

Franklin Art Association to Collaborate with FHS Artists

Gallery Show at Escape into Fiction Begins Feb. 17th

By JUDITH DORATO O'GARA

Looking for something to do on a chilly winter day? Starting February 17th through March 16th, you can head over to the Franklin Art Association Gallery, located at Escape Into Fiction Bookstore at 12 Main Street, Franklin, to see the Franklin High School Student Art Exhibit.

The show will also feature an opening reception, where the public can meet the artists, on Thursday, February 29th, from 6-8 p.m. (snow date: March 7th)

"The purpose of a gallery is to display and connect artists with the general public, and certainly connecting the high school student's artworks with the local community is really important for the students, to



On February 17th through March 16th, the Franklin Art Association welcomes Franklin High School artists to their own show at the Franklin Art Association Gallery, generously made possible by donated space Escape Into Fiction Bookstore. The event will feature a reception on February 29th. Shown, Cailyn Bruno-Acrylic Painting

son suggested having a student gallery show, and the Franklin Art Association board unanimously and immediately welcomed the idea.

Butler adds, "I think galleries are maybe (perceived as) mysterious or elitist or exclusive, but we're trying to change that, nurture visual artists and expose them to the public, but also expose the public to art. It's free. You just walk in and get to see all the creative works the community members are doing. There's no cost

have their art seen, and for the community to see art. This is going to be a real-life experience for students to engage (with the public). It's a win-win all the way around," says Franklin Art Association member Judy Butler.

The idea for the student art show emerged when Butler told one of the Franklin Art Association show judges, Brenna Johnson, art teacher at FHS, that the group hoped to support art students. John-

ARTISTS

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VITA Tax Help Program in Second Year at Franklin Library

Volunteers Needed for IRS-Sponsored Program

By JUDITH DORATO O'GARA

Daunted by tax time? If you are an individual who makes under \$60K a year or have a language barrier or disability that keeps you from properly filing your taxes, you can get free help doing your taxes at the Franklin Public Library. Thanks to the Volunteer Income Tax Preparation Assistance Program (VITA), a program sponsored by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), you can make an appointment for tax help at the library on Saturdays from 10 a.m.- 4 p.m., starting February 3rd through April 13. During those hours, intake volunteers will be available to make your hour-long tax preparation appointment at the library.

Programming and outreach librarian Mitzi Gousie initiated this effort at the library.

"The program has been running across the country for multiple years," says Gousie, "I saw it

available at other libraries, and I figured it was something we could offer here at Franklin. It's done at the Senior Center for seniors, but there was nothing in town for non-seniors. The closest one to Franklin is 7.3 miles away in Woonsocket, RI."

Gousie hopes for more volunteers, not only to work on taxes, but also to greet people and do intake, as well as be available to fill in in case another volunteer has an illness or emergency.

"To run the site, you need a minimum of two people, because every tax return that is filed at a VITA site has to be reviewed by another volunteer that has the training for that level of tax return."

Tax returns are categorized into levels of basic, advanced, international, and military. The Franklin

VITA

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ARTISTS

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to attend the reception, you don't have to dress up, and you can talk to the students about their work and what their hopes and dreams are about their artistic futures.

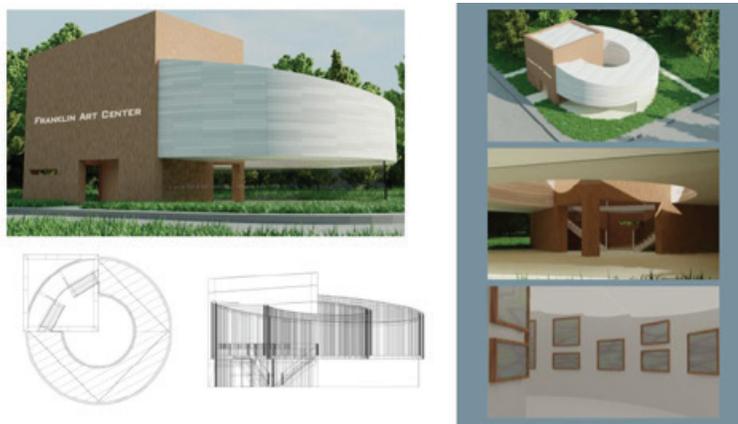
The Franklin Art Association has long supported the futures of FHS art students, according to FHS Art Teacher Danielle LaPlante. "Franklin High has a good relationship with the Franklin Art Association," she says, "They give a scholarship every year to a student going into art or design, and they come every spring and look at the work, and then there's other things, too. They're such a great supporter for the Franklin High Visual Arts Program."

On the show, LaPlante says, "This is such an awesome opportunity. Students have shows here (at Franklin High School) all the time, which is great, but to have their work shown in a local gallery, where the community can come in feels very real and authentic. I think it's very exciting to be in a different place."

LaPlante admits this chance is new to the high school, and she and other art teachers were "planning on showing some of our more advanced student work, junior and seniors. We have vi-



Izzy Powers-Ceramics



Noah Gorges - Architectural Concept Plans

sual photographers, a great architectural program, graphic designers. Definitely traditional drawing and painting, and there is a space for 3D work." The decisions on which 30 or so student pieces to choose was a difficult one, she says, as so many of the students are talented.

Sue Sheridan, president of the Franklin Art Association, is thrilled about the collaboration.

"The Franklin Art Association has been actively promoting the arts through educational programming and opportunities to exhibit for over fifty years. So it is with great pleasure that we

are now collaborating with the Franklin High School Art Department to offer exhibit space at the Association gallery at Escape into Fiction bookstore. Giving our young artists an opportunity to show their artwork in a professional gallery space is very exciting for them and for us! We look forward to more events of this type in the future. The public is invited to view the student show during bookstore hours, and to attend the gala reception on February 29th at 6 p.m."

Butler adds that art is an important element of a full education.



Brady Flynn - Photograph

"There are Common Core state standards for curriculum at each of the grade levels," says Butler, "I would like the general

public to understand that this art is academic. I think people need (to learn) the value of art education."

localtownpages

Published Monthly
Mailed FREE to the
Community of Franklin
Circulation: 13,164
households & businesses

Publisher
Chuck Tashjian

Editor
J.D. O'Gara

Send Editorial to:
editor@franklintownnews.com

Advertising Director
Jen Schofield
508-570-6544
jenschofield@localtownpages.com

Creative Design & Layout
Michelle McSherry
Kim Vasseur
Wendy Watkins

Ad Deadline is the
15th of each month.

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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 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 tremen-

Business spotlight

dously 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."

As for Franklin in particular, Schadler says they are proud to have many repeat customers and friends in the area. The



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

Schadlers' oldest daughter lives in Franklin, and their kids attended softball camp and learned how to skate in town. Prior to starting Affordable Junk Removal, Christine worked for years in Franklin as well.

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.

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VITA

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Library only guarantees access to a basic return, says Gousie, “but if the stars align, we can take care of an advanced return. It really depends on the level the volunteers are willing to go as far as certification.”

Volunteers need only a GED or high school diploma, and training is provided.

“There are multiple levels of certification, and you do not have to be a certified tax preparer to volunteer at the site,” says Gousie. “The most minimum level of certification is the code of conduct, the normal things you’d expect of honesty and integrity, protecting the taxpayer information. The exams are not difficult so much as they

are a way for the IRS to guarantee that you have some level of understanding of the current tax code as it stands and experience preparing a return before being in front of a person, and experience with some of the exceptions.” Another level of certification is intake certification, which allows a volunteer to determine what level of return a taxpayer will need – and whether the site is the best fit for this taxpayer’s needs.

Wrentham resident Robert Poklemba volunteered last year.

“My son participates in some of the events they have at the library,” says Poklemba, who noticed flyers looking for volunteers. “I figured if I was going to be waiting for him to finish his stuff, I was going to volunteer and pull my weight.”

Although Poklemba’s back-

ground is in customer service, he says the IRS training, mostly online, taught him a lot. “It was several hours of study to pass the certification tests,” says Poklemba, but the IRS provides so much supporting documentation that “you could read for a year and not cover all the material they offer.”

Poklemba is back again this year to volunteer, because “it just feels really nice to help people. Somebody that would have had to pay money to do taxes, we’re able to help them out for free. It’s really great the IRS offers the program and the software, which is similar to the commercially available applications out there. We’re able to walk folks through who may not be able to afford it. It’s really nice, and nice to connect with other people in the community as well.

Gousie and Poklemba both laud the support the IRS provides.

“There’s always two sets of eyes, if there’s any question,” says Poklemba. “There’s collaboration.”

“You are never alone at the site,” says Gousie, “There’s always going to be someone that can help you there if you have a question.”

The Franklin Public Library also offers information and links, under Adult Services, dedicated to the tax program, on its website.

The program keeps taxpayer information strictly confidential.

“We run our site on an encrypted Wi-Fi connection through the town, and all of our preparers only have access to the preparation software while the site is open,” says Gousie, adding, “No personally identifying information is left at the library. You take it all with you, and we file electronically, or

we’ll give you what you need to mail it yourself. ... We are not allowed to discuss any information on who, where, or what was processed at the site. The most information we can divulge is a ballpark number of returns we did.”

Gousie says the response to the VITA tax assistance program has been positive, and the library has improved the process this year.

“Last year, we didn’t get to the intake until after the appointment,” says Gousie. That yielded a number of cases beyond the scope of the site. This year, the intake will occur before the first appointment, she explains.

“That way,” she says, “every (hour-long) tax preparation appointment is guaranteed to be for someone we can help.”

To volunteer for the library’s tax assistance program, contact mgousie@minilib.net.

Congressman Auchincloss Comes to Town



Congressman Jake Auchincloss, shown with Sen. Becca Rausch and Rep. Jeff Roy, met with Franklin Fire Department’s Chief McLaughlin, members of Franklin Fire, town administrators and residents at Franklin Fire Department.

