

# The Yankee Xpress

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## Nichols College tees up new life for Dudley Hill Golf Club

BY ROD LEE

Nichols College President Glenn Sulmasy telephoned recently with the exciting word that the school has resumed full management of Dudley Hill Golf Club, which is situated almost within a five iron of its Center Road campus.

"This will further solidify our longstanding relationship with the golf course," Mr. Sulmasy said. It also strengthens Nichols' ties with the town of Dudley.

"The histories are inextricably linked between the town and the school," he said.

Last year, the school provided fireworks to honor the contributions of the town's selectmen. This year, it is doing the same for first responders.

Nichols currently utilizes Dudley Hill for its men's golf team practices and will be starting a women's golf team this year. Both programs will be led by Head Coach Tim Howard, who came on board in 2015.

Dramatic change is already



Nichols College's strong student connection to the Dudley Hill Golf Club—now under new management—is reflected by the presence of Colin Wallace, Brian Kallajian and Will Kleinhertz, pictured here in the pro shop.

apparent at the newly named "Dudley Hill Golf Club at Nichols College," Mr. Sulmasy said. As evidence of this, a partnership has been established with Pennsylvania-based BrightView Golf

Maintenance, which will oversee maintenance of the 3,241-yard,

**NICHOLS**

continued on page 2



CHECK OUT OUR ANNUAL SUMMER GUIDE, INSIDE!

## Robert Conroy Memorial Bridge salutes an American hero

BY ROD LEE

With placement of a beautiful monument at Southbridge and Water streets in Auburn last year, Gary Conroy and his loved ones "didn't want to forget" members of the family who had served their country.

Notable among them is Robert Conroy, who is now being further honored by the naming of the I-290 eastbound bridge over Water Street as the "Robert Conroy Memorial Bridge."

This new development can be

credited to legislation filed by State Rep. Paul Frost, R-Auburn, with an assist from Michael Moore, D-Millbury; passed recently, on Beacon Hill.

As Gary Conroy pointed out during a brief ceremony at the site of the Conroy monument at the start of the Memorial Day weekend on May 26th, and with his sister Sheila among those looking on, Robert Conroy's brief life was one of exemplary achievement.

Robert grew up "on this very land and this was the home of our construction business and we had a family farm with horses," Mr. Conroy said.

Early on, Robert "developed his love of God and country from his experience at All Saints (Episcopal) Church" in Worcester, where he was a member of the choir and a soloist.

In an aside, Mr. Conroy men-

**BRIDGE**

continued on page 4

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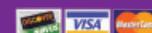
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## NICHOLS

*continued from page 1*

nine-hole layout.

This is only part of Dudley Hill's new lease on life. The clubhouse has been redesigned by Glenn Sulmasy's wife Marla to give golfers and the public a restaurant and bar "where folks can relax with a steak, a cheeseburger, hot dog, and a beer"—an ingredient that was sorely missing, to the extent it is now being provided. There is now "a nice menu, in a great spot," he said.

"My wife redesigned the whole thing," Mr. Sulmasy said, of what is called "the Bison Den."

A homey atmosphere prevails.

The news of a fresh start for the club could not come at a better time, as Dudley Hill approaches its 100th anniversary in 2026.

The Devereaux Emmett-designed

course features rolling hills, is in tiptop shape, and offers a challenge to golfers of all abilities.

Adding to the buzz Nichols College's takeover of the club is generating around town is the prospect of Nichols students from the Sports Management, Hospitality Management and other Business concentrations overseeing day-to-day operations while also acquiring practical work experience.

"Marla is running things now, cooking, cleaning, and it's student-driven," Mr. Sulmasy said. "We have sixteen interns working at the club this spring."

The relation-

ship with BrightView is a crucial connection, he said.

"The Nichols College community is delighted to partner with BrightView at our wonderful golf course and Bison Den clubhouse," Mr. Sulmasy said. "Their professionalism, expertise and dedication to the customer experience is well-known and highly regarded. Robert LaVigne, vice president



Above, Bruce Gagnon, Tony George and Ron Schonborg wait to tee off at Dudley Hill Golf Club at Nichols College on May 31st. All are members of the club.

Left, the redesigned "Bison Den" at Dudley Hill Golf Club at Nichols College.

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for operations, and I have been nothing but impressed with BrightView's expertise. Our club managers who will oversee the student experiential learning opportunities, Dr. Tim Liptrap and Marla Sulmasy, MBA, MSAT, are excited to have the BrightView Golf Maintenance team joining both our golf and Nichols community."

Vince Gilmartin, vice president of BrightView Golf Maintenance, said the company is thrilled to be teaming up with Nichols College to ensure that "Dudley Hill lives up to its classic Devereaux Emmett design."

BrightView boasts forty years in the industry, and more than eighty partner courses. BrightView notes with pride its refinement of the art, science and operations of golf course maintenance to bring BrightView clients better playing conditions, reductions in cost and improved crew training.

BrightView will be responsible for all aspects of course maintenance at Dudley Hill, including turf, irrigation and equipment, with a main focus on always providing the finest golf course conditions.

"BrightView is extremely well-known for landscaping, they've been terrific," Mr. Sulmasy said.

"Marla Sulmasy did an incredible job" reformatting the restaurant and bar area, Tim Liptrap said on May 31st.

Scorecards in the pro shop now read "Dudley Hill Golf Club at Nichols College."

With between 150 and 170 members, leagues throughout the week and a golf camp coming up, the future is rosy for the revitalized club.

Contact Rod Lee at [rodlee.1963@gmail.com](mailto:rodlee.1963@gmail.com) or 774-232-2999.

## The Yankee Xpress

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**Contact us:**  
 Rod Lee, Editor: [rodlee.1963@gmail.com](mailto:rodlee.1963@gmail.com)  
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 Laura Gleim, Billing & Sales: [lgleim@theyankeeexpress.com](mailto:lgleim@theyankeeexpress.com)  
 Bill Cronan, Blackstone Valley Sales: [bcronan@theyankeeexpress.com](mailto:bcronan@theyankeeexpress.com)

Kimberly Vasseur, Production Manager  
 Sally Patterson, Graphic Artist / Carol Kosth, Graphic Artist  
 Contributing Writers and Columnists: Tom D'Agostino, Christine Galeone, Amy Palumbo-Leclair, Janet Stoica

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# Xpressly Yours ... a letter from the editor

## No such thing as bad blood among local legislators

**G**reeting them just before a ceremony marking the naming of a bridge for local World War II hero Robert Conroy in Auburn on May 26th, I couldn't help but think that Paul Frost had won "The Battle of the Ties" over Michael Moore.



BY ROD LEE

Maybe it was the ensemble Mr. Frost had put together: blue jacket, blue tie checkered with white mark-

ings, blue shirt of a slightly softer shade, khaki slacks, black shoes.

Color coordinated and quite impressive.

Of course, there was no competition for the honor of Best Dressed involved—and Mr. Moore looked dapper in his own right for the start of the Memorial Day weekend.

Nor is there any friction or animosity between Mr. Frost, a Republican, and Mr. Moore, a Democrat. None of the backbit-



Rep. Paul Frost and Sen. Michael Moore speak at a ceremony signaling the naming of a bridge in Auburn in honor of World War II hero Robert Conroy.



ing and vitriol that can regularly be witnessed between members of opposite political parties in Washington, or at some state houses and town halls across the country.

That is the thing about the Central Massachusetts and Blackstone Valley legislative delegations. An unmistakable rapport and common sense of purpose exists within their ranks.

Rep. Frost and Sen. Moore are evidence of this. Paul Frost, who lives in Auburn, has served the 7th Worcester District since being elected at the age of twenty-six in 1996. Mike Moore, a lifelong resident of Millbury, won his seat in the 2nd Worcester District in 2008.

Those who disparage "career politicians" often overlook the large swath of territory these of-

icials are responsible for, on Beacon Hill; areas that demand much of their time and effort—including after-hours' commitments. Rep. Frost's district includes all or parts of Auburn, Charlton, Leicester, Millbury and Oxford. Sen. Moore's district includes all or parts of Auburn, Grafton, Millbury, Shrewsbury, Westborough and Worcester.

When it was their turn to offer brief remarks, Mr. Frost had high praise for the assistance Mr. Moore provided in shepherding a bill Mr. Frost sponsored through to an affirmative vote, on Robert Conroy's family's behalf.

"It took some time, these bills

are not so simple and easy to do, to name bridges after people who in their lives and actions have earned it and that's what Robert Conroy did," Rep. Frost said.

For his part, Sen. Moore noted that Robert Conroy, who was killed in action in Italy along with his service dog, "made the sacrifice for others."

Sen. Moore might have been speaking for both Rep. Frost and himself when he said "having an opportunity like this is one of the best parts of the job."

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## BRIDGE

continued from page 1

tioned that All Saints is referenced in the book "Episodes of a Real Life" by Raymond Wentworth, and that Kevin Neel, current director of the choir at All Saints, was in attendance at the ceremony.

In high school, Robert Conroy played football and baseball, was on the track team, and participated in such extracurricular activities as Glee Club.

Upon graduation in 1943, he immediately enlisted and joined the Army's "Dog Platoon."

Robert "was the only member of his platoon allowed to go to the war front in Italy," in 1945. "He and his dog saved his entire patrol from ambush the night before he died. He was killed the next morning when hit by an artillery. Robert and his dog both died."



Gary Conroy reflects on the life and heroic actions of Robert Conroy in World War II during a ceremony at the Conroy family monument in Auburn on May 26th. The "Robert Conroy Memorial Bridge" will further recognize Mr. Conroy's relative's sacrifice on behalf of "God and country."



Robert Conroy with his war dog Kosky

Robert Conroy was a recipient of the Purple Heart, posthumously, for his heroic actions.

Rep. Frost and Sen. Moore both said the Robert Conroy Memorial Bridge is a fitting tribute to a man whose family's roots in the town of Auburn are firmly entrenched.

