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## Municipal Spotlight

# Barca Settles in Nicely as Stall Brook School's Principal

By KEN HAMWEY,  
BULLETIN STAFF WRITER

Shannon Barca has been Bellingham's principal at Stall Brook Elementary School for only four months. The veteran educator has not only adapted to her new position quickly, but she also has displayed lots of passion for this important role.

The 47-year-old Barca arrived at Stall Brook after 10 years in administrative positions at the Parmenter School in Franklin — four as assistant principal and six as principal. Previously, Barca worked in Westboro for 13 years as a sixth-grade teacher, and for 12 of those years she was a team leader, deeply involved in decision-making.

"At Westboro, there was a sense of community, and I



Shannon Barca, who's been an educator for 26 years, says her prime goal in her first year as principal is to promote Stall Brook School's core values.

**PRINCIPAL**  
*continued on page 3*



Coach Steve Mantegani called Bellingham High's state final appearance in volleyball "an amazing run, somewhat unexpected but definitely something special."

# Bright Future Very Likely for BHS Volleyball Team

By KEN HAMWEY,  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

The 2023 edition of the Blackhawks now is the first girls' volleyball team at BHS to advance to a state final. And, it's been 27 years since the Blackhawks got to the Final Four. Another lengthy drought ended

when the Blackhawks posted an 8-0 record to win the Tri Valley League Small Division title. That championship ended a 23-year run of failing to garner a league championship.

**VOLLEYBALL**  
*continued on page 2*

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**VOLLEYBALL**

*continued from page 1*

The Bellingham girls' volleyball team fell short in the state final game against Ipswich, 3-2, but coach Steve Mantegani's forces not only exceeded expectations, but also registered some impressive firsts for the program.

"We had talent, but we were young," Mantegani said. "It was an amazing run, somewhat unexpected but definitely something special."

BHS began its journey by defeating South Lancaster Academy, then added three more triumphs over Advanced Math and Science Academy, Rockland, and Frontier Regional.

The Blackhawks lost the opening game against Ipswich, managed to win the next two, but faltered in the fourth and final games. The Blackhawks lost the fifth game by a 15-9 margin.

"Losing in a state final is very disappointing," said Mantegani, who also coaches the boys' volleyball team. "I feel badly for the seniors, like captains Ari Elster and Ciara Crayton, and Kateri Ducharme, Sarah Pirrong and Kira Syriac. They've got no

more chances at a state crown. Our younger players, however, can look forward to a few more opportunities, but there's no guarantees getting to that level again."

When the fifth game ended, Mantegani huddled with his team on the court at Worcester State offering his thoughts. "Who would have thought at day one of tryouts that we'd end up playing for the Division 4 state championship," he said. "It's been a magical season, and I know it hurts to lose. But, don't hang your heads. Be proud of what you accomplished."

The Bellingham spikers displayed plenty of resiliency during the regular season. They won their first eight matches, then lost three straight — to Medfield, Hopkinton and Holliston.

"We didn't crumble," Mantegani said. "We bounced back and won our final eight matches, ending the regular season at 16-3 and claiming the division title."

Next year could result in another long run in the playoffs. The team has eight returnees, all with experience. And, the core group is young.

Here's a thumbnail look at Mantegani's nucleus for next season, with his comments:

**SOPHIA SOTO** — A freshman libero this season, she became the TVL Small Division's Most Valuable Player. "She was one of our best defensive players.

She's quick and a leader on the court."

**MIA MILANI** — A freshman who competed as an outside hitter, she became a TVL all-star. "Mia is a dynamic hitter and a great all-around player."

**VAL NOLAN** — A sophomore outside hitter, she also earned TVL all-star recognition. "A tremendous competitor, Val is great on defense, has lots of energy and is strong on the outside."

**TAYLOR CALLERY** — A junior, she's versatile, moving from setter to right side hitter. "A good server, Taylor played mostly as a hitter and did a great job making the transition."

**JACOBI HOUSTON** — A sophomore setter, she handled that role effectively. "Jacobi has steady hands and she continues to grow in her role. Her ability to get the ball to the hitters is outstanding."

**MADY DeOLIVERA** — "Mady had a good freshman year, displaying lots of versatility. She was capable as an outside hitter and she was very good when we used her on the right side."

**AUBREY CALLERY** — An eighth-grade middle hitter, she filled in for Ducharme, who missed 16 games because of a concussion. "Aubrey has energy, and she gets her share of blocks at the net. She keeps her mistakes to a minimum."

**Save the Date!**

**Bellingham Business Association Meeting  
January 10th**

Local businesses! The Bellingham Business Association is starting the New Year off with some networking, trivia and a doughraiser for its next meeting, to take place on January 10th from 6 -8 p.m. at Uno Pizzeria & Grill, 205 Hartford Ave., Bellingham.

The Bellingham Business Association is an organization of business professionals focused on expanding their business opportunities while expanding their relationships with and exposure to other local business owners. Members are involved in many community and civic activities, helping to make Bellingham a town we can all be proud of.

Visit [www.bellinghambusinessassociation.org](http://www.bellinghambusinessassociation.org) to find out more.

For questions about member cost, or to RSVP (by January 8th ), email Sue Grady at [contact@bellinghambusinessassociation.org](mailto:contact@bellinghambusinessassociation.org).

**MAYA JACKSON** — A junior outside hitter, she missed the entire season, recuperating from a torn ACL suffered last year in basketball during the Hutchinson Tourney. "Maya played outside hitter for us for three years. She's a great passer and a dynamic hitter. She was a TVL all-star for three seasons."

The girls' run to the state tourney final has elevated the

BHS volleyball program to new heights. As Mantegani says, "The girls have a bright future. We'll still be a young squad but there'll be plenty of firepower returning."

The girls finished with a record of 20-4, and interesting enough, the four losses all went to five games. "We caught fire and we peaked at the right time," Mantegani said.

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**PRINCIPAL**

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felt embedded there,” Barca said. “As a team leader, it gave me confidence to be a leader in education, and I knew I wanted a role in administration.”

Before teaching in Westboro, the personable Barca began her career as a student-teacher in New York City, then spent a year as a para-educator in Wellesley and a year as a fourth-grade teacher in Sturbridge. The native of Oxford earned her bachelor’s degree in elementary education and psychology at Wagner College in New York and has her masters in elementary education from Framingham State University.

After 26 years as an educator, Barca has developed a variety of strengths.

“As an instructional leader, I’m able to provide meaningful feedback,” she said. “I also am objective, able to consider multiple perspectives and opinions. I love children and I’m eager to help them and see them grow. And, I always ground my decisions in what is in the best interests of students.”

Leaving the Parmenter School after 10 years in administration wasn’t an easy decision for Barca, who’s married and has two children.

“I felt good about building a sound culture that focused on the social-emotional learning practices,” she said. “I’m proud of the academic work we achieved and the authentic learning experiences we provided. The school became a well-oiled machine. But, for me to continue to develop and grow in my last stages of education, I knew I needed a new environment.”

Peter Marano, who’s in his ninth year as Bellingham’s School Superintendent, is delighted with the way Barca approaches her role.

“Mrs. Barca bring experience, dedication and a strong commitment to education excellence,” he emphasized. “Her leadership will significantly benefit our students and staff and I look forward to working together to continue fostering a positive and enriching learning environment at Stall Brook.”

Barca has settled in nicely at Stall Brook, a school whose faculty and staff numbers 70. The school is 50 years old and cur-

rently has 221 students in grades K-3. The new principal’s prime goal in her first year is to promote the school’s core values.

“I want our core values to serve as a foundation to build intrinsic motivation for both students and staff to take risks in a safe learning environment,” she said. “Our core values are to be hard-working, to be cooperative, to be respectful, to be kind and to be inclusive. My job is to create opportunities for students to be able to authentically demonstrate these values.”

Barca is acutely aware that it’s teachers who make a school respected and welcoming, and she’s thankful for the faculty she’s inherited.

“They are so devoted and dedicated,” she said. “They’re an appreciative group that makes working so enjoyable. They’re a big reason why I love my role at the school.”

Barca doesn’t mind the tedious task of annual budget responsibilities. “It helps align the priorities of our school and the district’s needs,” she said. And, fully mindful that education evolves, Barca says “it’s important to realize that we wear many hats and must accomplish numerous tasks on a daily basis. At times, we can be spread too thin among the many tasks and responsibilities, but the key is to prioritize the issues.”

Successful principals are often those who get into the classrooms and get to know their students. One of Barca’s favorite times is having fun with her students. “I love spirit days and school mascot days,” she noted. “Having fun and interacting with kids are very enjoyable moments.”

In her brief time as Stall Brook’s principal, Barca has a high regard for Bellingham’s school system. “The administrators and teachers are extremely supportive and motivating,” she said. “And, the students show resilience and great personalities.”

Barca, who graduated from Oxford High School where she competed in track, cross-country and cheerleading, was also a National Honor Society student. Long before graduating, she knew exactly what profession she would pursue.

“I knew I wanted to be a teacher,” she said. “My mom taught second grade for 30-plus years, and I often helped her set up her classroom for the year ahead. My dad also was an influence. He was a school psychologist, and that helped emphasize the need to advocate for students and families.”

Shannon Barca is comfortable in her role as principal at Stall Brook. But, she’s also proactive, energetic and ready to roll up her sleeves to tackle a challenge.

# Inclusive Playground Efforts Still Underway

It’s been awhile since *Bellingham Bulletin* reported on the efforts of Hallie Glassman, special education teacher at Stallbrook Elementary, to build an inclusive playground at the school. We contacted Ms. Glassman for an update:

“In the Fall of 2022, I teamed up with The Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism, and they are currently functioning as my Fiscal Sponsor such that I can apply for grants and be qualified as a tax exempt organization. I have not received any grants yet, but we’re still trying!,” says Glassman.

This past May, Our Playability worked on another fun-

draiser, but unfortunately the event was rained out and not as successful as previous years. Although Glassman was leaving on maternity leave at the end of December, she noted that another Touch-a-Truck event is being planned for this coming spring.

The effort did receive a \$25,000 grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to put toward the playground.

If you are interested in supporting the inclusive playground at Stallbrook, visit

<https://secure.qgiv.com/event/ourplayability> (this total does not include the \$25,000 from the state).

*Herbert F Hunter, CPA*

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# From the Town Clerk.....

## Census

In January, you will be receiving your town census form, there

is a statement referencing Massachusetts General Law (MGL) with regards to penalties for not

returning your census information (MGL Chapter 51, Section 4c: "Failure to respond to this

mailing shall result in removal from the active voting list and may result in removal from the voter registration rolls". The annual census is also used by the State to calculate tax monies to be returned to Bellingham. For these reasons, it is imperative that you return the signed and dated form as soon as possible, whether or not there are changes. The census may be returned by mail, by dropping it in the blue drop box at the entrance of the Municipal Center or by delivery to the Town Clerk's office.

## Elections

2024 will be a busy election year, with four scheduled elections:

- March 5 – Presidential Primary (with Early Voting)
- June 4 – Local Town Election (EV to be decided by Select Board)
- September 3 – State Primary (with Early Voting)
- November 5 – Presidential/ State Election (with Early Election)

Voters will be receiving cards early in the year from the State with which they may request Vote-by-Mail ballots for individual or all elections in 2024.

You may also request Absentee ballots as usual.

If you have any questions regarding the items above, please contact the Town Clerk's office at (508) 657-2833 or townclerk@bellinghamma.org.

Wishing everyone a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year!!

## Dog Licenses

Dog license renewal forms will be included in with your census forms. If you do not have a dog, simply recycle the form. If you are registering a dog (renewal or first time), please return the form to the Town Clerk's office with proof of rabies vaccination and a check for the appropriate amount (\$15 for neutered dogs, \$20 for intact). It is recommended that you send in your dog license application with your census to preclude any possibilities of late fees in May.

