

## Auburn Library Director has Traveled the World

BY JANET STOICA

From the remote African highlands to the tamer environs of Auburn, Library Director Dr. Jean Collins, brings her vast knowledge and enthusiasm to the town's library. A love of travel and books is the absolute best combination not only for any one of us but most importantly for a leader who promotes reading and its benefits to those around her, the wonderful citizens of Auburn.

St. Augustine once said: "The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page." For those who can and do physically travel their town, state, and world, how fortunate they are and for those who have access to their local public library traveling through time, space, and countries is certainly one of the best benefits a library offers. Books are the gateway to the world and its universe.

As one of six children, Ms. Collins' and her siblings were avid readers. "We didn't have a lot," she said, "but a library book was something we all enjoyed. Our parents instilled in us a life-long love of reading. Libraries are not just about books, they are the hub of the community. That's why we have so many great programs here at our Auburn Library. Socialization becomes the keystone for our younger children. Our library has a first-rate staff and many one-on-one programs. Many people have



Dr. Jean Collins

discovered e-books which can be downloaded to multiple e-devices. To have a knowledgeable society, libraries are critical as they are open to everyone."

While on her personal vacations Dr. Collins has traveled to foreign countries and has deliberately sought out libraries at each destination she has visited from Zanzibar, an archipelago off the east coast of Africa, where a local library had a total of 40 books and a dirt floor to the ruins of Pompeii in Rome where she observed the excavated remains of a library. Soon, she looks forward to a visit to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates where her tour will include access to a massive seven-story

library (built in 2022 in the shape of an open book) and, because of its enormous supply of reference materials, very likely to join the world-class sites of London's British Library and Egypt's Bibliotheca Alexandrina.

"You can see that libraries are important for all societies," stated Dr. Collins, "the first known library was found in the southern part of Mesopotamia in 4000 BC (or 6000 years ago). Libraries really have been around forever."

Dr. Collins received her Master's Degree in Library Science from the University of Rhode

**LIBRARY**  
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## Go Where the Rail May Run

BY PATTY ROY

Old Sturbridge Village is currently alive with thousands of lights – sparkling on trees and fences outside the early American homes of the 1830s. It's a special celebration called "Christmas by Candlelight" and a walk around the village is spectacular.

As the dwellings, shops and Meeting House are sourced from New England, they will look famil-

and a knack for pie-making and mulling cider.

But Christmas didn't really become a big deal until the mid-1800s when the Puritan hold on the population (and the holiday) finally loosened.

As OSV relaxed some of the strictures on Christmas, there are a few anachronistic touches around the village that are magical, anyway.

You can ride in a carryall drawn by two American Belgian horses, a



Charles Tatsis of the Worcester Model Railroaders Club at Old Sturbridge Village where his Christmas Town train layout is on display.

iar to Worcester County residents, though the Christmas decorations they sport would have seemed strange to those who lived during this era. The region had everything present day holiday makers like to see during this joyful season - plenty of greenery and red winter-berries, wood to stoke roaring fires

precursor to the group transportation of modern buses – definitely not out of place and time. Or, you can visit the more modern Christmas Express Model Trains set up by

**RAILROAD**  
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## LIBRARY

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Island and her Doctorate in Higher Education Administration and Education from Argosy University. She has also taken post-doctorate courses from George Washington University. Prior to becoming the Director of the Auburn Library she was Dean of Libraries at a local college. She thoroughly enjoyed her role in higher education and was pleased to join the town of Auburn in her current position. She soon realized that she looked forward to working with town residents and library patrons while working with her library team.

“This was a good fit for me,” said Dr. Collins, “I soon realized that public service was the

right place for me to be. I loved it. I worked with former Town Manager Julie Jacobson for seven years. It was very rewarding being part of a highly-efficient group working for the residents of Auburn. Working with all town departments has been gratifying. We’ve worked with Auburn Youth & Family Services, the Recreation Department’s summer programs, and the DPW as well as the Board of Health emphasizing our environment. We’ve worked very collaboratively especially with the schools.”

“Recently over 400 Auburn Elementary School students received book bags thanks to a grant we received. We offer hundreds of programs annually and 90% of those programs are filled to capacity. Our local

museum passes save our patrons about \$30,000 every year. Local passes include the Worcester Art Museum and the Ecotarium,” she said.

By early December, the library will have hosted a Chocolate-Tasting Program that will detail where chocolate is harvested from as well as a visit from Professor Bugman with his Arthropod Petting Zoo on the 27th during school vacation week. Kids will have the opportunity to make Snowflake Wands along with additional activities at their twice weekly toddler programs. All children’s programs are literacy based with a multitude of programs including the use of a 72 inch viewing screen.

Dr. Collins recently returned from Uganda and Rwanda where

she participated in an eight-day gorilla trek. “Gorillas are actually very docile,” she explained, “you can stand as close as three feet next to them but you aren’t allowed to get in front of them. Masks had to be worn too. It was really incredible to see some of the gorillas with their babies. Dian Fossey, an American primatologist and conservationist who studied gorillas, was instrumental in the rebound of the gorilla’s population growth. You have to put all your preconceptions away. Rwanda is probably the cleanest country in the world. Once monthly every citizen is expected to go out and clean up litter. The people here are so wonderful and friendly.”

She has also been on a Tanzanian safari where she viewed wildebeest herd crossings. Ad-

ditionally, while on a Nile River tour she noted the size of the Nile crocodiles as they swam around their boats and saw a large number of hippopotamuses. (Note: Nile crocs on average are about 14 feet long and weigh about 900 lbs. Hippos are about 10-16 feet in length and weigh between 3,000-9,000 lbs.) She is planning a future trip to Kenya where she hopes to see rhinos and since she enjoys hiking, Mount Kilimanjaro can’t be too far down her list!

Auburn Public Library, 369 Southbridge Street, Auburn MA 01501. Phone: (508) 832-7790. auburnlibrary.org.

Contact Janet: [jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com](mailto:jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com)



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## RAILROAD

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the Worcester Model Railroaders Club of Webster with miniature seasonally appropriate scenery, taste of transportation models to come.

The connection between railroads and Old Sturbridge Village? Railroading was just arriving on the scene in the 1830s and 1840s.

Charles Tatsis built his model railroad with a love that he has held for trains since he received his first set of Lionels many Christmases ago.

"I've been in this since I was four or five," he said about his hobby. "When I was a kid you hoped for one of these or an Erector set. I got the Lionel trains and my brother got an Erector set. We built a lot of stuff with that."

Model train tracks are scaled to various sizes with O Scale (1:48) being one of the most popular and oldest scales in the model railroading world.

"What it means is a quarter inch to the foot," he said. "A G gauge is a little bit bigger; it's a half inch to the foot. HO scale is called that because it stands for Half O Scale, so it's about an eighth of an inch to the foot."

The Worcester Model Railroaders Club has a 40' by 50' HO layout. A second layout is 10' by 37' O gauge.

Some folks bring their own trains, but there are also club trains and cars that are free to try.

"Anybody's welcome," Tatsis said. "I'll be glad to show them around."

Tatsis enjoys creating his own little world on train set-ups. But it can be an expensive hobby if you let it, said with a smile.

Tatsis' experience with trains is first hand on the Boston to Albany route. He was an engineer for Conrail, a freight carrier, for about five years, he said, after training for about five months in New Haven.

"I did a little bit of that and once in a while they'd call us from Amtrak (passenger trains) to engineer," Tatsis related.

It was the fulfillment of a childhood dream, he admitted.

The schedule he followed was leaving home on Saturdays at 10:31 a.m. and didn't return until about 5 p.m. the next day. Then the crews were home again for a day or two according to national safety rules. There were occasional overnight stays in Albany.

When Tatsis was with Conrail the train crew consisted of an engineer, a fireman and a conductor, along with a head end brakeman and a rear end brakeman. Trains also had a caboose in those days.

