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Inside Pages



Patriots Foundation Presents \$20,000 to Gilly's House

Last month, the Patriots Foundation presented a check for \$20,000 to Barbara Gillmeister of Wrentham for her volunteer efforts at Gilly's House, a residential facility for young men in recovery.

In early February, the Kraft family and the Patriots Foundation hosted a virtual celebration, honoring their 2020 Patriots Difference Makers of the Week. Gillmeister and sixteen



From left, Maureen Cappuccino, Gilly's House Administrator, David Gillmeister co-founder of Gilly's House, Barbara Gillmeister, co-founder and Gilly's House Executive Director, Chris Sachs, Gilly's House Director, and Joshua Kraft, President of the New England Patriots Foundation.

GILLY'S
continued on page 2

Senior Softball League Plays on Despite Pandemic

BY GRACE ALLEN

Eastern Massachusetts Senior Softball (EMASS) is launching its annual recruitment campaign for slow-pitch softball players age 50 and over. The season opens in May and runs until Labor Day, and playoffs are scheduled to be completed by early October.

Cal Ripken, Jr., famously said, "You could be a kid for as long as you want when you play baseball." The EMASS participants would likely agree. Creaky knees, bum shoulders and other ailments that come with age haven't slowed down these boys—and girls—of summer much.



SOFTBALL
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GILLY'S

continued from page 1

other individuals were recognized for their tireless volunteer efforts at nonprofit organizations all across New England.

During the celebration, Robert Kraft made the surprise announcement that Gillmeister would be receiving a \$20,000 donation to support Gilly's House. On March 3, Josh Kraft, president of the Patriots Foundation, toured Gilly's House and presented a commemorative check to Gillmeister and her team. Kraft also brought dinner and gift bags for the 25 individuals who currently reside at the facility.

The donation will be used to replace the furnaces and hot water heater at Gilly's House.

Ten years ago, the Kraft family and the New England Patriots Foundation introduced a season-long theme called Celebrate Volunteerism. The focus of the initiative was to recognize community volunteers and to promote the importance of volunteering.

The New England Patriots Foundation was created by

Robert Kraft to support charitable and philanthropic agencies throughout New England. The Foundation's primary goal is to support programs that aid the youth and families of the New England region by assisting programs that foster cultural diversity, education, family and health. The Foundation has taken special interest in youth programs that encourage education, creativity and development of character.

In October of 2016, Steven "Gilly" Gillmeister lost his battle with addiction. Within six months of Steven's passing, his parents – Barbara and David – purchased a residential home in Wrentham for young men in recovery. Gilly's House provides 24-hour staffing that reinforces a lifestyle free of alcohol and drug use. The house offers transitional life skills including career exploration, healthy living, personal finance, self-help groups and social services. To learn more, visit www.gillyshouse.com.

For more information about the New England Patriots Foundation, visit www.patriots.com/community.

SOFTBALL

continued from page 1

Norfolk resident Jim Leonard started playing for EMASS when he was 56. He is now 78 and says the games quickly became something to look forward to each week.

"You go out there and feel like you're a little kid," he affirmed. "The competition is well worth the investment in time."

Players come from towns all across Eastern Massachusetts, with Norfolk and Wrentham well-represented. Games are played on fields in Ashland, Framingham, Medfield, and Wayland. The co-ed league's 400 members, ranging from 50 to 90 years of age, play in five divisions with skill levels ranging from recreational to national tournament-level caliber.

When COVID hit last year, the season start was delayed until July. Although some members, including Leonard, opted not to participate, EMASS played a full 36-game season without any players testing positive.



Photo courtesy EMASS Senior Softball League.

Walker Royce, Commissioner of EMASS, said in a statement, "The 2020 EMASS season was a healthy escape and a lot of fun with a new twist. With masks concealing the identity of every batter, it was hard to tell whether the player at-bat was a rookie power hitter or an old veteran place-hitter."

Leonard grew up in West Roxbury and started playing organized ball in Little League and continued all through high school. Now, at his age, the big draw is the camaraderie and the feeling of competence despite being slower and generally less agile. Still, he remains impressed by the league's athleticism, especially in the younger divisions.

"The young guys coming in at 50 years old—looking back,

50 is young to me—they're really talented because everyone is into fitness, not like when I started," explained Leonard. "They're prepared for the rigors of sliding and falling. It's a mistake to think you can still play like you're in high school if you haven't stayed in shape. Getting hurt is not uncommon."

Leonard says one of the highlights of his participation in EMASS softball was his trip to Cuba in 2009. That year was the first time the league started sending teams to scrimmage against squads in Havana. Up until the start of the pandemic, the trips have taken place each year and friendships between the two countries' players have blossomed.

"That was the trip of a lifetime," reflected Leonard. "The Cubans are super talented and some of them received permission to come up here, too, and play."

According to Senior Softball-USA, there are more than 1.5 million participants playing the sport, and the number is expected to grow as more and more active baby boomers join.

Despite the pandemic, EMASS officials believe their COVID-19 protocols like facial coverings, social distancing, and other commonsense guidelines have proven the league can continue to provide an enriching and safe athletic experience for its members. And with the rollout of the vaccines, the upcoming season looks even more promising.

"We played ball safely in 2020 and we will do it again in 2021," said Commissioner Royce.

At press time, Leonard had not yet decided whether he will play this season but says "It's been a really great run. It's fun but super competitive too. We take it very seriously. I'd recommend it to anyone, male or female."

For more information about EMASS Senior Softball League, visit www.e-mass.org.

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Your Money, Your Independence

Rising Rates, Sinking Values: Are Bonds Dead?

Interest rates are rising due to expectations of better economic growth.

Economists expected inflation to perk up this spring due to higher prices from pent-up demand. Still, they don't expect the increase to be sharp enough or sustain long enough for the Fed to take action. In fact, the Fed reiterated in March rate hikes are unlikely through 2023, confirming a willingness to let inflation and U.S. economy run hot.

Over the last 6 months, investors have cooled on bonds, causing rates to move higher, take 10-year US Treasury rising from 0.66% to 1.73% ending March 19, 2021. Beyond affecting new mortgages and refinancing, investment portfolios with bonds are feeling an impact.

The Barclays US Aggregate Bond Market Index which returned +7.5% for 2020. This year through 3/19 it is down -3.6%, aligning to how bond performance works: when rates go up, bond prices go down.

While it's early, understand since 1976 this bond market index has been negative just 3 times in 44 years, with the worst return being -2.9% (1994).

So do you abandon bonds?

The better question: why do you hold bonds?

Stability during market stress. Consider last spring, Treasuries continued to maintain their status as a safe haven during market stress. Other alternatives that could fill that role? In a month (2/13/20 - 3/13/20), Bitcoin lost -52%, Gold down -5%, while Treasuries rose.

Aid in lower portfolio volatility. Risk control and income for those depending on regular distributions from their portfolios. Additionally, investors who can't handle the stress of portfolio swings cause more harm by switching around positions or going to cash, than if they'd been diversified with focus on staying invested over the long-term.



Glenn Brown

What can be done now?

Diversification. Origins of the 60/40 portfolio date back to stocks and bonds being the only two major asset classes. The evolution and access to indexes, funds and technology over the last few decades has provided choice for broadly diversified portfolios. Within fixed income, consider "Core & Explore".

Core stability from Treasuries and highly rated corporate bonds, then explore global fixed income with higher yields - if you can tolerate the higher volatility.

A TIP about inflation. When markets think one way and the opposite happens, shocks occur for extended periods. Markets think inflation is controlled. Treasury Inflation-Protected Bonds (TIPs), commodities, hard assets and real-estate investment trusts (REITs) help hedge against inflation or stagflation. When inflation heats up, stock-bond correlation will increase together, thus these should help bring lower volatility.

Goals-based planning. Financial planners can help implement broadly diversified portfolios to align to an individual/family's goals, needs, timelines and risk tolerance whether you are in an accumulation or distribution phase of your life.

The opinions voiced in this material are for general information only and are not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual.

Glenn Brown is a Holliston resident and owner of PlanDynamic, LLC, www.PlanDynamic.com. Glenn is a fee-only Certified Financial Planner™ helping motivated people take control of their planning and investing, so they can balance kids, aging parents and financial independence.

