

One Stop Travel Planning with TNT

BY PATTY ROY

Whether you yearn for fun in the sun, the cultured capitals of Europe or discovering a hidden gem off the beaten paths, TNT Cruise Planners is the agency to consult.

TNT (which could stand for its franchisees Tom Hansen 'n Ted Goulet, but doesn't) is the largest home-based travel agency in the world for 18 years running, according to Ted. They are celebrating 10 years in business this year and during that time have lived through the heady days of the cruise ship vacation boom and weathered the travel shut-down we all remember as Covid.

And they've emerged with a full range of vacations for many destinations and price points. Family vacations, birthday celebrations, bachelor/bachelorette parties and group adventure, Tom and Ted have something for you.

"With a name like Cruise Planners, we do a lot of cruises, but the majority of travel for our clients is land," Ted said. "So, of course, we will show you the ocean boats, river and small boats for cruises,



but we have a lot of other trips we book."

What has changed from their early days is that many vacations are now multi-generational.

"It's the grandparents, kids and grandkids - we're doing a family trip. We're all going to Italy; we're all going to France. We're all going on a safari. We're all doing this magnificent cruise," he said.

That works for big friends groups vacations, too, he said. "You've got seven or eight couples who want to rent an island? This is what you pay."

The increase in small group travel is a difference from 10 years ago, Ted and Tim said. They are currently working with a Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce group visiting Ireland later this fall.

Group trips can be very reasonably priced, he said. A booking agent can help you wade through the details of booking package vacations - are excursions included, do you have to take a bus for two

TNT

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Nordic-American Musician performing at Asa Waters

The Friends of the Millbury Public Library are pleased to host Sofia Talvik, an Americana artist who infuses folk music with her Swedish roots. The program will be held at 7 p.m. in the Great Room at the Asa Waters Mansion on Wednesday, May 8 at 123 Elm Street. Tickets are available at: zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/dda91a5f-8e8c-440b-b24e-3ffa9d-980bd9. Ticket Price: \$29.

Proceeds from this event will go toward programming and support for the Millbury Public Library

programs.

Originally from Sweden, Sofia Talvik has traveled 48 states in the U.S., blending her Nordic roots with American folk traditions to create a truly unique musical experience. Her performances are marked by engaging narratives and captivating melodies, enchanting audiences wherever she performs.

Expressing her anticipation for the event, Sofia shared, "I'm thrilled to be performing at Asa Waters Mansion. It's always special to connect with audiences in intimate settings, and I can't wait to share my music with the community in Millbury."

Sofia's latest album, released in 2023, received widespread acclaim and was considered for a Grammy nomination in the Best Folk Album category. Her songs, filled with heartfelt narratives and crafted melodies, resonate deeply with listeners of all backgrounds.

Unmistakably Nordic in flavor, Sofia Talvik still conforms to American interpretations of her own original music, a North Sea siren blending the darkening melancholy and wave-top sparkle of northern seas.

MUSIC

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Millbury Town Meeting slated for May 7

The meeting will take place at Millbury High School, 12 Martin Street. at 7 p.m. check-in begins at 6 p.m. Also, the Annual Town Election will take place on Tuesday, April 30, 2024 from 7am-8pm in the Millbury High School Gym, 12 Martin Street.

Voters will act on a General Fund budget looking to raise and appropriate \$56.8 million as well as borrowing \$2.2 million for two fire trucks. Another article also looks to borrow \$400K for paving at the Millbury/Howe

Avenues intersection.

A group of articles falling under the "Capital Consent" agenda will ask to transfer from Free Cash \$500K for cemetery expansion, \$150K for school technology, a fire panel at Elmwood Elementary School at \$100K, Senior Center HVAC upgrades at \$90K, fire personal protective gear at \$88K and real estate revaluation expenses at \$75K among other transfers.

The Capital Consent agenda is way to streamline town meeting and make it more inviting to voters

by grouping warrant articles for a single vote. This should shorten the length of the meeting while leaving all articles open to debate from the floor if voters should call for it. Consent agenda articles are clearly marked on the warrant. They are those that the Board of Selectmen, Town Counsel, Moderator, and Finance Committee, agree generate no controversy and can be properly voted without debate. The purpose of a Consent Agenda is to allow motions under these articles to be voted upon as one unit and to be

passed without debate.

At the call of each Consent Agenda, the Moderator will announce the number of each article. If one or more voters object to including any particular article in the Consent Agenda, they should say the word "Hold"

in a loud voice when the number is called. The Article will then be removed automatically from the Consent Agenda and restored to its original place in the Warrant, to be debated and voted upon in the usual manner.

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TNT

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hours to get to Rome, is there a wine-tasting included?

River cruises may detour depending on whether the water levels run low or high and TNT Cruise Planners can help you with that. They are totally familiar with all the variations of planning. Planned travel can easily move you from one boat to another if river conditions make it so your boat cannot safely travel under a bridge.

That's what a travel planner does for you – can your schedule accommodate changes? Are you looking for a big Cadillac and is this tour squishing you into a Volkswagen?

These days, Alaska is a very popular destination. And TNT may have space on popular lines that cruise the Caribbean when they appear to be sold out.

"Every month with various travel parts, whether it's land or sea or rivers, we always have some sort of exclusive and special offer that's going on," Ted said.

This might be a percentage off or a free night on land. There might

be a value added kind of deal," he said. These could be round-trip transfers or an extra night.

Most people are used to doing things online, but the cruise guys will do Zoom meeting or meet up locally with their clients.

"We like to get to know our clients," said Tim. He and Tom agreed that the biggest regret that they've met among clients "we didn't vacation as much as I wanted," he said.

There are "bucket list" travelers as well. Nobody ever said they wish they had spent more time in the office, they agreed.

"They're traveling retirees and they're taking the trips they've always wanted," he said.

People who haven't traveled a lot before can best be assisted by TNT.

"people are more conscientious about the environment. They don't mind receiving things electronically – they're more used to it now."

TNT will still provide their clients with documents "in hand" because "what if my phone dies?" Ted suggested.

For a family vacation, the dream of a lifetime or long-awaited couple or group sojourn, call tntguys.travel.com

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Willard House & Clock Museum to Receive a \$15 Million Gift

Museum trustee Charles N. Grichar of Houston, Texas pledged the gift to help the museum grow into a world-class assemblage of clocks and related horological exhibits.

The museum plans to build a space to accommodate 90 additional clocks with storage, a small auditorium, horological library, conservation workshops and classrooms.

For its part, the museum must raise \$3 million for its endowment to make the gift a reality.

The Willard House and Clock Museum has already benefited

from generous contributions from its trustees, added funding from major Worcester-based foundations, and contributions from benefactors and other sources. Two foundations have offered matching funds to grow the endowment.

Willard House & Clock Museum has passed its 50 year mark, carrying on its mission to preserve, display and connect through education and research, the contributions of the Willard Family of clockmakers and support the wonder and science of horology.

The museum will be holding a special public event on its grounds,



on Saturday, April 27 from 12- 4 p.m. Grichar and the trustees will be introduced to the community.

The public will learn about the vision for the new collection and building, take in feedback on the

plan and raise funds for the museum endowment.

MUSIC

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Sofia is a veteran performer with nine full-length albums as well as numerous EPs, singles and tours behind her.

Primarily a live artist, Talvik has taken her music across Europe and through 48 U.S. states, riding in her 1989 Winnebago Warrior with her husband at the wheel, digging deep into the American sound and channeling it through her Nordic roots to create a singular brand of Americana. While her Swedish roots serve as the basis for her songwriting, she often calls upon her many journeys and experiences for inspiration, especially the uniquely American archetype of roaming the endless highway.

Here are a few questions we had for Sofia:

Q: Who are some of your influences, for both your songwriting

and your live performances?

I listen to a lot of different kind of music. Some of my favorites are Neko Case, Valerie June and Aimee Mann. Influences for me come rather from what I see and experience than other music. It's a way for me to express my thoughts and feelings.

Q: *Has a tour stop or scenery in New England ever inspired a song?*

Right now I can't say I have any songs that were written with New England in mind, but I do have many songs about the beauty of the USA.

Q: *How does touring in the US compare to touring Europe?*

One thing that's a big aspect is the language, of course. Everywhere you go in Europe, people speak different languages, so for me that also does some storytelling in between the songs, it can be hard if I don't know the language,

or if the audience doesn't understand English very well. But I would say that the love for culture and music is similar in Europe and the USA. That's easier in the U.S. as everyone speaks the same language. Often, I also have to drive longer distances here, but that depends on which area I'm in.

Q: *How has touring in an RV influenced your songwriting and stage show?*

Touring in an RV enables me to

experience so much more than if I would just be touring in a car or a van. If I have days off, I can go explore and camp in nature, maybe check out a National Park or state park. It also makes it easier for me to visit smaller cities to do shows, which is always a treat.

At Sofia's performance, you will be up close and personal with a world-class act that has played big festivals like Lollapalooza and SxSW, and opened for artists like Maria McKee and David Ducho-

vny (X-files, Californication). It is in this kind of setting where she can casually joke and communicate with the audience that her strength as a performer shines the most.

Her four month 50-plus concert release tour throughout the country is promoting her ninth studio album "Center of the Universe." The album was recorded over a week in an old Swedish rural village that has been around since the 1500's.

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Local Chefs use Girl Scout Cookies as Main Ingredient in the 'Sweetest' Culinary Competition

Sample Sweet and Savory Masterpieces While Supporting Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts

Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts is pleased to announce the return of its Fork It Over fund-

raising event at a new venue, Top of the Tower, on May 9, 2024. The annual Girl Scout Cookie culinary competition features

some of the region's top chefs creating unique sweet and savory dishes using favorites like Thin Mints®, Samoas® and Do-si-dos® and presenting their creations to attendees and a distinguished panel of judges.

This year's chefs include those from: Bri's Sweet Treats, The Burgah Bar, Figsfood Portuguese Cuisine, Hilltop Restaurant at Bay Path RVTHS, Little Havana, Mozelle's Sweet Shoppe, Pastry Chef Medina, Simply Delicious Catering, and Unique Café.

The panel of judges who will determine the winners in both "Sweet" and "Savory" categories are Barbara Houle of the Worcester Telegram & Gazette; Attorney Rubby Wuabu, Policy and Cabinet Affairs Liaison for Governor Maura Healey; Natalie Rodriguez, CEO of To Life Enterprises and talented chef; Patrick Baliva, Executive Sales Director at Saint-Gobain, and Dr. Marlina Duncan,

Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion at UMass Chan Medical School. Attendees will vote for a People's Choice™ favorite.

The event is emceed by veteran radio show host Jen Carter, co-host of The XLO Morning Show and will feature live musical entertainment performed by Newport Ave., bar services by Simply Delicious Catering, and a raffle with local and regional items including a New England Patriots pre-season game tickets and behind-the-plate Worcester Red Sox tickets, a one night stay at the Charles Hotel in Cambridge including breakfast for two at Henrietta's Table paired with other local Boston attractions, a private wine class for 20 hosted by Total Wine, a Central Massachusetts Restaurant Gift Card bundle, and many more items.

