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## Transforming Newtown

Thursday, October 10, 2013

If we did not already celebrate Christopher Columbus this weekend, we would have to come up with another holiday this second week of October to celebrate the astonishing spectacle of fall in New England. The seasons and weather in this particular pocket of the world are precious coins in the currency of change — and we're not talking about spare change. In the space of a month, our landscape transforms itself from its summer look to its winter look with a flourish that continues to take our breath away, even after a lifetime of Connecticut Octobers. Perhaps the beauty of our fall days has given us a natural predilection for transformation. We find in Newtown these days ample cause for that belief.

In the past nine months, transformation has become a core principle of Newtown after 12/14 in Sandy Hook. That principle set the stage last week, through overwhelming public support, for a new educational facility in Sandy Hook so that a wounded school community can lean into the future with confidence. Emotional and spiritual transformation lies at the heart of the mission of the newly appointed Permanent Sandy Hook Memorial Commission, which will ensure that whatever form our future takes, it will be informed by the reserves of caring and compassion that flowed outward from that dark December day. These may become the most visible landmarks of Newtown's transformation, both a source of hope and resolve.

But we should take equal pride and encouragement from the less visible hallmarks of transformation — independence of thought and action — which can be found everywhere in this town once you become aware of them. Newtown has always been a community interested in its own reinvention and improvement. And that kind of transformation is almost always the work of volunteers, whether it is the group now searching for a new superintendent of schools, the donors who came forward last week with funds for the new playground at Dickinson Park, or even the hardy souls who brought shovels and bent their backs last weekend to plant trees both at the Victory Garden at Fairfield Hills and at the land preserve at Holcombe Hill. It is people pitching in — the ultimate currency of change. And it shines as brightly in Newtown as October.