

## Three Upton Call/Volunteer Firefighters graduated in Nov.



In November, Massachusetts State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine and Massachusetts Firefighting Academy Director Jeffrey P. Winn presented certificates of completion to graduating members of MFA Call/Volunteer Recruit Firefighter Training

Class #108 tonight.

Among those graduates were Charles Roche, Jacob Snow, and Dennis Shea of the Upton Fire Department.

The 26 recruits joined the ranks of more than 3,000 firefighters who have graduated from the MFA's Call/

Volunteer Recruit Firefighter Training Program, which was launched in 2003 to deliver a standard recruit training curriculum, meeting national standards, on nights

### FIREFIGHTERS

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## BVT member towns meet to discuss concerns related to district model

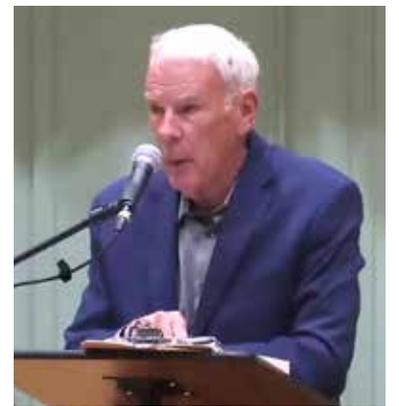
**Issues raised related to mandatory contributions, admissions, charter relevance**

By Linda Chuss

On Oct. 26, the Hopedale Select Board hosted representatives from the 13 towns that make up the Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School district.

Member towns include Bellingham, Blackstone, Douglas, Grafton, Hopedale, Mendon, Milford, Millbury, Millville, Northbridge, Sutton, Upton, and Uxbridge.

In the invitation to the member towns, Town Administrator Mitch Ruscitti said, "The intent of this summit is to engage in a district-wide conversation about our individual and collective community needs, the role that the vocational school plays in meeting those needs, and the overall impact of bonded capital investments on our other public-school districts/systems. More succinctly put, there have been concerns



**Dr. Michael Fitzpatrick, who has been the BVT Superintendent-Director for 31 years, responded to concerns raised at the summit.**  
Source: [www.townhallstreams.com](http://www.townhallstreams.com)

expressed by constituents, boards, and committees across town boundaries regarding tough decisions about the use of funding sources."

### BVT

*continued on page 20*

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# Celebration of Cultures

## 3rd Annual Multicultural Festival held at BVT

Understanding other cultures and traditions helps open our minds to diverse viewpoints and gain a broader perspective. Traditional foods, dance, music, and art can be a source of pride and an expression of cultural identity. Sharing those traditions is a fun way to celebrate one's heritage with others. It is one of the many ways Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT) students and staff contributed to an authentic celebration at its third annual Multicultural Festival.

The interdisciplinary event held at BVT on Oct. 27 included a Multicultural Center featuring student-run booths representing many countries and, in the process, diverse traditions that make each of the students unique. Members of the Multicultural Club prepared posters and shared items and goods from countries and cultures around the world. The students and staff browsed the booths and sampled other cultures' traditions, languages, and arts, all without using their passports.

"The festival is an excit-



Lizmary Vidal of Milford is pictured representing the Multicultural Club during the festival.



Students enjoyed dancing to Brazilian music before being photographed at the Brazil booth. Courtesy photos

ing event. Our students teach about their culture with pride, while those attending benefit from learning about other cultures through food, dance, and music," said Kerry Baldwin, World Language Instructor. "We are proud of the hard work our

student presenters put into their presentations and are grateful for their willingness to share. It makes for a very special day!"

If you were open to trying foods from other countries, you might have stopped by one of these booths: Costa Rica by

Jacob Cahill for a serving of Gallo Pinto (Costa Rican Beans and Rice); Multicultural Club for a sample of Arroz Con Gandules (Puerto Rican Rice with Pigeon Peas), or Tembleque (a coconut dessert pudding from Puerto Rico); Finland by Haley

Bilodeau, Lusikkaleivat which is a Finnish teaspoon cookie.

"I enjoyed speaking with my peers and instructors about Puerto Rico during the Multi-

### CULTURES

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# Mendon author writes “The Power of Positive Fishing,” a story of friendship and the quest for happiness

Join Michael J. Tougias, of Mendon, and Adam Gamble out on the water to see how their mutual passion for heart-pounding fishing action transforms their destinies. When the pair first met, they were married with two children each, nice homes in the suburbs, jobs that paid the bills, and frequent fishing trips. But their comfortable lives had cracks in them, and they soon found themselves hit by the rogue waves of divorce, financial challenges, addiction, and career upheaval. What kept them going—and helped them navigate the rough waters of middle age—was fishing and friendship. Together they not only learned some of the successful secrets of striped bass fishing, but they were also brutally honest in their advice

for each other. They began to see their time spent on Adam’s boat, the Scout, as a way to explore new ways of thinking, dreaming big, and being right with the world. The two not only discovered ways forward but began living lives far beyond what they thought possible.

*The Power of Positive Fishing* offers an inside look at what makes a super-successful male friendship and how that is sorely needed today with loneliness targeted by the Surgeon General as an epidemic.

This uniquely crafted book is an emotional journey interspersed with humor on how two individuals finally began tapping into their full potentials, while hooking some great fish along the way.



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# Charles River Bank holds Annual Dinner Meeting with Milestone Service Anniversaries recognized

Charles River Bank's Annual Dinner Meeting was held on Oct. 17 at Galliford's Restaurant in Mendon, MA. Chairman of the Board Steven Richardson opened the meeting by welcoming team members, directors and invited guests. President and CEO Derek Plourde then expressed his thanks for their continued dedication to providing stellar service to our customers, fellow team members and our community. Then, the following team members were recognized for reaching milestone anniversaries with Charles River Bank (CRB) in 2023: 25 Years - Bookkeeper Kathy Antonellis; 20 Years - SVP/Chief Customer Care & Marketing Officer Ann Sherry; 15 Years - SVP/CFO Robert Leist; 10 Years - SVP/Senior Retail Lending Officer Cheryl Beauvais; 5 Years - Medway Branch Supervisor Rachel Diaz, President & CEO Derek Plourde, and Facilities Coordinator Doug Downing.

Following the award presentations and dinner, the Social Ones, CRB's employee activity committee, led a video trivia game using little known facts about employees that required

team work to win.

President & CEO Plourde stated, "Our Annual Dinner Meeting provides a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge every team member, but especially those who have reached milestones in their length of service with Charles River Bank. It's always wonderful to see our people who work in different offices and departments get to know each other in an atmosphere of fun and camaraderie."

Charles River Bank—with assets of 303 million—was founded in 1915, and continues to offer a wide range of individual and business banking services. The Bank's Main Office is located at 70 Main Street in Medway, with state-of-the-art branches located on the Bellingham/Franklin town line on Route 140, and in Mendon at 1 Hastings Street, at the intersection of Rte. 16 and North Avenue. Charles River Bank also operates a branch in Medway High School. In 2022, Charles River Bank contributed more than \$36,000 to community non-profit organizations.

For more information call 508-533-8661 or visit www.charlesriverbank.com.



At Charles River Bank's Annual Dinner Meeting, Bookkeeper Kathy Antonellis is recognized by President & CEO Derek Plourde for her 25 years of service.

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# Avoid these investment mistakes



Mark Freeman

## FINANCIAL FOCUS

We all make mistakes in many areas of life. These mistakes are usually fairly harmless — we took a wrong turn while driving, used the wrong ingredients in a recipe and so on. But sometimes, our mistakes can be costly — especially those connected to investing.

Here are some of the most common investment mistakes:

- **Too much buying and selling** — Some people find it exciting to constantly buy and

sell investments in the pursuit of big gains. Yet, frequent trading can work against you in a couple of ways. First, it can be expensive — if you're always buying and selling investments, you could rack up taxes, fees and commissions. Perhaps even more important, though, excessive purchases and sales can make it difficult to follow a unified, cohesive investment strategy. Such a strategy requires, among other things, careful construction and management of an investment portfolio that's appropriate for your goals, risk tolerance and time horizon. Heavy trading can disrupt this strategy.

- **Failing to diversify** — If you only owned one type of asset, such as growth-oriented stocks, your portfolio could take a hit when the financial markets go through a downturn. But not all investments will respond the same way to the same forces — for example, stocks and bonds

can move in different directions at any given time. And that's why it's usually a good idea to own a mix of investments, which can include domestic and foreign stocks, bonds, certificates of deposit (CDs) and government securities. Keep in mind, though, that while diversification can help reduce the impact of market volatility, it can't guarantee profits or protect against losses in a declining market.

- **Trying to "time" the market** — "Buy low and sell high" might be the original piece of investment advice, but it's pretty hard to follow — because no one can really predict when an investment will reach "low" or "high" points. Also, trying to "time" the market in this way can lead to bad decisions, such as selling investments whose price has dropped, even if these same investments still have good business fundamentals and strong prospects.

- **Not understanding what you're investing in** — If you don't know the nature of investments when you buy them, you could set yourself up for unpleasant surprises. For example, some companies, by the very nature of their business and the type of industry they're in, may consistently pay dividends to their investors even though their stock prices may only show relatively modest price gains over time. If you bought shares of this stock, thinking it had the potential to achieve quite substantial appreciation, you might end up disappointed.
- **Making the wrong comparisons** — You're no doubt familiar with some of the most well-known investment benchmarks — the S&P 500, Dow Jones Industrial Average and the Nasdaq Composite. But it might be counterproductive to compare your results against these indexes. If you have a diversified port-

folio, you'll own an array of investments that won't fit into any single index or benchmark, so you won't get an apples-to-apples comparison. You're better off comparing your portfolio's performance against the only benchmark that really matters — the progress you need to make to help achieve your goals.

