

The Yankee Xpress

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March 26-April 23, 2021

INSIDE

North Oxford Mills has you covered, including Katharine Hepburn

By Janet Stoica

The saying goes “you can’t judge a book by its cover.” And so it is with the carpet and flooring outlet called North Oxford Mills.

“We might have the ugliest building, but the savings are beautiful,” to paraphrase owner Rob Mack’s words in his latest TV commercial.

Located off Route 12 in North Oxford, the store appears to be the ultimate local choice for a variety of flooring needs. They sell and install carpeting, laminate, hardwood, cork, and linoleum. And besides, why wouldn’t you want to buy local, from the businesses that are the lifeblood of our community?

“We’ve always been known as a carpet outlet, but we offer all types

of flooring,” says Rob Mack. “We buy a lot of inventory from brands such as Stainmaster, Shaw, Mohawk, Dixie Home, and Masland. We have waterproof vinyl floating floors that have a wood floor appearance. Sheet vinyl, however, is impervious to everything once it’s glued down to the base floor. The vinyl floating floor material styles and colors are truly beautiful; however, they’re not the least expensive, though easy to install over existing floors.”

North Oxford Mills also has a good commercial base. They’ve installed for and been involved with local banks, colleges, housing authorities, and general con-

tractors. “During the COVID situation we’ve been included in lots of home improvement projects as well as many commercial jobs,” said Rob, “I think with people working from home, they’ve been looking at their current flooring more critically and realizing it’s time for replacement. Last May and June were busier than normal for us as was the summer, fall, and winter. The holidays slowed things down but it’s picked up once again. We are very thankful for the business uptick and greatly appreciate our customers’ contact with us.”

Rob Mack had worked for his father-in-law, Bernie Edinberg, for



Rob Mack

a number of years before buying the business from him in 2005. The business currently employs two full-time and 2-3 part-time per-

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MORE PRIZES ADDED!
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Hey neighbor, our website is your website

The Yankee Xpress is excited to announce the re-launch of its website www.theyankeeexpress.com. It has a bright and streamlined new look. Our goal is to create a site that’s about you, your neighborhood, your businesses, your community resources, your town’s news, one stop – the voice of your community.

Online, you will be able to access the entire newspaper and features to empower you to become an active member of the community. Post events and what’s happening around town directly to our community announcement page. Easily share to your social media. Don’t forget to “like” us on Facebook. We have built an online directory, with maps, where you

can effortlessly explore local businesses serving our community. Get updates on what’s going on in your area on our event and calendar page.

Remember, these have been difficult times, and it is so important to support the businesses that support our community. You can check out business profiles, leave a review, connect to their Facebook page and website.

Businesses – a corporate profile on our new directory can feature your company on our opening page and drive visitors to your website with links, a map, and graphics. You can take advantage of becoming a community spon-

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North Oxford Mills offers carpeting and much more in flooring.

NORTH OXFORD MILLS

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sonnel as well as an installation team. "All of our work is fully guaranteed," says Rob. "We don't do ceramic tile, but we do most everything else. We also support our local schools and safety personnel. Additionally, I've hired our local high school students for after-school work and they are great additions to our staff."

"Our installation team is amazing; they are second to none," says Rob. "Anybody can sell flooring but it's only as good as the quality of the installation, including the underlay. The work of our installers is the best in Central Mass. Their work is

high-quality and we'll stand behind it. We take responsibility for materials, installation, everything.

"My father-in-law is 79 and he is the person who visits people's homes to assist with their choices and takes measurements. He also buys inventory and waits on store customers. During COVID, however, he has curtailed his work activity. Soon, he will re-join us."

Rob related a story about a movie-star personality, the regal Katharine Hepburn, who visited the store in the 1970s. Ms. Hepburn purchased flooring for her Connecticut home, and it was an honor that she had chosen North Oxford Mills as her residence's ultimate resource.

"We've been pleased to have been chosen to supply multi-million-dollar homes in the local area as well as for the average buyer," says

Rob. "Every job is interesting and unique. I enjoy the mathematical part of my job as well as its complexity. All of our customers are the best. This area has the most down-to-earth people. They are good, honest, hardworking people that you want to do a good job for. Many of our customers know the value of their purchases and this is the most satisfying part of my job. Our patrons work hard for their money and we work hard fulfilling their needs knowing it's important to them. We are extremely grateful to have the local community as our customer base."

North Oxford Mills is at 3 Clara Barton Road, North Oxford. Phone: (508) 987-8521. Hours: Tues-Sat 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Wed until 7 p.m. Closed Sunday and Monday. www.northoxfordmills.com and on Facebook.

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The Yankee Xpress

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4th Friday BLACKSTONE VALLEY North: Grafton, Millbury and Sutton.

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20% DISCOUNT FOR NEW CLIENTS

Perro's Auto of Auburn makes it easy

By Janet Stoica

Thinking about the car of your dreams? Make, model, color, cool accessories? The dealer of choice is right here in Auburn, Perro's Auto Sales, located at 772 Southbridge Street.

Michael J. Perro established the business in 1965.

"If you have a job that you enjoy and it keeps you busy, it's a great experience" says Mike A. Perro, son of the dealership's founder, "I thoroughly enjoy greeting our new customers and seeing our repeat customers. We are happy to assist a customer in choosing their pre-owned vehicle."

According to Bankrate.com, a new car loses up to 30% of its value as soon as it's driven out of the new car dealer's lot. This is where Perro's Auto comes in. They will find you just about any make or model of a pre-owned car or truck of your specifications.

"Most of our cars and trucks are strictly lease cars," said Mike, "and the majority are one-owner only. They are genuine off-lease sales right from the major auto manufacturers. We travel to the larger auto auction sites to buy the real thing. We'll buy only one-owner vehicles that we do our homework on. If we learn that the vehicle's been in an accident, 99% of the time we will not purchase it. We thoroughly inspect each car and truck before we put it on our lot."

Perro's has three mechanics and an auto body shop located at 354 Harding Street in Worcester. Their Auburn location will perform quick vehicle repairs and oil changes as well as tire rotations.

The Auburn and Worcester locations are all in the family with brothers Anthony and Robert Perro managing the Worcester location and broth-

ers John and Mike at the Auburn location. There are also two additional sales personnel at the Auburn site.

"People are finally beginning to come back into our lots again," Mike stated. "We have many repeat customers and look forward to meeting new shoppers. Someone new to our dealership might be apprehensive but our customer service is top-notch and we feel that they'll enjoy the selection experience. We take many custom orders but also have a good inventory to pick from."

"You just tell us what type of vehicle you're looking for and what options you like along with your budget and we'll search through the New England area as well as Pennsylvania and New Jersey to find your choice."

"Today everyone has the internet at their fingertips, and you don't have to be a car

guru to find what you want but our reputation means a lot to us and we'll try our best to accommodate our customers."

He explains that many of their cars are a factory sale, meaning that the manufacturer was the actual lease company. Some of the makes are Toyota, Honda, Ford, Hyundai, GMC, Dodge, etc. and all have been previously one-owner lease cars. Most are still under remaining factory warranties.

"We are good people and most people who buy cars here come back to us," said Mike. "That in itself is truly a positive as people's allegiances today are not what they were years ago."

Mike also indicated that owners are keeping their cars longer today. Drive trains haven't changed much in 50 years, he stated, but the electronics have multiplied.

Perro's Auto Sales sets itself apart from other previously-owned vehicle dealers with their RMV program. "All you have to do is contact your insurance agent," he said, "and we'll take care of the registration process for you. There's no need for you to drive to the RMV and wait in a long line, we'll do it all for you. You'll walk into Perro's and choose your vehicle and in short time, you'll walk out with your new registration in your hand."



Mike Perro in his dealership showroom.

There is a nominal fee for the RMV service but it's a much smaller fee than the customary "documentation fee" charged by new car dealers.

Perro's does take trade-ins and can compete with most car/truck dealers on any make and model of vehicle

you're interested in. They also assist with financing, using many local credit unions and banks.

Perro's Auto Sales is at 772 Southbridge Street (Route 12), Auburn. Phone: (508) 721-1444. Hours: Mon-Fri 9:30-7; Sat., 9-6; Sunday 12 noon-5. www.perroauto.com



Perro's Auto Sales is located at 772 Southbridge St. in Auburn.



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Harrington Auxiliary scholarships

SOUTHBRIDGE: The Harrington Hospital Auxiliary is pleased to announce the continuation of its annual scholarship program, which offers five \$2000 scholarships to students pursuing a career in health care.

Five (one year) scholarships will be awarded by The Harrington Hospital Auxiliary in June of 2021. Each scholarship will be in the amount of \$2000.00. Applicants must be planning to pursue a career in Health Care and must be accepted into an accredited Health Care Program.

To be eligible, applicants must reside in one of the Central Massachusetts or North Eastern Connecticut communities served by Harrington Hospital.

An applicant must be identified as one of the following:

A student who is graduating from an area high school in 2021.

An individual who has already graduated from an area high school and who has not been a previous recipient of a Harrington Hospital Auxiliary Scholarship.

An individual who has received a high school graduate equivalency diploma (G.E.D.).

An individual who has been home educated and who has met all high school graduation criteria as set forth by their local School Board.

Any person who is an employee or a relative of an employee of Harrington Hospital and affiliations who meets the above criteria is eligible to apply.

Completed application packets must include:

A current transcript of your high school or college record, including grades, grade point

average, and rank in-class (when applicable). PSAT, SAT I or II, ACT scores, or other pertinent standardized test scores. A personal (student written) ESSAY (on a separate sheet) describing why you wish to further your education in the field of health care. Two letters of reference. We request one letter from a faculty member, guidance counselor, or other school personnel. The second letter should be written by an individual who knows you from the workplace, church, organization, or volunteer organization.

All applications should be submitted electronically or postmarked by April 1, through the website: <https://www.harringtonhospital.org/harrington-hospital-auxiliary-2021-scholarship/> For more information, please contact Kelly Hibbard at 508-765-6473 or khibbard@harringtonhospital.org.

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Town of Auburn Ballot openings

Annual election May 18, 2021

On Tuesday, May 18, 2021 at eight o'clock AM to elect by Official Ballot the following Town Officers and Committees for the following terms of offices as provided by the Charter, March 10, 1969, under General Laws, Chapter 43B Section (9c).

