

State Police Museum

BY PATTY ROY

The Massachusetts State Police Museum and Learning Center is chockfull of interesting facts and exhibits related to the agency's nearly 160 year old history.

It's housed in an appropriately dignified old building (the Whitinsville Bank Building) and easily found at One Memorial Square on Whitins Road, off Route 146, Whitinsville.

Learning about the inner workings of this state constabulary, is a fun way to spend a couple of hours or even a casual drop-in, cherry-picking what interests you. Mission, weapons, vehicles, technology, canines and uniforms are all there along with a sweet piece of Norman Rockwell nostalgia that makes for a great selfie.

"We believe we are the oldest state police agency in the country," said tour guide MSP Sergeant Paul Belanger. "We argue that the Texas Rangers were formed before us, but they did not have police powers and were more like a militia."

The Massachusetts State Leg-



Retired due to its awkward braking system, this Indian motorcycle is still considered a beauty.

STATE POLICE

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Small Stones Festival of the Arts

BY PATTY ROY

As the old saying goes, "better late than never." And you can certainly follow that up with "it was worth the wait."

Both these well-used maxims

admission is free.

The regional juried art show was postponed for months due to spaces becoming unavailable. The show is now slated to take place at the Brigham Hill Community Harvest Barn, 37 Wheeler



"Committed," photograph by Al Weems of Sutton

can be applied to the 2023 Small Stones Festival of the Arts which will finally launch on Saturday, January 27 through February 4. The public is welcomed and

Road, North Grafton.

Saturday exhibit hours are 12-5 p.m. The awards ceremony and reception will begin at 2 p.m. Artist talks will be held at 2:30 p.m. in the exhibition gallery.

With the pace of work life on the farm slowing for winter, the beautiful post and beam venue became available. The barn is home to the Community Harvest Project and the Grafton Land Trust.

"It worked out nicely for the Festival," said Carolyn Kinloch-Winkler, co-chair and art teacher. "It's an absolutely beautiful space."

The show originated with a trio of organizations: the Worcester Camera Club, Apple Tree Arts and the Blackstone Valley Arts Association, she said. Over the years, it has developed into one of the largest art exhibitions in the state with about 550 submissions from which 144 were selected for display at the Festival, she said.

The artwork is chosen by a six person jury who have recognized careers in either photography or fine art painting. Awards are given for both fine art and photography categories. Cash prizes

SMALL STONES

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STATE POLICE

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islature passed an act to establish the State Police in 1865.

The head of the state police was originally called a constable, a British-sounding word that crops up often in colonial era records. The first appointed Constable of Massachusetts was William Sterling King, a captain of Company K, Thirty-fifth Massachusetts Regiment which suffered devastating casualties at South Mountain and Antietam. He suffered seven bullet wounds at Antietam, and garnered several important

promotions in the aftermath.

In 1865, the State Police were really a state detective force, Belanger related. "They were not uniformed or armed," he said.

Most of the first group of employees at the newly established law enforcement agency were typically Civil War veterans with militia training, Belanger said.

"Their first duties were actually enforcing temperance and liquor laws," he said.

That's because the towns weren't doing anything about this, such as no liquor sales on Sundays. This was likely due to a lack of manpower on the part of municipalities, he said.

In 1921 Gov. Calvin Coolidge signed the documents that created the State Patrol that eventually became the State Police in the 1930's, so the agency was moved from being detectives to the State Police Patrol. The pen used in signing is on display in the museum.

That led to the first recruit training troop. Belanger said he himself was a member of the 60th group training. They are now up to about the mid-80's, he said.

Col. Alfred F. Foote, the Commanding General of the 26th Infantry Division was named as the first Commissioner of Public Safety. He retired in 1933 and a



Retired MSP Sergeant Paul Belanger stands behind the counter pictured in Norman Rockwell's iconic cover illustration "The Runaway."

gold Badge presented to him by the officers of the department of public safety is on display by his portrait.

Also offered for your consideration is a metal sign announcing "Tattooed Poultry Registered with the Mass. State Police." During the Great Depression farmers were offered the use of tattoo equipment to identify their birds and prevent theft.

There are uniforms and equipment from all special services of the state police – dive suits, bomb disposal suits, air wing, tactical operations team and riot gear from the tumultuous 1960s and 1970s. Photos of police cars are arrayed on the walls, while an-

STATE POLICE

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tique methods of getting around include 1920s snowshoes, a life-size model horse topped by an old saddle and an Indian motorcycle that was manufactured in Springfield. Those were all methods of getting around in the 1920s for the force.

It was a time before State Police barracks, where the officers were housed in single family homes across the state.

The State Police also patrolled Boston Harbor in the 20s, a ship's wheel is on display from that time when the force was looking for untaxed alcohol shipments and also some fishery details.

There's information on the work State Troopers are responsible for with commercial trucking and enforcement of motor carrier safety regulations.

Lots of Baby Boomer nostalgia is also on hand – from photos of popular Saturday morning television cowboy Rex Trailer – his guns and hat are in the museum – to a reconstruction of the iconic Howard Johnson restaurant counter that was the setting for Norman Rockwell's 1958 Saturday Evening Post cover.

Belanger was a fount of information about the creation, process and location of the il-



A recreation of a frock coat worn by the original post Civil War members of the State Constabulary.

lustration titled "The Runaway. It depicts State Trooper Richard Clemens sitting beside youngster Ed Locke on the swivel stools typical for counter service with a

white-jacketed soda jerk looking on. Ed Locke (who also appears in two other Rockwell paintings) still shows up at the Museum every December when it hosts a

"Runaway Day."

The technology available to the State Police Force mirrors that of society. Teletype machines from World War II to portable radios not available until the 1980s and eventually the development of electronic or satellite communications that allowed for transmissions between different sectors of law enforcement, so that everyone was aware of what was going on.

An early version of the breathalyzer, one of the first technological attempts to crack down on drinking and driving reveals a machine that was capable of being manipulated to give a false reading – it's good to know that improvements have been made.

There is a Wall of Remembrance devoted to the State Troopers who died in the line of duty from Patrolman William Mateer who drowned in 1909 while attempting to rescue a man who had fallen through ice to Trooper Tamar Bucci who was killed in 2022 when a tanker truck slammed into her cruiser on I-93 when she was assisting a motorist.

A touching nod to the importance of K-9s to the State Police is the tribute to Frankie, a Belgian Malinois who was shot and killed while apprehending a violent suspect in Fitchburg in 2022.

The State Police is the premiere law enforcement agency in Massachusetts, Belanger said. "There

is no competition, there's no other statewide agency. Coming closely is the game wardens, but they only have a very narrow focus."

The State Police have athletics dedicated to their causes – the Boston Marathon is one and they also have a boxing team.

Belanger is especially enthusiastic about the Learning Center part of the Museum.

"A part of our mission is education. We have different levels of programs for different levels of learners," he said.

There are coloring sheets for the smallest kids, microscopes for looking at fingerprint cards or a single strand of hair for the older ones.

"So you can do kind of the CSI kind of stuff and then we'll have an expert come in from the department to talk about crime scenes, services, show them things and put them to work," Belanger said.

There is an initiative to work with high schools, especially ones with criminal justice programs and put on directed programs for them. These programs can include anything from rudiments of policing to border patrol, he said. The State Police Museum is open Tuesday and Saturday from 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. For more information, call 508-839-0001 or email info@mspmic.org

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How would you handle forced early retirement?



Mark Freeman

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When you plan to retire at a certain age, you can follow a strategy that incorporates your investment moves, your health insurance and other factors. But what happens if you're forced to retire earlier than you anticipated?

Unfortunately, this situation is not that uncommon. About 40% of Americans say they have been forced into retirement, according to a recent survey from Edward Jones and

Morning Consult, a research firm. If this were to happen to you because of a layoff, company downsizing or a health issue, would you be prepared to maintain your lifestyle today — and in the future?