Investing will always have its challenges — but you can help make it easier on yourself by staying away from as many mistakes as possible.

If you would like to discuss your personal situation with a financial advisor contact:

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Edward Jones Financial Advisor  
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**FIREFIIGHTERS**

*continued from page 1*

and weekends.

Members of Class #108 represented the fire departments

of Ayer, Boxborough, Carlisle, Dunstable, Holliston, Hopedale, Hubbardston, Lancaster, Ox-

ford, Sutton, Townsend, Tyngsborough, Upton, West Boylston, and Weston.

To watch a video of the graduation, visit [www.youtube.com/dfsosfm](http://www.youtube.com/dfsosfm).



# Discussion held on Mendon's Open Space and Recreation Plan

## *Evolving document is part of town's master plan*

*By Theresa Knapp*

On Nov. 13, Mendon residents held a discussion related to the town's current (2020-2030) Open Space & Recreation Plan.

Though the meeting had been posted as a public hearing, the required boards did not have a quorum, so a general discussion was held to share the document with the public. No content changes were made.

"The Open Space and Rec-

reation plan is a document that the town needs in order to apply for a lot of state grants," said Anne Mazar, chair of the Land Use Committee and the Community Preservation Committee, and one of the conveners of the meeting.

Mazar noted that the plan is updated annually and "has all kinds of information on the open space in Mendon, the recreational facilities, and more than that, the history and the

community setting, a whole environmental analysis of the land in Mendon, and the culmination of it is an action plan – what we hope to do for the next seven years."

She said that a great deal of information came from the town's master plan that was previously sent to each Mendon household, and they attended several meetings to gather information for this plan.

Day Byer, a member of the

Mendon Parks Commissioners and the director of the Parks and Recreation department, led a review of the seven-year action plan, which can be found at [bit.ly/MendonOSRDraftActionPlan](http://bit.ly/MendonOSRDraftActionPlan).

Issues raised included sidewalks, ADA compliance, partnering with someone who has GIS (geographic information system) experience, possibilities at town conservation land and related parking, and protecting

natural resources (including Lake Nipmuc).

Residents were encouraged to attend town meetings and contact town officials about issues with which they are concerned.

Mazar said, "This is a plan that's ongoing, and we will be updating it and working on it for the next seven years."

The meeting was recorded by Mendon Video and can be found at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=4eMAJCFRnlo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4eMAJCFRnlo).

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## Upton Town Library Calendar of Events

9 Milford Street, Upton • 508-529-6272 • UptonLibrary.org • HOURS: Tues., Wed. & Thurs. 9-8 • Mon., Fri. & Sat. 9-4 • Sun. CLOSED

By Matthew Bachtold, Library Director and Lee Ann Murphy, Children's Librarian

**Upton Library is now at 9 Milford Street.** The Library has moved and is now open at our new location at 9 Milford Street, inside the Upton Community Center.

### New Monday Hours 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Upton Town Library is now open on Mondays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Come down and enjoy the library collection, children's play area and public computers.

### December Holiday Hours

Saturday, Dec. 23 – 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Monday, Dec. 25 – Closed  
Saturday, Dec. 30 – 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Monday, Jan. 1 - Closed

### Virtual Author Talks

The Upton Town Library is showcasing a free virtual author talk series featuring bestselling,

award-winning, and highly acclaimed authors from around the world. The speakers will cover a wide range of fiction and nonfiction titles. A complete list of events is available on the Upton Town Library virtual author talk series website at <https://library.org/uptontown-library>. For more information or to register for the author talks, visit the website listed above or call 508-529-6272.

### Clough School Art Display

During January, come see artwork from students at Clough Elementary school on display in the Upton Community Center.

Memorial Elementary has a display coming up in March.

Display space is available to individuals and community groups, contact Library Director Matthew Bachtold.

### Technology Help

Adult Librarian Micaela is available on the first Tuesday of each month from 4 to 6 p.m. to provide drop-in technology help.

Have questions about email or online documents? Need advice on using a phone app or a laptop? Bring your device and we'll try to help. You can also contact Micaela in advance to make an appointment.

### Children's & Young Adult Events

#### Felt Snowmen, Dec. 16, 1 - 2 p.m.

Tweens and teens can join us as we use felt and beginning sewing skills to create adorable snowmen for ornaments or winter decorations. For ages 10 to 16. Pre-registration required.

#### Intergenerational Tea Party, Jan. 3, 10 - 11 a.m.

Senior citizens and preschoolers can join together for an "Intergenerational Tea Party"! We will share stories, songs, and snacks, along with lots of conversation and fun! For ages 3-5. Pre-registration required. Senior citizens can contact the Council on Aging separately to register for this event. 508-529-4558

#### Tools for Tiny Hands, Jan. 8, 10:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Caregivers and children will join together to learn all about activities that foster fine motor skill development. This program will demonstrate different activities with the participants, and then share an activity bag to take home. This program is in collaboration with Beginning Bridges CFCE and is partially sponsored by the Massachusetts Library System and the Boston Children's Museum. For ages 2 to 5. Pre-registration required.

For more details on any of our events, or to register, visit our website's Event Calendar at [uptonlibrary.org](http://uptonlibrary.org)

### MONTHLY LIBRARY EVENTS – REGISTER NOW!

All programs and events require pre-registration at [uptonlibrary.org](http://uptonlibrary.org) or call 508-529-6272. Registration for December programs opened Nov. 1. Registration for January events opened Dec. 1.

### Music & Movement – Select Mondays 9:30 a.m. Changing to Mondays starting in January!

Music & Movement with Deb Hudgins will take place Jan. 8 and 22 in the Greatroom. Join us for stories, songs, and fun. Best for ages 1-5. Partial funding for this program is through a grant from Beginning Bridges CFCE in Uxbridge. Pre-registration is required. Note: this event moves to select Mondays beginning in January.

### Baby Storytime – Fridays at 9:30 a.m.

Baby Storytime is for ages birth to 3 every Friday. This is a 20–30-minute lapsit program featuring stories, songs, and nursery rhymes. For ages birth to 3. Pre-registration required.

### Preschool Storytime – Thursdays at 9:30 a.m.

**UPTON LIBRARY**

*continued on page 8*

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**UPTON LIBRARY***continued from page 7*

Preschool Storytime is a 30–45-minute program, featuring longer stories, songs, rhymes, and crafts. For ages 3 to 5. Pre-registration required.

**Saturday Storytime** – Jan. 13 at 9:30 a.m.

Once a month we offer a 30–45-minute Saturday Storytime, blending Baby and Preschool storytimes featuring stories, songs, rhymes, and a craft. Can't join us for our weekday programs? This event is just for you. For ages birth to 5. Pre-registration required.

**Teen Group** – Tuesdays 3 p.m.

This group meets weekly every Tuesday from 3 - 4 p.m. and focuses on a new theme each month, sharing books, crafts, games, and more. For December, our theme will be space. This group is for tweens and teens ages 10 to 16. This is always a drop-in program.

**Teen Book Club** - \*New\* - Thursday, Jan. 11 at 6 p.m.

Are you a teen who loves reading? Then our Teen Book Club is for you! This group is for ages 13 to 18 and will meet once per season. Did you miss our fall meeting? Our next meeting will be Thursday, Jan. 11 from 6 - 7 p.m. in the main lounge, and snacks will be served. Meetings will involve sharing our own recent favorite titles, as well as learning about what's new and trendy in YA lit! Pre-registration is required. Contact Mrs. Murphy at [lmurphy@cwmar.org](mailto:lmurphy@cwmar.org) with any questions.

**Kids' Book Club** – Wednesday, Jan. 3 at 4 p.m.

Our book club members explore popular juvenile and preteen titles on the first Wednesday of each month from 4 - 4:45 p.m. Our January historical fiction title is *I Survived the California Wildfires*, 2018 by Lauren Tarshis. This group is for ages 8-12 and reads mostly middle grade titles. We welcome new

members all year round. Pre-registration required.

**Upton Reads Book Group**

An eclectic mix of contemporary literary fiction with meetings on the second Tuesday afternoon and Thursday evening of each month in the Community Center classroom, with a Zoom remote option.

Tuesday, Jan. 9 at 12:45 p.m., and Thursday, Jan. 11 at 6:45 p.m. : *The Secret Book of Flora Lea*, by Patti Callahan Henry.

**Fic or No Fic Book Group**

An adult book group led by Librarian Micaela that alternates fiction and non-fiction selections. Meets on the last Wednesday of each month at 6:45 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 27 at 6:45 p.m.: non-fiction title to be determined.

For more information or assistance with any library services, call 508-529-6272 or email [mbachtol@cwmar.org](mailto:mbachtol@cwmar.org)

## Local towns receive municipal road safety grants

### Upton and Mendon receive \$20,000 each

In October, the Healey-Driscoll Administration announced that 186 Massachusetts towns and cities will receive grant funds to support traffic safety enforcement and outreach programming. The federal awards total upwards of \$5.4 million invested in local roadway safety initiatives.

The Town of Upton received \$19,964 and the Town of Mendon received \$19,875.