"But they don't have that anymore. Not like it used to be," he said with a tinge of sadness. "I caught the tail end of it."

An admitted train spotter, Tatsis remembers when you could set your watch by the appearance of trains at certain crossings. "They were that on time," he said.

He also appreciates the romance of train travel.

"Years ago you could just about go anywhere by train, he said. "You could get around easier then than you can now."

The Worcester Model Railroaders Club is located at 14 Rail Road Ave., Unit 54

Webster, just over the tracks and to the right.

Meetings are held Tuesdays 6-9 p.m. and Saturdays 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. Meetings can go overtime if there's a good crowd.

## Oxford Senior Center

December Lunches will be served Tuesdays and Fridays from 12 - 12:30 p.m. Reservations are a must. Call 48 hours in advance of attending. \$4 dine-in, \$5 take-out. Sign up early for holiday meals on Dec. 19 and Dec. 26.

Outreach- Senior Center outreach Coordinator Cindy Nagle is available Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays to offer free and confidential information and Referral services on aging related issues. She can help with a variety of paperwork, including SNAP (formerly Food Stamps), Fuel Assistance, Math Health applications, etc. Call 508-978-6000.

Ugly Sweater Contest on Tuesday, Dec. 19 following lunch. Prizes for Ugliest Sweater, Most Creative, Most Festive and Funniest Sweater.

Coming soon! Town of Oxford Senior Tax Work-Off Program. Eligibility requirements will be out soon. Applications may be obtained from the Senior Center, Town Manager's Office or town website at: oxfordma.us.

Breakfast with the Chief Daniels Thursday, Dec. 21 9 a.m. at the Senior Center. RSVP by Dec. 15.

BEANO will be held at 12:45 p.m. Friday, Dec. 29.

Senior Book Club meets 12:45 p.m., Friday, January 5. The book

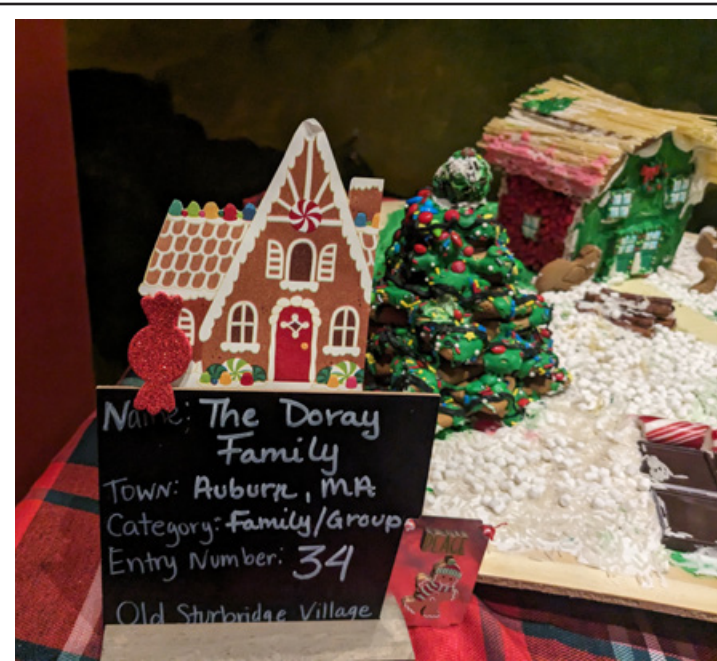
pick is "Winter Street" by Elin Hilderbrand.

Let's Talk Oxford History, Part 7. Tuesday, Jan. 9 from 1-2 p.m. Sponsored by the Oxford Historical Commission.

Oxford Food Shelf at the Community Center, 4 Maple Road. 508-987-1062. Open from 4:30-6:30 p.m. for Oxford residents. Clients are allowed to shop twice monthly.

Strength and Balance class, Tuesdays at 9:15 a.m. Taught by Donna Freeland \$3 per class.

Chair Yoga taught by Heidi Gambaccini Wednesdays at 9:15 a.m. Cost is \$3.



The Doray Family of Auburn took a prize in the family/ group category at the Old Sturbridge Village Gingerbread House contest.

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# Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program's Winter Heating Season

Applications are now open for eligible Massachusetts households to apply for financial assistance this heating season through April 30, 2024

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) is pleased to announce November 1 as 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 program of the same name 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 [toapply.org/massliheap](http://toapply.org/massliheap), 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 wintertime,” 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](http://www.toapply.org/MassLIHEAP).

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Thursdays: 9:30 a.m. – 8 p.m.  
Fridays: 9:30 a.m. – 6 p.m.  
Saturdays: 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Bugman – Arthropod Petting Zoo performance for kids  
Jan. 11 – 5:30 p.m. Book Club  
Monday, Jan. 15 – Library closed in observance of Martin Luther King Day  
Tuesday, Jan., 22 – 5:30 p.m. Friends meeting  
Tuesdays at 5 – 7 p.m. Drop in Knitting Group

Dec. 25 – Library is closed for Christmas  
Dec. 27 – 1-2 p.m. Professor

## Dean's List

Local residents make Dean's List at Wentworth Institute of Technology for the Summer 2023 semester,

- Anna Pyche of Auburn, Mass.
- Aidan Gordon of Douglas, Mass.
- Madeline Davis of Dudley, Mass.
- Karina LeBlanc of Sutton, Mass.
- Robert Whiton of Uxbridge, Mass.

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# Nursing Students earn a perfect score on Medication Calculation Test

**V**anessa Agyare of Jefferson, Julie Dodson of West Brookfield, Tracy Nakygaba of Charlton, Samuel Njenga, and Christian Sochiletey both of Worcester and Ashley Urbain of Paxton all practical nursing students at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy and members of the Practical Nursing Class of 2024 has earned a perfect score on their Medication Calculation test.

According to the Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy Student Handbook, under Clinical Policies, the “Students must demonstrate a level of medication calculation competence before administering medications to patients in the clinical setting. Students must pass the Medication Calculation Test (MCT) with a 90% or higher before passing medication in the clinical setting. Students will have three (3) opportunities to pass the MCT.”

Agyare, Dodson, Nakygaba, Njenga, Sochiletey and Urbain passed the MCT with a score of 100% on their first attempt.

Further, as stated in the Student Handbook, “Students will receive a different version of the test each time they take it. After

each unsuccessful attempt, the student **MUST** see an instructor for remediation before attempting to take the MCT again. If a student does not pass the MCT after the second (2nd) attempt, a performance notification will be issued. Students who do not pass the MCT after the third (3rd) attempt will be unable to pass medications and therefore be unable to meet the clinical objectives and ultimately unable to continue in the PN Academy.”

According to Gretheline Bolandrina, DHA, MSN Ed, RN, CRRN Academy Director, “I have always believed that student engagement and collaboration is a huge part of student success. It helps that we have amazing faculty at Bay Path. Dr. Ana Olivar who teaches Pharmacology is intentional in making sure our PN students are successful in doing what they love to do.”

*About Bay Path RVTHS Practical Nursing Academy:* Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy offers a 40-week, (10-month), full-time, Monday through Friday, evening program. The program begins in mid-August and is completed in late June. Graduates receive a

Practical Nursing Certificate and are eligible to take the NCLEX-PN licensure exam. The Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy is fully approved by the Common-

wealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services Department of Public Health Board of Registration in Nursing ([www.mass.gov/dph/](http://www.mass.gov/dph/))

boards/rn) and is accredited by the Commission on Occupational Education ([www.council.org](http://www.council.org)). For more information visit [www.baypath.net](http://www.baypath.net)



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# See Me, Hear Me at Booklovers' Gourmet

Nature & Wildlife Photography by Janet L. McDonald will be on display and for sale at Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 East Main Street, Webster, through December 30 in the cafe gallery during regular business hours. Free and open to the public. For more information call 508-949-6232 or email deb@bookloversgourmet.com. Hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Wednesday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Special

holiday hours: Sundays, December 10 and 17, 12-4 p.m.; Mondays, December 4, 11, and 18, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and December 24 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Closed December 25.