Congressman Jake Auchincloss took a trip to Franklin on Friday, January 5th. Several town officials and townspeople met with him, as well as Rep. Jeff Roy and Sen. Becca Rausch, at various locations around town, including the Nu-Style Brownfields Site on Grove Street, which has received \$500K in EPA funding, the Franklin Fire Department, where Chief Jim McLaughlin talked to the Congressman about hopes for new funding, the Franklin Public Library, where FPL’s Vicki Earls discussed Ben Franklin’s original book donation as well as the mural work in the original section of the library, and Dean College, where Dean President Ken Elmore met with the Congressman.



Franklin Public Library’s Vicki Earls illuminated some fascinating history about Ben Franklin’s donation of the library’s original books, as well as the mural painted in the original section of the Franklin Public Library.



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Ben Franklin Birthday Readathon Sheds Light on Town Namesake

BY ALAN EARLS

Franklin is named for Ben and even has a statue of him in front of its library. And most know that his gift of books helped launch the library, the first to be free, public, and a

lending library. But beyond that, few are very well acquainted with the man who must surely be the most accomplished and remarkable in the nation's history.

For those listening and those

actually reading aloud at the Ben Franklin Autobiography "Readathon" held on Ben Franklin's birthday, Jan. 17, at the Franklin Historical Museum, there were many 'ah ha' moments. First of all, there was a Ben's humor that came through from his lively, anecdotal writings. From youthful pranks and rags-to-riches adventures as a printer and businessman to his temporary appointment to lead a small army in defense of Pennsylvania's frontier, page after page produced fresh surprises. And the book barely touches on his most famous years as a diplomat and godfather of America's founding documents.

Still, there was plenty to digest in the pages he left behind.

Although Franklin did have the intention of writing an autobiography, the project was still just a collection of somewhat disjointed manuscripts when he died. As a result, a number of versions of the book exist, some with odd bits of Franklin's writing added to the primary manuscript, long after the book was first published in the 1790s.



Franklin Historical Museum archivist Rowan Lowell, L and Roberta Trahan, R, member of the Franklin Downtown Partnership, Franklin's Cultural District Committee and the Franklin Interfaith Council, were among those participating in the annual readathon of Ben Franklin's autobiography.

Congressman Jake Auchincloss, the reader who started the morning, enthused that the book is one of the great classics of American politics. He was followed as a reader by State Senator Becca Rausch and State Rep. Jeff Roy.

A dozen or so readers kept up the pace for approximately seven hours. They included Town Administrator Jamie Hellen and Fire Chief James McLaugh-

lin, who, serendipitously, had a chance to read Franklin's description of how he organized and launched the first volunteer fire fighting company in the colonies.

The reading was the cornerstone event of the Ben Franklin Book Week, a connected series of talks, lectures, demonstrations, and even a trivia contest, all intended to bring alive the town's namesake in ways both entertaining and informative.

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One Franklin Looks to Taxpayers to Support their Town

Group Spreads Message about Override, Awaits March 6th Joint Budget Subcommittee Figures

BY JUDITH DORATO O'GARA

Inflation doesn't just hit consumers at the grocery store. As prices go up, so does the cost of running town services. Parents, and especially students, see this at the school level, as belt-tightening requires educators to increasingly do more with less. During COVID, federal funds to schools softened this blow to Franklin, but now that those funds are gone, a group of citizens is asking Franklin to take a long hard look at better supporting the town.

The group, gaining visibility, is called One Franklin, and its aim is to pass a Proposition 2 1/2 tax override, not a debt exclusion such as that for Tri-County's new building, but a permanent commitment to supporting not just the schools, but all town services. Ruthann O'Sullivan, Chair of One Franklin, along with One Franklin Treasurer Ken Ojukwu, is newly leading effort, originally begun in 2019 by Dr. Anne Bergen, Roberta Trahan, Jim Roche.

O'Sullivan, a native of Natick, moved to Franklin in 2019, impressed by the town's solid school district. She distinctly remembers, in about March of 2020, seeing "roughly 100 teachers with pink slips out on Route 140, sitting in solidarity." Later, as she home-schooled during COVID, the self-described "civics nerd" with a legal and business finance background, became more acquainted with many of the district's teachers and issues they face.

"The state isn't going to come to our rescue," says O'Sullivan, referring to Massachusetts Department of Secondary Education (DESE) Chapter 70 Funds to aid schools.

"When the state issues Chapter 70 funds, it's largely weighted by property values and income. Franklin is not seen as a poor town, and so they expect towns like us to contribute more from a local level, and we have failed to pass an override for 16 years, and it's caught up with us. It's a real pivotal moment for the town. We are in the bottom 20% of per pupil funding in state, but



Shown are members of One Franklin at a meet and greet held on January 11th at 67 Degrees Brewing Company. From left, Denise Spencer, Ken Ojukwu, One Franklin Treasurer, Dave McNeil, and Ruthann O'Sullivan, One Franklin Chair

the town's wealth, based on land value and median income is in the top 20%."

O'Sullivan points out that Rep. Roy successfully lobbied for an additional \$11 million dollars on top of Ch. 70 funds, but "that's not guaranteed, and it's risky to depend on that money."

"You have to take care of your schools to drive home values, and we've just been steadily eroding our school offerings," says O'Sullivan, who believes the birthplace of Horace Mann "should be branded around education." However, young, enthusiastic new hires in the school system, she says, "train here and (then) go to a district that support their local schools better."

One Franklin is not just about the schools, says O'Sullivan. When schools can't afford their needs, she says, "other departments have their budgets dipped into, which creates division and resentment. This is a real, operational override for the town of Franklin. It (would go) to public schools, police, fire, DPW and other departments, the library, senior center, the recreation department."

Since the volunteers reignited One Franklin, their member list has grown from about 75 to about 270. At press time, the

group's Facebook page had 978 followers. O'Sullivan hopes to raise enthusiasm for the measure among all Franklin residents.

On top of spreading the word, an important step will be to come up with a solid figure of exactly how much is needed to ensure all factions of the town can operate to their best.

"Parents are the ones to push for an override, but every department is completely stressed and has no surplus. Ultimately, this is a decision for the residents of the community, and hence, a ballot question," says Franklin Town Council Chair Tom Mercer. "It is the role of the Council to decide when that ballot question gets put on a ballot and what that number is, which I believe will be the most difficult part ... trying to come up with a realistic, or passable, number."

Mercer continues, "We certainly want to continue to provide the schools with the necessary funds to provide a proper education. The problem we have is Proposition 2 1/2, and the fact that inflation has been growing at six, seven, eight percent rate over the past few years, and we're only able to increase taxes by 2 1/2 percent." Additionally, says Mercer, new growth, which could bring in revenue, has been meager.



Town members discuss One Franklin's override proposal last month.



On March 6th, the Joint Budget Subcommittee will meet, and according to Mercer, will provide a better understanding of what financial needs will be for the town. This committee is comprised of a subcommittee of the Finance Committee, a subcommittee of the School Committee and a Subcommittee of the Town Council, all of which began the budget process in November.

"That will be a very important meeting for all of Franklin and certainly for One Franklin,

because that's where we will get into a lengthy discussion regarding the need for an override," says Mercer. "Hopefully, the whole idea of that is to get one message to the community."

O'Sullivan remains positive the town can come together.

"We are one town; we are one community; and we need to work together to solve our budget issues," she says.

You can follow One Franklin's progress at Onefranklinma.com, reach out to OneFranklinVolunteers@gmail.com or find them on Facebook.



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Letter to the Editor

Hello,
I am writing to you in regards to an article published in the January 2024 edition of your publication:

“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.”

I am a domestic violence victim and advocate. I also am one of the many 100s of victims from First Justice Patricia Gorman. You see, this article has come to my attention from some of our victims who have placed two active Bills of Address to Remove First Justice Patricia Gorman from the Norfolk and Dukes County Probate and Family Courts. Bills: Resolutions H1652 and H1484. These bills are actively before the Judiciary Committee Board as we speak and will be determined if they will be passed this February 24th.

This article unfortunately has caused quite a bit of a stir. Many of our victims have become very upset and anguished over this article featured with the picture of First Justice Patricia Gorman

holding an adorable sweet innocent adoptee baby. The picture of First Justice Patricia Gorman reminds me of the classic idiom for “the wolf in sheep’s clothing.”

For us victims, our very own sweet innocent children were put into dangerous and life threatening situations back with their documented abusers by First Justice Patricia Gorman. Whether it is visitations, custody, guardianships, reunification therapy or the reunification camps. We are talking 100s of children and victims. Not one or two.

National Adoption Day should most definitely be recognized. Myself and the many victims feel that the picture and the mention of the first justice who has placed 100s of children in harm and in dangerous life situations should not be featured in any papers.

I would like to also make it clear that we are not upset with the editor nor the paper who published this article. We are upset of the duplicitous publicity stunt First Justice Patricia Gorman has tried to pull-off of what her true intentions and actions are truly for.

We want to make sure all children of the “system” are safe from harm. I cannot even put into words the hurt and the trauma she has caused to so many children and families already.

I am enclosing the links of our Bills of Address and our testimonies on Oct. 3rd 2023 before the Judiciary Committee Board to have the First Justice Patricia Gorman removed from Norfolk and Dukes County.

<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H1652>

<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H1484>

Here is a short original video that shows just as our bills.

https://1drv.ms/f/s!AvIlly_c4C4inivjrcCkn9oE5Taj

This is the original version on MA legislature.gov our bills are towards the end at about 32 minutes.

<https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/4721>

*With Warm regard,
Nora Smith*

Temple Etz Chaim of Franklin Takes Part in #BlueRibbonsForLife

Keeps Hostages in their Hearts

Members of Franklin area’s synagogue planted a flag for each of the hostages kidnapped by Hamas on Oct 7. Situated in front of the property, these flags symbolize hope that each hostage will be returned safely and immediately.



Temple Etz Chaim is partnering with many congregations, schools, and Jewish organizations to make certain these people are not forgotten as time goes on.

For more information, current hostage reports, and ideas for support can be found at <https://www.blueribbons.life/>

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Your Money, Your Independence

Frugal February... A Different Take, One That's Sustainable.

