

January 21-February 25, 2022

# Mike Labbe, All Phase Glass all in when it comes to disaster relief

By Rod Lee

It turns out that Michael A. Labbe and All Phase Glass are even more than what they bill themselves to be, which is: “the answer to all glass and property maintenance needs.” The South Grafton company is often at the forefront of disaster-relief efforts across the nation. This was the case again when a swarm of tornadoes converged on the Midwest and South—including Western Kentucky—in December. With winds up to 115 miles per hour, barns and homes were destroyed, trees uprooted, and more than seventy people lost their lives.

“It was quite the event,” Mr. Labbe said in his office on Collette St. the afternoon of January 4. “I turned on the news that day and was blown away.”

As he has in the past, Mr. Labbe, together with his wife Carrie, family members, employees, friends,

business acquaintances and residents, sprang into action. The result was thousands of dollars of goods rounded up over a four-day span. Food, first aid equipment, bottled water, tools, generators, bedding—to name just some of the items—were loaded onto three tractor trailers and a twenty six-foot box truck and delivered to Kentucky.

“I called (State Sen.) Mike Moore and (State Rep.) Dave Muradian Jr. and said ‘hey guys, it’s time to step up.’ Every time something happens I reach out to them and they come through. I said to my wife ‘are we going to do this again?’” Mr. Labbe said.

The vehicles were given an escort out to the Mass Pike by the Grafton Police Department, in coordination with the Millbury PD.

“I’ve been in public service all my life,” Mr. Labbe said, by way of

**Continued on page 2**



Mr. Labbe's family spearheaded a collection of goods over a period of four days to help victims of tornadoes that struck Kentucky in December.

## INSIDE

**HEALTHIER BAKING**  
Honey Almond Baked Apples  
PAGE 4

**GRAFTON BUSINESS**  
Health, exercise in a pandemic  
PAGE 6

**STATE AWARENESS**  
Vital safety nets available  
PAGE 10

**LIVING ON WITH LINCOLN**  
The last gift given  
PAGE 17



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

## Pizzeria Bruno brings a taste of Italy to Sutton

By Amy LeClaire

Davide and Marcello Bruno, of Milano, Italy, learned a lot from their father. They learned how to perform in a rock band, make pizza and, ultimately, how to make things happen by believing in a dream. “Everything we do is a direct consequence of the example my father gave us,” said Davide Bruno. “This time it was our turn. We were first in line. We said, ‘let’s do it.’”

Inspired by Franco Bruno’s restaurant, Vox - named after the Latin word for “voice” due to the space being used (originally) for them to play live music at - a drummer (Davide) and trumpeter/bass player (Marcello) etched a blueprint on a napkin and did it. “We bought material, drywalled, painted, installed floors, hired electricians and plumbers and physically did it,” Davide said.

Despite the challenges of opening up a new restaurant during a global pandemic, Bruno’s Pizzeria opened its doors to the public on August 5, 2020, and, remarkably, found the experience to be enjoyable. “All the laws made it a challenge but we never backed down. People is a lot more enthusiastic

while in Italy, most people are jealous of competition. Here it was fun because people really wanted us to open. The budget was a challenge. Everything we think it cost one, it costs three. Material cost less here than in Italy. The cost of services (for people) is much more than what we are used to in Italy.”

Amid budget and COVID challenge (fewer workers were available and paperwork/permits took longer than expected), the Bruno brothers chose to survive. “My brother more than me put everything into this,” said Davide. “He sold his house and car, and invested everything. For him failing was not an option. He gave up everything to make it work.”

Marcello Bruno, whose congenial temperament, hard work ethic and insistence that “it’s all in the ingredients” (hand-picked quality ingredients which include flour, meat, cheeses and even salt are imported from Italy), came to America in 2019. Meanwhile, Davide had been pursuing his current career in computer science engineering (since 2010). The brothers col-

laborated on the idea to bring to America a pizzeria designed with bare hands and a modern vision of Italy. “People in US have an idea about Italian restaurants that is fifty years old. They identify with a generation of people that came here from Southern Italy. That is the snapshot. They come here and ask for chicken parmigiana. Or chicken alfredo. There is no chicken alfredo in Italy,” admitted Davide. “We wanted to be authentic. Even the names of the pizza are the same as in Italy. We wanted music that is more lounge-style and relaxing, which is what you can find in Italy now.”

The Pizzeria Bruno menu is varied, tasteful, and infused with an Italian essence that’s as tasty as a signature wedge of focaccia bread dipped in peppery oil. Pizza is categorized as Red Pizza (No Cheese) Classic Pizza, which includes the Affumicata, boasting a blend of San Marzano, mozzarella cheese, and smoked ricotta cheese or the 4 Stagioni, with Parma’s ham, mushrooms, artichokes, and Kalamata olives, Gourmet Pizza and White

**Continued on page 3**



Marcello and Davide Bruno

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## Inside & Out: NESA sculpture exhibit at Alternatives' Whitin Mill

ValleyCAST, the arts and culture arm of Open Sky Community Services, has collaborated with the New England Sculptors Association to bring a unique exhibit of sculpture to the Whitin Mill. Over 30 sculptures are included in the exhibit and displayed inside the gallery, out on the Community Plaza, and around the grounds of the Mill Complex. Artists from all over New England are represented in the exhibit.

Prizes for favorites will be awarded by people's choice for first, second, and third place.

"Explore the grounds and gallery to see all the amazing sculpture 'Inside and Out' and then vote for your favorites by casting a ballot inside the gallery." Says Cristi Collari, judge and curator for the exhibit, and Director of Community Out-



reach for Open Sky.

Regular gallery hours for this exhibit will be held Mondays through Fridays from 9:00-12:00 and 1:00-4:00. The gallery will be closed on Monday, February 21, for Presi-

dents Day. Visits outside of regular gallery hours are by appointment only by contacting cristi.collari@open-skycs.org.

Voting ended Feb. 18. Exhibit ends on February 25.

## ALL PHASE GLASS

Continued from front page

explaining his involvement in such causes. He sees himself as a public servant, even as he has built an impressive corporate portfolio over the span of the last three decades.

He founded All Phase Glass & Maintenance Corp. going on twenty-eight years ago. The firm services residential customers in all of New England and upstate New York with such materials as shower doors and mirrors. All Phase Glass's workforce also includes painters, electricians and landscapers.

Born in Worcester, Mr. Labbe is the father of five daughters. He is humble about the role he has taken on as a Samaritan when catastrophe strikes. He sees his efforts as an opportunity not to glamorize his ability to provide sustenance to those in need but rather as a chance to set an example for young people, in the hope that they will carry it forward.

It is not unusual for him to enter the picture on behalf of victims of weather tragedies.

He was on the scene when Naples, Florida, was



Michael A. Labbe is president of All Phase Glass in South Grafton, a company that regularly comes to the aid of victims of weather events across the country.

struck by tornadoes.

"Katrina, I was there two days before it hit," he says of the Category 5 Atlantic hurricane that caused over 1800 deaths and \$125 billion in destruction in Louisiana in late August 2005. "I got trapped there just before the I-93 bridge (the 'Crescent City Connection,' spanning the Mississippi River from New Orleans to Gretna) collapsed (technically, it was closed down by the Gretna PD, in what turned out to be a controversial action)."

All Phase Glass sent food to first responders in the aftermath of California wildfires, and came to the assistance of victims when Hurricane Harvey ravaged Houston.

All Phase Glass's latest

request for help from townspeople resulted in people age 5 to 90 showing up with donations or to pack boxes, including a small elderly woman. "She had a sweater in a plastic bag. She said 'I wish I could do more,'" he said.

Mike Labbe added Christmas toys to the mix.

"I can't imagine my own children waking up on Christmas and no gifts," he said.

The first truck arrived in Kentucky seven days after the call went out.

"There are times in life to make money and times to be a patriot," he said.

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

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Bill Cronan, Sales (Blackstone Valley) [bcranon@TheYankeeXpress.com](mailto:bcranon@TheYankeeXpress.com)

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Sally Patterson, Production Manager Carol Kosth, Graphic Artist

Contributing writers and columnists: Peter Coyle, Tom D'Agostino,

Magda Dakin, Christine Galeone, Rod Lee, Amy Palumbo-Leclair, Janet Stoica

168 Gore Road, Webster, MA 01570 PHONE: 508-943-8784 FAX: 508-943-8129



## PIZZERIA BRUNO

Continued from front page

Pizza (No Sauce). There are also various salads, paninis, Limonata (Italian lemonade) and Davide's favorite dessert, a family recipe. "We make our own tiramisu, which is something I made passionately for a while. People liked it."

The Bruno Brothers, with nearly twenty years of cooking experience, have learned to master the art of the temperamental relationship between pizza and brick oven temperature. "We bought the oven from Milan because we used to have the same brand. We wanted to cook exactly how we were in Italy. We thought our way was better. You need to learn how the

particular oven behaves. It's not that easy. How you cook depends on how hot below, how close the fire is, and how to move the pan inside the oven. You need to know where to place the pizza, and what the temperature needs to be. It's not easy to find someone who knows how to manage the oven."

Finding someone to manage the oven may be a challenge for the Bruno brothers but restaurant diners, reportedly, are enjoying themselves in the meantime. Said Bob and Pat Watkins, Pizzeria Bruno regulars, "The food is excellent. Everything is unique and we've tried everything. We don't have a favorite. They are all favorites."

