

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

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

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



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.

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 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

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

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

BVCC

continued on page 2



"The line stretches all the way back to Terre Haute!" Santa exclaimed at the Asa Waters Mansion in Millbury, when told that a large number of adults and children were waiting to see him and Mrs. Claus.

Holidays grow in appeal in Grafton, Millbury and Sutton

BY ROD LEE

As longtime celebrants of the season, the towns of Grafton, Millbury and Sutton know a little something about how to sparkle up the holidays.

Saturday, December 3rd and Sunday, December 4th were those communities' time to shine near Christmastime, and they didn't disappoint.

The success of the respective productions this year was made possible by strong support from local businesses—as it has been in the past.

Sutton's Chain of Lights, now in its thirtieth year, was made possible by presenting sponsor bankHometown, trolley sponsors Catelli Bros. Family Foods, UniBank, Uni-

fied2 Global Packaging Group, Market 321 and Country Montessori Children's Center, and several other underwriters of the many events held throughout the historic village.

Event Level 1 sponsors in Sutton included Millbury Federal Credit Union, the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, Goretta's Supermarket and IBA Print Shop. Event Level 2 sponsors were Al's Rubbish & Container, Millbury National Bank, Nu-England Services Co. Inc., Galaxy Development, MMC Tax & Business Advisors, AE and the Whiting Community Center.

Sutton's celebration owes its start in 1992 to Gary Vaillancourt of Vaillancourt Folk

HOLIDAYS

continued on page 3

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BVCC

continued from page 1

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 individuals.

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



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.

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 col-

lective good and it's really remarkable," Mr. Penrose said.

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HOLIDAYS

continued from page 1

Art, who worked with the Worcester County Convention & Visitors Bureau to create a multi-town special Christmas-themed happening linking all of Central Massachusetts in a “Chain of Lights.” Sutton’s inaugural was called “Christmas Tastes in Sutton” and featured just one trolley and four stops. This year’s re-enactment showed how far Mr. Vaillancourt’s vision has come, with ten trolleys or buses carrying attendees to seventeen different venues.

Vaillancourt Folk Art, now situated in the Manchaug Mill, was one of the attractions with a miniature German Christmas Wine Market and mini European Christmas market. Vaillancourt’s own Christmas Cabernet Sauvignon and Nurnberg’s original hot Gluhwein were a highlight of the tastes available to patrons, harkening back to how it all began.

The story of commerce and culture coming together in a winning fashion was much the same in Millbury, where All Care Medical Supply, bankHometown, Cake Shop Café, DiRenzo Towing & Recovery, Goretto’s, IBA Print Shop, K&T Law Office and Millbury Family Dentistry stepped up corporate sponsors with a large contingent of banner sponsors, entertainment sponsors and other supporters also contributing.

In Sutton, hours-long rain on Saturday did nothing to dampen the spirits of attendees as they checked out Pucki-



Clockwise from above: Marge Duff, Russ Kassatly, April Kassatly and Alice Shaw help with the 50/50 Raffle during the “Chain of Lights”—Christmas in historic Sutton.

Mary Ann Brayer and Carrie Hogan work the Friends of the Grafton Public Library table during “Grafton Celebrates the Holidays.”

John Scott, Erin Prior, Lauren Scott and Muriel Scott sell chocolate as a fundraiser during “Grafton Celebrates the Holidays.”

huddle’s Winter Carnival, the Gingerbread Fair at St. Mark’s Catholic Church, Charlie Brown’s Christmas at Mickey’s Car Wash & Detail Shop, Winter Wonderland games and crafts for the kids at Dudley Gendron Post 414, handcrafted goods, raffle baskets and homemade baked items at First Congregational Church, “our famous hot chocolate bar” at Legacy Baptist Church, and a

chance to view hundreds of historical items at the General Rufus Putnam Museum and the M.M. Sherman Blacksmith Shop—to name just some of the many locations available by way of Route 1 and Route 2 trolley rides.

On Sunday, with better weather—fair and almost balmy—Grafton witnessed large crowds for its annual “Grafton Celebrates the Holidays.”

The same was true in downtown Millbury for Millbury’s 23rd annual “Chain of Lights.”

In Millbury, Informed as he sat with “Mrs. Claus” in a small room at the Asa Waters Mansion on Elm St. that dozens of adults and children were assembled in the hallway, waiting for a chance to see them, “Santa” voiced a memorable remark from “A Christmas Story” with a huge smile

on his face—“It stretches all the way back to Terre Haute”!

In Grafton and in Millbury, areas in and around the Town Common were clogged with pedestrians enjoying the comfortable temperatures.

“We live in Shrewsbury now but we lived in Grafton for thirty years,” Dominic Protano, accompanied by his wife Joan, said, as he sipped a cup of coffee. “We have

enjoyed coming back, this year.”

Grafton, Millbury and Sutton have become old pros at celebrating the Christmas season with a variety of offerings that drive interest among adults and children alike.

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WSN, Upton 4-H'ers team up on Yellow Tulip Project

By ROD LEE

Suzie Barrows is only in her sophomore year at Nipmuc Regional High School, but she can already see herself as a member of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's Women's Success Network (WSN) in the near future.

