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CROSTOWN ADS AND BUSINESS NEWS

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Zap the Blackstone movement to mark a 50th anniversary



The Blackstone River today, much cleaner than in the past but still with challenges. A 50th-anniversary Zap the Blackstone cleanup is scheduled for Saturday, August 27th.

Nearly fifty years have passed since 10,000 volunteers gathered along the banks of the Blackstone River to remove tons of trash, including appliances, furniture and even cars and a school bus.

Thus began, in September of 1972, an initiative called "Zap the Blackstone."

Today, although many challenges still remain in the effort to "Bring Back the Blackstone," the waterway is much cleaner than it was half a century ago. It is also a focal point for many of the activities taking place in the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.

Bonnie Combs, Molly Cardoza

and others in the Corridor office are understandably proud of all of the happenings that are calling overdue attention to the region's prized national park. Recently, for instance, the Corridor issued a

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Mark VandenAkker and Diane Henderson have high hopes for The Pewter Pot, a new business on Linwood Avenue in Whitinsville.

The Pewter Pot pumps new life into an old gem of a building

BY ROD LEE

An architectural oddity of a building at 670 Linwood Ave. in Whitinsville sits directly in front of a mill that was reclaimed as an apartment complex, a liquor store, a restaurant and more a number of years ago.

Presumably used as a guard house or check-in station in its heyday, the interesting two-story structure abutting the street recently became the home of The

Pewter Pot, a gift shop owned by Mark VandenAkker and his family.

Unlike some of the ventures that have come and gone at the location in the past, The Pewter Pot may have staying power.

Talking about The Pewter Pot on the afternoon of June 23rd, Mr. VandenAkker said the store's

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BLACKSTONE

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call for help in growing its “pollinator gardens;” asking, “do you have a green

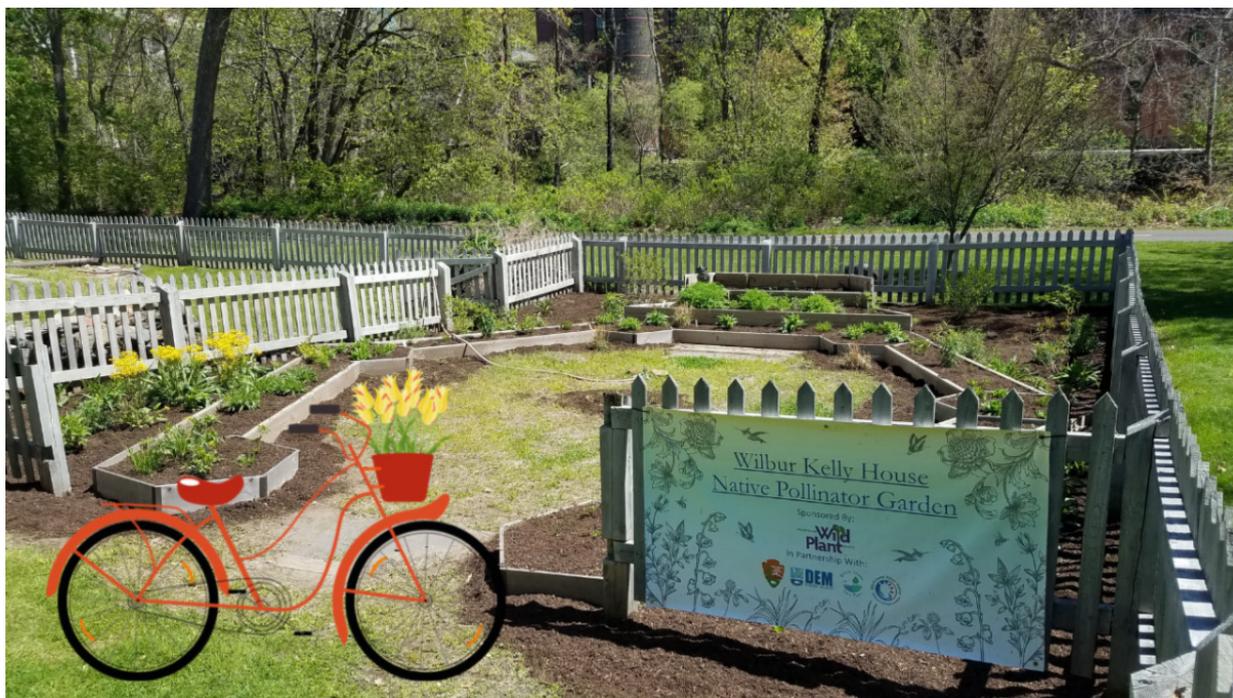
thumb? Want to volunteer for gardening projects?”

Individuals interested in helping out in this capacity should email Ms. Cardoza at mcardoza@blackstone-heritagecorridor.org.

There is also an opportunity to take “the pollinator pledge” by going to <https://blackstoneheritagecorridor.org/protect-our-pollinators/>.

Meanwhile, to mark the anniversary of the Zap the

Blackstone movement, a re-enactment of the 1972 clean-up will be held on Saturday, August 27th. The goal of organizers of the twenty seven-town watershed-wide cleanup in



Establishing “pollinator gardens” and preserving cemeteries are both focal points of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.



include naturist-led walks, workshops, a display of live caterpillars, children’s activities, garden tours, a plant sale and more. Anyone arriving in costume may win a prize.

On Wednesday, August 3rd, a Volunteer Appreciation Ice Cream Social will be held from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at West End Creamery, 481 Purgatory Road, Whitinsville. This is scheduled as a tribute to “volunteers-in-parks.”

A North Smithfield Heritage Day is scheduled for Saturday, July 9 at the North Smithfield Town Hall, 83 Greene St., as a way to mark the indigenous, colonial and republican heritage of the town. Walking tours, antiques, art, car displays vendors and food are all part of the mix for this event.

A “Nature of Design:

Connections Between Science, Engineering, and the Natural World: A Professional Development Institute for Grade 6-12 educators,” is on tap for July 11-15 from 8:30 to 3:30 p.m. Go to <https://www.wadeinstitutema.org/spidk12/> for more information.

Also, on Friday, July 22, a free cemetery restoration workshop conducted by Jon Appel of Atlas Preservation will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Hotchkiss Cemetery, Great Road, North Smithfield. Mr. Appel is a national stone preservation supplier and professional historic stone conservator.

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Massachusetts and Rhode Island is to have 10,000 volunteers again involved. It is being billed as “the biggest clean-up/green-up revival in fifty years.”

And the beat goes on. The Corridor just announced the 15th annual Barbara J. Walker Butterfly Festival, which is scheduled for Saturday, August 13th from noon to 4:00 p.m. at the Mass Audubon Broad Meadow Brook Conservation Area at 414 Massasoit Road in Worcester. “Where butterflies roam free in their natural habitats.”

Activities as part of the Butterfly Festival will

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Xpressly Yours ... a letter from the editor

Mark Scamman takes on those supermarket thieves...



BY ROD LEE

Hello, friends, a word about Mark Scamman, who some of you might remember as store manager of the Market Basket in the town of Oxford, until his recent retirement to Cape Cod, where he and his wife Amy are running a B&B.

As he was preparing to bring to a close his forty five-year career in the supermarket business, Mr. Scamman mentioned to me that he was planning to publish a book. I had no idea at the time what the subject matter would be;



Mark Scamman, retired from the Market Basket store in Oxford, and now an author.

the assumption being that he would merely be reflecting on the vocation that helped him pay his way through college (the University of Lowell, where he earned a Bachelor's degree in Industrial Management) and that he then embraced as his chosen method of employment.

Turns out he wanted to write about shoplifting, a crime he was thoroughly familiar with.

With the release of *Larceny in the Aisles/Stories from a Supermarket Manager*, Mr. Scamman has not only shed new light on an age-old scourge of retailers everywhere, he has done so with the touch of someone who sees the humor in many of the incidents he encountered along the way.

Maybe this was not so true when they occurred; but, as is the case with police departments across the Commonwealth, they can be now, in looking at them

in the rear-view mirror.

His book does in fact pay homage to members of the law enforcement community who are dealing with the same kind of misbehavior he saw from customers, day after day, month after month.

The cover of *Larceny*, designed by Destinee Almeida, and her illustrations inside, capture the hilarity that so often accompanies attempts to pilfer product. Ms. Almeida's cover artwork depicts a man preparing to stuff a Jack Daniels whiskey bottle into his coat.

I have to admit, I am a sucker for the kind of stories Mr. Scamman shares in *Larceny*. A typical example comes not from him, but one of his store-manager colleagues.

Entitled "Bloody mess," it reads as follows:

In the late 1970s, this future manager was bagging groceries while his store manager chatted with some

was coming from. A package of steak was concealed under there. Its seal had broken, and the liquid inside (called purge) was the extent of his injury.