Patrons of Pizzeria Bruno's, along with a tasteful

and varied menu, will also enjoy the ambience of a restaurant designed emotively. "We really built it. Our idea went from the brain to the napkin, to this. To see how much people appreciate it is the best thing for us. This wasn't about coming here to be a millionaire. I want to be here. I want to be a part of this. Sharing and knowing people like it is what we wanted. Every choice we take is driven by the emotion it gives back, even the lighting. We didn't go for what's functional and cheap. Every-

thing here was our idea and driven by the concept 'I like it.' We cannot ask for more."

Though satisfied, Davide Bruno confessed to a possible future goal. "We like dream. We can think of another business to open for gelato, or something like that. We'll see."

Pizzeria Bruno is located at 27C Galaxy Pass, Sutton. Call them for an order: (508) 917-8182, or visit: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 11:30 a.m. – 9:30 p.m.; Saturday 4 – 9:30 p.m.; Sunday 12 – 9 p.m.; closed Monday.



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Marcello checks in with The Watkins, restaurant regulars.

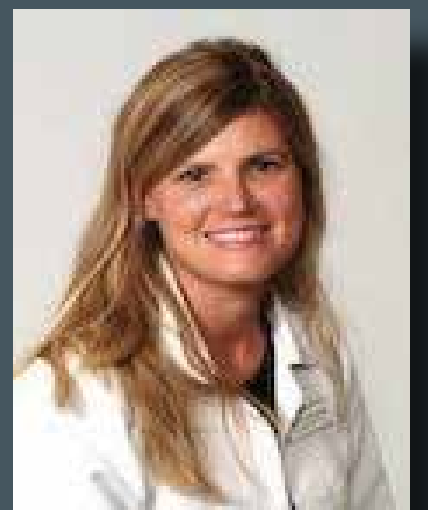


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## Living well and looking good

## Less mercury in flu shot than can of tuna

By Keith Roach, M.D.

DEAR DR. ROACH: How much mercury is safe? – A.C.

ANSWER: The chemical element mercury exists in three forms: elemental mercury, which is the kind in thermometers; inorganic mercury, especially mercuric chloride; and organic mercury, including methyl and ethyl mercury. All of these have toxicities, but the types of toxicities are different for each, and the safe level depends on which type it is.

Elemental mercury is dangerous primarily when it is inhaled, which occurs mainly in occupational settings. Accidental swallowing of the small amount of mercury in a thermometer has very low toxicity, but I still don't recommend it. Inorganic mercury is seldom a problem, as it is almost never used these days in the U.S. and Canada. Most products containing this form of mercury have been banned.

Methyl mercury is the major concern for consumers, as this is found in fish. It accumulates in the environment, and tends to be worst in larger fish, which eat the smaller fish and over their lifetime accumulate the methyl mercury, which was formerly used as a fungicide. The Environmental Protection Agency warns an average-size person not to exceed 70 mcg per day of methyl mercury: Below this dose,

toxicity is unlikely. This translates to two to three servings of fish per week, but no more than one serving of highest-risk fish for methyl mercury per week. High-risk sources include most tuna, halibut and snapper.

Ethyl mercury is significantly less toxic than methyl mercury, as it is removed from the body more quickly. There is no EPA recommendation for ethyl mercury levels. Ethyl mercury has been used as a preservative in vaccines, but it has been removed from all childhood and most adult vaccines. It is still used in some flu vaccines – the ones in multidosed vials: Single-use vials do not need a preservative. The amount of ethyl mercury in a flu shot is less than the more dangerous methyl mercury found in a can of tuna.

**Bipolar**

DEAR DR. ROACH: Is it possible for a person to reach the age of 70 and just now be diagnosed with bipolar disorder? Are there degrees of impairment, like with autism – some worse than others? – C.S.

ANSWER: The hallmark of bipolar disease is mania. "Mania" has a specific meaning in psychiatry: It's a very elevated mood, associated with high amounts of energy and an inability to think clearly, especially to see the consequences of one's ac-

tions. Some common features of people in a manic episode include an inflated sense of self-worth, distractibility and racing ideas. People can be very talkative and feel little need to sleep. Dangerously, people in a manic phase can spend large amounts of money and have many sexual indiscretions.

All diseases have a spectrum of severity, and some are quite wide. With bipolar disease in particular, how-

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ever, there are four distinct forms of the disease. Bipolar I is the classic form, once called "manic depressive illness," where people have episodes of mania, alternating with periods of normal behavior or depression. People with Bipolar II have depressive episodes and some "hypomanic" episodes: periods of high energy (and sometimes profound productivity), usually without the negative

aspects of the "full" manic episode. Cyclothymia is a rapid cycling between hypomania and mild depression. There is a fourth type, "unspecified," where people have abnormal mood elevations but don't meet criteria for the other types.

Bipolar disease usually has its onset in early adulthood, but sometimes in teens or even childhood. However, I have rarely seen bipolar disease diagnosed in someone as old as 70. It isn't always clear whether the disease is just manifesting that late, or

whether it has been around for many years, but compensated for by the person. Some people don't interact with a lot of family or friends, and manic or hypomanic episodes might be missed. It's possible the 70-year-old in question has a quite mild form.

Treatment for bipolar disorder can dramatically improve the quality of life of the person and of the family and friends affected by the illness.

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

## Healthier baking in the Blackstone Valley

By Christine Galeone

In these challenging, complex times, the simple joys of life seem more precious than ever. So, for 2022, why not start our healthier baking with a simple yet delicious recipe?

This recipe for honey almond baked apples consists of only four ingredients that are, thankfully, still easy to find on the shelves of local stores. And all of the ingredients are nutritious.

Cinnamon has antioxidant properties. Apples are heart healthy and believed to also be beneficial for lung health. Almonds – which contain vitamin E, magnesium and fiber and are high in plant protein

– are heart healthy, may help people lose weight, and may help control blood sugar. Finally, honey contains antioxidants, minerals and enzymes. And it's been endorsed by the World Health Organization and the American Academy of Pediatrics as a natural cough remedy.

**Honey Almond Baked Apples***Ingredients:*

2 Medium to Large Apples

¼ Cup of Slivered Almonds

1 Tbsp. Honey

Dash of Cinnamon

*Directions:*

- Pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees.

- Wash the two apples and remove the peels from the top



third of each apple.

- Remove the cores from both apples.

- In a bowl, mix together the honey and almonds.

- Stuff the apples with the honey almond mixture.\*

- Place the stuffed apples in a baking pan/dish.

- Sprinkle each apple with cinnamon.

- Bake at 350 degrees for approximately 35 minutes. Let them cool a little, but serve them warm. Makes 2 servings. \*Alternately, you could use a different type of nut, like walnuts, pecans or cashews, and you could add raisins, dates or dried unsweetened cranberries to the apple stuffing.

This is a dessert that's healthy enough to eat for breakfast or as a morning or afternoon snack. So, it's not only simple, it's versatile. Happy (healthier) baking in 2022!



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bankHometown raises \$39,200 for local food pantries in 18th annual Neighbors Helping Neighbors fundraiser

OXFORD– Robert J. Morton, president and CEO of bankHometown, announced that the bank’s 18th annual Neighbors Helping Neighbors fundraising drive raised \$39,200 for local food pantries. This brings the total amount raised over the 18 years the program has been in place to \$264,900. The annual appeal is part of bankHometown’s charitable giving program, called The Giving Tree, which reflects the bank’s commitment to making a real difference in the neigh-

borhoods it serves. Throughout the month of November, the bank invited customers, employees, and members of the community to donate funds at bankHometown branches. All donations received were matched, dollar for dollar, by bankHometown and the total divided among food pantries in Central Massachusetts and northeast Connecticut communities the bank serves. Each of these pantries received \$2,800 to help feed families in need:

- Massachusetts:
- Athol Salvation Army Food Pantry
  - Auburn Youth and Family Services, Inc. Food Pantry
  - CARE Food Pantry - Clinton
  - Food Share - Southbridge, Charlton & Sturbridge
  - Friendly House Pantry, Worcester
  - Friends of the Millbury Seniors
  - Ginny’s Helping Hand, Inc. - Leominster
  - Oxford Ecumenical Food Shelf
  - Sutton Senior Center’s Michael A. Chizy Food Pantry
  - St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry - Webster Connecticut:
  - Community Kitchens of Northeastern CT - Killingly
  - Daily Bread - Putnam
  - Friends of Assisi - Killingly
  - Thompson Ecumenical Empowerment Group (TEEG)
- “bankHometown would like to thank everyone who selflessly donated to our Neighbors Helping Neighbors campaign,” said Morton. “We’re pleased that these food pantries will receive much-needed funds in time for the holiday season.”



Pictured left to right are Millbury Senior Center Food Pantry Program Administrator Kendra Faldetta and bankHometown Vice President, Branch Officer Christine M. Lucier.



Pictured left to right are Sutton Senior Center Michael A. Chizy Food Pantry representatives Timothy Annis, Diane Hanley, and Michelle Edelstein, along with bankHometown Vice President, Branch Officer Christine M. Lucier and President and Chief Executive Officer Robert J. Morton.

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# Grafton's Business Scene

## Staying healthy and exercise in a pandemic

By Christine Galeone

With COVID-19 Omicron variant cases rising during January, Grafton's Board of Health recently instituted a mandate that unless a health condition makes it unsafe, everyone age 5 and older must wear masks in indoor public and private places, including businesses, churches, offices, etc. It also temporarily closed the Municipal Center, and the Town returned to remote operations. The decisions were made in an effort to help protect people from becoming infected.

With the pandemic still part of our everyday lives, and with a new year before us, it's not surprising that many people are resolving to become more fit. And while there are some wonderful online resources that can help people achieve that goal, such as CDC.gov/quit and smoke-free.gov, which help people to quit smoking – one of the best things people can do for their health and fitness – there are many exhilarating ways people can become more fit thanks to Grafton organizations and businesses.

