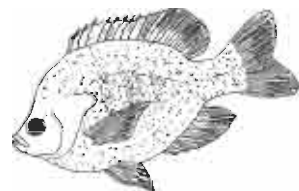




# Newsletter of the Saugatucket River Heritage Corridor Coalition

Issue 12, February 2004

Maureen Whelan & Robin Wildman, Acting Chairs  
Sue Fisher, Treasurer  
Don Robadue, Webmaster  
Dorothy Devine, Newsletter Editor



run  
river  
saugatucket

## Wakefield Elementary School Children Need Your Help!

Teacher Robin (Nelson) Wildman and her 5th grade students have spent much of the last seven years learning about the importance of preserving the health of the Saugatucket River. Students have embarked on many projects to raise public awareness about the river. Several years ago, after much research, they successfully convinced key figures, such as the Town Planner and the Narragansett Tribal Historical Preservation Officer, that the children who attend Wakefield Elementary School have earned the right to build an outdoor classroom on their beautiful river.

The close proximity of the river lends itself to many educational possibilities: students could conduct their silent reading sessions on the platform of the outdoor classroom, the band teacher could hold classes there, the art teacher could use the surrounding environment as the basis for her lessons, and of course, science lessons are too numerous to mention!

Several years have passed and five different classes of 5th grade students have participated in many fundraisers to earn part of the large sum of money needed in order to build the outdoor classroom. They have drawn and sold postcards of animals that live in and around the Saugatucket River, handmade and raffled a quilt, entered a contest about their river projects and won \$3,000, written grants and been awarded money, had many generous donations from community members, such as Ed and Ruth Steward, Women's Club of South County and South County Bridle Lanes Association, and

written a booklet of recipes for non-toxic cleaning products and pesticides. The children have worked hard and have yet to see the benefit of their efforts.

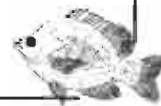
The estimated cost of the project, according to the architect hired by the town, would run somewhere around \$80,000. We plan on decreasing quite a bit of that cost through volunteer efforts to help with clearing the land and with construction. Of that estimated \$80,000, at least \$15,000 is needed for fifteen pilings, which will be the supports for the platform of the outdoor classroom. At the present time the bank account for the classroom shows a balance of \$10,801. Thus far, Wakefield School is the only elementary school in our town without an outdoor classroom. We are continuing to raise funds. If you are interested in supporting the education of the students at Wakefield School, please send donations to help build the outdoor classroom to:

Robin Wildman  
Wakefield School  
101 High Street  
Wakefield, RI 02879  
*(Checks can be made out to SRHCC)*

In addition, any help or expertise in building, clearing brush, contouring the banks, etc. would be greatly appreciated. Our goal is to begin work on the classroom this Spring! Please contact Robin Wildman at Wakefield School (792-9676) if you have any questions.

We appreciate your support!

*Robin Wildman*



## **Exciting News on the Riverfront**

It's been a long time in the making, but soon the Saugatucket will once again be a people's river for the village of Wakefield. The long-awaited boardwalk will run along the downtown side of the river, from the footbridge to the soon-to-be-renovated fish ladder. Set on pilings and extending over the banks of the Saugatucket, it will be the perfect spot for walkers, fisher-folks, bird watchers, and people of all ages.

The boardwalk will feature observation platforms and a canoe/kayak launch. Construction, by the Cardi Corporation, is slated to begin in March and be completed by the Fall of 2004. Funding from the state,

## **The Sad Loss of Three Friends**

Since our last newsletter in March 2003, the Coalition has sadly lost three Board members — Russ Koza, Ann O'Neill, and Caleb Davis. We miss them, their enthusiasm, and their work for the river.

Russell C. Koza was a professor of management science at URI and served as a liaison between the SRHCC and the Sierra Club. He is especially appreciated for his willingness to attend Town meetings! He also helped organize a demonstration in Saugatucket Park to draw attention to damage the developers of The Village of South County Commons had done to one of the river's tributaries, damage they were later required to correct. Russ even brought his truck to help us move to our new office during his final illness, although of course we did not realize it at the time.