Seen the "Frugal February" challenge recently?

The main idea is following holiday indulgences and resolutions being forgotten, use February (only 28 days) to do something difficult but important – get your finances back on track.

Popularity has grown amongst the F.I.R.E. (Financial Independence, Retire Early) bloggers. You know, the supposedly "retired at 33" gurus that post multiple times a day to promote a website with 6 Google ads and links for annual subscriptions payable to their LLC.



Glenn Brown, CFP

The challenge with this challenge?

Many use Frugal February as a month to not spend. While noble, how sustainable is this for improved outcomes, "Wow, \$2,200 saved last month, we deserve a vacation in the Caribbean!"?

Instead, let's discuss actions that provide yearlong benefits plus a better time to start.

Finding Time to Focus.

Weekends are likely full of family activities, kids sports and honey-do lists. Add an unofficial national holiday, Super Bowl Sunday, and it's easy to be derailed.

So wait, start February 12th and go through March 11th. Kids activities have a break between winter to spring and family activities may be in a lull.

Focus One: Credit Utilization.

Run your annual credit report. If not above 780, plan to

fix so it improves your future cost of borrowing.

Next, review your terms (interest rates, fees, available limits) of credit cards, loans and HELOCs, including the zero balances.

Also consolidate to 2-3 credit cards with high limits, then use one primarily that's paid off monthly. Now it's easier to track expenses for budgeting and maximizing rewards.

Speaking of rewards, shift from air/hotel rewards to cash back automatically used the following month on purchases. Consider how often air/hotel programs update for a destruction of stored value. A \$400 flight now likely needs 25,000 miles, whereas get 5% cash back on annual \$25,000 spend, \$1,250 was used on following month purchases.

Focus Two: Shop Insurance.

Been 3 years since shopped home, auto, umbrella and/or pet insurance? Good chance it increased over +30% without

any claims to "cover increasing costs."

While partially true, consider, "We noticed you're still here, so we're betting on autopay and inertia to increase profits."

Focus Three: Your Automatic Payments.

Review all automatic payments and use of those services/products.

Yes, it's easy to cancel Peacock after a NFL playoff game. But what of subscriptions on products shipped by Amazon, Instacart, DoorDash? Are you still using it, how frequently and can it be found at a lower price?

What of new bundles offered to better meet your needs? Talking about subscription plans for your cellphone, internet, cable/streaming, music, fitness, data storage, kids gaming, kids activities, club memberships, pet supplies, etc.

Focus Four: Organize to Live with Less.

Declutter, purge, or just throw (bleep) out. Feng Shui touts the benefits of energy and flow, but to me it reduces the need to buy stuff that will re-clutter your space.

Speaking of space, if paying for a storage unit, please stop. At \$200 a month, \$2,400 annually and \$12,000 over 5 years, is the crap not good enough to be in your home worth \$12,000?

How about even \$1,000? Prove it by listing for sale.

Get \$600, then a \$3,000 win/win (or 3X return) over next 12 months.

Focus Five: Finish Your Taxes.

With taxes done by March 11th, there is time to complete deadline items like funding an IRA or Backdoor Roth, plus gain ~10 months to impact 2024 from discovery within the return. Also, you're worry-free for March Madness, St. Patrick's Day and kid's new spring activities.

To get more sustainable ways to improve finances, speak with your Certified Financial Planner.

The opinions voiced in this material are for general information only and are not in-

tended 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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FPAC to present re-imagined *Tarzan* Starring Broadway's Original *Tarzan* Josh Strickland

The Franklin Performing Arts Company (FPAC) will continue their 2023-24 season with a re-imagined immersive production of *Tarzan* the Broadway musical starring Broadway's original *Tarzan* Josh Strickland March 8-17. THE BLACK BOX will be transformed into a multi-stage rock concert centering the iconic Phil Collins music, while telling the classic story by blending Broadway and concert experience. Conceptualized and directed by Raye Lynn Mercer and Ali Funkhouser with choreography by Broadway's Clay Rice-Thomson (Moulin Rouge!, KING KONG, News-

ies, Matilda). Music Direction by Hallie Wetzell. Based on Disney's epic animated musical adventure and Edgar Rice Burrough's *Tarzan of the Apes*, *Tarzan* features heart-pumping music by rock legend, Phil Collins, and a book by Tony Award-winning playwright, David Henry Hwang. High-flying excitement and hits, like the Academy Award winning "You'll Be in My Heart," as well as "Son of Man," and "Two Worlds," make *Tarzan* an unforgettable theatrical experience.

In 2006, Josh Strickland created the leading role of *Tarzan* in Disney's musical *Tarzan* on Broadway. In 2009, he made his

starring Las Vegas debut in Peepshow at Planet Hollywood Casino & Resort while concurrently co-starring in the hit E! reality show Holly's World. Strickland debuted his first single "Report to the Floor," which skyrocketed to the top-five on the iTunes Dance Charts the first week of its release, followed by "Last Dance."

In 2013, Strickland joined the cast of Vegas! The Show at the Planet Hollywood Casino & Resort in Las Vegas in a starring role. Strickland has also appeared internationally with the all-star cast of Disney's Broadway Hits,



including the Emmy®-winning concert at Royal Albert Hall in London, England. He most recently reprised his role as Tarzan in Disney's *Tarzan* in Oberhausen, Germany at the Stage Metronom Theatre.

FPAC is an Actors' Equity Small Professional Theater company based at THE BLACK BOX in downtown Franklin. Each season, FPAC produces musicals, plays, ballets, and more featuring Broadway stars, professional actors, local artists, and students of the arts. Tickets for *Tarzan* are available at FPAConline.com or by calling the box office at (508) 528-3370. Follow Franklin Performing Arts Company and THE BLACK BOX on Facebook and Instagram for updates on programming.

Show Love to the Environment with Eco-Friendly Valentine's Gifts

By JENNIFER RUSSO

Though there are certainly

people out there who like big-ticket items on Valentine's Day,

like diamond jewelry, Maui vacations and expensive perfumes and colognes, many have begun considering gifts that are more about the thought involved and eco-friendly options. With sustainability being a growing concern for many on our planet, there are many ways to show both a partner and the environment that you care.

Give back to Nature:

Why buy a dozen cut roses when you can plant an entire rose bush to enjoy year after year? If you own your home, this is a fantastic way to mark the holiday in a slightly unique way.

For a larger scale impact, you can go through a non-profit organization like One Tree Planted, where you can have a tree planted for one dollar a tree in the name of your loved one. You can select the country where it is planted, and you get a certificate to give your sweetheart to stick in a Valentine's card!

Does your honey love to cook? Consider an indoor herb garden, so they can have the freshest ingredients even in winter!

Another great option is to consider gifts made from beeswax, such as lip gloss or candles.

Find Your Inner Chef:

Going out for an expensive dinner is nice, but if you know what your partner's favorite bites are, consider cooking them dinner instead using locally sourced and seasonal ingredients.

Instead of buying a box of chocolates, make some! Candy melts can be found anywhere, and you can pick up heart shaped candy molds at a craft store. You can even get a pen that writes in edible ink to write messages on these when they are set.

Get CREATE-ive:

Are you a crafty person? If so, try your hand at creating something personal for your love. Build a birdhouse for the bird-watcher, craft a frame or album for the photographer, compile a book of love poems for the avid reader, or some homemade cupcakes for the dessert lover.

Perhaps create a string-art masterpiece for the art aficionado or a pillow made from an old team t-shirt for the sports fan. You could also consider writing a song for that music lover or framing old concert (or movie) ticket stubs to display.

Not super crafty, but still want to try a DIY project? Gather a bunch of pictures of the two of you, print them out and make a

collage. Add some cut outs from a magazine or some words and quotes that are meaningful to your relationship.

Recycled Gifts:

No, we don't mean re-gifting. There are some wonderful products out there that are made from recycled materials that are perfect tokens of affection for Valentine's Day. Depending on what you think your sweetie would like, there are many options.

Paper flowers made from book pages, sheet music or even maps, handbags made from repurposed denim, jewelry made from old puzzle pieces and Legos, recovered ocean plastics, sea glass, and recycled paper are all out there.

Search online for items made from used wine bottles, there is everything from windchimes to cheese platters to cool indoor lighting made from these.

Consider getting that baseball fan a vintage jersey from a reseller or a keychain made from old baseballs. There are also many brands out there that make super stylish clothing and shoes from recycled fibers.

For more on eco-friendly items to make or purchase, simply look online – there is a wealth of ideas to be found there!

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Business Spotlight: The Little Gym of Medway – Building Strength in Body, Mind and Community

By JENNIFER RUSSO

Imagine a world fueled by the energy and laughter of children. A place dedicated not only to keeping kids active, but which also embraces the idea that movement can teach kids important life skills like listening, teamwork, leadership, and sharing.

We know that exercise increases strength in muscles and bones, but experts also say that physical activity enables children to have a more positive outlook, more confidence, increased self-esteem, and the ability to better manage stress, especially in the winter months. When Nigel and Leah Chan took over the Little Gym about 3 years ago, they were already clients and fans of the philosophy behind the business. A three-dimensional learning concept that focuses on movement, mind and building well-rounded, thoughtful and “good citizen” children.

Classes at The Little Gym are non-competitive and range from parent/child classes (for ages 4 months to 3 years), Pre-K Gymnastics (for ages 3-6 years), Grade School Gymnastics (ages 6-12) and Dance (tap and ballet for ages 3-6). All classes are appropriately challenging for the age group and encourage social and emotional growth.

Gymnastics and dance are unique in that they engage both sides of the brain equally, coordinating spatial awareness and task completion. It helps children to develop and complete goals and think critically about how to achieve them. And all of this is fun!

With over 2,300 square feet of gym space, everything is centered around the “big red mat” – the hub where classes start with warmups, engaged in structured social interaction, proceed to

skills learning, and conclude with a reflective and fun activity. This area has become synonymous with fostering social interaction and building community.

