

Charlton's Library is Hoppin' with Activities

BY JANET STOICA

For over two years Karen Wall, Charlton Library Director, has steered the town's public library into an exciting and multi-faceted direction. There are so many educational and stimulating programs available at the centrally-located facility that there are no excuses for its townspeople to not visit and experience the excitement.

Director Wall didn't start out as a library science major, however. She began her career in high-tech marketing with an industry leader in computer science where she developed a marketing library for the company.

"I had my marketing degree and was working in marketing development," she said, "and I saw that there wasn't a specific place for research so I started collecting information in a central location for anyone's reference and that was my first library job. Fast forward to the year 2000 where I decided to get my Master's Degree in Library and Information Science from the University of Rhode Island. I had been working for the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and I went to school for my Master's Degree. I wasn't out to be a librarian but I was interested in marketing information. At RISD I worked in technical services cataloging in their library."

After Wall's graduation in 2003, she was offered a position with the Rhode Island State Archives which was a multi-dimensional



Charlton Library Director, Karen Wall. Photo, Janet Stoica

position in the Administrative Records Program. She stayed with the program until 2008 until accepting an appointment with the Killingly, Connecticut library in the Reference and Adult Services Department.

"I absolutely loved it," said Wall.

She then accepted a position with the Pearl Crawford Library in Dudley from 2013-2018. After a stint with the Mystic, Connecticut

library through 2020 until after COVID, she assumed her present role as Charlton Library Director.

"This is a great library," stated Wall, "we have the best staff and the best community. We have lots of fun and exciting events on the horizon. In 2024 through June,

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Dudley's History

BY JANET STOICA

With the town making headlines near and far in the past several months as its citizens grappled with town funding, it seems appropriate to give a softer and historical perspective of its beginnings with the help of the town's website. Much of the following information has been extracted from the website and acknowledgment and thanks is hereby given.

The town of Dudley, established in 1732, lies between the French and Quinebaug Rivers, just north of the Connecticut border. To the east, on the other side of the French River, lies Webster, to the north, Charlton, and to the west, Southbridge. The Quinebaug River runs through a steep, narrow valley in the southwest corner of Dudley.

Dudley Hill was the site of a Native American village, but the focus of settlement in the area was Lake Chaubunagungamaug (now in Webster). The lake was an inter-tribal meeting place, and during the mid-17th century, became the site of a Christian Indian village

under the aegis of the Reverend John Eliot. A network of native trails crossed through Dudley, including a north-south trail from Oxford to Woodstock, Connecticut, a northwest trail (probably including Dresser Hill Road), and a trail between the two rivers.

In 1681, the Nipmucs sold a large tract of land in south central Massachusetts to colonial investors, but reserved for themselves five square miles between Dudley Hill and Lake Chaubunagungamaug. Forty years later this reservation was also sold, and in 1732 Dudley became the first town incorporated in the new Worcester County.

Dudley Hill was its geographical center, and a meetinghouse built in 1734, as well as trails improved as roads cemented the hilltop village's importance. In 1816 Amasa Nichols established Nichols Academy in the town center. From the colonial period well into the

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LIBRARY

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we will be working on our five-year strategic plan to guide our library through 2029. We began this project in October 2023 and hope to finish by June. In January, we will be offering surveys on our social media sites of Instagram and Facebook as well as our library website and we will be holding focus groups in February. Following these activities we will distill our patrons' feedback into our Mission, Vision, and Goals Objectives."

In January, the library will be holding some interesting programs in the areas of organization and



who doesn't need that? On January 18, they will have a professional home organizer in attendance who will focus on Organizing and Decluttering and on January 22, will hold a program on Digital Organizing. Every Tuesday, the library offers free movies with a 1 p.m. matinee and a 5 p.m. showing. Check their website for titles. Registration is not necessary.

There are so many programs and offerings at the library they are too numerous to list here and their website is definitely the place to visit. There are book clubs, monthly genealogy workshops, and yoga classes. There is also an amazing children's initiative called

1,000 Books Before Kindergarten to be launched mid-January where children sign up for a reading log with incentives awarded after they've read a certain amount of books, with a larger incentive given after the 1,000 book total has been reached. The Charlton Library is definitely the place to be. Snooze-you lose as they say! Check them out so you don't miss out.

Charlton Public Library 40 Main Street, Charlton MA 01507. Phone: (508) 258-0452. Hours: 9:30 – 5:00 Mon/Wed/Fri; 9:30 – 8:00 Tues/Thurs; 9:30 – 3:00 Sat.; charltonlibrary.org

jstoica@theyankeeexpress.com

Charlton Public Library Seeks Input on Five Year Plan

Whether you are a regular Library user or haven't visited in a while, the Charlton Public Library is looking for input from the community as they develop their new five-year Strategic Plan. The new plan will help guide the selection of programs,

materials, and services offered by the Library and will contribute to future design considerations in the layout of the building. Part of the strategic plan process depends on community feedback in the form of surveys. Please consider being a part of this process.

Surveys are being conducted from January 10 through January 25:

The Community Survey (ages 18+) can be accessed online at <https://bit.ly/CPLSurvey2024>

Paper copies of the Community Survey are available at the Library,

Town Hall, and Senior Center, and can be downloaded/printed from the Library website (charltonlibrary.org)

The Teen Survey (grades 6-12) can be accessed online at <https://bit.ly/CPLTeen2024>

Teen Survey participants have a chance to win one of three \$20 Amazon gift cards.

In addition to the surveys, the Library plans to hold focus groups in the month of February. Feedback from the surveys, focus


groups, and other data-gathering exercises will be collated and contribute to the development of

the plan, which will be presented to the Library Board of Trustees for approval at their June meeting. Once approved, it will be used to guide the Library for the next five years.

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DUDLEY

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19th century, Dudley's economy was mainly agrarian, dependent on dispersed farmsteads and mixed agricultural production. After that time, as the industrial working population grew, Dudley's farmers switched to dairying. The West Dudley Cooperative Creamery was established in 1887, and by 1905, 31 dairy farms occupied a third of the town's agricultural land. They continued, in progressively smaller numbers, to provide milk and milk products for local and regional markets until recently.