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Progress is a Process – The Norfolk Public Library's Antiracist Discussion Group

By BRENDAN ZIMMERMAN

Last summer brought social unease and a long-awaited reckoning on racial injustice. Protests broke out across the country in response, and a new national conversation was born.

In the protests' aftermath, antiracism has become a more prominent, necessary topic of discussion – which led to an idea

for a local group discussion series about antiracism, offering residents an opportunity to learn more about the topic.

The Norfolk Public Library has been virtually hosting this series, which is titled "Watch. Read. Listen. Engage. How to Become an Antiracist Discussion Series."

For each meeting, the group gathers together remotely on

Zoom for an open discussion. Prior to meetings, attendees are expected to have read, watched, or listened to the required materials for that day's discussion.

The group is led by Suzanne Reynolds-Alpert and Tamara Dalton, both Technical Services Librarians at the Norfolk Public Library. They hope to encourage open conversation, as well as give residents a space to learn about

and discuss issues relating to racial injustice and antiracism.

"I think the protests did help inspire this offering," said Reynolds-Alpert. "We both know many people in and around town who felt impotent about their ability to do anything concrete about racial injustice."

The discussion group was then created to help residents interested in learning more. For the series' curriculum, the group leaders decided to use a variety of sources including books, articles, podcasts and films. This approach allows for a greater range of material, and for a more varied exposure to the many resources regarding the topic.

The meetings are bolstered by the powerful media sources selected as the preparation material for each meeting. Some of the media included in the discussion series so far include "Just Mercy," a film adaptation of Bryan Stevenson's moving book, Ibram X. Kendi's influential book "How to Be an Antiracist," and Ava Duvernay's eye-opening Netflix documentary, "13th."

For the upcoming April meeting, the chosen discussion topic will be on an episode from NPR's podcast series, "Code Switch."

The library rents out copies of the films and books in the series for interested attendees. For the selected books, attendees can also utilize Libby, an app that lets users rent eBooks from the library.

Both Reynolds-Alpert and Dalton want interested attendees to know that the meetings are not lectures, but rather an interactive, open discussion for all participating. They hope to lead with thought-provoking questions while allowing for conversation to naturally arise. Attendees are encouraged to ask their own questions and to actively participate in these dialogues.

Even though the discussion series is underway, anyone interested in joining can still sign up through the Norfolk Public Library's website as new members are welcome. The group will be meeting again on April 14 and May 12, take a break over the summer, and then resume again in the fall.

"Our perspective has always been that becoming an antiracist is a process – something to continually work on," said Reynolds-Alpert. "We learn as much from the participants as they learn from us. It's very much a group dynamic."

localtownpages

Published Monthly
Mailed FREE
to the Community of
Norfolk/Wrentham
Circulation: 8,473
households and businesses

Publisher
Chuck Tashjian

Editor
Grace Allen

Send Editorial to:
editor@norfolkwrenthamnews.com

Advertising Sales Manager
Jen Schofield
508-570-6544

Production & Layout
Michelle McSherry
Kim Vasseur

Advertising Department
508-570-6544
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Ad Deadline is the
15th of each month.

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Jay Schadler started his business in 2003. Back then, it was just him and a beat-up pickup truck taking small jobs and working nights and weekends when he could. As the years rolled on, his business grew, but his commitment to customer service never wavered. Now he's got a staff of ten, along with ten trucks, servicing eastern and central Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island.

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

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

Working with Affordable Junk Removal is simple. First, you can load stuff yourself if you want by renting a 15-cubic-yard dumpster for a week and chucking up to a ton of your unwanted stuff. If you need to get rid of

**Business
spotlight**



more weight, then Jay prorates that tonnage—you never pay for what you don't use.

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

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

And speaking of pricing, Jay is upfront about it. His website shows the truck sizes and prices, so you can save time knowing



your costs before you call for an appointment. There aren't any hidden costs or surprise fees with Affordable Junk Removal.

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

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

Jay and his family are deeply involved in the community. He and his wife, Christine, run the Corner Market restaurant in Holliston as well as Resellables, a thrift store in Bellingham. It's not uncommon for someone to

reach Jay at the restaurant, order a sandwich, and then schedule a junk removal appointment. Yes, the local small business really can handle everything!

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The Norfolk Annual Juried Art Show Goes Virtual

Awards Ceremony Slated for April 8

The Norfolk Cultural Council (NCC) is pleased to announce that the **2021 Norfolk VIRTUAL Juried Art Show** will be available for viewing on-line beginning April 1, with a Virtual Reception and Awards Ceremony taking place on April 8. The NCC's Annual Juried Art Show has taken on a new format in 2021 – it is virtual! In this annual show, previously held at the Norfolk Library, the NCC is showcasing and celebrating the work of artists from Norfolk and surrounding communities.

NCC is holding a Virtual Reception and Awards Ceremony on Thursday, April 8, at 7 p.m. via Zoom. Cash prizes will be awarded for top artworks. A link to the reception will be available on the Norfolk town website prior to the date. The Norfolk meeting calendar is available at www.norfolk.ma.us, and the direct link to the NCC page is <http://norfolk.ma.us/boards-committees/ncc.htm>. A Zoom link also will be sent ahead of the event to recipients of NCC's email newsletter.

Because the art show is online, there was no limit to the type or size of art that could be submitted (although there was a limit of two submissions per artist). The NCC received about 90 submissions in the form of 2D media (painting, drawing, photography, printmaking, collage, flat textile/fiber art, etc.) and in 3D (sculpture, reliefs, carvings, etc.).

The entire art exhibition will be available for viewing through the NCC website, and also will be accessible on Norfolk Community Television (<https://norfolk.cable.com/>).

I Thought Only Faucets Had Leaks

Leaky Gut Syndrome is a condition that affects the integrity of the gut lining which normally serves as a barrier of the intestines. It can also be called "Intestinal Permeability," which occurs when the gut wall becomes damaged allowing compounds to enter the bloodstream that normally shouldn't. For example, partially digested proteins and fats may seep through the intestinal lining making their way into the bloodstream which causes an allergic response.

One of the biggest warning signs of a leaky gut is that you are experiencing multiple food sensitivities. Other symptoms include: bloating, thyroid conditions, fatigue, joint pain, headaches, skin issues and weight gain. If left untreated for a long time, leaky gut can lead to IBS, arthritis, eczema, psoriasis, depression, anxiety and muscle pain. This can lead to malabsorption of vital minerals and nutrients including magnesium, zinc, iron and vitamins D, B12 and others.

Leaky Gut can be caused by a diet high in sugar and low in fiber. Other causes include dairy, lectins found in wheat, rice spelt and soy,



Dr. Rochelle Bien & Dr. Michael Goldstein

and glycoposphates which are found in our food from pesticides.

Dana B. came into our office complaining of gas, bloating after meals, fatigue and brain fog. She had been battling eczema for years and had joint pain. She never felt well which over time led to depression.

We put her on an anti-inflammatory diet as well as adding those foods that help to restore the natural biome of the gut. We added supplementation to remove the stressors in the gut as well as repair and rebuild the gut. Those changes along with the neurological integrative work has helped Dana to resolve her digestive issues.

If you are experiencing these symptoms and are ready to start on your journey to health, call the **HOLISTIC CENTER AT BRISTOL SQUARE** at 508-660-2722 and set up your appointment with Dr. Rochelle Bien or Dr. Michael Goldstein today.

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A Spring Arts Awakening for THE BLACK BOX

THE BLACK BOX, Franklin's very own concert, theater, and event venue, will host nine weeks of entertainment, outdoors under a tent in the venue's parking lot. The Spring Arts Awakening celebrates a comeback for arts and entertainment and offers an opportunity to support THE BLACK BOX in its recovery from the pandemic.

Spring Arts Awakening at THE BLACK BOX kicks off on April 16 with a concert by three Disney Stars of Broadway: Broadway's original "Mary Poppins" Ashley Brown, current "Genie" Michael James Scott, and original "Tarzan" Josh Strickland. The trio will perform an evening of Disney favorites. There will be limited seating for this special evening out in Franklin.

