

# The Yankee Xpress

CROSSTOWN ADS & BUSINESS NEWS

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February 9, 2024

## 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 Legislature 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



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

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

### STATE POLICE

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## Webster Town Hall is Floating Away

BY JANET STOICA  
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

Ironically, the Conservation and Planning offices at the Webster Town Hall have been flooding for years during any type of rain or snow-melting event. These offices are located on the east side of the grand building's entryway. Why this problem has never been addressed is a mystery. As a student at the former Bartlett High School (now senior housing) in the 1970's I remember the pond that always formed at that side of the building facing the town library. I recall one storm-water drain located in the corner area of this proud building that never could do its job.

Now that our weather patterns have changed and become rainier, this problem will become more of a nightmare not only for our devoted town employees who must vacate

their offices when it rains but also for us, the town taxpayers who must look for a solution before the building's strength is totally ruined by the constant dampness not to mention the remedial cost of mold removal that usually runs into the tens of thousands of dollars.

If there's a hole in the roof, fix it, right? If there's a flood in your cellar, get a sump pump or waterproof the cellar walls, yes? Apparently, our former Town Administrator had the foresight to have an evaluation done on our illustrious Town Hall's needs but the report was not publicized before his departure. Maybe a good review of that report is now in order.

During the last rainstorm, the basement flooding was so severe

### WEBSTER

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**WEBSTER**

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that not only were vacuum pumps necessary but the rainwater had to be carted away in barrels. Yes, that's right...in barrels. That one outside drain will never be adequate to carry away future water disasters. Never. Once mold takes hold there's no stopping it. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, mold growing on wet drywall begins in 24-48 hours of water intrusion. Mold spores then colonize rapidly within a few weeks. By the time mold is noticeable to the naked eye, 21 days may have passed and it has

already spread its spores to other areas. Mold spores never die and they never "dry up." Mold spores cause asthma, allergies and other respiratory illnesses.

If anything, for safety's sake and for the town's liability, this horrific working condition must be addressed and it should be addressed immediately. Let's preserve our stately town building.

"We need to get serious about capital improvements to our Town Hall," said Rick LaFond, Town Administrator, "this building does need major renovations to preserve its beauty and dignified appearance."

**STATE POLICE**

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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."



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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

**STATE POLICE**

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## The Yankee Xpress

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## STATE POLICE

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operations team and riot gear from the tumultuous 1960s and 1970s. Photos of police cars are arrayed on the walls, while antique 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 illustration 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 recreation of a frock coat worn by the original post Civil War members of the State Constabulary.*

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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## 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 come in person or prefer not to.

## Little League Registration

Spring registration for Webster Little League will be open until February 24. That's a hard deadline in order that uniforms can be ordered and teams assembled. The season

starts in April and runs through June. The 2024 fees are T-Ball/Coach Pitch \$80; Minors are \$120; Majors are \$150; Junior and Senior Baseball is \$180. Multi-player discounts are offered. Pay

by credit card or mail a check.

Sign up at [www.websterlittleleague.com](http://www.websterlittleleague.com) or visit facebook.com/WebsterLL for more information. Email is [websterlittleleague@gmail.com](mailto:websterlittleleague@gmail.com).

## 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 scholar-

ships 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.

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# Zoning Issues at 4 Bartlett Street, Webster

BY JANET STOICA  
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

Tree removal equipment, an illegal retaining wall, and zoning enforcement of property located behind the Worcester

Inspector and town attorneys. According to public documents, the property owner of 4 Bartlett Street, Nathan Lebaron, runs a tree removal business and asserts that the company's profits are used to support a Church of the

Street is located within a multi-family residential-zoned district where commercial uses are not permitted. When complaints were made in 2022 the town inspected the property and found that the owner was using the property for a commercial logging and tree business with multiple trucks and trailers stored on the property in violation of zoning laws. Letters were sent about the violations. Further inspection revealed that the owner was constructing a large retaining wall which was abutting

the neighboring property. The construction required engineering plans along with a building permit which were never submitted nor applied for. The building inspector issued a cease of construction order which was not complied with. Following a court hearing, the December 27, 2023 order of the Worcester Superior Court states that Mr. Lebaron must remove the construction of the fence and retaining wall and restore the wall to its prior condition within 60 days of the court order. Mr. Lebaron

must also cease and desist from the operation of any business including the use of heavy machinery, trailers, and land equipment on the multifamily residentially-zoned property within 30 days of the court order. Additionally, Mr. Lebaron's motion for a preliminary injunction was denied. Webster's Building Inspector, Ted Tetreault, will now monitor the timeframes for compliance with the court order.