Growing industry along the French River shifted much of Dudley's development away from the colonial village center. The section of town that lay east of the French River incorporated as the separate town of Webster in 1832, and the Norwich and Worcester Railroad was laid down along the river's west bank in 1840. Industrial development in the mill villages of Merino, Chaseville and Perryville over the next decades attracted a large immigrant population to work in the textile mills, including Irish, French Canadians and Polish.

During the Late Industrial Period (1870-1915), Merino Village especially continued to grow, with expansion of the Stevens mill, construction of a library and residential infill. In Perryville, downstream, workers' tenements and a proprietor's estate were built as mill capacity was doubled. A new textile village, Quinebaug (or Dundee) was established near the Connecticut line (1871-1872).

The early and mid-20th century saw improvement of local roads, including Routes 12, 197, and 131, for automobile traffic, where

development continued at this time. Residential development also spread in Chaseville, and Nichols Academy – now Nichols College – expanded in Dudley Center. Cottages were built on Pierpont Meadow Pond (Charlton Pond) and Merino Pond. The textile industry, including a new Stevens mill built in Merino Village in 1928, continued to provide most of the employment in town, suffering a decline during the Depression, but recovering by 1940 with a wartime demand for textiles.

Dudley Center is located on Dudley Hill, site of the town's Colonial Period hilltop settlement near the geographical center of town. There are approximately 40 individual historic resources in the 200-acre village, of which Nichols College makes up over 50 acres. The resources that constitute Dudley Center lie along Center Road from the historic William Carter House (1726) on the north, where the road splits into Ramshorn Road heading northwest and Dudley Oxford Road heading northeast, to the south end of the Nichols College campus (1815, oldest building 1881). The Carter House is the oldest standing building in Dudley, and was the site of the first town meeting when the town was established.

Historic buildings serve residential, academic, religious and civic uses. Many are in excellent condition while others have been updated with synthetic siding and modern windows. Examples of Colonial, Federal, Greek revival and Victorian Eclectic architectural styles are present. Residential buildings are set back 30-50 feet while college and civic buildings around Dudley Town Common have deeper setbacks.

The town common fronts on the

Conant Memorial Congregational Church (1891). A war memorial (1909) with stone base, bronze plaques and a bronze sculpture of an eagle sits in front of the church. The church is the central architectural resource in the area. Its brick Victorian Eclectic style cross-gabled form is dominated by a five-story tower with carillon, clock, rounded corner turrets and Romanesque detail. The Grange Hall (ca.1840) sits on the north edge of the common and the former Dudley Hill School (1890), now the Currier Center of Nichols College, borders the common to the south.

The Grange Hall is a rectangu-

lar, two and one-half story Greek revival building ornamented with paneled corner pilasters, frieze, and a molded cornice. Across the street from the Grange Hall is the Black Tavern (1803), Dudley's only National Register listed property. It is a classic side-gabled, Federal style commercial building two and one-half stories high. The building appears to have been built in two sections judging from the different heights of the roof. It occupies a prominent site in Dudley Center, and is one of the best preserved Federal style buildings in the area.

Major employers in the town of Dudley include Boniface Tool & Die, Gentex Optics, Henke Sass

Wolf of America, McGee Toyota, Myriad Fiber Imaging, Mace Polymers, Nichols College, Rampco Construction, Shield Packaging, Webster First Federal Credit Union, Webster Five Cents Savings Bank, and Webco Chemical.

The town's population of approximately 11,000 citizens consists of about 8,000 registered voters. There is a five-member Board of Selectmen and a Town Administrator. The town's area is about 22 square miles with 90 miles of roads. Its Dudley Conservation Land Trust seeks to promote conservation for recreation, education, and wildlife areas for the greater good.

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Film Director Adam McKay Talks Satire on the Creating Dangerously Podcast

Brought to You by The Shawna Foundation, New Podcast Covers Film, Cult Art & Everything In Between

A new podcast “Creating Dangerously,” recently launched by The Shawna E. Shea Memorial Foundation, riffs on a 1957 lecture by the philosopher Albert Camus four days after he gave his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize in Literature.

What’s this all about? Camus said, “To create today means to create dangerously. Every publica-

tion is a deliberate act, and that act makes us vulnerable to the passions of a century that forgives nothing.” And the “Creating Dangerously” podcast gives those words new life with a modern twist.

With hosts Skip Shea, Patrick Bracken and Andrea Wolanin, we explore artists past and present who are doing their part to create

dangerously to try to make sense of a world that often doesn’t make sense at all and still forgives nothing.

“It’s not a bleak as it sounds,” said producer Skip Shea. “We have a lot of fun discussing topics like satire or cult art. I think the creative process itself brings something positive to the world, even if the subject is as bleak as Picasso’s Guernica.”

“We recently interviewed film director and Oscar winning screenwriter Adam McKay (‘Don’t Look Up,’ ‘The Big Short,’ ‘Vice’) about the importance of satire and it was a lot of fun. Plus we got to discuss Worcester a little too as Adam grew up there.”

Joined by hosts filmmaker Andrea Wolanin and actor/writer Patrick Bracken, topics and issues up for discussion include women who Create dangerously; cult and outsider art; subversive art forms and much more.

“We also give listeners some bonus episodes like the interview with Adam McKay; and poetry epi-

sodes where Tony Brown, the Poet Laureate of the Shawna Foundation, brings poems that reflect the themes of the recent episodes like the one directly related to Camus and his philosophy,” said Shea. “For that Tony chose Andrei Voznesensky’s Darkmotherscream.”

Fresh episodes of “Creating Dangerously” podcast are released at least three times a month and can be found on most of the major podcast platforms—Spotify, Apple Podcasts, iHeart Radio and Amazon Music.

Shea said, “In a recent interview on 60 Minutes, Little Steven Van Zandt said that ‘... we’re the only country in the world that thinks art is a luxury. Everybody else in the world understands that art is an essential part of the quality of life.’ I tend to agree. We hope ‘Creating Dangerously’ can help shift that.”

