

Dudley's French River trace bridge ready for demolition

BY JANET STOICA

Residents of Dudley have been waiting for what seems like years for their bridge to reconnect to the roadway that links Hill Street of Webster to Chase Avenue of Dudley. This particular span hasn't been usable for a number of months and those who used the crossover for their daily commute from Route 395-South to Lake Parkway and School Street to Hill Street have finally resigned themselves that this route is no longer possible and won't be for a while longer. So frustrating to have to change a habit, isn't it?

Actually, it's more than a habit. It's a way to circumnavigate the knot of traffic that is always stopped along Webster's Main Street to commute to Dudley.

There are four routes that Dudley residents can use when driving south from Auburn/Worcester/the Mass Pike. Route No. 1 would be exiting the Cudworth Road-Webster ramp and wending your way south on Route 12 to Cemetery Road to Bigelow and South Main to the bridge behind Calvary Cemetery to Dudley. The second choice is the Route 16 exit to the East Main Street lights which would bring you to the heavy traffic congestion on Webster's Main Street. Thirdly, your option would be the last Webster exit to follow the aforementioned Lake Parkway route unless you live in the extreme south end of Dudley



A road closed sign has become a familiar sight to Dudley residents. Finally, a bridge that spans a dry trace will be demolished and replaced with a temporary crossing until a permanent one can be built.

in which case your fourth selection would be navigating Lake Parkway to its end and then taking a left to Snow's Corner and a right onto Perryville Road which would bring you to Route 12-Dudley.

It's a crazy deal which most commuters realized was best travelled via Hill Street and over

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Lucky Ducks will float again for hospitals' fundraiser

BY JANET STOICA

You know them, you love them, and you've proven over the many years of the Harrington Auxiliary's Lucky Duck fundraiser event that it's a proven winner for raising valuable scholarship funds for students in the towns served by the two campuses of UMass Memorial Health Harrington Hospital.

The event is customarily held at the Southbridge Town Common where the numbered Lucky Duck floating ornaments are available for participants to choose when making a donation. There are cool prizes for those Lucky Ducks that are randomly plucked from the water during this great afternoon outdoor fun event. The Webster and Southbridge hospitals have also been the beneficiaries of additional fundraisers that have been established by the Auxiliary. The group has worked tirelessly and persistently over the many years of their existence, including during the times of COVID, to raise funds for equipment and services at the UMass Memorial Health Harrington Hospital facilities in the two towns.

The Lucky Ducks are certainly not the Auxiliary's only fundraising event as they have recently completed their \$10,000 pledge for the renovation of the Cancer Center Pharmacy in Southbridge in June 2022 as well as their pledge to the Southbridge ER renovation completed in June 2022. They appropriated (and awarded per department



Lucky Ducks as depicted on this shirt are an important fundraising tool for the Harrington Auxiliary, whose members work tirelessly for equipment and services.

requests) \$10K in 2021-2022 for the Webster and Southbridge campuses. The Webster hospital now has 24 in-patient beds in their Psychiatric Unit along with 16 in Southbridge and room for future expansion.

Barbara Avery, president of the Auxiliary and a member since 2012, stated that the group's mission is to raise funds to support all hospital programs. "Our efforts have benefited various hospital departments with services and items such as children's toys, basic Spanish classes for our Emergency Room personnel to assist patients of Spanish descent, comfort supplies, therapy games, art supplies for the behavioral health departments, and scholarships for students totaling \$15,000.

FUNDRAISER
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BRIDGE

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the two French River bridges to Dudley. Perhaps some commuters don't watch their TV's local access channel or attend the Dudley selectmen's meetings in order to be best informed about the status of the bridge updates as their highway superintendent has been very diligent about keeping the selectmen and TV watchers well-informed. Oh, wait a minute, I guess most of them don't watch and/or don't care except to complain on social media about what is going on with that dang bridge. I suppose I could expound about citizen apathy but that's for another time. Let someone else do it, right?

According to Jeff Murray, Dudley's highway superintendent, the bridge spans what is called a

dry trace which means there is no water passing underneath the structure. It is an overflow passage in the event of future flooding from the French River which passes under the Webster span with the French River being the official dividing line between the towns of Dudley and Webster.

Demolition of the Dudley bridge will begin this month. After this happens the town must come up with funding for the temporary bridge that will be installed. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Dept. of Transportation (DOT) has a temporary bridge that Dudley can borrow but still requires Dudley to put together a funding plan for the permanent span. A full replacement cost according to the Mass. DOT is approximately \$6,235,000 and that's in today's dollars. Federal funding could come in very handy at this point.

The new structure would be designed and built by the Mass. DOT and outsourced to a private contractor without using local funds. The DOT has also recommended replacing the Webster bridge, which was built in 1923. As with all state and federal projects, however, there is a waiting list and, of course, every town and city feels that their project is the most important and should be pushed to the top of the priority list. The Dudley bridge project must be approved by the Mass. Project Review Committee which is comprised of members from the Mass. DOT. They are in charge of rating the importance, the funding, the designing, and then putting out to bid each and every project. "It's not a quick process," said Mr. Murray. "We've involved our state senator and representative to move this

along and have been unsuccessful. There have been funding opportunities as well but they fell through. We've explored other funding sources as well but it's a very slow-moving process. The project is now in the hands of the Mass DOT and the Federal Highway Administration. As another example of the approval and construction process we have the Dudley/Quinebaug bridge which has been on the Mass DOT list since 2017-2018 and it's just moving to the top of the list with that bridge replacement scheduled for fiscal year 2024-2025.

"There are many varying factors used for facilitation. The permanent solution is a very lengthy process. The Chapter 90 funds of \$148,500 which we would customarily use for our town's road resurfacing projects will now be directed to the demolition and temporary bridge for the dry trace bridge so we can open up access again."

If local residents really care about and wanted to move the permanent bridge project along in addition to requesting funding for it, they should get in touch with their State Senator Ryan Fattman who can be reached at (617) 722-1420, Ryan.Fattman@masenate.gov or their State Rep. Peter Durant (617) 722-2260 peter.durant@masshouse.gov. Locals can also contact their federal representatives: Rep. Richard Neal (202) 225-5601, Senator Edward Markey (202) 224-2742, and Senator Elizabeth Warren (202) 224-4543.

Now what's that old saying? The squeaky wheel gets the grease!

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Xpressly Yours ... a letter from the editor

A Hannaford remodel...and a Big Y coming to town?

Notes taken along the trail, while waiting to see how efforts to speed up the game of professional baseball play out in the major leagues and at Polar Park—and in anticipation of the Worcester Bravehearts' season opener against the Norwich Sea Unicorns at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, May 24th.

BY ROD LEE

The expression “can't find the chips!” and others like it are commonly heard at the Hannaford supermarket these days, as the store undergoes an extensive renovation and redesign—its first, customers say, in many years.

Along with this, there is widespread speculation that a Big Y is going to be setting up shop in the near future just down the road, at the former site of sand pits in South Uxbridge.

Google “Big Y in Uxbridge?” and the result is an “offering memorandum” from Horvath & Tremblay for space to lease in what appears to be a listing for a new-construction plaza just north of the towns of Blackstone and Millville that will apparently be anchored by a Big Y. “Nothing yet,” however, by way of commitments, according to Bob Horvath, executive vice president of Horvath & Tremblay.

The arrival of a Big Y would of course mean serious competition for Hannaford—the former Victory. Victory stores were started by the DiGeronimo family of Leominster in 1923 and sold to Hannaford in 2004.

Springfield-based Big Y boasts more than eighty locations in Massachusetts and Connecticut, and employs over 72,000 people.

Horvath & Tremblay notes that 222,000-plus individuals live within ten miles of the prospective grounds of a Big Y, with an average household income of \$115,889.

Caitlin Cortelyou, external communications manager for Hannaford Supermarkets, gave me the following statement about improvements being made to the company's North Main Street, Uxbridge store:

“We anticipate the upgrades currently underway at our Uxbridge store to be complete in mid-June. Designed to enhance the overall shopping experience, the remodeled store will feature a fresh look, as well as new products and services to make shopping as easy



Redesign of its produce area is a work in progress, as Hannaford Supermarkets' Uxbridge store undergoes a major facelift. The remodel is expected to be finished by mid-June.

and convenient as possible for our customers.

“We're excited to introduce a greater variety of grab-and-go meal options to our already expansive selection of fresh, quality items, including hot soups, chef-crafted sushi, hot and boneless wings, ready-to-heat and ready-to-eat entrees and flatbread pizza, freshly made sandwiches and salads, and pasta and taco meal kits.

“An enhanced selection of organic and natural products and dairy and frozen items will be available, as well as a greater variety of local products storewide.

“Customers will also enjoy more fine cheeses.

“As a thank you to customers, the Uxbridge store will offer a variety of special giveaways, coupons and offers for shoppers in

June and July.”

Ms. Cortelyou (she/her) told me anything to do with the rumors

about a Big Y would have to come from Big Y, a hard outfit to get in touch with.

Meanwhile, Hannaford's Uxbridge store is looking better by the week, as a familiar market gets a new look and feel.

▪ Speaking of the Bravehearts, the team has sold out their June 6 and June 7 games, for the earliest sellouts in the Futures Collegiate Baseball League perennial contender's ten-year history.

▪ Looking forward to the Blackstone Valley Education Foundation's annual Business & Education Forum at the Grand View in Mendon on April 13th...more later.