Janet McDonald is an artist, a creator, and nature lover. She received a BFA from UMass Dartmouth and later earned a master's degree in Early Childhood Education from Eastern Connecticut State University. Janet worked for over a decade as



Above, Janet McDonald is an artist, a creator, and nature lover. Her photography has been exhibited at the Sprinkler Factory Gallery, The Vanilla Bean Café, The Rose Room, Booklovers' Gourmet and Attleboro Art Museum.

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a textile graphic designer before pursuing a completely different creative outlet as a Pre-K teacher. Now in retirement, Janet walks dogs, pet sits and enjoys taking pictures while canoeing or hiking with her partner Tom.

Janet's photography has been exhibited at the Sprinkler Factory Gallery, The Vanilla Bean Café, The Rose Room, Booklovers' Gourmet, Attleboro Art Museum, the Sherill Library in Cambridge as well as many other libraries in the Northeast. The Brookside Chalet holds a permanent display of Janet's photographs, inspiring visitors to explore the beauty, history and serenity of the Quiet Corner of Connecticut whether it be a whimsical look into the Thompson Dam or a striking view

of Cargill Falls.

Janet says: "I often find wonder and beauty in the world around me. Whether I'm walking through the woods or even spending time in my own neighborhood, I always see magic in the ordinary. I am compelled to capture those scenes through my eyes so I can not only relive the joy I felt in that moment but share these portraits into my perspective and experience with others."

For more information on Janet and her work, visit her Instagram accounts

@janetmcdonaldphotography or @frenchcatdrawings.

On Saturday, December 16, visit Booklovers' Gourmet as Sue Sheperd discusses and signs cop-

ies of her latest book "Balancing My Seesaw :Through Life's Ups and Downs." Free and open to the public. (Rescheduled from an earlier date). Signed copies will be available for purchase.

Diagnosed with a chronic condition, over 29 years ago, Sue has learned how to live with life's ups and downs. Even so, she has navigated her way through divorce from an abusive marriage, homelessness, loss, and times of loneliness. And now she would like to share some of the secrets she has learned on her "SeeSaw", and how to hold on when the ride gets too rough.

Through short stories and poems, Sue has found her voice and wants to share the hope and inspiration she has discovered so that others can also find ways to balance their own "SeeSaw" of Life. She wants everyone to know the excitement of following Jesus and wants to show how involved He is in our lives. With God in the middle of it all, He helps to keep us balanced when life's circumstances are trying to bring us down or throw us off.

Sue is a life-long New Englander, and has been blessed with three adult children, two daughters-in-law and two grandchildren (and we can't forget the five grand-dogs). You are welcome to contact her via email at: JustSue4@gmail.com.

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# Sturbridge Village at Christmas

Old Sturbridge Village is currently alive with thousands of lights – sparkling on trees and fences outside the early American homes of the 1830s. It's a special celebration called "Christmas by Candlelight" and a walk around the village is spectacular.

As the dwellings, shops and Meeting House are sourced from New England, they will look familiar to Worcester County residents, though the Christmas decorations they sport would have seemed strange to those who lived during this era. The region then had everything pres-

ent day holiday makers like to see during this joyful season - plenty of greenery and red winterberries, wood to stoke roaring fires and a knack for pie-making and mulling cider.

But Christmas didn't really become a big deal until the mid-1800s when the Puritan hold on the population (and the holiday) finally loosened.

During "Christmas by Candlelight" every corner of Old Sturbridge Village's 200-acre campus has been transformed into scenes from Christmas in 19th century New England with some tweaks concerning decorations.

Watch our cabinetmaker craft-



Left, OSV blacksmith Ethan Choiniere points out the irregularities in an early iron kitchen tool.

ing wooden toys and gifts, sample mulled cider or traditional Polish gingerbread, or check out this year's entries into our Gingerbread House Contest. See a blacksmith at work or watch the train set-up by the Worcester Model Railroaders Club.

Walk the Christmas Tree Trail and see more than 4,000 candles and tin lanterns lighting the Village adorned in its holiday finest.

There is also ample holiday shopping to do at the Miner Grant Store and the Ox & Yoke Mercantile (which does not require an admission fee).

"Christmas by Candlelight" is open on select Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays through the end of the year, and will also be open between Dec. 27 and Dec. 30 for

those who want to extend the holiday season.

There is also ample holiday shopping to do at the Miner Grant Store and the Ox & Yoke Mercantile (which does not require an admission fee).

No visit to Christmas by Candlelight would be complete without taking a ride on the horse-drawn carryall or taking your picture with Santa. Delicious hot cocoa and cookies are also must-haves by the bonfire.

Daily admission is: \$30 for adults, \$28 for seniors, \$15 for College Students, \$15 for children ages 4-17, children 3 and under admitted free. Tickets can be purchased in advance at this link: [osv.org/plan-your-visit/](http://osv.org/plan-your-visit/)

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## LIVING WITH LUKE

amyleclaire@hotmail.com

# Luke's Christmas Gift

BY AMY LECLAIRE

**"A**re you coming to see me?" When it comes to the sights and sounds of the season, Luke is not shy to the joy of Christmas. He's an avid watcher. He's aware of the reason for the season.

"Amazon!!"

He stares across the front lawn. Another blue truck screeches to a halt and states the obvious. "A person is inside! He's coming, he's coming, he's coming. I can feel it in my bones." Luke quivers and smiles. His mouth opens and shuts. "He's coming. He's not. He's texting. He's just about ready!"

Luke stares some more, turns around like an oversized ballerina, then snaps out of delirium to concentrate. He doesn't want to miss out on a single clue that, indeed, a person will carry a pizza or a present to his front lawn.

"I wonder if he's bringing me something?" He stalks to the middle of the lawn and crouches down to submission. "I'm going to show the driver that my big head has nothing to do with my personality. I'm going to show him how gentle I truly am." He remains down for as long as he can bear it. Given his age (not yet two) I find Luke's patience to be remarkable. Still, my pup is about to learn a lesson—that not everyone likes dogs. The Amazon driver is no exception.

He appears stiff and serious, a cautious elf. Sensing his ambivalence, Luke attempts to compromise the awkward moment. He sits up straight and smiles proudly. "My name is Luke Valentino and I have my own column and website. You can find me at--"

Cautious Elf is unimpressed. He recoils. I eye him through the bubble glass of the front door like Mama in her kerchief, though I'm unable to settle down for any kind

of nap. A Christmas package is in jeopardy.

"Hi there!" I pull open the front door.

Luke takes my sudden appearance as a clue that a front yard social is in order. He gallops closer to Cautious Elf. "Momma, look – the elf with a vest on has a present for me!" Then he resumes a clownish habit he's recently adopted during new transitions. He chases his tail foolishly, spinning around like a

mind.

"Yeah. I had a bad experience."

The Valentino in Luke flares. "Give me a name." He tilts a curious head to the victim holding a present and inquires. "No one messes with my people." I make a fair decision to grab Luke's collar and collect more information.

"That must have been terrible. Was it a Pitbull, by chance?"

He places his free finger on his chin, a detective with a new clue.



top with a fur coat. My gaze rests on my crazy, spinning dog. Fearing him seems superfluous. Nevertheless, the driver has a right to be afraid. The journalist in me longs to better understand him. (Moreover, I want that package).

"Luke is just shy of two. He still has some puppy in him. I'm sorry."

Not sorry, Luke finishes one final spin and hedges closer to our guest.

"It's just that—" Cautious Elf takes a deep breath. The cloud of his exhale falls heavily in the space between us.

