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Postal Customer
Local

Vol. 30 No. 4

Bellingham's Favorite Hometown Newspaper

March 2024

Something for Everyone at the Family Fest & Home Show

Tri-County Regional Chamber Event to Be Held March 23rd at Tri-County HS

By J.D. O'GARA

Looking for something fun to do for the whole family? Join the Tri-County Regional Chamber on Saturday, March 23rd, for the Family Fest & Home Show, to take place at Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical High School (TCRVTHS), 147 Pond St., Franklin, from 10 a.m.- 2 p.m.

The event will feature over 100 local vendors as well as activities for the entire family. For admission, choose between a \$5 all-day pass or contribute an item to the Franklin Food Pantry for each guest.

"We've held this event for many years at Blackstone Valley Tech in Upton," says Tri-County Regional Chamber



President and CEO Laura O'Callaghan, who says the Chamber, after putting the event on hiatus after COVID, decided to change up the location and hold it at Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical High School (RVTHS) gym in Franklin this year, to be inclusive of its wide reach of 10 towns, including Bellingham, Franklin, Holliston, Hopedale, Hopkinton, Medway, Mendon, Milford, and Millis. "Planning this large event has been a breeze. Lori Villemaire, Executive Assistant to Superintendent Maguire, is a pleasure to work with," says O'Callaghan,

FAMILY FEST
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Four pie-eating contests will be part of the fun of the Tri-County Regional Chamber's Family Fest & Home Show, to be held Saturday, March 23rd, from 10-2, at Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical High School. Photos used courtesy of Tri-County Regional Chamber.



Bellingham Conservation Agent Hannah Crawford says results of a recent Open Space Committee survey will play a key role in updating the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan, last updated in 2017.

Recent Survey Sheds Light on Residents' Open Space Desires

By DAVID DUNBAR

Is more "open space" needed in Bellingham? In response to a recent survey, 83.2% replied "yes."

The survey, conducted by the town's Open Space Com-

mittee, drew 508 responses, and was concluded last month. Compared to surrounding towns, "Bellingham has a lot

SURVEY
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FAMILY FEST

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referring to the warm welcome the school gave the Chamber.

“Anytime we can open our doors and partner with a great community organization such as the Tri-County Regional Chamber, we jump at the opportunity. We are excited to host the 2024 Family Fest and Home Show and have no doubt the day will be a great success for not only the vendors but all attendees,” says Tri-County RVTHS Superintendent Dr. Karen Maguire.

O’Callaghan says it’s a Chamber tradition to hold the event on the 4th Saturday in March each year. “People are looking for fun things to do before the kids’ activities begin, before families start gearing up for the sports season,” says O’Callaghan. “We want to have an interactive day for the whole family, where it won’t cost an arm and a leg to have fun,” says the Chamber President and CEO.

In addition to a wide array of vendors and great bargains, family friendly events continue to be added to the Family Fest &



“If your product caters to families and homeowners, this is where you should be,” says Chamber President and CEO Laura O’Callaghan. Reardon HVAC is a long-time participant.

Home Show, including:

- Face painting
- A visit with Peter Cottontail (aka The Easter Bunny), with free photographs families can take home that day and a small gift
- A demonstration from a local martial arts school
- Smokey the Bear
- Tik Tok personality – Jack Hill
- Magician Ed the Wizard, who will not only perform but will mingle with the crowd
- A good old-fashioned pie-eating contest, with competitions at 10:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. (up to 12 participants per round, drop by and sign up)

- A chance to vote for the “People’s Choice” in the Mac-n-Cheese Cookoff from 10 a.m.-1 p.m., with five local restaurateurs putting forth their best creamy combo in hopes of winning one of two trophies – one judged by attendees and the other by sponsors of the event

The Chamber’s Family Fest & Home Show will also, importantly, give local businesses a chance to network with potential new customers.

“People do business with people they know and like,” says O’Callaghan, adding, “There’s so much in the power of conversation, and there’s great potential to get new leads.”

Tom Reardon, of Reardon HVAC, is one of those proprietors. He’s participated in the Family Fest & Home Show for a number of years.



The Family Fest & Home Show welcomes all sorts of vendors, many of whom will offer bargains that day.

“I think it’s good public exposure,” says Reardon, whose heating and air conditioning company has been in business 68 years. While he’d be unlikely to sell heating and air-conditioning systems on the spot, he welcomes the opportunity to make first contact with homeowners, who, down the road, may need such services.

On-the-spot contracts have been known to happen, however. “One year, we had a veteran that started a franchise building retainer walls through a Veteran’s program,” says O’Callaghan, “He got a job for \$100k at the show.”