- One Housing Authority for Five Years
- Two Library Trustees, Auburn Free Public Library for Three Years
- One Moderator for One Year
- Two School Committee Members for Three Years
- Two Board of Selectmen Members for Three Years

- Town meeting members**
- Precinct One - 8 to be elected for Three Years
 - Precinct Two - 8 to be elected for Three Years; 1 to be elected for One year unexpired term
 - Precinct Three - 8 to be elected for Three Years; 1 to be elected for One year unexpired term 2 to be elected for Two year unexpired term.
 - Precinct Four - 8 to be elected for Three Years
 - Precinct Five - 8 to be elected for Three Years; 3 to be elected for One year unexpired term

Town of Auburn

2021 Annual Town Election Information and Calendar

- Tuesday, May 4 - Annual Town Meeting - High School Auditorium
- Tuesday, May 18 - Annual Town Election-Precincts 1,2,3,4 & 5 Auburn High School Gym

- Nomination papers**
- Tuesday, March 30, 5:00 PM last day for candidates to file nomination papers with the board of registrars
 - Thursday, April 15, 5:00 PM Last day for filing objection/withdrawals
 - Wednesday, April 28, 8 AM - 8 PM- Last day to register to vote
 - Monday, May 10, 4:00 PM Campaign Finance Reports (Town-wide only) 8 day report
 - Thursday, June 17, 4:00 PM Campaign Finance Reports Due 30 day report

- Nomination papers - number of signatures required**
- Town-wide Office - Minimum of 50 voters of the town. No more than four blank nomination papers issued
 - Town Meeting member - Minimum of 10 voters of the precinct in which the candidate resides. No more than one blank nomination paper issued
 - Incumbent Town Meeting Members - Last day to notify the Town Clerk in writing they wish to be on the ballot, is Tuesday, March 23.

Auburn residents 18 years of age by Election Day, May 18, 2021, or older may register to vote in the Town Clerk's office. A resident may register to vote by mail, in person or online <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ovr/>; the mail-in form must be postmarked on or before April 28, 2021 for the voter to be eligible to vote at the annual town election. 16 and 17 years of age may also pre-register.

All the right moves and more to come at Booklovers' Gourmet

By Rod Lee

Significant as is twenty-six years in business, Debra Horan, owner of Booklovers' Gourmet in Webster, has no intention of settling for that particular milestone.

Booklovers' Gourmet celebrated its latest anniversary—Ms. Horan's first at the store's new home at 72 E. Main St.—the week of March 2-7. A large sheet cake was put out for customers to enjoy as they sampled the "cultural oasis" Ms. Horan has established since

opening her business in 1995.

Her goal from the outset was to create "a cultural oasis" in town. By every measure she has achieved that with a friendly local independent bookstore that defies the odds of "small" struggling and in many cases not making it. A combination of gently used books on virtually every subject imaginable, specialty drinks, fresh pastries, unique gifts including leather-bound journals, pottery, gemstone jewelry, bookmarks,

aromatherapy and incense, handcrafted soaps and soy candles, jigsaw puzzles and children's toys have worked to make Booklovers' Gourmet popular with customers.

The event was a success, Ms. Horan said.

"It was a steady flow of people, I was happy with the turnout. I decided to spread it out over the week," she said, choosing a five-day happening rather than limiting the festivities to the actual date of her anniversary, which was March 4.

Sandra Chase of Danielson, Connecticut, a first-time patron, a regular, happened to be in the store at the same time one afternoon during anniversary week. Both were complimentary of what Ms. Horan has accomplished.

"The merchandise is quite varied," Ms. Chase said. "I'm more of a gift shopper. For books I usually go to Pourings & Passages in Danielson. It's run by a priest from St. James School. I haven't paid full price for a book in a long time."

Ms. Wargo described herself as a customer of Booklovers' "almost from the beginning. I'm a retired librarian and taught in many schools. I am a voracious reader. It could be a bestseller or a used book. I like the colle-

giality and the chance to talk about books. It's kind of like Cheers for the bookish. Everyone knows your name."

Ms. Horan moved Booklovers' Gourmet from its previous location just down the block and on the other side of the street on April 1 of last year but "didn't open until mid-May" because of the pandemic—and then on a limited basis. Like other businesses, she has struggled through the partial shutdown.

Her attentiveness to what it takes to stay current and interesting is manifested in "Shelf Awareness" emails she shares with her audience, periodically. A recent "Shelf Awareness" featured Robert Gray's comments on a release from Rapper/Singer/Songwriter Dessa, entitled My Own Devices: True Stories from the Road on Music, Science and Senseless Love and praise for Gabriel Byrne's "compelling memoir" Walking with Ghosts. Shelf Awareness also includes notes on "Great Reads," "The Writer's Life" and "Book Reviews."

Ms. Horan expresses optimism about being able to return to normal.

"Yeah, I'm hoping to have warmer weather and do outdoor poetry readings," she said. "I'm starting to plan things for early summer.



Booklovers' Gourmet Owner Deb Horan, left, recently welcomed Tina Brooks to the store as a team member. Tina is a longtime resident of the town of Webster whose reading interests include art, mystery, science and health.

"I have more ideas," she said: a hint that Booklovers' Gourmet will only get better. "Even extending hours a little bit" is a possibility, she said.

She is pleased that customers appreciate Booklovers' atmosphere.

"I think people are starting to know that I have a lot of books but other things too, like gifts and coffees," she said.

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



Deb Horan offers Sue Wargo of Thompson some anniversary cake at Booklovers' Gourmet.

Pamala Holt joins Goodrich Insurance Agency

We are excited to welcome Pamala Holt from Dudley, MA to our team of insurance professionals at Goodrich Insurance Agency in Milton, MA.

Pamala has over 20 years of insurance expertise and will be our Personal lines Account Manager. Pam joined our office family on November 23, 2020 and will be working remotely from Dudley and in our main office in Milton. Help us give Pam a warm welcome!

We look forward to providing our current clients and new clients with professional, personal, knowledgeable valued client services you expect from Goodrich Insurance Agency!

Donna Benoit, CIC, CPA, Vice President



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Politicians announce \$300,000 grant for Oxford

BOSTON – State Senator Ryan Fattman (R-Sutton) and State Representatives Joseph McKenna (R-Webster) and Paul Frost (R-Auburn) announced recently that Oxford was the recipient of a \$300,000 grant from the MassDOT Shared Winter Streets and Spaces Program.

The Shared Winter Streets and Spaces program provides grants from \$5,000 to \$500,000 for municipalities to quickly launch changes for safer walking, biking, public transit, recreation, commerce, and civic activities. These improvements can be intentionally temporary or can be pilots of potentially

permanent changes. MassDOT is particularly focused on projects that respond to the current public health crisis and provide safe mobility for children, for elders, to public transportation, and to open space and parks.

The \$300,000 that Oxford received will go to install new safety improvements within the downtown area, including enhanced crosswalks with pedestrian safety beacons, ADA-compliant curb ramps, improved pedestrian signals, and bus shelters.

Representative Frost said, “I appreciate the Baker-Polito administration for awarding these grants to the communities of Auburn, Millbury and Oxford in my district. These grants will have a long-lasting positive impact beyond the pandemic.”

“I am very happy to support this grant which will provide significant safety improvements to a very busy street,” added Representative McKenna. “Oxford is always looking forward to making local improvements, and this state commitment will help move that forward.”

“I am pleased to see the hard work of the town of Oxford pay off with the receipt of this grant,” said Senator Fattman. “It is crucial to provide a safe means of pedestrian travel in a time when so many are staying in their small communities. I am proud to continue to support this grant program, so that many more communities can have access to road improvements that will make their streets safer.”

New Webster Library Director Sondra Murphy looks forward

By Janet Stoica

If travelling to exotic places is a requirement for becoming a savvy and knowledgeable library director, then Sondra Murphy has certainly checked that box. In the past few years, she has experienced the sights, sounds, and people of India, Nepal, and Vietnam.

Ms. Murphy is the Gladys E. Kelly Library's new director.

The education, experiences, and world views Ms. Murphy has obtained surely cannot be measured but those travels have served to expand her life outlook and ability to relate to all library patrons. To paraphrase Mark Twain: "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrowmindedness. Broad wholesome charitable views of all of us cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime."

Ms. Murphy volunteered at an American school in Siem Reap, Cambodia, where she helped to build and train personnel for the school library. "The opportunity and experience I had there were amazing," she said. "My husband and I then visited India, where we experienced yoga and meditation retreats. In Vietnam, we became fans of the wonderful foods offered and visited the many museums. While in Kathmandu, Nepal, I learned about a library director position in Leominster, which I interviewed for and accepted."

Ms. Murphy earned a master's degree in Library Science at Simmons University, Boston. Originally from Boylston, she was the Children's Librarian in the town of Oak Bluffs, on Martha's Vineyard, which has a population

similar to Webster, about 15,000, (with a summer population of about 150,000).

A year later she promoted to be the library's director. She successfully rebranded the local library and set up a new website. She stayed on the Vineyard for five years and also met her husband there.

When their housing needs changed, they moved back to this area. She accepted a position as Youth Services Coordinator with the Worcester Public Library, becoming immersed not only with the main branch at Salem Square but also with the four school/public libraries in Worcester's four quadrants. After a stint as the Library Director in Leominster she realized that she wanted a more hands-on approach where she could mingle with library patrons, and after applying for and interviewing with Webster, she successfully landed here!

Webster's library is currently operating in COVID mode. Ms. Murphy has met individually with her staff of three full-time and three part-time employees. The library also has two volunteers who are essential to its operation. "I really enjoy the staff here," she said. "The town hall staff has been wonderful as well. They're amazing. I can tell this is going to be a great place to work and be part of. Everyone looks forward to working in a newly-built and well-organized library like Webster's. Some of the projects I'll be working on are the internal processes and procedures, our summer reading program, and

bringing programs outdoors to the lawn area. This beautiful building is so modern, spacious and bright. It's truly inspirational and every librarian's dream to work in such a new establishment. I hope to bring new and interesting programs to our library."

Long-term plans include boosting programs and offerings to make the facility a vital place in town, maintaining good relationships with other town boards and committees, working closely with the Friends of the Library, ensuring fresh collections, and getting to know the community.

Two business leaders fund scholarship at Nichols College

DUDLEY - A new scholarship at Nichols College to benefit transfer students from Quinsigamond Community College has been created through contributions from two long-term Worcester business and community leaders.

