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Municipal Spotlight

Fraine's 36 Years as Town Administrator Were Phenomenal

By KEN HAMWEY,
BULLETIN STAFF WRITER

Sometimes the phrase "end of an era" is overdone and might even miss the mark when a long-time municipal official retires. In Denis Fraine's case, those words don't seem strong enough to capture how effective he was guiding Bellingham through both the good and the bad times during his 36-year career as Town Administrator.

After battling a serious illness for six months and overcoming several complications, Fraine officially retired in October. The 63-year-old native of Roslindale, who's lived in Bellingham for the last 33 years, has recovered nicely.

"It was good to get back home after being hospitalized," Fraine said. "I really appreciated everyone's prayers and well-wishes."



Denis Fraine has retired after 36 years as Bellingham's Town Administrator.

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On Wednesday, November 15th, Massachusetts Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Lauren Jones (second from right) and Rep. Jeff Roy, (left) met with apprentices program (shown) at Tegra Medical, an international medical device manufacturer, at its Franklin location. The state was celebrating Massachusetts Apprenticeship Week (Nov. 12-18) and has invested \$3.5 million so far in FY24 to connect individuals to registered apprenticeship.

Growing Skilled Labor a State and Local Goal

Local Chamber Launches Skilled Trade Program; MA Pushes Apprenticeship

By J.D. O'GARA

"Learn a skill. You'll never go wrong if you learn a skill."

That's advice to students from Laura O'Callaghan, President,

and CEO of the Tri-County Regional Chamber. She points out

APPRENTICESHIP
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APPRENTICESHIP

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that local employers are feeling an acute need for skilled workers.

"We get so many calls all the time from members. They're desperate, they're crying out for help, and they're mostly in the skilled trades industry," says O'Callaghan. The Chamber just this year created the Maximum Impact Foundation - a 501(c)(3) non-profit. Its mission: to support local businesses and programs that foster business growth and entrepreneurship through educational initiatives, training scholarships, and grants.

O'Callaghan refers to Mass.gov figures that show a decline in skilled trades.

"At this point in Massachusetts alone, for every three skilled trade businesses that retire, there's literally only one that's coming in," says O'Callaghan, who explains her office's research at Mass.gov showed a staggering decline in construction license renewals in the state, from 57,000 just a few years ago to 39,000 this year.

"We recognize the profound effect that local businesses and skilled tradespeople have on our community's development," said

O'Callaghan, in the new foundation's sponsorship letter, "We also see the challenges that individuals face when pursuing careers in the mechanical, building & service trades. Due to the increasing cost of education, licensing, tools, and essential training, many aspiring tradespeople find it increasingly difficult to break into these industries.

The Maximum Impact Foundation is holding a Live & Silent Auction Fundraiser to raise money toward its goals on Saturday, December 9th. Dueling for a Cause will take place at 6 p.m. at the Milford Portuguese Club, 119 Prospect Heights in Milford. The night will entail a family style dinner catered by Savini's Pomodoro, music from the Flying Ivories dueling pianos, dancing and over 100 auction items. Visit https://www.maximumimpactfoundation.org/ for more information.

Speaking to the need for skilled workers, the Healey-Driscoll Administration kicked off Massachusetts Apprenticeship Week (November 12-18), in conjunction with the 9th anniversary of National Apprenticeship Week. The administration hosted a weeklong series of events across the state to highlight the Registered Apprenticeship Program as a key resource for employers to address workforce shortages and encourage residents to pursue

apprenticeship pathways in sectors like construction and building trades, life sciences, health and human services, early education, advanced manufacturing, and other industries.

"The Registered Apprenticeship Program is instrumental to providing residents with the hands-on training and hard skills that lead to a long-lasting, family sustaining careers, while meeting the workforce needs of our state's employers," said Governor Maura Healey. "Our investments in Registered Apprenticeships will make the program more accessible to populations that have been underrepresented in the workforce and provides employers with tax credits to expand Registered Apprenticeships in all industries across the state."

Currently, 88 percent of apprentices are in the building and construction industry.

Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Lauren Jones and Rep. Jeff Roy took a trip to Franklin's Tegra Medical during Massachusetts Apprenticeship Week to meet the company's apprentices and learn about the career path enabled by Tegra's apprenticeship program.

"Registered Apprenticeship is a vital tool in the state's toolbox to help solve the workforce shortages in industries like construction and the building trades, healthcare, advanced manufac-



In the hopes of increasing the ease of getting workers into trades, the Tri-County Regional Chamber created the Maximum Impact Foundation this year. This month, it will hold its first fundraiser.

turing, cybersecurity, finance, and more," said Jones. "To maintain Massachusetts' competitive edge, we need to invest in our people—both existing workers and untapped talent—and Registered Apprenticeship is a proven, effective model to build the skilled talent that employers need."

Roy noted that international companies like Tegra and Plansee, both with sites in Franklin, have taken it upon themselves to invest in training and apprenticeship programs in order to build the workforce they need.

While visiting Tegra Medical, which manufactures medical devices, Jones said Apprenticeship Week served to "help celebrate apprenticeship programs, both within the building trades and construction, but also in new and expanded areas like we're celebrating here today at Tegra medical. It's an opportunity to provide technical training and on-the-job training and clear a pathway for individuals to gain industry-recognized credentials, and certainly a path for a mean-

ingful career."

The Healey-Driscoll Administration's FY24 budget invests \$4 million to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion for the state's construction and building trades and to expand registered apprenticeship in expansion industries. So far in FY24, the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development has invested \$3.5 million overall to connect 740 individuals to registered apprenticeship.

For more information about the Commonwealth's apprenticeship program, visit https://www.mass.gov/topics/apprenticeships.

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FRAINE

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The immediate priority for Fraine now is to focus on his health. But, since the Select Board couldn't agree on a candidate to succeed him during the interview process, he has agreed to serve in an advisory role until a new Town Administrator is selected. After his successor is hired, Fraine said he wouldn't rule out serving on a board in an appointed position."

That decision would be welcomed because his colleagues at the Municipal Center not only value his friendship, but still admire his personable leadership style.

If Bellingham had a Hall of Fame for town officials, Fraine would be a charter member and a unanimous choice.

It's been said that Town Administrators don't have a long tenure in that role because they serve Select Boards that change annually. And, the position so often deals with pressure-packed issues that require experience in public policy and knowledge of the state's General Laws.

Eight years is considered a lengthy run, but Fraine gave Bellingham 36. And, during that time residents got his best. His love for the town was visible on his sleeves, even when they were rolled up.

Fraine's journey to Bellingham started at Don Bosco High School in Boston where he was a member of the student council. He played a year of varsity baseball, but it was track and field where he excelled. "I was a miler, and at one time I held the school record in that event, finishing in a time of 4:28," he recalled.

After graduating in 1978, Fraine enrolled at UMass-Amherst where he majored in history. In college, he participated in ROTC, and when he graduated in 1983, he was commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant in the Air Force.

Fraine rose to the rank of captain during his 4½ years of military service, stationed primarily at Whiteman Air Force Base in central Missouri and also at Strategic Air Command Headquarters in Omaha, Neb.

"I was assigned to the quality force section in personnel," he said. "I assisted with reviews of personnel issues. I also was the support officer to the base commander. I learned a lot about administration in the military, because a base is like a city or a municipality. There's police (security), a fire department and even a department of public works.

"The service helped me enormously in two ways. I got experience in administrative work and

the Air Force paid for college. I got my master's degree in public policy at Central Missouri University."

When Fraine's military duty was nearing completion, he was eager to return home. He just happened to see a classified advertisement in the Boston Globe stating that Bellingham was looking for an executive secretary/administrator.

"I applied and eventually was hired on Dec. 17, 1987," he recalled. "I was interviewed by four Selectmen — Bill Bissonette and the late Betty Lowry, Wilfred Arcand and Larry Cibley."

In the early going, Fraine had to get involved in many departments, because staffing was minimal and technology wasn't in full bloom. "That was a big help, because I had to get into the trenches," he noted. "That's where I learned the basics and how departments operated."

A Town Administrator is responsible for all facets of municipal government and Fraine handled the job magnificently. "I was entrusted to manage the town's budget and to represent and execute the Board of Selectmen's directions," he said.

Fraine's favorite part of the job was "living in Bellingham and being connected to the decisions we were making."

"It was exciting to see what

our decisions created," he emphasized. "New buildings included a high school, a police station, a fire station, a senior center, a municipal center and a library. We improved ball fields and expanded playgrounds. It was great to help those causes."

The most challenging part of his position was when budgets had to be finalized.

"That was difficult at times, because we couldn't address issues we wanted to fix or upgrade," Fraine offered. "Making tough decisions is always difficult, because services have to be cut, public safety officers aren't replaced and if we cut teachers, class sizes increase. For the last few years, I think we've done a good job with municipal and school staffing needs."

Fraine rarely ever worked a 40-hour week. It was more like 24-7. "There's always emergencies, and I wanted to be involved in the things going on in town," he said.

Some will rate Fraine as calm and personable in dire times. Others will say he got results. Both views are correct. Getting everyone on the same page may have been his prime asset. "I worked hard to gain consensus with town boards," he said. "It was important to solve issues for all departments."

Fraine never lost sight of helping others, even when un-

usual requests popped up. In his role, he was a man of humanity who acted with sympathy towards residents, acutely aware that people need help. "I took a call from a woman who was upset that she was late getting her trash barrel out," he recalled. "She asked if a truck could return. It was late so I picked up her trash and put it in the town dumpster."

Fraine has two messages — one to his colleagues and another to Bellingham's residents. "I had an incredible professional career," he said. "Thanks to all the men and women I've worked with for 36 years. I learned a lot and hopefully I held up my end."

To the people of Bellingham, Fraine said: "I was entrusted with huge responsibilities. I did the best I could serving my community, and I greatly appreciate all the support and encouragement I received."

Fraine no doubt will offer some very sound advice when his successor takes the reins. "Get to know the community and the people who serve the town," he said. "And, get familiar with all of the issues in Bellingham."

That's a formula for success, and it comes from a man who handled a difficult job with lots of desire, dedication and devotion.

Save the Date!

Bellingham Business Association Holiday Party, December 6th

This month, the Bellingham Business Association's December's event is the holiday party on December 6th at Savini's Pomodoro, 476 Rathbun St., Woonsocket, RI.

This year, we will be conducting a toy/gift collection and gift swap for December.

For more information, visit www.bellinghambusinessassociation.org or email contact@bellinghambusinessassociation.org.



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Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Page Realty: Family Owned & People First, Joins Hands with Habitat for Humanity to Make a Difference

Page Realty, proudly demonstrates its commitment to the community through their Habitat for Humanity participation on November 2, 2023. Seven dedicated real estate agents enthusiastically joined the Women Build program, aligning with the agency's core values of being "Family Owned & People First." This initiative not only highlights Page Realty's commitment to its clients but also to the communities it serves.

Faina Shapiro, Al Rao, Ellen Rao, Chris Rao, Steve Coukos, Jennifer DeLuca, and Mark Lalond, devoted their time, skills, and energy to this important community project in collaboration with Habitat for Humanity, a global nonprofit housing organization. In addition Page Realty generously donated funds and actively fundraised to support Habitat for Humanity efforts.

Habitat for Humanity's mission is to bring people together to build homes, communities, and hope, providing affordable housing solutions to families in need. By working side by side with fellow volunteers, Page Realty and Habitat for Humanity exemplify the power of collective action to create meaningful change. This initiative symbolizes Page Realty's strong sense of social responsibility and its dedication to cultivating a culture of collaboration, empathy, and giving back. It illustrates the kind of dynamic and compassionate professionals that Page Realty attracts and nurtures, placing people at the forefront of its mission.