Everyone's situation is different. If your forced retirement happened only a short time before you actually expected to retire, you might not need to take any steps at all. But if it was a matter of a year or more, you may need to look into the following areas:

- **Cash flow** — Obviously, a sudden, unexpected loss of employment will affect your cash flow. And if yours was the only source of income for your household, the situation could be especially concerning. Still, you may well have options that can help. You might find a part-time job, for one thing — many employers hire seniors for various types of service-oriented work. And if you've built an

emergency fund containing several months' worth of living expenses, now might be the time to tap into it. You also might need to start withdrawing funds from your IRA and 401(k), though, ideally, you'd like to delay this move as long as possible, as these withdrawals may be taxable.

- **Health insurance** — Health insurance can be a major concern if you face an unexpectedly early retirement. Once you're 65, you'll be eligible for Medicare, but what if you haven't reached that age? Through the COBRA legislation, you might be able to remain on your employer-based health insurance for a while — typically 18 months after your job ends. However, COBRA is expensive: If you're qualified, you might have to pay the entire premium for coverage, up to 102% of the cost of the plan, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. If you're

married, you might be able to get on your spouse's health insurance, but if this option isn't available, you could explore a Marketplace plan by visiting the healthcare.gov website.

- **Social Security** — A forced early retirement could affect your decision on when to start taking Social Security. You're eligible to begin collecting payments at 62, but your checks will be considerably bigger if you wait until your full retirement age, which is likely between 66 and 67, depending on when you were born. If your sudden retirement puts you in a real cash crunch, you might have to start taking payments regardless of your age, but if you have enough in savings, or your spouse's income is enough to keep you afloat, you may want to wait as long as possible so you can get the larger checks. Of course, if your retirement comes while you're still several years away

from Social Security eligibility, you won't have to make this now-or-later decision right away.

Being forced to retire before you planned can certainly be challenging. But by looking at the options available to you, in terms of finances and health insurance, you may well find choices that can help you minimize the disruption to your life.

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

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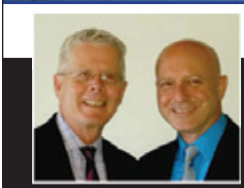
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of \$500 for first; \$250 for second; and \$100 for third are awarded.

Additionally, each of the six jurors select a Juror's Choice. The public votes for a Popular Choice winner in each category.

The fine arts jurors for 2023 are Glenn Murray, Kim Morin

Weineck and Michael Rose. Photography jurors are Ron Rosenstock, Shane Gutierrez and Tom Nault. Jurors work independently of the organizing committee. "It's a fairly selective show,"

Kinloch-Winkler explained, adding that about half the exhibits are photography and half painting. "It's a nice combination of

it's a marvelous collection and you realize, oh! I know him; he lives down the street. It's local," Kinloch-Winkler said.

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"Canal" by Joseph Corn of Grafton

people who are well-established in their field and people who are looking to be well-established in their field."

Sometimes when you go to a museum you're overwhelmed by an artist who's off in the stratosphere, she said, naming Andrew Wyatt or Ansel Adams as likely suspects.

"There is lots of talent right here. One of the things I love about the show is when you visit,

Not every artist is going to show in Boston or Providence or Worcester, she went on

"As a former art teacher, it's wonderful to have a show that's centered on us. I love the fact that we're providing this opportunity for local artists," Kinloch-Winkler said.

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- Mariestela Rosario of Uxbridge who studies Computer Aided Design

To be eligible for the MassBay Dean's List, students must complete at least six credits of college-level courses, be in good standing with the College, and earn a grade point average of 3.5 or higher.

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SMALL STONES

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The Small Stones Festival offers a hardback catalogue that includes every submitted piece of artwork. It can be purchased at the festival or online at smallstonesfestival.org/shop/.

The Festival operates under the shield of fiscal sponsor, Grafton Arts, Inc., a nonprofit 501 (c) 3 organization. Small Stones received a generous festival grant of \$2,500 from the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency, as well as additional grants provided by the Cultural Councils of Grafton and Millbury administered through the nonprofit organization.

This year, Small Stones has received donations from Homefield Credit Union, The Town House Tavern, One Grafton Common and Yesod Foundation, Inc. Support also came from community businesses including Art and Frame Emporium, Gaudette Insurance Agency, JCSI, Pepperoni Express, Roney Funeral Home, Mathieu Newton Sotheby's International Realty – Sydney Padgett, Theroux Dental Associates, Touchstone Crystal – Kathleen Schaker and the Uncommon Cow.

FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

Saturday, January 27: Awards Ceremony 2 p.m., Artist Talks, 2:30 p.m.

Sunday, January 28 through Wednesday, January 31; The exhibition open 12-4 p.m. (closed Monday)

Thursday, February 1: Friday, February 2: Exhibition open hours, 12- 6 p.m.

Saturday, February 3: Exhibition open hours, 12- 6 p.m.

Sunday, February 4: Exhibition open hours, 12- 4p.m. with Juror talks at 2 p.m. This is the final day of the Exhibition for 2023.

LOCAL ARTISTS EXHIBITING THIS YEAR:

Grafton artists: Bonnie Frederico, Cherie Davis, Joan Gage, Carolyn Kinloch-Winkler, Lori Aberg, Joseph Corn, James Bravosi, Bethani Chadbourne, Neil Rosenberg.

Sutton artists: Al Weems, Louise Winant.

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Fattman and Smola present field trip funding gift to Old Sturbridge Village

Almost everyone familiar with Old Sturbridge Village knows it because of a school seen hundreds of thousands of students, teachers, and chaperones through its doors to date.



Jim Donahue, Old Sturbridge Village president and CEO, said, “We are grateful to Representative Smola and Senator Fattman for their continued support for Old Sturbridge Village and more importantly, for the students of Worcester County. We are eager to welcome the students who will be funded by this generous support.”

field trip they or their children took at one point in the last 40 years. The Museum Education department at the Village has

Schools from surrounding areas and states plan visits to support their humanities curriculum and enjoy a day traveling back in time to learn about life in the 1830s.

On December 14, Senator Ryan C. Fattman (R) and Representative Todd M. Smola (R) presented a check for \$15K to aid experiential learning opportunities for local school students. The funds were acquired through the 2024 Fiscal Year state budget. As a result of the 2021 redistricting, the town of Sturbridge was added to Fattman’s district (Worcester Hampden). Fattman’s goal is to understand the economic and educational assets in his district therefore creating this relationship with the Village. This is the first time Senator Fattman has acquired a budget earmark for Old Sturbridge Village.

“There are a number of gems within my district and there is no doubt that Old Sturbridge Village is one of those. Allowing students to visit and experience OSV is critical to their understanding of the history of our area,” Senator Fattman said. “This funding through the state budget will provide students in the greater area the ability to see history come alive.

The Museum Education department offers several different options for school visits from self-guided tours to custom, hands-on workshop experiences, to Town Hall meetings or debates.

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Bay Path Nursing Students Volunteer at Show Choir Festival

The Central Massachusetts Show Choir Festival was held at the Shepherd Hill Regional High School, Saturday, February 3, 2024. Faculty and Practical Nursing Student Volunteers from Bay Path RVTHS Practical Nursing Academy provided on site medical emergency care alongside Dudley Police and Fire Department.

The Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy team included Faculty lead Dr. Adelina Healy of Dudley and Practical Nursing student volunteers John Martin Wanjiru, Ashley Urbain, Michael Wairimu, Kaitlin Miliauskas, Evelyn Kiplangat, Catherine Ibrahim and Christiana Sochiletey.

The Practical Nursing student volunteers are all HCP/BLS CPR certified and trained in first aid. Photo shows from left, Michael Wairimu, Christiana Sochiletey, Evelyn Kiplangat, Kaitlin Miliauskas, and Catherine Ibrahim, all from Worcester.



