

February 12-March 12, 2021

INSIDE

Little old Linwood abuzz about Dollar General coming to town

By Rod Lee

The sleepy little neighborhood of Linwood in the town of Northbridge was dealt a blow with the recent abrupt closure of a seemingly thriving Salvation Army store on Providence Road. Coupled with the loss of the Celler Sooper convenience store, Menard's service station and Lisa Jane's salon—situated within almost a stone's throw of each other—it loomed as ill tidings for a pocket of the community that had been fairly robust commercially for some time.

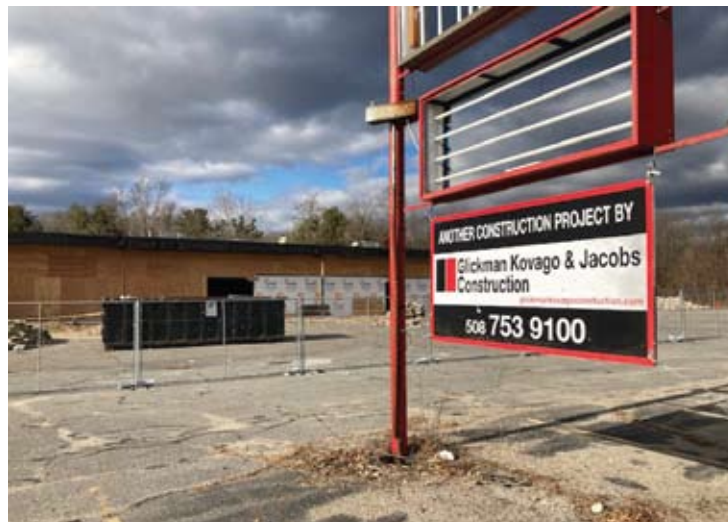
Now comes word that a Dollar General store is taking over the spacious Salvation Army building. The property is currently under redevelopment by NAI Glickman, Kovago & Jacobs of Worcester to make way for not the automotive dealership that had been rumored as the new occupant but a Dollar General “and I think a car parts store on one side,” a worker laboring inside the one-story structure said on January 21.

This is good news for owners of businesses that have had a long-standing presence in Linwood, like the Menard family of Foxy Travel,

Bill McAuliffe of McAuliffe Insurance and Scott Sundeen of Sundeen Furniture.

“Any business is good,” Keith Menard said. “The Kotseas family (which has owned the Salvation Army site)... everything they do is

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The former Salvation Army storefront in Linwood has been undergoing a massive overhaul as work continues in preparation for the arrival of a Dollar General.

Women's Success Network ready to reengage for 2021

By Barbara Van Reed

The year 2020's often-heard refrain was that of a new business or organization just getting started and then...COVID.

And yes, 2021 still has some hurdles ahead.

One organization that is eager to reengage with its community is the Women's Success Network, an initiative formally begun by the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce in April 2019 with a clear purpose to “help women in the workplace to achieve their vision of success by creating a community of support and inspiration.”

The very first program, one that people are still raving about, was

presented by Dr. Laurie Leshin, president of Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

Another was a presentation by Representative Hannah Kane, who spoke about the critical need for women to get involved in politics at all levels and her challenges as a mother, wife, business owner, consultant, volunteer, and politician.

Later in the summer of 2019, Wine & Women Wednesday debuted with a networking event at the Blackstone National Golf Club in Sutton, followed by financial and time management workshops in the fall.

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Heather Elster, executive director of Whittin Community Center.



Ashley Daviau, senior member service representative at Millbury Credit Union.

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Faith guided Tim Hare in sales to Extra Mile Award

By Rod Lee

Mike Hare, who is one of his father's four children, recalls how the imposition of discipline went when he and his brother Mark misbehaved as kids.

"If we owned up to it, there would be minimal punishment. But if we tried to weasel out of it..." Mr. Hare said in a telephone conversation in December. There was a hint of a smile in Mike Hare's voice as he spoke those words.

We were chatting about Tim Hare of family-owned and operated Harbro Auto Sales in Whitinsville and Webster, who received the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's 2020 Gerry Gaudette "Extra Mile Award" at the organization's 42nd annual meeting on November 19. Mike Hare did not see the ceremony, which was conducted virtually for attendees who had pre-registered and which featured a keynote speech by Maj. Gen. Thomas E. Murphy.

Maj. Gen. Murphy is director of the Critical Technology Task Force at the Department of Defense and a product of Oxford High School and Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

"That's really cool and a

great credit to my father," Mike Hare said, of the honor bestowed on Tim Hare. "He didn't even tell me that he won that award."

With the humility he has long been known for (and which many would agree is uncharacteristic of a car salesman), Tim Hare attributed his success in a business he and his brother Dave Hare started on Linwood Avenue in 1973 to his parents, to people who have helped him along the way, and to fully embracing Jesus Christ. "I was raised on the words of Jesus," he said, after accepting the award from Gerry Gaudette's son Lee Gaudette of Gaudette Insurance. "In my younger years, I rejected them. Thirty-eight years ago, the Lord changed the course of my life and my wife's (Jane Hare)."

Mike Hare was not surprised to hear that his father pointed out in his brief remarks on November 19 that the phrase "extra mile" originated not with the Chamber but with Jesus Christ—in the Bible.

His dad's faith-based approach to business "just dovetailed into my brother and I's," Mike Hare said. "My grandfa-

ther was like that. My dad tells me a story about how he gave up drinking and smoking and used the money he saved to buy a little lake cottage in the 80s that we all still enjoy.

"I remember my dad driving around in a muscle car and drinking with his friends," Mike Hare said. Turning completely to Jesus Christ, "it's changed him one hundred eighty degrees. He was never one to put up a cross or a big fish, he is quiet that way. He has always told me he doesn't want too many rewards on earth, they'll come in heaven."

Tim Hare has turned Harbro Auto Sales over to his sons (it is now a third-generation business with the addition of other family members). He and Jane Hare are involved with providing the battery-powered "Action Track Chair" to disabled veterans and others whose physical limitations prevent them from getting around. But when the pandemic hit last March and "none of us knew what was going on and we had to pretty much close the doors" for a time, "my dad saw what was happening

and we talked it through. Even though he is not active in the business, we came up with the best plan we could, all things considered. Dad was more like a guiding light person for us. He's a phone call away and he always answers his phone. Who better than the guy who founded it?" to seek advice from, Mike Hare said.

"He has most recently been helping us find cars. Many leases were expiring but being extended because of a lack of inventory. A lot of the vehicles we would normally buy are not there."