▪ The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce is touting a ribbon-cutting ceremony on May 11th at 12:00 noon at Manchaug Mills, 9 Main St., Sutton, for the new Heirloom Emporium. Heirloom Emporium is a unique consumer experience, offering a wide variety of handcrafted, authentic and natural creations transformed from lonely heirlooms into one-of-a-kind modern antiques.

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

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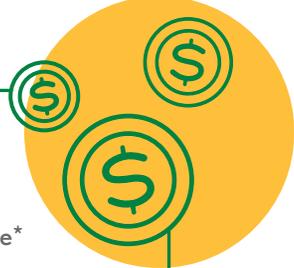
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Dudley Special Election

Meeting on April 10, 2023 regarding the Proposition 2 1/2 Override election The Town of Dudley will hold a Proposition 2 1/2 Override special election 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. April 25, 2023, at the Dudley Municipal Complex, 71 West Main Street.

The Dudley Board of Selectmen and the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee invite residents to Dudley Middle School, 70 Dudley-Oxford Road, at 6:30 p.m. April 10, 2023, to ask questions about the proposed override and learn how it affects the town and school budgets, as well as property taxes.

Additional override detail may be found on the town website at www.dudleyma.gov

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- 2 LB HOT DOGS
- 3 LB HAM STEAK OR
- 2 1/2 LB POT ROAST
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- 1 WHOLE OR CUT UP CHICKEN (3 LBS AVERAGE) OR
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- 2 LBS HOT DOGS
- 3 LB BONELESS PORK ROAST OR
- 3 LBS BONELESS CHICKEN BREAST
- 2 LBS STEW BEEF OR
- 1 PACKAGE OF MEATBALLS OF YOUR CHOICE (ITALIAN, CHICKEN OR DORITO AN CHEESE)
- 1 1/2 LB HAM STEAKS OR
- 1 1/2 LB NY SIRLOIN STEAK
- 1 PACKAGE (1 1/2 LB) COOKED CHICKEN WINGS OF YOUR CHOICE OR
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Booklovers' Gourmet marks Independent Bookstore Day on April 29

This year marks the tenth anniversary of Independent Bookstore Day and Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 E. Main St., Webster, is celebrating the occasion with an appearance by Tom Ingrassia.

Mr. Ingrassia is co-author with Jared Churdimsky of "One Door Closes: Overcoming Adversity by Following Your Dreams." He will talk about the inspiring stories of sixteen people from all walks of life who are featured in the book. Many of them live in Central Massachusetts. They have overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles in order to achieve their dreams.

Also sharing their stories in this special event from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. on April 29th are Scherrie Payne (formerly of The Supremes), June Monteiro of The Toys, and the late Mary Wilson of The Supremes who wrote the epilogue for the book.

Through their powerful, first-person accounts, these dreamers share a road map guiding the reader to discover how to live with vision, courage, determination and passion.

One Door Closes was named Best Self Help Book by the New England Book Festival and was a finalist in the National Indie Excellence Awards. The book is current-



ly being adapted as a documentary film: One Door Closes: Corey's Courage, which will have its premiere in Worcester in September.

FUNDRAISER

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The scholarships are awarded to those students who are pursuing healthcare careers. This year the Auxiliary will award five \$3,000 scholarships.

"We also work with Thompson Speedway every August to hold our Annual Classic Car Show. It's such a great event and we are very grateful for Thompson Speedway's support of this worthy cause. There are close to 100 vehicles in the fields of the Speedway where the cars on display are also judged. We hold 50/50 raffles and trophies are awarded to the winning vehicles. The Speedway graciously opens its grounds to the public all day. We

have deejays playing great music with continuous additional raffles. It's one of our most well-attended events and has become very successful."

The Auxiliary has provided financial support for many projects that benefit staff, patients and the local community including \$50,000 for the new Webster Emergency Department, \$25,000 for the Webster Recovery Services Unit, \$50,000 for the Southbridge Emergency Department's renovation project, and seed money for the robotic Rapid Disinfecter.

According to their historical records, the Auxiliary is an organization that began in 1932 and is composed of dedicated men and women who have joined together to volunteer their time and talents to support and enhance hospital services. They work to create interest in their members and the public to volunteer their time and service without financial compensation. Their many fundraisers provide the two hospital campuses with

needed money for equipment and programs to enhance patience comfort and care and their continued interaction with the communities provide a vital link between the two hospitals and the 17 towns they serve.

The group has recently welcomed a local church club whose members chose to begin a new phase of community service. The Auxiliary welcomes and looks forward to meeting and working with new members from all denominations and churches. If there are other groups in the 17-town area who are seeking to offer their volunteerism for this valuable and worthwhile team, please contact Kelly Hibbard, Manager of Volunteer Services at (508) 765-9771, Ext. 6472. They will welcome you and your greatly appreciated service!

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Jonathan Babcock brings folk songs to the masses

BY JANET STOICA

Recently the Massachusetts' Cultural Council doled out 4000 individual grants totaling \$20 million to the artists of our area and Jonathan Babcock was one of the successful recipients.

According to its website, the Mass Cultural Council works to elevate our rich cultural life in Massachusetts. The MCC partners with communities across the Commonwealth to expand access, improve education, promote diversity, and encourage excellence in the arts, humanities, and sciences.

Jonathan's discipline is listed as Interdisciplinary which encompasses his musical style and talents. "My grant request showed artistic disciplines from my past," said Mr. Babcock. "My current project

demonstrates history through music. A song can be a starting point to speak with children and to tell them about historical events that have happened in their community. A good example would be the Spin Song which focuses on the mills in the area and the stories told by the people who worked in those mills. The songs make it easier to learn through music."

Mr. Babcock has also played his folk songs at local nursing homes for residents' enjoyment using an historical perspective. "It's all acoustic-based with just my guitar which gives a great experience for everyone," said Jonathan. "Just last week I played a Woody Guthrie song and a new resident had her hands up in the air and was clapping along. I thought she might've been someone who had actually

been to a Woody Guthrie concert back in the 60's in her younger days. Many of my songs are from the years of 1955-1970. Many pass the test of time--even if you don't know the title, you remember the song. I sing songs like *Don't Fence Me In*, *Take Me Home Country Roads*, and *Good Night, Irene*. Most of us know these songs and they are easy-going, gentle, and very comforting.

Jonathan states that his retirement mission is singing these songs along with writing a few. He has put together tunes entitled "Four Trains Crash on the Airline Trail" which refers to the Thompson CT train disaster from years ago and The Molasses Flood Song about the great Boston Molasses Flood of 1919 when a 50-foot-tall steel tank filled with 2.3 million

gallons of molasses collapsed on Boston's waterfront spilling its contents via a 15-foot-high wave of molasses that traveled at 35 miles an hour. It destroyed everything in its path and the number of deaths wasn't known for days.

"I've always been interested in history," said Mr. Babcock. "My family's history dates back to the early 1800's and they were originally from England." The Dudley Woolen Mill was built by his great-grandfather and was sited at the current Stevens Linen building."

Mr. Babcock is in the middle of producing a new album with 13 tracks of historical and interesting songs in the genre of folk, retro-pop, and love. He is in the mixing process and after he is satisfied with the results a master copy will be made in the next three months. Marco Giovino will be his CD producer and Jonathan was quick to note that Mr. Giovino has played drums for Robert Plant's Band of Joy and has also collaborated with Norah Jones. "I'm very fortunate to have met him and grateful that he has assisted me," Mr. Babcock stated.

"For my type of music, a house concert event is appropriate, when someone invites 15-20 people to their home or venue. I intro the song, give a few historical facts, and then perform. It's a good gathering that people do appreciate."

Writing songs like these is pure poetry according to Jonathan. When he was in college at UMass-Amherst he had the opportunity to be an exchange student in Taiwan at the University of Taiwan. "It was the only public university that offered Chinese language classes," he said, "and I was interested in learning the Chinese language. It's a character-based language that de-



Folk music is in Jonathan Babcock's blood and he loves sharing his songs. He has performed all over, including in Taiwan.

pendes on a pictographic memory. Very different from the alphabetic languages most of us know here in the U.S." While at the University of Taiwan, Jonathan played for 800 students at an open-air concert.

"My goal is to get these songs out for people to hear. These days even with all our internet choices there is no central site to find these types of songs. It's all about the songs so people can listen and learn about where they live and where they came from. Lots of people go along in life without knowing their local history. I hope to have audio liner notes for my published songs to give a brief history of each. I'll have CDs for sure," Jonathan stated.

Jonathan's repertoire includes a few hundred songs from pre-1975 including folk and pop songs plus pure Americana from the likes of John Denver, Johnny Cash, Marty Robbins, Jim Croce (he does a great "Operator"), and Peter, Paul, and Mary. He also plays bass guitar with DW and the Shake Makers Band. To contact Jonathan: jonathanjaymusic@protonmail.com jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

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Samuel Slater Experience enjoys a banner first year

BY ROD LEE

The Samuel Slater Experience on Ray Street in Webster faced the kind of challenges that would confront any startup—any nonprofit—in the first year of its existence, when the museum opened in March of 2022.

The biggest of these being, will

operation, she said.

“They are the best people in the world. This couldn’t happen without them,” Ms. Van Reed said.

Word of mouth—people telling others about the museum—is driving attendance, she noted. Visitors are coming in from near and far.