Terry Salonis, Vice President of the Shepherd Hill Music Parents along with Maria "Chet" Perea-Beaulieu coordinated the Bay Path student nurses' participation with Gretheline Bolandrina, DHA, MSN Ed, RN, CRRN Academy Director. According to Salonis, "this enormous event involves over 24 schools from around the country and over 500 student perform-

ers." Bay Path PN volunteers were there to ensure the safety of students and their families with onsite medical care as a compliment to Dudley PD and Fire. Volunteer shifts started at 12 noon through 10 PM.

"This was the second year for PN Volunteers to participate in this capacity, we're glad to assist again and are looking forward to 2025," concluded Bolandrina.

About Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy: Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy offers 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 Human Services of Public Health Board of Registration in Nursing.

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LIVING WITH LUKE

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Luke Bucks A Family Rule

BY AMY LECLAIRE

Initially, I thought Luke was being headstrong when he bucked our table manner system, a system he supported early on (two years ago to be exact). The memory of his squat, fluffy body perched at his spot still makes me smile. Luke was a pup with a thirst for learning and he adored our training sessions. “Good boy, Luke!” At nine weeks old, he appeared too little to understand rules. Yet there he sat, a teddy bear with a big head, and even bigger brain. I couldn’t help but brag.

“Not to toot my own horn, but Luke responds so well to my training. I think he’s my smartest puppy yet.” A tiny, pink smile broke free from Luke’s concentration. “Aren’t you so happy you picked me, Momma?”

I truly was.

Time passed, old habits softened, and Luke became a confident young dog who approached his teens with a fair amount of bravado. The blonde hair on his chest grew long and silky, wheat blowing in the wind, and his body filled out to match his leonine head. He learned the benefits of begging while I handed him pieces of banana from the countertop. Consistency is key when it comes to dog training. Therefore, it’s possible that I’m to blame for the story to come.

“Luke! It’s okay. It’s just your old spot,” I reminded on that peculiar day in January. The catchphrase “New Year, New Luke” announced itself during a family lunch. I stared in disbelief at a newly minted Luke. My son, Ben, muscular and brotherly, had grabbed him by the collar to coax him back to his spot. Yet a simple tug somehow turned into a bizarre power struggle. What was wrong? Luke had put on his brakes and trembled with a fear that makes me shudder, even in retrospect. “I’m-not-going-there.” Tail fastened between legs; he

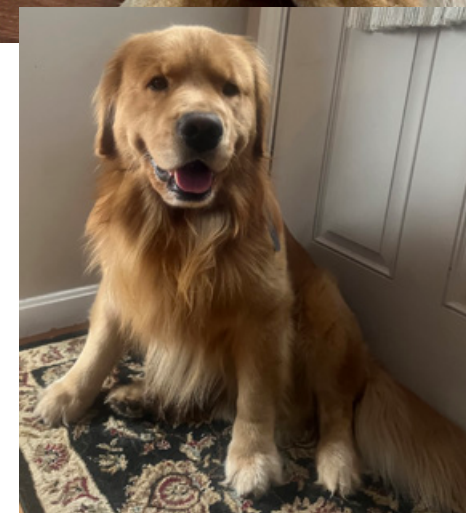


shook as though we had just placed him in solitary confinement with King Kong. What was happening?

Was Luke suddenly afraid of his brother?

“What’s the matter, Luke?” We cajoled him with baby-talk. “Look at Luke’s spot! It’s so comfy!” But he wrestled out of Ben’s grip and dashed to his bed in the dining room where he sat, stoic and determined. “I’m going to choose my own spot from now on.” I stood dumbfounded with a slab of meat, a reward that did nothing to motivate him. Instead, he rested his head over his paws and sulked. “I don’t need to stay at that dumb spot anymore. I’m over it.”

We speculated. Had a kitchen chair inadvertently fallen over on Luke during his puppyhood to



traumatize him? Or was his choice to ditch the spot prouder, perhaps even territorial? -- “I’m not answering to my big brother. He thinks he’s the boss. Well, I’m the boss of myself.”

I came to learn that Luke’s decision was rooted in something even more remarkable. Nevertheless, we needed to rule out sibling rivalry. My husband and I encouraged Luke to sit at his spot to see if he would comply with us, and not Ben. “Go ahead,” we gestured. “Sit at your spot, Luke.” The same behavior resumed. He trembled. He retracted. He dashed back to his bed. One time he even popped onto the rug at the front door. “I’m picking my own spot.” Not only did Luke insist on choosing his own spot, but he also refused to participate in any conversations about it.

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REAL ESTATE

Are More Homeowners Selling as Mortgage Rates Come Down?

If you're looking to buy a home, the recent downward trend in mortgage rates is good news because it helps with affordability. But there's another way this benefits you, it may inspire more homeowners to put their houses up for sale. Over the past year, one factor that's really limited the options for your move is how few homes were on the market. That's because many homeowners chose to delay their plans to sell once mortgage rates went up.

An article from Freddie Mac explains: The lack of housing supply was partly driven by the

likely lower rate existing homeowners had. These homeowners decided to stay put and keep their current lower mortgage rate (known as rate lock-in), rather than move and take on a higher one on their next home. Early signs show those homeowners are ready to move again. There were more homeowners putting their houses up for sale, known in the industry as new listings, in December 2023 compared to December 2022, up about 9%. Here's why this is so significant. Typically, activity in the housing market cools down in the later months of the year as some sellers choose to delay their moves until January rolls around. This is the first time since 2020 that we've seen an uptick in new listings this time of year. This could be a signal that the rate lock-in effect is easing a bit in response to lower rates.

What this means for you? While there isn't going to sud-

denly be an influx of options for your home search, it does mean more sellers may be deciding to list. A reduction in interest rates could alleviate the lock-in effect and help lift homeowner mobility. Interest rates have recently declined, falling by a full percentage point from October to November 2023. Further decreases would reduce the barrier to moving and give homeowners looking to sell a new sense of urgency. And that means you may see more homes come onto the market to give you more fresh options to choose from.

As mortgage rates come down, more sellers may re-enter the market – that gives you an opportunity to find the home you're looking for. Connect with The Marzeotti Group or a real estate agent so you've got a local expert on your side who'll help you stay on top of the latest listings in our area.



BY MARK MARZEOTTI



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LUKE

continued from page 10

“Do you think he’s afraid of his spot? Maybe we should try a new spot?” We pondered a solution. Meanwhile, we noticed that each time we uttered the word SPOT, Luke would turn his head away and threaten to leave the room, as though to say, “I’m not talking about this.” Clearly, the subject was sore.

Admittedly, his behavior led to some teasing from the boys in the house. “Hey, Luke – did you hang at your spot today? Where’s your spot, Luke?” His ears peeled back like a lamb’s. He hadn’t a proper comeback because he’s a dog. I became his voice. “Don’t push Luke’s buttons. He’s intelligent and he doesn’t appreciate sarcasm.”

Luke had his reasons. He was about to enlighten me on them a few weeks later. My mother, one of Luke’s favorite people, had been eating a dish at the kitchen island. Oblivious to our rules, she complimented Luke, despite that he sat at her heels. Grammy loved Luke unconditionally. He looked up at her dish, then at me, and away, ashamed. Something in his expression struck me. He had learned that begging was socially unacceptable and impolite. Luke had outgrown his spot because he had grown closer to his family. He wanted to

be included in our eating circles. Luke was a contributing family member! The drag away from the family table, then, felt belittling, counterintuitive to his emotional intelligence. Luke understood how we felt about begging but we failed to understand how he felt about being excluded.

From now on, Luke has a place at the family table, and it’s right at our feet.

Write to Amy – amyelaire@hotmail.com

Follow Luke on IG – livingwith-lukevalentino

Stay tuned for a story on Luke’s 2-year-old birthday, coming soon!



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New London's Ledge Light

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

New London, Connecticut's Ledge Light, was one of the last lighthouses built in New England. Its distinct French Second Empire style came about at the request of the wealthy homeowners along the shore who wanted the structure to keep in harmony with the elegant appearances of their coastal estates. Unfortunately, many of these fashionable homes were destroyed in the hurricane that swept through New England on September 21, 1938.

