

Lt. Gov. Polito, award winners highlight BVCC's annual meeting

BY ROD LEE

Just when it seemed that the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's annual meeting could not get any better, along comes Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito as

a special guest—an unexpected coup for BVCC President Jeannie Hebert and her hardworking staffers Liz O'Neil and Kristen Kearnan.

As she prepared to leave Pleasant Valley Country Club in Sutton

on November 16th after offering brief remarks at the outset of the 44th edition of the event—always the Chamber's most ambitious and impressive production of the year—Ms. Polito accepted well wishes from local state legislators



Legislators Paul Frost, David Muradian Jr., Mike Soter, Brian Murray and Joe McKenna give Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito a sendoff after her appearance at the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's 44th annual meeting.

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Wally Smith, left, and Phil Cyr at St. Pat's Cemetery in Whitinsville.

Unmarked veterans' graves become a cause for Phil Cyr, Wally Smith

BY ROD LEE

Phillip R. "Phil" Cyr and Wallace "Wally" Smith Jr. of Northbridge know all about service to their country. Mr. Cyr flew helicopters for the Army in Vietnam. Mr. Smith served in the U.S. Navy, the Navy Reserve and then the National Guard during Desert Storm.

They are also well aware that fewer and fewer older veterans are willing or able to step up and take on a project like the one the

two of them are involved in now.

Recently, working with the office of St. Patrick's Cemetery on Providence Road and the owner of Whitinsville Monumental Works, Mr. Cyr and Mr. Smith successfully secured military-style stones for the unmarked graves of two veterans—Frank Coburn and Elmer Nault—whose names have otherwise

GRAVES

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BVCC
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who crowded around her. Like Gov. Charlie Baker, she did not seek re-election in 2022.

“How was that for a nice surprise?” Ms. Hebert said to an appreciative audience.

“You must have some plans going forward, right?” Ms. Polito was asked, on her way out.

“You will see me again!” she responded with a smile, leaving everyone within earshot left to speculate about what future endeavors she might be referring to.

The breakfast meeting itself was crammed with all of the Chamber’s usual signature ingredients, including a chairman’s report from Kevin Hayes of Millbury Federal Credit

Union, Ms. Hebert’s year-in-review comments and recognition of a number of member businesses celebrating anniversaries—UniBank topping the list as it marks a 150th. UniBank President Mike Welch acknowledged his own role in the institution’s long history in asserting “you can tell by my hairline that I have been here” for a while.

Both Mr. Hayes and Ms. Hebert cited the Chamber’s prowess in obtaining funding for businesses, organizations and economic development projects—totaling millions of dollars—as one of the achievements they are proudest of having made happen over the past twelve months. With the help of “our amazing legislators,” Ms. Hebert said.

Even after experiencing a devastating flood in their

Linwood Mill offices in January, Ms. Hebert and her aides carried on. “It took us months to recover,” she said.

Mr. Hayes and Ms. Hebert pointed to such other prized pieces of the Chamber’s toolbox as the Blackstone Valley Hub for Workforce Development, now in operation for three years with expanded curriculums for training high school students and adult learners, and custom retraining for members’ incumbent employees; a new and stronger connection with the Blackstone Valley Education Foundation; and “our online format at ‘Ed2Go,’” which provides courses in everything from business leadership to certificate courses.

As is the case every fall, the Chamber saluted a number of deserving indi-



Bob Minarik, left, received the Economic Development Award and Glenn King, right, was presented with the Gerry Gaudette Extra Mile Award at the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce’s 44th annual meeting. Rushford and Sons Brewhouse (Cornerstone Award) and Alise Breton of MCU (Volunteer of the Year) were also honored.

viduals.

Bob Minarik received the Economic Development Award for spearheading creation of “The Cubes at Gilboa” in the town of Douglas to meet the high demand for modern distribution space with an 1.1 million-square-foot warehouse being built on 83.8 acres in close proximity to the Mass Pike and Interstates 495 and 395. Mr. Minarik was introduced by UniBank’s Mike Welch.

The Chamber’s Cornerstone Award went to Rushford and Sons Brewhouse in Upton, a nano brewery founded by childhood friends Mike Rushford and Brian Goodman, and Eric Martin. In accepting the award from Sen. Ryan Fattman, Mr. Goodman said “I couldn’t think of a better present for my 40th birthday.”

Presenting the Gerry Gaudette Extra Mile Award for the eighteenth time in

memory of his father, Lee Gaudette of Gaudette Insurance lauded winner Glenn King’s many contributions to community life—signified most recently by leading the way on the town of Northbridge’s purchase of the Castle Hill Farm property, which will be preserved for recreation and as conservation land.

Alise Breton of MCU was recognized with the Chamber’s Volunteer of the Year Award for her stellar work in a male-dominated profession. As Heather Elster of the Whittin Community Center put it in introducing Ms. Breton, “when she started in banking she didn’t even know how to complete a deposit ticket.” Now she is vice president of retail banking at MCU and chair of the Chamber’s Women’s Success Network.

All that the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce has accomplished was not lost on Guest

Speaker John Penrose of Leading Indicator Systems (LIS), a Boston-based human capital assessment firm. Mr. Penrose spoke about how emotions play a pivotal role in the performance of “the agile mind.”

In noting the results of a survey Chamber members took that revealed how they organize their lives and careers in four areas—Self, Material, Social and Spiritual—Mr. Penrose said he was impressed that the Chamber’s focus is not about monetary gain.

“You’re here for the collective good and it’s really remarkable,” Mr. Penrose said.

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

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GRAVES

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been mostly lost to history.

Mr. Coburn served with Company G of the 1st Rhode Island Cavalry in the Civil War. Mr. Nault served in the U.S. Army during World War I.

the younger members don't want to get involved," Mr. Cyr said on November 16th. In terms of the time commitment, "the only thing I've got to do is play with my three dogs," he said.

For years, Mr. Cyr and Mr. Smith have been among members of the

this to me it just clicked." Although information on Mr. Coburn and Mr. Nault was practically non-existent, Mr. Cyr and Mr. Smith with an assist from the caretaker at St. Pats were able to locate both unmarked graves, one by walking thirty feet from a bench at the front of the

unmarked graves are being identified and provided with a stone "deserve it, and I enjoy doing it," Mr. Smith said.

The initiative began with a letter to the editor Mr. Smith wrote, which helped raise the necessary financial support to get the first two markers done. To say that carrying the project forward is going to be a challenge "would be an understatement," Mr. Cyr said. "Pine Grove has been taken over by the town so we would have to consult old lists that DPW

and the town clerk have;" there is also the ongoing expense involved.

Mr. Cyr said there are fourteen cemeteries in the town of Northbridge but only three—St. Pats, Pine Grove and Riverdale—are presently "operational. We have heard there might be up to sixteen unmarked veterans' graves at Pine Grove," he said.

