

## Louie Will See You Now

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

Stressed at work? Get a dog. Responding to emergency calls, Captain Chris Hampton noticed a phenomenon in reading those many rooms. He oversees the Training Division of the Natick Fire Department, and saw that in situations where a dog was present, tension and stress held less sway.

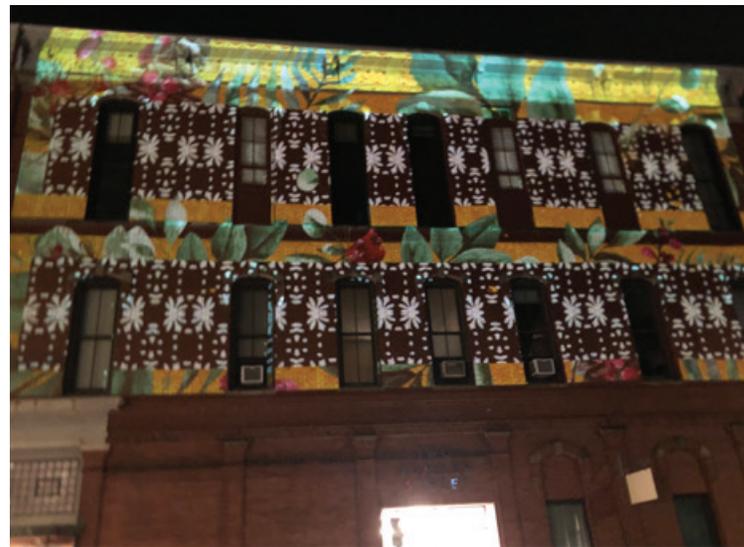
A confluence of high-stakes calls and Covid over the last few years, said Hampton, have stirred the pot of an already high-pressure profession. Responding to people's homes and interacting closely with the public make firefighters more susceptible to getting sick from a novel virus, and by extension puts their families at greater risk. During that time also, several members of the department had been diagnosed with cancer.

"It just became layered," said Hampton. "Stress levels high everywhere."

It seems a truism that stress can be part and parcel of the workplace, but that holds especially true for first responders.



**LOUIE**  
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## Lights Fantastic

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

"If you don't stop and look around once in a while," the saying goes of life, "you could miss it."

Although fictional Ferris Bueller didn't coin the quote, he must be the most famous character to have spoken and most popularized it. The Bueller from his classic, eponymous 80s film was legendary for stylish cool and missing school, but was no slacker. He seemed capable of cramming a year's worth of highlights and hijinks into a single weekday.

Missing out was not on the menu, and Bueller's advice is sage.

Drivers passing south through Natick Center are nightly given a pop-quiz on this philosophy, a kind of pass-or-fail exam on paying attention. For the past few years, the southern end of Clark's Block Building becomes an illuminated billboard as darkness falls.

Have you thus far missed it?

**LIGHTS**  
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**LOUIE**

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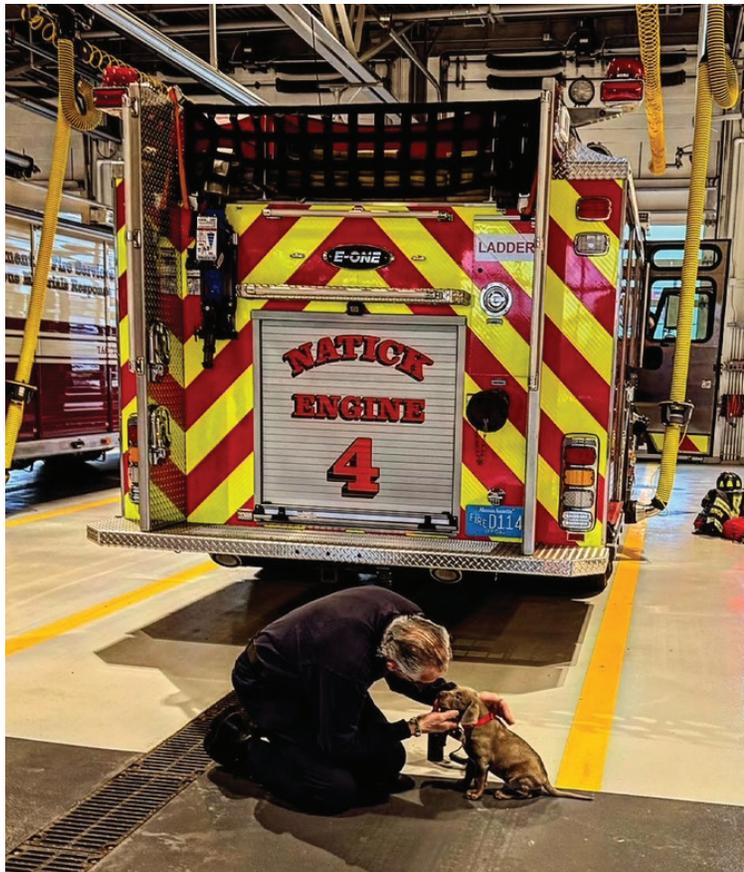
The inherent risks to personal and public safety add a whole other dimension to the standard stresses of long hours and deadlines.

Seeing how dogs could lower the temperature in a given situation, Captain Hampton recognized a phenomenon that's long been appreciated in mental health circles. Animals can serve as a powerful antidote to anxiety and stress.

"Nine times out of ten it was just kind of a calming energy," said Hampton. "I wanted to find a way to recreate that as a constant for the department."

Dalmatians, of course, are conjured in the public imagination as the firefighter's classic K9 companion. In the days of horse-drawn fire engines, the dogs were assigned to soothe and guard their equestrian cousins at the scene of a fire.