Page Realty encourages individuals who share the agency's passion for community service, teamwork, and making a positive impact to consider a career with a team that is genuinely "Family

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About Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Page Realty

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Page Realty is a full-service real estate company specializing in residential sales since 1963. The company has two offices in Medway and Medfield, and dominant market share in the MetroWest area. For more information, please visit www.bhhspagerealty.com

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Greater Milford Community Chorus Brings Joy this Season



By JENNIFER RUSSO

The Greater Milford Community Chorus (GMCC), a group of talented singers from Milford and surrounding towns, is excited to celebrate the holiday season this month with festive songs for all to enjoy. From well-known song medleys sure to get you singing along, to traditional pieces like the Wexford Carol, some classic Hannukah songs, and more contemporary pieces like "Wel-come Christmas" from Dr. Seuss' charming movie, How the Grinch Stole Christmas, the performance is great for all ages and sure to delight attendees and evoke the spirit of the upcoming holidays.

Concluding its Golden Jubilee year and celebrating 50 years of singing for the community, the GMCC offers both a Spring show and a Winter show annually, each centered around a theme – this upcoming concert is themed around the song Joyful, Joyful – an adaptation of Beethoven's composition, Ode to Joy, featuring the words of a poem written by Henry J. van Dyke, published in 1911. Religious themes aside, the song is about welcoming light into our hearts, a feeling that the chorus hopes the audience will leave

with as they head into the rest of their December celebrations.

"Joyful is just how we want our audience to feel when they head out after our performance. Our members each bring various and individual strengths to the group and our music is really all about bringing people together. After months of challenging work, we all look forward to joining our community for an evening or afternoon of peace and joy," shares Susan Surapine, GMCC President.

"It's great to see our audience members celebrating along with us - their friends, family, and neighbors – as we sing for them. It's all about that beautiful connection with everyone through music."

The GMCC, under the direction of Mark Schiappucci, will perform at Milford Town Hall on Saturday, December 2nd at 7:30 p.m. and on Sunday, December 3rd at 1:30 p.m.. Tickets are \$12 at the door and children ten and under are welcome for free. There will be exciting raffle baskets to win, and refreshments served. Additionally, the group will be performing with the Claffin Hill Symphony Orchestra for their Holiday Pops concert on Saturday, December 9th at 7:30 p.m.

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Capital Improvement Projects Strengthen VFW Post 7272

By DAVID DUNBAR

COVID 19 nearly claimed another victim in town.

The Bellingham VFW Post 7272 – forced to close during the pandemic – struggled financially without its usual sources of income. “We were down on one knee,” recalls Post Commander Kevin Calnan.

How’s the Post doing now? “Our revenue is steady,” says Calnan, and some key capital improvement projects have been completed. The Post welcomes 25 to 40 visitors each week. And it celebrated its 57th anniversary in October.

“I’m thrilled by the sense of community support at the VFW,” explains Elle Taran who recently started attending yoga classes at the Post. “I’m connecting with local veterans and making amazing new friends along the way.”

“It feels like home,” says Jackie Thibeault who comes to the Post once or twice a week. What she likes most: “Comfortable, no drama, friends!”

“I’m not here just to make everybody happy,” notes Calnan. “I’m here to honor the reputation of the Post and serve vets in the community.” As an example, the Post recently welcomed a vet who’s walking across the country for an overnight stay.

That vet stayed in the newly refurbished Hall, one of many capital improvement projects completed since the pandemic.

“We had the pleasure of meeting Tim Henney,” says Commander Calnan. “Tim is a veteran doing a silent walk across the country to raise awareness for PTSD and veteran homelessness. He didn’t need anything but a place to lay his head for the night. Tim spent



New furniture in the bar includes seven tables and 24 chairs and stools. The Firewood Shop on Pulaski Blvd. in Bellingham built them all. Five of the tables are tall and three have hexagon tops, there are two, rectangular low tables that are handicapped accessible. Plenty of chairs, with a few in storage. Occupancy of the bar is 49.



VFW Post 7272 recently supported veteran Tim Henney during his silent cross-country walk to raise awareness for PTSD and veteran homelessness by welcoming him to spend the night in its newly refurbished post.



Completely refurbished... flooring, lighting, painting, and there’s a fully-stocked bar. Occupancy is 95. If you would like to hold an event in it, please contact Jill at (508) 883-9538. Some civic groups can use the Hall for free.

the night in our Hall last month. From all of us at the Bellingham VFW, we wish you strength and good health on your continuing journey.”

Among other capital improvement projects completed at the Post: new flag poles at the front of the Post, upgrading the big walk-in cooler, oven and stove upgrades, new chairs/stools and tables for the bar (see

photo), and re-paving of the entire parking lot thanks to the generosity of Asphalt Engineering.

The Post offers lots of opportunities for folks to gather. Most popular are Karaoke on Friday nights and Acoustic Guitar with different performers on Saturday nights. Also offered are Cruise Night, Steak Shoot, Yoga, Flag Retirement Ceremonies, Trunk or Treat, Holiday Food Drives, and a Coffee Break on the last Saturday of each month.

The Commander says, “I like helping people, it brings me an internal reward. To vets reading this: Give us a shot, come on down!” There are about 130 members of the Post, but you do not have to be one to visit.

You can learn more by visiting www.vfw7272.org or the Facebook page: VFW 7272 Bellingham. You can also call (508) 883-9538.



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3. Sarah hosts all the elves at her house on Christmas morning. She orders a custom Reese’s cake for all the elves to enjoy, but the cake is destroyed during the shipping process. Would Sarah’s home insurance cover the damage to the destroyed cake during the shipping process?

Answers: 1. No, Fin needed the Permitted Incidental Occupancies endorsement included on his policy to cover minor at-home business exposures. 2. Yes, the workers compensation policy would pay. 3. No, there is no coverage.



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Removal of Old Dam to Restore Habitat, Protect from Flooding

By SYDNEY KEANE

Following a rainy summer and general wetter weather patterns due to climate change, flooding of rivers and wetlands are of increasing risk. Up and down the Charles River, unused and crumbling dams sit untouched, interfering with natural habitats and generating downstream flooding. The Charles River Watershed Association and the Bellingham Department of Public Works are partnering to restore the natural habitat at our North Bellingham Dam.

Located off a branch of the Charles River that flows through northern Bellingham, this dam was found to be unsafe following a 2022 inspection and evaluation report, deeming it a Significant, or Class II, hazard dam during its Phase I inspection.

According to Robert Kearns, a restoration specialist from the CRWA, "The North Bellingham Dam is approximately 6 feet tall with a 60-foot partially breached

spillway and over 200-foot-long structure... and is a relic mill dam that has been partially breached on both sides through weathering and storms."

In general, the several defunct dams that line the Charles River threaten to flood by over a foot in intense rain scenarios, which have become more frequent. Additionally, the abandonment of several of these dams has created interference with surrounding habitats and areas, contributing to unwanted vegetation like cyanobacteria in the water. Additionally, the erosion of concrete, slopes, and other aspects of these old structures creates spillage. Overall, dams like the North Bellingham Dam are in less-than-ideal condition, and opening up the wildlife passage may do wonders for the surrounding nature and neighborhoods.

With a number of concerns, total removal of the North Bellingham Dam is in the best interest of public safety and

conservation alike. Though the North Bellingham Dam is owned by the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), it falls within the Natural Valley Storage Area (NVSA), so Mass Wildlife manages the land through easements in partnership with the ACOE.

Wetlands, including those managed by NVSA, can function as a nature-based solution to mitigating downstream flooding. This dam, then, remains as a relic of the times when the Charles River fueled industrial mills. Today, also, the North Bellingham Dam is eroded from many years of weather, making it essentially useless.

Stakeholders are assessing the removal of the dam. On a local scale, restoring this area would improve the water quality by preventing the pooling of water and lowering the temperature to alleviate the negative conditions of the natural ecosystem. More extensively, the ecological restoration of this area would recon-



The North Bellingham Dam, a relic of industrial mill days, interrupts the natural ecosystem. Hopes are that its removal will restore natural order as well as create wetlands that protect from flooding.

nect about 8 miles of waterflow from the Charles River, extending through Franklin and Medway.

Ecological restoration also allows for natural wildlife passageways, creating more interconnectivity among aquatic creatures such as the fish that travel through the waters. Decades of data are available on the conditions of the area thanks to a number of water quality assessments conducted by volunteers sampling the river since 1995. Experts conclude that removing the Bellingham North Dam could be a successful step toward

restoring the vibrant array of aquatic wildlife that has long defined Massachusetts waterways.

If you are looking to learn more about this project and its progress, as well as the ecological restoration of other dams along the Charles River, seek out the River Interrupted Storymap by the CWRA for a comprehensive overview. For a look into the bettered state of Bellingham's ecosystems as a result of dam removal, consider visiting the site of the Old Mill Dam, removed in 2007, to observe the rushing water and thriving habitat in its place.

Reducing Pollution This Winter
What you can do to prevent stormwater pollution on your property

- 1) Shovel as soon as possible after a snowstorm. As a result, less ice will form and you won't need to use as much salt or de-icer.
- 2) Use safe and effective alternatives to salt. Remember that salt is not effective below 15 degrees Fahrenheit. Sand or kitty litter will give you traction when it's too cold for salt.
- 3) Plant native species, that are salt tolerant, near paved areas. Not only will these species be able to survive despite the road salt, they will also act as a protective buffer for local waterways.
- 4) Make sure the storm drains closest to your property are clear of snow and other debris. Do not shovel snow into storm drains since they empty directly into local creeks.

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The Santa Foundation Is Looking for a New Home

By J.D. O'GARA

The Santa Foundation is looking for a new home. The nonprofit is looking for a bigger space, as it continues to provide gifts and support for any family in need in Franklin, Bellingham, Norfolk, Wrentham, Medway, and Millis, among other towns. Their focus – families in need due to a health crisis or financial hardship. The organization, which works with local food pantries, The Salvation Army, St. Vincent de Paul, and local housing authorities, assisted 567 families last year. So far, in 2023, the Santa Foundation has assisted 465 families (at press time), and is already well on its way to again helping over 500 families

For 37 years, the main sponsor, and headquarters of the Santa Foundation, was Sullivan Associates, Inc., a small office located on a residential area at 1 Joy Street. This year, on May 31, 2023, Sullivan Associates officially closed its business, while the Santa Foundation, run entirely by volunteers, continues to operate on the premises. The Santa Foundation is now dependent on its corporate sponsors to cover overhead costs, while 100% of individual donations go to families in need.

“The SF team, still going strong at 38th years, is very tight on space,” says Dick Timmons, President of the Santa Foundation, now retired from Sullivan Associates. “We love our address but feel that we must relocate during 2024 in order to grow and help more families in need. The Santa Foundation will operate out of the 1 Joy Street location until a suitable new home can be found. We are looking for between 2,000 and 2,500 square feet, with a small office space. If anyone has the space available, please contact us. We would like to discuss the opportunity.”

The Santa Foundation has added four new directors this year who will help keep the organization going beyond 2024: Joe Formosa (Owner of iLove-Kickboxing), Pam Formosa (Owner of Brain Fit Academy), Mike Polenski (Social Worker, Commonwealth of Massachusetts), and Manisone Bounsavath, Assistant Branch Manager of Middlesex Bank.



Jan Prentice, left, longtime volunteer for the Santa Foundation, and Richard Timmons, President of the Santa Foundation, in the tightly packed storage space at the organization's current location, 1 Joy Street. The foundation is seeking a larger space to accommodate gift donations and to allow larger numbers of volunteers to help with distribution.



Volunteers that work at The Santa Foundation are still operating. In 2022, nine part-time volunteers, most notably Jan Prentice, Lia Thomas, Dick Tomaino, and Patty Toney, put in over 2,000 hours fulfilling holiday hopes for those in need, including four homeless shelters and two children's homes. Younger volunteers Patrick Timmons and Karina Thomas helped maintain the website and assist with annual fundraisers and the well-loved November Calendar raffle.

This year places the need for assistance as high as ever. Timmons points out that the best gifts for most recipients are gift cards, and Prentice adds that, in particular, the organization can always use gifts for teenagers.