"You've been bit?" I read his

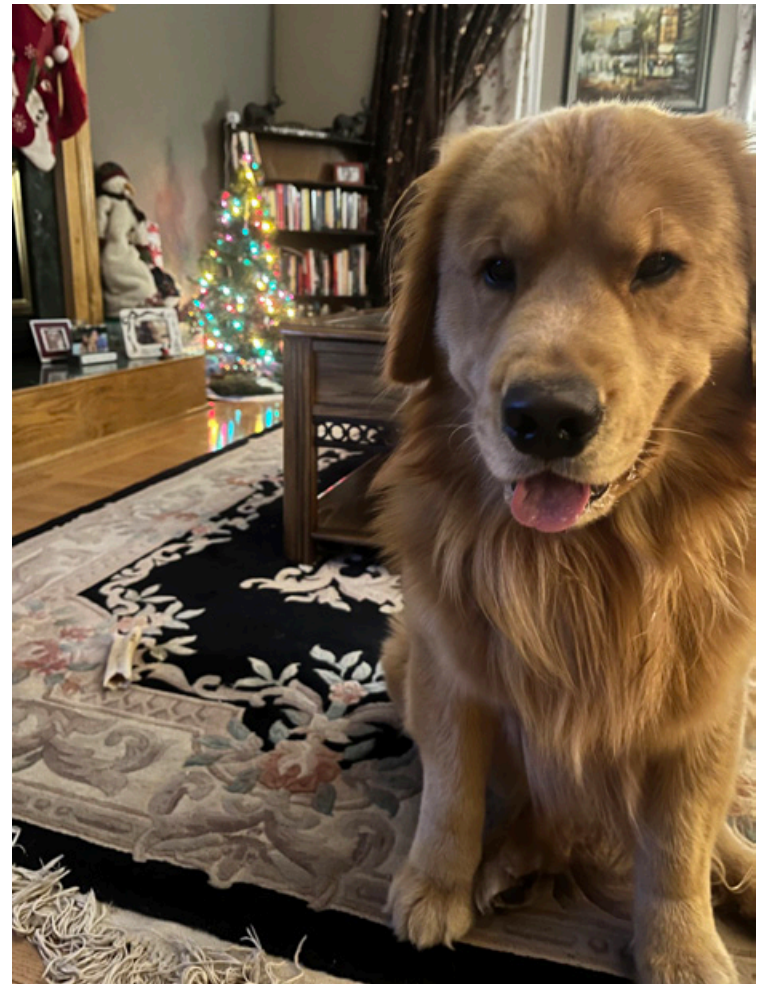
"Actually, it was a dog that looked like yours."

Luke looks up at me. He appears curious, a bear cub who's just finished the last of his honey. "Wasn't me."

The thought of a Golden Retriever attacking a person seems inconceivable, but the truth is grim. Any dog can bite. We don't know exactly what passes through a dog's mind pre-attack, though we do know that temperament, a dog's upbringing, territorial or food aggression, and fear play a role. I pet Luke's big head. He, too, seems to understand.

"Can I still have the present?"

The Amazon gift bag dangles lifelessly in the hand of Cautious Elf, an employee I place at the age of 25. He has a whole life ahead of him to experience the joy of dogs, yet he's been traumatized by one that looks like a bear cub. I remember the day Luke was attacked by a shepherd at the dog park. I haven't been able to return to that very park. Despite my perplex with the situation, I do understand this young man. "I'll go put Luke in the



house," I say, and proceed to tug Luke by the collar, back towards the front door.

"I didn't do anything, Momma!" Luke shuffles against my side with a heavy heart. I feel badly, but it's the right thing to do.

"Wait."

Little did I know we were all about to witness the kind of gift

that can't be wrapped.

Luke and I pause.

"Your dog seems pretty cool."

Luke tugs me back to the elf's voice. "He said I'm cool!"

"Are you sure you want to meet

## 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**

**LUKE**

continued on page 9



REAL ESTATE

# The Perks of Selling Your House When Inventory Is Low

**W**hen 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.



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

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 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 number-



bers 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.

package that's taken far too long to be delivered.

"I'll take that," I say with a snatch and a smile. Happy Elf hands it over but deep down I know the truth. Once again, my dog, a healer, has delivered a gift

that can't be wrapped.

Follow Luke on IG @livingwith-lukevalentino

Write to Amy - amyclair@hotmail.com

## LUKE

continued from page 8

Luke?" I don't want to exacerbate his trauma, yet deep down, I'm proud of the decision to face his dog demon. Luke is equally as proud. He wiggles joyfully. "Aw. That driver had me at Park."

Cautious Elf approaches Luke then kneels to his level. Roles shift. A Man Bitten and A Dog Loved form a match made on my frosty lawn. "He's so soft," he says, massaging Luke's big head. "Your vest smells like popcorn." Luke sniffs the man's pocket.

"Luke, be easy," I command, partially fearing the worst, that my dog bites the hand that feeds us somebody's Christmas gift. However valid, my fear is short-lived. Luke licks the scruff of the man's chin, boasting a relationship that works. "Hey, you can't have that." Happy Elf chuckles while Luke gnaws playfully at the corner of a

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# Avoid tapping into retirement savings early

If you want to make a big purchase, such as a new car or a piece of property, or you were faced with a large, unexpected



BY DENNIS ANTONOPOULOS

expense, such as a major home or auto repair, would you have the funds readily available? If not, you might look at what may be your biggest pool of money

— your 401(k) or IRA. But should you tap into these accounts well before you retire?

Maybe not — and here's why:

**• Less money in retirement** – The more money you invest in your retirement accounts, and the longer you keep it invested, the more you'll probably have when you need it most — when you're retired. Consequently, taking out sizable amounts from these

accounts before you retire could be costly, as it would disrupt the benefits of compounding that can be achieved by holding investments for the long term.

**• Possible bump into higher tax bracket** – The money you take out from your traditional IRA and 401(k) is taxable in the year of withdrawal. So, if you withdraw a significant amount of money at once from your traditional IRA or 401(k), you could be pushed into a higher tax bracket, at least for one year.

**• Tax penalties** – If you take money out of a 401(k) or traditional IRA before you turn 59½, you could face a 10% tax penalty, although some exceptions exist. Penalty-free withdrawals can be made for several reasons, including for education and medical expenses, first-time purchase of a home (up to \$10,000), after the birth or adoption of a child (up to \$5,000) and more (see [irs.gov/taxtopics/tc557](https://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc557)). With a Roth IRA, which is funded with after-tax dollars, you can withdraw contributions — but not earnings — at any time, for any purpose, without incurring penalties.

Given these issues, how can you avoid dipping into your retirement accounts when you're faced with a financial need?

One possibility is to take out a loan from your 401(k). Unlike a 401(k) withdrawal, a loan is neither taxable nor subject to tax penalties. Also, the interest you pay on a 401(k) loan goes back into your account. Still, a 401(k) loan has its

drawbacks. If you leave your job, you'll likely have to repay the loan in a short period of time and if you don't have all the money to repay it, the loan will be considered in default, so you'll owe taxes and the 10% penalty if you're younger than 59½. But even if you don't leave your job and you do repay the loan, you'll still have taken away money that could have potentially kept growing within your tax-deferred account. As mentioned above, as your money compounds, you'll want to minimize disruptions.

Building an emergency fund is another way to gain access to cash. Such a fund should contain at least six months' worth of living expenses, with the money kept in a liquid, low-risk account. It can take time to build a fund of this size, so it's never too soon to start putting away money for it. To avoid the temptation of dipping into your emergency fund, you'd ideally keep this fund separate from your daily spending accounts.

Explore all your options before tapping into your IRA or 401(k) early. Keeping these accounts intact as long as possible is one of the best moves you can make to help build your future retirement income.

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

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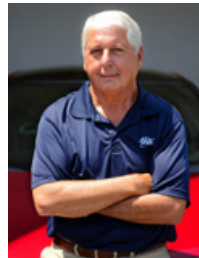
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# Dead Battery? Could be a parasitic drain ...