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## Seeking a Few Good Sponsors!

Once again, The Friends of the Library would like to extend an invitation local businesses and others to sponsor its museum/ attraction passes. The library pass program allows patrons free or discounted admission to various local attractions and museums, and sponsors are integral to this important program. Thanks to the Bellingham Business Association, which has once again, for 2024, sponsored the library's most expensive pass, to the Southwick Zoo.

For the list of 2024 Library Museum & Attraction Pass Sponsorship Opportunities, visit

<https://tinyurl.com/Library-Pass-Sponsorship>

If you or your company would like to sponsor a pass for one year, please contact Bernadette Rivard, Library Director at brivard@bellinghamma.org or (508) 657-2776.

Sponsors will have their name mentioned on the library museum pass brochure, reservation website and two social media postings during the year. These sponsorships are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Full sponsorships cost from \$100-\$1250, and shared sponsorships are \$150-\$250.

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# Family-Run Affordable Junk Removal Takes the Stress Out of Cleanups

BY CHRISTIE VOGT  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Whether it's one old fridge in the garage or an entire home of unwanted goods, the team at Bellingham-based Affordable Junk Removal offers a cost-efficient, stress-free approach to waste management. "You don't lift a finger," says owner Jason Schadler, who started the company along with his wife Christine in 2005.

The business offers same-day service for both residential and commercial clients across eastern and central Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island. In addition to junk removal, the company rents 15-yard dumpsters.

As a family-owned and operated company, Schadler says Affordable Junk Removal has lower overhead costs and is more accessible than national competitors. "I answer my phone 24 hours a day," he says. "I was on vacation in Italy and Portugal, and I was still answering my phone on the beach. When you call us, you get me — not an automated machine!"

Schadler says the company has an environmentally friendly approach to disposal in which it recycles items when possible, properly disposes of non-recyclables and resells many items at the Schadlers' secondhand store, Resellables. "We opened that store in Bellingham because we hated to see things thrown away," Schadler says. "We have four kids and sustainability is extremely important to us."

During the business's early days, Schadler provided junk removal on nights and weekends when he wasn't busy working at a machine shop. Eventually, the business grew into a full-time



endeavor, and the Schadlers invested back into the company with new equipment and techniques. "When I first started, for example, we didn't have any tarps. I'm driving around and things are flying out of my truck," Schadler laughs. "I'm like, 'Oh my god, I need a tarp.'"

Schadler says his wife Christine "was equally as involved" in getting the business off the ground. "She handled the back-end while I did the heavy lifting, all while she was working at EMC," he says. "Fast forward 17 years, and we both work full time managing the company as well as other endeavors. Business is doing great; it has grown tremendously to a fleet of trucks and dumpsters, and we've also been able to buy a pizza place, The Corner Market in Holliston."

In addition to delivering an in-demand service to the community, Schadler is appreciative that Affordable Junk Removal has helped provide a work-life balance that suits his family. "It allows me to be able to do what I like doing and spend time with my kids," he says. "I'm home to see my babies play softball and do all that stuff. We are also able to give back to the communities we serve."

## Business spotlight

The Schadlers say that Bellingham has been an excellent hometown for both Affordable Junk Removal and their Resellables shop, and they are proud to have many repeat customers and friends in the area.

One of the best parts of his job, Schadler says, is meeting and getting to know new people and developing relationships with returning customers. "We are really grateful for the repeat business and the chance to form connections with residents across the MetroWest area," he says.

To receive a free junk removal estimate, call (774) 287-1133 or visit [affordablejunkremoval.com](https://affordablejunkremoval.com).

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Christine and Jason Schadler, shown here with their children and dog, started Affordable Junk Removal in 2005.

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# January is National Blood Donor Month

By J.D. O'GARA

The first month of the year marks a national awareness month for blood donation. According to the American Red Cross, someone in the United States needs blood every two seconds, with over 29,000 units of red blood cell donations needed every day. Blood and platelets cannot be manufactured, but nearly 5,000 units of platelets and 6,500 units of plasma are needed daily in the U.S. January is a critical time for blood donations, which often decline in November and December as people become busy with the holiday season.

On August 7, 2023, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) modified blood donor eligibility guidelines. For the first time in 40 years, blood donor eligibility will be evaluated independent of sex, gender, or sexual orientation, allowing more people will have the opportunity to donate blood. Screening questions on sexual orientation, which prevented gay and bisexual men from donating blood, have been eliminated.

The American Red Cross notes that in most states, donors must be at least 17 years old in most states (16 with parental consent), healthy, and weigh at least 110 lbs. In fact, less than 38% of the U.S. population is eligible to give blood. Some may be turned

away due to illness such as the common cold, being on a particular medication, low iron or having recently traveled outside the United States.

Type O-negative blood and Type AB positive plasma can be transfused to patients of all blood types. Both are always in demand and often in short supply. Donors must wait 56 days before each whole blood donation, although they can donate platelets every seven days, up to 24 times a year.

Want to give blood? Here are some local blood drives this month.

- Saturday, January 6, 2024  
20th Annual Gary Mirliss Memorial Blood Drive, in participation with Brigham, Women's Hospital and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Children's Hospital Boston, and Massachusetts General Hospital, King Philip Middle School, 18 King Street, Norfolk, Mass., 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Appointments at [https://donor.kraft-familyblooddonorcenter.org/donor/schedules/drive\\_schedule/3371](https://donor.kraft-familyblooddonorcenter.org/donor/schedules/drive_schedule/3371)
- Thursday, January 11, 2024  
Franklin Elks, 1077 Pond Street, Franklin, MA  
1-6 p.m., [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org)

- Friday, January 12, 2024  
The Adirondack Club, 800 Chestnut St., Franklin, MA  
1-6 p.m., [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org)
- Monday, January 15, 2024  
Blake Middle School, 24 Pound Street, Medfield, MA 02052  
8 a.m. – 2 p.m., [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org)
- Tuesday, January 16, 2024  
Milford Regional Medical Ctr., 14 Prospect Street, Milford, MA  
9 a.m. – 2 p.m., [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org)
- Friday, January 19, 2024  
Encompass Fitness, 27 Milliston Road, Millis, MA 02054  
1-6 p.m., [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org)
- Saturday, January 20, 2024  
Saint Mary's Parish, 8 Church St., Holliston, MA  
8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org)
- Tuesday, January 23, 2024  
The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, 91 Jordan Road, Franklin, MA  
1-6 p.m., [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org)

- Wednesday, January 24, 2024  
Milford Regional Medical Center, 14 Prospect Street, Milford, MA  
1-6 p.m., [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org)
- Thursday, January 25, 2024  
Franklin Elks, 1077 Pond Street, Franklin, MA  
1-6 p.m., [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org)
- Sunday, January 28, 2024  
Milford Regional Medical Ctr., 14 Prospect Street, Milford, MA  
8 a.m. – 1 p.m., [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org)

The above is just a sampling of local blood drives, but you can also donate blood or platelets blood or platelets at Boston Children's Hospital Blood Donor Center at 333 Longwood Ave. in Boston, as well as the Blood Donor Center at Massachusetts General Hospital, 55 Fruit Street, Boston.

You can also visit the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's "Giving=Living" website to find a local blood drive at <https://www.hhs.gov/givingequalsliving/giveblood/start-donating>.

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# BFCCPS Celebrates Foreign Language Week

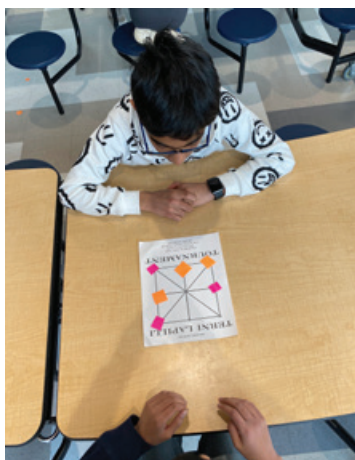
By JENNIFER RUSSO

The Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School (BFCCPS) in Franklin prides itself on enabling students to have an education that is well rounded, incorporating not only standard academic classes, but also a strong focus on visual arts, music, athletics, and foreign languages. Students begin learning French in Kindergarten and by the time they reach high school, have received the equivalent of a French I high school level course. In sixth grade, students also begin learning Latin, which gives them a sturdy base for upper-level grammar and prepares them, should they choose, for Latin II when entering ninth grade.

To solidify the languages and culture even more, the school

celebrated Language Week during the month of December. This includes a Language Night, where French and Latin teachers organized a cultural celebration with live music and tasty treats, and where younger students were able to participate in language learning strategies led by the eighth-grade students. There were also French themed school lunches, a language question of the day, A Terni Lapilli (an ancient strategy board game) tournament for the upper grades and students were encouraged to wear clothing in the colors of the French flag.

Additionally, sixth through eighth grade students created visual projects highlighting French monuments and tombstones, and posters featuring cultural French



Last month, Language Night at BFCCPS celebrated French culture and gave younger students the opportunity to practice language skills with older students. At the charter school, children begin learning French in Kindergarten, and in sixth grade, Latin.

facts, Latin etymology, and classical mythology for the school to enjoy and learn from.

In April, the school's seventh grade class will be taking a group

field trip to Quebec, where they will be able to actively use their language skills and immerse themselves in the French culture even more.

To learn more about BFC-CPS, its Language Arts curriculum and events, visit their website at [www.bfccps.org](http://www.bfccps.org).

# Local Democrats Honor Former Chair

Kevin Tagliaferri, the former chair of the Bellingham Democratic Town Committee was honored at the group's annual meeting/holiday party held on December 6 at the Medway Lotus Restaurant. Present members of the committee, as well as guests who have worked with Kevin over the years on Democratic campaigns, celebrated his ten years of service to the committee. Kevin, who has recently relocated out of town and had to resign as chair, was responsible for resurrecting the moribund committee ten years ago. Under his leadership, Bellingham Democrats became a visible presence in town, holding signs for various

campaigns, sponsoring public forums on a number of issues, taking part in town wide events like the Earth Day clean up, and sponsoring scholarships for outstanding Bellingham Seniors. Lora Davidson, the new Chair of the Committee, presented Kevin with a plaque "in appreciation for ten years of leadership and friendship." Kevin expressed his gratitude at being honored, and pledged that "the fight continues."

Lora, as was Kevin's tradition at the annual holiday party, also reminded the group of the accomplishments of the 2022-2023 year. The Bellingham Democrats successfully transitioned to a new

slate of officers, continued to grant scholarships to deserving students, were Gold Sponsors of the Bellingham Pride Day event, and gave out over a thousand candies at the Trunk or Treat/Pumpkin Stroll. The members also successfully supported the election of

Ann Odabashian and the acceptance of the new charter. Lora reminded the group that with an election year coming, more work remains to be done.

The Bellingham Town Committee is always open to new members. All registered Democrats who are town residents are invited to attend meetings, which

are held on the first Wednesday of most months at the Town Hall. For more information, you can contact Patricia Keppler at (508) 966-0003.



Pictured L-R: Kevin Tagliaferri, outgoing chair of the Bellingham Democratic Town Committee, and Lora Davidson, the new chair

local candidate



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2. Jeff & Kia are traveling to Florida to run the Disney Marathon. While running the race, someone breaks into their hotel and steals their belongings. Would their homeowner's insurance cover the theft even though the belongings were not at their house?
3. During a windstorm, Nick's tree falls onto his neighbor Spencer's shed. Spencer wants Nick to pay for the cleanup and shed since the tree was originally on Nick's property. Is Nick required to pay for the shed and clean up?

Answer 1: Yes. Answer 2: Yes. Answer 3: No. This is considered an 'act of God.' Wherever the tree lands, it is now that person's problem.



