



**UPPER
AQUIDNECK
IMPROVEMENTS**



**MIDDLETOWN
VALLEY
TRAIL WORK**



**SPEED, SAFETY
REVIEW ON THE WAY**



**DOG RULE
ENFORCEMENT
STEPPED UP**

MIDDLETOWN TODAY

Always On Guard

Two Lifeguards Talk About Their Love Of Second Beach, Job

As they speak about lifeguarding at Second Beach, the eyes of Christine Woolbright and Ted Falvey rarely leave the water.

Although neither is on duty, Woolbright and Falvey can't help but check on the swimmers in the two-foot waves at Surfer's End.

The job of watching others, making sure they're okay is so engrained in them, there are no days off when they're at Second – or any other -- Beach.

“Sitting on the stand and staying alert and locked in for eight hours requires a tremendous amount of energy,” the Lifeguard Captain Woolbright said. “I think that’s one of the biggest misconceptions about the job, even my friends will say it ‘Must have been nice, sitting out in the sun and getting paid.’ It’s so much

more than that. The sun, the wind, how busy it is, the training, it’s not an easy job. Not at all.”

“Now that I’ve done it a couple years, I compare it to a marathon,” the Lifeguard Falvey said. “Sure, one, two, three days, some people could do it, but to be out here the whole summer, being alert and ready to go at any time, it’s definitely not for everybody.”

How and when Woolbright and Falvey ended up as lifeguards at the Sachuest Point Road

summertime hotspot might be different.

But like each of the close to 50 guards who patrol the beach from Memorial Day weekend through the first week of September, they feel they're part of something very special. Words “family,” “lifetime friendships” and “here to help others” are mentioned more than once.

For Woolbright, lifeguarding at Second Beach just felt right, so much so that it’s been



her summer job the last 15 years. A 2008 graduate of Middletown High School, Woolbright grew up around the corner from the beach, so guarding was the next step in a natural progression when she was 16.

“I was on the swim team in high school and some of my teammates were lifeguards here and talked about what a great job it was, how they helped people

and it sounded perfect to me,” said Woolbright, who is a high school art teacher by trade. “As I got older, I learned



“As I got older, I learned my (late) dad (John) was a guard in South Florida, which I thought was pretty cool. Kind of full circle.”

Falvey comes from eastern Massachusetts and fell in love with Second Beach when he was a student at Portsmouth Abbey, where he graduated in 2020. Now living in Newport, Falvey is a sophomore at Catholic University of America in Washington, DC and on his third season as a lifeguard at Second – or Sachuest – Beach.

“I love this job,” Falvey said. “I’ve always enjoyed being at the ocean and when I first started thinking about lifeguarding, it was one of those things where I knew it was right for me, the ability to help people and being at the beach.”

At a time when some other beaches are struggling to fill lifeguard positions, a big part of what keeps Woolbright and Falvey coming back is the atmosphere among those who work at Second Beach.

Both said everyone gets along and is willing to pitch in if someone needs help without

question. They also said the experience and knowledge of the veterans on the crew is unmatched. The expectations are clear and everyone is pulling in the same direction – to make the experience at Second Beach the best it can possibly be.

“You can tell a lot of people really care about this place and we’re no different,”

Woolbright said. “I spent a lot of time here growing up and there’s no place I’d rather be than right here.”

“Being a lifeguard here, there’s a lot of

responsibility, more than people might think,” Falvey said. “I remember my first day sitting on the chair (lifeguard tower) when there were big waves and that’s when it really struck me.”

Second Beach Lifeguard Manager Meg Flanagan said Woolbright and Falvey were just two examples of the outstanding guards – and people – that work at Second Beach.

“We have a really good team here,” Flanagan said. “That’s the mindset here, how can we make this experience the best it can possibly be and keep people coming back day after day, year after year. We’re very fortunate to have the people here that we do.”