Did you ever go skating back in the day? Maybe it's

time to go again. In South Grafton, the **Town of Grafton Recreation Department and Parks Department** have, once again, made a temporary ice skating rink freely available to everyone. The rink is open daily through February from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. (weather permitting) at Mill Villages Park, which is located at 61 Main Street. People must bring their own skates, and all children must be accompanied by adults. If you prefer hiking snowy trails, the Recreation Department also has free snowshoe rentals available. More information can be found on the department's Facebook page.

If thoughts about outdoor winter activities leave you anything but warm, you might want to consider indoor classes. Both **Premier Sport Taekwondo** in North Grafton and **Dance Soul Motion** in South Grafton offer a variety of classes. Premier Sport Taekwondo, www.premierkick.com, teaches martial arts, karate, taekwondo and self-defense classes for kids, teens and adults. Although they might be sold out by the time this column goes to press, special highly-discounted two-week passes to the studio's family martial arts classes are being offered through mid-February or until

they sell out. Dance, Soul, Motion, www.dancesoulmotion.com, is an adult Yoga, Barre, Zumba and Pilates studio. In addition to the limited-size classes it holds in its studio, it has live-stream options for people who would prefer to take classes from home.

For adults, teens and children who want to get fit and express themselves through dance, there are a few Grafton businesses that can help. Dance classes for children, teens and adults of all ages (including people with special needs) are available at Grafton Common-based **Beatz Dance Studio**, www.beatzdance.com. In addition to its drop-in adult Zumba and Tap Fit classes, the studio just added adult Ballet Fit and Jazz classes. Studio and Zoom dance classes for all ages are also available at North Grafton's **Dance It Up**, www.danceitup.com. It offers adult classes in Jazz, Ballet and Barre. And Irish dance classes for children and teens can be found at **Murphy Academy of Irish Dance**, www.murphyacademy.com. Like the others, the studio implements COVID-19 safety measures at its new studio, located at 16 Ferry Street in South Grafton.

Elsewhere in South Grafton, **Crossroads Nutrition** wants



Winter Skating Rink at Mill Villages Park in South Grafton. (Courtesy of Grafton Recreation Department's Facebook Page)

to help people with weight loss, weight gain and nutrition goals. The shop, which sells protein shakes, refresher teas and protein snacks, infuses its offerings with a variety of fun flavors. On various days this month, its specials have included banana split shakes, pumpkin turtle cheesecake shakes, peach pomegranate refreshers and blackberry dragon refreshers.

If better hearing is what will help you to become more fit, a local business should have everything you need. Dr. Mary Ellen Curran Rancourt, who runs **Hear Joy Audiology**, recently posted some helpful tips about protecting hearing devices during winter months on her South Grafton practice's Facebook page. Above all, with state-of-the-art testing equipment, Hear Joy Audiology can help people to be more fit by helping them to hear more clearly.

A nonprofit might be able to offer support to parents who want to reduce the stress of funding their teens' college education. The **Greater Worcester Community Foundation** is currently reaching out to offer support for high school seniors in Grafton and throughout Worcester County. It's now accepting scholarship applications. The available scholarships generally range from \$300 to \$5,000. Students can apply through the foundation's website, www.greaterworcester.org, through Tuesday March 1.

Finally, the **Grafton Public Library** is offering its patrons a chance to learn helpful ways to set goals. The library's Inspirational Book Group will be discussing "This Year I Will...How to Finally Change a Habit, Keep a Resolution or Make a Dream Come True"

by M.J. Ryan on Tuesday Jan. 25 at 7:30 p.m. on Slack. For more information about the virtual discussion or how to borrow the book, you can visit the library's website, Grafton Public Library (graffonlibrary.org), and click on Events.

Getting more fit many not be easy, but gaining strength, vitality and better health is certainly worth the effort. And Grafton organizations and businesses can make the process much more enjoyable.

Please note that this information was correct at the time the column was written. However, because the pandemic is rapidly changing things, it's best to check the websites and social media pages of any business to see if new changes have been implemented. Contact Christine with your business news items at cmgaleone15@gmail.com.

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FROM THE PHYSICAL THERAPIST:

# Four tips for an ergonomic office

By Dr. Sean T. Lordan

We spend a lot of time at our desks; even as a physical therapist who regularly sees patients, I find myself sitting at my desk for hours during the day answering emails and doing other administrative tasks. It is important that we understand and implement smart strategies for optimizing the time we spend sitting at our desks so that we don't face the negative consequences later in the day, such as back pain, shoulder pain, neck pain, muscle tightness, or sciatica. Luckily, there are steps we can take to tend to our joints and muscles while working. Here are my best tips for an

ergonomic office set up:

**Proper set up** - It's important that your desk and office area are set up correctly, including the height and distance of your chair, desk, and computer. Your chair should allow for you to sit with your knees at a 90-degree angle, with your feet flat on the floor. Your hips should be square under your torso; no bending forwards or arching your back. Your shoulders should be relaxed and rolled slightly back. You should position your head no less than 1 foot away from your computer screen, and it should be placed at eye level.

**Move regularly** - One of the

biggest agitators of joint and muscle pain is long periods of sitting. I'm sure you've heard the phrase "sitting is the new smoking" before, and it's remarkable how true that statement is. Even if you exercise after or before work, it's important to keep your muscles loose during the day by moving regularly. Set a reminder on your phone or computer to get up and walk around - even if it's just to look out the window or get a drink of water - every 45 to 60 minutes. Stretching is a great idea as well.

**Consider a standing desk** - Standing desks have become increasingly popular

over the past few years, and with good reason - they are awesome tools for treating and preventing back pain while working. Being able to stand at your desk while using a computer, writing, or being on the phone is a game-changer. There are lots of options, ranging from desks that are motorized or manual, go on top of a regular desk, or varieties that are an all-in-one system. Whatever your preference or price point, I always recommend that my clients consider a standing desk to help them work more ergonomically.

**Get evaluated by a physi-**

**cal therapist** - I would be remiss if I did not recommend that you get evaluated and treated by a physical therapist regularly in order to discover your specific needs when creating an ergonomic office. Your doctor of physical therapy will be able to tell you where your problem areas lie and create a plan to get you back to feeling your best.

Thank you for checking out this month's edition of "Four Tips From Your Neighborhood Physical Therapist." As always, if you have any questions for me personally, I can be reached at 508-861-1010 or [drlordan@conciergephysicaltherapy.com](mailto:drlordan@conciergephysicaltherapy.com).



**Dr. Sean T. Lordan**  
[conciergephysicaltherapy.com](http://conciergephysicaltherapy.com).

Dr. Sean T. Lordan is a doctor of physical therapy and the author of "11 Winning Secrets To Stop Aging In Its Tracks." He is the owner of Concierge Physical Therapy with locations in Sutton and Shrewsbury.

## Students and staff explored cultures and traditions at the Multicultural Festival

UPTON - In a world where sharing who we are and where we all come from is becoming the cornerstone to truly understanding our perspectives and paths in life, there is no better time to celebrate cultures and traditions. Recently, Blackstone Valley Tech students and staff contributed to an authentic cultural celebration and learning experiences through music, live performances, and interactive demonstrations at its Multicultural Festival.

There were a variety of cultural offerings. A Multicultural Center featured some traditional Day of the Dead activities and thoughtfully prepared presentations and posters on countries, cultures, and traditions. Many of the student presenters are native to the countries they chose to discuss. For example, Yara Alomar, a sophomore in Health Services, is a Palestinian-Jordanian American and is fluent in Arabic. She wanted to share her ancestry and culture

with her peers at this event.

"I had an amazing time speaking with my peers and instructors about Jordan and Palestine," said Yara Alomar. "We discussed clothing, food, music, and some pictures of a recent visit to Amman, Jordan. I'm glad that I was able to share a little piece of my home, and me essentially, with others in my school community."

J&L Dance Studio instructors shared a brief history with those who had signed up for a lesson and taught the basic steps to dance Salsa or Bachata, while Chanel Therivel, a Haitian-American artist and educator, discussed culture, art and assisted students in creating a memory mosaic. The day also

included a cultural performance by Veronica Robles, an authentic representative of Mexican music and culture. She performed a Dance Journey through Latin America, sharing dance, rhythms, and traditional outfits from Mexico, Peru, and Colombia.

"We are immensely proud of our student participants," said Kerry Baldwin, World Language and Electives Department Team Leader at BVT. "We are thankful to everyone who helped make the Multicultural Festival a success."

The successful interdisciplinary event was a collaborative effort supported in part by grants from the Douglas, Grafton, Mendon, and Milford Cultural Councils, local agencies supported by the

Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.

Join in the celebration, explore the cultural offerings, and learn more by visiting the school website to view a video of the festivities produced by student videographers Alexis Vazquez and Abril Sanchez at: [www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/multiculturalfestival](http://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/multiculturalfestival).



**Yara Alomar, a sophomore in Health Services at BVT, discussed the cultures & traditions of Jordan and Palestine with her peers during the Multicultural Festival.**

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## Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park seeks public input for general management plan



PAWTUCKET, RI – The National Park Service (NPS) is seeking public input to guide the development of a general management plan for Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park (“the park”).

The plan is in the early stages of development, and the National Park Service is seeking feedback from the public and local community members to help identify key issues, opportunities, and potential management strategies.

Now through February 15, the public is invited to participate in the planning process. The information gathered in this planning process will inform decision-making and priority setting for public investments over the next decade.