“We really want The Little Gym to be a place where families can have fun and grow together,” says Nigel. “Introducing socialization at an early age helps kids to be even more prepared when they start attending school.”

“It’s also a wonderful opportunity for local families to meet and form lasting bonds,” Leah shares. “Many parents start amazing friendships by meeting others through their kids’ activities. So, it’s just as much a place for parents as it is for their kids.”

Though the business has been in this location for 20 plus years, when Leah and Nigel took over, they really wanted to give it a facelift – it was “well-loved”, but the couple envisioned a fresher, lighter and brighter feel. They upgraded the equipment, added lots of color, and brought new life to the space. With a great staff of friendly people who love to have fun and a goal to have every child leave excited and smiling, it has really become a “happy place” for all. The bright and welcoming space is also great in the winter months and is a safe place to play when it gets dark so early outdoors.

In addition to their regularly scheduled classes, The Little Gym of Medway also offers super fun community events, open to members and non-members. From their Winter Wonderland Ugly Sweater Party coming up on January 12th to a “Talls and Smalls” caregiver/child dance, a Back to School Bash, and an annual Halloween party, the hope is to bring together families for a night of fun each month. These events can be signed up for through their website.



The Little Gym of Medway has also become renowned as a fantastic facility to host private birthday parties, available Fridays through Sundays throughout the year. These parties are an excellent choice for families whose kids and their friends are looking to enjoy a “Serious Fun” birthday celebration, complete with planned games, music, and activities. It is also an ideal option for the parents who are concerned about providing ample space for children to run around during the winter months. Additionally, their well-trained staff ensures a hassle-free experience by taking care of both the set-up and clean-up before and after the party.

“We encourage people to try one of our introductory classes without any commitment,” says Leah. “It’s a beautiful, safe environment where children can



develop physical and social skills, expend their energy, and make friends in the process. It offers kids the opportunity to grow in numerous ways – from enhancing agility to building character.”

Learn more about The Little Gym of Medway and their exciting classes and events. They are located at 74 Main St in Medway. Visit their website at <https://www.thelittlegym.com/massachusetts-medway> and check them out on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/TLGMedwayMA> and Instagram at <https://www.instagram.com/tlgmedwayma>



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The College Financial Aid Award Letter

Over the next couple of months, families will be receiving their students' financial aid award letters. The financial aid letters details the award amounts from the institution(s) as well as the federal government. Understanding the different types of awards and comparing the financial aid packages from each university will enable families to make an informed decision.

The financial aid packages are processed after a family has submitted the FAFSA, the need-based federal financial aid form, and depending on the specific college, the CSS Profile, the specific college's need-based financial aid form. The letters from the colleges may list additional expenses for the upcoming school year as well.

Good things to note when reviewing the letters:

- Create a cost comparison spreadsheet to compare the same type of award from each college. **FREE RESOURCE:** email tracy@mycollege101.com for a copy of a cost comparison spreadsheet.
- The award letter includes the Cost of Attendance (COA) direct costs such as tuition, room & board, and fees. If your child is living

on-campus, be certain that "Room & Board" is included in the Cost of Attendance.

- Additionally, the award letter will include indirect costs, such as personal expenses, books, and transportation. The indirect costs are often estimated low. Families should develop realistic expense projections based on their student's needs. For example, if the student is attending college in or near a major city, the student's lifestyle may be more expensive. Transportation costs are also a factor, especially if the student is attending a college far from home.
- If the student is eligible, the letter will provide the student's need-based financial aid awards, such as grants, work-study, and/or subsidized loans. Grants do not need to be repaid. Work study provides part-time jobs to students with financial need allowing them to earn a specific amount of money per semester. The letter will also indicate if the student has earned any non-need merit scholarships and/or unsubsidized federal student loans. Merit scholarships do not need to be

repaid. All loans need to be paid back, whether it is an unsubsidized or subsidized loan.

- Academic scholarships and loans are often combined in the same section which can cause confusion. Remember, loans need to be paid back and academic scholarships do not need to be paid back. Be sure to separate the award types on your spreadsheet. Loans are either unsubsidized loans, interest starts to accrue in college, or subsidized loans, interests start to accrue 6 months after the student leaves school.
- When reviewing merit scholarships, which are based on the student's academics, be certain that the letter states the scholarship is renewable all 4 years. Generally, the institution will have academic requirements to retain the scholarship. The acceptance letter should clarify the terms of the scholarships. If your student intends on transferring at some point, determine if the scholarship would need to be repaid. If there is any ambiguity - call the college's Financial Aid Office.



Maryline Michel Kulewicz and Tracy Sullivan of College 101 Admissions Consultants

- FAFSA's federal loans have the lowest possible interest rate available. Over a four-year period, the student can borrow \$27,000 in FAFSA loans. Families should help students understand the responsibilities of taking out loans. **FREE RESOURCE:** Go to studentaid.gov (valuable website!) and use the loan simulator. Enter the relevant college costs along with the loan amount. The simulator will calculate the monthly payments following graduation.

Fully understanding the financial aid package is a critical piece in determining the overall best

fit for your student. Take your time reviewing all the options provided from the individual colleges, and make sure all of your questions are answered before making any decisions.

Good luck and enjoy the journey!

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February Vacation Happenings

By SYDNEY KEANE

Franklin Public Schools will be closed for February vacation from Monday, February 19 - Friday, February 23. For ideas of fun, family-friendly activities to enjoy during the time off, consider some of the local events listed below!

Friday, February 16

Franklin Public Library (1 p.m. - 5 p.m.), Book Sale!

Saturday, February 17

Franklin Public Library, Winter Beach Party! (10:30 a.m.) for families

Science Series! (1 p.m.), special science workshop led by volunteers from the Franklin High School Science department! Ideal for kids ages 7+.

Bag Sale - \$5 A Bag (1 p.m. - 4 p.m.)

Franklin Historical Museum, Silent Film Saturdays (6 p.m.)

On Feb, 17 Cinema 80 will screen the first of two treasures by comic genius Harold Lloyd, Safety Last, an over-the-top version of a young man trying to

make good in the big city story (in this case, bustling, Jazz-Age Los Angeles). For information, contact Commission Chair Alan Earls (508) 560 3786

Franklin Art Association, Franklin High School Art Exhibit opens until March with art on display at the Escape into Fiction bookstore on 12 Main St.

Monday, February 19

Franklin Cultural District, Children's Museum of Franklin pop up (9 a.m. - noon), indoor mobile pop up Downtown Sports, 240 Cottage St, Franklin. these larger pop-up events, featuring a variety of rotating exhibits, will bring a few hours of play to you and your kiddos.

Tuesday, February 20

Franklin Public Library, Jenny the Juggler! (10:30 a.m.) Interactive variety show includes magic, music, comedy, a BUBBLE EXTRAVAGANZA and of course, juggling!

Open Mic at 67 Degrees Brewing, Hosted by David Penza. 158 Grove St, Franklin, MA

Wednesday, February 21

Franklin Public Library, Pumpernickel Puppets! (10:30 a.m.) A cast of colorful puppet characters, live voices and sound effects!

Teen Pirate Mystery Party! (5:30 p.m.) Welcome aboard the pirate ship Revenge, the most feared ship on the water! Captain Meed has been found dead in his quarters, and his murderer could have only been a member of the crew! Now everyone aboard is a suspect in his murder, and the mutineer must be discovered and face his judgement by Davy Jones himself.

Thursday, February 22

Franklin Public Library, Mr. Vinny Shadow Puppets! (10:30 a.m.) Mr. Vinny from the Toe Jam Puppet Band presents a dynamic and hilarious family show with storytelling with unique puppets! Get ready for lots of jokes and audience participation, and a few fun surprises!

Friday, February 23

Franklin Public Library, "Drive-In" Movie! (1 p.m.) Families!

Indoor "Drive-In" movie in program room! First we'll decorate our "cars" (aka boxes we've been saving up for the event) then we'll relax and enjoy a movie and some popcorn in our spiffy new rides! You're welcome to bring your own box to decorate, or use one of ours!

Saturday, February 24

Franklin Historical Museum Silent Film Saturdays (6 p.m.)

The Freshman, a hilarious look at college culture 100 years ago, (we are a college town after all!), about 75 minutes in length.

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The b.LUXE *beauty beat*

Celebrate Your Besties This Galentine's Day!

BY GINA WOELFEL

Galentine's Day falls on February 13th and is a day for women to celebrate their female friendships. It originated from the character Leslie Knope on the TV show "Parks and Recreation" and is now widely celebrated by countless gal-pals nationwide. On Galentine's Day, women recognize the importance of their female bonds and honor their tried and true friendships. It's the perfect opportunity to pay tribute to your besties who've been there for you through thick and thin.

We all have that special person in our lives: our go-to buddy, our confidant, our ride-or-die, forever friend. You know who she is. She's the person you call when

you get engaged and the person who helps you cut the face out of your photographs when you break up. She's the person who cheers you when you succeed and the person who tells you to get back up when you fall. She's part of your DNA and gets you. She's your person... That's your Galentine.

And guess what? Sometimes, your Galentine is you, and if that's the case, then February 13th is your Day to celebrate the strong, beautiful woman you are!

In The Beauty Beat, we often emphasize the importance of self-care. Last year, for Galentine's Day, we made the executive decision that spending quality time with friends is the best self-care there is. You can

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trust, laugh, and celebrate with your friends; they always make you feel more relaxed and beautiful after you hang out. Sounds familiar? Hmm, who else makes you feel that good? Ah, yes, The b.LUXE Beauty Team! We know how to make you look and feel fabulous, and we're excited to celebrate that this year.

2023 was a stellar year for b.LUXE. We're so incredibly grateful for you, our wonderful clients, and thanks to your unwavering support and loyalty, it was our most successful year yet! We don't often get to share how much you mean to us, but when you're in our studio, you make our days better. Your conversation and personality propel us forward in our profession, and you're the reason we love our jobs.