A total of \$5,449,584.03 was awarded through the FY24 Municipal Road Safety Grant Program. The program is administered by the Office of Grants and Research (OGR) and utilizes funds awarded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The annual program provides funding to municipal police departments who propose traffic safety projects in their community, including high visibility enforcement patrols, equipment to enhance road safety such as digital speed signs, pedestrian and bicyclist safety initiatives and public

outreach campaigns intended to educate community members and youth about roadway safety.

“Whether by vehicle, bicycle or foot, everyone has the right to travel safely through our communities,” said Gov. Maura Healey. “Through this program, we were able to award grants to every community that requested funding. The education, enforcement and outreach initiatives supported through these grants will help ensure safer roads for all.”

“Aggressive and dangerous driving are a threat to every road user. Providing local law enforcement agencies with the resources necessary to enforce traffic laws and educate members of their communities about distracted, impaired and aggressive driving is vital to ensuring the public's safety,” said Secretary of Public Safety and Security Terrence Reidy. “These grants allow towns and cities to approach traffic safety initiatives in ways that make the most sense for the community's needs.”

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By Roger M. Kaldawy, M.D.  
Milford Franklin Eye Center

A chalazion, commonly known as a sty, is a small, painless lump that forms on the eyelid due to a blocked meibomian gland. This obstruction leads to the accumulation of oil and subsequent swelling. Although generally harmless, a chalazion can cause discomfort and aesthetic concerns. In this article, we will explore the multifaceted aspects of chalazion, including its origins, the potential role of Demodex mites, and whether a connection exists between a chalazion and domestic pets. Furthermore, we will delve into the significance of Xdemvy in the treatment of Demodex blepharitis, offering readers a thorough understanding of this very common ocular condition and its management.

### Origins of Chalazion

A chalazion primarily stems from the occlusion of meibomian glands, responsible for secreting oils that lubricate the eyes. Several factors contribute to this occlusion, including:

#### 1. Hypersecretion of

**Sebum:** Excessive oil production can lead to the thickening of the sebum, hindering its proper flow from the gland.

**2. Bacterial Infections:** Infections can incite inflammation and glandular obstruction, culminating in the formation of a chalazion.

**3. Demodex Mite Influence:** Demodex mites, microscopic organisms that inhabit hair follicles, including those on the eyelids, have been suggested to play a role in chalazion development. Studies indicate that an overpopulation of these mites may contribute to meibomian gland blockage, though further research is needed to establish a conclusive link.

### The Role of Demodex Mites in Chalazion Development

Demodex mites, tiny arachnids that naturally inhabit human skin and hair follicles, are commonly found in the

eyelid area and in particular on the eyelashes. While their presence is considered normal in some cases, an excess of Demodex mites could potentially contribute to meibomian gland blockage, leading to the formation of a chalazion. Demodex mites infestation has been found in 50% of children with chalazion compared to no mites in healthy controls. This mite was also associated with recurrent and multiple chalazion. Ongoing research aims to elucidate the precise relationship between Demodex mites and chalazion, seeking to determine their significance as a contributing factor to the condition.

### Chalazion and Pets

Although owning cats or dogs is not directly linked to chalazion, it is important to note that Demodex mites are also prevalent in pets. Consequently, individuals who have close contact with pets, especially those that share sleeping spaces or maintain frequent physical proximity, may face a potential of Demodex mite transmission. It is crucial to emphasize that chalazion is not an inevitable consequence of pet ownership. Many factors enter in the equation including the owner immune system strength.

### The Significance of Xdemvy in Demodex Blepharitis Treatment

Xdemvy, a topical medication, plays a pivotal role in the treatment of Demodex blepharitis, a condition characterized by an overpopulation of Demodex mites on the eyelids. This innovative formulation contains targeted ingredients designed to effectively combat Demodex mites, alleviating symptoms and facilitating recovery. Xdemvy has demonstrated remarkable efficacy in clinical trials, making it a valuable addition to the arsenal of treatments for Demodex-related ocular conditions.

### Comprehensive Treatment Options

**Warm Compresses:** Applying a warm compress to the

affected eyelid for intervals of 10-15 minutes, several times a day, serves to soften the blockage and facilitate natural drainage. This simple yet effective technique can significantly alleviate discomfort.

**Eyelid Massages:** After applying a warm compress, gently massaging the eyelid in a circular motion can further aid in releasing the obstructed oil and hasten the resolution of the chalazion.

**Antibiotic Ointments or Drops:** In instances where bacterial infection is suspected, a healthcare provider may prescribe topical antibiotics to combat the infection and expedite the healing process.

**Xdemvy Application:** In cases of Demodex-related ocular conditions, Xdemvy serves as a highly effective treatment option, targeting Demodex mites directly and aiding in their elimination.

**Steroid Injections:** For



more persistent or severe chalazion, your ophthalmologist may administer a steroid injection to mitigate inflammation and hasten resolution.

**Surgical Drainage:** In cases where other treatments prove ineffective, a minor surgical procedure may be performed to create a small incision for drainage. This option is reserved for particularly stubborn or large chalazion.

### Conclusion

Chalazion, while generally benign, can be an uncomfortable and visually noticeable

condition. Understanding the potential causes, including factors such as Demodex mites, and discerning the potential connection with pets, can aid individuals in effectively managing this ocular ailment. Incorporating innovative treatments like Xdemvy in the management of Demodex-related ocular conditions adds a powerful tool to the healthcare provider's armamentarium. Should one suspect the presence of a chalazion or Demodex-related blepharitis,

**EYELID**

*continued on page 17*



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# Mendon Senior Center Programs for Dec. & Jan.

## Regular Weekly Programs:

Transportation is Available for Mendon Senior Residents.

Walking Group – Monday/Wednesday/Friday – 8:30 a.m.

Chorus Rehearsal – Monday 1 p.m.

Chair Exercise – Tuesday/Thursday 9 a.m. (must register; call for availability)

Shopping Van – Tuesday 9 a.m.

Lunch Club – Tuesday/Thursday 12 p.m. Please make reservations at least 48 hours in advance at 508-478-6175.

Scrabble – Tuesday 9 a.m.

Hand, Knee & Foot (Canasta type) – Tuesdays 1 p.m.

Cribbage – Wednesday 9:30 a.m.

Qigong – Wednesday 10 a.m.

Games – Thursday 9:45 a.m.

Brain Games – Thursday 11 a.m.

Mah Jong – Thursday 1 p.m.

Yarn Works/Knitting Group – Thursdays 1 p.m.

## Minstrels Holiday Performance & Ham Luncheon ~

Thursday, Dec. 14 at 11 a.m.

Save the date! The Mendon Minstrels will be offering us a

festive holiday performance on Thursday, Dec. 14 at 11 a.m. followed by a luncheon. Space is limited for this popular event. Please contact the Senior Center to inquire about seating.

## Nipmuc High School Music Program ~

Thursday, Dec. 21 at 11:30 a.m.

Join the Nipmuc jazz ensemble and Acapella group for a festive Holiday concert followed by a Tri-Valley meal. Contact the center to reserve your spot!

## Roaring 20's Themed New Years Eve Celebration!

Thursday, Dec. 28 at 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Let's celebrate the incoming New Year together! Join the Friends for a festive Roaring 20's themed party—enjoy an assortment of tasty appetizers and delicious desserts with friends, and “toast” to the new year! A donation of \$5 per person is requested.

Please stop in or call 508-478-6175 to register at the Senior Center.

## Mendon Senior Center Van Transportation

Even during the winter

months ahead there is no excuse to stay home. The Senior Center van is available to offer transportation to Mendon residents, age 60 and over and to people with disabilities Mondays through Thursday for local medical appointments, shopping and errands and rides to and from Senior Center activities. If you have yet to make your medical appointment, Mondays and Wednesdays are the preferred days for medical transportation. Also, we can accommodate appointments times beginning at 9 a.m. with a final time of 2 p.m. Please call the Senior Center at least 48 hours in advance to schedule a ride. Greater notice, however, is recommended as we book up quickly. Requested donations for round trip rides in town is one dollar and out of town rides are four dollars. Van passes or Vanbucks are available for a donation of ten dollars payable to the Friends of Mendon Elders allowing for twelve in town rides. Vanbucks make the perfect holiday, birthday or thinking of you gift and can also be purchased to be donated to someone in financial need.

No senior or person with disabilities will be denied a ride due to the inability to pay the requested donation.

Please note - If the Mendon-Upton school system is delayed or canceled due to inclement weather then van transportation will also be canceled. We apologize for the inconvenience.

## Local Artist Spotlight with Jim Buckley

Tuesday, Jan. 23 at 11 a.m.

Jim will be taking a hiatus for the month of December and will return in January with an interesting talk about Hopedale born William Frankline Draper, who was an American Official War Artist. Jim will cover his famous paintings and talk about his life. Please call the Mendon Senior Center at 508-478-6175 to register.

## Local Art Display ~ Artist Among Us

The Mendon Senior Center will be coordinating a display of local artists' work later this winter—in March dates TBD. Please contact Amy Wilson Kent at 508-478-6175 if you would like to participate.

## CULTURES

continued from page 2

cultural Festival,” said Autumn Gromelski of Northbridge, a sophomore in Culinary Arts. “We discussed food, music, and art,” said Yaritza Ayala of Uxbridge, a sophomore in Culinary Arts. “Autumn and I prepared and offered samples of pulled pork with plantains, a popular food in Puerto Rico.”

