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Paradise Hills Vineyard & Winery owned by the Ruggiero family opens in Wallingford

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Wallingford is now home to a second Connecticut Wine Trail destination, Paradise Hills Vineyard & Winery. Located on 65 acres at 15 Wind Swept Hill Rd., Paradise Hills is owned and operated by the Ruggiero family. The Ruggieros bought their land in Wallingford in 1977 and have been growing grapes for other Connecticut wineries. According to a recent article in the Meriden Record Journal, Albert Ruggiero, president, said the plan was always to open a winery alongside the vineyard and for the family to produce its own wine. Now that the winery is open, everyone in the family is expected to know each facet of the business, from harvesting the grapes to running the bar and making the wine.

According to Ruggiero, Paradise Hills was designed to be a "relaxing place, where people can sit, relax and enjoy the day". The vineyard offers blends and varieties of wine that are not available elsewhere. Wallingford is now the only town in Connecticut with two stops on the Connecticut Wine Trail. Paradise Hills joins another Wallingford winery, Gouveia Vineyards, a short distance away.

Burns & McDonnell expanding in Wallingford

Burns & McDonnell Engineering has signed a 7.5-year lease for 27,635 s/f at the Campus at Green Hill. Burns regional administrator Carl James said the Campus will be the company's New England regional headquarters. Burns will relocate 85 employees from their current location in Wallingford. The Campus location will provide "room to grow to 120 employees in the next few years". Burns & McDonnell, based in Kansas City, MO, is a full-service engineering, architecture, construction, environmental and consulting firm that is owned by its 3,000 employees. Burns will be joining Anthem Blue Cross & Blue Shield at the Campus at Green Hill. Anthem signed a 10-year lease for 218,000 s/f last year. Both firms will be relocating into the 300,000 s/f building this fall.

Courtyard by Marriott Under Renovation

The Courtyard by Marriott, 600 Northrop Rd., is putting the finishing touches on an \$800,000 renovation to update the hotel's public spaces including the lobby, restaurant, fitness center, meeting rooms and patio. The highlight of the renovations is the new state of the art lobby where the traditional front desk was replaced with separate "welcome pedestals" where guests check in. The lobby also features a new eatery, "The Bistro" with casual, flexible seating, healthier menu options, a light evening fare and a full bar.

Rte. 5 Transformation

With its high traffic count, Wallingford's Rte. 5 retail corridor is bucking the trend and undergoing a transformation. Chef's Equipment Emporium Co., the largest kitchenware retailer in Connecticut, is now anchoring its own shopping plaza on 920 South Colony Rd. When completed, the plaza will be 36,000 s/f and include seven storefronts. Chef's Equipment Emporium will move its retail store to the rear of the plaza and occupy 30,000 s/f.

Staple's Plaza, 1145 North Colony Rd., is undergoing a \$6.9 million facelift. Owned by CT Properties LLC, the 97,200 s/f retail center is anchored by Staples Office Supply and Dollar Tree. Also undergoing renovation on Rte. 5 is 9 South Colony Rd., a centrally located downtown commercial building that has been vacant since the 1970s. The prominent, 3-bay structure, which was formerly Gaetano's Tavern, is being renovated into office space which was recently leased to Prudential Realty.

Other transformations along Rte. 5 include: renovation of the Colony Diner, reconstruction of a Burger King at 888 North Colony Rd., reconstruction of Scrubbin Bubbles Car Wash at 895 North Colony Rd., relocation of Executive Kia auto dealership to 1114 North Colony Rd. and several new retailers: Hot Rod Parts, Kiwi Spoon, Charlene Elizabeth Salon and American Muffler & Brake.

Doreen DeSarro, EDP, is the business recruiter for the Town of Wallingford EDC.

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