To celebrate this milestone and show our appreciation, we're giving back in a big way with a bevy of surprises we're sure will delight you. There'll be complimentary gifts and pop-up services, and on select dates, we will reopen our books for our popular makeup lessons with celebrity



artist Madison Elliot. These are just a few of the ways b.LUXE wants to thank you. You deserve a gift of luxury, and we have something special for every one of you!

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way to say Happy Valentine's Day to your special someone. You know how much your wives, mothers, and significant others love b.LUXE! So, hint, hint... Grab your honey the gift they really want!

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Rotary Club of Franklin MA Awards 2023 Scholarship to Molly Normandin

Rotary Club of Franklin MA is proud to announce their 2023 Scholarship Award winner, Molly Normandin. Congratulations to you Molly!

“Molly is very engaging and well spoken, and Rotary is so happy to be a part of her academic journey.” boasted Rotary Club President, Diane Padula.

Molly is currently studying to become a Special Needs Teacher at U-Conn. On December 20, 2023, a special dinner was held in her honor, at the Rome Restaurant, where she delighted the group with stories of her U-Conn life and her college pursuits, as well as, collected The Robert W. Simmler Esquire and Franklin Rotary Club Service Award of \$3,000.

This scholarship is largely made possible by the family of former and dedicated Rotarian, Atty. Robert W. Simmler and

through Rotary’s annual fundraisers and sponsors.

This scholarship award is open to all Franklin High School seniors who are planning to attend college. Each candidate must provide an essay that touches on their experiences and actions exemplifying Rotary’s motto; “Service Above Self”. Before receiving their award, he or she must provide Rotary with their first semester transcript.

Diane concluded, “We wish Molly the best and look forward to keeping her in touch with Ro-



tary. She is Rotary family now and knows that she is welcome to join us at anytime!”

Consider a Heat Pump Hot Water Heater to Save Money and the Environment!

By MARK MINNICHELLI

Did you know that it costs more to create heat than to move heat from one place to another? That is the basic principle that allows heat pump technology to heat our homes, offices, and hot water more efficiently, with less impact on our environment. A heat pump hot water heater moves heat from the air around it and concentrates that heat on the water in the tank, producing typical 120-130F hot water from 60F air!



In 2019, we considered the opportunity to replace our existing electric hot water heater with a low-carbon footprint electric heat pump hot water heater. We decided on a 50-gallon model by Rheem, which had good ratings, was comparatively quiet, and featured Wifi-control capability. With 50-gallon capacity, the unit is able to keep up with the hot water demands of our 3-bedroom home. The heat pump draws heat from the basement air and uses that ambient heat to heat the water in the tank, using roughly 1/3 the electricity of an electric hot water heater. The air flowing out of the unit is cooler and drier, and the water heater requires an auxiliary water pump to remove the condensate water from the unit. The noise produced by the heater is similar to the noise of a running dehumidifier. The unit also has a conventional electric heating element for high-demand times when the heat pump would be unable to keep up with demand.

There are various settings which can be used to control the unit; we use the “energy-saver” setting, which prioritizes the heat pump mode, and automatically switches to conventional heating if needed. One can also choose only heat pump, or only conventional heating element modes,

for complete control over the heater energy source. The Wifi-control capability makes it easy to switch modes, increase or decrease water temperatures, and monitor energy usage and unit health from anywhere, using a standard smart phone.

Although a heat pump water heater is a more expensive initial purchase, the monthly energy savings, combined with the MassSave rebate (currently \$750 for this heat pump) enables an estimated payback period of 2 years versus a pure electric water heater. And by using the clean electricity provided by Dynegy to Franklin residents, we are happy knowing that our domestic hot water heating footprint is minimized! We have had the unit for 4 years as of this writing. We are very happy with this unit’s performance, have had no issues at all, and have definitely saved energy during that time.

For more information on this and other energy-saving ideas, please visit EnergizeFranklin.org.

Franklin Downtown Partnership 2024 Slate of Events & Member Meetings

The Franklin Downtown Partnership has set its schedule of events for this year. Please add these to your calendar:

Beautification Day	Saturday May 18	8 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Strawberry Stroll	Friday June 7 Rain date: June 8	4 p.m. – 8 p.m.
Harvest Festival	Saturday Sept. 28 Rain date: Sept. 29	12 p.m. – 5 p.m.
Winter Decorating Day	Saturday Nov. 23	9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

We seek adult and student volunteers for these events. If you would like to get involved, please reach out to the partnership at downtown.franklin@yahoo.com

The Franklin Downtown Partnership is a non-profit 501©3 organization made up of 350 residents, business owners and community leaders working to revitalize downtown Franklin. The Partnership manages events like the Strawberry Stroll and the Harvest Festival, and initiatives such as beautification, streetscape design, greenspace, alley murals, and sculpture projects. For more information go to www.franklindowntownpartnership.org.

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Living Healthy

Macular Degeneration: 2 New Treatments

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

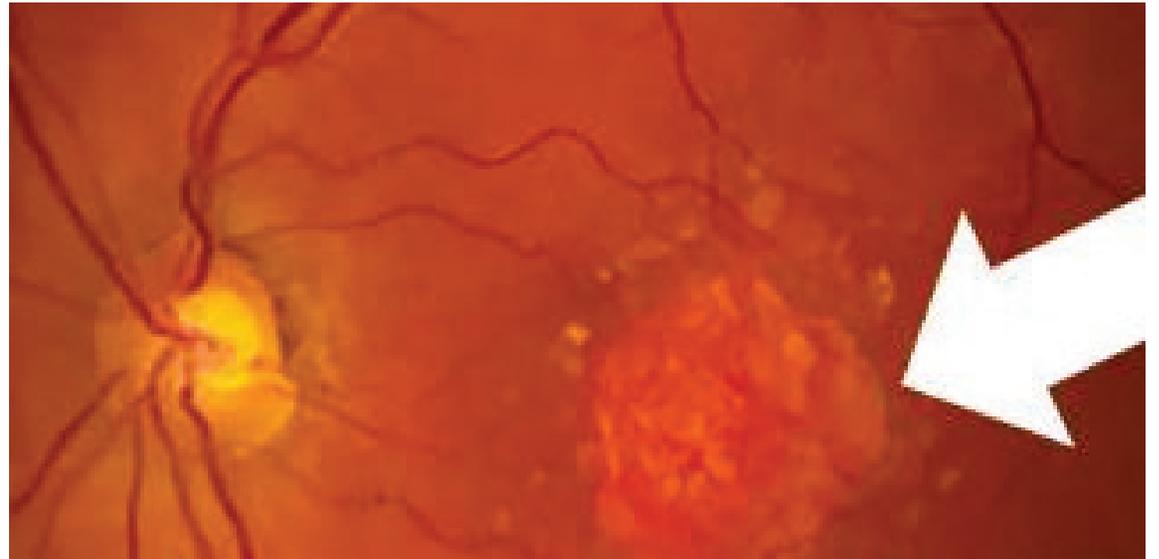
Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) stands as a major cause of blindness in the United States, predominantly affecting seniors. Recently, two innovative treatments for geographic atrophy (GA), an advanced form of AMD, have emerged. This article delves into the various AMD types and identifies potential candidates for these groundbreaking treatments.

Between ages 60 to 70, only 0.7% of the U.S. population exhibits AMD, but by ages 80 to 90, it affects 12% of Americans. This means less than one in 1,000 individuals in their 60s will have AMD, contrasting with over one in 10 in their 80s.

The progression of AMD unfolds gradually, spanning over 20 years. Initial signs include

fine drusen and disruptions in the retinal pigment epithelium (RPE) with depigmentation and pigment clumping. If there's no visual loss, these serve as precursor findings, with not all patients progressing to visually significant AMD.

Effectively managing this condition involves evidence-based medicine while acknowledging the art of medical therapy. Personal approaches include discussing findings like fine drusen and RPE dispersion with patients, reassuring them they don't yet have AMD. Emphasizing higher risk and the need for follow-up visits is crucial. Key risk factors include genetics, behavior, and associated diagnoses. Although genetic testing isn't recommended currently, advocating for a diet rich in green leafy vegetables and discussing AREDS-type vitamins are com-



mon practices. Smoking cessation, if applicable, might require expert referral, and patients with hypertension or hyperlipidemia are encouraged to manage these conditions with their primary care physician.

Once drusen, RPE changes, and vision loss occurs, early AMD is diagnosed in 60-65% of cases. Despite no clear evidence supporting AREDS vitamins,

many patients choose them. As AMD advances to intermediate stage (20-25%), evidence suggests daily vitamin and AREDS vitamin use can delay disease progression. Some specialists also recommend omega-3 supplements.

Late AMD, affecting 10-15% of the 20 million U.S. AMD patients, manifests as wet AMD, GA, or a combination. Those are the real serious types of AMD. Treatment for wet AMD with anti-VEGF intravitreal injections is a significant breakthrough. While the financial and personal cost toll is evident, the vision improvement is substantial.

Distinguishing treatment for dry AMD and GA is essential. AREDS vitamin supplementation for intermediate AMD and monthly intravitreal injections for GA slow progression but don't improve current vision. Adopting vitamin therapy is easier, but monthly injections pose challenges, especially for GA patients. Despite an equal number of wet AMD and GA patients in the U.S., fewer GA patients might opt for intravitreal injection therapy.

With two recent FDA-approved intravitreal injection products delaying GA progression, treated patients can retain reading and driving vision for more years. Decisions regarding intravitreal injection therapy for GA patients need personalized counseling, highlighting the importance of smoking cessation. Patients with family history or bilateral disease are more likely to choose treatment.

Ophthalmologists and optometrists play a vital role in managing and counseling AMD

patients. Differentiating between AMD stages and accurate diagnosis can be achieved through careful examinations, regular OCT testing, and advanced imaging. Collaboration with retina specialists is essential, ensuring appropriate referrals for wet or combined AMD patients.

Patients with GA opting not to proceed with intravitreal injections can be managed without immediate referral. As their disease progresses, some may change their minds, emphasizing the evolving nature of decisions. All patients with significant visual loss deserve an evaluation for appropriate low vision aids.