The Spring Arts Awakening lineup will also include local band The Peacheaters, Blues legend James Montgomery, viral



a cappella sensation T.3, international touring ensemble Electric Youth, cabaret performances featuring Broadway stars, a June Pride Month concert benefiting The Trevor Project, FPAC's annual Culinary Cabaret, and more.

"The Spring Arts Awakening provides an opportunity to welcome our audiences back to THE BLACK BOX," notes TBB and Franklin Performing Arts Company Director Raye

Lynn Mercer. "The safety of an outdoor venue provides patrons a comfortable transition to performances and event gatherings." Mercer adds, "Reopening guidelines will be followed and all safety protocols will be in place."

Patrons are encouraged to visit www.THEBLACKBOX-online.com and follow THE BLACK BOX on social media to stay updated on the venue's offerings.

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Last-Minute Tax Tips for Procrastinators

It's April already. Are your taxes done? If your answer to the question is no, you are not alone. The Internal Revenue Service says as many as 25 percent of taxpayers file their returns the final two weeks before the filing deadline. And with the recent COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic that we have been experiencing as well as the multiple stimulus programs offered, that percentage is probably quite higher.

If you have not completed your taxes yet, here are some stress-relieving ideas:

Don't Procrastinate Anymore
Resist the temptation to put off your taxes until the very last minute. Your return takes time to prepare and your preparer may need to request certain documents from you, which will take

additional time.

Don't Panic If You Can't Pay
If you can't immediately pay the taxes you owe, consider some alternatives. You can apply for an IRS installment agreement, suggesting your own monthly payment amount and due date, and getting a reduced late-payment penalty rate. You also have various options for charging your balance on a credit card. There is no IRS fee for credit card payments, however the processing companies charge a convenience fee. Electronic filers with a balance due can file early and authorize the government's financial agent to take the money directly from their checking or savings account on the April due date, with no fee.

Request an Extension of Time to File, But Pay on Time If the

clock runs out, you can get an automatic six-month extension, bringing the filing date to October 15, 2021. The extension itself does not give you more time to pay any taxes due. You will owe interest on any amount not paid by the April deadline, plus a late-payment penalty if you have not paid at least 90 percent of your total tax by that date (normally, but see exception above). Contact your tax professional for a variety of easy ways to apply for an extension.

Tax Filings Relative to The COVID-19 Pandemic As of this writing, the tax season has not been extended due to the continued COVID-19 pandemic. However, those who owe taxes do have options. The Secretary of the Treasury Mnuchin announced that IRS payments can

be deferred for 90 days interest and penalty free. He stressed that tax returns still be filed timely, especially if a refund is expected. File electronically and process through direct deposit for the most efficient way to receive the refund. According to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Revenue website, the DOR is prepared to follow the IRS in offering similar relief for taxpayers with Massachusetts tax filing obligations. The situation is fluid and things are changing almost daily. Please reach out to the office for further clarification or check out our online updates relating to COVID-19.

To get an estimate of what you owe, you generally have to do a dry run of your tax return—which probably means you will have almost everything you need to file anyway. If they're 90 percent done, it's really in your best



interest to just get it done and file by April 15th.

Jeffrey Schweitzer can be found at Northeast Financial Strategies Inc (NFS) at Wampum Corner in Wrentham. NFS works with individuals and small businesses providing financial and estate planning, insurance, investments and also offers full service accounting, bookkeeping, payroll, income tax preparation, and notary public services. For more information call Jeffrey at 800-560-4NFS or visit online - www.nfsnet.com

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Living Healthy

Glaucoma Treatment: SLT

10 Commonly Asked Questions

By: ROGER M. KALDAWY, M.D.
Milford Franklin Eye Center

Lasers can be very useful in treating many eye problems from helping patients eliminate the need for glasses to cosmetic procedures of the eyelids and bladeless cataract surgery to treatment of glaucoma.

Glaucoma is a condition that can damage our field of vision. It affects us when the pressure inside the eye is higher than what the eye can tolerate. Glaucoma is treatable with drops targeted at lowering the eye pressure. Laser technology can also be used in a focused beam of light to treat the drainage angle of the eye in an additional attempt to lower the pressure. This surgery makes it easier for fluid to flow out of the front part of the eye, decreasing pressure inside the eye. Selective laser trabeculoplasty or SLT is the name of the laser procedure used to lower the pressure. SLT has been in use for more than 25 years in the United States and around the world.

1. Who is a candidate for SLT?

Patients who have primary or secondary open-angle glaucoma (the drainage system in the front part of the eye is open) and are in need of lowering of their intraocular pressure (IOP) are eligible for the procedure. Your eye doctor will make the final determination if you are a candidate.

2. How does it work? Laser energy is applied to the drainage tissue in the eye. This starts a chemical and biological change in the tissue that results in better drainage of fluid through the drain and out of the eye. This eventually results in lowering of IOP. It may take 1-3 months for the results to appear.

3. Why is it called Selective?

The type of laser used has minimal heat energy absorption because it is only taken up by selected pigmented tissue in the eye. Sometimes it is referred to as a "cold laser." Because of this, the procedure produces less scar tissue and has minimal pain.

4. What are the risks?

One key aspect of SLT is a favorable side effect profile, even when compared with glaucoma medications. Post-operative inflammation is common but generally mild, and treated with observation or eye drops or an oral non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug. There is an approximately 5% incidence of IOP elevation after laser, which can be managed by glaucoma medications and usually goes away after 24 hours.

5. How effective is it and how long does it last?

SLT lowers the IOP by about 30% when used as initial therapy. This is

comparable to the IOP lowering of the most powerful and commonly used class of glaucoma medication (prostaglandin analogs). This effect may be reduced if the patient is already on glaucoma medications. The effect will generally last between 1-5 years, and in some cases, longer than that. If it does not last at least 6-12 months, it is usually not considered successful.

6. What happens if it wears off?

If SLT is effective at lowering IOP but this wears off over several years, the procedure can be repeated. Repeat treatments may or may not lower IOP as much as the first, and continued repeat laser will eventually not be effective. Some doctors may elect to treat half of the tissue on the first treatment, then treat the second half at a later date (this is not considered repeat treatment, and is completion of treatment). If SLT is not initially successful, repeat treatment is not likely to be effective. Alternatively, glaucoma medication can be used if the effect wears off over time.

7. What happens if it doesn't work?

If SLT fails to lower the IOP, then the glaucoma is treated by other means such as additional medications or surgery. The laser does not affect the success of these other types of treatment.

8. What is the cost? Since the procedure is an accepted glaucoma treatment, and is FDA approved, it is covered by Medicare and medical insurance. The cost for an uninsured individual or with an insurance co-pay will vary.

9. Will I still need to use glaucoma medications?

Some patients can be controlled with just laser treatment. Others require additional IOP lowering and may therefore need to use glaucoma medication as well. Think of the SLT as equivalent to one glaucoma medication. Just as some patients will require more than one glaucoma medication to control their IOP, some may also require laser plus one or more glaucoma medications. It is important to remember that SLT is not a cure for glaucoma, just as medication and surgery are not. Whatever method is used to treat glaucoma, appropriate follow up and testing with your eye care professional is critical.

10. What are the alternative laser treatments?

Other similar procedures are argon laser trabeculoplasty (ALT) and micropulse laser trabeculoplasty (MLT). ALT was the first laser trabeculoplasty procedure. It uses a thermal (heat) laser and may cause more scarring in the drainage angle than SLT, which may also limit its ability to be repeated. MLT was designed to reduce the

amount of energy delivered to ocular tissues by pulsing the energy in small increments. It therefore has similar potential benefits as SLT in terms of lower inflammation, tissue scarring and ability to repeat.

