

Grafton's Business Scene

BY CHRISTINE GALEONE

It's that time of the year again. It's time to try to get into the spirit of the upcoming holidays.

Naturally, people get ready to celebrate the holidays in various ways. But putting up festive décor, attending holiday events, and embracing the spirit of giving are wonderful ways for many to prepare for the season. And Grafton businesses and organizations want to help.

On Sunday Dec. 3, the Grafton Recreation Department will hold its 28th annual Grafton Celebrates the Holidays event. The event will include a craft and vendor fair from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Grafton Municipal Center gym, festivities at "Frosty Stops" throughout Grafton from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m., a wreath sale fundraiser for Boy Scout Troop 107 from 12 to 4 p.m. on the Common, winter and festive songs by the Grafton Girl Scouts on the Common around 4 p.m. and Santa's arrival and the lighting of the Common between 4:30 and 4:45 p.m.

Several Frosty Stop businesses

will offer free food, treats and kids' activities and giveaways, including chicken noodle soup for adults and a cookie for each child at Bushel N' Peck, kids' crafts at Savers Bank, Perreault Nursery and Houlden Farm – with the latter two selling Christmas trees and greenery – and coloring books, badges and a visit with McGruff the Crime Dog for kids and gun locks for adults at the Grafton Police Department. Kids can also participate in many other fun activities like sending a letter to Santa at the Grafton Fire Department, taking on obstacle courses at Premier Sport Taekwondo and Connections Physical Therapy, having s'mores around a campfire at Brigham Hill Community Barn and Grafton Lions Club, and visiting with Santa at Homefield Credit Union from 12 p.m. to 3:30.

A few of the local churches will also offer fun and inspirational activities at the event. The Congregational Church of Grafton will offer a Gaga game starting at 2 p.m.

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It's the Cat's Meow



BY PATTY ROY

If you're a fan of furry felines, make your way to the American Legion at 156 Boston Post Road, Sutton on November 25 and 26 where you can admire the finest of the species at an accredited Cat Fanciers Association (CFA) show competition.

The doors open at 11 a.m. both days and the show is expected to last until 3 or 4 p.m.

"We're excited about it because we have two CFA judges who will be judging on Sunday," said Barbara Genatossio, show manager of Cat Fanciers.

About 60 entrants are expected, she said.

The exhibitors come with their cats and while there are cages setup for each cat, some cat owners will bring their own.

The exhibitors then get down to the serious business of grooming the entrants with combs and cotton swabs ("really fun to watch" said Genatossio).

There are four rings for four categories: Kitten; Altered Cats (neutered and spayed, not from breeding programs); Championship (whole cats who are able to breed) and Household Pet division for cats that do not have a pedigree with judging based on personality and overall looks, rather than conforming to a breed metric.

"Children enjoy showing their cats off and it's also good for people who maybe can't afford a show cat," Genatossio said.

Some cat breeds are fan favorites. Generally, these are Maine Coon cats, the fluffy and affectionate gentle giants of the cat world, she said. Ragdolls, with their distinctive coloring and blue eyes are another much loved breed.

"They're beautiful, floppy, gen-

CAT SHOW

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SCAN ME

Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park Events

Walk along the historic canal, which was once used for trade in the 1800s

Sunday, November 19
Hike to Lookout Rock, 2 -4p.m.
Blackstone River and Canal
Heritage State Park
Meet at the parking area by Rice
City Pond on Hartford Avenue
East.

Follow King Philip's Trail
through forest and wetlands before
ascending to Lookout Rock to en-
joy scenic views of the Blackstone
River. 2.75 miles over moderate
terrain.

Sunday, November 26
Eagle Bridge and TNT Trail
Loop, 2-4 p.m.
Douglas State Forest
Meet at the Route 16 parking
area and follow the Schmidt Trail
south.

Head back north through the
Cedar Swamp along Eagle Bridge

Trail before taking the TNT Trail
back to the trailhead. 2 miles over
moderate
terrain.

Sunday, December 3
Mammoth Rock Trail Hike, 2-4
p.m.

Upton State Forest
Meet at the trailhead parking
area and start on CCC Way before
heading orth on the Swamp Trail.
Then follow Southboro Road to
Mammoth ock Trail and then take
Loop Road back to the trailhead.
~1.5 miles over moderate terrain.

Sunday, December 10
Hike to Little Purgatory, 2-3
p.m.
Purgatory Chasm State Reserva-
tion
Meet at the Visitor Center and

head south on Charley's Loop
until you reach Little Purgatory,
a miniature version of the park's
iconic chasm.

Then continue on Charley's
Loop back to the VC. ~1.25 miles
over moderate terrain.

Sunday, December 17
Tri-State Marker Hike, 1-4 p.m.
Douglas State Forest

Meet at the parking area by the
Wallum Lake Boat Launch and
head west on the Coffeehouse Trail
to the Mid State Trail. When the
Mid

State turns south, stay straight
on the SNETT trail and follow it to
the Tri State Trail and then on to
where three states meet!

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and refreshments. At 1 p.m., the
Unitarian Universalist Society will
have a reading of "Twas the Night
Before Christmas" and a perfor-
mance by the UUSGU bell choir.
The Baptist Church of Grafton
will have soft, soothing Christmas
music playing for its visitors, who

supply shop sells holiday items fea-
turing angels, birds, animals and
more. The Grafton Country Store,
the Grafton Common gift shop
that sells gifts, jewelry, décor and
accessories, among other things,
boasts a wide selection of holiday
gifts (including many featuring
cardinals, snowmen and wildlife),
ornaments and décor. Nearby, Off
the Common Antiques, the multi-
artisan, multi-vendor shop has

also updated
its inventory
to include
many holiday
hand-crafted
and antique
ornaments
and décor.
Over in South
Grafton, The
Saddle Shed
offers a sele-
ction of horse
equipment,
accessories,



can tour the church's large display
of global Manger Scenes depicting
the Nativity.

At the Frosty Stop for Gaudette
Insurance Agency, kids can get
free custom-made cookies by the
Crafted Cookie. People can also
help others by dropping off new
toys for Toys for Tots at the agency.
They can then enter a raffle.

And at Grafton Community
TV, visitors with thumb drives can
make video messages for loved
ones who are deployed overseas.

People looking for holiday orna-
ments, décor or gifts can find them
in several Grafton shops, including
Perreault Nurseries' gift shop, the
Grafton Country Store, Off the
Common Antiques and The Sad-
dle Shed. In addition to selling fes-
tive soy candles and holiday green-
ery, Perreault Nurseries, the North
Grafton nursery and landscape

gifts and tack and has winter wear
for horses and their riders.

On Saturday Nov. 25 – which
is Small Business Saturday – in
North Grafton, Angel Hair
Alpacas will hold its annual open
house from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m.
In addition to fun, educational
farm tours, there will be pop-up
vendors. Its own farm shop will
be selling knitted garments and yarn.

Although the holiday season
will be here soon, Grafton and
many of its businesses and orga-
nizations are ready to help people
prepare for it in fun and inspiring
ways. Have a wonderful Thanks-
giving!

Contact Christine with your
Grafton news at cmgaleone15@gmail.com

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CAT SHOW

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tle cats,” Genatossio explained.

You can also expect to see Persians, probably some Scottish fold cats with their forward-fold-

not against each other, she said.

“In other words, they’re judged against a perfect cat,” Genatossio said. “For instance where a Persian has a big, fat face, the head size carries more points than an Oriental shorthair where the

color and balance can all come into play with varying points assigned to each characteristic.

“Personality and behavior do not come into it, unless the cat cannot be handled, then it cannot be judged,” Genatossio said. “The judges have to be able to handle or touch the cat, to feel its body, to determine where it will rank in terms of one through 10 for one of 10 prizes awarded.

In the household division, the cat’s personality might sway a judge, especially if the cat is really cute or personable, she said.