Mike Hare said that with his



Tim Hare, a founder of Harbro Auto Sales, speaks after being presented with the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's "Gerry Gaudette Extra Mile Award."

dad's help Harbro has survived the pandemic so far. "Eight staff did not want to come back. All in all it blended out. We gave the Salvation Army some money. We are so thankful and feel

blessed, even though people aren't driving as much."

Contact Rod Lee at rodlee.1963@gmail.com or 774-232-2999.

DOLLAR GENERAL

Continued from page 1

a good addition to the community."

"The Sally" building has a history, dating back to its days as a market and subsequently as the home of Bill and Patti Giannopoulos's Friendly Discount Liquors before the Giannopoulos's moved up the road to the Shaw's plaza at Plummers Corner.

More of a positive nature may be in the offing in Linwood, relating to the now-empty Lisa Jane's, which the Menards hold title to. "We're hoping for a dog groomer in there," Mr. Menard said.

The past year or so has been a struggle for many businesses and Foxy Travel is no exception. "We're doing about as well as everyone else," Mr. Menard said. "Business is down about 90 percent." Foxy is running buses "for some local schools, doing ski trips, and for inbound sports teams like UNH gymnastics," Mr. Menard said. "We're very fortunate, my dad instituted a

policy of putting money aside for a rainy day."

Nevertheless, one or more tenants in an empty building nearby will be undoubtedly welcomed by Foxy Travel and other enterprises in the neighborhood, including Peterson Oil, Grille 122 and Cherub's Haven.

"Anything that is not vacant is great with me," Mr. Sundeen said.

For Sundeen Furniture, "the big issue" during the pandemic has been "getting product in, because factories are closed down and the freight situation is terrible."

Mr. Sundeen had heard "a couple of storefronts" for 135 Providence Road. Sundeen itself "approached the owners" a while ago with an interest to buy the property "and put our store there when we were looking to get out of Uxbridge." Sundeen wound up finding a nice fit for its store in the former Linwood Lumber building at 241 Providence Road.

"I didn't hit Powerball!" Mr. McAuliffe said on the telephone, in announcing that "one ticket in Mary-

land" instead carried the winning numbers, before he turned his attention to a question about what was happening in the Salvation Army building.

"I don't shop at the one up the street (the Dollar Tree in the Shaw's plaza) and I probably won't at a Dollar General," Mr. McAuliffe said.

Dollar General and Dollar Tree are owned by the same company, but they offer a slightly different retail experience. Despite its name, as Reader's Digest has pointed out, Dollar General is not "a true dollar store." Dollar Tree is, and in some cases product, like greeting cards, can be purchased for even less (two for a dollar). "Whichever store you choose to shop at, you'll still be getting a [better] deal than you would for the same items at Walmart or Target," RD reported. "Just remember to look for 'Tree' on the storefront before you go in expecting to snap those dollar deals."

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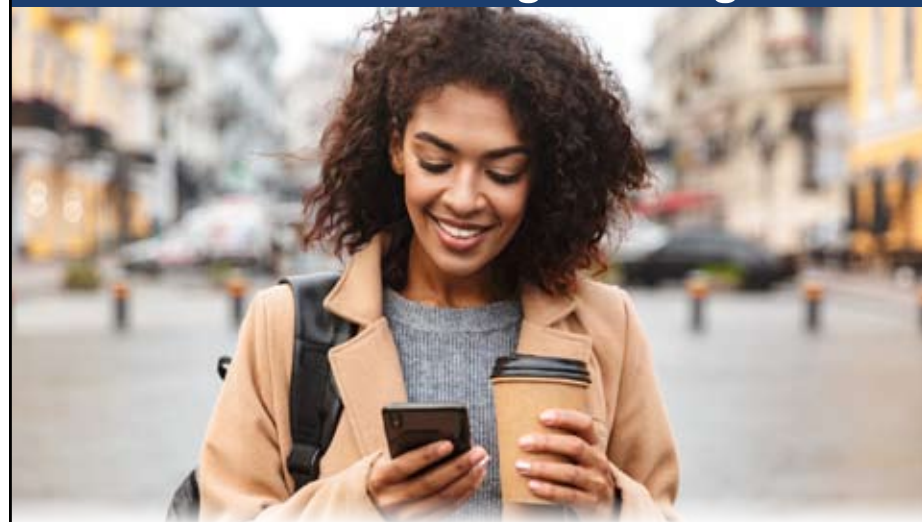
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Sally Patterson, Production Manager Carol Koth, Graphic Artist
Contributing writers and columnists: Peter Coyle, Tom D'Agostino,
Magda Dakin, Christine Galeone, Rod Lee, Amy Palumbo-Leclair, Janet Soica

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Focus on non-profits

Blackstone Valley nonprofit brings joy to cats and the people who love them

By Christine Galeone

Charles Dickens once quipped, "What greater gift than the love of a cat?" The legendary author and known cat lover was among the multitudes throughout history who understood what a blessing cats could be to the people who share their lives.

Thankfully, Eileen Russo also understands the joy that cats can bring to people's lives. And she's aware of how good, caring people can beautifully enrich the lives of their feline friends. By founding and running BV Cats, a Northbridge-based non-profit cat rescue, she

and her group of dedicated volunteers have made a wonderful difference in the lives of both species throughout the Blackstone Valley.

With a team of around 20 volunteers, including Russo, the group's mission is to "strive for cleaner, safer homes and neighborhoods in which families, felines and others can co-exist in harmony, by providing compassionate care and control of cat over-population." To accomplish that mission, the group started by trapping, spaying or neutering, vaccinating and releasing feral cats. But when Russo and the other volunteers began finding abandoned pets who had joined feral colonies to survive, they branched out into fostering and adopting out homeless cats. Now, BV Cats also finds new homes for cats that need to be surrendered by their human companions because of financial, health or lifestyle changes that negatively impact their ability to care for the felines. Additionally, the group helps rescued cats to

get the veterinary care they need.

Rescuing cats from a variety of circumstances has given Russo some unique insights. "Some people love their cats but do not know how to take care of them; some people put their cats upon a pedestal and can't do enough for them," Russo noted. She added, "They have feelings, wants and needs and a psychology that if you work with it, they can become the best they can be. If you do not acknowledge it, they cannot flourish, and they become less than manageable, less than desirable. Misfits that eventually become surrendered or abandoned."

