

## OBA's Gateway Park shaping up as a community gem

BY ROD LEE

A narrow, deep piece of land just east of the main traffic light in Oxford Center isn't attracting a whole lot of attention yet, but it will soon, Daniel M. "Dan" Prouty of the Oxford Business Association says.

Mr. Prouty and other members of the OBA are in the process of transforming the parcel into a "gateway park."

"We want it to be welcoming to people coming into Oxford," Mr. Prouty said on November 16th. Extensive work that has involved grading, plantings, fencing, paving, and construction of a post-and-beam pavilion over the past several months, is nearing completion.

Gateway Park, as the site has been unofficially dubbed, will be turned over to the municipality in the spring, subject to approval on the Town Meeting warrant.

The Oxford Business Association maintains a fairly low profile and its principal members are getting up there in years, but the OBA's contributions to betterment of the community are significant.

"Some of our guys are working on a rail trail with the conservation agent, next," Mr. Prouty said, noting that "there is a lot of money available for rail trails," which have grown in popularity.

Recently, motorists passing by the park could see all of the labor that has gone into the project already. Hundreds of flower bulbs—daffodil, tulip, crocus and hyacinth—were planted by members of Boy Scout Troop 147 and volunteers with two hundred more to go. Attractive fencing was installed. Landscaping was done. A split-rail fence running parallel to the parking lot is in the offing. The "true post-and-beam pavilion" has been finished with



A handsome post-and-beam pavilion will be one of the crowning touches to a gateway park being built in the area of Oxford Center by the Oxford Business Association.

"the average age of the people working on it being seventy-one," Mr. Prouty said.

"Good weather and my volunteer craftsmen showed up and we finished our task at hand which was to plank the post-and-beam pavilion roof and touch up the stain," Mr. Prouty said on November 10th. "New England Metal Roofing is donating the finished roof. We have some more plantings and fence work next week and (will) have everything waiting for spring."

A Christmas tree will be set up soon.

Still to be added are benches. "A couple of us went out to Old Sturbridge Village to look at what they have there for benches," he said. "I'd like to do millstone instead of metal."

All of the comment Mr. Prouty

and his colleagues have received since summer "has been positive," he said. "That looks pretty good," people have been saying, since the paving got done.

Mr. Prouty is working on a thank-you list to acknowledge the many individuals and businesses that have contributed monetarily or with in-kind assistance. The project received an infusion of \$60,000 toward an approximately total cost of \$120,000-\$135,000 from the Cecelia J. Smolenski/Millette Charitable Trusts, an organization that provides grant dollars for projects and programs that promote and foster recreational and literary opportunities and

### OXFORD BUSINESS

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## Conroy War Memorial pays homage to heroic family members

BY ROD LEE

Veterans Day 2022 carried more meaning than usual for Sheila Conroy and three generations of the Conroy family, as they gathered on November 12th at 516 Southbridge St. in Auburn for dedication of the Conroy War Memorial.

The Conroy family has had a presence in the town of Auburn for many years, Ms. Conroy pointed out.

"The site of the monument is

support as well.

Swenson Granite Works was helpful in choosing the right materials and lettering for the handsome monument, Ms. Conroy said.

Ruben Da Silva of New Image Landscape Construction was responsible for the structural design of the retaining wall and finishing off the area with crushed stone and mulch.

**The family members from World War II remembered on the monument are:**



The names of Conroy family members who served in World War II and Vietnam are etched in this handsome monument in Auburn. The Conroy War Memorial was dedicated last month.

the small piece of land remaining after the sale and division of the family-owned ten-plus acres for the Mass Pike, I-290, the widening of Southbridge St., and the relocation of Leicester St. (now known as Water St.)," she said, prior to the event.

Work began after a go-ahead was obtained from the Auburn Planning Board, which offered its

Ralph J. Conroy, pilot for Gen. Eisenhower and President Truman.

Robert Conroy, killed in Italy on patrol with his K-9 Kosky. It was just four days after his twentieth birthday. Earlier that day Rob-

### MEMORIAL

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**OXFORD BUSINESS**  
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activities for children in Oxford.  
Previous projects funded in whole or part by the Trusts include the Splash Pad, the NJROTC program at Oxford High School, the library pass program, the skate park, activities at Joslin Park, the Greenbriar osprey camera, playground equipment, upgrades to the Little League concession stand, and activities at the Community Center.  
“We are almost there,” Mr. Prouty said on November 16th.  
“They’ll be calling this park city.”  
Contact Rod Lee at [rodlee.1963@gmail.com](mailto:rodlee.1963@gmail.com) or 774-232-2999.