In addition to the student-run booths, there were traditional “Día de Los Muertos” activities, a visiting artist, dance lessons, and a cultural workshop. The instructors from Dance Fitness Collaboration were teaching Salsa or Zumba to those who had signed up. Sabato Visconti, a new media artist and photographer, spoke about how his Brazilian heritage influenced his art and assisted students in glitch photography. There was also a cultural workshop with instructors from Monano who presented the history of Peruvian drumming and encouraged active participation in playing the drums.

The interdisciplinary event was a successful collaborative effort supported in part by grants from the Douglas, Hopedale, Mendon, Northbridge, Upton, and Uxbridge Cultural Councils, local agencies supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.



**Wishing you a happy  
Holiday Season  
and a wonderful New Year.**

Please note our special holiday hours  
**Christmas Day • Monday, December 25th • Closed**

**New Year's Day • Monday, January 1st • Closed**

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## Recent Home Sales

Date	Mendon	Amount
11/20/2023	31 Blackstone St.	\$573,000
11/16/2023	1 Crestview Dr.	\$690,000
11/16/2023	11 Pleasant St.	\$1.18 mil
11/06/2023	24 Taft Ave. (5,000 sf lot)	\$109,900
10/27/2023	128 Millville Rd.	\$1.40 mil
10/26/2023	107 Hartford Ave. W	\$509,000
Date	Upton	Amount
11/30/2023	46 W River St.	\$815,000
11/29/2023	41 South St.	\$835,000
11/24/2023	48 Taft St.	\$650,000
11/17/2023	61 Forest St.	\$885,000
11/17/2023	184 East St.	\$907,200
11/15/2023	31 Rockwood Ln.	\$800,000
11/13/2023	62 Chestnut St.	\$997,000
11/10/2023	0 Westboro Rd. (11.29 acres)	\$350,000
11/08/2023	53 Warren St.	\$593,000
11/07/2023	51 Sienna Cir. #4113	\$640,000
11/02/2023	31 Pleasant St.	\$505,000
11/01/2023	20 Shoemaker Ln. #14	\$760,790
10/30/2023	47 Southboro Rd.	\$800,000
10/30/2023	3 Stoddard St.	\$525,000
10/30/2023	8 Claflin Farm Rd. Lot 3	\$1.07 mil
10/26/2023	4 Shoemaker Ln. #20	\$659,900
10/25/2023	99 Crockett Rd.	\$650,000

Source: www.zillow.com / Compiled by Upton Mendon Free Press



The 3-bed, 2-bath 1,932 sf home at 31 Pleasant St. in Upton recently sold for \$505,000.  
Photo courtesy of RobynandSeanSoldMyHouse.com

## Hope for Heroes



(L to R) Michael Shain, founder and president of Thanks to Yanks; John Milot, Commander American Legion Post 75 in Franklin; Caroline Molla and Christine Molla of Costello Real Estate in Franklin. Every year around Veteran's Day, Costello Real Estate takes up a collection in support of the Thanks to Yanks' initiative of "Hope for Heroes," an annual event during which needed items are collected for veterans. Costello Real Estate has always been generous in not only the collection of items but also in the donation of funds to Thanks to Yanks to further its mission of serving those who have served. For more information regarding Thanks to Yanks, visit them on Facebook @thankstoyanks

## CHRISTMAS TREE PICKUP \$10

Upton Boy Scout Troop 132

Saturday Jan. 6, 2024

SIGN UP at:  
Troop132Upton.org

EMAIL with questions to:  
UptonScouting@gmail.com

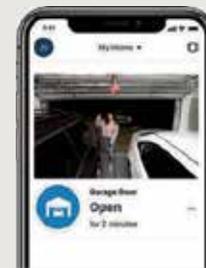
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# Ask the Assessors

Fiscal Year 2024 “actual” tax bills were issued the end of December so you may need to ask: **“Do I qualify for a real estate tax exemption?”**

While taxes cannot be avoided, some taxpayers may be entitled to partial relief via a “real estate tax exemption.”

What is a real estate tax exemption? A tax exemption is a discharge from the obligation to pay all or a portion of a tax. Exemptions are conferred by the legislature on particular categories of persons or property.

The following clauses apply in Mendon:

**Clause 41D of Chapter 59** provides a \$1,000 exemption to persons 65 years of age or

older who satisfy the following requirements:

1. An individual must be either 65 years of age or older or a joint owner with a spouse 65 years or older as of July 1 of the tax year.
2. An individual must have been continuously domiciled in Massachusetts for the last 10 years preceding the application and have owned and occupied the property or other property in Mass for 5 years.
3. The holder of a “Life Estate” satisfies the ownership requirements.
4. If the domicile is held in a trust, a person must be a trustee or co-trustee and pos-

sess a sufficient beneficial interest in the domicile through that trust.

5. Gross receipts, minus an annual social security allowance of \$5201 for the worker and \$2601 for the spouse, must be less than \$29,123. if single, \$43,731. if married (increases annually.)
6. Whole estate cannot exceed \$58,307. if single, \$80,174. if married (increases annually.) The value of a person’s domicile, cemetery plots, registered motor vehicles, wearing apparel and household furniture and effects kept at the domicile should be excluded from the calculation of the whole estate.

**Clause 17E of Section 5 Chapter 59** provides a \$274.70 (FY24) exemption to three categories of persons who satisfy certain residency requirements and whole estate or asset requirements:

1. A surviving spouse or a minor with a parent deceased who owns and occupies the property as his/her domicile or a person 70 years or older who has owned and occupied the property as his/her domicile for at least 5 years.
2. A person’s interest in the do-

micile must be worth at least \$2,000.

3. The holder of a “Life Estate” satisfies the ownership requirement.
4. A person’s whole estate, real and personal, cannot exceed \$65,379. (FY24), excluding the value of the subject property, motor vehicle & cemetery plot.

**CPA Exemption:** This would entitle taxpayers who qualify as low or senior moderate income by HUD median annual income amounts, to receive an exemption from the 3% surcharge on their real estate tax imposed by the Community Preservation Act. (i.e.: senior household of 2 = less than \$118,080 per year; low income household of 2 = \$94,464 per year.)

**Clause 37A of Section 5 of Chapter 59** provides a \$500 exemption provision for blind persons who satisfy the following requirements:

1. Proof of blindness
2. Occupy the property as his/her domicile on July 1 of the tax year.
3. Ownership interest in the domicile must be worth at least \$5,000.
4. The holder of a Life Estate satisfies this requirement.

**Clauses 22, 22A, 22B, 22C, 22D and 22E of Section 5 of Chapter 59** provide exemptions to certain veterans (and their spouses or surviving spouses) who were not dishonorably discharged and who satisfy the following requirements:

1. An applicant must occupy the property as his/her domicile on July 1 of the tax year and satisfy ownership requirements.
2. Holder of a Life Estate satisfies the ownership requirement.

**\*Clause 22 - \$400:** (1) Veterans with a wartime service connected disability of 10% or more as determined by the Veterans Administration, or (2) Awarded the Purple Heart, or (3) Gold star mothers and fathers, or (4) Surviving spouses who do not remarry, or (5) Surviving spouses of World War I veterans whose whole estate does not exceed \$20,000.

**\*Clause 22A - \$750:** Suffered in the line of duty the loss or permanent loss of use of one foot or one hand or one eye, or received the Congressional Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross or Air Force Cross.

**\*Clause 22B - \$1,250:** Suffered in the line of duty the loss or permanent loss of use of both feet or both hands or both eyes.

**\*Clause 22C - \$1,500:** Suffered total disability in the line of duty and who received assistance in acquiring “specially adapted housing” which they occupy as their domicile.

**\*Clause 22D – Full ex-**

## ASSESSORS

*continued on page 18*

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# It's the most wonderful time of the year to use Affordable Junk Removal

By Linda Chuss

With so much to do around the holidays, give yourself the gift of space by using Affordable Junk Removal to help prepare your home for the season. "Life is hectic, we are all so busy in our daily lives that we don't notice how quickly we are being overrun with junk" said Jason Schadler, who founded the business in this area 20 years ago. "It's nice to park your car in the garage during the cold months, but maybe you need to make room there first, and we can help with that."

With Affordable Junk Removal, you can rent a dumpster or have their Junk Removal Professionals come to haul away items that have been gathering dust and taking up precious space. Setting an end-of-year or New Year's resolution to clean up a neglected basement or attic is a great start. You can even put a dumpster rental on your gift list. Sometimes the biggest challenge is not knowing where to begin, and that is where Affordable comes in.

"You can load your own dumpster or have our truck guys do all of the work for you," Schadler explained. "And rest assured, we don't just take everything to the landfill. We try

and recycle as much as possible. Clothing and household items are donated to local organizations that help our friends and neighbors. We also take some items to Resellables secondhand store in Bellingham. That keeps them out of landfills, gives them a new life, and helps us keep our prices down. We're always looking for ways to be more cost effective because customers appreciate our reasonable prices."

Changes in legislation have made it increasingly more difficult to dispose of certain items, like mattresses, for example. It is now state law that most textiles and mattresses must be recycled. "Finding places to take mattresses is a challenge and the fees for disposal have gone through the roof," said Schadler. Items like these carry a separate recycling fee that the commercial transfer stations charge because of how labor intensive that recycling is. "People are usually shocked at the cost, and we find ourselves educating the customer as to why these fees exist. Here at Affordable, we view ourselves as an avenue our clients can turn to when they have these items and want them disposed of legally, safely and properly."