Plans are afoot to expand on what has already been put in place.

over the past two decades.

Her most recent work has been as a rigid heddle weaving instructor at Woolworks in Putnam. The rigid heddle loom captured her heart from the first project in 2019. The ease of use and portability of these little looms has led to the current weaving workshop series she has developed.

On Thursday, April 20th, Richard Hughes returns to the SSE, during School Vacation Week, “and we have discovered that kids love silent movies,” which are part of Mr. Hughes’ presentation. “You’d be amazed,” Ms. Van Reed said.

The Samuel Slater Experience will benefit too from being incorporated into the final segment of a documentary about “Slatersville” that has been coming together for

some time now.

The museum’s hours are 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday and noon to 4:00 on Sundays. Visit <https://samuel Slater Experience.org> or call 508-461-2955 for information about field trips and tours.

Visitor numbers including those

who showed up for private events totaled 4500 in the museum’s first year, Sally Patterson of the SSE said.

Another beginner weaving class starts April 22.

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



Jacklyn Bonneau, a guide at the Samuel Slater Experience in Webster, introduces Steve and Kathy Bullock of Medway to the interactive aspects of the museum. “I’m a teacher at heart,” Ms. Bonneau told the couple.

the people come? Will patronage justify Chris Robert’s efforts to bring the story of pioneering manufacturer Samuel Slater and the history of the town of Webster (and Dudley and Oxford) to life?

For all involved in the venture, the answer is a resounding yes.

“We had more than 4000 visitors, groups of all kinds, schools, organizations, and a lot of private events, corporate and Chamber of Commerce gatherings,” SSE’s Barbara Van Reed said on March 11th.

Her remarks came a week after an official celebration of the museum’s first anniversary, which drew strong backing from local businesses and an appreciated turnout.

“There were a lot of happy raffle winners,” she said.

As evidence that the SSE is indeed attracting all sorts of support, a baby shower was taking place in the large meeting room just off the lobby, as Ms. Van Reed spoke.

“That’s been our major focus, to let people know we’re here,” she said. “In some respects the first impression people have of a museum is that it’s stodgy. People don’t think of the museum industry as a growth business. But this is different. It is interactive. This is what museums are going to be like in the future. We have good space and we have Main Street with the ambience.”

The Samuel Slater Experience also has the volunteers, who serve as guides and in other capacities. They are the backbone of the

“We are looking at developing an exterior site plan with more parking,” she said. This will enable the museum to host concerts and other attractions beyond its doors.

Meanwhile bookings continue.

On Saturday, April 15th, Sharon Geyer, a fiber artist who specializes in weaving, will make an appearance as part of a one-day Log Cabin Workshop for intermediate weavers. This occurs from noon to 3:00 p.m.

Ms. Geyer began her weaving career in 1995 as a tapestry weaver (French tapestry technique) under a master artist in Philadelphia. From there, she began to explore patterns and textures on a large eight-harness loom. Her membership in the Yankee Fiber Friend Guild has advanced her prowess

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Rip roarin' riders eager to help support Boys & Girls Club

BY JANET STOICA

They're hoping for a beautiful day on Saturday, May 6, when the American Legion Riders from Oxford's Post 58 along with other motorcyclists from the area take to the road for their 120-mile roundtrip to The Berkshires and back to benefit the Webster-Dudley Boys and Girls Club.

It's all to benefit one of the most worthy causes in the area--funding for the after-school programs at the club located at 55 Oxford Avenue in Dudley.

"Christopher Battista of Oxford, a retired Air Force veteran, was grateful for those club programs as a youth and the purpose of this



A ride to the Berkshires and back on May 6th is serving as a fundraiser for programs administered by the Boys & Girls Club of Webster-Dudley.

ride means a lot to him. He's looking forward to seeing and meeting many of the participants," said Aaron Peek, of Peek's Auto Detailing of Dudley, one of the event's organizers.

"The riders' contributions will greatly benefit our after-school youth programs," said John Lefebvre, member of the Boys and Girls Club Board of Directors. "This will be our first year and we hope to make it an annual event. We used to have a motorcycle run for fund-

raising but it ended about ten years ago and we're glad to see it back as a wonderful event to benefit our kids. Aaron Peek saw a need and wanted to help fund our efforts. The benefits to our local youth are immeasurable. Such a great cause."

Tyler Bailey, Club Unit Director, said "this is a great opportunity for community involvement. The funds raised will not only help with our eight-week summer programs but also assist with our ongoing after-school programs like

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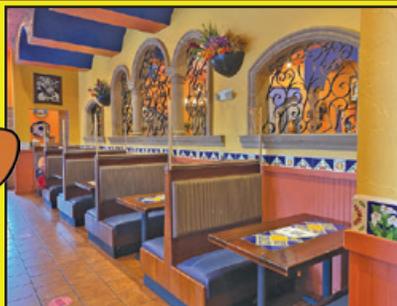
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athletics, STEM (STEAM), arts, and all recreational programs that provide for our kids. We never turn members away because of the \$50 annual fee. We currently have eighty-five members and average sixty members daily. Most youngsters are from the Webster/Dudley

starts at 8:30 a.m. There will be fresh coffee and donuts kindly donated by Dippin Donuts of 32 West Main Street, Dudley. Kickstands go up at 11 a.m. sharp for the 60-mile Berkshire ride to Griffin's Restaurant for a quick lunch and then return ride back to the Oxford

American Legion Post 58, 227 Main Street, Oxford.

The 2:30 expected arrival time and the festivities awaiting the riders will prove to be truly worth it! Live music by East Coast band Crossfire playing classic rock; food provided by Mack's Catering of Quinebaug CT; bounce house and games for the kids; many vendors; and a great variety of raffles including 50/50. Registration is \$20/bike plus \$10/passenger and includes

music and entertainment. Two, three, and four-wheelers welcome. All riders from solo to groups are welcome. It's sure to be a great day for riders and, most importantly, for the youth of The Boys and Girls Club.

Contact Aaron Peek for more details at: (903) 900-0813.

"It's easy to make a buck, it's a lot tougher to make a difference." Tom Brokaw

jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com



area but we also have members from Connecticut and Worcester. All youth are welcome here."

"American Legion Riders from Oxford Post 58 make it a point to ride for their communities. We all scramble to raise money for worthy causes whether it's to help those who need funds for their heating and utility bills or similar funding projects, we want to make a difference," said Mr. Peek.

The May 6th ride begins at the Boys and Girls Club on Oxford Avenue, Dudley, where registration



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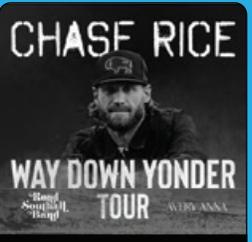


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BY ROD LEE

With her well-established reputation for nutritious and wholesome food, Danielle Desrosiers of The Green Plate in Whitinsville was a natural to line up alongside competitors from Galliford's Restaurant & Tavern,

Chowder call for The Green Plate and others; The Lodge at 70

Samuel Slater's Restaurant and the Grafton Job Corps in the chowder contest at the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's 23rd annual Home & Community Expo on March 25th. Ms. Desrosiers declared her experience a satisfying one. "The chowder contest was great!" she said. "I offered a dairy-free clam chowder. It was so nice to see some familiar faces, but getting positive feedback from people who had never been to the café or some



The Galliford's booth at the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's Home & Community Expo. Galliford's was the Judge's Choice winner in the chowder contest.

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who had never heard of us was great too! The event was so well attended!" Liz O'Neil, director of programs, events and membership/marketing coordinator for the Chamber, said "the People's Choice winner was Grafton Job Corps and the Judge's Choice winner was Galliford's." By the way, Expo concessions were provided by The Neighborhood Kitchen, also in downtown Whitinsville.

Wood-fired pizza and more

The Lodge is something of an institution on Gore Road in Webster. Celebrating seventy years in business, the restaurant's appearance has not changed dramatically over that time. Antique rifles are

still mounted on the wall. Easter bunnies adorn the fireplace. But one thing that's different is a brick oven, which commands a prominent spot in the vicinity of the bar, lounge and dining room. "That was added two years ago," Heidi, a waitress, said on the evening of March 30th. "Coming out of the pandemic, we asked ourselves how can we change things up?" The result is wood-fired pizza that is proving to be popular. On this particular occasion the choices were wood-fired chicken parm with linguine and baked haddock cooked in sherry and lightly covered in Ritz crumbs, served with hand-cut fries and smashed turnips and carrots.

Happy Hour at Samuel Slater's
 There has been a lot of talk about a possible return of the Happy Hour in Massachusetts, and Samuel Slater's Restaurant at Indian Ranch is doing something about it. In addition to "Prime Rib Wednesdays" (a 12-ounce cut plus two sides), Samuel Slater's has brought Happy Hour back from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. on both Wednesday and Thursday. Don't forget the events...Comedy Night with Tony V and Guests on April 21st, Music with Aquanett on April 29th and Music with Boombox on May 5th.

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

THROUGHOUT APRIL

• "Through an Artist's Eyes—Paintings & Carvings" by Wayne Yacino will be on display and available for purchase at Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 E. Main St.,



Lisa Powers of Worcester will be the featured attraction for "Night with a Psychic" hosted by the Women's Success Network of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce at Apple Tree Arts in Grafton on April 26th.