Anne E. O'Neill was the president of the South County Tourism Council and one of the earliest believers in the Saugatucket River Walkway project. Ann saw the connection between heritage tourism and environmental management. She promoted alternatives to beach-only tourism and encouraged walking and biking trails, bed and breakfast accommodations, and eco-tourism. The Tourism Council sponsored the river fires at one of the Rivers Day Block Parties and helped distribute our brochure and newsletters. Ann always had enthusiastic words of praise for our hard-working river volunteers.



town, SRHCC, private foundations, and citizens has helped make this \$863,000 project a reality. Phase II, pending additional funding, will involve an outdoor classroom on the North/West side of the river for South Kingstown school groups. (See story, page 1.)

We've worked hard to make this idea a reality, to bring the river back into the heart of the community. Be on the lookout for upcoming river activities and keep your eyes on the progress of the boardwalk. Get ready for your morning paddles, afternoon fishing or evening strolls along the banks of the Saugatucket. The time has come to once again enjoy our community river!

*Glenn Ricci*

Caleb W. Davis was the proprietor of the Dove and Distaff antiques and upholstery shop on Main Street. He worked with us from the very start in 1994, representing both the Main Street Merchants Association and the Historic District Commission. When we voted to fund a canoe dock behind the Main Street stores, Caleb took the project to Town Hall for us. We are sorry he won't be here to see it when it is finally built! Caleb always had fervent opinions and expressed them emphatically. He also really liked people, and expressed that strongly as well.

Our heartfelt thoughts go out to Russ's, Ann's, and Caleb's families.



## **Look for Our Signs**

Thanks to a recent grant award from Senator Susan Sosnowski, the Coalition now has funds to design and install an interpretive sign on the O'Neill Bikeway overlooking the soon-to-be-built River Walkway in Wakefield. Last year's grant from Senator Sosnowski funded our folding traveling display.

Our new interpretive sign will be designed to explain and draw attention to the Walkway and to entice visitors and bikeway users to the Walkway area to take a closer look. We'd like to thank Senator Sosnowski for her past and present support!

*Richard Youngken*

## The Coalition's Goals for 2004



One year ago the board members of the Saugatucket River Heritage Corridor Coalition attended a retreat to discuss the direction of the organization. Many conversations were begun, with a major focus on the goals of the Coalition. After much discussion, we narrowed down the goals and devised three main topics: Clean, Seen, and Used.

### Clean: The goal is to maintain and improve the Saugatucket River's water quality.

The Coalition has begun several projects focusing on this goal. First are the annual River clean-ups. These are typically well attended and occur in the fall and spring. We plan on continuing these, with the next one planned for Earth Day in April. Next, the Coalition is working in partnership with the North and South Kingstown Land Trusts to preserve open space in the watershed. Also, The Coalition is working with Rhode Island DEM, the R.I. Audubon Society, Grow Smart R.I., and the Rivers Council on an educational outreach program to promote better management of surface water runoff which contributes to bacterial and non-bacterial pollution in the river and its tributaries. Finally, we are working on writing a frequent articles for the local newspaper, which would cover many different topics about the water quality of the Saugatucket River.

### Seen: The goal is for the Saugatucket River and watershed to be "seen" as a vital aspect of the quality of life of our community.

The Coalition held several well-received educational lectures last year and are in the midsts of scheduling several more for 2004. Last year's historical talk by Richard Greenwood was a huge success (See story, page 5). Also, building the outdoor classroom on the banks of the river will enable generations of Wakefield School students to learn about and appreciate the habitats that rely on the health of the river. This spring a river bike tour will be conducted, in conjunction with the Neighborhood Guild, and used as another educational tool. We also plan on setting up informational tables at each Main Street block party. We are looking forward to the building of the River Walkway project this spring, and plan on monitoring that closely. We will be designing informational signs to be placed along the walkway, further educating the community.

### Used: The goal is to enhance community members' appreciation for the river through usage.

The Coalition has chosen one big project to work on for this goal: a Run, Pedal, Paddle event. This event is in the very early planning stages and, we hope, will come to fruition this summer. If anyone is interested in helping to plan this event, then please let us know! And of course, canoeing, kayaking, walking, bird-watching, and bicycling tours can also be planned.

*Robin Wildman*

## You Can Help Us Meet These Goals!

### A Clean River

To help, call Maureen Whelan at 782-0304.