4 Bartlett Street

3/11/2021 1:37:45 PM  
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County Sheriff's Office and the Afro Fusion Restaurant on South Main Street in Webster have been the focus of the town's Building

Firstborn of which he lists himself as President. Public documents also state that most of the property at 4 Bartlett

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Susan Wilbur is a certified Brain Gym instructor licensed through Breakthrough International. [www.braingym.org](http://www.braingym.org). To register go online to Bay Path Evening School classes at [www.baypatheveningschool.com](http://www.baypatheveningschool.com). For questions call Susan Wilbur at 508-410-5654.



SPORTS

# Year-Round Basketball Player with College Plans

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Shepherd Hill's Lucas Miglionico is a year-round basketball player because he felt that his skills in other sports were just not up to those on the basketball court. At the age of four, after trying other sports that he also loved like football and soccer, his dad introduced him to basketball. However, the now senior found that his talent was better suited to playing basketball instead of other sports.

Miglionico played youth basketball up until the eighth grade before entering high school. In addition to the youth leagues, he also found a position on club basketball teams; he now plays for Swarm Select, out of Central Massachusetts.

Upon entering high school, the world found themselves involved with Covid-19 and making the varsity squad was not going to be an easy thing.

"I was on the junior varsity team my freshman year," he said. "We only got to play 8 games that year because of Covid and had to wear masks at all times. It was very weird and way more difficult to play and breathe than normal."

Following his freshman campaign, Miglionico found himself training harder and trying to get himself used to playing high school basketball. Not only did he make



the varsity team the next season, but the program also began to turnaround. Shepherd Hill only lost a handful of games during the regular season and made it as far as the Sweet 16 in the Division 2 State Tournament, being sent home by the number two seed Mansfield 47-44.

That year he considered himself

a shooter off the bench for the Rams where he averaged 7 points per contest.

During his junior season he stepped up and became the team's second option at scoring, averaging 17 points per game as a starter with a majority of his shots coming from behind the three-point arc.

"I found at an early age that it (shooting threes) was one of my strengths on the court," Miglionico said. "So, I began working on it from a young age."

Behind his outside shooting Miglionico helped the Rams to a rather impressive regular season, where the team only lost a single game, but things were much different once they began play in the State Tournament. Having earned themselves a four seed, Shepherd Hill was upset 55-54 by 29th-seed Westwood in the first round.

"That loss was painful and shocking," he said. "It definitely gave me the motivation to get better for this year. Last year's team was one of the closest teams I have ever been on."

The surprising loss in the State Tournament lit a fire within Miglionico and he trained five days a week during the off-season by doing skills and weight training to get ready for this his senior campaign.

"As a third-year varsity athlete, Lucas worked extremely hard on his game coming into this year and it has paid off," Rams Coach Mike Rapoza said. "His teammates are doing a tremendous job putting him in position to score and lead the team."

According to the Shepherd Hill Coach, Miglionico is an all-around player who does all the little things.

our leading scorer from last year, so I had to pick up the slack," he said. "This year we are also playing a different style allowing us more freedom in transition. We are doing more off the dribble and the result has us going to the line more often."

As the season goes on, Miglionico would love nothing more than to lead the Rams back into the State Final and avenge that first round upset of a year ago. He also wants to be the very best version of himself that he can be while leading his team into the winners circle in as many games as possible.



He has also improved greatly at team concept basketball, while his defense has seen the biggest improvement on the court. As an offensive player, he has always had the skills for the game.

Through the early stages of the season the senior has upped his scoring and is averaging 25 points per contest and is leading Central Mass in points per game.

"I think the biggest reason my scoring has gone up is that we lost

"I know that this is a less talented team than the one that we had last year, but everyone has bought into their roles," Miglionico said. "The chemistry has been working and we are all working hard each and every game."