Understandably spooked by a blaze, the horses were put more at ease in the presence of their smaller white and black-spotted companions. Via their breeding



history, Dalmatians tend to have an affinity for horses.

Bringing a dog into the mix was the logical choice for Hampton. As the saying goes, when you feed and shelter a dog, they come to think of you as a god. But feed

and shelter a cat, and they think they're the god. No shade upon our feline friends, but one would be likely to find a mascot cat too often curled up in a fireman's helmet in some sunny corner. No, a cat wouldn't serve.

Tending to be more gregarious and good-naturedly goofy, dogs were the way to go. Hampton started to design a program that would "adopt" a K9 into the ranks of the department. He researched and reached out to other organizations that had successfully done so, embracing from those examples what he thought would work at the NFD. Any M.O. he deemed impractical was discarded.

Enter Louie.

The 10-week-old Silver Lab became part of Hampton's family, and by extension, the fire department's. So as not to be underfoot in the special environment, Louie has been undergoing specialized training. He is technically Hampton's dog, but lives with the Captain during his four-day rotation at the station.

When the Captain and I spoke over the phone, Louie was asleep in his bunk, a nearby open cage in Hampton's office. A bustling fire station would seem to provide a never-ending playdate for a dog, constant companionship and attention.

"He's like a medium-tempered dog. I make him available to everyone I can. He's loving it."

If Louie is in the car with Hampton when a call comes in, he'll ride shotgun with the Captain to the scene.

The Silver Lab is short of stature for now, but that very likely won't last. Louie's brother, said Hampton, is already weighing in at 80 pounds.

"He's going to be a big boy."

Now, said Hampton, other departments and organizations are reaching out to him for advice on how to integrate a team member like Louis into their group. The Captain has thus far paid for the dog, his training, and all the expenses of pet ownership himself.

That option was simplest in terms of bypassing red tape, said Hampton, if not the least expensive. Yet the department has been supportive, and is exploring ways the organization might share some of those costs.

"I wouldn't have been able to do it without the Chief and union support."

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**LIGHTS**

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But billboard is too ungainly a word to describe the illuminated art installation that's been featured there for many months. A drive-in movie screen would be closer to the spirit of the project, at least in its vividness and square footage, yet even that comparison seems to fall short of the mark.

The scenes being cast on the red-bricked shoulder of the three-story building stream above and across Summer Street. Like an unseen clothesline, the images connect the two tall brick facades that stare at one another across the chasm.

"Art in Lights" is the name given to the effort, a program brought to life by the Natick Center Cultural District.

Housed behind a high window in the building where the Debsan paint company has done business for decades, a projector whirrs to life when daylight wanes. Set to a timer geared to the seasonal sunset, the device activates at an appointed hour, painting the opposite building with light.

The images bring the inside, outside. They are a slideshow of

sorts, depicting the antique architecture of the cavernous old concert hall that still dominates Clark's Block Building. Rendered are snapshots of the painted ceiling and ornate fixtures of the third-floor hall, dating back to 1874, the building's crowning centerpiece.

The light show is an apt tribute to the craftsmanship of that bygone era, and it's fitting that images of it are worn on the sleeve of the old building's flank. It's a slideshow with a smooth and elegant segue between scenes, each piece bleeding into the next as if by the silent turning of a page.

The current collection of images from the concert hall's interior could best be described as an exhibit, which would make Art in Lights its gallery. And as the projector is portable, and virtually any surface can serve as a canvas, the program presents vast potential as a literal moveable feast of artistic expression.

The project was an unanticipated upshot of a lighting study aimed at enhancing the atmosphere of the downtown area. That, and a state grant gift to the Natick Center Cultural District, made the installation possible.

"What would make it a bet-

ter-lit center?" said Athena Pandolf. "We decided to go a more creative route." She is executive director of the NCCD.

"I think it adds a lot to Natick as an arts center."

The NCCD partnered with projection design artist Pamela Hersch and the company LuminArtz to produce Art in Lights. Casting artistic images onto irregular canvases is Hersch's specialty, and the brick facade above Two Summer Street was no exception.

Colors and patterns of pigments rendered in photons had to be carefully chosen to avoid being washed out by rusty-hued brick, and to navigate around windows placed ostensibly as obstacles to the artist's vision. Yet to a creative like Hersch, these quirks can more aptly be seen as expressions of the canvas's character - part of what makes such installations so unique and compelling.

"It just works," said Pandolf. "It's just so innovative and cool."

Powerful projection technology is becoming ever more prevalent as cost continues to fall. And its ephemeral quality has conjured somewhat of a conundrum for some municipalities. Whereas the graffiti artist mars surfaces with cans of spray pig-

ment, the projectionist "paints" a chosen surface with light, creating an image that appears at the push of a button and vanishes just as readily.

But that doesn't mean there'll be no objection to a particular projection. That virtually any surface can instantly become a temporary billboard creates questions about who has the access to project what, when and where.

Projection technology has of late become a powerful tool for cultural and civic advocacy. Presidents and political parties have learned this lesson, sometimes

finding themselves on the receiving end of messages projected by adversaries. Projected light leaves no physical residue, but it's the message, not the medium, that stakeholders may take issue with.

On the cusp of New Year's Eve weeks ago, one high-rise building overlooking the Boston Common was awash with evolving images in honor of the occasion. The projected light show dominated the scene and captured the attention of the many thousands on

**LIGHTS**

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# Boys And Girls Club Gets Grant

The Metrowest-based Sincere Foundation announced that it has completed its first full grant cycle and distributed \$250,000 across 20 nonprofit organizations that address basic needs (food security, housing stability, and safe spaces) in Massachusetts.