The mission of the Shawna E. Shea Memorial Foundation Inc. is to support young people, especially women, in filmmaking, performance arts and other artistic

and cultural endeavors through financial assistance, collaborative fellowships, mentoring and educational opportunities. We established the Foundation in memory of Shawna, a creative and artistic young woman from Uxbridge who lost her life too soon and we strive to sustain her legacy of encouraging young people who live in the margins of society and yet have dreams and aspirations in the fields of film and performance arts.

Links:

Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/show/1Pg5Z9I2PevPEXG72QopI1>

Apple Podcast: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/creating-dangerously/id1716077784>

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Owned Businesses by the SBA Massachusetts District Office. The Webster Five Business Banking team was recently recognized at the 2023 SBA Massachusetts Lender Awards. This recognition highlights Webster Five’s commitment to supporting Veterans, as evidenced by the bank’s distribution of 16 SBA 7(a) loans totaling over \$3.6 million.

“Receiving this award is a tremendous honor for Webster Five,” said Christopher Watson, SVP Senior Business Lending Officer, Webster Five. “Our team appreciates what U.S.

Veterans have done to support our country and the unique challenges that they face. We strive to provide support with tailored financial solutions to help them grow and succeed.”

From left, Robert Nelson, MA District Director, SBA; Christopher Watson, SVP Senior Business Lending Officer, Webster Five; Rob Totaro, Vice President, Business Loan Officer, Webster Five; and Ili Spahiu, Lead Lender Relations Specialist, SBA.



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Sen. Fattman and Rep. Soter Announce \$6 Million in Funding for The Blackstone River Greenway Project

On December 27th, Senator Ryan Fattman and Representative Michael Soter announced that the Blackstone River Greenway Project has received a \$6 million investment for a 0.5 mile section of the greenway in Blackstone. This funding was made available through a \$24 million investment in the state's recreational trails by Governor Maura Healey and Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll, initially received through The American Rescue Plan (ARPA).

The Blackstone River Greenway is a section of a longer 48-mile bikeway that connects Worcester, MA to Providence, RI, along the National Heritage Corridor. The

paved trail follows the Blackstone River and Canal wherever possible. Though intended as a bike path, it is also used for walking, jogging, and other recreational activities.

This funding will be used to invest in a 0.5 mile section of the trail from the Canal Street Bridge in Blackstone to the Rhode Island border, where the greenway joins another existing shared-use path. It will make possible repairs and upgrades to the existing trail.

"I am incredibly excited about the upgrades this funding will allow us to make to our existing recreational infrastructure," commented State Rep. Michael Soter in response to this funding. "Trails such

as the Blackstone River Greenway provide the perfect opportunity for everyone to explore the wonderful natural beauty of our town and state."

"The expansion of the Blackstone River Greenway trail highlights the importance of outdoor recreational space in my district," Senator Fattman continues, "I look forward to seeing this project bring more people to the area to enjoy our natural resources."

Rep. Soter and Sen. Fattman stated that they will continue to advocate for funding that will help towns expand and improve access to recreational activities.

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SPORTS

Margoupis Hoping to Eclipse 1,000 Points

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Oxford basketball player Brady Margoupis enters his senior campaign with 799 points scored over his high school career. Barring an injury, the two-time captain should be able to scale that mountain during the eighth or ninth game of the season.

“One thousand points is a big goal and has always been one of our goals,” Pirate head coach David Aldrich said. “With that said, Brady could care less if he never scored another point as long as the team is winning.”

As a sophomore Margoupis averaged 19 points per contest and upped that average to 24.5 last winter. With only 201 points away

from the magical number the senior would welcome the milestone, but as his coach noted he is not about stats.

“To get to 1000 would obviously be cool, but it is not my main focus,” he said. “If it happens, it happens. I’d like it to happen, but I definitely want to win more that accomplish the milestone.”

The senior has always played basketball growing up and loved everything about the sport. He also saw time on the baseball field as well but stopped playing the sport last year to join an AAU team to

prepare for his senior season on the court.

Growing up Margoupis found himself playing guard, basically

team I would need to pick it up,” he said. “Not only did I play as much basketball as I could I also played summer league ball and worked on



dictated by his size, but according to the Pirate athlete he didn’t mind the position. The now senior noted that he loved the position because it allowed him to control the pace of the game that

that part of my game.”

Coach Aldrich noted that as a sophomore Margoupis was an offensive player for Oxford, but he has since committed to both ends of the floor and has become a team player.

“We run a complex system both offensively as well as defensively,” the coach said. “He’s right there and competes every night. He’s as very coachable individual who does so many things right.”

As a second-year captain for the Pirates, Margoupis has the respect of his teammates because he not only leads by example but works hard and always says and does the right things.

Last year Oxford finished the regular season 10-9 and after picking up a win in the first round of the Division 4 State Tournament, the Pirates fell to Millbury in the next round. This season they would love to change that scenario.

“Our number one goal is to win. We have a lot of kids coming back who can score as well as a couple of new kids who are also capable of scoring. “We are a very athletic team and would love to take our game further into the State Tournament than we did last year.”

Individually, the senior, who was named to the SWCL All-Star team last winter, plans on doing whatever his Coach asks of him as long as the team continues to win. When the season comes to an end Margoupis would love to entertain the thought of playing basketball on the next level. At this point in time, he has just started reaching out to schools.

his team would play.

Following the eighth grade, he started to focus heavily on his game, so that when he entered high school he’d be ready to make the team. Unfortunately, before his freshman season could even begin, it was over due to the Covid Pandemic.

“Freshman year really sucked. I was so looking forward to that year and playing basketball with the high school, but Covid put a stop to that,” Margoupis said. “There were no games, but I would still practice, either in my driveway or at the gym to stay sharp for when the season did begin.”

Thankfully, Covid did not carry over to his sophomore season and although Margoupis was ready, he found the tryout process to be rather nerve wracking. When he was named to the varsity squad those nerves quickly vanished and he began to find his role on the team.

Following his sophomore year, he knew what his role would continue to be, but he needed to work on his defensive game.

“Defense wins games and if we were going to improve and win as a

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2024 Webster/Dudley Veterans Council



The officers of the Webster/Dudley Veterans Council for 2024 have been installed. (From L – R) Treasurer, Robert Guenther; Chaplain, Ken Kuzdzal; Commander, Victor Jankowski; Sergeant-at-Arms, James Brinker; Sr. Vice Commander, Ron Prest; Jr. Vice Commander, Randy Snow; not pictured, Adjutant, Andy Kozlowski.

