation Supervisor at the University of Hartford Library. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in History with a minor in Latino Studies and Creative Writing, and she has also earned a certificate in Women in Leadership & Advocacy.

**"**I'm super excited to join the town of Bloomfield public library. I've worked in both education and nonprofits, and I've always loved helping people find what they need—whether it's a good book or a new skill. As a first-generation American, educator and artist, I'm a big believer in community spaces where everyone can learn and grow. I joined the library because I believe in the power of literacy, community, and access to information. I'm excited to help make the library a place where everyone feels welcomed. -Christina **"**

**WELCOME TO TEAM BLOOMFIELD!**



### New Employee Biography



#### TERRY KING JR.

**Police Officer**  
**Police Department**

**March 13, 2025** - We are pleased to welcome Terry King to the Town of Bloomfield's Police Department as a Police Officer. Terry is a resident of Bloomfield and the owner of his own automotive business, specializing as a professional car tint installer for the past few years. He is a graduate of Wilby High School in Waterbury, Connecticut.

**"**I'm excited to join the Town of Bloomfield because I'm passionate about contributing to a community that values growth, collaboration, and service. The opportunity to work alongside dedicated professionals who share these values is inspiring. I look forward to using my skills and experience to support our community, drive positive change, and help make Bloomfield an even better place to live, work, and grow -Terry **"**

**WELCOME TO TEAM BLOOMFIELD!**



### New Employee Biography



#### DUSTIN MENDENHALL

**Police Officer**  
**Police Department**

**March 13, 2025** - We are pleased to welcome Dustin Mendenhall to the Town of Bloomfield's Police Department as a Police Officer. Dustin currently serves as a Passenger Service Supervisor for the U.S. Air Force Reserve, where he oversees the cargo and passenger movement of airmen, ensuring tasks are completed in a timely manner to ensure they are fully equipped. He previously worked at JJ Dally as a Culinary Manager. Dustin holds a Bachelor's degree in Culinary Management from the Art Institute of Charleston, South Carolina.

**"**"Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country". -JFK **"**

I live by this trying to make our country and the Town of Bloomfield a better place to work and live -Dustin **"**

**WELCOME TO TEAM BLOOMFIELD!**

## HAIL (CONT.)

### WELCOME TO THE TOWN OF BLOOMFIELD



**New Employee**  
Biography

**DEVON LABRECK**



**Police Officer**  
Police Department

**March 17, 2025** — We are pleased to welcome back Devon LaBreck to the Town of Bloomfield's Police Department as a Police Officer. He was an officer with the Town of Bloomfield for 5 years. Prior to returning, he served as a Officer with the Town of South Windsor. Devon graduated from Enrico Fermi High School in Enfield, CT. He attended Asnuntuck Community College in Enfield where he received an Associates Degree in Criminal Justice.

“ I'm excited to be back in the community where I began my Police career and look forward to serving the community in the highest capacity possible. -Devon ”

**WELCOME TO TEAM BLOOMFIELD!**



**New Employee**  
Biography

**AMANDA REID**



**Library Assistant I**  
Library Services

**March 31, 2025** — We are pleased to welcome Amanda Reid to the Town of Bloomfield's Library Services Department as a Library Assistant I. With over 10 years of experience in customer service and administrative roles, Amanda has previously worked as a Library Assistant at both the Windsor Locks Public Library and the East Hartford Raymond Public Library. She attended Three Rivers Community College, where she earned a certificate in Library Technology.

“ I am thrilled to be joining Bloomfield Public Library, an organization that values connection, learning, and inclusivity. I look forward to contributing to the mission not only by creating enriching programs but also by assisting with daily library services, supporting patrons, and helping to make the library a welcoming space for all members of the community. -Amanda ”

**WELCOME TO TEAM BLOOMFIELD!**

## FAREWELL

### THANK YOU FOR MAKING BLOOMFIELD BETTER

NAME	POSITION	DEPARTMENT
Matthew Suplee	Lieutenant	Police, Retired after 20 years
Lionel Rodriguez, Jr.	Detective	Police, Retiring after 17 years
Joni Celmer	Librarian I	BPL, Retired after 15 years
Joyce Pickett	Recording Secretary	SCGA, Retired after 7 years

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### April 1

#### April Fool's Day

The story of April Fool's Day goes back to the 1500s in France when the Julian calendar (established by Julius Caesar) was replaced with the Gregorian calendar (introduced by Pope Gregory XIII and still used in most parts of the world). In the old Julian calendar, the new year began on April 1, but with the new Gregorian calendar, the new year was set to begin on January 1.

News did not always travel fast in those days so not everyone got the word that the start of the New Year changed to January 1. They kept celebrating it on April 1, and they were widely mocked as April Fools.