The seeds of this possibility have been planted through her involvement with the WSN's Yellow Tulip Project for the past two years.

"I know of [the WSN] and the amazing work they do, so yes, I hope," Ms. Barrows said on December 5th. "My career goal is to become an occupational therapist but whatever I end up doing it will be helping people in the community."

Jeannie Hebert, Pat Hurton, Heather Elster, Alise Breton and others who have nurtured the growth of the

Women's Success Network would welcome the addition of Ms. Barrows and some of her fellow Upton Hoofbeats 4-H'ers to the organization.

Ms. Barrows' mother, Karla Barrows, whose family operates Rock Hill Farm in Upton, said an interest in community service and mental health "is how we got hooked up with the Women's Success Network."

Suzie Barrows is prone to anxiety, her mother said, but this has not stopped her from engaging in all kinds of teenage activities, from traveling the country for 4-H events to clearing trails and performing with a mounted drill team; and with an involvement in drama.

Such undertakings have been "a real boost to her confidence, and the whole purpose of yellow tulips is to get rid of the anxiety," her



Suzie Barrows and fellow members of the Upton Hoofbeats, a 4-H club, have become an integral part of the Women's Success Network's Yellow Tulip Project.

mother says.
The WSN's Yellow Tulip

Project has been a huge success. WSN members planted five hundred yellow tulips at the Millbury Town Common in October, in support of mental health awareness, according to Ms. Hurton.

Suzie has embraced being part of the initiative and has become "a yellow tulip ambassador" at her school, Ms. Hebert noted.

"We're very proud of her!" Ms. Hebert said.

"We learned about the Yellow Tulips Project in October of 2021 with plantings done at the Whittin Community Center," Suzie's mom said.

More recently, working with several hundred bulbs provided to her by the WCC's Ms. Elster, Suzie and fellow 4-Hers have been doing plantings at all four of the schools in her district.

Ms. Elster chairs the WSN's Community Service subcommittee.

"I have been in 4-H

almost since I was born," Suzie said on December 5th. "My sister Elina was doing it and my mom was a leader."

Earlier this year, Suzie Barrows won a public speaking contest in Kentucky at the 4-H Eastern Nationals. This was followed by a trip to Atlanta for 4-H's National Congress, where, she says, "I got to meet people from all over the country, which was eye-opening." She was mistress of ceremonies at the Atlanta function.

"Our club is really active," Karla Barrows said, of the Upton Hoofbeats, a group that numbers more than a dozen girls. "Suzie won a Citizenship Award from Sen. Brewer. We have done a coat drive with Rep. Muradian."

Aligning herself with the WSN's Yellow Tulip Project is a natural fit for a busy young woman, Karla Barrows says of her daughter. Suzie is a straight-A student. She also takes night classes through the Blackstone Valley Education Hub.

Whatever vocation Suzie Barrows ends up pursuing, it is safe to say that yellow tulips will always be an important part of her life.

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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 Police.

Mr. Guilmette's book was published in 2018.

The Massachusetts State Police Museum



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.

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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GRAFTON BUSINESS NEWS

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Good tidings abound in Grafton during the holidays

BY CHRISTINE GALEONE

It's true that there's no shortage of depressing news in our country and our world. But there's also no shortage of good news. The latter just seems to frequently get pushed aside.

Thankfully, it's easy to see a lot of the good things happening in Grafton. Many local businesses, organizations and residents have been spreading cheer in so many different ways.

One very distinctive person who's known for

spreading Christmas cheer is Santa. On Saturday, Dec. 17, from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. (with a rain date of Sunday Dec. 18), the Grafton Fire Department will escort the jolly old elf through neighborhoods throughout Grafton. His tour will begin in South Grafton, proceed to North Grafton and end in the center of Town.

The Grafton Police Department has also been bringing joy to kids by once again helping an area nonprofit. On Nov. 26, the GPD held its annual

Fill the Cruiser event. The toy drive benefitted Toys for Kids and Teens, the nonprofit run by Blackstone Valley veterans – that provides new toys and bikes for area families in need during the holidays. After the drive, the GPD thanked everyone who made the event so successful. Particularly generous donations were made by Homefield Credit Union, Grafton Lions Club, All Phase Glass, Precision Services and Adams Plumbing.

Because animals need some cheer too, Quite Fetching, the barkery and boutique located on the Grafton Common, which sells items such as specialty cakes for pets, pupcakes, dog toys and pet holiday items (including gingerbread house kits for dogs), has been helping homeless animals. The shop has a giving tree decorated with pet-themed



Grafton Police Department's 2022 Fill the Cruiser Toy Drive (photo courtesy of Grafton PD's Facebook page),

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Chuck Brown, the founder and owner of Bread Guy Breads, has been establishing an exciting partnership with Grafton High School for a new venture that will uplift and empower students in the school's 18-22 program. The GAIN (Grafton Achieving Independence Now) program will teach the students excellent work skills, as well as baking skills through a program inspired by the

successful Sugar Shack in Westborough. Initiated by Jay Cummings, the superintendent of Grafton Public Schools, GAIN's storefront will be located between Grafton Pizza and Donut Star in North Grafton.