Scholarship High School Seniors and Class of 2020 grads

Bartlett High School Guidance Department announces that scholarship season has begun. Scholarships will now begin to be posted as they become available. All scholarship information can be found in the Guidance Office as well as on Naviance. Please visit the Guidance Office any day after school or log onto Naviance to view details.

Our first roll out is with the Rita Gelinas Scholarships, a wonderful opportunity.

The Bartlett High School Guidance Department is once again offering the Rita Gelinas Scholarship for the study of math or science.

BHS Alumni Scholarship

The Bartlett High School Guidance Department is once again offering the Rita Gelinas Scholarship for the study of math or science. Students from the BHS Class of 2020 who will be immediately entering a graduate program in a math or natural science field

are encouraged to apply. Funds are available up to \$5,000 per semester with a minimum award of 1,000 per semester for one year. Please pick up an application in the Guidance Department or call Nancy Guiney at (508) 943-8552 ext. 34033. Complete applications are due to the Guidance Department by Friday, April 5th.

BHS Class of 2024 Gelinas Scholarship

The Rita Gelinas Scholarship is also available to students in the Class of 2024. Two seniors will be chosen to receive up to \$10,000 a year for all four years of an undergraduate program. Applicants must have over a 3.0 (B average) and be pursuing a major in either a math or natural science field. The application process is very extensive so all applicants should start the process early. In addition to other materials, students must supply their SAR (Student Aid Report through the FAFSA

process) as well as the financial aid award letter from the college that the student WILL attend if given the award. Applications are due to the BHS Guidance Department by Friday, April 5th.

If you have any questions about either of these scholarships please contact Nancy Guiney in the Guidance Department at Bartlett at (508) 943-8552 ext. 34033 or via email at nguiney@webster-schools.org

Milford Regional Adopts Patient and Visitor Code of Conduct

Milford Regional Medical Center has adopted a new Patient and Visitor Code of Conduct. The new code is intended to establish an expectation of respectful behavior from patients and visitors in order to provide for a secure, caring and inclusive atmosphere throughout the Milford Regional system.

This measure is in response to the growing number of acts of violence and aggressive behavior toward healthcare workers across the state and throughout the nation.

Milford Regional's Patient and Visitor Code of Conduct specifies that words or actions that are considered disrespectful, racist, discriminatory, hostile or harassing will not be tolerated. Examples include:

- Offensive comments about others' race, ethnicity, accent, religion, gender, sexual orientation or other personal traits
- Refusal to see a clinician or other staff member based on these

personal traits

- Aggressive or intimidating behavior, physical or verbal threats and assaults

- Sexual or vulgar words or actions

- Disrupting another patient's care or experience

"Being clear about expectations for behavior will translate to a stronger culture of respect and a safer environment for all," said Milford Regional Chief Medical Officer Peter Smulowitz, M.D. "Although acts of aggression or violence are an unfortunate reality in today's healthcare settings, our Code of Conduct will help reinforce a safe and trusted environment that everyone should continue to expect at Milford Regional."

Communication promoting the Code of Conduct is visible throughout the Milford Regional system and can be viewed on Milford Regional's website: milfordregional.org/patients-visitors/patient-and-visitor-code-of-conduct/



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LIVING WITH LUKE

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Luke's NEW YEAR Goals

BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

• THE MORNING WALK

December 2023 ended with peculiar high temps. A muddy ground complicated life with dog. I may have stood alone in my wish for a snowstorm, but I had good reason. Snow is pretty. Snow is quiet. Snow is clean.

“Luke! That hole is crazy big!” Luke’s digging habit continued. He dug deep and wide, as though excavating the area beside our front steps for the benefit of a miniature pool. I tore open the door in horror. A cool gust of wind



blended with the sound of my husband’s cry. “I’ve worked hard on that lawn! Luke is getting a zap next time!”

Indeed, Luke’s Daddy has slaved over that lawn. However, no such zap will occur. “Let’s not be dra-

matic,” I countered while my pup faced me, his face mottled like that of a child who’s found the brownie bowl. “Dogs are natural diggers. Imagine zapping a child for building a sandcastle.” I held my ground with the recurrent analogy. “Luke is just bored.” The wheels of Luke’s paws continued to spin in agreement. Once again, I couldn’t help but feel impressed by the depth (no pun intended) of his work. “Besides, we don’t need to keep up with the Joneses.” I brandished the maintenance broom and pushed the pile of fresh dirt back into the hole. Meanwhile, my pup zoomed around the yard and tore through grass the Jones’ would have approved of, if it weren’t for fresh skid marks “Let’s go for a walk, Luke.” I grabbed his leash and the resolution settled in my mind. Give Luke early morning walks in 2024.

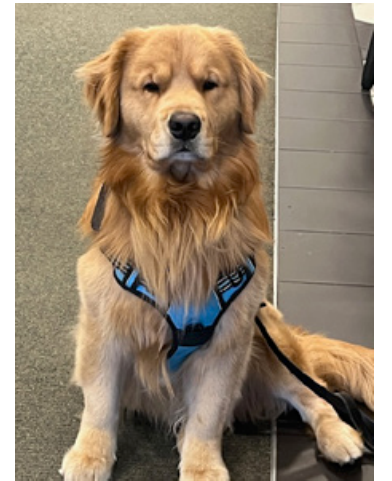
when it comes to dog training. Show your dog that your food is not part of his, and he’ll learn quickly. However, turning down the quiet face of a begging Golden is easier said than done. We know gingerbread cookies are not good



a message from a bottle that reads this: Luke Valentino is going to live an incredibly long life.