The event runs from 5:30 to 7:30 PM at Top of the Tower,

446 Main St., Worcester. Tickets are \$60 each and are available at <https://www.gscwm.org/en/support-us/donate-locally/events/fork-it-over.html> or by calling 508-365-0115. All proceeds benefit Girl Scouts and their continuing efforts to provide innovative programs and vital support to girls in grades K-12 throughout central and western Massachusetts.

Sponsors include: Saint-Gobain, The Hanover Insurance Group, Women's Initiative-United Way of Central MA, Country Bank, UMass Chan Medical School, Central One Credit Union, Middlesex Savings Bank, Cornerstone Bank, Tinsley Financial Group, CSR Financial, Fallon Health, Stowe & Degon, St. Mary's Credit Union, Main Street Bank, and Leominster Credit Union.

For more information: Jess Hamilton jhamilton@gscwm.org, or 508-365-0115, x3623.

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Grafton History Award Presentation

The Grafton Historical Society will present the 2024 Grafton History Award to Michael F. Goulet at this year's annual meeting on Friday, May 3 at the Post Office Pub.

Goulet, a life-long Grafton resident, is being honored for his dedication to the town of Grafton. Friends and family are invited to the Friday, May 3 dinner at the Post Office Pub, 6 Ray Street, North Grafton, in the atrium room at 5:30 p.m. A buffet meal of house salad, bread and butter, herb roasted chicken, haddock, steak tips, oven roasted potatoes and a mixed vegetable melody will be served at 6 p.m. A selection of desserts will

be offered to go with coffee as the gathering moves into the business meeting. A cash bar will be available throughout the evening. For reservations, please call 508-839-0000 and leave a contact number, email grafftonmahistory@gmail.com or send \$50 to Grafton Historical Society, P. O. Box 218, Grafton, MA 01519 with name and contact information. Gluten-free choices are available at this event as well.



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Time for financial spring cleaning?



Mark Freeman

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Spring is almost here, which means it's time for some spring cleaning. This year, in addition to tidying your home and surroundings, you might want to consider sprucing up your financial environment, as well.

Here are some suggestions for doing just that:

- **Improve your vision.** Once the days are warmer and longer, you may want to get outside and clean all the winter grime

and smudges from your windows, allowing you to see the world more clearly. And you may want to bring more focus to your financial vision by asking some key questions: Is my investment strategy still appropriate for my needs, goals and family situation? If not, what changes should I make? And am I prepared for changes in my life, such as health challenges or a need to retire earlier than planned? The answers to these and other questions can help you clarify where you are, in terms of your financial picture, and where you want to go.

- **De-clutter.** As you look around your home, you may find things such as expired health care products, old prescriptions, ancient cleaning solutions, and so on, in addition to duplicate household items (how many blenders do you really need?) and non-working equipment — printers, laptops, etc. Most people find that eliminating this clutter

gives them a good feeling — and more livable space. As an investor, you can also find clutter in the form of redundant investments — for example, you might own several nearly identical mutual funds. You might be better off selling some of these funds and using the proceeds to find new investments that can help you further diversify your portfolio. As you may know, diversification is a key to investment success, but keep in mind that it can't prevent all losses.

- **Plant seeds of opportunity.** Whether they're planting camellias and crocuses or carrots and cilantro, gardeners are busy in the spring, hoping their efforts result in lovely flowers and tasty foods. And when you invest, you, too, need to plant seeds of opportunity in the form of investments that you hope will grow enough to enable you to make progress toward your goals. So, you may want to review your portfolio to ensure

it's providing this growth potential, given your individual risk tolerance.

- **Reduce dangers.** You may not think about it that much, but your home and surroundings can contain potential hazards. You might have ill-fitting caps on cleaning products with toxic chemicals, or sharp cutting instruments protruding from shelves in your garage, or heavy, cracked tree branches hovering close to your roof. Spending some time on a spring-cleaning sweep can get rid of these dangers — and devoting time to consider the possible threats to your financial security, and those of your family, can pay off, too. For starters, review your life insurance to determine if you've got enough. Your employer may offer some coverage as an employee benefit, but it might not be sufficient, so you may need private coverage. And the same is true for disability insurance, because

if something were to happen to you, and you couldn't work for a while, you'd still want to protect your family's lifestyle.

Spring is a great time for brightening your physical space — and your financial one, too.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor.

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

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BVT Students Earn 94 SkillsUSA Medals at District V Competition

36 Gold, 27 Silver, 31 Bronze, and 9 Sweeps

Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT) students put the systems voc-tech mission on full display. During the first of three SkillsUSA competitions, students test their vocational-technical competency by competing with other trained career and technical education students from six vocational high schools. On March 13th, 227 BVT students competed in the annual SkillsUSA Massachusetts District V Competition with outstanding outcomes.

The competition allows students to demonstrate their vocational-technical education, skills, and knowledge with SkillsUSA employment and trade tests. Successfully demonstrating their knowledge in their career technical area of study, employability skills, and safety. Student competitors from BVT proudly claimed 36 gold, 27 silver, 31 bronze medals and swept 9 categories.

68 students will advance from

districts to compete amongst the most talented vocational-technical students in the Commonwealth at the SkillsUSA Massachusetts State competition held at BVT in late April. An additional 43 students will go directly to the state competition, and 13 student delegates will represent BVT. The complete list of medalists is available at www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/skillsusa.

BVT students who earned medals at the SkillsUSA Massachusetts District V Leadership Conference are listed by hometown:

BELLINGHAM

Silver: Charlie Leighton, Major Appliance Technology; Kiele Sarnie, Carpentry; Lucien Stenehjem, Robotics & Automation Tech; and Tan Tran, Restaurant Service.

Bronze: Pyper Bourre, Health Knowledge Bowl; and Matthew Skarin, Welding.

BLACKSTONE

Gold: Haley McKinnon, Photography; and Carolyn Powers, Collision Damage Appraisal.

Silver: Mia DelVecchio, Baking & Pastry Arts; and Ella Ruth, Welding.

Bronze: Paige Connolly, Baking & Pastry Arts; Parker Guilbert, Nail Care; and Samaria Saylor, Web Design.

DOUGLAS

Gold: Caitlin Kelly, First Aid/CPR; Om Patel, Mobile Robotics Technology; Samantha Pinto, Health Knowledge Bowl; and Skyler Robinson, Restaurant Service.

Silver: Colin Lavoie, Photography.

Bronze: Addison Taylor, Nurse Assisting.

GRAFTON

Silver: Connor Mcinerney, HVAC/R; Cooper Often, Mechatronics; Owen O'Packi, Television (Video) Production; Ryan St. Angelo, Culinary Arts.

Bronze: Audrey Bell, Robotics & Automation Tech; Zoey Dauderis,

Basic Health Care; Isabella Grabau, Power Equipment Technology; Soumith Madadi, Computer Programming; and Benjamin Miller, Urban Search & Rescue.

HOPEDALE

State Officer Candidate: Kallie Allen.

Gold: Gabriella Griffin, Health Knowledge Bowl; and Joshua Maillet, Diesel Equipment Technology.

Silver: Jason Abbruzzese, Mobile Robotics; and Igor Freeman, Additive Manufacturing.

Bronze: John Fumia, Television (Video) Production; Ashlyn Leonard, Health Knowledge Bowl; Eleanor Poitras, Health Knowledge Bowl; and Mikayla Sanosi, Web Design.

MENDON

Gold: Kalynn Bellefontaine, Nurse Assisting; Noah LeFave, Electronics Technology; Leila Leyvas, Health Knowledge Bowl; Abigail Scharnagle, Medical Math; and Arthur Tusoni, Television (Video) Production.

Bronze: Sophia Blalock, Cosmetology Over 500 Hours; and Charles Lozeau, Mobile Robotics Technology.

MILFORD

Gold: Lacey Coffman, Advertising Design; and Lizmary Vidal-Sanchez, Dental Assisting.

Silver: Andrew Dolan, Basic Health Care.

Bronze: Julia Ribeiro, Esthetics.

MILLBURY

Gold: Camden Darrell, CNC 2 Axis Turning Programmer; Mason Diosomito, Mechatronics; Dylan Fleming, Major Appliance Technology; and Jayden Quang, Mechatronics.

Silver: Jack Kenary, Television (Video) Production.

Bronze: Nicole Boucher, Health Knowledge Bowl; Wyatt Darrell, Mechatronics; Jonathan Tremblay, Diesel Equipment Technology

BVT

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Millbury Annual Town Election

April 30 7 a.m. – 8 p.m.
at Millbury Memorial Junior/
Senior High School

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Two three-year seats (vote for two)
Katherine M. McKenna 28
Miles Street candidate for re-election
Francis P. Desimone
1 Weldon Drive
Daniel R. Jakes 65
Canal Street, 115
Nicholas John Lazzaro 9
Jaclyn Rae Drive
Amy M. Paquette-Riordan
146 Wheelock Avenue

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Two three-year seats (vote for two)
Christopher Wilbur
228 Main Street candidate for re-election
Kristen M. Birch
45 Burbank Street

Sean Michael Cooper
238 W. Main Street

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

One one-year seat (vote for one)
Open seat

BOARD OF ASSESSORS

One three-year seat (vote for one)
Jonathan M. Cammuso 6
Jacques Parkway candidate for re-election

PLANNING BOARD

Two three-year seats (vote for two)
Francis P. Desimone
1 Weldon Drive candidate for re-election
Paul A. Piketelis 38
Braney Road candidate for re-election
Terry Burke Dotson
20 Salo Terrace

BOARD OF HEALTH

One three-year seat (vote for one)
John H. Dufresne
44 Rayburn Drive

LIBRARY TRUSTEES

Two three-year seats (vote for two)
Carol F. Burke
4 Brenda Drive
Keith A. St. Denis
84 Auburn Road

RE-DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Two five-year seats (vote for two)
Alecia Marie Cox Miller 11
Middleton Street
Harold F. Proodian
1 Lakeview Road

MODERATOR

One three-year seat (vote for one)
Open seat

BVT

continued from page 6

MILLVILLE

Bronze: Hannah Murphy, Photography.

NORTHBRIDGE

Gold: Sosie Derkosroffian, Medical Terminology; Catherine Kingsbury, Customer Service; Dylan Leeds, Mobile Robotics Technology; Kayla Leppamaki, Robotics & Automation Tech; and Emma Vaughan, Baking & Pastry Arts.

Silver: Kayla Chausse, Cosmetology Under 500 Hours; Zabel Derkosroffian; Technical Computer Applications; Haley Marston, Dental Assisting; and Connor Mcquilkiln, Automotive Refinishing Technology.

Bronze: Maddison Dos Santos, HVAC/R; and Mikaela Sadik, Television (Video) Production.