Although last month Truth Organic Spa in North Grafton was devastated by a fire that left the spa uninhabitable, it has since been the recipient of so much good cheer through an outpouring of support that it has just joyfully re-opened at a temporary location last

week. The new location is at 74 North Main Street in North Grafton.

With plenty of bad news in the world, it's wonderful to know that there are many people of good cheer who are sharing their gifts and resources with the community in so many ways. We wish you and your loved ones a happy, healthy holiday season!

Contact Christine with your business news items at cmgaleone15@gmail.com.

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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 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.

not right. I have known Phil only for a few years but when he mentioned this to me it just clicked."

Although information on Mr. Coburn and Mr. Nault was practically nonexistent, 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 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."

The veterans whose 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



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



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.



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 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.

Inspired by what they have accomplished, Mr.

"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 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 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

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.

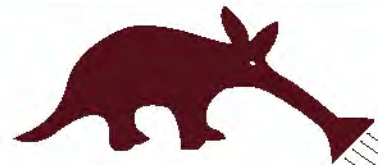
"First we have to do the research, and then obtain the funding."

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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Restoration work complete in rooms at Waters Farm

Heart cooking returned to Waters Farm Days in October with the newly restored fireplaces in the Dining Room and North Kitchen, according to officials at the

Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. In addition, the North Kitchen's beehive oven was brought back to operating status. This work was done

by Richard Irons of Irons Restoration Masonry and Jeremy Brown of Wachusett Chimney. Rides about the Blackstone Valley Polar Express remain available through

December 23rd. Enjoy a ninety-minute train ride for a view of the North Pole along with singing, games, a reading of the

Nominations are now in for the John H. Chafee Heritage Awards, which honor individuals and groups that have worked on

vocates and students whose achievements have resulted in public benefit. One way to support the Corridor as a nonprofit is



A view looking to the southeast from the hilltop at Waters Farm.

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projects and programs, and institutions that promote the cultural heritage and the preservation of natural areas and that strive to enrich the quality of life in the Blackstone Valley.

The Corridor established the award to honor the late Sen. John H. Chafee. Recipients have included community leaders, preservation heroes, business partners, environmental ad-

by volunteering; the community and the Corridor benefit greatly from the contributions of volunteers, whose efforts are considered an in-kind donation. The current value of a volunteer (national average) is \$29.95 per hour. When volunteers report and log their hours, the Corridor is able to use them as an in-kind match when applying for grants.

Culture drives way forward at Samuel Slater Experience

BY ROD LEE

The new Samuel Slater Experience on Ray Street in Webster received an early Christmas present even before the arrival of Santa on December 3rd. In what will surely be a boost to the first-year museum, it has been accredited to participate in the Card to Culture program, a collaboration between the Massachusetts Cultural Council and several government agencies in providing assistance to eligible residents.

Card to Culture partnerships enable arts, humanities and science organizations to offer free or steeply reduced admission to Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT), Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Nutrition Program and/or ConnectorCare cardholders.

With presentation of an EBT card, a family (up to four people) receives the discounted entry fee of \$3

per person. This is significant for those who can take advantage of the program, and for the museum, the SSE's Barbara Van Reed said.

Described as "Disney-like," the Samuel Slater Experience continues to build patronage with its state-of-the-art 4D digital technology to tell the story of Samuel Slater, the industrialist credited with creating the American factory system, and powering the extraordinary growth of the textile industry as it took root in the U.S.

A visit to the Samuel Slater Experience is designed to be educational and entertaining. Visitors are encouraged to immerse themselves in history in a new, immersive way—by climbing aboard the ship

SLATER
continued on page 9

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SPORTS

Grafton lacrosse players selected to All-State Tour Team

Hunter Laverdiere and Beckett Heidental of Grafton were selected to the Mass Bay Colonials' boys lacrosse team traveling to Houston on December 10th and 11th to compete in the Best of Texas Lacrosse Tournament. Heidental & Laverdiere are two of twenty-two players selected from over two hundred athletes from one hundred twenty-five town lacrosse programs from Central and Eastern Massachusetts.

"The Mass Bay Colonials is an extension of our community-based youth league, Mass Youth Lacrosse, which was founded to promote and celebrate town-based lacrosse and the elite athletes who commit to their communities each spring," said Joey Picard, Colonials founder and general manager.

Laverdiere is a fifth-year player with the Grafton Youth Lacrosse Program. He plays midfield and is currently in seventh grade at Grafton Middle School. He is a multi-sport athlete who also plays football and basketball.

Heidental is a sixth-year player with Grafton Youth Lacrosse Program. He plays defense and is currently

in eighth grade at Grafton Middle School. He also plays basketball and runs cross-country.

The Grafton Youth Lacrosse program has been continuously growing in numbers in both boys and girls participating and is known throughout Central Massachusetts for having an immense respect for the game, creating a place to learn while also producing great competition and strong athletes.

In addition to performance at the tryouts, players submitted recommendations from coaches, teachers, and community leaders to earn a spot from the selection committee. The Mass Bay Colonials seek to not only bring the most talented youth lacrosse players from Massachusetts, but the players who can proudly represent our state on and off the field.