If a judge is comparing kittens, they are one at a time removed from their cages, handled and ranked. After all the kittens are back in their cages, the top 10 kittens will be chosen.

With four rings and four judges, there will be 16 prizes awarded over the weekend.

All the points are totaled with the Cat Fanciers Federation (CFF) prizes in mind. The CFF in New England is over 100 years old, according to Genatossio in New England. At the end of the show year in April, points are totaled from various competitions and the cats with the most points are honored at a banquet in September.

Exhibitors are welcomed and cat lovers are invited to attend for a nominal fee.

Chairs will be set up at the different rings and attendees can watch the judging, talk to the exhibitors and maybe take a look at kittens for sale.

It’s a relief after Covid and shutting the competition circuit down for a few years, Genatossio said. Upcoming shows will be held in Fairhaven in December and one in Cumberland, Rhode Island in January. There’s usually one competition a month.

“Kids love cats, the elderly love cats,” she said. “We just want to get the word out that cats are great.”



ed ears (another popular breed), Abyssinian, hairless Sphinx cat and of course, household pets.

The purebred cats are judged according to a breed standard,

body has to be very long.”

The point system is broken down, how the head compares to the perfect standard or the body, she said. Coat and color, eye

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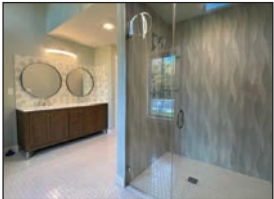
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Sixth Annual Fine Art and Photography juried exhibition

The 2023 Small Stones Festival of the Arts announces a new schedule for the Sixth Annual Fine Art and Photography juried exhibition with run dates of December 8 – 17 at the Grafton Public Library, 35 Grafton Common, Grafton, MA. The Festival opens with the reception and awards ceremony from 7-8 p.m. on December 8. The free exhibit is open to the public.

The Festival's exhibit schedule has been changed to accommodate scheduled remediation work required in the Library's community meeting room due to the unprecedented August flood.

The exhibit is open daily from 12 – 4 p.m. with extended hours

on Saturday, December 9, Friday, December 15 and Saturday December 16 until 6:00 p.m.

Artist and juror presentation dates will be announced soon. Artists will discuss their inspiration and the techniques used in their work. The jurors will explain their thoughts and perspectives on the juried art exhibit and provide insights on why they liked their favorite artwork.

The Blackstone Valley Art Association and the Worcester County Camera Club have collaborated to create one of the region's largest juried exhibitions to provide a venue to showcase artists' work and to elevate the practice and appreciation of fine art.

This year the festival received a generous festival grant of \$2,500 from the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency as well as additional grants provided by the towns of Grafton's and Millbury's cultural councils administered through the nonprofit organization.

A distinguished panel of six jurors (three for each category) have selected 144 works to appear in the exhibit and printed catalog. The hardback exhibit catalog is for sale online and at the festival. All submissions meeting minimum requirements are featured in the Festival's web gallery.

Awards are given for both fine art and photography categories. Cash prizes of \$500 for first; \$250 for second; and \$100 for third are awarded. Additionally, each of the six jurors selects a Juror's Choice. The public votes for a Popular Choice winner in each category.

This year's masterful fine art jurors include Michael Rose, gallery manager of the historic well-known Providence Art Club since 2014, art historian, gallerist and popular 'Inside Art' columnist; Glenn Murray, a traditionally trained, award winning contemporary realist painter whose work is included in numerous private collections and has received many international and national competition awards; and Kim

Morin Weineck, an artist who works in all fine art mediums, is signature member of the Pastel Painters Society of Cape Cod and whose artwork is widely collected and exhibited.

The photography jurors are accomplished photographers – Ron Rosenstock, a highly regarded professional whose work is in the collections of the Fogg Art Museum, the Worcester Art Museum and the International Center of Photography as well as many private ones; Shane Gutierrez, a master working in portraiture, corporate, product and architectural photography for over 40 years with a variety of film cameras, plastic and digital cameras; and Tom Nault, a professional commercial and fine art photographer who presents the unique in a setting, forcing the viewer to step back to see the image clearer and is adjunct professor at New England Institute of Technology.

The mission of the Small Stones Festival of the Arts is to elevate the practice and appreciation of fine art and photography in the Blackstone Valley and beyond. The Festival is under the aegis of fiscal sponsor, Grafton Arts, Inc., a nonprofit 501 (c) 3 organization.

Small Stones Festival of the Arts has been awarded grants from the Mass Cultural Council and the cultural councils of Grafton and Millbury. Donations from Homefield Credit Union, The Town House Tavern, One Grafton Common and Yesod Foundation, Inc. also made the Festival of the Arts possible.

Financial support from community businesses has included Art and Frame Emporium, Gaudette Insurance Agency, JCSI, Pepperoni Express, Roney Funeral Home, Mathieu Newton Sotheby's International Realty – Sydney Padgett, Theroux Dental Associates, Touchstone Crystal – Kathleen Schaker and the Uncommon Cow. For more information, visit <https://smallstonesfestival.org>.

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If you've invested in an IRA for many decades, it may well turn into a key source of income for your retirement. Still, you might not deplete your IRA in your lifetime, especially if you also have a pension or a 401(k) and other investment income. So, if your IRA still has sizable assets after your passing, it would likely end up in your estate plan. If you leave your IRA to grown children or other family members, could they be

hit with a big tax bill?

Here's a little background: Up until the Secure Act of 2019, those who inherited traditional IRAs could extend their required withdrawals over their lifetimes, which stretched out the annual taxes due on these withdrawals. But the Secure Act changed the provisions for non-spouse beneficiaries who inherited an IRA after 2019, meaning that beneficiaries of inherited IRAs had only 10 years (beginning the year after death) to withdraw the entire balance. For some beneficiaries, this could potentially create a tax burden. (Inheritors of Roth IRAs are also required to follow the 10-year distribution rule but are not subject to income taxes on account earnings if the Roth IRA's five-year holding period has been met).

However, not all beneficiaries were affected by the new rules. Spouses can stretch their inherited IRA distributions over their lifetimes and exceptions exist for

certain non-spouse beneficiaries. Minor children of the IRA owner (until the age of majority), chronically ill or disabled individuals, and beneficiaries who are no more than 10 years younger than the IRA owner may opt to stretch their distributions.

The new 10-year requirement applies to IRAs inherited on or after

Jan. 1, 2020. But due to confusion over changes to required minimum distribution (RMD) rules for some beneficiaries of inherited IRAs, the IRS waived penalties for individuals who failed to take RMDs in 2021 and 2022 and extended the RMD penalty waiver for 2023.

Although these rulings give beneficiaries — those not eligible for the exemptions listed above — more time to plan, they will eventually need to start taking RMDs, which could affect their tax situations. To help protect your heirs, consider these suggestions:

- **Using permanent life insurance.** A properly structured permanent life insurance policy could help you replace the assets your family might lose to the taxes resulting from an inherited IRA. You might even consider naming a charity as the beneficiary of an IRA, rather than your family members. The charity would receive the IRA proceeds tax free, and the life insurance could then provide tax-free benefits to your heirs.

- **Leaving taxable investment accounts to your heirs.** Apart from your tax-deferred IRA, you may own other, fully taxable accounts containing investments such as stocks or bonds. Typically, these investments receive what's known as a "step-up" in their cost basis once they are inherited. This means your heirs will essentially inherit all the gains your invest-

ments earned by the time of your passing — but they won't be taxed on these gains if they sell the assets immediately. This type of sale could help offset the taxes your heirs will incur from the inherited IRA.

The tax and investment issues surrounding inherited IRAs can be complex, so consult with your tax and financial advisors before making any moves. And, as with many areas relating to inheritances, the sooner you start planning, the better.