While some of the stories of the cats that the nonprofit serves are heartbreaking, including one involving a beloved, well-cared-for cat of a woman who had to move into a homeless shelter and ones of precious, aging cats with hyperthyroidism abandoned because of their condition, others are heartwarming. "One mom cat forced her way through the outer wall and through the



Frumunder, a sweet FIV-positive cat with a heart murmur, is one of the felines that BV Cats hopes to adopt out to a good home. (Submitted)



Frumunder, who emerged "from under" a couple's porch one day, enjoys having his head rubbed by his foster pet parents, and he seems to like dogs. People that believe they can provide a good, caring home for him should call BV Cats at 508-735-5825. (Submitted)

inner wall of a house that was being renovated – to be sold eventually; she had her kittens on the wall-to-wall carpet," Russo recalled. "I trapped the mom and the four kittens. I moved them to a special foster home where they lived with love, good food and safety until all of them were adopted."

To help BV Cats during the pandemic, Russo said that there are two things that people could do. "You can donate to BV Cats or buy the things we sell – cat blankets, cat toys, handmade jewelry and scarves," Russo said. "A fiber artist in

Pennsylvania makes an 1898 knitted alpaca winter hat to order. She also makes beanies of alpaca yarn which I supply..."

More information about the nonprofit is available on the BV Cats website, www.bvcatsincma.org, on its Facebook page or by calling 508-735-5825. You can also send a non-tax-deductible check to BV Cats, P.O. Box 819, Northbridge, MA 01534.

If you would like to suggest a Blackstone Valley nonprofit or initiative for this series, please contact Christine at cmgaleone15@gmail.com.

Blackstone Valley Forum Series

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In Gear Automotive Services in tune with local customers

By Magda Dakin

There are many benefits of living in a smaller hometown area and one of the main ones is finding trustworthy, honest service people. In the Douglas area one of these finds is In Gear Automotive Services, conveniently located at 151 Davis Street (Route #16).

Starting off as a pure transmission service shop, Kerry and Ross Smith soon expanded their services to include a full range of automotive needs. "The customers kept asking if we could do other work, so we started to offer full services to everyone. When we built this building and opened this shop in 2004, we already had a large group of devoted customers," says Kerry, co-owner of In Gear.

The entrance to the building is friendly, inviting, clean and not intimidating. "We listen to the customer, find out what the problem is and offer our best advice and service even if it means sending them to have their warranty work done at the dealer," advises Kerry. "We want our customers to be happy with our service and feel comfortable coming here."

The In Gear shop has four full time mechanics, each specializing in their own area of expertise. "We have the skills and expertise to get the job done right the

first time and do it at an affordable price," adds Kerry. In addition to taking apart complicated transmissions and engines and fixing them, the shop also has fun working on hot rods, classic cars, muscle cars and Rat Rods.

What's a Rat Rod you ask? The modern definition is a custom car with a deliberately worn-down, unfinished appearance, rusting, and made from cheap or cast-off parts. A wrench for a door handle or a rifle for a gear shift. "It's fun to see how creative some of them are," says Kerry.

In Gear is also well known for participating in the Annual Douglas Oktoberfest, hosting the popular Car Show with a best-in-class contest complete with trophies for the winner.

"No job is too big or too small," says co-owner Ross, carefully cleaning and sorting a pile of springs and gears in his large garage workshop. All the mechanics, Ross, Justin, Al and Dan, have been with In Gear for years and are proficient in customer speak, meaning they can articulate the problem and give the customer a reasonable answer to questions and timing.

"We have customer financing available too through Synchrony Car Care. Some-

times an engine or transmission repair is costly and it's necessary to spread the payments out," says Kerry.

Although In Gear is very vested in the local economy and well connected with other local shops, their customer base is not only drawn from the local area but from beyond the Blackstone Valley, including Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire. Good service news gets around.



Son Justin and Al working under the hood at In Gear

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Kerry and Ross Smith - co owners of In Gear Automotive Services

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the Library by getting these books out of the building to make room for more.

Once bidding ends on the 21st, pickup will be a simple matter of pulling up to the Library and having staff bring bundles out the door—just like regular Library curbside service. The fine details can

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Join Kristy Genga, AVP from UniPay by UniBank for a 45-minute webinar on Wednesday, February 24, at 1 p.m. to learn how this solution can help your business or non-profit and enhance your revenue collections.

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Living well and looking good

Office test alone can't diagnose COPD

By Keith Roach, M.D.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am a healthy 70-year-old woman. The only prescription medication I take is for dry eyes. I recently visited my new primary physician for the first time, and she had me do a breathing test, where I exhaled into a tube to measure airflow. I was told to breathe deeply and exhale completely into the tube three times in succession. It took less than a minute to complete. It is apparently a routine test she orders for new patients.

She then told me I have COPD, on the basis of that test

alone. She asked if I had ever smoked or been exposed to secondhand smoke. That was her only question – coughing or shortness of breath was never mentioned. I have never smoked, but my father was a smoker when I was growing up. I actually do have a slightly productive cough most mornings. I probably walk about 10 miles a week, and I do notice some shortness of breath on long uphill sections,

though I can walk briskly in level areas for miles with no problem.

She said it is not advanced enough to require an inhaler at this time. I am bothered by this very easy “diagnosis” on the basis of one simple test. I wonder if I should ask to be referred to a pulmonologist for a more thorough evaluation. – O.P.

ANSWER: The test your doctor performed is called office spirometry, and it is useful for

monitoring known pulmonary diseases, especially COPD and asthma. However, by itself, it is inadequate to make the diagnosis of COPD, which I am not sure you have.

The diagnosis of COPD is made in people with persistent respiratory symptoms, usually shortness of breath or coughing. Spirometry will usually show obstruction to airflow. Formal pulmonary function testing, which is an extensive process taking an hour or so with a skilled and experienced technician, is ideal for determining severity.

The problem with getting a breathing test in someone who has no significant symptoms is that you can find someone whose test results are at or just below the lower limit of normal, and the diagnosis is unclear. The prognosis for people with mild airway obstruction but with no symptoms of COPD is much better than for people with COPD and who continue to smoke. For this reason, using spirometry as a screening test for everyone is not recommended. Without knowing the exact results of your spirometry, I sus-

pect you do not have COPD, given your absence of smoking and your extremely mild symptoms. A comprehensive exam by a pulmonologist would be definitive and may help you be less anxious about the results you have now.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu. (c) 2021 North America Synd., Inc. All Rights Reserved

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Five secrets to fix your sciatica pain today

Sciatica is a common problem that up to 40% of people will experience in their lifetime. The hallmark symptoms of sciatica include a painful "nerve-like" shooting sensation in either one leg or the other, predominantly occurring after the 4th decade of life. It affects both genders equally and can truly be a nuisance to handle. If you think you might have "sciatica" try these tips to reduce your pain and live a healthier life.