Among the recipients is The Boys & Girls Club of Metrowest. Here's what their Vice President Laura Terzigni had to say about the news:

"Boys & Girls Clubs of MetroWest is grateful to the Sincere Foundation for supporting the Teen Takeover Program at the Framingham Clubhouse's Teen Center. The Club and the Teen Center do "whatever it takes" for our youth members and teens and the Teen Takeover Program is a critical step in helping all youth explore their interests, pursue their passions, and build their great futures in a safe,

inclusive, and positive space."

The Foundation and these grants are made possible by the support of Metrowest-based technology company Sincere Corporation and its family of brands: Punchbowl, Timehop, and Memento.

Why this matters: According to the Greater Boston Food Bank's Third Annual Report, published in May 2023, one in three Mass. households experience food insecurity or lack of consistent access to adequate food. Furthermore, individuals and families across the state are lacking housing stability and safe spaces. Sincere envisions a world where everyone has the opportunity to celebrate, recognize milestones, and honor memories; and that is only possible when people have what they need to thrive.

# Real Self-Care: A Revolutionary Approach to Taking Good Care of Yourself with Dr. Pooja Lakshmin

Wednesday 2/14/24 from 12-1pm on Zoom  
For adult community members

In this Q&A "fireside" chat, author and psychiatrist Pooja Lakshmin, MD, offers an inclusive and affirming approach to prioritizing your own well-being. Her approach shifts self-care from a task on your "to do" list (that you feel guilty about not achieving) to a values-based practice of setting priorities and taking action. Dr. Lakshmin will share accessible, science-based strategies to help you shift your relationships, nurture yourself, and find ownership over your life. Participant questions will be welcomed before the program. Live ASL Interpretation will be provided.



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### LIGHTS

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the green below, until fireworks began and shook the Common from above.

In the same spirit but on a smaller canvas, Natick's Art in Lights has been a case study in how the technology can be used with elegance for the betterment and beautification of public

spaces. Debsan and the Walnut Hill School for the Arts also continue to play a pivotal role in the art installation.

The latter uses spaces in the Debsan building to host its dance programs, and agreed to set aside a small window spot where the projector resides. Artwork by the school's students has also been cast onto the brick canvas in months past.

"Both groups have been un-

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believably generous," said Katie Love. She has worked as project manager for Art in Lights since the project's inception.

Solving and creating systems for technical challenges has been part of the process. Keeping the timer in sync with the seasons has been among them, in addition to all the potential glitches that come with using technology.

These aren't your standard home entertainment or company meeting projectors. The tech used for such large-scale installations are far more pricey and powerful. They must generate enough lumens to saturate stubborn surfaces with high resolution images and video.

Natick's cluster of high and historic facades seems ready-made for the Art in Lights gallery. The Summer Street installation has been a trial run of sorts, a chance for users and artists to grow comfortable and competent with the gear.

"There's so much vast potential to what can be projected and how it can be projected," said Love. "I was just so intrigued by it. There's kind of no end to the creative options."

Have a great story idea? Please reach out to: seansullivanrsvp@gmail.com

# Bacon Free Library February 2024

### Library Hours

Monday through Friday, 9:30-5:30 with extended hours on Tuesday until 7:00pm

Saturdays 9:30-1:30

Curbside pickup is available during all open hours

Check our website for the most up-to-date information and to register for programs: <https://baconfreelibrary.org>

### Children's Programs

Story Time -- Mondays and Tuesdays @ 10 am -- We'll feature a combination of stories for listening and songs for singing & dancing.

Baby Time -- Wednesdays @ 10am -- Join us for a cozy story time filled with lap bounces, rhymes, songs, and simple stories. Geared toward infants and young toddlers with their grownups.

Dog Tales Story Time -- Monday, February 5th @ 10am -- Join us for dog-approved stories and a chance to pet a calm, sweet, and soft therapy dog.

Jammin with You -- Fridays, February 2nd & 16th @

10:30am -- Be prepared to laugh, dance, sing, and jam your way through 30 minutes of non-stop family fun! Registration is required.

Read to a Dog -- Saturday, February 3rd, 10-11:15am -- Kids build confidence and practice reading skills by reading out loud to a registered therapy dog. Children ages 5 and up can sign up for a 15-minute reading session with Sophie, a gentle golden retriever who loves belly rubs, stories, and cuddles. Registration is required.

Drop-in Valentine Making -- Mon, February 12th, 3-5pm AND Weds, February 14th, 10:30am-12pm-- Make some Valentine's Day cards for your friends and family! We'll provide an assortment of craft materials. All ages are welcome.

Buildwave Workshop -- Tuesday, February 20th @ 1pm -- Build and have fun in this creative, hands-on workshop that encourages play and collaboration. Participants will be given

wave after wave of kits filled with different building materials to explore. Geared toward kids in grades K to 6. Registration is required.

Drop-in Craft -- Friday, February 23rd, 10:30-11:30am -- Stop by to make a fun craft during school vacation week. All ages welcome!

### All Ages Programs

Featured art display: Our newest display features two local artists who are each inspired by nature. Carol Keefe's oil paintings emphasize the meeting of sky and sea on Nantucket Island, while Bobby Reeve expresses his appreciation of birds through hand-carved sculptures. Come to see these beautiful works between February 8th and March 27th.

Art Opening Reception: Carol Keefe and Bobby Reeve -- Tues, February 13th @ 5:30pm -- Join us for a reception to welcome our featured artists and to enjoy their work.

Instrument Petting Zoo -- Saturday, February 17th @ 11am -- Bach to Rock in Wellesley will bring a variety of musical instruments to the BFL to give people of all ages a chance to learn about instruments and experience playing them. Stop by to try out an instrument, or two, that you're curious about.