In summary:

SLT is a laser treatment for open-angle glaucoma that lowers eye pressure. It can be used as initial treatment, instead of eye drop medications, or as additional treatment when medications do not adequately reduce the eye pressure. It is often effective but that effectiveness may wear off after some period of time. It can be repeated but the effect may be reduced with repeat treatment. SLT is not a cure for glaucoma but one of many tools to keep it under control. At Milford Franklin Eye Center, Dr. Kaldawy was among the first surgeons to offer SLT in the area. We perform the procedure in a state-of-the-art surgery center in Milford and closer to home. With this center available to you here in your backyard there is no reason to travel hours to have eye surgery and laser glaucoma surgery. If your eye provider is still recommending you travel miles away to have surgery we are available for a second opinion! We are proud to offer excellence in SLT- laser glaucoma surgery with world class outcomes and here is the great news: Here, in Milford, and closer to home than ever before!

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VA BOSTON COVID-19 VACCINE UPDATE

| TARGET GROUP (Veterans enrolled at VA Boston) | PROJECTED DATE (Dates may change depending on vaccine availability) |
|---|--|
| Residents | |
| Community | |
| Cord Injured | |
| High risk dialysis, transplant living situations | |
| Veterans age 85+ | |
| Veterans age 75+ | March 2021 |
| Veterans age 65+ | April 2021 |
| Veterans age 50+ | May 2021 |
| Veterans aged 50 and younger | June 2021 |

- Now Scheduling -
ALL AGES
(Ahead of Schedule)

- VA Boston is following national guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and VA which is different from the plan of any state.
- We will offer a vaccine to ALL Veterans who receive care at VA Boston.
- **Veterans MUST BE enrolled in VA Healthcare to receive the vaccine.**
- Service-Connected Disability Rating is not a factor in vaccination eligibility.
- The vaccine is voluntary.
- The first inpatient Veterans and staff were vaccinated on December 21, 2020.
- Vaccinations began for outpatients on January 5, 2021.
- We're administering both the Moderna COVID-19 and Janssen COVID-19 vaccines.
- The Moderna COVID-19 requires a second shot 28 days after the first – we must administer both shots.
- The Janssen COVID-19 vaccine only requires one shot.
- Veterans will be offered a vaccine based on clinical need and vaccine inventory.
- Enrolled Veterans can call 857-203-3919 to schedule an appointment.
- Drop-in clinics will be announced on VA Boston's social media pages - **VA Boston Healthcare System** on Facebook and **VA Boston HC** on Twitter.

VA U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Boston Healthcare System

For More Information: www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/
Become a Patient: www.boston.va.gov/patients/eligibility.asp

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Norfolk's 12th Annual Clean & Green Town-wide Cleanup Set for April 24

The Norfolk Grange invites locals of all ages to celebrate Earth Day and participate in Norfolk's 12th Annual Clean and Green Town-wide Cleanup on Saturday, April 24 to clean the unsightly litter along roadways and public places and beautify our community.

Participants may collect litter any day(s) of the week prior to and including April 24. Participants are asked to attest that the trash is not from a household. Drop-off collected litter and recyclables at the Grange Hall at 28 Rockwood Road from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the 24th.

Alternatively, participants may request their litter collection or large items be picked up at the site of the cleanup. Contact Kevin Roche at 508-328-5604 if you would like pickup on the 24th by Lions Club volunteers.

Due to COVID-19 concerns, we ask that participants follow current guidelines set by Governor Baker. Also, the historical Grange Hall will be closed to the public and there will be no celebration or refreshments. Participants may pick up volunteer certificates documenting their community service in the parking lot of the Grange.

For more information regarding this event, please visit the Grange Facebook page at www.facebook.com/NorfolkGrange or contact Robin Biscaia at (508) 740-2777.

Our Ad & Editorial Deadline is the 15th of each month, for the following month's issue.

Attracting Birds, Butterflies, and Other Beneficial Wildlife

Zoom Presentation

Attend and enjoy a 90-minute remote Zoom presentation by experienced naturalist John Root and learn how to attract pollinators and other beneficial wildlife into your yards and neighborhoods on Thursday, April 1 at 7 p.m. This warm and engaging presentation will show you which plants nourish and protect these organisms. Please join us on April 1 at 7 p.m. using the following internet link:

tinyurl.com/1hj6k9hq

Meeting ID: 861 1450 8871

Passcode: 551393

Audio only by phone #: 646 558 8656

This program is supported by the Norfolk Grange and the Norfolk Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

John Roddy Named to 2020 Lawyers of the Year by Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly

“Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly” has named BG Partner John Roddy a 2020 Lawyer of the Year in recognition of his work representing those affected by the Columbia Gas explosions in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Roddy led a team of lawyers appointed by Massachusetts Superior Court Judge James F. Lang to represent the class of people and businesses in greater Lawrence, Massachusetts who were devastated by the Columbia Gas disaster.

As co-lead counsel, Roddy spearheaded the pleadings, briefing, and negotiation which ultimately resulted in a “historic” \$143 million class action settlement providing significant compensation to victims of the September 2018 Merrimack Valley gas explosions caused by Columbia Gas. The settlement was crafted over six months of mediated negotiations. The court praised the settlement’s design, noting that “the major-



ity of compensation will appropriately go to those who are most adversely impacted by the event, those in or near the impact zone.”

“Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly” also recognized Roddy for his work representing a class of Uber riders for whom he and his co-counsel secured a \$3 mil-

lion settlement with Uber after it charged riders to Logan Airport a bogus \$8.75 “Massport surcharge” —Massport had no such fee. The trial court dismissed the case based on Uber’s arbitration clause. But Roddy, along with BG Partner Elizabeth Ryan and appellate co-counsel Matt Wessler prevailed at the First Circuit, which found the arbitration clause so inconspicuous that it could not bind a reasonable consumer. The \$3 million Uber settlement represented 80% of the maximum damages available.

In addition to these cases, Roddy represents consumers in class actions challenging unfair and deceptive business practices, and serves as relator’s counsel in qui tam “whistleblower” actions. In the last two decades the settlements in cases he has litigated have returned more than \$1 billion to consumers harmed by marketplace misconduct.

Roddy is a Norfolk resident.

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Planning and Protection Saved the Morgans' Health, Home, and Life Savings

DENNIS SULLIVAN & ASSOCIATES,
COUNSELORS AT LAW

Through the years we have seen all too often a person or family who thought all was well, only to discover otherwise at the worst possible time ...

Mr. Morgan came to one of our free discovery seminars a while back. If you asked him at the time, he probably could not give you a specific answer as to why he showed up, other than, "I knew I had to do something and when I saw your information about the education and counseling process, I just felt like I had to be there."

It was fortunate that Mr. Morgan made this decision. We had noticed him sitting in the back. He was easy to spot in his red striped tie but more importantly because he never took his eyes off of us as we spoke. Talking with him afterwards, we could see why he was hanging on our every word regarding protecting your estate and assets.

His wife had recently become ill, and medical bills had begun to deplete their life savings. It had been their dream to live a comfortable lifestyle in retirement and eventually leave a financial legacy

for their children and grandchildren, but now all this was in serious jeopardy. It was very possible, he said, that Mrs. Morgan might have to enter a nursing home, which would further rob them of hard-earned retirement savings earmarked for their loved ones.

Mr. Morgan's situation was very personal to our team. It struck at the very heart of our core values of Faith, Family and Finances. It is why we have done our very best to protect families in our community and region for generations! Does this sound like something that hits home for you as well?

Upon learning of Mr. and Mrs. Morgan's plight at our discovery session, we immediately set up an appointment with Mr. Morgan to dig deeper into the situation. In preparation for our meeting, we did a thorough and complete review of legal, financial and tax matters, including present finances, future goals and, most importantly, the major obstacles (medical and otherwise) that could potentially rob this couple of their hard-earned money and retirement savings. Accordingly, we determined what they wished to do to make their children and grandchildren more comfortable. The end result was that Mr. and Mrs. Morgan were able to stay on track through a solid retirement, estate and asset protection plan we put in place for them.

What about your present situation? Might there be landmines on the horizon which could shatter your future dreams and plans? Based on what has happened to numerous clients, families have been unable to visit and/or coordinate matters from bill paying to document signing. Those who had the right legal documents and financial matters coordinated as well as the right people in place, were successful with what needed to be done. We have heard of many who did not have the right team and/or preparations in place, and the outcomes were not favorable. How has COVID-19 affected your family, friends and neighbors? What if Mr. Morgan had not happened upon our free discovery workshop and personal counseling session? What might his and his wife's financial future have looked like? Do not let a healthcare catastrophe or another major event put an end to what you have been working towards for your golden years.