2022 is the third iteration of the Mass Bay Colonials, but the first time with both a boys and girls team, as Mass Youth Lacrosse added a girls league to the organization in 2022. The Mass Bay Colonials will send a boys team (class of 2027) and a girls team (class of

2027/2028) to Houston to compete against teams from Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and others from across the Southwest.

The boys team will be led by Head Coach Nathan Kittler. Kittler is the head coach at Natick High School and was named the 2022 Eastern Mass Lacrosse Coach's Association Coach of the Year. Kittler will be assisted by Ed McCarthy, a long-time youth and high school coach who has been a Mass Youth Lacrosse coach and education trainer for the past five years. Rounding out the coaching staff is Tom Spangenberg, the current chair of Mass Youth Lacrosse Board of Directors, former president of the board, and long-time youth coach with Dover-Sherborn Youth Lacrosse.

"As a league, we focus on many important facets of the game designed to grow lacrosse and honor its sacred traditions," said Spangenberg, "and the Colonials are one such example of how we're uniting our towns, prioritizing teaching the skills in a fun environment, and promoting the importance of character, community, and camaraderie. We're

thrilled to bring the finest athletes and coaches from our small community to a much larger one in Texas this winter."

The 2022 Mass Bay Colonials Boys team will

have twenty-two athletes representing youth lacrosse programs in Andover, Cambridge, Framingham, Grafton, Hamilton-Wenham, Holliston, King Philip, Lexington, Marblehead,

Melrose, Natick, Newburyport, North Andover, North Central, Norwood, Pentucket, Reading, Stoneham, Wachusett, and Wayland.

SLATER

continued from page 8

that brought Samuel Slater to America, for instance, or by riding the trolley through downtown Webster a century later.

The museum's exhibits cover two time periods, from the post-Revolutionary era into the early 1800s, and the first decade of the 20th Century.

In bringing Britain's textile industry trade secrets to America in 1789, Samuel Slater, hence known as "Slater the Traitor," successfully created the country's first cotton-spinning jenny. He eventually owned thirteen spinning mills and developed tenant

farms and company towns around these. He is largely responsible for formation of the town of Webster.

On Sunday, December 4th, the museum held an Open House with free admission to residents of the town of Webster.

"We're still learning," Ms. Van Reed said, as the museum works to establish its place among the cultural offerings available to residents of South County and Central Massachusetts.

Special holiday hours are in effect, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. December 27-29.

The museum will be closed December 23-25, December 30-31, and January 1.

Those interested in learning more about the museum are asked to visit <https://samuelslaterexperience.org>.

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SPORTS

One step further, but same result for Sutton boys

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Last fall the Sutton boys soccer team earned themselves a number five seed in the Division 5 State Tournament and went on to defeat Atlantis Charter, Oxford and Hopedale before running into the number one seed Bromfield in the Final Four. Unfortunately, Bromfield took out the Sammies and went on to capture the State Title.

This year Sutton once again posted an impressive 10-3-4 regular season record and was awarded the number two seed of

the tournament. Sutton then posted four straight shutouts against Atlantis Charter (2-0), Hopedale (7-0), Holbrook (2-0) and Douglas (1-0 in double overtime) to advance into the Division 5 State Tournament Final. Advancing one step further than the previous season, Sutton would once again have to square off against Bromfield for the championship. Despite outscoring their first four opponents 12-0, the Sammies found themselves up against a tough Bromfield team, which was the number one seed coming into the tournament. And

although the Sammies were playing stellar defense, much like the year before Sutton fell 3-0 to the now back-to-back champions.

“Coming into this season we lost our starting defensive line, all four defenders graduated,” Sutton Coach Mike Elster said. “We always set high expectations, but with a guarded optimism. We expected to exceed, but I’m not sure that we thought that we’d get to do what we accomplished this season.”

In the recent past Sutton has captured four straight State Championships (2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014) in



The Sutton boys soccer team benefits from the toughness of its schedule, in making a tournament run almost every year.

addition to its fair share of Dual Valley Conference titles. Elster attributes the team’s overwhelming success to the tough schedule

that they put together year in and year out.

“We have a good history of being a top-notch contender, one of the higher Division teams,” he said. “We play a number of Division 1 teams for our out of conference games; big, strong opponents that we generally play close. I’d say we’re in the top three of Division 5 teams in terms of strength of schedule.”

Sutton took the next step and although the Sammies were not able to capitalize on it Elster was rather proud of his team’s accomplishments.

“Following the loss, the kids were sad, but I was quite proud of this team. Each of the seniors stepped up and told the rest of the team how much this meant to the program,” the coach said. “That there, is a telling sign of program strength and I was extremely happy with the situation.”

Although the Sammies were without their entire defensive line from a year earlier, Sutton still was able to put the ball in the net on a regular basis while keeping its opposition at bay. Leading the way for Sutton’s run to the Championship Final were the team’s three senior captains, all Central Mass All-Stars.

Keeper Connor Mulderig, a very important piece between the pipes for Sutton, kept the Sammies in each and every game this year. Ben Venuti was converted to a forward this year and although it took a bit of time, he eventually got used to his new position and was able to score a large portions of Sutton’s goals. Third and not least, mid defender Justin Cao was a talented individual who could read the game and make the necessary adjustments to stop the opposition’s attack.