Mark Scamman presents fifty largely comedic moments like the aforementioned over the course of approximately one hundred eighty pages. In Chapter 25, entitled "Pecans for Pie," he describes an encounter with an elderly woman during the holidays—"a tough time of year for many families." A manager, he relates, noticed the woman put a bag of pecans in her purse in the baking aisle. "I was absolutely not going to have her arrested, but I also wanted to speak to her about stealing, even though she was older than me," Mr. Scamman writes. "We did not go to the office, but I pulled her aside to talk. I quietly asked if she forgot to pay for the pecans she had in her purse. [She]



regular customers seated on benches in front of the store.

While talking to one, the manager noticed blood was trickling down the side of the man's face. The customer was wearing a fedora hat, and the blood was slowly trickling down.

"Are you okay?" The customer said yes and wiped the blood from his face. But it continued to trickle.

Concerned for the customer's health, the manager took the hat off the man's head to see where the blood

started to cry, and said she needed them for her pecan pie she was making for Thanksgiving. She couldn't afford to pay for them. The front-end manager and I were moved nearly to tears. He was the fastest in offering to pay for the pecans. He opened a register, deposited his money, and handed the pecans to the woman. "God bless you!" was her response. "Happy Thanksgiving," we told her. Her story is one of too many to count.

From "A Carriage Full of

Tide Detergent" to "Bubble Gum Theft in a Duffel Bag" to "The Jumper," Mr. Scamman relies on notes he took over the years to address shoplifting in a light-hearted but at the same time serious manner.

His objective, he explains in the epilogue, "Thou Shalt Not Steal," is

to point out that shoplifters should not get off unpunished—as, unfortunately, they so frequently do. "Community restitution" or "community service" should be mandatory penalties, in his opinion.

In the Introduction to *Larceny*, he says "during my career, I caught nearly

one thousand shoplifters." He knows, however, that there are more where they came from.

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PEWTER POT

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focus will be “primitive and country furniture, décor and novelty items.”

Mr. VandenAkker, his wife Diane Henderson and his daughters Tara Melo and Lauren Spada are counting on “hand-built Amish furniture” to be an integral ingredient of the business—and an attraction for prospective patrons.

“We will be doing a lot of custom orders,” he said. “And we are hoping to open a small coffee shop on the first floor, and maybe have outdoor seating.”

“Ambitious” is a word that surfaces in describing what Mr. VandenAkker has in mind as the objective of the shop. Having grown up in town, he was aware of the building’s existence and

optimistic about its potential. “We kind of like the building,” he said. “I like the location, right on the street. It was built in 1866, and has an ornate feeling.”

This goes hand-in-hand with the exquisite variety of tables and chairs, cabinets, cupboards, and curio pieces that are thoughtfully and tastefully arranged upstairs and down, many of which have been purchased from Amish dealers—“about five different vendors in Pennsylvania, and we are looking at others in Ohio.”

The VandenAkker family with an able assist from Joe Melo has made good use of limited space, so that every possible square foot has been captured for display—but without looking cramped or overburdened. This is a tricky proposition but one that Mr. VandenAkker enjoys tackling.



Left, this chair with side arm for an antique telephone was reconditioned before being put on the floor; it hearkens back to the days of yore. Right, the building that The Pewter Pot now occupies has an “ornate feel” that appealed to Mark VandenAkker in choosing a location for his shop.

“A lot of it is experience,” he said, in referring to the approach that has been taken. “We have some of the furnishings in our home in Sutton.

“We installed new flooring, new lighting and we 100 percent repainted the whole place,” he said.

“I also have a pest-control business. This is set up for my daughters to run.”

Mr. VandenAkker signed a lease in July. The Pewter Pot is already earning plaudits. One customer said “this is the nicest country store I’ve been in,” which is the kind of feel we wanted.”



A comment that has been heard too is “when is the coffee coming?”

Walls built “at an angle”—a feature that is not immediately apparent to the casual observer—present a challenge; but this has been dealt with by way of shelves built to fit the slant.

The Pewter Pot is going to be a seven-days-a-week operation with hours of 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., 11 to 7 on Thursdays and 11 to 5 on Sundays.

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

UniBank 150+2 anniversary marked in Northbridge Town Hall

UniBank, the largest mutual community bank headquartered in Central Massachusetts, recently held its annual meeting in historic Northbridge Town Hall as part of the institution’s 150+2-year anniversary.

Adam Gaudette, Northbridge’s town manager, said “UniBank is the pillar of community excellence in town, [meeting] our population’s financial needs and [providing] ongoing charitable support to the many nonprofit organizations in town, year after year. It was a pleasure for the town to host Chairman Wickstrom, Michael Welch (UniBank CEO),



The crowd that gathered for UniBank’s 2022 annual meeting, held in the Northbridge Town Hall.

Chris Foley (UniBank president) and their dedicated team on this milestone anniversary.

“Since the pandemic delayed our celebration two years ago, we decided to hold our 150+2 anniversary annual meeting in the Northbridge Town Hall,” Mr. Welch said. “We like to think that while the leaders of Northbridge were laying the groundwork for the town’s growth in this hallowed building, we took the baton 152 years later and pledged to commit to the same core values of growth and prosperity for the community established in 1870 for the next 152 years and

beyond.”

Tim Wickstrom, a fourth-generation Whitinsville native, said “it was a great honor to have UniBank’s annual meeting in one of the most historic buildings in town, financed by one of our founders, John Whitin. It is our privilege and duty to serve the community and it was a great venue to communicate our servitude.

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Past, present on display at Grafton's Antique & Arts Fair

BY ROD LEE

Residents of Grafton would undoubtedly say there is no better place to hold special outdoor events than the Town Common—arguably the prettiest in all of New England.

They would also probably agree that the Grafton Historical Society is the orga-

nization most ably suited to host an Antique & Arts Fair, the 53rd edition of which was held on June 18th.

Under refreshingly cool and breezy skies, vendors had come from near and far.

Jean Pellerin was there with “books and smalls;” Jim Bavosi with “rocks, jewelry and photographs;”

Denis Worden with samples from “Sweet Briar Florist;” Bonnie Frederico with “fine art;” Tom Tomaszek, offering “appraisals;” Joanne Beller with “Nantucket Baskets;” Kerry Simmler with “Chrysalis-Grafton Memorabilia;” Deb and Bob Goss, Elaine Koleshis, John Stephens, Tom and Deb Joralemon, Michael Paquette and others with antiques and vintage collectibles.

Elaine Blake of Sterling was present too, standing guard with her husband Steve over an assortment of beautifully caned chairs she had arranged for viewing and purchase.

Ms. Blake does “wicker repair, hand-woven caning and shaker tape” from her home.

“This is our fourth of fifth year here,” she said. “Not too many people are doing caning, I’m trying to change that, one student at a time (as an instructor in the craft). I started caning in high school and I have been teaching off and on for twenty years.”

Ms. Blake says she finds

the chairs she turns into absolute gems “everywhere, at flea markets, on the side of the road. I’ll come back from shopping and there will be a chair on my porch!”

The opportunity to be more involved than just as an accommodating host was not lost on Nancy Therrien and fellow members of the Grafton Historical Society. The Society, which Ms. Therrien heads up as president, was represented with an antiques table, books and maps and a silent auction table.

“See this 1887 map,” Ms. Therrien said, pointing to a large item lying on the table at which she and Helen Blazis were positioned. ‘It shows some of the oldest mills in the town.’

Charged with the lofty goal of fostering interest in Grafton’s past, collecting and preserving Grafton artifacts and memorabilia and providing resources for students and future generations, the Grafton Historical Society relishes the opportunity to put on



Nancy Therrien, right, and Helen Blazis at the Grafton Historical Society's table during the 53rd annual Antique & Arts Fair. Ms. Therrien is Society president; Ms. Blazis is a docent.



It was a family affair for the Blake family at Grafton's Antique & Arts Fair. Steve and Elaine Blake are pictured with Peter and Melissa Blake for the display of chairs Elaine canes from her home business in Sterling.

an annual Antique & Arts Fair that draws hundreds to the Town Common. “The turnout was unbelievable,” the Society said, immedi-

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North All-Stars prevail in game at Doyle Field

The Central Mass. North/South All-Star football game was held on Friday, June 17, at Doyle Field in Leominster. The All-Star team included players from South County and the Blackstone Valley.

South players included Tim Visbeek, Briant Johnson, Jon Carlos, John Mimawi, Ryan Boyce, Michael Nadeau, Colin Falconer, Trey Howe, Cam Ayotte, Brian Dillon, Kai Belanger, Matt Wildman, Alexander Siwik, Adam Hillerstrom, Bryce Patterson, Jordan Rivera, Noan

Ostrowski, John Furno, Trout Marnell, Charlie McMahon, Antoine Lacourt, Owen Fitzgerald, Andrew Lavoie, Joe Hennessey, Ricky Leach III, Nolan Legere, Kevin Cunningham, Kevin Paulino and Joe Maxim.