**MEMORIAL**  
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ert saved his entire platoon from ambush. His mother Hannah was presented with the Purple Heart for Robert’s bravery.  
Frederick Conroy returned home after serving in Germany.  
**Family members from the Vietnam War are as follows:**  
Robert T. Conroy, son of Ralph Conroy and Rita Conroy.  
Robert A. Whitney, son of Austin and Emma (Conroy) Whitney.  
Paul K. Wentworth, son of Kenneth and Ruth (Conroy) Wentworth.  
“The Conroy family have been residents of Auburn since the 1870s, beginning

their first business as a convenience store and gas station where the Auburn Water District is presently,” Ms. Conroy said.  
“Conroy Construction Co. was owned and operated by Henry Conroy, father to Ralph, Robert, Frederick, Emma and Ruth. Henry invented one of the first paving machines, which was used in his heavy construction business, located near Water St.  
“The sons worked for their father and continued the operation of the business after Henry’s death in 1944.  
“The family owned a package store, Chieftain Liquor, on Southbridge St., which is still in operation with new owners. Next to the package store was the family-owned bowling al-



Gary Conroy offers welcoming remarks at the dedication of the Conroy War Memorial on Southbridge St. in Auburn on November 12th.

ley, which is now the home of Home Outlet building materials.”  
Ms. Conroy said Ralph Conroy purchased the land on Washington St. which became the Auburn Air-

port. This was in operation until his death in 1955. It then became the Auburn Drive-In and is now the location of Home Depot and BJ’s Wholesale.”  
“The monument is a

reminder of the bravery and dedication of these men, who kept our country free for generations now and to come,” Ms. Conroy said.

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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

ing 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

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 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.

Contact Rod Lee at [rodlee.1963@gmail.com](mailto:rodlee.1963@gmail.com) or 774-232-2999.



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. 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.

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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 morn-

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

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# Amazon Building Rises in Charlton

BY JANET STOICA

Don't look now but the behemoth construction project going on in Charlton is progressing quickly. According to Charlton Town Administrator, Andrew Golas, the scheduled opening of the new Amazon Robotic Sortation Center located at 53 Sturbridge Road (Route 20 eastbound) will be late 2023 or early 2024. Driving along a quiet country road running parallel to the project brings a driver to a dead stop to stare at the four huge cranes and hectic activity surrounding the new building that can easily be seen from any satellite circling the earth.

The site surely must be the most expansive construction project in New England. Sitting on nearly



100 acres of former woodlands, the 2.8 million square foot building is expected to bring 1,000 jobs to the local

area along with a bus stop scheduled by the Worcester Regional Transit Authority. The business that will be

brought to Charlton's coffee shops, fast food emporiums, gas stations, pharmacies, and similar retailers will be

one for the books, ledger books that is.

"The town negotiated a 10-year Tax Increment Financing plan," said Town Administrator Andrew Golas, "along with an allocation of \$650,000 for the purchase of a new fire and rescue truck suitable for technical rescue operations as well as \$100,000 funding for fire operations. Since Amazon's building will be used as a first-line facility accepting manufacturer products, trailer trucks will be the main vehicles to this location with most arriving from and returning to Interstate 84."

According to the town's website information the 100-foot high warehouse will have 49 loading docks, 265 trailer parking stalls, and 1,250 car parking stalls on three surface lots.

Projected net real estate taxes for the property will be \$18,995,250 over the 10-year term of the TIF not including personal property taxes. The town is also expected to receive a host of additional funding that includes Routes 20 and 169 highway reconstruction, sidewalk replacement and improvements on Main Street and Masonic Home Road areas, STEM funding for Charlton schools, as well as recreation and arts investments.

Charlton voters at their recent special town meeting also just granted feasibility studies for a fire station sub-station as well as one for a community center/senior center.

Contact Janet: [jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com](mailto:jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com)

# Culture drives way forward at Samuel Slater Experience

BY ROD LEE

The new Samuel Slater Experience on Ray St. 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 creat-

ing 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 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



The Eldred girls, Olivia and Samantha, enjoyed spending time with Jacklyn Bonneau, a docent at the Samuel Slater Experience, and with Santa on the trolley, during a visit to the museum on December 3rd.

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://samuel Slater Experience.org>.

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# Night Lights at New England Botanic Garden

Heralded as one of the best winter light shows in Massachusetts, Night Lights at New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill immerses visitors in color and illumination. This year, the Garden expects to dazzle thousands of visitors from around the region with displays that celebrate the natural world in lights.

Night Lights runs daily from 4 – 10 PM through New Year's Eve, December 31 (excluding December 24 and 25 when the Garden is closed). Tickets must be purchased online in advance at <https://nebg.org/nightlights/>.

Celebrated by many as an annual winter tradition, Night Lights offers a magical experience for guests of all ages and

backgrounds. Illuminated features transform outdoor garden spaces and conservatories with string lights, rope lights, spotlights, orbs, starbursts, and more. Artfully crafted displays made from thousands of twinkling lights take guests on a journey through different environments on Earth such as meadows, seascapes, mountaintops, and, of course, icy winter wonderlands.

"This one-of-a-kind event is the perfect opportunity to create lasting memories while celebrating the



winter season," says Mark Richardson, New England Botanic Garden Director

of Horticulture. Richardson leads the team responsible for bringing

Night Lights to life. "Our talented group of staff and volunteers bring creativity

and vision to Night Lights each year to ensure it's really special for our guests. We're excited to share this year's event with the community," he says.

Other highlights of Night Lights 2022 include a rainbow tunnel, a crowd-favorite for photo backdrops, that will extend longer than ever at 100 feet, an outdoor garden train display, a tree constructed from living bromeliad plants, and firepits for warming up or making s'mores. Guests can also enjoy snacks and drinks from the Farmer and the Fork Café and find the perfect holiday gifts among the unique items in the Garden Shop.