R. Joseph Salois, owner and president of Atlas Distributing Inc., and Robert Vaudreuil, retired president and CEO of The Protector Group, have committed to sponsor the Nichols Connect Scholarship, which will assist QCC graduates who pursue a Nichols degree.

"As the scholarship's name implies, this effort will connect our institutions in a meaningful way and enhance our longstanding partnership with QCC through the Affordable Business and Leadership Education initiative," said Bill Boffi, Nichols College vice president for enrollment. "We are grateful to Joe Salois and Bob Vaudreuil for strengthening our bridge to

Ms. Murphy looks forward to hearing suggestions and getting feedback. "People tend to have an old view of libraries," she says. "We're not old and stodgy and quiet. We are a living, breathing entity that is a reflection of the community. Our staff is vibrant, warm, and welcoming to our patrons and we look forward to expanded hours of operation in late April. I'm excited to be here and look forward to new and innovative programs for Webster."

Hours of operation are limited currently due to COVID and the lobby is the only area available

to patrons. Books are held there for those requesting them and staff will be happy to retrieve additional materials requested. Chromebooks and Hot Spots are available for lending.

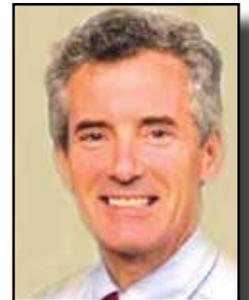
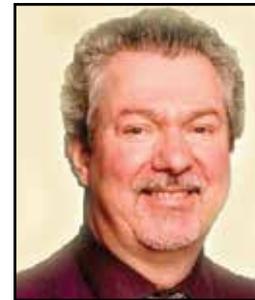
Gladys E. Kelly Public Library is at 2 Lake Street, Webster. Phone: (508) 949-3880. Hours: 10-5 Mon/Tues; 10-1 Wed; 10-7 Thurs; 10-5 Friday.



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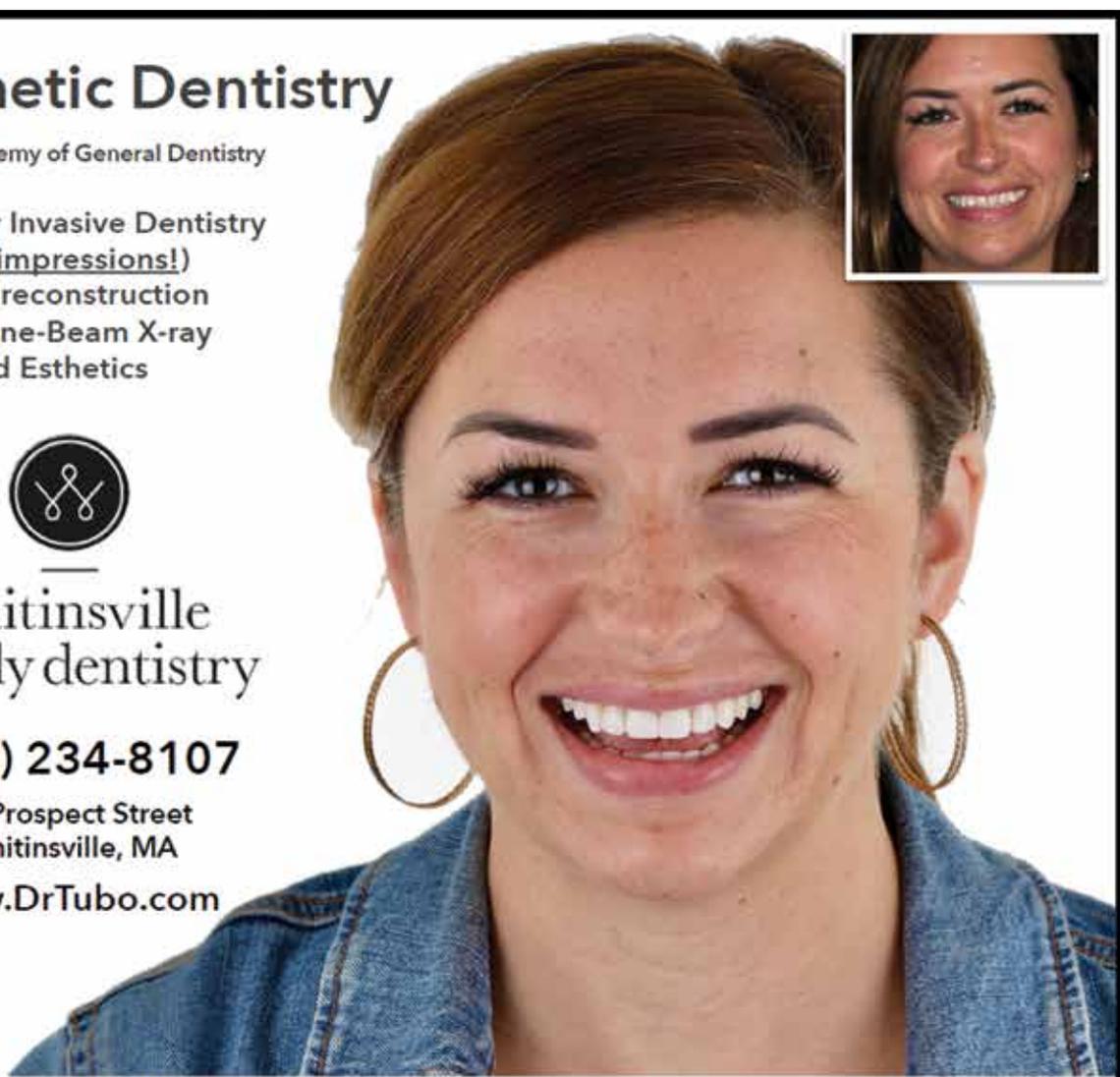
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The Bird Store and More really is more

By Janet Stoica

Can you imagine selling through 6,000 – 8,000 lbs. of bird seed weekly? That's the average amount of bird seed sold by Bill and Nancy Cormier, owners of The Bird Store and More in Sturbridge. Amazing. If you have outdoor bird feeders and enjoy seeing the beautiful avians indulge in their favorite treats then you owe yourself a visit to The Bird Store and More. The most frequently bought items are bird seed, bird feeders, and suet but you will lose yourself in the many other products that the store has on display for your surfing enjoyment.

First of all, let's just clear up a little trivia about birds. According to their definition in The Free Dictionary "If you ask your average paleontologist, who is familiar with the phylogeny of vertebrates, they will probably tell you that yes, birds (avians) are dinosaurs. Using proper terminology, birds are avian dinosaurs; other dinosaurs are non-avian dinosaurs, and (strange as it may sound) birds are technically considered reptiles." They may be considered all of the above, but they sure are graceful, beautiful, and full of wonderful feathery color palettes. The red cardinals are a beauty to behold as are the Eastern bluebirds, American

goldfinches, and red-bellied woodpeckers. If they choose to grace our backyards with their elegance and variety, we should look upon them as one of the greatest gifts of nature. Just watching them dine on the seeds in our feeders is mesmerizing.

If you are looking for the absolute freshest bird seed, pay a visit to The Bird Store. Their bird seed is shipped weekly from an Amish packing house in Ohio so their entire warehouse of bird seed is replenished with fresh seed weekly. The fresh seed is packed on a Monday and delivered to Sturbridge on a Thursday. "We don't use any chemicals on our bird seed mixes," says Nancy Cormier, "this would be detrimental to the birds' hatchlings. Hopefully, after a customer buys their bird seed, they'll use it within a month. If you can't use it within that time frame, it's best to freeze it, that way it will kill any moth eggs that have been laid in the seed when it is in the fields. The moths lay their eggs in the fields before harvesting begins." By the way, The Bird Store does sell moth traps that use pheromones to attract both male and female moths if you ever encounter such a moth infestation problem.

There are three additional

varieties of seed that the store offers: the most popular blend is the #2 Sunflower Seeds which are partially hulled so not as messy; Hi-Energy which is their custom blend consisting of nuts, berries, and a small amount of millet; and Nutrasaff, safflower seeds loved by birds but shunned by squirrels and starlings. Additional bird attractions are dried and live meal worms which bluebirds thoroughly enjoy.

The store does sell a great amount of suet. Hint, buy the hot pepper variety if you don't want the squirrels enjoying the suet. The birds' taste buds will not pick up the hot pepper but the squirrels are sure to shy away after their first taste. There are squirrel treats here too though, known as Critter Vittles, such as dried corn on cobs and sunflower seeds with corn and peanuts.

Additional browsing in this wonderful store will uncover delicate wind chimes, garden extras, beautiful bird houses, and hummingbird feeders as well as human coffee cups, locally-harvested honey and local maple syrup for those fluffy pancakes you might make on winter weekends. The items are relaxing to look at and wonderful to consider, including puzzles for adults and children, kids' plush toys,

Australian Natural Soaps that are triple-milled along with goat's milk soap too, including a soothing variety of scents. Of course, they have an interesting variety of tee shirts and even bird-watching binoculars with field guides which could come in handy if you join the couple on bird walks in late April and early May. They carry a pretty cool variety of greeting cards, including the Pumpernickel brand, wall art, and fascinating whirligigs, which are yard ornaments powered by the wind. Their webstore presence allows them to take orders from all over the country and their 10-year employee, Dezeree Kelley, is only too happy to help customers find the products they are searching for.

A visit to the Crooked Shed is in order to admire the largest cuckoo clock in New England. The cuckoo sounds off every hour from 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. while the store is open. Mr. Cuckoo appears from his perch once his door opens and is currently two-dimensional but Bill Cormier hopes to change the crooner to a three-dimensional version in the near future.

"Our business has boomed during the COVID situation," said Mrs. Cormier, "and we consider ourselves very fortunate. Our store is always evolving. It's the 'more' in Bird Store and More. In the spring we look forward to expanding our product lines with additional items. We're always looking for new things to add." The couple has a store mascot named Alf. He's a cockatiel, which is a small parrot that is a



Nancy and Bill Cormier, owners of The Bird Store and More



The Crooked Shed in the Secret Garden.

member of the Australian cockatiel family. He is a rescue bird

and enjoys being the overseer of the store. Up until last year, a turtle dove also enjoyed residence at the store for 18 years but an unfortunate accident ended his habitation there. And, no, they don't sell birds!

Making the drive to the Bird Store and More will be very rewarding. Check it out.