South All-Star coaches included coaches from Oxford: Head Coach Jeff Clarkson,

Assistants James Royster, Jimmy Nolan, James Small and Pete Lewis.

The final score was North 14, South 3. Congratulations to all.

Photos by Sally Patterson. See more photos on our Facebook page.



Clockwise from above: QB Cam Ayotte of Millbury; Jon Carlos Estrada of Shepherd Hill; John Furno of BVT; Briant Johnson of Sutton; the captains at mid-field for the coin toss.

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Clockwise from above: Adam Hillerstrom of Grafton; Jim Himawi of Grafton; Bryce Patterson (#35) of Bartlett; Tim Visbeek of Northbridge; Colin Falconer (#15) of Northbridge; Ryan Boyce (#12) of Northbridge; the coaches.



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Terri and Mike

Northbridge 250th parade, fireworks set for July 16

In what might be described as a "better late than never" moment, the town of Northbridge's annual fireworks display will take place not on the holiday weekend but rather on Saturday, July 16, at the Middle School.

The show will coincide

with the town's 250th-anniversary festivities. Rain date for the pyrotechnics is Sunday, July 17th.

Activities will kick off with a parade at 10:00 a.m. and will include trolley tours of the historical district. Gates open at 6:00 for the remainder of

the event, which according to the 250th Anniversary Committee will include food trucks, facing painting and more.

The 250th has already been observed with a spaghetti supper and other happenings.

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Food Truck Festival in Millbury back with a bang

BY ROD LEE

To say that the Millbury Redevelopment Authority's Food Truck Festival & Craft Fair came back with a bang after a brief hiatus because of Covid-19 would be an understatement.

"Absolutely fantastic, the best festival we've had,"

Leonard Mort of the MRA said. "The weather was incredible, it was almost like being set up on a frying pan! We had the most trucks ever, twenty, and thirty-two craft vendors. Our volunteers were twelve hours in the hot sun."

The event, the fifth annual, was held in the rear parking area of Millbury

High School on Martin St. on May 22nd and it had something for everyone including a variety of American and ethnic fare, entertainment and raffles.

Proceeds from the festival benefit projects the Millbury Redevelopment Authority takes on, like the handsome clock it recently placed in the center of town.

"We have several projects that have been suggested, four or so," Mr. Mort said. These will be discussed at the MRA's next meeting, in August.

Mr. Mort was especially pleased that "a relative newcomer," Say Cheese, a Shrewsbury-based food truck, emerged as the People's Choice Best Food Truck for 2022.

Consisting of unpaid municipal employees, five members in all, the Millbury Redevelopment Authority was established in 1963 and raises money through donations from businesses and residents for community-betterment initiatives it tackles.



Len Mort of the Millbury Redevelopment Authority congratulates operators of the Say Cheese food truck, winner of the People's Choice award at the MRA's fifth annual Food Truck Festival & Craft Fair.

Submit your restaurant news for The Feisty Fork column to rodlee.1963@gmail.com.

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Happenings!

NOTE: Community bulletin board-type items are welcome for inclusion in the Happenings! section of the Xpress newspapers. Please allow enough lead time for publication. Email your calendar or event notice to rodlee.1963@gmail.com.

THROUGHOUT JULY

• "Beyond Blooms, Textures in Our Garden," photography by Don McCallister, will be on display and available for sale all month at Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 E. Main St., Webster. A meet-the-artist reception will be held on Saturday, July 23, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Viewing hours for the public are Tuesday-Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Wednesdays 10:00

a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Call 508-949-6232 or email deb@booklovers-gourmet.com for further info. A statement from the artist: "Look beyond the blooms and you'll discover a never-ending variety of shoots and textures. And having a talented gardener, such as my wife, to design the garden helps. I hope this collection will inspire its viewers to look for unexpected scenery in our yards and in the natural world."

UPCOMING AT INDIAN RANCH IN WEBSTER:

July 8, Get The Led Out; July 9, Scott McCreery; July 17, Little River Band; July 23, Ann Wilson of Heart; July 24, Three Dog Night; July 30, The Pike Hairfest; July 31, TESLA; August 5, "Weird" Al

Yankovic; August 6, Collective Soul and Switchfoot; August 7, Lost 80s Live; August 12, ABBA The Concert; August 13, Badfish; August 20, Home Free; September 2, Extreme. Tickets are available at www.indianranch.com, by calling 1-800-514-3849 or at the Indian Ranch Box Office.

FRIDAY, JULY 8

• Static performs at Andy's Neighborhood Center, 9 Frederick St., Webster, 7:00-10:00 p.m.

SATURDAY, JULY 9

• A Night of Zeppelin: A Led Zeppelin Tribute Band, comes to Douglas Orchard and Farm, 36 Locust St., Douglas, as part of the facility's Summer Concert Series, 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. Admission is \$10 cash per person 16-and-older, kids get in free, no rain date. Go to douglasorchardandfarm.com for more info.

• The Dudley Grange presents "The Great American Band Reunion," a fourteen-piece show band offering Rock & Roll, Blues and R&B from the 60s and 70s, as part of its Summer Music Series, at 6:00 p.m. on the lawn at the Grange, 139 Center Road, Dudley. Rain date is July 16. This is a free concert. Bring a lawn chair. Water and soda will be available along with homemade goodies from the Grange's bake table. This event is sponsored



The Hip Swayers will deliver a dose of Americana at the Asa Waters Mansion in downtown Millbury on Saturday, July 30.

by the Dudley Cultural Council and the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

SUNDAY, JULY 10

• The New England Country Music Club will host a dance featuring

the Rachel Landry Band at the Progressive Club, 18 Whitin St., Uxbridge. Doors open at 12:30 p.m., live music 1:00-5:00 p.m. www.facebook.com/NECountry-MusicClub.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 13

• A Blue Shades luncheon concert will take place at the Asa Waters Mansion, 123 Elm St., Millbury,

HAPPENINGS!

continued on page 11



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"Texture," by Don McCallister, whose photographic artwork is being exhibited throughout the month of July at Booklovers' Gourmet in Webster.

HAPPENINGS!

continued from page 10

from noon to 1:00 p.m. Free admission.

THURSDAY, JULY 14

• ValleyCast presents Blackstone Valley Bluegrass as part of its summer concert series, 6:00 p.m., at the Whitin Mill complex, 50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville. In the event of rain the show will move indoors to the Singh Performance Center.

THURSDAY, JULY 14

• 4Ever Fab, a Beatles tribute band, will perform at the Millbury Senior Center, One River St., from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Call 508-865-9154 for more info.

FRIDAY, JULY 15

• Joe Cicero performs at Andy's Neighborhood Center, 9 Frederick St., Webster, 7:00-10:00 p.m.

SATURDAY, JULY 16

• The town of Northbridge's 250th anniversary festivities will kick off with a parade from the elementary school on Crescent St. at 10:00

a.m. and conclude with fireworks at the middle school on Linwood Ave. Gates will open at 6:00 p.m. for the pyrotechnics show, which will be preceded by activities for the whole family: food trucks, music, face painting, potato-sack races and more.

• Douglas Orchard and Farm, 36 Locust St., Douglas, welcomes Araxas—a Santana Tribute Band, for a show at 36 Locust St., Douglas, 5:30-8:00 p.m. Part of the Douglas Orchard and Farm's Summer Concert Series. Admission is \$10 per person 16-and-older, kids get in free, no rain date. Visit douglasorchardandfarm.com for more info.

TUESDAY, JULY 19

• Paint Night is back at Millbury's First Congregational Church, 148 W. Main St., Millbury. Sue Dion will provide instruction in the art of acrylic painting in Fellowship Hall at 6:30 p.m. Paint "A Moose in Moonlight." Cold beverages will be available. Bring a snack. Register for this event at suedionart.com.

THURSDAY, JULY 21

• Icons & Legends Concert, including a Maine Lobster Bake in York, is being presented by the Northbridge Senior Center. Cost is \$110 per person. Sign up with Amy at the front desk. Call 508-234-2002 for more info.

• Enjoy a Far from Eden summer concert at the Asa Waters Mansion,

123 Elm St., Millbury, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Free admission.

• ValleyCast presents the Country Wild Heart Band as part of its summer concert series, 6:00 p.m., Whitin Mill complex, 50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville. In the event of rain the show will move indoors to the Singh Performance Center.

SATURDAY, JULY 23

• Exit 17th Band, a Rock & Roll Band, will perform at part of Douglas Orchard and Farm's Summer Concert Series, 36 Locust St., Douglas, 5:30-8:00 p.m. Admission is \$10 per person 16-and-older. Kids get in free, no rain date.