In addition to the three captains leaving the team Sutton will also be saying goodbye to another four

seniors, all who played contributing factors in the team reaching the State Finals. Although seven graduating seniors is a decent amount for a small school such as Sutton’s, Coach Elster has a good amount of athletes who will be returning to the team next season. Sutton will return eight juniors, two sophomores and four freshmen from this year’s squad.

With a decent number of returners coming back next year to make another run at the title, the Sammies will be without their solid goalie from this year’s run.

“Our biggest loss is going to be our goalie situation. We really didn’t have a back-up goalie this year so if anything had happened to Connor then we would have had to go to a field position athlete to fill in,” Elster said. “Next year I believe that we will have a freshman coming out for the team that could possibly take over the position. He’s young but he may be the only one, we’ll have to wait and see.”

As Elster previously noted, he is a firm believer in playing a strong schedule as it prepares you for the playoffs and although his team will be on the younger side next fall he still wants the athletic director to schedule those top teams during the regular season so that the players can take their game to the next level.

“We’re a good enough team and always strive to earn a high seed in the tournament; hopefully, we will once again at least make it to the final four if not further,” the Sammies coach said. “Once you get to the tournament anything can happen at that point. I expect to be one of the favorites next year.”

One step at a time; if that progression continues for Sutton next fall the Sammies could be the Division 5 State Champion.

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SPORTS

Back-to-back state titles for Uxbridge field hockey

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

During the 2021 campaign the Uxbridge field hockey team posted a 15-0-2 regular season record, earning itself a three seed in the Division 4 State Tournament. The Spartans would rattle off five straight wins in the tournament, outscoring their opponents 26-0 to take home the Division 4 State Championship.

Uxbridge field hockey Coach Kelly Rosborough would graduate three seniors who were an integral part of that magical squad and knew that if she could fill those empty vacancies with talent then the Spartans could possibly do it again.

"I and (JV head coach and assistant varsity coach) Jody Blood preach to the team offense and defense; full systems that work together and if everyone does their jobs then we will be successful again," Rosborough said. "We knew that we had the chance to once again be successful and make a run at the State Championship."

While the Spartans were working hard and playing to their potential, no one could have ever imagined the team going 18-0 during the regular season and then winning all five games that they played in during the Division 4 State Championship Tournament to finish 23-0. The culmination was Uxbridge's second straight State Field Hockey Championship.

"Earning the number one seed in the tournament, the girls knew they had the opportunity, the coach said. "If we could stay in the moment and prepare one game at a time that we could do this again. The girls don't have that we're winning this type of attitude without playing hard."

While Uxbridge was taking care of business during four of its five games (7-1 win over Westport, 9-0 over Nantucket, 5-0 over Frontier Region and 5-0 over Manchester Essex), the team did have one game, against Monomoy, that could have ended its season.

"The Semi Final game against Monomoy was our only problematic game (the two teams would battle to a double overtime victory for Uxbridge 3-2)," Rosbor-



The Uxbridge field hockey team is looking to three-peat as state champs next year, after a remarkable 2022 season.

ough said. "This was our first overtime game of the season, never mind going to double overtime and we hadn't really been challenged in this way all year long."

During the regular season Uxbridge handled Monomoy rather easily, grabbing a 6-1 victory, but Rosborough knew that once the two teams met up in the Semi Finals that the game would be totally different. "I knew that they'd be more prepared this time around and looking for redemption," she said. "But we came together as a team and were able to come away with the win."

Uxbridge's top two scorers were a big part of the Spartans getting back to the State Championship for the second year in a row. Sophomore Ellie Bouchard, who was a threat last year, scored 34 goals and added 6 assists from her left forward position while freshman Kendall Gilmore, playing the right forward position, notched 31 goals and 14 assists for Uxbridge.

Right behind the youngsters was senior inner forward Meghan Smith who tallied 25 goals and 5 assists. The senior was one of the Spartans key offensive players. Freshman Amelia Blood didn't have as many goals (11), but she used her

talents to record 30 assists instead.

"She ran our offenses as the center mid and liked to distribute the ball," Rosborough said. "A lot of her assists came off corners and as a solid midfielder she stepped up our offensive by, moving the ball up field."

As an eighth grader last fall Blood scored the only goal in last year's Championship game against Ipswich.

Other offensive threats this past season were freshman Julianna Casucci (8 goals-5 assists) and eighth grader Aubrey Bouchard (10 goals - 4 assists) from their left and right forward positions respectively. Over the last two seasons Uxbridge's offense has averaged 6 goals a game throughout the regular season as well as the post-season.

Rounding out the offense, Uxbridge had two interchangeable athletes that brought a dynamic presence when they stepped onto the field at left inner on the forward line in eighth grader Brooklyn Kaferlein (9 goals-7 assists) and junior Tessa Johnston (8 goals-2 assists).