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# BVT Student Earns National Recognition from College Board

A Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT) student earned academic honors from the College Board National Recognition Programs, which celebrate underrepresented students who excel academically. Vanessa Lizotte of Bellingham, a senior in Information Technology, has been granted the National African American Recognition Award.

This academic honor can be included in college and scholarship applications and is designed to help students stand out during admissions. Many colleges intentionally recruit awardees

through College Board's Student Search Service™.

"We're happy to recognize Vanessa and acknowledge her academic excellence and hard work. We are incredibly proud of her strong academic performance in the classroom and on the College Board assessments, including PSAT/NMSQT®, PSAT™ 10, and AP® exams," said Superintendent-Director Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick. "This recognition reinforces the great work she has done and will continue to do as she advances her career."

The criteria for eligible students include:



**Pictured, from left to right, are Principal Anthony Steele II, Senior Vanessa Lizotte, and Superintendent-Director Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick. Vanessa Lizotte of Bellingham, a senior in Information Technology at BVT, earned academic honors from the College Board National Recognition Program.**

- GPA of 3.5 or higher.
- PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10 assessment scores that are within the top 10% of assessment takers in each state for each award program or earned a score of 3 or higher
- on two or more AP Exams in 9th and 10th grade.
- Attend school in a rural area or small town, or identify as African American/Black, Hispanic American/Latino, or Indigenous/Native.

Eligible students are invited to apply on BigFuture during their sophomore or junior year and are awarded at the start of the next school year in time to share their achievements in high school as they plan for the future. At the same time, colleges and organizations using College Board's Student Search Service can connect directly with awardees during the recruitment process.

"It's becoming increasingly hard for students to be 'seen' during the college recruitment process. We're exceptionally proud of the National Recognition Programs for celebrating students who are at times overlooked but have shown their outstanding academic abilities," said Tarlin Ray, Senior Vice President of BigFuture at College Board. "This is a benefit not only for students but also for colleges and universities committed to recruiting diverse and talented students."

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Your Money, Your Independence

# If You Fail To Plan, You Are Planning To Fail.

Making New Year's resolutions to improve your financial wellness in 2024?

Do they look familiar to last year's?

As Ben Franklin repeatedly said, "If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail".

Let's help you start by recognizing questionable resolutions, including three destined for failure plus what should be considered for successful planning outcomes.

**Bad Resolution:** *Need to start buying "X" to grow my money.*

Before buying "X", how does fit into your investment strategy within your financial plan?

Over the last 4 years, crypto, I bonds, meme stocks and cash have had their shiny object moments with investors chasing.

If to start 2023 one moved their investment strategy to cash based on 2022 performance of stocks and bonds, well... past performance is no guarantee of future results.

Yes, interest rates rose, and one could find ~4-5% CD's. Yet, through December 15, 2023 on Year-To Date returns, several equity indices have significantly outpaced, and certain bond indices have done as well or better.

Recall as treasury yields fall in anticipation of Federal Reserve action and/or economic outlook, bond funds and ETFs participate in this inverse relationship - interest rates fall, bond



Glenn Brown, CFP

prices rise. When bond prices rise, this increases the value of bond funds/ETFs. Just like in 2022, when rates rose, value of bond funds/ETFs fell.

**Better Resolution:** *Need to save \_\_\_% and take \_\_\_ risk with investments to reach \_\_\_ goal.*

To truly build assets, you need to save a specific percentage each year, take opportunistic or measured (less) risks AND invest towards your established goal(s), not performance that occurred the year before or one market benchmark.

**Bad Resolution:** *Pay down debt.*

Sounds important, but is it? It depends. Tax deductions, interest rates, duration, fixed or variable, inflation, deflation, depreciation, and impact to your future cash flow ensure all debt is not equal.

**Better Resolution:** *Execute a debt reduction plan.*

Access all debt, then prioritize on high-interest debt, variable rates, and unsecured. If down to a 3% or lower mortgage, 2% auto loans, and a MassSave at 0%, then maintain required payments, reap benefits of low, fixed rates in an inflationary environment and allocate towards investments outpacing those rates over time.

An exception, if not at ~40% home equity ownership, can make a case to get there and open a HELOC. Beyond flexibility to access equity built and lower total interest paid, can eliminate the opportunity costs of a large cash position for the "what ifs" in life.

**Bad Resolution:** *Do more for my retirement.*

Buy a lottery ticket, as greater chance of success than this vague "lose weight" resolution tossed by January 10th.

**Better Resolution:** *How do I retire at 55 or semi-retire in 5 years.*

Now you're analyzing cash flows, balance sheet, contribution rates, investment allocations, taxation, work benefits, college funding, planning for the unexpected and desired lifestyle with expenses in retirement. You'll establish a set of base facts, allowing to then create scenarios, see projections, reverse engineer action steps, and track goals within timelines.

Aggressive timelines create urgency, leading to actions that bring you closer the ultimate retirement accomplishment - choice.

Now ask yourself, are your resolutions the same as last year?

What different actions are you going to take to make a difference?

Know what Einstein said about doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

Maybe it's time to socialize your goals, set monthly action items to create fresh start moments and leverage an accountability partner (i.e. Certified Financial Planner) to make your 2024 resolutions happen.

The opinions voiced in this material are for general information only and are not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual.

Glenn Brown is a Holliston resident and owner of PlanDynamic, LLC, www.PlanDynamic.com. Glenn is a fee-only Certified Financial Planner™ helping motivated people take control of their planning and investing, so they can balance kids, aging parents and financial independence.

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**Register O'Donnell Wraps Up  
16th Annual Toys for Tots Drive**

Norfolk County Register of Deeds William P. O'Donnell and Registry Staff distributed donations from the Registry's 16th Annual Toys for Tots Drive to Cpl. Christopher Todd of Franklin, Lance Cpl. Madison Flynn of Foxborough, Pfc. Braylan Quinche, and Pfc. Jeffery Manna, all with the 1st Battalion, 25th Marines, representing Toys for Tots, during a pickup event on Dec. 7.

With the help of the local community, business owners, and staff, the Registry of Deeds collected nearly 100 gifts during the drive. "I would like to thank everyone who generously donated to the Registry's 16th Annual Toys for Tots Drive. We are grateful for the service of all veterans past and present and are, as always, honored to partner with the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve in their annual toy drive, which helps make the holiday brighter for so many," said Register of Deeds William P. O'Donnell.

Since 2007, the Registry of Deeds has collected over 1,700 toy donations for the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots program.

This year marks the 76th anniversary of Toys for Tots. The program was established in 1947 when the wife of a Marine major wanted to donate a Raggedy Ann doll for Christmas

but couldn't find an organization to accept it.

The U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots program's mission is to help less fortunate children experience the joy and happiness associated with Christmas.

The program operates in more than 800 cities and towns throughout all 50 states. Since its start, the national program has delivered over 652 million toys.

To learn more about Registry of Deed's events and initiatives, like us on Facebook® at facebook.com/NorfolkDeeds or follow us on Twitter® at twitter.com/NorfolkDeeds and Instagram® at Instagram.com/NorfolkDeeds.

The Norfolk County Registry of Deeds is located at 649 High Street in Dedham. The Registry is a resource for homeowners, title examiners, mortgage lenders, municipalities and others with a need for secure, accurate, accessible land record information. All land record research information can be found on the Registry's website www.norfolkdeeds.org. Residents in need of assistance can contact the Registry of Deeds Customer Service Center via telephone at (781) 461-6101 or email us at registerodonnell@norfolkdeeds.org.



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# Country Christmas Fair a Huge Success

Thank you to all those who attended the St. Blaise Country Christmas Fair! The parish hall was transformed to include a Country Store featuring jars of soup and dessert ingredients, homemade Christmas snacks and mulled cider packets, decorations, and many other items found in a typical New England country store. The candy section was especially crowded with kids picking out favorites. The kids' games section was busy all day too with games like pick-a-pocket, reindeer ring toss, and

snowman knock down. The craft table had many Christmas-themed handmade items such as Christmas centerpieces, key rings and ornaments. Santa and Mrs. Claus enjoyed greeting the kids as they told Santa their Christmas wishes.

The Main Raffle featured 40 gifts, including \$150 gift cards to Walmart and Market Basket! The Money Raffle, will be drawn on January 14, after the 10 a.m. Mass, and tickets are still available for purchase after each Mass at St. Blaise.



The adults had a great time playing the Card Game with all kinds of themed baskets as prizes. The kitchen supplied a tasty variety of food and hot mulled apple cider enjoyed by many visitors! And coffee and tea were available free of charge! Many purchased individual cupcakes, muffins and cookie packs from the Christmas Bakery for their breakfast or dessert after their lunch. Pies, cakes and breads were also bought to take home to enjoy with family and friends. A delicious pasta and meatball meal for all volunteers capped off the day.

The committee co-chairs, Sue Garten, Diane Gaughran and Mary Tucker, want to thank all who donated raffle gifts and the volunteers for their time, work and donations which made this fair possible.

The St. Blaise community wishes you the joy, peace, hope and love of the Christ Child this Christmas season and into the New Year.



Patti Goddard, Mrs. Clause, Santa Clause with Faith Goddard on his lap

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# The Cataract Surgery Center of Milford

## The Gold Standard for Surgical Eyecare

BY: ROGER M. KALDAWY, M.D.  
MILFORD FRANKLIN EYE CENTER

The Milford-Franklin Eye Center - Cataract Surgery Center of Milford is pleased to announce our recertification by the American Association for Accreditation of Ambulatory Surgery Facilities (QUADA). This accreditation authority sets the Gold Standard and certifies thousands of facilities worldwide. We received no deficiencies, achieved full compliance, and earned a perfect score.

An accreditation certification by QUADA provides peace of mind, indicating our surgery center's highest standards in patient safety, surgical results, infectious disease control, and healthcare quality. We take pride in our staff's success in navigating this extremely strict and tedious process.

Milford-Franklin Eye Center has been delivering excellent eye care to the community for four decades. With offices in Milford, Franklin, and Millis, along

with our award-winning surgery center in Milford and a support staff of 60, we stand as the leading medical and surgical eye care center in the area and one of the major eye care centers in the State. We are also one of the rare ophthalmology practices to own and operate our surgical center, the Cataract Surgery Center of Milford. No longer do you need to travel miles and hours for cataract surgery! Our experienced eye physicians/surgeons, along with four optometrists, provide comprehensive and excellent eye care for the entire family.

Milford-Franklin Eye Center acknowledges that you have choices when it comes to eye care. We set ourselves apart by focusing on excellent and advanced eye care and treating our patients as if each one is family. Our surgical results rival those of major centers in Boston, and we can prove it. We are deeply rooted in the community, most of us living here, and our primary focus is to serve the community. While some competing 'fran-

chise' practices have a satellite office in the area with an occasional ophthalmologist, we are here full-time, five days a week, with an eye surgeon ready to see you in case of an emergency. Did you know that seeing a surgeon from a 'franchise' practice means you are outside their referral network and your expenses may be higher? We are local and in the network of your local primary care physicians. In case there is a surgical emergency after cataract surgery, we see you immediately. With other practices, you may have to go to Boston to be seen. We are the only dedicated practice taking emergency call responsibilities at Milford Regional Hospital and have been doing the same for decades.

Our surgery center is Medicare-certified, State-licensed, and QUADA accredited. This center stands as a beacon of excellence in ophthalmic care, showcasing a state-of-the-art facility dedicated to restoring vision with precision and innovation. Equipped with cutting-edge technology and staffed by a team of highly skilled and experienced professionals,

the center is at the forefront of cataract and glaucoma surgery. From advanced laser systems that enhance surgical accuracy to personalized treatment plans tailored to each patient's unique needs, the Cataract Surgery Center of Milford prioritizes both efficacy and patient comfort. The facility's commitment to staying abreast of the latest developments in the field ensures that individuals seeking cataract surgery receive the highest standard of care, making it a trusted destination for those looking to regain clarity of vision in a modern and sophisticated setting.