- Sign in Earth Day volunteers April 24
- Bring cold drinks for Earth Day volunteers April 24
- Spend an hour this Spring weeding and cleaning the SRHCC garden in Saugatucket Park
- Write a newspaper column about river issues

### A Seen River

To help, call Robin Wildman at 783-5465.

- Work on the outdoor classroom (see page 1)
- Sit at an information and display table at a Main Street Block Party in June or August

### A Used River

To help, call Glenn Ricci at 789-1412.

- Plan and participate in the Run-Pedal-Paddle race through the Saugatucket watershed
- Plan a canoe, kayak, walking, birding, or biking trip and invite others to join you

## Mark Your Calendars!



SRHCC 2004 Annual Meeting  
Lecture by Karen Jessup (see box, page 7)  
Thursday, March 25, 7:00 p.m.  
Peace Dale Library

Earth Day River Cleanup  
Saturday, April 24, 10 a.m. - 12 noon  
Meet at the Pedestrian Bridge behind Caylily's  
Bistro on Main Street, Wakefield

Bike Ride Back in Time:  
A Tour of the Saugatucket Watershed  
Saturday, May 15, 10 a.m. - 12 noon  
Pre-Register at the Neighborhood Guild  
789-9301

**Life on the River**

*Resident Interviews  
A Continuing Series*

*Jim Creighton is a Providence firefighter who lives with his family on the river in Peace Dale. Maureen Whelan will continue interviewing river residents for future issues.*

*Q: How long have you lived on the river?*

7 or 8 years. We moved from Providence and built a house down here.

*Q: Why did you move to the area?*

We had liked this area of the state for years. And then we had the chance to live right on a river and to have some land. We loved it from the first.

*Q: What do you do on or around the river?*

Kayak and canoe, walk, and sometimes we get to skate.

*Q: What do you like best about the river?*

The view of the water and the wildlife. The peacefulness of the setting.

*Q: What part of the river do you like the best?*

Where it widens nearer to town, just above the small waterfall. The water's deeper there and the river has a better flow to it.

*Q: Do you have any concerns about the river?*

Yes. Why is it so shallow in places? And so overgrown with plant life? Why can't it be dredged? From what I've heard it wasn't always this way.

*Q: What do people say about the river?*

People who come to our house are just amazed at how we are surrounded by it. They say how lucky we are. People in town seem to really like it, but I am surprised that people don't spend more time on it.

*Q: What wildlife have you seen?*

Deer, waterfowl, a muskrat or otter. I like the diving ducks the best. And we can watch an osprey circling and then diving to catch a fish.

*Q: What is your favorite river story?*

It's a story I would like to know more about, actually: the ice house on the river. I've heard a little but would be interested in knowing more.

We have been honored to receive a grant from the Rhode Island Foundation (RIF) this year to establish funding (\$20,000) for a part time position of executive director. This boost will give us a part time paid staff position for one year and our thanks go to the RIF for acknowledging our accomplishments and challenging us to become more self-sustaining. The award was made in support of our efforts to attract new members, expand services, and increase our fund-raising capacity to undertake beneficial projects for the river and watershed.

The executive director will be responsible for coordinating activities to increase our membership, develop educational programs and outreach. Soliciting major donors and additional grant support are also on the agenda. We are certainly excited about this opportunity! Already discussions are underway on bike and canoe tours in the watershed. We are planning a membership drive, lecture series, and programs for Rivers Month in June. Stayed tuned for more information. We will be posting information on our website [www.saugatucket.org](http://www.saugatucket.org) and on the telephone message system.

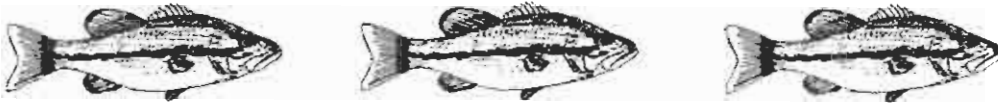


**Conservation Summit Scheduled**

The Rhode Island Land Trust Council, the Rhode Island Rivers Council, and the Rhode Island Association of Conservation Commissions will be presenting The Rhode Island Land & Water Conservation Summit on Saturday, March 20, 2004 at North Kingstown High School. A number of speeches and workshops will provide an opportunity for individual citizens and organized groups to work together to protect our communities.