The Bird Store and More, 4 Cedar Street, Sturbridge. Open Monday – Saturday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Phone: (508) 347-2473. www.thebirdstoreandmore.com

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Nichols Consulting Group a boon to students, businesses they help

By Rod Lee

Long and deservedly known as a top school for business, Nichols College is always finding new ways to prepare its students for success in the world of commerce.

Nichols is ranked 12th nationally among undergraduate business schools for salary potential and 13th nationally as a Best Value Business College by Payscale.com. It is also ranked second most affordable online college in Mas-

sachusetts by OnlineColleges.net.

According to Nichols' website, 96% of its 2019 graduates were employed or in a graduate program six months after receiving their diplomas.

One of the people at the forefront of the continuing mission to groom Nichols students for future accomplishment is Leonard K. Harmon, the school's associate professor of marketing and an in-

structor with years of classroom experience behind him. Professor Harmon's credentials as a mentor to aspiring entrepreneurs and other students seeking professional attainment upon graduating includes having worked for such large consumer brands as Nestle' Chocolate and Transitions Optical.

Who better, then, to talk about the "Nichols Consulting Group," a program

that gives Nichols students a chance to use what they've learned on Dudley Hill to help local businesses grow?

"When I took over the marketing program from Larry Downs in 2009, he had done a Capstone course and he had worked with an external company," Professor Harmon said on February 23. "I thought that was a valuable experience for the students so I expanded it and created teams. We worked to develop an action plan" from there, he said.

More recently, a Stansky professorship he was awarded, good for two years, has enabled Professor Harmon to get the neophyte Nichols Consulting Group on a firm footing. A contribution from a Nichols alum helped the endeavor along as well. Students who are part of the Nichols Consulting Group are paired with businesses that have expressed a need for assistance with any or all aspects of their enterprise.

"Last fall, we undertook nearly twenty projects," Professor Harmon said.

Finding prospective clients is not as hard as it might seem, he noted.

"Some companies come to me," Professor Harmon said. "But we also work with Chambers of Commerce and local economic-development organizations" to obtain clients. In addition to companies Nichols students have worked with so far and for which good results have been generated, "we are now hoping to connect with women-owned companies and minority-owned companies," Professor Harmon said. "We have thirty students in the Capstone course. We are doing a project with the Worcester Red Sox in sports management, one of our largest majors."

The reward for students,

Professor Harmon said, is that projects they tackle let them "put their skills into practice and more importantly learn how to create a leadership team. They bring their status, concerns and projects to me. From the clients' standpoint, it has a practical benefit." Nor does it necessarily end with an initial partnership. "We look to have ongoing relationships with our clients," he said.

A businessperson with whom the Nichols Consulting Group has formed such a relationship is Michael Frisbie, a Nichols alum and real estate developer who owns a number of Noble gas stations and convenience stores in Connecticut. One of these "had a dairy barn" ingredient that Mr. Frisbie was looking for help with.

"We picked out two graduating students. They went to Ice Cream University and presented a business plan to Mike and the bank and it was accepted," Professor Harmon said. "This was in May of 2019. They took over the location (the Frisbie Dairy Barn in New Britain) and ran it all summer. This led to us working with Mike on other projects. Then Paul Parks (III), who is an instructor at a martial arts studio (Mastery Martial Arts in North Attleborough), bought the dairy barn with his dad." After seeing the results the Parks father-and-son team produced, organizationally, "Mike Frisbie told Paul 'I want you to open ice cream shops in all my gas stations,' so there were unintended [positive] consequences," Professor Harmon said.

Professor Harmon points out that while internships—a traditional path into the business sphere—are "valuable," supervisors do not always have time to think about their role in the arrangement. The Nichols approach works differently by giving students more direct hands-on involvement with the businesses they work with.

In recent years, Nichols students have lent support to SJC Custom Drums in Southbridge, Sturbridge Coffee Roasters of Southbridge and Dudley, Alternatives for Health Herbal Apothecary in Sturbridge, Paw Plaza in Sturbridge and Kells Brewing Co. in Natick—for instance.



Professor Len K. Harmon works with Nichols College students in a consulting group that provides support to the small business community.

The Nichols Consulting Group is just one example of a college that keeps its course content fresh. In 2019, Nichols launched two new marketing concentrations: "Digital & Social Media Marketing" and "Marketing Analytics." Also introduced in the fall of 2019 was a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration with a concentration in corporate finance and investments.

All of this is exciting to Professor Harmon, who teaches marketing, advertising and public relations. He can see how Nichols students are playing key roles in today's technologically driven marketplace.

As Professor Harmon says, "we are closing the loop on the marketing process—from research and analysis to planning, execution and evaluation of marketing campaigns."

Paul Parks III, a 2019 Nichols grad, said in a telephone conversation on February 24 that he and Taylor Kerr were the two students Professor Harmon mentioned who worked at Frisbie's Dairy Barn. "We came in and ran it, [he] wasn't happy with the previous management. We set up an operations plan, trained employees, remodeled. It was one of the earliest versions of the Nichols Consulting Group," Mr. Parks said.

"It was a great season, a lot of fun."

Paul Parks III is also lead instructor at Mastery Martial Arts in North Attleborough.

Now, Mr. Parks said, Mike Frisbie is "building out additional travel plazas and convenience stores" and the Parks' are involved with that initiative.

"Absolutely, for sure," he said, of the value of his Nichols education to his budding career.

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



Paul Parks III at his Nichols College graduation in May of 2019; he has gone on to realize almost immediate success in the business world.

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Applications will be available at their schools or by contacting Anne Marie Palermo, Chairperson of the Oxford Woman's Club Scholarship

Committee. Please plan to contact by emailing to simplyanne14@gmail.com (for confidential use only). All applications must be submitted in writing with all completed requirements in order to be considered for one of the scholarships. All applications must be postmarked no later than Saturday, April 17. The Oxford Woman's Club mission statement is "Working together for our community."

Good Citizens award announced

The General Ebenezer Learned Oxford Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) would like to announce the school winners of the Good Citizens Award from the schools that the chapter sponsors.

Bartlett High School in Webster, is represented by Gabriela Piowarczky, Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School in Charlton, is represented by Cheyenne Courtney. Daniel Bowen represents David Prouty High School in Spencer, Keegan Gleason represents Millbury Jr./Sr. High School. The North Brookfield High School representative is Mikayla Bokis, the Oxford High School representative is Amy Vo, and Joshua Gray represents Quaboag Regional High School in Warren. Cut-

ter Beck not only represents Shepherd Hill Regional High School, but also is the General Ebenezer Learned Chapter at the state level.

The DAR Good Citizens Award and Scholarship Contest, created in 1934, is intended to encourage and reward the qualities of good citizenship.

This award recognizes and rewards individuals who possess the qualities of dependability, service, leadership, and patriotism in their homes, schools, and communities. These students are selected by their teachers and peers because they demonstrate these qualities to an outstanding degree.

This program is only open to high-school seniors whose schools are accredited by their state board of education.

• Only one student per year may be honored as a school's DAR Good Citizen.

• United States citizenship is not required.

• Additional rules and guidelines can be acquired by contacting your local DAR chapter.

Once a student is chosen as the DAR Good Citizen the student is invited to participate in the scholarship portion of the program. This con-

sists of a personal statement and an essay.

The Daughters of the American Revolution is a non-profit, non-political volunteer women's service organization. DAR members are dedicated to promoting historic preservation, education and patriotism in communities across the nation. All students are invited to participate and learn more about the educational programs the DAR offers.

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Community yard sale - spaces available

AUBURN— Spring cleaning? Don't throw that good "stuff" away. Recycle it by selling it to someone who needs it. Do you have an accumulation of things that are too good to throw away but you no longer need? Don't have enough to hold your own yard sale? Join us on the lawn of the First Congregational Church, Saturday, June 12, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., for our annual Community Yard Sale/Plant Sale. This is a rain or shine event.

After having to cancel the 2020 yard sale we are excited to say we are back for this year. Because we have all been so restricted in what we could do this past year we anticipate even more people setting up to sell their "treasures" as well as a larger turnout of people looking for that special bargain or those out to get a feel for a return of normalcy. Masks will be required and all COVID guidelines will be enforced.

We also will be having our Plant Sale. There will be a large selection of annuals and perennials. Those who have been buying plants from us return year after year and see how each year we have more and more to offer. This year should be no different.

Spaces are available for a \$25.00 fee; a limited number of tables may be rented for \$5.00 each. We'll do all the advertising, both print and digital, and will post plenty of signs the day of the event at key locations in town. Depending on the COVID restrictions in place at the time we hope to have coffee and pastries, and hot dogs and soda available for sale.

Due to our central location and previous yard sales (26), we expect a large turnout. Don't delay, reserve your space now by calling Cindy Dube at 508-832-6646, please leave message, or the church office at 508-832-2845. You may also text 774-238-0260.

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Programs and events at the Pearle L. Crawford Library

Programs and events are listed at the Pearle L. Crawford Library, 40 Schofield Avenue, Dudley, 508-949-8021. Join in for one of the virtual programs at the Pearle. To register go to www.crawfordlibrary.org or call 508-949-8021

Storytime on Facebook Lives, Wednesdays at noon. Join Miss Lida for a live storytime on Facebook, every Wednesday at noon, and then stop by the library for a free take-and-make craft kit. No Facebook account is needed for this free program. Just point your browser to <https://www.facebook.com/crawfordlibrary> to access the video. Can't tune in at noon? Recordings of each week's storytime are available on the Facebook page beginning Wednesday afternoon.

Music and Movement first Friday of every month at 11:00 a.m. Join Deb Hudgins on Facebook for Music and Movement, one of our most popular programs. Nothing gets kids on their feet and having fun quite like songs, dance and silly stories, and Miss Deb has been. No Facebook account is needed for this free program. Just point your browser to <https://www.facebook.com/crawfordlibrary> to access the video.

Growing a summer salad with Blackstone Valley, Thursday, April 8, 6:00-7:30 p.m. Is there anything better than a fresh summer salad? Join Blackstone Valley Veggie Gardens for this Zoom presentation where they will cover all the basics of growing your own lettuce, tomatoes, and cucumbers. Free; registration required. Participants will be emailed a link to the Zoom meeting 24 hours before the event. Sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

A celebration of women composers, Thursday, May 6 6:00-7:30 p.m. Historian Jeffrey Engel will highlight the lives and the music of several distinguished female composers/concert pianists who attained recognition and success during the nineteenth century in this Zoom program.