1. Empty your pockets

One of the main culprits that creates sciatic pain is carrying an object in your back pocket. Over time, especially if your job requires constant sitting, pressure from your wallet causes ischemia to the nerve and can result in local numbness in the butt

cheek. The pressure from the wallet can potentially cause numbness and tingling further down the line of the sciatic nerve as well. The good news is that this is a correctable problem. As soon as you move your wallet, you should notice an improvement in symptoms. The numbness and tingling should abate.

2. Learn nerve glides

Nerve glides are mobility exercises that professionals like physical therapists prescribe to improve symptoms of sciatica. Your symptoms could be caused by either a proximal nerve root entrapment at the low back, or a distal nerve root entrapment further away from your spine and down your leg. There are several spots in the back of the leg where your sciatic and other nerves can get

"stuck" in tight fascia. Type this into your browser for exercises to beat low back pain and sciatica: <https://bit.ly/3izc6xZ>

3. Do this, not that - standing v sitting

Do you sit a lot for work? If so, you have a greater likelihood of developing symptoms related to low back pain and sciatica. Over time sitting for more than 4 or 5 hours a day causes your spine to lose its flexibility, and your spinal disks experience a phenomena called "creep." This phenomena results in the spinal disks crowding the posterior canals of the spine causing inflammation and potential nerve impingement creating "sciatica" - or nerve like sensations down the spine. If you sit during the day for an extended period of time, my advice is to add prone press

ups to your routine. Unsure what those are? Simply lie on your stomach on the ground and lift up your head and chest to extend your low back. That is a prone press up. It will greatly help your low back if you sit for prolonged periods of time.

4. If you're a smoker, quit

Smoking is a leading risk factor for low back and sciatic pain. Those who smoke tend to show worse rehab outcomes overall. Low back pain and sciatica rehab time, also, takes twice as long on average for smokers. Science points to the fact that nicotine reduces the blood flow to your intervertebral disks. Your disks are responsible for the "cushioning" effect between vertebra. When the cushion is reduced due to degeneration secondary to poor blood flow, it

opens the door to bone-on-bone facet joint disease and spine degeneration. When the sciatic nerve has less space to move (through the nerve root foramen), it gets "pinched," requiring extensive mobility work in order to restore normal function.

5. Exercise regularly

Diabetes and obesity are both directly tied to the occurrence of sciatica (and low back pain). Regular exercise works to improve blood flow to the muscles of your core. Squats (when properly performed) will improve bone density and spinal disc nutrition over time. Since your spinal disks get their nutrition through osmosis, it is



Dr. Sean T Lordan

important that they are loaded axially (from above) with safe loads to improve spine health. So if you are looking to eliminate the nerve pain in your legs, make sure you exercise regularly!

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WOMEN'S SUCCESS NETWORK

Continued from page 1

The Women's Success Network was off and running, complete with a committee of professional women from all backgrounds and experiences to support the effort, which would include quarterly gatherings. But 2020 was to become history; all four major scheduled events were canceled, though quarterly newsletters were published.

The board is ready now to plan lectures, workshops, and networking opportunities for the new year.

The first, a Blackstone Valley Zoom Café on February 9, featured Sandra Kearney, CEO/President of Human Power Solutions, whose timely topic focused on building and maintaining strong business relationships in the age of COVID.

The WSN executive committee members who plan the programs are Pat Hurton (Chair), Pat Baker, Alise Bretton, Carol Dauphinais, Ashley Daviau,, Heather Elster, Jessica Muradian, Kathy Tonry, and the BVCC staff.

We asked several of the members why they personally became involved with the Women's Success Network.

Interview with Heather Elster, Executive Director of Whitin Community Center

Why did you agree to join the WSN committee?

I believe in our mission to support one another to reach our professional and personal goals.

How do you think WSN can best support women?

WSN can best support women by providing opportunities to build new relationships and facilitate those introductions at events that are fun and informative.

How do you think you can personally contribute to that?

I can help with that by encouraging attendance of women in my network and make introductions at events.

WSN seeks to connect with women in a great variety of careers and life stages. What is the best way to do that?

By providing events that appeal to different generations and encouraging everyone to be open to trying new things.

What experiences in your life would make a good illustration of having received support from another woman?

I have been fortunate to work for and work with women who prioritized their family but did not sacrifice their work commitments. I learned to share with my employer what was important to me but assuring them that I would work hard and commit to my deadlines. It

might mean I had to take a work phone call on the sideline of a soccer field when my boys played but I could still be present for them, which was my priority.

What is your advice for young women, middle-aged women, older (maybe retiring) women?

This can be life advice, financial advice, career advice or other. You truly cannot do it all. You have to prioritize what is most important to you and then be open and honest about what you can and cannot do. Work hard and be flexible.

Interview with Ashley Daviau, Senior Member Service Representative at Millbury Credit Union.

Why did you agree to join the WSN committee?

I had attended a women's breakfast back in 2017 and just loved every second of it. It was so interesting to see all of the remarkable accomplishments that Dr. Laurie Leshin (president of WPI) had achieved. I was so small minded and didn't realize that someone from our very own city of Worcester, Massachusetts, had done such great things – I mean, she worked with NASA! It was also then that I felt very small in this sea of big fish. When I had the chance to work with women and the opportunity to network with

these “big fish,” I jumped to the occasion. It felt nice to be able to contribute and to be helpful towards a common goal.

How do you think WSN can best support women?

I think that the WSN can best support women by helping facilitate the networking process and to show other women that they are the “big fish” regardless of their title or status. The WSN is all about creating our own version of success and helping women achieve that through workshops, discussions and by working together to recognize our own value and worth.

How do you think you can personally contribute to that?

Well, there is the most obvious answer in the sense that I help with the mailing list, so I put together all of the contacts that we reach out to. I also brainstorm with this group of impressive women, bouncing ideas off one another to create and construct events that are meant to not only support women, but to additionally educate and encourage them as well.

WSN seeks to connect with women in a great variety of careers and life stages. What is the best way to do that?

I don't think that there is any one-stop-shop in terms of connecting with and reaching out to women in various careers or different life stages. I think that's the importance of having such different women working together - to come up with different events and avenues to go down to help achieve this goal. I, for one, am in a different career and in a much different life stage than many of the members on the Committee, but that's what makes it work. You are getting differing views and opinions from all sides of the spectrum and we talk about what would work for us. I am still growing in my career and have two young children at home – what works for me may not work for a grandparent who has settled in their job title or a single woman who isn't quite sure what they want their career to be just yet. It



Photo of the Wine & Wednesday networking event held in 2019.

is key to switch up the type of event, the focus or topic, the timing, and schedules, etc. to be able to reach as many women as we can.