The lighthouse was built in 1909 to replace the inefficient New London Harbor Light. It was originally called the Southwest Ledge Light, but the name was changed because a light in New Haven had already claimed that moniker.

The fourth-order Fresnel lens held an incandescent oil vapor lamp that could be seen up to eighteen miles away and was rotated by a clock mechanism that required winding every four hours. During the Hurricane of 1938, Howard B. Beebe was on duty as keeper. The waves came through the second-floor windows of the three-story building, forcing him and his assistant to take refuge in the cast iron light tower that sits on the mansard roof. After the hurricane, Coast Guard crews were stationed at the light to keep it lit until it was automated on May 1, 1987. The day the light went automated was a monumental event for one of the keepers, who wrote in the log,

"Rock of slow torture. Ernie's domain. Hell on earth—may New London Ledge's light shine on

forever because I'm through. I will watch it from afar while drinking a brew."

The ghosts that haunt the light are few, but they make themselves known — especially the ghost of John "Ernie" Randolph. Randolph is said to have lived at the light with his wife.

As the legend goes, Randolph's wife became very depressed about living in the middle of the bay with little contact from the outside world and soon sailed off with the captain of a Block Island ferry. Poor Ernie was so distraught that he climbed to the top of the light, slit his own throat, and dove into the waters below. His body was never found, but from that moment on, Ernie's ghost began haunting the Ledge Light. When the Coast Guard became keepers of the light in 1939, cadets constantly witnessed doors opening and closing on their own, and had their bed covers tugged on or wrenched off them as they tried to sleep. Televisions would mysteriously come to life without anyone to switch the units on. The foghorn was also prone to ethereal antics. Even on the clearest of days, the horn would begin to wail. When inspected, it was always found to be in perfect working order. When keepers went out to swab



Photo by Beyond My Ken - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0; commons.wikimedia.org

the decks around the light, they would find them inexplicably already washed down. Boats docked and tied securely would suddenly break free and start drifting out to sea. The 2009 multi-award-winning WGBY documentary Things That Go Bump in the Night: Tales of Haunted New England tells of an account by Guardsman Bill Rhodes Jr.

Young Mr. Rhodes was stationed at the light from August 1979 to January 1980. One night, while on watch, Bill heard creaking and groaning from the upstairs door to the light room. He was sure he had latched the door, which was part of his duty. When he checked out the noise, he saw the door wide open. It took a lot of force to unlatch the door and thrust it open, as it was designed to withstand hurricane-force winds.

New Hampshire EVP expert Karen Mossey once caught a voice on her recorder that was not Ernie's.

Karen asked if there was anything she could do for the spirits. When she played back the recorder, she heard a voice loud

and clear say, "Help me, I'm cold." She was later told an account of a vessel that crashed on the ledges near the lighthouse. Unfortunately, the father and daughter aboard succumbed to the ravages of the sea before they could be saved.

A keeper heard his name called several times while descending the ladder from the light tower. This was rather disconcerting to the man, as he was the sole occupant of the light at the time.

A woman and her children staying at the light got a visit from the ghost of Ernie. She was suddenly awakened by something at the foot of her bed. As she focused her vision, she distinctly saw a semi-transparent figure of a man in a rain hat and slicker. The gaunt apparition stood over six feet tall and sported a beard. Her children were also witness to the maritime spirit that decided to pay them a visit.

The lighthouse can be seen from shore, or toured through a cooperative program with the University of CT's Project Oceanology Program.

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Winter Safety: 4 Essential Tips from a Physical Therapist on how to Brave a Snowstorm

BY SEAN LORDEN
Concierge Physical Therapy
Conciergephysicaltherapy.com

As the winter season blankets the landscape in snow, it brings with it a whimsical charm but also potential hazards. Snowstorms create picturesque scenes but can also pose risks to our physical well-being. As a physical therapist, I've witnessed firsthand the injuries and challenges that arise from navigating through these wintry conditions. Here are four critical tips to stay safe during a snowstorm:

1. Be Mindful of your Movement and Posture

Snowstorms often mean shoveling snow to clear pathways, driveways, and sidewalks. Improper shoveling techniques can lead to strained muscles, back injuries, or even falls. It's crucial to maintain proper posture and body mechanics while shoveling.

- Bend with your knees, not your back: Use your legs to lift the snow rather than straining your back. Bend at the knees, keeping your back straight, and lift small amounts of snow at a time. Do NOT twist with snow on the shovel.

- Use ergonomic tools: Invest in an ergonomic shovel with a curved handle or adjustable length to reduce strain on your back and wrists. Use a snow-blower if you are able for larger spaces.

- Take breaks and pace yourself: Shoveling can be physically demanding. Take regular breaks to rest and avoid overexertion, preventing muscle fatigue and potential injuries. If you have a

history of stroke or cardiovascular disease spend no more than 15 minutes at once shoveling snow, with the same amount of break in between bouts.

2. Proper Footwear and Traction

Navigating through snow and ice requires appropriate footwear to prevent slips and falls. Wearing the right shoes or boots can significantly reduce the risk of injury.

- Choose slip-resistant footwear: Opt for shoes or boots with good traction and slip-resistant soles. Adding ice grips or traction aids can further enhance stability on icy surfaces. Assess your boots every 2-3 years to make sure they still have adequate slip-resistance and traction.

- Take cautious steps: Walk consciously and take shorter steps to maintain balance. Avoid sudden movements and be aware of black ice, which can be particularly hazardous. Many broken bones are caused each year from an errant slip on the ice.

3. Layered Clothing and Stay Hydrated

Staying warm and hydrated is crucial during cold weather. Layering clothing helps regulate body temperature and prevents hypothermia.

- Dress in layers: Wear moisture-wicking fabrics as a base layer, insulating materials in the middle, and a waterproof outer layer to protect against snow and wind. (Pro Tip: More layers also insulate a fall, but you don't have to go as far as Ralphie in A Christmas Story.)

- Stay hydrated: Cold weather may make you less aware of your thirst, but hydration is essential. Drink water regularly, even if you don't feel thirsty, to prevent dehydration.

4. Be Prepared

Adequately preparing for a snowstorm can significantly reduce risks.

- Stay informed and plan ahead: Monitor weather forecasts to anticipate storms and plan activities accordingly. Stock up on supplies like food, water, and medications to avoid unnecessary outings during harsh conditions.

- Practice caution indoors too: Be mindful of slippery floors indoors due to tracked-in snow. Use rugs or mats near entryways to prevent slipping and ensure adequate lighting to spot potential hazards. Put boots and snow clothing to dry in an area that is not highly trafficked in your household.

Remember, your safety during a snowstorm is paramount. By implementing these tips and exercising caution, you can minimize the risks associated with wintry conditions and enjoy the season to its fullest without compromising your well-being.

Stay safe and embrace the beauty of winter here in New England! If you have any comments or questions on this article I can be reached at Drlordan@conciergephysicaltherapy.com

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BVT is path to success

Brendan Hawkins, an 18-year-old graduate from Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School in Upton, has made headlines for his exceptional journey into the workforce. Departing from traditional academic routes, Hawkins chose a vocational education to pursue hands-on learning and practical skills. Hawkins graduated from BVT in May 2023 after completing the 4-year HVAC program offered at the school. Hawkins thrived in BVT's environment, a place where

he could work with his hands and expand his learning. While not heavily involved in extracurricular activities, he found his passion through his trade experience.

Centerline Mechanical LLC, a full-service HVAC company that was established in October of 2020, was discovered by Hawkins during a presentation at BVT given by Julian Picard, the company's founder. Intrigued by the prospect of working with the promise of significant growth opportunities, Hawkins joined Centerline

Mechanical LLC during his junior year. Julian Picard's words and demonstration of leadership in the industry is what fueled his interest in working for the company. After graduating high school, Hawkins was promoted to HVAC Installer and Service Technician.