Webster, during regular business hours, Tuesday-Saturday 10-5 and Wednesday 10-6. The store will be closed for vacation April 10-13. Mr. Yacino is a native of Oxford, Massachusetts of Metis (French-Abenaki), Italian and Polish descent who began painting at the age of five. He is self-taught. He

has exhibited his Native American imagery in Europe and the U.S. and has taught the Ancient American Skills the first weekend of October at Waters Farm Days in Sutton since 1996.

FRIDAY, APRIL 14

• The Millbury Women's Club will host its Ladies Night Out fundraiser with WHDH TV Investigative Reporter and Thriller Novelist Hank Phillippi Ryan as guest speaker. Ms. Phillippi Ryan will be selling and signing her newest novel "The House Guest." There will be a cash bar, light refreshments and raffle prizes donated by businesses in town and members of the MWC. Tickets are \$35. Contact MaryLou Mulhane at mlmulhane1@gmail.com.

SATURDAY, APRIL 15

• St. Peter's Parish, 39 Church Ave., Northbridge is hosting a Chicken Parm Dinner starting at 5:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall. Tickets are \$17 per dinner for a meal that includes salad and dessert. To-go meals will be available for pickup at 5:00 p.m. All orders must be purchased in advance. Pay It Forward by purchasing an extra dinner to be delivered to someone in need in the community. Call 508-234-2156 or email parishoffice@stpeterrockdale.org to buy tickets or for further info.

• The Grass Roots Coffeehouse's first concert of the season with the band Redwood Hill performing will take place at the Rockdale Congregational Church, 42 Fowler Road, Northbridge. Doors open at 6:45 p.m. The show starts at 7:30 p.m. Admission is \$15; \$5 for students under age 18. Proceeds benefit the Rockdale Congregational Church. Redwood Hill is a tribute band that pays homage to The Country Gentlemen, one of the most influential bluegrass groups of all time. Redwood Hill is made up of veteran southern and western New England musicians Dave Orlomoski, Terry McGill, Keith Edwards and Lillian Fraker. Hot soups, chili, beverages and desserts will be available for purchase. For more details, visit www.rockdalechurchonline.org, email aplant-bob@aol.com or call 617-429-0347.

SUNDAY, APRIL 16

• The New England Country Music Club hosts dancing featuring the "Crossfire" band at the Uxbridge Progressive Club, 18 Whittin St. Doors open at 12:15 p.m. with live music from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. www.facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19

• Join Rainne Richards and the Plummer Place Pluckers for a ukulele sing-a-long concert featuring favorite songs from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s at Plummer Place at the Northbridge Senior Center, 20 Highland St., Whitinsville, at 2:00 p.m. Lyrics provided. All are welcome. Snacks will be provided. Sign up at the front desk.

THURSDAY, APRIL 20

• Kids of all ages are invited to be entertained by pianist and historian Richard Hughes as he present a special children's silent movie program at the Samuel Slater Experience museum on Ray St. in Webster at 2:00 p.m. Mr. Hughes will begin with a ragtime solo from the early 1900s. He will talk about silent movie days, cylinder phonographs, synchronized sound effects, animation devices and motion picture cameras. He will play the piano along with historic movie clips. The event is free, but registration is required at Eventbrite.com Children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult. Visit samuel Slater Experience.org for more information.

SATURDAY, APRIL 22

• Douglas's Silver Club is sponsoring a bus trip to New York City to see the new Titanic exhibit. Cost is \$120. There will be lunch at Ann and Tony's in the Bronx and time on Arthur Avenue (lots of Italian bakeries, butcher shops and delis). For more information call Sue at 508-476-5820.

• The Manchaug Pond Association hosts its annual Spring Cleanup of Manchaug Pond.

Volunteers are invited to join members and friends of the Manchaug Pond Foundation in this initiative. Volunteers with boats are also welcome to help clean up coves. Meet at the state public access boat ramp on Torrey Road in Sutton. Rain Date is April 23.

• A Home Baked Ham & Bean Supper is be-

ing offered by the Uxbridge Congregational Church at 5:00 p.m. in the Community House, 8 Court St., behind the Uxbridge

HAPPENINGS!
continued on page 12

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HAPPENINGS!

continued from page 11

Town Common. The menu includes baked ham, home-baked beans, potato salad, coleslaw, brown bread, beverages and dessert. Donation is \$12 per person. Children under six are admitted free. Raffle tickets will be available. RSVP by calling 508-244-7849. A limited number of tickets will be available at the door. Come enjoy good

fellowship and good food.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26

• The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's Women's Success Network is hosting "Night with a Psychic," featuring Spiritual Medium and Animal Communicator Lisa Powers from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at Apple Tree Arts, 1 Grafton Common, Grafton. Contact Liz O'Neil, 508-234-9090 or go to www.blackstonevalley.org to register.

THURSDAY, APRIL 27

• Come dance the afternoon away to music from the Disco era of the 1970s at Plummer Place at the Northbridge Senior Center, 20 Highland St., Whitinsville, 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Costume attire is highly encouraged. \$10 per ticket, limit two tickets per person. Sponsored by AdviniaCare and F.I.N.E. Sign up in the main office.
• The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Com-

merce will host a Business After Hours with Affiliates from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at Southwick's Zoo, 2 Southwick St., Mendon. Go to www.blackstonevalley.org to register or for more info.

SUNDAY, APRIL 30

• The Uxbridge PSG 2023 is hosting a Spring Vendor Fair from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Uxbridge High School, 300 Quaker Highway. More than thirty local vendors will be on hand with unique gifts. Raffle items will be available. PSG-raised funds go towards the Uxbridge High School Class of 2023 graduation event to help students celebrate in a safe, alcohol and drug-free environment. Contact Uxbridge PSG FMI: psguxbridge@gmail.com or on Facebook @Uxbridge-PSG2023-Parents for a Safe Graduation.
• The Uxbridge Historic District Commission is hosting a Spring House Tour from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. with magnificent architecture available for viewing including homes open to the public at 236 Mendon St., 115 So. Main St., 46 Capron St. and 35 Capron St.



"Fisher boy," an oil painting by Wayne Yacino, is typical of works by the artist that will be on display throughout the month of April at Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 E. Main St., Webster.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 3

• Music for seniors by Howie Newman will be presented at The Residences at AdviniaCare, Northbridge, from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. Howie Newman brings music and laughter through his original songs. This program is sponsored in part by a grant from the Northbridge Cultural Council, a local agency supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

FRIDAY, MAY 5

• St. Peter's Parish, 39 Church Ave., Northbridge, will host a Trivia Night at the Knights of Columbus, 77 Prescott Road, Whitinsville. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. The trivia game starts at 7:00 pm. Tickets are \$20 per person and can be purchased in advance or at the door There will be a cash bar, food for purchase and a 50/50 raffle. To buy tickets or for more info call 508-234-2156 or email parishoffice@stpeterrockdale.org.

SATURDAY, MAY 6

• Open Sky Community Services is co-hosting the 8th annual Family Fun Fishing Day at River Bend Farm in Uxbridge, in coordination with the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Volunteers-in-Parks program, the Blackstone River Watershed Association, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife. This year's event will take place from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. with a rain

date of May 7th. Pre-registration is required. Contact Lori Girard at 508-234-6232 or lori.girard@openskycs.org.

• The Millbury First Congregational Church, 148 West Main St., is sponsoring a Flea Market from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. To reserve table space, call Jeri Stead at 508-865-5371. "The Kitchen" will be selling coffee and muffins, and hot dogs at lunchtime. There will also be a bakery table.

• Whitin Community Center hosts its 100th Anniversary Gala, a black-tie fundraiser featuring cocktails, dinner, dancing, a live auction, a commemorative photo gallery and more, 5:00 p.m., 60 Main St., Whitinsville. Visit www.WhitinCommunityCenter.com for more information.

• A Scottish Highland Game featuring nine events of strength and agility will be held from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at 4 Dresser Hill Road, Charlton. Robert Sims, athletic director for the day, says "guys and gals in kilts will be throwing stupid heavy things:" stones, weights, hammers and the most recognized one of them all, the caber toss, AKA the "tree throw." Athletes from New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York and even one from Canada will take part—from a teacher to

HAPPENINGS!

continued on page 13

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HAPPENINGS!

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active-duty Navy. For more information email rsims@charter.net.

MONDAY, MAY 8

• The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's Annual Charity Golf Tournament will be held at Pleasant Valley Country Club in Sutton to benefit the Chamber, the Blackstone Valley Education Foundation and the Blackstone Valley Hub. www.blackstonevalley.org/events.

TUESDAY, MAY 9

• The Sutton Historical Society welcomes Carol Crossed curator of the Susan B. Anthony Birthplace Museum, with a talk, "Vintage Tweets: A Book of Suffrage Era Postcards," at the First Congregational Church, 307 Boston Road, Sutton, at 7:00 p.m. Go to www.suttonhistoricalsociety.org for further info.

SATURDAY, MAY 13

• The Northbridge Historical Commission in partnership with the Northbridge Historical Society and will funding provided by a grant from the Northbridge Cultural Council hosts its popular Trolley Tours with three

times offered: 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m. or 1:00 p.m. Space is limited. The tours begin at the 1770 Fletcher House, 1 Main St., former home of James Fletcher and now the home of the Northbridge Historical Society. Northbridge Historian and Teacher Ken Warchol will serve as guide for this two-hour tour of Northbridge Center and the Historic District of Whitinsville. The tour will take participants back to 1772, when Northbridge received its town charter. Information will be provided about the vital role Northbridge played in the Industrial Revolution with establishment of the Whittin Machine Works as the most prominent textile machine shop in the world by the end of the 1920s. There is no charge for the tour. Registrations are required. Maps of the walking district are available for \$5, and donations are accepted. To register and for more information contact Ken Warch at 508-680-3440 or email kenwarchol2@msn.com. Leave complete contact info including full name, contact number and email and preferred time and the number of seats requested.