Our team Protects Families for Generations. What do you and your loved ones need to know now for your lifetime? You and your family may very well be our next success story.

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perienced, caring, compassionate professionals creates a comprehensive health estate and asset protection plan that provides you and your family members total peace of mind now and for generations that follow.

The most important phone call you can make today is to our discovery line 800-964-4295 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) or 781-237-2815 (weekdays) to register for a Discovery Session and to see if you qualify for a personalized review and counseling session. You can also register online at DSullivan.com. Due to the current pandemic, we are doing our best as essential service providers to help those who qualify, understand how much they can and should do for their family now!

Dennis Sullivan & Associates is a team of caring, compassionate, experienced professionals who Protect Families for Generations.

Book a free online discovery session today. You'll discover why 90% of all trust and estate plans fail as well as what you can do to protect your health, home, spouse, family, legacy, and life savings. You and your family will benefit from the peace of mind knowing you have done everything you can to protect yourself and your loved ones for generations. Call 800-964-4295 NOW to register for a Discovery Session or visit www.DSullivan.com.

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Wrentham Announces New Collaborative Effort for Local Business Owners

Town Administrator Kevin Sweet recently announced the creation of a new effort that will help to strengthen and unify Wrentham-based businesses and business owners.

The newly-formed Wrentham Business Collaborative will focus on promoting local businesses by giving them a platform on which they can communicate and work together. Owners can use the organization to raise issues, propose solutions and share a unified voice.

The collaborative is a new organization that arose out of

a focus group discussion conducted by the town. Businesses that participated in the focus group expressed their desire for collaboration and a unified message in order to address problems or create solutions. The WBC is supported by the Wrentham Economic Development Commission.

For now, meetings will be conducted remotely as COVID-19 restrictions remain in place. The collaborative is encouraging Wrentham businesses who wish to support and enter into the collaborative to reach out to Rachel

Benson, Director of Planning and Economic Development, at 508-384-5400, ext. 5486.

"This is a great opportunity for Wrentham businesses to support each other and the town itself," Town Administrator Sweet said. "As COVID-19 continues to adversely impact small business owners, we're proud to offer our local businesses this chance to collaborate and stick together during these tough times."

The town has also set up a Facebook group for participating businesses to further interact and collaborate with each other.

Philip Jordan Announces Candidacy for Wrentham Public School Committee

Ten-year Wrentham resident and local business owner Philip Jordan has announced his candidacy for the Wrentham Public School Committee. The election, set for April 5, will fill two vacancies on the Committee. Jordan is running to help the district navigate the challenges of COVID-19 on school operations and to seek novel funding from outside the district to enhance the curriculum and provide additional resources, such as tuition-free full-day kindergarten.

A father to three girls, Jordan has experienced first-hand the many challenges of the coronavirus pandemic. Year-long school closures have placed immense financial stress on families and teachers alike. "We're finally starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel, but many of the challenges facing our district are just beginning," said Jordan. "The impact of isolation and remote learning on the mental health of our children can't be erased overnight."

Jordan's campaign addresses many of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Wrentham school community:

Outside Funding: Jordan will work with the school board, other elected officials, and local nonprofits to secure additional outside aid and grants. These grants will serve as key funding streams for emergency programming and piloting new offerings in Wrentham schools.

Kindergarten Tuition: The coronavirus pandemic has made preschool and kindergarten even less accessible to low- and middle-income families. Jordan will work with the board to secure outside grants and funding for free, full-day kindergarten tuition.

Supporting Teachers: Many Wrentham teachers and staff have been working overtime to ensure the continued education of students throughout the pandemic. As a board member, Jordan will work to reduce teacher and staff workloads and ensure that they have the necessary resources to enrich student learning.

COVID Impacts: Although children are resilient, the impact of extreme isolation and disruption cannot be taken lightly. Jordan will work with the school administration to make the mental health of Wrentham students and teachers a top priority going forward.

For more information, visit phil4wrentham.com

Vote Chris Gallo for Board of Selectmen

To the Editor:

My name is Chris Gallo and I am running for Wrentham Board of Selectmen. I feel extremely fortunate to call Wrentham my home. My wife Katlyn and I have two children, Tommy (7), and Maddy (3), and we both strongly believe in serving our community. Katlyn is the President of WEST and we coach both soccer and baseball. We are also very active and involved in our church. I want to get more involved in town politics because I am heavily invested in making this town the very best that it can be for ALL residents.

As a Wrentham selectman, I look forward to building upon the great strides that have been achieved thus far and leveraging my experience as a small business owner/real estate investor, developer, and lender. I will work hard for our community in the following areas:

Economy: My focus as a selectman will be to help keep our taxes LOW while also helping our local economy thrive by statically developing downtown, 1A, and route 1. Low taxes and smart development will lead to more revenue and opportunity for small and family-owned businesses.

Schools: We must continue to support our schools and ancillary organizations such as WEST, PTO, the School Committee and others. Additionally, it's essential that we continue to increase the opportunities we are providing in school-based recreational activities, and music, drama and the arts.

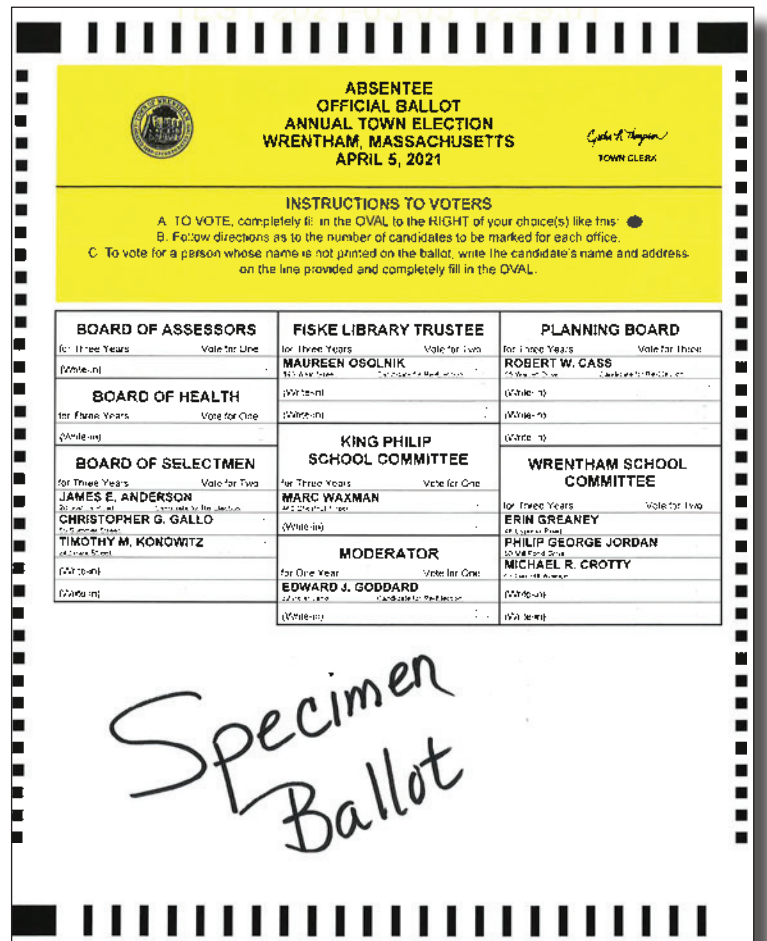
Essential Town Services: I will strongly support our essential town services like Wrentham Police Department, Wrentham Fire Department, and the Department of Public Works.

Seniors and Veterans: The COVID-19 pandemic has had a staggering impact on our senior citizens and veteran communities, so as selectman I will ensure that we are providing the highest level of support that these important people deserve.

I am asking for the wonderful residents of Wrentham to VOTE Gallo for Selectman on Monday April 5. Stand with me and remember a vote for Gallo is a vote for: COLLABORATION, DETERMINATION, AND RESULTS!

Sincerely,

Chris Gallo



The ballot for Wrentham's town election, scheduled for April 5. Polling hours will be from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Delaney Elementary School, 120 Taunton Street.