SUTTON

Gold: Caroline Martin, Additive Manufacturing.

Silver: Alexandra Nunnemacher, Painting & Design Technology

Bronze: Benjamin Hicks, Electronics Technology.

UPTON

Gold: Cassidy Lyon, Health Knowledge Bowl; and Ryan Poirier, CNC 3 Axis Milling Programmer.

Silver: Justin Fransen, Mechatronics; and Laith Shloul, Telecommunications Cabling.

Bronze: Ryan May, Urban Search & Rescue; and Van Richard,

Mobile Robotics Technology

Dylan Ryan, Mechatronics; Roan Tajiani, Major Appliance Technology; and Stephanie Zaitoun, Robotics & Automation Tech.

UXBRIDGE

Gold: Caterina Corapi, Robotics & Automation Tech; Samuel Kirby, Telecommunications Cabling; Brendan Knox, Cosmetology Under 500 Hours; Matteo Lame, Power Equipment Technology; Samantha Makynen, Additive Manufacturing; Cole Pinchuck, HVAC/R; Joshua Thompson, Television (Video) Production; Eli Tripp, Culinary Arts; and Samuel Waugh, Electrical Construction Wiring.

Silver: Kali Bly, Cosmetology Over 500 Hours; Jacob Giancola, Robotics & Automation Tech; Avery Herrick, Advertising Design; Makaylah Holzman, Additive Manufacturing; and Daniel Noel, Mobile Robotics.

Bronze: Breanna Donahue, Telecommunications Cabling;

About Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School

Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School serves the towns of Bellingham, Blackstone, Douglas, Grafton, Hopedale, Mendon, Milford, Millbury, Millville, Northbridge, Sutton, Upton, and Uxbridge. Located in the heart of the Blackstone Valley, BVT creates a positive learning community that prepares students for personal and professional success in an internationally competitive society through a fusion of rigorous vocational, technical, and academic skills.

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Grafton FY Budget Message

In accordance with Article 6-3 of the Grafton Home Rule Charter, Town Administrator Evan Brassard wrote that he was pleased to present the Fiscal Year 2025 Balanced Budget, which incorporates information regarding revenue projections (both state aid and local receipts) and department expenditure requests.

As Grafton enters FY2025, it continues to maintain a secure financial future and an AA+/Strong Bond Rating. Despite the unexpected cost increases and decreases in State Aid over the past year the FY25 Budget is balanced and does not see a reduction in any services. This is due, in large part, to the work of dedicated Town Staff over the past year to address many of the short-term influences on the budget, and our overarching priorities.

SHORT TERM FACTORS

Increases in the cost of Health Insurance remain a major factor in balancing any municipal budget. In FY24, the Town joined the Massachusetts Strategic Health Group (MSHG) which is a conglomerate of Towns in Massachusetts purchasing Health Insurance as a block to reduce

costs. Joining MSHG helped to lower our projected increase from upwards of 9%, down to 5.3%. While this increase still had an impact on the budget, it was lower than originally anticipated, and therefore easier to absorb.

While Health Insurance remains a short-term factor that impacts our expenditures, our dedicated staff is always taking action to bring in one time revenue to address these types of issues. In FY23, Grafton received almost \$2.8 Million in one time Grant Funding. At the time of writing this message, January 2024, the Town has been awarded almost \$700,000 in Grant Money. These funds allow us to pursue studies, fund programs, and complete projects, that would otherwise be overlooked while building the budget. Because of our staff's proven track record in applying for and receiving grants, we are able to make taxpayer dollars go further.

PRIORITIES AND ISSUES

Priority – Maintain Override Capacity

When the Town passed an Override in 2019, the vote was taken with the goal in mind to make the additional funds last five

years. As we enter year five, we are happy to report that the funds have lasted for the desired period of time. This was done while continuing to meet our Departmental needs to adequately deliver services to Grafton Residents.

Priority – Fund Schools Competitively

Town Administration and the Superintendent have worked closely to ensure that our School System continues to receive the funding it needs to deliver quality services. Increases in the Cost of Living and expenses in the department posed a difficult problem for the FY25 budget, but through close collaboration between the Town and Schools, the Department is getting what it needs. This close working relationship will ensure that the Schools will continue to function at a high level, and deliver quality services to our young residents.

Priority – Public Safety

In FY25 Grafton will hit its goal of bringing the Police Department up to the recommended staffing levels outlined by the FBI, by bringing on a 25th Officer. Additionally, there has been a greater push to recruit

members into the Grafton Fire Department. Adding staff to both of these departments ensures that Grafton Residents continue to be safe in their homes and receive a prompt response when calling emergency services.

Priority – Creating a Competitive Work Environment

There is a growing interest in Municipal Jobs in Massachusetts. Whether it's a student entering the workforce for the first time or someone looking to make a mid-career change, people are realizing that Municipal jobs are an exiting option. Being a competitive employer and offering attractive compensation packages, in both salary and benefits, will ensure Grafton is able to recruit talented staff members with the diverse skills needed to manage a municipality.

Issue – Waste Reduction and Hauling

The increasing cost of solid waste hauling and disposal remains an outstanding factor in many municipal budgets. While the cost increases present a potential issue for future budgets, the Town is taking proactive steps to reduce our overall

costs. In FY24, we spun up our first ever curbside composting program, and continue to have more households register every week. This program is going to go a long way in removing organics from the waste stream and keeping costs under control. The Town is also looking at a proposed increase in bag fees. An increase occurred in 2022, and in order to keep 50% of the program covered, another increase will be required.

Issues – Volatile State Funding and Cannabis Income

State revenue remains a volatile funding source, with a new administration with new priorities. Funding that was once guaranteed is now in a state of flux as we adjust to a new set of expectations. In addition to this, the State recently passed legislation that changed any Host Community Agreement towns had with cannabis facilities. This change led to a large reduction in the revenue we expected to see from these businesses. The Town will continue to take a conservative approach to these revenue sources to ensure the budget is balanced within a realistic frame of mind.



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FULL: \$299

(REGULARLY \$599)



<p style="font-size: x-small;">5 CU. FT. CHEST FREEZER</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">\$219⁹⁹</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">WAS \$299.99</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">FRIGIDAIRE DISHWASHER #7150</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">\$299⁹⁹</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">WAS \$599.99</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">18 CU. FT. REFRIGERATOR</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">\$549⁹⁹</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">WAS \$699.99</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">MAYTAG DISHWASHER #MDB4949SKZ</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">\$549⁹⁹</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">WAS \$849.99</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">STAINLESS STEEL BOTTOM FREEZER</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">\$899⁹⁹</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">WAS \$1295.99</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">DELUXE WHIRLPOOL WASHER</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">\$499⁹⁹</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">WAS \$699.95</p>
<p style="font-size: x-small;">FRIGIDAIRE SIDE-BY-SIDE REFRIGERATOR</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">\$999⁹⁹</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">WAS \$1,599.99</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">HOTPOINT WASHER OR DRYER</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">\$469⁹⁹</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">WAS \$599.99</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">MAYTAG DRYER OR WASHER</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">\$569⁹⁹</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">WAS \$699.99</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">WHIRLPOOL FRENCH DOOR BOTTOM FREEZER</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">\$1599⁹⁹</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">WAS \$2,699</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">10 CU. FT. CHEST FREEZER</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">\$499⁹⁹</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">WAS \$599.99</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">20 CUBIC FOOT UPRIGHT FREEZER</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">\$799⁹⁹</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">WAS \$999.95</p>
<p style="font-size: x-small;">LG TOP FREEZER 18 CU. FT.</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">\$699⁹⁹</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">WAS \$899.99</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">AMANA GAS RANGE #AGR1533CBAS • Stainless Steel</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">\$599⁹⁹</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">WAS \$699.99</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">GE FRONT LOAD WASHER #GFWSOSSNWW</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">\$749⁹⁹</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">WAS \$999.99</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">20 CU. FT. CHEST FREEZER</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">\$899⁹⁹</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">WAS \$1099.99</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">LG SMOOTH TOP ELECTRIC STOVE</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">\$729⁹⁹</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">WAS \$999.99</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">OVER THE RANGE MICROWAVE</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; color: red;">\$199⁹⁹</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">WAS \$279.99</p>

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BVCC Offers Free Master Classes for Women

BY PATTY ROY

The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce is invested in the success of women, notably through its Women's Success Network and is committed to helping

(when you're performing well but feel undeserving about your success) called "Who Do You Think You Aren't? Dismantling Imposter Syndrome."

Hahn is the head of DGC (Dirty Girls Consulting) and says her

who want to make a difference in their own lives first, and the lives of others. She is now pursuing a more caring path to help those "willing to dream big and design a life that focuses on women making themselves their number one priority."

"Inspire Inclusion" has been launched by the IWO as a way to celebrate diversity and empowerment throughout the year and throughout society. It encourages everyone to recognize the unique perspectives and contributions of women from all walks of life, including those from marginalized communities. It calls for action to break down barriers, challenge stereotypes, and create environments where all women are valued and respected.

The event is a master class series endorsing this concept; the classes will provide assessments, profiles, lectures and take-away information.

One of the key pillars of "Inspire Inclusion" is the promotion of diversity in leadership and decision-making positions. Women, especially those belonging to underrepresented groups, continue to face barriers when seeking leadership roles. By championing inclusion, organizations and communities can harness the full potential of diverse perspectives, leading to better decision-making and innovation.



Michelle Lemoi



Natalie Hahn

women achieve success through creating support and inspiration for their personal and professional lives. In conjunction with the International Women's Organization (IWO) theme for 2024, "Inspire Inclusion," the BVCC is creating a virtual event via Zoom that is open to the public.

To access the Zoom presentation, visit <https://blackstonevalley.org/> and follow the WSN Master-class tile to use the QR codes.

A class running on Wednesday, May 15 at 9 a.m. via Zoom, Natalie Hahn will lead a presentation addressing imposter syndrome

business came into being because she wanted to help women find "their purpose and their joy in life."

Communication, both at home and work has an enormous effect on our lives, she says. Because clarity in our sense of purpose and the way we choose to fill our days IS what fills our lives.

"Stand in Your Power - 3 Tools to Define Your Success & Inspire Inclusion" with Michelle Lemoi becomes available via Zoom on Tuesday, June 18 from 9-10:30 a.m.

Lemoi spent more than two decades in the construction industry and offers life coaching to those

Grafton Town Election

The annual Grafton town election will be held on Tuesday, May 21 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

- Vote for one Select Board member - three year term
- Vote for two Planning Board members - three year term
- Vote for three Board of Library Trustees - three year term
- Vote for one Housing Authority member - five year term



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Town Of Sutton Annual Town Election May 28

Board/Committee/Town Official	Number of positions and length of term
Town Moderator (One)	3 years
Select Board (Two)	3 Years
School Committee (Two)	3 Years
Planning Board (One)	3 Years
Library Trustee (One)	3 Years



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Spring Cleaning is Greener with Affordable Junk Removal

There are plenty of reasons to call a junk removal service. Maybe walking through your basement has gotten difficult or there is no more room in the attic? Perhaps you are planning to move, and you need to declutter before your open house?