While over 100 vendors are expected, there’s still time to sign up. Deadline for registering is March 15th. The cost for booths varies by size, business, and membership, with discounts for members, and access to electricity is first come/first served.

“Any type of business can get join us,” says O’Callaghan, “If your product and service caters to homeowners and families, this is where you should be.”

For this event, the Tri-County Regional Chamber is offering a promotion of an annual membership plus a single booth for \$650. Members have access to networking events, business education and training, free start-up resources and workshops, leadership opportunities, access to business referrals and other resources. Learn more about vendor booths or sign up at [https://www.tricountycham-](https://www.tricountycham-berma.org/vendor-registration)

[berma.org/vendor-registration](https://www.tricountycham-berma.org/vendor-registration)

For an added business opportunity, companies can choose to sponsor the show. Those interested in ramping up their brand’s promotional efforts and customer base can choose from five different levels of sponsorship. Deadline for sponsoring the event is March 15th Visit the sponsorship page for more details at <https://www.tricountychamberma.org/family-fest-sponsors>.

Volunteers are still needed for the event.

“Volunteers will make it go a lot smoother for everyone. The vendors have quite a bit to set up, and we’re hoping to get some enthusiastic students to jump in and help them unload/load their vehicles, help with the Easter Bunny pictures, help vendors find their spaces, and such. They’ll get their needed volunteer hours, and we’ll make sure there’s plenty of pizza so that they don’t go hungry during the day!” says O’Callaghan.

Anyone interested in helping can visit the volunteer page at <https://www.tricountychamberma.org/volunteer>. High school students looking to earn credit toward their volunteer service should reach out to Sherri Hannon at sherri@tricountychamberma.org.

For more information about the Tri-County Regional Chamber’s Family Fest & Home Show on March 23rd, visit

<https://www.tricountychamberma.org/family-fest>.

localtownpages

*Founded by
Pamela Johnson*

Published Monthly
Mailed FREE to the
Community of Bellingham
Circulation: 7,500
households & businesses

Publisher

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Ad Deadline is the
15th of each month.

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From the Town Clerk...

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY

The Presidential Primary will be held on March 5, 2024. By the time this edition of the Bellingham Bulletin is received, In-Person Early Voting for the Primary will be all but over, as there is only one day of Early Voting in March (see below).

Important dates remaining relative to the Primary are as follows:

| | | |
|------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| March 1, 2024 | 5:00 p.m. | Last Day of In-Person Early Voting |
| March 4, 2024 | 4:30 p.m. | Last Day to Apply for Absentee Ballot |
| March 4, 2024 | Noon | Last Day for In-Office Voting |
| TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2024 | 7 a.m.-8 p.m. | PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY (BHS GYM) |

Local Election Calendar

As you may know, the date for our Local Town Election has changed as prescribed by a bylaw change approved by Town Meeting. Beginning in 2024, our local election will take place the

first Tuesday in June. This year, it falls on June 4th. The calendar for the Local Election is as follows:

| | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| March 13, 2024 | 8:30 a.m. | Obtain Blank Nomination Papers form Town Clerk, FIRST DAY |
| April 17, 2024 | 5:00 p.m. | LAST DAY to Obtain Nomination Papers; ALL Nomination Papers Must be Returned |
| April 24, 2024 | 4:30 p.m. | Nomination Papers Submitted to Board of Registrars (by Town Clerk) |
| April 29, 2024 | 4:30 p.m. | Nomination Papers Filed with Town Clerk |
| May 1, 2024 | 5:00 p.m. | Withdrawal of, and/or objections to, Nominations, LAST DAY |
| May 17, 2024 | 4:40 p.m. 1st | OCPF Report Due Covering March 13 through May 16, 2024 |
| May 28, 2024 | 8:00PM | Last Day to Register to Vote Prior to Local Town Election. |
| TUESDAY, June 4, 2024 | | ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION (BHS GYM) |
| June 30, 2024 | | Final OCPF Report Due Covering May 16 Through June 30, 2024. |

- More information to come after Select Board decisions (Public Hearing) relative to Early Voting and Mail-In Voting.

TOWN OFFICES TO BE ELECTED

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Select Board (for 3 years) Michael J. Connor (I) Ann L. Odabashian (I) | Two (2) to be Elected |
| Select Board (for 2 years) Open Seat | One (1) to be Elected |
| Library Trustee (for 3 years) Carol Bird (I) Suzanne Garten (I) | Two (2) to be Elected |
| Planning Board (for 3 years) Brian Salisbury (I) Dennis J. Trebino (I) | Two to be Elected |
| School Committee (for 3 years) Mark J. Flannery (I) Erik Ormberg (I) | Two to be Elected |
| Housing Authority (for 5 years) Debra Sacco (I) Christopher Remillard (I) | Two to be Elected |

OTHER 2024 ELECTIONS

More information to follow on the two other elections to be held in 2024. Dates below:

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| SEPTEMBER 3, 2024 | STATE PRIMARY |
| NOVEMBER 5, 2024 | STATE/PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION |

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SURVEY

continued from page 1

of opportunities to create more open space with what the town already owns,” observes Conservation Agent Hannah Crawford.