About Phil Jordan

Philip Jordan is the Vice President of BW Research and manages the firm's Massachusetts office. He has worked in research, law, and policy for nearly two decades in the private sector, government, and academia. Jordan is a Fellow at the Ash Center for Democratic Governance at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, where he focuses his teach-

ing and research on comparative talent and labor practices in the U.S. and Asia, and is an attorney and member of the Massachusetts Bar.

He has his J.D. and Certificate in Environment and Land Law from Boston College and his B.A. in Psychology from the University of Connecticut. When not working, you can find Phil outside with his family, on the water, in the woods, or in the garden.



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THE BLACK BOX to present Disney Stars of Broadway

THE BLACK BOX, the region's premiere concert, theater, and event venue, will present three Disney Stars of Broadway: Broadway's original "Mary Poppins" Ashley Brown, current "Genie" Michael James Scott, and original "Tarzan" Josh Strickland on April 16 to kick off Spring Arts Awakening- nine weeks of entertainment, outdoors under a tent in the venue's parking lot. The trio will perform an evening of Disney favorites. There will be limited seating for this special evening out in Franklin. Founder of THE BLACK BOX Raye Lynn Mercer comments, "Hosting Disney Royalty and presenting them in concert together at TBB is a huge honor. We are able to offer this unique opportunity to see three Disney and Broadway stars on stage in Franklin. It will be a night to remember!"

Ashley Brown originated the title role in Mary Poppins on Broadway, for which she received Outer Critics, Drama League, and Drama Desk nominations for Best Actress. Ms. Brown's other Broadway credits include star turns as Belle in Beauty and The Beast, The Sound Of Music, and Disney's On The Record. Ms.

Brown has also performed with virtually all of the top orchestras in North America, including the Boston Pops, the New York Philharmonic, The Hollywood Bowl Orchestra at Disnaey Hall, The Pittsburgh Symphony, the New York Pops at Carnegie Hall, and more. Ms. Brown's PBS special called "Ashley Brown: Call Me Irresponsible" received a PBS Telly Award. Ms. Brown is the voice of Disneyland's 60th anniversary celebrations, singing the newly-penned Richard Sherman song, "A Kiss Goodnight." Both Ms. Brown's album of Broadway and American Songbook standards "Speak Low" and her newly recorded Christmas EP "The Secret of Christmas" are available on Ghostlight/Warner Brothers.

Michael James Scott has played the Genie in Disney's Aladdin internationally including Broadway, London, the North American Tour and originating the role in the Australian Production for which he won the prestigious Helpmann Award. He's also known for originating the role of the Minstrel on Broadway in Something Rotten and originating Dr. Gotswana (aka The Maggots Guy) in the Tony win-



ning phenomenon The Book of Mormon. Other Broadway credits include Mamma Mia, Tarzan, All Shook Up, The Pirate Queen, Elf and Hair. On the West End he was the associate choreographer and performed in the Broadway revival transfer of Hair. Scott was the standby for the legendary Ben Vereen in the Int. tour of Fosse, taking over

the role in Paris, France at the Théâtre du Châtelet.

In 2006, Josh Strickland created the leading role of Tarzan in Disney's musical Tarzan on Broadway. In 2009, he made his starring Las Vegas debut in Peepshow at Planet Hollywood Casino & Resort while concurrently co-starring in the hit E! reality show Holly's World. Strickland

debuted his first single "Report to the Floor," which skyrocketed to the top-five on the iTunes Dance Charts the first week of its release, followed by "Last Dance." In 2013, Strickland joined the cast of Vegas! The Show at the Planet Hollywood Casino & Resort in Las Vegas in a starring role. Strickland has also appeared internationally with the all-star cast of Disney's Broadway Hits, including the Emmy®-winning concert at Royal Albert Hall in London, England. He most recently reprised his role as Tarzan in Disney's Tarzan in Oberhausen, Germany at the Stage Metronom Theatre.

According to Mercer, "The Disney Stars of Broadway show is a fantastic way to kick off our Spring Arts Awakening and we look forward to welcoming audiences back to the theater." The Spring Arts Awakening celebrates a comeback for arts and entertainment and offers an opportunity to support THE BLACK BOX in its recovery from the pandemic. To purchase tickets for this special concert, visit www.THEBLACKBOXonline.com or call the box office at 508-528-3370.

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Director Dot Pearl (center) was presented with the Wellness Coordinator of the Year award by MIAA Associate Director Peter Smith (left) and MIAA Wellness Coordinator Carolyn Bohmiller (right) on Feb. 26. (Photo Courtesy King Philip Regional School District)

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Schools' Regional Director of Wellness Dot Pearl Recognized as MIAA Wellness Coordinator of the Year

Superintendents Paul Zinni, David Raiche, Allan Cameron and Ingrid Allardi, and King Philip Assistant Superintendent Susan Gilson have announced that Director of Wellness Dot Pearl has been named the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association's (MIAA) Wellness Coordinator of the Year.

MIAA's Wellness Coordinator of the Year award recognizes an individual who goes above and beyond to promote wellness in their school community, is a positive role model, and whose students benefit as a result of his/her efforts to keep young people safe and substance free.

Director Pearl has concurrently served as the Regional Director of Wellness for the King Philip, Plainville, Norfolk and Wrentham school districts since 2019.

Throughout the past year, Director Pearl has worked tirelessly to ensure that students, staff and families throughout the region have had access to necessary resources during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. She worked with cafeteria staff to distribute food to families in need at the start of the pandemic through the USDA Summer Food Service Program sponsored by the Hockomock Area YMCA, and often went the extra mile for families in the process.

Director Pearl has also helped staff during this high-stress period as she began offering live and virtual yoga sessions and brought in medical professionals for training on stress reduction and wellness.

"Dot's work during this time of need has been exemplary and there is no one more deserving of this award," Superintendent

Zinni said. "We are lucky to have her and appreciate all the effort she puts into her work. Dot clearly wants the best for the students and her colleagues, and she has gone above and beyond to provide them with numerous wellness opportunities and support."

In addition to her continued efforts during the pandemic, Director Pearl has also expanded mental health resources for the King Philip, Plainville, Norfolk and Wrentham school districts. She has fostered important change within the districts including improving the success of students returning from hospitalization, improving suicide prevention and increasing support for students managing depression. She also co-wrote a grant which awarded the Healthy KP Coalition \$625,000 to benefit

students in the Norfolk, Plainville and Wrentham communities. The Healthy KP Coalition is made up of members from the Norfolk, Plainville and Wrentham communities committed to helping prevent substance use by youth in these three communities.

Director Pearl has most recently partnered with INTERFACE Referral Service of William James College to provide students in all four districts with access to outside providers for mental health services.

"Dot has demonstrated exemplary leadership that has involved planning, implementing, and sustaining wellness program changes that have influenced highly successful outcomes for students not only in our district, but within Plainville, Norfolk and Wrentham as well," Assistant Su-

perintendent Gilson said. "The way in which she approaches her job with outstanding energy, training, passion, and thoughtful, persistent drive is truly remarkable. We are extremely lucky to have her working alongside us."

Director Pearl was selected for this award by the MIAA Partners in Prevention, a department of the MIAA that works in many fields including, but not limited to, mental health, substance abuse, concussion safety and gender equity.

Director Pearl was honored by the MIAA at a virtual presentation on March 9. The presentation coincided with the start of the MIAA's Wellness Summit, which was conducted in six webinar sessions over the course of three days.

Norfolk Advocates for Children Earns National Re-accreditation

The county's Child Advocacy Center, the Norfolk Advocates for Children (NAC), has earned re-accreditation from the National Children's Alliance, according to Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey and NAC Board President, Joel Fishman.

"Child Advocacy Centers were created to provide compassionate, effective, sensitive support to children who have been sexually and physically abused, and support their non-offending family members," District Attorney Morrissey said. "Being accredited by the National Children's Alliance is a rigorous process of making certain that we are adhering to national best practices in our service to child victims and their families," said

Board President Fishman.

Earning that accreditation, Morrissey said, "means we are providing Norfolk County child victims with the best service and support possible."