“Gift cards to Walmart, Target and local food chains are gifts that allow families to get a gift but also go shopping for clothes and food as needed,” says Timmons. The Santa Foundation places giving trees at the following locations, with tags created from Christmas wish lists that generous neighbors are encouraged to take and fulfill:

- Franklin Police Department, 911 Panther Way, Franklin
- Grove Street Auto, 79 Grove Street, Franklin
- James Roadside Café, 850 Franklin St., Wrentham
- King Street Cafe, 390 King St., Franklin
- Medway Police Department, 315 Village St., Franklin

- Middlesex Bank, 1000 Franklin Village Drive, Franklin
- Norfolk Credit Union, 194 Main St., Norfolk
- Norfolk Fire Department, 117 Main St, Norfolk
- Postal Center, 279 E Central Street, Franklin
- Postal Center, 9 Medway Rd., Ste. C, Milford
- Postal Center, 14 Milliston Rd., Millis

“The Santa Foundation not only provides families with gifts during the holiday season, but also helps families in need throughout the year. We have paid rent, utilities, and expenses for daily necessities as needed,” says Timmons. In addition to delivering 17,010 gifts (valued at \$340,200) in 2022, with the foundation purchasing \$12,767 of that total, the Santa Foundation also assisted needy neighbors with \$6,413 in rent and \$1,827 in family support. “We will never say no to a legitimate request for assistance from a verified local family in need, not just at Christmastime, but throughout the year,” adding, “The Santa Foundation wishes everyone a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and Happy healthy New Year.”

Timmons points out that the Santa Foundation could not operate without its sponsors, and a complete list is available on its website, www.sfjoy.org. The Santa Foundation can also be found on Facebook. To reach them you can also call (508) 528-4715 or email hello@sfjoy.org.

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Bellingham Honors Veterans

On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 2023, Bellingham once again celebrated its veterans with a ceremony at Bellingham Public Library. The Bellingham VFW presented the colors, and Robert & John Oliver began the ceremony with the National Anthem. After the Pledge of Allegiance, the invocation was given by Rev. David Mullen, of St. Brendan's Church, and Sam Cowell gave opening remarks. Guest speak-

ers included Chris Condon, US Navy, and Margaret Johnson, US Army, followed by Keynote Speaker Staff Sergeant Kyle J. Reitnaur of the Natick Soldier Systems Center. Lori Fafard then offered poetry from Bellingham Middle School, and Rep. Mike Soter offered remarks, as well as recognition to Bellingham Middle School students Maxwell Tucker, Aria Hynes, and Rhea Briggman for winning this year's veteran letter contest. Fol-

lowing the United States Armed Services Medley, Chris Condon, Margaret Johnson, and Kyle Reitnaur lay a wreath outside the library at the American flag, and closing prayer was offered by Rick Marxoux, followed by taps.



Featured speakers stand with the Oliver duo.



The ceremony ended with laying of the wreath and a prayer.



These Bellingham Memorial Middle School students are going to the State House after winning this year's veteran's letter contest. From left, Lori Fafard, Rep. Mike Soter, Breagha Briggeman, Aria Hinds, Maxwell Tucker, and Sam Cowell.



Bellingham veterans stand to be recognized during the United States Armed Services Medley.

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3rd Annual Bellingham Lions Holiday House Decorating Contest!

The Bellingham Lions are sponsoring a Holiday House Decorating Contest for this holiday season. The Lions are asking for a \$10 donation to enter, with all donations going to Lions' charities locally and globally. Prizes will be awarded for 1st place \$100, 2nd place \$50, and 3rd place \$25.

Displays will be judged based on:

- Presentation & Theme (all holidays are welcome)
- Creativity
- Wow Factor

Participation is open to all Bellingham residents, and you must ensure the displays are on and visible between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. on Saturday December 16th and Sunday December 17th for judging. Winners will be announced the week of Monday December 18th. The contest is limited to outdoor displays only.

You can register using this link <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/00377bef-d6b1-4da7-ad11-47f267f8e04e> use the below QR code. Information can also be found on the Belling-



First place winner of the 2022 Bellingham Lions Holiday House Decorating Contest. Photo used courtesy of Bellingham Lions Club.

ham Lions Club Facebook page. All entries MUST be received by Wednesday December 13th, 2023.

For any questions contact Brian Salisbury bellinghamlights@gmail.com

Senior Luncheon

The Bellingham Lions Club will provide meals for our seniors at the Bellingham Council for Aging Senior Center. Reservations should be made in advance by contacting the Senior

Center at (508) 966-0398. A full Thanksgiving dinner will be catered by PJs.



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The Clash against the Magnificent Seven

Never before has the S&P 500 been this top-heavy.

The seven largest companies by market capitalization (Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, Alphabet, Nvidia, Meta, and Tesla) comprise more than 29% of the S&P 500 index. These companies dubbed the “Magnificent Seven” have performed very well in 2023.

The Only Band (of stocks) That Matters?

A November 14th Goldman Sachs report shared that the Magnificent Seven have gained 71% this year while the other 493 stocks in the S&P 500 have gained just 6%.

Given market cap distribution, which allows larger stocks to contribute more to the index’s movements, the S&P 500 has gained +19% this year.

Thus, if one owns the other 493 stocks but not the Magnificent Seven, they’re trailing the S&P 500 Index by ~13%.

“Di-worse-ification”?!

As for other asset classes YTD through 11/14:

- +9.1% - MSCI EAFE (International) Index.
- +7.5% - Gold.
- +5.1% - Dow Jones Industrial Average (Apple, Microsoft are components).
- +5.0% - MSCI Emerging Markets Index.
- +3.4% - U.S. Small Cap (Russell 2000) Index.
- +0.4% - U.S. Aggregate



Glenn Brown, CFP

Bond Index.
-0.6% - Morningstar U.S. Real Estate Index.

What of dividend stocks? Vanguard’s Dividend Appreciation +7.9% trails S&P 500 Index by ~11% even though its largest holdings Apple and Microsoft are ~9%. It can’t own other Magnificent Seven stocks because they don’t pay dividends (yet).

Before asking, what about NASDAQ 100’s +34.6%? Understand, Magnificent Seven are 44% of that index’s 100 stocks.

Death or Glory.

Yes, Magnificent Seven 2023 returns are eye-popping, but let’s review 2022 then add together for net total return (not average) from 01/01/22 -11/14/23.

Apple: **2022 -26%**; 2023 +45%; Net +7%
Microsoft: **‘22 -28%**; ‘23 +56%; Net +12%

Amazon: **‘22 -50%**; ‘23 +74; Net -13%
Alphabet: **‘22 -39%**; ‘23 +51%; Net -8%
Nvidia: **‘22 -51%**; ‘23 +240%; Net +69%
Meta: **‘22 -64%**; ‘23 +179%; Net 0%
Tesla: **‘22 -65%**; ‘23 +93%; Net -32%

Still, since 2018 the Magnificent Seven have outpaced the S&P 500 and Nasdaq 100. Not the first time a concentrated group of tech stocks outperformed 5 years to sit near the top of S&P 500.

The Four Horsemen.

In the late 90s, Dell, Cisco Systems, Intel and Microsoft were deemed The Four Horsemen.

To end 1999, the Top 10 S&P 500 Index holdings were - Microsoft, General Electric, Cisco, ExxonMobil, Wal-Mart, Intel, Lucent, IBM, America Online and Citigroup. Notice 7 out of Top 10 were technology. Dell was #18, between Nortel Networks and MCI Worldcom.

A “What Happened To...” article should be done, but understand from 2000-2009, aka “The Lost Decade”, the S&P 500 Index lost -9%. The best performing Four Horseman, Microsoft, had a -36% decline for 2000s.

Diversification and Equal-Weight at Work.

If S&P 500 was negative for the 2000s, so was everything else. Right?

Nope.

Per indices cited previously, Gold returned +274%, U.S. REITs +162%, Emerging Markets +154%, U.S. Bonds +85%, U.S. Small Caps +44%, and International stocks was +12%.

Additionally, the Equal-Weight S&P 500 Index was +65% for the 2000s.

An equal-weight index is when all components are weighted equally. In today’s terms, a Magnificent Seven stock impacts the same as Lululemon, Hubbell and Blackstone, all recently added to S&P 500 Index.

Should I Stay or Should I Go?

This isn’t to say sell this or buy that, as everyone’s situation is different with goals, taxes, risk tolerance and timelines. It’s to help educate, understand what you own and why you own it.

You should go to your CFP for your customized recommendations.

The opinions voiced in this material are for general information only and are not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual.

Glenn Brown is a Holliston resident and owner of PlanDynamic, LLC, www.PlanDynamic.com. Glenn is a fee-only Certified Financial Planner™ helping motivated people take control of their planning and investing, so they can balance kids, aging parents and financial independence.

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Please mark your calendar for the St. Blaise Country Christmas Fair on December 9th. We're waiting to welcome you, help you with Christmas shopping and to enjoy good food and Christmas cheer with family, friends and neighbors. The fair will take place December 9, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., in the Parish Hall, 1158 S. Main St., Bellingham.

The hall will be transformed into a traditional country store with many lovely items to purchase for your home or as gifts. Two of our parishioners have completed two beautiful quilts, one measuring 57"x72" and one 55"x41", that will be available in the Country Store.

A variety of ready-to-make food items in Ball jars such as chili and soups (just add meat and water), cookies, muffins and mulling spices are prettily packaged and ready for sale. Homemade cake pops, spiced cracker mixes, and Reindeer Chow will also be available. A unique Christmas gift that the kids can easily make for Mom and Dad or Grandma and Grandpa is the Family Tree with Heart that is customized with their fingerprints. You can buy pre-made gift baskets or put together a special one with items like jams, soup or cookie mixes, Christmas decorations, soaps, crocheted afghans, pillows, religious items, or jewelry. We are there to offer help if you need it, too. Penny candy, actually priced at a penny, or an already filled bag for 50 cents, will be available in the store.

The fragrance of a crockpot of hot mulled cider, available for sale by the cup, will greet you as you arrive. Our great kitchen volunteers will be on hand to serve delicious lunch choices like hamburgers, hot dogs, chili, dynamites, and other favorite foods and drinks. The cafe will be open from 10:30-2:00. A great opportunity to refuel yourself



while enjoying our fair! Enjoy a variety of breads, muffins, cookies, cakes, and pies from the St. Blaise Sweet Shoppe!

At the Craft table, there will be many handmade items for purchase, like key rings, bookmarks, tissue holders, re-



ligious items, Christmas, or winter centerpieces. There will be old favorites and new kids' games, like Reindeer Ring Toss, Snowman Knock Down, with prizes displayed with each game in a Kids Zone where there will also be a Christmas Tree craft for kids to make. The main raffle table, scratch ticket raffle, and the adults' Card Game will also make their return. As part of the raffle, parishioners Chef Dylan Ormberg and family are offering a dinner for six in the Rectory. The meal will be an appetizer, salad, pasta with homemade meat sauce and dessert. Take your chance in the raffle for a pair of Bruins tickets, for a February game! Tickets will also be available for the Money raffle, first prize \$500 with four other drawings for various amounts, to be drawn on Sunday, January 14, 2024.

From 10 a.m. until 2 p.m., Santa and Mrs. Claus will arrive at the Fair to visit with all who have a Christmas wish list to give Santa. And don't forget to take a picture with them!



Wishing you a happy Holiday Season

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From the Town Clerk...

In January, when you receive your town census form, there is a statement referencing Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) with regards to penalties for not returning your census information

(MGL Chapter 51, Section 4c: "Failure to respond to this mailing shall result in removal from the active voting list and may result in removal from the voter registration rolls").

After the census is complete and the annual Street List/Residents books are printed, the Town Clerk is obliged to notify those who have not returned their census for the current year, and thus begins the process of removal from the voter rolls. The process can take up to two years for the actual removal. Therefore, if you receive a "Confirmation Card" in the mail, do not panic! Simply fill out the card to let us know that you are still residing in Bellingham, and we will remove you from the inactive voter list. The card may be returned by mail using the postage paid portion of the mailer, by dropping in the blue dropbox at the entrance of the Municipal Center or by delivery to the Town Clerk's office. If you go to polls and have not returned the card, you will be asked to complete a

form signifying that you have continuously been a Bellingham resident. You will then be taken off the inactive list and allowed to vote. If after two State election cycles, you have not properly declared your continuous Bellingham residency, you will be permanently deleted from the voter rolls.