"I want to find a way to honor" Robert Conroy's service dog, as well," Rep. Frost said, in thanking Sen. Moore for his help getting the bill passed, and "the Massachusetts

DOT for their cooperation."

The Massachusetts DOT will place and maintain a marker on the bridge.

In his remarks, Sen. Moore said "in seventh grade I was told by my history teacher that if we don't honor history we repeat it. We don't want to see another war again. Robert made the sacrifice for others."

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# Carla Morano ends long run as director at Jack & Jill Preschool

BY ROD LEE

Something of a fuss is being made about Carla Morano's imminent retirement as director of the Jack & Jill Pre-School in North Oxford—appropriately so.

Ms. Morano is the daughter of Betty Cross Fisher, who founded

“So many kids have gone through that school, six of us,” Ms. Lirange said.

Ms. Morano was treated to a sendoff at Oxford High School on Sunday, May 7th. She was recognized too at a meeting of the Oxford Board of Selectmen. “The chairman of the Board of Selectmen came

the staff and the parents. We just had a fancy dance at Oxford High and the parents put so much energy into it.”

Ms. Morano's children are now 45, 44 and 39 “and they definitely have that pride” of having attended Jack & Jill, she said. “Schools tell us which kids went to Jack & Jill. The state of education is always changing. We want our own students to have an edge and be fully confident and go off to further learning with strong skills.”

Retirement “will be bittersweet, but it's time and time for new ideas.”

As for her own future plans, “I enjoy gardening, reading and we

are go to do some traveling. I don't know what my next chapter will be but I'm a high-energy person.

“I've always had a dream of working with children.”

Addressing the mark that Carla Morano has left on the school, Jane Toner said “she has had a considerable influence in her role as director, meeting the needs in the community at an accredited, safe and nurturing place for preschool children to thrive.”

In fact, Ms. Morano points out that “we are licensed by the state and also nationally accredited. We were just re-accredited for another five years, that's a high pinnacle to

achieve. There are not too many schools around that have that distinction.”

The school's relationship with The First Baptist Church has been integral to its success.

“It has been a good partnership, because we like supporting each other. We have the whole downstairs.”

Melissa Borgeson, who has been on the staff of Jack & Jill Preschool five years, has been in training and will succeed Ms. Morano as director.”

Contact Rod Lee at [rodlee.1963@gmail.com](mailto:rodlee.1963@gmail.com) or 774-232-2999.



Carla Morano, right, who is retiring as director of Jack & Jill Preschool in North Oxford, is joined by her sisters Carrie Cross-Tiraboschi and Candy Lirange at a celebration of Ms. Morano's contributions to the school on May 7th.

the school fifty-eight years ago—in 1965. What began as Ms. Cross Fisher's belief that kids in Auburn and Oxford should be able to go to kindergarten when there were no such programs in the public schools at the time has grown into a much larger operation.

Housed at The First Baptist Church on Main Street, the school started with a first class of less than a dozen. Ms. Morano's sister Candace “Candy” L. Lirange was in that first class. Today there are sixty-five students—three, four and five year-olds—from fourteen different towns, and a staff of twelve. There is also a waiting list for admittance.

Education is a cornerstone of Ms. Morano's family's public life. Her sister Candy Lirange is a Spanish teacher at Oxford High and runs a Spanish program for preschoolers at Jack & Jill. Ms. Morano's husband Rocco J. Morano is a retired elementary-school principal.

here and members of the Oxford Police Department were at the meeting and their children went to Jack and Jill too,” Ms. Morano said from her office on May 16th.

“This year alone we have so many parents who were students here. One teacher, half of her class went here.”

Ms. Morano's involvement with the Jack & Jill Pre-School, and her family's, is pretty special. All three of Ms. Morano's children attended, as did other family members. Ms. Morano started as a teacher at Jack and Jill in 1988 and took over as director in 1998, following four others who had held the position.

“It definitely has grown,” Ms. Moran said, of the school. “At one point we had one hundred thirty-two students but some parents wanted longer days than we were able to offer them.

“I feel like it's a very special place here,” she said. “Such harmony with

## EXCITING NEWS!

Starting in July, The YankeeXpress will run in the full towns of Charlton, Dudley and Webster on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday and in the towns of Auburn and Oxford on the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of each month.

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# Family-owned Blackmer Farms brimming with plants, vegetables

BY JANET STOICA

The Blackmer family's fifth generation is carrying on the family name and business while being proud to do so as they look forward to providing their home-grown plants and vegetables to the local community for many years to come.

"We offer our customers what they like and are happy to do so," said Michaela Kelley, wife of Dan Kelley whose grandparents worked the land. "This working farm was originally a dairy operation. In the 1960's a decision was made to close the dairy operation and transition to a fresh vegetable and greenhouse business. Sweet corn was the first product offered and the expansion to where we are today has just flourished. Lots of the family's hard work has produced wonderful plants, vegetables, and our own farm-raised cuts of USDA beef, pork, and chicken."

This bountiful and palate-pleasing agricultural marketplace is just a short hop over the Connecticut state line and you'll be happy you took the short scenic ride to their greenhouses.

Blackmer's opened for the sea-

son to its loyal customers in April and on Memorial Day weekend will offer beautiful cemetery baskets as well. There are plenty of annual and perennial plants for the public to pick from whether in attractive hanging baskets or plastic six-packs for your home garden. The greenhouse will be open for customers in May and June for those wanting decorative plants such as superbell petunias (a hummingbird favorite), impatiens, and Dragon Wing begonias (a robust and heat-tolerant variety producing abundant flowers all summer). Also in the mix are geraniums, verbena, and fuchsia.

Their vegetable plant offerings are many with over forty varieties of tomatoes and peppers. "Every customer has their own personal favorite of plants that they come here for," said Ms. Kelley, "but some of our tomato varieties are Big Boy, Roma, Sun Sugar cherry tomatoes, and super-sweet cherry tomatoes. We grow and seed everything ourselves in February and work the greenhouses for three months growing everything from seed. When the plants come in they're the size of your thumb. We nurture the baby plants. We do buy



seeds from various seed companies and grow our plants from those."

Their pepper varieties include jalapeño and Carolina Reapers which Guinness World Records declared to be the hottest chili pepper in the world. The Carolina registers 1,641,183 SHU on the Scoville Scale of heat pungency. That's enough to make you sweat 'til January! Of course, Blackmer's also carries a nice selection of bell peppers of many colors as well as banana peppers. Additional vegetable plants include Marketmore cucumbers, pickling cukes; summer, zucchini, butternut and acorn squash; classic eggplant; candy and



Jessica, Michaela and Daniel, part of the welcoming team at family-owned Blackmer Farms.

red onions; leeks; Bravo and Blue Lagoon cabbage; broccoli, cauliflower, and Brussel sprouts. All of these vegetable plants are available through May and June or until they are sold out. Get 'em fast and while they last!

Of course, no vegetable listing would be complete without mentioning that when the time is right, their own sweet corn is available for us to relish in the good ol' summertime! Two varieties of sweet corn that patrons enjoy are butter and sugar (the white and gold kernels) and Silver Queen (white kernels). Other items for summer purchase are their own tomatoes, summer squash, zucchini, eggplant, peppers, and fresh fruit from other local farms that includes apples, peaches (if available, as the frost this past year hindered the peach crop), blueberries, and sweet plums.

In 2017, the farm began selling itsr own pasture-raised USDA-certified beef (including porterhouse and other steak cuts, tenderloins,

boneless sirloin, ribeyes, and roasts); non-GMO pork (chops, sausage, ribs, and bacon); and non-GMO free-range chicken (whole and half-cuts).

The fall will bring live seasonal decorations in addition to corn stalks, mums, pumpkins, jack-o'-lanterns, and gourds for your home's embellishment. The farm also sells hay (round and rectangular bales) to horse farms and anyone else in need of the product.

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"Agriculture is the greatest and fundamentally the most important of our industries. The cities are but branches of the tree of national life, the roots of which go deeply into the land. We all flourish or decline with the farmer." Bernard Baruch

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# Memorial Day 2023

Memorial Day 2023 in Webster began early in the morning for local veterans who made their yearly trek to all local cemeteries in remembrance of those who gave the supreme sacrifice to keep the country free.

Kickoff for the parade was 11 a.m. with veterans groups, police, fire, schools, scouts and civic groups participating. The Pulaski Brass Band, Bartlett High School Band and Shepherd Hill Regional High School Band all marched to patriotic tunes. A float this year was sponsored by Webster Fish and

ans Council Commander Victor Jankowski. A Navy veteran, Mr. Marier was presented with a plaque commemorating the honor he received as Grand Marshal.

The National Anthem was sung by Ellie Adams, a graduating senior at Bartlett High School. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by Francesca Zacarro, a third grade student at All Saints School. The Gettysburg Address was read by Pharell Assizo, a senior at Bartlett High School.

The solemn placing of the wreaths was handled by local veterans and citizens.



Above, Veterans and lifelong friends Mike, Mitch and Tom.

## Game Club.

The Webster Court of Honor was the site of the annual Memorial Day program on a beautiful Monday afternoon.

Master of Ceremonies for the program was former State Rep. Paul Kujawski who introduced Veterans Council Chaplain Randy Snow to give the invocation.

Grand Marshal Adelard Leo Marier was recognized by Veter-

Guest speaker for the program was Stephen Rogerson, a certified Massachusetts and VA Accredited Veterans Services Officer for the town of Dudley for the past seven years. Mr. Rogerson is an Army veteran who served more than twelve years in both domestic and foreign duties from the Cold War through Desert Storm in the Field Artillery.



Above, Grand Marshal: Commander Victor Jankowski presents plaque to Grand Marshal Adelard Marier.

Left, 3 generations of the Lipski family.

Below, George Bibeau, Grand Marshal Adelard Marier and Sen. Ryan Fattman.