Affordable has many repeat



customers. "When people call, they reach me, not some automated corporate call center," he said. "They know me and the crew and trust us. We do a good job, are fast, efficient, and reliable. We come when we say we will and if anything unexpected comes up, we communicate. We live here too, we are your friends and neighbors, we sponsor your little league teams and run into you at the grocery store. We are your local guys." A quick look at the many years of positive on-

line reviews attests to this.

For more information, visit [AffordableJunkRemoval.com](http://AffordableJunkRemoval.com).

For an estimate or appointment, call or text 774-287-1133.

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## Move guarantees that those who deserve coal this year will get it!

**NORTH POLE** — Santa Claus announced today that he has chosen **Medway Oil & Propane** as the exclusive resource for high-quality Reading Anthracite coal throughout the greater MetroWest region and eastern Worcester County.

According to one of Santa's elves, it was very important that Santa chose a company he could count on this winter. "We were delighted that Santa chose us again this year," said Jeffrey Mushnick, owner of **Medway Oil & Propane**. "We have coal that is quite suitable for keeping people warm this winter — and also for filling stockings and decorating snowmen! We offer the best quality coal in the region."

### Even the Naughty Will Get Something!

In a telephone interview this week, Santa Claus elaborated further on his decision. "We know that **Medway Oil & Propane** has been offering high-quality Reading Anthracite coal to their customers since 1954," said Santa. "It was natural for me to select the region's best coal supplier to handle all of the MetroWest requests we get for a lump of coal." Based on Santa's happiness with **Medway Oil & Propane**, the "naughty and nice" will want to consider them for coal, fuel oil and propane service.



### One FREE Bag of Coal!

Homeowners who heat with coal are invited to receive a FREE bag of coal with any coal delivery before January 31, 2024. Call (508) 533-6561 or 1-800-649-5949. Anyone wanting a few free lumps of coal for stocking stuffers should call for details. Santa hastily ended his press conference to return to his shop in preparation for visiting the MetroWest area later this month.

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# Advent and Christmas at the United Parish of Upton

The United Parish would like to invite you to participate in our community events this month.

**Dec. 21:** Community Supper - on the third Thursday of each month from September through June at 5:30 p.m., our Faith in Action committee provides a delicious and nutritious meal for the community. Everyone is welcome. Please check our website: [www.unitedparishupton.org/ministries/community-supper](http://www.unitedparishupton.org/ministries/community-supper) for this month's menu.

Our Early Learning Center is seeking a few new volunteer members for the Advisory Board. The commitment is minimal (usually one meeting per month). It is not a require-

ment to be a member of the congregation. We would especially love one of the new members to have experience in early childhood education and knowledge of related regulations, but this is not a requirement. The ELC is not only a ministry of the church, but a beloved resource to our greater community. Please contact [unitedparishschool@gmail.com](mailto:unitedparishschool@gmail.com) if you are interested in learning more.

Soul Fuel Cafe is open Tuesday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Saturday from 8 a.m. to noon. Free wifi, coffee, tea, daily fresh bread, pizza, brownies, cookies and more. This is a great place to hang out with friends, work on

a puzzle, read, write, or just chill. There is always a friendly face to greet you.

In addition to our regular Sunday worship service at 9:30 a.m., all are welcome to participate in the following special services for Christmas:

**Longest Night Service:** Thursday, Dec. 21, 1 p.m. in the vestry and 7 p.m. in the sanctuary

**Christmas Eve Family Service:** Sunday, Dec. 24, 5 p.m. in the sanctuary

**Christmas Eve Candlelight and Communion Service:** Sunday, Dec. 24, 11 p.m. in the sanctuary.

*All are welcome at the United Parish of Upton.*

## Mendon Senior Center events

**Hope & Healing ~ Surviving Loss** - Thursday, Jan. 25 6 - 8 p.m.

Loss is difficult any time of the year but with the upcoming holidays the pain can be more acute. Fortunately, there is help for those experiencing grief because of the loss of a loved one. Grief Recovery Seminar and Support Meetings are held at Faith Fellowship Church, 647 Douglas St. Uxbridge. Meet others who understand what you're going through. Receive comfort and support. Learn practical tips for navigating your grief.

The upcoming thirteen-week weekly session begins Thursday, Jan. 25 from 6 to 8 p.m. The program consists of video presentations, group discussions, and workbook based personal home study and reflections which are used to help in the journey to-ward healing.

Registration is through Griefshare.org. contact Tom Stavish 508-478-3445 for assistance. Online groups are also available. Visit [griefshare.org/findagroup](http://griefshare.org/findagroup) to find a group in your area. You are not alone.

**Food and Fuel Assistance - Help is Just a Phone Call Away**

If you or someone you know is having trouble making ends meet this winter, please consider contacting the Mendon Senior Center. Our helpful staff including Janet Hubener, Outreach Coordinator, are here to offer confidential assistance with fuel assistance applications and nutritional support to Mendon residents of all ages. The SMOC Fuel assistance program helps defray heating costs incurred between Nov. 1, 2023, and April 30, 2024 for eligible households (see household size/income guide.) Please call for guidelines for larger households. Additionally, the Mendon Food Pantry, housed at the senior center is well stocked and available to Mendon residents in need. Call the senior center at 508-478-6175. Help is just a phone call away.

Household Size	Income Limit
1	\$45,392
2	\$59,359
3	\$73,326
4	\$87,294
5	\$101,261



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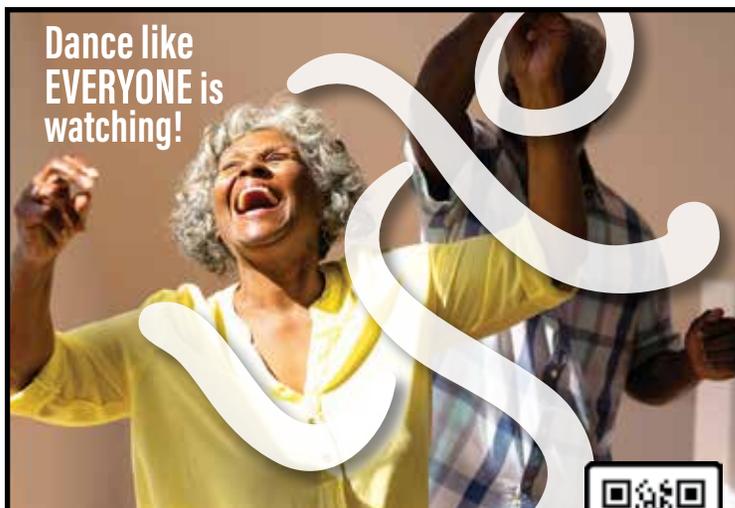
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## Taft Public Library Calendar of Events

29 North Avenue, Mendon • 508-473-3259 • TaftPublicLibrary.org • HOURS: Tues. & Wed. 10-7 • Thurs. 3-7 • Fri. 12-5 • Sat. 9-12 • Sun. & Mon. CLOSED

### ADULT PROGRAMS

#### Upcoming Events:

To register for an event, click on the Library Event Calendar & Registration link at the top of the library's homepage (www.taftpubliclibrary.org).

#### Dustin Pari's It's a Wonderful Lecture

Dustin has done it again! It's a Wonderful Lecture is a presentation that has resonated on a deep level with so many. Taking a look at the beloved classic *It's a Wonderful Life*, Dustin uses quotes, scenes, and characters from the movie as he weaves a tale of commonality and humanity that brings us all together in love, kindness, and harmony. Hear the tale and feel the struggle of George Bailey because his issues are our issues. As we walk through this human experience together, we feel the ripple of the lives of those around us. Dustin's program is Tuesday, Dec. 12 at 7 p.m. Please visit our website to secure your place for this wonderful event.

#### Friends of the Library Holiday Gift Workshop

Would you like to make

some holiday gifts for the special people in your life? Register today for the Friends of the Taft Public Library gift workshop. Choose from a variety of crafts to create and gift wrap. Register on our website, then stop in on Saturday, Dec. 16 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Recommended for ages 6 and up. Limited of 3 projects per person. Only while supplies last.

#### Handcrafting Group

Let's get crafty! Join us on Wednesday, Dec. 6 and Wednesday, Dec. 20 at 2 p.m. downstairs in the library and get your craft on. Bring your own craft project, whatever it might be, to work on while you visit. Intended for adults. Crafts are NOT supplied.

#### Learn Contract Bridge with Val Fay

Join Val Fay, a contract bridge instructor for over twenty years, as he guides you through the game of contract bridge. Designed for ages 16 and up, the classes Val offers will include upgraded instructions at the beginning of every class, starting with the basics. Those interested should contact him at 508-473-

3049 to sign up. All bridge players are forever students of the game, no matter what level they feel they've achieved. Whether you play or have always wanted to learn, join him at the library on Tuesday afternoons. For further details regarding specific times and schedules, call Val's number above.

#### Adult Book Club

The Adult Book Club will meet on Monday, Dec. 11 at 7 p.m. to discuss *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig. Adult Book Clubs are typically held on the second Monday of the month. For upcoming book clubs contact the library at 508-473-3259 to request copies of the books or log in to your account from our website to request them through interlibrary loan. The upcoming Adult Book Club book discussion schedule is as follows:

January: *Sourdough* by Robin Sloan

February: *The Clockmaker's Daughter* by Kate Morton

March: *The House of Mirth* by Edith Wharton

April: *Find Her* by Lisa Gardner

May: *Memorial Drive: A Daughter's Memoir* by Natasha

Trethewey and the poetry of Amanda Lovelace

#### German Conversation Club

Are you looking for a place to practice what German you remember or to improve your German vocabulary? Conversations in German is no pressure, just fun. Lead by Library Assistant (and Mendon resident) Monika Schmid, the group typically meets the last Monday of each month. Mark your calendars for Monday, Dec. 18 at 6 p.m. for the next session. Registration is required. To register, visit our website.