Those interested in hearing more about the process may join one or more virtual public meetings, which will include an opportunity to ask questions and make preliminary comments. The links to those virtual public meetings is live on the General Management Plan's official Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) webpage as well as on the

park's website and social media accounts.

Parkplanning - Blackstone River Valley NHP General Management Plan (nps.gov). The meeting was held: Thursday, January 20, at 8:00 p.m. Those who could not attend may learn more about this process and enter comments/questions at: Parkplanning - Blackstone River Valley NHP General Management Plan (nps.gov) The public commentary period will last until February 15.

The Park's General Management Plan will:

- Identify management zones and desired conditions for natural and cultural resources, visitor experiences, and opportunities, and facilities or services;
- Indicate types and intensities of development (including visitor circulation and transportation patterns, systems, and modes) associated with public enjoyment and use of the area;

• Ensure that the park has a clear vision and direction for visitor use, access, and experience; and

• Consider ways to use pre-existing or planned visitor facilities and recreational opportunities developed in the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.

Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park owns and operates the three historic buildings of Old Slater Mill National Historic Landmark, including the 1793 Old Slater Mill, the 1810 Wilkinson Mill, and the 1758 Sylvanus Brown House along with about three acres of land. In addition, the Park has a conservation easement on 85 acres of the Blackstone River State Park in Lincoln, Rhode Island. The Park boundary also includes four local historic districts within four unique mill villages in the Blackstone River Valley: The Ashton Historic District in Cumberland, Rhode Island, the Slatersville Historic District in North Smithfield, Rhode Island, the Whitinsville Historic District in Northbridge, and the Hopedale Historic District in Hopedale.

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## Senate passes bill to make state IDs more accessible to people experiencing homelessness

BOSTON – The Massachusetts Senate passed S.2612, An Act to provide identification to youth and adults experiencing homelessness.

Currently, a person experiencing homelessness looking to obtain a Massachusetts identification card must surmount prohibitive fees and documentation requirements. The legislation passed seeks to remedy these burdens. It directs the Registrar of Motor Vehicles to implement a specific process for individuals experiencing homelessness that waives fees and accommodates alternative residency documentation.

ID cards are necessary for applying to jobs, enrolling in school, interacting with law enforcement, accessing government buildings, opening financial accounts, and many more basic services that many take for granted. The current financial and form-filling barriers that exist within the process to obtain a state ID encourage a cycle of poverty and prevent many individuals experiencing homelessness from accessing basic services.

“Given that identification is a basic need, my colleagues and I felt that barriers needed to be removed so that anyone, regardless of their living situation, has access to Massachusetts Identification Cards,” said Senator Michael Moore (D-Millbury). “Those who are experiencing homelessness should have access to the same basic services as the rest of us, which is why we felt that this was such an important piece of legislation. I’d like to thank Senator Chandler for her leadership on this issue, as well as my fellow co-sponsors.”

“As the state begins to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturn, the Legislature must ensure that individuals experiencing homelessness have the same fundamental opportunities to succeed and thrive. One fundamental key to accessing basic services are state-issued IDs. Currently, people experiencing homelessness face significant financial and bureaucratic barriers when they attempt to obtain an ID. Now is the time to break down bureaucratic barriers that fuel the cycle of poverty as we look towards a post-pandemic world,” said Senate President Emerita Harriette L. Chandler (D-Worcester).

Under this legislation, a proof of residency for persons experiencing homelessness can be established through alternative documentation that is determined to be satisfactory by the Registrar. This alternative documentation can be provided by a homeless services provider or by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services.

The bill now moves to the House of Representatives for their consideration.



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## Commonwealth raises awareness about vital safety nets available

By Christine Galeone

When people face significant financial challenges, it's not uncommon for them to feel like they're walking on a high wire. Much of their focus and energy is directed at simply trying not to fall.

Fortunately, there are "safety nets" available that can help those facing such challenges. And the Commonwealth of Massachusetts wants people to know about resources it offers to those who qualify. Two of those vital resources, the Baker-Polito Administration's Emergency Rental Assistance Program and the Massachusetts Health Connector, have recently been the focus of public outreach campaigns facilitated by Archipelago Strategies Group.

The Massachusetts Health Connector enrollment campaign launched with November business walks in East Boston, Dorchester, New Bedford and Springfield. MHC and community leaders shared information concerning how the program is the Commonwealth's health insurance exchange, where income-qualifying residents who aren't covered by em-

ployers or other sources can enroll in low-cost health and dental insurance. Open enrollment will continue through Sunday Jan. 23. More information can be found at MAHealthConnector.org or at 1-877-623-6765.

Meanwhile, the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has been reaching out to low-income tenants who have been financially impacted by the pandemic to let them know that they can apply for assistance through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, which is part of the DHCD's COVID-19 Eviction Diversion Initiative (EDI). "The pandemic has had disproportionate impacts on our most vulnerable communities and neighborhoods across Massachusetts, and we want to remind households in need that help is available," said Housing and Community Development Undersecretary Jennifer Maddox in a recent press release. "Over the past 12 months, we've scaled up our rental assistance program to match the urgency required by this situation.

With a pool of state and federal resources, a streamlined application process, and simplified criteria for eligibility, we can process more applications at a faster rate than ever before. So, we strongly encourage all tenants that have fallen behind to seek help now." People can learn more at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/emergency-housing-payment-assistance-during-covid-19>.

While both programs have had a positive impact on many people, Johnny Corson, the Communications Manager at Archipelago Strategies Group, shared a story of a family of 13 Afghan refugees that was greatly helped by the Health Connector. He said that working with a refugee resettlement agency, Family Health Center of Worcester was able to immediately perform identity proofing on the father, allowing the center to complete applications for the entire family, including a pregnant woman and two people who needed medical care. He was told that the father expressed his deepest gratitude to FHCW staff for



Photo: (submitted) Volunteers participate in a business walk to raise awareness about the Massachusetts Health Connector.

getting him and his family healthcare and health insurance through the MHC.

Although these are only two of many resources

available to people facing significant financial challenges, they're two that can provide much-needed safety nets. Corson also assured

that "both opportunities are available to Massachusetts residents, regardless of vaccination status."

## DA Early offers funds to support safe end-of-year school events

WORCESTER – District Attorney Joseph D. Early Jr. is inviting local schools and parent groups to apply for mini-grants to support post-prom and post-graduation events designed to keep students safe and prevent drunken driving crashes.

"This time of year is supposed to be a celebration for students and their families, but too often we see tragedies," Mr. Early said. "We're hoping these grants will assist more schools in offering safe options for students."

These events, organized and overseen by adults, offer safe drug- and alcohol-free alternatives to high-risk activities that often follow end of the year celebrations for high school students.

"While none of us know what the status of school activities will be in the spring of 2022 due to the COVID pandemic, we are cautiously optimistic and accepting applications for funding requests," Mr. Early said. "Some celebrations looked different in 2021, but

we were proud to continue supporting these efforts and providing students with the fun and safe events they deserve."

This is the fourth year the office has offered grants thanks to the support of the Massachusetts Office of Victim Assistance Drunk Driving Trust Fund. Prior to that, Mr. Early supported local post-prom and post-graduation events at high schools across the county through his drug forfeiture funding.

Schools and parent groups can apply for these grants to either support existing events or to assist in establishing new events. Applications for funding requests are due by February 17.

To request a grant application, contact Ellen Miller at [ellen.miller@mass.gov](mailto:ellen.miller@mass.gov).

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# How to improve flexibility

Many men and women become less flexible as they get older. That loss of flexibility can make performing everyday tasks more difficult while also increasing the risk of injury when working out. Fortunately, there are many steps men and women can take to improve their flexibility.

Embrace dynamic stretching before a workout. Static stretching was once the rage, but research has indicated that static stretching is not as beneficial as people once thought. Static stretching is a blanket term used to describe several techniques that stretch muscles while a body is at rest. When a person is performing a static stretch, he or she gradually lengthens the muscle until it reaches an elongated position, which is then held for 30 seconds or more. But recent research has indicated that static stretching is not as effective before a workout as dynamic stretching, which are stretching exercises done while a body is moving. Push-ups, squats and lunges are just a few examples of dynamic stretching techniques, and these exercises can warm up your body and prepare it for the workout to come.

Reconfigure your workout. When you want to improve flexibility, it's beneficial to examine your existing workout routine. Are you lifting as much weight as pos-

sible during your strength training workout but don't really know why? If building muscle mass is not your goal, you can probably improve your flexibility by lifting less weight. Lifting less weight can be a great way to tone your muscles, and you won't be sacrificing the benefits associated with strength training.

Drink water. Properly hydrated muscles are more capable of responding to flexibility training than poorly hydrated muscles. Make an effort to drink more water throughout the day, and bring your own water with you to the gym so you can stay hydrated during your workouts.

Find ways to unwind. Your workout may not be the culprit behind your inflexibility. Stress can cause muscles to tighten, and it also increases your risk for a host of ailments, including heart disease and stroke. If your workout routine is already one that promotes

flexibility but you are still dealing with tightness, then you might be falling victim to stress. If that's the case, find time to alleviate that stress throughout the day, whether it's taking a relaxing walk during your lunch break or embracing yoga at the end of a long day.

Perform static stretches at the end of your workout. Static stretches may be ineffective and contribute to injury at the beginning of workout, but that does not mean they can't help you improve flexibility once your workout is complete. Static stretches at the end of a workout can help you lengthen muscles that might have lost some of their flexibility during strength training.

Men and women who can't seem to improve their flexibility no matter what they do may benefit from working with a professional trainer or discussing their concerns with their physicians.