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# Chester P. Tuttle Post 279 marking a 100th anniversary

BY ROD LEE

Memorial Day 2023 and the week or so beyond that occasion were extra special for members of the Chester P. Tuttle Post 279 American Legion in Auburn this year, as the facility celebrated its 100th anniversary.

Tom O'Rourke who is sergeant-at-arms and also incoming commander of the Post, and Happy Erickson, who sits on the E-Board, served as co-chairs for the festivities, which were observed on Sunday, June 4th starting with a social hour from noon to 1:00 p.m.

Past Commander Rich Larson took on the role of master of ceremonies for the event. Remarks were offered by Mr. O'Rourke and Sally Nay, who is deputy commander. A meal and entertainment will follow.

The Tuttle Post traces its history to July 14, 1922, when a group of men whose vocations varied from chauffeur to engineer met at the Stoneville schoolhouse. All were veterans of "the Great War." Albert J. Eno became the first commander of

"Volunteer Post 279" with Ralph Sibley as vice commander, Clifton Stone as post adjutant and Raymond Grosvenor as treasurer. All these years later, membership as grown from fifteen to four hundred thirty. Over the years the Post has made many financial and physical contributions to "community, state and nation."

The program booklet produced for the anniversary celebration includes a sketch of Phyllis Gallant, Pharmacist 3rd Class in the U.S. Navy upon her discharge in 1946. Now 102 years old, Ms. Gallant joined Post 279 and served as assistant chaplain and held the title of chaplain or assistant chaplain for fifty-four years. She has been presented with the Boston Post Cane as the town's oldest resident, and the Riley Award for community service. She is well remembered for the many years she spun tickets for the Post's meat raffle, and is still a welcome sight at the Post, at the bar "having a beer with the guys," Mr. O'Rourke says.

"As a Post we are doing quite well," Mr. Erickson said on May

17th. He was CPT Post 279's chef for thirty-eight years, going back to the Post's days operating out of an old schoolhouse on Southbridge St.

Activities that take place throughout the week at Chester P. Tuttle Post 279 American Legion include the "Dream Wheels of New England's Tuesday Night Cruising" through October 10th. This began on May 16th, Organizer John Weston said, "and we had thirty to thirty-five cars the first night"

Tuesday Night Cruising features antique cars and trucks, collectible late models, military vehicles, off-road race cars, motorcycles, a BBQ, an outdoor bar, special surprises, a 50/50 raffle "and more."

Post 279 again played an active role in Auburn's Memorial Day Parade on Monday, May 29th. Parade staging took place at 9:00 a.m. for the 1st Division, 2nd Division and 3rd Division following a service at Bethel Lutheran Church on Sunday, May 28th at 9:00 a.m.

The Memorial Day Committee included Steven Gallant, commander, Bill MacLean, finance officer,



Tom O'Rourke and Happy Erickson are co-chairs of the Chester P. Tuttle Post 279 American Legion's 100th anniversary festivities, which will take place on June 4th.

Eric Sunden, Sr. vice commander, Tina Sunden, auxiliary historian, John Lauzon, Post commander, John Doherty from the E-Board, Millie Larson, auxiliary president, David Gallant, SAL commander and Giuelana Valera, auxiliary.

Steve Gallant was grand marshal for the parade, the Order of March for which included the Auburn Fire Department, Auburn Middle School Band, Auburn Police Department, Auburn Explorer Scouts, Auburn Boy Scouts, Auburn Girl Scouts,

Auburn Campfire Girls, Auburn Blue Birds, Auburn Brownies, Auburn Cub Scouts and McCoy Action Karate.

Remembrance exercises took place at Hillside Cemetery. Chester P. Tuttle was wounded in France on October 31, 1918 and died the following day. His body was brought to Auburn in 1921 for services at the First Congregational Church, of which he was a member. He is interred in the Tuttle family plot in Hillside Cemetery.



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5:30 p.m. Yoga for All	4 p.m. Yoga for All	7 p.m. Chair Yoga, Flexibility & Balance	7:00 p.m. Gentle & Restorative	11:30 a.m. Chair Yoga, Flexibility & Balance		
7 p.m. Flow Yoga	5:30 p.m. Beginners Yoga					9:00 a.m. Morning Shine Yoga
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# A Nation of Immigrants: Elefteria Xega

BY JANET STOICA

*This is the fourth in a series of articles about local immigrants and their lives in the United States, why they came, how they lived, and what their outlook is about this country.*

**H**ave you visited Lake Pizza & Restaurant in Webster? If you have then you've probably seen a spunky and



*Elefteria came to America with her family, learned English and waitresses at Lake Pizza in Webster.*

customer-friendly wait staffer named Elefteria. She's one of the great staffers at Lake Pizza who is always at your side when you need a good hot meal or a nicely shaken martini. She gives you the best dining experience you could ever have and always with a smile.

Born in Albania, a beautiful country tucked under the republic of Montenegro on southeastern Europe's Balkan Peninsula, Elefteria always considered herself Greek as her grandparents were from Greece. Albania shares a southern border with Greece. As the "winner" in a lottery that would allow her to emigrate to the United States in 2004, she took the opportunity with her husband, Dhimitraq Xega, and two children. Their oldest daughter, age 19, was attending college in Athens, Greece and was accepted at Clark University in Worcester where she finished her degree in accounting, has become a CPA and also obtained

her teaching credentials. Their younger daughter was a high school sophomore at the time of the emigration and transferred to a Worcester high school and then graduated from Holy Cross College with a biochemistry degree. She furthered her education by obtaining a master's degree in science from Harvard and currently works in the lab of a pharmaceutical company. No doubt about it, Elefteria is a very proud mom as she describes what her daughters have accomplished.

"My husband and I came here for a better life for our children," she said, "I am very glad we came. We worked hard and found ourselves." Lefteri was an accountant in her native Albania and her husband was a professor of veterinary science. "We couldn't practice what we had been educated in when we came here so I worked at a Dunkin Donuts on Park Avenue in Worcester for 25 years. I made donuts, bagels and other baked goods. My day started very early as we began selling our products at 4 a.m. It was a bit scary being in the bakery with a small staff at that hour but it all worked out. At first, working the night shift was very hard. I didn't speak English. The language barrier was very hard. I briefly thought about returning to Albania but my husband didn't want to return. I went to Clark University for a year to learn English. My husband worked at a Worcester gun factory 60+ hours weekly and then worked for a friend's cleaning business for extra money. We really didn't have time to further our education here. We focused on supporting our family. In 2007, we moved to Webster as my husband's friend worked at Lake Pizza and the employment opportunity presented itself."

Lefteri can speak four languages: Greek, Albanian, Romanian, and English. Absolutely amazing but not uncommon in Europe. Seems like the Foreign Service certainly might've been a great opportunity for her in her younger years before her family came along. When the Albanian lottery brought her and her

family good fortune to make the trip to America they came with trepidation and certainly fear of the unknown. Her husband, Dhimitraq, truly seemed to be the real catalyst for the family's moving decision. Dhimitraq had to promise his daughters that if they didn't like America, he would let them return to their home country. Obviously, everything worked out as their daughters' successes were absolutely wonderful. "My husband's sister was here in America already," said Lefteri, "We stayed with her for one week and then found a rental house for our family. We always wanted to buy our own place but then my husband passed away from illness in 2015 and that never happened."

Lefteri described her oldest daughter's experience while attending orientation at Clark University. She said her daughter came home in tears because of her limited English skills and seriously considered returning to Athens but her husband convinced his daughter that she should try one semester and then make a decision. It worked and all was well. The interesting facet of the education system in Greece is that if you are a dean's list student, the government will pay for your tuition and you take care of the cost of books. Her daughters did very well in the U.S. Because of their good grades, they were able to obtain several scholarships but the Xega parents' share

of the remaining tuition was still quite expensive. They managed it all however.

The Xega family studied hard and long for their U.S. citizenship tests. They all passed successfully in 2009. "We knew the United States was the best place in the world to be," said Lefteri, "I love the U.S. If my husband were still with me I'd be so much happier though. We've been blessed with two grandchildren ages 10 and 8 from our oldest daughter, Eleni, who is married to John

Sgouritsas, owner of Lake Pizza & Restaurant; and with two more grandchildren from our youngest daughter, Kristina, aged 2 and a newborn. Last summer when I visited Albania, a restaurant owner approached me and asked my opinion about coming to the U.S. Without hesitation, I told him to make his plans."

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# Hiring headache real at restaurants, including Bentley Pub

BY ROD LEE

Life for restaurateurs like Steve Bingham of Bentley Pub in Auburn is about to get even more difficult in the days ahead, Stephen Clark, president and CEO of the Massachusetts Restaurant Association says.

Recently, Mr. Clark told a gathering of business leaders at the University of Massachusetts Club, as reported by the State House News Service, that profitability for restaurants is down in the after-

math of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the biggest impacts stemming from inflation and labor costs.

Now, there is a move afoot to raise the Commonwealth's minimum wage still again, by another dollar, from \$15 per hour. This would translate into a \$1000 increase per employee, which would have a "cascading effect" for all workers in the industry.

"I don't have any minimum wage issues," Mr. Bingham told The Feisty Fork on June 1st. "I have no employees working at minimum wage. I do have servers working at \$6.75 per hour."

Bentley Pub's more pressing

challenge is on the hiring front.

"Very difficult," Mr. Bingham said, of finding people to work. And it's across the board at Bentley Pub, wait staff, line cooks and so on.

The MRA's Mr. Clark does not believe the minimum wage fight will resurface this year, but it could in 2024.

The Raise Up Massachusetts coalition—a meshing of organized labor and community groups that influenced passage in 2018 of the "grand bargain" law, setting Massachusetts on the path to a \$15 minimum wage—now has its sights set on another hike. The coalition is backing legislation



A turkey burger plate at Bentley Pub in Auburn.

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that would gradually increase the minimum wage to \$20 by 2027 and nearly double the minimum wage for tipped workers to \$12 an hour. The latter move would definitely impact Bentley Pub.