Norfolk Advocates for Children, Inc. (NAC) is a public-private partnership between District Attorney Morrissey's office, the 501 (c) (3) non-profit NAC governing board, and more than 50 governmental and social service organizations – including all 27 municipal police departments in Morrissey's jurisdiction.

"This process helps us continue to grow and improve," said Board President Fishman. "It also assures the families who use the NAC to help their children, the donors who support our mis-

sion, and our partner organizations, that we are serving those children well."

The core of the Child Advocacy Center model is the interdisciplinary investigation of child abuse and sexual assaults. "Years ago, children coming forward to report an assault could be interviewed first by a detective at a police station, then by a medical professional, then by child protective services or others," said Jessica Kelly, Executive Director of the NAC.

"The goal of the multi-disciplinary approach used at the NAC is to limit the amount of times a child is interviewed," Kelly said. "A trained forensic interviewer asks questions of the child in a neutral, non-leading,

developmentally appropriate, and trauma-informed manner. All of the agencies involved in protecting the child are present and obtain the information needed for their individual discipline at one time. The partners communicate directly to the interviewer through an earpiece as the interview unfolds which allows all disciplines to obtain their necessary information."

Children often find police stations, hospitals, and other institutions to be intimidating, Kelly said. Now forensic interviews are video recorded and take place in a stand-alone, child-friendly, culturally-diverse facility. The NAC opened in 2010 on Payson Road in Foxborough. There is also a medical suite where pediatric

SANE (sexual assault nurse examiner) services can be provided.

"Every time a child has to tell, then retell, the story of abuse, there is the potential for additional traumatization – and a child might interpret repeated questioning as not being believed," District Attorney Morrissey said. "This allows us to collect the best evidence in the way least traumatic to the child, and then connect them with support and services – whether they decide to pursue a criminal case or not."

This reaccreditation status is effective for five years.

For more information, visit www.norfolkadvocatesforchildren.com

Sports

Cooke Eager to Get Another Chance to Play for KP Nine

Catcher a Quality Captain, Leader

By KEN HAMWEY
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Conor Cooke is very appreciative he'll get a chance to play baseball.

Last spring, the King Philip catcher was a junior who expected to provide quality leadership as a captain, add some offensive clout and utilize a variety of skills behind the plate. But, the baseball season was canceled, along with all other spring sports, when COVID-19 struck.

All his excitement and anticipation disappeared, taken away

as if demolished by a hurricane. To be a captain after a promising sophomore season was indeed exciting. And, the Warriors appeared to have the talent to be a tournament team. Cooke also was eager to get started with a new coach — Jeff Plympton Jr. The coach's debut and Cooke's role as a captain had to wait a year.

"No sports last spring hurt, but mostly it was sad for our seniors," Cooke said. "It was heart-wrenching they couldn't compete before graduating. As for me, I wish I could have gained some



experience being a captain, and it would have been nice for coach Plympton to get his program started. We all were expecting to qualify for the playoffs."

Cooke, who also was a captain for KP's hockey team, is eager to return to the diamond. Although he thoroughly enjoyed his four-year hockey career as a capable right wing, the 18-year-old Wrentham native will be committed to baseball for the long haul. After what he hopes will be a positive interscholastic campaign, Cooke will enroll at Brown University where he'll compete for the Bears.

"I'm just grateful to be playing baseball this season," he emphasized. "I hope it's a 20-game schedule, but if not, I still feel blessed. It's unfortunate that COVID-19 has forced different rules to play. It's disappointing there'll be no statewide playoffs because the tourney was definitely within our reach."

Cooke, who plans on majoring in economics at Brown, is acutely aware that athletics should be in the background as the virus continues to claim lives. His perspective is spot on. "Our No. 1 priority is the health and safety of everyone," he offered. "We want our families, our

schools, our state and the country to be safe."

Being safe was one thing that runners trying to steal second base didn't experience when the 6-foot-1, 215-pound Cooke was starting 13 games as a sophomore. His strong arm is a prime asset along with a high baseball IQ, sharp instincts, solid skills, quality leadership and athleticism.

"Conor has a good presence on the field," Plympton said. "He manages a game effectively and our pitchers respect him. He's got a powerful swing, so we'll likely make him our cleanup hitter. On defense, he's very good at throwing out runners and blocking the plate."

A .280 hitter as a sophomore, it's Cooke's demeanor in handling pitchers and his defensive savvy that's impressive.

"I enjoy throwing out runners," he said. "It's a challenge to cut down a runner trying to advance. I also try to encourage our pitchers. If they're struggling, I emphasize that they're in their position for a reason. I let them know there's no worries and I try to build trust."

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COOKE
continued on page 17

Sports

COOKE

continued from page 16

Teammates trusted Cooke when he called signals during his soph campaign, and on two occasions he really shined. “Two games were very memorable that season,” Cooke said. “I had the regular flu but returned and helped us beat Canton, 5-4. I went 2-for-2 and had an RBI single. We were big underdogs against Mansfield but upset them, 3-2. I called my best game and Jake Silveria pitched superbly.”

Cooke’s goals this spring are for KP to win as many games as possible. “I also would like to see us win any playoff for the Hockomock League title,” he noted. “Franklin and Mansfield will be strong contenders, too. Individually, my goals are to hit .350, hit some home runs and get a decent amount of RBIs.”

Cooke likes the idea of hitting in the No. 4 slot. “If I hit cleanup, that’ll help me drive in runs,” he said. “Hitting in that slot means the coach has confidence in me. I also would like it

because it comes with pressure and I like dealing with pressure situations.”

KP’s ice hockey coach, Paul Carlo, got an up-close look at how Cooke handled pressure situations. “Conor led by example and by being vocal,” Carlo said. “He’s a natural leader with all-around ability. A dependable hard-worker, he’s a great ambassador for KP and was a pleasure to coach.”

A physical player on the ice, Cooke had 9 goals and 4 assists and helped the Warriors go 9-1. “My most memorable moment in hockey was beating Franklin, 5-4, for the first time in 20 years,” he said. “I scored twice and got the game-winning goal.”

There should be more euphoric outcomes on the horizon when Cooke dons a Brown University uniform and hopefully takes charge as its catcher. A National Honor Society student, his only college choice was Brown.

“I committed verbally as a junior,” Cooke said. “I wanted to play college baseball and I’ll get the opportunity there. They have a good program and the coaching staff is experienced. Academ-

Hockomock League Fall II “Wedge” Season League Statement on Spectators

In an effort to organize the safest athletics experience possible for our student-athletes, the Hockomock League will be following the most recent guidance that was issued by the MA Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs: “Spectators are limited to 2 adults (parents/guardians or chaperones) and siblings of a participating player.”

Only home spectators will be allowed to attend league games during the Fall II season. All away spectators are strongly discouraged from traveling to away games, especially since they will not be allowed into the host high school’s facility when they arrive. The method by which each host school chooses to admit, or to not admit, their HOME fans, will be decided at the individual DISTRICT level.

Schools are making every effort to livestream as many home games as possible this season.

ics there are top-notch and I plan to major in business.”

Calling his parents (Julie and Chris) role models for their support, encouragement and motivating nature, Cooke relies on a competitive philosophy that focuses on hard work and winning. “I hate to lose,” he said. “It’s also important to have fun and that happens when winning occurs.”

Aware that sports teach valuable life lessons, Cooke understands that hockey and baseball have helped him to deal with the

ups and downs of COVID-19. “I’ve learned how to cope with the way it’s changed how we compete,” he noted. “It’s a life lesson in overcoming adversity. Sports also teach how to develop a strong work ethic and that an athlete shouldn’t take anything for granted. Sports have also taught me how to be a leader.”

Cooke knows that a transition will take place when he plays for Brown. “I’ll be competing against all-stars,” he said. “There’ll be no drop off in talent. And, the speed

of the game will be faster.”

Cooke also knows his career at KP is heading for the finish line. “It’s kind of a bittersweet feeling,” he admitted. “I want to finish on a high note in baseball and I’m thankful there’ll be a season. Just competing is a blessing.”

Conor Cooke has dynamic perspective, especially at a time that’s been difficult for students and athletes.

He’s the real deal.