On the defensive side of the field the Spartans are led by senior captain Morgan Ouellette. The center defender plays with a lot of

Okenquiste, who was on the team last fall but only saw limited action during the regular season and was on the bench during the tournament, became the team's starting goalie this fall. Playing in all 23 games this year, Okenquiste only allowed 11 goals for a .478 goals against average and blanked the opponent on 15 occasions

Other players for the Division 4 State Champions were seniors Gianna Noyes, Maddison Tousignant, Abby Sanches, Grace Orr, and Lily Brayman. These five athletes were all on the team as eighth graders.

"This year's seniors were part of the first eighth grade class five years ago," the coach said. "They are a great group of girls who worked extremely hard throughout the years and were a great part of this program."

Juniors Sam Jones and Ella Pezzullo, along with sophomore Natalie Orr, not only round out the team but give the squad a deep sideline.

In 2015 the Uxbridge field hockey program started a feeder program so that by the time the girls got to high school they'd be ready to step right in.

"We are fortunate enough that the community as well as the parents love and know the sport of field hockey," Rosborough said. "Without the community and school, who have been so supportive during our playoff run, who knows where we'd be. The last two games we had a super fan base and the Board of Selectmen has put signs all around town stating 23-0 State Champions."

Rosborough will be graduating seven seniors, only two of whom started, from this year's team, but believes that the Spartans will be just fine and once again in pursuit of yet another State Championship.

The girls who are coming back next season have already began working to get ready for next August and are looking to three-peat.

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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 Meatballs, Shepherd's Pie,

Lisa Moon aims high with The Neighborhood Kitchen



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

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 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 indus-



Bettie Carlson’s photographs of a foggy day in December are on display and available for purchase at Booklovers’ Gourmet throughout this month.



Winter Wonderland

Visits with Santa are part of the experience connected with the Festival of Illumination and Winter Wonderland at Southwick’s Zoo, this month.

trial might to build the weapons needed by the last struggling democracies to save themselves from fascism. The American Heritage Museum is open Wednesday-Sunday.

• “Walking Through the Woods on a Foggy Day in December,” photographs by Bettie Carlson, are on display and available for purchase throughout the month at Booklovers’ Gourmet, 72 E. Main St., Webster. In an artist’s statement, Ms. Carlson says “winter,

the time when all the leaves have fallen from the trees and the flowers have died and the colors have gone from the land—or have they? It is just that the colors are more subtle than in summertime? Not everything is dead. Most are just waiting for spring when they will rise again. But on a foggy day in December, I discovered plenty of color—and saw fantastic shapes in the decaying wood and leaves that I would not have encountered in summertime; and the fog cre-

ated a veil to embrace it all.” Email deb@bookloversgourmet.com for further info.

• Southwick’s Zoo’s combination extravaganza featuring both the Festival of Illumination (with a “Once Upon a Time” theme) and Winter Wonderland display of spectacular holiday lights and handcrafted Chinese lanterns

HAPPENINGS!

continued on page 17

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Christmas Banana Split Brownies!

BY CHRISTINE GALEONE

One of my favorite recipes from this series is the one for banana split brownies. They're delicious, healthier than most brownies and easy to make. What more could you want from a dessert?

So, when I was trying to come up with a festive reci-

pe for this month's column, these came to mind. All that was necessary to transform the recipe into a holiday dessert was a merry little garnish that's healthy. And it complements the flavors of the brownie. The result is this recipe for Christmas Banana Split Brownies.

The brownies themselves are healthier than most

because they contain less added sugar and unhealthy fats than most brownies. And they're healthier because of their ingredients. While walnuts are heart-healthy and brain-healthy nuts, bananas contain important vitamins and minerals, including potassium, vitamin B6, vitamin C and magnesium.

The garnish is also healthier than most brownie toppings, such as frosting and sprinkles, which frequently contain harmful artificial food coloring. Not only is fresh mint free from anything artificial, it's rich in nutrients, including vitamin A and antioxidants. And strawberries contain antioxidants as well. They're a heart-healthy, brain-healthy fruit that may reduce the risk of cancer.



Topping Ingredients:
16 Fresh Strawberries
32 Fresh Mint Leaves

Directions:

Combine flour, cocoa and baking powder in a large bowl.

In a separate bowl, combine sugar, olive oil, almond extract and one mashed ripe banana.

Add eggs to the mixture, and beat well with a spoon.

In a few increments, add the dry mixture to the wet mixture. Blend together with a spoon.

Mix in walnuts and dark chocolate chips.

Pour batter into a 9"X9" baking pan.

Bake in a pre-heated

oven at 350 degrees for around 25 minutes. Brownie should begin to pull away from the edges of the pan.

Cut into 16 squares.

Rinse and dry the strawberries and the mint leaves, and cut the bottom leaves off the strawberries.

Garnish each brownie with a strawberry centered on top of two mint leaves.

Most of us will end up eating more than enough unhealthy treats in the next couple of weeks. Why not make a recipe or two that you can feel good, in more ways than one, about eating and sharing? Happy (healthier) holiday baking!

