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THE WESTERLY SUN
Westerly • Stonington • Chariho • Mystic
Wednesday, July 22, 2026

CREATIVE SPACE

Photos by Emma Grunwald, The Westerly Sun

Kari McCabe, owner of Mor, sits on the couch next to her wall display of rugs inside her home goods store located at 61 Water St. in Stonington.

Interior designer sets up shop in Stonington, fulfilling her decades-long dream

By Emma Grunwald
Sun staff writer

STONINGTON — Interior designer Kari McCabe has turned a decades-long dream into reality with the opening of her new home goods store, Mor, on Stonington's historic Water Street, offering a range of curated items to accentuate people's homes.

"The store is something that I've wanted to do for a really long time," McCabe said.

In March, McCabe heard through word of mouth that a space on Water Street was suddenly available. The previous renter, architect Julia Leeming, was moving to a bigger place in Mystic. "I was like, 'Oh, what's happening with their space?'" McCabe said. She calls it a stroke of luck that a spot in the historic building, dating back to 1883, had opened up.

She realized she had a lot of work to do if she wanted to open in time for the summer tourist season. "I had to make things happen quickly," McCabe said.

The interior of Mor, in Stonington Borough.

McCabe has a long history in interior design. She started her own interior design business in 1995 in New York and also studied painting, printmaking, and architecture as an undergraduate student at Yale. Over the years, she would often collaborate with her husband, an architect, and other architects on the interiors of New York apartments. "I did that for about 30, 35 years. And I was always kind of nursing this idea of having a store, but it's hard to find," McCabe said.

The store first opened in the beginning of June, with McCabe designing the interior herself. Her goal was to create a space that is both practical and fun through mixing modern, traditional, vintage, and new items.

"There's a kind of beige sameness to a lot of homes, which, I get it. I think it's very restful, and very soothing, but I think it gets boring pretty quickly," McCabe said.

Mor has decided to start with a range of smaller interior decor items in the store "to test the waters," and see how they sell. Items include a vintage Eero Saarinen side table for $400, vintage vases for $25, linen cloth napkins for $25, and a $125 platter made by Ahmee Ceramics, a local pottery manufacturer.

There's also handmade and recycled glassware, including bowls, plates, and glasses. Her most popular items are decor pillows made from vintage fabric, as well as Swedish botanical trays.

McCabe came up with the idea to add the designs to the trays herself after finding botanical prints in an antique shop in Sweden. "I just love the way these botanicals look. They're

See McCabe, **A2**

FAMILY BUSINESS

Sign of change: Morrone Electric becomes Hallock's Appliances, at the same Main Street spot

By Ryan Blessing
Sun staff writer

WESTERLY — The vibrant new sign announcing Hallock's Appliances in the Main Street building that housed Morrone Electric might have come as a surprise to some.

The transition of ownership from the Morrone family, longtime proprietors of the business, to Hallock's actually happened in 2024. On June 29 however, a public celebration and ribbon cutting on the "new" store took place. Among the attendees were local officials, members of the Morrone family, the Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce, Greater Mystic Chamber and loyal customers.

For decades, Morrone Electric has been a trusted name in the Westerly community. In 2024, a new family duo took over ownership: Gerry Vece and his daughter, Tara.

"Thank you, for being the best dad and business partner, ever," Tara Vece said to Gerry before the ribbon cutting.

Gerry said it was Tara's idea to buy Morrone Electric.

"She kept saying, 'Dad, dad, dad, this is a good business, we've gotta buy it," he said. "We did, and we put some paint on some things, and did some advertising, and we're really, really happy to be here. This is such a nice community."

The June 29 ribbon cutting was

See Hallock's, **A2**

Photo courtesy of Hallock's Appliances

Gerry and Tara Vece, father and daughter, have taken over ownership and operation of the Morrone Electric store on Main Street in Westerly. Last month, it re-branded as Hallock's Appliances.

Chariho eyes dialing back e-devices in its schools

By Joseph Volpe
Sun staff writer

WOOD RIVER JCT. — The Chariho School Committee discussed creating a subcommittee on July 14 to review the use of Chromebooks and other electronic devices in elementary classrooms following concerns raised by parents earlier this year.

School Committee Vice Chairwoman Laura Chapman, the member that added the agenda item, said at the meeting that this was being brought up due to concerned members of the public that reached out in March and requested information about student Chromebook usage.

During that time, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Michael Comella suggested that a subcommittee would potentially be the best way to address the topic, as the discussion of electronic usage entails teacher's contracts and policies, state mandates and the budget, among many other aspects.

"I think there was a push that happened when COVID came to the U.S., and everyone had to get laptops and be online. Now, we're looking at a substantial amount of time later, where there are a lot of parents and educators that are really pushing the brakes on how much tech is being used in classrooms," Chapman said.

She said multiple districts across the country have reverted back to no electronic use, especially for children in grades K-5, and that older grades have been holding "tech-free days," where students are not allowed to use electronic devices throughout the school day, including in learning content.

As an example, Chapman said that the second largest school district in the country, Los Angeles Unified School District, banned the use of electronic devices for students below grade 3. She said there is also medical literature that documents continued electronic use in younger children and the effect it has on their attention spans, among other findings.

"In an effort to try and collaborate with parents and what's best for the kids, I thought that it would be a good idea for Chariho to come up with a subcommittee to work in tandem with the administration for this," Chapman said.

School Committee Chairman Ryan Callahan said when the one-to-one program was established for electronics in 2016, that it was challenged then. Callahan said concerns about one-to-one device programs are not new, citing a Forbes article examining Maine's implementation of a similar initiative.

Callahan agreed on the importance of the topic, but that finding out how to implement the changes would be a very intricate and challenging task.

"The idea of developing a subcommittee where we take a look at how our investment is truly benefiting the students is very intriguing to me," Callahan said. "That being said, I'm very concerned from the standpoint of how we'll integrate this into what work the district does in compliance with mandates from the state, and what the subcommittee's functional output would be."

Chapman envisions Comella having substantial input into the subcommittee, alongside teacher input and community feedback. Superintendent of Schools Gina Picard said teacher involvement would

See Chariho, **A3**

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