MAY 15-17

• Douglas's Silver Club is sponsoring a three-day trip to Maine (Portland and Kennebunkport) that includes guided tours of both places, a tour of the Victoria Mansion,

a visit to the Seashore Trolley Museum with a trolley ride, two nights lodging, two breakfasts and two dinners (one of them lobster) as well as some free time for shopping. Cost is \$399 per person. Call Sue at 508-476-5820 for further details.

MAY 27-28

• World War II Tank Demonstration Weekend takes place at the American Heritage Museum, 568 Main St., Hudson, featuring the M4 Sherman, the M24 Chaffee, the M5 Stuart, the M18 Hellcat, the M26 Pershing and the first-ever event for the AHM's new M35 Jackson Tank Destroyer. Times are 9:00 a.m. on Saturday and 5:00 p.m. on Sunday. www.americanheritemuseum.org or call 978-562-9182 for further details.

SATURDAY, JUNE 3

• St. Peter's Parish, 39 Church Ave., Northbridge, is hosting a Yard Sale and Vendor Fair from 7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Rain date is Saturday, June 10th. Volunteers will be available to pick up donated items. Vendors are welcome. Vendor tables may be secured for \$40. Call 508-234-2156 or email parishoffice@stpeterrockdale.org for more information.

FRIDAY, JUNE 9

• The Millbury Women's Club will host

"Under the Tent," a concert with singing sensation Dan The Singing Trooper and his wife Mary Colarusso a coloratura soprano performing. There will be a cash bar, raffles and an evening of "incredibly beautiful and

HAPPENINGS!

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Local 4 Life Earth Day Family Fair

Local 4 Life is celebrating Earth Day with a Family Fair on Saturday, April 22, 2023, from 1 to 4 pm. The event takes place at Andy's Neighborhood Canteen, 9 Frederick Street in Webster.

Families will learn about sustainable practices they can do at home, such as creating a pollinator garden, growing their own food in small spaces, acquiring some gardening tips, finding out about beekeeping, and more. Children can

participate in hands-on workshops about gardening, backyard animals, reusing materials and composting.

There is no charge to attend Local 4 Life's Earth Day Family Fair.

This celebration is sponsored by Saloon No. 6 Bar and Eatery, JV Mechanical Contractors, Inc., Green Light Baking, The Dancer's Sole, Kerrin Graphics & Printing, Inc., and Booklovers' Gourmet.

Local 4 Life is a non-profit organization that cultivates lo-

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For more information, contact Erin at 508-341-5347.

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HAPPENINGS!

continued from page 13

inspirational" entertainment. Contact Jane Cheetham for tickets at jane.cheetham@gmail.com. Space is limited.

SATURDAY, JUNE 10

• Picnic in the Park, the Whitin Community Center's popular event with food trucks, live entertainment, community vendors, a doll and pet parade, a dunk tank and more,

returns to Whitin Park, 60 Main St., Whitinsville. Visit www.WhitinCommunityCenter.com for further details.

• Get The Led Out performs at Indian Ranch, 200 Gore Road, Webster, 7:00 p.m. www.indianranch.com.

SUNDAY, JUNE 11

• Kip Moore performs at Indian Ranch, 200 Gore Road, Webster, 1:00 p.m. www.indianranch.com.



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The American Heritage Museum, 568 Main St., Hudson, will host a World War II Tank Demonstration Weekend May 27th and 28th from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. www.americanheritagemuseum.org.

MONDAY, JUNE 12

• Blackstone Valley Tech's 24th annual golf tournament will be held at Highfields Golf & Country Club, 42 Magill Drive, Grafton will proceed benefitting the school's Education Foundation and Athletic Department activities and programs. Registration is \$150 for individuals and \$125 per person for a foursome and includes 18 holes on the championship course, golf cart and a buffet dinner. There will be a silent auction and raffles. To register, support the event as a sponsor or donate a raffle item, visit www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/golftournament.

SATURDAY, JULY 1

• Chase Rice performs at Indian Ranch, 200 Gore Road, Webster, 1:00 p.m. www.indianranch.com.

SUNDAY, JULY 9

• Rumours: The Ultimate Fleetwood Mac Tribute Show, takes the stage at Indian Ranch, 200 Gore Road, 1:00 p.m. www.indianranch.com.

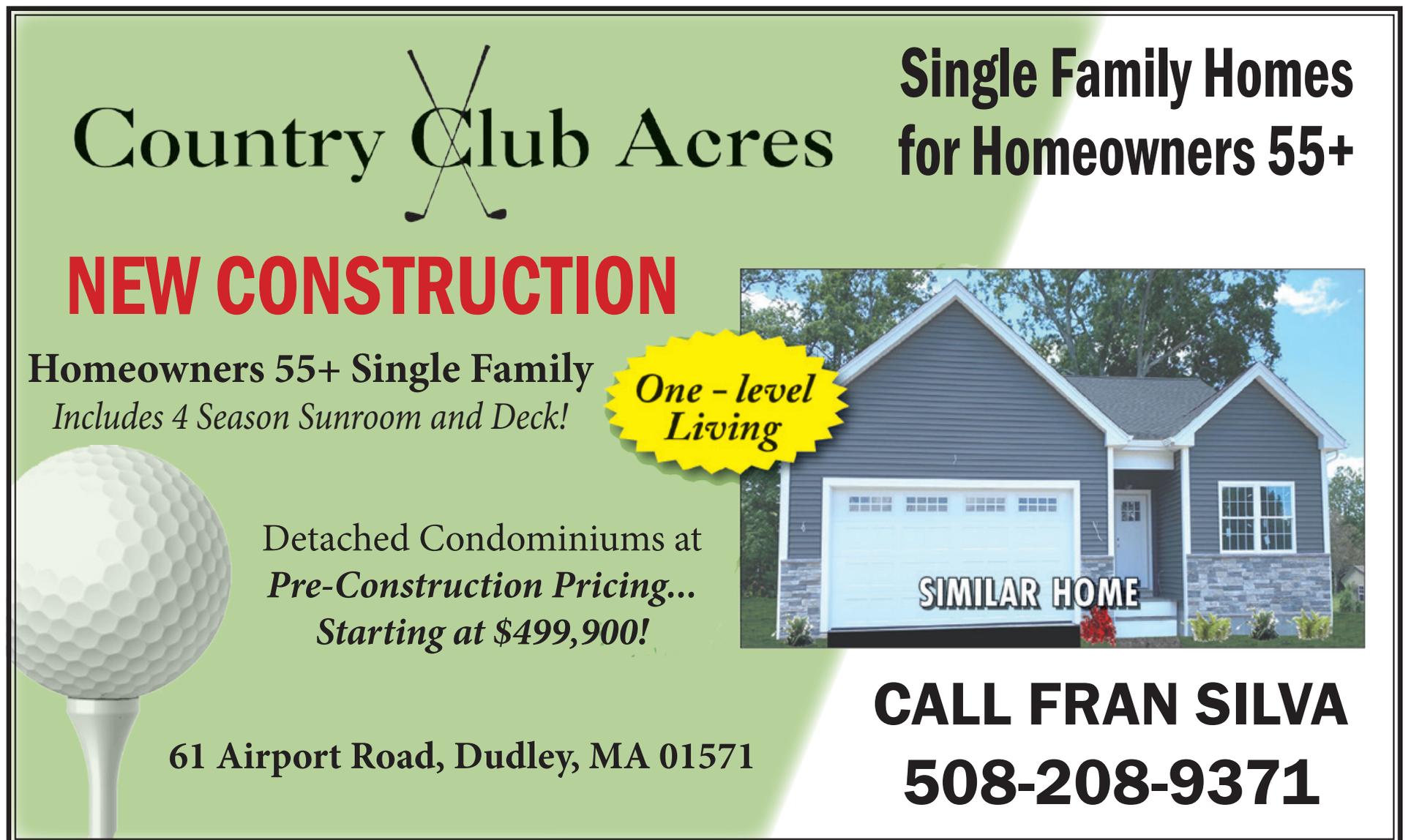
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

• The Sutton Historical Society welcomes Andrew Noone, author of "Bathsheba Spooner: A Revolutionary Murder Con-

spiracy," at the First Congregational Church, 307 Boston Road, Sutton, at 7:00 p.m. Go to www.suttonhistoricalsociety.org for further info.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7

• The Sutton Historical Society welcomes Mark Savoio of the Thompson Historical Society for the presentation "The Mass 15th of the Civil War and Wilder Holbrook, Sutton," at the First Congregational Church, 307 Boston Road, at 7:00 p.m. Go to www.suttonhistoricalsociety.org for further info.



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SPORTS

Numbers up, future promising for Shepherd Hill wrestlers

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

In the past the Shepherd Hill wrestling program has not been fortunate enough to have a full team. This year some 40 athletes turned up for the initial tryouts, though, leaving Coach Ray Ayotte optimistic as the winter season got under way.