What about office-based cataract surgery? Some franchise practices are advocating for performing cataract surgery in their office. Unapproved by Medicare and major ophthalmology professional societies, this office-based surgery raises significant concerns about patient safety and the quality of care provided. Performing cataract surgery in an office setting may lack the rigorous standards and sterile environments maintained in dedicated surgical centers. The absence of dedicated anesthesia professionals and comprehensive medical support can compromise patient comfort and safety during surgery. Patients are advised to prioritize their well-being and consider established surgical centers with experienced medical teams and top-notch facilities to ensure optimal outcomes for cataract surgery. For instance, at the Cataract Surgery Center of Milford, a dedicated MD anesthesiologist is present full-time for all procedures, and your comfort and safety are titrated by using an IV line, which is lacking in the office-based surgery model.

With the new year 2024, we are proud to continue to serve our communities as we did for four decades.

Dr. Roger Kaldawy is an experienced eye physician and surgeon. Dr. Kaldawy, trained at the University of Rochester and the University of Iowa. As Assistant Professor at Boston University, he directed the Cornea and External Disease program, influencing physicians worldwide. A pioneer in DSAEK corneal transplantation, he performed over 30,000 cataract surgeries, introducing advanced implants and bladeless laser assisted Femto cataract surgery at

the Cataract and Laser Surgery Center of Milford, where he also serves as Medical Director.

Dr. Dan Liu earned her medical degree from Rutgers New Jersey Medical School in 2016. She was elected to the medical honor society, Alpha Omega Alpha. Completing her ophthalmology residency at Albany Medical Center, Dr. Liu received multiple accolades. She pursued fellowship training in Cornea, External Diseases, and Anterior Segment Surgery at Tufts Medical Center in Boston, Massachusetts. Dr. Liu specializes in Cataract surgery, ORA technology, Cornea transplants, and various eye disorders. She is affiliated with several medical associations.

Dr. Arroyo, our vitreoretinal specialist, earned his degrees from Amherst College, Yale, and Duke. With 20+ years of experience, he's published extensively and held leadership roles, including past president of the New England Ophthalmological Society.

Dr. Shalin Zia, O.D., a Purdue and Indiana University graduate, brings extensive private practice experience, excelling in routine eye care, contact lenses, and disease diagnosis.

Dr. Adams, a John Carroll University graduate, has advanced training in corneal pathology, specialty contact lenses, ocular disease, and laser refractive surgery.

Dr. Purvi Patel, OD, a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry, brings teaching and leadership experience from the New England College of Optometry. Her clinical interests include diabetes, glaucoma, and community-based eye care.

At Milford Franklin Eye Center and The Cataract Surgery Center of Milford, our focus is on you, your vision, excellent surgical results without compromising your safety or comfort. You come first. We are available in your backyard and proud to offer world-class cataract surgery closer to home: Here in Milford! In a surgery center facility, not in an office. Our optical shop has its own dedicated lab and can cut and finish your glasses while you wait. All new patients receive a free pair of select glasses.



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# Santa Had a Very Successful Ride around Bellingham

Santa, along with his elves, traveled throughout the town on Nov. 24-25. His trip was organized and overseen by members of the Bellingham Lions Club.

Santa Claus was especially grateful for the kindness and generosity of the town's residents for their donations totaling \$1,500 for the Loaves and Fishes food pantry. "This will benefit those in need, especially over the holidays," he said.

He also expressed his gratitude to the Bellingham Fire Department, Bellingham Police Department, and Heather and Rey from First Impressions Photo & Video Service for volunteering their time.



## Ladies of St. Anne Enjoy Christmas Gala

Games and presents topped off a wonderful gathering at Empire Buffet in Woonsocket. Forty-six people, including Father Al Faretra and Deacon Rich Brennan, enjoyed delicious appetizers, main dishes, and desserts.

The Ladies' January meeting will take place in the parish hall on the 11th at 6 p.m. It will be Movie Night! A brief business meeting with pizza and beverages will begin the evening before starting the movie (always a surprise selection) with popcorn. At intermission, ice cream sundaes will be served while the raffle is conducted.

We want to remind all women Bellingham residents 18+ they are invited to come to a meeting to learn more about the Ladies



of St. Anne Sodality and what we do to benefit the community.

For more information you can contact President Jay Castonguay, (774) 262-9605.

### EYES

*continued from page 12*

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and going strong. In 2024, we remain dedicated to the best in eye medicine and surgery closer to home.

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# Coming Up at the Bellingham Senior Center

The Bellingham Senior Center is located at 40 Blackstone St., Bellingham. Reach them at (508) 966-0398 or visit [www.bellinghamma.org](http://www.bellinghamma.org).

**Sign Up for Free Tax Preparation and Filing:** AARP Foundation Tax-Aide volunteers will help you prepare and file your return. AARP volunteers are IRS certified and can help you file a complete and accurate return – both federal and state.

The service is free, offered at our Senior Center, and, while AARP is focused on taxpayers over 50 with low to moderate income, open to anyone of any age.

Appointments begin on February 8 and continue through March. Call the Senior Center at (508) 966-0398 for more info. and an appointment.

**Boston History in Poetry:** The history of Boston is a fascinating aspect of the social history and development of the city, and in this lecture Anthony Sammarco will discuss aspects of the history from the 17th through the 20th centuries in photographs as well as poems.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow immortalized Paul Revere in his poem *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere*; Oliver Wendell Holmes would coin Boston as the Hub of the Universe in his poem *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*; Lydia Maria Child would commemorate her family Thanksgivings at her grandparents' house in Medford with the poem *Over the Bridge and Through the Woods to Grandfather's House We Go*.

Join us for this informative session on Friday, January 19, at 2 p.m. Please call ahead.

**SATURDAY COFFEE AT THE VFW:** From 9-11 a.m., visit the VFW on South Main Street for free coffee and assorted goodies including bagels the last Saturday of each month.

**MEDICARE ADVANTAGE OPTIONS:** The general Open Enrollment period ended on December 7th. However, if you currently have a Medicare Advantage plan and would like to make a change to or just compare other Advantage plans you still have time. From January 1 — March 31 you can make changes. Medicare.gov is a great site to make comparisons, or you can set up an appointment with Judy Higgins by calling the Senior Center at (508) 966-3098.

**A Funny Program About Funny Programs:** The Greatest Sitcoms of All Time :

Award-winning author and pop culture historian Marty Gitlin hosts this fun and enlightening presentation based on his book, *The Greatest Sitcoms of All Time*. He is the only author to rank the best of the best, including "I Love Lucy," "The Honeymooners," "The Andy Griffith Show," "Get Smart," "All in the Family," "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," "Cheers," "Seinfeld," "The Golden Girls," "Frasier" and "The Big Bang Theory." He will show funny snippets of these shows and others, challenge attendees with sitcom trivia (including identifying cool theme songs!), discuss the criteria he used to rank 70 years of sitcoms and talk about how they have evolved over the decades in humor, presentation, and content. Join on the fun on Friday, February 23, at 1 p.m. Please call ahead to reserve your spot.



# Lunch at the Senior Center Was Enjoyed by All



On Saturday, December 2, the Bellingham Lions Club continued the tradition of holding an in-person lunch at the Bellingham Senior Center. After three years of providing the lunch as a drive-thru, everyone agreed it was great being back inside.

Seniors throughout Bellingham enjoyed a full meal consisting of turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, squash, gravy, cranberry sauce, and desserts.

A big thank-you to those at the senior center who took the reservations and helped during the event: PJ's Smokehouse, who provided the lunch; Mike Soter, who provided dessert; Bellingham Boy Scouts Troop 14 and the Bellingham High School National Honor Society students, who helped that day. The Lions are looking forward to doing this again next year.

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# House Passes Legislation to Lower Prescription Drug Prices for Medicaid Patients

The House of Representatives passed a bill co-lead by Congressman Jake Auchincloss (D, MA-04), the *Drug Price Transparency in Medicaid Act*, to lower prescription drug prices for Medicaid patients, as part of the broader *Lower Costs, More Transparency Act*. The bipartisan legislation takes important steps to rein in Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs) – the middlemen of drug pricing – by prohibiting the use of spread pricing in Medicaid programs. The package will now be sent to the Senate for consideration.

The bill was introduced by Congressman Earl L. “Buddy” Carter (R, GA-01), and co-led by Congressman Vicente Gonzalez (D, TX-34), Congresswoman Elise Stefanik (R, NY-21), Congresswoman Deborah Ross (D, NC-02), and Congressman Rick Allen (R, GA-12).

“For far too long, PBMs have been allowed to collect taxpayer

dollars without reducing the costs of drugs for Medicaid patients. Increasing transparency in pricing and cracking down on PBMs will put money back where it belongs – into the pockets of patients dependent on life-saving medication. This bill builds on the work done last Congress to lower the cost of drugs and finally holds PBMs accountable,” said Congressman Auchincloss.

Throughout his time in office, Auchincloss has made lowering prescription drug prices a top priority. He has supported efforts to cap out-of-pocket costs for seniors, continue Medicare negotiation of drug prices, and increase access to cutting-edge gene therapies for individuals with rare diseases. The Congressman is also a cosponsor of the *HELP Copays Act* and the *Protecting Patients Against PBM Abuses Act* to ensure cost is not a barrier to patients receiving the medications they need.

# Bishop Feehan Announces First Quarter Honor Roll 2023-2024

Vice Principal for Academics, Charlotte Lourenco, is proud to announce the Honor Roll students for the first quarter. Honor Roll is a recognition of high-performing students based on the student’s overall average in

any given quarter, regardless of the levels of their classes. Bishop Feehan has three levels of Honor Roll. First Honors is awarded to students whose overall average in that quarter is grade 93.00 or higher, Second Honors is grade

90.00 or higher, and Third Honors is 85.00 or higher, with no individual grade below 80.

For a full list, including local students, visit <https://www.bishopfeehan.com/apps/news/article/1850951>

# 20th Annual Gary Mirliss Memorial Blood Drive

Please plan to join us for the

## 20th Annual Gary Mirliss Memorial Blood Drive

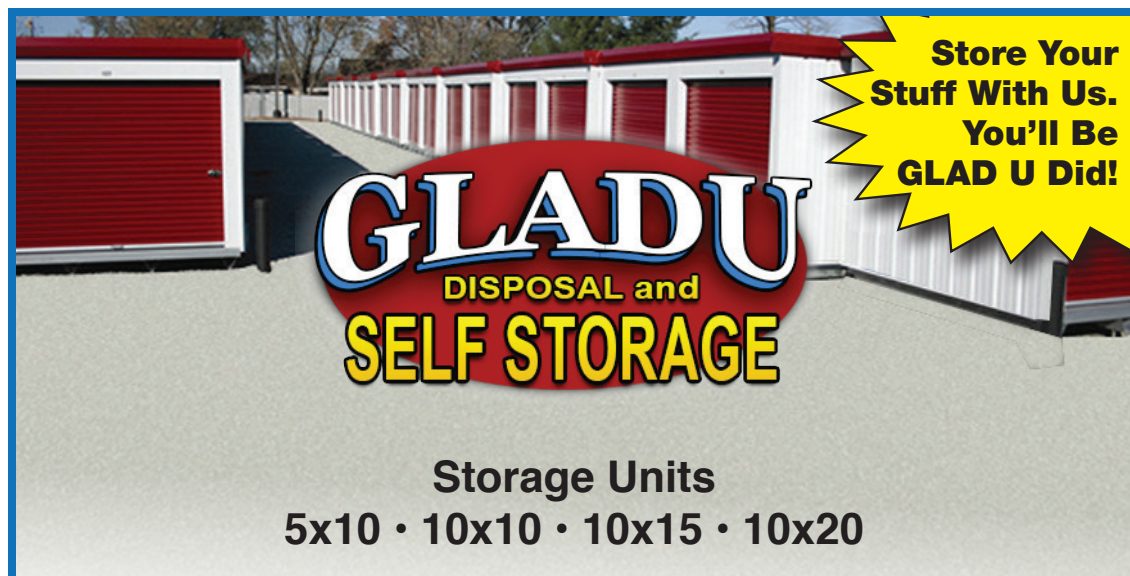
In participation with Brigham, Women’s Hospital and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Children’s Hospital Boston, and Massachusetts General Hospital

What better way to end the holiday season than by donating blood.