Whenever the season comes to an end, Miglionico is hoping much later than sooner, the senior will take a two week break before he suits back up for his club team. Once that season ends, he is hoping that he'll be playing college basketball.

"I have a couple of options; so, I'm sure that I'll be playing basketball somewhere in college next year in the area," Miglionico said.

While college basketball is most likely in his future, right now everything revolves around his high school season and putting forth the best effort that he and his teammates can to get back to the State Tournament.



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5:30pm Yoga for All	7:00pm Tuesday's Featured Class Rotating pop-up classes	5:30pm Yoga for All	7:00pm Gentle and Restorative	11:45am Chair Yoga, Flexibility & Balance		
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# Webster Updates: Town Saves \$1.3 Million on High School Project, Webster Seeks Lake Partnership with State, Permit System Goes On-Line

BY JANET STOICA  
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

“It’s all good information,” said Webster Town Administrator Rick LaFond, “we had to rebid our construction piece of the high school project and the new bids recently came in which were \$1.3 million below the budget we had anticipated. Considering some of the known costs like modular classrooms this will go a long way. This is extremely good news. All of the bidders are well-qualified and our company, Brait Builders, did a fine job on the Abington High School a few years ago.”

The Boathouse Store LLC located at 4 Town Forest Road, a marijuana establishment, had its license transferred via a host community agreement to Webster Cannabis LLC. Apparently, The Boathouse had three years to open its establishment but never did and in the past year others have sought to purchase the location. Webster Cannabis LLC is a Worcester operation and their new Webster

venture should be open by the spring. The building is leased by Ms. Mary Hazard.

The Tropicana Café will soon be opening at 8 Davis Street which was the former home of Mama Dolce’s and B. Kind Café. The business is listed as an ice cream shop but there is no website information available at this time. Hopefully, we can all enjoy some refreshing ice cream and smoothies during the upcoming warmer weather. Stay tuned.

The Stave & Still Restaurant that was located at 131 Main Street has closed its doors and moved to its Whiskey Rocks location on Airport Road in Dudley. Their liquor license is now available to a new owner who may want to open at the 131 Main Street, Webster location.

According to Mr. LaFond, the Webster Lake Association (WLA), town officials, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have an effort underway to receive state support to maintain Webster Lake which is a state-regulated water

body.

“The WLA pays for many phases of the lake’s upkeep and it is unfair for them to maintain an asset that isn’t theirs or the town’s” said Mr. LaFond, “The WLA, two members of the Board of Selectmen (Randy Becker and Mark Rogers), State Rep. Joe McKenna, and State Sen. Ryan Fattman’s staff along with representatives from the Dept. of Environmental Protection met recently to establish a relationship between the state and the town. To the extent we can get the state and town involved, the key is to get the state more involved. Also, Pout Pond, which is close to Route 395, is an inlet on the lake that the WLA managed to obtain a state grant for dredging and weed control a few years ago. If a state grant is involved providing funds versus a separate entity like the WLA, permits are not an issue. A partnership is the ideal solution.”

According to public records, the former Route 16 campground owner, Michael Finamore, is complying with court orders for his

property. All previous inhabitants have left the property and there are no residents. Before any inhabitants are allowed back onto the property, updates must be made to the septic, electrical systems, etc. Mr. Finamore is pursuing purchasers for his property and due diligence is currently being performed by those interested parties.

Webster’s on-line permit system is slowly but surely being brought into the 21st century. In 2023 two departments, Building and Fire, were brought on-line making a smoother transition for those seeking fire permits as well as for contractors wanting building, wiring, and plumbing permits. “Hopefully, the Selectmen’s and Town Clerk’s offices and their permits will be on-line next. We look forward to the annual repetitive licensing process to be ready soon and in compliance with all state laws,” said Mr. LaFond.

The Treasurer/Collector’s Offices will be redesigned to be more customer friendly. This office receives the most foot traffic in the Town



Webster Town Administrator Rick LaFond

Hall. As anyone who has visited the office knows, it’s like stepping back in time to the 1920’s (which, I must admit, is pretty cool but at the same time very inefficient as Webster’s population has grown substantially in the past 100 years and computerization and the user-friendliness of the office is in great need of renovation). American Rescue Plan Act Funds will be used to update the workplace. Design work has just begun by Town Engineer Chuck Eaton, and his firm will analyze and design the department.