What experiences in your life would make a good illustration of having received support from another woman?

Honestly, the situations that stand out the most to me would be my get-togethers with a couple of my co-workers. I consider this group of women to be like my mentors. They are older (although not much older – sorry ladies) and further in their careers than I am, and I have always looked up to them. We have become quite close over the years and, as time has passed, we no longer work side by side. We still have our little getaways or sporadic dinners with each other and inevitably, work conversation comes up. This is about the time when they, not only give me advice and direction, but praise me for the work I've done. There isn't much like the feeling of a group of women that you look up to telling you what a good job you have been doing and pushing you to keep climbing. They, too, come from different stages in their career and in their personal lives and to get their guidance, in all of the different shapes and sizes that it comes in, is extremely gratifying. Although it doesn't seem like much – this is some of the support that means the most. It really does go to show that what may seem like such a small act to you can mean something so much greater to someone else.

What is your advice for young women, middle-aged women, older (maybe retiring) women? This can be life advice, financial advice, career advice or other.

My advice for all women is to never settle. It doesn't matter if you're just starting out and are feeling insecure about what you have to offer or if you're retiring and you think that you've done all that you are going to do. There is always going to be something more – something more that you can learn, something more that you can offer, something more that will surprise you about yourself. As I mentioned before, I have always considered myself to be one of the “small fish” in this big sea but the more that I network and put myself out there, the more I realize that I can swim with the “big fish” just the same. Through the Women's Success Network, I have been introduced to some women that I consider to be extremely successful, by my own definition of the term, and some women that have done some pretty remarkable things. What I've learned is that we all have to start out somewhere and make our own path. We truly are in control of our own destiny. It is never too late to redefine yourself or add something to your so-called “resume.” Create your own definition of success and never let anything stop you from achieving it.

Women interested in getting more information about the Women's Success Network and to be added to the mailing list should contact Pat Hurton at pjhurton@yahoo.com.

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and must be able to demonstrate revenue loss caused by the pandemic. The business owner's family income must fall within certain limits. Other eligibility requirements apply.

The grants are made possible through a Community Development Block Grant program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development through the Federal CARES Act and administered by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development.

Preliminary applications will be reviewed for eligibility. All businesses deemed eligible for assistance will be entered into a lottery that will determine the order in which applications are processed. Separate lotteries will be held for each community. Applications received after the February 8 deadline will be added to the wait list on a first-come, first-served basis.

For more information and a preliminary application contact Carol Cyr at the Webster Office of Community

Development: (508)949-3800 ext. 4004 or e-mail: ccyr@webster-ma.gov.

You can also visit www.webster-ma.gov, or the website of the municipality in which your business is located: www.douglas-ma.gov; www.clintonma.gov; www.ci.lancaster.ma.us, www.northbridgemass.org or www.sterling-ma.gov.



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Open Sky Community Services opens new family support center

Open Sky Community Services, Inc. is opening the Blackstone Valley Family Support Center in Whitinsville this month, according to agency President and CEO Ken Bates. The Center will serve children and adults with intellectual disabilities and/or autism and their families.

"We are very pleased to have been selected by the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to operate this program in the Blackstone Valley," said Bates. The Center will operate at 70 Douglas Road in Whitinsville, the site of the historic Alternatives Whitin Mill.

The Center will offer a wide range of services designed "to help individuals live, learn, work, play, have relationships and pursue their life's aspirations in the community," according to DDS.

Among others, services will include help in applying for DDS services and other benefits, trainings, information and referral, navigation of systems and community resources, social and recreational opportunities and connecting individuals and families with each other.

The Alternatives Whitin Mill is the perfect location for this service, according to Donna MacLeod-Prior, vice

president of developmental services at Open Sky. "This site has long been a place where the community gathers for plays, concerts, gallery exhibits, and so much more. While these events are currently virtual, we look forward to welcoming our new DDS families and individuals to in-person events in the near future."

The Family Support Center will be staffed by a man-

ager and service navigators and is expected to serve between 300 and 450 families once fully operational.

For more information, email familysupportcenter@openskycs.org.

For more information about Open Sky Community Services, please contact Lorie Martiska, lorie.martiska@openskycs.org

About Open Sky Community Services

Open Sky Community Services is dba for Alternatives Unlimited, Inc. and The Bridge of Central MA. Open Sky offers a wide range of services for adults, adolescents, and children with mental health challenges, developmental and intellectual disabilities, substance use disorders, brain injury, homelessness and other challenges throughout Central Massachusetts. Open

Sky Community Services has over 1,300 dedicated employees and an annual budget of \$83M with more than 100 programs throughout the region. For more information, please visit www.openskycs.org.

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Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor announces new board appointments

WHITINSVILLE – Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (BRVHNC) announces appointments made to its Board of Directors following its annual meeting in January.

The Board of Directors elected new officers as follows: Chair, Richard T. Moore (MA); First Vice-Chair, Dennis Rice (MA); Second Vice-Chair, Lee Dillard Adams (MA); Treasurer, Yvonne Chita (MA); and Secretary, Todd Helwig (MA). BRVHNC's Immediate Past Chair is Richard H. Gregory III (RI).

Directors re-elected for a three-year term on BRVHNC's Board include Richard H. Gregory III (RI), Dennis Rice (MA), and Gary E. Furtado (RI).



Richard T. Moore

Directors on the Board include Bill Beitler (RI), Robert Billington (RI), Michael D. Cassidy (RI), Bob Contursi (MA), Robert Dandrade (MA), Gary E. Furtado (RI), Pieter de Jong (MA), Jeannie Hebert (MA), David W. Kellogg (RI), Thomas Kravitz, (RI), Harry T. Whitin (MA) and Donna M. Williams (MA).

Whitinsville Social Library news and events

Whitinsville Social Library, 17 Church St., Whitinsville, www.northbridgemass.org/WSL (508) 234-2151 lists upcoming events. Follow WSL on Facebook and Instagram.

As of November 12, Whitinsville Social Library is reclosed to the public due to the increase of COVID cases in Northbridge. The Library is offering parking lot pick-up Monday through Saturday. Place items on hold in the online catalog, wait for a notification that it's ready, and give the library a call at 508-234-2151 to schedule a contactless pick up window. Not sure what you'd like to read, watch or listen to? Fill out the Library Sampler form on our website and staff will pick out something for you.

Cookbook Club: Spice up winter

Join us virtually this winter for our Cookbook Club's exploration of spices. We provide registrants with a sample of the spice via Parking Lot Pick Up. Try the spice at home and then join other food enthusiasts to talk about what you made, what you want to try, and what you thought of the spice.