- DATE:** Saturday, January 6, 2024
- PLACE:** King Philip Middle School  
18 King Street, Norfolk, MA
- TIME:** 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Walk-ins will be accommodated on a 1st come 1st serve basis, so we recommend that you make an appointment! Spots are filling up fast!

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# Bellingham Public Library News & Events for January

For updates to library programs and services, please see the library website, [www.bellingham-library.org](http://www.bellingham-library.org). Click on the red alert banner on the top of the page for details.

Additional details about library programs are available on the library calendar at <https://bit.ly/3xMECCt>

## January Hours

Monday - Thursday 9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Friday & Saturday 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

The library is closed on Monday, January 1st for the New Year's Holiday and Monday, January 15th for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday.

## Highlighted Programs

### Chess Club Returns! Session starts January 4th and ends March 28th

4th-9th graders are invited to join Bellingham resident and nationally ranked chess player Meghana for a return of our Beginner's Chess Club. The group will meet on Thursdays from 4:30-5:30 p.m. in the Conference Room at the library. Attendees are welcome to stay from 5:30-6 p.m. for practice play. There will be no meeting during February school vacation week. As the lessons in each session build on the content from the previous session, attendees should plan on attending all sessions. A free chess set will be awarded to all attendees with perfect attendance. Limited to 9 participants so please register early. Please note: registrant email addresses will be shared with Meghana so she can communicate directly with participants as a group about the program.

### Indoor Growing with Blackstone Valley Veggie Gardens

Monday, January 22nd at 6:30 p.m.

Grow all kinds of plants, from ornamentals to edibles, from the comfort of your own home.

Grow hydroponically or with LED lights. Learn all about self-watering plants and soil created especially for indoor growing. The mission of the Blackstone Valley Veggie Gardens is to inspire people to grow their own fresh produce. Registration is preferred. Sponsored by the Friends of the Bellingham Library.

### Save the Date! Bellingham Library Art & Photography Show with music by Ric Allendorf

Saturday, February 17th from 6-8 p.m.

Did you participate in our Photography Show in 2019? If you did (or even if you didn't) now is your chance to showcase your art and photography at the library. Details will be on the library website soon, but save the date and start thinking about what art and photography you would like to enter into the show!

## After School Programs

Registration is mandatory for children in grades 4-6 to attend the ASK program.

- ASK Program hours 2:30-4:45 p.m.
- The Teen Room is open for grades 7-12 from 2-4:45 p.m.
- Check the library website for details on the programs. <https://bit.ly/3QzITpI>

## Ongoing Children's January Programs

First Saturday Fun - Saturday, January 6th at 11 a.m. Make winter animal artwork!

Ring a Ding - Mondays & Thursdays at 10:15 a.m. Drop in! No session school vacation week.

Read to Freedom the Reading Dog - Mondays from 6-7 p.m. Sign up for a 15-minute time slot!

Sensory Story Time - Tuesdays at 10:15 a.m. Please register for each session. No session school vacation week.

Adult/Child Book Club - For kids in grades 6-9 and the adult in their life who loves to read.

Meets monthly, contact Diane Nelson, [dnelson@cwmar.org](mailto:dnelson@cwmar.org) if you are interested in joining! Check the library calendar for details on the January meeting date and time.

## Adult Programs

**Book Discussion Group** - Generally meets the 1st Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. Attend in person or on Zoom. Contact Cecily Christensen, [cchriste@cwmar.org](mailto:cchriste@cwmar.org) for more information.

Our upcoming titles are:  
January: *The Keeper of Stories* by Sally Page

February: *The Night Ship* by Jess Kidd

March: *The Little Paris Bookshop* by Nina George

**Writing Group for Adults** - Tuesday, February 9th at 6:30 p.m.

Writers, readers, listeners - come join us! Local area writers Amy Bartelloni and Marjorie Turner Hollman welcome the public to an evening of reading and listening. Hear what local writers are working on, and share what you are working on. Works of fiction or non-fiction, all are welcome. Reading limit is 9 minutes per reader, with a brief opportunity for positive, personal comments only. To participate contact Marjorie Turner Hollman at [marjorie@marjorie-turner.com](mailto:marjorie@marjorie-turner.com).

**Friends of the Library Annual Meeting** - Tuesday, January 9th at 7 p.m.

All current and prospective members of the Friends of the

Library are encouraged to join us for this once-a-year annual meeting. Andrea Fiorello of the Massachusetts Library Association's Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibilities Committee will be providing a short presentation on the current climate around intellectual freedom and book banning issues libraries are facing. Learn about the fundraising work of the Friends of the Library and how you can get involved. This meeting will be a hybrid meeting, so please register to let us know if you'll be coming in person or attending online. All registrants will receive the Zoom link.

**Library Board of Trustees Meeting** - Thursday, January 11th at 7 p.m. in the Conference Room.

### Virtual Ask-A-Lawyer Program with Attorney Brian T. Salisbury

Monday, January 22nd starting at 5 p.m.

Local attorney Brian T. Salisbury of the law firm Doherty, Dugan, Cannon, Raymond & Weil, PC will meet with you individually through Zoom to discuss any legal questions you may have. Appointments are 20 minutes long and are free. Appointments are between 5 and 7:30 pm. Register for an appointment and you will receive the Zoom link close to the appointment date. You will be asked to choose an appointment time when you register. Your registration with your email address will go to Attorney Salisbury so he can send you the Zoom link.

Note: The Bellingham Library Ask-A-Lawyer Program is a limited pro bono legal service provided by Attorney Brian T. Salisbury and is strictly limited to 20-minute consultations regarding legal questions that you may have. Unless otherwise agreed in writing, Attorney Salisbury will not provide legal representation in any legal matter discussed.

**Yoga for the Seasons** - Tuesdays at 8:30 a.m. Check the library calendar for details and to register.

**Bellingham Skein Artists** - Wednesdays at 6 p.m.

Do you enjoy knitting, crocheting, or any of the other fiber arts? Join us on Wednesdays! All skill levels are welcome, including beginners. Please bring your own materials. No registration required.

**Drop in Sewing/Craft Night** - Thursdays from 5:15 to 7:45 p.m.

Join members of your community for a night of sewing, quilting, knitting, or any other creative project you are working on.

- This is an independent setting for you to work on your current project
- Please bring your own supplies- supplies are not available
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# Senators Markey, Paul Celebrate Bipartisan Committee Passage of Lifesaving Methadone Expansion Legislation

MOTAA Would Allow Doctors Outside Opioid Treatment Programs to Prescribe Methadone that Could Be Picked Up at a Pharmacy

Washington, D.C. (December 12, 2023) – Senator Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), chair of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Subcommittee on Primary Health and Retirement Security, and Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) issued the following statement after the Senate HELP Committee passed the *Modern-*

*izing Opioid Treatment Access Act* (MOTAA), legislation to allow board certified addiction medicine and addiction psychiatry doctors registered with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to prescribe methadone that patients could pick up at a pharmacy. The bipartisan legislation would represent the first major reform to methadone in half a century and is supported by hundreds of clinicians and medical organizations.

“Methadone for opioid use

disorder is locked behind arcane laws that criminalize and stigmatize people in recovery. The experts and evidence are clear: this outdated system is costing lives, and we should no longer stand by as outdated federal law keeps people from treatment they need no matter where they live. We are pleased that my colleagues are joining with me in passing the *Modernizing Opioid Treatment Access Act*. Together, we took an essential step toward reducing stigma, expanding access, and

saving lives in communities all across the country. We will keep fighting until the Modernizing Opioid Treatment Access Act is signed into law.”

In March, Senators Markey and Paul, along with Representatives Donald Norcross (NJ-01) and Don Bacon (NE-02) introduced their bipartisan and bicameral MOTAA. In December 2022, Senator Markey secured his bipartisan *Opioid Treatment Access Act (OTAA)*—legislation that reduces wait times

for patients qualifying for methadone medication treatment and expands access to methadone clinics—into the end-of-year omnibus spending package. That same month, Senator Markey also applauded proposed changes by the Department of Health and Human Services to remove barriers to OUD treatment, such as allowing people to take home doses of methadone medication, which are key provisions included in the OTAA.

# MassBay Offers Free College Courses to Area High Schools

Local high school students are eligible to take a free class at MassBay Community College through the state-funded Commonwealth Dual Enrollment Partnership (CDEP). This is the ninth year MassBay has offered free dual enrollment courses for qualified high school students, and this year MassBay, is collaborating with Bellingham

High School, Framingham High School, Keefe Technical High School, Natick High School, Hopkinton High School, and Needham High School to offer the free classes to eligible juniors and seniors.

These college-level courses will be taught by MassBay Community College faculty and are credit bearing for both high

school and college. MassBay credits are transferable to college and university Associate and Bachelor degree programs.

Classes will be offered online and in person, with two classes on the new MassBay Framingham campus located at 490 Franklin Street. Students can take one of the following general education courses:


- Contemporary Nutrition
- Principles of Marketing
- Health Careers Exploration
- Critical Thinking
- Introduction to Communication

the course, these students are one step closer to completing a degree or certificate, saving time and money for them and their families.”

For more information about MassBay’s free dual enrollment college courses being offered to eligible high school students this spring, or to register for the virtual information session, please contact Elaine Rosenberg at [erosenburg@massbay.edu](mailto:erosenburg@massbay.edu), or visit <https://www.massbay.edu/cdep-dual-enrollment>.

Registration is now open for the spring 2024 semester at MassBay. Classes are online and on campus, starting January 22, 2024.

“I’m delighted MassBay is once again offering the CDEP dual enrollment classes this spring,” said MassBay Associate Vice President of Enrollment Management Lisa Slavin. “CDEP enables high school students to participate in a college-level class while still in high school, exposing them to new topics, professors, and rigor. Once they successfully complete



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# 2024 Metrowest Student Film Festival Seeks Submissions

## Event Presented by The Center for Arts in Natick

The Center for Arts in Natick is pleased to present the MetroWest Student Film Festival, featuring the work of talented students from the cities and towns of Boston MetroWest.

Now in its 6th year, MWSFF cordially invites high school age residents between the ages of 14 and 19 who are current high school students and live in the following 39 cities and towns of MetroWest Massachusetts:

Acton, Ashland, Bedford, Bellingham, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Dedham, Dover, Framingham, Franklin, Groton, Harvard, Holliston, Hopkinton, Hudson, Lexington, Lincoln, Littleton, Marlborough, Maynard, Medfield, Medway, Milford, Millis, Natick, Needham, Sherborn, Southborough, Stow, Sudbury, Walpole, Waltham, Wayland, Wellesley, Westborough, Westford, Weston, and Westwood.

The Center for Arts in Natick is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) arts organization dedicated to presenting arts programs of the highest standard that are available to everyone.

The MWSFF is a student film festival dedicated to showcasing the talents and creativity of the region's youth by providing an opportunity for young filmmakers and production teams to explore and create stories through motion pictures. Finalists among these student-created films will

be shared with friends, families and the community at-large in TCAN's state-of-the-art screening room.