In the interim, Steve Bingham says the minimum wage issue is undoubtedly of more concern to "consumers" in Central Massachusetts. "It doesn't affect me as much as the person who pays \$30 for a meal at McDonald's," he says.

The Raise Up people filed paperwork in March exploring an initiative petition, the goal of which, they say, is "building shared prosperity in the Commonwealth through higher mini-

mum wages and fair and adequate taxation."

Small businesses should be forewarned, if this were to advance to become a ballot question in 2024, Steve Clark says.

Ballot questions are "very expensive to defend," he said.

Hiring challenges, inflation, labor costs and steep health-insurance costs are battering small businesses; on top of this, nearly 60% of Bay Staters support a minimum wage increase to \$20 per hour.

Contact Rod Lee at [rodlee.1963@gmail.com](mailto:rodlee.1963@gmail.com) or 774-232-2999.



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# Happenings!

**NOTE:** Community bulletin board-type items are welcome for inclusion in the *Happenings!* section of the Xpress newspapers. Please allow enough lead time for publication. Email your calendar or event notice to [rodlee.1963@gmail.com](mailto:rodlee.1963@gmail.com).

## JUNE 1-30

• "Views from a Palace," paintings and drawings by Jim Palace, will be on display and for sale throughout the month at Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 E. Main St.,

Town Common in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the construction of the General Rufus Putnam Museum building at 4 Uxbridge Road. This Picnic Reunion is for anyone who attended school in the building during its time as both an elementary and a high school. For more information or to share memories about the many uses to which the building has been put, including as a Masonic Hall, a DAR facility, a public school and a library, email [Sutton1704@gmail.com](mailto:Sutton1704@gmail.com).

• The Millbury Women's Club will host "Under the Tent," a concert with singing sensation Dan the Singing Trooper and his wife Mary Colarusso a coloratura soprano performing, at 6:00 p.m.. There will be a cash bar, raffles and an evening of "incredibly beautiful and inspirational" entertainment. Contact Jane Cheetham for tickets at [jane.cheetham@gmail.com](mailto:jane.cheetham@gmail.com). Space is limited.



The grand opening of The Pewter Pot in Whitinsville will be celebrated with a ribbon cutting on Friday, June 16 at 11:00 a.m.

Webster. A meet-the-artist reception will take place on Saturday, June 10 from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. Inspired by landscapes across the eastern coast, Mr. Palace's watercolors and colored pencil drawings capture views from the past several years involving travels he has made throughout Cape Cod, New Hampshire and North Carolina. Primarily self-taught, he has refined his craft under the tutelage of Ed Turner. Mr. Palace's skilled application of scumbling, crosshatching and burnishing can be seen in such works as "Taylor's Crossing" and "Times in the Orchard."

## FRIDAY, JUNE 9

• The Sutton Historical Society will host a Brown Bag Picnic Reunion on the Sutton

## SATURDAY, JUNE 10

• Picnic in the Park, the Whitin Community Center's popular event with food trucks, live entertainment, community vendors, a doll and pet parade, a dunk tank and more, returns to Whitin Park, 60 Main St., Whitinsville. Visit [www.WhitinCommunityCenter.com](http://www.WhitinCommunityCenter.com) for further details.

• St. Patrick's Church's Spring Recycling Event will take place at 7 East St., Whitinsville, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Profits will benefit upcoming VIA service projects. Accepting gently used books (no encyclopedias), gently used textiles/clothing,

## HAPPENINGS!

*continued on page 12*



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**HAPPENINGS!**

*continued from page 11*

electronics for a fee (no propane, batteries, light bulbs), rinsed bottles/cans returnable in MA, paper shredding (\$8 a box, 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. only). Please keep items for each station separate. For more information and electronics pricing, call 508-234-5656 or email officesupport@mystpatrick.com.

- The Auburn Historical Society & Museum will host a Yard Sale, 40 South St., Auburn, 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. No Early Birds please.
- Soorp Asdvadzadzin Armenian Church, 315 Church St., Whitinsville, will host its annual Community Yard Sale from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Vendor space is available. For reservations, email Jeff at katama@gmail.com.
- The Douglas Historical Society's Rhubarbs Challenge on Main Street is back. Entries

- will be accepted between 10:00 and 11:00 a.m. with judging set to begin at 11:00 a.m.
- Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 E. Main St., Webster, presents "An Evening of Music with Sam Bowen and Blue Cat Groove," an award-winning blues band based in New England. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. for the 6:30 p.m. show. General admission tickets are limited and can be purchased in person at Booklovers' Gourmet, by calling 508-949-6232 or online at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/581099784097>.
- Get The Led Out performs at Indian Ranch, 200 Gore Road, Webster, 7:00 p.m. [www.indianranch.com](http://www.indianranch.com).

**SUNDAY, JUNE 11**

- The New England Country Music Club hosts the Rustic Country band for entertainment and dancing at the Progressive Club, 18 Whittin St., Uxbridge. Doors open at 12:15 p.m. with live music from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. [www.facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub](http://www.facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub).
- Kip Moore performs at Indian Ranch, 200 Gore Road, Webster, 1:00 p.m. [www.indianranch.com](http://www.indianranch.com).

**JUNE 11 & JUNE 24**

- The Northbridge Historical Commission in partnership with the Northbridge Historical Society and a funding grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council will present a two-part historical event, "Connecting with Our Community through Culture, History and Architecture." This begins at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 11 in the Northbridge Town Hall Selectmen's Room. Then on Saturday, June 24, an Historical Trolley Tour of Northbridge will roll with four times of 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m. or 1:00 p.m. offered. Reservations are required. Contact Christine Johnson at 508-395-9761 or email [cfu-lone@verizon.net](mailto:cfu-lone@verizon.net) to register or for more information.

**MONDAY, JUNE 12**



*This 1928 Chrysler Model 72 Roadster is part of a stunning collection of classic-era automobiles that will be on display Father's Day weekend at the American Heritage Museum in Hudson.*

- Blackstone Valley Tech's 24th annual golf tournament will be held at Highfields Golf & Country Club, 42 Magill Drive, Grafton will proceed benefitting the school's Education Foundation and Athletic Department activities and programs. Registration is \$150 for individuals and \$125 per person for a foursome and includes 18 holes on the championship course, golf cart and a buffet dinner. There will be a silent auction and raffles. To register, support the event as a sponsor or donate a raffle item, visit [www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/golftournament](http://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/golftournament).

**TUESDAY, JUNE 13**

- The June Intrepid Readers will meet at the Simon Fairfield Public Library, 290 Main St., Douglas, at 6:30 p.m. Discussion will be about Lara Prior-Palmer's book "Rough Magic: Riding the World's Loneliest Horse Race," which captures the story of the author as a young nineteen-year-old

woman who forged ahead against all odds to become the first winner of the Mongol Derby. This race re-creates the horse messenger system developed by Genghis Khan and lasts for ten days. Call 508-476-2695 for a copy of the book, available in print and audio. Homemade treats inspired by the book will be offered.

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14**

- Lifelong Whitinsville resident and Telegram & Gazette writer Bill Ballou will present a history of the Whittin family at Plummer Place (the Northbridge Senior Center) from 9:30 to 10:15 a.m. Sign up in the main office.

**THURSDAY, JUNE 15**

- The Dudley Grange's annual Strawberry Festival will be held on the Grange's grounds on Dudley Hill at 139 Center Road.
- The New Sound Assembly Barbershop Chorus will perform at Plummer Place (the Northbridge Senior Center) from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. Light refreshments will be served. Sign up in the main office.

**FRIDAY, JUNE 16**

- The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce will host a grand opening ribbon-cutting ceremony for The Pewter Pot, 670 Linwood Ave., Whitinsville, at 11:00 a.m. The family-owned store is located in the former Linwood Mill Payroll Building and features old-fashioned primitive country and Amish furniture, décor, housewares, gifts, crafts, candles, soaps, natural dog treats, antiques and collectibles and home-town Americana. In heralding the event, which is free and open to the public, BVCC President and CEO Jeannie Hebert said visitors will delight in The Pewter Pot's "warm aromas of fresh wood, burning candles and coffee."




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**HAPPENINGS!**

*continued on page 13*

**HAPPENINGS!**

*continued from page 12*

**SATURDAY, JUNE 17**

• “Tanks, Wings & Wheels—Featuring American Elegance,” will highlight Father’s Day Weekend at the American Heritage Museum, 568 Main St., Hudson, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Many of the Collings Foundation’s astounding classic automobiles will be out in the sunshine in a

grandiose automobile presentation at 1:00 p.m. daily called American Elegance. Accompanying color vintage radio broadcast narration will be sure to entertain. Several other exhibitions and surprises will be afoot. Historic aircraft and tanks will be on display. The AHM will be open along with the two additional annex buildings on the campus: the AHM aircraft hangar and the AHM automobile collection. Visit americanheritagemuseum.org for further details.  
• The Sutton Historical Society will host its

Annual Town-Wide Yard Sale from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Participant registration forms can be found at sutton-historicalsocietyinc.org. Cost to take part is \$10. New this year is the option to pay via UNIPAY. The Society accepts yard sale donations; please not items such as TVs, computers, monitors, upholstered furniture or clothes. Contact sutton1704@gmail.com to donate.

The Friends of the Sutton Public Library will host a Book Sale from 10:00 a.m. to

2:00 p.m., rain or shine. Donations of books can be made the week prior to the event.