• MORE PLAYDATES PLEASE

A fellow Dog Person recently said it best. Our dogs used to run free, find other dogs in the woods, and play. They naturally socialized. Now, constrained to short leashes, we find them territorial and pugnacious, almost as though to say, “I’m stronger than you and stay away from my owner.” Unleashed, both of those same (aggressive) dogs would likely rumble and become best pals. Admittedly I’m guilty of the short leash rule, especially given that we live in a neighborhood, but I also appreciate Luke’s



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• BETTER NUTRITION FOR LUKE

Weight problems are both common and problematic in Golden Retrievers. Extra weight is hard to bear on dogs’ joints and can lead to muscular problems, diabetes, digestion, breathing and mobility issues.



Luke is a young, active dog with normal weight. Stocky and strong at seventy-three pounds, he’s built like a linebacker who, nevertheless, isn’t above begging for gingerbread cookies. Consistency is crucial

for them. Who are we kidding? Yet their pleading faces somehow manage to sell us.

“I was thinking that because I’m such a good boy, you’d be willing to share.” Mesmerized, he stares up at the cookie, a bear cub lifting a paw ever so gently, a dog willing to behave forever—if only his Dog Mom would share. I break the cookie in half. The creases of his head and expression deepen. He reminds me of a pumpkin with a personality. “My Momma is such a good person.”

My goal for 2024 (along with being a good person) is to integrate more foods that a dog truly needs. I’ve since researched the practice of Dr. Marty Goldstein, a Cornell University graduate and veterinarian with over 35 years of experience in helping dogs thrive (he changed the life of one of Oprah Winfrey’s dogs, who had been suffering, along with countless others who were nearly dying). His prescribed diet designed for dogs of all ages to thrive. Organ meats, omega 3, probiotics, flax, carrots, ginger, and blueberries are to name a few additions to Luke’s upcoming Nutrition Plan! I also plan to remain educated on dog foods and treats which are harmful, despite trendy catch phrases such as “All Natural” or “Organic”. Certain fillers, preservatives and grains are detrimental to a dog’s digestive system. Canine cancers have multiplied at an alarmingly fast rate, with some studies showing that one out of two Golden Retrievers will be struck by the disease. My eyes rest on Luke’s kind, pumpkin face. He smiles up at me with love and innocence. I imagine shaking

needs to play with other dogs. At almost two, he’s matured. He’s learned that not every dog likes to wrestle. Some like Chase. Some (as Lincoln had) just want to play fetch. He’s learned to submit to signals of other dogs. That said, Luke is a social creature! Forbidding him to play with other dogs is like asking a rugby player to sit down for a thoughtful game of chess. Though I’m reluctant to visit Dog Parks now (after the fight that ensued when he was only six months old) my 2024 goal is to set up more playdates for Luke Valentino.

• LUKE NEEDS HIS OWN SHOWS

I’ve noticed that Luke is intelligent enough to understand certain television scenes, especially those involving animals. His process for watching the activities of other dogs is a show in and of itself. He’ll smile as though to say, “I love to eat dog food, too.” Or tilt his head curiously. “Are you going to swim

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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Expert Quotes on the 2024 Housing Market Forecast

If you're thinking about buying or selling a home soon, you probably want to know what you can expect from the housing market in 2024. In 2023, higher mortgage rates, confusion over home prices, and a lack of homes for sale created some challenges for buyers and sellers looking to make a move. But what's on the horizon for the new year?



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

The good news is, many experts are optimistic we've turned a corner and are headed in a positive direction. Recently, mortgage rates have started to come back down. This has offered hope to buyers dealing with affordability challenges. Mark Fleming, Chief Economist at First

American, explains how they may continue to drop: "Mortgage rates have already retreated from recent peaks near 8 percent and may fall further . . ."

Jessica Lautz, Deputy Chief Economist at the National Association of Realtors (NAR), says: "For home buyers who are taking on a mortgage to purchase a home and have been wary of the autumn rise in mortgage rates, the market is turning more favorable, and there should be optimism entering 2024 for a better market."

As rates ease, activity in the housing market should pick up because more buyers and sellers who had been holding off will jump back in. If more sellers list their homes, the supply of homes for sale will grow, a trend we've already started to see this year. It is expected that supply will loosen up in 2024. Even homeowners who currently have a low interest rate on an existing mortgage, will increasingly find that changing family and financial circumstances will lead to more moves and

more new listings over the course of the year, particularly as rates move closer to 6.5%."

Mortgage rates pulling back isn't the only positive sign for affordability. Home price growth is expected to moderate too, as inventory improves but is still low overall. We expect that 2024 will be a better year for the housing market. So, if you're thinking about making a move next year, know that early signs show we're turning a corner. We're going into 2024 with slight home-price gains, more inventory, slightly increasing transaction volume . . . All in all, things are looking up for the U.S. housing market in 2024."

Experts are optimistic about what 2024 holds for the housing market. If you're looking to buy or sell a home in the new year, the best way to ensure you're up to date on the latest forecasts is to partner with The Marzeotti Group or trusted Realtor.

LUKE

continued from page 8

in that lake?" He'll even approach the television screen to get a closer view. "That person is climbing on top of a roof!!" Just as he revels in



lighthearted television moments, Luke shows dissatisfaction for darker scenes. Lord Voldemort,

a Harry Potter character, for example, sends chills through Luke's spine. "You do not look like a nice person. I don't trust you." He'll lower his head in suspicion to the actor. Ralph Fiennes. I do my best to placate him. "Don't worry. That's just a man in a costume, Luke."

He looks up at me, then back at the screen. "I don't trust him."

Whether it's through morning walks, playdates, better nutrition, or television shows; Luke Valentino needs the stimulation of new sights, suppers, and stories. 2024 is going to be my pup's year! Stay tuned for the next story,

featuring Luke's two-year-old birthday on January 31st!

Follow Luke on IG @livingwith-lukevalentino

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Consider family meeting to discuss estate plans

At some point, you'll want to share your estate plans with your loved ones — and the first step in this process may be to hold a family meeting.



BY DENNIS ANTONOPOULOS

The best time to hold this meeting is when you're still in good mental and physical shape, and the enactment of your estate plans may well be years away. But what topics should you cover?