"First we have to do the research, and then obtain the funding."

So far, Mr. Smith said, "it has all come together. It's nice to see people from

the community" embrace a worthy cause of this kind.

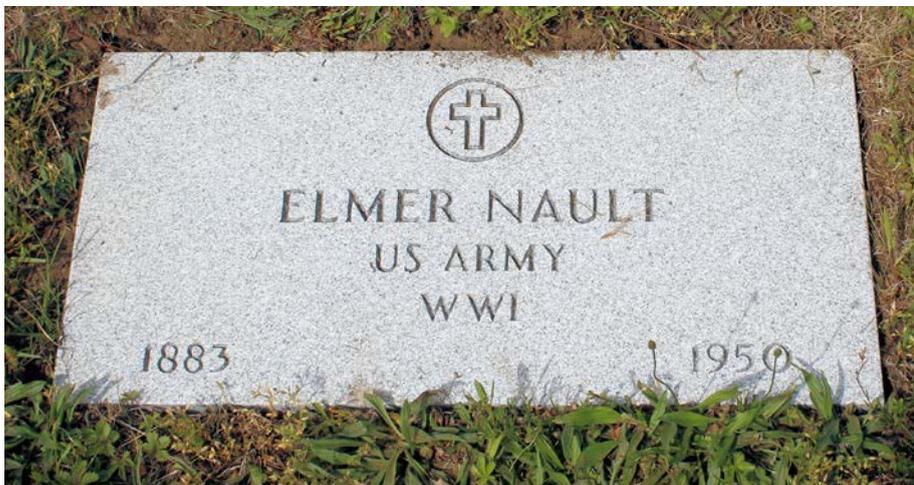
Donations on behalf of the project can be made to the Northbridge American Legion Post 343, 198 Church Ave., Northbridge MA 01534.

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Above, the marker placed on the previously unmarked grave of Civil War Veteran Frank Coburn at St. Pats Cemetery in Whitinsville. The marker was provided by Whitinsville Monumental Works after the company was approached for assistance by Phil Cyr and Wally Smith.

Below, World War I Army Veteran Elmer Nault finally also has a marker on his grave at St. Pats.



Inspired by what they have accomplished, Mr. Cyr and Mr. Smith are hoping to see stones placed at other unmarked graves of veterans, a number of whom are buried at Pine Grove Cemetery on Linwood Ave.

"My dad and father-in-law are both buried at Riverdale Cemetery," Mr. Smith said during a conversation at McDonald's on November 14th, in citing his motivation for finding the unmarked graves of veterans who, unlike Wallace Smith Sr. and Romeo Vruneau, have not yet been accorded the honor of a stone.

"The DAV, the American Legion and the VFW are losing members, and

American Legion and other volunteers who put flags out for veterans on Memorial Day. Mr. Smith says that when Mr. Cyr told him "hey, there's a World War I vet buried in this spot" at St. Pats, "I said OK, let's fix this—it's not right. I have known Phil only for a few years but when he mentioned

cemetery and another in a space between two markers that was "just grass," Mr. Cyr said.

Thomas Delfanti, the longtime proprietor of Whitinsville Monumental Works, furnished the markers "at cost," Mr. Smith said. "He really went out on a limb for us."

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Corridor pays tribute to Margaret Carroll in Millville

The late Margaret M. Carroll was remembered in appropriate fashion on October 27th with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Blackstone River Greenway in Millville.

A town historian, educator, preservationist and charter member of the Blackstone River Valley Vol-

unteers-in-Parks program and the John H. Chaffee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, Ms. Carroll was well known and highly regarded for her contributions to community life. Recent legislation created the Margaret M. Carroll Memorial Greenway Access Area in Millville. The Mas-

sachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation is working on installing a sign and a memorial bench at the site.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM FLOURISHING

A message from Molly Cardoza, director of Volun-

teer & Community Engagement for the Corridor:

"I continue to be blown away by our Volunteers-in-Parks volunteers and their incredible commitment to the work they do in the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor and Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park.



Pictured from left to right at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Margaret M. Carroll Greenway Access Area in Millville are Carroll McGahan, Maureen McGahan, former State Sen. Richard T. Moore, Jody Madden, Jeannie Hebert, Helen Kennedy, State Rep. Mike Soter and Jack Carroll. In the back row are Kylie Gibbons, Donna Williams, Devon Kurtz, and Val Stegemoen. Not pictured: State Sen. Ryan Fattman.

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The numbers are in for the Volunteers-in-Parks program for FY 2022. Volunteers logged 30,607 hours at a total value of \$916,679.

MILLBURY SCOUTS RECOGNIZED FOR WORK

NIZED FOR WORK

Five Millbury scouts from Troop 109 recently earned their Resource Stewardship Scout Ranger Badge and two earned their Scout Ranger Certificate. These Scouts, led by Eagle Scout Candidate Adam Moroney, worked to create a path and make the spillway of the former Asa Waters Armory—a gun manufacturer in the 1800s—accessible as a recreational space. This spillway historically flowed into the Blackstone River, which is visible from this location behind the present-day Millbury VFW.



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Xpressly Yours ... a letter from the editor

Coin celebrates a town's 250th, and a State Police icon



That creation of the new Massachusetts State Police Museum and Learning Center at Memorial Square in Whitinsville has been a labor of love for John H. "Jack" Crawford and associates is reflected in the extensive array of artifacts and memorabilia they have made available for viewing by patrons on Tuesdays and Saturdays from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Mr. Crawford's work is not done, however. He is now busy promoting a freshly minted commemorative "challenge coin" as a way to raise monies for the museum.

"I already sold two coins at McDonald's this morning and one man gave me an extra five dollars, which throws my accounting off!" Mr. Crawford said on November 12th just after opening the door of museum, which is situated in the old Whitinsville Bank Building.

The handsome coin pays homage to both the town of Northbridge on its 250th anniversary (1772-2022) and to Samuel Judson Fletcher, an adopted native

son, who served as a state constable from 1867 to 1875.

The coin costs just twenty-five dollars and is available at the museum.

Mr. Crawford enjoys telling the story of Samuel Judson Fletcher. Born in Solon, Maine, Mr. Fletcher was educated at Brown University, graduating in 1857 with a degree in Engineering. He enlisted as a private with the Fifteenth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry on July 12, 1861. His brothers, James Brainerd Fletcher and George Fergo Fletcher, and his cousin Edward Fletcher Chapin, all served with him in Company H of the Fifteenth.

Samuel was promoted to first lieutenant and was shot through the jaw at Antietam, but survived. He was promoted to first lieutenant in November of 1862. On July 3, 1863, he was wounded at Gettysburg while leading his men into battle and was presented with a "Sword of Bravery" by the regimental commander. He was then promoted to captain.

Samuel's brother James died at Antietam at the age of twenty-three, shot through the head; Samuel caught him as he fell. His brother George was killed in the Battle of Gettysburg at the age of nineteen.