The term “open space” is often used to refer to conservation land, forested land, recreation land, agricultural land, corridor parks and amenities such as small parks, green buffers along roadways or any open area that is owned by an agency

or organization dedicated to conservation. Some of the town’s current, and most popular, open spaces include Silver Lake, the Town Common, and the SNETT trail.

According to the survey, what many people want done is not “hugely expensive,” according to Crawford. “They want walking trails and trash cans that are emptied regularly.”

The survey, which was conducted mostly online, had about half a dozen questions and the

one that drew the most opinionated response (287 out of a total of 508) was about the town improving open spaces.

Respondents want more events that appeal to kids and families, cleaner parks, restrooms in public spaces and seating areas, and improved communications from the town. “Many citizens and I,” says Crawford, “would like to see a true Department of Parks and Recreation that could implement both community and conservation values.” There may be a formal proposal to do so presented at the spring town meeting.

Crawford joined the Town of Bellingham as Conservation Agent last August and supports the Conservation Commission. “I’ve been pleasantly surprised by the involvement of Bellingham residents... they help make a difference... people care!”

What are some of the challenges that prevent residents from enjoying local open spaces? Survey says 44% cite “lack of information” about where to go and what to do. The lack of parking space and walking access were also frequently mentioned.

Interestingly, says Crawford, 52% of respondents were between the ages of 35 and 54. More than two thirds of all respondents were female.

While this survey was being conducted, significant commercial and residential development in town was underway. How to reconcile this kind of development with conservation goals? Crawford explains, “There isn’t a clear boundary between the two; we need to talk and find compromises to work out solutions.”

“We need workshops and open discussions where stakeholders can explore solutions,” she adds. Nearly 70% responded that they were concerned about climate-related issues.

The Town’s Conservation Commission administers Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 131, section 40, (The Wetlands Protection Act) and as such reviews a variety of applications in relation to changes made to a wetland or within a wetland buffer zone. Site inspections and reviews are conducted in conjunction with most filings.

In addition, the Commission meets with proponents, consultants, and other town boards to provide guidance and input relative to the specified interests of The Wetlands Protection Act. Lastly, the Commission manages and seeks to expand conservation properties through donation, purchase, or conservation restrictions as well as implement targeted goals within The Bellingham Open Space and Recreation Plan. You can learn more by visiting www.bellinghamma.org/conservation-commission

Crawford says the results of the survey will play a key role in updating the Open Space and Recreation Plan which was last done in 2017. The Conservation Commission meets twice a month, the public is invited, and the website listed above has details.

Although the survey has closed, Crawford says she would still welcome specific comments and ideas about open space. She can be reached at (508) 657-2858 or by emailing hcrawford@bellinghamma.org.

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Advantage Appliance's 'typical' customer is someone who does not want to go shopping for new appliances but wants to repair the appliances they have.

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Affordable Junk Removal specializes in house and estate cleanouts. If your garage, attic, or office is overflowing with stuff, take back your space and let the pros do the heavy lifting.

Jay and his team have handled it all. They've dismantled above-ground pools, hauled away ancient hot tubs, taken down old fencing, and stripped away worn carpeting. They'll come for a single item, or they'll clean out an entire house. And they can take almost anything. They can't accept hazardous materials, brush, dirt, or concrete, but everything else is fair game for them to take away.

Not everything ends up in a landfill—not if Jay can help it. He first tries to either recycle or donate items. Only after he tries to repurpose items do they end up at the transfer station.

Business spotlight

Working with Affordable Junk Removal is simple. First, you can load stuff yourself if you want by renting a 15-cubic-yard dumpster for a week and chucking up to a ton of your unwanted stuff. If you need to get rid of more weight, then Jay prorates that tonnage—you never pay for what you don't use.

If you don't want to be bothered with the dumpster, they've also got a driveway special where they'll take away a truckload of your unwanted things if you pile it up. Or if you don't want to lift a finger, then you can point at the items, and the team will fill up their truck and haul away your unwanted things. However you do it, you're left with more space and more peace of mind.

Jay and his team beat the big waste haulers on both price and



customer service. When you call Affordable Junk Removal, you aren't connected to an anonymous call center. Your phone call goes right to Jay.