Consider these main areas:

Your wishes — and those of your family. Use this meeting to introduce your estate plans and, in a basic sense, what you hope to accomplish with them — leave money to your family, support charitable groups and so on. You'll want to emphasize that you want to be equitable in what you leave

behind, but there may be issues that affect this decision, such as disparities in income between grown children or an allowance for a special-needs child. But you'll also want to listen to what your family members want — and you might be surprised at what they tell you. Consider this: More than 80% of the millennial generation would rather know their parents are financially secure throughout their retirement, even if this means that their parents will pass on less money to them, according to an Edward Jones/Age Wave study.

Estate planning documents — At the time of your family meeting, you may or may not have already created your estate planning documents, but in either case, this would be a good time to discuss them. These documents may include a will, a living trust, financial power of attorney, health care power of attorney and possibly other arrangements. At a minimum, you'd like to give a general overview of what these documents mean, but at an initial family meeting, you don't necessarily have to get too detailed. For example, you might not want to talk about specific inheritances. This is also an opportunity to inform your loved ones of the professionals involved in your estate plans, such as your attorney and your tax advisor.

Roles of everyone involved — Not only does a comprehensive estate plan involve moving parts, such as the necessary documents, but it also includes actual human beings who may need to take on different roles. You will need an executor for your will and, if you

have a living trust, you'll need a trustee. Even if you choose to serve as the initial trustee, you'll still need to identify one or more successor trustees to take your place if you become incapacitated, or upon your death. Plus, you'll need to name people to act as your power of attorney for health care and finances. Choosing the right people for these roles involves thought and sensitivity. Obviously, you want individuals who are competent and reliable, but you also need to be aware that some family members could feel slighted if others are assigned roles they feel they could do. By being aware of these possible conflicts, you can be better prepared to address them.

Here's one more suggestion: Let your family know that this initial meeting doesn't mean the end of communications about your estate plans. Encourage your loved ones to contact you with questions whenever they want. You may need to hold additional family meetings in the future, but by laying the initial groundwork, you will have taken a big first step in establishing the legacy you'd like to leave.

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

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When trailer lights are out, check wiring in tow vehicle as well as trailer

Q. I was working on my boat trailer, which I use only a couple of times per year and noticed the lights are not working. Some work and some don't, where can I start and what else should I do to this trailer over the winter?



BY JOHN PAUL

A. The first place to start is to see if the trailer or the tow vehicle wiring is an issue. A simple 12-volt test light or an inexpensive trailer light testing tool is about all you need. Depending on the plug (flat four or round seven) the troubleshooting is about the same. Use your test light and see if the wiring will light the test light, if it does move onto the trailer wiring. The most common issues are related to corrosion of the lamp sockets. As for other repairs, check for rust, inspect the rollers or bunks, springs, shackles and remove, clean and repack the wheel bearings.

Q. I have a Honda Accord and it was in for an oil change and they said the brake pads on the front were down to 3mm. They were really busy and said they couldn't replace the brakes for a couple of weeks. I like this shop and would like to have them do the work, replacing both the brake pads and brake rotors. Should I wait or find another shop?

A. New brake pads are generally about 10-12 millimeters thick. At 3 millimeters the brakes are just about worn out and should be replaced. Considering you are replacing the rotors, a couple

more weeks of normal driving shouldn't make a difference. If you hear scraping, bring the car in as soon as possible.

Q. Recent articles seem to point out that the public has not fallen in love with electric cars. In fact I have seen discounts and electric cars sitting on dealer lots. What is your take on this?

A. Electric cars are not for everyone. Buying an electric car depends on charging availability, budget and how far you drive. For my personal use a plug-in hybrid, that can charge on 120-volts, drive in electric or EV mode would suit my needs better than a pure electric car. But as the charging infrastructure changes and recharging becomes quicker, that could change.

Q. I have a 2008 Toyota Avalon and it is the best car I have ever owned and want to keep it forever. The problem is the high beam bulbs have shattered or blown twice. My mechanic said Toyota had sent a bulletin to the dealers about the problem. It is my understanding that some 2008-2010 models have a problem with the bulb housing, not the bulbs and the fix is to replace the housing. To me it is a manufacturing or design defective, and the car should be recalled. I haven't gotten anywhere with Toyota or the local dealer. Any suggestions?

A. As you stated, there is a technical service bulletin that describes the problem. The repair does in fact require replacing the housing and bulb. My only "guess" is this isn't a recall since the low beam light will still function when the high beam light fails. If you decide to replace the housing, perhaps use an aftermarket part. If you go this

route, look for a CAPA approved part. This certification tells you it is as good as the original or hopefully in the case of your Avalon better.

Q. I own a 2001 Lexus RX300 that was recently given to me. Over the six months I have owned it, the engine has gotten noisy. My mechanic says the oil is like sludge. I looked online and found this was a defect. So, do I have any recourse?

A. Oil gelling/sludge happens generally from the heating and oxidation of oil due to infrequent oil changes. Since you don't have much invested in the vehicle you could try an oil flush. Over the years mechanics have used transmission fluid rather than oil, kerosene mixed with oil and dedicated oil flush products, such as Seafoam to remove sludge. Sometimes this works and removes accumulated sludge, other times the sludge just moves around and causes other issues. Regarding Toyota standing by their product, I don't see them offering any relief on an 23 year old car.

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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TALES FROM BEYOND tomdagostino.com

Beware of Krampus

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

This is the time of year everyone begins to think about spending the holidays with family

and friends. Shopping, decorating, holiday parties, gatherings and a visit from that magical icon, Santa Claus. Little do people think about the possible visit from Santa's exact

opposite, the creature that makes children shiver at the very thought of. Those who live in our western world may not be so familiar with him, but to the children of the Alpine region around Europe, he is a very real and evil spirit. His name; Krampus.

Krampus is a horned demon from Alpine folklore who, along with Santa visit the children in the night. The well behaved are rewarded with gifts from Old Saint Nick while the bad ones are punished by Krampus with a good swatting from the birch rods he carries with him. The origin of Krampus is not readily known, but there are recollections written of his being around since the 16th century, maybe hundreds of years before that.

Krampus appears in many variations, according to the artist's conception, but is generally accepted to be brown or black haired with cloven hooves, horns like a goat, and a long forked tongue. Basically a monster that is half man and half beast. He is sometimes depicted carrying a large sack which is used for putting the bad children in and taking them away.