Samuel was the only family member to return home alive.

On March 8, 1864, he married Emma A. Luther

in Ashland. He mustered out of the Fifteenth on July 28, 1864. Residents of Northbridge elected him to the Massachusetts State Legislature's Eighteenth Worcester District in 1865. He was appointed a state police deputy constable for Worcester County on July 26, 1867.

In May of 1870, Sam was stabbed and thought killed during a raid in Uxbridge. Several

people were arrested and tried for assault.

He continued as a state constable until February of 1875 when the state detective force was established.

In April of 1875 he was appointed a constable in Northbridge.

He and his wife had four children, Nellie, Alice, Bertha and Edward.

Around 1912, the family moved to Gill, Massachusetts, where Samuel Judson Fletcher died at the age of ninety three on July 11, 1924.

He is buried at Pine Hill Cemetery in Sherborn, Massachusetts.

Mr. Fletcher is among those deputy constables of the Commonwealth featured in "The First to Serve," by Ronald J. Guilmette, who retired in 1999 as a lieutenant colonel in the Massachusetts State



Inset, an image of Samuel Judson Fletcher graces one side of a commemorative coin that also celebrates the 250th anniversary of the town of Northbridge. The coin is available for purchase at the State Police Museum. Above, at the new Massachusetts State Police Museum and Learning Center in Whitinsville are, from the left, Paul Landry, Benji Feliciano and his wife Liz, Lisa Haley, Jack Crawford and Barry O'Connor and Mr. O'Connor's son Bailey.

Police.

Mr. Guilmette's book was published in 2018.

The Massachusetts State Police Museum and Learning Center is dedicated to preserving the history and traditions of the nation's first state police organization. It has been made

possible by the generous support of a number of individuals and companies including Vincent Osterman, Access TCA and Sunshine Sign.

About thirty people have already ordered the commemorative challenge coin, of the one hundred that

were initially minted.

For more information about the museum, go to mspmlc.org.

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Magician, veterans' breakfast and more at busy Plummer Place

The Northbridge Senior Center "at Plummer Place" is quickly becoming known for the quantity and quality of the events it hosts. A Halloween Party on October 27th with the theme of "Pumpkins and Pranks," and a breakfast celebrating veterans on November 10th, both of which were organized by Amy Cowen, the Senior Center's

programs and volunteer coordinator, are among the latest examples.

A crowd of more than seventy people, including members of the Senior Center staff, was on hand for a post-luncheon performance by Magician Steve Charrette at Pumpkins and Pranks.

Mr. Charrette has been doing magic for forty-seven years, spent about ten of

those years on the QE2, and owns four hundred magic books.

"It's a full-time job," he said, before snatching the hat off a man's head, turning it over, and pulling a yellow ribbon out of it.

"I went to college for psychology but magic has been a hobby of mine since age nine."

"This is such fun and ev-





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Counter clockwise from top left: Magician Steve Charrette displays his sleight of hand at the Northbridge Senior Center at a "Pumpkins and Pranks" luncheon. Matt Reilly, who served in the Marine Corps, and Bob Taylor, who served in the Navy, were among those in attendance at a breakfast for veterans. Sen. Michael Moore of Millbury was thanked by Senior Center Director Kelly Bol that morning for his support of the facility and local seniors.

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everyone's enjoying it having a good time," Ms. Cowen said.

Custom prizes were handed out at two o'clock.

The first-ever breakfast for veterans to thank "all who served" was put on with support from Sen. Ryan Fattman of Sutton, Rep. David Muradian of Grafton and the Northbridge Police and Fire departments. It was catered by Creedon & Co.

"This is something we

have always wanted to do!" Senior Center Director Kelly Bol told a large crowd.

In welcoming those in attendance, Ms. Cowen said "every branch of the service is represented here today." She identified herself as "an Army spouse for the last twenty years."

A highlight of the breakfast was recognition by Ms. Bol of Sen. Michael Moore of Millbury for his longtime support of seniors in Northbridge. Because of

redistricting, Sen. Moore will no longer be representing the town of Northbridge in the Legislature.

Ms. Cowen partnered with Project Hope and Northbridge Middle School students under the direction of "Mr. Ashby and Ms. Williams" to craft cards that were handed out to veterans in attendance.

Ed Briand played taps to close the program.

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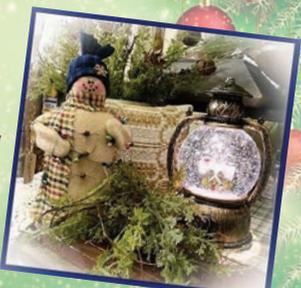
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Ross Weaver leads intrepid band of Sutton cemetery ambassadors

BY ROD LEE

Two nights before Halloween, Ross Weaver, Brian Stevenson, John Belculfine, Dave Pizzi and others involved with restoration work done in the Sutton Center Cemetery behind the Gen. Rufus Putnam Hall on Uxbridge St. could be found at the site, eager to show off the results of their labors as part of a tour by flashlight open to the public from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

They had every reason to be proud of what has been accomplished in stabilizing gravestones that were leaning or otherwise falling into disrepair at the Sutton Center Cemetery and several of the other approximately thirty cemeteries located in town.

Mr. Weaver said the project was initiated with a Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor-sponsored presentation by Carlo and Betty Mencucci of Burrillville,



Leaning gravestones, and others that needed cleaning or repair, are among those that Ross Weaver and his fellow ambassadors have restored in the Sutton Center Cemetery, which dates to the early 1700s.

Rhode Island, which was followed by a workday at the Sutton Center Cemetery with hands-on instruction from the couple on cleaning, resetting and repairing gravestones.

The Sutton project was launched in the fall of 2019, around the same time the Corridor created the Cemetery Conservation Ambassadors as a

component of its Volunteers in Parks program. The Corridor's VIP program is run in collaboration with the National Park Service and has involved cleaning of the river basin, providing docents at historic sites and

CEMETERY
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The Green Plate's growth saluted on eve of Shop Small 01588

BY ROD LEE

Danielle Desrosiers of The Green Plate has more reason than ever to look forward to this year's Shop Small 01588

event, which begins on Saturday, November 26 in downtown Whitinsville and continues in and around Church St. all of the following week, through Saturday, December 3rd.

Other participating businesses are equally excited, as Shop Small 01588 organizers celebrate the start of another holiday gift-buying season. Among the new venues are the Neighbor-

hood Kitchen, Koopman's with a pop-up tent in the Crafty Nest, and Blue Zone Integrated Fitness. Also, Carr Funeral Home is hosting a drive-through drop off on the 26th.

Christine Guanipa of Little Man Handbags, Heather Glode of LuLu's Jewelry & Gifts and Jessie Scotanus of Scotanus Design Center encourage residents to check out their Facebook

an adjoining storefront on November 7th with a festive and well-attended ribbon-cutting ceremony.