There have always been women composers. As far back as the seventh century BC, Sappho, the Greek lyric poetess, played her own accompaniments on the barbiton and the pektis. Throughout the twelfth century there were female troubadours and during the sixteenth, madrigal composers. Francesca Caccini (1587-1638) is thought to be the first woman to write an opera and Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre (1663-1729), the author of an early ballet. It is not until the end of the nineteenth century, however, that significantly more women begin to enjoy public performances of their music and become professional composers. Perhaps you've heard of Teresa Carreno, Sophie Menter and Clara Schumann? Free; registration is required. Participants will receive a link to the Zoom meeting 24 hours before the event. Sponsored by the Hugh W. and Harriet K. Crawford Endowment.

Holy Week services at United Church of Christ

The United Church of Christ, Federated, 4 Church Street, Webster, has listed Easter services.

Palm Sunday at 10 a.m. - in-person service as well as on-line service.

Wednesday evening: Prayer on Facebook Live and Zoom at 6 p.m.

Good Friday: The sanctuary and chapel will be open for

a self-guided Stations of the Cross from 5-7 pm

Easter Sunrise Service will be at Point Breeze at 7 am

Sunday Worship will be in the sanctuary at 10 am - in-person service as well as on-line service.

Information on how to access the on-line services can be found at uccfedwebster.org.

Virtual Reali "tea"

With the Covid restrictions, the United Church of Christ, Federated is not able to host its annual Daffodil Tea again this year. Many commented on how much they missed it. So, after brainstorming, the church will present a virtual Reali "Tea." People can buy tickets and in return will be presented on driving up to the church on April 17, with a box containing tea and goodies, have the opportunity to participate in a basket raffle and then join the Virtual Reali "Tea" on Zoom.

Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased at: <http://united-church-of-christ-federated.ticketleap.com/virtual-realitea>

If you are uncomfortable buying on-line, you may also purchase tickets by sending payment to UCC, Fed., 4 Church Street, Webster, MA 01570 and your ticket(s) will be waiting for you when you come for pick-up. If you have questions, please feel free to call the church at 508-943-0061.

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FOOD AND FUN SECTION

Save these pages as a guide to area dining and things to do

Palm Sunday weekend Polish food

St. Andrew Bobola Parish, 54 West Main St., Dudley, can make your Easter table a bit more special. On Saturday, March 27, the parish will be holding its 2nd annual Easter drive-thru Polish Food Sale from 9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. As you drive thru, contactless frozen food orders will be taken at the back entrance

of the church and then delivered directly to you as you sit in your car. Pierogi (homemade cabbage or cheese) for \$18/dozen \$9/half dozen; small pierogi (blueberry, potato/cheese, cabbage/mushrooms) for \$7/dozen, gołabki \$3 each, smoked or double smoked kielbasa for \$12 and Bigos

(kapusta) \$10/quart will all be available along with Babka (cheese or cherry cheese) and Strudel (poppy seed or prune) for \$10 each. Make your Easter so much more special, and let us do some of the cooking for you.



Lenten fish dinners

Every Friday from March 12 through March 26, St. Andrew Bobola Church, 54 West Main St., Dudley, will be offering take-out Lenten dinners with your choice of baked

or fried fish from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and again from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Fried dinners include french fries, cole slaw and tartar sauce. Baked dinners include baked potato, sour cream, coleslaw and tartar sauce.

You can call ahead to

order, 508-943-5633, but please understand there may still be a wait time in our parking lot, depending upon order volume. Cost is \$12pp for adults and \$6pp for children. During Lent, come take home a great meal and avoid cooking on Fridays.

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March art show

March Art Show – “It’s Never Too Late,” paintings and mixed media work by Meg Harrison Young and her late twin sister, Martha, is on display until March 31 at Booklovers’ Gourmet, 72 East Main Street, Webster, during regular business

hours: Tuesday-Saturday 10-5. For more information, call 508-949-6232 or email deb@bookloversgourmet.com.

Artist’s statement: After graduate school I worked for 25 years as an Art Therapist with mentally ill adults. In the

almost decade since, I’ve been a mental health counselor. Over the years, art making was a hobby, with long stretches of time when materials lay idle and dusty. In January 2020, my terminally- ill twin, Martha, could no longer care for herself,

and so moved in with my husband and me. Soon thereafter, COVID made sheltering in place another challenge. Martha had art school training, and over the years had exhibited her work on occasion. Making art again would become a self-therapy

and an activity we could share. And then, she passed in November. The opportunity to exhibit here seemed an excellent way to first and finally show together.

Book group Zoom event

Wednesday, March 31, at 5:30 p.m. Booklovers’ Gourmet will host a special book group event with local mystery author Jane Willan via Zoom. The book to be discussed is *The Shadow of Death*, a refreshing change in the cozy mystery book category. The first in a series, the story is centered around a convent in the Welsh countryside and the main character, Sister Agatha, sets out to solve a murder that occurred at the Abbey. For the Zoom link, please email deb@bookloversgourmet.com

Jane Willan wants to live in a world where everyone has time to read their favorite books,



drink good coffee and walk their dog on the beach, but until that can happen she enjoys life as a pastor and writer. When she’s



not working on a sermon, or hiking with her husband, Don, you can find her re-reading Jane Eyre, binge-watching Downton Abbey and trying out new ways to

avoid exercise. This is her first sermon. Sister Agatha and Father Selwyn mystery.

DWC April meeting

On April 8, the Dudley Woman’s Club will meet at 6:30 p.m. at Our Father’s Table Restaurant, Rte. 12, No.Grosvenordale, Conn. Scholarship recipients will be announced and their scholarships awarded to them this evening. The voluntary giving project this month is mask donations, including children’s masks for the Webster/Dudley Food Share Program. In addition, we are also seeking contributions for our Sun-

shine Baskets. The Dudley Woman’s Club is open to all women from Dudley and surrounding towns, and we welcome your attendance. Join us for this fun and lively evening, be our guest and discover what our Woman’s Club is all about. For more information please send an email to DudleyWomansClub@gmail.com, contact Andrea at 508-868-7110 or visit our website: http://DudleyWomansClub.org.

- Nancy Vajcovec

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Webster Lions Club scholarship

The Webster Lions Club is currently accepting applications for the George Sellig Memorial Scholarship.

The winner will be selected based on the student's academic performance, community service and financial need.

The \$1000.00 award is presented each year to a graduating high school senior who is a resident of Webster and will be continuing his or her education in an accredited college program.

The scholarship is named in honor of former Webster Lions Club president, George Sellig.

Mr. Sellig was once a teacher at Tottelote Memorial High School, a Webster Selectman and a superintendent of the former Webster-Dudley School Union.

Applications are available at the Bartlett High School and BayPath Regional Technical High School Guidance Departments or by contacting Dr. John Kalinowski at 508-943-7434. Applications are due by May 1.

WEBSTER RECREATION PRESENTS

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STARTING MARCH 27

TOWN-WIDE

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PT Pet Supply & Grooming Salon grows as it gets back to basics



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A serval keeps watch.

By Janet Stoica

In early 2020, before COVID became a household word, Yolanda DeGaetano had been seriously thinking about closing the business she had established in Webster 16 years earlier, PT Pet Supply & Grooming Salon.

"The craziest thing is that business was down 50%," she said, "I only had one employee and then COVID happened. I told my husband 'we're done,' as this store is our only income." Yolanda's husband is a stay-at-home dad caring for their special-needs son.

Adding to the turmoil, her brother had suddenly passed away; it was a very emotional time.

After COVID struck, however, PT Pet Supply's business suddenly increased. "It was certainly the opposite of what we expected," Yolanda said, "and so far, it's still busier than it was in the past four years, so I can employ more people."

She explained that before the COVID crisis, she could barely afford to pay one employee and now with the business increase, she can employ six. "We are unhappy about the current health situation, but we are so grateful that our business has weathered the storm. We are getting back to our roots where we began 17 long years ago."

PT Pet Supply specializes in quality all-natural foods. "We've gotten back to our original ideas and offer our customers and their pets unique natural products that you will never find in chain stores. In the past two years we've increased our pet food lines to include more high-quality goods like raw food for dogs and cats."

She has added another freezer for those lines and now has three freezers filled with nutritious pet food. "These are clean products with only one, two, or three all-natural ingredients," she said. "They are all as biologically appropriate as possible."

Yolanda has expanded her grooming business too. She now employs three groomers, and all services are by appointment-only. They can do nail trims, ear cleanings, and sanitary shaves for pets who are unable to groom themselves in their remote areas.

"COVID restrictions shut down our grooming area as it was deemed a non-essential service. We knew some of our customers' pets needed specific grooming services to maintain their health, so we petitioned the state to allow us to groom. Eventually, by May 2020, we were allowed to help our customers' pets and their owner's relief was unmistakable. We had one dog who had developed a terrible medical condition due to the lack of routine grooming. We were able to relieve his condition with the grateful approval of his owner."

Through the end of March 2021, PT Pet Supply and Grooming Salon is having a Paws-itivity Video Clip Contest! Using Instagram or their Facebook page, enter your 10-20 second video clip with you and/or your pet dancing using the song Champagne Night by Lady A. Check it out on YouTube and proceed. The winner will receive a \$50 gift card to PT Pet Supply and Grooming Salon.

Yolanda and her business have supported many local worthy causes. They have worked with the Webster Animal Shelter and raised \$1,500 for agility equipment used by long-term shelter dogs and helped raise funds for the Community Cat Connection, as well as Dog Orphans.

They have gladly groomed many types of furry friends too, like baby kangaroos, monkeys, servals, cockatiels, bunnies, ferrets, and even guinea pigs. "We're like that TV show Cheers," says Yolanda. "When you come in here and we become friends, Everybody Knows Your Name."

Yolanda's irresistible enthusiasm comes through in the tone of her voice and the grateful comments she makes about her customers. It is especially rewarding to know that her business has turned a corner and that local customers now know what true assets she, her employees, and her outlet are to our community of pet owners.

PT Pet Supply and Grooming Salon is at 86 Worcester Road, Webster. Phone: (508) 943-9600. Hours: Mon-Fri 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.; and Sunday 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Find them on Facebook and Instagram.



One of the employees holds a kangaroo from Records & Burpee's Petting Zoo.



Yolanda has done Husky rescue. Isaiah, in this photo, was adopted by Renee and her husband. They visited once in a while and Isaiah lived a great life until he was 16.