If you would like to discuss your personal situation with a financial advisor contact:

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Pickleball Health 101: 8 Tips to Prevent Injury on the Court this Fall

SEAN LORDAN PT, DPT, OCS, CSCS

Pickleball, the sport that has been capturing the hearts of many in our community, is a fantastic way to stay active, burn calories, and have a great time this Fall. As a physical therapist, I understand the joy this game brings, but I also recognize the importance of preventing injuries. We have seen a large influx of pickleball injuries of late in all of the clinics.

In this article, I'll share my insights on how to keep yourself safe on the pickleball court, and prevent common injuries that can occur as a side effect of too much activity.

1. Perform a Proper Warm-up: Before diving into your pickleball match, take a few minutes to prepare your body. Start with light aerobic exercises like brisk walking or gentle jumping jacks to increase blood flow and warm up your

muscles. Follow this with dynamic stretching, focusing on the major muscle groups you'll be using, such as your legs, shoulders, and arms. This will help improve your flexibility and reduce the risk of strains and sprains. If you are unsure how to perform dynamic stretches, consult your local physical therapist for a specific program for you.

2. Wear Proper Footwear: The right pair of shoes is your first line of defense against pickleball injuries. Choose court shoes with non-marking soles to provide optimal grip and support for lateral movements. Avoid using running shoes, which lack the necessary lateral stability, and treaded soles, which can increase the risk of slips and falls. My personal favorites are "tennis shoes."

3. Consider Protective Gear: While pickleball is generally non-contact, accidents can happen. Depending on your level of play, consider wearing protective gear

such as knee and elbow pads, and wrist guards for extra safety during fast-paced rallies. Wrist guards will specifically keep repetitive strain away from the elbow complex—which is where the most pickleball injuries I see occur.

4. Technique Matters: Proper pickleball technique is key to preventing injuries. Work on your posture, grip, and swing mechanics to ensure you're playing with the correct form. Seek guidance from experienced players or even schedule lessons to hone your skills and reduce the risk of overuse injuries.

5. Stay Hydrated: This is a common theme in many of my articles regarding injury prevention! Dehydration can lead to muscle cramps and decreased performance. Before, during, and after your game, hydrate well with water, and consider replenishing electrolytes with a sports drink, especially while inside of a humid arena this Fall and Winter.

6. Respect Your Skill Level: It's natural to want to challenge



yourself, but playing above your skill level can lead to injuries. Play with opponents who match your abilities, and gradually increase the level of competition as your skills progress.

7. Court Safety: Always be mindful of the court's condition. Loose gravel, uneven surfaces, or cracks can pose tripping hazards. Inspect the court before play and report any issues to the relevant authorities for prompt repairs.

8. Consult a Physical Therapist: A good physical therapist will screen you to provide you with the right stretches and exercises to perform to prevent injuries before they happen. Pay attention to your body's signals. If you feel pain or discomfort during the game, don't ignore it. This is your body's way of telling you

that something is wrong. In conclusion, pickleball is a fantastic sport that promotes health and social interaction in our community. By following these safety tips, you can reduce the risk of injuries and continue enjoying the game for years to come.

Stay safe, stay active, and have a great time on the pickleball court this Fall! If you ever have any questions or concerns about injury prevention, don't hesitate to reach out to a local physical therapist for guidance. Most often no referral is required and you can access physical therapy directly without having to stop by your PCP's office for a script.

*In good health,
Dr. Sean T. Lordan*

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Passport Event" to guide your local explorations. On Saturday, November 25, several businesses have planned a holiday shopping treat for picking up gifts or spoiling yourself.

To participate, pick up a Shop Small 01588 Passport at any of the participating businesses located throughout Whitinsville and Northbridge. Plan your visits to these businesses to get your passport stamped at each location. Enjoy in-house specials and sales prepared especially for the Passport Shoppers. When you have seven or more stamps on your passport, fill in the contact information found on the back of your passport and you'll be eligible to enter to win a grand gift basket filled with goods donated by the participating shops. Deliver your completed passport by December 2nd to our drop box location located inside

Schotanus Design Center, 83 Church Street Whitinsville.

So what will you discover this

holiday season as you travel locally?

Perhaps a new membership for your fitness journey from Whitin Community Center, Driven Self Defense, or Blue Zone Integrated Fitness. Or lessons from The Family Karate Center. Maybe it's time to spruce up your home with help from Schotanus Design Center or Koopman Lumber. Is it time to freshen up your wardrobe? Look no further than Katalina's Boutique. Get crafty with classes from Barbara Connors Art Glass Studio or The Crafty Nest DIY. Find the perfect gift for you or your family or pet at Little Man Handbags, Gifts + Accessories, LuLu's Jewelry + Gifts, Furiends Gourmet Pet Treats or The Flower Shop. Look for a new car with services from Harbro Sales & Service. And don't forget to prepare your table with wonderful food made fresh from The Green Plate.

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Metro-West Building Officials Association Thanksgiving Dinner

The Metro-West Building Officials Association (MWBOA) will host a Thanksgiving Dinner for seniors on Thanksgiving, Thursday, November 23 from 11 to 1 p.m. at the Grafton Municipal Center gym, 30 Providence Road, Grafton.

A three-piece jazz band will play at the traditional turkey dinner with all the trimmings.

Bob Berger, the MWBOA founder and president said the association wanted to give back to the community and offer an enjoyable day to seniors who might not be able to be with their families on the holiday and to provide a joyous meal with kindness and dignity. Reservations will be accepted from 25 seniors from each of the following towns: Grafton, Millbury, Sutton, Northbridge, Northborough and Upton.



Thus far, the event has attracted many generous donations: of the \$10,000 goal, the MWBOA had already raised \$7,000. Many volunteers have come forward as well to serve that day. Caterer John Ayotte of Chef du Jour catering has volunteered his time and his employees'

time as well to cook and serve the meal.

Reservations are required. The Senior Center has volunteered to help take reservations; contact director Shannon Smith at 508-839-0242 to reserve your place.

Sutton Senior Center

Annual Holiday Bazaar at the Sutton Senior Center. 19 Hough Road, Saturday, December 2 from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Shop for the holidays. There will be gorgeous gift baskets, jewelry, scratch ticket raffles, hats and mittens as well as dollar items.

A take-out lunch of turkey soup or meatball sub will be available.

All proceeds will benefit Sutton Seniors.

FREE THANKSGIVING LUNCHEON

Monday, November 20 at 11:30 a.m. Prepared and served by the Sutton High School Community Service Learning Group. Menu include turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, mixed vegetables and pie. RSVP by Friday, Nov. 17 at 12 p.m.

Tuesday, November 21
SHINE counselor Pat Morris is available by appointment to discuss your health insurance options

Enjoy coffee and donuts with State Representative Joe McKenna, Monday, November 27 at 10 a.m.

Tuesday, November 28, 10 a.m. Christmas Craft with Andrea Snowman Soup Mug Making \$5 RSVP if interested

Tuesday, Nov. 28 at 11:45 a.m. Got a November birthday? Enjoy a free lunch with cake and ice cream! RSVP by 12 p.m. on November 24. \$3 pp (except for birthday honoree)

Wednesday Lunch Club
November 29 at 11:45 a.m. \$3 per person RSVP by November 27 at 12 p.m. to Michelle Saucier

508-234-0703 Maple glazed ham, mashed potatoes, carrots

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Tuesdays: Darts 10:30 a.m.; Cardio Barre 1:30 low intensity workout

Wednesdays: Nurse is here to check blood pressure, height and weight 10 a.m.; Muscular Range and Range of Motion Exercise 10 a.m.

Thursdays: Tai Chi 9 a.m.; Chair Yoga 1 p.m.

Fridays: Zumba 10 a.m.

SOCIAL GROUPS:

Tuesdays: Pitch 10 a.m.; Darts 10:30 a.m.