HAPPENINGS!

continued on page 12



BLACKSTONE VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SIGNATURE EVENT

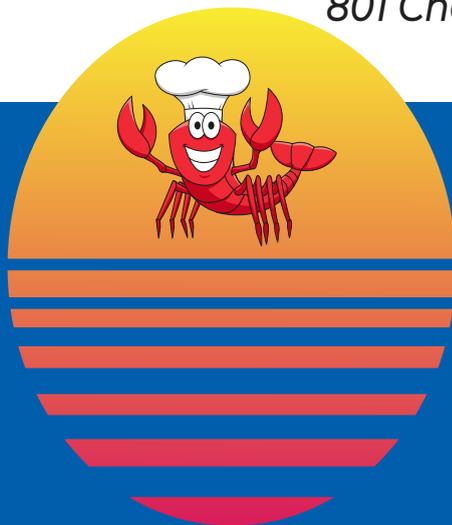
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HAPPENINGS!

continued from page 11

SUNDAY, JULY 24

• The New England Country Music Club will host a dance featuring The Farm Hands at the Progressive Club, 18 Whitin St., Uxbridge. Doors open at 12:30 p.m., live music 1:00-5:00 p.m. www.facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub.

THURSDAY, JULY 28

• ValleyCast presents Michelle Canning as part of its summer concert series, 6:00 p.m., Whitin Mill complex, 50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville. In the event of rain the show will move indoors to the Singh Performance Center.



Michelle Canning will perform at the Whitin Mill complex in Whitinsville on Thursday, July 28 as part of ValleyCast's summer concert series.

FRIDAY, JULY 29

• Rockwell Valentine Jazz Trio performs at Andy's Neighborhood Center, 9 Frederick St., Webster, 7:00-10:00 p.m.

SATURDAY, JULY 30

• Douglas Orchard and Farm's Summer Concert Series continues with a performance by Petty Larceny, a Tom Petty Tribute Band, 5:30-8:00 p.m., 36 Locust St., Douglas. \$10 cash per person, kids are admitted free, no rain date. Visit douglasorchardandfarm.com for more details.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 4

• The Hip Swayers will perform a summer concert at the Asa Waters Mansion, 123 Elm St., Millbury, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Free admission.

• ValleyCast presents Ash & Eric (formerly The Promise is Hope), 6:00 p.m., Whitin Mill complex, 50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville. In the event of rain the show will move indoors to the Singh Performance Center.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 6

• 4 Ever Fab, a Beatles Tribute Band, will perform as part of Douglas Orchard and Farm's Summer Concert series, 36 Locust St., Douglas, 5:30-8:00 p.m. Admission is \$10 per person for those 16-and-older. Kids get in free, no rain date. Go to douglasorchardandfarm.com for more info.

• "Donny and the Coyotes," a seven-piece Rock & Roll band, will perform on the lawn at the Dudley Grange, 139 Center Road, Dudley, at 7:00 p.m. Rain date is

August 13th. This event is part of the Grange's Summer Music Series and is free to the public. Bring a lawn chair. Water and soda will be available along with homemade goodies from the Grange's bake table. This concert is sponsored by the Dudley Cultural Council and the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 8

• The New England Country Music Club will host a dance featuring the Rustic Country Band at the Progressive Club, 18 Whitin St., Uxbridge. Doors open at 12:30 p.m., live music 1:00-5:00 p.m. www.facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 9

• Judy Saves the Day, a puppet show, will take place at the Asa Waters Mansion, 123 Elm St., Millbury, from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. Free admission.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 11

• ValleyCast presents the Claffin Hill Symphony Orchestras Summer Wind, 6:00 p.m., Whitin Mill complex, 50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville. In the event of rain the show will move indoors to the Singh Performance Center.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 12

• Evan Wood Trio performs at Andy's Neighborhood Center, 9 Frederick St., Webster, 7:00-10:00 p.m.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 13

• Counterfeit Cash, a Johnny Cash Tribute Band, will perform at

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In inclement weather, the concert moves indoors to the Singh Performance Center at the same location.

Kick-Off Concert June 30

Samuel Bowan from 5:30-6:30
Blackstone Valley Community Concert Band from 6:30-8:00

July 7

Chuck & Mud and the Hole in the Dam Band

July 14

Blackstone Valley Bluegrass Band

July 21

Country Wild Heart Band

July 28

Michelle Canning Band

August 4

Ash & Eric

August 11

Claffin Hill Summer Winds

August 18

Le'Mixx Band

August 25

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September 1

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HAPPENINGS!

continued from page 12

Douglas Orchard and Farm, 36 Locust St., Douglas, 5:30-8:00 p.m. Admission is \$10 per person 16-and-older, kids get in free, no rain date. Go to douglasorchardandfarm.com for further details.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 17

• Taking it to the Streets: The Ultimate Doobie Brothers Tribute Show, will be performed in Plymouth, New Hampshire at the Flying Monkey Theatre—a trip offered by the Northbridge Senior



The music of Tom Petty will be showcased when the band Petty Larceny performs at Douglas Orchard & Farm on Saturday, July 30.

Center. Show and a buffet lunch are included at a cost of \$110 per person. Sign up with the front desk. Call 508-234-2002 for more info.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 18

• ValleyCast presents Le'Mixx Band, 6:00 p.m., Whitin Mill complex, 50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville. In the event of rain the show will move indoors to the Singh Performance Center.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 25

• ValleyCast presents Grayson Ty, 6:00 p.m., Whitin Mill complex, 50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville. In the event of rain the show will move indoors to the Singh Performance Center.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 26

• Joe Cicero performs at Andy's Neighborhood Center, 9 Frederick St., Webster, 7:00-10:00 p.m.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 27

• The Auburn Historical Society & Museum presents the first annual Parking Lot Craft Fair, 41 South St., Auburn, 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., rain or shine. For more information or to reserve a spot contact Helen Poirier at auburnmuseum@verizon.net, or stop by the museum Tuesdays or Saturdays between 9:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

• ValleyCast presents The Eagles Experience, 6:00 p.m., Whitin Mill complex, 50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville. In the event of rain the show will move indoors to the Singh Performance Center.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

• The Northbridge Senior Center is offering a "Lake Winnepesaukee Cruise & Castle in the Clouds Estate Tour," including lunch at Harts Turkey Farm, for \$151 per person. Sign up with Amy at the front desk. Call 508-234-2002 for more info.

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Greatest Hits Cannabis Co. striking all the right notes

BY ROD LEE

It comes as no surprise to Joe Villatico, chief executive officer of Greatest Hits Cannabis Co., that the marijuana industry has exploded since retail sales of the product in Massa-

chusetts began in 2018.

The state recently topped \$3 billion in revenue realized from purchases of marijuana for recreational and medical use, according to the Cannabis Control Commission. Dozens of licenses have been granted

by the CCC from one end of the Bay State to the other.

Mr. Villatico, the son of Arnie Villatico of Periwinkle's Restaurant celebrity, and the brother of Jason Villatico, who now operates its successor—J.

Anthony's Italian Grill—on the Auburn/Oxford town line, is at the forefront of a business that is growing seemingly faster even than the plants that sustain its livelihood.

A father of two, Mr. Villatico left restaurant work

at the age of fifteen “to become a serial entrepreneur,” he said in a small conference room in the Greatest Hits building on Chase St. in Dudley on June 2nd. After partnering with Robert Jordan, founder of Native Roots, on the startup of a cannabis company in Colorado, “my attorney said ‘maybe there’s an opportunity for you in Massachusetts.’ I came home in 2019 and put eyes on the premises”—the old Ethan Allen mill.

The success of Native Roots, which rapidly grew to more than twenty dispensaries, fed Mr. Villatico's desire to replicate that achievement in Massachusetts.

Greatest Hits has “three locations, Dudley, Lynn and Taunton,” he said. “We have about forty employees and will grow to two hundred fifty to three hundred. We are starting cultivation (in a wing of the mill) July 1st.”

The public is embracing the store, which sells only

marijuana for recreational use (not medical).

“I think the response has been amazing,” he said. “A good amount of our dollars will go back to the community. To take an old mill that was used for storage and turn it into this, giving back to the community is a very big thing. Cannabis is the vehicle in 2022; this is the new yesterday.”

A onetime dirt biking enthusiast who enjoys the fast-paced nature of the cannabis industry, Joe Villatico points to the “\$52 million we raised” as a positive indicator that the venture will prosper. Another reason for optimism, he said, is “Massachusetts has done a good job limiting licenses. A lot of it has to do with experience, like the kind my partner has. We went through roughly a year of approvals to get our Community Host Agreement. The CCC (Cannabis Control Commission) is highly involved. You have

CANNABIS

continued on page 15

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CANNABIS

continued from page 14

to take the right precautions. We have one of the best compliance rates and Lucas Baier, our VP of retail, he is phenomenal.”