St. Andrew Bobola Church's April calendar money raffle

St. Andrew Bobola Church, 54 West Main St., Dudley will sponsor a calendar money raffle for the month of April. Buying a raffle entry gives you up to 30 opportunities to win any one of the daily monetary prizes. The prize pool for the month totals \$1775 and the last week in April is big - each day's drawing is \$100 or more. So it is never too late to enter. Pick up entry sheets at (and also make returns to) the rectory by April 1 for the maximum chances to win. Additional calendar entry sheets are available from parishioners or after Masses in the church. For more info, please call the Rectory (508-943-5633), or Paula (508-248-4237). We appreciate your support of our parish fundraiser and good luck.



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Living with Lincoln

I got you, ball

By Amy Palumbo-LeClaire

Lincoln chose our family at a fluffy seven weeks old. His "pick-up day" had been scheduled for February 12 – on Abraham Lincoln's birthday.

Lincoln.

The name sprung off of the calendar and into our hearts and home. Little did we know that our largest male of the litter, a puppy named after a president, would not only choose us, but also his way in the world.

"Mom, we have to take this one." My son, Ben, at an intuitive ten years old, had known what we know now. Lincoln was meant to be with us, and us with him. Confirming such, he grabbed the miniature leash from my hand and paraded around his blonde siblings, as though to claim his new family.

"These are my People."

We cradled him onto our laps, then lifted him to face us. His morsel nose twitched while he found our eyes. "Are you ready to play?"

We were ready to play. Yet little did we know just how much.

"Lincoln!!"

I'll never forget the day he had been trotting along a Cliff Walk ledge at Newport, RI. A precocious puppy, he had tottered about clusters of rock to

explore, then struggled to negotiate a sudden narrow path. Whoa! Not enough room. He lost his footing and fell off of a twelve-foot incline. Somehow, he managed to wrestle his body back to a soft landing. Then, exhausted, he had collapsed.

"I think he may have broken a bone."

"Does he need some water?" "That puppy needs to rest."

A crowd of onlookers shuffled to our side while, smothered in guilt, I teared up and kneeled by my puppy's side. His chunky belly rose and fell beneath my palm. What had I done? How could I ever forgive myself?

"Let's finish the Cliff Walk!"

Lincoln sprang to his feet. His miniature tongue shook while he smiled, panted, and colored the world pink again. I sighed, massaged his ears. "You're okay." It was only a case of Lincoln being Lincoln.

Fast forward ten years. Lincoln fell off of a ledge of a different sort. His health took a dip during the Fall of 2020. His breathing was abnormal. An ultrasound indicated large masses at on both thyroid glands. We were told his life was about to end. Little did we know—

"Want to play?"

Lincoln was just being Lincoln. A clean, protein-based

nutritional plan (and a whole lot of love) turned a fat, ugly report into something slender.

Lincoln scratches at the deck door. I open it and there he stands, propped up on the step, appearing larger than life. His black, senior nose quivers with desire. He's wearing the expression I've come to know and love. "Few throws?" I read his mind.

Frozen with hope, he stares at me and awaits a verdict. His tail wags slowly, gearing up for action.

"Can you wait, Lincoln? Mummy has to work."

More charming than his thirst for life has been his sensitivity to his owner's role in it. My dog understands nuance. "Can you wait?" I accent the word wait.

"But can you just come out? I was thinking we could play in the snow today."

His cuteness tempts me. He's a dog, fully immersed in the present, yet intelligent enough to discern my needs as a human. "Bring the ball here, Lincoln." I gesture with grand enthusiasm. "Go get it and put it here for Mummy!"

The compromise sells him. He's willing to negotiate. I can play ball in my slippers, from the comfort of my now-drafty kitchen. I gaze out the window and watch him nose the snow as though searching for a diamond in a corn maze. He zigs. He zags. Then a stiff wagging tail produces the truth. He's found the ball! But before he brings it back, he performs a clever trick, one he created on his own. I watch him through the window and giggle to myself. Work can wait.

"I'm in charge of you, Ball."

He digs a hole with manic concentration then pushes the ball down in the snow to bury it. He pounces on the burial ground over and over again, as though to set a final nail in the ball's coffin. Then he digs it back up and slobes it about his frothing mouth with crazy joy. His process is deliberate, even calculated. Dig. Bury. Pounce, Find, Slosh. Over and over

again. Every now and then, he tosses a glance up to the window, sensing that I'm watching.

"Good boy, Lincoln!" I hoist the window open and holler the compliment. He's patented Bury & Find, a game which offers rationale for the need to allow a dog to be a dog. Work with them. Allow them opportunities to do what dogs do. They need to run, dig, play, and be reckless. Let them be dogs and they'll let you be human. I settle back to my work and welcome a sip of coffee. The door rattles again.

"I found the ball!"

I open the door. Cold air accosts me, fueling my laziness. "Lincoln, put it right here." I don't want to reach any further than I need to for the ball on the snowy deck. He grumbles yet complies, still managing to toss the ball as close to the threshold as possible. I don't have to set a single toe outside. "Thank you, Lincoln."

I hold the ball up like a trophy. He races down the stairs, not wanting to miss out on the throw. "Which way?" I refuse to endorse the bullyish "fake throw" which forces a dog to track the ball tirelessly through the yard. I'm confident that he'll find it either way. A

dog's senses truly are remarkable. Like a professional outfielder, he watches the ball sail through the air. He backs up to gage position. I underhand a solid throw, and he freezes to capture its soft whooshing sound through the air, then its notable drop into the snow.

"I hear you, Ball! I'm coming!"

I watch him romp through the snow after a ball that he protects like an abducted baby. His tail stiffens and wags while he appreciates a scent made for a dog. "I knew I'd find you." He slobes the ball, then indulges in another game of Bury & Find.

Dig. Bury. Pounce. Dig. Bury. Pounce. "I got you, Ball."

I watch him from the window. Work can wait.



I was thinking we could play in the snow.



Lincoln relishes in a game of Bury and Find.

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Chief's corner

Shoplifting costs everyone; drug take-back program

By Chief Steven J. Wojnar
Dudley Police Department

When people see criminal charges in police logs or other places, questions for this column are often asked. The charge of shoplifting is always interesting, as it contains so many parts. I was asked to explain shoplifting by "asportation."

Shoplifting, under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 266 Section 30A, contains several ways a person can commit a violation. Asportation is one of these terms and it is contained in the first section of the law. It is defined by Webster's Dic-

tionary as "The act of carrying a thing away; the removing of a thing from one place to another." This is the most common offense people associate with shoplifting. The definition can be rather complex, however; it generally involves intentionally taking possession of an item and carrying it away from the place in which it is stored. The most common example of this is when a person goes into a store, takes an item, and leaves without paying for it. The shoplifting statute does contain many other charges as well. They include concealment, altering merchan-

dise, label switching, and more. As for the concealment portion, the mere act of taking an item and placing it in your pocket, without leaving the store, could possibly be considered as shoplifting. If you take the price tag off one item and place it on another, it can also qualify as a violation under this section.

Shoplifting costs the retail industry billions of dollars each year and the losses are passed on to the paying customers. Penalties can include a fine or jail time, depending on the value of the item. Police of-

ficers also have a statutory right of arrest for this charge without a warrant.

Drug take-back

I wanted to take this opportunity to inform the residents of Dudley that on Saturday, April 24, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., the Dudley Police Department and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) will give the public another opportunity to prevent pill abuse and theft by ridding their homes of potentially dangerous expired, unused, and unwanted prescription drugs. This has been a popular and much requested program in the past. I wanted to provide some information to people once again on this event.

The Drug-take-back has been held several times over the years in Dudley. Last Spring's event was cancelled due to COVID-19 (as were numerous other activities). Our last event took place this past October. A large quantity of prescription medications and medical sharps were taken in at that time. The service is free and anonymous, no questions asked. This initiative addresses a vital public safety and public health need. Medicines that languish in home cabinets are highly susceptible to diversion, misuse, and abuse. Rates of prescription drug abuse in the U.S. are alarmingly high, as are the number of accidental poisonings and overdoses. Studies show

that most of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends, including from the home medicine cabinet. In addition, people are advised that their usual methods for disposing of unused medicines—flushing them down the toilet or throwing them in the trash—both pose potential safety and health hazards. Thanks to the effort of District Attorney Joseph Early's Office, we now have a permanent Drug Disposal Kiosk located in our Police Station Lobby. These items can now be disposed of locally at any time during the year. Other communities have these kiosks at their police stations or other town buildings. If you are not from Dudley, be sure to check with your community for one of these disposal locations.

In addition to the prescription disposal, officials from Harrington Hospital have once again generously offered their assistance to dispose of medical sharps (needles, etc.) on this same day. Collection bins will be on hand to dispose of these items properly and safely as well.

A number of these programs will take place on this same day in communities all over the area. If you are not a Dudley resident, please check with your local officials for a disposal site near you. In Dudley, bring your medications to The Dudley Police Department located inside the Dudley Municipal Com-

plex at 71 West Main Street Dudley, Ma. We thank everyone in advance for their participation in this worthwhile program.

As the pandemic continues, we ask everyone to stay safe and continue to take the necessary precautions to protect yourselves. For those eligible, vaccination information can find it at www.dudleyma.gov or by calling 508-949-8036. We continue to serve the people of Dudley and work with the community to improve the quality of life for everyone. I thank the men and women from my department for their continued dedicated service to the Town during these trying times. Thanks also go out to the many Police Officers, Fire and Emergency Services members, public works, health care, government officials, and all other "essential" personnel for their continued hard work and service. We all hope for a quick end to this pandemic and greatly appreciate the support we receive from our community.

Thanks again for your questions and comments. Please send them to me at the Dudley Police Department 71 West Main St., Dudley, Ma. 01571 or email at swojnar@dudleypolice.com. Opinions expressed in this weekly column are those of Chief Wojnar only and unless clearly noted, do not reflect the ideas or opinions of any other organization or citizen.

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This space will forever be grateful to the great contributors over the past years, including **John Mullen**, for the History of Oxford High School Football celebrating their 50th anniversary in 2018 featuring head Coach Paul Brisette and his legacy. To **Justin "Jut" Stockhaus**, grandson of legendary football coach Rene Langevin, who took us through the fall of 2019 to help celebrate the 100th Thanksgiving Day game between Bartlett and Southbridge when the Indians were victors at Southbridge in 2019.