Thursdays: Computer Club, 9 a.m. a social gathering for all skill

levels

Fridays: "I'm Sorry", a fun and easy to learn card game 9:30 a.m.; Bingo hosted by Friends of Sutton Elders, 1 p.m.

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HEALTHIER BAKING

Autumn Brownies

BY CHRISTINE GALEONE

We all know that fall is one of the best seasons for baking. The only angst comes from choosing which baked good to make. Will it be pumpkin spice muffins, banana bread, apple cider donuts, brownies, etc.?

These magical autumn brownies could be the answer. They combine

fall flavors in a rich chocolate dessert. And they're magical because they disappear incredibly fast.

It's easy to see why any processed, store-bought brownies are unhealthy. And even though mixes call for a couple of additional fresh ingredients, and, like most, the results taste great, they're still processed and generally include unnecessary ingredients. But even



most homemade brownies that are made from fresh ingredients are unhealthy, because they call for lots

of added sugar. In fact, it's not uncommon for a recipe to call for two cups of sugar. That sugar causes inflammation. Inflammation is linked to various diseases and other harmful health conditions.

This recipe calls for significantly less sugar, because the banana contains natural sugar. It also calls for healthier fats, instead of butter, margarine or other unhealthier fats that can lead to clogged arteries and heart disease.

While walnuts are heart-healthy and brain-healthy nuts, bananas contain important vitamins and minerals, including potassium, vitamin B6, vitamin C and magnesium. And the pumpkin spice – which generally consists of cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger and allspice – provides antioxidants, antimicrobial properties, fiber and minerals along with a warm autumn flavor.

MAGICAL AUTUMN BROWNIES

Ingredients:

- ½ Cup of Unsifted All-Purpose Flour
- 1/3 Cup of Unsweetened Cocoa
- 1 tsp. Baking Powder
- 1 tsp. Pumpkin Spice
- ¾ Cup of Sugar
- ½ Cup of Light Tasting Olive Oil

- 1 tsp. of Vanilla Extract
- 1 tsp. of Apple Cider
- 2 Eggs
- 1 Banana
- ½ Cup of Natural Walnuts
- ¼ Cup of Dark Chocolate Chips (Optional)

Directions:

Combine flour, cocoa, pumpkin spice and baking powder in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, combine sugar, olive oil, vanilla extract, apple cider and one mashed ripe banana. Add eggs to the mixture, and beat well with a spoon. In a few increments, add the dry mixture to the wet mixture. Blend together with a whisk or a spoon. Mix in walnuts and dark chocolate chips. Pour batter into an 8"X 8" baking pan. Sprinkle more pumpkin spice over the entire batter. Bake in a pre-heated oven at 350 degrees for around 25-28 minutes. Brownie should begin to pull away from the edges of the pan.

The warm pumpkin spice aroma alone offers enough motivation to go out to the kitchen and make a batch of these brownies on a cool autumn evening. Happy (healthier) baking, and have a wonderful Thanksgiving!

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bankHometown Supports Local Food Pantries through 20th Annual Neighbors Helping Neighbors Fundraiser

Robert J. Morton, president and CEO of bankHometown, is kicking off the bank's annual Neighbors Helping Neighbors fundraising drive for 2023 to help support local food pantries. The annual appeal is part of the bank's charitable giving program, The Giving Tree, which reflects the bank's commitment to making a real difference in the neighborhoods it serves.

This marks the 20th year of the bank's annual appeal, which invites bank customers, employees, and community members to donate money between November 1 and November 30 to help fight food insecurity.

All donations up to \$2,500 per customer will be matched dollar for dollar by bankHometown and the total raised will be divided among participating food pantries across Massachusetts and Connecticut in communities the bank serves. In 2022, through contributions and matching donations, the campaign raised over \$66,000, and since inception has donated more than \$331,000.

Donations of any amount are encouraged. As an added incentive to give, the bank offers those who donate the opportunity enter a drawing to win a \$25 gift card, which will be awarded at each of its 16 locations.

"Neighbors Helping Neighbors shows how communities can come together to help others in need," said Morton. "bankHometown is proud to lead this annual giving tradition. We thank everyone who selflessly gives each year."

Those who wish to participate have until November 30 to make their donations. Checks should be made payable to "bankHometown Neighbors" and can be dropped off at any bankHometown branch or mailed to:

A total of 16 food pantries will be supported this year and include: Athol Salvation Army Food Pantry, Auburn Youth and

Family Services Food Pantry, CARE Food Pantry, Clinton, Food Share: Southbridge, Charlton and Sturbridge, Friendly House Pantry, Worcester, Ginny's Helping Hand, Inc., Leominster, Millbury Senior Center Food Pantry,

Oxford Ecumenical Food Shelf, Sutton Senior Center Michael A. Chizy Food Pantry, St. John's Food for the Poor, Worcester, and St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry, Webster.

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Lunch is offered weekdays at 12 p.m. Reservations must be made 48 hours in advance. Suggested donation is \$2.50

Food Pantry is open weekdays 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Call for curbside pick-up.

Shopping transportation is offered to local venues including the Shoppes at Blackstone Valley, Auburn Mall, Price Chopper, Goretta's and more. Call 28 hours in advance.

Clinics: SHINE Clinic for health insurance questions. Podiatry Clinic is the third Friday of each

month. Memory Café is the fourth Tuesday of each month. Appointments are required, call the Senior Center.

Activities:

Monday: 9:30 - 10:15 a.m. Light exercise; 12:45 p.m. Mahjong; 1 p.m. Zumba

Tuesday: 9-10 a.m. Blood pressure; 9:30 a.m. Tai Chi; 1 p.m. Cribbage

Wednesday: 9:30 a.m. Craft Class

10:30 a.m. Line Dancing

1 p.m. Social Bingo

Thursday: 9 a.m. Yoga; 10 a.m. Coloring Class; 12:30 a.m. Pitch

Friday: 9 a.m. Shopping; 9:30 a.m.; Light Exercise



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LIVING WITH LUKE

amyleclaire@hotmail.com

Luke and Bruno Reunite

BY AMY LECLAIRE

The first few minutes were less than graceful. Luke was so happy to see Bruno that he couldn't hold back a surge of testosterone. He smelled the signs. He saw the bags. He heard the news. "Sleep over!" Then he climbed on his friend's back and mounted him. "Luke! Please!" Of course, we

redirected our one-year-old dog. Nevertheless, boundaries were in order and the two dogs, senior and young, would establish such. "I love you, Luke, but I'm not into physical play." A few hours later, Luke suffered a bout of diarrhea while Bruno hacked up his dry dog food. Luke attempted to eat the mound of vomit, but I caught him in time. "Leave it." I yanked at his collar.

It's the life of a dog owner, chaotic and joyful all at once.

"Let's both get a drink of water!" The two pals—bonded by breed, temperament, and dog-parent-friends—drank and drank. I



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cleaned and cleaned. Bruno studied my moves. "Are you a professional cleaner, by chance?"

The dogs tap danced about the kitchen, grabbed stuffed animals,

and followed me around the house. They did what dogs do. They stood at the door to go outside.

They came back in. They settled down. "I'm thriving at 'ten' aren't I?" Bruno smiled up at me. I had earned his trust. Meanwhile, Luke fought to claim his Golden bestie.

"Let him off the leash, Momma! He's my friend and you're being a control freak!" Luke hollered at me on that first day while we showed Bruno our unfenced backyard. "We just want to hang out, No Parents Allowed." Luke had a point. He was being reasonable. Dogs are supposed to run free in a big backyard. Still, there was no way I could risk losing sweet Bruno, who buried his whitened face in my lap. "Help."