## Holidays a happening good time at Booklovers' Gourmet

No time of year is more special at Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 E. Main St. in Webster, than the month of December. Which is why Owner Deb Horan is offering extended holiday hours. The store will be open from noon to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 18 and from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Monday, December 19th.

Booklovers' Gourmet will close at 4:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

"Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!" Ms. Horan says of the strong show of support for Plaid Friday and Small Business Saturday. "We couldn't be any more grateful to see so many new and familiar smiling faces."

Winners in the store's raffle were Maria Perry and Betty O'Connor for \$25 gift cards, Amy Angell and Destiny Bolduc for T-shirts, Chris Joiner and Sophia Ciuitenga for linen calendars and Faythe Millhoff for a tote bag.

Booklovers' December art exhibit, "Walking Through the Woods on a Foggy Day in December"—photographs by Bettie Carlson—continues throughout the month.

Local Author Carol Morrissey made an appearance at the store on December 3rd to talk about and sign his new novel "In a Borrowed Suit." The main character's lament "nothing is ever easy! Something always goes wrong?" follows



Carlo Morrissey chats with customers of Booklovers' Gourmet prior to his talk about his latest novel, "In a Borrowed Suit," on December 3rd. Mr. Morrissey has also written such works as "Lavender Skies," "If You See Your Father, Shoot Him" and "I am the Moon."

"Raymond Rosemont" as the unassuming, socially awkward, middle-aged loner bumbles his way through one absurd episode after another.

The flurry of activity at Booklovers' included an "Eat, Drink and Be Merry" gathering of the Webster Dudley Business Alliance on December 6th; and a "Scars to Stars Vol. 2: Stories of Vulnerability, Resilience and Overcoming Adversity" Book Launch with contributing author Bil Gardiner on December 10th.

A Holiday Pop-Up Book Fair will be held on Saturday, December 17th from noon to 4:00 p.m., with author appearances, books from different genres and giveaways.

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# Lisa Moon aims high with The Neighborhood Kitchen

BY ROD LEE

Lisa Moon has no previous experience in the food industry, but this would

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, Turkey Dinner, American

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.”

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



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

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.

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

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

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](mailto:rodlee.1963@gmail.com) or 774-232-2999.



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](mailto: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

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 created a veil to embrace it all.” Email [deb@bookloversgourmet.com](mailto:deb@bookloversgourmet.com) for further info.

• Southwick’s Zoo’s combination extravaganza featuring both the

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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.”

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

Festival of Illumination (with a “Once Upon a Time” theme) and Winter Wonderland display of spectacular holiday lights and handcrafted Chinese lanterns continues Wednesday-Sunday through December 31st, at 2 Southwick St., Mendon. Tickets to the Festival include a visit with Santa (until December 24th) and

**HAPPENINGS!**  
continued on page 9

**HAPPENINGS!**

*continued from page 8*

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](mailto: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



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



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

**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](http://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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# Are you SAD? There's a good reason for it

BY JANET STOICA

**D**o you have Seasonal Affective Disorder (otherwise known as SAD)? Although I am not a psychiatrist nor do I hold a medical degree, I wanted to write an article about the emotions we all experience during the holiday season. The term that has been used over the past many years to describe our low points has come to be known as SAD. It is a reference to the low energy levels and mood changes that occur when sunlight diminishes beginning in September. For some of us, this slowly encroaching low point in our states of mind happens once annually beginning in the fall season and lasting until the spring. The sun sets sooner,

the days shorten, holidays approach, anxiety sets in, and maybe loneliness begins to nudge us during the early onset of the season's darkness. We become less active and staying in bed later seems like a better choice than jumping out from beneath those cozy blankets to greet the day.