CHRISTMAS BANANA SPLIT BROWNIES

Ingredients:

- ½ Cup of Unsifted All-Purpose Flour
- 1/3 Cup of Unsweetened Cocoa
- 1 tsp. Baking Powder
- ¾ Cup of Sugar
- ½ Cup of Light Tasting Olive Oil
- 1 tsp. of Pure Almond Extract
- 2 Eggs
- 1 Banana
- ½ Cup of Natural Walnuts
- ¼ Cup of Dark Chocolate Chips (Optional)

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HAPPENINGS

continued from page 15

continues Wednesday-Sunday through December 31st, at 2 Southwick St., Mendon. Tickets



Thousands of Christmas lights adorn this one hundred-foot-tall crane owned by Leo Crane Service in Webster. Owner Tony Leo, now semi-retirewd, says "some people decorate Christmas trees. I decorate cranes."

to the Festival include a visit with Santa (until December 24th) and a free train ride through the Enchanted Forest. Dine at Galliford's Restaurant & Tavern while on the grounds. Go to <https://southwick-zoo.com> for full details.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16

• The Birch Alley Brass Ensemble will present a free concert of Christmas music from around the world at 7:00 p.m. at Valley Chapel, 14 Hunter Road, Uxbridge. Directed by William Moffett, the ensemble is made up of thirty-five student and professional musicians from area towns including Uxbridge, Upton, Hopedale, Mendon and Milford. This is the 11th annual version of the concert, which is made possible by the Mendon, Milford and Hopedale Cultural Councils.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17

• Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 E. Main St., Webster, will host a Pop-Up Book Fair featuring authors represented by the T. Fielding-Lowe Co. with copies of children's books, fiction and inspirational titles available for purchase from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. For more information call 508-949-6232 or email deb@bookloversgourmet.com.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18

• Blue Christmas Service, 3:00 pm

United Church of Christ, Fed. 4 Church St., Webster

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22

A CULE Yule Holiday Strum Along 6:30-7:15, Sibley Reading Area (main floor). Free and open to all. Registration is not required. Cider and cookies will be provided! Charlton Public Library, 40 Main St., Charlton

CHRISTMAS DAY

• Parishioners and volunteers from the Blackstone Valley United Methodist Church, 61 Linwood Ave., Whitinsville, invite members of the community to a traditional

turkey dinner consisting of such holiday favorites as potatoes, vegetables, squash, stuffing and cranberry sauce from noon to 2:00 p.m. Parking is available behind the church and is accessible from Church St. The meal is open to all free of charge. For more information, call the church office at 508-234-2275.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 8

• The New England Country Music Club presents Al Carter at the Progressive Club, 18 Whitin St., Uxbridge. Doors open at 12:30 p.m. with dancing and live entertainment from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

www.facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 10

• Make your own holiday spice mix with therapy gardens, 1:00 P.M. Come learn how to make pumpkin spice, mulling spices for wine or cider, and other recipes for holiday spice blends. Bring home your own blend of Holiday spice mixture along with recipes. Class is \$5 per person. RSVP is required call us or stop by the Millbury Senior Center! 508-865-9154

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LIVING WITH LUKE

amyleclaire@hotmail.com

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 muddy 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,



Luke visits the Barnes & Noble at the Millbury Shopping Mall

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-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



"More ice, please."

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

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TALES FROM BEYOND

tomdagostino.com

Peter Rugg's eternal search—Part 1

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

One of the most endearing legends of New England originally began sometime before the start of the American Revolution, 1770 to be exact. Although its origin can be traced back centuries, its end has no record, for, you see, it has never concluded.

great roman-nosed bay for a small business trip in Concord, Massachusetts.

His ten-year-old daughter, Jenny, accompanied him on that fine and fair day. As they rode away from their Middle Street home in Boston, Massachusetts, his neighbors had no idea it would be the last time they would see Peter Rugg.

bors on Middle Street were arisen out of their sleep by the clapping of hoof prints on the cobblestone road. Thomas Felt peered out the window into the midnight mist and saw a glowing phosphorescent chaise with the countenances of Rugg and his daughter coming down the cobblestone street. The apparition gave him such a scare, he quickly locked the windows and drew the shade. Soon reports of the phantom chaise were coming in from all parts of the region.

Adonariah Adams claimed to have encountered the ghoulish carriage while delivering mail in Newburyport. He told of how Rugg's chaise overtook his coach at such a clip, it caused his horses to leap from the road, wrecking his wagon against a rock outcropping. As the glowing carriage passed him, he could see the apparitions of Rugg and his frightened daughter gripping his sleeve. Flames flew from the horse's ears and nose and the smell of brimstone overwhelmed the otherwise jovial man. He was sure what he saw was the devil's shade of Peter Rugg.

New York businessman Jonathan Dunwell had an unforgettable encounter with the ghostly carriage. On a trip from Providence, Rhode Island to Boston, he was forced to sit atop the coach, as the stage was overcrowded inside. The horses suddenly recoiled and their ears went flat

against their heads. At that moment, an old rickety wagon with a man and a little girl raced by them at a furious pace. Dunwell, stunned and a bit frightened, asked the driver if

what he had just seen was real.

The driver confided with Dunwell that he had encountered the coach hundreds of times and that sometimes the man,

dressed in previous century clothing, asks directions to Boston before racing off out of sight. The incident is always followed by a sudden and terrible thunderstorm.



Image: www.slightlyodditchburg.com/

To this day, the ghostly visage of Peter Rugg still haunts the highways and byways of New England.