Company founder of Centerline Mechanical LLC and BVT alumni, Julian Picard, appreciates Hawkins' ability to apply skills to hands-on projects.

"Finding help can be hard in the trades. So I reached out to the BVT HVAC program to see what they had for prospects since I knew I had to grow my own help," said Picard. "I have had Hawkins since his final trimester Junior year. After the interview, I knew he would be a good fit, and the rest is history. I want to see him buy his first house soon," Picard adds.

Hawkins acknowledges the transformative impact of working in a small company. He has overcome self-doubt and was able to successfully apply his technical skills to the work environment.

"I cannot express enough the gratitude I have for this opportunity to work with Centerline Mechanical," Hawkins said. "It's nice to be an asset to a team that is generous and actually care."

The young man's journey serves as a testament to the diverse paths available to technical graduates, challenging the conventional



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norms of education. His accomplishments at BVT and success at Centerline Mechanical LLC highlights the potential for growth and learning in non-traditional career paths.

BVT is open to students from Bellingham, Blackstone, Douglas, Grafton, Hopedale, Mendon, Milford, Millbury, Millville, Northbridge, Sutton, Upton, and Uxbridge.

For more information about Centerline Mechanical LLC., please visit www.centerlinemech.com or contact Julian Picard at julianpicard@centerlinemech.com. To learn more about Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School, please visit www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/Page/2.

College Scholarship Opportunities

Greater Worcester Community Foundation has opened applications for its 2024 scholarship program for college-bound students.

As the largest independent scholarship provider in Worcester County, the community foundation has awarded almost 10,000 scholarships to students since the program's inception in 1978, totaling \$14.8 million in awards.

As of today, students seeking financial assistance for higher education can conveniently complete one online application to be considered for more than 140 scholarship funds, each with specific criteria including financial need, academic merit, career objectives, and community involvement. The community foundation, with support from dedicated community volunteers, matches applicants with suitable scholarship opportunities.

In 2023, the Foundation awarded \$765,000 in scholarships to 421

students with an average award of \$1,691. This year, the Foundation expects to make at least \$800,000 in awards thanks to newly established scholarship funds, including a \$2 million fund created in honor of Mary T. Cocaine, matriarch of the Table Talk Pies company. This scholarship fund will support the children or grandchildren of an immigrant or refugee in Worcester and its contiguous towns and will be available in the 2024 cycle.

While most Foundation scholarships cater to high school seniors demonstrating financial need within Worcester County, exceptions do exist. Specific funds are earmarked for adult learners, college students, and individuals residing outside the county. Interested applicants are encouraged to visit to determine eligibility criteria and learn about the application process.

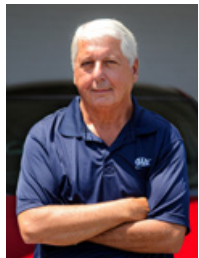
Scholarship applications must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, March 1, 2024. Recipients will be announced by July 2024.

THE CAR DOCTOR

jpaul@aanortheast.com

High mileage engine oil - is it worth it?

Q. My 2014 Mazda CX-9 has 63,000 miles and I faithfully change the full synthetic 5W-20 oil and filter every six months. I never reach 5000 miles during that six months or I would change it at that mileage. I use "regular" synthetic oil. I'm reading that it might be



BY JOHN PAUL

time for the "high mileage" engine oil version. Supposedly it has additives for aging seals. (If that's the case, why not have those additives in all versions?) The Ford 3.7L V-6 Duratek in this SUV is dynamite. No oil leaks and I love its performance. (No towing or heavy loads). What are your thoughts on switching to the high mileage? Pros vs. cons? Also, I am starting to look at the CX-9's replacement, the CX-90, new in model year 2024. Mazda has replaced the recent four-cylinder turbo engine with a six-cylinder engine in 2024. Since it is the first year for this engine, I am watching for feedback. Have you heard any? And yes, I understand Mazda's "joystick" infotainment setup has its detractors.

A. At first, I thought high mileage oil was just marketing, but after some research it does have its benefits. It will help with aging engine seals, the additives condition the seals, not swell them up like some pour in additives do. That being said at

ten years old and using good oil, I'm not sure you need it, perhaps switch in the 75,000-100,000-mile range. The only negative of high-mileage oil is it costs a bit more. As for the latest CX-90, a very well-made vehicle and the new six-cylinder engine performed quite well during my road testing. There are a couple of powertrain choices, plug in hybrid, mild hybrid, and conventional engine. The mild hybrid and PHEV are too new to know how they will do. The conventional inline six-cylinder turbo engine, also new for Mazda, seems very solid. The interior is very comfortable and unlike many bigger SUVs, then handling it quite good. The newest Mazda is not without some problems with at least two recalls since its introduction.

Q. My son is visiting from overseas and borrowed my car to drive to Pittsburgh to visit friends. The car is a 2012 Audi A4 with 90,000 miles, no significant issues to date, though it has been burning a bit more oil of late. The check engine light came on in Pittsburgh. The light is solid, no noticeable issues with driving yet. He did find a parts store and they came up with codes; P2187 and P2279. Am I taking major risks allowing him to drive back home, provided there are no noticeable performance issues, and the light is not flashing? I would of course take the car in for diagnostic to my local trusted mechanics once he is back.

A. The two codes relate to fuel mixture, perhaps a leak in the air intake before the throttle plate, vacuum leak at the intake manifold or even a dried out vacuum hose. The most common issue is with the PCV system, sometimes called an oil separator in VW/Audi engines. This could also explain your engines' increased oil use. Since the car is running normally chances are it is a minor fuel issue and should be okay. In the worst case, there could be some stalling.

Q. Ford continues to innovate in its quest to make trailering easier and less intimidating for truck owners through its Pro Trailer Assist and in the past year, the ability to automatically hitch your truck to a trailer hitch. While these systems are available on the F-150, SuperDuty trucks, Expedition - I have been following every year for when they would expand these options to the Explorer or Escape. Any rumors that this could happen soon?

A. I asked that question about a year or two ago with engineers from Ford and they said it was in the plans with the next major upgrades to the Explorer but not likely in the Escape. They hinted at that time that budgetary concerns were an issue, focusing more on electric vehicle development.

Q. I am wondering if you can recommend a good steering wheel lock seat belt lock to protect my 2019 Honda CRV? The rash of car thefts has me concerned so I thought a lock of this type would be an effective way to deter auto thefts. The main advantage is, it is easy to use and will not mar any of the surfaces like a bar type of lock would. I have read some of the reviews of this type of lock. My main concern is that I could install it and then cannot get it to unlock, or it could damage the seat belt receptacle, so it will not work either. I have read complaints about both conditions. The other one is the seat belt could be damaged and so the belt

alert continues to chime. What do you think?
A. Like all of these devices (cane locks, steering wheel locks and armored ignitions), they are a deterrent, and hopefully a thief would see this and move on. The weakness in this product is the seatbelt. The device that I have seen has a rigid plastic case and strong cable, but it still connects to a fabric seatbelt. Keep in mind than even the steel cable can be cut with battery grinder or hydraulic cutters. Adding additional security is a personal choice and certainly could work, but I would also follow the advice of the police, park in well-lit areas, remove valuables and lock the 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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The Pike Hairfest Returns To Indian Ranch

The annual Pike Hairfest will return to Indian Ranch in Webster, MA on Saturday, July 20,

2024. The show will feature tributes to all of your favorite 80's bands. This year's lineup includes East

Coast Alice (Alice Cooper tribute), Everybody Wants Some (Van Halen tribute), Raise Your Hands (Bon

Jovi tribute), Back In Black (AC/DC tribute), Leppard (Def Leppard tribute). Tickets go on sale this Saturday, February 3rd at 10:00 AM at www.indianranch.com.

YOUR HANDS rocks all the BON JOVI songs you know and love.