The full day program will run from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and includes lunch. Partnerships for land conservation and affordable housing will be described and updates on RI legislation will be provided. There will also be an opportunity to attend as many as three workshops on topics such as organization development, resource protection, fundraising, and historical preservation. Preregistration is \$25 (\$35 at the door).

The complete schedule and a preregistration form is available at our website at [www.saugatucket.org](http://www.saugatucket.org).



Based on a SRHCC lecture in May 2003

by Richard Greenwood of the

RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission

## **The River, Mills, and Reservoirs -**

### **An Engineered Power System for the Hazards, Rodmans, and Robinsons**

Peace Dale is a remarkable place. Professor William Jordy of Brown University calls it "one of the country's most outstanding examples of a created landscape from the industrial era." The Saugatucket River valley has a remarkable amount of early industrial development. Mills were built by the Hazard, Rodman and Robinson families who had to overcome a number of serious engineering difficulties to harness the river's power to build and then expand textile manufacturing.

Peace Dale village is isolated enough from surrounding development to give the sense that you are entering a special place, unified by the mills, the civic buildings, and mill-related housing. Green areas, when seen from the air, tend to disguise the fact that the village was a giant productive machine. Its productive capability gave Peace Dale its reason for being and allowed it to grow. All of the people who lived in the nearby houses walked through the gates of the factory at sunrise and walked out at sunset.

It all began with the waterfall. While the Hazard family named Peace Dale, the village was founded somewhat earlier with the construction of a water-powered country mill. From the eighteenth to the early nineteenth century there were mills standing on the original Peace Dale site — a grist mill, a pulling mill, and a linseed oil mill. These served the needs of the surrounding agrarian population.

The power of falling water made the mill site important. A fully developed mill might have only provided 5-12 horsepower at the time, but this was still beyond human and animal power for mechanical energy. Water supply and water drop are the two key factors engineers took into account to get the most energy out of the river.

Woolens were the primary fabric of choice for rural people in New England; they raised the sheep and spun their wool to weave cloth by hand. One of the first mechanized processes for textiles was the carding machine, which eased the painstaking process of preparing coarse wool for spinning. These machines were the first to appear in the countryside, and fit very easily into the homespun production cycle.

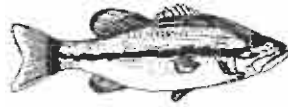
One of the first carding machines in the country was set up in 1804 alongside the Peace Dale dam. Later, the owners got involved in spinning wool and weaving cloth. Rowland Hazard bought a partial interest in the carding machine and eventually acquired a total interest in 1812 and then bought a spinning machine. This major breakthrough still relied on hand weaving. By 1832, Peace Dale, with a population of 30, appeared on the South Kingstown map. The Hazards had finally adopted weaving into their operation, but in 1844 the entire complex burned down.

The Hazards were anxious to recover from this crisis and decided to take advantage of the new technology that was becoming available. They redesigned the water power system and built a new mill complex out of stone, moving into a new product line, woolen shawls. The complex was completed in 1847 and incorporated as the Peace Dale Manufacturing Company.

The waterfall of the Saugatucket was moved several hundred feet down a sluice to the new power wheel house. A new reservoir was created out of what had been known as the Fresh Meadows and prized by farmers as an important grazing area. It is now Indian Lake. It made it possible to keep a continuous flow of power during drier summer months. Without this continuous flow the mill would have to be shut down periodically, creating a serious problems for the workers and their families.

Other mills were constructed throughout the Saugatucket watershed. A small woolen mill was located in the second half of the 1800s in Mooresfield, where today Route 138 crosses the Saugatucket. The pond can still be seen there. About 20 people worked there. Rocky Brook also supported a mill at Asa Pond. Rodman bought up a number of mills along this branch of the river to create another mill. Four mills also existed on Rocky Brook, employing up to 70 people. The Wakefield Mill was also important and the Robinson Factory, also a woolen mill, operated into the 20th century.

The next generation of Hazards expanded the Peace Dale Mill complex further in the 1860s and 1870s. This was



## **River, Mills, and Reservoirs** *continued from Page 5*

made possible by the addition of the reservoir at Indian Run. At first glance, it seems the reservoir would benefit the Robinson's mill, which was located below the Peace Dale waterfall. But a channel was constructed to drain the water into the Peace Dale reservoir through what is now Old Mountain Field. Indian Run never powered a mill.