### Evening of April 12-April 20

Passover

### April 18

Good Friday - Town Facilities Closed

### April 20

Easter

### April 22

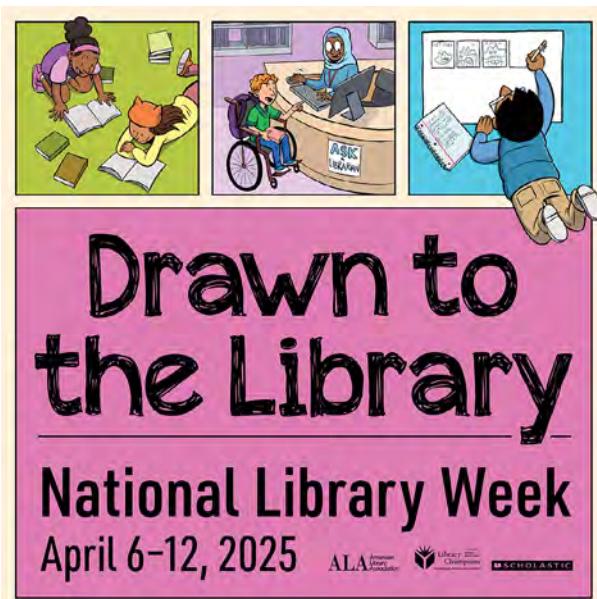
Earth Day

### April 25

Arbor Day

## WORK ANNIVERSARIES

NAME	YEARS OF SERVICE	DEPARTMENT
Matthew Mace	4/6/09 - 16 years	Leisure Services
Nicole Downs	4/1/11 - 14 years	Police
John Barrett	4/3/14 - 11 years	Police
Christopher Collins	4/4/11 - 14 years	Police
Latanya Tubbs	4/7/03 - 22 years	Police
Chrystal Gibbs	4/8/13 - 12 years	Police
Lionel Rodriguez	4/14/08 - 17 years	Police
Jalisa Cuevas	4/22/13 - 12 years	Police
Riley Feldblum	4/24/24 - 1 year	Police
Matthew Bangs	4/26/21 - 4 years	Police
David Frank	4/4/05 - 20 years	Public Works
Michael Castonguay	4/4/05 - 20 years	Public Works
Shane O'Neill	4/22/24 - 1 year	Public Works
Christopher Ceglia	4/24/23 - 2 years	Public Works
Brian Ozenne	4/2/07 - 18 years	Senior Services
George Simonian	4/9/08 - 17 years	Senior Services
Yvette Huyghue-Pannell	4/10/85 - 40 years	Senior Services
Dawn Cooper-Grodder	4/23/01 - 24 years	Social & Youth Services



Every April Autism Speaks celebrates World Autism Month beginning with United Nations-sanctioned World Autism Awareness Day on April 2. For 20 years, Autism Speaks has stood alongside the autism community, igniting a global movement for understanding, acceptance, and lasting change. Together, we've—fueled groundbreaking research, advanced critical advocacy, and opened doors to education, healthcare, and employment, creating a brighter future for people with autism.



During April, we recognize National Child Abuse Prevention Month (NCAPM) and the importance of communities working together to support and strengthen families and prevent child maltreatment. Throughout the year, communities are encouraged to increase awareness about child and family well-being and work together to implement effective strategies that support families and prevent child abuse and neglect.

April is National Financial Literacy Month. It's an excellent opportunity to review and upgrade your financial smarts. National Financial Literacy Month places the importance of learning about finances and the tools to learn about them right in the classroom, too. No matter their age, putting the know-how and resources at our children's fingertips will give them the power to make smart decisions now and in the future.



Stress and poor mental health are one of the biggest public health challenges that we're facing. Sadly, even though that is the case, we are still not taking its impact seriously enough. We continue to separate mental health from physical health and vice versa. The reality is they cannot be separate – they are two sides of the same coin. There is no health without mental health and stress can lead to numerous health problems. From physical problems, like heart disease, insomnia, digestive issues, immune system challenges, etc to more serious mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression.

Stress Awareness Month has been held every April since 1992 to raise awareness of the causes and cures for our modern-day stress epidemic. It is the time when we have an opportunity for an open conversation on the impact of stress. Dedicated time to removing the guilt, shame, and stigma around mental health. To talk about stress, and its effects and open up about our mental and emotional state with friends, families, colleagues, and professionals.

## RECIPE CORNER

### Ackee and Saltfish

*Ackee and Saltfish, a beloved Jamaican national dish, offers a delightful combination of flavors and textures. Beyond its delicious taste, this dish provides a source of protein from the saltfish and essential nutrients from the ackee. It's a hearty and comforting meal that reflects the rich culinary heritage of Jamaica.*

#### Ingredients

- 1 lb saltfish (cod)
- 1 (19 oz) can ackee, drained (Fresh ackee will yield even better flavor)
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 scallions, chopped
- 1 scotch bonnet pepper, seeded and chopped (optional)
- 1/2 bell pepper (red or yellow), chopped
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- Black pepper to taste

#### Directions

- Soak the saltfish in cold water for at least 4 hours, changing the water every hour, to remove excess salt. Alternatively, boil the saltfish for about 20-30 minutes, changing the water halfway through the boiling process. Flake the saltfish into small pieces, removing any bones.
- Heat the vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, scallions, bell pepper, and scotch bonnet pepper (if using), and sauté for about 5 minutes until softened.
- Add the flaked saltfish and thyme to the skillet and cook for another 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- Gently stir in the drained ackee, being careful not to mash it. Cook for another 5-7 minutes until heated through.
- Season with black pepper to taste. Be cautious with salt, as the saltfish may still be salty.
- Serve hot with your choice between boiled dumplings, fried plantains, breadfruit, or rice.



**NOTE:** Ackee is a delicate fruit, so handle it gently to avoid breaking it apart. Ensure the ackee is fully ripe before cooking, as unripe ackee is toxic. Serve immediately for the best flavor.

This dish is often enjoyed for breakfast in Jamaica, but it can be served at any meal. It's a flavorful and traditional part of Jamaican cuisine.



**Q:** Why did the computer break up with the printer?

**A:** It found someone more compatible

**Q:** Why did the golfer bring two pairs of pants?

**A:** In case he got a hole in one

**Q:** What did the personal trainer say to the tomato at the gym?

**A:** You need to ketchup!