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# 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 Mc-

Govern. "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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# 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 snowblower 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@concierge-physicaltherapy.com](mailto:Drlordan@concierge-physicaltherapy.com)

## Local residents named to Fall 2023 Dean's List at Saint Michael's College

The following local students were named to the Dean's List at Saint Michael's College for the Fall 2023 semester. Students who complete at least 12 credits of classes and achieve a grade point average of at least 3.5 in a particular semester are cited on the Dean's List for that semester.

- Nicholas D. Lindberg of Dudley

- Bernadette E. Lesieur of Oxford

*About Saint Michael's College*  
 Saint Michael's College, founded on principles of social justice and leading lives of purpose and consequence, is a selective, Catholic college just outside Burlington, Vermont, one of the country's best college towns. Located between the Green Mountains and Lake Champlain, our closely connected community guarantees housing all four years and delivers internationally respected liberal arts together with an innovative Purposeful Learning Program, preparing students for fulfilling careers and meaningful lives. Young adults here

grow intellectually, socially, and morally, learning to be responsible for themselves, each other, and their world.

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## Call for Grant Applications Janet Malser Humanities Trust

Deadline is April 1 for the current grant cycle

The Janet Malser Humanities Trust is now accepting applications for the 2024 grant cycle. Janet Malser set up the charitable Trust in order to support the arts and humanities, community service and conservation in the towns of Dudley, Oxford, and Webster. Trustees make awards annually to verified tax-exempt organizations meeting the charitable purposes of the Trust. Prior recipients are encouraged to apply and are eligible as long as proper follow up status reports have

been filed.

The causes for which funding will be considered include: "the restoration and preservation of historic sites; the furtherance of art and music in the schools, both public and private; public concerts with an emphasis on classical music; the improvement and growth of public libraries; the support of church work aiding the indigent, homeless, aging citizens and needy children; beautification through planting and the preservation of park areas and

cemeteries; the improvement of service and equipment at the Hubbard Regional Hospital (now UMASS Memorial), and the environmental protection of Webster Lake."

Any questions should be addressed to janetmalsertrust@gmail.com.

Applications and additional instructions including filing final reports are available at www.janetmalsertrust.org. All applications must be postmarked by Monday, April 1, 2024.

## The Worcester Snow Squalls Hockey

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# bankHometown, employees make generous donation

Donations totaling more than \$27,000 were made recently by bankHometown and its employees to three United Way organizations in central Massachusetts. Employees pledged over \$17,000

the workplace campaign and donations to other United Way-related campaigns, events, and initiatives. The United Way is a volunteer-driven organization that serves residents through its own programs



Kory Eng, president and CEO of the United Way of North Central Massachusetts; Timothy Garvin, president and CEO of the United Way of Central Massachusetts; Tina Puzo, vice president and branch officer of the Auburn office of bankHometown and the bank's workplace campaign coordinator; Robert J. Morton, bankHometown president and CEO; Mary O'Coin, executive director of the United Way of South Central Massachusetts.

of their own funds in the bank's United Way workplace campaign for 2024. Combined with the bank's donation of \$10,000, the campaign total of \$27,419 will be divided among the United Way organizations of Central, North Central, and South Central Massachusetts as determined by the employees. The campaign lets employees donate and direct funds to advocate for causes most important to them. As a long-time contributor, the bank and its employees have donated more than \$176,000 through

and services as well as those of its partner agencies. The organization works to advance the common good by focusing on the building blocks for a good life – education, financial stability, health, and basic needs. "bankHometown and our employees are proud to support the United Way in its mission to unlock the full potential of our friends, neighbors, and communities in need throughout Central Massachusetts," said bankHometown President and CEO Robert J. Morton.

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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 soft-

ened, 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 encour-



aged 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.

“Do you think he’s afraid of his spot? Maybe we shout 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.

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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



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

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 suddenly 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.