BACK IN BLACK is the "True AC/DC Experience." There is no substitute. The band has been touring the United States since 1990, entertaining audiences with AC/DC'S music old and new. Armed with an impressive song list of over 80 songs you are sure to be pleased. The high energy live show, professional sound and production, and exact song replication will surely leave you wanting more.

East Coast Alice, the Ultimate tribute to the Godfather of Shock Rock, Alice Cooper, rolls out all the theatrical suspense and generation spanning music you would expect from one of the Coopers live shows. Circus freaks and hula hoops, electric chairs, guillotines, The Evil Nurse, and Frankenstein's monster, only begin to tell the story that unfolds before your eyes, as East Coast Alice takes you on a musical journey that encompasses all the horror and vaudeville shtick you have come to expect from the Master of Madness.

Leppard - The Def Leppard Experience has stunned audiences all over the world with their amazing recreation of one of the most memorable rock bands and rock songs ever written. The music, the vocals, the harmonies and the screams. Don't worry, it's all there. The band has worked hard to make sure that nothing is left out; and once the show starts, Leppard never slows down. Being called "The Next Best Thing to Def Leppard" is an honor that Leppard, The Def Leppard Experience, doesn't take lightly. Ten years in the making, the band captures the music and the essence of a rock band that has sold over 100 million albums worldwide.

Everybody Wants Some is a Van Halen tribute band that was formed back in 2016. They have quickly established themselves as THE premiere classic Van Halen tribute band in Central Massachusetts. The band captures the power and energy that Van Halen brought to the world from 1978 to 1984 - that raw, hard-driving party rock music.

RAISE YOUR HANDS is the premier tribute to the music & spirit of BON JOVI. The band formed in 2018, the same year BON JOVI was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. Covering both the hits and deep catalog tracks, this 5-piece professional band has quickly become one of the Northeast's top tribute acts. Entertaining crowds from Mohegan Sun & MGM Casino to theaters, venues and town greens, their live experience is polished and engaging. Consisting of seasoned musicians from the New England music scene, everything heard is performed live without any pre-recorded backing tracks. RAISE

Tickets for The Pike Hairfest on Saturday, July 20, 2024 go on-sale Saturday, February 3, 2024 at 10:00 AM. Gates open at 11:00 AM and showtime is 12:00 PM. Tickets are available online at www.indianranch.com, by calling 1-800-514-ETIX (3849) or at the Indian Ranch Box Office. All events are rain or shine. No refunds. Indian Ranch is located at 200 Gore Road in Webster, MA outside of Worcester and less than an hour's drive from Boston, Providence, Hartford and Springfield. For more information, visit www.indianranch.com.

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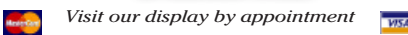
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New Field Coordinator Hired for Water Quality Monitoring Program

The Blackstone River Watershed Association and the Blackstone River Coalition are pleased to announce the hiring of Emily Dart as the new water quality monitoring field coordinator for the middle reach of the Blackstone River watershed. She will manage one of the three water monitoring teams that cover the entire Blackstone River watershed; 80 moni-

tors sample at 75 sites throughout the watershed on a monthly basis from April through November. The work is performed under a Quality Assurance Project Plan approved by Mass. DEP, RI DEM, and the US EPA to ensure accuracy and consistency. Testing occurs on the second Saturday of the month, from April through November, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. The Midreach Team

portion has twenty-eight field sites and lab testing takes place at the Tri-River Medical Center in Uxbridge. Emily's position is funded by the Blackstone River Watershed Association, and she reports to Heather Parry who coordinates the program for the Blackstone River Coalition.

The Legacies of Lincoln and Reagan

The Uxbridge Republican Town Committee invites the public to join them at a breakfast on Sunday, February 18 at 10 a.m. at the Uxbridge Road and Gun Club, 560 West Street.

The event will shine a light on two Republican leaders with February birthdays – Abraham

Lincoln and Ronald Reagan. Lincoln led the nation through the Civil War and proclaimed the Emancipation Proclamation while Reagan oversaw the fall of Communism and the breakup of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic and Warsaw Pact. Their respective successes were remark-

able achievements.

Speakers at the breakfast will include Republican representatives from our district in the state legislature.

All are invited to join the breakfast in a spirit of fellowship. Donation is \$20 per person. Children under 12 are free.

Free Tax Prep Services

WCAC's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program opened on January 30th and will run through the tax deadline of April 15th. Requests for free tax preparation by WCAC are accepted for individual taxpayers or households making \$64,000 or less within Worcester and 45 surrounding towns in Central Massachusetts. Through VITA, IRS-certified volunteers prepare taxes and specifically look for tax credits the household may be eligible for, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Child Tax Credit (CTC), Circuit Breaker Tax Credit, and others. Utilizing the free tax preparation service allows families to retain their full refund, avoiding typical preparation fees which can often cost hundreds of dollars.

Appointments for face-to-face tax preparation with IRS-certified volunteers are available to book by preferred time slot and are now open. Appointments will begin the last week of January and be held at WCAC's main office at 18 Chestnut Street, Worcester. New for 2024, additional in-person appointments will also be available in Southbridge, Webster and Leicester.

Visit <https://wcac.net/vita/> to book an appointment or access online tax preparation services.

WCAC's Resiliency Center Director Maydee Morales said, "We look forward to meeting people

where they are and expanding our appointment locations this year to include opportunities in Southbridge, Webster and Leicester. Additionally, we are really focusing on integrating services for VITA clients. We hope to have our Community Navigators on site to assist with other financial services, including accessing SNAP, RAFT and other community resources. VITA sites are a low-cost and high-return activity offering up to 60 to 1 return on investment, bringing \$60 million in tax credits back to taxpayers and their communities."

A fully online tax preparation process is also available again this season should you be unable to

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SPORTS

Seniors Looking to Take Tigers Deep

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

The Douglas boys basketball team consists of 12 seniors out of its 15 players and, while Coach Chad Gosselin is all in with his seniors this season, he knows that the following year is definitely going to be a rebuilding year.

“This group of seniors have been playing basketball together since the fourth grade and have come together on the high school level over the past three seasons,” the Tiger’s Coach said. “We’ll worry about the future after the season, for now its all about the seniors.”

Adam Dunphy, one of three Douglas captains to take to the court this winter, has upped his game this season and the Tigers will be looking to go through him as the season progresses. After averaging between 12 and 15 points per contest last season, the senior center is scoring 19 points per game thus far this season and is the team’s workhorse.

“He knows the offense is going to go through him,” the Coach said. “We will be relying on him to lead us, and we will go as far as he takes us this season.”

Another tri-captain that will spark the team will be Issac Gosselin and he, like Dunphy will be a catalyst to how far this team can go. Gosselin will be the team’s distributor and as long as he keeps the ball in his possession the Tigers will be in a good place.

“From last year to this year he has improved dramatically,” the Douglas Coach said. “He is our decision maker. He’s averaging about eight or nine points a game, but he has games where he has the ability to score a lot more, but his main focus will on distributing the ball.”

The final tri-captain is Colton Howard, who will play the 2 or 3 guard. He is a mid-range shooter who provides communication on the floor. Josh Farrell is the team’s shooting guard who is also the team’s defensive lynch pin on the floor. Gosselin is also looking for him to be that attacker to the rim



he found himself coming off the bench, but after shedding 60 pounds he is now one of the quickest athletes on the squad. His speed will be used primarily as a defensive player to get the team transitioning.

Matt Doyle, Gavin Morin, Ethan Vassar, William and Andrew Hogan round out the seniors, while Cam Beauregard, Stoen Slowik and Zach Sargent are the juniors who will take on the identity of the team next year.

The Tigers have been able to qualify for the Division 5 State Tournament the last two years but have not had all that much success once there. Two years ago, they were the 21 seed and fell in the first round and fell to Hull, while last season they entered the post-season as the 23 seed where they took out Atlantis Charter in the first round, but then fell to Roxbury Prep Charter in the next round.

Gosselin is hoping that the team can once again venture into the State Tournament, but with a little more success this year.