Figuring out who to call can be challenging. If you contact one of the big haulers, they route you to a phone center where they've never even heard of your town, plus their pricing seems vague and full of extra fees. No wonder you've let the stuff pile up—it's too much of a hassle to get rid of it!

Or you can call Affordable Junk Removal and let a local small business with deep community roots take care of everything.

Jay Schadler started his business in 2005. Back then, it was just him and a beat-up pickup truck taking small jobs and working nights and weekends when he could. As the years rolled on, his business grew, but his commitment to customer service never wavered. Now he's got a staff of ten, along with eight trucks, servicing eastern and central Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island.

Affordable Junk Removal specializes in house and estate cleanouts. If your garage, attic, or office is overflowing with stuff, take back your space and let the pros do the heavy lifting.

Jay and his team have handled it all. They've dismantled above-ground pools, hauled away ancient

hot tubs, taken down old fencing, and stripped away worn carpeting. They'll come for a single item, or they'll clean out an entire house. And they can take almost anything. They can't accept hazardous materials, brush, dirt, or concrete, but everything else is fair game for them to take away.

Not everything ends up in a landfill—not if Jay can help it. He first tries to either recycle or donate items. Only after he tries to repurpose items do they end up at the transfer station.

Working with Affordable Junk Removal is simple. First, you can load stuff yourself if you want by renting a 15-cubic-yard dumpster for a week and chucking up to a ton of your unwanted stuff. If you need to get rid of more weight, then Jay prorates that tonnage—you never pay for what you don't use.

If you don't want to be bothered with the dumpster, they've also got a driveway special where they'll take away a truckload of your unwanted things if you pile it up. Or if you don't want to lift a finger, then you can point at the items, and the team will fill up their truck and haul away your unwanted things. However you do it, you're left with more space and



more peace of mind.

Jay and his team beat the big waste haulers on both price and customer service. When you call Affordable Junk Removal, you aren't connected to an anonymous call center. Your phone call goes right to Jay.

And speaking of pricing, Jay is upfront about it. His website shows the truck sizes and prices, so you can save time knowing your costs before you call for an appointment. There aren't any hidden costs or surprise fees with Affordable Junk Removal.

Affordable Junk Removal is fully licensed and fully insured, and they'll treat your property with care and respect.

They also have a thriving commercial business, working with contractors and roofers to clear away debris and keep the job site clean. They can even handle commercial and residential emergencies with

Business spotlight

same-day service.

Jay and his family are deeply involved in the community. He and his wife, Christine, run the Corner Market restaurant in Holliston. It's not uncommon for someone to reach Jay at the restaurant, order a sandwich, and then schedule a junk removal appointment. Yes, the local small business really can handle everything!

Contact Affordable Junk Removal and let a local small business take care of everything for you. Call Jay Schadler at (774) 287-1133 or visit us online at www.affordablejunkremoval.com.

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MASTER CLASS SERIES "INSPIRE INCLUSION"

Hosted by the BVCC's Womens Success Network

FREE & Open To The Public

The BVCC's WSN is excited to host a transformative master class series as we celebrate International Women's Day and Inspire inclusion. This virtual series is designed to help women from diverse backgrounds and business/career stages to explore the power of inclusion in their professional and personal lives. Stay tuned for more detailed information for each class!

"Breaking Barriers, Building Belonging, Empowering Women Through Inclusive Success" with Lynn Whitney-Turner

Wednesday, April 24, 2024
9:00am-10:30am | Virtual (ZOOM)

"Who Do You Think You Aren't? Dismantling Imposter Syndrome" with Natalie Hahn

Wednesday, May 15, 2024
9:00am-10:30am | Virtual (ZOOM)

"Stand in Your Power - 3 Tools to Define Your Success & Inspire Inclusion" with Michelle Lemoi

Tuesday, June 18, 2024
9:00am-10:30am | Virtual (ZOOM)

MEET OUR PRESENTERS

Lynn Whitney-Turner
Business Coach, Facilitator & People Analyst,
CEO COREXP Solutions

Natalie Hahn
DGC Consulting

Michelle Lemoi
Author & CEO of Elevate Women in Construction, LLC

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MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024 | 10:00AM

This major fundraising event for the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, BV Education Foundation and the BV Hub will fund essential programs to support students and schools in the Blackstone Valley. The mission of this tournament is to enrich education and strengthen leadership among students, teachers, businesses & communities in the Blackstone Valley.

Program of Events

- ★ 10:00AM Registration, Coffee, Raffle & Silent Auction Bidding Opens
- ★ 11:00AM Tee Time
- ★ 4:00PM Cocktails & hors d'oeuvres
- ★ 4:55PM Raffle & Silent Auction Closes
- ★ 5:00PM Buffet Dinner
- ★ 6:00PM Event Concludes/Auction Check-Out

Putting Contest on Practice Tee Throughout Tournament

Registration

\$250	Single Player
\$1,000	Foursome
\$100	Dinner & Programs Only <i>(Invite your Spouse or friends!)</i>

- ★ Lunch & Buffet Dinner included for all players
- ★ Swag Bag included for all players
- ★ Raffle prizes and silent auction items
- ★ Putting Contest! Chance to win a cash prize!

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To register, please visit our website or scan the QR Code

www.blackstonevalley.org/events

Community Harvest Project receives \$47,000 earmark in state budget for tractor purchase

Community Harvest Project (CHP), a non-profit farm that engages and educates volunteers to grow fruits and vegetables for hunger relief, welcomed state representatives to celebrate the purchase of a new tractor. The tractor will enhance CHP's Grafton

farm operations to more efficiently grow crops to supply 26 distribution partners who provide produce to Massachusetts residents experiencing hunger.

Second Worcester District State Sen. Michael Moore and Ninth Worcester District State Rep. David

Muradian championed the inclusion of the earmark to purchase the tractor in the FY24 state budget. "I'm thrilled that the funds Representative Muradian and I secured in the FY24 state budget are going to help bring hunger relief to families cross the Commonwealth

through the purchase of this tractor," said State Sen. Michael Moore (D-Millbury). "Community Harvest Project's mission to provide fresh, wholesome, and nutritious meals to people experiencing food insecurity is one that I could not be more proud to support. I'm looking forward to continuing our partnership in the future as we work to eliminate hunger in Massachusetts."

"We are extremely grateful that Representative Muradian and Senator Moore have made alleviating hunger in their district a priority," said Tori Buerschaper, CHP's Executive Director. "At a time when individuals are still struggling to make ends meet, strengthening

our emergency food resources is critical."

CHP's distribution partners include the Grafton Food Bank, the Worcester County Food Bank and its network of 115 hunger relief agencies, and the Greater Boston Food Bank.

"The purchase of this tractor represents a huge opportunity to increase the efficiency of our farming operation," said Dave Johnson, CHP's Manager of Farm Operations. "The addition of a fully capable, second tractor allows us to perform a greater variety of agricultural tasks in a shorter period of time -- this effectively doubles our capacity to perform field work operations."



From left: Edith Marie Gillespie (Community Harvest Project Assistant Farmer), Kristin Bafaro (Community Harvest Project Board President), Jeannie Hebert (Community Harvest Project Board Member and Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce President and CEO), Massachusetts Representative David Muradian, Tori Buerschaper (Community Harvest Project Executive Director), Massachusetts Senator Michael Moore, Brad Millar (Community Harvest Project Volunteer Coordinator)

Sutton Town Meeting May 13

Middle School/High School Auditorium, 383 Boston Road
Check-in begins at 6:30pm
Meeting starts promptly at 7pm

At the May 13 annual town meeting, voters will act on a \$38.9 million budget, 2.72 percent or just over one million dollars more than last year.

Town Manager James Smith estimated that the tax levy will raise \$29.5 million, while state aid will add \$6.6 million. Local receipts are expected to total \$2.4 million.

A transfer from the Capital Stabilization Fund in the amount

of \$234,673 and \$56,000 will come from free cash.

Budget recommendations for the following departments are:

Police \$2.4 million
Fire \$634K
Ambulance service \$103K
Sutton schools \$21.3 million (including Blackstone Valley Regional)

Highway department (snow & ice removal, street lighting, cemetery) \$1.2 million

Health and Human services \$387K

Library \$270,548
Recreation \$42,270

Insurance and benefits \$3.78 million

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ValleyCAST hosts a Yellow Tulip Garden Hope Day Celebration

ValleyCAST, the arts and culture arm of Open Sky Community Services, in collaboration with the Yellow Tulip Project will be hosting their annual Yellow Tulip Gardens Hope Day Celebration on Wednesday, May 1 from 1:00-3:00 PM at the Dennis H. Rice Community Plaza. This free event is a celebration of resilience, joy, wellbeing, and community and the public is welcome and encouraged to attend. If it rains,

the celebration will move indoors to the Singh Performance Center at the same location.

The Annual Hope Day Celebration brings people together to celebrate hope, smash the stigma around mental illness, and bring suicide prevention, mental health awareness, and resources for recovery to the community in anticipation of May is Mental Health Awareness Month. This year's celebration will feature live

music by The Blackstone Valley Quartet, a story of recovery by Christen Mahoney-Pick, wellness offerings, art making, resource information, and a chance to admire our yellow tulip Hope Garden in full bloom.

In collaboration with Yellow Tulip Project, ValleyCAST board members and staff, along with community members from the Whitin Community Center, Blackstone Heritage Corridor, and NOWA Peer Recovery Support Center, planted their first Yellow Tulip Hope Garden with 500 tulips at the Alternatives' Whitin Mill in the fall of 2020. This has since inspired the planting of yellow tulip gardens at the Whitin Community Center, The Rockdale Youth Center, Douglas Primary School, NOWA, the Whitinsville Town Common, Worcester City Hall, The Heartwell Institute, and as far away as the Town Common in Southbridge, MA.

After the Hope Day event, people are encouraged to take a short walk to the Whitin Community Center, 60 Main Street, Whitinsville MA and the Whitinsville Town Common to see three more yellow tulip Hope Gardens planted by the Whitin Community Center, the Women's Success Network, the local 4H Club, and Girls On The



Yellow Tulip Garden planting and blooming at The Alternatives' Whitin Mill

Run Worcester County with over 1500 yellow tulips planted in all.

The Yellow Tulip Project is a Maine based, youth driven, non-profit that is fiercely dedicated to suicide prevention, mental health stigma reduction, community building, and helping people know that there is help and hope out there ... one yellow tulip at

a time. To learn more about the Yellow Tulip Project and how to plant your own Yellow Tulip Hope Garden go to www.theyellowtulip-project.org.

To learn more about ValleyCAST and/or Open Sky Community Services and their events and services please visit openskycs.org.