In the ever-evolving landscape of AMD research, many more advances are anticipated. As the population ages, preparing every ophthalmologist and optometrist for the integral role of counseling and managing AMD patients becomes paramount.

At Milford Franklin Eye Center, we use state-of-the-art technology to treat a variety of eye problems, including macular degeneration. We have a dedicated retina specialist in our practice, specializing in the treatment of retinal eye disease and AMD, including the 2 recent treatment modalities discussed in this article. With the presence of this service and equipment that rivals the best found in major teaching eye hospitals, our practice continues to provide world class eye care closer to home.

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For Your Valentine's... Feature Films Return

The Second Sunday Speaker Series at the museum continues on Feb. 12, 2024 with "Postal Poetry: The Art and Commerce of Valentine's Cards." Historical Commission chair Alan Earls will explore the remarkably long story of Valentine's greetings and how entrepreneurs and new technologies turned sentiment into big business in the 19th century. The story includes key Massachusetts innovators like Louis Prang and pioneering woman business leader, Esther Howland – plus images of many beautiful old cards. A limited number of free, vintage reprint sample cards will be available at the event. Doors open at 1 and the presentation begins at 1:15



at Franklin Historical Museum, 80 West Central Street, Franklin, MA. FREE

Later in the month, the Museum will welcome the public to Cinema 80 – a new program of films of the 20th century, curated by Chris Leverone in cooperation with the Franklin Senior Center. Leverone, a videographer and graphics artist from Franklin, has directed promotional and fundraising videos, and is currently a producer at Franklin TV and is extremely passionate about film. Silent Saturdays start at 6 p.m. on Feb. 17 and Feb. 24.



On Feb. 17 Cinema 80 will screen the first of two treasures by comic genius Harold Lloyd, *Safety Last*, an over-the-top version of a young man trying to

make good in the big city story (in this case, bustling, Jazz-Age Los Angeles). Then, on Feb. 24 it's *The Freshman*, a hilarious look at college culture 100 years ago,



(we are a college town after all!). Both films are about 75 minutes in length.

"We are excited to provide this free, innovative programming in a time slot that should leave people free to squeeze even more into their Saturday night," said Commission Chair Alan Earls. "The best of the silent films are amazing and just as entertaining as anything Hollywood is doing today, we are sure our Franklin audience will agree," he added.

The Franklin Historical Museum is located at 80 West Central Street, Franklin. The museum is open Saturday mornings from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. and Sunday afternoons from 1-4 p.m. When visiting the museum, please consider donating a non-perishable item for the Franklin Food Pantry.

Questions? Contact Alan Earls at (508) 560 3786.

Franklin Art Meeting Feb. 7th to Welcome Glass Sculptor Pariseau



The Franklin Art Association welcomes glass sculptor, Phil Pariseau to be featured artist demonstrator for their February 7, Wednesday meeting at 6:30 p.m. at the Franklin Senior Center.

Phil Pariseau is a self-taught glass artist working on Cape Cod and Franklin, Mass. Phil's early interest in glass began with a glass blowing class more than 25 years ago and developed into a passion for creating kiln-formed pieces of art and unique glass gifts. Combining various techniques of fusing, raking, temperature manipulation, slumping, his pieces

often produce a flow that results in a unique designed to capture light and color beautifully. Phil's glass pieces are known for their distinctive and colorful qualities, including one-of-a-kind wall hangings, sculptures, plates, bowls, and seasonal artwork.

Phil will be demonstrating his approach to glass fusing and designing his sculpture pieces. Meetings are open to the public, free of charge, at 6:30 p.m. at the Senior Center in Franklin. The Franklin Art Association is partially sponsored by the Franklin Cultural Council.



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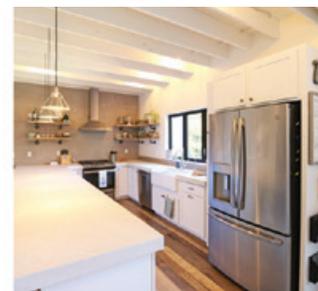
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Tri-County Regional Chamber to Host Family Fest & Home Show

Saturday, March 23rd, Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical High School

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Sports

Musically Inclined and a Force on the Mat

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Franklin's Weylan O'Connell is not only an accomplished musician, but he can also fine tune his opponents when he steps onto the mat, leaving them wondering what just hit them. The senior wrestling captain has been using his strength and knowledge on the mat since the seventh grade, when he first joined Carmine Colace's New England Gold Wrestling club.

"Friends and family told me about wrestling, and eventually, I thought that it would be a could opportunity for conditioning," O'Connell said. "It also helped with the mental aspect of things as well. Wrestling can break you or build you up."

The Franklin native began wrestling for Colace in high school during his sophomore season, and although he saw the majority of his time on the junior varsity level, he did see occasional action with the varsity team. Although having wrestled since the seventh grade, O'Connell's freshman year was that of COVID and with everything that was going on, he really didn't think about wrestling that year.

"I didn't lose a match my first-year wrestling with the JV team," he said. "The Coach saw what I was doing and that I was ready, so he gave me the opportunity to wrestle on the varsity team a couple of times near the end of the season."

Following his first campaign with the Panthers, O'Connell wanted to stay on the varsity squad, so during the off-season he worked hard with New England Gold.

"Prior to my junior year, I continued to work with New England Gold, and I crushed it," O'Connell said. "The coach-

ing staff there are amazing; they pushed me putting me in a good position to succeed my junior year."

During the wrestle-off's, O'Connell validated himself and earned his spot with the Panthers wrestling in the 170 lb. weight class that year.

"It was definitely different that year, being seeded and seeing how well I could do," he said. "I don't remember the numbers, but I didn't have that many losses."

O'Connell, in fact was able to finish fifth at the Sectional Tournament and was an alternate at the State Meet. Unfortunately, although hoping to do better than he actually did, he was motivated for the challenge.

"I was ready, but I was beat out by a kid that I had beaten earlier in the year – it was a real slap in the face. It was a weird match, and I got caught in a position that I had never been in before," he said. "But, I ended up beating him in the consolation round to take fifth place and send me to the States as the alternate and not him. That set me up to be successful this season."

Despite the loss in the Sectionals, O'Connell noted that there are millions of combinations in wrestling, and you can't know them all, and eventually you're bound to fall into one you don't know. Luckily, he took that lack of knowledge to that particular position and turned it around to benefit himself.

Coming into his final season with the Panthers, the senior grappler wants nothing less than a Sectional Championship and to be able to place well at the State Meet. At the time of this writing, O'Connell, a senior captain for the team, found himself sporting an impressive 15-2 record for Franklin.



Weylan O'Connell, a senior captain for Panthers wrestling and also an accomplished musician, hopes for a sectional championship and to place well in states this year. Photos courtesy of Weylan O'Connell.

"At the end of last year, Coach told me that I was going to be a captain, and that it was now my team," O'Connell remembers. "I worked really hard to be a captain, and I like being able to show the other kids when they think that they're tired and its over; you're only at 40% and still have something left."

Colace noted that his senior captain is an extremely hard-working all-around individual that gives it everything that he has when he's on the mat. He is the stronghold for the team and their winning.

While on the mat, O'Connell is a beast with a mission, and the only thing that can stop him from winning on the mat is his music. In addition to being a superstar wrestler for the Panthers, he is a big music advocate. Playing bass, he has found his way to the Districts for Music and will be

competing at Mechanics Hall in Worcester.

"It's audition based, and this is the second year that I have made it playing jazz bass," he said. "I am hoping to do well and make it to All-States."

Unfortunately, the Music Districts will be taking place at the same time that Franklin will be hosting the Franklin Invitational, and not having O'Connell there will make it tough for the Panthers.

"I knew what he was involved in, but this is the wrong time to be happening," Coach Colace said. "He is a very important part of our team, and his wins are vital in our success."

While his coach may not be all that thrilled that his captain is not going to be able to take part in the tournament, O'Connell says he tries to keep both entities as equal as possible.

"I enjoy wrestling as much as I do music and try to keep them balanced," he said. "But when you get that once in a lifetime opportunity, like playing at Mechanics Hall, you have to take it. Other than that, wrestling will always take top precedent."

O'Connell is also part of DECA Inc, which was formerly Distributive Education Clubs of America where he recently placed first in his field in the district.

When his high school wrestling career comes to an end, he will be off to college to study Business Economics with a minor in Music and most likely will not have the time to suit up and get back onto the mat. So, while he has the chance, he is looking to give everything that he has to become a champion.

Franklin Youth Wrestlers Worthy Contenders in PA Tournament

On December 28, 2023, Franklin youth wrestlers Jackson Mahoney (5th grade) and John Woodall (8th grade) traveled with their coach, Frank Mahoney, to Pittsburgh Pennsylvania to wrestle at the prestigious "Powerade Nationals," one of the hardest tournaments in the country.

Jackson Mahoney was placed in a 64-man bracket. He won his first match by a score of 15-0, before being knocked out of the tournament by the eventual 3rd placer from Ohio.

John Woodall won all of his first four matches to earn a spot in the finals match, including a 1-to-0 win in the semi-finals with a tough opponent. Although John fell short in the finals, he earned second place at the prestigious tournament, a first for any Franklin wrestler.



Pictured is John Woodall after winning his Powerade Nationals semi-finals match, 1-0.