"You have built quite a following," Jeannie Hebert, president and CEO of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Com-



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Danielle Desrosiers of The Green Plate, center, is joined by Sen. Ryan Fattman, Rep. David Muradian, Jeannie Hebert of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce and Sen. Michael Moore after receiving legislature recognition on the business's fifth anniversary and continuing growth.

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page ShopSmall01588 and Instagram@shopsmall01588 for updates.

The Green Plate with its health-oriented Signature Bowls, Signature Pizzas, frozen heat-and-eat meals, wraps, bunless burgers, salads and wraps and sweet treats marked five years in business and expansion into

merce, told Ms. Desrosiers, in congratulating her on the success of The Green Plate.

"To have thrived in a pandemic is quite an achievement," Sen. Michael Moore of Millbury told her. Sen. Ryan Fattman of Sutton added "most businesses, 90% of them don't make it to five years."

Rep. David Muradian Jr. of Grafton echoed these sentiments, telling Ms. Desrosiers "your commitment to make the community better is greatly appreciated."

Northbridge Town Manager Adam Gaudette expressed what many in attendance were feeling, too, when he said "I look forward to ten years" for The Green Plate as well.

Not only is The Green Plate acquiring the storefront previously occu-

ried by The Welcoming Lantern, next door, Ms. Desrosiers is now aiming to franchise.

"Own a Green Plate franchise!" are the words written on a postcard-like message she distributed. Ms. Desrosiers said franchisees will tap into a support system "with training, business operations and resources for success."

Choking up as she addressed the gathering, Ms. Desrosiers said "five years comes so quick. Everything fell in place the way it needed to. The town, my customers, my team, so much around me, that's why I'm growing" the business.

"Now you are franchising," Ms. Hebert told her. "We will have Green Plates

SHOP SMALL
continued on page 9

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CEMETERY

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facilities, and maintaining walking and bicycle paths.

“Almost 1900 hours of volunteer time has been recorded” on the cemetery work in town so far, Mr. Weaver said.

Gravestones, twenty-one of which belong to Revolutionary War veterans buried in Sutton Center Cemetery, were given long-overdue attention by a group that included Boy Scouts, over a period of three years.

No one has been buried in the Sutton Center Cemetery since 1937; also, Mr. Weaver points out, “there are certainly more buried here than we know about.”

Mr. Weaver credited the town’s Cemetery Commission, the Sutton Historical Society and the Dudley Gendron American Legion Post for the encouragement and assistance they have provided to the project.

“The King family plot,” and gravestones bearing the names of prominent members of the community who even have roads

in town named after them, like Harback—“all of the Harback family except for wife Ruth,” for instance—are among those buried in the Sutton Center Cemetery. Mr. Weaver noted that “33% percent of these gravestones were severely leaning.” In some instances the lettering on the gravestones was “mostly indistinguishable.”

A walk-through of Sutton Center Cemetery just before the tour began revealed interesting information about some of the people buried there. Abigail Moore, for example, “was married three times, all pastors.” Eight members of the Harback family died in a thirteen-year period. A crypt contains the remains of the Rev. David Hall, a Harvard grad who served as minister of the Congregational Church for sixty years.

Of the more than four hundred “humanly placed” stones in the Sutton Center Cemetery, 384 were cleaned, 273 were plumed, others required cosmetic work, and 68 needed restoration and resetting.

In a number of cases, ambassadors had “rein-

forcement pieces” placed behind the original headstone. In other cases, slate replaced marble “because it holds up better,” he said.

For his own leadership role in the project, Mr. Weaver was presented with the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor’s 2021 John H. Chaffee Heritage Award. In joining those saluting Mr. Weaver, James Smith, Sutton’s town manager, said “Ross has become Sutton’s unsung hero in our rural world of cemetery conservation...collectively [Mr. Weaver and his fellow volunteers] have made amazing progress in local historical cemetery conservation. He has worked tirelessly to preserve our cemeteries while promoting (our) cultural heritage.”

In all, 340 memorials in the Sutton Center Cemetery have been uploaded to Find-a-Grave and are accessible to anyone with Internet access. A QR code sign, funded with a grant from the Sutton Cultural Council, is located between the Gen. Rufus Putnam Museum and Town Hall. This QR code directs

visitors to a self-guided tour of the cemetery along with other historic sites in town.

There are 482 head and foot stones, and one crypt, in the cemetery.

The volunteers’ efforts to restore gravestones in

the Sutton Center Cemetery were noticed by Suzanne Buchanan, the Corridor’s volunteer coordinator, and Ms. Buchanan included Mr. Weaver on a panel to discuss the Cemetery Conservation Ambassadors program

and how volunteers could work together and share resources.

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

SHOP SMALL

continued from page 8

all over!”

Watching this, Ms. Desrosiers’ father said “she has done extraordinarily well. I’m very proud of her.”

Businesses planning to be a part of Shop Small 01588 this year are:

Barbara Connors Art Glass Studio; Blue Zone Integrated Fitness; Carr Funeral Home; Daily Grind Barbershop; Driven Self Defense; Family Karate Center; Furiends Gour-

met Pet Treats; The Green Plate; Harbro Auto Sales; Katalina’s Boutique; Koopman Lumber; Little Man Handbags; LuLuRoe Kathy Bartlett; LuLu’s Jewelry & Gifts; Neighborhood Kitchen; Schotanus Design Center; The Crafty Nest; The Flower Shop; UniBank; Whitin Community Center; and Woodshop@933.

Shoppers can pick up a Shop Small 01588 Passport at any of these businesses and get it stamped to enjoy in-store specials, giveaways and holiday promotions.

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launched Shop Small Saturday in the midst of a recession in 2010. The inaugural event was a hit and has grown since. In 2020 alone, American Express notes, the company spent approximately \$200 million on initiatives to support small business around the globe.

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Grafton artists are among award winners at 5th annual Festival

BY ROD LEE

This year's fifth annual Small Stones Festival of the Arts attracted entrants from far and wide, but there was also no shortage of strong local talent.

The People's Choice awards for the 2022 version of the Festival were captured by Bonnie Frederico in the Fine Art category for her oil painting "Peonies" and Amanda Conyers in the Photography category for her "Eye to Eye."

Both live in the town of Grafton.

Also, Ria Hill of Uxbridge placed first in the Juror's Choice for Fine Art with her "Crow on Top."

Opening Night of the Festival in the Great Hall saw artists mingling with those checking out the painting and photography on display and marking their choices for first, second and third in each category. Excitement carried throughout the week as



"Crow on Top" by Ria Hill of Uxbridge was deemed the winner in the Juror's Choice Fine Art category at the Small Stones Festival of the Arts.

the Festival's other events took place. A highlight for many were remarks made by Grafton's own Nicholas Gage on "A Writer's Life," with special attention given to his mother Eleni, who was executed during

the Greek Civil War while trying to help her children escape to safety.