**Q.** I have a 2010 Dodge Journey. One morning, a couple of weeks ago, the battery was dead. The car is used every day and always started. I charged the battery up, and it worked fine for over a week. I visited a sick relative at the hospital for a couple of hours, and the car would not start after my visit. I was able to



BY JOHN PAUL

jump start it and charge it again. I brought it to my local tire/battery/brake guy. They checked the charging system, and although the battery looked

like it should have some life left in it, I had them replace it anyway. Four days later (unfortunately at night leaving the same hospital), the car was again dead. When I charged the battery, and then left it alone for several hours, I rechecked the battery, and it had drained quite a bit. Do you have any recommendations for doing some initial troubleshooting for a draining battery?

**A.** This is a classic example of parasitic drain on the battery. There are a couple of methods to test for a potential drain. The classic method is to remove the negative battery cable and connect a multimeter, set to measure amps, in a series between the negative battery terminal and the disconnected negative battery cable. Be aware that you will need to wait for the electronics to "go to sleep." If you see a draw, then remove fuses one at a time, until the draw returns to normal. The secondary method is to measure voltage across the fuses. A circuit that is not active should have no voltage flowing. Here is a pretty good article with more detail <https://testmeterpro.com/parasitic-draw-test-with-a-multimeter/> The most common cause of parasitic draw with this vehicle is related to

the radio and Bluetooth module.

**Q.** We have a 2006 Cadillac DTS, and the left front directional light does not work, I assume a blown bulb. Though only one front-blinker bulb is currently blown (dead), should we have both front blinker bulbs replaced at the same time?

**A.** All bulbs have an expected life and typically if one bulb burns out the others doing the same job could certainly be near the end of their useful life. Although you would think replacing a bulb is easy, but the assembly needs to be removed and this will take a little more than an hour. Depending on the shop and labor rate, replacing one bulb could cost \$150 or more.

**Q.** My Mom recently needed to get another car and I helped her pick out and purchase a 2012 Nissan Versa. Everything was going fine for months, seemed to be a good purchase. Her mechanic even looked it over and recommended a few minor things like new wipers, nothing to worry about. After several months of use, something strange started to happen. As she pressed on the brake, the car seemed to rev up, as if the gas were being pressed as well. The vehicle seemed to want to "go" when the brake was being applied. It has happened three times to her, with no warning. The local mechanic drove it around for about 30 minutes and it never happened. Then we went to a Nissan dealership, and they said they were able to recreate the issue. Their recommendation was a new master cylinder and brake booster. The bad news was that they said Nissan no longer made the parts and they were not able to get them anywhere. So back to the local guy, but he was very hesitant to do work based on another mechanics diagnosis. He also did not think it was correct but could not come up with any different diagnosis. Any suggestions? Other than taking it to

another mechanic to look it over?

**A.** This is an interesting one. I also suspect it might be due to a leaking brake power booster. When you apply the brakes, the booster uses engine vacuum to apply more brake pressure. If the booster is leaking it may draw too much vacuum (air) from the engine and the car's computer tries to compensate for this by speeding up the engine. You mechanic may be able to watch all of this by putting a vacuum gauge in line to the power booster and then driving. I also checked a couple of sources and found available parts are going to be a problem, which also could indicate this may be more common than I thought. I checked eBay motors and there are used brake power boosters and boosters and master cylinders for \$100. I would go back to your mechanic to talk with them about it and the possibility of using used parts.

**Q.** I have a 2007 Volvo convertible with only 30,000 miles on it. Since the first

year, it has had an intermittent electrical problem the dealer has been unable to fix. When I turn the key, it sometimes will not start. The dealer replaced the starter years back. When it does not start, it will always start on the second try. Since I only drive a few thousand miles and only in the summer I have just been putting up with it. Any ideas Mr. Car Doctor?

**A.** Volvo did have a problem with the ignition system immobilizer. The symptom sounds just like the issue with your car, especially with it always starting on the second try. The repair

involves replacing the central electronic module and updating the software.

*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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# The Spectre Leaguers: Part II

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

*If you missed Part I, go to [www.theyankeeexpress.com](http://www.theyankeeexpress.com)*

**O**n July 14, the whole garrison spied a half dozen men who were now in gunshot range of them. Babson and his fellow townsmen set out in hot pursuit of the strangers. Babson saw two and took aim, pulling the trigger of his gun but it would not fire, thus allowing the two to get away. He then saw three more exiting the swamp where he then shouldered his rifle and fired at them. All three fell at once. Babson yelled to his companions that he had shot all three, but when he approached them, the three dead men rose and stole away into the night. One of them returned a volley that hissed by Babson's ear, implanting the bullet into a tree.

Babson and his comrades took cover and plotted another attack upon where the spectres were now concealed. Once

again, the strange beings rose and retreated but not before one could be hit by a shot from Babson's rifle. As they closed in on the casualty, they were taken by a sudden horror; the place where the enemy had fallen was void of a body. It was clear to the exhausted men that neither lead nor iron was useful against whatever demons had come to torture them. No sooner had they reached the garrison when more were spotted roaming about the brush just out of gunshot reach.

The next day, Babson went out to the harbor to warn of the visitors and the danger that may follow. As Drake puts it,

"While on his way thither he was waylaid and fired at by the 'unnaccountable troublers,' who, strange to say, loaded their guns with real bullets, as poor Babson was near finding out to his cost. Having procured help, the neighborhood was scoured for traces of the attacking party, two of whom were seen, but not

being of mortal flesh and blood, could not be harmed by lead or steel."

For several days, scouts combed the vicinity of the garrison in search of the spectres. One day the scouting party spied eleven men departing an orchard where they were performing strange incantations. Richard Dolliver fired into the assemblage but, as before, the bullets did nothing but make them scatter. It now became more evident than before, in Drake's words that the "strange visitors bore a charmed life, and that the cape was in great peril from this diabolical invasion..."

A regiment of sixty men from Ipswich were called in to assist in the fight against the unearthly visitors who for a fortnight had continually appeared in various places, harassing the people of Gloucester. Though repeatedly shot at, not one was killed or injured. The assailants beat on barns with clubs, threw stones, whooped and made various

noises much to the resemblance of a poltergeist more than a foe wishing to annihilate an enemy. To make matters more supernatural, they left no footprints in the sands or swamps where they were seen and chased.

It was a matter of time before the spectres began confronting the soldiers of the garrison. Three of them were seen one morning by Babson walking toward him with no fear or apprehension. Babson quickly hid and waited until they were within stones reach. He then shouldered his rifle and fired at them. The powder flashed in the pan, but no shot projected from the barrel. He tried repeatedly to shoot them with no success as the phantoms passed by without as much as flinching. He later was able to fire the gun several times in succession without fail. There was only one explanation Bason could come up with; the wraiths had charmed his rifle so it would not harm them.

In time, the visitors either

grew weary of their diabolical pranks or had better things to do somewhere else. The odd happenings ceased as quick as they had started. One account states that it was not just the spectres going away but divine intervention that played a role in their retreat.

It was decided that if mortal tools could not harm the spectres, then the only answer was to pray to their savior for redemption from the evil. The people of the garrison converged and began praying for salvation. Their plan seemed to have worked, for it was not very long before the spectres were gone for good and the people of Cape Ann were relieved of the devil's minions that had for some time kept them in fear of being taken by the evils that prevailed at the time.

John Greenleaf Whittier wrote of the phenomenon that beleaguered the people of Gloucester in his poem, The Garrison Of Cape Ann.

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# Local Recruits Among Newest Class of Correctional Officers

**O**n Friday, December 1, Worcester County Sheriff Lew Evangelidis proudly administered the Correctional Officers Oath to the 26 graduating recruits of the Sheriff's Office's 60th Basic Recruit Training Academy (B.R.T.A.) in Zecco Auditorium at Anna Maria College.