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Please recognize the loss of 1.5 million Armenian Martyrs

April 24 marked the 109th commemoration of the Armenian Genocide. Our Armenian history is well-documented, save for a select few who seem to think that having a revisionist's view of history somehow changes it. On April 24, 1915, most Armenian doctors, educators, writers, intellectuals, lawyers and community leaders were rounded up and viciously

killed or forced into death marches. This massacre left over 1.5 million Armenian dead from the actions of Young Turk Government members.

Genocide across the world has had a profound effect, and there is no doubt that this was a horrific incident, encased in a horrid part of history. Unspeakable crimes, committed by undeserving-to-mention individuals, and by a com-

munity and government who still to this day overwhelmingly denies this history.

We must recognize the happenings of 109 years ago. Wounds heal, but scars certainly remain. The healing process truly begins when all involved take responsibility for their role. We will never be able to change what happened, but we can all help with continuing to educate, so that history never repeats itself.

Armenian-Americans and human rights supporters must continue to teach individuals of this history. We must take time to reflect and remember all our family and friends whose lives were taken. There is no mistake that we have a dark cloud hanging over our heritage due to horrific actions from others. However, we also have a ray of sunshine shining through, and that is our successes and survival.

Sincerely,
Proud Armenian-American
State Rep. David K. Muradian, Jr.
9th Worcester District
State House, Room 156
Boston, MA 02133
617-722-2240

Child Safety Fair

If you have young children who are in preschool or early school age, then mark your calendar for Saturday, May 4. The Moonlight Program in Practical Nursing is presenting a Child Safety Fair that promises to be fun and educational for your children. It's a free event that will be held 9:30 a.m. - 1: p.m. at Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School located at 65 Pleasant Street, Upton.

The Child Safety Fair will feature an interactive vehicle display which includes an Upton police cruiser to explore if the weather cooperates. The Practical Nursing students will be in the cafe annex sharing information with parents through engaging presentations on bicycle, car/booster seat, fire, backyard/playground, and water safety. The event also includes fun activities that will engage children and help them learn about safety.

The PN students are excited to meet you and give back to the community by providing helpful information about keeping children safe. If you or someone you know is interested in pursuing a new and exciting career, one of the Moonlight Programs at Blackstone Valley Tech might be a great fit. To learn more about these programs, visit www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/moonlightprograms

Hikes Through History with Alison O'Leary on May 5

A presentation on land-use change with the shift from an agrarian to industrial economy in Central Massachusetts Award-winning journalist

culture shifted with the Industrial Revolution, on Sunday, May 5, at 3 p.m. at the Samuel Slater Experience museum.

Ms. O'Leary will also take us on a tour of some of the many Massachusetts parks and trails that have been carved out of historical sites.

The author is a Massachusetts history buff and outdoorswoman who has published five books on history, hiking, and travel. Her presentations include stunning visuals, insights into the research involved, historical perspective and humor.

This free presentation is sponsored by the Webster Cultural Council. Please register at samuel Slater Experience.org or leave a message at admin@samuel Slater Experience.org or 508-461-2955.

Hikes Through History will be from 3 to 4 p.m. on Sunday, May 5, at the Samuel Slater Experience, 31 Ray Street, Webster. Visitors who also plan to tour the museum should arrive by 1 p.m.



Alison O'Leary will take a walk through history and describe how our use of land changed when America's agrarian economy and

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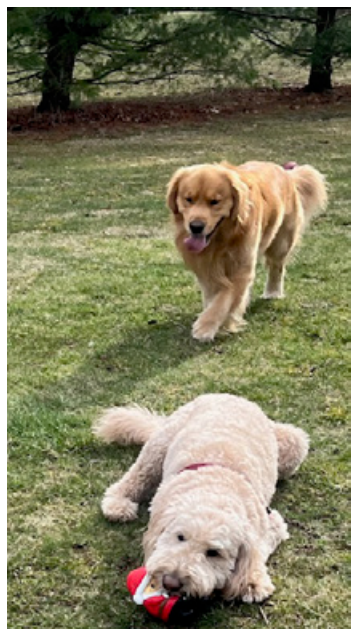
A Mother's Love

BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

Something was different. Something wasn't adding up. I'm never up at 5 a.m. Nor do I shuffle down the stairs carrying a bright yellow container. Luke lifted his nose and sniffed out the truth. My dental retainer case would be the last to reach my suitcase. "Where's Mom headed?" "I'll be back, Luke. I'll be back. I'm going to miss you so much." I kissed his head and embraced a bittersweet moment. I was headed for sunny Florida—no dog included. Would he be okay without me? Would the men of the household provide him with weekly playdates, surprise excursions and the daily assurance that he can sit outside on the front step as long as he's a good boy? "Daddy and Ben are going to stay with you, Luke." He lifted his nose, skeptical. Would they remember Luke's shows? I gazed out the window on the way to the airport. The sky was dark, unforgiving. I wasn't sup-

posed to be awake this early. The song "Don't Cry Out Loud" by Melissa Manchester, blared from the radio. Would Luke learn how to hide his feelings and keep it all inside? A lump settled in my throat. A dog will not leave our sides. Yet here I was leaving mine for a cheap stretch of sunshine.

A smooth flight led to an even smoother transition to the outdoors. Blue sky greeted me with a holiness that rallied New England greys. I felt optimistic about



Luke waits his turn

Palm Sunday and my pre-Easter vacation, while my parents pulled up to the sidewalk. We drove further away from home routines. Leisurely beach days gave way to dancing nights, poolside family reunions and sunny spirits. I followed Luke on his Instagram site (@livingwithlukevalentino) and sipped pina colodas. Luke offered up a virtual smile from his perch at a picnic table at Charlton's Treehouse Brewery. "Love you, Luke." I sighed. Life was good.

Until it wasn't The report rained down on me like a New England storm, four days following my kitchen departure. "Luke gets a D- today for his behavior with Rosie." Daddy's text was flat, lacking in tone.

Oh no! Luke has been an A student since he learned how to come when called at 8 weeks! Luke aims to please and is the most well-behaved of all my dogs! What happened? The tale of a dog unable to hide his feelings in the absence of his mother came to me through a series of elaborate text messages and one sorry phone call. Here's the story.

I had scheduled a playdate for Luke and Rosie at our house. Nothing new there. Rosie's Dog Mom, Kara, was one of Luke's favorite people. An energetic and



Rosie takes a turn with the Santa toy

kind-hearted schoolteacher, Kara typically manages playdates with a special dose of curriculum. She encourages turn-taking with outdoor toys, allows for competitive games of fetch, and stands by for rounds and rounds of Chase in the yard. Doodle and Golden, Rosie and Luke, gallop freely around the perimeter of my yard. Their collaborative speeds (and the energy!) is both fascinating and remarkable to watch. They exchange roles with profound dog communication. Luke jumps on Rosie's back. Rosie snarls then grabs Luke's favorite toy, a squeaking Santa, to assert her status. Luke remains patient but hits a wall after some time "You've had him the whole time, Rosie. My turn!" He barks at his friend's cheek again. She bounces off him and tests her limits, crossing into a neighbor's yard. "We're supposed to stay with our moms, Rosie." Luke sits like a king with a dirty face and waits for her to come back.

That cold March Monday was different. Luke approached the mailbox,

paused, and sniffed. Was he hoping to find a letter from me—a message to say that, perhaps, I was on my way home? We'll never know for sure. Nevertheless, he turned to the street and did the unimaginable. He raced towards a truck and apparently the decision was conscious! "Get back here, Luke! It's not worth it!! You have too much going for you!!" Warrior Rosemary lunged at Luke and bit his ear. Hard. "Get back into your yard this instance!" Her bark was grave, furious even. Luke barked back. "Leave me, alone, Rosie!! You have your mom. I don't!" Thankfully, the driver, aware of looney Luke's behavior, slowed to a crawl. Unfortunately, a dog feeling abandoned wasn't through feeling sorry for himself. He dashed away, finally landing at the fox den beneath our neighbor's shed. "At least they'll love me here."

The scene of a suicidal Luke played out viscerally in my mind as the story was told. My heart

LUKE

continued on page 17

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REAL ESTATE

There won't be a wave of foreclosures in the housing market

My team often gets asked about...when are the foreclosures coming as a result of the pandemic? We always respond, "we hope never". But here is the response from some of our lender friends.

There won't be a wave of foreclosures in the housing market. When mortgage forbearance plans were first announced and the pandemic surged through the country in early 2020, many homeowners were allowed to pause their mortgage payments. Some analysts were concerned that once the forbearance program ended, the housing market would experience a wave of foreclosures like what happened after the housing bubble 15 years ago.



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

Here's a look at why that won't happen.

1. There are fewer homeowners in trouble this time. After the last housing crash, over nine million households lost their homes to a foreclosure, short sale, or because they gave it back to the bank. Many believed millions of homeowners would face the same thing again this time. However, today's data shows that most homeowners exited their forbearance plan either fully caught up on payments or with a plan from the bank that restructured their loan in a way that allowed them to start making payments again. The latest data from the Mortgage Bankers Association (MBA) studies how people exited the forbearance program from June

2020 to November 2021.

Here are those findings:

- 39% left the program paid in full
- 20% made their monthly payments during the forbearance period
- 12% made up all past-due payments
- 7% paid off the loan in full
- 44% negotiated work-out repayment plans
- 29% received a loan deferral
- 14% received a loan modification
- 0.8% arranged a different repayment plan
- 0.6% sold as a short sale or did a deed-in-lieu
- 17% left the program still in trouble and without a loss mitigation plan in place

2. Those left in the program can still negotiate a repayment plan. As of last Friday, the total number of mortgages still in forbearance stood at 890,000. Those who remain in forbearance still have the chance to work out a suitable plan with the servicing company that represents their lender. And the servicing companies are under pressure to do just that by both federal and state agencies.

3. Most homeowners have more than enough equity to sell their homes. For those who can't negotiate a solution and the 16.8% who left the forbearance program without a work-out, many will have enough equity to sell their homes and leave the closing with cash instead of facing foreclosures. Due to rapidly rising home prices over the last

two years, the average homeowner has gained record amounts of equity in their home.

4. There have been far fewer foreclosures over the last two years. One of the less reported benefits of the forbearance program was that it allowed households with financial difficulties prior to the pandemic to enter the program. It gave those homeowners an extra two years to get their finances in order and work out a plan with their lender. That prevented over 400,000 foreclosures that normally would have come to the market had the new forbearance program not been available. Otherwise, the real estate market would have had to absorb those foreclosures.

5. The current market can

easily absorb over a million new listings. When foreclosures hit the market in 2008, they added to the oversupply of houses that were already for sale. That resulted in over a nine-month supply of listings, and anything over a six-month supply can cause prices to depreciate. It's exactly the opposite today. Total housing inventory at the end of November amounted to about 1.11 million units, down almost 10% from October and down over 13% from one year ago (1.28 million). Unsold inventory sits at

a 2.1-month supply at the current sales pace, a decline from both the prior month and from one year ago.