Woolbright and Falvey said there are two shifts of lifeguards at Second Beach, those who arrive at 8 a.m. and work until 4 p.m. and those on from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Expected to arrive 15 minutes early to clock in and pick up their gear, including a walkie talkie to communicate with others. Sunscreen, plenty of water and a good hat are also staples.

From there, guards take up their chairs and get to work, serving as the silent eyes in the sky

watching for trouble. Training gets mixed in along with alerts from other lifeguards and staff, making sure everyone is functioning as one unit although the chairs are spread



out at large intervals across the beach.

Whenever anyone is in the water, that's where they said the guards' focus is. Because there are usually so many people in the waves, particularly on hot, humid summer days, guards do an "active scan" of the water. That involves watching everyone in their designated zone of coverage, not just picking one area and focusing on it.

If someone looks like they might need help, that individual gets extra attention whether they're aware of it or not, until they get out of the water.

"I know one big thing that we're taught here is to watch out for higher risk individuals," Falvey said. "No one rule applies to everybody and most people are okay, but when you're talking about young children, those in their early teens or older adults who aren't strong swimmers, we're definitely keeping an eye out."

Instead of letting someone get into trouble, they said the guards will whistle people in from swimming out too far and other measures to squelch problems before they arise.

As for tips for those at the beach who need help in the water, they said there were a couple

keys. One is to draw as much attention to yourself as possible if you're struggling by yelling, waving your arms and the like. From there, once you know you have the guard's

attention, try to remain calm and relax. That's because depending on the conditions, you don't want to tire yourself out before help arrives.

In terms of joining on as a lifeguard at Second Beach, both had tips help make that a reality one day. Working out and being a strong swimmer who's a certified lifeguard were important, they said. Being a team player was crucial too.

"For me, this is home," Woolbright said. "I'm a beach person and I love the summer. I wouldn't have my summers any other way. I feel so lucky to be here and work with the people I do."

"Being a lifeguard is a lot more than just sitting on the beach and watching people swim," Falvey said. "You're an ambassador for the community and we all recognize that. There's an internal drive for each and every one of us to help people and make sure they enjoy their experience here. I know I love the job and I've learned so much from people like Meg and Christine, it makes it more than a job. It is a family."

Upper Aquidneck Avenue Upgrades Move One Step Closer

Road, sidewalk, drainage work planned between East Main Road and Green End Avenue

Upper Aquidneck Avenue is in line for sweeping upgrades. Recently, the Town Council signed off on an agreement with the state Department of Transportation and City of Newport for waterline work by Aquidneck and Park drives. Town Administrator Shawn J. Brown said the result of the arrangement was that roadway, sidewalk and stormwater work by the state is one step closer to coming to fruition.

“This is an important project for the Town,” Brown said. “I know there are a lot of people and businesses that are looking forward to the drainage work and road improvements, not to mention the sidewalks. This is going to make the upper part of Aquidneck Avenue much, much better.”

For years, the council – led by Councilwoman M. Theresa Santos – has talked about the need to redo the stretch of road between East Main Road and Green End Avenue. The state recently paved a section of middle Aquidneck Avenue and there are plans in the works for lower Aquidneck to the Newport line.