We envision the MWSFF as the largest student film festival of its kind in the region. Being part of this festival provides entrants the opportunity to:

- Share films with the regional community
- Screen films in an independent, state-of-the-art cinema
- Network with a jury of judges from the industry, and

other film makers in the region - Attend the festival premiere showcase

\*\*\* Please be sure to fully read the Festival rules and eligibility for submissions. Entries that do not meet requirements will be automatically disqualified. \*\*\*

Rules and terms can be found on the submission website:

<https://filmfreeway.com/MetroWestStudentFilmFestival>

# US Lt. General Braga Speaks at Bishop Feehan, His Alma Mater

ATTLEBORO, MA – It's not every day that a double-rotor, Chinook helicopter touches down at Bishop Feehan High School. But that was the vehicle of choice for Feehan graduate, Lt. Gen. Jonathan P. Braga – Commanding General, United States Army Special Operations Command at his Alma Mater, Bishop Feehan High School when he came to share his perspective on living a life of purpose with the school's 1090 students, staff and invited guests.

Braga advised the students to "find their why" and to pursue that why with passion. For him, that why is "making a difference in people's lives." And he has "loved every step of the journey."



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## Sports

# BHS Quintet Hopes to End Two-year Tourney Drought

By KEN HAMWEY,  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

The 2023-24 edition of the Bellingham High boys' basketball team has experience, depth, and athleticism, and it's those attributes that make coach T.J. Chiappone optimistic that the Blackhawks will end a two-year absence in the post-season play-offs.

Chiappone's goals this season are to compete for the Tri Valley League Small Division title, qualify for the tournament, improve daily and win the Hutchinson Tournament. The 51-year-old coach believes his objectives are realistic and can be achieved.

"We lost only two seniors from last year's team, and we've got 10 returnees with experience," said Chiappone, who's in his 14th season as head coach. "Our depth is also a plus, enabling us to rely on our bench. We're athletic, our defense is dependable, and solid

play from our backcourt will be the catalyst for our offense."

The return of senior point guard Ross Priscella is a prime reason why Chiappone is upbeat about ending the tourney drought. Priscella was a TVL all-star last year and he led the team in scoring (13.8 points a game), assists (3.8 per game), and was second in rebounding.

"Ross is a two-time captain who's a difference-maker," Chiappone said. "He can control the tempo in key situations. He's dynamic with the ball, he sees the court well, and he's instinctive. A good passer, he's a shoot-first point guard. We think he's the top point guard in the small division."

Two other guards who'll be counted on are seniors Dasha Domercant and Ryan Nolan. Domercant averaged 10 points last year and led the squad in rebounding with five a game.



Bellingham High's basketball team will be led by its captains, from left, Tyler Ladouceur, Ross Priscella and Joe Corsi, and its coaches — T.J. Chiappone, back row left, and Rich Blue.

"Dasha plays the two-guard," Chiappone noted. "He's quick, has speed, can pass, and hit threes. He was the TVL's Small Division MVP in football. Ryan can play both guard positions. He's our best outside shooter and he's capable from the three-point arc. He'll play a pivotal role against a zone defense.

Senior Tyler Ladouceur is a two-year captain who returns at forward. "Tyler's strength is rebounding," Chiappone offered, "but he plays like a point forward. He sees the floor well and I'm hoping he improves his scoring."

Senior Jerry Domercant will fill the quick forward role. He showed lots of promise his sophomore year, but did not play last season. "It's nice to have him back this year," Chiappone said. "Jerry is the best athlete at the high school. He's quick and physical. He'll guard our opponents' top offensive players."

Senior Alex Hughes is a top-notch defender, and Chiappone admires his defensive presence. "Alex is a physical player who is tenacious on the defensive end," he emphasized.

Two other key components are senior captain Joe Corsi at forward or center and junior guard Max Gamble. "Joe has worked hard on defense and

rebounding and has become a leader as a senior," Chiappone offered. "Max's defensive ability on the ball has been outstanding. His ability on the defensive end fits in nicely with our pressure defense approach."

Three players who'll alternate between forward and center are seniors C.J. Fama, and Latrey Barche, and sophomore Wyatt Callery. "We'll rely on them to rebound, protect the basket, and provide energy off the bench," Chiappone said.

A physical education teacher at the high school for 28 years, Chiappone has a capable staff of assistants. They include Rich Blue (varsity), Rob Evans (jayeve coach), Kevin Gruppiso (jayeve assistant), Brian Martin (freshmen) and J.J. Newcombe (middle school).

A native of Bellingham, Chiappone relies on an athletic philosophy that combines winning, reaching one's potential and having fun. "It's important that the players enjoy their high school experience and be good ambassadors for their school," he said.

Chiappone also hopes his players learn some valuable life lessons from athletics.

"Learning how to overcome adversity is a great lesson that sports teach," he emphasized. "Players can also learn how

to be quality leaders and good teammates. Time management is another key lesson along with respecting your opponent. As much as I want our players to be competitive on the court, I also want them to be kind off the court."

The Blackhawks defensive style this season will be different. Chiappone will be employing an up-tempo, pressure defense instead of a half-court approach. "On offense, we'll push the ball and hope for some easy baskets," he said.

One of the team's goals is to battle for the TVL Small Division crown, and that objective is a definite possibility. Chiappone believes the contending squads will be Norton, Medway and Dedham. "Medway is a well-coached, veteran group, Norton is a traditionally strong program and Dedham is always in the mix," he noted.

At the Bulletin's deadline, the Blackhawks had a 1-1 record, defeating Blackstone Valley Tech and losing to Dover-Sherborn.

Last year's squad, which finished at 4-16, had some growing pains. Now, 10 players from that contingent are back and they're eager to provide quality experience, depth, and athleticism.

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# Sports

## Trying to Oust His Brother

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Growing up Landry Fitzgerald was first introduced to wrestling through his older (some ten years) brother Damian, and now he enters his senior season with the Bellingham-Blackstone Valley co-op wrestling program looking to write his own history.

“He would wrestle myself and brother when we were younger, and being so much older, he was a beast,” Fitzgerald said. “Having gone through this transition with him I knew that I wanted to beat him, but I’d have to get involved in combat sports.

Being that much younger, Fitzgerald occasionally watched his older brother wrestle, but never really understood much about the sport. The only thing swirling about in his brain was that he had to get involved with the sport and eventually take down his older brother on the mat.

Being a football player for all his life, he decided to get involved with wrestling when he entered high school. Unfortunately, his freshman year was the year of COVID, and he would not be able to get onto the mats just yet. Following that year, Fitzgerald was finally able to give wrestling a shot as a sophomore, but standing in his way of wrestling with the varsity team was a first-year senior wrestler.

“Having no availability to wrestle my freshman year, I had to wait until my sophomore season,” he said. “But, once I was able to wrestle, there was a senior in my weight class, and he was much stronger than I was, so he won the majority of the wrestle-offs, and he would compete in the varsity meets.”

Eventually, Fitzgerald would see some action for the Bellingham co-op squad and when the senior wrestler went down with an injury late in the season, he would receive the chance he was looking for – to wrestle on a consistent basis with the varsity team.

The sophomore would take the chance that was given to him and never looked back. Finish-

ing up the regular season, he got a chance to compete in the Division 2 Sectionals. Here he would face off against the very same kid with whom he opened his varsity wrestling career.

“The first time we wrestled, he whooped me pretty good,” Fitzgerald said. “At the Sectionals, he still beat me, but it was a much closer match.”

After being knocked out in the first round, Fitzgerald continued to wrestle in the consolation round, where he won enough matches to move onto the State Tournament.

“Being that I was wrestling in the Sectionals for the first time, I didn’t think that I would do that great. It was overwhelming, but I continued to stick with what I knew, and it got me the opportunity to advance,” Fitzgerald said. “At the States I didn’t win at all; it was so much of a shock to me. So many people watching you at all times, and the wrestlers were all good.”

During his second year he was able to finish seventh in his weight class, but found that he was disappointed with his finish as he had beaten both the kids that finished in fifth and sixth place in the States during the regular season. So needless to say, this year, his final with the squad, he is looking for nothing but to be the absolute bet in the heavy weight class.

“I knew what my faults were, and I worked on them in the off-season in addition to hitting the weight room hard making me faster and stronger,” he said. “The ultimate goal is to win the Division 2 State Championship. It’s an obtainable goal, as last year I was up against seniors, while I was a junior. I have the upper hand this year with an extra year under my belt.”

According to Coach Tom Forbes, Fitzgerald’s goal is there for the taking. Last season the junior finished the season at 21-5 while winning the Wayland Holiday Tournament, the Cape Cod Tournament, the Vocational States and finished second at the Division 2 Central Sectionals.



Senior wrestler Landry Fitzgerald, in the Bellingham-Blackstone Valley co-op wrestling program, has hopes of winning a State Championship this year.

“Landry is a tough, hard-working kid that I can not say enough about; he truly inspires the other wrestlers,” Forbes said. “As a third-year wrestler, who had never wrestled prior to high school, he has learned and adapted, and today he is an animal on the mat.”

Following high school, Fitzgerald would really like to continue with wrestling.

“If an offer came for me to wrestle in college I’d definitely take it as I love the sport and want to continue with it,” he said.

As he wrestles through his senior season toward his goal of winning a State Championship, Fitzgerald has one other thought on his mind – beating his older brother.

“If we were to actually wrestle and he doesn’t use any of his jujitsu and choke holds, I’d definitely beat him,” Fitzgerald said. “I guess I’ll have to take up jujitsu next to be on his par, and I’m sure that it would also help me with my wrestling.”



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# Sports

## Mental Toughness Keys BHS Eleven to TVL Division Title

By KEN HAMWEY,  
BULLETIN SPORTS WRITER

The 2023 Bellingham High football team personified mental toughness and resiliency.

The Blackhawks rebounded from an 0-3 record to start the season, won six straight, then finished their year by beating Norton to clinch the Tri Valley League's Small Division championship.

Coach Dan Haddad's squad ended its season at 7-4 overall

but won all five of its games against the small division teams.

The Blackhawks lost their first three games by a total of five points. They bowed to Blackstone-Millville and Medfield by two points and lost to Westwood by a point. The team also began its season with 10 players unavailable for the first two games.

"The only way we could get through an 0-3 start was to rely on mental toughness," said



Coach Dan Haddad has guided Bellingham's football team to a pair of TVL Small Division championships in the last four years.



Connor Kelley was all smiles after Bellingham won the Tri Valley League Small Division championship by defeating Norton on Thanksgiving.

Haddad, who has guided BHS to a pair of TVL Small crowns in the last four years. "We had a bunch of kids who didn't quit and trusted one another."

Winless in their first three games, BHS then defeated Ashland, Dedham, Medway, Millis and Dover-Sherborn before entering the Division 6 playoffs. During the tourney, BHS downed Maynard/AMSA then lost in the quarterfinal round to Stoneham. The Blackhawks' 20-13 triumph over Norton clinched the division title on Thanksgiving Day.

Haddad credits senior leadership for the turn-around, especially from the squad's five captains — Donovan Turner, Sean Dutremble, Connor Kelley, Ryan Cochran and Mason Jacques.

"The most vocal captain was Kelley," Haddad noted. "He emphasized that he wasn't going to end his senior year of football on a losing team. He stressed that 'this isn't going to end poorly.'"

Haddad said that two other factors in the turn-around were staying focused on the task at hand and not showing any signs of panic. "Winning the division title after the way we started was a great lesson for our younger players," he said.

Capturing the division crown, however, did not soften

role in the victory. One turnover stopped their momentum and we scored on the other."