A balanced market would have approximately a six-month supply of inventory. At 2.1 months, the market is severely understocked. Even if one million homes enter the market, there still won't be enough inventory to meet the current demand. If you have real estate needs, contact a member of the Marzeotti Group or a trusted real estate professional.





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Indian Ranch Adds Second Show with Get The Led Out

Due to popular demand, a second Get The Led Out show has been added at Indian Ranch in Webster, MA on Friday, August 23, 2024. Limited tickets are left for the first show on June 15th. Tickets go on-sale this Saturday, April 20th at 10:00 AM at www.indianranch.com. A limited number of Low Dough Early Bird General Admission tickets will be available for just \$30 through April 26th, while supplies last.

From the bombastic and epic, to the folky and mystical, Get The Led Out (GTLO) have captured the essence of the recorded music of Led Zeppelin and brought it to the concert stage.

The Philadelphia-based group consists of six veteran musicians intent on delivering Led Zeppelin live, like you've never heard before. Utilizing the multi-instrumentalists at their disposal, GTLO re-create the songs in all their depth and glory with the studio overdubs that Zeppelin themselves never performed. When you hear three guitars on the album...GTLO delivers three guitarists on stage. No wigs or fake English accents, GTLO brings what the audience wants...a high energy Zeppelin concert with an honest, heart-thumping intensity.

Dubbed by the media as "The American Led Zeppelin," Get The Led Out offers a strong focus on the early years. They also touch on the deeper cuts that were seldom, if ever heard in concert. GTLO also include a special "acoustic set" with Zep favorites such as "Tangerine" and "Hey Hey What Can I Do."

GTLO has amassed a strong national touring history, having performed at major club and PAC venues across the country. GTLO's approach to their performance of this hallowed catalog is not unlike a classical performance. "Led Zeppelin are sort of the classical composers of the rock era," says lead vocalist Paul Sinclair. "I believe 100 years from now they will be looked at as the Bach or Beethoven of our time. As cliché as it sounds, their music is timeless."

A GTLO concert mimics the "light and shade" that are the embodiment of "The Mighty Zep." Whether it's the passion and fury with which they deliver the blues-soaked, groove-driven rock anthems, it's their attention to detail and nuance that makes a Get The Led Out performance a truly awe-inspiring event!

Indian Ranch offers music lovers a chance to see some of the greatest country, classic rock and pop bands steps from Lake Chargogagoggmanchauggagoggchaubunagungamaugg. Nestled between pine trees, the amphitheater offers the ability to see the stage from anywhere in the audience. More than



a concert venue, Indian Ranch opened Samuel Slater's Restaurant and is also home to the Indian Princess paddlewheeler and Indian Ranch Campground. Tickets are on sale now for Jo Dee Messina on June 1st, VOYAGE - CELEBRATING THE MUSIC ON JOURNEY on June 9th, Get The Led Out on June 15th, The Mavericks on June 22nd, Scotty McCreery on June 23rd, Three Dog Night on June 29th, Elle King on June 30th, Justin Hayward and Christopher Cross on July 7th, Aaron Lewis on July 14th (July 13th show is sold out), The Pike Hairfest on July 20th, RUMOURS: The Ultimate Fleetwood Mac Tribute Show on July 21st, and Yächtley Crëw on July 25th, Almost Queen: A Tribute to QUEEN on July 27th, The Concert: A Tribute to ABBA on August 2nd, Badfish: A Tribute to Sublime on August 3rd, Grace Potter on August 4th, Face 2 Face: A Tribute to Elton John & Billy Joel on August 9th, Ripe on August 10th, The Beach Boys on August 11th, and Tyler Hubbard on August 18th, Little Feat on August 24th, and Brett Young on September 7th. More shows will be announced soon.

Tickets for Get The Led Out on Friday, August 23, 2024 went on-sale Saturday, April 20. A limited number of Low Dough Early Bird GA tickets will be available for just \$30, April 20th-April 26th. Gates open at 5:00 PM, showtime is 7:00 PM. Tickets are available 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. For more information, visit www.indianranch.com.

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TALES FROM BEYOND

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Abram's Rock

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

This story is from our upcoming book, *Ghosts of King Philip's War* due out on July 22, 2024. The book is filled with legends, ghost stories, and haunted places from the war and subsequent skirmishes that took place years after the last treaty was signed. If you are looking for a nice small hike with a lot of history and perhaps a ghost, Abram's Rock is the perfect place to visit.

At the outset of King Philip's War, several tribes chose to remain neutral for various reasons. Most of the converted, or praying Indians sided with the English. Members of the warring tribes often dissented and pledged their allegiance to the colonies much like the Tories of the American Revolution pledged their allegiance to the throne instead of fighting for independence from the mother country. This is the legend of one of those dissenters during King Philip's War called Abram by the English.

Abram was a renegade Christian praying Indian who de-

serted the Wampanoags during the conflict in favor of siding with the English. Abram became very close friends with the English, so much so, that there were rumors circulating among the Wampanoag that he even had an English girlfriend. This made Philip, whose real name was Metacom, very angry as Abram knew much of Philip's plans and strategies regarding the proposed annihilation of the enemy. Philip sought to take Abram back and sent a search party out to find him.

In the meantime, Abram had found a towering rock he used as a hiding place and lookout. The west side of the large boulder had a natural room formed by other large boulders. This was where he lived in seclusion for several months until he was found and captured. Philip, being merciful at the time, gave him a chance to live. Abram was given the choice of leaping from the massive formation three times or instant death. Abram chose to take a chance and leap from the rock. Some historians argue Abram voluntarily

performed the act as a testament of his loyalty to Philip.

Tradition says he successfully completed the first and second leaps unscathed, but the third one became his demise. Legend has it that his ghost can be seen leaping from the rock, then appearing again at the top for another leap. The third time the ghost attempts to leap, he vanishes. Perhaps he is still trying to complete the task he failed.

Whether a hike out to the rock reveals a ghost or not should not deter one from soaking up the history and atmosphere of the place.

Abram's Rock is in Village Park behind the Swansea Town Hall and Library complex at 81 Main St. The trail leading to the rock is easy and there are signs to follow. One trail heads straight toward the site while another takes hikers past the cemetery in a more circular route that is both pleasant and scenic. The natural room formation is still there and is called "Abram's Bedroom" as that is where he allegedly lived during his months of hiding.

LUKE

continued from page 14

sank. Luke needed his mother. The men in my household did a tremendous job caring for him, even walking him three times per day. Still, something was missing. I needed to call my pup.

"Put Luke on speaker phone!" (I was afraid Facetime might be counterintuitive) "Hi Luke! Are you having a good day?" I spoke in the doggie voice he knew and loved. "Mummy's coming home soon!" I envisioned the tilt of his curious, blockhead while he reconciled my voice through the

phone. A call was okay, though pale in comparison to our in-person reunion.

"Luke!! I missed you so much! I dashed into the kitchen, tossed my bag aside, and planted myself on the floor. Luke grabbed his red-hot chili pepper, whimpered (overjoyed), and circled my lap. "Not gonna' lie, things have been rough, but I'm so glad you're back!!!" We settled down on his family room bed just like old times. Luke licked my face, chewed his bone, and fell back into old habits.

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THE CAR DOCTOR

jpaul@aanortheast.com

Too Good to Be True? It's Most Likely a Scam

Q. I recently looked at a car for sale on Facebook Marketplace and it looked great and almost too good to be true. After a couple of days, my wife talked me out of it. My question is, can you tell if something is a good deal or a scam?

A. A neighbor recently sent me a listing for a 2008 Volkswagen Beetle convertible for just \$1000. The car was very clean, claimed one owner and didn't have the typical VW convertible issues, such as lose rear window, power rear window issues and worn-out front seats and rusty rockers panels. The ad

stated low price for quick sale. Typically, according to Kely Blue Book that car sells for \$5-\$6000, which is the first red flag. I also looked up the seller and the same car was listed on the same day in 20 locations across the country, second red flag and the third issue was the lack of a visible VIN in any pictures. At that point, my best guess was it was a scam.

Q. Since Covid-19 I have been working from home and living in an apartment near where our office is located. Since there is no reason to be in one spot, I recently purchased a 2015 Winnebago Travato class

B motor home. It has very low miles and was part of an estate sale. The vehicle has been sitting for 18 months. What should I do before I become part of "Van-Life"?

A. The Travato is based on the front wheel drive RAM Promaster line of vehicles and are typically equipped with the 3.6-liter V-6 engine. I would start by checking all the fluids and change the engine oil. Look at the tires, they may be original and have some dry rot, check the drive belts and hoses, cooling system (some had faulty fan modules) as well as the brakes and steering components. If it has a generator, check for proper operation, and change the engine oil. Check or replace the truck battery as well as the "house" battery. Run both the cabin air conditioner as well as the roof top unit. Check all the "house" water lines and pumps, storage tanks for cleanliness, proper operation and leaks. Try the refrigerator and water heater, if dual fuel, try them both on propane and electricity. If ev-

erything checks out good or has been repaired, start your adventure, and send pictures.

Q. What is the estimated cost to replace the transmission on a 2014 Infinity Q50? I was told the car needs a transmission and the price quoted was a bit shocking. I just wanted to make sure I was not being taken advantage of.

A. Assuming the car is not a hybrid and rear wheel drive, the factory part is \$10,000 with some online Infinity parts outlets selling it for \$8800. The labor time to install the transmission is about five hours. Today we are seeing typical labor rates at \$150-\$250 per hour. Add in fluid, miscellaneous parts and shop supplies and the total price could be \$12,000. At that price you need to consider if it is worth the money to have the repair performed. There are many Infinity Q50s selling for less than the cost of the repair. If it were me, I would certainly have an overall evaluation of the car performed to see if there are other pending costly issues and get a second opinion and estimate on the transmission issue.

Q. My 2014 BMW 528i X Drive vibrates when I stop when I leave the care in gear. It stops when I put it in neutral. The dealer says I need to replace the motor mounts. My mechanic says it is not dangerous and replacing one of the mounts may correct the problem. How

much should this cost, and should I have both mounts replaced for safety reasons? The car has 95,000 miles on it. What would cause the mounts to need replacement?

A. Motor mounts can fail due to aggressive driving, oil or other fluid contamination and internal failure. BMW uses liquid filled mounts rather than solid rubber and the liquid can leak out which would cause a vibration. If the mounts are worn, they should be replaced-there are two engine mounts and one transmission mount. The engine mounts are \$140 each and take about 4.5 hours to replace them. Labor rates vary depending on location with the dealers typically being on the higher side. If a local shop is doing the work rather than the dealer, I would only use BMW parts on this car, after market mounts may fit but could cause may cause other weird vibrations.