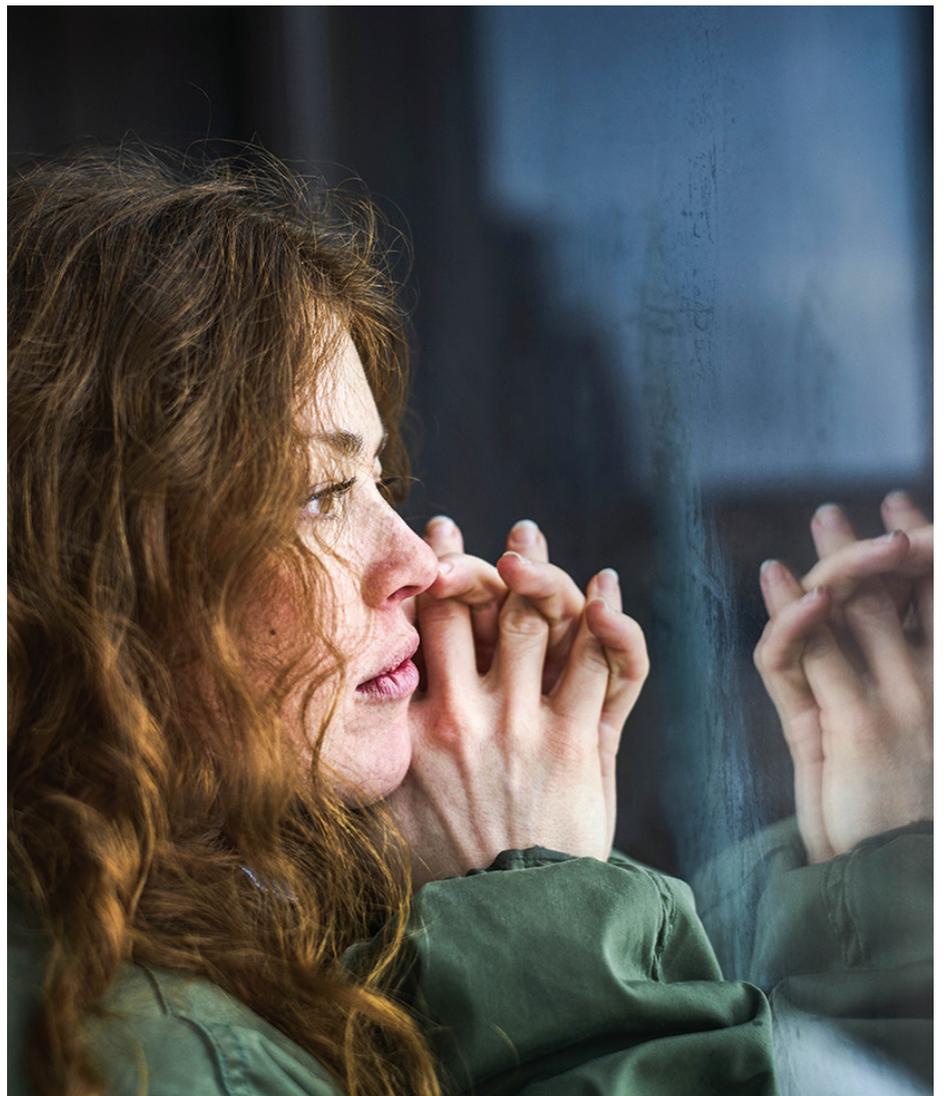
Sydney Zatz of Rochester, Minnesota's ABC news interviewed Dr. Craig Sawchuk of the Mayo Clinic and wrote the following: "For some people, they may experience this in early fall in mid-late September when the weather is still fairly pleasant. For other people, this might not hit until mid-January," said Dr. Craig Sawchuk, a psychologist at Mayo Clinic. SAD happens because of a chemical change

in the brain when your body naturally makes more melatonin because it's dark. Melatonin is a sleep-related hormone released by the pineal gland to the brain at night that has been associated with sleep/awake cycles.

"Some folks might be more vulnerable to that. In return, with more exposure to light, that helps to regulate the system more. Most are probably familiar with Winter Seasonal Affective Disorder, but it can also happen in summer. Those symptoms include trouble sleeping, weight loss, and increased irritability. But how do you know these feelings are seasonal, rather than a sign of long-term depression?"

"When it's more the seasonal pattern, usually what we see is this happening for a person over a course of two years so that starts to establish more of a pattern. And then what you do actually find are individual differences of when these symptoms come on or the onset of those symptoms.

When those symptoms do hit, it's recommended you stay social, get regular exercise, and use light therapy. A light box mimicking outdoor light to help boost your mood. It can especially be helpful for those who work overnight shifts. They may experience more variability in their sleep patterns but if there's an opportunity to regulate those patterns that would be great. However, when you do wake up in the morning, having to go with the artificial light is the way to go. And having a good, established wakeup routine. It's normal to have days when you feel down. If you can't get motivated to do things you normally



enjoy that's when you should see a doctor."

SAD is also experienced when we are completely stressed out by the holidays. You know the feeling. Rushing around to get tasks completed before a family gathering and even the stress of buying gifts for those who won't really appreciate them. Who among us hasn't returned at least one holiday gift we've received? Then, of course, as we grow older we lose family members who always gathered with us during the holidays. One by one the jovial, the comedians, the shy, and even the grumpy

of the large family we remember from holidays past become the ghosts and tender emotional moments of our lives. Suddenly, we realize, the joyful family celebrations have evaporated. We can still replay those gatherings in our minds but those happy times certainly can bring on melancholy not to mention tears to our eyes. The smiles, laughter, and sounds of glasses clinking in toasts to the holidays are but a distant memory. It is just so difficult for some of us to get through this dark time but most of us do get through it with hopes and

forward-looking thoughts of a new year and how spring is not far behind with its promise of crocuses poking their beautifully vibrant heads through the fresh damp soil, trees in bloom, warmer days, longer days, beautiful sunsets, and the traces of snow that are nearly melted away like the past unhappy moods of winter. Soon, the spring and summer sun will be smiling upon us once again.

Contact Janet: [jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com](mailto:jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com)

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# Auburn town manager to retire, closing stellar career

BY JANET STOICA

After eleven years steering the ship of Auburn, Julie Jacobson will be saying goodbye to the town on January 30, 2023. Her triumphs and successes as town manager as well as any unfinished business will now be built on by her successor, Edward Kazanovicz, who is currently the town's chief financial officer and assistant town manager.

Formerly assistant city manager in Worcester, Ms. Jacobson assumed the leadership role of managing the town of Auburn's welfare in 2011. "Grant writing was one of my main goals to bring in new revenue to the town," said Ms. Jacobson. "I wanted us to aggressively seek and secure grant funding. We've applied for 391 grants worth over \$30 million and we've been awarded 340 of them totaling \$16 million. All departments write their own grants as we have no town grant writer. All department heads and employees are encouraged to actively seek grant funding and I'm proud of our department heads for accomplishing this. There has been no additional burden on the town's taxpayers."