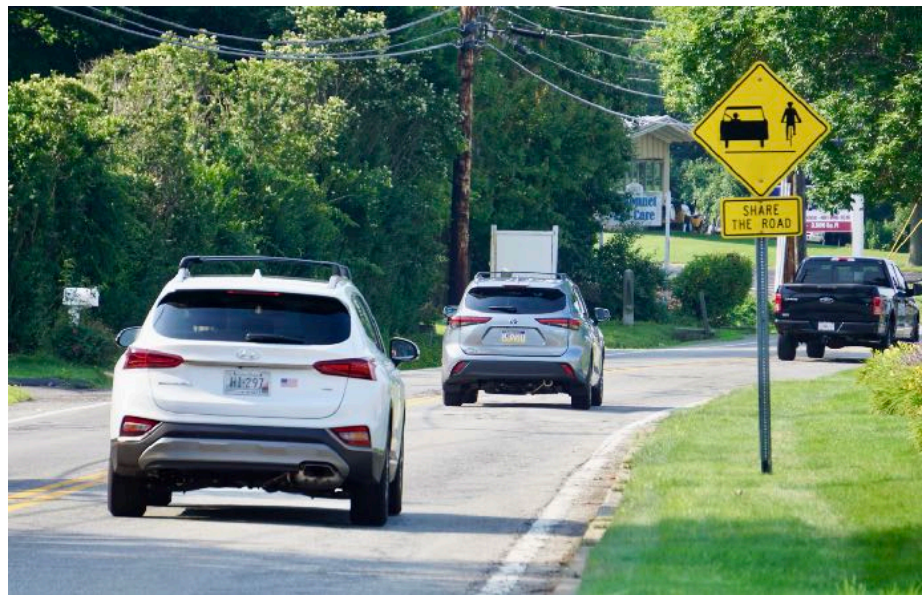
Santos and others have expressed concerns about students from Gaudet Middle School – located at 1113 Aquidneck Ave. – walking to and from the building without sidewalks, saying more needed to be done to keep children safe.

Now as the COVID-19 pandemic has seen more people venture outdoors to walk and exercise, the need for sidewalks has grown.

Once completed, pedestrians will be able to walk uninterrupted from Aquidneck Avenue to Valley Road to West Main Road, Forest Avenue and a short segment of East Main Road, a loop of more than five miles.

The sidewalk project is part of a concerted effort by the Town to make the community more pedestrian friendly. Similar sidewalk work has taken place along Forest Avenue, East Main and West Main roads, Woolsey Road and the Commodore Perry Village neighborhood, among others.

As for the start date on the work, Town officials said the DOT hasn’t locked in a date for the upper Aquidneck Avenue project to begin.



Whenever that may be, Town officials said there's much anticipation about the effort, which should improve the flow of traffic, eliminate drainage issues and make things better for pedestrians and bicyclists.

A major part of that will be to get rid of the drainage ditches along the road, which can create hazards for motorists, walkers and bicyclists alike.

"Upper Aquidneck Avenue has been identified by the Town as the top priority for sidewalk installation for several years," Town Planner Ronald Wolanski said. "It is a densely developed business area, and also includes pedestrian traffic from middle school and high school students in the area."

State Awards \$80,000 To Middletown Valley Park Project

Close To 50-Acre Park Off High Street Has Become A Relaxing West Side Hub For Pedestrians, Dog Walkers, More

The Middletown Valley Park trail expansion project received an \$80,000 boost from the state recently.

According to a letter from Acting Department of Environmental Management Director Terrence Gray, the Town's project was



a standout among the 34 applications seeking more than \$2.2 million in support for trail-based recreation across Rhode Island.

A news report indicated Middletown's project was one of 22 projects that received \$1.4 million in state DEM funding. The report also indicated the Norman Bird Sanctuary got a

\$68,600 grant for highly trafficked trails at the wildlife refuge at 583 Third Beach Road.

"This is definitely good news for the Town of Middletown, its residents, businesses and visitors," Town Administrator Shawn J. Brown. "We're constantly striving to make family friendly Middletown the best community it can be to live, work and play."

The Town purchased the close to 50-acre Middletown Valley parcel behind the Aquidneck Shopping Centre from the Kempenaar Family in 2004, saving the property from a rumored new housing development.

In 2017, the Town opened a 1.3-mile passive trail network that's been embraced by residents in the High Street area and other nearby neighborhoods as a quiet, relaxing place to walk and enjoy the outdoors.

Earlier this year, the Town Council okayed a request from the Town's Planning Department to apply for the state "Recreation Trail Grant" money. At the same time, the Council said it was not signing off on the final design of the project, something that must get a formal review by the Town's top elected body.