As you can see, this is a long and involved process that can be completely avoided by simply returning your annual census in a timely manner. As well, it is a costly endeavor in both labor and material costs.

Confirmation Cards have mailed out. If you received one, please complete the card, sign it, then return it as soon as possible.

Bellingham's annual census forms will be mailed out in mid-January of 2024. Please do your best to comply with the 10-day return requirement. At the very latest, please be sure to have it in by April 1st, the same day that dog licenses are due. If you have a dog, please send the renewal in (with rabies information and a check) with your census and you will avoid any possibilities of dog late fees or inactive voter status.

Have a wonderfully happy, healthy and fun Holiday Season!!

Garden Club Adds Seasonal Color

This fall, Daigle Way in Bellingham got a little TLC from the Bellingham Garden Club of MA.

Hope you had a happy fall!

For more information, visit <https://bellinghamgardenclubofma.com>.



BWOT Holiday Activities

The Bellingham Women of Today will welcome Santa for their 30th year of Muffins with Santa on Saturday, December 16th from 9 – 11:30 at St. Blaise Church Hall, 1158

S. Main St., Bellingham. Admission fee is \$5 per child with a maximum charge of \$15 per family. Children can meet Santa, give him their Christmas wish list while you are welcome to take your phone or camera photos. We will offer muffins, bagels, juice, milk and coffee. Food and beverage items are \$1-2.00 each. There will be free crafts and coloring pages for kids as well as raffle baskets and holiday items for sale. All proceeds will benefit local BWOT charities.

Letters from Santa

Santa and his elves are so busy preparing for Christmas the Bellingham Women of Today will be helping him send personalized letters to anyone on

your list. They are a great gift for children, seniors, college students and anyone young at heart. The cost is \$2 for each letter or three for \$5. We will be taking requests at Muffins with Santa, December 16th, 9 to 11:30 at St. Blaise Church Hall in Bellingham, or send the name and address of child/children along with your name and phone number, payment, and any information you would like added to the letter, to BWOT, PO Box 405, Bellingham, MA 02019 before December 15th.

About BWOT

The BWOT is a nonprofit civic organization that has served Bellingham and surrounding communities for over 30 years. We would like you to join us as we continue to serve our community. We meet the 2nd Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m., September through June, in the Police department's conference room on Blackstone St. Bellingham. Contact us at bellingham-womenoftoday@gmail.com and visit us on Facebook.

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What is this bump on my eyelid?

Causes and treatment of chalazion

By: ROGER M. KALDAWY, M.D.
MILFORD FRANKLIN EYE CENTER

A chalazion, commonly known as a sty, is a small, painless lump that forms on the eyelid due to a blocked meibomian gland. This obstruction leads to the accumulation of oil and subsequent swelling. Although generally harmless, a chalazion can cause discomfort and aesthetic concerns. In this article, we will explore the multifaceted aspects of chalazion, including its origins, the potential role of Demodex mites, and whether a connection exists between a chalazion and domestic pets. Furthermore, we will delve into the significance of Xdemvy in the treatment of Demodex blepharitis, offering readers a thorough understanding of this very common ocular condition and its management.

Origins of Chalazion

A chalazion primarily stems from the occlusion of meibomian glands, responsible for secreting oils that lubricate the eyes. Sev-

eral factors contribute to this occlusion, including:

- 1. Hypersecretion of Sebum:** Excessive oil production can lead to the thickening of the sebum, hindering its proper flow from the gland.
- 2. Bacterial Infections:** Infections can incite inflammation and glandular obstruction, culminating in the formation of a chalazion.
- 3. Demodex Mite Influence:** Demodex mites, microscopic organisms that inhabit hair follicles, including those on the eyelids, have been suggested to play a role in chalazion development. Studies indicate that an overpopulation of these mites may contribute to meibomian gland blockage, though further research is needed to establish a conclusive link.



The Role of Demodex Mites in Chalazion Development

Demodex mites, tiny arachnids that naturally inhabit human skin and hair follicles, are commonly found in the eyelid area and in particular on the eyelashes. While their presence is considered normal in some cases, an excess of Demodex mites could potentially contribute to meibomian gland blockage, leading to the formation of a chalazion. Demodex mites infestation has been found in 50% of children with chalazion compared to no mites in healthy controls. This mite was also associated with recurrent and multiple chalazion. Ongoing research aims to elucidate the precise relationship between Demodex mites and

chalazion, seeking to determine their significance as a contributing factor to the condition.

Chalazion and Pets

Although owning cats or dogs is not directly linked to chalazion, it is important to note that Demodex mites are also prevalent in pets. Consequently, individuals who have close contact with pets, especially those that share sleeping spaces or maintain frequent physical proximity, may face a potential of Demodex mite transmission. It is crucial to emphasize that chalazion is not an inevitable consequence of pet ownership. Many factors enter in the equation including the owner immune system strength.

The Significance of Xdemvy in Demodex Blepharitis Treatment

Xdemvy, a topical medication, plays a pivotal role in the treatment of Demodex blepharitis, a condition characterized by an overpopulation of Demodex mites on the eyelids. This innovative formulation contains targeted ingredients designed to effectively combat Demodex mites, alleviating symptoms and facilitating recovery. Xdemvy has demonstrated remarkable efficacy in clinical trials, making it a valuable addition to the arsenal of treatments for Demodex-related ocular conditions.

Comprehensive Treatment Options

Warm Compresses: Applying a warm compress to the affected eyelid for intervals of 10-15 minutes, several times a day, serves to soften the blockage and facilitate natural drainage. This simple yet effective technique can significantly alleviate discomfort.

Eyelid Massages: After applying a warm compress, gently massaging the eyelid in a circular motion can further aid in releasing the obstructed oil and hasten the resolution of the chalazion.

Antibiotic Ointments or Drops: In instances where bacterial infection is suspected, a healthcare provider may prescribe topical antibiotics to combat the infection and expedite the healing process.

Xdemvy Application: In cases of Demodex-related ocular conditions, Xdemvy serves as a highly effective treatment option, targeting Demodex mites directly and aiding in their elimination.

Steroid Injections: For more persistent or severe chalazion, your ophthalmologist may administer a steroid injection to mitigate inflammation and hasten resolution.

Surgical Drainage: In cases where other treatments prove ineffective, a minor surgical procedure may be performed to create a small incision for drainage. This option is reserved for particularly stubborn or large chalazion.

Conclusion

Chalazion, while generally benign, can be an uncomfortable and visually noticeable condition. Understanding the potential causes, including factors such as Demodex mites, and discerning the potential connection with pets, can aid individuals in effectively managing this ocular ailment. Incorporating innovative treatments like Xdemvy in the management of Demodex-related ocular conditions adds a powerful tool to the healthcare provider's armamentarium. Should one suspect the presence of a chalazion or Demodex-related blepharitis, seeking consultation with your eyecare provider is paramount for accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment. With 2 full-time external disease specialists on staff, 7 ophthalmologists and optometrists, 3 locations including a surgery center in Milford, our eye centers offer state-of-the-art equipment to diagnose and treat eye problems, including chalazion. We have published research papers and lectured to other physicians on the subject. We are now a referral center for difficult cases of ocular surface disease, chalazion and ocular rosacea. We continue our mission to provide world class eye care for the entire family.

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Coming Up at the Bellingham Senior Center

The Bellingham Senior Center is located at 40 Blackstone St., Bellingham. Reach them at (508) 966-0398 or visit www.bellinghamma.org.

Free Turkey Lunch: The Bellingham Lions Club is offering a FREE sit-down lunch at the Senior Center on Saturday, December 2 from noon to 1 p.m. Enjoy a turkey luncheon, pie for dessert, drinks, all from the popular restaurant PJ's. Will include raffles, prizes, and, perhaps, a visit from Santa. Please call the Senior Center at (508) 966-0398 to reserve your spot. Seating is limited.

Christmas Party Saturday, December 9 at noon: \$15 per person.

Attendance is limited to 125, so call the Senior Center now (508 966-0398) to reserve your seat at the table.

New Year's Eve Party, Saturday, December 30 at noon: \$5 per person, call the Senior Center now (508 966-0398) to reserve.

Tax Work-Off Program: Offer your services to the town to get up to \$1,425 off your annual property tax bill. Work up to 100 hours per year at the rate of \$14.25 per hour. (Individuals only, couples working can make up to \$1,500) Open to Bellingham seniors 60+ years of age and qualified vet-

erans of any age. New program begins on December 1, ends November 30, 2024.

To sign up, please call Melissa Paquette at (508) 657-2801 and make an appointment. She is located on the lower level of the Municipal Building.

Gift Donations Needed: The Senior Center in collaboration with Cornerstone at Milford is accepting donations for gift giving to elders who are alone or in need. We are accepting gift cards from Bellingham businesses, small boxes of chocolate, tea boxes, puzzles, snacks (pretzels and crackers), scratch tickets, hot cocoa, hand lotions, and any small gift someone living alone may enjoy. Gifts can be dropped off at the Center until Wednesday, 12/13. For more information, please contact Terri Graham at (508) 966-0398.

Saturday Coffee at the VFW: From 9-11 a.m., visit the VFW on South Main Street for free coffee and assorted goodies including bagels the last Saturday of each month.

Christmas Caroling: The "Daisies" (pre-Brownie Girl Scouts) will be at the Senior Center on Friday, 12/22, at 1 p.m., for caroling, hot chocolate, and cookies. They are kindergartners — five years old — and adorable!

Easy Walks: An "Easy Walk" means not too many roots or rocks, relatively level with firm footing, and something of interest along the way. The program is presented by Marjorie Turner Holman who is the author of four Easy Walks in Massachusetts guides. Included are walks in Bellingham and surrounding towns. Join us on Thursday, December 14 at 1 p.m. to learn more about where you can walk safely and easily. Please call ahead to reserve your spot.

Drive-By Lunches: Here's the plan for this month: 12/5: Baked Schrod; 12/12: Turkey; 12/14: Shepherd Pie; 12/19: Stuffed Chicken; 12/21: Pot Roast; 12/28: Meatloaf. All provided by our friends at Mickey G's.

Sharing Tree: It's at the Senior Center this year... Please stop by ask at the front desk how you can help make a senior's Christmas a little brighter! It's the season for sharing!

Bellingham PD Awarded JAG Funding

The Bellingham Police Department was one of 130 police departments from across the state that was awarded funding made possible by the Edward J. Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program.

The Edward J. Byrne Justice Assistance Grant Program is a federal grant awarded by the Department of Justice to the Office of Grants and Research (OGR). As the State Administering Agency (SAA), OGR designs competitive grant opportunities and distributes JAG funds with a focus on meeting the needs of local communities.

The Bellingham Police Department is set to receive \$49,381.20 from this grant process. As part of the competitive grant process, the Bellingham Police Department submitted proposals in early 2023. Grant reviewers identified projects that aligned with specific priority areas, including strategies to address unlawful drug use, human trafficking, domestic violence, sexual assault, gang and gun violence, missing person cases, and hate crimes. Additional priorities

funded by this grant include technology upgrades, investigative tools and protective gear, school safety and security, and efforts to advance racial equity and support underserved communities.

"I am excited to see the Bellingham Police Department receive this funding," said State Representative Soter. "I am glad that the police department will be able to take advantage of these federal funds to help address some immediate concerns that they are facing. This grant funding will help to make our community safer!"

"The Bellingham Police Department is grateful for the Byrne JAG grant award issued to us by the Commonwealth," Bellingham Police Chief Ken Fitzgerald. "These funds will be used to supplement local funding to help us secure updated less lethal technology and equipment to properly equip our staff. This will enhance our ability to properly respond to and manage dangerous or critical incidents and give our staff another potential De-escalation tool."