Reading from notes, Mr. Gage struggled to control his emotions as he talked about his mother.

Ms. Frederico has been

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a decorative painter since 1973 and says she was interested in painting from early childhood, "even if it just meant helping to paint my family home. As the years passed, my enthusiasm didn't change."

The first place awards in the juried Fine Art painting and photography exhibition held at the Great Hall, One Grafton Common, were Pam Short of Lancaster for her pastel "Beauty in My Own Back Yard" and Kenneth Salmone of Attleborough for his photograph "On the Rocks."

An accomplished artist, Ms. Short entered her painting on a whim and was surprised and delighted to learn she had taken first place, according to SSFA Publicist Dana Wilson. Ms. Short enjoys painting landscapes, seascapes, animals and wildlife and buildings. Pastels are her preferred medium. She believes "beauty is everywhere if you choose to see it." Her work has been featured in the Fruitland Museum Shop, Petersham Craft Center and at the NOA Gallery at the Groton Inn.

Mr. Salmone quoted Henry David Thoreau in asserting that "It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see" to explain his approach to photog-



Grafton's Amanda Conyers captured first place in the People's Choice Photography category at the fifth annual SSFA.

raphy. He has traveled extensively to find beautiful places but says "I still manage to discover overlooked and often unseen snippets of beauty within the small, natural worlds" close to home.

Ms. Short and Mr. Salmone both received \$500 first-place winnings for their work.

The exhibition featured contributions by ninety artists with one hundred forty-three pieces on display at the Great Hall. Five regional art organizations—Apple Tree Arts, the Blackstone Valley Art Association, the Claflin Hill Symphony Orchestra, the Shakespeare Club of Grafton and the Worcester County Camera Club—collaborated to develop a

multi-genre festival with a variety of programs illuminating different art forms.

Lectures by prominent authors and educators, a dramatic reenactment of a literary figure, a musical lecture on abstract form

and structure and talks of interest to artists and art supporters were offered.

The Festival's hardback printed exhibition catalog is available online at <https://smallstonesfestival.org>. Participating artists reside in communities in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maine, Vermont—and elsewhere.

Planning for the 2023 Small Stones Festival of the Arts will start early next year. The Organizing Committee is considering a midsummer date for the Art Call. Contact Ken Cramer at ken@graftonarts.org if you are interested.

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

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BY ROD LEE

Lisa Moon has no previous experience in the food industry, but this would not be apparent from the strong start The Neighborhood Kitchen is enjoying on Church Street in downtown Whitinsville.

Open since January 5th, The Neighborhood Kitchen is building a clientele for dine-in or takeout on a menu of "American comfort food" for lunch or dinner.

The restaurant is closed on Tuesdays.

From such "Starters" as onion strings, clam cakes and buffalo chicken tenders to an array of noon-hour sandwiches (served all day) to Entrees like Pasta and

Lisa Moon aims high with The Neighborhood Kitchen

Meatballs, Shepherd's Pie, Turkey Dinner, American Chop Suey, Meatloaf and Haddock and Hand-Cut Fries (Thursdays and Fridays only), the restaurant is "where family and friends gather to eat," Ms. Moon said on November 17th.

She even has a kiosk at her husband Mark Moon's nearby Sparetime Recreation so that bowlers can order food.

Arrangements with Door Dash, Uber Eats and Grub Hub and "an amazing cook staff" are leading the way in establishing The Neighborhood Kitchen as the town's most promising new restaurant.

The menu is complemented by several exotic "shakes." Fruity Pebbles, Orange Dreamsicle, Cotton Candy Unicorn and Cup of Dirt—for example.

The interior of what was previously mostly a pizza place has been completely renovated and upgraded with tables crafted by Mr. Moon and a neighborhood-themed mural spray painted on one



Lisa Moon, owner of The Neighborhood Kitchen, with De Shauna Bates and David Place Sr.

of the long interior walls. Ryan Gardell, an artist, did the honors and the mural is impressive.

Ms. Moon has set an ambitious tone that even included "breakfast and pre-order your dinner go to for Thanksgiving, with a meal featuring fresh-roasted turkey, mashed potatoes, butternut squash, corn, stuffing,

cranberry sauce, gravy and a roll-for \$14.95.

She is more than willing to take on any job necessary.

"I cook, wash dishes, clean, wait on tables. That's what I think an owner should do," she says.

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

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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.

ONGOING

• The "Arsenal of Democracy" exhibit at the American Heritage Museum, 568 Main St., Hudson, celebrates the phrase FDR coined during a radio broadcast on December 29, 1940, to signal that the then-still-neutral United States would use all of its industrial might to build the weapons needed by the last struggling democracies to save themselves from fascism. The American Heritage Museum is open Wednesday-Sunday.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2

• The Oxford Senior Center's Senior Book Club meets at 12:45 p.m. to discuss "A Redbird Christmas" by Fannie Flagg; at the Senior Center, 323 Main St.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3

• St. Gabriel's Church, 151 Mendon St., Upton, will host its Christmas Fair from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. with a variety of fresh balsam wreaths,

cemetery baskets and table-top arrangements. Raffles available. A new gift boutique featuring new and "like new" items, Oldye Tyme Christmas decorations, gems, jewels seasonal décor will be included along with a Bake Table. Face masks are encouraged.

- The 25th anniversary of the Uxbridge First Holiday Night Celebration and Parade, a family tradition, will be held. Volunteers are welcome for the event. Stop by the Mendon Street Kitchen for more information.
- The Uxbridge PSG 2023 is hosting a Jack-a-doo Holiday Vendor Fair from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Uxbridge High School, 300 Quaker Highway. More than thirty local vendors with unique gifts for the holidays. Contact PSG for more information at psguxbridge@gmail.com or check Facebook, UxbridgePSG2023-ParentsforSafeGraduation.
- The Sutton Chain of Lights: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., featuring family fun with free trolleys, boutique shops, local products, handmade gifts, specialty items and services for all the people on your Christmas list.
- "Christmas in New England" will return for a live concert with a performance at the Rockdale Congregational Church, 42 Fowler

Road, Northbridge, at 7:30 p.m. Admission is \$15 at the door only. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Desserts and beverages will be available at intermission along with a Cookie Walk. For more information, visit www.christmasinnewengland.net or call 617-429-0347.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4

- "Grafton Celebrates the Holidays" at the Grafton Public Library, 35 Grafton Common, from noon to 4 p.m., in partnership with Grafton RISE. Girl Scouts Gingerbread Contest; Friends of the Library Bookstore; Henna artist; Central Massachusetts Foster/Adopt MA giveaways and activities; Girl Scouts singing holiday tunes.
- Visit the Baptist Church of Grafton, 1 South St., to view its annual Creche Display in the sanctuary as part of "Grafton Celebrates the Holidays." The display features a variety of manger scenes drawn from artistic styles from around the world—a truly international depiction.
- The New England Country Music Club presents the Rhode Island Rednecks at the Progressive Club, 18 Whitin St., Uxbridge. Doors: 12:30 p.m. with live dancing and entertainment from 1-5 p.m. www.facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6

- The Webster Dudley Business Alliance's Holiday Party will take place from 5-7 p.m. at Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 E. Main St., Webster.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7

- A Holiday Sing-a-Long with Diane Pollard is scheduled at 2:30 p.m. at the Northbridge Senior Center (Plummer Place), 20 Highland St., Whitinsville. Sign up in the main office.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8

- Explore the benefits of The Zentangle Method while unleashing your inner artist and creative capabilities, at the Northbridge Senior Center (Plummer Place), 20 Highland St., Whitinsville, from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. Did you know that Zentangle was developed

HAPPENINGS!

continued on page 16

Christmas Bazaar
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HAPPENINGS!

continued from page 15

right here in Whitinsville? Sign up at the main office.