Adult Book & Film Clubs - registration required for all clubs <https://baconfreelibrary.org/clubs-programs/>

Mystery Book Club - first Thursday of the month @ 1pm on Zoom  
Feb 1st: A Flicker in the Dark by Stacy Willingham

History Book Club - second Thursday of the month @ 11am on Zoom  
Feb 8th: Until I am Free:

Fannie Lou Hamer's enduring message to America by Keisha M Blai

Nonfiction Book Club -- fourth Saturday of the month @ 10am at the library

Feb 24th: Longitude: the true story of a lone genius who solved the greatest scientific problem of his time by Dava Sobel

Cinephile Mondays -- last Monday of the month @ 4pm on Zoom; watch and discuss films. Check the BFL website for the film of the month and to register.

### Museum Passes

The Bacon Free Library and Morse Institute Library offer passes for free or reduced-admission to 30 local museums. Check one out and plan your next day trip!

## Natick firefighters graduate from Fire Academy Training Program

On Jan. 22, the Natick Fire Department had four recruits

Other fire departments represented in Class #317 include

13,000 students each year, providing vital training to firefighters at every level of experience at three regional campuses and at local fire departments.



Natick firefighters Kelly Marolf, Micah Alexander, Dennis King, and Kevin Tosi graduated from the Firefighting Academy on Jan. 22, 2024. Courtesy photo

graduate from the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy as part of Career Recruit Firefighter Training Program Class #317.

Natick firefighters Kelly Marolf, Micah Alexander, Dennis King, and Kevin Tosi were among 31 members to graduate after 10 weeks of training.

Bedford, Danvers, Dracut, Holden, Marlborough, Melrose, Milford, Nahant, Newton, North Andover, North Reading, Phillipston, Reading, Revere, Salem, Saugus, Seekonk, Tewksbury, and Weston.

The Massachusetts Firefighting Academy serves more than

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# Community – Senior Center February news

## MONDAYS AT A MUSEUM-ZOOM

Mondays 3:00-4:00pm, free  
 Join Sharon as we look at fine art in museums across the world.  
 February 5- Black Artists - National Gallery of Art  
 February 12- Matisse, Derain and a love story  
 February 19, 26 no Mondays at a Museum

## CULTURALLY CURIOUS - Kehinde Wiley: Color & Splendor- ZOOM

Tuesday, February 6, 1:30-2:30pm, free  
 Kehinde Wiley's portrait of President Obama cemented his status in the contemporary art world as an artist that mixes Grand Manner portraiture traditions, intricate patterns and designs, and a vibrant, technicolor palette.

His paintings, which most often depict contemporary African American subjects, examine visual codes for power and challenge expectations. This program explores the artist's life and provides an overview of his works and inspiration. Thank you to Whitney Place for sponsoring this program!

## UNDERSTANDING THE US CONSTITUTION- PART 1 - IN PERSON

Why is there a Constitution?  
 Thursday, February 8, 1:30-2:30pm, free  
 Join Rick Tulipano, historian for this fascinating 3-part series on the US Constitution. Part 1 – Why is there a Constitution? We'll look at the problems that pushed America's leaders to write a constitution in 1787. We'll see how close those men came to giving up and leaving America as a collection of thirteen separate countries. Be sure to mark your calendar for part 2- What does the Constitution actually say?, Thursday, March 7, 1:30 and part 3- How America accepted the Constitution, Thursday, April 4, 1:30pm.

## VALENTINE'S DAY CELEBRATION WITH MUSIC- MICHAEL LEIDIG- PIANO/ VOICE

Tuesday, February, 13, 12:30-1:30 pm, free  
 Michael Leidig is a jazz/classical pianist from Dedham performs frequently at community centers, libraries and restaurants throughout MA. His solo piano performances have been described as a mellifluous im-

pressionistic blend of well-known jazz, blues, classical, rock, and pop music. Michael is known for his eclectic medleys spanning centuries and musical genres weaving interpretations of a wide variety of music from jazz greats like Nat King Cole & Bill Evans, to rock artists such as The Beatles, Elvis, & John Denver to classical composers including Chopin, Mozart & Pachelbel. For this program, Michael will include a selection of music related to Valentine's Day. Sponsored by Riverbend Associates, Rehabilitation Associates / Riverbend of South Natick

## THE JOYS OF NATURE TRAVEL TALK- AUSTRALIA-HYBRID

Wednesday, February 28, 1:30-2:30pm, free  
 Join Joy Marzolf in person or virtually as we travel to Australia. Flying, hopping, crawling, swimming...The wildlife of Australia is truly unique. Tour through the temperate rainforests of Southern Queensland and the tropical rainforests of the Northeast. Enjoy views from above, and then below, as we visit the home of "Nemo" and many other beautiful creatures found on the Great Barrier Reef.

## 2024 TRIPS with Natick Community Senior Center

For more information, please call Sharon at Natick CSC 508-647-6540 X1907, skirby@natickma.org. Please note for all trips: There is some walking, stairs, uneven surfaces and standing for this day trip. This is a non-refundable purchase. Register at the Center, 117 East Central St or online through Community Pass.

## DAY TRIP- ST PATRICK'S DAY CELEBRATION

Tuesday, March 12, \$125.00 per person (non-refundable purchase), Bus departs from Fisk Methodist Church, 106 Walnut St, Natick at 8:45 am returning approximately 5:45pm.  
 We travel to Aqua Turf, Southington, CT- a lovely venue for parties surrounded by landscaped gardens. Join us for Live music with Padraig Allen and the McLean Avenue Band for Irish music and Irish Step Dancers. Adding a classic Irish lunch of Corned Beef and Cabbage or Baked Cod- choose at registration. Also included is coffee and donuts and a glass of wine or beer. May the luck of the Irish be with you to win a door prize before you depart.  
 Registration Deadline is Monday, February 19.