The Worcester County Sheriff's Office has demonstrated a strong commitment to ensuring the public safety of the cities and towns in Worcester County. The department recognizes the importance of having a team that is representative of the community it serves. The graduates of B.R.T.A. #60 are a highly qualified and diverse group of recruits, each bringing unique skills and experiences to their new roles as correctional officers. These officers hail from sixteen different towns across Massachusetts, and many of them are veterans or reservists. B.R.T.A. #60 is the largest graduating class the department has had since 2017.

The Sheriff's Office Academy is a paid full-time three month program that teaches recruits how to handle and maintain the care, custody, and control of inmates at the Worcester County Jail & House of Correction. The program in-

cludes both classroom and hands-on instruction, covering important topics such as de-escalation, duty to intervene, fire safety, defensive tactics, first responder training, suicide prevention, mental health, and substance abuse. In the classroom, recruits learn about these topics, while hands-on training includes physical fitness, CPR/first responder, firearms, skid school, and many other scenario-based exercises.

"The recruits of the B.R.T.A. #60 have just completed 12 weeks of rigorous training and will now join the ranks of our full-time staff behind the walls of the Worcester County Jail and House of Correction," commented Worcester County Sheriff Lew Evangelidis. "This class has demonstrated great strength and resiliency as they have navigated the academy. They represent the upcoming generation of correctional officers who will undoubtedly carry forward our mission to serve, protect, and foster a better and safer community for all."

Since taking office, Evangelidis has implemented several changes to enhance the professionalism and integrity of the department hiring process. The new standards



for correctional officer applications include a minimum of an associate degree, two years of military service, or two years of relevant work experience. Additionally, applicants must pass a written exam, physical fitness test, background check, and psychological screening test.

To ensure fairness and impartiality, Evangelidis has also implemented a policy that prohibits the submission of letters of recommendation from politicians and gives preference to hiring those who have served our country.

The Worcester County Sheriff's

Office is accepting applications for its 61st Basic Recruit Training Academy, which will begin in March 2024. To learn more about what it takes to be a correctional officer, please visit: WorcesterCountySheriff.com/Careers.

## Auburn Senior Center

4 Goddard Drive  
508-832-7799

Hours:

Monday and Fridays: 8 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday: 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Veterans Agent Coffee Hour - Michelle Murdock will host a coffee hour at the Senior Center, Monday, Dec. 18 from 9 - 10 a.m.

SHINE appointments (Serving the Health Information Needs of Elders) is a state program that provides free health information. For an appointment with the SHINE counselor Patrick Morris, call the Senior Center 508-832-7799.

Let's Move Together with Angie Lavache, Tuesdays 1-1:45 p.m. \$3 per class

Tai Chi with Sifu Gary Lachapelle, Tuesdays, 11 a.m. \$3 per class  
Strength and Balance with Lin Hultgren, Wednesdays and Fridays 10 a.m. \$3

Yoga for Mindfulness with Ann Ramsey, Mondays at 11 a.m. \$3  
Chair Dance with Forty Arroyo, Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10 a.m., \$3

Weekly Tech Clinic will handle problems with your computers, phones or tablets.

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Clermont, Mondays at 10 a.m., \$3  
Meditation Class with Usha Verma, Friday at 11 a.m. No charge.

Book Club every third Tuesday of the month at 2 p.m.

Quilting at 12 p.m. on Fridays. No charge.

Pitch Wednesdays 1 p.m. and Friday 6:30 p.m.

Bingo - Thursdays, 12:45 p.m.  
Canasta - Mondays 12:45 p.m.

Adult Coloring Club with Jessie Harrington, Mondays at 10:30 p.m.

Cribbage Wednesdays at 6 p.m.  
Bridge, Fridays at 1 p.m.  
Walking Club Monday and Wednesday, 10 a.m. Auburn Mall Dominos, Friday at 12:45 p.m.

Make Your Own Holiday Centerpiece, Tuesday, Dec. 19 at 1 p.m. \$15, nonfundable.

Book Club meets Dec. 19 at 2 p.m. The book being read is "The Perfumist of Paris" by Alka Joshi.

Scenting with Aromatherapy, Wednesday, Dec. 20 at 11 .m. Call

the senior center for a reservation.

Fire Safety at Home with Tess DiDonato Wednesday at Dec. 20 at 1 p.m. Call to reserve a place.

Presentation, Christmas Customs around the World, Thursday, Dec. 21 at 10:30 a.m. Call to register.

"Christmas Inheritance", movie at 12:45 p.m. on the big screen.



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## Museum hosts Dickens Carolers

Samuel Slater Experience in Webster hosted the Very Merry Dickens Carolers Sunday evening, December 10, for some festive fun and help spread Christmas cheer! The Carolers performed to a full house singing Christmas songs that scanned the years including requests from the

audience. Refreshments of cookies, hot chocolate and hot apple cider were provided by the Rose Room. Following the hour and a half performance, the Carolers received a standing ovation from the audience who were festively brought into the holiday season.

# Christmas Messages and Reflections from Area Houses of Worship

BY JANET STOICA

As Christmas 2023 approaches bringing with it the commercialism and stress that has now become our Christmas season, it seems most appropriate to reflect on what Christmas was truly meant to be. The unfortunate mania of scurrying about buying sometimes meaningless holiday gifts appears to have taken away from what the deep and thoughtful message of sincere Christianity is all about – that is, peace among mankind and the joy that the Christ Child brought to the world over two thousand years ago. In years past, several parish communities in our area offered the following words for many of us to reflect upon and we sincerely thank them for their contributions as they still resonate in the current year.

The Reverend Andrew Borden of Bethel Lutheran Church in Auburn stated “In the liturgical tradition, Advent prefaces Christmastide as a preparation for the incarnation, a time for readying oneself amidst the busy-ness of life to encounter Emmanuel once again. Christmas is rightly understood as God’s breaking-in to love us, providing

direction, comfort and salvation in the person of Jesus who died to save humanity from itself. The mystery of the annunciation and story of the Magi focus attention on the One who is bigger than all of our expectations, imagination, hopes and desires whose birth has global significance: God for the world against our many-times narrow human vision; the hope of peace.” They are located at 90 Bryn Mawr Avenue, Auburn; phone: (508) 832-3427. For more information, please visit their website: [grace-lutheran-elca.org](http://grace-lutheran-elca.org)


The Rev. Karen D. Fournier, Pastor, of The First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, of Oxford had the following message: “At Christmas, we recall the story of the birth of our Savior. The story of two people traveling a great distance at a difficult time. Two people who are following governmental guidelines by registering in the town of their birth. They are road weary. It seemingly matters not at all who they are, or that one of them is carrying the Messiah; there is no special treatment for them. At an inconvenient time, under uncomfortable conditions, and without fanfare, a baby was born to a woman named Mary: Jesus, who

is Christ our Lord. The rest of the world continued on with its business. Nothing stopped for them. In the hustle and bustle of life, where time still does not stop, those who follow Christ, pause. We gather together to ponder the story of the birth of the Savior of humankind. The Gospel of John tells us: The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. . . And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory. . . (John 1:8,14 NRSV)

We follow a Savior, who knows our struggles because He lived those struggles. We follow the light, because it will never be overcome by the darkness. With the help of God, we endeavor to bear witness to that light, the Good News of Christ’s birth as we live and work in this world. We seek to share the hope, peace, joy, and love of Christ with all; that the light of Christ may pierce all darkness.” The First Congregational Church, 355 Main Street, Oxford MA 01540. Phone: (508) 987-2211. For more information, please visit their website: [firstchurchoxford.com](http://firstchurchoxford.com)

Contact Janet: [jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com](mailto:jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com)






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# The Webster Five Foundation Gives Local Nonprofits a Boost

## \$38,000 in grants to be awarded to community organizations

The Webster Five Foundation enters the season of giving with funding for nine Worcester County based organizations. Combined, these nonprofits will receive up to \$38,000 in grants from the Foundation to further their missions.