**THURSDAY, JUNE 22**

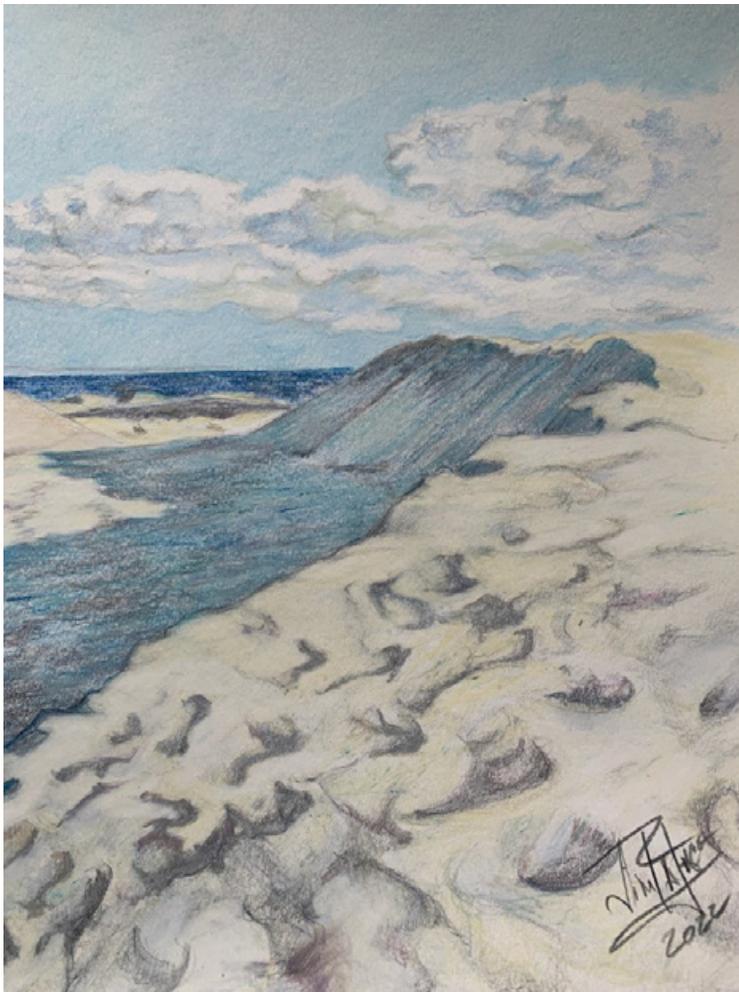
• “What’s Up Doc,” a women’s health forum, will be held from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at Plummer Place (the Northbridge Senior Center), 20 Highland St., Whitinsville. This workshop will feature an open discussion with a panel including a female psychologist, a female psychiatrist “and our very own Dr. Maggie,”

a family medicine provider. Bring your questions, drop them off at the Center or email Amy at acowen@northbridgema.org. Refreshments will be served. Sign up in the main office.

• “The Wonders of Whitinsville” will be presented at 50 Douglas Road in Whitinsville at 6:30 p.m. This program will explore the

**HAPPENINGS!**

*continued on page 14*



A seascape by Jim Palace, whose artwork is on display all month at Booklovers’ Gourmet, 72 E. Main St., Webster.

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**HAPPENINGS!**

*continued from page 13*

influence of the Whitin family in financing and managing a community into one of the most successful textile-manufacturing mill villages in New England. Sponsored by the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.

**SUNDAY, JUNE 25**

• The New England Country Music Club hosts the Rhode Island Rednecks for entertainment and dancing at the Progressive Club, 18 Whitin St., Uxbridge. Doors open at 12:15 p.m. with live music from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. [www.facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub](http://www.facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub).

**THURSDAY, JUNE 29**

• Dan Fontaine, an Elvis tribute artist, will

return to Plummer Place (the Northbridge Senior Center), 20 Highland St., Whitinsville, for a performance from 12:00 noon to 1:30 p.m. Lunch is a Memphis-themed barbecue. Tickets are \$10 each with a limit of two tickets per person.

**SATURDAY, JULY 1**

• Chase Rice performs at Indian Ranch, 200 Gore Road, Webster, 1:00 p.m. [www.indianranch.com](http://www.indianranch.com).

**THURSDAY, JULY 6**

• "Architects and Anarchists: who has the power to make big decisions in your community" a program sponsored by the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor, will be presented at 6:30 p.m. at 12 Hopedale St. in Hopedale. This is a walkabout and will include a long history of habitation in the area and continue through the construction of large Draper workers' houses in the late 1800s.

**JULY 2-OCTOBER 1**

• Daniels Farmstead in Blackstone is open for its 13th season of Farmers' Markets, every Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Email [info@danielsfarmstead.org](mailto:info@danielsfarmstead.org) for further details or visit the Daniels Farmstead Foundation website at [www.danielsfarmstead.org](http://www.danielsfarmstead.org).

**SUNDAY, JULY 9**

• Rumours: The Ultimate Fleetwood Mac Tribute Show, takes the stage at Indian Ranch, 200 Gore Road, 1:00 p.m. [www.indianranch.com](http://www.indianranch.com).

[indianranch.com](http://indianranch.com).

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 10**

• "Of Farms and Factories:" Tour a history farm and homestead in beautiful Sutton at Waters Farm, 53 Waters Road, at 6:30 p.m. Presented by the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, this walkabout will show the important role local farmers have played in the evolution of industry in New England. The program is being presented in collaboration with Waters Farm Preservation Inc.

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 17**

• "Adaptive Reuse in Manchaug:" This program is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. at Manchaug Mills, 9 Main St., Sutton, and it will show how the creative adaptation of an old industrial complex can take shape. Attendees will meet local historian Christine Watkins who will discuss the opportunities and challenges of working in a restored mill space. The program is being presented by the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor in partnership with Deb Dunleavy of Manchaug Mills Inc.

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 24**

• The Silver Club of the Uxbridge Senior Center is planning a trip to The Theatre by the Sea to see the show "Jersey Boys." There will be a sit-down lunch at Bravo by the Sea with meal choices of haddock, chicken or pasta. Bus pickups will be at the Millbury Park and Ride in Millbury and at the Dollar General in Whitinsville. The cost including

driver gratuity is \$150. Call Sue at 508-476-5820 for more details about this trip and a five-day trip in September to Penn Dutch to see the brand new show "Daniel" at Sight and Sound Theatre.

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 26**

• The 2nd Annual Parking Lot Craft Fair sponsored by the Auburn Historical Society & Museum will be held at 41 South St., Auburn, 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., rain or shine. Vendors are welcome. Contact Helen at [auburnmuseum@verizon.net](mailto:auburnmuseum@verizon.net) to reserve a space for \$15.

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5**

• The Sutton Historical Society welcomes Andrew Noone, author of "Bathsheba Spooner: A Revolutionary Murder Conspiracy," at the First Congregational Church, 307 Boston Road, Sutton, at 7:00 p.m. Go to [www.suttonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.suttonhistoricalsociety.org) for further info.

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7**

• The Sutton Historical Society welcomes Mark Savoio of the Thompson Historical Society for the presentation "The Mass 15th of the Civil War and Wilder Holbrook, Sutton," at the First Congregational Church, 307 Boston Road, at 7:00 p.m. Go to [www.suttonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.suttonhistoricalsociety.org) for further info.

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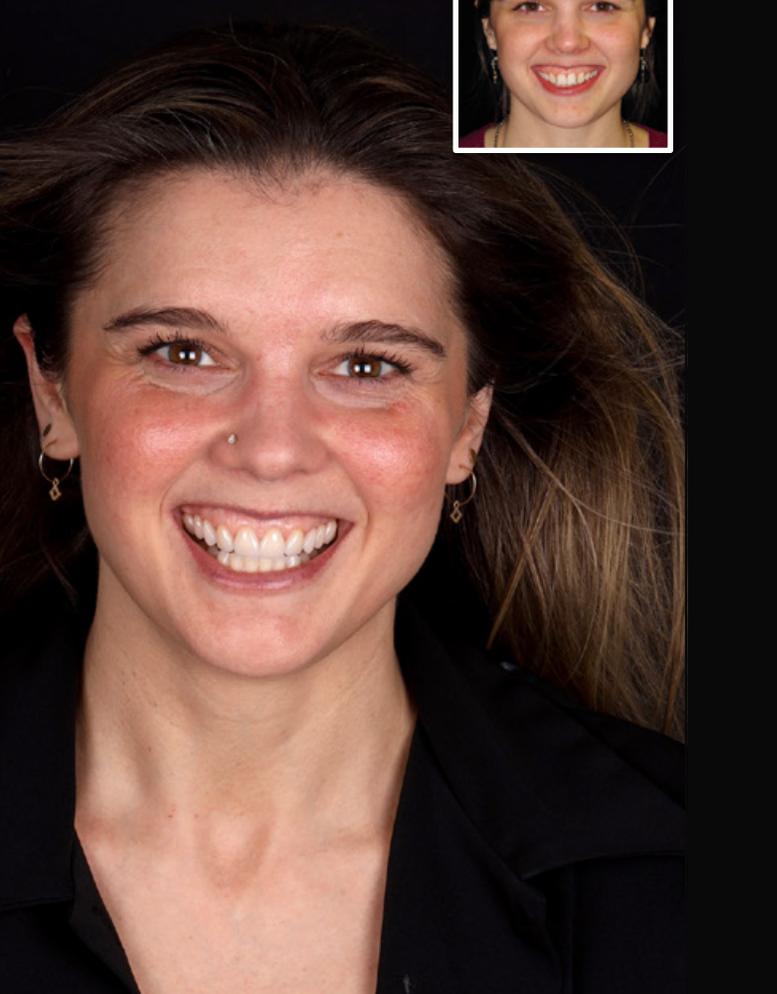
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# Lip Sync'ing at Dudley MS

The 13th annual Lip Sync contest was held at Dudley Middle School on May 12th. This highly anticipated event featured nine acts presented by student groups with a wide variety of song and dance routines. The DMS Jazz Band presented a concert following intermission when the students and attendees submitted their ballots to determine prize winners. The finale of the evening featured the DMS teachers in a "Taylor Swift Mash-up." The grand prize winners were the 8th Grade DMS football players for their act "Material Girl/Pretty Girls Walk." The players donated their prize money to the Webster-Dudley Food Share. Photos by Sally Patterson.