## Resolutions inspired by trending health topics

Improving personal health is a popular New Years resolution. A 2020 Finder survey found that an estimated 188 million Americans planned to make resolutions to carry them into 2021. Similar numbers of people likely will put personal goals on the calendar this year. Those focused on health and wellness may consider these trending topics.

### Collagen supplementation

Collagen is a family of proteins that serves as the structural component of most connective tissues in the body. Collagen production wanes as people age, but it also can drop quickly due to excess sun exposure, smoking, lack of exercise, and excess alcohol consumption, according to the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Many people are interested in maintaining adequate levels of collagen, which is vital to giving skin a

youthful appearance and helps to maintain healthy joints. According to Google Trends, online searches for collagen have increased steadily since 2014. Collagen has become a top-selling supplement to improve hair, skin and nails. Though human studies that prove collagen supplementation efficacy are lacking, some randomized controlled trials have found that collagen supplements improve skin elasticity and joint mobility and reduce joint pain. Collagen supplements are thought to be safe, but people should discuss supplementation with a doctor first.

### Fermented foods

More research is showing a connection between digestive tract (gut) health and immunity, and people concerned with boosting their immune systems are paying attention. Research published in the journal Cell in 2014 indicated the im-

mune system has evolved to maintain a symbiotic relationship with microbiota in the gut. Accordingly, when operating optimally, this immune system-microbiota alliance allows the induction of protective responses to pathogens.

Naturally fermented foods may help strengthen the gut microbiome by supplying it with healthy probiotics, according to Dr. David S. Ludwig, a professor of nutrition at the T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Some pickles, Korean kimchi, sauerkraut, and other foods can be beneficial. Consumers should look for product labels that say 'naturally fermented,' which use live organisms for the fermenting process.

Getting healthier is a common theme of New Year's resolutions. Various health trends could affect what people resolve to do in the year ahead.

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# Simple strategies to combat stress

Just about everyone experiences stressful situations. Sometimes a measure of stress can provide motivation to do one's best or strive for an especially lofty goal. However, when stress becomes a chronic condition, it can adversely affect individuals' quality of life and even their overall health.

Harvard Medical School says stress can manifest itself in myriad ways. Stress can cause tension headaches, indigestion, aches and pains, or even heart palpi-

tations, and it may affect the mind by making it hard to concentrate or make decisions. Many people experience stress through emotional or psychological symptoms, such as irritability or feeling down. Learning how to effectively manage stress is essential for individuals' overall well-being.

**Exercise regularly**

Exercise serves many functions, including acting as a potent stress relief strategy. The Cleveland Clinic says aerobic exercise releases endorphins, which

are natural substances that help a person feel better and maintain a positive attitude. Movement activities like yoga or Tai Chi also can relax the mind and body and promote physical health.

**Take media breaks**

Overwhelming oneself with a barrage of negative news stories or constant information can increase stress levels. Individuals can strive to remain informed and still build breaks into their schedules. Shut off news programs, turn over

the newspaper or tune out of social media from time to time. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that individuals who are stressed out by world events reduce the number of times they read the news or check the headlines each day.

**Meditate or perform breathing exercises**

Breathing and meditation can help alleviate stress, according to the American Heart Association. A quick meditation can provide some perspective. If a

situation is stressful, go for a walk or take a few slow, deep breaths until the body relaxes. Harvard Medical School also says meditation can induce a relaxation response, which is an antidote to stress.

**Change negatives to positives**

Negative self-talk may increase stress, but positive self-talk can help a person

calm down. Individuals should practice positive self-talk every day. Instead of saying, "I hate when this happens," say, "I know how to deal with this, I've done it before."

A small amount of periodic stress can be a good thing. However, chronic stress poses a significant threat to individuals' long-term health.

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### How are hearing and cognitive decline related?

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## DA's community outreach talks reach audience of 600,000

WORCESTER – Worcester County District Attorney Joseph D. Early Jr.'s office has officially reached more than 600,000 people with his crime prevention and community safety programming.

"We are at schools, senior centers and community events across Worcester County nearly every day, presenting on topics such as bullying and cyber bullying, scams and fraud, drugs and alcohol, and texting and driving," Mr. Early said. "I've always said I'd rather prevent a crime than have to solve one. I'm proud to say we've officially reached 600,000 residents with this

programming, many of them youth."

The District Attorney's Community Outreach Team, made up of 10 staff members, presents programming to schools and groups of all sizes by request. These presentations are always free and can be tailored to the specific age range or audience. The Outreach Team also runs the intern program and manages grant implementations.

The most popular program is bullying and cyberbullying prevention. This program also helps kids understand the importance of protecting their digital



footprint and imparts the knowledge that nothing on the internet is ever deleted.

There are two specific programs addressing drugs and

alcohol, including "This Is (Not) About Drugs" and "If They Had Known." The office also has a display called "Hidden In Plain Sight" that

shows parents potential warning signs of substance use by their children.

"Early substance use can lead to a lifetime struggle with addiction for our youth," Mr. Early said. "These evidence-based programs help kids understand the risks associated with all substance use, including

scam and fraud education is regularly provided to seniors. New this year, the Outreach Team is also presenting a program called "Creating A Caring Community" to senior housing facilities.

"Our seniors, who have contributed so much to our society, deserve to live

without fear of losing their hard-earned money or being bullied or excluded in their social life," Mr. Early said.

These presentations are coordinated with schools and community partners who share a commitment to protecting residents and preventing crime.

"This level of widespread outreach would not be possible without our dedicated staff," Mr. Early said. "Thank you to our Outreach Team: Nelson Colon, Kevin Donahue, Elisabeth Haddad, Michael Jennette, Eileen Kneeland, Kevin Lefrancois, Julie Lesure, Ellen Miller, Julie Nonni, Jill Wooldridge and, until recently, Abigail Westerland."

## BVT First Trimester Commendation List

Superintendent-Director Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick has released the Commendation List for the first trimester of the 2021-2022 academic school year for Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School. To be named to the Commendation List, students must meet rigorous standards that include maintaining a grade point average of 88 percent or above in each technical, related, and academic course for the trimester. The Superintendent-Director's Commendation List Criteria is on page 16 of the Student Handbook.

### Seniors (Class of 2022)

**Grafton** - Andrew Corbett, Engineering & Robotics; Noelle McDonald, Construction Technology; Samaha Roban, Business & Entrepreneurship; Celine Vaz, Information Technology; and Sofia Yitts, Culinary Arts.

**Millbury** - Julia Allain, Health Services; Logan Beaudoin, Business & Entrepreneurship; Morgan Cashman, Multimedia Communications; Madison Forget, Multimedia Communications; and Thomas O'Leary, Electronics & Engineering Technology.

**Sutton** - Gwyneth Dube, Health Services; Kyleigh Leonard, Automotive Technology; and Matthew Machado, Information Technology.

### Juniors (Class of 2023)

**Grafton** - Juliana Errara, Health Services; Noah Mariano, Engineering & Robotics; and Owen Mathieu, HVAC&R.

**Millbury** - Kasey Reeves, Health Services.

**Sutton** - Katelyn Devine, Construction Technology; Riley Donovan, Electrical; Samuel Judson, Drafting & Design Technology; Kyle Katz,

Automotive Technology; Brenna Kehowski, Health Services; Haley Kirouac, Engineering & Robotics; Ryann Lombardi, Health Services; Colin Medeiros, Electronics & Engineering Technology; and Evan Theborge, Electronics & Engineering Technology.

### Sophomores (Class of 2024)

**Grafton** - Tyler Bell, Electronics & Engineering Technology; James Benoit, Electrical; Caitlin Brown, Dental Assisting; Madison Collins, Painting & Design Technology; Alison Graves, Construction Technology; Skyla Jack, Construction Technology; Carlie Jensen, Painting & Design Technology; Soumith Madadi, Information Technology; Ava Mills, Engineering & Robotics; Joshua Mumford, Automotive Collision Repair & Refinishing; James Nelson, Electronics & Engineering Technology; Grant Purcell, Engineering & Robotics; Haleigh Reynolds, Dental Assisting; Ryan St. Angelo, Culinary Arts; Lily Turcotte, Construction Technology; Nicholas Valoras, Engineering & Robotics; and Casey Wong, Engineering & Robotics.

**Millbury** - Michael Borowski, Multimedia Communications; Amelie Botelho, Painting & Design Technology; Nicole Boucher, Health Services; Ava Lawton, Engineering & Robotics; Holden Marnell, Information Technology; Madison Moore, Painting & Design Technology; McKenna Morin, Engineering & Robotics; James Richert, Electronics & Engineering Technology; and Emma Shum, Dental Assisting.

**Sutton** - Michaela Gledhill, Construction Technology; Christopher Gubbins, Construction Technology; Julianna Hawley, Multimedia Communications; Peyton Nolan, Multimedia Communications; and Macyn White, Construction Technology.

### Freshmen (Class of 2025)

**Grafton** - Steven Caya, Engineering & Robotics; Nora Iadarola, Multimedia Communications; Christopher Joiner, Biotechnology; Keyara Jones, Health Services; Ella McCann, Advanced Manufacturing & Fabrication; Carly Simpson, Health Services; Daniel Warfield, Electronics & Engineering Technology; and Annika Welles, Advanced Manufacturing & Fabrication.

**Millbury** - Mason Diosomito, Engineering & Robotics; Ethan Ikeda, Construction Technology; Maya Lorion, Automotive Technology; and Jayden Quang, Engineering & Robotics.