The lobby of the building on Chase Ave. is situated in direct proximity to the retail store. The lobby is simply appointed with a welcoming floor mat bearing the message “Let the Good Times Roll”—a nod to a music theme that

is prevalent throughout. Mounted guitars and a black-and-white décor with a heavy emphasis on musical notes contributes to a warm atmosphere.

There is an even a “DJ station” in one corner of the retail store; yes, Willie Nelson is among those marijuana aficionados whose framed pictures are displayed there.

The retail store is a beehive of activity, with ample staff in place to handle transactions.

As expected, cannabis is booming in the Bay State, with cultivators, product manufacturers, retailers, independent testing labs, microbusinesses, couriers and others riding the wave.

Greatest Hills Cannabis Co. is off to a good start, in joining that mix.

Go to greatesthillscc.com for more information.

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Toto the Tornado Kitten revisiting Grafton Public Library

The Grafton Public Library is pleased to welcome back Toto the Tornado Kitten. The hero cat and his companion, Jonathan, will be visiting Grafton on Friday, July 29 at 10:30 a.m. This program is for all ages: kids, teens and adults.

One of our favorite summer guests, Toto made headlines in 2011 when he was found clinging to life after a devastating F3 tornado struck Western and Central Massachusetts. Firefighter Jonathan adopted the tiny kitten, and later published a book about their adventure called "Toto the

Tornado Kitten."

Together they visit schools and libraries, raising money for animal shelters throughout the state.

Jonathan and Toto have visited Grafton over half a dozen times. In honor of our favorite feline friend, the Grafton Public Library will be collecting pet food and supplies for the Grafton Food Bank in July and August. Bring your donations of new, unopened dog, cat or small animal food, litter or supplies to the Grafton Public Library. Items particularly needed are dry

cat food and canned dog food. There will be a collection box in the lobby.

Animals abound in the library's Summer Reading programs, GPL Director Beth Schreiber said. Signup is required. Register online at www.graftonlibrary.org/events.

This program is supported in part by a grant from the Grafton Cultural Council, a local agency, which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.

Learn more about the library's Summer Reading Program at www.graftonlibrary.org/srp.

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Sutton parade, fireworks and more 'blazes' anew in 2022

BY ROD LEE

What the weatherman threw at the organizers of the town of Sutton's dog-mayor parade, fireworks and other activities on June 26th in terms of broiling temperatures was no match for the event's appeal to residents. They came in droves. They set up lawn chairs along Boston Road. They

congregated in the center for cow-chip bingo tickets, food, beverages and ice cream from Julia Moriconi's truck.

"It was a very busy, crazy day (and HOT!!)," Coleen Tarentino said. "Great attendance, awesome feedback—the fireworks were outstanding, just a great, great day!"

The newly elected mayor himself, Waffles, adorned

in his "official" bandana, presided over the ceremonies.

The mood in the moments directly before the parade began around four o'clock was anticipatory, reflecting all that was worth looking forward to.

Gathered beneath a tent, Barry Marando, an eighty-

PARADE

continued on page 19



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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**

PARADE

continued from page 18

year resident of Sutton, said “if anything goes on in town, we know about it.” Joining Mr. Marando were Jan Marando (“I was born on Buttonwood Ave.”), Butch Marando and Cindy Marando.

On the Common, Megan Berg and Sarah Gillespie were busy selling cow chip bingo tickets and trying to ignore the heat.

“We’re with 4H, we’re Sutton preservationists,” they said. “Our kids are showing their cows in the parade. Our goal is six

hundred tickets sold. We’re not there yet!”

Occupying a spot alongside a line of food trucks, Julia Moriconis said “my business is in Tatnuck Square in Worcester. We make everything from scratch. I’ve been doing ice cream for two years. I’m more mobile than ever.”

Ms. Tarentino gave credit to Jonathan Rocheleau and April Eaton Brown as “the two individuals who cooked up this whole affair. They first held the parade and fireworks in 2019, the next two years were delayed because of Covid, and so this was its sopho-

more year. I cannot say enough about how lucky Sutton is to have these two amongst the townspeople. They are terrific people, dedicated, hardworking, the salt of the earth. This event would never have happened without all their hard work, heart and soul.”

Back for the first time since 2019, the town of Sutton’s parade and fireworks drew a large turnout despite 90-degree temperatures.



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Healthier Baking in the Blackstone Valley

BY CHRISTINE GALEONE

Summer mornings are something many of us enjoy. They’re a little slower-paced and brighter. And a leisurely breakfast or morning snack is an added benefit.

But a leisurely breakfast consisting of donuts, pancakes or store-bought muffins isn’t always the best compliment to these summer mornings. Instead, why not try a healthier breakfast that features blueberries, a summertime favorite for many? These blueberry banana protein treats could be exactly what you need.

Although they look like muffins, these treats are much healthier. They don’t have any added sugar or flour, and they’re packed with protein. They also contain heart-healthy ingredients, including blueberries, bananas and walnuts. Cinnamon also has antioxidant properties.

Blueberries are considered to be a superfood for many reasons. They are certified by the American Heart Association to be a heart-healthy food. Loaded with antioxidants, they are believed to be beneficial in fighting cancer and in improving brain health. Additionally, the anthocyanins – which give the fruit its deep color – may have antidiabetic effects.

Blueberry Banana Protein Treats

Ingredients:
1 Cup of Blueberries
1 Cup of Chopped Walnuts

1 tsp. of Cinnamon
½ tsp. of Ground Cardamom
2 mashed ripe bananas
2 eggs
6 tablespoons of smooth peanut butter
Directions:
Rinse the blueberries.
Mix together all the dry ingredients.



Mix together all the wet ingredients.

Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients.

Pour the batter evenly into 8 muffin cups (glass cups or a muffin tin) after placing muffin/cupcake liners into the cups or tins

Press the blueberries into the batter.

Bake at 350 degrees for about 21 minutes.

Although these treats are definitely better fresh, as refrigerating them with the paper causes them to stick to the paper quite a bit, they’re a healthier choice than many leisurely morning snacks or breakfasts. And they’re a great compliment to a summer morning! Happy (healthier) baking!

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LIVING WITH LUKE

amyleclaire@hotmail.com

Luke's personality emerges; tales from the fox den

BY AMY LECLAIRE

Luke Valentino, at just over four months, is growing up before our eyes. I could write about how nicely he's acclimated to our family's routine or how he's already learned to swim, and walk on a leash. I could write about how he sits and lowers his head to the girls at the bus stop, adopting a child-like gentleness while he identifies with them (you're small, playful and present just like me – let's be friends!) I could write

about his accomplishments over the past four months, but there's something more noteworthy about Luke, something worthy of a mention.

His dog personality is simply irresistible! "Who Luke is" is so much more than "what Luke does." Every dog I've owned has had unique traits; quirks and special tendencies that have left a tattoo on my heart. Max was my carefree mongrel who followed me to school every morning. "Go home, Max!" I can still hear the chants of my neighborhood friends. Max did not go home. Max, a dog of the 70's, chose his own path. Duke was my massive German shepherd. He was ma-

cho and reserved, a 90's man who carried a log around in the yard. Lincoln was The King, the inspiration for this very column, the robust athlete of a dog with paws as big as his heart. After he passed, I couldn't imagine loving another dog again.

I held off for some time, until my heart began to swell with longing. I missed the happy wiggle. I missed walking up the basement stairs to be greeted with the elation of a sibling parted at birth with her twin—to finally reunite at the airport of our home. A dog's love is unconditional and constant. They know you. They see you. They love and forgive you. I missed all that a dog brings. Never would I have



Keeping up with the big guys.

imagined that a puppy named Luke Valentino was about to bring even more with his new brand of love.

"What's that, Luke?" I follow the path of his gaze while we sit together on the front steps. Luke's latest study happens to be an ant, one foolishly tiny yet surprisingly quick. The ant seems to sense my puppy's overbearing glare yet—caught in an ironic defense—the creature is too small to be caught. Luke stretches a slow paw across his moving body, but fails to grip the bug. Even more promising; he is more interested in watching the ant fumble along a groove than he is in killing it. Luke, otherwise known as Professor Luke, is the most curious and intelligent puppy I've ever owned.

"How is it possible, Mom, for a living thing to be so

small?" He looks up at me for a split second to acknowledge the discovery, the mystery that is the ant.

"That's an ant, Luke." The teacher in me points out the obvious while my puppy continues to watch and learn. His curiosity and "chill" temperament are qualities I've come to adore. He seems to study the way the world works and, alternately, lets me know when it's not working.