**LUKE**  
continued from page 12

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 – amyleclaire@hotmail.com

Follow Luke on IG – livingwith-lukevalentino

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

## 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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# Benefits of fixed-income investments

When many people think about investing, the first thing that comes to mind is the stock market. And that's not surprising, as the rise and fall of stock prices is constantly in the news. But if you're going to achieve your financial goals, you may well need to look beyond stocks and include fixed-income investments in your portfolio.



BY DENNIS ANTONOPOULOS

Fixed-income investments offer three important benefits:

**Income** – When you invest in fixed-income vehicles, such as bonds, Treasury securities and certificates of deposit (CDs), you receive regular income in the form of interest payments. And you continue to receive this income until your investment matures or you sell it, no matter what's happening in the financial markets. Of course, the income you can receive from fixed-income investments will always depend on the interest rates at which these investments were issued. But if you own a mix of long-term and short-term fixed-income investments, you can gain some protection against fluctuating rates. When market rates are low, you can get greater income from your longer-term bonds, which typically — although not always — pay higher rates. And when market rates rise, you can benefit by reinvesting the proceeds from your shorter-term bonds.

**Diversification** – If you were only to own stocks, or stock-based mutual funds, your portfolio would be susceptible to higher risks, especially with market downturns. But you may be able to reduce the impact of market volatility by adding fixed-income investments to your holdings. Bond prices often move in a different direction from stocks, so if stock prices are falling, you might find that the value of your bonds is rising. You can also diversify within the fixed-income portion of your portfolio by owning a mix of corporate and Treasury bonds, as well as CDs, just to name a few.

**Stability** – As mentioned, you will always receive interest payments from your bonds if you hold them until maturity. But if you wanted to sell your bonds before they mature, you could

get more, or less, than what you originally paid for them. When market interest rates rise, the price of your current bonds will likely fall, as no one will pay you the full price for them when they get newer ones that pay more — this is what's known as interest-rate risk. Conversely, when market rates fall, the prices of your current bonds will probably rise. But here's the key point to remember: Bond prices generally don't fluctuate as much as stock prices. In other words, bonds are typically less volatile than stocks. Consequently, owning bonds can add diversification to your portfolio. And to maximize the stabilizing effects of bonds, you may want to stick with high-quality bonds rated as "investment grade" by independent bond-rating agencies.

How much of your portfolio should consist of fixed-income investments? There's no one right answer for everyone. And over time, your interest in these types of investments may well change — for example, as you near retirement, you may want to consider shifting some of your growth-oriented investments into income-producing ones, though you'll still need some growth potential to keep up with inflation. In any case, the combination of income, diversification and stability provided by bonds and similar securities should be compelling enough for you to find a place for them in your investment mix.

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

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**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 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.

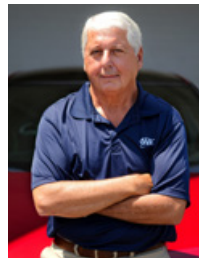
**Q.** I am wondering if you can recommend a good steering wheel lock seat belt lock to protect my 2019 Honda CRV? The rash of car thefts has me concerned so I thought a lock of this type would be an effective way to deter auto thefts. The main advantage is, it is easy to use and will not mar any of 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 that 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.*



BY JOHN PAUL

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TALES FROM BEYOND

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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



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

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 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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## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Community Yoga –Free Join local instructor Linda Davis for yoga at the library. All ages and levels are welcome. 9:45-10:45 a.m. Register.

Lego Club – Try out our weekly challenge or create your own design. 10-11:30 a.m.

Saturday Acoustic Roots Jam – SARJ. 12- 1:30 p.m. For acoustic instruments only. Open to all 18 +

Teen Volunteers: Valentines for Seniors. Need volunteer hours? Stop by to help make Valentines for seniors at The Overlook. 12:30 – 2:30 p.m. Register.

## MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12

Tiny Tots Storytime 10-10:45 a.m. This is a ticketed program. Join us for songs, fingerplays, board books, shakers, scarves, dancing and free play. For babies age 2.5 and older with a caregiver.

Baby Storytime (0 – 12 months) 11-11:45 a.m. for infants to 12 months only. Join us for board books, songs, fingerplays, lapsits, music, bubbles and free play.