"I really don't know what happened this year, for some reason kids started coming out of the woodwork to try wrestling," the coach said. "We'll be a very young team, but one that will be great for the future. In the past we've had to forfeit a lot of matches because we couldn't fill the weight classes. This year was different."

Ayotte has been with the program for eight years and he cannot remember the last time that he had a full roster.

One of the biggest surprises on the wrestling season for the Fighting Rams was eighth grader Sam Phillion. The middle schooler recorded 20 plus wins this season wrestling in the 106-pound weight class and qualified for the State Tournament, where he unfortunately went 1-2 and was elimi-



Justin Kelly (above) and Sawyer Ayotte (opposite page) are two reasons why Shepherd Hill High School's wrestling program is showing promise.

nated. While he may have found a diamond in the rough for this past season, Ayotte believes that he will lose the middle schooler to St. John's next year.

In addition to Phillion, Shepherd

Hill also had three other grapplers qualify for the State competition. Advancing into the post-season tournament were Sawyer Ayotte at 138 and alternates Justin Kelly at 113 and Diego Gutierrez in the

heavy weight (285) division.

In the Division 1 West Central Sectional Tournament Ayotte finished in second place and then took home fifth place in the State Tournament, allowing him to gain

access to the All-State Tournament. Kelly and Gutierrez both finished fifth in their respective weight classes in the Sectionals, giving them that alternate status for the State Tournament.

At the States a wrestler failed to make weight in the 113-pound weight class, allowing Kelly to step up and get his opportunity. Being the alternate, Kelly was ranked as the final wrestler (16th) in the weight class, but the Shepherd Hill wrestler fought his way out of the bottom all the way to finish in fifth place.

"He continued to practice all week and was ready to go when he found out that he would be wrestling in the State Tournament," Coach Ayotte said. "Justin had a bad day at the Sectionals and was a much better wrestler than he showed that day, so he was pumped up and very excited to get the opportunity to wrestle in the States."

According to the coach, the two sophomores finished just about where they should have finished

SPORTS

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SPORTS

SPORTS

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in the State Tournament. The four athletes in front of both Shepherd Hill wrestlers are unbelievable



grapplers.

Overall, Coach Ayotte was able to field a team that participated in each and every weight class this winter and although a relatively young team he is optimistic about the squad's future.

"Sawyer and Justin are only sophomores, and we have a bunch of freshmen and eighth graders on the team," Ayotte said. "They are all on the same track giving us a very solid foundation over the next few years. This year's success is starting to show we are making our mark and getting more attention coming."

The success that the Shepherd Hill wrestling program has had is giving the coach more hope that more wrestlers will come out for the team next year. He hears the whispers of the reputation that the team is earning and people are talking about the Fighting Rams wrestlers.

Participating in the All-State Tournament Kelly was eliminated on day one, while Ayotte took sixth place and qualified to continue his season at the New England Championships on March 3rd and 4th.

Ana Hilner of Oxford earns post-secondary student award

The MassCTE.org honored Ana Hilner of Oxford with the Post-secondary student of the year award at the 90th Annual MassCTE Awards Banquet on April 1st at the Renaissance Boston



Patriot Place Hotel, Foxborough. Hilner is a practical nursing student at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy in Charlton.

"We are proud of Ana," said Gretheline Bolandrina, DHA, MSN Ed, RN, CRRN, Academy Director,

"and grateful that her husband and daughter were there to celebrate with her. Additionally, we are grateful that Dr. Adelina Healy was in attendance on behalf of the faculty and staff of Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy." Dr. Healy shared that "It was a great evening for Ana. Her husband said he was so proud of her."

Ana stated, "Being recognized for something I am putting my whole heart into, something I feel I am meant to do, is absolutely amazing!"

It was while working as a substitute teacher at the Oxford Elementary School that she realized her heart was in nursing. Ana is certified in Mental Health First Aid, Dementia Care, Stop the Bleed, and Health Care Provider CPR. Her volunteer activities include mandated screenings for Charlton Elementary School, vision, hearing & BMI screenings at Shepherd Hill Regional High School, and on-site Medical Care for Show Choir at Shepherd Hill Regional High

School. She is earning her Practical Nursing certificate with an impressive GPA and soon to be inducted for membership to the National Technical Honor Society. She is co-chair for the UNICEF Club advocating for children's causes and fundraising. She is a member of the Mock Code Team helping ensure high quality, safe patient care through small group simulations-based sessions supervised by faculty and engaging nursing students in a variety of roles. Ana is a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and works at the Overlook in Charlton. She is a MassHire grant recipient and will be one of Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy's delegates to the Worcester Women's Leadership Conference at the DCU Center in May.

Prayer



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

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SPORTS

All hands on deck for Oxford indoor track team

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

In the past the Oxford boys indoor track team has found themselves running in the middle of the pack of the Southern Worcester County League (SWCL). This winter the Pirates found themselves in fourth place, not exactly where Coach Jerry Royster was hoping his team would finish.

“I thought that we were going to finish a little higher than we did, but track is a numbers game and being a school on the smaller size it makes it difficult,” the Ox-

ford Coach said. “Not having the numbers like some of the bigger schools our guys are taking on multiple events, they don’t complain – they’re all hands on.”

Despite the lack of numbers Oxford had three individual events do well at the SWCL Dual Meet Championships in Northbridge with all three moving onto the Central Sectionals. Matt Szela finished sixth in the 1000-meter run, the 4x2 relay team finished fourth and Sam Boucher won the shot put.

Szela, a senior runner, ran the mile and 2-mile for Oxford last year but seemed to find his niche

in the 1000-meter this winter. According to Royster he was the team’s heavy hitter this season in his new event.

“Matt overperformed for us this year. He was not only the fastest and strongest, but he wanted to help out in anyway possible; that’s why we threw him in the 1000 to steal points for us,” Royster said. “He’s a smart kid, but not much of a talker, so you never really know what you’re going to get from him.”

The Coach continued to say that the senior runner finished in third place at the Sectionals with a time of 3 minutes flat; a good 15-20 seconds faster than he’s run all year and will next be headed to the States.

Boucher, also a senior, had himself a decent year throwing the shot-put 35’ 10 ½”. According to his Coach, he really worked hard to get to the District Tournament and did his team proud.

“I knew that Sam had the potential, but I really didn’t expect him to do what he did this year,” the Coach said.

The 4x200 relay team consisting of junior Aiden Van Arsdan, Szela (who was a fill-in), senior Quinn Clarkson and junior Robbie Fisher was something that wasn’t supposed to be.

“As a lot of funny things happened with this event,” said Royster. “As I said earlier, being a smaller school I didn’t even enter a relay team in our first meet of the season and we lost by 3 points. If I had and this was my mistake, we would have at least gotten five points and would have won the meet.”

With the mistake behind him Royster put together a team that had success during the year, but the time they got to the Central Sectional Meet he found himself short a runner, due to sickness – that’s when Szela stepped up.

“Being short I tried to talk them out of it, but they were all in and wanted to do it,” the Coach said. “Robbie was the spearhead and said let’s give it a go. Matt was thrown into it and the race was right after he just finished running his 1000-meter

event. It was a last minute thing and they all showed heart; they’re whatever you need guys.”

Despite the heart, the four-somes run as not up to their potential.

Having three events advance into the Sectionals Royster is hoping for more next season when he will have a lot of now experienced shot-putters and sprinters back for another year.

“I really feel good about next year. They’ll have a whole year to build upon it, whether it be in spring track or practicing,” he said. “Before you know it they’ll be right back into it for the indoor season.”

During the spring season Van Arsdan is one of the better javelin throwers in the district and should have himself a decent season. In addition to being a very tight knit family, a lot of the team has been together since their freshman campaign and Royster is looking forward to them improving.

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Ghost Cats-Part 1: Return visits are not unusual

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

Many people believe that animals cannot become ghosts. It seems rather implausible since they are living beings with a personality, life force, and intelligent energy that can remain behind after they are gone. There is also the residual factor, where the earth tapes a moment in time and replays it when the conditions are just right. In many cases, people have had their beloved fur family member return after passing over to the other side to let them know they are still there, in spirit at least. It seems the most common entity other than humans to come back and pay a visit are cats.

Cats are amazing creatures. They are highly intelligent, athletic, independent, and adaptable. Arlene and I presently have five of the lovely fur folk, having lost a few over the years due to age, and yes, they have visited us from the other side.

When we lived on Mowry Road in Burrillville, Rhode Island, we sometimes heard what sounded like a cat running around in the

room above us. The landlord, who later became a great friend, told us that section of the house was completely closed off, yet what sounded like a cat was running around. We would later add to our living space to include the upstairs, accessible through a door on our side of the house. We then witnessed the cat several times in the two upstairs rooms. No one knew the feline's identity, but for some reason, it always preferred to stay upstairs, never venturing down to the first floor.

Our friend Kevin once saw the ghost cat, which is a rather amusing tale. He frequently accompanied us on paranormal investigations, yet never saw anything unusual. His very first actual sighting of a ghost was seeing our little ethereal friend running around the corner. His only comment was, "wouldn't you know it, the very first time I see a ghost and it had to be a cat's behind."