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Calendar

February 3

Sound Sculpture at Bellforge, 5-9 p.m., Rt. 27 to Hospital Road, Medfield. Make a left on Hospital Road, then a left on Service Drive. Turn into the hospital grounds at school buses. Drive up the hill, lots on your left, Bellforge is on right (walk between the brick buildings) -events outside on the grounds of the former Chapel, www.bellforge.org

February 4

Climate Change: A Spiritual and Moral Lens, 10 a.m., First Universalist Society, 262 Chestnut St., Franklin, free, presented by Carolyn and Rand Barthel

February 5

MPAC Full Circle presents: Auditions for Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express, 6-8 p.m., 150 Main St., Milford, Rehearsals Tues and Thurs Evenings Feb and March, Performance Dates: April 5th-7th, Open to individuals ages 16+, visit <https://www.milfordpac.com>

February 6

Franklin Rotary Club Meeting, 5:30 p.m., Rome Restaurant, 4 East Central St., Franklin, if interested in attending, email padularotary@gmail.com

MPAC Full Circle presents: Auditions for Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express, 6-8 p.m., 150 Main St., Milford, Rehearsals Tues and Thurs Evenings Feb and March, Performance Dates: April 5th-7th, Open to individuals ages 16+, visit <https://www.milfordpac.com>

February 7

Veterans Coffee Social, 10 a.m., Franklin Senior Center, 10 Daniel McCahill St., Franklin

Franklin Newcomers & Friends meeting, 7 p.m., Escape Into Fiction, 12 Main St., Franklin, speaker Owen Folsom

Franklin Art Association meeting, 6:30 p.m., Franklin Senior Center, 10 Daniel McCahill St., Franklin, featured artist Phil Pariseau, glass artist

February 8

Chocolate 101 Talk & Tasting, 6 p.m., Franklin Public Library, 118 Main St., Franklin, Come try samples of craft, small batch chocolate. Also learn about the ingredients, processing, and where cocoa pods are grown from our own resident chocolate expert.

Registration required for chocolate on library website! Presented by Coco Beantown!

February 10

Dance for a Cause and Play Musical Bingo, 7 p.m., American Legion Post 225, 592 South St., Wrentham, benefits Tri-County Vocational Scholarship, James M. Paquette Memorial Fund (J.u.M.P.) and Gilly's House Sober Living Scholarship Fund

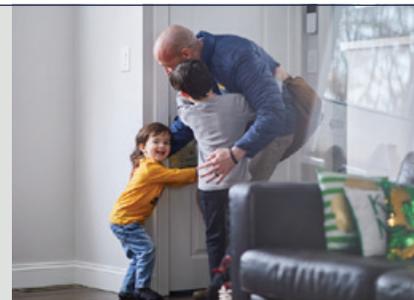
February 12

Second Sunday Speaker Series, 1:15 p.m. (doors open at 1 p.m.), Franklin Historical Museum, 80 West Central St., Franklin, Alan Earls will present "Postal Poetry: The Art and Commerce of Valentine's Cards"

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February 15

New Program: Tricky Trivia Thursday, 6:30 p.m., Franklin Public Library, 118 Main St., Franklin

Join us for snacks and a Family Trivia Challenge at the Library! Play as a team or go solo for ultimate bragging rights!

February 16

Franklin Public Library Book Sale, 1-5 p.m. Franklin Public Library, 118 Main St., Franklin Saturday, February 17th, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 Noon

Franklin Public Library Book Sale, 9 a.m.- 12 p.m. Franklin Public Library, 118 Main St., Franklin

Cinema 80 – a new program of films at Franklin Historical Museum, 6 p.m., curated by Chris Leverone in cooperation with the Franklin Senior Center, 80 West Central St., Franklin, featured film: *Safety Last*

February 17

Franklin Student Art Show opens at Franklin Art Association Gallery, Escape Into Fiction

Bookstore, 12 Main St., Franklin (opening reception Feb. 29), exhibit runs through March 16

February 20

Jenny the Juggler! 10:30 a.m., Franklin Public Library, 118 Main St., Franklin, interactive variety show which includes magic, music, comedy, a BUBBLE EXTRAVAGANZA

Franklin Rotary Club Meeting, 5:30 p.m., Rome Restaurant, 4 East Central St., Franklin, if interested in attending, email padularotary@gmail.com

Voice of Franklin Toastmasters International meeting, 7:30 p.m. - 9 p.m., Franklin TV, 23 Hutchinson St., Franklin

February 21

Pumpnickel Puppets! 10:30 a.m., Franklin Public Library, 118 Main St., Franklin

February 22

Mr. Vinny Shadow Puppets! 10:30 a.m., Franklin Public Library, 118 Main St., Franklin

February 24

Enchanted Fiesta! 10:30 a.m., Franklin Public Library, 118 Main St., Franklin

Gather your whole familia and join us and special guest, The Miracle Keeper, for an energetic and exciting morning fiesta!

Cinema 80 – a new program of films at Franklin Historical Museum, 6 p.m., curated by Chris Leverone in cooperation with the Franklin Senior Center, 80 West Central St., Franklin, featured film: *The Freshman*

February 29

Franklin High School Art Student Exhibit opening, 6-8 p.m., Franklin Art Association Gallery, Escape Into Fiction, 12 Main St., Franklin, exhibit to run through March 16th

March 2

New England Country Dance, 7-9 p.m., First Universalist Society, 262 Chestnut St., Franklin, Admission is \$5 for students 13-18, \$10 for individuals. Tickets at door or FUSE.org/UpcomingEvents

Not Just for Newcomers . . .

Save the date the Franklin Newcomers and Friends Club welcomes you to join us at our next bi-monthly gathering on Wednesday, February 7th. Our speaker Owen Folsom, a financial advisor, will share his expertise on topics like Long Term Care, 529 college funds, the importance of life insurance and more.

The Franklin Newcomers and Friends meet at Escape Into Fiction Book Store, 12 Main Street in Franklin at 7 p.m. Come early and shop at this gem of a bookstore . . . in addition, you'll meet new friends, learn new things and have fun. We provide light refreshments from Franklin restaurants. We are a

multi-generational, member-driven organization and are always excited to welcome new faces and new ideas. Residents of Franklin, or any surrounding town that doesn't have a Newcomers Club, are welcome to join us. In addition to our bi-monthly meetings, we hold fun and varied events to stay connected throughout the year. Look for us on social media for more information: <https://www.meetup.com/franklin-newcomers-friends/> <https://www.facebook.com/FranklinNewcomersFriendsClub>.



February Programming at the Senior Center

Feb 6th at 12:30 p.m. Exploring Medicare Advantage Plans: Have you ever wondered about the Medicare Advantage plans? Join us as a BCBS of MA rep unravels the options. Learn about Medicare Advantage Plans, the differences between HMOs and PPOs, and get a closer look at the Blue Cross Blue Shield Medicare Advantage plans. Discover benefits and understand your healthcare options better! With various plan types available, understanding how different options work is crucial. It's not a one size fits all situation, but being aware of the variations empowers you to make informed decisions

Feb 7th at 1 p.m., Join Joe Landry as he presents on the Hurricane of 1938

Feb 9th at 11 a.m., Join us for our Monthly Party "Mardi Gras" themed! Complete with live entertainment and a delicious meal. Must Register \$6/person

Feb 12th, Senator Rausch will have office hours at the Senior Center

Feb 13th at 1:30 p.m., We will be starting monthly cooking classes! Join us to learn knife skills in the kitchen with Chef Anne.

Feb 23rd at 11 a.m., Eat Around the World Portugal! Must Register \$6/person

Feb 26th at 11 a.m., Drum Circle- Join us for an hour of drumming. Feel the beat, learn some new rhythms, and make friends. Drums and percussion supplied or bring your own.

Feb 28th at 2 p.m., Thriving Solo. Join other Solo Agers (single or partnered adults 55+ without the support of adult children or close family members) for a social group focused on what it means to navigate aging on one's own and meeting fellow solo agers!

Ballet Franklin at FSPA Continues Enrollment in Pre-Professional Ballet Program

Ballet Franklin, the ballet conservatory at the Franklin School for the Performing Arts, is continuing to welcome new students in the new year.

Under the direction of Cheryl Madeux, Ballet Franklin offers the highest quality of classical ballet education and training in the area. They also provide their dancers with a wide variety of performance opportunities for all ages and levels interested in the study of classical ballet. Ballet Franklin graduates and students have been accepted to some of the most prestigious trainee, college, and summer ballet programs available.

The scope of the curriculum provides unparalleled opportunities for dancers to pursue programs tailored to their interests, abilities, and needs. From beginner students seeking to establish a solid foundation in classical ballet technique, to advanced dancers focused on refining artistry, musicality, and performance qualities, all will find a home to train, grow, and develop at Ballet Franklin.

Ballet Franklin Director and Instructor Cheryl Madeux, a Connecticut native, received her training at the Nutmeg Conservatory for the Arts under the direction of Sharon Dante and Donna Bonasera. She has en-

joyed a long professional career, dancing with such venerable companies as the Joffrey Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, and principal dancer with the Hartford Ballet under the direction of Kirk Peterson. Madeux performed extensively throughout the United States and Europe and has been coached by such ballet luminaries as Igor Youskevitch and Eleanor D'Antuono.

Every student is encouraged to audition for FPAC Holiday Productions' *The Nutcracker*, which is performed with a professional orchestra and special guest artists, such as Boston Ballet Principals Erica Cornejo and Paulo Arrais

and Soloists Dalay Parrondo and Bradley Schlagheck. Conservatory dancers have the extra opportunity to participate in Ballet Franklin's Spring Ballet Production as well as audition for FSPA ensembles and dance company opportunities offered throughout the year. The programs are designed to expand knowledge of the classics and explore contemporary ballet and original works by faculty or guest artists. Past Spring Ballet productions have included *Alice in Wonderland*, Prokofiev's *Cinderella Suite*, *Coppe- lia*, *Graduation Ball*, Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, Les Patineurs, and Britten's



Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra. Repertory Concerts include classical and contemporary original works.

The Franklin School for the Performing Arts invites the community to stop by 38 Main Street to tour the facilities, observe classes, speak with faculty and staff, and learn more about all FSPA programs in music, dance, and drama, whether for recreational enjoyment or serious study.

Climate Change: A Spiritual and Moral Lens

10 a.m. Sunday, February 4th, First Universalist Society in Franklin

Please join Carolyn and Rand Barthel, lay members of the First Universalist Society in Franklin, on February 4, 2024, as they explore the spiritual and moral aspects of climate change and activism. Climate change

will affect all of us, while further exacerbating current inequities and disproportionately adversely affecting the poorest among us.