The Town's application to the state showed about .6 miles of new trails added to the southern third of the Middletown Valley. If those plans get the go ahead from the council, they would be connected to the existing trails. No new parking was included in the Town's proposal to the state.

The council is expected to take up the matter at its first meeting in August, scheduled for Aug. 2 at 6 p.m. in Town Hall.

"Ever since COVID-19 hit, there's definitely been an increase in interest in outdoor passive recreation," the town administrator Brown said. "The Valley has really become an integral part of Middletown, a place on the west side for people to get away and enjoy what makes this town great right in the heart of our community."

A news report indicated Gov. Dan McKee was proud and supportive of the trail grant program, saying it helped everyone enjoy the Ocean State that much more.

"Our state's vast network of recreational trails enhances the enjoyment of Rhode Island's tremendous natural resources and provides an opportunity for people of all ages to enjoy

nature and get fit by taking a walk or a hike in a peaceful, relaxing setting," McKee said. "It is a pleasure to award these federal grants to develop new recreational trails and hiking paths and make needed upgrades to existing facilities in communities across Rhode Island.

Applications were made to DEM over the winter and reviewed by the DEM Trails Advisory Committee. The money can be used to build new trails, or restore and improve existing trails, whether for hiking and similar recreational uses. To accept the money, the Town is on the hook for a 20 percent match, meaning about \$16,000.

"Rhode Island is fortunate to enjoy a strong network of active municipalities and non-profit organizations seeking to provide new and expanded opportunities for Rhode Islanders to explore the beauty of our state's natural areas and woodlands," the acting DEM director Gray said in a news report. "DEM and DOT staff work closely with Federal Highway Administration representatives to support these many wonderful projects."

High Street, Miantonomi Avenue Getting Speed, Safety Review

Part Effort To Further Improve Family Friendly Middletown



Two more of the Town's busier roads are getting a speed and safety review.

At the urging of Councilman Christopher Logan, the Town Council approved a contract earlier this week with PARE Corporation to study High Street and Miantonomi Avenue to see if improvements could be made.

Logan said the idea came about after he visited High Street recently and was concerned about some of the

driving he saw there and other nearby streets.

“I saw somebody blow through the stop sign at the intersection of Paul Avenue, right in front of my own eyes,” Logan said. “I have to take action, we have to do something about it. There are residents that live up there, the (Middletown) Valley (Park) is so accessible there and you have a lot of pedestrians walking that street now because of the access to the Valley.”

In recent years, the Town Council has quietly made the safety of local streets a top priority in Middletown.

New signs, sidewalks and other measures have been installed on several roads, all intended to help slow down traffic naturally and make the community friendlier to pedestrians and bicyclists.

It all started in earnest with a project on Forest Avenue to reduce the amount of cut through traffic between East

Main and West Main roads. Speed tables, speed notification signs and other steps proved to be high impact-low cost changes in the area.

Similar improvements were rolled out on Chase’s Lane, Oliphant Lane, Green End Avenue and other locations. A new three-way stop was put in at the intersection of Mitchell’s Lane, Third Beach Road and Wapping Road to

improve the safety by Howland Park. The Town is in the process of making adjustments to Paradise Avenue, which is used during the summer months as a shortcut to the beaches.

Before PARE Engineering gets too far down the road with its recommendations for High Street and Miantonomi Avenue, council members asked the Lincoln firm to make sure they’d obtained input from neighbors. That way, when any recommendations are put forward to the council, they’ll likely have buy-in from



residents and businesspeople.

“If there’s substantial public input at the workshop and changes need to be made, once the changes are made, the neighbors should look at it again and say ‘Yup! Go to work. That’s exactly what we thought,’” said Councilwoman Terri Flynn, saying she wanted any work done once and done right.



Leashed Dogs Allowed At Town Beaches Until 7:45 AM Only



MIDDLETOWN
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