Middle Grade Book Club (in-person and on Zoom) 4-4:30 p.m. Best for grades 5-8.

Yoga Class 5:30 – 7 p.m. Vinyasa yoga class; bring your own mat. Vigorous yoga practice.

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13

9:45 – 10:45 a.m. Yoga for Seniors with Linda Davis. Ages 50 + are welcome. This class is offered by the Charlton Senior Center and funded by a Council on Aging grant.

Storytime for Ages 4 and 5. 10-10:45 a.m. Stories, scarves, songs, activities and free play.

Movie- “The Holdovers” 1 – 3:15 p.m. A 2024 Critics Choice Award winner. Run time 132 minutes. Second showing at 5:30 – 7:45 p.m.

Creative Writing for Teens 6-6:45 p.m. Best for ages 11 – 18. Registration is required.

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

Adult Hatha Yoga class 9:30 – 11 a.m. Traditional “on the mat” yoga class with 15 minutes relaxation at the end. Bring your own mat.

Storytime for Ages 2 and 3, 10 – 10:45 a.m.

D & D for Teens This is not an expert group – just learning how to play together. 3:30 -4:30 p.m.

Adult Hatha Yoga Class – 5:30 – 7 p.m.

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15

Yoga for Seniors with Linda Davis 9:40 – 10:40 a.m.

Silver Needles Knit/Crochet Group 1 – 3 p.m. Meets every Thursday in the Sibley’s Reading area. Bring your current project or

swing by for some assistance and conversation.

The Alzheimer’s Caregiver Support Group led by professionals and experienced caregivers. WE offer information, resources and strategies.

Board of Library Trustees monthly meeting 6:30 – 8 p.m.

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16

Young Scientists Stem Program, 10 – 10:45 a.m. For ages 3-6 years. Free, in-person program facilitated by STEM Beginnings and hosted by the library. Registration is required.

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17

Lego Club for ages 5 -12. From 10 - 11:30 a.m.

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Yoga for Seniors with Linda Davis. 9:45 – 10:45 a.m.

Movie: “The Hunger Games: the Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes.” 1 – 3:45 p.m.

Coriolanus Snow mentors and develops feelings for the female District 12 tribute during the 10th Hunger Games. Runtime 157 minutes.

Movie: “The Hunger Games: the Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes.” 5- 7:45 p.m.

Crunchyroll Club. For those who love anime. We’ll be watching anime and chatting about Manga and other fandoms. Best for tweens and teens ages 10 + . Registration is required.

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Teen Felting Class. Learn how to bring a penguin to life with a unique crafting experience. Easier than it looks and relaxing, too. 10 – 11:30 a.m. For ages 13-19. Register.

Dinosaur Dig! 10 – 10:45 a.m. Excavate a dino from a clay egg. Each participant will receive a clay egg, chisel and brush. Chip away to discover a dinosaur to take home. For Age 5 – 10 . Registration required.

Wednesday , February 21

Death Café – from 1 – 3 p.m. join us for a group-directed discussion on death with no agenda, objectives or course of action, no set conclusions and no judgment. It’s an opportunity to share, explore and questions our perceptions of death. It’s not a bereavement session, just an open conversation that we often find taboo. Share as much or as little as you wish.

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22

Yoga for Seniors with Linda Davis, 9:40—10:40 A.M.

Reading To Penny the Dog 10-10:15 a.m. Register.

Reading To Penny the Dog 10:30 -10:45 a.m. Register.

Silver Needles Knit/Crochet Group, 1 – 3 p.m.

Family Retro Gaming – Free Play! 1 – 4 p.m.

Sensory-Friendly Storytime, 6-6:45 p.m. Register.

CULE Charlton Ukulele League and Ensemble, 6- 8 p.m.

Organize Your Digital Files, 6 – 7 p.m. Register.

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23

Critical Thinking Discussion Group, - “Othello” by William Shakespeare. From 1- 2 pm.

Crafternoon for Kids, 3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Saturday, February 24

Lego Club 10 – 11:30 a.m.

Family Movie – “Trolls Band Together.” From 1 – 2:30 p.m.

Monday, February 26

Open Play for Tiny Tots, no Storytime program, 10 – 10:45 a.m.