The Foundation is committed to supporting nonprofit organizations or programs that support expanding or improving access to education, culture and the arts, social services, charitable activities, and community development. The Foundation awards funds on a quarterly basis and has fulfilled 54 grant requests, totaling \$246,500, in 2023 alone.

In this grant cycle, the Webster Five Foundation awarded funding to the following organizations:

- Boys and Girls Club of Webster-Dudley -- \$5,000 to support its Evening Teens Program to help members with job-readiness skills, leadership opportunities, and academic support through the related programming. The Club is a licensed after-school program providing year-round care for kids ages 5-13 in a safe, caring, supportive environment.

- Boys and Girls Club of Worcester -- \$2,500 for the Club's eSports programming for club members. All Club programs are based on a youth development model that builds self-esteem and offers a sense of belonging, competence, and influence.

- Open Door Arts -- \$1,000 to support the Open Door Gallery at the Worcester Art Museum and the related programming associated with the gallery. Open Door Arts works annually with more than 2,000 students, teaching artists, educators, and leaders of cultural organizations through innovative and inclusive programming designed to improve access and ensure equitable representation by people with disabilities in the arts.

- Open Sky Community Services, Inc. -- \$15,000 for Open Sky's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Champions capacity building project. Open Sky has served Central Massachusetts and the communities of the Greater Worcester region for 50 years and offers over 100 health services/programs serving 5,000 individuals with complex health challenges per year.

- Quinsigamond Community College (QCC) Foundation -- \$4,000 to support its Student Emergency Aid Program, which is a lifeline that helps low-income, at-risk students with emer-



Members of Open Sky Community Services' CARE team. Open Sky received \$15,000 from the Webster Five Foundation to support the organization's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Champions capacity building project. From left, Ken Bate, CEO; Liz Olivera-Mustard, Senior Vice President of Quality & Compliance; Amy Kukta, Director of Health Information Management & Privacy; Stephen Osei-Bonsu, Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB); Jennifer Galbraith, Director of Quality; Lori Girard, AFC South Division Director; Moses Osagie, Interim Program Coordinator; Jessica Reid, Assistant Program Director; Maria Caicedo, Clinician; and James Castell, Care Coordinator.

gency expenses for basic needs so they can stay in college and obtain a post-secondary degree or certification, and ultimately, family-sustaining wages. The QCC Foundation is an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization working to enhance opportunities for over 7,000 students.

- Rachel's Table -- \$2,500 for its Children's Milk Fund. The mission of Rachel's Table is to end hunger in the Worcester, Massachusetts, area and to prevent the waste of excess nutritious food. Their vision is a community where no one goes hungry, and excess food is utilized to its fullest potential, benefiting those in need.

- Venture Community Services -- \$1,000 and a match of up to

\$1,000 to support Peltask, which is a digital medication administration tool aiming to reduce medication errors and increase efficiency of delivering medication and to ensure complete compliance with the Department of Public Health Requirements. Venture Community Services provides support to individuals facing diverse challenges through a compassionate and dedicated workforce using innovative practices that encourage independence, empowerment, and opportunity.

- VNA Care Network -- \$1,000 to support the organization's Removing Barriers: Nursing and Medical Social Work Case Management programming. VNA Care provides home health,

palliative, and hospice care to individuals and families in their own homes.

- Worcester County Horticultural Society (New England Botanic Garden) -- \$5,000 to help fund the organization's general education initiatives. The mission of New England Botanic Garden is to engage the local community and create experiences with plants that inspire people and improve the world.

"At Webster Five, we celebrate the role that local nonprofits play in creating positive change in our communities," said Don Doyle, President/CEO, Webster Five. "We're thrilled to contribute to their efforts through the Webster Five Foundation, empowering them to continue making a difference in Worcester County."

Since its inception in 1996, the Webster Five Foundation has awarded \$3,900,508 to 292 organizations. The next round of grant recipients will be awarded in January of 2024. To learn more about the Webster Five Foundation, visit: [web5.com/about-us/our-foundation/](http://web5.com/about-us/our-foundation/)

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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.*

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15**

• Birch Alley Brass Ensemble, Valley Chapel Uxbridge. Thirty-five student and professional musicians from Uxbridge, Hopedale,

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.

• Kids Movie Night featuring "The Polar Express.", Aspire Dance Center from 5-8 p.m. , 278 Main Street, Oxford. Drop your kiddos off for a big screen movie. Make a craft and enjoy a hot chocolate bar. Kids are encouraged to wear their most comfortable pajamas and bring a pillow and blanket. Snacks and drinks will be provided. (No outside food/drinks please) For ages 4 and up. \$25 per child. No refunds. Purchase here (there may be a surcharge eventbrite.



Mendon, Northbridge and Milford in their 12th annual performance of carols from around the world. At 7 p.m. at Valley Chapel, Uxbridge.

com/e/kids-christmas-movie-night-the-polar-express-tickets-764022009397)

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16**

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**DECEMBER 16-23**

• A Christmas Carol — The Hanover Theatre will put on the holiday classic, "A Christmas

Carol", Worcester. Saturday performances at 2 p.m., and 7 p.m. A "relaxed performance" will be held at 1 p.m. on Sunday, December 17 and at 6 p.m. with audio description and ASL. Wednesday, December 20, and Friday, December 22, performances at 7 p.m. Saturday, December 23, performances at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Featuring the Mighty Wurlitzer Organ, the annual holiday favorite returns to the main stage with timeless music period costumes and spectacular lighting and scenery. See and hear the tale of that grasping miser, Ebenezer Scrooge, who is visited by the Spirits of Christmases Past, Present and Yet To Come. Use promotional code GHOST for \$31 tickets.

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17**

• Baptist Church of Grafton will present the Christmas Story in Song during their regular worship at 10 a.m. A special service to sing and learn about the most inspirational Christmas carols.  
• The New England Ringers Handbell Ensemble will give their final concert of the holiday season at their home church, at 4 p.m. at First Congregational Church, 355 E. Main Street, Oxford.

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31**

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

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 9**

• Coffee Break Bible Study for Women will explore The Power of Forgiveness: Finding Freedom in Forgiveness. Childcare and refreshments provided. 9:30-11 p.m. Pleasant Street Church, 25 Cross Street, Whitinsville. For more information, contact Anna t 508-234-4902; email churchoffice@pscvc.org or visit pscrc.org/adults.

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18**

• Bethel Lutheran Church, Auburn Centennial Celebration February 18, 2024. Festive Eucharist Service at 10:30 AM in the church, 90 Bryn Mawr Ave followed by Banquet at the Auburn Elks at 12:30. Centennial Committee reaching out for information on anyone who has attended or whose family has a history with Bethel to share in this event. Please contact Judy Sampson at jas2155@charter.net; Jackie Walsh at jackmae@charter.net or Bethel Facebook page Bethel Lutheran-Auburn MA Centennial. A series of special events will follow throughout 2024.

**Moonlight Serenade with MIKE DUTRA**  
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# The Greatest Gift Christmas Concert

The New England Ringers will give their final concert of the holiday season at their home church, on Sunday, December 17

Some ringers (the truly bell-crazy ones) travel more than two hours each way to rehearsals. These marathon rehearsals are powered

shire, Connecticut, and Vermont. New England Ringers was founded by some of the region's most talented ringers in 2000

the mission of performing challenging music at its highest level. Membership is offered to qualified and interested ringers by audition and invitation of the ensemble. NER rings on a core instrument of six octaves of Schulmerich Handbells and seven octaves of

Malmark Choirchimes. The original five-octave set was received as a gift from an anonymous donor in February 2004.

Visit [www.newenglandringers.org](http://www.newenglandringers.org)



at 4 p.m. at First Congregational Church, 355 E. Main Street, Oxford.