The past half year featured the French River Rivalry where former Shepherd Hill and Amherst College athlete **Rusty Oleszewski** took us through the separation of Webster and Dudley students and how the two towns used student athletes in the early 70s as a political forum to isolate only Webster residents to attend

Are you ready for some football?!

Bartlett High dominates over Worc. North in season opener

Local schools are gearing up for a spring football schedule, which will be a little different this year. Due to COVID concerns, the fans in the stands are limited, but the excitement and anticipation can't be taken away from the kids who fought so hard to get out on the football field.

The Bartlett Indians took to the field at Foley Stadium on Saturday afternoon to do battle with the Worcester North Polar Bears.

Bartlett came out strong and ended with a convincing 34-14 victory. Great job on offense and defense by the entire team.

Bartlett Head Football Coach Dane Laboissonniere is excited to start the season, even if it is spring and not fall. Coach Laboissonniere remarked, "The kids have been working hard. There is a sense of excitement around the season, especially after not being sure that we were going to have one."

"We return a number of starters from last year with experience - Alex Nunez, Kevin Flanders, Zack Latuga, Alex Costomiris, Sam Kontoes, Blake Haney, Bryce Patterson. We return some younger players who are ready to step up into starting roles - Jay Whitney, Andrew Sanford, Elijah Rudolph, Anthony Corley, Quiava Brown and Sean Baca. There are also a few first time football players stepping into meaningful roles - Jacob Plasse and Bryant Macura.

Remember when... Webster-Dudley sports scene

Bartlett while Dudley residents formed what is now Shepherd Hill High School with the town of Charlton. Little did the politicians of both Webster and Dudley realize that the present school choice rule would give all sides their cake and eat it at the same time.

Tip of the hat to these contributors as they reported on their stories with passion, hard work, and enthusiasm. Others have also helped this space in the past by dropping an email, text, or phone call to correct a fact or provide an idea. This space needs all the help it can get. Please keep your ideas coming. Always appreciated.

The legendary Mike Vendetti

The cast of characters who have played a role at this address have been local giants regarding athletics and giving back to the community. The leader for this space will always be the "godfather," Nichols College legendary football coach Mike Vendetti and his two loyal assistants **Ed Kunkel** and **Rene Langevin**. The Golden Era of Nichols Football in the 70s has never been duplicated by any measure.

Next is the best high school football game ever seen in

these parts. Shepherd Hill at Bartlett in 1987, a Saturday night special when Shepherd Hill beat the Indians in overtime 18-10 as **Kyle Kunkel** of SH made a game saving tackle on the one-foot-line near the Ray Street ticket box end zone as Bartlett's **John Lamontagne** was rambling in for a touchdown during the overtime. Lamontagne and Shepherd Hill's **Ron Springer** headlined the anticipated clash that drew 6,000 fans in week five of the football season. The quarterbacks were Hall of Famer **Dave Ceppetelli** of Bartlett and **Brian Ravenelle** of Shepherd Hill. Langevin coached the Indians and **John Hickman** coached Shepherd Hill. The game was played as advertised and remains as a heavy weight toe-to-toe great high school football game.

Some other past memories are loyal readers **John Hejwosz**, **George Kujawski**, and **Ringer** keeping us on our toes. The induction of **Bob Daigle** into Bartlett's Hall of Fame was a highlight in October 2018. And the legacies of **Ziggy Strezlecki**, **John Stefanik**, **Paul Lamontagne**, **Tate Dion**, **Wiggs Deary**, **Kiki Kunkel**, **Charlie Pappas**, **Chet**



1973 Starr Realty Senior Little League baseball team. Photo contributed by Jeff Stefanik

Starzec, **Rocky Miller**, and so many more have been a part of the local fiber.

Memory Lane includes the Intermediate School gym on Ray Street in Webster which was always the place to be on a week night any time of the year. **Gerry Canty** was the captain in call-your-own fouls league when tempers and competing went hand in hand. **Jack Kelly**, **Kenny Moran**, and **Al Malkaisian** tried to keep the natives in order despite a lot of bloodshed every night. But a lot of fun. Canty's playground drew 30 customers a night with free admission.

Post 184 American Legion started a baseball team in 1970 and the coaches were **Norman "Frenchy" Millette** and **Levi Brisbois**. Two good guys who went on the ultra competitive Legion circuit with a brand new team. We held our own and those guys knew the game and taught us how to respect it and eventually handed the coaching reigns over to **Francis X. Kasheta** who went on to win many Zone 4 titles. Kasheta pitched for the San Francisco Giants with the great **Juan Marichal**. Millette, Brisbois, and Kasheta believed in fundamental baseball. The 1966 Webster Little League All Star team led by **Paul Kujawski** is still the town's best Little League team after 55 years. The '66 team got into

the state tournament and beat Boston Red Sox player and television commentator **Jerry Remy** of Somerset to advance to the quarterfinal game only to be beaten by Weymouth South. Kujawski was hitting home runs at a record pace and shared the pitching duties with left handed **Mike Quigley**. The big reason for the '66 team retaining its self-proclaimed best team ever is because they won district 5, 6, 7, and 8, by playing single elimination. One loss and it's over. **Wiggs Deary** was the manager.

If you have anything you would like to share in this space please do so by emailing me at pcoyle@oxfordinsurance.com.

1973 baseball

Jeff Stefanik, longtime friend and Bartlett baseball captain, is going to help the memory lane cause going forward with pictures from the past and he submitted this

photo circa 1973. Didn't know Stefanik was ambidextrous. Look how he is holding his glove? How many of these players can you name? The coach is **Tony Vegnone**. The team is the Starr Realty Red Sox, 17-1 record four years in a row as well as league champions.

For all you AAU pay-to-play, everybody gets a trophy ya-hoos.... this 1973 team didn't have to pay a dime to play. There are 14 players on the team ages 13-15. The team was part of the six team Webster Senior Little League circuit. Here is the math: six teams with 14 players per team equals 84 players playing baseball in a constructive environment for free. Vegnone did not get paid for coaching. His teams practiced twice a week and played two games per week. Only a championship trophy was given to Starr Realty. Times have changed.



Alex Nunez eludes a tackle on his way to the endzone.



Sean Baca makes the tackle for Bartlett.

"Schedule will be challenging, playing five good teams in a season we're not used to playing in. The kids have done everything necessary to

get themselves ready."

Bartlett will take on Abby Kelly Friday (today) at 5 p.m. at the Memorial Athletic Field in Webster.



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Tales from beyond

Ghost of the Sun Tavern

By Thomas D'Agostino

The Sun Tavern in Duxbury, Massachusetts, is famous for its fare and hospitality. It is also well known for its permanent resident, Lysander Walker.

The front part of The Sun Tavern was built in 1741. At the end of the nineteenth century, Lysander Walker, who gained dubious fame when his story was published in the Boston Herald in an article titled "Last Duxbury Hermit," owned the building. For some time Duxbury folk knew that all was not well with Lysander. After the death of his wife, Lysander, getting on with age, refused to venture forth from the home, which had sheltered him for so long.

The children of the neighborhood always watched for the American flag hung at the corner of the house. Its presence was the signal that Lysander needed provisions from the local store. On October 3, 1928, 11-year-old Gladys Belknap saw the flag hung union down at the corner of the house. The locals entered the home and found Lysander

seated on a sofa. Beside him, still tightly gripped, was a loaded revolver from which one shot had been fired. Lysander had signaled one last time in a way which would never be forgotten. The Tavern recently received a post card from Gladys Belknap confirming this story.

After Walker's death, Father Francis Keegan purchased the property for a summer residence. He befriended Mary Hackett and financed her education at Salem State Normal School. In the early 1930s he suggested she take over the house to run as a restaurant. This small place of food and refreshment became very successful. Situated in the heart of cranberry plantations it was famous for its quaintness, beautiful flowers and delightful meals.

David Wells bought Mary Hackett's in 1964 and changed the name to Fiddler's Green Restaurant to convey the feeling of an English Pub. Somewhere along the way, it was renamed Buck's Tavern. In 1987

the restaurant would be named The Sun Tavern, a moniker that remains to this day.

Larry and Carol Friedman owned the Tavern from 1996 to 2001. When it became available again, the couple could not resist the lure and charm of this enchanting property. The Sun Tavern in all of its incarnations is woven into the lives of countless people who have walked through its doors.

Wells put the house on the map after experiencing the ghost of Lysander Walker. Each night when the restaurant was being locked up, and every candle extinguished on the tables, just one would be relit, as he was about to walk out the back door. Of course David was teased about his "ghost." Late one night the alarm went off and the police arrived to investigate. After checking the entire building and finding nothing, they closed the door and started up the path. Suddenly each officer heard footsteps in the restaurant. With guns drawn

they entered the building but found no one. That would be the last time David was ridiculed about his ghost.

Larry and Carol have many stories to tell.

One evening the police were summoned to the restaurant because of a 911 call. Larry swore that the place was empty and no one could have called. It must have been a wrong number. The police told him the call came from his pay phone.

Patrons and staff have heard heavy footsteps in the building, yet no visible person was present to create the occurrence.

The towel dispenser in the ladies room began dispensing towels by itself one day in front of Larry.

A man was choking one night and suddenly unseen hands assisted him. He leaned over to thank the person next to him but they swore they were not close enough to help him. Before they could assist him, someone hit him on the back to dislodge the obstruction in his throat.

While Larry was telling Arlene and me this story, we heard a voice like a choking sound that we were able to record.

While we were visiting, there were three loud bangs that emanated from the dining room. We were the only ones in the building at the time. We have this recorded as well.

The phone seems to be one of Lysander's favorite items in the tavern, as staff and patrons have witnessed his ghost standing in front of it.

To this day many have experienced Lysander's presence. His constant visitations are only part of the magic and charm of The Sun Tavern.

Thomas D'Agostino and his



The Sun Tavern in Duxbury is the home of resident ghost Lysander Walker.

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.punr.org.

Charitable trust funding available

OXFORD - The Trustees of the Cecelia J. Smolenski/Millette Charitable Trusts have announced applications are available for grant funding for projects and programs that promote and foster recreational and literary opportunities and activities for children in Oxford.

The Smolenski/Millette Trusts were established in 1995 and 2000 to be used for the charitable, recreational, literacy, or educational purposes for the benefit of the youth of Oxford. The Trustees comprise various town officials as well as members of the public. The original donation to the town totaled over \$2 million and distributions

are made from trust income. Previous projects and programs funded in whole or in part through the trust include the Splash Pad, the NJROTC program at the high school, the library pass program, the skate park, activities at Joslin Park, the Greenbriar osprey camera, playground equipment, upgrades to the Little League concession stand, and activities at the Community Center.