Luke acquiesced; especially given multiple walks offered, a trade-off for the leash law. "This is my neighborhood, Bruno." Luke pulled ahead while Bruno ponied forward

like a dog half his age. He reveled in new sights and fun neighbors to greet. I could tell he felt at home in the neighborhood. "This is Bruno." I boasted of my senior Golden while Luke did the same. "This is my friend, Bruno. Doesn't he look so good for his age? We're having a sleep-over tonight."

Rosie, Luke's girlie BFF, stopped over one day and showed Bruno some sass. "That's my friend! You don't belong!" Luke mediated, baseball in mouth. "Let's just play chase and let it go, Rosie." Bruno sat at my husband's heel and waited to go back inside. "That Doodle's crazy."

Our love for the two Golden retrievers swelled with the passing of each day. Bruno adored family nights while we all hung out in the family room to watch football games and snuggle. He added a special charm to our time together. World News was grim, but we had two Golden retrievers in the same room. We were living the dream. Luke shared his orthopedic bed but struggled to let go of his shin bones. "Luke, no hoarding." Bruno smiled and went with the flow. "No worries. I'll take the stuffed beaver."

The subtle fashion by which the dogs bonded, be it via walks, play time, or sleeping schedules, was something I'll always cherish as a Dog Person. They checked on each other and chose to stretch out and nap in the same spots. Luke stared at Bruno while he rested and licked his nose. He also became a role model, showing Bruno

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LUKE
continued on page 11

REAL ESTATE

The Perks of Selling Your House When Inventory Is Low

When it comes to selling your house, you're probably trying to juggle the current market conditions and your own needs as you plan your move. One thing that may be working in your favor is how few homes there are for sale right now. Here's what you need to



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

know about the current inventory situation and what it means for you. The Supply of Homes for Sale Is Far Below the Norm. When you're selling something, it helps if what you're selling is in demand, but is also in low supply. Why? That makes it even more desirable since there's not enough to go around. That's exactly what's happening in the housing market today. There are more buyers

looking to buy than there are homes for sale.

To tell the story of just how low inventory is, here's the latest information on active listings, or homes available for sale. The data from Realtor.com shows how many active listings there were in September of this year compared to what's more typical in the market. Monthly listings in September, 2017 were 1.3 million, same in 2018. In 2019 there were 1.2 million and in September, 2023 there were only 700k

As you can see, if you look at the last normal years for the market versus the latest numbers for this year, it's clear inventory is still far lower than the norm.

What That Means for You.

Buyers have fewer choices now than they did in more typical years. And that's why you could still see some great perks if you sell today. Because there aren't enough homes to go around, homes that are priced right

are still selling fast and the average seller is getting multiple offers from eager buyers. Based on the latest data from the Confidence Index from the National Association of Realtors (NAR):

69% of homes sold in less than a month.

2.6 offers: the average number of offers on recently sold homes.

An article from Realtor.com also explains how the limited

number of houses for sale benefits you if you're selling: "... homes spent two weeks less on the market this past month than they did in the average September from 2017 to 2019 ... as still-limited supply spurs homebuyers to act quickly ..."

Bottom line, because the supply of homes for sale is so low,

buyers desperately want more options – and your house may be just what they're looking for. If you work with The Marzeotti Group or a trusted local agent to get your house listed at the right price for today's market. You could still see it sell quickly and potentially get multiple offers.



that's my dish. I'll take a water refill when you get a chance. Who's that at the bus stop?!!!"

Positivity has become cliché, a word preached but not always practiced. Dogs are naturally positive without the flood of pop psychology and cheesy inspirational quotes. Dogs don't post a wish that you "Have a Blessed Day" on social media. Dogs give you a blessed

day by waking up genuinely happy to see and be with you, with and without messes. I've given every dog I've owned my best, but they give back so much more, especially when there are two.

Stay tuned for more on Living with Luke. Find him on IG @living-withlukevalentino

Write to Amy amyleclaire@hotmail.com

LUKE

continued from page 10

how he stays "at his spot" during mealtimes. "Bruno, if you sit and wait long enough, eventually my mom will give you a treat, but you must be consistent. I think it's the teacher in her."

Bruno stayed by my side and leaned into my lap. Kind and sensitive, he whimpered while I trotted up our (gated) staircase. "I'll be right down, Bruno!" Luke craned his neck up to the foyer. "They always come back. Let's go people-watch on the step outside."

Luke sustained his outdoor dog-watching routine while Bruno stayed inside with me, a loyal friend and gentle giant. He watched me practice dances and smiled up at me with adoration. He communicated his needs with patience and gratitude. "Thank you for taking care of me. I'm just so happy to be with you." A senior Golden is as warm and cozy as a cup of tea. Mornings were equally as gratifying with the two pups.

"Oh my gosh! Hello! It's a brand-new day! Can you believe it? Hey, how did you sleep? I'm loving the rug by the front steps, by the way. Let's go outside! I'm so excited for my breakfast! Hold on – I just need to pee. Don't forget,

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SPORTS

Nummela Looking to Follow Teammate into the ECHL

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Although only a senior from Uxbridge playing high school co-op hockey for Northbridge, Jack Nummela is hoping to follow Derek Lewis, his last year's teammate, into the East Coast Hockey League once he graduates.

Nummela, who has been playing hockey with his linemates Joe Sullivan and Brett Flanders (both from Nipmuc High School) for some time now, have all been talking and practicing with the Worcester Railers, a New York Islanders affiliate. And although his is not sure about his two friends, Nummela is certain that he wants to give the Railers a shot once his high school playing days are over.

The ECHL is a premier AA hockey team where 676 players have gone on to play in the National Hockey League after beginning their careers in the league.

Growing up, Nummela believes that he first laced up his skates at the age of two when his dad, who has been a hockey coach, built the family a rink in the backyard. It was about four years later when



Jack Nummela, Uxbridge native playing Co-op hock for northbridge high school is aiming for the Worcester Railers hockey team, part of the prestigious AA East Coast Hockey League.

he had to venture outside of his hometown to play youth hockey for Tri Valley, as Uxbridge didn't have any hockey programs.

Throughout his early years, the Uxbridge resident found himself playing center and left wing for his

youth teams, but once he joined his last club team, the Minutemen Flames, he found himself on the defensive side of the ice. As he enters his final season with the Northbridge co-op team he may find himself back on the blueline

for the first time in his high school career.

"The last few years I have been playing left wing for Northbridge, but with four senior defenders graduating there is going to be a big hole on defense this year," Nummela said. "I don't mind playing defense; in fact, I feel like I am built to play there. While the coach hasn't actually said I'll be playing there just yet, I have been getting ready to take on the role this season."

When Nummela was set to enter high school, he found out that the Spartans didn't have a hockey team of their own, instead they were part of a five-school co-op team where Northbridge was the home team under Coach Ryan Neville. Needless to say, when it came time to try out for the team, the Uxbridge native found that he really didn't know all that much about the team. Once thing he did know was that Northbridge was coming off a State Championship season.

"I really didn't know what to expect, the only good thing was that my two buddies (Sullivan and Flanders) who I've played with

pretty much my entire hockey life were there also," Nummela said. "Making the varsity team as a left winger was great and the boys welcomed us to the team and helped us a bunch. It was an easy fit."

Although he went into the season somewhat skeptical and timid he had fun during his first campaign and came away learning a lot. The team struggled at times that season, but over the past two years they have steadily improved and the now senior believes the team has what it takes to put together their best season on the ice.

"I consider myself to be a physical player, not as flashy as Joe and Brett, but I can hold my own on the ice," he said. "The three of us have played on the same line and have a really good chemistry together, I really expect a successful season this year."

As the season gets closer to starting the senior has high hopes that Northbridge will put together a better record than last year's

NUMMELA

continued on page 13

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Webster Five Aids Fuel Assistance Program

Webster Five is helping the Worcester Community Action Council's (WCAC) Emergency Fuel Fund get ahead of the cold with its recent donation

ited resources to address the growing needs of Central and South-Central Massachusetts residents.