#### Footnotes Nonfiction Book Club

The Footnotes Nonfiction Book Club meets downstairs in the library on a quarterly basis. Those interested are asked to stop at the downstairs desk to sign the Footnotes registration sheet and pick up a copy of the latest book.

Upcoming books in the Footnotes series:

*The Spy and the Traitor* by Ben Macintyre (Jan. 11 at 7 p.m.)

*The Revolutionary: Samuel Adams* by Stacy Schiff (April/May discussion date TBD)

#### Cooking with Chef Rob Scott

Chef Rob Scott returns with a whole new set of cooking demonstrations on Zoom. Rob joins us virtually from his kitchen in Long Island. All ages are welcome to participate. The recipes will be sent out before each class if you want to cook alongside Chef Rob. Sessions are at 7 p.m. The next session is:

Tuesday, Dec. 19: Provolone and Artichoke Cheese Ball in Toasted Pignoli Nuts and Amazing Swedish Meatballs

Please visit our website to register for the session.

#### Friends of the Taft Public Library Meeting

The Friends of the Library will meet next on Tuesday, Jan. 30 at 7 p.m. downstairs in the library's Art Holmes Community Room for their monthly board meeting. Board meetings are typically held on the last Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m., unless it falls on a holiday or during a school vacation. There will be no meeting in December.

### TAFT LIBRARY

continued on page 18

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## OBITUARIES

### Mrs. Miriam P. (Kavanagh) Milani

Mrs. Miriam P. (Kavanagh) Milani, 89, of Milford MA and formerly of Blackstone MA, died Friday (November 10, 2023) at Countryside Health-care of Milford. She was the beloved wife of the late Richard A. Milani, who died in 1973.

Miriam was born in Boston MA and was a graduate of Milford High School, Class of 1951 and also attended the former Chandler Secretarial School, located in Boston MA.

Miriam was first employed as a young woman as a secretary for the President of Wellesley College. She then became a devoted housewife & mother raising her family until the untimely death of her husband in 1973. She returned to the workforce, working as a secretary for the Milford public school system until her retirement in 2001.

Miriam was a very generous person and would do anything for her family members & her friends. She loved to play the piano and loved to sing and also loved listening to and singing along with Frank Sinatra. But her favorite past time was spending time with her beloved family members, especially her grandchildren & her great

grandchildren.

Miriam is survived by her 3 children: Patricia M. Partlow of Blackstone MA, Mary Alice Miller and her husband Harry A. Miller Jr. of Mendon MA and John A. Milani and his wife Brigit of Millville MA; her daughter-in-law: Johnna Cooley of Douglas MA; her 8 grandchildren; her 14 great grandchildren; also many nieces & nephews.

Miriam was the mother of the late David Milani & the mother of the late Richard T. Milani.

Her funeral was held Wednesday (November 15) under the direction of the Edwards Memorial Funeral Home, 44 Congress Street, Milford MA. Please visit [www.edwardsmemorialfuneralhome.com](http://www.edwardsmemorialfuneralhome.com) for complete obituary & condolence book.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Alzheimer's Association, Massachusetts Chapter, 309 Waverly Oaks Road, Waltham MA 02452 or to the American Diabetes Association, New England Offices, 260 Cochituate Road, Suite #200, Framingham MA 01701 or to the National Kidney Foundation, 209 West Central Street, Natick MA 01760.

### Carolyn M. Heusmann

Carolyn M. Heusmann (nee' Montgomery,) daughter of John C. Montgomery and Carol Montgomery (nee' Diomond) and wife of H W Heusmann for 53 years whom she met when joining the UMass Outing Club at the Amherst campus, passed peacefully on November 17, 2023, at UMass Memorial, Worcester from Pulmonary Fibrosis. She said she was ready to go, and maintaining her sense of humor commented on the money she was saving by not going into a \$450 a day Hospice facility.

Carolyn received a B.A. from the University of Massachusetts and after, was employed at the former Worcester State Hospital as a social worker. She left that position to become the Director of Sheraton House in Worcester and when that facility closed, volunteered at the Worcester Rape Crisis Center, (now Pathways for Change) professionalized it and became the Director. She enrolled in the University of Connecticut, Storrs where she earned her Master of Social Work degree. Carolyn then opened a private practice in Shrewsbury and when rent became too high H built her an office in Upton over their garage continuing during the Covid pandemic via telework even when patients moved to Maine and California. She continued her practice until

declining health forced her to turn it over to other providers until just recently.

She and H had two daughters, Shana and Shell and took tent camping vacations throughout the U.S. On one cross country vacation, H took their daughters across the country and Carolyn wisely said, "I'll fly out and meet you at Red Woods National Park". Before children, Carolyn went on vacation to Demark. The family also visited several Canadian provinces, making several trips to Prince Edward Island where the Montgomery family first arrived on American shores. Carolyn was a relative of Lucy Maud Montgomery, author of Anne of Green Gables. She and H alternated Christmases between home and H's family in Illinois driving overnight, first with their daughters and then by themselves as their daughters became adults.

Carolyn, known to family and friends as Lyn, helped hundreds of patients with mental health issues for over 40 years. Though handicapped after a botched back operation which left her partially paralyzed in one leg and needing a brace to get around and with the help of a walker when outside, it did not prevent Lyn and H to continuing their camping adventures, most recently touring Newfoundland in June/July 2022.

Carolyn is survived by her brother, John C. Montgomery, husband H W Heusmann, daughter Shana Lyn Daykin and her husband Patrick Daykin



and granddaughter Kaitlyn Daykin; daughter Shell Janet Heusmann and grandson Tavin Hochmuth and Tavin's father, Zackary Hochmuth, dogs Vivi, Thor Janet, and Zola. Also, sister-in-law Juanita Miller and husband William Miller of Colorado, Sister-in-law Kathleen Heusmann though her brother-in-law, Larry Heusmann of Illinois died the same evening as Carolyn. Carolyn was preceded in death by her younger sister, Janet A. Montgomery, whom which she shared the same birthday and close relationship making annual visits to her sister's Hawaii home.

A private service for family members was held on November 17 at the Rural Crematorium in Worcester.

A celebration of life will be held in the springtime for Carolyn.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to Doctors without Borders; Pathways for Change, Worcester; or BayPath Humane Society of Hopkinton.

The Pickering & Son Upton Funeral Home is honored to assist the Heusmann family with arrangements. [UptonFunerals.com](http://UptonFunerals.com)

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## EYELID

*continued from page 9*

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**TAFT LIBRARY**

*continued from page 15*

All are welcome (and encouraged) to attend. If you plan on attending, it's always a good idea to call the library at 508-473-3259 or email the Friends at friendsoftaftlibrary@gmail.com to confirm the date and time of the meeting. The group will do its best to post any meeting changes on the Taft Library website.

**TAFT CHILDREN'S NEWS**

Registration is required for all programs. Please log onto our website: www.taftpubliclibrary.org and find the events page to register along with more information for the programs.

**Itty Bitty Story Time**

Itty Bitty Story time is designed for our youngest patrons

birth to 3 years old. Join us for a lot of fun on Tuesdays at 9:30 a.m.

**Story & Craft Time**

Join us for story and craft time. Perfect for the preschool-aged child. All sessions take place on Tuesday mornings at 10:30 a.m.

**Alphabet Storytime**

It's all about the alphabet. Each week we will focus on a different letter. We will read a couple of books, sing songs, and learn about the letter of the week. Wednesday mornings at 10:30 a.m. Please note there is no Alphabet Storytime the first Wednesday of the month.

**Coffee and Conversations & Puppet Storytime**

*Dates:* Wednesdays; Dec. 6, Jan. 3, Feb. 7, March 6, April 3, May 1 and June 5.

*Time:* 9:15 to 10:15 a.m.

*Location:* Taft Public Library, 29 North Ave., Mendon.

Join us for an informal playtime where families will be able to build social connections and learn about early childhood development and family friendly resources. The library will supply Muffin House Muffins.

Please stay for the 10:30 a.m. Puppet Storytime. Join Newton and Friends of Through Me to You Puppetry for songs and stories. At the end of the 30-minute show, children can greet the puppets. Geared for children 2 to 5 years, but all are welcome.

**Preschool Kidding Around Yoga**

We will learn yoga poses, dance, sing, and meditate. This class is all about fun-all abilities are welcome. Mats are available, or feel free to bring your own. Wednesdays, Nov. 8 at 9:30 a.m.

**Cookies with Santa**

On Monday, Dec. 18 at 6:30 p.m., Santa will join us via Zoom all the way from the North Pole. Santa will share some of his favorite books about one of his favorite things COOKIES! Not only will Santa be reading about cookies, but we will be decorating cookies from Hens & Chicks Cookie Company. To make this event even more fun, Deb Hudgins will join us to sing a few of our favorite holiday songs.

Please visit www.taftpubliclibrary.org to register. You will be sent a Zoom link the day before the event. Cookie Kits are limited and will need to be picked up December 13 - 16 during normal library hours.