Spices and meetings:

Thursday, February 25 at 12 - Chinese five spice.

Thursday, March 18 at 12 - garam masala.

Sign up at www.tinyurl.com/EventsAtWSL to receive a sample of the spice, information on its history, usage, and recipes. Once you've registered you will receive a link via email to that spice's meeting on Zoom.

Ten Year Club: The Song of Achilles

Wednesday, February 17 at 6:30 p.m.

Join us as we discuss the best sellers from ten years ago. Whether you read the book when it was first released in 2011 or want to read it now, let's talk about it! We'll discuss the book itself and how it's held up ten years later.

The first meetings will take place via Zoom. Copies of The Song of Achilles by Madeline Miller are available for Parking Lot Pick Up, electronically in Overdrive, or patrons may place on hold in the catalog or by giving the Library a call.

Sign up at www.tinyurl.com/EventsAtWSL to get the link to attend the book discussion.

Local residents earn award from WGU

SALT LAKE CITY - The following local residents have earned an Award of Excellence at Western Governors University. The award is given to students who perform at a superior level in their coursework.

Zaily Naranjo of Douglas, has earned an Award of Excellence at Western Governors University College of Business.

Mohammad Ghani of Oxford, has earned an Award of Excellence at Western Governors University College of Information Technology.

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Dog Orphans 2nd annual virtual bow wow bingo

Dear friends,

We are very excited to be celebrating our 50th anniversary this year and will be holding many fun-filled activities throughout the year. Whether on-line, or in person, if possible, we have many events coming your way.

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Sincerely, Ron Morse (508) 475-1855
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Living with Lincoln

The Senior Stroll

By Amy Palumbo-LeClaire

Every pet owner, at one time or another, has experienced the joy of going for a WALK. Some dogs even know how to spell the W-A-L-K. I don't know what's better: the build-up to the walk or the actual stroll itself. When it comes to living with Lincoln, I'd have to give each a fair shake. Now that he's a Senior Pet, walks have become even more interesting, and treasured.

"Want to go for a walk?"

The question passes through him like electricity while he relaxes in his preferred spot, the nook beneath our island countertop, his dog cave. He stiffens his posture, stretches his paws forward at an attentive numeral eleven, and tilts his square head. "Want to go for a walk?" I repeat the question just to plant that expression (a Dog Owner fave) in my mind.

The second request sells him. He springs from his cave and grabs the nearest dishrag, one of several used to clean dirty paws. "I love this ideal!" He parades around the kitchen with the dirty rag.

It's a Retriever thing.

Dogs remind us that the simple joys in life are the sweetest. He waits for me to grab my coat from the closet and, since its winter, tack on a hat, scarf, and gloves. Leave it to a dog to give "his person" the charm of a butler. He observes my routine carefully. He grins while I button my coat. He blinks while I wrap my scarf. Then he performs a happy dance, as though we've both just won the lottery. "Do you want to go see Gracie, Lincoln?" I keep the inspiration

going. Naming other Golden retrievers in the neighborhood turns on his heart light even more.

"Do you want to go see the new puppy?" He tap-dances and grabs a dropped glove. "Let it go, Lincoln." I'll admit, this particular habit has lost its luster. "Lincoln, please. I need the glove. Let it go." Refusal. He wiggles to the front door mouthing the glove like a magician with a dove. I resort to the obvious: use my bare hands as a scissor to pry open his upper and lower jaw. The slimed glove drops to the floor like a dead bird.

"Go ahead, Lincoln." Since he's already pushed his way through the opened doorway, I gesture that he GO first.

"A couple throws?" Before I have a chance to attach leash to collar, he's found a ball in the yard. Now that he's ten, I have to monitor the number of throws because we still have an entire three mile walk to manage. "Just a few," I say to him. He drops the ball by my feet and waits, the indent at his head creased with that expression again. I toss him a few and he completes the 40 yard dash to retrieve one of thousands of balls thrown over a decade. I resist the opportunity to offer the Gronk-toss—a high ball thrown perfectly to allow him to spring like a dolphin on all fours, catch the ball on the hop, and carry it back with a celebrity smile. 2020 has been a year of worry. Test positive? Torn ACL?

"We're going for our walk now, Lincoln." He stares up at me, foam lining his black lips like the suds of an ocean shoreline. He secures

the ball to one side of his mouth with big canines that have been filed flat by so much ball play. He drools. A new battle begins. "Let it go, Lincoln." He turns his head away from me—a subtle hint to let me know he'll be bringing along the ball, thank you very much.

"Give."

Refusal.

Our latest problem.

His breathing is already compromised due to age and, well, a few senior issues. I use gloved hands to pry a slurpy ball from a surprisingly strong, old mouth. In the process, the ball shoots off my hand and takes a bad bounce. The two of us scramble like football players for the fumble. "Leave it!" I shout. Too late. Lincoln recovers the ball, a close snag. A ghost from NFL Football Past announces the play while Lincoln celebrates the victory with a dance. Meanwhile, I produce Plan B.

Reverse Psychology.

I pretend I don't mind that he has won the battle and walk to the edge of the driveway, as though to desert him. "Bye, Lincoln. Have fun."

His expression softens. "You're really going to go without me?" He tip-toes toward the mailbox, ever so slowly, a lion studying his prey. "Can we talk about it?"

"I'll be right back, Lincoln," I lie, and keep walking. He comes closer to the driveway threshold, more vulnerable now. I spin around, dash towards my ball-obsessed dog and perform a quick, unexpected extraction. Then I jog back down the driveway, place the ball on a high garage

shelf, return to his side, and snap on a leash. We cross over to the street. He pulls me back in the direction of the garage. "Cheap shot."

I tug him forward. Within seconds, the incident is a distant memory. Unlike humans, dogs forgive immediately, fully. They don't hold grudges. We go for a walk. Lincoln wears a permanent smile that falls somewhere between the residue of ball play and the promise of new adventure. His trot is peppy, age-defiant. We pass kind neighbors, interesting shrubs, and the small, crabby pug whose bark is significantly worse than any dog's bite. He tailgates Lincoln's hairy butt with an obscene, gurgling rattle.

"Go home!" I turn around and stomp my foot. Lincoln shakes him off and proceeds, unaffected by bad behavior. "Hyper little fellow, isn't he?"

We pass the deserted apple orchard and Lincoln takes a shot at pulling me back to beautiful "off-the-leash" years when we'd tour rows and rows of apple trees long since cut down. The field, now overgrown and fenced in, is nostalgic for both of us. "You remember the orchard, don't you, Lincoln?"