Carolyn and Rand are climate change activists who are recognized leaders in this work

through their leadership in 350 Mass, a statewide climate organization (350mass.betterfutureproject.org); local and state testimony in support of legislative change; and establishment of Energize Franklin. Afterwards, they will be available for conversation about their service or discussion of "nuts and bolts" approaches to reducing indi-

vidual greenhouse gas emissions (your carbon footprint).

The First Universalist Society in Franklin (FUSF) is located at 262 Chestnut Street, Franklin MA. For more information about FUSF please visit FUSF.org. Interim Minister Rev. Beverly Waring can be reached at minister@fusf.org or at (508) 528-5348. FUSF is a Unitarian Universalist Welcoming Congregation.



Climate Justice March, New York City, September 2023. Photo by Rand Barthel

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Library website (<https://www.franklinma.gov/franklin-public-library>)! Orders are due by February 3rd.

February 2024 – Veterans' Services Office Notes

(508) 613-1315

February 4 - United Service Organization's (USO) 83rd Birthday - Founded in 1941, the USO is a private, not-for-profit organization that raises morale and provides emergency contact, financial assistance, educational aid, live entertainment, care packages and more for American troops serving all over the world.

February 7 - Veterans' Monthly Coffee Social - 10 a.m. at the Franklin Senior Center. All Veterans are invited for coffee and conversation. Refreshments will be provided by our wonderful friends at Starbucks!

February 15 - Veterans' Council Meeting - 7 p.m. at the Senior Center. All Franklin residents interested in Veterans' activities and events are welcome to join us!

February 19 – Coast Guard Reserve's 85rd Birthday

The next engraved brick installation on the Veterans Memorial Walkway is scheduled to coincide with Memorial Day. An engraved brick makes a great birthday or Mother's or Father's Day gift for your special Veteran or current military service member. Brick order forms are available in the Town Hall and Senior Center lobbies as well as on the Veterans' Services page on the Town web site. Thank you to all who have supported the Walkway Project!

The Tune It Out guitar lessons program for Veterans meets on Tuesdays at 5:30 p.m. at the Senior Center. There is no charge for lessons and no guitar experience is required. Guitars are available in the Veterans' Services Office. Call for details.

Tri-County Students Build New Playground Equipment for Medway's McGovern Elementary

On Wednesday, Jan. 3, a ribbon-cutting was held to celebrate newly added playground equipment at the McGovern Elementary School playground with several members of the Medway School community as well as students and administrators from the Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical school.

The ceremony began with opening remarks from Principal McDonald. School and town officials attended the event including Superintendent Pires, Assistant Superintendent Gabrielle Abrams, Student Services Director Ryan Place, Facilities Director Michael Grennon, Medway Foundation for Education member Michael Hanson, Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical High School Superintendent Karen Maguire and Principal Dana Walsh.

McGovern Elementary School's former first grade



Members of Medway Public Schools and students and administrators of the Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical school joined in the ribbon cutting ceremony at McGovern Elementary School to celebrate newly added playground equipment. (Photo courtesy Medway Public Schools)

teacher Tara Barrows wrote and submitted a grant to the Medway Foundation for Education in 2022, with hopes to enhance the playground area and create an outdoor nature play and exploration zone for students.

The Medway Foundation for Education awarded the \$5,000 grant, allowing for new pieces of dramatic play equipment to be added to the playground.

Additionally, a stage, four mud kitchens, four easels, two sandboxes and a 2-story pirate ship were built for the playground by Jeremy Barstow, a Medway parent and carpentry teacher at Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical school and his carpentry students.

"This vibrant and colorful space is not just a collection of swings, slides, and monkey bars; it is a testament to the dedication and collective effort of our community to create an environment that fosters joy, growth, friendship and exploration," said Principal McDonald. "I would like to express our deepest gratitude to everyone who played a role in making this dream become a reality."

FPS Celebrates Successful Fall 2023 Athletics Season

Superintendent Lucas Giguere and Athletic Director Karrah Ellis congratulate Franklin High's student-athletes and athletic staff on a successful fall athletics season.

Competing in the Hockomock League as part of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA), FHS athletics finished fall with the most wins across all teams in the league. FHS sports teams recognized include: Boys' Soccer, Girls' Soccer, Golf, Boys' Cross Country with Volleyball and Field Hockey placing in the Final Four for the Division 1 State Tournament.

The FHS cheer team won its 10th consecutive Hockomock League title, the Division 1 South Regional Championship, and the Division 1 State Championship with the highest state score.

FHS also won the Hockomock League Val Muscato All-Sports Award for fall 2023,

tallying the highest average of earned points from league standings in all sports.

Franklin High School athletics secured The Boston Globe Dalton Award for the fifth straight year, winning 74.7% of its games for an overall record of 251-83-6.

The MIAA recognized three FHS head coaches as Coach of the Year including Baseball coach Zach Brown, Unified Basketball coach John Leighton and girls' Lacrosse coach Kristin Igoe, who was also honored as the National Federation of High School Sports Section 1 Coach of the Year.

Several FHS student-athletes were named "All-Scholastic" by the

Boston Herald: Emily Carney (Field Hockey), Raena Crandall (Field Hockey), Rex Cinelli (Boys' Soccer), Anya Zub (Girls' Soccer)

Real Estate Corner



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REALTOR® Jessica Azzi of LAER Realty Partners Creates a Win-Win in 2024 for Buyers and Sellers



By JENNIFER RUSSO

In 2018, Jessica Azzi and her family made the exciting decision to upgrade their living space as her family expanded, sparking a newfound passion for real estate. With a diverse background encompassing entrepreneurship, international marketing, law consulting, and personal property management, Jessica is dedicated to providing top-notch real estate services.

Jessica Azzi, REALTOR® of LAER Realty Partners mission is crystal clear—to offer exceptional customer service and navigate the ever-changing market using effective negotiation skills to support any market changes for buyers and sellers. Buyers need someone like her to help negotiate the ever-changing commission landscape and provide loyalty and fiduciary duties



**Real Estate
spotlight**

in protecting buyers interests in the real estate transactions to purchase their home. Sellers need Jessica's marketing skills and market knowledge to price and promote their home to get it market-ready and provide the best possible reasonable care and financial outcome from the sale.

Striving to transform the goals of both buyers and sellers into their dreams come true, Jessica's innate desire to connect with others and find satisfaction in helping clients achieve their home goals drives her commitment to excellence in the real estate industry. Whether you are buying, selling, or seeking the perfect business location, Jessica is here to guide you every step of the way, ensuring a seamless and successful real estate journey.

The real estate market has faced significant changes in recent years. Looking ahead to 2024, she shares several key trends that are poised to redefine the industry.

Recent Trends:

- **Pandemic-Driven Changes:** Remote work spurred demand for larger homes with home office space and properties in suburban areas.
- **Tech Integration:** Virtual tours, virtual staging, AI integration, and digital transactions transformed the buying process.
- **Supply Chain Impact:** Construction delays and shortages exacerbated housing deficits.

Views on 2024 Trends:

- **Commercial Revitalization:** Renewed interest in underutilized commercial space for new residential use.
- **Sustainable Living:** Increased demand for eco-friendly and smart homes.
- **Economic Influence:** Potential interest rate reductions impacting sellers and buyers and affecting home prices.

"Additionally, real estate investment shaped by trends like house flipping (renovating undervalued properties for profit) and owning rental properties, which remain a steady avenue for long-term wealth building, offers diverse opportunities in today's dynamic market for both seasoned investors and newcomers," comments Jessica. "Investors navigating this landscape and its emerging trends really must stay agile, leveraging market insights and professional guidance to un-

lock true potential."

With a steady and strong commitment to her clients' needs and housing aspirations, a REALTOR® like Jessica can help meet her clients' goals. She is an expert guide along the journey who can save clients time and amplify the home buying and selling processes by leveraging her network and interpreting any unfamiliar financial jargon.

"My understanding of the ever-changing real estate market, meticulous attention to detail, and adept negotiation skills enable me to secure the most advantageous deals for my buyers, sellers, and commercial clients. I excel in cultivating enduring relationships and providing steadfast support. Whether collaborating with seasoned investors, guiding first-time buyers through their home buying journey, or assisting homeowners through the challenges when they decide to sell their homes, my commitment remains unwavering. I am dedicated to delivering exceptional service, professionalism, and results that consistently surpass expectations," Jessica shares.

Apart from her role as a REALTOR®, Jessica actively contributes to the community through her annual Marines Toys for Tots Drive. This initiative attracts donations not only from the Franklin Community but also from neighboring towns like Bellingham, Medway, Millis, Medfield, etc. Her efforts extend to networking, connecting local businesses, and fostering relationships within the community.

In addition to being a full-time REALTOR®, Jessica holds certifications such as Short Sales and Foreclosure Resource (SFR®) and the Accredited Buyer's Representative ABR® Designation. Additionally, she is a proud member of the Massachusetts Association of Realtors (MAR) and the Northeast Association of Realtors (NEAR). Currently, she actively participates on the board for Networking Group USA, North Attleboro Chapter. Jessica is also a member of (RIAR) Rhode Island Association of REALTORS®.

To meet Jessica and connect about your real estate questions or goals, she welcomes you to come by the LAER Realty Partners office at 55 West Central Street in Franklin or reach out by scanning the code below or call (508) 517-4594. You can also learn more by visiting her website at www.yourjazzirealtor.com or sending an email to JAzzi@LAERrealty.com

Here's to a prosperous 2024 filled with successful real estate journeys!

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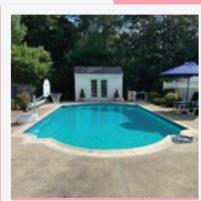
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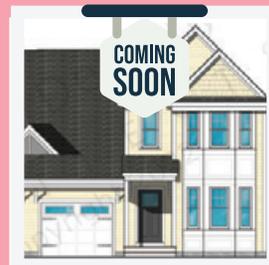
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