- The Auburn Chamber of Commerce's annual Holiday Party - 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Realtor Association of Central Massachusetts, 492 Washington St., Auburn. Bring an unwrapped toy and a door prize. All donations will benefit Auburn Youth & Family Services.

- A book-folding workshop will take place at the Grafton Public Library, 35 Grafton Common, 6:30-

8:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13

- The Charlton Public Library, 40 Main St., presents the Shepherd Hill Choir Holiday Concert at 12:30 p.m. in Dexter Hall.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14

- A Grafton Ukele Musicians Jam: Grafton Public Library, 35 Grafton Common, from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15

- "All That Glitters is Snow," a holiday party, will be held at the Northbridge Senior Center (Plummer Place), 20 Highland

St., Whitinsville, from noon to 2 p.m. A catered lunch will be served and there will be Victorian carolers. Tickets are \$5 and must be purchased at Plummer Place. Doors open at 11:45 a.m.

- A book-folding workshop will take place at the Grafton Public Library, 35 Grafton Common, 6:30-8:30 p.m.



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LIVING WITH LUKE

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The stars align for Luke Valentino – parking lot peril

BY AMY LECLAIRE

Every Dog Mom relates. There's always one frightening incident, the dog story to be told and retold. The one that can't be topped. I thought losing Luke to the shadowy cave of the fox den last spring was my scary story, and the one to be placed up on a high shelf. He was a curious three-month old pup, still learning his boundaries, yet, incidentally, my smartest dog to date. Luke is a thinker and he aims to please.

"I'm coming, Momma! I just needed to sniff the mud-

dy leaves across the street!" My puppy isn't perfect. He loves to explore but always comes back on command, and expects to be rewarded for good intentions. "How about a few blueberries since I listened so well?" My horror was not surprising, then, when after a full ten minutes of searching the yard, I still couldn't find little Luke on that chilly, spring day. Worse, Daddy Fox had been checking him out on more than one occasion. I knew a clever carnivore when I saw one. Little did I know that my fear of losing the pup that stole my heart (even after losing King Lincoln) was about to rekindle.

We had just visited the dog park. After parking and guiding him to jump from

dog crate (perched in the trunk) to ground, I allowed him to grab his leash and gallop up to the dog park gate. The park is safely located on a high hill at the end of a long, driveway flanked by woods. The small liberty offered, I've learned, has helped Luke to gain confidence with unfamiliar ground. He loves to survey the play scene before making a grand entrance. "My name is Luke Valentino and I'm here to play! I excel in a defensive game of wrestling and/or chase, but preferably wrestling because I'm not built for speed. Oh, and my Mom might not let me play with you if you're a Pitt. Who's ready?" The spirit of the dog park, though fun and free, served as an

unhelpful precedent to our next destination.

I had a lunch date planned with a friend at Panera, the outdoor café of which Luke had come to know and love. "How old is your puppy? He's so well behaved! I once had a Golden that looked just like him!" Friend after friend came over to meet and greet my social (now) ten-month old puppy. His favorite server, Ryan, filled his water bowl and made sure to add enough ice (a recurrent Valentino request). The Panera experience had become a vision that danced through my puppy's head like a slab of moist chicken.

"Hey, I know this place! This is where I meet new adults and children! And Ryan brings me water! And my Mom gives me a slice of—"

After noting the scene through the backseat window, his four legs found the ground as they usually do, with his leash clipped and exuberant thirst for life turned on. I fumbled with his backpack, adjusted my keys to lock the car, and rushed to the unsafe speed of a puppy in a hurry, a puppy pulling me forward, a puppy who had suddenly broken free!

What happened next plays out now in my mind like a slow-motion film featuring someone else's pup. Luke, unaware of the vehicles surrounding him, galloped through the mid-



"More ice, please."

section of the parking lot to then cross over the main road running parallel to the restaurant's front entrance. A car was coming. It wasn't speeding. But it wasn't moving slowly either. It was simply moving forward casually, a ship sailing to the motion of a breeze. The driver (though I'm not absolutely sure) seemed unaware of the puppy heading in front of her car. Likewise, Luke was unaware of the danger. I could not scream his name because stopping him in his tracks would have derailed the physics of what was to become a perfect storm. My heart sank in my chest and I screamed his name a thousand times while running forward to witness what stars look like when aligned. The exact speed of Luke's gallop had aligned perfectly with that of the oblivious driver, so that the two moving parts, pup and car, had sailed seamlessly by each other. Had the driver accelerated a beat faster, Luke would have been hit. Had Luke moved a few steps slower, ditto. A small crowd

had already formed on the patio to protect the galloping puppy.

"Oh my gosh." I made it to him and gasped while he sat regally, completely oblivious to what had just transpired. "Look at all of these amazing people to greet, Momma!"

For as long as I live, I don't think I'll ever forget the compassion shown in the eyes of a girl who came to our side. "It's okay. It just happened." She had bright, punk style hair and kind eyes.

"That was completely my fault," I said back, feeling dizzy.

"Sometimes things just happen and we don't know why. He's alright. Your puppy is going to be alright and so aren't you."

I've always said that dogs are better than people. But on that particular day, I learned that sometimes the stars align, and people are just as good.

Tell me your dog story. Write to me amyleclaire@hotmail.com

Follow Luke on IG: @livingwithlukevalentino

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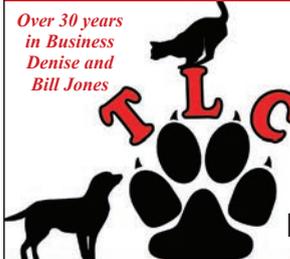
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TALES FROM BEYOND

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Otherworldly voices and forms haunt The Dover Mills

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

The Dover Mills still sits at One Washington Center in the heart of downtown Dover, New Hampshire. The mill's history is ripe with tales of prosperity and woe. Perhaps that is why its walls are full of ghosts and ethereal noises passing through the time barrier.