"At Webster Five, we're committed to investing in our community and



of \$25,000. This contribution marks the first significant gift the Fund has received for the 2023-24 heating season.

As winter approaches and the demand for emergency heating assistance grows, WCAC is working to ensure that some of the most vulnerable households in the region – seniors, disabled individuals, veterans, and families with young children – have access to this basic necessity during challenging times.

Last year, WCAC received a total of 16,000 applications, representing a 44% increase in new and first-time applicants and a 20% increase in applications overall. Webster Five's donation in 2022 supported approximately 60 households with emergency fuel deliveries, among nearly 1,200 households WCAC served with emergency utility payments over the course of the year.

WCAC anticipates an equally busy season with a significant demand from the community, having already received 6,000 applications prior to the program opening on November 1. With federal funds still awaiting release and WCAC's emergency fund having been completely depleted, WCAC was left with lim-

supporting our neighbors during times of need," said Don Doyle, President and CEO, Webster Five. "By making this donation early in the season, we hope to help WCAC get a jump start on funding for what is likely to be thousands of requests. We're proud to support this organization and the important work they do."

"We are exceedingly grateful for Webster Five's ongoing support of WCAC and the Emergency Fuel Fund," said WCAC Chief Executive Officer Marybeth Campbell. "This donation comes at a critical time when our resources are stretched thin and will make a lasting impact on the lives of families in our community who are facing no-heat emergencies."

"As a board member of WCAC, I've had the privilege of seeing the significant contributions this organization makes every year to vulnerable households in our community," said Brian Westerlind, Senior Vice President, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, Webster Five. "I'm thrilled that Webster Five has continued to be an active partner of the Fuel Assistance Program.

NUMMELA

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while working more as a unit instead of individually.

As a captain he has been part of running the practices during the early months and is trying to get the team to get together outside of the rink to form a bond between the players as well as building a better team chemistry. Nummela is also looking forward to getting the team to work hard on the ice and focus on the game at hand

and not worrying about the tournament until the time comes.

Along with Flanders and Sullivan, he is hoping that all three can be in the upper echelon of the league when it comes to scoring. The trio each posted 20-25 points last winter and Nummela is hoping that they can all add to their totals this year.

If the captains' practices continue to go well the Northbridge hockey team has the capability to have a good season if they continue to play as a whole.

Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy at the MassHire Career Fair

MassHire Southbridge Career Fair was successfully held Thursday, October 26 at the MassHire Southbridge Career Center located within the Southbridge Hotel and Conference Center, 14 Mechanic Street.

Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy was one of the featured training providers. The career fair was open to the public and over 100 training candidates participated. Prospective trainees who may be eligible for MassHire grant funds were provided prescreening at the event. Along with training providers, ten area employers were also in attendance.

MassHire Career Center maintained its strong support for the Practical Nursing Students of Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy in Charlton for the past several years, serving as a resource center. Practical Nursing students on the rigorous program at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy benefit from assistance offered by MassHire. The Practical Nursing students are academically qualified students who, despite other financial or social circumstances, have persevered and remained



Gretheline Bolandrina director of the Bay Path Nursing Academy at the MassHire Southbridge Career Fair.

dedicated to their nursing journey and future success.

"Our Practical Nursing students are blessed to be a part of MassHire's programs," said Academy director Gretheline Bolandrina. "MassHire has helped and prepared many of our students and graduates since 2016,

with job readiness techniques and tuition grants as they pursue their nursing career and navigate the healthcare system. MassHire gives our practical nursing students a chance to master their expertise in nursing skills and help make a difference in their lives as they start their nursing career." Career readiness is a significant focus for MassHire. For the academic year 2023-2024, multiple practical nursing students received \$8,000 tuition grants.

In addition to providing support, online and hands-on assistance is available. MassHire also works closely with practical nursing students when they graduate providing support and assistance with NCLEX-PN preparation and the actual exam. Added work includes coaching graduates in resume-writing techniques, job interviewing best practices and other skills that not only help during a job search but are also relevant once they're in the workforce. MassHire Worcester Career Center is located at 340 Main Street, Suite 400, Worcester, MA 01608 MassHireCentralCC.com



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TALES FROM BEYOND

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The Spectre Leaguers: Part I

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

Everyone is aware of the Salem, Massachusetts witch trials that took place in 1692 but few have knowledge of an event that took

place just north of the Witch City. This ghostly occurrence took place at the same time and it was believed by many to be closely related. Author Samuel Adams Drake wrote of the physical phenomenon that

plagued the town of Gloucester, located on Cape Ann.

"It is gravely told in the "Magnalia Christi" of Cotton Mather, and on the authority of the Reverend John Emerson of Gloucester, how a number of rollicking apparitions dressed like gentlemen, in white waistcoats and breeches, kept Gloucester and the neighboring towns in a state of feverish excitement and alarm for a whole fortnight together.

In the midsummer time, in the year 1692, Ebenezer Babson, a sturdy yeoman of Cape Ann, with the rest of his family, almost every night heard noises as if some persons were walking or running hither and thither about the house.

He being out late one night, when returning home saw two men come out of his own door, and then at sight of him run swiftly from the end of the house into the adjoining cornfield. Going in, he immediately questioned his family concerning these strange visitors. They promptly replied that no one at all had been there during his absence."

Babson and the rest of Cape Ann would be besieged for a "fortnight" by what they deduced were ghosts or specters, perhaps even demons in human form sent by the devil to torment them. Drake, along with Mather and others also vouch for the authenticity of the event. Drake, in his writing states,

"But the fact that they were

spirits, and no ordinary spirits at that, being so confidently vouched for, and by such high authority on such matters as Dr. Cotton Mather, would seem to dispose of all doubt upon the subject."

Mather's account was written shortly after the event and in his own words in the telling, yet the conviction of his narrative has warranted the tale to become an integral part of New England folklore. He relied upon the sworn testimonies of those who actually fought with the unknown assailants who, in their conclusion, were not of this world. The men involved were of solid character and highly respected. For them to fabricate such a story would be detrimental to their caliber in society.

To continue the above narrative by Drake, Babson seized his gun and went in pursuit of the strangers. As he came upon a log, the two men jumped up and ran into the nearby swamp. As they ran, he heard one of them say, "The man of the house is now come, else we might have taken the house." In an instant, they were gone.

Stricken with fear of an attack by hostile enemies, Babson and his family took shelter in the nearest garrison. Upon entering, the sound of heavy footfalls resembling an army marching around the house was heard. Babson, along with a few other brave souls armed themselves and sallied forth to confront the enemy. Instead, they saw the same two men fleeing the scene. It was then that they deduced it may have been French scouts and an attack was imminent.

The next night, Babson, being out of the garrison, saw two men once again who he thought to be Frenchmen as one of them had a bright gun, such as the ones used by the French Canadian, slung over his back. Both started towards him but Babson was able to make haste to the garrison where he got safely inside. Once again the heavy footfalls commenced as if a league of men were circling the safe house. Babson and a man named John Brown spied three men outside and took a shot at them. To their surprise, the men dodged their bullets like snowballs lobbed at them from a lame arm. For the next three nights, the three men, or what the towns people now thought were demons or devils, continued to mystically appear here and there in attempts to lure the inhabitants from their safe haven in the garrison.

Watch for Part 2 coming in the December issues.

Prayer



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

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

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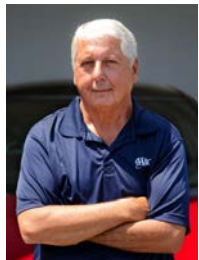
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THE CAR DOCTOR

jpaul@aanortheast.com

CDs, LEDs and Rotors, Oh My!