Applications can be found online at www.oxfordma.us/town-manager. Applications are due no later than April 30. Applications are also available by contacting the town manager's office at manager@oxfordma.us or 508-987-6030, ext. 8.

Social Security - your questions answered

Social Security will likely be the foundation of your retirement income. Before you retire, it's important to understand your options and the effect your decisions have on your retirement.

Join Dennis Antonopoulos, financial advisor for Edward Jones in Auburn, for the presentation. Here's what will be discussed:

- How does Social Security fit into my retirement income plan?
- When should I start taking benefits?
- What about taxes?

The date is Wednesday, April 14, from 6:00-7:00 pm. This Webinar is being held via Zoom.

To register please call Karen Rieser at 508-832-5385 or email Karen.rieser@edward-jones.com by April 13 to receive Zoom link. This is a part of the Edward Jones monthly webinar series - Held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month.

social security questions answered

Simmons U Dean's List

BOSTON - The following local residents were named to the 2020 fall semester dean's list at Simmons University in Boston.

Nicole Morrison, Dudley
Olivia Panagiotou, Webster
Victoria Lavelle, Webster

To qualify for dean's list status, undergraduate students must obtain a grade point average of 3.5 or higher, based on 12 or more credit hours of work in classes using the letter grade system.

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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John Paul is AAA Northeast's Car Doctor. He has over 40 years' experience in the automotive business and is an ASE certified master technician. He will answer reader's questions each week. You can find the Car Doctor podcast at www.johnpaul.podbean.com or other popular podcast sites. Email your car questions to jpaul@aaanortheast.com. Follow John on Twitter @johnpaul and friend him on facebook [mrjohnpaul](https://www.facebook.com/mrjohnpaul)



Q. My 2008 VW Passat would not crank on Friday morning when it was very cold. I bought it used last year and had no idea how old the battery was, so I put a battery charger on it and waited a few hours. It still would not crank. I called my mechanic and he towed it to his garage, attempted to jump start it but it would not, so they pushed it into the garage for the night. Saturday morning they went to work on it and it started right up. They put it outside in the cold and it started every time they tried it. They left it outside all day through Sunday into Monday (it was very cold Sunday), it started right up Monday morning and has ever since. My teenage daughter drives this car so I need it to be reliable, my mechanic said he could put a starter in (\$550) but would not recommend it because he's not sure. Any ideas?

A. If the shop tested the battery, they may have cleaned the battery connections and that may have solved the problem. It doesn't take much corrosion at a battery cable to keep an engine from cranking over. A no start/no crank in a Volkswagen only has so many possibilities. The battery, battery cables, starter motor (which includes the starter solenoid) and ignition switch. If the battery and cables test out as being good, there isn't much left to check. At that point, replacing the starter in your 13-year-old VW may be money well spent.

Q. My son owns a 2007 Honda Accord which has 50,000 miles on it and the "check engine" light came on. He brought it to an auto repair shop, they were busy and couldn't test the engine to read the codes. They told him he would need an appointment, and not to worry about it unless the light "flashes." They told him people drive for months with check engine lights on. Do you agree for him not to worry unless it starts "flashing?" We also did some Google searches and saw that people have had major problems with this model. I hope my son doesn't end up having major problems

with this car in the future. My other question is: my son just ordered a code reader, do these work?

A. The garage is correct that you should stop driving a car with a flashing check-engine-light. A flashing check-engine-light indicates an engine misfire which can result in damage to the catalytic converter. A steady check-engine-light can be on from something as simple as a loose gas cap to a malfunctioning sensor. A check-engine-light should not be ignored since it could affect fuel economy and vehicle emissions. Regarding code readers, they are handy to read a code. They will not tell you what the actual issue with the car is. Once you have the code, then there is a specific procedure to test and isolate the problem. Google is a great search engine but I would not base a car's reputation on what I have read on the internet, especially a 14-year-old car.

Q. I'm almost eighty and can't clean the inside of my rear window because of my age and the slant of the glass. It's a Toyota Avalon. I thought I saw something on TV with a handle that looked like a fly-swatter with a sponge on the end. Are you familiar with anything like this? I want to get rid of that film build-up.

A. I have also seen that window cleaning product "as seen on TV." I have never used one, but the idea is good. A long-handled tool that is flexible/springy enough to keep even pressure on the window, that allows for easier cleaning. When completed I would wrap a microfiber cloth around the sponge just to finish off the cleaning process.

Ron Moscoffian
Appr. #9537

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Job Type: Full-time. **Experience:** Driver's License (Required), Diesel Mechanic: 1 year (Required), Diesel repair certification (Preferred), Trash industry experience (Preferred), Class A or B CDL (Preferred), Welding experience (Preferred)

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Tips on financial planning



Dennis Antonopoulos

If you've been contributing for many years to your 401(k) or similar retirement plan, it may be your largest pool of money. So, if you are facing a financial need, you may think about tapping into your account. After all, it's your money - why not use it?

But touching your 401(k)

Avoid tapping into 401(k) early

before you retire may not be a good idea, as it can lead to some unwanted consequences.

First, taking funds out of your 401(k) now could increase the risk of running out of money during retirement, which could last for decades.

Also, withdrawals taken from your 401(k) before age 59½ may be taxed as ordinary income and are generally subject to a 10% penalty for early withdrawal, although there are some exceptions. And a sizable taxable withdrawal from your 401(k) could bump you into a higher tax bracket.

Therefore, if you are facing a financial crunch, you may want to explore some op-

tions before tapping into your 401(k). For starters, see if you can cut your expenses where possible and explore financial assistance programs that service providers, such as utility companies, might offer.

Also, if you have an emergency fund, now may be the time to use it. For most folks, it's a good idea to keep three to six months' worth of living expenses in such a fund, with the money kept in a liquid, low-risk account. But even smaller amounts can help in a financial crunch.

You might also find another source of cash in your taxable investment accounts. Any uninvested cash in these

accounts is an easy place to start. You might also look at selling investments to free up some cash. However, before making this decision, you may want to consult with a financial professional to discuss the pros and cons.

Another cash-generating option is a 401(k) loan, assuming your plan permits such loans. Unlike a direct withdrawal, a 401(k) loan is not taxable if it's repaid on time. (If it isn't, you could also incur penalties.) And, although the loan may have some fees, the interest on it will be paid to your account, rather than to a bank. However, you won't earn investment returns on the loan balance,

because you can't use this money to invest. And if you leave your job before you've fully repaid the loan, you'll likely have to come up with the remaining balance quickly.

You could also consider using your credit cards to generate cash, but these types of loans or advances can be quite costly. Instead, you may want to look at other possibilities, such as a home equity loan, the cash value of a life insurance policy, the "margin" on your investment accounts or a personal loan. Again, you should talk to a financial professional to discuss the tradeoffs of taking out these loans and to de-

velop a payoff strategy, if you decide to use any of them.

Your 401(k) is a long-term investment designed to meet a long-term goal: your retirement. So, if you think you might require these funds before retirement, explore all alternatives first to find the right decision for your needs.

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

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RE: Real Estate



Mark Marzeotti

If you watch a steady stream of TV shows that focus on buying and selling homes, you've probably learned a lot about the process. As a result, you may think you have a solid enough handle on things to forego using a real estate agent when selling your house.

This is understandable, especially when you think about how much you could save on the realtor's commission. Plus, if you were captain of the ship, you'd be in charge of every decision during the process. But a few homebuyer education courses can't give you the years of experience realtors have. Here's the first thing you need to know before you take the reins and decide to sell your home without a real estate agent.

You may not be saving as much money as you think.

Hiring a real estate agent will typically cost you about six percent of a home's sale price. For a \$350,000 home, that's \$21,000. It'd be pretty nice to shave that number off your expenses, right?

The idea of saving thousands of dollars on commission by selling your own home can be tempting, and for a few it may even make sense, but for the vast majority of homeowners the desire to pocket more money by selling their own home will likely cost them.

Maybe you are thinking that a realtor writing a column, of course will say that." According to the National Association of Realtors, homes that are for sale by owner, or FSBOs, typically sell for less money than

The first thing you need to know about selling your home without a realtor

homes sold by realtors. In 2020, homes sold by owners closed at a median of \$217,900, while those sold by real estate agents closed for \$242,300. That's a \$24,400 difference.

The upside of selling your place on your own, per the report, is saving time. FSBO sold more quickly than homes sold by agents in 2020 – 77 percent of FSBO homes sold in less than two weeks. But NAR points out that's because the homes were often sold to someone the seller knew.

Some agents say they don't believe that selling your home without an agent is a bad idea for all sellers – but it's probably a bad idea for most sellers. There are three reasons why.

First, there's pricing. One of the reasons you may not make as much is related to your potential pricing strategy. How will you determine the right price to sell? While multiple real estate websites offer quick estimates of your home's value, this is simply an algorithm – not a researched comparison of other similar homes in your neighborhood. In fact, she says those quickly generated estimates are often exaggerated, which can cause you to upcharge your home. You might already know what happens to overpriced homes: nothing. They languish on the market as buyers select more

reasonably priced options. It's almost worth hiring an agent just to be sure that your home is priced right.

Even if you don't hire an agent, you might need to hire a lawyer to go over all your contracts. This will cost you money, too. Still, this isn't the only reason you might not get as much money as you think. You have to be prepared to put in the work necessary to attract the right buyers. Just sticking a sign in your front yard will likely not generate the traffic and interest that you hope for. The owner is responsible for all the marketing, photos, property descriptions, inquiries, open houses, showings, and vetting the potential buyers.

Then there's the business of appealing to buyers. Sellers need to understand the pros and cons of their property, and know what will distract buyers and turn them off. However, since homeowners tend to gloss over their home's flaws, this can be a challenge. Having an unbiased person to help out can be a plus. Many times, sellers eventually realize they'd rather just spend five to six percent of the sale price and hire an agent to do all of this for them.

If you're selling to someone you know, marketing and appealing to potential buyers

might not be necessary. But you will have to negotiate with the buyer no matter who it is. So let me ask you this important question: Can you negotiate as well as an agent can on your behalf? The answer may be yes, but be realistic – not everyone is a born negotiator. Leave the job to a professional!



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