“Our goals this year are to win the Dual Valley Conference Championship, make a run at the Clark Tournament and break into the Elite 8 in the Division 5 State Tournament,” the Douglas Coach said.

With a dozen seniors on this year’s squad who have played together for some time now, Gosselin is hoping that they can gel at the right time and take this team deep into the State Tournament. The juniors are biding their time to take over the team next winter.

on offense.

Owen Gray and Brady Nolan, both in the 6’ 3-4” range will give the team some height ability. The Coach calls Gray the team’s x-factor; having just returned to the starting lineup he has the ability to light up the scoreboard at any time.

“He’s a mad man on defense and when his confidence is not there offensively, he buys into it defensively and takes us to another level,” Gosselin said.

Nolan also gives the Tigers a

defensive presence inside, making the opposition’s shots more difficult. He will also block a good number of shots and grab his share of rebounds.

Douglas’ identity basically starts on the defensive end of the court. The team plays with a scrappiness and will fight to the last possession; according to the coach defense is huge, as it turns into offense.

One other senior who will provide some key moments will be Gavin Gualtieri. Last year

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As of February 1 Massachusetts State Treasurer Deborah B. Goldberg and the National Association of Unclaimed Property Administrators are in their National Unclaimed Property Day era ... and you should take the moment and taste it by visiting find-massmoney.gov/

The Unclaimed Property Division (UCP) is real, so take the money because Massachusetts is

holding more than \$3 billion in unclaimed property belonging to individuals and businesses throughout the state. A friendship bracelet could help get you a girlfriend, but telling someone about unclaimed property will get you a big reputation as the best of friends.

"You are not on your own, kid, when declaring what is rightfully yours," said State Treasurer Deborah B. Goldberg. "Be fearless and

write your name in the blank space on our website at any time... even on midnights like this!"

Your friends from home won't know what to say if you tell them that unclaimed property includes forgotten savings and checking accounts, un-cashed checks, insurance policy proceeds, stocks, dividends, and the contents of unattended safe deposit boxes. You could use your unclaimed funds to

adopt a Ragdoll kitten, buy your favorite shade of red lipstick, or even purchase tickets to this year's Super Bowl!

Most accounts are considered abandoned and are turned over to the state after three years of inactivity. In 2023, Treasury processed over 148,000 claims and returned over \$185 million in cash and securities to its rightful owners. That's a lot of thirteens.

There is no time limit for a person to claim this property, but we do not want to wait ages to see you there. Searching for unclaimed money is always free.

Treasurer Goldberg urges all citizens to check the comprehensive list for all amounts at findmassmoney.gov or call our live call center at 888-344-MASS (6277) because everything you lose is a step you take when contacting UCP.

Bowler named head of school at WCS

The Board of Trustees of Whitinsville Christian School is pleased to announce that Sarah Bowler has accepted the role of Head of School. Sarah has served as Interim Head of School since July 2023.

Sarah is a graduate of WCS, Class of 1995, and brings a wealth of experience and a proven track record in educational leadership. She holds a Bachelor of Applied Science and a Bachelor of Arts from Gordon College and a Master of Arts of UMass Lowell. She is a Massachusetts licensed administrator and has 22 years of experience in education including as a Curriculum/Campus Coordinator in Qingdao, China.

Sarah joined WCS in 2010 as an elementary teacher and was named Pre-School/Elementary Principal in 2015. In all her roles at WCS, she has exhibited

a passion for guiding students towards a holistic education that encompasses not only academic achievement, but also spiritual and personal growth.

"I am grateful for the support and encouragement I've received and I am excited to make the shift from interim to Head of School," said Sarah. "I have served many roles at WCS including student, parent, alumni, teacher and principal, and each has further developed my love for this community. I look forward to partnering with our families, faculty and staff and faithful supporters as we strive to fulfill our mission, relying on God for wisdom and guidance."

"Our work with the Center for Advancement Christian Education was instrumental in helping the search committee engage, identify the needs of WCS and

ultimately determine that

Sarah is the best person to serve as our next Head of School," said Erika Johnson, President of the Board. "Sarah has been a member of the community in a variety of roles, each with their own unique perspectives and experiences. We are thrilled that her leadership in Christian education will allow WCS to deliver upon our mission as we draw close to our 100th anniversary in 2028 and embark upon the next 100 years."

Bay Path LPN obtains Wound Care Certification

Heather Sheehan, LPN of Charlton adds a new credential after her name, that of Wound Care Certified (WCC), joining certified nurses at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy faculty and alumni to date, marking professionalism and expertise.

According to the National League for Nursing, "Certification in any field is a mark of professionalism. For nurses, it establishes a specialty area of practice and creates a means to demonstrate their expertise in this role." It communicates to students, peers and the academic and health care communities that the highest standards of excellence are being met. The mission of certification is to promote excellence in the advanced specialty role of the nurse.

By becoming certified in wound care, Sheehan serves as a leader and a role model. Certification is the mark of distinction for a specialty. WCC by the Wound Learning Academy by SNF wound care "is an online education platform with content approved by RN and LPN/LVN Nursing Board nationwide, in all 50 states. WCC offers 30 CEU for license renewal." Sheehan dem-

onstrated dedication to the highest standards in wound care management and achieved recognition and elevated her status as a wound care specialist. Sheehan will collaborate and exchange invaluable insight and resources with like-minded wound care industry specialists, gain professional growth, and career advancement opportunities. According to the Wound Learning Academy, "Wound Care Certification demonstrates specialized and distinguished knowledge in wound management, promoting the highest level of care for all wound care patients."

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 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 Human Services of Public Health Board of Registration in Nursing.

The Worcester Snow Squalls Hockey

The Worcester Snow Squalls announces its Special Hockey season on at 4 p.m. Saturdays, Feb. 24; March 9; 16 and 23 at Horgan Ice Arena 403 Oxford

a Special Hockey Team, partnered with the American Special Hockey Association. Our team welcomes individuals with intellectual, developmental and

Facebook page at facebook.com/worcesterspecialhockey/

The Snow Squalls are grateful to Wegman's that helps to pay for ice time. The team is also



Street, North Auburn. This is the first session of the winter, so don't worry, you haven't missed any of the fun!

Worcester Snow Squalls is

physical disabilities to the sport of hockey.

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ValleyCAST is hosting their third annual Inside & Out Exhibition at the Whitin Mill

50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville with 40 sculptures on display until February 23.

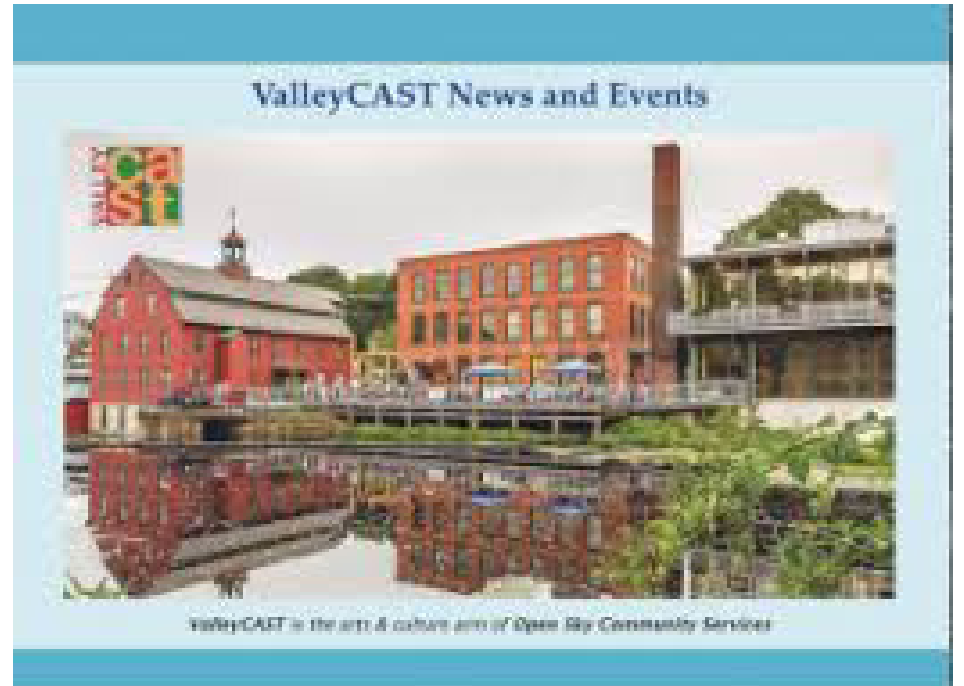
The sculptures are placed to create an engagement with the community and prompt discussions about the artwork.