In addition to building the reservoirs, a shift from the water wheel to cast iron turbines permitted expansion of the mills. The turbines were attached to flywheels that had belts to transfer the power to the operations overhead.

In 1872, the Peace Dale Mill shifted to a new product line, worsted wool, which required a significantly more advanced technology and permitted moving beyond shawls to other types of woolen garments, for which they won prizes in international product fairs. Toward the end of the century a new weaving factory was constructed to be strong enough to support the active machinery, which could shake a building apart. The mill complex reached close to its present scale by 1899.

The Hazards had outgrown Saugatucket River power by the 1870s, so they installed a steam engine to power mill operations. The Narragansett Pier railroad was constructed in 1875 to bring in the coal needed to operate the steam plant. Steam power was available year round. Given its cost, it augmented the water power rather than replaced it. The steam was also used in finishing processes, and gas produced from the coal was valuable in illuminating the mill complex.

The village surrounding the mill complex grew considerably. Workers arrived by foot each day and had to live close by to arrive to work on time.

One of the distinctive aspects of the Hazard family was their approach to development of the community. Unlike most mill owners, they planned from the beginning to create what they felt was a comfortable and familiar kind of village, not the more typical regimented settlement. Single family, well spaced homes were built along existing roads. Today Peace Dale feels very cozy, and we do not think of the residences as company-built mill housing. Peace Dale is very atypical. Rowland Hazard is credited with the L-shaped one-story design for mill worker housing. The

Hazards were also pioneers in profit-sharing for workers, based upon similar practices in some mills in England.

A key reason Peace Dale is such an important exception to typical mill village development is that the Hazards lived in the village close by the factory in Oak Woods. This proximity undoubtedly influenced the decisions they made as the village grew. They also paid careful attention to the landscape. As the industrial aspects of Peace Dale recede, it is perhaps their contributions to the design of the village landscape that will most endure. Charles Elliot, one of the nation's most gifted landscape architects, helped to realize and improve their basic plan. Some of these features can still be seen in the Oaks subdivision. Elliot was also responsible for the landscaping of the sluiceways that brought water from the dam.

For example, if you stand at the Lily Pads complex, and you look across at Palisades Industries, you see enormous banks of rhododendrons and a very pretty river valley. The mill and the house were linked by a very finely developed landscape. The Congregational Church is another feature that contributes to the village. It was designed by Rowland Hazard II. The Hazard School is another example of this design legacy. The Peace Dale Library, built at the close of the 19th century, is perhaps one of the finest buildings in the state. Peace Dale seems to have always been here, as if the buildings just grew out of the ground. It took great skill to achieve this effect. The Peace Dale Guild building, dating from the beginning of the 20th Century, and the Village Green, were institutions that helped Peace Dale function as a community through recreation.

The beautiful memorial at the entrance to the library, *The Weaver*, sculpted by Daniel Chester French and commissioned by Caroline Hazard, is dedicated to the story of the early weavers. Falling water allowed for expansion of textile manufacturing that occurred here. But we should not forget that it was the people, and the machinery of the mills that turned that falling water into products that gave money to enable the village to grow and to enable the Hazard Family to amass the wealth that enabled them to create this gem of a village.



For more information, contact Richard Greenwood at [rgreenwood@rihphc.state.ri.us](mailto:rgreenwood@rihphc.state.ri.us).

## **New Uses Considered for Palisades Mill**

The Town of South Kingstown, with the help of the Rhode Island Foundation and the Rhode Island Housing Authority, has hired Newport Collaborative Architects (NCA) to study the feasible uses for the Palisades Mill Complex (the historic Hazard Mill) should the current owners, the Guarriello family, decide to sell or redevelop the site. The study is a part of the larger Peace Dale revitalization plan.