New England Ringers members descend on Oxford from throughout New England to rehearse.

by plenty of coffee and chocolate, both of which flow freely. Between meetings, ringers rehearse individually and in sectionals throughout the region. Current members come from Massachusetts, New Hamp-

for the purpose of attending and ringing at the National Directors Seminar of the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers in Buffalo, New York. Following that event, the ensemble continued with

## Oxford Public Library

Registration for Children's programs takes place on the library website by scanning the QR code or Facebook.

Tuesday, December 19  
4 p.m. Winter Holiday Drop-in Storytime. In the downstairs meeting room.

Join us as we read books, sing songs and make holiday cards. Best for ages 3-8(ish). No registration is required. Siblings are always welcomed.

Wednesday December 20  
6:30 p.m. Make a Santa gnome with Mandy from Wicked Good Henna. In the downstairs meeting room. Register online. Ages 3-12.

Thursday, December 21  
5- 7 p.m. Gingerbread houses! Join to create your own ginger-

bread house. Registration required

Friday, December 29  
10:30 - 11:30 a.m. New Year's Eve Party. In the downstairs meeting room. Children and their caregivers are welcome. Games, crafts and more. Register online.

Friday, January 5  
12:45 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. Senior Book Group at the Oxford Senior Center. The book is "Inter Street" by Elin Hilderbrand.

Tuesday, January 9  
6:30 - 7:30 p.m. Tuesday Book Group. In the Reading Room. "The Dictionary of Lost Words" by Pip Williams.

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## Samuel Slater staff thanks Webster EMS

**W**ebster Emergency Medical Services (Webster EMS) made Giving

wanted to make sure the museum has a top-of-the-line model that is easy to use.



An automated external defibrillator, is a sophisticated yet easy to use device to help those experiencing sudden cardiac arrest.

Tuesday a very special day for the Samuel Slater Experience museum with the donation of an AED (Automated External Defibrillator).

Chief Gary Milliard noted that “AEDs save a lot of lives.”

The donated device is a LIFEPAK CR2 model, made my Physio Control. Milliard said he

Webster EMS staff will train museum staff and volunteers on its use.

Thank you so much, Webster EMS. We’re thrilled to have this potentially life-saving device available for our visitors.

– Signed by Samuel Slater Experience staff

Oxford Woman’s Club offers thanks for wonderful turnout at the December 2 Holiday Craft Fair at Oxford High School.

The Oxford Woman’s Club was one of the many vendors at the Craft Fair. Our offerings were homemade baked goods including cookies, Irish bread, chocolate pops, whoopie pies and sweet breads. We also had generous donations of handmade hats, scarfs, mittens and scrubbies, many of which were made by our friends from the Senior Center.

The proceeds are just another way the Oxford Woman’s Clubs works to raise money for our yearly gift to three qualifying Seniors’ scholarships in the amount of \$750.

We welcome new members at any time to help in many ways to serve our community .

For further information please contact Paula at (508) 987- 2804 or Phparker1951@gmail.com.



## Friendly House receives grants from FHLBank Boston and bankHometown

FHLBank Boston recently recognized bankHometown for its commitment to affordable housing, awarding a \$2,000 grant to Friendly House, Worcester, the nonprofit organization selected by bankHometown in turn matched the grant through its own charitable giving program, The Giving Tree, providing Friendly House with an additional \$2,000, bringing total donations to \$4,000.

Through the FHLBank Boston’s Grants for New England Partnerships (GNP) program, the bank partners with member banks, like bankHometown, to provide grants to nonprofit organizations that offer critical services to the communities. bankHometown was one of just 10 banks selected to request a grant based on the housing and community investment programs in which it participates.

According to bankHometown President and CEO Robert J. Morton, bankHometown selected Friendly House and matched the grant because of the nonprofit organization’s longstanding commitment to providing housing-related

services to families in need.

“For more than a century, Friendly House has been focused on providing Worcester families with a wide variety of services, including transitional housing and emergency shelter,” said Morton. “We thank the FHLBank Boston for recognizing our commitment to affordable housing lending and for giving us the opportunity to provide Friendly House with necessary funding to help them continue improving the well-being of those they serve.”

“We are doubly honored by the FHLBB award and the generous match from bankHometown,” said Friendly House Executive Director Trish Appert. “We are thankful for our partnership with Rob Morton and bankHometown and value their support in helping us respond to the urgent need for housing solutions in Worcester and throughout the Commonwealth. Together, we are making a difference in the lives of children and families in Worcester.”

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# Thanksgiving Food Drive Collects Over 200 Canned Meals for Veterans and Families

Centerline Mechanical LLC partnership with Project New Hope Worcester

Centerline Mechanical LLC, a leading name in the HVAC industry and trusted partner of the Mass Save Program, hosted a Thanksgiving Food Drive on Wednesday, November 1 until Wednesday, November 15. Centerline Mechanical LLC and Project New Hope Worcester collected over 200 nonperishable food items to provide Thanksgiving meals to Veterans and their families.

Project New Hope Inc. in Worcester is a charitable organization with a steadfast commitment to providing veterans and their families with the resources they need. Project New Hope Inc. salutes and proudly serves veterans and service members in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, Guard and Reserve, and their families. Centerline

Mechanical LLC teamed up with Project New Hope Inc. to collect specific donations to ensure that Veterans and families are fed with a delicious Thanksgiving meal.

"I am so thankful for all donations that CLM was able to collect and provide to Project New Hope Inc.," said Centerline Mechanical LLC owner Julian Picard. "This direct-to-consumer organization is a true blessing to people in need, especially those who sacrificed so much."

The community dropped off canned seasonal foods for Thanksgiving meals at the Centerline Mechanical LLC office located at 5 Charlesview Road, Hopedale. Over 200 donated canned meals were collected in labeled containers, then transported to Project New Hope Inc. in Worcester. Items that were

donated include instant potato, cranberry sauce, stuffing, canned vegetables, raisins, Pop Tarts, oatmeal, apple juice, spam, and gravy. Project New Hope Inc. received \$20 grocery store gift cards, so Veterans could choose a turkey, ham, fish and other items that completed a delicious Thanksgiving dinner.

"It is in giving that we receive," Project New Hope Inc. President Bill Moore quotes St. Francis. He adds, "Such selfless acts of kindness not only brings joy to others but also Enriches our own lives with a deeper sense of purpose and happiness."

For more information on Centerline Mechanical LLC, please visit centerlinemech.com or call 508-310-0955. To learn more about Project New Hope Inc., visit projectnewhopema.org.

# Timeless gifts from the good old days

If you are longing for a traditional, less harried Christmas season, you won't want to miss Christmas by Candlelight at Old Sturbridge Village. This popular holiday event kicked off on November 24 and is open select Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays through December 30.

The malls aren't the only place you can shop for gifts. Unique, Village-made holiday items are available at the Sturbridge Village Miner Grant Store during this shopping event and the Ox & Yoke Mercantile which opens daily at 10 a.m. and does not require admission to the Village.

Visitors who would like to give the gift of something handmade, can learn about crafts made throughout the Village, purchase craft kits for gift giving, or try their skill at hand dipping candles.

Your family, friends and out-of-town visitors will find themselves enchanted as they step back in time to celebrate a New England Christmas in the 19th Century. Enter Village households to watch traditional craft making demonstrations, stroll through The Christmas Tree Trail featuring over 80 cut trees, and be astounded by over 4,000 candles and lanterns and over 2,000 yards of garland dressing up the Village in its holiday finest. And don't miss the nightly lighting ceremony at 4:30 p.m.

And yes, Santa Claus himself makes a nightly appearance allowing the little ones to tell him their special Christmas wishes.

Purchase tickets in advance for savings at [www.osv.org/event/christmas-by-candlelight/](http://www.osv.org/event/christmas-by-candlelight/).



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