**Storytime with Santa**

Join us on Tuesday, Dec. 19 at 9 a.m. for a Storytime with

Santa. Santa will be sharing some of his favorite books with us. Deb Hudgins will join us to sing a few of our favorite holiday songs. To register for this event, please visit our website. www.taftpubliclibrary.org

**Book Clubs**

**Graphic Novel Book Club:** This month we will be reading: *Otis & Peanut* by Naseem Hrab. The book club will be held downstairs on Tuesday, Jan. 9 at 5 p.m.

**8-12 Book Club:** This month we will be reading: *It All Begins with Jelly Beans* by Nova Weetman. The book club will be held downstairs on Tuesday, Jan. 16 at 5 p.m.

**6-9 Novel Book Club:** This month we will be reading: *Bad Food: Game of Scones* by Eric Luper. The book club will be held downstairs on Tuesday, Jan. 23 at 5 p.m.

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**emption:** Surviving spouses (who have not remarried) of service members or guardsmen who died from injury or disease due to being in combat zone, or

who are missing in action and presumed dead due to combat.

**\*Clause 22E - \$1,000:** Veterans with 100% disability in the line of duty.

**\*Clause 22F - Full exemption:** Paraplegic or veterans with 100% disability for service-connected blindness.

**\*Clause 5L -** Gives Massachusetts National guardsmen and reservists deployed outside the state, or their dependents, up to 180 days after that service to pay their property taxes without interest or penalties.

**Note:** If both spouses qualify for veteran's exemptions, each receives the full exemption.

**Motor Vehicle Excise Exemptions:** All peacetime and wartime veterans as defined in G.L. c. 4, S7 are now eligible for the motor vehicle excise exemptions provided to veterans with certain service-connected disabilities under G.L. c. 60A, S1.

In addition, veterans who have been determined to be permanently disabled by the Medical Advisory Board within the Registry of Motor Vehicles and have or have not been issued disability veteran plates will now be eligible for an excise exemption.

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If you feel you may qualify for any of these exemptions, contact the Assessor's office and I will be happy to assist you. Please keep in mind that all of the documentation involved in filing for these exemptions is strictly confidential with the Board of Assessors as mandated by Massachusetts General Law.

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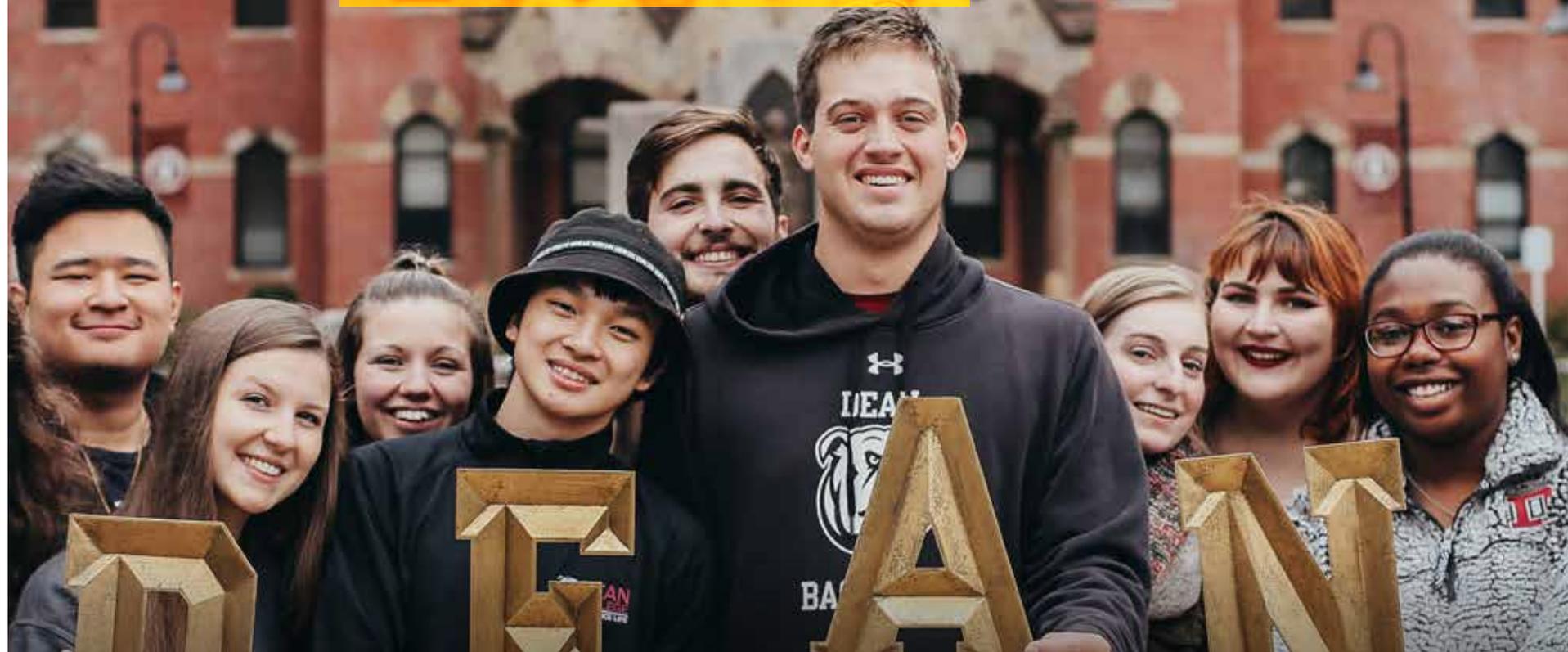
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**BVT**

*continued from page 1*

The 1.5-hour meeting was held at the Hopedale Community House.

As she welcomed the group, Hopedale Select Board Chairwoman Glenda Hazard said, "Over the years I've heard it said that the 13 towns in the BVT district don't really care how the rest of the towns in the district feel, and I called this meeting because I don't really believe that's true. There've been many times I've wondered how you all respond to financial constraints the majority of us are facing, and if there are other related concerns that we all share. To that end, I'm hoping that this is the beginning of a meaningful collaboration between all of us."

"Tonight's summit is a result of us having heard from many surrounding communities with a desire to discuss budgetary issues related to our vocational school. We feel this is absolutely in the spirit of the [BVT] charter."

Hazard said that "BVT is a tremendous institution and one

of best technical schools in the Commonwealth," but noted that, like many other member towns, Hopedale "operates under a tight budget" and "must be responsible for every dollar we spend." She said that, because of the nature of the state assessment process and the town's resulting mandatory contribution, "we find ourselves forced to cut local programs and services in response to costs such as those related to BVT that we can't control. This scenario makes it difficult, if not impossible, to invest in our own public school students, facilities, and operating and capital improvements without asking for additional revenues from taxpayers in the form of overrides."

She said that, because of the timing of BVT's budget-setting timeline and Hopedale's fiscal process, "Historically, by the time our annual town meeting comes around, we're told that BVT already has enough votes in the other communities to pass [its budget], effectively negating our vote. Generally, we are presented with a figure that would be Hopedale's share without input from [the] local finance

committee or Select Board and whether or not we feel we can afford it. This has been deeply concerning for both our local boards and our residents who tell us that they feel they are cut out of the process. We've heard that several of your towns feel the same way."

Hazard said, "In Hopedale, we think that as towns included in the charter, we should all be able to determine what costs we can afford so that all students that reside in our towns are equitably supported. We often feel that Hopedale Public Schools are forced to cut, yet BVT hasn't had to make the same kinds of sacrifices," adding that Hopedale had to ask residents for an override for FY24 but still had to make cuts to the school budget while BVT's budget increased.

"As an institution, we [Hopedale] believe that BVT should have to operate within the same financial constraints that each municipal budget does... We think it should be clear that the goal is to provide a great education for all students in our communities, whether they go to BVT or stay in our local schools. We want to be

able to invest in programs and facilities locally at the same level that we invest at BVT."

Hopedale Town Moderator Mitch Ruscitti moderated the conversation.

Bellingham Selectboard Chairman Michael Connor thanked Hopedale for calling the summit. "I think it's an exceptional opportunity... This is one of the best ideas that's come along."

Connor said their per student costs for BVT students "are dramatically higher" than they are within the Bellingham Public Schools. He, in addition to other attendees, expressed frustration that local town budgets go through detailed scrutiny from town boards and taxpayers, yet the BVT budget does not.

"The budget process is what has really skewed me the most over the last 15 years. When the Superintendent of BVT comes into our town meeting, the votes are 'locked up' - the process to speak up has long passed... [and] it's simply 'pay up' and I think we, as the communities of BVT, need to vet that process."

As a possible solution for future consideration, Connor suggested each member town would calculate its own public school budget increase from one year to the next, and the average budget increase among the 13 member towns would be the increase BVT would also receive.

Connor said, "We've never had a choice as to what the BVT budget would be" and said Bellingham has some ideas for future forum topics.

Millbury Select Board Chairman Chris Naff told the story of a Millbury student who was interested in attending BVT and would have been well-served there but their academic record was not strong enough to be admitted into BVT.

"That story can be told again and again. And I think the problem we all face today is the very students that BVT was founded for no longer have the opportunity to go. That, to me, is a very big problem."