Some claim he eats them, drowns them or transports them straight to hell. Krampus is also adorned with various sized odd looking bells and carries chains which he thrashes about. He also has on hand, a wealthy supply of birch branches which he uses to beat the badly behaved children before carting them away. Woe to the child who should talk back to their parents or disregard their rule, for like Santa, Krampus knows all.

During pre-Christain festivals, young men dressed as the horned demon and ran amok, scaring children in the villages and towns. The name is thought to have derived from the Bavarian word "krampn" which means dead or rotten, or from the German kramp/krampen which means claw. Either or both can be used to describe the hideous creature that stalks the children on a certain night in December, searching for those who misbehaved during the year. December 5 is known as Krampusnacht or Krampus Night where either St. Nick rewards the good little children or Krampus doles out his form of punishment to those who have been bad all year.

At one time, any celebrations regarding the existence of Krampus were banned in certain countries, like Austria in the 1930s, for fear it would mentally damage the children by threatening them with such a horrible fate. This idea was later rescinded and today, the legend of Krampus lives in parades and even greeting cards called Krampuskarten. Wooden masks are also made and adorned during the holiday season to pay tribute to the antithesis of St. Nick.

Krampus was very little known or recognized in the western world, but very well known in the Bavarian and Alpine regions of Europe until recently. Somehow, he made his way into our society and has been a growing force since. Krampus has been gaining so much popularity in recent years, one can find a vast number of Christmas ornaments, greeting cards and movies about him. So much so, that even Santa may have a bit of competition on his hands. That is, of course, unless the children are extra good this year.

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Charlton Senior Center January Newsletter

37 Main Street, 508-248-2331

SENIOR TAX WORK-OFF PROGRAM

If you are age 60 or older and live in Charlton, you may receive a deduction on your property tax after completion of the required volunteer hours to a municipal department. There are up to 20 openings for this program and you must be income eligible. For more information, call Julia at 508-248-2246.

AARP TAX AIDE

Free tax assistance is available for low to moderate income residents – by appointment only. The schedule will be announced in mid-January. Stop by the Senior Center or call 508-248-2231 after Jan. 15 to make your appointment and pick up your paperwork. Remember that appointment times fill up quickly.

CHILI RECIPES WANTED

Share your favorite chili recipe with the Senior Center and maybe we will feature it in our February newsletter. Call, drop it off, email or mail your favorite recipe today.

TECH TRAINING

Thursdays at 3:30 p.m. by appointment. Learn to use technology, create and check email. Shepherd Hill Regional High School to help you learn new things or familiarize you with your electronic devices. They will not be able to repair your devices. Call the Senior Center.

FREE MONTHLY DRAWING

Each month a name will be selected for those who are signed up with MySeniorCenter and scan their card as they come in for activities, programs and, clinics, lunches and events. Each month a winner will be picked.

THE SEW-WHAT SEWING GROUP

Offering minor alterations at reasonable prices: pants and skirt hems, jeans hems, mending, buttons and other repairs.

Bring your items to the Senior Center from 9-11 a.m. on Tuesdays for assessment.

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THE CHARLTON REAS FOUNDATION (RESIDENTIAL ENERGY ASSISTANCE FOR SENIORS).

Helps qualified Charlton senior age 60 and older with funding towards energy needs. Call 774-276-5930 for more information. Applications are online at reascharlton.org or call the Senior Center for an application. Heating assistance season is Oct. 1 – April 30.

There is also fuel assistance, low income discount on electric bills, etc. There are even programs to help those with arrears. Call the Senior Center.

SAND FOR SENIORS

Available for all Charlton elders. The town Fire Department will deliver a bucket of sand to your home. Call 508-248-2246 to have your name added to the list for a drop-off of a five gallon bucket. Thanks also to the Highway Department.

ELDER BUS RIDES

For seniors 60 or older, for medical, nutrition sites, shopping, hairdresser, bank, post office, work, Senior Center, etc. Call 1-800-321-0243 at least 48 hours in advance.

PROFESSIONAL FOOT CARE

by a licensed nurse. Call Diane for an appointment at 508-353-4972. In-home appointments are available.

JANUARY SPECIAL EVENTS

Learn/Refresh Poker – Tues. Jan 16 at 10:30 a.m.

Winter Safety with the Charlton Fire Dept. – Thurs. Jan. 18 at 12:30 p.m.

Movie Matinee – Thurs. Jan. 18 at 12:30 p.m. “The World’s Fastest Indian”

Pie Competition – Tues. Jan. 25 at 10:30 a.m. Call 508-248-2231

MASS Advantage – Tues. Jan 24 at 10:30 a.m. Medicare Solutions Advisor

SHRHS Vocational Students – Wed. Jan 24 at 10:30 a.m. 18 – 22 year old vocational students will be at the Senior Center for their January service project

January Birthday Party – Wed. Jan. 25 at 10:30 a.m.

Painting with NV Creations – Mon. Jan. 29 at 1:30 p.m. \$10 fee to cover supplies

Call 508-248-2231 to sign up. National Hot Chocolate Day – Wed. Jan 31 Stop by for a cup at any time

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

Mondays: 9:30 - Fitness w/Jen 10:00 - Cribbage 1:00 - Diamond Dots

Tuesdays: 9:00 - Sew What Group 9:40- Floor Yoga (Library) 10:00 - Billiards 10:30 - Golden Age Club 11:00 - BP w/Fallon Health 12:30 - Mahjong 1:15 - Line Dance

Wednesdays: 10:30 - Book Club 10:30 - Penny Drop 12:30 - Scat

12:45 - Bingo w/Janet 1:00- Tai Chi

Thursdays: 9:40- Floor Yoga (Library) 10:00 - Cornhole 12:30 - Charlie Chaplin “The Circus” A 1927 Silent Film 1:30 - Silver Needles (Library)

Tri-Valley lunches - \$3.00 donation. Ken’s Cooking Days - \$4.00,

To-Go Lunches (Ken’s cooking days only) \$5.00 Please sign up 48 hours in advance for all meals. To Go meals can be picked up after 12:15 in the Center.