There are some people alive in the present, who have beheld a phantom chaise drawn by the largest black horse ever seen. At the reins, one unfortunate man named Peter Rugg desperately wanders the countryside eternally searching for the streets for home with his ghostly daughter clutching his sleeve. The sighting is always followed by a sudden and unexpected storm.

Who was Peter Rugg? Or, rather, who is Peter Rugg? There are many New Englanders who know the story behind the glowing carriage led by an unearthly roman-nosed bay, furiously racing along the roads with the drenched spirit of Peter Rugg at the reins and his ghostly daughter alongside him.

The story began in 1770 when Peter Rugg, a wealthy cattle and horse merchant, harnessed his light carriage with his favorite horse, a

Alive, at least.

The trip out was uneventful, but on the way home, a terrible thunderstorm suddenly took the area by surprise, forcing them to take refuge at a friend's home in West Cambridge. Tom Cutter served Rugg a dram of hot-spiced rum while his daughter shivered from the wet by the fire. The fierce storm raged on with no end in sight, yet Rugg, stubborn and determined, decided to make his way home despite the torrential downpour. Tom Cutter pleaded for the man to stay and wait out the tempest to no avail.

Rugg just shook his fist and exclaimed in oath, "I shall see home tonight by god or the devil, or I will never see home!"

Truer words were never spoken in all of West Cambridge. Rugg's chaise never made it home. Authorities along with friends and neighbors searched for months, yet not a trace of the wagon and its occupants was ever found.

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What's ahead for mortgage rates and home prices?

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.

Mark Marzeotti
Realtor




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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

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Rely on basic diagnostics to resolve VSC issue



BY JOHN PAUL

again on my way home from the shop. This happened at least three times. We never quite figured out what the issue is. Now my engine light is also on, and I don't know if it is related. Any ideas before I spend a fortune diagnosing the issue? I just had it inspected and replaced all the brake pads and three of the calipers. Nothing else was needed. Any thoughts?

three calipers. This can lead to uneven braking.

Q. When shopping recently for new car, I was shocked to learn that cars do not have CD players in them and haven't for several years. I have a 2017 and a 2019 BMW X3 and I cannot imagine not having a CD player since I am always listening to books on CD, are there any new cars that have CD players in them?

A. There are a few vehicles with CD players, Ford, Nissan and I believe the last Cadillac I drove had a CD player. Unfortunately, CD players are going the way of cassette tapes and 8-tracks (dating myself). If you find a vehicle you like you may be able to add an aftermarket CD changer. Also, my local library has a feature that allow you to download a MP3 audio books. Perhaps your library has a similar service. Then you

can listen through Bluetooth from your phone.

Q. I am the proud original owner of a 1969 Chevrolet Camaro Pace car replica. I am keeping it a survivor at 120,000 miles. I have a very good shop specializing in GM vehicles go over the car and found very little mechanically to be done. A compression test showed all cylinders had compression of 135 -145 except the number three cylinder that was 115 pounds of compression. After a good tune-up the car runs very well. Should I be concerned with cylinder number 3 as the fix is a major job?

A. Generally, it is best when all of the cylinders have compression within 10 percent of each other. So, using your numbers having compression of less than 120 PSI indicates a problem. Although realistically at 115 PSI, I would just log

it to age and know that at some point you may need to rebuild the engine. But if this were my car (1969 Camaros are one of my favorite cars), I would just drive it and enjoy it.

Q. My question concerns my 1972 Buick Skylark braking system. I have been struggling with a hard brake pedal that takes very high effort to stop the car. In the past year I have replaced the brake booster, master cylinder, proportioning valve, all brake lines (both metal and rubber), front calipers, pads and rotors, and rear cylinders, hardware and shoes. The rotors are Hawk drilled and slotted and the pads are Hawk. The engine is a Buick 350 with a Rochester Q-jet on a TA aluminum intake, Kooks headers and a mild performance camshaft with 114 degree lobe separation (minimal overlap). Idle vacuum runs 16 to 18 inches. It used to

have that GM power brake feel but hasn't in a long while, any ideas?

A. I would start with checking engine vacuum at the brake booster, you should see between 17-21 inches of vacuum at idle. If it is less than this, it could be part of the problem. Also, the performance brake parts tend to work best when they are hot and have a bit of vague hard pedal when first starting out.

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.

Q. I am the original owner of a 2002 Toyota Highlander with a V-6 engine and all-wheel-drive with only about 107,000 miles. It has been a really good vehicle for me, and I currently use it as a secondary vehicle. The VSC (vehicle stability control) light has been on for some time. Many years ago, it would come on and I'd bring it to the shop and usually they would replace a sensor. Most of the time the light would come on

A. You need to start with some basic diagnostics. Using a scan tool, a technician will be able to read the code for the VSC issue as well as the check engine light. I suspect there is another sensor or tone ring issue that is turning on the VSC light and common with this vintage Highlander is a leak in the evaporative emissions system. Unfortunately, it will take some time and your money to find the cause of the problem. Also, I question why the shop only replaced

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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 fund-

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ing 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 Dis-

mas House in Worcester In addition to \$3.76 billion in direct invest-

ments, 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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