## DAY TRIP TO ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM, BOSTON

Wednesday, April 10, (non-refundable purchase), Cost is \$117.00 includes luxury bus, lunch, museum entrance. Please come by the center to register and pay or online through community Pass, call for more information 508-647-6540. Bus departs from Fisk Methodist Church, 106 Walnut St, Natick at 10:15 am returning approximately 6:30 pm.  
 This is the most spectacular time to visit the Gardner Museum when the annual Nasturtium Flowers are on display in the Venetian-Style Courtyard. Three floors of galleries surround the courtyard with paintings, sculpture, tapestries, furniture and decorative arts. Our trip will start with lunch at the Venezia

Restaurant, please choose your entrée: Baked Haddock, Chicken Parmigiana or Pasta Primavera. After lunch we'll stop at the Prudential Center to browse the shops, then we are off to Isabella Steward Gardner Museum for a self-guided tour.  
 Registration Deadline is Tuesday, March 19.

## DAY TRIP TO BLITHEWOLD MANSION

Monday, April 22, \$117, non-refundable, payable at registration. Luxury bus departs from Fisk Methodist Church, 106 Walnut St, Natick at 8:45am, returns approximately 5:45pm.  
 The turn of the century Blithewold Mansion and 33 acre estate in Bristol Rhode Island is the perfect day trip getaway. The gardens surrounding the house and abutting Naragansett Bay are spectacular with woodland spring flowers and over 50,000 daffodils! Savor the ambience of life during the Country Place Era as you dine on scones, tea sandwiches and more. After lunch, enjoy a little time strolling downtown Newport before heading home.  
 Registration Deadline is Friday, March 29.

## DAY TRIP- CAPE ANN

Wednesday, May 8, \$126.00 per person (non-refundable purchase), come by the center to register and pay or online through community Pass, call for more information 508-647-6540. Bus departs from Fisk Methodist Church, 106 Walnut St, Natick at 10:00 am returning approximately 6:30 pm.

## SENIOR CENTER continued on page 7

# PUBLIC NOTICE

Verizon Wireless is proposing to install new wireless antennas on an existing building located at 45 Eliot Street, Natick, Middlesex County, Massachusetts 01760. The new facility will consist of the collocation of antennas at an approximate center height of 60.5ft above ground level behind new fiberglass shutters (to replace existing) in the 78-ft building. Any interested party wishing to submit comments regarding the potential effects the proposed facility may have on any historic property may do so by sending comments to: Project 6123008829 - MAB, EBI Consulting, 21 B Street, Burlington, MA 01803, or at 617.909.9035.

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SENIOR CENTER

continued from page 6

Join us in this visit to America's Oldest Port, Cape Ann. We begin in Salem for a buffet lunch at the Sea Level Restaurant. A professional guide will join our bus for a 2-hour guided tour of Essex, Rockport and Gloucester. After the tour, we end up at downtown Rockport to browse the stores and art galleries or you can sit by the water and admire the views. Registration Deadline is Tuesday, April 16.

DAY TRIP- LOBSTER ROLL CRUISE- DENNIS ON THE CAPE

Tuesday, July 23, \$116.10, non-refundable, payable at registration. Luxury bus departs from Fisk Methodist Church, 106 Walnut St, Natick at 10:00am, returns approximately 6:15 pm.

Join us as we head to Dennis on Cape Cod launching on our dinner cruise boat. Enjoy views of Sesuit Harbor on the calm waters of Cape Cod Bay while you enjoy a choice of Lobster Roll, Roast Beef Roll Up or Vegetarian Roll Up (choose lunch option at registration). Back on land, we

have some free time in downtown Hyannis to shop.

Registration Deadline is Monday, July 1.

DAY TRIP TO ESSEX STEAM TRAIN AND RIVERBOAT

Thursday, August 8, \$140.00, non-refundable, payable at registration. Luxury bus departs from Fisk Methodist Church, 106 Walnut St, Natick at 8:45am, returns approximately 5:30pm.

Join us as we head down to Essex, CT boarding Essex Steam Train. We will enjoy lunch in the dining car while we take in the beautiful countryside of meadows and farms. Please choose: Beef Tips with gravy, Baked chicken or Vegetarian Plate at time of registration. We will get off the train at Deep River Station to board the Riverboat for a relaxing ride along the Connecticut River.

Registration Deadline is Tuesday, July 16.

DAY TRIP TO BLOCK ISLAND

Tuesday, August 20, \$140.00, non-refundable, payable at registration. Luxury bus departs from Fisk Methodist Church, 106 Walnut St, Natick at 6:45am, returns

approximately 6:15 pm.

Step back in time to relaxing Block Island starting with ferry ride from Point Judith, RI to the Island. We'll start with an Island Tour approximately 1hr 15' with a stop at the historical Southeast Light. Afterwards we lunch at the National Hotel on the waterfront. Please choose: Pan Seared Chicken Breast, Pasta Pomodori or Flame Grilled Salmon for lunch at your registration. After lunch we'll have time to walk and shop in the Old Harbor downtown or just relax on the porch at the hotel.

Registration Deadline is Tuesday, July 16.

DAY TRIP TO NEWPORT PLAYHOUSE- Run For Your Wife

Wednesday, September 25, \$134.10, non-refundable, payable at registration. Luxury bus departs from Fisk Methodist Church, 106 Walnut St, Natick at 9:00am, returns approximately 5:45 pm.

A FUN filled afternoon at this dinner theatre with buffet lunch, wonderful play and cabaret. The feature play, 1982 British comedy by Cooney, Run For Your Wife, shows John Smith who has two wives, two lives and a very precise

schedule for juggling them both. When John Smith is mugged, ending up in the hospital, both his addresses surface, causing both the Streatham and Wimbledon police to investigate. Comedy ensues as Smith tries hopelessly to explain himself with the help of his upstairs neighbor. Lunch is a hearty buffet with hot/cold foods, main entrees, side dishes, beverages and homemade desserts. You will not be disappointed!