Q. I have a basic manual transmission 2019 Subaru Impreza 5-door (no frills). One thing I miss is not having a CD player which has been deemed no longer feasible. When I purchased the car, I asked if a CD



BY JOHN PAUL

player could be installed, and the dealers told me no. Can I have a CD player installed elsewhere and is my car capable of having Sirius Radio?

A. There are plenty of ways to go about this with add-on components. You can get a CD player that simply plugs into an available USB plug. SXM has adapters as well. But the other option is to upgrade the radio to one that has everything you want. If it were me, I would go to an auto stereo store and see what they have. The other option is a Bluetooth adapter for SXM and stream from your phone to your current radio.

Q. Two days after the water pump and timing chain in my 2015 Ford Explorer, an engine rattling noise started and it is coming from the timing chain area. I took it back twice, but they can't locate the problem. The head technician has ideas where the noise is coming from but is not 100 percent sure. The Ford runs great, and I have a good relationship with the shop and the engine was quiet

before this work was done. I am trying to sell this car, but the noise is pushing buyers away. I also tried to trade it in but trade offer too low because of the engine noise. The dealership claimed it was the timing chain.

A. If the noise is loud and only on, startup (4 hours plus sitting) the issue is with the camshaft phasers. The shop is likely reluctant to take the engine apart again to check their work (an all-day job) but this may be necessary to solve the problem.

Q. I'm writing about my 2013 Buick. I have to replace a blown headlight bulb. Can I legally replace it with a Sylvania XTRAVISION H11 bulb instead of a GM OEM? I read a review on the Sylvania bulb and one buyer said they both blew out in two months. He thought it was a fluke so he replaced them with the same Sylvania and they both blew out in four months, four hours apart. Do you have any experience and recommendations with these bulbs? And what is your opinion on LED replacements for my car?

A. Proper lighting is important especially as we age. We need three times as much light to see at 60 years of age than we did at 20. I have mixed feelings about higher performance bulbs, I have Sylvania SliverStar Plus in my car now (about \$55) and they are good. I have used them in the past in other vehicles and have only lasted about 18

months. They produce whiter light and certainly seem brighter. Conventional bulbs last a really long time, but they start to dim after three years. So sometimes just replacing the stock bulb with a new bulb just seems to make an improvement. As far as LEDs, technically they are not legal, since they are bigger than stock bulb and throw the optics off. Yes, they will be brighter but may not be aimed properly. Also, some require additional kits to trick the body control computer. The LED bulbs draw less current, and the car's computer thinks a bulb is out. You will find that the LEDs are not made by Sylvania, Wagner, GE or other major lighting companies and use words like almost exact size, works with most vehicles, and my favorite 300% Brighter than halogen bulbs: Well, I don't think you can have a bulb that is 300 percent brighter. Typical halogen bulbs are 1000 lumens, BMW high intensity discharge (HIDs) and LEDs are 2900 lumens. My poor math skills would put the LED claims at 150,000 lumens.

Q. My neighbor is a mechanic and does the maintenance work on my car. He is going to replace my car's rotors and brake pads. He is going to spray the rotors with a coating to prevent rust. Is this recommended because the rotors rust?

A. Seems like anything you spray on the rotors would wear right off since the brake pads are constantly "wiping" the rotors. A few years ago I even purchased rotors that we're supposed to be impregnated with some anti corrosion material, after about 60 days they rusted. Surface

rust is not a concern, it wears off after a few stops. As long as this spray is not oil based it shouldn't cause any harm but the results in my opinion will be short lived. Give it a try and let me know.

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

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NOTE: Community bulletin board-type items are welcome for inclusion in the *Happenings!* section of the Xpress newspapers. Please allow enough lead time for publication. Email your calendar or event notice to news@theyankeeexpress.com.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18

• Our Lady of the Valley Regional School hosts its 39th Annual Holiday Fair from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. at 75 Mendon Street, Uxbridge behind St. Mary's Parish. The Holiday Fair has something for those of all ages. Shop for holiday gifts from a wide range of local vendors. Try your luck at one of the fair's many raffles, including basket raffles, the super raffle, and the grand raffle. And enjoy fresh baked goods, popcorn, soft pretzels, and the ever-popular cookie walk. Children will love the kid's activities, including crafts, games, inflatables, a scavenger hunt, a kid's raffle, balloon animals, a hot cocoa bar, and pictures with Santa. Come for lunch and choose from several

delicious options, including chicken parmesan subs, meatball subs, hot dogs, pizza, and fries. You can also purchase homemade meat pies to heat up at home. The Our Lady of the Valley Holiday Fair is so big, that it takes place in three buildings—the main school building, the G.R.A.C.E. Center, and the St. Mary's Parish Hall (Good Shepherd Center). This year's fair includes 3,000 more feet. For more details, visit their website at www.ourladyofthevalleyregional.com. Vendors looking for table space can email olvguild@gmail.com. Willard House and Clock Museum, 11 Willard Street, North Grafton will host a plein air painting event on its grounds for any and all artists from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Also held on Nov. 25. The museum will also feature select works for those days on the museum Facebook, twitter and Instagram pages. Please join this informal gathering of artists who love to paint the New England landscape. Bring your own supplies. Register online at willardhouse.org/events/calendar.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 24 – SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26

• The Douglas Scouting Association will host a Hometown Holiday Hall at the Scott Hall Building, 22 Church Street, Douglas on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 24-26. The hours are 10 a.m.- 6 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. on Sunday. Free admission and free refreshments. All

items are homemade. Holiday store atmosphere – one stop check-out. Cash, check major credit cards accepted. All proceeds to benefit the Douglas Scouting Association.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25

• 10th Annual Shop Small holiday shopping event with local merchants in Whitinsville and Northbridge
 • Join us on Small Business Saturday, November 25 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. at Angel Hair Alpacas, 66 Wesson Street, North Grafton to meet our friendly alpacas and shop with several amazing area vendors! Get away from the box stores and enjoy a fun day out with family and find some unique gifts! We will be joined by Brookfield Candles, Minuteman Kettle Corn, Sweet Willow Naturals, Wright's Chocolates, Everything Jalapeno and Not, Stan's Wooden Toys and The Fudge Lady! No pets at this event please. Parking at the Willard Clock Museum.
 • The Farmer's Daughter, 150 Millbury Street, Auburn. Holiday hours and events: Beginning Nov. 25, daily 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.; Christmas Eve: 9 a.m. – 1p.m.; closed Christmas Day. Visit with Santa, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 26; Sunday, Nov. 27; Saturday, Dec. 3; Sunday, Dec. 4. Delicious apple cider donuts are made daily starting Saturday, Nov. 26.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2

• Uxbridge First Holiday Night and Santa

Parade 4:30 p.m. To register as a parade participant, complete the form found at facebook.com/uxbridgefirstholidaynight and return it by Nov. 26. Donation of \$100 per vehicle, float or marching group. Parade staging will begin at 3 p.m. Contact us at Mendon Street Kitchen, 508-278-5750.

• Chain of Lights, Sutton's annual town-wide Christmas event. Free trolley rides from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. to participating locations. Food, children's activities, shopping and lots of holiday cheer. Tree lighting with Santa and the Sutton High School Band at 5 p.m. on the Town Common.

• Annual Christmas Bazaar, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. St. Joseph's Parish Center, 68 Central St., Auburn. Come and enjoy an old fashioned Christmas Bazaar and check out the Collectibles, Attic Treasures, Jewelry, Plants, Knit Goods, Holiday Décor, Toys, Candy & Baked Items and so much more! Take a chance on one of our many raffles. There is something for everyone! Free Admission. Plenty of parking available. Handicap accessible.