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Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School Accepting Applications

The Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School (BFCCPS), located in Franklin, Massachusetts, has begun accepting applications for the upcoming 2024-2025 school year. BFCCPS is a regional public charter school for students in Kindergarten through Grade Eight. Founded in 1995, BFCCPS is one of the oldest and most successful charter schools in the state of Massachusetts.

Siblings of currently enrolled students will have priority enrollment status; thereafter applicants from communities in the school's district will have a chance at securing a spot for their child through the annual enrollment lottery to be held on February 26, 2024. Applicants from outside of the region (who reside within the state of Massachusetts) will be eligible for enrollment should additional spaces remain after all sibling and regional applicants have been placed.

For the 2024-2025 school year 100 spaces will be offered



for Kindergarten and students at all other grade levels will receive a waiting list number. Offers for Grades One through Eight

would be contingent upon currently enrolled students electing not to return next year.

The school provides a well-rounded, rigorous academic program designed to educate the whole child providing courses in art, music, languages, technology, and physical education. In addition to our core academic and co-curricular classes, students in Grade Six through Eight participate in weekly Classical Enrichment Courses and start Latin studies in Grade Six. Middle schoolers are also eligible to par-



ticipate in our Spring Musical. Students in Grades 5-8 also have the opportunity to participate in overnight field trips each spring.

Round trip bus transportation is available with bus stops currently in Bellingham, Blackstone, Franklin, Norfolk, Mendon, Medway, Milford, Millis, Walpole, and Wrentham.

BFCCPS alumni continue to excel during their attendance at local public high schools as well as independent high schools.

Please visit the school's website at www.bfccps.org for enrollment details, including applications. Enrollment information sessions and building tours will be held on January 20th and February 3 from 10am to noon. Please note that the enrollment period will come to a close on February 14, 2024 at 4 p.m.

If you'd like to learn more

about the educational mission of the school or have enrollment related questions please contact the school's Communication Coordinator, Joanne Basile at jbasile@bfccps.org or (508) 541-3434 x104.

About the Benjamin Franklin Charter School

The Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School's mission is to assist parents in their role as primary educators of their children by providing students with a classical academic education coupled with sound character development and community service. Our mission is supported by four distinct, yet interconnected pillars that provide for a collaborative, rigorous education for all students. These pillars guide, direct and define the school in all it does.

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BVT Practical Nursing Program Earns Top-Ranking

PracticalNursing.org, a leading resource for LPN/LVN students, recently announced BVT's evening nursing program as the #5 Ranked Practical Nursing Program in its annual assessment, recognizing exceptional programs in Massachusetts. The ranking assists aspiring nurses with a resource for selecting a prospective nursing school. The evaluation considers various factors, including past and present first-time National Council Licensure Examination for Practical Nurses (NCLEX-PN) pass

rates, weighted by year, and a methodology that assesses how effectively a program supports its students on their journey toward licensure and beyond.

"It's an honor to be #5 in the PracticalNursing.org 2024 rankings of the best nursing programs in Massachusetts," said Practical Nursing Coordinator Joann Monks, MBA, MSc, RN-BC, RMA. "This is a tribute to the hard work and dedication of our students, faculty, staff, and stakeholders working together to support our program and champion

the growth of nursing professionals through education."

The Moonlight Program in Practical Nursing at Blackstone Valley Tech proudly serves adult learners in the District, out of District, and out of state. It is a part-time, 60-week program that accommodates non-traditional students, balancing additional commitments to family and work. For more information, visit www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/practicalnursing.

BVT Class of 2024 Adams Scholars

Hard work and academic achievement of students, staff, and parents pays off for eighty-five Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT) seniors who are the proud recipients of a John and Abigail Adams Scholarship. These students have earned free tuition at any Massachusetts public college or university and may want to further their vocational and career training with additional education, advanced training, and credentials.

The first-time score on a high school MCAS exam determines eligibility for an Adams Scholarship. Adams Scholars receive

free tuition at any Massachusetts public college or university, renewable for eight consecutive semesters or four years. Recipients must use the tuition credit in the first fall semester following their high school graduation and maintain a GPA of 3.0 or better.

The following members of the Class of 2024 from Bellingham have earned a John and Abigail Adams Scholarship:

Bellingham

Pyper Bourre, Sophie Jacobson, Vanessa Lizotte, Aiden Simpson, and Lucien Stenehjem.

Sheriff Patrick McDermott Appointed to Key National Sheriffs' Association Committees

Dedham MA- Norfolk County Sheriff Patrick W. McDermott was recently appointed by the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) to serve on the organization's Government Affairs Committee and Youth Programs and Juvenile Justice Committee through 2024.

These committees play a vital role in shaping policies and initiatives that have a profound impact

on public safety, juvenile justice, and the relationships between law enforcement agencies and local, state, and federal governments.

The National Sheriffs' Association, founded in 1940, connects thousands of sheriffs, deputies, law enforcement and public safety officials to address today's public safety issues through education, awareness and training.

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Bellingham Public Library News & Events for December

For updates to library programs and services, please see the library website, www.bellingham-library.org. Click on the red alert banner on the top of the page for details.

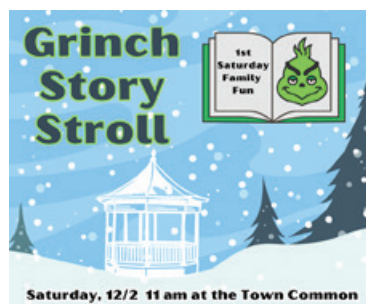
Additional details about library programs are available on the library calendar at <https://bit.ly/3xMECCt>

December/January Hours

Monday - Thursday 9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., Friday & Saturday 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

The library is closed on Monday, December 25th for the Christmas Holiday and on Monday, January 1st for the New Year's Holiday.

Highlighted Programs



First Saturday Family Fun! Grinch Story Stroll

Saturday, December 2nd at 11 a.m. at the Town Common

A special guest is joining us for this month's First Saturday Family Fun - The Grinch! Stroll around the Town Common with us while we read our December Story Walk - *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* by Dr. Seuss. No registration, just join us!

Polar Express Extravananza

Friday, December 8th at 6 p.m.

The Polar Express Extravananza is back with the famous story, seasonal crafts, and visits from Santa and the Grinch! Come see the library lit up at night. For families. Please sign up to attend - you can come and go as desired between the 6 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. event time.

Gingerbread Mania

Thursday, December 14th from 6-7 p.m. for families

Friday, December 15th from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. for toddlers and preschoolers

Come and decorate gingerbread people using gingerbread, frosting and an assortment of candies. Please register.

Drop in Sewing/Craft Nights

Thursdays, December 14th and 28th from 5:15 p.m. to 7:45 p.m.

Join members of your community for a night of sewing, quilting, knitting and crocheting. Feel free to bring other craft projects you are working on! Light refreshments will be served.

Red Cross Blood Drive

Friday, December 22nd from 9 am to 2 pm. Register at redcrossblood.org

Dungeons & Dragons: A Winter Fairytale

Tuesday, December 26th from 1-4 p.m. for grades 8-12

Wednesday, December 27th from 1-4 p.m. for grades 4-7

A fairytale inspired game in a winter-themed setting. Players will be a group of friends lost in the woods of Lonelywood,

Icewind Dale that catch themselves unable to find their way out. This session will be using D&D 5th Edition and the module Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden. The session is 3 hours with a break in the middle. Please register. Emails will be sent out before the program to discuss characters and gameplay. Materials will be provided but feel free to bring your own. New players welcome.

New Year's Eve Party

Friday, December 29th from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Join us for a New Year's Eve party! There will be music, crafts, a photobooth and celebrating as we count down to the end of 2023 and welcome 2024. For families. Please register so we can plan for the craft supplies needed.

After School Programs

Registration is mandatory for children in grades 4-6 to attend the ASK program.

- ASK Program hours 2:30-4:45 p.m., no ASK program on 12/22 Early Release Day
- The Teen Room is open for grades 7-12 from 2-4:45 p.m.
- Check the library website for details on the programs. <https://bit.ly/3QzITpI>

Ongoing Children's December Programs

Ring a Ding - Mondays & Thursdays at 10:15 a.m. Drop in! No session school vacation week.

Read to Freedom the Reading Dog - Mondays from 6-7 p.m. Sign up for a 15-minute time slot!

Sensory Story Time - Tuesdays at 10:15 a.m. Please register for each session. No session school vacation week.

Chess Club Returns in January! Session starts January 4th and ends March 28th



4th-9th graders are invited to join Bellingham resident and nationally ranked chess player Meghana for a return of our Beginner's Chess Club. The group will meet on Thursdays from 4:30-5:30 p.m. in the Conference Room at the library. Attendees are welcome to stay from 5:30-6 p.m. for practice play. There will

LIBRARY

continued on page 17

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be no meeting during February school vacation week. As the lessons in each session build on the content from the previous session, attendees should plan on attending all sessions. A free chess set will be awarded to all attendees with perfect attendance. Limited to 9 participants so please register early. Please note: registrant email addresses will be shared with Meghana so she can communicate directly with participants as a group about the program.

Adult/Child Book Club –For kids in grades 6-9 and the adult in their life who loves to read. Meets monthly, contact Diane Nelson, dnelson@cwmars.org if you are interested in joining! Check the library calendar for details on the December meeting date and time.

Adult Programs

Book Discussion Group – Generally meets the 1st Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. Attend

in person or on Zoom. Contact Cecily Christensen, cchriste@cwmars.org for more information.

Our upcoming titles are:
January: *The Keeper of Stories* by Sally Page

February: *The Night Ship* by Jess Kid

March: *The Little Paris Bookshop* by Nina George

Yoga for the Seasons

Tuesdays at 8:30 a.m., registration required. Check the library calendar for details

Virtual 50+ Job Seekers Networking Group – Wednesdays on Zoom

If you are unemployed and actively looking, underemployed, seeking a new career direction, re-entering the job market after a long employment gap, or recently retired and looking for your “Encore Career”, this networking group program is perfect for you!

Check the library calendar for each week’s topic and more information.

Bellingham Skein Artists – Wednesdays at 6 p.m.

Do you enjoy knitting, crocheting, or any of the other fiber arts? All skill levels are welcome, including beginners. Please bring your own materials. No registration required.

Writing Group for Adults – Tuesday, December 12th at 6:30 p.m.

Local area writers Amy Bartelloni and Marjorie Turner Hollman welcome the public to an evening of reading and listening. Hear what local writers are working on, and share what you are working on. Works of fiction or non-fiction, all are welcome. Reading limit is 9 minutes per reader, with a brief opportunity for positive, personal comments only. To participate contact Marjorie Turner Hollman at marjorie@marjorieturner.com.

Friends of the Library virtual meeting – Tuesday, December 12th at 7 p.m. Email library@bellinghamlibrary.org for the Zoom link.

Library Board of Trustees Meeting – Thursday, December 14th at 7 p.m. in the Conference Room.

Gift of Laughter at LoSA Yankee Swap

The Ladies of St. Anne participated in the annual Yankee Swap meeting on November 9th. After praying the St. Anne rosary and a brief business meeting, everyone filled plates at the buffet of sandwiches, snacks, and desserts. With plates on our laps, the swap began. As usual, everyone went home with many beautiful Christmas themed gifts having

laughed and had a wonderful evening of fellowship.

All members were reminded to bake for the Country Christmas Fair Ladies Bake Table, on Saturday, December 9th. Items should have a brief description of what they are and if they contain nuts. They can be dropped off on Friday night or Saturday morning.



The Christmas Gala will be on December 14 at 6 p.m., at the Empire Buffet on Diamond Hill Road in Woonsocket, RI. The cost is \$27 and is due by December 3. Checks made payable to St. Blaise, with “LoSA Christmas Gala” on the Memo line, should be put in an envelope marked Attn: Ann-Marie Lavallee-Kell and dropped in the collection bas-

ket at any Mass. Please contact Ann-Marie Lavallee-Kell, (508) 488-8528, for more information.