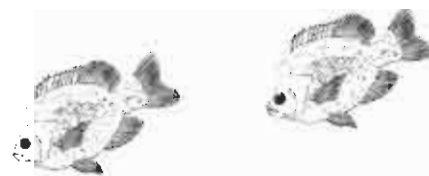
In meetings at Broad Rock Middle School during November and December Arnold Robinson, the project director, presented NCA's data. He showed slides of each of the 13 buildings and other prominent features of the site, detailing measurements and the condition of the buildings, which is for the most part excellent. He praised the care the Guarriello family has taken of the historic site since they purchased it in the 1960s. At the first meeting, citizens brainstormed in small groups on possible reuse scenarios. Parking will be one of the primary issues any redevelopment plan will have to address.

At a second meeting, four possible scenarios for redevelopment were described, one focusing on the arts, one on housing, one on commercial development, and one on mixed uses. These plans and a wealth of other information on the project can be viewed at the NCA website: [www.ncarchitects.com/palisades](http://www.ncarchitects.com/palisades). The consensus of the meeting was that mixed use was the best reuse. A greenway (riverwalk or bike path) through the property from the Flats to the Guild and a restaurant had broad approval. Mixed uses were preferred. Any new use will require zoning changes, which will be recommended to the Town Planning Board.

Reuse will have to be economically sound and also connect with and draw in the surrounding community, much as the historic mill did 100 years ago. Historic character must be preserved and the Saugatucket River of course must be protected.

At the meetings I emphasized the SRHCC's interest both in protection of the river and in interpretive signs or exhibits integrated into the site to educate visitors of the important role of the mill in the development of Peace Dale. A mill history museum or SRHCC headquarters at the site were also discussed.

*Dorothy Devine*



### **A Special Landscape -**

#### **Karen L. Jessup to Be Annual Meeting Speaker March 25**

Historic landscape authority Karen L. Jessup will attend our annual meeting this year and speak on the landscape vision of Caroline Hazard and her sister-in-law Mary Pierrepont Bushnell Hazard (the wife of Rowland Gibson Hazard II). Some of Peace Dale's historic landscape form is the result of the inspired work of these women, including the Daniel Chester French bronze sculpture, "The Weaver," and other designed features. Mrs. Jessup will focus on Caroline Hazard's travels and landscape visions for the Hazard properties and her community. She will also speak about Mary P. B. Hazard's role in international gardening circles.

Karen Jessup is a research fellow at the John Nicholas Brown Center for American Civilization at Brown University. She has been particularly interested in Caroline Hazard and her work. Mrs. Jessup is chair of the Northeast Advisors to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. She is active in preservation issues statewide, nationally and abroad. Currently she is finishing her Ph.D. in landscape conservation at the Center for Conservation Studies at DeMontfort University, England. Mrs. Jessup is a former professor of Landscape History and Historic Preservation at Roger Williams University, where she was the director of the Center for Historic Preservation and coordinator of the historic preservation program.

The program will begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Peace Dale Library.



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## membership form

\_\_\_\_\_ I am already a member. Here is my contribution for 2004.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please add my name as a member of the Saugatucket River Heritage Corridor Coalition.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

*All who care about the Saugatucket are welcome to join us at our monthly meetings at 313 Main Street, Suite B, Wakefield, the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m.*

**I would like to help out with:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ River & Trail Cleanups
- \_\_\_\_\_ River Access & Trail Development
- \_\_\_\_\_ River Office Volunteer Staff
- \_\_\_\_\_ Garden Planting & Care (Saugatucket Park)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Education / Publicity / Exhibits / Displays
- \_\_\_\_\_ Land Acquisition & Protection
- \_\_\_\_\_ Grant Writing, Fundraising & Membership
- \_\_\_\_\_ Self-Guided History/Ecology Tour Design
- \_\_\_\_\_ Attending/Reporting on Relevant Town Meetings
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mailing/Phoning /Database

Enclosed is my contribution for conservation of the Saugatucket River:

\_\_\_\_\_ \$10 Pumpkinseed

\_\_\_\_\_ \$25 Pickerel

\_\_\_\_\_ \$50 Yellow Perch

\_\_\_\_\_ \$100 Smallmouth Bass

\_\_\_\_\_ (Other) \$\_\_\_\_\_ Trout



Please make checks payable to S.R.H.C.C.

Mail to: P.O. Box 209, Wakefield, RI 02880.

*Questions? Ideas? Call us at 782-0149*

or email [saugatucket@saugatucket.org](mailto:saugatucket@saugatucket.org)

Here are some other ways I can help (please specify):

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