A hanging set of "door knob" bells designed to teach a pup how to "tap and ring" to go pee outside are no exception. I hung them during early training stages. Luke barked with the fury of a Chihuahua. I went on to explain my reasoning to a pup, perhaps, too intelligent for his own good. "Look, Luke. If you tap the bells (I demonstrated) you can tell Mommy you have to go pee-pee." My aim to teach a lesson was not lost on Luke. His bark faded to a grumble. He loves to learn. He aims to please. He simply didn't want to do either with the aid of bells. He dug in his puppy heels, and barked some more. "Those clinkers don't belong on a door! You can achieve the same result supervising me more closely!" I took the set off and let them fall to the ground. I took the jingle out of their jangle, hoping to appease my skeptical pup. He inspected them with a

peculiar nose; poking the bells, backing off, and grumbling with irritation. "Let's put them away, Luke." The bells have long since become a play toy.

Luke has become a star student in our family, seated comfortably "at his spot" with an inquisitive bear cub face. "What's today's lesson going to be about?" One lesson happened to be about how other dogs walk on a leash. Luke had been sitting outside on the front steps one morning doing what he loves—watching. There were fluttering birds, skittering squirrels and, more pertinently, dogs of all shapes and size strolling by. He narrowed his gaze and glanced up at me. "The doggies are going for a walk, Luke." I capitalized on another teachable moment. "See how they don't bite their leashes." He broke into a miniature puppy smile. "I think I can manage that." My dog training wheels began to turn.

"Hey! Do you mind if we catch up with you?" Shamelessly, I invited myself to join the 8:00 a.m. dog walking group. My puppy needed friends. He needed to interact with dogs that don't think like him.

The Dog Moms welcomed us to walk with their eclectic mix of dogs: There is Oscar, a bashful Dachshund-Chihuahua mix; Lexi, a dainty Rescue who loves to play chase; Maui, a bossy Frenchie who makes her role in the group clear; and Okemo, a regal Husky with ice blue eyes and a territorial stride.

"My name is Luke Valentino!" Luke fit right in. He trotted alongside the pack with confidence, boasting his best walking behavior. He even conformed to Maui's insistence that, ahem, he not accept any treats from her mom. "That is my mother and those are my treats." She snarled in his face. Luke accepted Maui's sense of entitlement with a

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casual attitude. After all, he was the newbie in the group. “I got you, Girl. Where we all headed?”

Though calm and cooperative on walks, Luke shows a different side while playing with other dogs. “Bring it on. I’ll go easy on you.” He jumps on the back of Mandy,



Luke and Mandy play rough.

a one-year-old Golden who’s as patient as she is playful. He shows his teeth to Lexi, who dodges him in a game of chase. He barks playfully at Bruno, a Senior Golden who hasn’t the energy for him. “C’mon! Let’s wrestle!” Luke crinkles his snout and shows his teeth. He loves to play rough. His tenacity, though cute, had me frightened a few times. Read on.

A new fox family had just moved into the hood, creating homes beneath my neighbors’ sheds, and swapping dens as foxes do. I knew Luke sensed their presence. Meanwhile, we all saw glimpses of fox dashing through our yards, sometimes carrying a rodent or,

pups unmistakably his own size? He had been more and more drawn to the fox den; wandering closer and closer to the forbidden area. His curiosity, I feared, could kill him. What if the parents had come home to find a zooming pup in the mix of their family dynamic? Worse, what if Daddy Fox, clever and wise, tried to lure my pup to his crib for a tenderloin feast?

I hauled the pitchfork out of the shed and set it down with the force of a character from a Steven King novel. I even made eye contact with Daddy Fox. He stood pensive and thin, standing twenty feet away from me to protect his young while I gave him a piece of my mind. “Go Away.”

My measure, even in its grand audacity, proved no comparison to Luke’s confrontation with Daddy Fox. The incident, captured through the eyes and care of my son, Ben, has brought life to a family folktale, a story told and retold about the adventures of a protective pup and a sly fox.

Luke had been loose in the yard when Daddy Fox dashed across our driveway. All training bets were off for a three-month-old puppy who had grown protective of his yard. “You don’t

belong!!” He barked and shot across the street after the fox. Ben followed and supervised an interaction that took place atop the hill of my good neighbor’s lawn. Both animals, in ruthless opposition, stopped and stared at each other, a mere fifteen feet between them. Daddy Fox hissed. Little Luke barked and barked some more. He refused to back down. He lowered his puppy voice to that of a huskier, older dog. He stood his ground, unaware of his miniature size yet innately conditioned to protect his family. He puffed out his puppy mane, and did his job.



Sutton fox. Photo by Meagan Fedigan

Had the fox discerned the puppy in the puff? Perhaps, but he still ran off, his fluff of a tail tucked between his legs. Ben was able to catch Luke in a follow-up race, and relieve himself of a plausible alternate scenario: a horrifying Choke Out

between Fox and Puppy.

The incident had me spooked. A few days later, I opened the front door to haul in groceries. I placed them on the counter then went back outside to chase after Luke, who had dashed outside when I came in. “Luke!” I called his name, but he didn’t come back (such was out of character for my rule-abiding pup). I ran to the back yard. My heart pounded. I scanned the fox den area. An eerie quiet surrounded my yard. I moved to the other side of the house. Still, no Luke.

Visions of a slinking fox returning to his den caved

house a few more times. Finally, I decided to go back inside and come up with a plan, a Call Out to the community.

“Luke!!!” There he stood wiggling and smiling up at me. He had never left the house! “Momma, I heard you calling and calling my name! I’m right here! Is everything okay?” I kneeled down, picked him up and flattened him to my belly like a frog (our signature hug). He licked my entire face as he always does and I felt his little heart pump with pride. “Oh, Luke—I thought you...”

He smiled innocently, as puppies do. “I’ve been here the whole time, Momma. I heard you calling my name. I tried to find you, but I was door-blocked.”

“I thought you—” I closed my eyes, truly grateful for my own mistake. “Never mind, Luke.”

The fox story, like all things involving Luke, came with a happy ending, and, thankfully, the family seems to have moved on.

*Please note – my own family has since taken several training and safety measures to keep Luke safe and protected in our yard!

Stay tuned for more on Living with Luke.



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TALES FROM BEYOND

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Gay City State Park, haunted ghost town - Part 1

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

Here is another two-part account of one of New England's most haunted ghost towns. It is difficult to imagine that Gay City State Park in Hebron, Connecticut was once a fully populated community of twenty-five families, a woolen mill, a satinet mill, two gristmills, charcoal pits, a church, a general store and other such necessary mercantilism found in the small hamlets that dotted the early New England landscape.

Other than stone walls and foundations, there is not much evidence left to show that people once called the place home. There are also the ghosts that occasionally remind

explorers of the old town that not only were they once residents in the flesh, but they are eternally tented there in spirit.

A small burial ground near the entrance of the park contains a few members of founding families. The stones are placed on either side of the burying yard facing each other. This lends credence to what history tells us about the two prominent families of Gay City, The Gays and the Sumners, and the animosity they had toward one another.

The original name for the village was Factory Hollow. A preacher named Elijah Andrus steered his congregation toward the wooded hollow in 1796 only to leave four years later

due to disagreements and quarrels within the congregation. This left Reverend Henry P. Sumner as the new spiritual leader. His grave is among the scant stones in the burying ground near the entrance of the park. Also in 1800 John Gay was chosen to head the town's affairs.

Reverend Sumner held church services twice a week, which to some was a bit too taxing on their time. To augment the attendance, rum was served during the meetings, but the libations would prove to be the downfall of the sermons. Arguments and even fistfights became common during the lectures, so much so that many of the families began migrating away from the town, includ-

ing several of the founding families.

Reverend Sumner's son, Charles, founded a mill for the production of rag paper. Residents, along with laborers from nearby towns, began the arduous task of transporting stones for the foundation, dam and beautiful stonework canal. Unfortunately, the powers of the dark did not wait very long to taint the massive undertaking.

During the construction of the dam and canal, one worker studied the angle of the duct and concluded that the water was supernaturally flowing uphill toward the factory. He is reported to have dropped his tools and quit on the spot, calling the phenomenon the work of the devil. Others would

follow in his wake, bringing the construction of the venture to a temporary halt.

When the mill opened, and Factory Hollow saw a slight incline in prosperity. Many of the town's young men later enlisted in the Civil War. Most of them never returned from battle, leaving a number of homes in Factory Hollow unoccupied and crumbling until a time when the elements of nature reclaimed the land. The paper mill burned in 1879, leaving the last vestige of the hamlet to the elements. Before long, trees and brush sprouted from the decaying cellar holes and foundations.