Our cat, Cooneys, named so because she resembled a raccoon, passed away in 2008. She not only came back to visit, but we received a message from a "pet medium"

telling us that our little girl actually visited her and wanted her to tell us she was fine and doing 'the good work' of helping other fur people on the other side. If that was not enough, she appeared several times in our home. One time she even appeared on the stairs to have her picture taken by none other than paranormal investigator and author Chris Balzano while he was writing his book, *Picture Yourself Ghost Hunting*. When the photo was examined, there she was, stretching out across a few stairs, looking out at us like she always did.

Our beloved Arthur passed away in 2013. Arlene had him since he was very young, and he was the love of her life, so much so that she had a portrait painted of him, which still hangs in our living room in a place of honor. He was an amazing and intelligent little guy. Arthur loved going for rides in the car; he came along on vacations with us and accompanied us on shopping excursions, picnics and visiting friends. He was our constant companion.

When he passed, we were very

heartbroken, but a few nights later, we heard the distinctive sound of Arthur's voice in the house. A few nights after that, as we both sat in bed reading, the end of the bed suddenly moved as if something had jumped up on it. We both watched in astonishment as little paw prints made indentations in the blanket on the bed.

Arthur would one up coming back in spirit. We buried him outside and made a little yard for him. Early summer, we decided to clean his yard and put flowers in it. As we were planting the flowers, we heard Arthur cry. The cry permeated the air around the

yard and froze us in our work. We heard it again and traced it to the little hill behind our house. Upon investigating, we discovered a small kitten that we would later be able to capture and bring in the house. When we brought her to the veterinarian to have her checked out, it was discovered that she was born about the same time Arthur passed. As she grew, her mannerisms and habits were just like his. She loved to sit and sleep in the same places he did and knew the house instinctively. We feel that a part of Arthur was reincarnated into Freyabelle just so he could be with us again.

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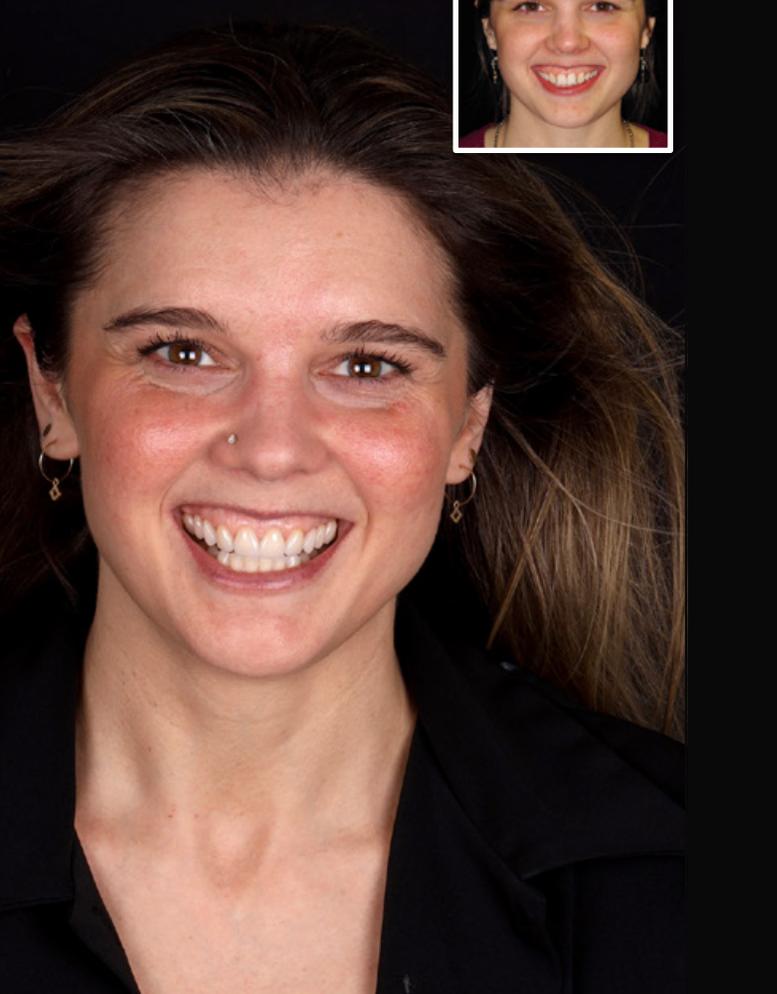
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Away to Aruba and a vacation closer to home for Luke

BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

Plans to leave Luke for a much-needed Aruban vacation had not been easy. We needed the sun. We needed time away. We needed time to regroup. However reasonable, we also needed Luke to

The Dog Nanny, I learned during an interview, was a kind Dog Person. However, she was also a busy lady. "I get up at four a.m. but will be home with him as soon as I'm done with my first job."

"Your first job?" My mind saw a lonely Luke lying on the floor, head over paws. "I'm sorry I left the yard to chase after my girlfriend. I promise to do better."

year-old senior Golden who once knew Lincoln (first protagonist for this column) when he was about twelve weeks old. "Hey, you look like me only your face is white! Let's wrestle!" Uncle Bruno, who preferred humans, hid in the bushes. This pup was certifiably crazy.

Now that Luke was nearly full-grown and stronger, the gap in age had me concerned. Certainly, my pup had matured. But he was un-neutered and had sometimes shown aggressiveness toward male dogs. Bruno, a Senior Pet, deserved peace and respect.

"Mom, why is this mini-me on my turf and how long is he staying?" Bruno questioned the decision during their first day together. He was tolerant but kept his distance. "Our family is fine just the



JoAnne and Pete DiTommaso create a happy family for Luke.



Bruno accepts Luke...

be safe and cared for by someone who truly wanted to be with him. Dogs lie at the mercy of people, preferably good people, who also happen to be Dog People. We knew Luke would love and trust another person freely. The only problem was, who would love him back in the same way? Who would take the time to embrace his Lukiness?

"Amy, we would be honored!" My good friend JoAnne DiTommaso, a Golden Retriever enthusiast by nature, agreed to take him on. Since our initial plan to hire a Dog Nanny went sour, we couldn't have been more grateful.

"I work nights at the restaurant, but I'll be home with him on the weekends!" I did the math. Eighty dollars for eight nights equals \$640.00, a hefty expense, especially given that Luke would be a third job for this woman.

"We've found someone whose schedule is a bit more compatible with Luke's. Thank you." Leaving Luke at home just wasn't going to work out. Little did I know, Luke was about to embark on his own brand of vacation.

BRUNO LETS HIS GUARD DOWN

Luke first met Bruno, a nine-



Luke hogs the bed...

way it is. Aren't I enough?" Oblivious, Luke grabbed a stuffed turkey

and paraded around the kitchen. "Let's get this party started!"

Exuberance aside, days passed, and Luke had begun to earn the trust of his elder golden pal. He gave him space. He respected his boundaries. He even helped him bark at a suspicious dog outside of the property. "Woo, woo, woo, woo!!"

"That dog's odor is off. I feel ya' Bruno. Let's bark at him together. Woo, woo, woo, woo!!"

The two Golden, young and old, had begun to synchronize. They walked together. They slept side by side. They sipped water together. They searched for each other in the yard. "Where'd you go Luke?" Bruno became protective of his young pal. They grabbed sticks together. They checked out the birdfeeder and played soccer with a basketball. Luke helped Bruno stay young. Bruno helped Luke stay wise.

"This is how you stay cool, little fella." A fluffy Bruno, older and wiser, rubbed his back in the one patch of snow in the backyard. Luke watched intently from a high platform on the deck. "You are so good at snow angels, Bruno." The two Golden bonded. They had numerous visitors amid shared rest times and playtimes. JoAnne felt her heart swell with joy, having experienced a double shot of Golden love. "I am crying just thinking about leaving Luke." I sipped a rum cocktail on an Aruban lawn chair and counted my blessings. My

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REAL ESTATE

What's ahead for home prices in 2023?

Over the past year, home prices have been a widely debated topic. Some have said we'll see a massive drop in prices and that this could be a repeat of 2008 – which hasn't happened. Others have forecasted a real estate market that could see slight appreciation or depreciation depending on the area of the country. And as we get closer to the spring real estate market, experts are continuing to forecast what they believe will happen with home prices this year and beyond.

While 2023 kicked off on a more optimistic note for the U.S.

housing market, recent mortgage rate volatility proves how much uncertainty remains. However, the continued shortage of inventory is likely to keep price declines modest, which are projected to top out at 3%.

The latest economic forecast is as follows:

- 2023 – down 1.91%
- 2024 – Up 3.6%
- 2025 – Up 4.25%
- 2026 – Up 4.44%

So, given this information and what experts are saying about home prices, the question you might be asking is: should I buy a home this spring? Here are three reasons you should consider making a move:

1. Buying a home helps you escape rising rents. Over the past several decades, the median price of rent has risen consistently. The bottom line is, rent is going up.
2. Homeownership is a hedge against inflation as I have stated

before. A key advantage of homeownership is that it's one of the best hedges against inflation. When you buy a home with a fixed-rate mortgage, you secure your housing payment, so it won't go up like it would if you rent.

3. Homeownership is a powerful wealth-building tool. The average net worth of a homeowner is \$255,000 compared to \$6,300 for a renter.

Experts are projecting slight price depreciation in the housing market this year (as noted above), followed by steady appreciation. Given that, you may be wondering if you should move ahead with buying a home this spring. The decision to purchase a home is best made when you do it knowing all the facts and have an expert on your side. Reach out to Marzeottigroup.net or a local real estate professional to make the most informed decision about your next move.