I notice the memory emerge in his mind. He flecks me a knowing grin. Then, as quickly as it came, the memory morphs to a new sight. A friendly Human across the street walks a gorgeous German Shepherd pup. Normally, a tsunami could not hold me back from this pup. "What a beautiful pup!" I croon. Lincoln interrupts. "My name is Lincoln! I'm ten years old and have my own column! You can read about



More ball please.

me in Living with Lincoln, of The Yankee Xpress!"

"I'm sorry. I'm on Day 10," the Human says, and we part like the Red Sea. Lincoln tosses a glance up at me. "He had the puppy smell, too."

It's a 2020 thing.

We make our way to the "home stretch" at Dodge Road, where a trot becomes a stroll.

The pep in Lincoln's step becomes a pause in his paws. "You want to take a rest, Lincoln?" He sits, lifts his head, and smiles proudly.

Despite an already healthy self-esteem, I pour on praise. "You're doing such a good job walking." I massage his ears. "Most ten-year old dogs couldn't walk this far. You're so athletic. We'll get some water when we get home. Sound good?"

He listens to me - happy tongue out - and agrees. Always, there is inspiration between us while we put our best foot forward and count our blessings. Life is worth living. Especially with a dog like Lincoln.

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Tales from beyond

The Ghosts of Pachaug State Forest

By Thomas D'Agostino

The ghosts of Pachaug are well documented and have attracted the curious and paranormal enthusiasts for years.

As the shadows grow long and darkness envelops the terrain around Pachaug State Forest in Voluntown, Connecticut, unearthly shrieks permeate the wooded domain. They are the shrieks of an Indian girl who was killed by British soldiers over three centuries ago. The once flourishing village that is now deserted thicket is host to several creepy entities from colonial soldiers to the wraith of a little girl. There is even a black misty figure that stalks those who hike the trails and roads of the forest.

The ghosts seem to fall neatly into the history of the region. Pachaug is Indian for "bend in the river." The Narragansett, Mohegan, and Pequot tribes inhabited the area. Towards the end of the 17th century, the colonists began to settle there and convinced the Mohegan tribe to rid the others from the land. After they had gained the help of the Mohegans in successfully removing the other two tribes, the colonists then turned and pushed them out as well.

Around 1700, a six square mile expanse of land was given to veterans of the Indian Wars. They named the new settlement Volunteer Town due to the fact that they had been volunteer soldiers during the conflict. In 1721, they shortened the moniker to Voluntown. A community was quick to spring up along the fast flow of the Pachaug River. This tributary runs through the forest from Beach Pond to the Quinebaug River. Mills began to dot the river as early as 1711. Nearly every brook has some remnant of the

many mill ruins in the forest preserve.

Like many other small New England farming and mill communities, progress and technology became their enemy and soon the small village of Pachaug was on the downward slide. By the Great Depression of the early 20th century, the village was nothing but overgrown roads and crumbling homes. The mills, long dormant, had also fallen into disrepair and were soon consumed by the ravages of time and nature. All that remained among the forest were the ghosts that still hold their vigil to this day amid the ruins of what was once their home.

There is a section of the forest called Hell Hollow along a road and pond of the same name. The name is not necessarily derived from the demonic forces that thrive in the area. The settlers named many parts of Connecticut with prefixes like "devil" or "demon," as the area gave them the feeling that there were supernatural forces at work. In the case of Hell Hollow, the land was rocky and poor. Farming was brutal and the area was prone to flooding. Such names have carried on through history. If they are haunted at present, it only adds to the mystery of the locale. A rock formation known as "Devil's Den" can be seen northeast of Hell Hollow Pond, on the southwest side of Flat Rock Road along the Quinebaug Trail. This may not be of ghostly significance but tends to reiterate the fact that the settlers were probably a bit superstitious.

Visitors to this patch of the forest have witnessed a dark entity that rushes out of the woods directly in front of them. The strange mist is reported to be about fifteen feet

long and hovers a few feet off of the ground as it makes its way across the road. Hikers and hunters alike have given testimony to the strange fiend that lurks in the dark bowers of the forest. Many also get a fearful feeling of being watched while traversing the trails of the Hell Hollow section of the forest.

Another haunting in the Hell Hollow area is that of an Indian girl. In the late 1600s, an Indian woman was slain by English soldiers near the present Hell Hollow Road. Since then her vengeful screams of murder and brutality have saturated the air in a tormenting aria that eerily replays over and over. The screams send even the bravest hunter on his heels for more hallowed ground. The local hunters will not venture far into that area according to the few I have talked to. They wished to remain anonymous for fear of ridicule but as one said, "When you hear that piercing scream come out of the woods, no one cares what anyone might think. Your hair stands up on the back of your neck and you are out of there!"

The ghost of a colonial soldier still makes his rounds at a section along Breakneck Hill Road. Locals have encountered the vigilant spirit many times over the years as it marches back and forth along the side of the road. Some have actually almost hit the wraith as it crosses the road, still on eternal duty.

Author David Trifilo encountered the ghostly soldier once while traveling along the thoroughfare. He wrote of his experience in his book entitled, "The Hauntings of Pachaug Forest." The author was rounding a sharp bend of the road when he encountered a threadbare colonial

soldier carrying a long musket over his shoulder. The entity marched into the road directly in front of Trifilo. When he hit the brakes, the ghost vanished into the void. The sightings of the soldier have been frequent over the years. Paranormal investigator and writer Lauren Neslussen has heard of others who have been startled by the ghostly guard as it crossed the road in front of them. Motorists have actually driven through the specter. Some have stopped for a moment to reflect on what they had just encountered while others do not stick around for a second meeting.

The ghost of this soldier has been witnessed for centuries. The first sighting recorded goes as far back as 1742. The description is the same as the present day witnesses accounts. The spirit is dressed in a tattered uniform holding a long musket slung over the right shoulder. He marches silent and dusty along the bend in the road, sometimes crossing as if looking for something on the other side. The date of the first sighting definitely places him well before the American Revolution. Perhaps he is a remnant of King Philips War (1675 to 1676) or Queen Anne's War (1702-1713), which was the second inter-colonial war between France and England. Some claim he is from the French and Indian War, yet that conflict took place from 1754 to 1763, several years after the initial sighting of Pachaug's sentinel ghost.

Another spot of spectral relevance is an area of the forest called Maud's Grave. The original site of her burial was on a rise next to the remains of the Reynolds home at the Sterling/Voluntown border.

Maud was the daughter of



Maud Reynolds' grave marker.



Breakneck Hill Road where soldier's ghost is seen.



Hell Hollow Road.