**Sutton** - William Bogdan, Information Technology; Emma Cliadakis, Culinary Arts; Morgan Gervais, Advanced Manufacturing & Fabrication; Benjamin Hicks, Electronics & Engineering Technology; William Kelly, Construction Technology; Caroline Martin, Engineering & Robotics; and Trevor Martin, Engineering & Robotics.

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## Living ON with Lincoln

# The last gift given

By Amy LeClaire

Lincoln would have turned eleven on December 26, on the day after Christmas. We would celebrate by singing a wild and crazy rendition of the birthday song before presenting him with a slice of leftover prime rib, pegged with a candle. He'd smile to the melody (he knew the song was about him) and move his nose away from the flame, sensing the heat. Then we'd cut his slice into small pieces and let him at it. "He loves it!" we'd say, as though somehow surprised that our dog likes beef. Dogs do this for us. They make the small stuff the big stuff. They remind us of the spirit and magic behind life's ordinary routines.

Each season brought forth different routines. Winter (along with snow games) brought forth indoor sessions of baking and begging. "That smells sooooo good," Lincoln said, his snout lifted while I baked gingerbread cookies. He never knew when a scrap of food might drop; he wasn't taking any chances. "I was just thinking - that gingerbread boy's head got cut off.

I could probably save you the hassle of putting him back together. Just a thought."

"Here you go, Lincoln." He gulped the ginger-head down.

Now that I'm spending more time indoors (for winter), I find myself thinking about Lincoln's presence by my side. He'd press his face into the smallest of crevices to take care of fallen table scraps. I bend over to pick one up now, then hesitate. Lincoln would have loved that scrap.

My home certainly feels different now, but I'm at peace with a loss that's also a gain. Lincoln gave us perspective and bundles of small joys to pass on to pups we've yet to meet. He also had an extraordinary short life full of "presence" and, also, presents.

"Hey look! This wrapping paper stick rolls. On and on. Look at it go!" A typical pup, Lincoln was attuned to every detail as it unfolded before his eyes. "Another shoelace! Another shoebox!" However, back then, he couldn't distinguish an actual present from the new surprises laid out before his sniffing nose. "More stringy fingers at the edge of rugs!" A puppy's mind is a playground.

Lincoln grew taller and wiser; and while the leonine mane of his chest grew thick, so did his desire for actual presents. Through the years he watched and learned. He

knew that when my hands disappeared into the mouth of a bag—Let's see who this one is for???—there was going to be something for Lincoln. He'd sit at my heels, chin up, on Christmas Eve while I led a "Secret Santa" gift exchange. He knew exactly what was happening. A gift was being shared. Mom was in charge of handing out gifts. Who would be the lucky winner?

"This one says it's for Lincoln!" His stare (along with a slight invasion of my personal space) put me under pressure. I had to make sure he opened first. He accepted his gift with pure fascination, as though each one was the first ever opened. "I can't believe this is really happening!" He sniffed the gift as though it was alive, nosing and poking and finally looking up at me for help. "Let's get to the bottom of this!"

I tore off the paper. His brown eyes bloomed. "It's a baby possum!" He'd sniff the stuffed animal suspiciously. "Could it be alive?" Then he'd thrash it around the room and pounce on it.

"Look Daddy, it's a possum and he's dead!" He'd dominate an animal stuffed cheaply in China while we continued the gift exchange and celebrated Lincoln's gratitude. "I'll get you, possum." He'd pull cotton from the animal's belly using the only tiny part of his body, his front teeth.

"Lincoln..." I'd pick up the wounded possum and cradle him in my chest, "You have to be eaaassy. It's just a baby."

"I'll be easy. I didn't mean it. Can I have my possum back?"

"You have to be easy." I stroked the animal softly.

"I'll be easy. Promise. Put him back down, please."

Lincoln was intelligent. My tone of voice, along with his remarkable vocabulary, made an impact on his behavior. He chewed more gently while, paranoid, he tossed me guilty glances. "Be easy

with the possum," I scolded with a facetious grin.

My attempt to protect the stuffed possum wore thin. It wasn't long before the poor animal bled out more cotton. I had to intervene. "What are you doing to the possum's guts, Mom?" I'd pull cotton from the animal's belly as though reeling in the long braid of Rapunzel's hair from a tower window. Lincoln watched with intrigue. "How much cotton did that little guy eat?" Then I'd tie the possum's slimed coat into a knot and hand him back an evolved present. "What happened to you?" He'd sniff the emaciated possum and, nevertheless, sneak off to his nook beneath the dining room table to finish chewing.

On Lincoln's passing, one of our veterinarian's said it perfectly. "He was good until he wasn't." Lincoln found joy in every single activity until he couldn't any longer. He wanted to play ball in the snow on the very last day of his life, and suffered for only a few hours. I look at a picture of the two of us on his last day. I'm holding up his paw. He's smiling as though I've just handed him another gift. I'm devastated, but he's still happy. I look at the picture again and the truth rises like vapor through my tears.



Celebrating Lincoln's 10th birthday - Dec. 26, 2020

"You love me enough to make sure that I'm happy every single moment. You love me enough to not let me suffer, even though you are in pain." Lincoln knew this about me

and while he licked away my tears, he gave me the last gift—the know that he was happy until he slept.

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The gift shop will also be open.

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- On Jan. 23, 1855, John Moses Browning, sometimes referred to as the "father of modern firearms," is born in Ogden, Utah. Many of the guns whose names evoke the history of the American West – Winchester, Colt, Remington and Savage – were based on Browning's designs.
- On Jan. 17, 1953, a prototype Chevrolet Corvette sports car makes its debut at General Motors' Motorama auto show at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City. The Corvette was named for a fast type of naval warship.
- On Jan. 18, 1996, Major

League Baseball owners unanimously approve interleague play for the 1997 season. The owners' vote, which called for each team to play 15 or 16 interleague games, broke a 126-year tradition of teams playing only within their league during the regular season.

• On Jan. 26, 1788, Capt. Arthur Phillip guides a fleet of 11 British ships carrying convicts to the colony of New South Wales, effectively founding Australia. The date eventually became commemorated as Australia Day.

• On Jan. 25, 1905, at the Premier Mine in Pretoria, South Africa, a 3,106-carat diamond is discovered. Weighing 1.33 pounds and christened the "Cullinan," it was the largest

diamond ever found.

• On Jan. 27, 1967, a fire on the launch pad during Apollo 1 program tests at Cape Canaveral, Florida, kills astronauts Virgil "Gus" Grissom, Edward H. White II and Roger B. Chaffee. An investigation implicated a faulty electrical wire inside the command module as the probable cause.

• On Jan. 28, 1985, dozens of pop stars gather to lay down tracks for "We Are the World," under the direction of Quincy Jones. The song would go on to sell more than 7 million copies and raise more than \$60 million for African famine relief. Participants were told: "Check your egos at the door." (c) 2022 Hearst Communications, Inc. All Rights Reserved

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**Q.** I have a 2015 Nissan NV 200 van. The maintenance guide does not mention shock absorber replacement. Are the shocks lifetime of the vehicle?

**A.** I am glad to see you reading the vehicle owner's manual. Unfortunately, not every part in a vehicle has a specific replacement interval. Shock absorbers, like ball joints, radiator hoses and drive belts, require periodic inspection. Shock absorbers can last as little as 20,000 miles and may even last the life of the vehicle, depending on how and where the vehicle is driven. Periodically the shocks should be inspected for oil/seal leaks. If there is oil on the shock absorber it needs replacement. The old standard test of bouncing a car still is a good test. Go to one corner of your van and push down hard. When the van rebounds it should only bounce once and then settle down. If it continues to bounce, it is time for new shocks. If it is time for new shocks, they should always be replaced in pairs.

**Q.** I have a question regarding my 1968 Pontiac GTO that I have owned for almost 20 years. It's been restored and is a low mileage California born and bred car. My problem is that the car runs smoothly at normal in town speeds (up to 60 MPH but on the freeway, once you reach 68-70 mph, the car tends to shake as if the wheels are out of balance. I recently installed a set of expensive Firestone redline wide oval radial tires purchased from Coker Tire. When they were first installed by a local shop, due to the vibration, I felt that they were not balanced properly so I had a different shop rebalance them. Unfortunately, there was no change. I have disc brakes up front and drums in the rear. Both were replaced, including the drums, within the last 1000 miles. Most front-end components and suspension parts were also replaced. Could you suggest what the next step I should take to diagnose this issue. The issue only seems to be noticeable at high speeds. A friend of mine suggested that the drive shaft could be out of balance. I'm anxious to have this car run as good as it looks.

**A.** First off, I don't believe it is a driveshaft balance issue. If it were, you would feel the vibration in the body of the car much more than the steering wheel. Back in the 60s, 70s and even 80s we would use an on-the-car wheel balancer. These balancers would not just balance the wheels and tires but the hubs, rotors and drums. With a little investigating you may find a shop with one of these balancers. The other possibility is that the tires, wheels and hubs need to be better matched to each other. Every tire, wheel and hub have a high and low spot. If the high spot of the wheel is mounted on the high spot of the hub, even if the wheel and tire is perfectly balanced you can get a vibration. At this point it will take some time with a dial indicator and runout gauge to get everything as close to perfect as mechanically possible.

**Q.** I have a 2022 Chevy Bolt EUV. I have a question about charging the system to a maximum mileage. When I first got the car, it was charging up 296 miles, now it charges only up 241. Would the cold weather have any effect on how much it charges?