• First Congregational Church of Oxford presents their Annual Christmas Tea. 9:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.. Keepsake photo experience, Gift Center & Granny's Attic. Assorted desserts and teas served all day. Luncheon begins at 11:30. www.firstchurchoxford.com

• Breakfast with Santa, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Waters Farm, 53 Waters Road, West Sutton
 • St. Denis Church Holiday Fair, Douglas will be held Saturday, Dec. 2, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Purchase crafts, enjoy baked goods or try our raffles. Have lots of fun at the Kids' Table. Luncheon served from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

• Annual Holiday Bazaar at the Sutton Senior Center, 19 Hough Road from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Shop for the holidays. There will be gorgeous gift baskets, jewelry, scratch ticket raffles, hats and mittens as well as dollar items. A take-out lunch of turkey soup or meatball sub will be available. All proceeds will benefit Sutton Seniors.

• The parade will be held on Saturday, De-

ember 2nd, and will kickoff from the North Oxford Fire Station at 5:00 pm. The parade will continue down Route 12 to Joslin Park where Santa, Mrs. Claus and a special guest will light the tree on the Town Common Bandstand.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3

• The Unitarian Church at 3 Grafton Common is having a traditional Church Faire on Sunday December 3, from 11:30-3:00. Enjoy a hot lunch including chili, cornbread, hot dogs and apple crisp; Attend a family friendly performance of 'Twas the Night Before Christmas at 1:00 featuring our hand bell choir; enjoy free kids crafts and shop at our local holiday market.

• Grafton Celebrates the Holidays, 8 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. Join the fun for the 28th year as more than 30 businesses, churches and organizations come up with a host of delightful seasonal activities. Keep an eye out for the "Frosty Stop" snow bear logo that marks fun spots like the Polar Express Trackless Train Ride, photos with Santa and the Craft and Vendor Fair at the Municipal Center Gym. The day starts with a pancake breakfast at North Grafton Elementary School. In other stops, enjoy hot soup, pizza or a grab and go craft for kids. The Baptist Church will display its traditional crèche from 1-5 p.m.

• Millbury Chain of Lights at 11 a.m. Join the 24th annual, town-wide event to celebrate the holidays with local food, shopping and entertainment! Enjoy nearly 40 stops in town for live music, holiday shopping, holiday figures like Buddy the Elf and the Grinch, raffles and food. Old-fashioned trolleys provide free transportation throughout the day. The event is sponsored by local businesses and concludes with a tree lighting and appearance by Santa Claus at the Millbury bandstand

HAPPENINGS!
continued on page 17



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HAPPENINGS!

continued from page 16

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5

• Christmas Potluck at 6:30 p.m. First Congregational Church, 307 Boston Road, Sutton.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9

• Auburn Recreation and Culture is hosting its 10th Annual Holiday Craft Fair from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 9 (snow date Dec. 10) at Auburn High School, 99 Auburn Street, Auburn.

150+ Craft Vendors will help you get into the spirit of the holiday season. Santa will be making an appearance from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., so bring the kids. There will be activities, food, drawing, face painting and much more. For more information please Contact the Recreation & Culture Division or call 508-832-7736.

• Annual Holiday Bazaar 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Webster Town Hall Auditorium, 350 Main St.

•Light It Up: A Christmas Concert with Whitinsville Christian School alumnus and Nashville star Jay Bragg Basiner, 7:30-9 p.m. at 279 Linwood Avenue. Tickets \$17.

• Celebrate with a traditional Christmas stroll in Sutton's historic village of Manchaug. The free community event incorporates food, history, shopping and holiday merriment from 4- 8 p.m.

DECEMBER 13

• Story Time at the Willard House and

Clock Museum, 3:30 – 4:30 p.m. for pre-schoolers and siblings. Children will hear a few stories, take a short museum tour and make a craft, 11 Willard Street, North Grafton.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16

•For over 65 years the Auburn Fire Rescue Department has brought Santa around town in the Fire Truck to visit children and adults throughout the community. It has become a tradition shared in families for generations. The route will start at approximately 11 a.m. from the Drury Square Fire Station on Auburn Street. Times are approximate when listed. Please be patient as this is all dependent upon traffic and times are subject to change.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31

• Midnight, Last Night Cannon firing, M.M. Sherman Blacksmith Shop, 6 Singletary Ave., Sutton.

SATURDAY, MARCH 16 2024

• The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's Home & Community Expo will be held at the Northbridge High School Field House on Linwood Avenue in Whitinsville from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Registration will occur late summer, early fall.

Millbury Public Library

Throughout November – All ages are invited to join the tree decorating contest. Stop by the library to pick up a small tree and decorate it at home. Return it to the library for display during the Chain of Lights. Limited to one tree per household.

Monday, November 27 at 4 p.m. Join the Adult Book Club for a discussion of the mystery novel, “The Innocent” by David Baldacci. Register at the library website.

Tuesday, November 28 at 6 p.m. Teen writers 13 – 18 years are invited to meet with the Epic Tales Writing Group. No registration required. Write a story and receive peer support.

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bankHometown Commits \$10,000 to Millbury Parents Club

bankHometown and its charitable giving program, The Giving Tree, recently pledged \$10,000 over three years to the Millbury Parents Club, supporting the club's mission to fund educational activities and experiences for students in Millbury Public Schools. This brings the bank's support over the last decade to more than \$30,000. "Education is the key to a bright future, and Millbury Parents Club plays a critical role in ensuring that students gain access to unique learning experiences," said bankHometown President and CEO Robert J. Morton. "We're happy to make this additional investment in our children and to help unlock their full potential." Founded in the 1970s, the all-volunteer Millbury Parents

Club hosts fundraisers throughout the year to support various initiatives for students in preschool through grade 12 that are not funded by the school budget. These include recent funding for reading and literacy programs at Elmwood Street School and field trip and enrichment opportunities for multiple grade levels. "We're excited to renew our partnership with bankHometown and grateful for their generosity," said Millbury Parents Club President Jessica Orsi. "Their ongoing commitment to the students of Millbury will allow us to continue funding programs that are meaningful and enriching to our kids' educational experience." In the PhotoMillbury Parents Club President Jessica Orsi and bankHometown Elm St., Millbury office Vice President, Branch Officer

Christine Lucier along with third, fourth, and sixth grade students from the Raymond E. Shaw Elementary School. About bankHometown- Founded in 1889, bankHometown is headquartered in Oxford, Massachusetts and has \$1.3 billion in assets and 16 branches located throughout Central Massachusetts and northeast Connecticut. Through its sponsorship and charitable giving program, The Giving Tree, bankHometown and the Hometown Bank Community Foundation support non-profit organizations and causes throughout Worcester and Windham Counties. In 2022, The Giving Tree donated approximately \$320,000 and over the last decade has donated more than \$2.5 million. For more information, visit bankhometown.com.



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Holiday Pops with the BVCC!

The Blackstone Valley Community Chorus will present their concert, HOLIDAY POPS with THE BVCC, on Sunday, December 3, 2023 at 3:00pm. The concert will take place at Valley Chapel at 14 Hunter Road in Uxbridge. Admission is free, though donations are accepted and appreciated!

HOLIDAY POPS with THE BVCC includes holiday classics and spirituals, a cappella tunes and a twenty-five member orchestra, and a sing-along of favorite Christmas carols! The program promises fun and holiday cheer for an audience of all ages. Come celebrate the holiday spirit with family and friends and sing along!

The Blackstone Valley Community

Chorus is a merry group of singers from towns throughout Central Massachusetts. Singing under the direction of Diane Pollard of Douglas, the BVCC has been committed to bringing varied musical performance opportunities to the Blackstone Valley for nearly twenty years. Along with HOLIDAY POPS, the BVCC can be found performing throughout the Valley during the holiday season. Listen for us caroling at the Blackstone Valley's Festival of Trees, the Southwick Zoo Winter Wonderland, and at Mary Christmas and a Happy Moo Year! A Cozy Christmas Benefit Concert for the Whittiers. Visit the BVCC on Facebook or at www.bvcchorus.com for more information about all of these events!

Hear for the Holidays!



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