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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, JANUARY 27

• Third Annual Oxford Winter Fest 10:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. To benefit Special Olympics 4 Maple Road, Oxford. Public event.
10:30am: POLAR PLUNGE at Carbundle Pond to benefit Special Olympics.

11am: Pancake Breakfast at First Congregational Church with Elsa & Anna!
Beginning at NOON: Activities on the Common: Food Trucks, 104.5 XLO, Children's Games, Ice Sculpture Demo, Fire Pits, S'mores, Wishing Trees, Hot Chocolate, Coffee, P&D Pizza, *Horse-drawn Wagon Rides. Community Center Vendor Fair & Ice-Skating Rink plus family games, crafts & cookie decorating workshop, Senior Center Art Exhibition, Library Book Bingo & StoryTime

SUNDAYS JANUARY 14, JANUARY 21, FEBRUARY 4, FEBRUARY 18

• The New England Country Music Club will hold the following dances with live Classic Country Bands at the Progressive Club, 18 Whitin St., N. Uxbridge. Sunday, Jan 14, "The Farmhands" Sunday, Jan. 21, Al Carter" Sunday, Feb. 4, "Rustic Country" Sunday, Feb 18, "Jessie Caruso and Ambush" Doors open at 12:15 p.m., music 1-5 p.m., \$11 for non-members, Snacks may be brought in,

cash bar. For more information, visit <http://www.Facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub>

TUESDAY, JANUARY 16

• The SciFi Book Club at the Douglas Library will next meet on January 16 @ 6:30 pm. The book to be discussed is "Shadow and Bone" by Leigh Bardugo.

MONDAY, JANUARY 22

• Milford Regional Medical Center, Inc. Board of Trustees will host the Annual Meeting of the Corporation on beginning at 5:30 p.m. The in-person meeting will be held in the hospital's Atrium Café. The public is invited to attend.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 23

• The Book Bunch at the Douglas Library will next meet on January 23 @ 4:00 pm. The book is The Courage of Sarah Noble by Alice Dalgliesh. Call 508-476-2695 or email dso-derman@cwmar.org to register.

STARTING TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13

St. Peter's Parish in Northbridge will offer the ALPHA program on Tuesday evenings starting February 13, 2024 to May 7, 2024 from 6:30PM to 8:00PM. Sessions will be held in the parish hall, 39 Church Avenue, Northbridge. ALPHA is a series of interactive sessions to help people explore the basics of the Christian faith. The goal of ALPHA is to create a warm welcoming, non-threatening, non-pressured and non-judgmental environment where guests are accepted unconditionally. Each session looks at a different question around faith. We start with a light meal, followed by a video and small group discussion. There is no charge to attend ALPHA evenings. There is a good will offering to help cover the cost of the meal. If you would like to join us for ALPHA, please contact Louise Forget, 508-234-6355 or email: religiously@stpeterrockdale.org to register or for more information.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18

• Storyteller Sari Bittocks will present the Tragic and True 1778 Crime Story of Bathsheba Spooner. Learn about the fascinating scandal that led to her unfortunate demise of Joshua Spooner at the hands of his wife in Brookfield. But why was Bathsheba really silenced and sentenced to death? At Mendon Historical Museum, 15 Hastings Street, Mendon. Snow date February 25.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25

• Greater Worcester Model Train Show Auburn Elks 10 A.M. – 3 P.M., 754 Southbridge Street Auburn. Donation \$6, kids under 12 free with adult. Visit mrr.org

SATURDAY, MARCH 16

• Blackstone Valley Home Expo 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Sponsored by UniBank, Northbridge High School Field House, Linwood Avenue, Whitinsville. Admission \$3. For more information visit: blackstonevalley.org or contact: loneil@blackstonevalley.org

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Nursing Student Earns “Be There Certificate”

Ashley Breault of Brookfield, a practical nursing student at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy recently completed training and obtained her Be There Certificate.

The Be There Certificate is a self-paced learning experience designed to increase mental health literacy. The training provides knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to safely support anyone who may be struggling with their mental health. According to betherecertificate.org/ “It provides a deep understanding of Be There’s Five Golden Rules — a simple but actionable framework on how to recognize when someone might be struggling with their mental health, your role in supporting that person, and how to connect them to the help they deserve.”

Breault has been a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) at Quaboag Rehabilitation and Skilled Care Center since 2021. She was previously honored as Employee of the month at Quaboag and is active with mentorship since 2022. She completed her CNA and Home Health Aide Certification at the Fieldstone School in 2021. Breault is an alumna of Quaboag Regional Middle High School (2019). She is certified in Mental Health First

Aid, Dementia Care, Stop the Bleed, HCP/BLS Provider CPR and first aid. She recently participated



in her clinical team’s Luminary lighting project for the Alzheimer’s Association’s the Longest Night to shine a light to diminish the darkness and illuminate a path towards a world where Alzheimer’s and dementia are nothing but a memory.

Breault joins 31 other members of the 2024 cohort progressing to term 2 of the rigorous 10-month practical nursing program at Bay Path. She previously took the leadership in handling Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy mer-

chandise (sweatshirts & hoodies) distribution for the PN Class of 2024 and assisted with stocking the Practical Nursing student food pantry. Photo shows Breault with her Be There Certificate.

According to Gretheline Bolandrina, DHA, MSN Ed, RN, CRRN, Academy Director, “At Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy we believe that student engagement and patient advocacy are contributory to a well-rounded, prudent nurse. Success is intentional. We ensure that our PN students are relevant and actively engaged in empowering themselves, especially when it comes to mental health.”

The Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy program is a 40-week, (10-month), full-time, Monday through Friday, evening program. The program begins mid-August and is completed in late June. Graduates receive a Practical Nursing Certificate and are eligible to take the NCLEX-PN licensure exam. The Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy is fully approved by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services Department of Public Health Board of Registration in Nursing mass.gov/dph/boards/rn and is accredited by the Commission on Occupational

Education, council.org. For more information visit baypath.net.

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The Small Stones Festival of the Arts

The Small Stones Festival of the Arts will hold its sixth annual fine art and photography exhibit of juried artwork will run Jan. 27 – Feb. 4 at the Brigham Hill Community Barn, 37 Wheeler Road, Grafton. The free exhibit is open to the public.

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