**A.** Certainly temperature, accessory use and climate control will all have an effect on mileage/range of an electric car. AAA testing of electric cars has shown that in very cold weather, range can be reduced by as much as 30 percent and in very hot weather range can be reduced by 15 percent. Looking at the specification of the 2022 Bolt, the 241 mile range is still higher than the advertised number. General Motors did issue a recall on some Bolt models due to a possible battery fire. GM has advised owners to set the maximum charge at 90 percent and avoid depleting the battery to less than 70 miles of range. They also recommend

charging more frequently and not charging the battery indoors at night. I read that GM does have a fix for the battery issue, but like everyone else they are waiting for parts.

**Q.** With new and used car prices going up and limited inventory due to chip shortages, have you noticed increase collectible car prices. I read Hemmings Motor news and some other old car publications, and it seems as if these cars are also getting more expensive.

**A.** Collector car prices can be very cyclical. There have been fortunes gained and lost buying and selling some collector cars. Prices are determined by several factors: condition, rarity and market demand. Value will always be determined by how much a buyer is willing to pay. There are tiers of the buying public that have plenty of available disposable income, time and storage space that can drive prices up on some popular vehicles.



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## Millbury Council on Aging

MILLBURY - Millbury Council On Aging, 1 River St., has listed the following calendar of events.

**Valentine's Day party**, Tuesday, Feb. 8, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Games and prizes. Lunch will be served: chicken fajitas with Spanish rice, black beans and corn, pineapple, sour cream pita bread. Call the center to RSVP by February 1 508-865-9154.

**Senior work-off program** for eligible seniors, 60 or older that are residents of Millbury. Receive up to \$1,500 per year that can be used to pay real estate property tax. In return for voluntary service at a town department. For more information or to pick up an application please call the center at 508-865-9154.

**COVID-10 booster vaccine appointments** - We will assist Millbury senior residents. If you do not have access to a computer and need help scheduling an appointment for the Booster. Please call the center at 508-865-9154.

**Fraud prevention class** Thursday, Jan. 6, at 1 p.m. Officer Piscitelli will be presenting. Learn about different Scams that target seniors. Please call the center if interested in attending 508-865-9154.

### Senior center exercise classes

Light exercise classes Mondays and Fridays 9:30 – 10:15 a.m. Free.

Tai Chi - Tuesdays 9:30 - 10:30 a.m. class is \$3.

Yoga - Thursdays 9 – 10 a.m. (class is \$3)

### Senior Center activities

WII bowling - Mondays at 12:30 p.m.

Majong - Mondays at 12:45 p.m.

Blood pressure clinic - every Tuesday from 9 - 10 a.m.

Cribbage - Tuesdays at 1 p.m.

Social Bingo - Wednesdays at 1 p.m. Bring your pennies.

Dull Men's Club - Thursdays at 10 – 11 a.m. No reservations required for any of our activities or exercise classes.

Lunches are served Monday through Friday 12 p.m. at the Senior Center. The menu is available on the town website, www.townofmillbury.org or our Millbury Senior Center Facebook page. A 48 hour reservation is required.

**Millbury Senior Center Transportation** - Transportation is provided for Millbury Senior residents Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. We travel one town out in each direction including Sutton, Grafton, Auburn and Worcester. A 48 hour notice is required for scheduling rides (business days). Rides are free until July 1. For more information or to schedule transportation call the center at 508-865-9154.

**Memory Café** - Please join us Tuesday, January 25, 2 - 3:30 p.m. A Memory Café is a monthly gathering for people with memory loss/challenges and their care partners. It is a time to socialize, make new friends, and have a good time. Fourth Tuesday of each month, refreshments will be served. We are also looking for volunteers to assist with this program. Our Outreach worker, Julie Fitzgerald, is happy to answer any questions, call to RSVP 508-865-9154.

**Millbury Friendly Visitor Program** - Our Friendly Visitor Program is now being provided by telephone. Volunteers call clients to check in with them, chat and hear a friendly voice. For more information on coordinating a Friendly visitor call the center at 508-865-9154.

**SNAP applications (Food Stamps)** - Our appointments are on Tuesdays & Thursdays 10 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Call for an appointment & required documentation 508-865-9154. This project has been funded at least in part with Federal Funds from USDA. This institution is an equal opportunity provider. The SNAP Logo is a service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. USDA does not endorse any goods, services or enterprises.

## SENIOR NEWS LINE

### Is telehealth all it's cracked up to be

By Matilda Charles

Medicare started paying for telehealth medical visits last year and will continue through the end of 2023. With telehealth, we sit in our homes and talk to our doctor on a screen, and Medicare pays for it. In the beginning, the number of telehealth visits skyrocketed – and then fell dramatically. Is that because we learned the hard way just what the limitations of telehealth really are?

There are people on both sides of the “should seniors use telehealth” debate. They both say they offer solid evidence for their opinion.

Those who claim it's a great thing for us to consult with our doctors via a little screen say it's helpful because it keeps us out of the doctor's office. We don't have to go in among all the germs, and we don't need to worry about transportation. On the other hand, those who are against telehealth appointments for seniors argue that many of us can't even afford the very devices we would need for telehealth. Even if we have a cellphone, the screen is so small as to be worthless, especially if we have a vision or hearing problem. Then there are the plan fees needed for that device. And what of privacy when we need someone at hand to help navigate the software for us? Do we really want our grandchildren sitting there when we discuss a personal issue with our doctor?

Even if we have a computer, one with a large monitor, how is that going to work when we need the doctor to look at a rash on our back? Or if we really ought to have a stethoscope pressed to our chest because of that ragged cough we've had for days?

Note: If you have original Medicare, you'll pay the same amount for the telehealth appointment as you would if you got the services in person.

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## 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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## Tales from beyond

### FINAL CHAPTER

# The Unfortunate Hannah Robinson

By Thomas D'Agostino

Presented here is the final part in the story of Hannah Robinson.

Hannah was returned to her home, where she passed on October 30, 1773, at the age of twenty-seven. As for Simons, he returned from his fraternizing some time later and found that she had died. Simons asked permission to be present for her interment. Rowland Robinson granted his wish but spoke very little with the man who broke his daughter's heart and spirit. Hannah was buried in the family tomb not far from their former home. The Robinson house, now a private residence, still occupies its original place on Old Boston Neck Road. Hannah Robinson's headstone is located in a small plot behind a Cape Cod duplex off Riverdell Drive in Narragansett.

Rowland Robinson died in 1806, never fully recovering from the death of his daughter. In his book *The History of the Episcopal Church in Narragansett, Rhode Island*, Wilkins Updike presented Rowland Robison as a stubborn, heartless man, yet his accounts and affections speak otherwise. Peter Simons is also portrayed as a villain, yet he may have also been cast in a bad light.

The previous version is taken from the writings of the Robinson and Hazard families, along with those of Updike. The Hazards and Updikes were married into the Robinson family and vice-versa.

J.R. Cole, in telling the tale, ends with, "She expired in her husband's arms." There is record that her husband was not the rogue he is written to be. According to other accounts, they married and stayed married and in love for ten years, until Hannah's untimely death, which may have been from one of the many illnesses that were prevalent of the day. Another not so small detail that may attest to their undying love is that they had a daughter. Hannah Robinson Simons was born on February 19, 1762 (stone states 1767). She married Dr. Joseph Bowen of Glocester, Rhode Island and died on December 7, 1824, at the age of sixty-two, nine months and eighteen days. Joseph, born in 1756, died on August 12, 1832, at the age of seventy-six.

Hannah Robinson Simons-Bowen is buried in Acotes Cemetery in Chepachet, Rhode Island, along with her husband, her son and a few

other members of the Bowen family. You cannot miss the tall monument just at the top of the hill just past the corner.

One more quaint detail came to light while researching the complete story of Hannah Robinson. Dr. Joseph Bowen's father, Colonel Benjamin Bowen, was married twice. His second wife, Abigail, was the mother of Peter Simons.

McSparran Hill, where Hannah played as a child is now called Hannah Robinson Park. The 1.52-acre section includes the ledge also known as Sad Rock, Crying Rock, and Meditation Rock where Hannah would sit and look out over the Narragansett Bay and Boston Neck; the great rock, now called Hannah Robinson Rock and a wooden tower named after Hannah rising forty feet into

the sky. Her spirit still roams the grounds that bear her name in memory of her sad and tragic passing. It is in that peaceful place where people occasionally see the ghost of young Hannah Robinson either sitting on the ledge looking out over the bay or on top of the great rock that bears her name. Visitors also hear her mournful sighs echoing in the wind as she relives the last moments of her life forever

and ever. Legendary writer Howard Phillips Lovecraft once commented on the rock as being "the finest rural prospect I have seen anywhere."

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

## The Dover Demon

By Thomas D'Agostino

On April 21, 1977, the small town of Dover, located just 15 miles from Boston, was thrown into world recognition. In this little quiet community, a strange creature was witnessed by several people over two days.

William Bartlett, then 17-years-old, was the first person to see the Dover Demon. As he and two friends, Mike Mazzocco and Andy Brodie, drove along their local Farm Street just past 10 pm, Bartlett witnessed a creature "standing on a wall, its eyes glowing [in the headlights]. It was not a dog or a cat. It had no tail. It had an egg-shaped head." Its body was thin with long spindly arms and legs. The fingers resembled tendrils as they grasped the broken wall. It began to traverse the top stones of the wall. Bartlett saw it for but a few moments before passing it. When he turned around, it was gone.

A mere two hours later, 15-year-old John Baxter encountered the creature on Miller High Road. As Baxter proceeded down the street, he saw a small figure approaching him. The figure was at first unidentifiable in

the dark. Still, as it neared, Baxter knew it was not an ordinary animal or human; instead, something in between.