The mills go back to the early days of the Industrial Revolution. John Williams and fellow investors formed the Dover Cotton Factory in 1812 along the Cochecho River. In 1823 the name was changed to Dover Manufacturing Company because they began manufacturing other items along with the cotton.

Factory life was hard. Mr. Williams paid his worker girls forty-seven cents a day. They received room and board and put two cents per day towards medical. The workers toiled for eleven to twelve hours a day. From March thru October, the workday ran from 6:30 AM to 6:30 PM with forty-five minutes for lunch.

John Williams moved to Boston around 1828, leaving James Curtis in charge of the business. He was harsh and insensitive to the woman employees. He cut their wages from fifty-eight cents a day to fifty-three cents. He even imposed a fine of twelve and one-half cents for anyone who showed up late.

On December 30, 1828, about four hundred of

the eight hundred female workers stormed off the job and took up a picket line in front of the factory. This was the first strike by women in the workforce of the United States. Unfortunately, the strike was a failure. The mill owners placed an ad for replacements, and the women were forced to return to their jobs on January 1, 1829, with a reduction in pay.

Expansion created another building to manufacture cloths and other related goods. This branch was named the Cochecho Manufacturing Company. The spelling error in the name was due to an oversight by the state clerk when recording the birth of the business. Even the river now bears the name with the missing "H."

Years passed, and the mill grew into several buildings. One building of particular interest was the new Building #1, built at the bend of the river, known as "The Beach." This building is the site of the tragic fire that occurred on January 26, 1907. The fire broke out on the fourth floor at about 6:30 PM. Since the sprinkler system was down, the fire spread quickly. Workers had to leap from the windows, and many were injured. The firefighters fought the blaze for one and a half days in temperatures that plummeted as low as twenty-six degrees below zero.

In the end, four people were lost to the fire, and the building was gutted.

They rebuilt the structure and by 1908, it was back in business.

In 1909 the factory was sold to Pacific Mills of Lawrence, Massachusetts. At the end of World War I, things took a turn for the worse. Then came the Depression, and in 1937, the great facility finally closed its doors. In 1940 the town of Dover bought the mill at an auction for the sum of fifty-four thousand dollars.

They rented the complex to small businesses, but the buildings had fallen into a sad state of disrepair. By the 1960s, only the ghosts inhabited the empty shells that loomed over the center of town. In 1984 the mill was purchased and renovated into office and business spaces. The building lives once more with the advent of present-day industry and the revenants of the past.

People standing outside of the building after business hours have claimed to see strange glowing lights hovering around the upper floor windows. Voices of the long-dead still echo through the building as if calling out over the clamor of the machinery that once graced its walls. Other noises frequently heard are the clanging of old machinery. The sounds resemble old looms and other manufacturing machines starting and stopping. A custodian working the night shift often heard the phantom machinery running while he was working.

Otherworldly voices and



forms have been witnessed in one of the towers. Eerie lights sometimes emanate from the basement windows. This would not seem so strange if it was not for the fact that the basement

has been securely sealed for many years.

Could the workers of the past still be drawn to their duties long after their mortal time on earth? Is the machinery that maimed

or claimed the lives also part of the spirit world; or is it just a byproduct of the ghost's never-ending tenure at the haunted Cochecho Mill?



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REAL ESTATE

What's ahead for mortgage rates and home prices?



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

Now that the end of 2022 is close, you may be wondering what's going to happen in the housing market next year and what that may mean if you're thinking about buying a home. Here's a look at the latest expert insights on both mortgage rates and home prices so you can make your best move possible. Mortgage rates will

continue to respond to inflation. There's no doubt mortgage rates have skyrocketed this year as the market responded to high inflation. The increases we've seen were fast and the average 30-year fixed mortgage rate even surpassed 7% at the end of last month. In fact, it's the first time they have risen this high in over 20 years. Just one year ago, rates were under 3%. This means that while mortgage rates are not as high as they were in the 80's, they have more than doubled in the past year. Mortgage rates have never doubled in twelve months before. Because we are in unprecedented territory, it's hard to say with certainty

where mortgage rates will go from here. Projecting the future of mortgage rates is far from an exact science, but experts do agree that, moving forward, mortgage rates will continue to respond to inflation. If inflation stays high, mortgage rates likely will too. Home price changes will vary by market. As buyer demand has eased this year in response to those higher mortgage rates, home prices have leveled off in many markets too. In terms of the forecast for next year, expert projections are mixed. The general consensus is home price appreciation will vary by local market, with more significant changes

happening in overheated areas. Basically, some areas may still see slight price growth while others may see slight price declines. It all depends on other factors at play in that local market, like the balance between supply and demand. This may be why experts are divided on their latest national forecasts. If you want to know what's happening with home prices or mortgage rates, reach out to the Marzeotti Group or a trusted realtor for the latest on what experts are saying and what that means for your local area.

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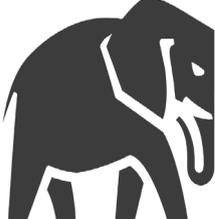
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BY JOHN PAUL

Q. My Ford Explorer with 321,000 makes a noise if I'm driving more than 45 miles per hour. When I accelerate its fine, when I let off the gas, there is a loud fan-like noise. What could cause that?

A. Generally, the differential pinion bearing will make this type of growling noise. Typically, the noise gets louder the faster you drive. Four-wheel drive vehicles like yours can sometimes be a little hard to diagnose. As a general rule the front pinion bearing will be noisy when coasting and the rear pinion bearing will make noise under load.

Q. Gasoline is still too expensive, and my question is can tires actually save gas? I have been hearing about tires that can cause the car to use less fuel, is this true?

A. I have seen some comparison studies that found that low rolling resistance tires such as Michelin Energy Saver and Bridgestone Ecopia can actually save fuel. In a test with a Toyota Prius the difference between tested tires with the lowest rolling resistance and the highest, resulted in the savings of 21 gallons of fuel over 15,000 miles without any trade-offs for performance and tire life. Now of course this isn't a huge saving, but every little bit helps. Without spending more money on tires, keep the tires you

have properly inflated, accelerate and brake gently and combine trips when possible.

Q. We love our Honda Odyssey because of its reliability, fuel efficiency, comfort and its quiet car-like ride. We need a vehicle like the Odyssey because of our kids, our dog and we are teachers and get the summer off and always plan long road trips. One of the other reasons we like the Honda is because of the built in vacuum. Do you think the new Honda is still a good choice?

A. I still believe that the Honda Odyssey is one of the best vehicles of its type on the market. It rides well, gets decent fuel mileage and is very versatile. The Toyota Sienna is also a good choice and stands apart from the mini-van crowd with all-wheel-drive. The Sienna as well as the Chrysler Pacifica also have hybrid options. I do have one bit of bad news about the Honda Odyssey, the last time I looked due to supply chain issues, the built in Honda-Vac was unavailable.