Defeating Norton clinched the crown outright. It was obvious that the Blackhawks and their coach had no interest in ending their season in a three-way tie for the division title. A Bellingham loss to Norton would have given Dedham and Norton a tie with BHS.

"Norton had a better record than us," Haddad said. "They were 6-2 and we were 6-4. We wanted to prove to our fans that we'd be the last team standing. A three-way tie waters down calling yourself a champion."

Haddad credits all his assistants for igniting the spark to finish 7-1 in the squad's last eight games. "They were the driving force behind the surge," he emphasized. "They all said that we were going to win out and the players bought in. They knew that we were a Super Bowl caliber team."

Haddad revealed that his players showed lots of emotion in the post-game gathering on the field. "They were excited they achieved their goal to win the division crown, but I could also see some sadness. Some were sad to see their season come to an end."

When a team develops mental toughness and relies on it, that attribute can pay dividends. It obviously did for Bellingham's football team.

"When there's adversity, like a fumble or an interception, you have 40 seconds to get ready for the next play," Haddad offered. "You've got to shift gears immediately and have a short memory. Mental toughness can take a team a long way."

The Blackhawks were down but not out after an 0-3 start. The coaches and the players regrouped and clicked in a big way.

And, Connor Kelley probably said it best while he was hugging Haddad during the post-game celebration. "I knew we could do this," he said.

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# Rep. Soter Touts Perfect Voting Record in 2023

State Representative Michael Soter, R-Bellingham, maintained a perfect voting record in 2023, participating in all 70 roll call votes recorded in the House of Representatives between February 1, 2023, and November 15, 2023.

Representative Soter compiled a 100% attendance record this year by casting votes on several major policy initiatives during the first half of the 2023-2024 legislative session, including a comprehensive tax relief package that is expected to provide taxpayers with \$561 million in savings this fiscal year and an estimated \$1.02 billion in savings once the changes are fully implemented in 2026. Signed into law on October 4, 2023, as Chapter 50 of the Acts of 2023, *An Act to improve the Commonwealth's competitiveness, affordability and equity*, the bill:

- Doubles the Senior Circuit Breaker tax credit from \$1,200 to \$2,400, indexed to inflation, to assist nearly 100,000 seniors with their housing costs;
- Eliminates the estate tax for all estates valued under \$2 million and allows for a uniform credit of \$99,600, effective January 1, 2023;
- Combines the child and

dependent tax credits into one while eliminating the existing cap and increasing the credit from \$180 to \$310 in FY23 and to \$440 in FY24, which will benefit over 565,000 families;

- Increases the rental deduction cap from \$3,000 to \$4,000, which will assist approximately 800,000 renters;
- Raises the Earned Income Tax Credit from 30% to 40% of the federal credit, which will benefit approximately 400,000 taxpayers earning less than \$60,000;
- Allows municipalities to provide up to \$2,000 in property tax reductions for older residents participating in the senior work-off program, which is currently capped at \$1,500; and
- Reduces the tax on short-term capital gains from 12% to 8.5%.

On November 15, Representative Soter joined with his colleagues in the House of Representatives to pass a long-term care oversight bill that will provide enhanced protections for patients as well as expanded training provisions for the industry's workforce to help address persistent staffing shortages at

nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. He also cast a vote against salary transparency legislation on October 4 which would require most employers to disclose the salary range for open positions on job postings, citing the potential negative cost implications for smaller businesses.

On October 18, Representative Soter voted against a House-sponsored gun bill, saying it will do nothing to reduce crime and will instead have a negative impact on lawful gun owners in the Commonwealth. He also questioned how much the bill will cost to implement and noted that it was strongly opposed not only by the Gun Owners Action League, but also by the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association, whose members voted unanimously to oppose the bill.

Representative Soter also voted against a supplemental budget proposal on November 8 to allocate \$250 million in additional funding to the state's emergency shelter system to help pay for the recent influx of migrants seeking shelter in Massachusetts. He cited the lack of a plan by the

Healey-Driscoll Administration to stem the flow of migrants, which has pushed the state's emergency shelter assistance program to its limits and created a strain on municipal finances as cities and towns struggle to house and educate these new arrivals.

During floor debate on the bill, Representative Soter supported an amendment to prospectively limit future emergency housing services to individuals who have been residents of the Commonwealth for at least one year and can provide documented proof of residency. He/she said this is a reasonable policy change that will help ensure that long-term residents do not lose out on housing assistance to individuals who are newly arrived from out of state, but the amendment failed to pass.

In 2023, Representative Soter also supported bills that:

- Provide universal free school meals for all students to help promote their health and well-being;

• Allow municipalities to continue the use of remote and hybrid meetings, as well as reduced quorum requirements for town meetings, until March 31, 2025;

• Authorize a one-year extension of outdoor dining options for restaurants, which will be allowed to continue serving cocktails, beer and wine in conjunction with food takeout orders until April 1, 2024; and

• Provide \$175 million in additional municipal grant funding to support several transportation-related initiatives such as the Municipal Small Bridge program and the Complete Streets program.

Representative Soter represents the 8th Worcester District. He currently serves on the Committees on Financial Services, Revenue, Cannabis Policy, and Labor and Workforce Development.

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# Calendar

## January 2

**Yoga for the Seasons, 8:30 a.m.**, Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, register at <https://www.bellinghamma.org/library>

## January 3

**Veterans Monthly Coffee Social, 10 a.m.** Franklin Senior Center, 10 Daniel McCahill St., Franklin, All vets welcome, refreshments by Starbucks

## January 5

FPAC presents *Bright Star*, featuring Steve Martin and Edie Brickell's Tony-award-winning score, **7:30 p.m.**, THE BLACK BOX, 15 West Central St., Franklin, FPAConline.com or call (508) 528-3370.

## January 6

FPAC presents *Bright Star*, featuring Steve Martin and Edie Brickell's Tony-award-winning score, **7:30 p.m.**, THE BLACK BOX, 15 West Central St.,

Franklin, FPAConline.com or call (508) 528-3370.

## January 7

FPAC presents *Bright Star*, featuring Steve Martin and Edie Brickell's Tony-award-winning score, **2 p.m.**, THE BLACK BOX, 15 West Central St., Franklin, FPAConline.com or call (508) 528-3370.

## January 8

Book Discussion group, *The Keeper of Stories* by Sally Page, **6:30 p.m.**, Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham

## January 9

**Yoga for the Seasons, 8:30 a.m.**, Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, register at <https://www.bellinghamma.org/library>

**Friends of the Library Annual Meeting, 7 p.m.**, Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, All current and

prospective members encouraged to join in for this once-a-year annual meeting. Andrea Fiorello of the Massachusetts Library Association's Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibilities Committee will speak on the current climate around intellectual freedom and book banning issues libraries are facing. Hybrid meeting, registration preferred.

## January 11

**Ladies of St. Anne meeting, 6 p.m.**, St. Blaise Parish Hall, 1158 S. Main St., Bellingham, women over 18 welcome, for info. contact Jay Castonguay, (774) 262-9605

## January 12

**Electric Youth 2024, 7:30 p.m.**, THE BLACK BOX, 15 West Central St., Franklin, [www.theblackboxonline.com](http://www.theblackboxonline.com) or call (508) 528-3370

## January 13

**Joe Jencks, 8 p.m.**, Circle of Friends Coffeehouse, Franklin First Universalist Society Meetinghouse, 262 Chestnut St.,

Franklin, doors open 7:30 p.m., refreshments available, <https://circlefolk.org/>

## January 16

**Yoga for the Seasons, 8:30 a.m.**, Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, register at <https://www.bellinghamma.org/library>

## January 22

**Yoga for the Seasons, 8:30 a.m.**, Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, register at <https://www.bellinghamma.org/library>

**Indoor Growing with Blackstone Valley Veggie Gardens, 6:30 p.m.**, Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, presented by Blackstone Valley Veggie Gardens. Registration is preferred. Sponsored by the Friends of the Bellingham Library.

**Virtual Ask-A-Lawyer Program with Attorney Brian T. Salisbury, free appointments 5-7:30 p.m.**, 20 minutes apiece. Register for an appointment and you will receive the Zoom link close to the appointment date. Visit Bellingham Public Library website at <https://www.bellinghamma.org/library>

## January 23

**Yoga for the Seasons, 8:30 a.m.**, Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, register at <https://www.bellinghamma.org/library>

**Charles River Chorale Open Rehearsal, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.**, Church of Christ, 142 Exchange St., Millis, prospective members welcome, for more information, visit <https://www.charlesriverchorale.com>

## January 30

**Yoga for the Seasons, 8:30 a.m.**, Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, register at <https://www.bellinghamma.org/library>

**Charles River Chorale Open Rehearsal, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.**, Church of Christ, 142 Exchange St., Millis, prospective members welcome, for more information, visit <https://www.charlesriverchorale.com>

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# Mass-Fiscal Demands Healey-Driscoll Administration Speak Up for Immigration, Border Reform

The Massachusetts Fiscal Alliance and Jessica Vaughan, the Director of Policy Studies for the Center for Immigration Studies, made the following statement in response to the Biden-Harris and Healey-Driscoll administrations announcement of new clinics to help illegal migrants obtain work permits. The Center for Immigration Studies is a Washington, D.C. based research institute that examines the impact of immigration on American society and educates policymakers and opinion leaders on immigration issues.

"Massachusetts desperately needs our Governor and Lt. Governor to confront the Biden-Harris administration for failing to secure our southern border, and today they have an oppor-

tunity to hold them accountable. Photo ops with Washington bureaucrats will not fix the problem. Millions of immigrants crossing our southern border are incentivized to come here, in part because the Biden-Harris administration allows it to happen, but also because of our state's generous taxpayer funded benefits and right to shelter law which currently has no residency requirement. Without securing our southern border, a work clinic for migrants will do nothing to fix the growing situation we face and simply act as another incentive to come to Massachusetts," stated Paul Diego Craney, a spokesman for the Massachusetts Fiscal Alliance.

"Our nation is experiencing the worst mass illegal migra-

tion crisis in our history, with profound fiscal and security costs to Massachusetts. Instead of demanding relief from this record-breaking influx, which was caused by Biden-Harris policy changes, Gov. Healey and her team are working alongside this administration in a way that will attract even more illegal migration, and further facilitate the human trafficking and debt bondage that comes with it, not to mention displacement of legal workers who need these jobs. When was the last time the Governor held a job fair for locals who need a hand up?" concluded Jessica Vaughan, Director of Policy Studies at the Center for Immigration Studies.



# New Members Welcome to Charles River Chorale Open Rehearsals in January

The Charles River Chorale will begin rehearsals for its Spring 2024 season and is actively recruiting new members who are seeking a new community and musical opportunity. Anyone who enjoys singing is encouraged to come and join in the fun and experience of singing with a chorus.

The non-audition chorale group will begin open rehearsals on Tuesday, January 23, 2024 from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. at the Church of Christ, 142 Exchange St., Millis. Two additional open rehearsals will take place on January 30th and February 6th to allow interested new members an opportunity to explore the chorale opportunity.

Under the leadership of director Ashley Nelson-Oneschuk, the Charles River Chorale is in its 40th year as a non-profit 501(c)3 chorale. Nelson-Oneschuk, a music professional in her 9th year with the Charles River Chorale, is also the choral director for Medway High School. Her goal for the chorale is “focused on cultivating a joyful community first, with excellent musical experiences as the vessel to achieve this.”

Charles River Chorale members hail from many area communities, and they range in age from teenagers to octogenarians. The group typically holds winter and spring concerts, with the Spring 2024 concert planned for Saturday, May 11, 2024, 7pm, at Medway High School. The theme of the Spring 2024 con-

cert is **Road Trip Across America**. This program will feature music that spans time, place, and genre, assuring that both the chorus and audience will be in for a memorable musical journey.