Ms. Jacobson explained that if not for the grant funding the monies would come out of the town's capital improvement projects funds. All grants are tracked with Excel spreadsheets in a collaborative effort across all town departments. "Our employees have been just great at this," she said, "they are all educated in grant writing and have become very proficient."

Ms. Jacobson reviewed some of the town's accomplishments including the introduction of many new businesses and the startup of a business roundtable to bring together business leaders to listen to their concerns and suggestions. "We've seen great industrial growth in the past nineteen years," she said, "town bylaws were reviewed and modified to become more business friendly."

"We have a lot of exciting projects going on in Auburn right now too," stated Ms. Jacobson. "The former Julia Bancroft School on Vinal Street has been transformed into senior housing that includes 60 apartment units of affordable housing. Eight of



Julie Jacobson has spent thirty-seven years in municipal government including the past eleven as town manager in Auburn. She will retire in January.

those units will be offered at market rate. Our former Mary D. Stone School was converted into senior housing apartments as well and opened in 2021. The beautiful stone façade was nicely preserved and redeveloped with much thoughtful design accommodations, the original blackboards were preserved and even the children's coat hangers were used as a nice touch and a nod to the past." If and when town seniors decide to down-size and perhaps become senior housing dwellers, their homes will be available for younger families seeking their first new residences. The timely circle of life's residences will be fulfilled.

Ms. Jacobson remarked about the current \$5.4 million road project in Drury Square and elaborated that the improvements were primarily a state project but the town did pay \$1 million of the costs for street-scaping, benches, and walkways. "It's almost finished," she said, "The renovation of Goddard Park will be a great accomplishment too. We hope to get the Goddard Rocket Fountain into working order again, along with the cleanup of Auburn Pond by the library. We'll be building a pedestrian bridge and walkway from the library to Goddard Park and adding a much-deserved sunroom to the library. Of the park, pond, and library improvements, the total project cost is \$1.5 million. Auburn taxpayers will fund \$500,000 of the total with additional funding provided by the Pappas Foundation and other grant monies. These

improvements will go out to bid in spring 2023 with completion expected in 18 months.

"My retirement from the town of Auburn will be bittersweet," said Ms. Jacobson. "There have been so many good experiences and great people here but I made the decision to spend time with my family at this stage of my life. I have two grandchildren now and want to spend time with them. I want to enjoy family time. After thirty-seven years in government, it's now time for family. I love municipal government and would like to communicate my feelings of gratification and fulfillment to those young people who are considering their first employment choices after completing their schooling. Our towns and cities

need the younger generation to know what great careers they would have if they consider working for their own municipalities."

Additionally, Ms. Jacobson noted that "The Select Board voted to appoint Ed Kazanovicz as the next town manager effective January 31st. Currently the assistant town manager/chief financial officer, Ed and I have worked together since I started in January of 2011. Ed has been with the town for twenty-seven years and has worn multiple hats here, many simultaneously: assistant town manager, chief financial officer, town accountant (until one year ago), and

as CFO he is the department head overseeing the Town Accountant's Office, Treasurer/Collectors Office and Assessor's Office. Over the past twelve years, Ed has worked closely with me on a variety of projects, initiatives and issues ranging from economic development to human resources to collective bargaining. He is responsible for all aspects of financial management, including preparation of the 5 Year CIP annually, the 5 Year Budget Forecasts annually, and the Annual Operating Budget. He is the acting town manager in my absence. Mr. Kazanovicz is an experienced, skilled professional who is well

prepared to assume the role of town manager when I retire."

Bon Voyage, Julie Jacobson, the Town of Auburn thanks you for your great leadership! May the wind be always at your back!

*"Often when you are at the end of something, you are at the beginning of something else."*

– Fred Rogers

Contact Janet: [jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com](mailto:jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com)

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Thursday 5:30PM – 7:30PM and Friday 10:00AM-12:00PM  
All stitchers are welcome for this informal group

### LEGO CLUB

Mondays @4:00PM  
Come join us each week for a different Lego challenge, from writing your name in Legos to making a Lego zipline. Ages 5+

### POKEMON CARD TRADING

Tuesdays @ 4:00PM  
Children are invited to bring their Pokemon cards for informal card trading and discussion.

### EXHIBIT BY KNIT & CROCHET GROUP

December 1- December 31  
Members of our Knit & Crochet Groups will display examples of their work in the Fels Room throughout the month of December. Open to the public during regular library hours.

### WIGGLES AND GIGGLES FOR LITTLES

Friday, December 16 11:30AM-noon  
Children, ages 6 months up to 24 months, with a parent/caregiver, will sing, move, play musical instruments, learn rhythm and listen to stories in this FREE series facilitated by music teacher Laine Hanlon! "Wiggles & Giggles" fosters physical, cognitive, social and emotional learning through music and motion. Siblings are welcome and must be supervised. You must register each week at [crawfordlibrary.org](http://crawfordlibrary.org)  
This series is sponsored by the YMCA Family & Community Partnership (YFCP) and hosted by the Dudley Public Library. YFCP is a Massachusetts Coordinated Family & Community Engagement (CFCE) grant funded by the Department of Early Education & Care and awarded to the YMCA of Central Massachusetts.