"Our gracious host [Hazard] asked us not to disparage anyone tonight, but it's a matter of fact that one administrator told the Town of Millbury to no longer send its 'riff raff,'" said Naff, adding "That 'riff raff' are the very students BVT was founded for, and those students are being



**Millbury Select Board Chairman Chris Naff attended a "BVT Summit" in October in Hopedale to discuss municipal issues related to the Blackstone Valley Regional Technical High School District.**  
Source: www.townhallstreams.com

denied the opportunity they should have today."

"Until some reform is done, which I believe has to take place at the state level, and that reform is much needed and would be heavy-handed, until that is done, the conversation at the municipal level is only going to become more and more difficult each year because I know as a fact that Millbury, and I think a lot of the communities like us, are becoming more and more tired of providing significant funding for what we believe to be a very significantly flawed system."

Millville Board of Selectmen Chair Jennifer Gill said her town was there to listen to area concerns, noting their BVT enrollment to date has been low and financially manageable but is growing.

BVT Superintendent-Director Dr. Michael Fitzpatrick was invited to respond, and started his remarks by saying he recognized several of the audience members "because I do make appearances at the finance committees, the public hearings, and the town meetings."

Fitzpatrick, who has been BVT's superintendent for 31 years, started his response by focusing on member towns of a different school system, Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical High School District, for supporting its recent district-wide request for a new school building expected to cost \$286 million.

"I guess it's appropriate, with the Tri-County voter approval

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STORM HOURS AS NEEDED

**BVT**

*continued on page 21*

**BVT**

*continued from page 20*

this week of a \$300 million expansion, to congratulate the Tri-County district for supporting and recognizing quality vocational technical education. What's also interesting is if you look across the Commonwealth, Tri-County Regional Voc Tech was the fifth vocational school - Northeast Metropolitan, Minuteman Regional Voc Tech, Bristol-Plymouth, and Cape Cod Tech - all also approved \$300 million expansions [for] brand new facilities for their vocational technical schools. We have not requested that."

Fitzpatrick said that each year, BVT makes "a modest budgetary request which is inclusive of all expenses." He detailed the items that go into the BVT school budget, reiterated his frequent offers for town officials to visit the school, and said the BVT building is a model that other vocational technical schools hope to replicate.

Fitzpatrick said, "The state doesn't allow us to ask for equal-

ized costs or assessments in order to comply with the 1993 Ed Reform Bill;" acknowledged that Hopedale and Bellingham have been at the latter part of the budgetary process; and said that, if two-thirds of the towns vote to support then all towns are directed to honor the budget.

He said the BVT process is "very transparent;" the district is committed to collaborating with member towns; and said "it's embarrassing to think" any of their students are considered "riff raff."

Among the issues raised during the public comment segment were: revisiting the BVT charter which has not been reviewed since it was created in 1962; possible implementation of an admissions lottery; review of administrator and superintendent staffing levels, compensations, and benefits plans for BVT and the feeder districts; review of expenses related to extracurricular activities, campus amenities and student services for each district of BVT; review of admissions process; review of proposed capital projects; and agreement to a joint finance committee

each year at which BVT makes one presentation to all member towns at one time.

Scott Savage of Hopedale, speaking as a resident and not a selectman, said, "It is my hope that the towns will reject the majority of the capital requests that BVT has put forward for next fiscal year. The town needs more time to review the need of these improvements and weigh the financial burden it will place on our own schools and town services."

Neal Sherman, a public school teacher in Milford, said, "I am concerned that [BVT] is not serving the needs of the sending towns. I see students in the hallways every day who would be well-served by access to a technical education but right now 75% of the graduates from BVT are college-bound... I think that it should be revisited to consider whether or not the school is serving its mission and allowing access to a high-quality education to all students from its sending towns."

Chris Naff of Millbury asked Supt. Fitzpatrick if BVT uses a blind-lottery admission system.

**"This governance model has outlived its useful life. Period. It can't continue like this."**

*- Matt Wojcik, Douglas Town Administrator*

chuckle. "I don't want to bad-mouth any other system, but we would hardly follow the example that we've seen there."

Tony Fathom of Hopedale spoke as a parent who had three students attend BVT, and detailed their success stories.

Matt Wojcik, Town Administrator in Douglas, said he was reluctant to make a comment earlier in the evening because "our frustration level with BVT in the past has been very, very high and it has not necessarily simmered down completely as we sit here," but did note the agreement dates back to 1962 and can only be amended by unanimous vote of the member communities.

"If there's anything we need to reopen in this governance agreement, it is that each individual town needs to have its own voice, elected by its own people. We live in America, we have a representative democracy, and it is only fair that it be done that way. This governance model has outlived its useful life. Period. It can't continue like this."

To watch the full meeting, visit [www.townhallstreams.com](http://www.townhallstreams.com)

Fitzpatrick said they do not. "We've examined the merits of that along with colleagues throughout the Commonwealth and did not feel it represented the best way to recruit."

Naff noted that Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School uses a lottery. Fitzpatrick said Assabet is the only district in the state that uses a lottery, and "We've seen no results. We've seen nothing but turmoil. You're not speaking to the staff of the system," he said with a

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# SPORTS

## Nipmuc Cheer wins another CMass crown

### Fall squad captures third straight district championship

By Chris Villani

The current group of Nipmuc senior cheerleaders have been cheering together since they were little kids. In fact, most of them came together when they were seven years old. Varsity head coach Christie Keyes has been with the group throughout their entire run, and the team helped her win a third-straight Central Mass. Division II championship in her final year at the helm.

“We had high expectations, and this senior class is pretty special,” Keyes said. “I have been coaching them since they were seven. I started right with the junior program, and started to help build them up so they could have a great high school career.”

After winning yet another district title, Nipmuc earned a fourth-place finish at the state

meet, the highest placement in program history.

“Watching them come all the way through their senior year of high school, and having such an amazing season, was pretty sweet,” Keyes said.

This year’s team featured 11 seniors and two sets of captains. Lilia Young and Phallon Clark served as Nipmuc’s game day captains.

“They made sure that we were in control and organized at games, and school spirit was a big focus,” Keyes said. “They were fantastic.”

Emma Haley and Casey Keyes were Nipmuc’s competition captains.

“They helped make sure the team stayed motivated and prepared for competition,” Keyes said. “Those two captains are unique in that they cheer year-round.”



Many of Nipmuc's 11 seniors have been cheering together since they were seven years old. (L to R) Chloe Ball, Ava Smith, Lilly Moshier, Lilia Young, Emma Haley, Casey Keyes, Libby Fernald, Phallon Clark, Molli Powers, Sabrina Cassano, Sofie Geremia. Photo credit Christie Keyes

Both Haley and Keyes have ambitions to cheer in college, and recently showcased their skills at a recruitment clinic at the University of New Hampshire.

Fellow seniors Chloe Ball, Ava Smith, Lilly Moshier, Libby Fernald, Molli Powers, Sabrina Cassano, and Sofie Geremia were all huge contributors to the program’s success, not only this season, but also over the past two. Keyes said the only thing that prevented Nipmuc from potentially winning four district titles in a row is the fact that the competition four years ago was canceled due to the pandemic.



Nipmuc had two sets of captains who helped them win a third district title. (L to R) Lilia Young, Emma Haley, Casey Keyes, Phallon Clark. Photo credit Christie Keyes

“They have been together for so long,” Keyes said of her seniors. “They are really close, they trust each other, they support each other, and they have fun together.”

Keyes will be stepping down and leaving the program with the crop of seniors that includes

her daughter. “I am hoping to hand the program over to someone who is interested in continuing the winning tradition,” she said. “There are a lot of good underclassmen coming up, and I am looking forward to handing over the keys to the next coach.”

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SPORTS

# BVT Soccer reloaded after title game run

## Beavers exceeded even their own coach's expectations

By Chris Villani

One could forgive Blackstone Valley Tech head boys' soccer coach Justin Asam for being unsure what to expect from his team this fall. The Beavers graduated 16 seniors from a team that went all the way to the 2022 state title game before losing to South Hadley.

The 2023 Beavers provided a worthy follow-up to that run, winning 15 games and earning a spot in the state tournament once again.

"After last year, you don't expect the team to come out and have a season like they did this year," Asam said. "I was not expecting them to have as great a season as they did."

BVT's 2023 season came to an end with a loss to Dighton-Rehoboth in the round of 32.

Asam's team was led by a quartet of captains, two of whom are set to return next year. Junior Matthew Drons earned Colonial Athletic League all-star honors and a Central Mass. all-star nod after scoring 15 goals and adding 29 assists on the year. His classmate, goal-tender Mason Dorr, once again stood out in net.

"He was the goalie who brought us to the championship last year," Asam said. "He is an overall great goalie."

Valley Tech's other two captains are seniors. Ryan Sauter finished the season approaching the 40-point mark and was named to the all-state team. Midfielder Tyler Stevens stood out as a midfielder and defender.

"He is a great leader," Asam said. "He has great sportsmanship, and he is a great player overall. He helped us out a lot."

Stevens, Sauter, and Dorr joined Drons on the CAL all-star team.

Asam said the run of success is not over yet. In addition to the returning junior captains, sophomore Miguel Machado will return after a strong season.

"He is going to be a star with this program," his coach said.

The program has been healthy for the past several years, ever since BVT went



This year's BVT's soccer team. Courtesy photos



deep in the state tournament in 2018 under previous head coach Khalid Al-Haza. Asam said more than 100 hopefuls have turned up at tryouts the past three seasons, more than double

what some of the other teams in the area typically see. "We have just kept it going," he said. "It's a very strong program, from the freshmen all the way up to the seniors."



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