Local Residents Named to University of Maine Fall 2020 Dean's List

The University of Maine recognized 4,133 students for achieving Dean’s List honors in the fall 2020 semester. Of the students who made the Dean’s List, 2,670 are from Maine, 1,366 are from 38 other states and 97 are from 35 countries other than the U.S.

The following local students received Dean’s List honors for fall 2020:

Norfolk: Julia Bean, Matt Shiels, Cam Smith

Wrentham: Tim Hanson, Thomas Lacroix, Brynn Yarbrough

Due to the unusual and challenging circumstances faced this semester amid the global pandemic, the university has modified its Dean’s List policy for the fall 2020 term. The requirement that students earn 12 calculable credits to be eligible for Dean’s List has been waived. Instead, students will be eligible 1) if they

earned Dean’s List recognition in spring 2020 and have placed all of their fall 2020 courses on pass/fail; or 2) if they have earned a minimum GPA of a 3.5, regardless of the number of credits taken, in fall 2020.

About the University of Maine:

The University of Maine, founded in Orono in 1865, is the state’s land grant, sea grant and space grant university. It is located on Marsh Island in the homeland of the Penobscot Nation. As Maine’s flagship public university, UMaine has a statewide mission of teaching, research and economic development, and community service. UMaine is the state’s only public research university and among the most comprehensive higher education institutions in the Northeast. It attracts students from all 50 states and more than

75 countries. UMaine currently enrolls 11,741 undergraduate and graduate students who have opportunities to participate in groundbreaking research with world-class scholars. UMaine offers more than 100 degree pro-

grams through which students can earn master’s, doctoral or professional science master’s degrees, as well as graduate certificates. The university promotes environmental stewardship, with substantial efforts campuswide to

conserve energy, recycle and adhere to green building standards in new construction. For more information about UMaine, visit umaine.edu.



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KPHS Diversity Club Hosts Epidemiologist

Dr. Brandon Marshall Discusses COVID-19 Disparities

The King Philip Regional High School's Diversity Club hosted Dr. Brandon Marshall on Feb. 2 for a Zoom presentation to students and staff. The Brown University epidemiologist gave a presentation entitled "Disparities in the time of COVID."

During his presentation, Dr. Marshall discussed some of the major factors, according to research, that have created greater risks within vulnerable communities for contracting COVID-19 and how those factors affect the rollout of the vaccination program.

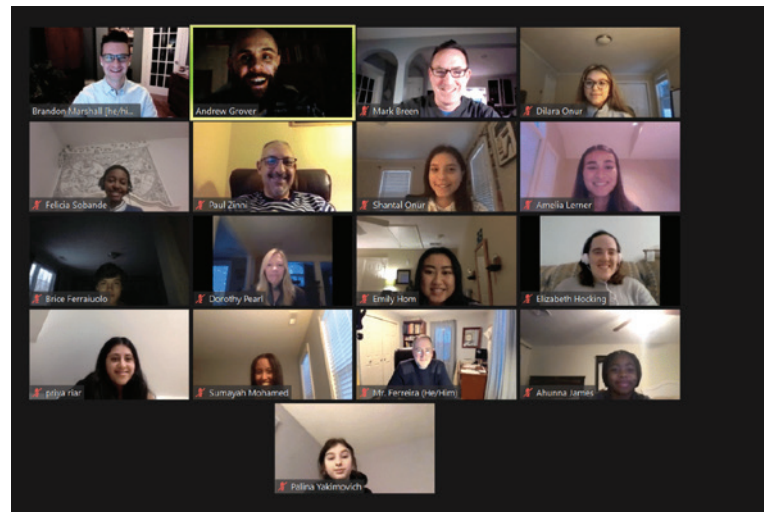
According to Dr. Marshall, preliminary numbers have shown that in Massachusetts, low-income residents and people of color are already receiving a disproportionately small share of vaccines even though women of color are well-represented in healthcare work, which is a prioritized group.

A question-and-answer session was also held following the presentation. Many questions asked by attendees were about vaccine distribution and a discussion followed regarding what factors should be considered when

prioritizing groups in the vaccine distribution plan. Many students also had questions about the field of epidemiology and some of the research Dr. Marshall did before the pandemic.

"Dr. Marshall's presentation allowed our students to look deeper into the ramifications inequity has on communities in the midst of a public health crisis and the lingering affects inequity has on response efforts," Diversity Club Advisor Andrew Grover said. "We truly appreciate the time he spent discussing these issues with our students and faculty, and how open he was to answering everyone's questions."

Dr. Marshall is an Associate Professor of Epidemiology at the Brown University School of Public Health. His areas of focus are substance use epidemiology;



King Philip's Diversity Club hosted epidemiologist Dr. Brandon Marshall to discuss disparities throughout communities during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. (Photo courtesy King Philip Regional School District)

infectious diseases; and the social, environmental and structural determinants of health of drug-using populations.

"The ongoing public health crisis is an event that will be in our future students' history books, but our current students are living through these unprec-

edented times," said KP Superintendent Paul Zinni. "Like most adults, our students have many unanswered questions in regards to the disease and the effect it has on our society. We appreciate Dr. Marshall taking the time to discuss the disparities that many may be unaware of."

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Neponset Valley Transportation Survey Will Influence Improvement Plan

What will getting around the Neponset Valley be like when things open back up? That's a big question, but there's an even bigger one: what do we want it to be like?

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and Neponset Valley Transportation Management Association (NVTMA) are planning improvements to transportation in the Neponset Valley, especially along Routes 1 and 1A. A new survey will help identify the most pressing needs for post-COVID commuters.

The survey, aimed at people who live, work or own businesses in Canton, Dedham, Foxborough, Norfolk, Norwood, Sharon, Walpole, Westwood and Wrentham, will be open until April 16.

Take the survey at: <http://mapc.ma/neponsetvalley>.

Questions focus on common pre-pandemic transportation challenges, ask whether employees will work remotely after COVID restrictions end and gauge interest in shuttle connections from public transit to jobs.

The aim of potential improvements, such as a shuttle service to nearby public transit or new pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, would be to reduce traffic and make it easier for employees to reach workplaces in the Neponset Valley.

Questions? Contact MAPC Transportation Planner Travis Pollack at tpollack@mapc.org.

Real Estate Corner

Guest Column

The Hue of the Social Spectrum

By G. GREGORY TOOKER

As the world's population continues to blossom and expand despite the ravages visited by emerging viral strains and climate change, the ability of racial fortresses to isolate and preserve themselves will become increasingly diminished. Verbal and physical confrontation is inevitable as these islands of purity draw closer to each other. More frequently, to the chagrin of those infected with racial prejudice, the geographic barriers are becoming more permeable. Fringe elements in society grow more threatening in reaction, advocating violence much as they did in the days of the KKK over a century ago. Relatively speaking, that threat although intense as it was, pales in comparison with the numbers and capabilities of 21st century right-wing extremist groups.

Like climate change and the global campaign educated mankind has launched in its attempt to reroute and defuse Nature's torpedo, worldwide racism will only be defeated when human beings comprehend that the fruitless effort to preserve racial purity works to the disadvantage of everyone. Shameful tactics,

such as the ugly Gerrymandering chess match designed primarily to disenfranchise minority population voters, are doomed to fail as more and more minority candidates are elected to office. We are seeing an emerging population of local state and national elected representatives which is a blend of racial and ethnic backgrounds. This is reflective of a process that is slowly but inevitably taking place in America and globally.

As this social evolutionary trend continues and more and more families of mixed race and ethnicity emerge, the visual cues that prejudiced individuals feed upon to stimulate their simmering hatred will become confused and challenged. The primary cue, skin color, will be less distinctive as will distinguishing facial features and eventually, the most visible characteristics driving racial discrimination will become largely undetectable to the human eye. Of course, other traditional factors fueling discrimination such as religion, social class based on income bracket, material wealth, etc., will continue to exist but these too, will likely diminish as the primary causal factors gradually fade.

Some will quickly reject these predictions as pie-in-the-sky thinking, detached from reality. They will maintain that prejudice is an innate tendency with which mankind will forever be burdened. This is a self-serving, slanted philosophy, and one which this writer believes will be discarded with the passage of time.




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