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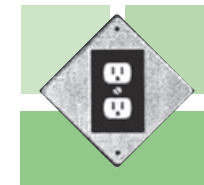
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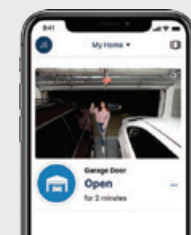
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Charles River Chorale to Perform at Medway High School

The Charles River Chorale and the Charles River Children's Choir will be presenting their Winter Concert on Sunday, December 10 at 2:00 p.m. at the Medway High School Auditorium.

The theme of this concert is *Joy to the World, Celebrations Around the Globe*. This year's program will feature music celebrating cultures and seasonal events across the globe, including Chinese New Year, Kwanzaa, Christmas, Hanukkah, Diwali and more! We invite you to travel around the world with us as we celebrate music and tradition from over 10 different cultures. With many of these pieces in other languages, we expect the music will speak for itself, radiating reverence, joy, humor and more in our universal language - music!

Doors open at 1:30 p.m. Tickets can be purchased prior to the concert by using the QR code below or by visiting our website at www.charlesriverchorale.com/tickets. Tickets can also be purchased at the door with payment by cash or check. No credit cards will be accepted at the door.

Under the leadership of director Ashley Nelson-Oneschuk, the Charles River Chorale is in its 40th year as a non-profit 501(c)3 chorale. Membership has grown and both the chorale and the younger children's choir are very excited to be back on stage stronger than ever to present our joyful work to the greater community! We hope you can join us, stow away any worries for a few hours, and liftoff into the holiday season through our gift of music.

BFCCPS Hosts Diwali Celebration

The Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School (BFCCPS) recently hosted a Diwali Festival of Lights Cultural Celebration. This educational and cultural event was organized by a variety of BFCCPS parent volunteers and the BFCCPS ELPAC. This program is supported in part by a grant from the Franklin Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.

The event was well attended by BFCCPS families, faculty,

staff and administration. Participants were joined by District Director Aidan Doherty, a representative from the office of State Senator Rebecca Rausch. The Senator's office presented Manisha Thanneeru with an official citation from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts State Senate to recognize her efforts to bring our community together during this celebration.


"On behalf of the BFCCPS Administration, I'd like to extend a tremendous thank you to Manisha Thanneeru, Deepa



Bhaskar and the team of volunteers who led this year's event; we also wish to thank the many students and parents who shared their time and talents with us. This festival was such a wonderful opportunity for all of our families to learn more about Diwali." Joe Perna BFCCPS Head of School

For more information about the school's mission or enrollment-related questions, please contact Joanne Basile at jbasile@bfccps.org or (508) 541-3434 x104.





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Rep. Soter Receives Legislator Award from Massachusetts Speech-Language Hearing Association

State Representative Michael J. Soter (R-Bellingham) received a legislator award from the Massachusetts Speech-Language Hearing Association (MSHA) last month at their 2023 American Speech Language Hearing Association Annual Convention held in Dorchester.

Representative Soter received this award for his work to help advance and advocate for the MSHA policy initiatives, including his work to help pass H.5094 – An Act Providing for Provisional Licensure for Speech-Language Pathologists. Rep. Soter was honored along side Senator Nick Collins and Representative Paul McMurtry.

On November 10, 2022, then-Governor Charlie Baker signed An Act for Provisional Licensure for Speech-Language Pathologists into law. This bill created a provisional or tempo-

rary license for clinical fellows, in turn solving a long-term licensure and billing challenge. Clinical fellows will now be allowed to bill Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance for the services that they provide. With this law, hundreds of clinical fellows are able to stay and work right here in Massachusetts, helping to improve the staffing shortage affecting the industry.

The implementation of this law now waits approval from the Board of Registration of Speech Language Pathologists and Audiology. Representative Soter hopes that these regulations changes go into effect soon so that clinical fellows can start to help out our communities!

Updates regarding the implementation of this regulation change will be posted on the Board's web-site as they become available.

Exsultet! Celebrates the Holiday Season



Exsultet! invites you to celebrate the festive sounds of music during the upcoming holiday season! Exsultet! will perform a holiday concert entitled "Listening to the Snow" on Saturday, December 9, 2023 at 7 p.m. at First Congregational Church, 725 Washington Street, Holliston, MA and on Sunday, December 10, 2023 at 2 p.m. at Allin Congregational Church, 683 High Street, Dedham, MA. This performance is a celebration of sacred song, familiar jingles and winter cheer. We invite you to take a break from the hustle and bustle of this busy time of year to fill your soul with gladness and find quiet moments for contemplation. Old favorites like O Come All Ye Faithful will resound with upbeat classics like "Joy to the World." Let the music

of the season fill your heart and soothe your soul!

General admission tickets are \$20; students and seniors (65+) are \$15; and children 12 and under are free. Performances are not suitable for children under age 5. Tickets can be purchased starting November 1, 2023 through our website (www.exsultet.us) or by calling Stacey Balardini at (508) 395-5600.

Founded in 2013, Exsultet! A Celebration of Voices is an auditioned women's chamber ensemble combining great music and poetry to inspire audiences with adventurous and innovative concerts.

Exsultet's mission is to give women an opportunity to join together to make music, to showcase the works of up-and-coming composers and arrangers, to feature the talents of local musicians and actors, and to combine performance and advocacy by focusing on important community issues and partnering with other local organizations. For more details, please visit www.exsultet.us.

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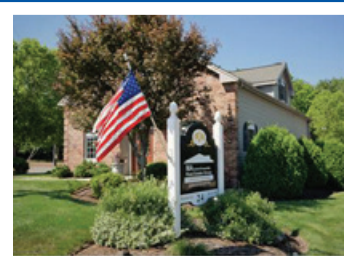
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Sports

Two-time Captain Guilmain Aims to Lead in Hockey

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Originally, it was a sport that his father enjoyed and wanted his son to give it a try, and once a young Ayden Guilmain stepped onto the ice, hockey became his main sport. The now senior Bellingham center can play just about everywhere, but center has been his primary position.

“My father signed me up for lessons, and immediately it was a sport that I loved. Everything about the game was exciting; the environment in the rink is unlike any other sport,” Guilmain said. “The vibe is different, and the game is played at a super-fast pace with action all around you.”

Growing up, Guilmain played youth hockey in addition to playing on three different club hockey teams (Woonsocket North Stars, RI Saints and lately the Bronco Hockey Club out of Burrillville RI). Thankfully, he had decided to take part in the club hockey route as, by the time he got to high school, he found that hockey was on a very different level than what he was used to.

“High school hockey was really serious, and I was glad that I

had played for a good club team in the Saints,” he said. “Playing for them really helped me to prepare for the high school season. The coaching staff was really helpful in getting me ready for that next level.”

As a freshman, Guilmain made the Bellingham varsity squad as a defenseman, something that he had played occasionally throughout his career whenever his team someone to fill in, but he would much rather play center, his natural position. When he was moved back to center as a sophomore, he was more than relieved.

Making the varsity team was not only an honor, but a big step up for Guilmain.

“It was one of the biggest steps that I have ever been involved with; being a 14-year-old playing against 17- and 18-year-old seniors,” he said. “It was intimidating, but I did learn a lot from them, discipline being the biggest.”

Coach Brad Kwatcher has seen Guilmain, now as a second-year captain with the Blackhawks, grow over his four years with the team.



At home on the ice, Ayden Guilmain, named a captain for a second year for Bellingham High hockey, is poised to have his best season.

“As a person, he has matured and become more vocal on the ice. His hockey sense has also gotten much better,” the Bellingham coach said. “He took on the challenge of playing defense for us for one year, and now he’s

back to playing center, where he shines. I believe that he can challenge himself to take it to the next level.”

Naming a player a two-year captain is not something that the Coach usually does, but knows it is something that Guilman can handle.

“As a second-year captain I want to improve. Last year, I don’t think that I led as best as I could have,” Guilmain said. “I want to be a positive role model and lead by example more this year. I also want the experience top to be a positive one where we are all having fun and let them know that it’s ok to fail once in a while.”

Over the past three seasons, the Blackhawks have improved each year and although Bellingham will still have a tough time competing against some of the top-notch programs, Guilmain is looking forward to a successful senior campaign.

“We are still building, but after only losing two seniors, I think that we should have a strong season this year,” the two-time captain said. “If we stick to our game and play disciplined hockey, we should be alright and able to make it into the playoffs, something that I have never done in my high school career, and I’m

not sure when the last time Bellingham made it.”

According to the Blackhawk Coach, if Guilmain stays focused, he is going to be counted on to provide some big offensive threats this year. He also expects the senior to have the best year of his career.

While he is looking to guide his team into the playoffs, individually, Guilmain is looking to increase his strength while gaining some weight so that he can hold his own on the ice against the bigger athletes. During the offseason, he has put in the work while hitting the gym as much as he can.

Guilmain sees himself a more of a playmaker, pass first before shooting, but he also believes that he’ll get his goals as well. While the season has yet to begin, Guilmain would like to continue his hockey playing following high school, but most likely for a collegiate club team, hopefully at the University of New Hampshire or Syracuse University.

“I’d like to play club hockey in college to have fun,” Guilmain said. “I am mainly going to college for academics, but schools with a club hockey team would be a perk, being able to play the sport that I love.”

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Sports

BHS Girls' Basketball Team Sets Some Lofty Goals

By KEN HAMWEY,
BULLETIN SPORTS WRITER

The 2023-24 girls' basketball team at Bellingham High appears to be in a good place after last year's youthful squad finished with a 3-18 record, one victory shy of qualifying for the state tourney.

The Blackhawks struggled last year after losing Maya Jackson, a promising sophomore. The 5-foot-11 power forward suffered a torn ACL against Douglas in the Hutchinson Tournament and missed 16 games. A fundamentally sound competitor, Jackson's all-around talents were sorely missed.

Coach Bob Pingeton, now in his second year at the helm, is optimistic his forces will be vastly improved and he's eager to get the season started. The Blackhawks, who'll open at Blackstone Valley Tech on Dec. 8, have 10 players returning, and all of them have experience.

"Our strengths include athleticism, good team chemistry, experience, depth and an improving basketball IQ," Pingeton said. "We're more confident, and that leads to better play. Many of the girls are technically sound, and they're striving to be mentally tough, an attribute that helps with resilience."

The 50-year-old Pingeton has set some lofty team goals, but he firmly believes they can be achieved. Heading the list is qualifying for the state tourney.

"Getting into the playoffs is the top priority," he said. "And that means beating some Tri Valley League teams. We also want to be in the mix to capture the TVL Small Division title. Two other objectives are to improve daily in practice and games, and to repeat as Hutchinson Tourney champs. It's important to win the tourney that we host."

The Blackhawks' three captains will play key roles in trying to achieve Pingeton's goals. They include Jackson, a junior who can play either forward or guard; Calleigh Elder, another junior who will start at point guard; and senior forward Ciara Crayton. They are not only capable leaders, but they're also talented and skilled.

"Maya is a great team-first player," Pingeton offered. "She's very athletic, can score, rebound and defend, and her basketball IQ is the best on the team. She'll lead by example and by being vocal."

Elder averaged 8 points and 3 assists last year, but Pingeton expects those numbers to improve. "Calleigh's court vision is excellent," he said. "She's an incredible athlete who also plays soccer and runs track. She's experienced and distributes the ball well."

The 5-foot-9 Crayton can rebound and defend. "Ciara is impactful in the paint," Pingeton noted. "She's got good court presence, she's physical and will guard our opponents' to forward in the paint. She's competitive and displays good court presence."

Junior off-guard Anabella Barrasso likely will start on the wing. "She could be our best pure shooter," Pingeton said. "She's competitive, can get to the rim and finish the play. Anabella could be a double-figure scorer."

Sophomore Maggie Kane gained experience as a freshman last year at the small-forward slot. "She's got good court sense, a high basketball IQ, and she's competitive. An AAU player, we'll lean on her to get some rebounds."