Q. I read your column every week and enjoy the Q&A. It takes me back to the early 70s when I first owned a car and learned to do some of my



BY JOHN PAUL

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CAR DOCTOR
continued on page 19

Sutton Historical Society News and Events



Ed Chrostowski, metal detectorist and Sutton Historical Society member, hard at work. (submitted photo)

On Tuesday, May 7, at 1 p.m. at the Sutton Senior Center, 19 Hough Road, Sutton, the Society will host member, Ed Chrostowski, who will share his metal detecting expertise. Ed has metal detected several historic properties in Sutton finding many interesting artifacts which will be on display. Ed will also discuss the various tools used in metal detecting. Not only does Ed dig into the ground, but he meticulously documents where items were found and links them to individuals who lived on the properties. This free presentation is open to all members and the general public of all ages.

The Annual Town-Wide Yard Sale hosted by the Sutton Historical Society will be held on Saturday, June 15, 2024 from 8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Participant registration forms can be found at suttonhistoricalsocietyinc.org. Cost to participate is \$10. The Society accepts yard sale donations for the benefit of the Society. Please no items such as TVs, computers, monitors, upholstered furniture or clothes

will be accepted as a donation. Contact sutton1704@gmail.com if interested in donating items or if you have any questions.

The Sutton Historical Society is a 501(c)3 organization dedicated to preserving history

in the Town of Sutton. Membership is open year-round. Members do not have to reside in Sutton. For more information, visit suttonhistoricalsocietyinc.org.

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CAR DOCTOR

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own repair work. Those days are gone now for me, but I do have a maintenance question and I have had difficulty finding a straight answer so maybe you can assist me. We have a 2016 Hyundai Elantra SE sedan with the standard engine and 46,000 miles on it which we purchased new in October 2015. It has always been well-maintained according to the manual recommendations. The question is when to replace the timing belt. I see some information saying 90,000 miles but I wonder if the age of the car should be part of the question. I have been quoted a price of \$1400 which I think includes the water pump. It is a lot of money

for us, but I will do it if needed.

A You are correct, that age can influence the life of a rubber timing belt. But on your Hyundai both the 1.8-liter and 2.0-liter engines use a timing chain. Typically, if the car is properly maintained (routine oil changes) does not require any maintenance for the life of 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@aaanortheast.com. Follow John on Twitter @johnfpaul and friend him on Facebook at mrjohnfpaul.

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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SPORTS

Sutton Tennis Looking To Take That Next Step

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

After the Sutton boys tennis team put together a 15-3 regular season earning themselves a 12 seed in the Division 4 State Tournament last spring, the Sammies were able to sweep their first two opponents before falling in the Round of 8 to Hamilton-Wenham, the four seed. Having only lost North Graff, a doubles player from that team coach Dennis Stamos is looking for his team to continue on the same path this year.

“We’re always looking to take that next step,” Stamos said. “This year we’re hoping to win the Central Mass. Tournament where we lost to Bromfield in the Finals last year, a team that we beat during the regular season. We also want to get back to the States while improving on last year’s performance.”

Stamos went on to say that what goes on in the State Tournament all depends on how the seedings and brackets come together, but you take what you are given and go from there. Sutton would like to get past the Round of 8 and at least make it into the Final 4 this year.

Looking to lead Sutton to the promised land will be sophomore Nick Champigny, playing in the number one singles spot. Although, as a freshman Champigny was the Sammies’ number one singles player last year, he did have

his ups and downs playing against the best players from each school. While he did struggle being young and inexperienced in the position, he did come through with some big matches for Sutton. Unfortunately, the sophomore is scheduled to miss a handful of the team’s first few games due to an illness.

Until Champigny returns to the tennis courts, the Sutton team will find themselves moving into unfamiliar places. Senior Charlie Marchand, the team’s number two singles player, will move up a notch to take the top spot for the Sammies.

“With Nick out, it shouldn’t be that big of a difference for Charlie to play number one singles,” the Sutton coach said. “He has the experience and doesn’t get rattled. Besides, he’s faced that type of competition on occasion last year so, not only does he have the reps under his belt, he also knows what is coming and he can handle it.” Another senior, Andrew Nelson, looks to be holding down the number three singles spot and, according to Stamos, seems to have improved his game for the upcoming season.

“He’s another experienced player and has looked really good so far this season,” Stamos said. “He’s taller and slimmer and is getting to the balls much quicker. There is much improvement to his game; it seems that he has cleaned

up his inconsistencies.”

With Champigny missing the first few matches Nelson will also move up into the second singles position, however the vacancy he leaves at third singles has not been determined at the time of this writing.

“It will be a game time decision each match. It will depend on who is ready and who has played well and committed themselves,” the coach said. “It’s possible that it could be one of our doubles players, but who knows at this point.”

Much like the vacancy at the final singles position Stamos has an influx of players that he can move around to play both doubles positions. Sophomore Palmer Graff. Who played doubles with his older brother last season, looks to have the inside track to playing first doubles but he could be bumped down to the second doubles team depending on who happens to be playing well at the time.

Last year senior Tighe Rogan and junior Reeg Kassaly held onto the second doubles position and having played well together, Coach Stamos is inclined to start the duo there when the season opens up.

“I feel that I at least need to start them together. Reeg has worked on his game this winter and the two are committed to one another on the court,” Stamos said. “It could put me in a difficult spot if I do need to break them up for the



team’s sake, but at least for now they’ll play together.”

Hopefully by the time that Nick gets back, the team will return to its set lineup and have only one position available in the doubles somewhere. Sutton will have a lot of young individuals battling for that lone vacancy. According to Stamos, there are two seniors, a sophomore, two freshman and three eighth graders looking to grab that opening.



“It’s wide open and all eight players are on the same level,” the Sutton coach said. “Challenge matches and how they work with another individual on the courts will be the underlying factor; doubles is a totally different game and you need to work well together with a teammate.”


In addition to the players being up for the challenge and making

that jump to the next level Stamos is trying to get his team prepared to play top talent on its way to the State Tournament, but that may not be as easy as it sounds.

“We try to schedule some tougher, high-ranked schools so that we’re ready for when the tournament rolls around,” he said. “However, a lot of teams don’t want to put us on their schedule because it does nothing to improve their rankings, so we’re at the mercy of the schools who want to play us.”

Despite the fact that Sutton can’t get those top ranked teams to walk onto the courts with them, the Sammies just need to go out and play their individual games throughout the season and take things as they come in the tournament. And as everyone knows, anything is possible at that point.



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

SATURDAY, APRIL 20

• Home Baked Ham & Bean Supper, April 20, 2024 at 5:00 pm in the Community House, 8 Court St, Uxbridge located behind the Uxbridge Town Common. Sponsored by the Uxbridge Congregational Church. Menu includes baked ham, home baked beans, potato salad, coleslaw, brown bread, beverages & dessert. Donation of \$13.00 per adult, children under 6 free. Raffles will also be available. For reservations call 508.244.7849 Limited tickets will be sold at door. Come enjoy great food and fellowship.

SATURDAY, MAY 4

• The Millbury Nature Trails Committee will host an Arbor Day Tree Planting Event at 9 a.m. at the Brierly Conservation Area. Help plant trees and mark a new trail. Rain date

is May 11. To register, visit the Nature Trails Facebook page.

• 9th Annual Family Fun Fishing Day - Open Sky Community Services and the Blackstone River Watershed Association are excited to co-host the 9th Annual Family Fun Fishing Day at Riverbend Farm in Uxbridge along with our partner organizations, the Blackstone River National Heritage Corridor Volunteers-in-Parks Program, Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife. This year's event will be held on Saturday May 4 from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. with a rain date of Sunday, May 5. Prizes offered in four different age groups will be awarded at 1:15 p.m. There will be activities for the whole family, as well as food and ice cream for purchase, free face painting and raffles. All ages and ability levels are welcome. Fishing poles, bait and instruction will be available with pre-registration and participants are welcome to bring their own. This is a catch and release event for everyone from first time fishers to experienced anglers. Adults must accompany children under 12. Volunteer opportunities are available at openskys.org/fishingvolunteers. Pre-registration will open starting April 5 at thebrwa.org/familyfishing2024. This is a FREE event, but pre-registration is required. Please contact Joanne Holahan at 508-278-5200 with any questions.

• At 7 pm at Vaillancourt Folk Art, 9 Main Street, Manchaug Village, Sutton. Christine

Watkins, Sutton Historical Society, will tell the story of the devastating 1924 Manchaug Village fire on its 100th anniversary which burned over 10 acres, left 25 percent of the Village population homeless, destroyed the retail section of the village, and made national news. This presentation will include photos, newspaper summaries, and eyewitness accounts. Come hear how a small community, with the help of generous neighbors, persevered over a tragedy.

• Sutton Historical Society's first speaker presentation at 7 pm at Vaillancourt Folk Art, 9 Main Street, Manchaug Village, Sutton. Christine Watkins, Sutton Historical Society, will tell the story of the devastating 1924 Manchaug Village fire on its 100th anniversary which burned over 10 acres, left 25percent of the Village population homeless, destroyed the retail section of the village, and made national news. This presentation will include photos, newspaper summaries, and eyewitness accounts. Come hear how a small community, with the help of generous neighbors, persevered over a tragedy.

at 508-234-2156 or email parishoffice@stpeterrockdale.org to purchase tickets or if you have any questions.

• Grass Roots Coffeehouse Concert featuring Blackstone Valley Bluegrass! The band plays a mixture of traditional, contemporary, and original Bluegrass music and always puts on an entertaining show. The Grass Roots Coffeehouse is located at the Rockdale Congregational Church, 42 Fowler Road Northbridge. Admission to the concert is \$15. Hot foods, beverages and desserts are available prior to the concert and during intermission. Doors open at 6:45, concert begins at 7:30 and usually wraps up by 9:30. Proceeds support the artists and the church. The Coffeehouse is run by volunteers. For more info: www.rockdalechurchonline.org or call Bob at 617-429-0347.

• Charlton City United Methodist Church is excited to announce a new quarterly series: Dynamic Collectibles, Cards, and Craft Show. The first show will be May 4 from 10-4 at 74 Stafford Street, Charlton. Watch for dates for future shows every quarter. Each show will be jam-packed with vendors and will feature baked goods and drinks. Any interested vendors of collectibles, cards, or crafts can contact Joe Dupont at joedupont@dynamiccardcollectors.com for this or future shows. The May 4 show will feature rare Pokemon cards from Dynamic Card Collectors; comics and toys from Remember that Collectibles; a variety of trading card game cards from Wicked East Coasters and Toyland Treasures; Epicure products for food

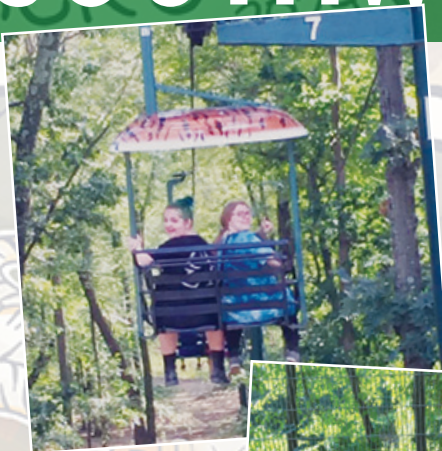
service from Barbara's Epic Eats; Bee Jewelry and Scarves; Essential Oils and natural wellness products and tips; handmade greeting cards; fly fishing ties; Sweet Leilani Crafts & SassiePastries; anime/gaming/kawaii merchandise from Tokkishi; and many, many more. Hope to see you there!