For the most part, Factory Hollow was now a true ghost town. Stories abound of ghostly encounters and

unseen forces that wander among the living who visit the haunted hamlet.

Just before the Civil War, a jewelry peddler came rolling into town on his usual route. Peddlers were common in those days and sold everything from tin to top hats. The salesman suddenly disappeared without a trace. Shortly after his disappearance, a human skeleton was discovered in one of the charcoal pits at the edge of town. Evidently the purveyor of goods had a healthy sum of money on him that attracted the attention of some unsavory kind. No clues as to who was responsible for the crime ever turned up, and to this day, the murder remains unsolved.

CHIEF'S CORNER

swojnar@dudleypolice.com

Counterfeit Currency

BY CHIEF STEVEN J. WOJNAR DUDLEY POLICE DEPARTMENT

Modern computer technology has been used to falsify several documents including money, driver's licenses, and vehicle inspection stickers. We have encountered several instances in recent years where counterfeit currency

was passed off as real. I was asked to provide some information on the penalties for this type of offense.

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 267 Section 12 is the law regarding counterfeit currency. It states in part, "Whoever brings into this commonwealth or has in his possession a false, forged or counterfeit bill or note... with intent to utter or pass the same or to render

the same current as true, knowing the same to be false, forged or counterfeit, shall be punished..." When these documents are passed off as true, it is larceny of the goods and / or services. A violation of this law is a felony charge, regardless of the value of the bills or documents used. Even a false \$1 bill amounts to a felony. The penalties for violation include imprisonment in

the state prison for not more than five years, or by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars and imprisonment in jail for not more than one year.

Anyone engaging in this activity is assuming a huge risk. The potential penalties should discourage people from engaging in this action. This is another example as to why it is better do things the right way than risk the serious

consequences.

For those still seeking vaccination or COVID related information, it can be found at www.dudleyma.gov or by calling 508-949-8036. During these challenging times, we, at the Dudley Police Department, greatly appreciate the support we receive from our community.

Thanks again for your questions and comments. Please send them to me at

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

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THE CAR DOCTOR

jpaul@aanortheast.com

Jeep Wrangler a good summer and winter vehicle ... but ...



BY JOHN PAUL

Q. I was wondering if people hire you to find vehicles for them. If so, how does that process work? I am looking for a relatively inexpensive Jeep Wrangler for the beach. If you do not, do you have any leads? Favorite websites? Any help will help.

A. There are car brokers who search for vehicles (not me, perhaps a second career). Today new and used cars are still in short supply and people are holding onto their current vehicle longer than any time in history. The Jeep Wrangler is a fun summer and winter vehicle and also holds its value longer than many SUVs. If I was looking, I would check Jeep forums, Facebook

pages, and websites such as iSeeCars, CarGurus and AutoTrader. Jeeps can also be prone to rust issues, transmission and transfer case failure and any used Jeep should be checked by a good repair shop prior to purchase.

Q. I have a problem that I hope you can help me with. I have a 2019 Toyota Highlander. About a year ago, it started having a problem with the rear hatchback door. Sometimes when I press the button to open it, it begins to open about one foot or so but then stops. Sometimes I am unable to get it opened or closed but after a few tries it does. I brought it to the dealer who said they ran a diagnostic test but tells me everything looks okay.

A. I would start by erasing the vehicle computer memory (the equivalent of a computer reboot). Start with disconnecting the battery and connect the cable ends together for 15 seconds. This will clear any memory functions (including radio presets and seat memory). Now you will need to re-program the lift gate. With the lift gate fully open push and hold the close button

until it beeps four times, and the lift gate closes. This will reset the system. You will also need to reset the auto up and down feature of the windows. This is also simple, open the driver's window fully, now close the window and hold the up button for a few seconds this should reset the automatic controls.

Q. I have owned a 2010 VW EOS since 2012. It had about 57,000 miles on it and is great running condition. In the years that I've owned it, I have had the convertible top repaired a number of times due to failure to open or close and/or water leakage. The dealership I had covered the cost of these repairs because the EOS was still under warranty. We moved to a location that was very far away and began using another VW dealership for repairs and general servicing. The top had to be repaired about three or four times because it would stop going up and down or leaked repeatedly and had to be brought in to be fixed. These repairs were very expensive, but I was able to deal with it. Finally, I brought the EOS in due to leakage and of the opening and closing of the top

again. The dealership kept my car for about a week and finally called me and asked that I come in and discuss what needed to be done. When I got there, he told me that the entire top had to be replaced to the tune of \$15,000 and would not be covered. The top does not work, and it still leaks.

A. There have been many technical service bulletins about that roof, which when it works correctly is a mechanical marvel. I have seen many seal leaks to the roof so it won't go up or down in hot weather. It is very complicated with servos motors and computers, but for the life of me I don't know why you would replace the steel roof when there are so many other parts to check. I would ask the VW dealer if they could contact a VW field engineer and see if they can offer a better solution than spending more on the roof than the value of the car.

Q. My 2009 Chevy Silverado needs the passenger side upper control arm replaced according to the local garage mechanic. I have been out of the shade-tree mechanic practice for years and so am

confused. Should I replace both the left and right upper control arms and ball joints? The mechanic says in order to save me money, only the one side upper needs replacement. Also, I thought that the lower control arms and ball joints bear most of the weight of the vehicle so that is most likely to go bad. Any thoughts?

A. You are correct in the suspension style used in your truck, the lower control arms and ball joints carry the majority of the load. It is also typical the right will wear more rapidly since the right-side tire is in the gutter of the road. Considering the cost of parts and labor these days I see no reason only to repair what is wrong now. I would also thank your mechanic for looking out for both your safety and wallet.

Q. While waiting for various traffic lights I hear people in cars next to mine also waiting for the light, turning on and off their cars. Is the purpose of turning on and off the car to save gas and do you recommend I do this to save gas?

A. Many cars made in the past few years use an idle stop feature that when certain conditions are met, will stop the engine to save fuel. These cars will typically have more robust battery and starter. In your car to save fuel, keep tires properly inflated, accelerate gradually and apply the brakes gently. Easy on the gas and brake saves fuel, stay at the speed limit and if you frequent coffee and other fast food drive throughs park the car and walk in. These small changes in driving habits have proven to save gas and improve overall miles per gallon.

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

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REAL ESTATE

A closer look at what realtors/real estate agents make



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

Buying or selling a home is one of the biggest financial transactions that many people make in their entire lives. Realtors/real estate agents work with buyers and sellers during this process by getting their clients the best deal possible. A lot goes into the job, and there are many things to consider when determining how much real estate agents make.

How do realtors/real estate agents make their money? Most real estate agents work on commission and receive a set percentage of a home's total sale price upon completing the sale. Therefore, an agent's annual income can vary based on how many homes they sell. Market fluctuations and full-time vs. part-time hours affect income range, but there are additional factors that impact how real estate agents make their money.

Shrewd negotiation skills maximize the value of a sale for clients and set the real estate agent apart from their competitors. Furthermore, real estate negotiation skills take on a whole new meaning in understanding the emotional components of both sides during any deal.

Effective communication and responsiveness is a realtor's/real estate agent's craft when assessing their clients' motivations and those of the other side.

Experience may be one of the best indicators of how much a realtor/real estate agent makes. Anyone can search home listings online, but an experienced realtor/real estate agent will likely know more about local neighborhoods and building codes, making them more marketable to clients.

An experienced real estate agent shouldn't have any issues checking off all the small details and marks on a sale contract, which also maximizes the deal value and, therefore, their commission.

How much do realtors/real estate agents make? This question covers a considerable range and therefore has a few different answers. As of May 2021, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates the average annual income for real estate agents is \$61,480. That's \$29.56 per hour, given a standard 2080-hour work year. However, most realtor/real estate agents have considerable control over their hours, and their dependence on commission leads to real estate agents having a wide spread of income.

Commissions generally vary from 5% to 6%, and the amount may be split among different parties including the buyer and seller's agent. The me-



dian price for home sales in the U.S. for 2021 was \$346,900. That leaves real estate agents with \$17,345 to \$20,814 per home sale. According to that same report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 10% of real estate agents made less than \$28,270. The bottom 25% brought in \$35,880 or less. The median income was \$48,340.

Most people probably agree that location is critical in how much real estate agents make. The top states for real estate agents are:

State, annual mean wage, Massachusetts \$90,390, New York \$81,020, Wyoming \$80,580.

Is being a realtor/real estate agent worth it? Numbers don't lie, and these financial statistics certainly make the profession seem worthwhile. However, there are additional aspects to look at a little more closely.

Realtors/real estate agents may have a large earning potential, but market fluctuations can directly impact those earnings.

Agents only make money when they sell houses, so any housing market crisis could see them out of a job. A prime example of this happened during the 2008 housing market crash, with over 10% of real estate agents losing their positions permanently.