Junior Luci Walden, who was the MVP of the Hutchinson Tourney last year, is a capable wing player. "Luci is a sparkplug who at times was our best defender," Pingeton noted. "She's like a utility knife, always willing to do the dirty work. Her scoring and defense were keys in our winning the Hutchinson Tourney."

A trio of senior Montana Berglund, freshman Debora Kalemli and junior Sam Gibbs are guards who'll contribute.

"Montana came off the bench last year," Pingeton said. "She's got good instincts and is smooth in transition. A two-guard, she can shoot the three, and she's able to get up and down the court quickly. Debora can play the point or on the wing. I expect her to get more



Junior forward Maya Jackson missed 16 games last year, but she's fully recovered from ACL surgery.



Bob Pingeton is eager to get his second season underway as coach of the Bellingham High girls basketball team.

minutes this season and have a bigger role. A strong defender, she passes well. Sam is a two-guard who can shoot, pass and also get to the basket. She was on the varsity but also gained experience by competing on the jayvee team."

Senior Sam D'Agostino will play forward. "She's fearless," Pingeton said. A rebounder, she can also shoot and knock down three-pointers."

Pingeton, who coaches girls' tennis and boys' golf at Franklin High, says he wants to keep building stability for the Blackhawks' girls' program. "My second year will be easier, but it won't be easy," he emphasized. "It will be easier, because I'm familiar with the school, the players and the program. But, it won't be easy because the TVL is an incredibly tough league. There's no easy opponent on the schedule. And, our non-league games will be challenging."

BHS will play Notre Dame of Hingham twice, Blackstone Valley Tech, and open the Hutchinson Tourney against Carver. In either the tourney's title game or the consolation contest, the Blackhawks will face either Ursuline or Dighton-Rehoboth.

"We were 3-18 last year, but no one quit and our team chemistry remained solid," Pingeton noted. "We're in rebuilding mode, and this season will be a key year. We're on the right path."

Pingeton, who was an assistant in 2021 for coach John Leighton with the Franklin High girls' basketball team, revealed that his squad's motto this season is "trust." The players will have that word on their uniforms.

"Trust is about trusting the process, the coach and your teammates," he said.

Pingeton's players are also learning some valuable life lessons while competing "I want them to learn how to be accountable, how to overcome adversity and to be leaders and good teammates with a terrific work ethic," he said.

Bob Pingeton is eager to get his second season underway and it's unlikely that he'll experience a sophomore jinx.

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Celebration of Cultures

3rd Annual Multicultural Festival held at BVT

Understanding other cultures and traditions helps open our minds to diverse viewpoints and gain a broader perspective. Traditional foods, dance, music, and art can be a source of pride and an expression of cultural identity. Sharing those traditions is a fun way to celebrate one's heritage with others. It is one of the many ways Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT) students and staff contributed to an authentic celebration at its third annual Multicultural Festival.

The interdisciplinary event held at BVT on October 27th included a Multicultural Center featuring student-run booths representing many countries and, in the process, diverse traditions

that make each of the students unique. Members of the Multicultural Club prepared posters and shared items and goods from countries and cultures around the world. The students and staff browsed the booths and sampled other cultures' traditions, languages, and arts, all without using their passports.

"The festival is an exciting event. Our students teach about their culture with pride, while those attending benefit from learning about other cultures through food, dance, and music," said Kerry Baldwin, World Language Instructor. "We are proud of the hard work our student presenters put into their presentations and are grateful for their willingness to share. It makes for

a very special day!"

If you were open to trying foods from other countries, you might have stopped by one of these booths: Costa Rica by Jacob Cahill for a serving of Gallo Pinto (Costa Rican Beans and Rice); Multicultural Club for a sample of Arroz Con Gandules (Puerto Rican Rice with Pigeon Peas), or Tembleque (a coconut dessert pudding from Puerto Rico); Finland by Haley Bilodeau, Lusikkaleivat which is a Finnish teaspoon cookie.

"I enjoyed speaking with my peers and instructors about Puerto Rico during the Multicultural Festival," said Autumn Gromelski of Northbridge, a sophomore in Culinary Arts. "We discussed food, music, and art," said Yaritza Ayala of Uxbridge, a sophomore in Culinary Arts. "Autumn and I prepared and offered samples of pulled pork with plantains, a popular food in Puerto Rico."

In addition to the student-run booths, there were traditional "Día de Los Muertos" activities, a visiting artist, dance lessons, and a cultural workshop. The instructors from Dance Fitness Collaboration were teaching Salsa or Zumba to those who had signed up. Sabato Visconti, a new media artist and photographer, spoke about how his Brazilian heritage influenced his art and assisted students in glitch photography. There was also a cultural workshop with instructors from



Students enjoyed dancing to Brazilian music before being photographed at the Brazil booth.



Students and staff take a dance lesson with the instructors from Dance Fitness Collaboration and learn the basic steps to dance Salsa.



During this Cultural Workshop with Monano, students in a Peruvian drum circle felt the beat and kept the rhythm.

Monano who presented the history of Peruvian drumming and encouraged active participation in playing the drums.

The interdisciplinary event was a successful collaborative effort supported in part by grants

from the Douglas, Hopedale, Mendon, Northbridge, Upton, and Uxbridge Cultural Councils, local agencies supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.

Circle of Friends Again Welcomes Ellis Paul

Award winning performer Ellis Paul returns to the Circle of Friends Coffeehouse in Franklin on Saturday, December 2nd accompanied by Radoslav Lorković on keys. He doesn't just write songs; he's a guitar-carrying reporter who covers the human condition and details the hopes, loves, losses of those he observes, turning their stories into luminous pieces of music that get under your skin and into your bloodstream. And much like the artists who have influenced him, including his greatest inspiration, Woody Guthrie, Paul weaves deeply personal experiences with social issues and renders them

provocative works that are as timely as they are timeless. His new album "55" touches on the necessity of gratitude in a difficult era of the pandemic and divided political stances. <https://www.ellispaull.com/>

Special guest Grace Morrison will open the show. Born and raised on the shores of Cape Cod, Grace's unique brand of "saltwater country" has established her as a confident, refreshing voice in country-pop. <https://www.gracemorrison.com/>

The Circle of Friends Coffeehouse is a non-profit organization affiliated with Franklin's First Universalist Society. Concerts are



presented in a smoke free and alcohol free environment at the Society's handicapped accessible Meetinghouse, 262 Chestnut St. in Franklin, and begin at 8 p.m.; doors open at 7:30 p.m. Beverages and gourmet desserts will be available. Visit <https://circlefolk.org/> for ticket information.

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MA Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program Now Open

Applications Accepted for Eligible Households through April 30, 2024

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) is pleased to announce the start of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) 2023-2024 winter heating season. LIHEAP is a free, statewide service funded by the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program that helps eligible households stay warm during the winter months by paying a portion of winter heating bills.

Applications for home energy assistance are currently being accepted online at apply.massliheap.org, and income-eligible households may receive financial help to offset heating

bills from November 1, 2023, through April 30, 2024.

Both homeowners and renters can apply online or through local administering agencies for LIHEAP assistance. Households must meet specific eligibility requirements to qualify for aid, which will be paid directly to their heating vendor.

Eligibility is based on several factors, including household size and combined gross annual income of residents 18 and older. Qualifying households – including those with the cost of heat included in the rent – can receive assistance for all sources of heat, including oil, electricity, natural gas, propane, kerosene, wood and coal.

“The Massachusetts home energy assistance program is free, because no resident should have to worry about heating their home during the winter-time,” said Ed Augustus Jr., Secretary of Housing and Livable Communities. “High fuel costs can have a devastating effect on household budgets and can even endanger Massachusetts’ most vulnerable residents. We encourage anyone who needs heating assistance to explore their eligibility by applying online or visiting the nearest administering agency. And to please share the information with loved ones or neighbors who could benefit from this free resource.”

For more information, or to find your local LIHEAP agency, visit www.toapply.org/MassLIHEAP.

Not just for Newcomers . . .



Come join your Franklin friends and neighbors at the Franklin Newcomers and Friends Club annual Holiday Yankee Swap. Join us Wednesday, December 13th, 7:00pm at Franklin’s local bookstore, Escape Into Fiction, 12 Main Street, Downtown Franklin. The night will include our Holiday themed trivia contest and our Yankee Swap. Bring a wrapped gift (\$20 limit) and get one in return. Prizes are awarded to trivia winners and we’ll be serving refreshments from Birchwood, a lovely cafe/bakeshop located in Franklin. Come early and check out the bookstore to get a jump on Holiday shopping. There is always a wonderful selection for all ages.

We are a multi-generational, member-driven organization and are always excited to welcome new faces and new ideas. Residents of Franklin, or any surrounding town that doesn’t have a Newcomers Club, are welcome to join us. In addition to our bi-monthly meetings, we hold fun and varied events to stay connected throughout the year. Upcoming meetings will be held in February and April. Look for us on social media for more information: <https://www.meetup.com/Franklin-Newcomers-Friends> <https://www.facebook.com/FranklinNewcomersCraftFair/>

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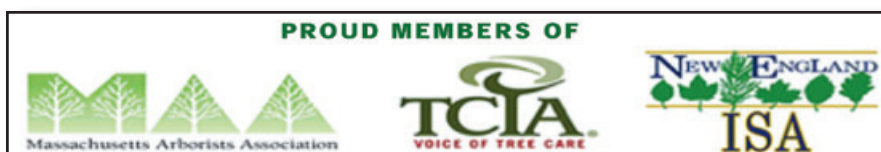
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Calendar

Bellingham Police Toy Drive, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., Walmart, Bellingham

Toy drive will be at Walmart on 11/25, 11/26, 12/2, 12/3, 12/9 and the last day 12/10 from all 10-4

December 2

Bellingham Police Munchkins with Santa, 10:30 a.m. – 1 p.m., includes holiday treats and crafts and an opportunity to meet Santa! Bellingham Police Station, 30 Blackstone Street, Bellingham

Ellis Paul, with special guest Grace Morrison, 8 p.m., Circle of Friends Coffeehouse, 262 Chestnut St., Franklin, MA, doors open 7:30 p.m., \$25, smoke- and alcohol-free, desserts available. www.circlefolk.org

Bellingham Police Toy Drive, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., Walmart, Bellingham. Toys are given to Bellingham-area children, with excess donated to Massachusetts Department of Children and

Families (DCF).

Grinch Story Stroll, First Saturday Family Fun, 11 a.m., Bellingham Town Common, sponsored by Bellingham Public Library

Downtown Franklin (circa 1932) Model Railway Exhibit opens at Franklin Historical Museum, 80 West Central St., Franklin, exhibit available to view during museum hours, Saturdays 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., Sundays 1-4 p.m., through early January. Free admission, please consider bringing donation for Franklin Food Pantry.

Greater Milford Community Chorus Holiday Concert, 7:30 p.m., Milford Town Hall, \$12 at the door; children ten and under are welcome for free. There will be exciting raffle baskets to win, and refreshments served.

Revolutionary Snake Ensemble, with special guest Brian Roche, 8 p.m., Niagara Firehouse, 8 Exchange St., Millis, MA, doors open at 7:30 p.m., refreshments available, sponsored by

Middlesex Savings Bank, supported by Millis Cultural Council, local state agency. Tickets at Eventbrite or email niagaracoffeehaus@gmail.com

December 3

Bellingham Police Toy Drive, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., Walmart, Bellingham. Toys are given to Bellingham-area children, with excess donated to Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF).

Greater Milford Community Chorus Holiday Concert, 1:30 p.m., Milford Town Hall, \$12 at the door; children ten and under are welcome for free. There will be exciting raffle baskets to win, and refreshments served.