• Annual Fishing Festival Geared to All Ages. The Oxford Conservation Commission has teamed up with the Department of Fish & Game again this year to introduce fishing to those new to the sport. Fishing instructors will teach how to set up your rod, tie knots, cast and identify fish on Saturday, May 4 from 10 a.m. -1 p.m. at Carbundle Pond in Oxford. This family-friendly event is open to all levels of experience and ages, and no fishing license is needed. Participants can bring their own gear or borrow it from the instructors; bait will also be provided. In addition to the fishing fun, Rangers from The Last Green Valley will be on hand to discuss the multitude of outdoor opportunities in the area from hiking and canoeing to upcoming cultural events. Attendees can also learn about wildlife and nature activities available at the nearby Hodges Village Dam and Buffumville Dam from Army Corps of Engineers Rangers. The first Family Fishing Festival at Carbundle Pond took place in 2016 and due to its success, has been scheduled every year since then!

HAPPENINGS!
continued on page 22

SOUTHWICK'S ZOO PHOTO CONTEST

ILLUSTRATION BY ROMAN KAPLAN MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN



In 2025, Southwick's Zoo will be celebrating 60 years of family fun! Share a photo of your favorite memories at Southwick's Zoo for a chance to win a family four-pack of general admission passes for the 2024 season and make some new memories!
Contest begins April 1, 2024.



By entering this contest, you are providing consent for Southwick's Zoo and Our Town Publishing (the publishers of The Yankee Xpress/Blackstone Valley Xpress, Free Press and the newspapers of Local Town Pages) to use your photo(s) for print, digital and social media purposes, and allowing Southwick's Zoo and Our Town Publishing to contact you via email for this promotion or upcoming promotions. Only one winner per household. Cannot be an employee or family member of Southwick's Zoo or Our Town Publishing to win.



HAPPENINGS!

continued from page 21

SATURDAY, MAY 11

• Rough Seas, Safe Harbor: Wings of Song Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish Church 16 East Main Street, Webster, 7:30 p.m. Admission to concerts is free, with a freewill offering collected at intermission. "Rough Seas, Safe Harbor" will take audi-

ences on a huge sea voyage, much of it aboard a whaling ship that might have left New Bedford, Mass. in, say, the 1850s, and sailed practically around the world, separating crew members from their families for as long as four years. These concerts are sponsored in part by the Monson and Sturbridge Cultural Councils, local agencies supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. Wings of Song is grateful for this support—and

for the continued support of their many faithful audience regulars, supplemented by first-timers whom we're always glad to see! Anyone needing more information is encouraged to email Music Director Cooke at nymcooke@gmail.com or Wings of Song President Carol Curtin at carolcurtin77@gmail.com.

SATURDAY, MAY 18

• 4:00pm Bethel Lutheran Church/Grace Ministries of Auburn will be performing music concert "Peace & Praise" as they continue to celebrate their Centennial Anniversary. The program will include present as well as many past organists/music directors, choir members & musicians including hymns/anthems/contemporary music by choir embers, bell choir and children's performances. A reception will follow. All are welcome to either attend or participate in this festive, free-will offering event. For more information contact Adam Hanks at arhanks42385@hotmail.com.
• Save the date! Sutton Garden Club is pleased to announce that our Annual Plant Sale will be held on Sutton Common on Saturday, May 18th, 10am - 12Noon. SGC members will be dividing and potting up a variety of perennial plants from our gardens in preparation for the sale. Proceeds from the Plant Sale fund our community efforts, including our Scholarship Fund, plantings and maintenance at the Bandstand and Manchaug Square during the summer,

decorations and wreaths for the Bandstand and Commons at Christmastime and also helps fund our Gardening programs during the year. Updates regarding the Plant Sale, including any in case of severe weather, will be posted on our Facebook page, <https://facebook.com/SuttonGardenClub>

SUNDAY, MAY 19

• The Blackstone Valley Community Chorus will present their concert, American Rhythms & Roots, on Sunday, May 19th, 2024 at 3:00pm. The concert will take place at Valley Chapel at 14 Hunter Road in Uxbridge. American Rhythms & Roots includes a blend of American folk music and jazz standards and celebrates American songwriters from George and Ira Gershwin to John Denver. Admission is free, though donations are accepted and appreciated! The Blackstone Valley Community Chorus is composed of singers from towns throughout Central Massachusetts. Singing under the direction of Diane Pollard of Douglas, the BVCC has been committed to bringing varied musical performance opportunities

to the Blackstone Valley for almost twenty years. Visit the BVCC on Facebook or at www.bvccchorus.com for more information.

SATURDAY, JUNE 1

• Saint Peter's Parish in Northbridge will be holding a Yard Sale on Saturday, June 1st, 7:30am to 3:00pm in the parish hall. If you are moving, spring cleaning or just have too much clutter, bring us your gently used items for your yard sale. You may drop-off your donations every Saturday from 10:00-1:00pm April through May, starting on Saturday, April 6th at the parish garage. We are accepting kitchen items, home goods, toys, sporting goods, books, small furniture items, clothing for donation and much more. Please see our website for a complete list of what we are accepting. You may also call or email the parish office, if you have any questions: 508-234-2156 or email: parishoffice@stpeterockdale.org.

HAPPENINGS!

continued on page 23

The New England Country Music Club will hold the following dances with live classic country bands at the Progressive Club, 18 Whitin St., Uxbridge, MA: Sunday, May 19, "Al Carter & The Nashville Boys"; Sunday, June 9, "Rustic Country"; Sunday, June 23, "Angela West & Showdown"; Doors open at 12:15, live music 1-5pm. Snacks may be brought in, cash bar for beverages. facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub

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Scotty McCreery LIVE IN CONCERT JUNE 23 • 1PM	THREE DOG NIGHT Live in concert - Chris Frappier JUNE 29 • 1PM	Elle King JUNE 30 • 1PM	Justin Hayward THE VOICE OF THE MOODY BLUES JULY 7 • 1PM
Aaron Lewis JULY 14 • 1PM	LEPPARD DEF LEPPARD TRIBUTE EAST COAST ALICE ALICE COOPER TRIBUTE EVERYBODY WANTS SOME VAN HALEN TRIBUTE RAISE YOUR HANDS THE JOLLIESTE BACK IN BLACK AC/DC TRIBUTE JULY 20 • 12PM	THE CONCERT A TRIBUTE TO ABBA AUGUST 2 • 7PM	GRACE POTTER AUGUST 4 • 1PM
RUMOURS THE ULTIMATE FREEBORN BAND JULY 21 • 1PM	Yachtley Crew JULY 25 • 7PM	ALMOST QUEEN AS SISTER SOUNDS WITH SPECIAL GUEST STEVE LEONARD JULY 27 • 1PM	BAD FISH JULY 28 • 1PM
TRIBUTE TO ELTON JOHN & BILLY JOEL FACE 2 FACE AUGUST 9 • 7PM	RIPE AUGUST 10 • 1PM	The Beach Boys ENDLESS SUMMER GOLD AUGUST 11 • 1PM	TYLER HUBBARD LIVE AUGUST 18 • 1PM
Little Feat CAN'T BE SATISFIED TOUR WITH SPECIAL GUEST Steel Wheels AUGUST 24 • 1PM	BRETT YOUNG LIVE IN CONCERT SEPTEMBER 7 • 1PM		

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Sutton Athletic Booster Club to Host Cornhole Tournament Fundraiser

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From SABC Board President, Peter Scott: "We have had tremendous success with our fall youth travel basketball tournament for the last 20 years and wanted to build on that experience and stretch ourselves into another large seasonal fundraiser, this time, outdoors. Our new spring cornhole tournament grew out of the idea to host a fun community event, to raise town-wide awareness and gather support for the Sutton Athletic Booster Club mission in an entertaining way inclusive of all ages.

With steeply rising operational costs, athletic directors and programs are constantly challenged to do more with less, and this new fundraiser will be another critical initiative for the Sutton Boosters to raise funds and help support our year-round program needs. From long term capital projects

like helping to buy new scoreboards, or smaller requests, like covering cop costs and purchasing new pitching machines, we are dedicated to doing whatever we can to make the competitive playing experience at Sutton High School for all athletes the best it can be, and to demonstrate our pride for all of their hard work and effort to represent our town.

As a 501c3 organization we are deeply grateful to our corporate and local business partners for helping us to underwrite costs for the event and raise revenues through sponsorships and donations. Interested businesses can request an event sponsorship guide at: sutton.sabc@gmail.com. Special thanks to Backwoods



About SABC: The Sutton Athletic Booster Club (SABC) is a not-for-profit organization of parents and other interested individuals of the community. By raising funds from the sale of apparel and concessions, and other special tournaments and events, the SABC has enhanced the athletic programs and facilities at Sutton High School,

positively impacting the experiences of hundreds of students and student athletes at both the Varsity and Junior Varsity levels. <https://www.suttonbooster.com/>

When: Sunday, June 9th 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
What: The first-ever (and hopefully annual) fundraiser tournament with proceeds benefiting Sutton High School student-athletes and programs.
Where: Singletary Rod & Gun Club, 300 Sutton Ave, Oxford
Who: Open to all ages. No experience necessary.
Tournament notes:
 • Cost per team \$60 in advance. \$75 day-of as space allows.
 • 4 game round robin and tiered double elimination format.
 • On site food catered by Savage Wraps food truck. Full bar, raffles and merchandise on site. Free parking. Guests welcome. • No outside food or alcohol please.
 • Interested teams should register in advance on the free Scoreholio app: <https://scoreholio.app.link/nvtCO0tLSHb> And then pre-pay team fees online at: www.suttonbooster.com/cornhole

HAPPENINGS!

continued from page 22

SATURDAY, JUNE 8

• Please join us for our Annual Community Yard And Plant Sale! As we've done in the past, we will rent spaces and tables, plus we'll do all the advertising and remember, our prime location can't be beat! Spaces Are \$25 For Non-Members. Tables Are Available To Rent For \$5 Each. Last year our

Community Yard Sale and Plant Sale was so successful that we had to implement a wait list! We anticipate the same level of interest again this year, so don't delay in reserving your spot. We are very excited at the thought of gathering, again, with our church family and our neighbors on the church's front lawn. Call the church office, 508-832-2845, to reserve your spot! All are welcome! First Congregational Church of Auburn, 128 Central Street, Auburn.

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, 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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