ValleyCAST is the arts and culture branch of Open Sky Community Services, a non-profit that provides support to people with mental health challenges, developmental disabilities, substance use disorders and other struggles in daily living.

The sculptors are all members of the New England Sculptors Association.

Visitors will be able to vote for their favorite sculpture, with the winner claiming the "People's Choice Award."

According to Christi Collari, Director of Community Outreach for Open Sky, the goal and the mission of the exhibit is to create a space where the public and the community can come in and mingle with the people served by Open Sky that are also part of the community.



McGovern Introduces Legislation Easing Access to Medically Necessary Formulas

Representatives James P. McGovern (D-MA), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee and Co-chair of the Cystic Fibrosis Caucus, and John Rutherford (R-FL), Co-chair of the Crohn's and Colitis caucus, led their colleagues in introducing legislation to remove barriers to access for all Americans who require medically necessary foods to lead healthy lives.

The Medical Nutrition Equity Act would require coverage of specialized formulas, vitamins, individual amino acids, or other medically necessary foods under Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, Medicare, the Federal Employee Health Benefit Program, and private insurance for patients with specific gastrointestinal and inherited metabolic diseases and disorders. It is narrowly drafted to focus on individuals for whom medically necessary nutrition is the treatment for their diseases.

"I've heard devastating stories from constituents struggling to access medically necessary foods to keep themselves or their child

healthy," said Congressman McGovern. "As a dad and husband, I can't imagine not being able to access the food your child or your partner depends on to live. To me this is simple: no one should struggle getting medically necessary food, and insurance companies shouldn't be creating more barriers to receiving proper care. Our bill cuts through the red tape and ensures those with inherited metabolic diseases or gastrointestinal conditions can access the nutrition they need."

"Our health systems must be structured to support innovative treatments," said Congressman Rutherford. "As co-chair of the Crohn's and Colitis Caucus, where I advocate for those living with digestive diseases, I am excited to join Rep. McGovern to introduce this important legislation that would make medically necessary nutrition more easily accessible to patients across our nation."

Approximately 2,000 infants every year are diagnosed with an inherited metabolic disorder. When left untreated, inherited

metabolic diseases or gastrointestinal conditions can cause the body to fail to absorb necessary nutrients and food can even become toxic. An inability to access specialty formulas forces patients to go without adequate nutrition or seek hospitalization to maintain nutrition levels. Already, 40 states require coverage of medically necessary nutrition, but coverage is highly variable from state-to-state and does not apply to patients covered by private sector health plans governed by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act.

This bill builds on the precedent of the 2016 National Defense Authorization Act which improved coverage for medical nutrition for military families enrolled in TRICARE, so more Americans can access medically necessary nutrition.

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Prayer

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

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

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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@theyankeexpress.com.

SUNDAY, 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, 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>

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: religioused@stpeterrockdale.org to register or for more information.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16

• The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce invites you to the "Love Your Legislator Breakfast." From 7:30 – 9:15 a.m. at Galliford's Restaurant and Tavern, Southwick Zoo, 2 Southwick Street, Mendon. Members: \$50 and future members \$60. Hear about new legislation and plans for 2024 and the latest governmental developments with regional legislators.

RSVP by Feb. 9.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18

• Bethel Lutheran Church, Auburn will hold its Centennial Celebration Festive Eucharist Service at 10:30 a.m. in the church, 90 Bryn Mawr Avenue followed by a banquet at the Auburn Elks Lodge, 754 Southbridge Street, Auburn 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 at the Bethel Facebook page, Bethel Lutheran-Auburn MA Centennial. A series of special events will follow throughout 2024.

• Storyteller Sari Bittocks will present "The Tragic and True 1778 Crime Story of Bathsheba Spooner" at 2 p.m.. Learn about the fascinating scandal that led to the 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.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20

• The Douglas Library SciFi Book Club will meet at 6:30 p.m. to discuss "Siege and Storm" by Leigh Bardugo, the second book in the Shadow and Bone Trilogy. Contact douglas@cwmmars.org for more information.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25

• The Greater Worcester Model Train Show will take place from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. at the Auburn Elks Lodge, 754 Southbridge Street, Auburn. All are invited to attend. View detailed train set-ups and find out how to get involved in this fascinating hobby. Donation \$6, kids under 12 free with adult. For more information, 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

HIKES WITH BLACKSTONE VALLEY HERITAGE CORRIDOR HIKES

The following is a list of hikes in Massachusetts being led by volunteer Trail Ambassador Phil. Phil's hikes begin at 10 a.m. Saturday, March 9: Cormier Woods Hike, Uxbridge Saturday, March 23: Midstate Trail Hike – Part 1, Douglas Saturday, April 6: Midstate Trail Hike – Part 2, Douglas Saturday, April 20: Castle Hill Farm Hike, Whitinsville Saturday, May 4: Mendon Town Forest Hike, Mendon Saturday, May 18: Wallis Pond Loop Hike, Douglas Saturday, June 15: Douglas State Forest Hike, Douglas

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FEBRUARY 10 – MARCH 17

Blue Cross Blue Shield Of Massachusetts Brings Free Ice Skating To The Oval Ice Skating Rink In Worcester

Central Massachusetts skaters will have the opportunity to skate for free at The Oval Ice Skating Rink in Downtown Worcester, courtesy of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (Blue Cross).

Blue Cross, the presenting sponsor of the 12,000-square-foot rink located at 455 Main Street, announced that free-skating days will take place on:

Friday, February 16
5:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Complimentary skate rentals will also be available for children 12 and under. As the second year of the sponsorship, the events underscore Blue Cross' commitment to the health and wellness of the greater Worcester community by encouraging outdoor activity that supports physical and mental well-being.

The Oval Ice Skating Rink, which reopened in December, has welcomed more than 72,000

skaters since 2012. It offers skate rentals, concessions, and a limited number of free parking spaces (on a first-come, first-served basis) in the garage under City Hall.

"We're honored to offer these complimentary events at this exceptional community space, creating lasting memories for numerous families as part of our partnership with The Oval Ice Skating Rink," said Jeff Bellows, Blue Cross Vice President of Corporate Citizenship & Public Affairs. "These five days serve as an added motivation for everyone to embrace the outdoors, and enjoy healthy lifestyles."

Recognized as a highly effective form of exercise, ice skating engages nearly every muscle group in the body, promotes joint flexibility, and supports cardiovascular health. It also helps with improved balance, coordination, and weight management, while contributing to improved mental health and overall well-being. Accord-

ing to a 2021 Harvard Medical School study, a mere 30 minutes of ice skating can burn between 210-294 calories, making it one of the most beneficial winter activities for fitness.

"We're thankful for the support provided by Blue Cross, including these free-skating events, which significantly contribute to the sense of com-

munity that The Oval Ice Skating Rink promotes," said John LaHair, Director of Marketing, for the DCU Center which also manages The Oval Ice Skating Rink. "They have become a true highlight of the winter season in Worcester and we are looking forward to welcoming guests for a day of enjoyment in the outdoors."

For more information, including weather-related closings, please visit the The Oval Ice Skating Rink's Facebook and Instagram pages or call the Cornerstone Bank Oval Hotline at (508) 929-0777.

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