December 8

Polar Express Extravaganza, 6-7:30 p.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham

SAFE Coalition Jack Frost Jubilee, 4-8 p.m., Proctor Mansion, 36 Common St., Wrentham, MA, includes Santa, reindeer, stories, sweet treats, \$20 adults, kids free, www.safecoalitionma.org/jubilee

December 9

St. Blaise Christmas Country Fair, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., 1158 S. Main St., Bellingham, food, handmade items, mulled cider, kids' activities, Santa, and Mrs. Claus 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Bellingham Police Toy Drive, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., Walmart, Bellingham. Toys are given to Bellingham-area children, with excess donated to Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF).

Exsultet! holiday concert "Listening to the Snow," 7 p.m. First Congregational Church, 725 Washington Street, Holliston, MA, tickets \$20; students & seniors (65+) \$15; children 12 and under free at www.exsultet.us or call Stacey at (508) 395-5600.

Giant Menorah Lighting at Gilly's House, 6:30 p.m., 1022 West St., Wrentham, Chanukah donuts, hot apple cider, chocolate gelt, lively Chanukah music, free raffle

Holiday Pop, 7:30-10 p.m., presented by the Claffin Hill Symphony Orchestra, Milford Town Hall, 52 Main St., Milford. Come celebrate winter's magic

with the CHSO and Greater Milford Community Chorus where The Grand Ballroom is transformed into a winter wonderland! The warm sounds of the holidays will fill the hall with festive seasonal favorites, including a holiday sing-along and a visit from jolly ol' St. Nick! <https://www.claffinhill.org/symphony-series/symphony>

December 10

Bellingham Police Toy Drive, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., Walmart, Bellingham. Toys are given to Bellingham-area children, with excess donated to Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF).

Joy to the World, Celebrations around the Globe, 2 p.m., presented by Charles River Chorale, Medway High School Auditorium, 88 Summer St., Medway, Tickets \$20 adults, \$15 students and seniors, <https://www.charlesriverchorale.com/tickets>

Exsultet! holiday concert "Listening to the Snow," 2 p.m., Allin Congregational Church, 683 High Street, Dedham, MA, tickets \$20; students & seniors (65+) \$15; children 12 and under free at www.exsultet.us or call Stacey at (508) 395-5600.

Friends of Franklin Elders and Franklin Senior Center present Winter Wonderland: a Community Holiday Light Event, 4:30-7 p.m., 10 Daniel McCahill St., Franklin, come out for an evening of holiday cheer to see a display of beautifully decorated Holiday Trees and décor while enjoying Live Entertainment, Hot Cocoa & Cookies, and a visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus! Fun for the whole family! For further details, call (508) 520-4945

December 12

BWOT meeting, 7:30 p.m., Bellingham Police Department's conference room on Blackstone St. Bellingham. Contact us at bellinghamwomenoftoday@gmail.com and visit us on Facebook.

December 14

Gingerbread Mania, 6-7 p.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone Street, Family program. Come and decorate gingerbread people using gingerbread, frosting and an assortment of candies. Please register.

Ladies of St. Anne Christmas Gala, 6 p.m., Empire Buffet, Diamond Hill Rd., Woonsocket, RI. \$27, due by December 3. Checks made payable to St. Blaise, with "LoSA Christmas Gala" on the Memo line, should be put in an envelope marked Attn: Ann-Marie Lavallee-Kell and dropped in the collection basket at any Mass. (508) 488-8528, for more information.

December 15

Holliston Dancing Arts Center presents The Nutcracker, Norwood Theatre. Student matinee tickets available for groups 12/15. For more info. see <https://norwoodstage.com/the-nutcracker-2023>

Gingerbread Mania, 11:30-12:30., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone Street, for toddlers and preschoolers, Come and decorate gingerbread people using gingerbread, frosting and an assortment of candies. Please register.

December 16

Bellingham Women of Today Muffins with Santa, 9-11:30 a.m., St. Blaise Parish Hall, 1158 S. Main St., Bellingham, \$5 per child, \$15 family, muffins, bagels, juice, milk, coffee, food items \$1-2, plus free crafts, coloring pages, take your own photos with Santa, raffle baskets,

Holliston Dancing Arts Center presents The Nutcracker, Norwood Theatre. For more info. see <https://norwoodstage.com/the-nutcracker-2023>

December 17

Holliston Dancing Arts Center presents The Nutcracker, Norwood Theatre. For more info. see <https://norwoodstage.com/the-nutcracker-2023>

December 22

Red Cross Blood Drive, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham. Register at redcrossblood.org

December 29

New Year's Eve Party, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, family program, please register so we can plan for the craft supplies needed.

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Norfolk County Registry of Deeds Announces 2023 Toys for Tots Drive

Norfolk County Register of Deeds William P. O'Donnell is sponsoring the Registry's 16th annual U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots drive.

"The Registry of Deeds is proud to partner with the United States Marine Corps Reserve to help deliver a happy Christmas to children this holiday season," said Register O'Donnell. "This act of kindness can help spread joy and make a positive impact

on those in need. Those engaging in this selfless act can know that they are part of what makes this time of year so special and hopefully inspire others to do the same."

Donations of new toys and games for toddlers and children up to age 10 can be brought directly to the Norfolk County Registry of Deeds building, located at 649 High St. in Dedham, through Friday, December 8th, at

10 a.m. A marked donation bin will be set up in the lobby, which is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

The U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots program's mission is to help less fortunate children experience the joy and happiness associated with Christmas. The program operates in more than 800 cities and towns throughout all 50 states.

Library Service of the Month – Reading Recommendations

The Bellingham Library's website has a link called *Reading Recommendations*, which takes you to a variety of ways that you can find your next great read! The possibilities to explore under the Reading Recommendations link are:

- Book Club for Adults
- Book Club Recommendations
- New Titles
- New York Times Bestsellers
- Novelist Book Recommendations
- Similar Books
- Staff Picks
- Topic Based Recommendations

Book Club for Adults contains a catalog list of books that the library's book club has discussed within the past few years. The catalog list is a good place to start if you're looking for a book to recommend for your own book club or just for your own personal enjoyment.

Book Club Recommendations takes you to a list of books that have been suggested for book clubs, because they have promoted good discussions in various book groups. This is another good way to get ideas for your own book group, or to read on your own.

Clicking on *New Titles* will bring you to Wowbrary, an electronic newsletter which highlights all of the week's new titles at the library. This includes fiction and nonfiction, adult and young adult titles, DVDs, music CDs, audiobooks, as well as books in large print. You can select the language you would like to read the newsletter in, and can

view previous newsletters from prior weeks too! There is also a link to sign up if you would like to receive Wowbrary in your email's inbox every week.

New York Times Best Sellers will bring you to the lists of *NY Times* Best Sellers for the current week, as well as previous weeks. This includes lists for:

- Combined print and eBook fiction and nonfiction
- Hardcover fiction and nonfiction
- Paperback trade fiction and nonfiction
- Advice, how-to and miscellaneous
- Children's middle grade hardcover, picture books and series
- Young adult hardcover

The **Novelist Book Recommendations** link will take you to a database called Novelist Plus, which helps you to find what to read next. You have to sign in with your library card to access this database. You can search by keyword, title, author, series, or narrator. If you enjoy reading a certain author or liked a particular title, you can search for that author or title and then click on a link to similar authors/titles. You can also search by types of books that you like to find books that fit those criteria.

Similar Books will bring you to lists of bestseller read-alikes. If you enjoyed reading a certain bestseller, check out this link to see if there is a list of similar books that you might want to try.

Staff Picks lists each library staff member with the types of books they prefer. Just click on the staff person's name and you will get a list of their favorite

books. There is also a Staff Picks display in the library with selections for you to choose from.

Topic Based Recommendations contains lists of books the library owns on a wide range of nonfiction topics from financial matters, meditation, gardening, travel guides, and much more!

No matter what type of book you like to read, the library has recommendations online through the above links, or stop by and ask a staff person for suggestions!



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Local Support for Veterans

Pictured are Michael Shain, founder and president of Thanks to Yanks, John Milot, Commander American Legion Post 75 Franklin, Caroline Molla and Christine Molla, both of Costello Real Estate Franklin. Yearly, around Veteran's Day, Costello Real Estate takes up a collection in support of Thanks to Yanks initiative of Hope for Heroes. Thanks to Costello Real Estate for its support of Thanks to Yanks' mission of serving those who have served. For more information regarding Thanks to Yanks please like them on Facebook.



Get a Head Start on the Holiday at St. John's Christmas Fair

Get a head start on your holiday shopping at St. John's Episcopal Church Christmas Fair on Saturday, Dec. 2nd from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 237 Pleasant Street, Franklin.

You will find lots of gift cards from popular restaurants and stores. Browse among many silent auction and raffle items. There's something for everyone among the gift baskets like sports; spa, health and wellness; food and wine; coffees and teas; games and

toys; pet items. For those who appreciate unique items handmade with love, you'll find decorative holiday greenery, scarves, mittens, hats and blankets. Pick out your favorite treats like cookies, fudge and other baked goods at the Cookie Walk. Food and drinks will be served during the fair.

For more information: Call (508) 528-2387, Facebook at St John's Episcopal Church, or visit www.stjohnsfranklinma.org.

Franklin Garden Club to Sell Decorated Holiday Wreaths and Arrangements

The Franklin Garden Club will sell decorated holiday wreaths and cemetery arrangements on Saturday, December 2, from 9:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. at Daddario's Hardware Store, 528 West Central Street, Franklin, MA. The sales will benefit several different club activities. In addition, holiday fresh floral arrangements will be sold on Ins-

tagram and Facebook beginning December 16. The Franklin Garden Club Instagram handle is @franklingardenclubma. Payment for all purchases can be made with cash, check, credit card or Venmo.

The real wreaths will be decorated in a variety of colors and styles and will include eye-catching bows and other ornamenta-

tion. Many will include a variety of greens, as will the cemetery boxes. All items will be reasonably priced.

"We are very excited to offer area residents the opportunity to purchase beautiful holiday wreaths and arrangements created by members of the Franklin Garden Club," say Club Co-Presidents Pat Donnelly and

Mary Anne Dean, "This will help those who may not have the time to decorate their own wreaths or make arrangements, while also assisting the Club. All proceeds will benefit Garden Club activities, including the Club scholarship, pine tree seedling program for elementary school students, some of the Franklin Common and library plantings, and

education programs open to the public.

The Franklin Garden Club is a member of the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts.



Franklin Food Pantry Needs Community Support this Holiday Season

Demand for Food Assistance & Programs Increasing as Winter Months Approach

In recent months, The Franklin Food Pantry, which provides supplemental food assistance and programs in Franklin, has experienced a sharp increase in demand for food and services including weekend backpack meals for school children, holiday meal kits, and health and wellness items. By supporting The Pantry this holiday season, Franklin residents can make a lasting, positive impact in their immediate community.

"The holiday season can be a time of tremendous stress for individuals and families experiencing food insecurity. By coming together, we can provide hunger relief that lasts throughout the new year," said Tina Powderly, Executive Director, Franklin Food Pantry.



How to support the Franklin Food Pantry:

Donate – Make a monetary donation and help provide food and goods to the more than 1,300 individuals and families who rely on The Pantry annually. Recurring monthly donations are also available, and be sure to check if your employer has a matching program. Click [HERE](https://form-renderer-app.donorperfect.io/give/franklin-food-pantry/giving-tuesday-2022-copy) to donate.

Organize a Food or Fund Drive using The Pantry's online toolkit. Collected food and funds will help The Pantry provide assistance throughout the season and into the new year. Click [HERE](https://www.franklinfoodpantry.org/get-involved/food-and-fund-drives/) (<https://www.franklinfoodpantry.org/get-involved/food-and-fund-drives/>) to learn more.

Volunteer – The Franklin Food Pantry has flexible volunteer options to meet almost everyone's desire to help. To volunteer, complete the online application and a volunteer coordinator will be in contact. Please note that availability for new Pantry volunteers will begin after the holiday season. For more information, click [HERE](https://www.franklinfoodpantry.org/get-involved/volunteer/franklin-food-elves/). (<https://www.franklinfoodpantry.org/get-involved/volunteer/franklin-food-elves/>)

For more information, visit www.franklinfoodpantry.org.

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