The Charles River Chorale rehearses on Tuesday evenings from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. at the Church of Christ, in Millis. Membership dues for the non-profit organization support operating costs. There are no dues for high school students, and scholarships based on need are available. There is also a separate children’s choir for children in Grades 2 through 6.

For more information about the organization and the upcoming open rehearsals, visit <https://www.charlesriverchorale.com>. Those who are interested in joining the chorale for the start of the season on January 23rd are asked to complete a short sign-up document via the attached QR code (or via this link: <https://forms.gle/6d5iNSvPUqqFx9ubA> ). Sponsorships and advertising opportunities are also available and very much appreciated.



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# Belo of NeighborWorks Housing Solutions Serves on Panel of 5th Annual South Shore Conference for Women

Serenity Belo, director of resource development with NeighborWorks Housing Solutions (NHS; [www.nhsmass.org](http://www.nhsmass.org)), the leading housing service provider in southern Massachusetts, recently served as a panelist for the 5th Annual South Shore Conference for Women, which was held on October 19 at the Hotel 1620 in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Belo, along with fellow panelists Karen Marinella Hall, principal of Marinella Hall Associates, and Rose Arthur, founder of McKaskie & Associates, discussed the topic, “Ignite Success: Cultivating Authentic Relationships for Lasting Impact.”

The mission of the South Shore Conference for Women is to create lasting experiences for women, close to home. Since 2019, the South Shore Conference for Women volunteers have created an annual sold-out event that brings together as many as 400 guests of all backgrounds. The conference features compelling local speakers and opportunities to connect with the region’s

vendors and sponsors, business owners and community leaders together in one space to support and learn from one another. For more information, please visit <https://sheslocal.org/south-shore-conference-for-women/>.

## About NeighborWorks® Housing Solutions

NeighborWorks® Housing Solutions is the leading housing service provider in southern Massachusetts, providing services to more than 20,000 households in over 75 cities and towns across the region. In addition to building and managing nearly 900 units of housing for veterans, homeless families and others in need, the agency offers a wide range of housing services, including foreclosure prevention counseling, home rehabilitation loans and grants, financial coaching and first-time homebuyer workshops. For more information, contact Serenity Belo, Resource Development Director, at 617-770-2227 x123 or [sbelo@nhsmass.org](mailto:sbelo@nhsmass.org), or visit: [www.nhsmass.org](http://www.nhsmass.org).

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# Norfolk Probate & Family Court Celebrates National Adoption Day

On Friday, November 17th, the Norfolk Probate and Family Court hosted its first annual celebration of National Adoption Day. The day was a hit with ten families traveling from as far as New York state to take part in the event. Hosted by Register Colleen Brierley and First Justice Patricia Gorman, the goal is to make the event an annual part of the Trial Court's calendar. The families left with various gifts and refreshments provided by Register Brierley, the Judges, Boston Post Adoption Resources, and Ursuline Academy of Dedham. The event involved all departments of the Norfolk Probate and Family Court and was made possible by everyone's commitment to help.

As a former DCF social worker, family law attorney and foster mom, this day was of special meaning to Register Brierley, who is an adoptive mother of three.

We would like to issue a special thanks to: Register Colleen



Register Colleen Brierley addressing families in attendance.



Friday, November 17, 2023 marked the first year Norfolk Probate and Family Court celebrated National Adoption Day. Shown, First Justice Patricia Gorman holds an adorable adoptee.

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Brierley, First Justice Patricia Gorman, Tricia Loughman-West, Jocelyne Welsh, Tyler Hurley, Deborah Collins, Patrick Janas, and all the families involved who made this special day possible.

The Norfolk Probate and Family Court serves Avon, Bellingham, Braintree, Brookline, Canton, Cohasset, Dedham,

Dover, Foxborough, Franklin, Holbrook, Medfield, Medway, Millis, Milton, Needham, Norfolk, Norwood, Plainville, Quincy, Randolph, Sharon, Stoughton, Walpole, Wellesley, Westwood, Weymouth, and Wrentham. Visit <https://www.mass.gov/locations/norfolk-probate-and-family-court> for more information.



Pictured left to right: Patrick Janas, Jocelyne Welsh, Deborah Collins, Tyler Hurley

# Library Resource of the Month – Digital Books and Magazines

The Bellingham Library offers access to digital books, both eBooks and eAudio, as well as digital magazines. The databases that offer access to this content are Overdrive, Hoopla, and Flipster. All you need is your Bellingham Library card!

Overdrive is a digital distributor of eBooks, digital audiobooks, magazines and videos. Your Bellingham Library card gives you access to over 80,000 eBooks, 17,000 audiobooks, 1,200 videos, and 4,000 magazines from Overdrive. They can be read/watched on devices such as laptops, tablets, computers, and smartphones. This includes bestsellers, seasonal favorites, different themes and genres. There are titles for adults, teens, and children that you can download to your device through the Libby app.

Libby is a free app, built by Overdrive, which allows you to read or listen to Overdrive’s digital collection.

- Up to 10 titles at a time can be borrowed
- 10 items can be on hold
- Some items are always available, while others may have a wait list, but you can put them on hold and will receive an email when the title is ready to be downloaded.
- eBooks, eAudiobooks, and magazines can be borrowed for 7, 14, or 21 days. You choose the borrowing time!

The magazines in Overdrive include the latest issue of the magazine as well as up to 3 years of back issues. There are titles from around the world and in a variety of languages. Magazine titles are always available, so there are never any holds or waiting. You can borrow and read digital magazines alongside eBooks and audiobooks in Overdrive’s Libby app. The app includes an article view, which makes reading digital magazines more interactive and enjoyable.

The Bellingham Library belongs to the CW MARS Library System. You can also borrow digital materials from the following partner library systems through Overdrive/Libby:

- Boston Public Library
- CLAMS
- Merrimack Valley Library Consortium
- Minuteman Library Network
- NOBLE: North of Boston Library Exchange
- Old Colony Library Network
- SAILS Library Network

Hoopla lets you borrow eBooks and magazines with no waiting and no holds list.

- Titles are immediately available

- Up to 4 Hoopla titles each month can be checked out
- Titles are automatically returned and removed from your device at the end of the lending period.
- Titles can be downloaded anywhere you have a screen – computer, phone, tablet, etc.
- Besides eBooks and magazines, Hoopla also gives you access to TV shows, movies, audiobooks, comics, and music.

*Flipster* is a collection of a variety of online magazines. Some titles include *All Recipes*, *American Craft*, *The Atlantic*, *Better Nutrition*, *Internet Genealogy*, *Let’s Travel*, *My Wedding*, *Mystery Magazine*, *National Review*, *Parents*, *Rethinking Schools*, and *Science News Explores*. Back issues as well as the current issue can be accessed. Both the desktop and mobile web browser versions of Flipster support keyword searching within the magazine.

To get started with Overdrive/Libby and Hoopla, go to the Bellingham Library’s website at [www.bellinghamlibrary.org](http://www.bellinghamlibrary.org) and click on the “Ebooks and Digital Media” link on the right. To access Flipster, go to the “Online Resources” tab on the library’s website and click “Digital Magazines.”

# MA Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program Now Open

Applications Accepted for Eligible Households through April 30, 2024

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) is pleased to announce the start of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) 2023-2024 winter heating season. LIHEAP is a free, statewide service funded by the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program that helps eligible households stay warm during the winter months by paying a portion of winter heating bills.

Applications for home energy assistance are currently being accepted online at [attoapply.org/massliheap](http://attoapply.org/massliheap), and income-eligible households may receive financial help to offset heating bills from November 1, 2023, through April 30, 2024.

Both homeowners and renters can apply online or through local administering agencies for LIHEAP assistance. Households must meet specific eligibility requirements to qualify for aid, which will be paid directly to their heating vendor.

Eligibility is based on several factors, including household size and combined gross annual income of residents 18 and older. Qualifying households – including those with the cost of heat included in the rent – can receive assistance for all sources of heat, including oil, electricity, natural gas, propane, kerosene, wood and coal.

“The Massachusetts home energy assistance program is free, because no resident should have to worry about heating their home during the wintertime,” said Ed Augustus Jr., Secretary of Housing and Livable Communities. “High fuel costs can have a devastating effect on household budgets and can even endanger Massachusetts’ most vulnerable residents. We encourage anyone who needs heating assistance to explore their eligibility by applying online or visiting the nearest administering agency. And to please share the information with loved ones or neighbors who could benefit from this free resource.”

For more information, or to find your local LIHEAP agency, visit [www.toapply.org/MassLIHEAP](http://www.toapply.org/MassLIHEAP).

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# Despite Low Poverty Statistics, Area Food Insecurity on the Rise

By J.D. O'GARA

January is National Poverty Awareness Month. Although compared to the national average of U.S. residents living in poverty in 2022, (11.5% according to the U.S. Census), just around one in 20 in local towns such as Bellingham (5.1%) and Franklin (4.6%) live in poverty.

One might assume that these low-income residents are the ones accessing local food pantries, but according to Tina Powderly, Executive Director of the Franklin Food Pantry, food insecurity, which is on the rise, isn't solely tied to income.

Although the sheer number of registered households access-

ing the Franklin Food Pantry has risen (for example, 523 registered Franklin families in FY22 to 534 so far this year, and 29 registered Bellingham families in FY22 compared to 45 so far this year) a good indicator food insecurity is rising is that folks are visiting the food pantry more often, with a 27% increase in visits from November 2022 to November 2023.

This year's MetroWest Health Foundation's 2023 MetroWest Community Health Assessment, in fact, lists "Food Insecurity" and "Housing Insecurity and Homelessness" among the top five reported community concerns for the first time in the past decade.

"Shelter is, on the average, a household's biggest expense, and that's true wherever you fall on the income bracket. Housing inflation is a real struggle folks face, as well as a rising cost of groceries," says Powderly. Families, she says, must decide between paying for housing and paying for groceries.

"Food insecurity is just not an issue simply faced by folks that have economic insecurity,"

says Powderly. "It's really one social determinant of health. There's a whole host of non-medical factors, including housing, job security, education, and income." Although combatting food insecurity is the pantry's mission, it also can connect its users to resources aimed at improving other factors.

In fact, the MetroWest survey listed Mental Health as this year's top community concern, a problem exacerbated by instability.

"An individual who's food insecure is much more likely to experience mental health stressors," she points out, and these folks face larger barriers to expensive mental health services. "It's not necessarily that you're hungry at any hour of the day. It's the lack of consistent access to enough food or the people in your house to live a healthy life. That's how the USDA defines food insecurity." One of the things we try to do in this space is reduce the stigma and anxiety that comes with experiencing food insecurity with an atmosphere that feels very warm, like a grocery store."

The Franklin Food Pantry can connect patrons to other resources, she says, but "part of the job is getting them in the door, so they feel safe. It takes time to convince them to try the resources that help them. It could be a social worker at Franklin Public School for a child, the weekend backpack program, or the SHINE counselor at the Senior Center. We can be a point of reference, and all of these issues are so interconnected. Certainly, economic insecurity is a factor in food insecurity, but we see the whole breadth of humanity here ... Chances are high if you volunteer here for any period of time, you'll come across someone you know."

For information on the Franklin Food Pantry, visit [www.franklinfoodpantry.org](http://www.franklinfoodpantry.org).

For more information on the MetroWest Health Foundation and its recent 2023 MetroWest Community Health Assessment, visit <https://mwhealth.org>.

## Evergreen Center Students Brighten the Town for the Holidays

Each year, children living in Bellingham who attend the Evergreen Center in Milford donate a wreath they have decorated to the town of Bell-

ingham. Shown are the students presenting the wreath to Town Administrator Denis Fraine, with Police Chief Ken Fitzgerald shown, left.



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