Additionally, upfront costs come with being a real estate agent, such as license and franchise fees, business and home office equipment, marketing material and travel.

A realtor/real estate agent's career can be lucrative, but much depends on how much effort an agent is willing to put in. Successful agents usually match certain skills and personality traits, leading to their success. Agents who do not communicate well, don't display a positive work ethic and fail to relate to their clients and those on the opposite side of the deal probably won't realize all of the financial potential.

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Blackstone Heritage Corridor's Bikeway Ambassadors will be leading guided bike rides along the Blackstone River Bikeway this summer. To learn more, visit BlackstoneHeritageCorridor.org.

**Wednesday, July 13:
Worcester, MA**

Meet at the Blackstone River Valley Heritage Center at 3 Paul Clancy Way, Worcester, MA. We will pedal along the Blackstone River Bikeway for 2.5 miles, where it ends in Millbury,

and bike over to Christopher's Homemade Ice Cream for a refreshing summer treat. Bring your own cash or credit. The approximate round-trip distance is five miles.

**Wednesday, July 27:
Lincoln, RI**

Meet at the Capt. Wilbur Kelly House Museum at Blackstone River State Park, 1075 Lower River Road, Lincoln, RI, for a guided ride along the Blackstone River Bikeway and Canal Towpath as we ride south

to Lonsdale and back. The approximate round-trip distance is seven miles.

**Wednesday, August 10:
Blackstone, MA**

Meet at the Blackstone River Greenway, 85 Canal Street, Blackstone, MA, for a guided bike ride along the Blackstone River Greenway to Uxbridge, MA, and back. The round-trip distance is just over seven miles.

**Wednesday, August 24:
Lincoln, RI to Old Slater Mill**

Meet at the Lonsdale Drive-In parking lot, 121 John Street, Lincoln, RI, for a guided bike ride to Old Slater Mill in Pawtucket, RI. Much of this ride will be off the bikeway and on the street. The approximate round-trip distance is five miles.

To learn more about the Blackstone Heritage Corridor Bikeway Ambassadors, visit BlackstoneHeritageCorridor.org. To learn more about the Volunteers-In-Parks program, contact Molly Cardoza, Director of Volunteer and Community Engagement, at mcardoza@blackstoneheritagecorridor.org or call 508-234-4242.

Save the date of Saturday, August 27, for clean-up and green-up events throughout the Blackstone River Watershed to celebrate the 50th anniversary of ZAP the Blackstone. Learn more at ZAPtheBlackstone.com and BlackstoneHeritageCorridor.org.

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SPORTS

First Year Coach Leads Baseball Team Into The Round of 8

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Coaching the Douglas baseball team in his first season Coach Mike Brousseau led the Tigers to an 11-8 regular season record and into the Division 5 State Tournament. Douglas advanced into the Round of 8 where they traveled to Mount Greylock in Williamstown, Massachusetts to square off with the number three seed.

Unfortunately, for Douglas the team had a long ride home as they fell 3-1 ending their season.

The Tigers played the home team tough and found themselves tied 1-1 going into the bottom of the sixth inning, where Mount Greylock was able to push across two runs to take the victory and advanced into the Final Four.

Having only four seniors, who were all instrumental in Douglas' season, Brousseau found himself fielding a relatively young squad this spring.

"We were a young team and made our share of mistakes, but we didn't let it bother us," the Douglas Coach said. "We have this question (from a TV

show) that we are always asking 'What is the happiest animal? - the goldfish because he only has a 10 second memory.' That's the way we play the game."

Entering the season, the coaching staff figured that they would make the tournament and by the time they got to the Round of 8 they knew what they were up against.

"As a first-year coach I knew a fair number of the kids on the team as I was a coach at Millbury prior and we played Douglas in the Dual Valley Conference. We may have been young, but we were athletically talented," Brousseau



said. "I knew that we'd be able to hit in the DVC. Going up against Mount

Greylock we knew that they were a very talented team with two very good

BASEBALL
continued on page 27

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BASEBALL

continued from page 26

pitchers.”

Leading the Tigers into the tournament this spring were the four seniors. Catcher matt Landry, who has been behind the plate since the eighth grade, was a solid defender and named to the DVC All-Star team. Tommy George, who was lost to the team for a couple of games due to a knee injury, was able to close out the team’s last win before the squad ran into Mount Greylock.

According to the Coach, DH/outfielder Joe Labonne is one of the hardest working kids you’ll ever meet no matter what he’s doing. The senior is an inspiration to all the other teammates, and he puts forth an effort second to none.

Outfielder Cam Bergeron, who was lost for about a month to Mono, found himself in a difficult position when he was healthy and ready to return to the field.

Brousseau couldn’t get him back into the starting lineup right away and the younger kids were playing their butts off, so Bergeron

became a cheerleader from the dugout until he worked his way back onto the field.

Landry, Labonne and junior shortstop Ryan Bonin were the Douglas tri-captains. Bonin was the team’s offensive juggernaut leading the team in all offensive statistics. He was also the squad’s leadoff hitter despite being a power hitter. Sophomore Tristan Meech hit in the clean-up position for the Tigers and was particularly strong with runners in scoring position.

“We like to throw him out there to let the opposing teams know what they’re up against right away,” the Douglass skipper said.

On the mound lefty Griffin Berard was the team’s ace. The junior hurler pitched an incredibly high number of innings (45) posting a 6-3 record with 55 strikeouts and a mere 6 walks for an outstanding ratio.

Following Griffin, Brousseau liked to go with the tandem of George and Meech to keep the opposing batters on their toes and thinking.

“Meech, another lefty, was a hard thrower who

had 50 strike outs in 30 innings while George, a 5’ 7” 145 pounder, who follow him to close things out and give the batters a completely different look,” Brousseau said. “George kept everything low and Meech threw a lot of his stuff up high.”

With Meech (arm injury) and George (knee injury) Ethan Vesser stepped up to help the team on the hill. Having only pitched 10 innings all year long, Vesser pitched a gem of a game going 6.1 innings in the Tigers tournament game.

At the plate second baseman Evan Wheeler is a battler taking opposing pitchers deep into the count making them throw nine to 10 pitches on a regular basis.

Although Brousseau is the Head Coach he firmly believes that he couldn’t do it on his own. Helping get the Tigers into the tournament Juston Carter, who came from the previous staff, has been huge in the team’s success; Millbury’s Matt Fiore has been instrumental as the hitting coach and 2021 Douglas graduate Connor Loeh has guided the outfielders.

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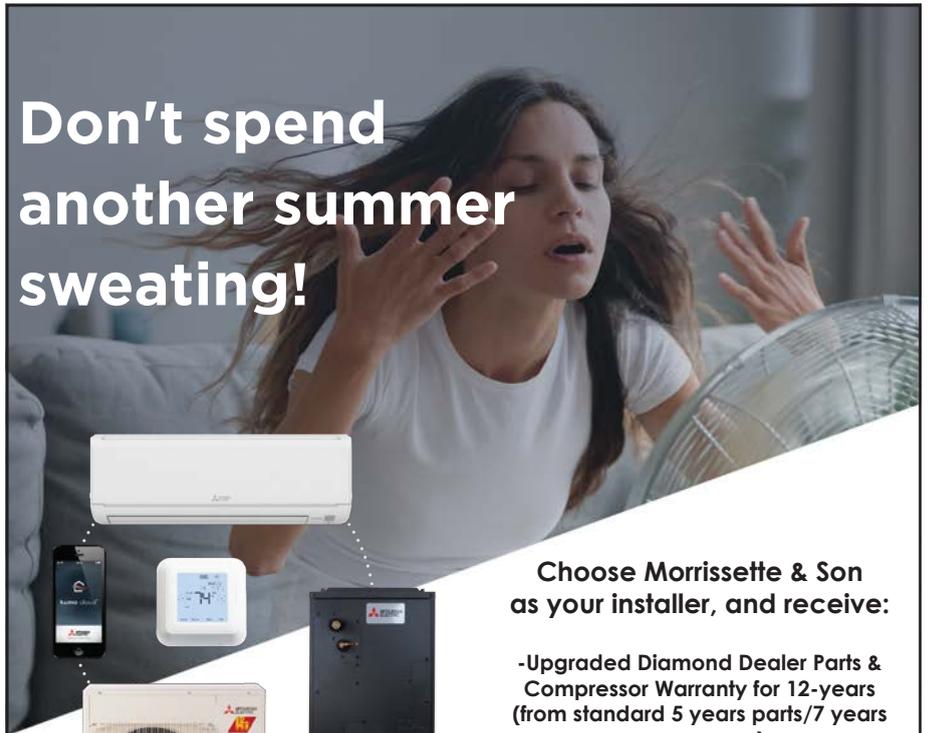
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