Registration Deadline is Tuesday, September 3

DAY TRIP TO TURKEY TRAIN, NH

Thursday, October 10, \$126.00 non-refundable, payable at registration. Luxury bus departs

from Fisk Methodist Church, 106 Walnut St, Natick at 9:45 am, returns approximately 6:45 pm.

Begin your day with a beautiful scenic drive up to Meredith, New Hampshire where we will board the Winnepesaukee "Turkey Train" at the Hobo Railroad. This two-hour scenic train ride, through the countryside and fall foliage is complete with a delicious full turkey dinner with all the fixin's provided by Hart's Turkey Farm. After our train excursion and on the way home, we stop at Moulton Farm which dates back to 1890's, in the heart of the Lakes Region.

Registration deadline Wednesday, September 18.

Winter Farmers Market

The Natick farmers market is a year-round market serving the MetroWest community for over 20 years.

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It is located in the Com-

mon Street Spiritual Center, on two floors, every Saturday until the end of April, moving back to the Natick Common the beginning of May for the next season.

The market is sponsored by the Natick Center Cultural District.



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Ann Dolloff M.D.



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# 2024 Metrowest Student Film Festival

The MWSFF is a student film festival dedicated to showcasing the talent and creativity of the region's youth by providing an

- Share films with the regional community
- Screen films in an independent, state-of-the-art cinema
- Network with a jury of judges from the industry, and other filmmakers in the region
- Attend the festival premiere showcase



opportunity for young filmmakers and production teams to explore and create stories through motion pictures.

Finalists among these student-created films will be shared with friends, families and the community in TCAN's state-of-the-art screening room.

We hope to see the MWSFF become the largest student film festival in the region. Participating in this festival provides entrants the opportunity to:

Submissions are now open for our sixth annual MetroWest Student Film Festival. Films can be submitted via our FilmFreeway page. The submission deadline is April 22, 2024.

Official public screening dates for finalists are scheduled for May 19, 2024, at The Center for Arts in Natick.

Submission Eligibility:

MWSFF cordially invites residents between the ages of 14 and 19, who are current high school students living in MetroWest Massachusetts to submit.

View Submission Rules on our website at [tcan.org/community/mwsff/](http://tcan.org/community/mwsff/) or on FilmFreeway.

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Your Money, Your Independence

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



Glenn Brown, CFP

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.

## 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 Carib-

bean!”?

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 intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual.

Glenn Brown is a Holliston resident and owner of PlanDynamic, LLC, [www.PlanDynamic.com](http://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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# Natick Fire Chief Among Fire Service Leaders Graduate From Management Training Program

## Multifaceted Course Supports Professional Development for Chiefs and Rising Officers

Nearly three dozen fire service leaders from across Massachusetts graduated today from the 29th class of the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's Chief Fire Officer Management Training Program.

The four-month program for new chief officers and chief officer candidates is delivered jointly by the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy and the University of Massachusetts Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management. Through classroom instruction and out-of-class assignments, the course delivers intensive training in the non-fire suppression aspects of managing a municipal fire department.

"The Chief Fire Officer program is a tremendous opportunity for new chiefs and rising officers," said State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine, who graduated from the program in 2016. "The rigorous instruction in such a wide variety of topics will help these graduates provide the leadership that their departments and communities deserve. Completing the program is a major accomplishment and I want to congratulate all of them on their initiative and dedication to professional development."

The Chief Fire Officer Management Training Program covers a spectrum of topics considered essential for effective public sector management. It includes human

resource management, ethics, executive leadership, governmental and organization structures, information management, customer-focused strategic planning, legal issues, budgets and public finance, community awareness, and labor relations. The curriculum helps fire officers improve their ability to lead and manage personnel, understand employees' needs and problems, communicate effectively to a variety of audiences, and leverage inter-agency cooperation. The Massachusetts Firefighting Academy, a division of the Department of Fire Services, offers this program tuition-free.

The 2023-2024 graduating class was drawn from the fire departments of Amesbury, Ayer, Barnstable, Bedford, Bolton, Canton, Cotuit, Dennis, East Longmeadow, Erving, Everett, Framingham,



Freetown, Hopkinton, Lawrence, Lowell, Ludlow, Manchester-by-the-Sea, Medway, Natick, New Bedford, Northampton, Northbridge, Onset, Royalston, Sharon, Ware, Wellfleet, West Springfield, Westfield, and Winchester, where its members serve as chiefs, deputy chiefs, and captains.

### Graduates:

Deputy Chief Robert Serino  
Amesbury Fire Department  
Deputy Chief Jeremy Januskiewicz  
Ayer Fire Department  
Deputy Chief Kevin Brailey  
Barnstable Fire Department  
Acting/Interim Chief John Daniels  
Bedford Fire Department  
Deputy Chief Dana Amendola  
Bolton Fire Department  
Chief Wendell Robery  
Canton Fire Department  
Deputy Chief Shane Clark  
Cotuit Fire Department  
Chief Christopher Guerreiro  
Dennis Fire Department  
Deputy Chief Christopher Beecher  
East Longmeadow Fire Department  
Chief Philip Wonkka  
Erving Fire Department  
Deputy Chief Lawrence Cardinale  
Everett Fire Department  
Deputy Chief Nader Hamed  
Framingham Fire Department  
Deputy Chief Kevin Sullivan  
Framingham Fire Department  
Chief Harrie Ashley  
Freetown Fire Department