LUKE

continued from page 20

friend loved my dog just as much as I do. I perused the pictures she sent. He looked so happy. Luke was not only safe. He was also loved. By the end of the week, Bruno even shared the Orvis king bed once owned by Lincoln. "You're not so bad, Luke." He even let Luke hog the middle.

THE CAT

"There's a live paw coming out of the crack beneath the door!" A mystery that was a black cat behind a closed bedroom door captivated Luke's attention. She sensed Luke's presence and teased him with affection. "Love me. Love me not. Love me. Love me not." She extended a paw from beneath the door and pulled it back. As though playing a game of Wack-a-Mole, Luke tracked her paw and covered it with his own. "Who are you? What are you?"

DiTommaso daughter Angela, equally as supportive to Luke's stay at the house, finally opened her bedroom door. Exposed, Luke's intrigue came to life. "A whole

other animal lives here!!" Regina, the mysterious black cat, hunched over and stared spookily at Luke, who stared right back. They even touched noses. "It's love at first sight!" The DiTommaso family reveled at a first date that carried



The staring contest ...

on with the world's longest staring contest. "You have the pointy ears of a fox. But you're not a fox. You have a small nose, but you're too frigid to be a small dog. Why so still? Want to play Chase?" Luke adored Regina.

Joanne sent me a picture of Cat and Dog staring at one another. Not having grown with cats, I confess to a mild cat fear. My heart stirred. Cats are unpredictable. I imagined coming home to greet

Luke, one eye sewn shut. "The cat scratched my eye out, Momma. But I had so much fun!" Regina and Luke, I later learned, respected each other's differences just as he and Bruno did.

Our vacation to Aruba, one that marked our first time away from Luke, turned out to be a success in more ways than one. We were happy to be on vacation and, equally important, Luke was happy to be with his second family, the very wonderful DiTommaso's. He was loved and he knew it.

Find Luke Valentino on Instagram @ livingwithlukevalentino

Write to Amy at amyelaire@hotmail.com

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TIPS ON FINANCIAL PLANNING

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Investment ideas for business owners



BY DENNIS ANTONOPOULOS

By definition, business owners put a lot of their financial resources into their enterprises. But as an owner, you

may need to invest in more than inventories and payroll to help achieve the future you've envisioned.

Here are a few investments you may want to consider:

- Retirement account – Depending on the nature of your business and how many employees you have, you can choose from a variety of tax-advantaged retirement plans, such as an owner-only 401(k), an SEP-IRA and a SIMPLE IRA. By contributing regularly to one of these accounts, you can avoid being entirely dependent on the sale of your business to pay for your retirement years. To fund your

401(k) or other retirement plan, you'll have many investment options — stocks, bonds, mutual funds and so on. And if you "max out" on your retirement plan, you may even be able to build a separate investment portfolio. In any case, keep in mind that you're already putting a lot of money into your business, so, to achieve a level of diversification, you may want to concentrate your investment choices in areas outside your industry. However, while diversification can help reduce the impact of market volatility on your portfolio, it can't guarantee profits or protect against losses in a declining market.

- Property – Your physical space is a key part of your business' success. So, you may want to invest some time in comparing the pros and cons of renting versus owning. Of course, owning your building may require a big financial commitment, and it may not be feasible, but it could free you from worrying about untimely rent increases.

- Disaster protection – If a fire or a weather-related disaster should strike your business, would you be prepared? It's important for you to create a disaster recovery plan, which can include business interruption insurance to pay for your operating costs if you're forced to shut down for a while.

- Emergency savings – While a disaster protection plan with appropriate insurance can help keep your business afloat, it's unlikely

to cover other types of emergency needs, such as a major medical bill or an expensive repair to your home. For these unexpected costs, you may want to build an emergency fund covering at least a few months' worth of living expenses, with the money kept in a liquid account. Without such an emergency fund, you may be forced to dip into your 401(k), IRA or other long-term investment vehicle.

You'll also want to invest the time and energy into creating a business succession plan. Will you keep the business in your family? Sell it to outsiders or a key employee? If you do sell, will you do it all at once or over time? Clearly, the answers to these types of questions will make a big difference in your ultimate financial security.

Finally, invest in help – Enlist the services of a financial advisor and business-planning professional, so you'll be able to make the decisions that work best for your business and you.

Your business may well be a lifelong endeavor — so make sure you're investing whatever it takes to earn a lifetime of benefits.

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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Our Rates at a Glance

April 6, 2023

Whatever your specific income needs, Edward Jones can help determine which investments may be right for you. Below are some examples of the many income investments Edward Jones offers.

Term	APY
3 months	4.80%
6 months	4.85%
9 months	4.85%
1 year	4.80%
2 years	4.65%
3 years	4.55%
4 years	4.50%
5 years	4.40%

Maturities and/or rates may not be available in all states.

Term	YTM ¹⁰
3-month	4.35%
6-month	4.20%
1-year	4.22%
2-year	3.70%
5-year	3.24%
10-year	3.18%
30-year	3.45%

Investment Grade	Yield
Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, TVA	3.31% to 4.47%
Corporate Bonds	3.33% to 5.39%
Tax-free Bonds	1.51% to 4.18%

Updated as of market close April 06, 2023. Rates and Yields shown are subject to availability and change without notice. Rates are provided for informational purposes only and should not be deemed a solicitation for any specific investment.

See page 2 for important disclosure information.

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Start with a scan to address Odyssey EX heating system issue



BY JOHN PAUL

Q. I own a 2010 Honda Odyssey EX, purchased new in July 2011, which is kept outside and maintained as directed. It has been

modified so that I can drive from my wheelchair and is important for my personal mobility. In 2019, after chronic problems with cabin cooling, the AC condenser was replaced. In 2020 the AC compressor,

with a professional scan tool or onboard diagnostics. I would start with a scan of the system (there are at least 15 possible fault codes). In addition, I wouldn't rule out the basics. As complicated as this system seems there is still a cable-controlled heater valve and basic water pump, thermostat and hoses, that all should be inspected.

Q. Our 2020 Ford Escape Titanium Hybrid at just 25,000 miles is already on its third 12-volt battery and is at the dealer right now potentially gunning for its fourth. This time

tracking the output voltage of the battery regularly since the last replacement was done in November, and lately it hasn't been above 11.8 volts in the morning and rarely reads above 12.3 volts even after a long trip. As I understand it, these are dismal readings. Any thoughts?

A. A battery is at 100 percent state of charge at 12.6 volts and at the reading provided, 12.3 volts is about 70 percent state of charge and 11.8 volts is closer to a 30 percent state of charge, so something is certainly going on. The dealer is correct, when it comes to warranty, they can only repair or replace as authorized by the manufacturer. Although a bigger battery may cure the symptom of the car not starting it doesn't address the issue of why the battery voltage is low. Although if this were my car, I certainly would try replacing the 12-volt battery with the larger battery for a non-hybrid vehicle. The hybrid Escape battery is a 45-ampere hour battery with 395 cold cranking amps. The non-hybrid Escape battery is 70-ampere hour battery with 760 cold cranking amp rating.

illuminates you should shut off the engine ASAP to prevent possible internal damage. The oil level light (typically yellow) will usually illuminate when the oil level is down one quart. Like many warning lights red requires the driver to take immediate action and the yellow warning lights are cautionary, but shouldn't be ignored.

Q. I have a 2018 Mercedes-Benz GLA 250. Is it necessary to get it maintained/serviced at the Mercedes-Benz dealership? They are ridiculously expensive.

A. There are times when the dealer is the best choice, such as warranty repairs, recalls and some tricky and com-

plicated repairs that may require software updates. Although it is possible that independent shops can do some of this work, they may not have the necessary tools. As for regular maintenance (fluid changes) tires, brakes and suspension services as examples any quality should be able to provide these services.

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 questions to jpaul@aanortheast.com. Follow John on Twitter @johnfpaul and friend him on Facebook at mrjohnfpaul.



and the last time, the dealer has kept the car for several days to search for any unusual parasitic drains. All software updates have been done and the charging system checked. I've suggested that the tiny 12-volt battery is undersized given the plethora of accessories it supports. Reading online on various car forums where other owners have solved this same issue with a larger battery that bolts right in. The dealer, tech advisor says they can only do what the factory authorizes or recommends, and an upgraded battery is not among them. The notion of "too many short trips" has been discussed, but the use that this car gets should more than allow sufficient recharge time with each use. I started

and the last time, the dealer has kept the car for several days to search for any unusual parasitic drains. All software updates have been done and the charging system checked. I've suggested that the tiny 12-volt battery is undersized given the plethora of accessories it supports. Reading online on various car forums where other owners have solved this same issue with a larger battery that bolts right in. The dealer, tech advisor says they can only do what the factory authorizes or recommends, and an upgraded battery is not among them. The notion of "too many short trips" has been discussed, but the use that this car gets should more than allow sufficient recharge time with each use. I started

Q. I occasionally see your readers reference a Low Oil 'Level' light. It has always been my understanding that the Oil light indicates a loss of oil 'pressure' which warrants shutting off your engine ASAP. Am I wrong? Are there actually sensors now that monitor oil 'level'?

A. In many vehicles today, there are sensors that measure both low oil pressure and low oil level. You are correct when the red oil pressure light

A. Like many vehicles built in the past 15 years, the climate control is managed by a computer. In the case of the Odyssey the system can be checked

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