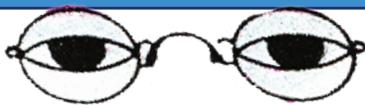


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# David Macharia: An LPN, a leader and a resident care manager

“I have a great sense of responsibility. I strive to improve the quality of life of all residents,” said David Macharia, a licensed practical nurse and a 2019 alumnus of Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy. Gretheline Bolandrina, DHA, MSN Ed, RN, CRRN, Academy Director at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy, is grateful for Macharia’s sharing updates of his

nursing journey. “David is caring, attentive, patient and gracious, and he does it all with utmost humility,” Bolandrina, explained. “He was equally attentive when he was a student at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy. With all the nurse burnout, especially during COVID, it’s refreshing to see a nurse maintain being patient-focused,” Bolandrina, added.

Macharia’s care, leadership, and demeanor are what have made him a top nurse, well-suited for the resident care manager position.

When Macharia graduated from Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy, his dream to become a nurse became a reality after successfully passing the NCLEX-PN on his first try. He initially worked at Benchmark Senior Living in Worcester, but his family moved to Spokane, WA. So Macharia moved as well, landing a position at Columbia Crest Center in Moses Lake, WA. But all that time, he had the leadership roles on the horizon.

His mother, who is also a nurse was his inspiration and encouraged him to “go for it.”

“I ‘went for it’ and I endured, even the rigorous 10-month practical nursing program,” said Macharia. “I started the resident care manager position last April and I am enjoying the new role. I finally have a great work-life

balance.” As resident care manager, Macharia reports directly to the Director of Nursing Services. His primary focus areas include development and documenting care plans and changes in resident condition and quality assurance of care.

While at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy, Macharia was elected Student Representative, was a member of the UNICEF Club, a member of the Mock Code Team, a recipient of MassHire Grant, District & State Champion for SkillsUSA Medical Math earning silver medals, attendee for SafeTALK and Innovation Summit at Northeastern University, nominee for Clinical Excellence Award and the Massachusetts Vocational Association Outstanding Post-Secondary Student of the Year Award. He is certified in Mental Health First Aid and Dementia Care.

Prior to moving to WA, he was instrumental in facilitating



David Macharia

scholarships for current practical nursing students. He continues with his philanthropy, which he says is very uplifting.

“I am abundantly blessed, and I am forever grateful,” Macharia said.

About Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy: Bay Path Practical Nursing is a 40-week, (10-month), full-time, Monday through Friday, evening program. The program begins mid-August and is completed in late June. Graduates receive a Practical Nursing Certificate and are eligible to take the NCLEX-PN licensure exam. Visit [www.baypath.net](http://www.baypath.net)

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## Bike Nights at Ice Cream Pharm in Dudley

BY JANET STOICA

Okay, it’s time to put your kickstands down and enjoy some cool refreshing original ice cream flavors at the Ice Cream Pharm located at Tynsley Square in Dudley. Every Tuesday from 5 – 8 p.m. bikers can truck on down and order up some frosty treats for their evening desserts. There will be weekly drawings for a gift card to the Ice Cream Pharm and how can you possibly pass that up?

Some of their new small-batch flavors include salted caramel; red, white, and blue vanilla;

butter crunch; Boston blackout with brownie bits in a fudge and chocolate base; moose tracks; Oreo chocolate chip; blueberry crumble; and toasted coconut. There are alcohol-laced ice cream drinks too like Orange Creamsicle made with vanilla ice cream, orange soda, and vanilla vodka; Pink Dream mixed with vanilla ice cream, pink lemonade, and peach vodka; a special Harley-Davidson drink; a Mai Tai sorbet; and even an especially tasty raspberry chardonnay sorbet!

Plenty of sundaes are calling your name along with homemade ice cream pies and cakes made to your specs. Adult cakes and



pies can be ordered with alcohol infusions as well. And, you just have to try their Ice Cream Nachos made with dipped wafer cookies. It’s a hit! Indulge yourself on a hot summer night, c’mon. Sundae toppings include strawberry, caramel, butterscotch, Reese’s peanut butter cups and even Kit Kats with whipped cream and a cherry on top. More no-bake desserts will be popping onto the menu soon. Come one, come all, Tuesday Nights are Bike Nights! See you there.

Ice Cream Pharm, 185 West Main Street, Dudley MA 01571. Phone: (774) 696-0193.

Hours: Tuesday (Bike Night!) 5-8 p.m.; Wed-Sat 3-8 p.m.; Sun 3-7 p.m.; closed Monday.

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# Dudley's library faces decertification because of budget cuts

BY JANET STOICA

**“W**hatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation.” Walter Cronkite.

“Civilized nations build libraries; lands that have lost their soul close them down.” Toby Forward. “A library is a place to learn what teachers were afraid to teach you.” Alan Dershowitz

Will it be quality of life or your tax bill? On June 12th, Dudley voters will be deciding their town's future funding of not only the Pearl L. Crawford Memorial Library but also for that of many other town departments including their regional school system.

“All town departments have been directed to cut 10% of their current budgets,” said Drusilla Carter, director of the Crawford Library. “Our town administrator has advised each department to prepare for 10% cuts. For us, that means a \$39,000 cut combined with an additional loss of \$25,000 from state funding bringing the total to \$64,000. The \$25,000 funding reduction from the state is due to Massachusetts' library funding mandates.” These current mandates refer to a 2.5% annual increase that every town's budget must include for local libraries. The library will now automatically lose \$25,000 of state funding and become decertified. A huge hit for those who come through the shining doors of knowledge in Dudley.

What a shame. There are over 100 patrons daily using the library's educational displays of excellence.

Yes, there will always be Google and our smartphones and tablets but there will never be a substitute for educational gatherings of young and old at a central location that does not discriminate by any category. There is no substitute for asking a library staff member how to find, how to search, how to locate a subject of your choice. None! As a child, I spent my summers at my local library. I would borrow three to four books weekly. Mystery novels, adventure tales, you name it. My parents encouraged me to take advantage of our exceptional town resource and my bike and I knew the way to our library blindfolded. My grades in school were excellent, spelling bees were my forte where I competed with a few others for the championship title. All this, including my love of writing, I attribute to my library visits and the adventures my books and imagination took me on from one end of the world to the other.

Because of the impending decertification, Dudley library patrons are looking at loss of use for their library privileges at all other libraries in the regional system too. No book borrowing, no material borrowing, no nothing. “I know these are tough decisions to make,” said Director Carter, “but we wish it wasn't our library that will suffer. Because of the way the state regulations are set up, even if

we fund-raised or accepted donations, the town of Dudley would not meet its state requirements for library funding obligations.” There are 369 town libraries in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and Dudley will no longer be a state-certified library. There are requirements for basic services and hours open to the public.

Ms. Carter has drafted her library budget and her staff thus far will not see their hours slashed. Utility costs have risen dramatically. Many of their materials and supplies will be severely affected. Building maintenance will be cut including simple but very important things like plumbing and/or electrical repairs, IT costs for computer maintenance and upkeep that so many local citizens depend on, staff professional development courses will be deleted, simple office supplies like paper, staples, rubber bands, everyday items, will be eliminated. “We'll still be here to help people,” said Ms. Carter, “but we'll have fewer resources is what it boils down to. Our Friends of the Library will be called on for even greater assistance and they do so much for us currently. Their volunteerism is so valuable. Our endowment from the Crawford family limits our usage of those funds as they cover programs only. This all depends on our local citizenry. Many patrons are greatly upset by the upcoming budget cuts.” Drusilla Carter is certainly correct. The impact of these cuts will be felt for years to come. The



Children's Story Time at the library in Dudley.

lack of services and library decertification will surely be a black eye for Dudley.

The fact is that the town of Dudley has one of the lowest tax rates in Worcester County. In fact, besides Royalston (population: 1,276) with a tax rate of 9.79 mill, Dudley (population: 11,802) has the second lowest tax rate in the county at 10.16 mill vs. an average Worcester County tax rate of 14.42 mill. An interesting statistic indeed. Will citizens, young and old alike, unite to save their local

library and town budget or does the usual apathy reign as it does for so many of us today? Please get involved Dudley citizens, show your true colors, and fund your local library and police and fire and highway departments. Don't sit back and wait for someone else to do it. YOU are the factor! Monday, June 12, is your day to make a difference. The Municipal Center polls will be open from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

*jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com*

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BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Last spring the Bartlett softball team finished the regular season around .500, earning itself a spot in the Division 4 State Tournament. Unfortunately, once in the tournament the Indians were not able to make it past their first game and succumbed to Abington 9-3.

Regrettably Coach Courtney Stawiecki will be returning only five athletes to this year's team from the previous team. Stawiecki only has fifteen players on her roster this year and out of the ten newcomers, eight have never played the sport.

Vicky Spitz, the Indians' first baseman, was lost for the season due to an injury sustained during

the basketball season and was not cleared to play softball this spring.

"The loss of Vicky completely changes the dynamic of our infield, and we are forced to consistently move people around," the Bartlett coach said.

Sophomores Taryn Gerber and Dakota Vaudriul will make up the Indians' battery. Gerber will be located behind the plate full-time this year after only getting into one contest as a catcher last spring. She found herself mostly as a utility player as a freshman. Vaudriul was a left fielder for Stawiecki last season but will be in the circle this year for Bartlett. Last season she had encountered a shoulder injury and wasn't allowed to pitch.

The other three athletes to



The Bartlett High softball team, hoping for a return to the state tournament.



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## Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil (intention), Amen.

If you pray three times a day, three consecutive days, you will receive your intention, no matter how impossible it may seem. Praise and Thanksgiving please the Heart of God. **Believer**

return to the field this year are all seniors: Camryn Philips, Elizabeth Adams and Dawanee Phangthavong. Philips, according to the coach, was groomed to be a second baseman with smoothness to her game, but she will also play first and shortstop as well. The senior is trying to step up for the squad and taking more of a leadership role and communicating with the team.