Q. I just bought a 2002 Lexus SC430 with 70,000 miles on it from a neighbor and it is in stunning condition. Most people who look at the car think it is a new model. Would you recommend due to age that I replace the timing belt and water pump? I think the manual recommends 90,000 miles but considering the car is 20 years old,

I'm thinking it might be the right thing to do.

A. Considering the age of the car it would make sense to replace the timing belt and belt tensioner as well as the alternator and power steering belts. Regarding the water pump, I would also replace it since it is an integral part of the timing belt system. The labor to replace the timing belt in just under five hours and it is only another 18 minutes to replace the water pump. When replacing the belts and water pump give the coolant hoses a good look too. In my opinion although a little costly replacing these items could prevent a costly breakdown and would be money very well spent.

John Paul is AAA Northeast's Car Doctor. He has over forty years' experience and is an ASE-certified

master technician. He will answer readers' questions each week. Email your car questions to jpaul@aanortheast.com. Follow John on Twitter @johnfpaul and

friend him on Facebook, [mrjohnfpaul](https://www.facebook.com/mrjohnfpaul).

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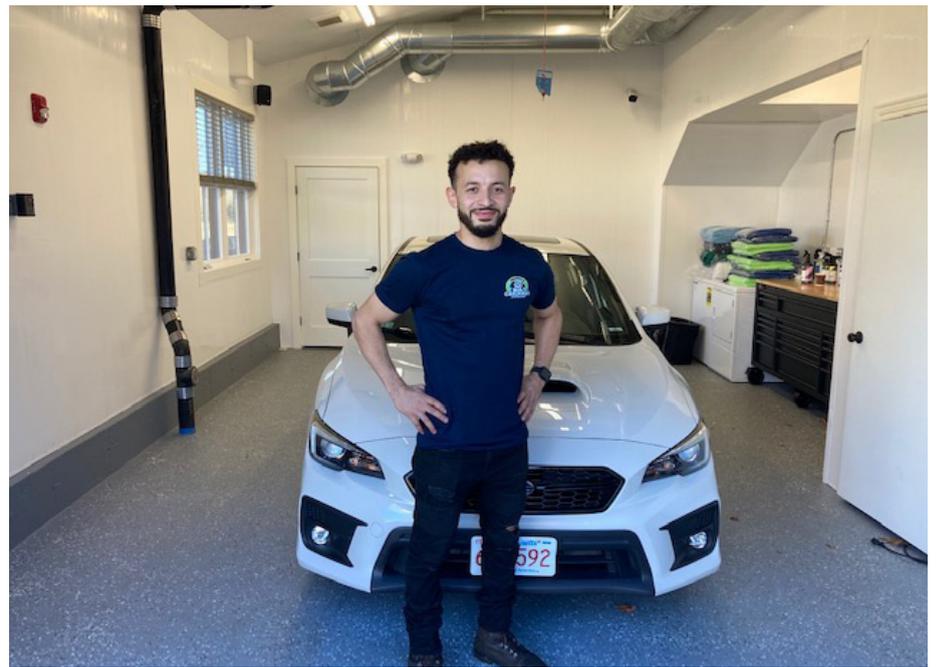
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Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into 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.

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Legislature passes massive economic development bill

The Massachusetts Legislature has passed a wide-ranging \$3.76 billion relief package to provide targeted energy assistance, support ongoing transportation needs, and invest in the state's small businesses, caregivers, health care system, affordable housing, and efforts to fight climate change.

"Massachusetts families are facing rising costs and tighter budgets every day," said Senator Michael Moore (D-Millbury). "Yesterday, the Legislature passed a wide-ranging bill focused on supporting essential industries and services, easing the burden of soaring energy costs for low-income households, and spurring economic development across the Commonwealth - actions that will make a meaningful difference to Bay Staters. I want to thank Senators Gobi and Chandler for their partnership in securing these funds for our constituents."

"I would like to express my sincere appreciation for my colleagues in the House of Representatives and the Senate, in passing An Act relating to the economic growth and relief for the Commonwealth. This bill provides essential funding for organizations and initiatives throughout the state during a time of prolonged economic instability," said Senator Harriette Chandler (D-Worcester). "The work of my fellow legislators from Central Massachusetts was vital in securing funding for a wide range of programs, including street improvements and downtown revitalization in the City of Worcester, as well as upgrades to municipal buildings in central Massachusetts

towns, and critical funding for non-profits throughout the region that are essential to the functions of organizations that benefit the Greater Worcester community."

"I am grateful for my partnership with Senator Moore and Senator Chandler. Together, we ensured a pathway forward to support our Veterans. It is right that Massachusetts should empower veterans to build sustainable futures after all their sacrifices," Senator Anne Gobi (D-Spencer) said.

The local earmarks secured in the final Economic Development bill include:

\$450,000 to fund Veterans Inc, a Veterans' service provider and substance use community support program in the Worcester area.

"We are so incredibly grateful to Senators Moore, Chandler, and Gobi, and the rest of the Central MA Congressional delegation for their help in obtaining these funds," said Vincent J. Perrone (Lt. Col., USAF, retired), President and CEO of Veterans Inc. "The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) is a crucial part of our employment services, integrating homeless Veterans into the labor force and funding the development of the innovative service delivery systems that are essential for Veterans in need."

\$750,000, in collaboration with Senator Harriette Chandler, to fund road improvements at the intersection of Ararat Street and C Street in the Greendale neighborhood of Worcester.

"These infrastructure funds are critical to improve and upgrade the roadway system in the Greendale section of Worcester," said Craig L. Blais, President of the

Worcester Business development Corporation. "We are so grateful to Senators Chandler and Moore and Representative O'Day for offering these amendments to the legislation."

\$100,000 to fund Centro Las Americas' food pantry program in Worcester

"With winter right around the corner and energy costs expected to skyrocket, community food pantries will be more important

than ever," said Juan Gomez, President of Centro Las Americas. "This \$100,000 grant will ensure Centro's Food Pantry is prepared to serve as a critical source of food for those who may have gone hungry otherwise. I want to thank Senators Moore, Gobi, and Chandler for securing this funding for the people of Worcester."

\$100,000 to fund the Blackstone Valley EdHub Collaborative Workforce Pipeline, a non-

profit economic and workforce development program run by the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce.

\$35,000 to fund Dismas House in Worcester

In addition to \$3.76 billion in direct investments, this compromise legislation ensures that the Commonwealth responsibly pays for the historic \$3 billion one-time tax relief that will be returned to an estimated three

million taxpayers over the coming weeks. Combined, this \$6.76 billion in tax relief and direct investments will provide much-needed breathing room for families, small businesses and individuals feeling the pinch of inflation. Notably, the bill closes the books on Fiscal Year 2022 and dedicates \$500 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), leaving a balance of \$1.75 billion in federal resources for future use.



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