Open play for babies (0- 12 months) No Storytime program.

11- 11:45 a.m.

Yoga Class, 5:30 – 7 p.m.

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27

Yoga for Seniors 9:45 – 10:45 a.m.

Open Play for ages 3 – 5 years. 10 – 10 :45 a.m. No Storytime

Movies 1 – 3 p.m. “Priscilla.”

Movies 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. “Pris-

cilla.”

Just Craftin’ Around from 6-7 p.m.

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Adult Hatha Yoga 9:30 – 11 a.m. D & D for Teens, 3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Pokemon Club 4- 4:30 p.m.

Register.

Adult Hatha Yoga, 5:30 – 7 p.m.

Thursday, February 29

Yoga for Seniors ,9:40 – 10:40 a.m.

Silver Needles, Knit/Crochet 1 – 3 p.m .



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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](mailto:news@theyankeeexpress.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](mailto: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](mailto:jas2155@charter.net); Jackie Walsh at [jackmae@charter.net](mailto: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@cwmares.org](mailto:douglas@cwmares.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](http://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](http://blackstonevalley.org) or contact: [loneil@blackstonevalley.org](mailto: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

**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.

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## Sheriff Evangelidis Celebrates Many Milestones at Webster Regional Resource Center

On January 25th, 2024, Sheriff Lew Evangelidis and the Worcester County Sheriff's Office Webster Regional Resource Center celebrated the graduation of three students who passed the High School Equivalency Test (HiSET). The event also featured a keynote speech by Chief Probation Officer Nilza Sylvestre, who delivered an impactful message. Moreover, the event marked the retirement of the center's founding Director, Byron Titus, who served for nine years.

Clients become involved with the Regional Resource Center by voluntarily seeking services or through a court order. In addition to educational opportunities, Regional Resource Center Staff assist individuals who have been or are currently involved with the justice system. Various services include assistance with finding employment, housing, and health insurance. The center also offers programs, including addiction recovery and mental health assistance.

Byron Titus, Director of the Webster Regional Resource Center, opened the graduation ceremony by welcoming guests and congratulating the three graduates on completing years of hard work.

Titus reassured the graduates that, "The Regional Resource Center staff will always be here to support you. This center will be here until you are

settled and totally satisfied with whatever you choose to achieve."

Nilza Sylvestre, Chief Probation Officer at the Dudley District Court, was the ceremony's guest speaker. In her remarks, Sylvestre recalled the struggles of her own family growing up. Sylvestre explained to the crowd that she is a first-generation American, the daughter of two immigrants. Sylvestre became the first in her family to not only graduate high school but also to earn a bachelor's and master's degree. Sylvestre concluded her comments by reassuring the graduates that they can achieve their goals as they transition from the Webster Resource Center and on to their next endeavors.

"The staff at the Webster Regional Resource Center can only help those who want to help themselves," commented Sheriff Evangelidis. "You all have proven your dedication to furthering your education and elevating your life. Education is unassailable, and this achievement cannot be taken from you. Today is a milestone and should set the tone for the rest of your lives."

Thursday's graduation was a turning point for the Webster Regional Resource Center. Byron Titus, longtime Director of the center, retired from his role at the Sheriff's Office. After nine years, Titus bid farewell to the last round of clients

who completed the program under his guidance.

Evangelidis referenced Titus' departure during his remarks. The Sheriff recalled a conversation about building such a center in Webster over a decade ago.

"It was Byron who shared my dream of what this center could be," commented Evangelidis. "My goal was to make this center a community center, a true asset to southern Worcester County. We built this place from the ground up. Our team has and will continue to serve the residents of Worcester County."

Over the past decade, Titus has been responsible for the center's expansion. What started as only 12 client referrals from probation, has amounted to over 170 referrals and services provided to hundreds of walk-in clients. Titus has continually advocated for the addition of programs and services. Under his leadership, the Webster Resource Center staff have positively impacted the lives of countless community members.

Titus has handed over the reins of the center to Erica Jajliardo, who previously served as the center's Assistant Director.

To learn more about how the Worcester County Sheriff's Office Webster Center may be able to assist you, please call 508-640-5044.

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