Adams will be playing first base as well as sharing time with Dakota pitching and Phangthavong is moving over from right field into center, where she will take command of the outfield. Phangthavong has the range to play center while helping out

the corner outfielders, which are typically new and unestablished players. Outside of Vaudriul, Phangthavong is the team's only other experienced outfielder.

Despite having such a small team with only five returning players the coach is looking for growth throughout the season from her athletes. As they continue to play the sport she is hoping that they become more consist defensively, while putting together at bats at the plate.

Following the season Stawiecki is really hoping that the new kids decide to come back next year with some experience under their belts.

"After the five seniors graduate

that will leave us with only nine returners for next year if they all decide to come back," she said. "It's tough because of the numbers we don't even have a junior varsity program to pull from."

According to Stawiecki, the younger kids are just not getting involved with the sport of softball anymore, leaving the high school without any type of feeder program.

"It's not that we're losing the girls to other sports, the girls are just not playing softball. Historically, you have kids moving through the rec leagues into middle school and then into high school, but not lately," she said. "The rec league programs are not even getting the girls and they are having number issues as well. In fact, we're not the only school to have low numbers playing the sport, a lot of schools are also having the number issues as well."

While she still has a full team Stawiecki is hoping that her squad continues to build upon the program while improving the athletes on the field in hopes of returning to the tournament once again. Hopefully this time around Bartlett can take its success deeper into the tournament which in turn will open the eyes of some of the younger girls who will want to play for the team next spring.



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TALES FROM BEYOND

tomdagostino.com

# Troubled history haunts Smith's Castle in Rhode Island

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

The history of Smith's Castle in North Kingstown, Rhode Island goes as far back as 1637 when Roger Williams and Richard Smith established a trading post on the land for local tribes and colonists to swap goods.

Williams, the founder of the Rhode Island colony, felt it important to build a trading post in the area in order to make friends with the local tribes. Richard Smith migrated to present day North Kingstown to build a home there. It was at the time called Smith's Blockhouse, located in what is still known as Cocumcussoc. Being on the water, it seemed perfect for trade until the outbreak of King Philip's War in 1675. There had already been Indian attacks upon the land and fearing for his family, he built tunnels that ran under the house and out to Rabbit Island very close by.

After the Great Swamp skirmish, the English militia hiked through the cold and snow to Smith's home where many were nursed back to health but some, unfortunately, succumbed to their wounds and

rigors of the brutal ordeal. Forty in all were buried in a single grave on the site. The area is well marked and easy to get to.

Another tragedy took place at the home after the fight. Joshua Teft was tried and found guilty of treason for helping the Narragansetts during the confrontation. He was duly hanged, drawn and quartered. Seventy men were ordered to remain behind after the Great Swamp fight, using the blockhouse as a temporary garrison. The day after they left, the Indians burned the house down in retaliation for the Great Swamp massacre. It was rebuilt in 1678 and thrived throughout the ages. In the 18th Century, it became a thriving plantation and is now labeled as the oldest in the nation. The property is also part of the Rhode Island Slave History Medallion program which promotes public awareness in regard to the awareness of former slavery in Rhode Island.

During the Revolutionary War, soldiers stayed at the secluded territory and according to historians of the manor, a few skirmishes on the land resulted in the



Image: www.smithscastle.org/

untimely demise of some soldiers during the war.

Combining the events from King Philip's War, the hanging of Joshua Teft, casualties of the Revolutionary War and the families of the property who died of more natural causes, it is inevitable that there would be ghosts lingering on the property. The ghosts of the castle seem to be trapped in an

eternal struggle to right the negative energy that holds them to the homestead. Phantoms of people in colonial attire are occasionally seen wandering through various rooms. Some appear out of nowhere then vanish into thin air. Various witnesses have seen a soldier in a revolutionary uniform walking along the grounds near the water. Perhaps he was one who met a sad

fate at the house or he is looking out to sea for something. His aeriform presence is semi-transparent. Noises from inside the house give the curators and other guests a start, as many times the origin of the din is in the room they are in.

Voices and sounds of items falling are also heard by the docents who wear period clothing during tours to capture the mood and perhaps attract a few of the long deceased tenants of the house. There are reports of phantom slaves who died while hiding in the escape tunnels below the house. The tunnels have long been closed due to their dangerously frail condition yet the moans of the past and the apparitions of those who once tenanted there still permeate the walls and air of the ancient building.

Smith's Castle is a very great place to visit even if you don't see the four centuries of the "other" living history.

The house is located at 55 Richard Smith Drive off Route 1. Follow same directions for places above. The house is closed from Mid-December to Mid-April.

Call (401) 294-3521 for more details.

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LIVING WITH LUKE

amyleclaire@hotmail.com

# Luke becomes a dirt digger, and teaches a lesson

BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

Spring 2023 has brought forth new growth in Luke's personality. More specifically, he's become a dirt digger. I've watched him swipe dirt with the speed of a



texting teen. My lawn, verdant with fresh grass and deep holes, reflects life with a grown pup. "I need to get to the bottom of this." Head down, tail stiff, his focus is manic. Fresh dirt falls like powdered sugar around new holes. He looks up at me every so often like a lion who's found chocolate pudding in the garbage. "I like to dig."

Dogs, Google tells me, dig because they are bored or to bury prey. Luke Valentino, a current unneutered male, exposes a third reason.

"Luke. Please." I caught him peeing on a worm after sniffing (and digging) him out. "I don't know who you think you are Mr. Slime, but I'm the boss of this yard." Dirty deeds aside, I can't help but appreciate my pup's natural tendency to

play in the earth. I've watched him zoom around the yard like a fool falling in love. I've watched him rub his back in the grass as though scratching an itch. I've watched him sniff new blooms.

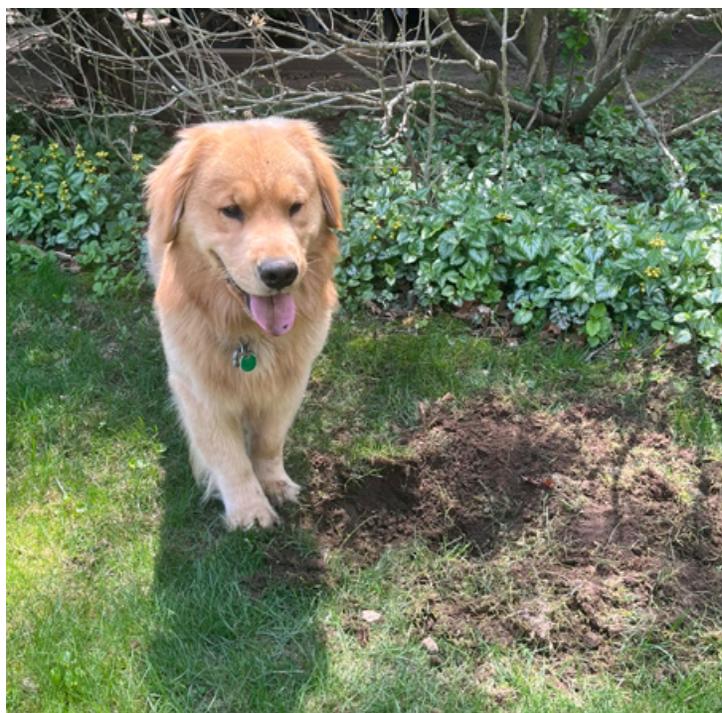
Spring has sprung. My pup wants a taste of it.

"We need to do something about Luke's digging. He's wreck-

ing the whole yard." My husband is unimpressed by Luke's spring cheer. Keeping up with the Jones's is difficult with a sixteen-month-old digger. He grabs Luke by the collar to (literally) rub his nose in the dirt. "Noooooo."

Luke smiles down at one of numerous holes. "That bitch was my best work yet."

Never a fan of shame and blame, I've found that applying "natural consequences" works better for my adolescent pup. Imagine scolding a child for building a sandcastle in the sand. "How dare you make that hole in the earth!" The process of digging is natural and playful, an act of innocence and an expression of a dog's personality. Luke is a big kid wearing a fur coat. Besides, Luke Valentino, quite admirably, has not chewed on a single piece of furniture, as many pups do. Granted, he's torn the guts out of a stuffed elephant, but that's about it. "It's just a phase," I tell my husband. "Leave Luke alone. He's just being a dog." My dog-friendly rationale has led to a rather ironic outcome. I've respected my pup's needs to be a dog and, in turn, he's understood my human side.



I emphasize the word wait. He inspects the covered hole and smiles again. I can tell he's thinking about his actions. "Let's go for a walk!" But not for long. Luke is a dog. His guilt is short-lived. He's moved on three seconds ago. We move away from the hole (pun intended) incident. Boredom strikes a few days later. A young dog's energy is boundless. There aren't enough hours in the day, it seems, to take Luke on the walks, runs, playdates, and dog-friendly adventures which he requires. I gaze down at my yard to see the latest surprise, one that takes my breath away.

"What are you doing, Luke?"

Luke is digging another hole, but this one is different. This one is created at the border of my Mother's Day Garden, in a spot naturally "prepped" for a new flower. "What do you think, Momma?" I can barely believe my eyes. He shows me his work with a nose smeared in dirt. My yard is expansive. He could have dug in so many other areas but, instead, he chose this one. My mind draws up the memory. A few weeks back he sat and watched me plant flowers there.

He lifts his chin while I pet him. "I was thinking you could plant

"You do yard work, Momma?" Luke watches me use a pitchfork to make final touches to one more dirt-filled hole. He stares up at me with a champion smile. His body is finally catching up to his head. He's a beautiful, curious dog. I read his mind. "My Momma is so good at everything she sets her mind to. She types and dances and does yard work, too. Look at her go!" Dogs love us unconditionally. They

have no agenda or expectations for us. They love every part of us.