Gilbert and Lucy Reynolds. She died just before her third birthday after choking on an apple from complications due to diphtheria. The parents found her on the morning of October 12, 1886, with the apple by her side. They preserved the apple in alcohol because it had the impressions of her baby teeth in it.

She was the third child of the Reynolds to die within a few years, but she was not buried in the family cemetery. Mrs. Reynolds was so taken aback by the death of her daughter, that she buried her close to the home where she could see the cross that marked the grave. It is in this spot that her ghost is seen, perhaps trying to find her family or wondering why she is not at rest with her brothers. No one has an answer, as

she has never spoken. Even after she was laid to rest in the family plot, her ghost has continued to wander the grounds which were once her home.

In 1965, a relative moved the remains of Maud to the family burying ground on the top of Bare Hill. A cross was fashioned from bricks over her grave and her original marker was taken to the church the family once attended and put in a closet. It remains there to this day as a reminder of one of Hell Hollow's most famous ghosts.

Thomas D'Agostino and his wife Arlene Nicholson are seasoned paranormal investigators, authors, and co-organizers of Paranormal United Research Society. You can find out more about them by visiting www.tomdagostino.com.

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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Q. This seems like a simple question but I'm getting different answers. My car calls for 33 pounds of tire pressure. Sometimes it will reach all the way up to 39 PSI. Do I have to adjust for those times and what is the detriment if I don't?

A. I commend you for checking your vehicle tires as often as you do. You should check the tire pressure monthly and adjust the pressure when the tires are cool. Driving will raise the tire pressure and that is built into the pressure calculation. Set the tires at 33 PSI and check them again each month before you drive any long distances that would warm up the tires.

Q. My friend has a 2012 Nissan Juke that she bought used about five years ago. Almost as long as she has owned the car the check engine light has been on. Occasionally it will go off but lately it never goes off. Carol has brought the Juke to numerous mechanics and it has been hooked up to all forms of computers. Shops have replaced sensors but otherwise the consensus is that no one knows what the problem is. However, this year the car would not pass inspection because of the light and she did another round of mechanic visits. She was told no one could figure out the problem. The last mechanic told her she needed to replace her engine. The car runs fine, no knocking or noises and it doesn't blow smoke from the exhaust. I

am wondering if you have any suggestions of the next step she could take. She is retired and can't afford a new car or to replace an engine but without it being able to pass inspection she is at an impasse.

A. I think your friend should start by finding a different repair shop. Saying they do not know what is wrong or it needs an engine without a reason, tells me that they just don't know how to fix it. Most states that require vehicle inspection have financial hardship exemptions. Before I pursued that route, I would find a repair shop that can diagnose, and depending on the result, repair the car. You will need to have this work performed prior to applying for an exemption. In most cases the repairs or diagnosis needs to be performed at a state certified repair shop.

Q. I heard you on your radio show podcast talking about the Ford Mustang Mach-e, but I was confused if you liked it or not. In the next year, maybe two, I'm thinking about an electric car and the Mustang intrigues me.

A. Perhaps it is my age, but to me a Mustang should have two doors, a V-8 engine and snarling exhaust. Then I drove the Mustang Mach-e, it was fast, handled well, nicely designed infotainment system and very

good ergonomics. The hatchback was handy as was the useful front trunk. During my road test, I got the most response from Tesla owners who all gave it a thumbs up. There was nothing about the Mustang Mach-e I did not like, well maybe the name.

Q. I have a 2019 Lexus RX 350. The navigation has a weird problem that Lexus hasn't figured out. When on a highway the screen will show rest areas, it will not show highway exits. It completely skips it and shows the next non-highway exit. Any idea what the problem is?

A. I agree that this is weird. I have checked for a technical service bulletin specific to the GPS and mapping and found none. The first thing I would do is drive the same route with both the factory GPS and at the same time using maps on a phone and see how they compare. I have seen that occasionally the mapping data is just wrong. If the phone and the GPS do not agree then I would see if Lexus can update the software in the unit. According to the database that I use, Lexus used two different systems (depending on the infotainment system), one used a hard drive the other used an SD card. I would see if the dealer is willing to add new software updates or send the hard drive out for new software.

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Mark Marzeotti

Home buyer statistics

- First-Time vs. Repeat Buyers:
 - o First-time buyers: 31%
 - o Median age of first-time buyers: 33
 - o Median age of repeat buyers: 47
 - o Median household income of first-time buyers: \$80,000
 - o Median household income of repeat buyers: \$106,700
- The typical home purchased was 1,900 square feet in size, was built in 1993, and had three bedrooms and two bathrooms.
- Among those who financed their home purchase, buyers typically financed 88% of the home price.
- 88% of buyers purchased their home through a real estate agent or broker—a share that has steadily increased from 69 percent in 2001.
- Buyers who would use their agent again or recom-

Market recap – good tips if you are planning to buy or sell

mend their agent to others: 91%

- Where buyers found the home they purchased:
 - Internet: 52%
 - Real estate agent: 29%
 - Yard sign/open house sign: 6%
 - Friend, relative, or neighbor: 5%
 - Home builder or their agent: 6%
 - Directly from sellers/Knew the sellers: 2%
 - Print newspaper advertisement: 1%

Home seller statistics

- The typical home seller was 56 years of age, had a median household income of \$107,100, and lived in their home for 10 years.
- 89% of sellers were assisted by a real estate agent when selling their home.
- Recent sellers typically sold their homes for 99% of the listing price, and 38% reported reducing the asking price at least once.
- The typical home sold was on the market for 3 weeks.
- 41% of sellers who used a real estate agent found their agents through a referral by friends or family, and 26% used the agent they previously worked with to buy

or sell a home.

- Sellers who definitely would use same agent again: 74%

For sale by owner (FSBO) statistics

- FSBOs accounted for 8% of home sales in the past year. The typical FSBO home sold for \$217,900 compared to \$295,000 for agent-assisted home sales.
- FSBO methods used to market home:
 - None: Did not actively market home: 46%
 - Yard sign: 25%
 - Friends, relatives, or neighbors: 22%
 - Social networking websites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.): 14%
 - Open house: 11%
 - Multiple Listing Service

(MLS) website: 6%

- Online classified advertisements: 5%
- For-sale-by-owner websites: 5%
- Video: 2%
- Print newspaper advertisement: 1%
- Direct mail (flyers, postcards, etc.): 1%
- Most difficult tasks for FSBO sellers:
 - Preparing/fixing up home for sale: 12%
 - Understanding and performing paperwork: 10%
 - Getting the right price: 9%
 - Selling within the planned length of time: 6%
 - Having enough time to devote to all aspects of the sale: 5%

* Source: 2020 National Association of REALTORS

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