### GINGERBREAD HOUSE MAKING FOR KIDS

Saturday, December 17 Multiple sessions  
Come and make and decorate your own gingerbread house using graham crackers and royal icing. Ideal for families and children up to 12.  
Space is limited so registration is required  
Children 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult.  
Sponsored by the Hugh W and Harriet K Crawford Endowment.

### GIFT WRAPPING BEE

Monday, December 19th and Thursday, December 22nd  
10:00AM-8:00PM

No Kids Allowed! Come and wrap those presents where prying eyes can't see them. We will have scissors, tape, and a limited amount of paper. Bring your own supplies

and wrap away!

### CHRISTMAS STORY TIME

Wednesday, December 21  
3:45PM-4:30PM  
Join Miss Lida for a special afternoon Christmas story time! We'll read stories, sing songs, and do a craft.  
Children 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult.

### AFTERNOON CHILDREN'S MOVIE

Wednesday, December 28  
1:00PM-3:00PM  
Join us for a free screening of a fun movie for kids – title to be determined. Free popcorn provided.  
Children 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult.

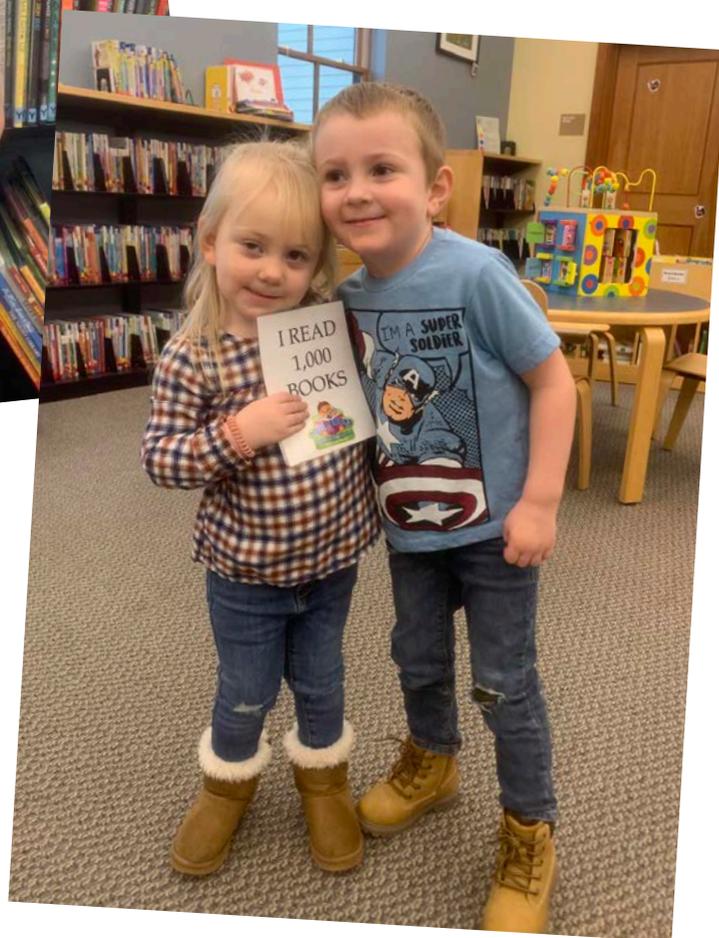
### DROP IN CHILDRENS CRAFTING

Thursday, December 29 1:00PM-4:00PM  
Drop in and create something from your imagination using a variety of craft supplies from Miss Lida's stash.  
Children 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult.

## 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten



Jonah Tokarz (left) of Dudley and Wayke and Lucile Gryb of Dudley completed the 1000 Books Before Kindergarten program at the Pearle L. Crawford Memorial Library.



For more information on this program, visit <https://www.crawfordlibrary.org/kidsfamily.asp>

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## Webster Five, YWCA partnering on financial seminars

**W**ebster Five announced recently that it has established an exclusive relationship with the YWCA Central Massachusetts to provide financial seminars for domestic violence survivors the YWCA serves as part of its comprehensive domestic violence program.

The \$15,000 grant from Webster Five will provide the necessary funding to serve one hundred twenty-five people per year over three years. The seminars will be delivered in person, remotely, one-on-one, and in small groups as well as sessions conducted in Spanish. Participants will sign up for five-week sessions, which will include a one-hour seminar each week.

"We are very excited to partner with Webster Five to provide this critical financial information for the people we serve," Tara Huard, manager, community-based intervention services, YWCA, said. "Understanding how to manage and budget money is an important step in helping survivors reach financial freedom and stay safe after leaving an abusive relationship. We are grateful to the Webster Five facilitators, who will participate in a training themselves to recognize the signs of domestic violence, for sharing their knowledge.

"It is important for everyone to build their financial confidence by learning more about money management, and this is especially impor-



*Pictured representing the BBB and Webster Five in recognition of the award Webster Five received for Marketplace Excellence in Central Massachusetts are Nancy Cahalen, president and CEO of BBB of Central New England, Brian McEvoy, SVP Sr. Retail Banking Officer, Webster Five, Donald Doyle, president and CEO, Webster Five, Bruce Varner, mortgage loan originator, Webster Five, and Michele Kasabula, board chair for BBB of Central New England.*

tant for domestic violence survivors who often are denied access to finances b their abuser," Donald Doyle, president and CEO of Webster Five, said. "We are proud to support this important initiative and hope it will make a difference in the lives of everyone who participates in the seminars."