Chief Gary Daugherty  
Hopkinton Fire Department  
Deputy Chief Matthew Nadeau  
Lawrence Fire Department  
Deputy Chief Timothy Casey  
Lowell Fire Department  
Deputy Chief Jeffrey Lavoie  
Ludlow Fire Department  
Chief James McNeilly  
Manchester-by-the-Sea Fire Department  
Deputy Chief Craig Vinton  
Medway Fire Department  
Acting/Interim Deputy Chief Andrew Hladick  
Natick Fire Department  
Chief Scott Kruger  
New Bedford Fire Department  
Deputy Chief Andrew Breen  
Northampton Fire Department  
Deputy Chief Michael Hatch  
Northampton Fire Department  
Deputy Chief Anthony Genga  
Northbridge Fire Department  
Assistant Chief Howard Andersen  
Onset Fire Department  
Chief Eric Jack  
Royalston Fire Department  
Deputy Chief Jeffrey Ricker  
Sharon Fire Department  
Chief James Martinez  
Ware Fire Department  
Deputy Chief Joseph Cappello  
Wellfleet Fire Department  
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Westfield Fire Department  
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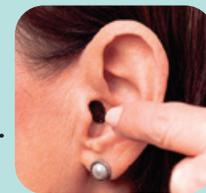
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## CODE: DP442041

# Sports

## NHS Girls Basketball Team Transitions To New Coach

### Injuries Thwart Redhawks In Early Going

By KEN HAMWEY  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

The Natick High girls basketball team is off to a slow start as it transitions to a new coach and a new system.

The Redhawks had a 2-6 record at Local Town Pages deadline but adjusting to a new coach and a new system has not been a problem. Trying to stay healthy, however, is the prime issue.

“Anytime a new coach arrives, there’s bound to be some ups and downs while the players learn a different system,” said Oryx Cohen, the Redhawks’ coach. “But the players and the coaches have bonded well. What’s gotten in the way early on are injuries. Our starting guards have missed games and our top scorer and rebounder has been sidelined for six games.”

Cohen has taken the reins from Dan Hinnenkamp, who guided the girls for the last 14 years but decided to retire to spend more time with his family. The Natick girls squad is the first varsity post for the 51-year-old Cohen, who has extensive coaching experience at the club and middle school levels (Northboro and Grafton) and also with recreation and travel teams. A five-year veteran of club basketball, he’s a senior coach with the Blazers, a team based in Southboro.

Cohen played basketball and golf in high school and college. A native of Oregon, he played point guard at South Eugene High where he was a captain who earned all-district honors. At Lewis and Clark College in Portland, he moved into the shooting-guard slot.

Cohen’s first eight games as Natick’s head coach haven’t gone the way he expected but he’s still upbeat about his players achieving the goals he laid out during the pre-season.

“We want to improve daily as individuals and as a team, and we want to qualify for the state tournament,” he offered. “Plus, we want to get the town excited about girls basketball. It’ll take time but I want to develop a quality girls hoop program in Natick.”

Cohen’s players continue to

work hard and stay positive in spite of their slow start.

“The girls have put in extra time before and after practice and have spent added time in film sessions,” he emphasized. “The team comes in early and stays late. They keep battling. They’re weathering the storm by staying together and remaining positive.”

The Redhawks are balanced — 3 seniors, 5 juniors, 2 sophomores and 2 freshmen. There are



also other strengths.

“We’ve got size and depth,” he noted. “And, we’ve got capable outside shooters. The girls are very coachable and willing to grow and learn a new system. They’re also mentally and physically tough, athletic and smart.”

A capable core group should play a major role in bouncing back. The senior captains are a good starting point — True Liner at small forward and Katie Stopka at power forward.

“True and Katie are leaders by example and by being vocal,” Cohen noted. “True works hard, is a good shooter who can drive to the hoop, and she also can pass and rebound. A smart player, she’s a coach’s daughter. Her father Paul is the varsity boys coach at Needham. Katie is versatile, able to shoot, rebound and finish inside. A good defensive player, she makes few mistakes and is a solid all-around player.”

Junior Sammy Collins, a 6-foot-1 center, is another plus. “A



**Above, the 2023-24 Natick High girls basketball team hopes to keep improving, stay healthy and qualify for the playoffs.**

**Left, Coach Oryx Cohen discusses a drill with junior Sammy Collins, left, and senior captain Katie Stopka.**

and is able to score, pass and defend,” said Cohen, who’s on-court style involves an up-tempo offense and an aggressive defense that applies pressure. “Bridget has a high hoop IQ, is instinctive and sees the floor well.”

Katie McMahon and Aly Kastantin are sophomore power forwards who can also play center. McMahon is 5-11 and Kastantin is a six-footer. “Both have good post moves, can score inside and are solid rebounders,” Cohen said. “Katie is aggressive on defense and Aly, who’s our top scorer and rebounder, has missed six games.”

Junior guards Christina Lopus and Addie Robie bolster the team’s depth in the backcourt. “Christina is a two-guard who can shoot, rebound and get steals,” Cohen noted. “An aggressive competitor, she works hard on all the other aspects of her game. Addie is a versatile two-way guard. An all-around player, she can shoot, drive and finish. She also passes effectively and is capable on defense.”

Rounding out the squad are senior Remy Shapiro, a shooting guard, and freshman Lily Downing, a point guard. “Remy provides senior leadership, can shoot, is solid on defense and she’s smart,” Cohen offered. “Lily is the point guard of the future. She’s very quick, is a good shooter, passes well and can drive to the hoop.”

Cohen’s two assistants are coaches from the Blazers. They

include Chet Smith and Debbie Krause. “They’re very involved with Natick basketball at the youth level,” he said.

Cohen, who has a bachelor’s degree in psychology and a master’s in public administration, is the chief executive officer of National Empowerment Center, an organization that educates and trains clients around mental health issues. The training is offered to school districts, corporations, government agencies and mental health organizations. He and his wife Kristin have two children — Katiya, 15, and Ethan, 13 — and reside in Grafton.