The figure then scurried off to the left, descending a wooden gully and stopped on the other side. Baxter followed the formation, pausing at the top of the gully, where he got his first good look at the being. It sat near a tree with its feet "molded" around the top of a rock. Its head was "figure eight" shaped with two dark eyes and a body that resembled a monkey. Struck with fear, Baxter left the scene, moving swiftly down the road until he reached Farm Street where a couple, noting he was visibly shaken, picked him up and gave him a ride home.

The next night, on April 22, a 15-year-old girl named Abby Brabham saw the creature standing upright next to a tree. Her time of witness was also around midnight. All three witnesses gave similar descriptions of what they saw and drew sketches of the creature. The monster was dubbed the "Dover Demon." Bartlett wrote on his sketch, "I, Bill Bartlett, swear on a



stack of Bibles that I saw this creature."

Noted Maine native and Cryptozoologist Loren Coleman spoke to the teens within a week of the sightings and concluded they were credible. The Dover Demon was sighted at night, for two days within a 2-mile radius, near water. Some authorities passed the creature off as a foal or a moose calf. Still, it soon became apparent that none such animals had been spotted in the area and any such young animals were out of season. If a moose was wandering the site, it would have been easily seen and captured. Another aspect that shot holes in that theory was that the witnesses saw the creature standing upright and walking like a human.

To this day, Bartlett still remains shaken and mystified by his witnessing of the Dover

Demon. In an interview, he stated, "In a lot of ways it's kind of embarrassing to me. I definitely saw something. It was definitely weird. I didn't make it up. Sometimes I wish I had."

For the record, the Dover Demon is not the first strange sighting in the small hamlet. Stories have circulated for centuries about buried treasure and pirates. Also, there are legends of the devil on horseback being seen in the 1600s. However, the Dover Demon has captured the attention of many since its brief sighting and disappearance over 40 years ago.

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



- At the height of their fashion craze in the 1580s and '90s, neck ruffs could include up to 6 yards of starched-stiff material with up to 600 pleats, supported by a wire, wooden frame or board.
- Starfish don't have blood. They circulate nutrients by using seawater in their vascular system.
- The first baseball caps were made from straw and worn by the New York Knickerbockers in 1849.
- After the Titanic sank in 1912, ships sent to recover the dead ran out of embalming supplies. It was decided to preserve only the bodies of first-class passengers, due to the need to visually identify wealthy men in order to resolve disputes over their estates.
- Between 1848 and 1850, the Gold Rush caused the population of San Francisco to grow from 900 to 35,000 people.
- A mother black lace-weaver spider will drum on her web to call her babies to come and eat her alive.
- In medieval times, fruit and vegetables were cooked because they were thought to cause disease, with a book from 1500 even warning consumers to "Beware of green salads and raw fruits, for they will make your master sick."

- Pinball was banned in most major cities from the early 1940s to the mid-1970s because it was considered a game of chance and, therefore, gambling.
- Oysters can change genders back and forth.
- Tobacco companies spend the most money on advertising in January, when many people make a New Year's resolution to quit smoking, but the largest increase in new smokers actually occurs in the summer.
- There's a national pillow-fighting tournament in Japan.
- A 43,000-square-foot room beneath the Lincoln Memorial that was forgotten about until 1974 is filled with concrete columns and has its own plant life and ecosystem, as well as graffiti from the original workers.
- Humans are comprised of about 30 of the 118 elements on the periodic table. Their iPhones, however, are made up of about 75 elements.
- Intelligent people have more traces of copper and zinc in their hair.
- Every day, around 18 acres of pizza are eaten in America.
- At the U.S. Open and other U.S.-based tennis tournaments, the men play with the slower, heavy-duty felt balls while the women play with the faster, regular-duty felt version.

Thought for the Day: "Everyone knows something I do not; therefore, everyone is my teacher." – Unknown

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# KOVELS® Antiques & Collecting

By Terry and Kim Kovel

## Toy tourist bus

Buses were used for transportation as early as the 1820s, long before the modern motor was invented. They had horse-power – live horses pulled the bus. By the 1830s, buses were powered by steam, and in 1882, the first electric bus was introduced.

But the toy bus made after 1895 often resembled tourist buses used in a few large cities. It had a motor. The tourist bus had seats inside and out;

if the weather was nice, riders could climb the stairs to go up to the top seats where tall buildings could be admired. There was no cover for the top.

The Kenton Hardware Co in Kenton, Ohio, made many small cast iron household items such as bookends, doorstops, small figures, ashtrays, cooking utensils and toys. A double-decker tourist bus was made in about 1900, followed

by a second version in 1910. An orange one sold for \$1,020 at a Bertoia auction despite seven replacement figures with old paint. Many old iron toys have been copied; original toys should have a smooth, not bumpy, bottom. The seams between the molded parts must be tight and jointed with slotted screws. And most old toys have the maker's name impressed in the mold.

### What is it made of

Q: Is there any way to test to see if an item is made of resin, bone or plastic?

A: Bone and resin are natural products. Bone has small black or brown pock marks called "marrow flecks." It's heavier than resin or plastic. Resin is an organic material made from plants and trees. It may have some tiny bubbles in it. Plastic is a synthetic material and is harder than resin. Although a resin figurine is heavier than the same figurine in plastic, it is not as durable and is more likely to chip or crack if dropped.

### Bake-a-lite

Q: My mother says her bracelet is made of bake-a-lite. What is that?

A: Bakelite is a plastic developed in the early 1900s. It was used for jewelry by the 1930s by major designers. The art deco jewelry became very popular. Bakelite was needed for the war in the 1940s, so the jewelry wasn't made for about five years. About 1997, the deco jewelry was rediscovered by collectors, and books were published with information and color pictures that made prices skyrocket. Bracelets with inset dots were selling for \$300 to \$1,000. Small pins were \$75 to \$300, and carved bracelets were about \$500. There is a good supply of plastic jewelry now that those who bought in the 1990s are older and "de-cluttering." A recent Morphy's auction sold about 600 pieces



This toy tourist bus was made about 1910 by the Kenton Hardware Co. in Ohio. Not all of the passengers are original, but suitable replacements had been found. It is a rare toy, so rare it auctioned for just over \$1,000.

in a recent auction. They sold for a total of \$43,000 (yes, I counted the pieces), with an average price of \$70.

### Current prices

Wedgwood, tea set, blue Jasper, white raised relief, classical figures making burnt offerings, teapot, covered sugar, creamer, impressed mark, 1950s, teapot 5 inches, \$55. Tiffany sterling silver asparagus tongs, English King pattern, designed by Charles Grosjean, Pat. 1885, 7 1/2 inches, \$490. Aluminum, bench, cast end supports, oak slats, two on back, four on seat, painted, Cedar Point Amusement Park, Ohio, 1900s, 30 x 48 x 26 inches, \$595. Fiesta, sugar & creamer, shaped tray with tab handles, periwinkle blue, concentric rings at neck, sugar has lid with tapered finial, post-1986, tray 10 inches, \$40.

Sampler, alphabets, birds, flowers, Victorine Leonore Bonnegent, December 9, 1800, Bernay, Parish School of Sewing, August 12, 1808, silk & cotton on linen, frame, France, 12 x 13 inches, \$1,065.

Poster, Beatles concert, Candlestick Park, Aug. 29, 1966, Here Come the Beatles, psychedelic design, yin yang circle with U.S. & British flags, Wes Wilson, paper, 24 x 17 inches, \$7,190.

**TIP:** Don't drag heavy furniture. Get some slider disks ahead of time and be ready when they are needed.

Kovels' Antiques & Collectibles 2022 Price Guide is the ONLY antiques price guide that empowers collectors with the most up-to-date price information based on actual sales and market data. Available in stores and online, it also makes a great gift. (c) 2021 King Features Synd., Inc.

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## RE: Real Estate



Mark Marzeotti

If you're following along with the news today, you're probably hearing a lot about record-breaking home prices, rising consumer costs, supply chain constraints, and more. And if you're thinking about purchasing a home this year, all of these inflationary concerns are likely making you wonder if you should wait to buy. Economists explain that during a period of high inflation, prices rise across the board. And while home prices aren't immune from this increase, here's why inflation shouldn't stop you from buying a home in 2022.

Homeownership offers stability and security. Home prices have been increasing for quite some time, and experts say they're going to

## Why inflation shouldn't stop you from buying a home in 2022

continue to climb throughout 2022. So, as a buyer, how can you protect yourself from rising costs for things like food, shelter, entertainment, and other goods and services? The answer lies in housing.

Buying a home allows you to lock in your monthly mortgage payment for the foreseeable future. That means as other prices rise, your monthly payment will be consistent thanks to your fixed-rate mortgage. This gives you the peace of mind that the bulk of your housing costs is shielded from inflation.

A fixed-rate mortgage allows you to maintain the biggest portion of housing expenses at the same payment. Sure, property taxes will rise and other expenses may creep up, but your monthly housing payment remains the same.

If you rent, you don't have that same benefit and you won't be protected from rising housing costs. As an added incentive to

buy, consider that today's mortgage interest rates are lower than they have been in decades. While inflation decreases what your dollars can buy, low mortgage rates help counteract it by boosting your purchasing power so you can get more home for your money. They also help keep your monthly payments down. This is especially important during an inflationary period because you'll want to protect yourself from the impact of inflation as much as possible.

If you have cash and are expecting inflation, you want to think through where you can put your money so it does not lose value. Housing is commonly looked at as a good inflation hedge, especially with interest rates so low.

Bottom Line, the best hedge against inflation is a fixed housing cost. That's why you shouldn't let it stop

you from buying a home this year. Not sure where to start? Connect with Marzeotti Group or a real estate pro-

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