The seminars will include such topics as saving, budgeting, protecting financial information, building and repairing credit, and first-time home buying programs.

In other news involving Webster Five, the bank was recognized recently as a 2022 winner of a BBB of Central New England

Award for Marketplace Excellence.

The award celebrates businesses in Central Massachusetts and Northeast Connecticut that epitomize corporate responsibility and always do what's right by the customers. Honorees convey to the community of businesses that upholding the ethical standards of the BBB is the hallmark of a successful business. Other winners for 2022 included Harbro Auto Sales and service and the Worcester Railers Hockey Club.

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SPORTS

# Shepherd Hill boys look to make a deep run this winter

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

In the recent past the Shepherd Hill Regional High School boys' basketball has had much success, capturing 3 Mid Watch League Championships (2012, 2013 and 2016) and a District Title in 2018. The program then ran into a couple of tough years before bouncing back last winter, going 19-4 and earning a spot in the Division 2 State Tourna-

ment.

The Fighting Rams were seeded 15 going into the tournament where they defeated East Longmeadow before falling to Mansfield in the round of 16. This winter Coach Mike Rapoza is looking for his squad to once again finish with a decent record to get into the State Tournament, but this time with a deeper run.

"Last year we definitely had high expectations coming into the season

and really didn't expect to accomplish as much as we did in year one," the now second-year coach said. "The kids bought into the system we were showing them and they executed it to a high level and we were successful."

Shepherd Hill lost five seniors, three of whom were starters, from last year's resurgent team that got back to having success on the court, but according to the coach the team has a solid foundation of athletes

returning that should be able to fit into the vacant positions and be just fine.

Conference MVP Ryan Brooks will be back for his fourth varsity season to lead the Rams onto the court and hopefully back into the tournament this winter. The senior forward averaged 18 points and 12 rebounds per contest for Shepherd Hill last season. Brooks will be headed to Keene State



in New Hampshire to play basketball next year.

The only other starter returning this year will be starting point guard Nick Veronis. The senior not only can distribute the ball and gets the Rams offense moving down court, but he is also a very good defensive player. Rapoza would like to see Veronis do a little more scoring this year (he averaged 7 points per game).

"I always expect our players to get better during the off-season and bring something new to the team each year," the coach said.

With nothing set in stone as of this writing the coach wouldn't commit to any other starters nor the players who would see varsity action this winter other than his two returners. He did say that whoever does make up the team will be a part of the Rams repeating last year's success.

"If we go out and play an unselfish offense with our solid defense we

should have success once again," Rapoza said. "The main thing is that the kids have to continue to buy into what we do at practice; if they do that then we'll advance."

While Shepherd Hill can put the ball in the basket on a regular basis, defense is a rather big part of the team's current identity. Last season the Rams were able to hold their opponents to an average of 49.5 points per contest and if they repeat that performance again this year they should be able to win their share of games.

"Our players have the talent," the coach said. "If they play our system and maintain the defense we should be back in the tournament once again, hopefully this time we can go further."

Shepherd Hill opened the season on December 9th with a road game at Algonquin.

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TALES FROM BEYOND

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# 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. 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 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. Alive, at least.

The trip out was uneventful, but on the way home,

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.

It wasn't until spring of the next year when neighbors 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.

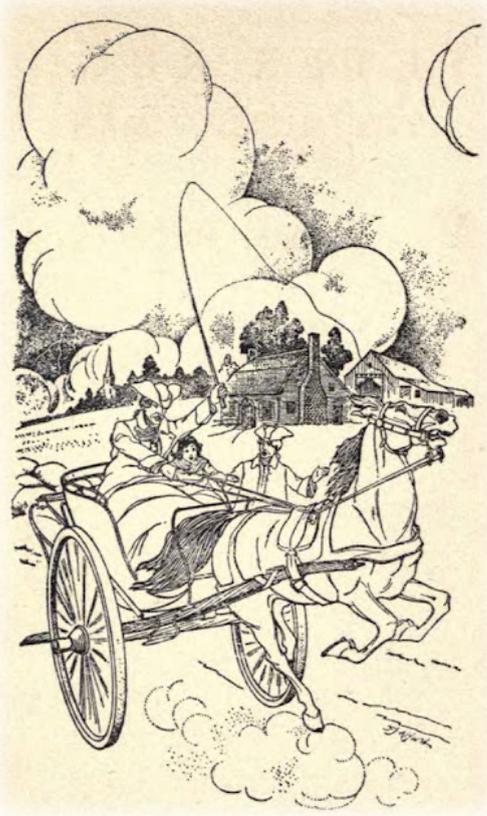


Image: www.slightlyoddffitchburg.com/

a terrible thunderstorm suddenly took the area by surprise, forcing them to

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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 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 mak-

ing 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

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

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



Luke visits the Barnes & Noble at the Millbury Shopping Mall

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

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

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



"More ice, please."