Cohen’s coaching philosophy focuses on helping his players reach their potential and to ensure they’re enjoying their athletic endeavors. “I want our team to win and we expect to win,” he said. “But, winning will only occur when players put in the work and prepare at a high level.”

Life lessons can be learned from athletics and Cohen has some specifics.

“The girls can learn to overcome adversity,” he emphasized. “That helps them to be mentally tough and resilient when things aren’t going their way. Other key lessons they can learn are how to lead, how to be good teammates and to be accountable.”

The girls have a new coach and so far they’re adapted to the change. Now, if they can stay healthy and add some triumphs, they could get into the mix for playoff consideration.

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# Real Estate Corner

## 2023 In Review: Where Are We Headed in 2024?



John McHugh

### REAL ESTATE INSIGHTS

What a year! Increasing interest rates throughout 2023 were a challenge for home buyers, especially first-time buyers and potential sellers as well. The market has been in a catch-22 situation in that many people wanting to purchase a new home were put off by higher

interest rates than we've seen in many years. Many buyers decided to wait due to the high interest rates and the historical lack of inventory. Home sellers who had previously locked into affordable low-rate mortgages were an equal part of the issue. Sellers decided to remain in their current homes paying low mortgage rates instead of selling and having to take a mortgage at a higher interest rate when buying their new home. While homes were still being bought and sold, 2023 saw a stall in the market on both sides leading to an all-time high pent-up buyer demand. With interest rates seemingly at the core of this stalled market, it seems that continued reduction toward more affordable mortgages and more housing inventory would be the solution for both buyers and sellers.

For the best possible outcome in 2024 we first need to see a considerable increase in houses for sale. When more homes come on the market there will be a gradual leveling off of all time high prices. Continuing to move in the same direction as overall inflation, yet becoming more affordably within reach.

Also necessary would be interest rates returning to a closer to "normal" 5 to 6%. The demand for houses exceeds supply and this will probably not change until mortgage rates go down. Lower rates will bring more sellers and buyers into the market.

As we head into 2024 the National Association of Realtors has projected a 30-year mortgage rate to be between 6 and 7% by the end of 2024. The movement of interest rates is heavily influenced by the rate

of inflation. If inflation rises, mortgage rates may not fall as quickly. If inflation is stabilized toward reducing, interest rates may fall sooner than expected. Home buyers and sellers should keep a close eye on the actions taken by the Federal Reserve and it's ongoing regulation of financial markets.

Sellers that have a place to go or who will pay cash for their new residence should take advantage of the lack of supply and abundance of buyers. Home buyers who see something they truly love may consider financing at the best rate available today with an eye for refinancing when the opportunity arises.

Sellers should also be ready to put their best foot forward in the presentation of their home: get the little repairs done, clear out, organize and consolidate.

While attentively reviewing the listings that your real estate agent provides, buyers can continue to put money aside for their down payment, polish their credit history and obtain the all important pre-approval.

Work with a real estate agent to get your pricing right and marketing and advertising prepared. Your agent will assist you each step of the way while encouraging buyer competition to sell your home faster and for more money. Reach out now to get started!

John McHugh is a Senior Real Estate Agent with Coldwell Banker for over 23 years. He can be reached at JohnSellsNow@gmail.com or 978.902.JOHN

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# Real Estate Corner

## Recent Home Sales

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01/17/2024	40 Nouvelle Way #N645	\$890,000
01/16/2024	20 Sherwood Rd.	\$1.01 mil
01/12/2024	46 Wethersfield Rd.	\$675,000
01/12/2024	15 Proctor St.	\$550,000
01/12/2024	4 Wayside Rd.	\$1.65 mil
01/11/2024	20 2nd St.	\$585,000
01/10/2024	114 Glen St.	\$2.06 mil
01/10/2024	2-2A Circular Ave.	\$865,000
01/09/2024	67 Beverly Rd.	\$1.70 mil
01/08/2024	10 Phillips St.	\$1.18 mil
01/05/2024	28 Elmwood Ave.	\$750,000
01/02/2024	9 Alger St.	\$825,000
12/29/2023	18 Wheeler Ln.	\$1.21 mil
12/29/2023	168 Hartford St.	\$600,000
12/28/2023	67 Union St.	\$210,000
12/27/2023	6 Melvin Rd.	\$784,000
12/27/2023	7 Greenleaf Rd.	\$700,000
12/22/2023	7 Irving Rd.	\$860,000
12/22/2023	7 Glen St.	\$845,000
12/21/2023	3 Hopewell Farm Rd.	\$840,000
12/20/2023	9 Walkup Ct.	\$565,000

Source: [www.zillow.com](http://www.zillow.com) / Compiled by Local Town Pages



The 5-bed, 5-bath 3,766 sf home at 10 Phillips Street in Natick recently sold for \$1,175,000. Image credit: [www.zillow.com](http://www.zillow.com)

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# #1 AGENT IN NATICK

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\* Per MLS 2023 Individual Agent



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**Jessica Allain**

#1 in Natick homes sold since 2018\*  
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4 BD | 3F 1H BA



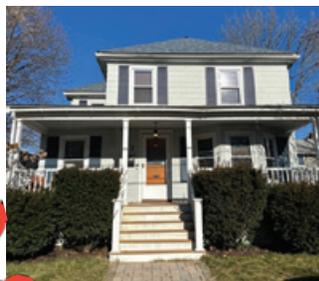
For Sale in Natick  
3 BD | 2F 1H BA



For Sale in Natick  
4 BD | 2 BA



For Sale in Natick  
3 BD | 2 BA



For Sale in Natick  
4 BD | 1 BA



For Sale in Ashland  
2 BD | 1 BA