"Luke, want to go for a walk?" My cheek is smeared with dirt, but Luke doesn't notice.

He translates the offer. I watch his smile close then open again as he thinks about it. "I was thinking the same thing!! I love going for walks!"

"You created a lot of work for Mummy, Luke. You'll have to wait."

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**REAL ESTATE**

# Why homebuyers need an expert agent by their side

The process of buying a home can feel a bit intimidating, even under normal circumstances. And today's market is not



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

normal. There continues to be a very limited number of homes for sale, and that's creating bidding wars and driving home prices back up as buyers compete over the available homes. Navigating all of this can be difficult if you're trying to do it alone. That's why having a skilled expert to guide you through the home buying process is super important, especially today. Advice and guidance from a professional real estate agent can be invaluable, especially during a hot or unpredictable housing market.

Here are just a few of the ways a REALTOR, or real estate expert, makes a big difference:

**Experience.** We know the ins and outs of what's happening today, how it impacts buyers, and how to manage any hurdles that may pop up.

**Education.** Knowledge is power when it comes to buying a home. We will simply and effectively explain market conditions and translate what they mean for you so you can feel confident in your decision.

**Negotiations.** We advocate for your best interests. Having an expert on your side provides assistance with the written offer and purchase agreement. We also help you negotiate potential seller concessions if the inspection reveals issues with the home.

**Contracts.** We guide you through the disclosures and contracts necessary in today's heavily regulated environment.

**Pricing.** Making an offer and negotiating with a seller can be one of the most difficult and stressful parts of the home-buying process. We will help you understand what similar homes are selling for so you have the full picture of what you may want to offer.

All of these reasons combined may be why 86% of recent buyers used an agent according to the latest Home Buyers and Sellers Generational Trends Report from the National Association of Realtors (NAR). NAR also has this to say about why an agent is so essential today:

"A great real estate agent will guide you through the home

search with an unbiased eye, helping you meet your buying objectives while staying within your budget. Agents are also a great source when you have questions about local amenities, utilities, zoning rules, contractors, and more."

What's the key to choosing the right expert? It starts with trust. You'll want to know you can trust the advice they're giving you, so you need to make sure you're connected with a true professional. No one can provide perfect advice because it's impossible to know exactly what's going to happen at every turn, especially in today's market. But a true professional like the Marzeotti Group can give you the best possible advice based on the information and situation at hand.

We will help advocate for you throughout the process and coach you on the essential knowledge you need to make confident decisions. That's exactly what you want and deserve. It's critical to have an expert on your side who is skilled in navigating today's housing market. If you're planning to buy a home this year, connect with a member of The Marzeotti Group or another trusted real estate advisor who will give you the best advice and guide you along the way.

*gram @livingwithlukevalentino*

**LUKE**

*continued from page 20*

more flowers here, and that way you'll always remember me—Luke Valentino—your favorite Golden Retriever."

I cover the hole, but not completely. I think about all the dogs I've had; good dogs I've loved, missed, and cried for. Someday, I'll wish for one more day to watch Luke Valentino dig one more hole. Dog owners understand the empty holes in our hearts when we lose our pets. What I wouldn't give to have one more day with Lincoln!

"I love you, Luke." I massage the ears of my young dog's big head.

I've since planted marigolds in this garden for my favorite golden, Luke Valentino. There's no need to wait for his passing to remember him.

He's with me now and, together, we're filling the holes.

Write to Amy at amyclair@hotmail.com  
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BY DENNIS ANTONOPOULOS

# Biggest threats to a comfortable retirement?

If you save and invest for decades, you'd like to know you can retire without financial worries. Nonetheless, you still have to be aware of some threats to a comfortable retirement — and how to respond to them.

These threats include:

- **Inflation** – Inflation has been high recently, but even a mild inflation rate can seriously erode your purchasing power. In fact, with just a 3% inflation rate, your expenses could double in about 25 years — and your retirement could easily last that long. So, if you're going to rely on your investment portfolio for a sizable part of your retirement income, you will need to own a reasonable number of growth-oriented investments, such as stocks or stock-based funds, whose potential returns can equal or exceed the inflation rate.

- **Excessive withdrawals** – Once you retire, you should establish a withdrawal rate for your portfolio

— an amount you can take out each year and still feel secure that you won't run out of money. Some people make the mistake of withdrawing too much, too soon once they're retired. Your withdrawal rate should be based on several factors, including your age at retirement, the size of your portfolio and the amount of income you receive from other sources, such as Social Security. A financial professional can help you determine a withdrawal rate that's appropriate for your needs.

- **Market volatility** – The financial markets will always fluctuate. When you're still working, this volatility may not be such a problem, as you have years or decades to recover from short-term downturns. But when you retire, you don't want to have to sell investments when their price is down. To help prevent this, you can tap into the cash in your portfolio, assuming you have enough to cover several months' worth of living expenses. You could also draw on a CD "ladder" — a group of CDs that mature at different times — to provide you with resources for the next few years and allow your equity investments time to recover their value.

- **Unexpected costs** – You had them when you were working, and you'll probably have them when you're retired: the furnace that breaks down, the car that needs a major repair, and so on. But if you've established an emergency fund containing a year's worth of living expenses, with the money

kept in a liquid account, you may be able to "ride out" these costs without jeopardizing your investment portfolio. Be sure to keep these reserves separate from your typical day-to-day accounts to avoid the temptation of spending your emergency money.

- **Health** – Retirees may face more health concerns than younger people, and those concerns often come with larger medical bills. That's why it's important to maximize the benefits from Medicare or your Medicare Advantage plan. Also, if you contributed to a Health Savings Account (HSA) while you were working, and you haven't depleted it, you can use the money in retirement. As long as the HSA funds are used for qualified medical expenses, withdrawals are tax- and penalty-free, and won't be included in your income. This could help keep your income below certain levels, lower your Medicare premiums or avoid the 3.8% surtax on net investment income that can be assessed on high-net-worth taxpayers.

Retirement can be a pleasant time in your life — and you'll enjoy it more if you're prepared for the challenges that face all retirees.

*This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Please contact Dennis Antonopoulos, your local Edward Jones Advisor at 5 Albert Street, Auburn, MA 01501 Tel: 508-832-5385 or dennis.antonopoulos@edwardjones.com. Edward Jones Member SIPC*

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# Faulty ignition switch may require replacement of lock module

**Q.** I have a 2006 Nissan Murano with keyless intelligent key system. (Not stop/start button) I cannot get the ignition switch to turn on to any position. The steering wheel is locked due to the security system. I tried



BY JOHN PAUL

rocking steering wheel, no help there. I have replaced key fob batteries in both fobs. Also tried to use both Mechanical Keys, but the ignition switch will not turn. I can lock and unlock doors remotely, so some keyless functions are working. Some research I have done seems to point to Keyless Entry Module Part or ignition switch assembly. Any thoughts on what is causing this problem?

**A.** There was a recall for a faulty ignition switch. Perhaps the switch itself is bad, sometimes if you gently turn the key while tapping on the end of the key it will get the lock tumblers to line up. Other than that, the lock module which is a complete assembly is usually faulty and quite expensive at \$675 plus a couple of hours labor to install it.

**Q.** This is a problem I am having with my 2021 Honda Ridgeline; I had an accident on the first of September 2022 and my Ridgeline is still in the body shop, and I can-

not get the parts to fix it. I have called Honda and we have gotten some of the parts but currently I still need one more part. Honda said they would call me and tell me what was going on, but there has been no return call. What can I do?

**A.** Unfortunately, I am hearing this issue of body parts availability across the country. I would continue to keep checking with the local dealer or wherever the parts are coming from to try to get to the top of the list-sometimes the squeaky wheel does get the grease. Yes, I would also call Honda customer service (800- 999-1009) to see if they can expedite the parts.

**Q.** Hope you can provide insight as to what is going on with my 2021 Hyundai Palisade's factory installed navigation system. I do have a repair appointment at the dealer, which is weeks away. Until several days ago, all worked well. The navigation screen loads correctly, the maps are accurate, and I can enter and set the destination information. So far so good. When I press "go" for the actual directions however, the system shows "unsuccessful," and directions will not process. All other car functions (radio, phone, etc.) run well.

**A.** There can be some issues with Apple CarPlay interfering with GPS commands. There are also at least two software updates for the GPS, I would just let the dealer check for any available updates

and go from there.

**Q.** My 2020 Subaru Forester has about 32,000 miles on it I stopped using Subaru for oil changes at 28,000 because it drove me crazy that they consistently overfilled the crankcase by one-half quart. I know this is common. I use Valvoline 0W-20 Extended full synthetic and Subaru filters. At about 30,000 I took a trip to New Hampshire in February. Overnight temps. dropped to -20F. When I started the car in the morning it turned over reluctantly. About 1,500 miles after the trip, I noticed that the engine had consumed about 1/4 to 1/3 quart of oil. Could the cold start have damaged the engine (rings) and caused the increased consumption?

**A.** No, these engines are designed for cold climates and as long as the car is driven reasonably when cold it should be fine. Subaru is a little unique in that they have a blue light that comes on when the engine is cold to remind the driver to take it easy until the engine

warms up. Generally, a cold engine will consume a bit more oil until the rings/pistons get up to operating temperature.

**Q.** Can you remove one battery wire at a time to clean the terminals without disconnecting the battery and losing setting and memory?

**A.** When you disconnect the battery (negative cable first) you will lose the memory for the radio, clock, and other settings. Some people will use a battery powered memory saver, some of which plug into the under-dash computer port

or cigar lighter or 12-volt power point-if powered with the key off. Some technicians simply attach a jump pack to the battery cables, clean the cables and posts and reinstall the cables.

*John Paul is AAA Northeast's Car Doctor. He has over forty years' experience and is an ASE-certified master technician. He will answer readers' questions each week. Email your questions to jpaul@aanortheast.com. Follow John on Twitter @johnfpaul and friend him on Facebook at mrjohnfpaul.*



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