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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THE CAR DOCTOR

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# Rely on basic diagnostics to resolve VSC issue



BY JOHN PAUL

**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 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?

**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 turn-

ing 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 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.*

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BY MARK MARZEOTTI

# What's ahead for mortgage rates and home prices?

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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TIPS ON FINANCIAL PLANNING

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## Protect financial accounts from “cyberthieves”



BY DENNIS ANTONOPOULOS

Cybercrime is booming. In 2021, the FBI reported that cybercriminals scammed nearly \$7 billion from Americans — a figure slightly higher than the gross domestic product (GDP) of Switzerland for that year, according to research organization World Economics. How can you protect yourself from cyberthieves?

Here are some suggestions that can help:

- Watch out for “phishing” attempts. You may receive emails that appear to be from a legitimate firm, requesting information your financial institution would never request online — confirmation of an

account number, password, Social Security number, credit card number and so on. These notes can look official, often incorporating a firm's logo, so pay close attention to what's being asked of you.

- Think twice before clicking or downloading. If you are suspicious about a communication, don't click on a link or download an attachment — instead, go to your financial firm's website or use their app to verify they sent the information or request.

- Become adept with passwords. Use a different password for each of your accounts and change your passwords regularly. Of course, maintaining multiple passwords can be confusing, so you might want to consider using password management software, which generates passwords, stores them in an encrypted database and locks them behind a master password — which is the only one you'll need to remember.
- Use your own devices.

Try to avoid using public computers or devices that aren't yours to access your financial accounts. If you do use another computer, clear your browsing history after you log out of your account.

- Be cautious about using Wi-Fi when traveling. When you're on the road, you may want to use public hotspots, such as wireless networks in airports and hotels. But many people don't realize that these hotspots reduce their security settings to make access easier, which, in turn, makes it easier for cyberthieves to intercept your information. In fact, some hackers even build their own public hotspots to draw in internet-seekers in an effort to commit theft. So, if at all possible, wait until you can access a trusted, encrypted network before engaging in any communications or activity involving your financial accounts.
- Don't give up control of your computer. Under no circumstances should you provide remote access to

your computer to a stranger who contacts you, possibly with an offer to help “disinfect” your computer. If you do think your device has an issue with malicious software, contact a legitimate technician for assistance.

- Know whom you're calling for help. If you need assistance from, say, a customer service area of a financial institution, make sure you know the phone number is accurate and legitimate — possibly one from a billing or confirmation statement. Some people have been scammed by Googling “support” numbers that belonged to fraudsters who asked for sensitive information.
- Review all correspondence with your financial services provider. Keep a close eye on your account activity and statements. If you see mistakes or unauthorized activity in your account, contact your financial institution immediately.

Advanced technology has brought many benefits, but also many more opportuni-

ties for financial crimes. By taking the above steps, and others that may be needed, you can go a long way toward defending yourself against persistent and clever cyberthieves.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your

local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Please contact Dennis Antonopoulos, your local Edward Jones Advisor at 5 Albert Street, Auburn, MA 01501 Tel: 508-832-5385 or dennis.antonopoulos@edwardjones.com. Edward Jones Member SIPC

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# Webster town administrator offers updates on Lake Street, high school bonds

BY JANET STOICA

**R**ick LaFond, Webster's town administrator, stated recently that the Lake Street sewer project is progressing well.

"Our sewer project is coming along and is on schedule," said Mr. LaFond, "it has been substantially completed. In the meantime, our Highway Superintendent, Ken Pizzetti, will be working with the project contractor to assist with engineering to make

Lake Street safe for plowing this winter. The first layer of asphalt will be applied by mid-December and the final asphalt coat will be completed in the spring. Soon the street will be much easier for all commuters to navigate."

Lake Street is a main thoroughfare for much of Webster's traffic and the sewer project has made commuting a veritable nightmare for many residents with detours and road closures along the road.

Each day has brought new detours and re-routings. Residents will soon be rewarded with substantial improvements to the sewer system as well as a first-rate driving surface.

Webster has also applied for and received approval for a Qualified Bond Program administered by the Commonwealth which will allow the town to borrow funds at the same rate that the Commonwealth pays. Massachusetts' bond rating is AA+ and Webster's

bond rating is A+. "We'll be borrowing \$57 million at a better rate to pay for our high school's improvement project that has a total cost of \$101 million and we will also use the additional funds for our PFAs project for safer drinking water and new water meters. Massachusetts will pay for 51% of the total \$101 million school improvement price tag," said Mr. LaFond.

The town is looking forward to a higher bond upgrade rate. "Tim Bell, our

town accountant, deserves a huge amount of credit for getting this together," stated Administrator LaFond, "he has done a lot of research and due diligence."

Webster's Police Chief Michael Shaw was a recent graduate of the FBI's National Academy where he received 10 weeks of training at the University of Virginia with classes geared toward law enforcement disciplines in the areas of security and crisis intervention as well as officer

wellness. Only about 1% of law enforcement officers who apply are accepted into the program. Webster is truly fortunate to have Chief Shaw as head of its police department. Chief Shaw hopes to have other members of the town's police department apply to the FBI Academy.

Contact Janet: [jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com](mailto:jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com)

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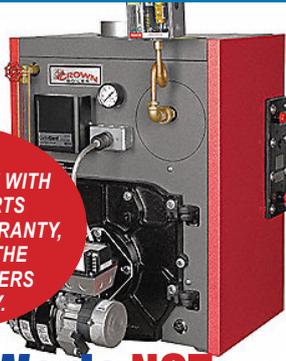
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