And speaking of pricing, Jay is upfront about it. His website shows the truck sizes and prices, so you can save time knowing your costs before you call for an appointment. There aren't any hidden costs or surprise fees with Affordable Junk Removal.

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They also have a thriving commercial business, working with contractors and roofers to clear away debris and keep the job site clean. They can even

handle commercial and residential emergencies with same-day service.

Jay and his family are deeply involved in the community. He and his wife, Christine, run the Corner Market restaurant in Holliston. It's not uncommon for someone to reach Jay at the restaurant, order a sandwich, and then schedule a junk removal appointment. Yes, the local small business really can handle everything!

Contact Affordable Junk Removal and let a local small business take care of everything for you. Call Jay Schadler at (774) 287-1133 or visit us online at www.affordablejunkremoval.com.

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PULSE Connects Young Professionals

By ANGIE FITTON

Are you a professional aged 45 and under? Then PULSE Young Professionals Group is definitely where you want to be! PULSE is hosted by the Tri-County Regional Chamber of Commerce and was founded by Chairperson Alycia McCallum in 2017. McCallum initiates and runs each monthly event with her co-chair Ariane Morais.

The Chamber of Commerce is based in Milford, but covers ten different towns: Bellingham, Franklin, Holliston, Hopedale, Hopkinton, Medway, Mendon, Milford, Millis and Upton. They recently celebrated a huge milestone-100 years of service as of 2022!

So, what exactly is PULSE and what does it entail? PULSE is a young professionals networking group that meets once a month in one of the towns that the Tri-County Chamber of Commerce oversees.

“It is a place where young professionals can meet like-minded young professionals,” says McCallum. “The people who attend these events build long term connections and relationships with one another.” This month, on Tuesday, March 12th at 9:30 a.m., visit King St. Cafe at 390 King Street in Franklin to find out what PULSE is all about! The link to register is at www.tri-countychamberma.org.

Upon the start of the meeting, because it is considered speed-networking, each individual in

the group gives a 60-second Introduction, which is a great way to share your professional background and interests, and also break the ice. The attendees are broken up into small groups where they can interact about things such as common interests and pain points in business. They discuss upcoming sales or events for their business and oftentimes give one another referrals. In order to get the most of the opportunities presented while taking part in these PULSE meetings, it is encouraged that each person schedules at least two follow-up one on one meetings with those they connect with in the group.

This month’s event is what is known as a “coffee connection”, where young professionals meet and partake in discussions over coffee and breakfast. McCallum and Morais like to mix it up and alternate between coffee connections and “after hours events”.

In February, the event was visiting a brewery after hours. There have also been trivia nights, and the members of PULSE work on thinking of different ways to engage and be proactive with social/professional development activities. Unlike many professional networking programs, PULSE does not limit one seat per profession, keeping the group open to anyone who wants to attend, not relying on

a “first come first served” policy.

PULSE also prides itself on being passionate about volunteering. In the early fall, they always have an event designed to give back to the community. Last fall they visited Gilly’s House in Wrentham, where they had a barbeque and potluck dinner. While there, they had the opportunity to get to know the residents and toured the house.

The Tri-County Chamber of Commerce is also very big on empowering women and con-



necting women leaders. They recently hosted an after-hours event at Dean College in Franklin to discuss the importance of networking. On Saturday, March 23rd, they will hold the Family Fest and Home Show at the Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical High School.

Alycia is grateful for the work she does with the Chamber of Commerce, alongside its members. Currently the committee members are Gregg Katz, Ryan Bradley, Kenyhton Burton and Eric Munoz, along with Sherri Hannon who is the Director of Programs and Events. “We want to grow the Chamber and hope in the future that young professionals who attend the PULSE events will become members,” she states.

PUBLIC HEARINGS: VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PLAN NOTICE: PUBLIC HEARINGS FOR VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

Pursuant to the Rights-of-Way Management Regulations (333 CMR 11.00) in order to apply pesticides to control vegetation to maintain Rights-of Ways, the Department of Agricultural Resources must approve a Vegetation Management Plan (VMP) and a Yearly Operational Plan (YOP). The VMP is intended to justify the need to control vegetation, identify target vegetation, describe the intended methods of control, describe methods for identifying sensitive areas, describe operational guidelines for applicators, outline a program of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) designed to reduce the use of herbicides, and describe alternative land use activities.

The following municipalities are advised that Next Era Energy (NEER) proposes to utilize herbicides on their Rights-of-Way: Bellingham

PUBLIC HEARINGS SCHEDULED:

In accordance with 333 CMR 11.05 the Department of Agricultural Resources will conduct regional hearings to receive public comment on the proposed NextEra Energy Vegetation Management Plan, as submitted by SWCA Environmental Consultants.

To provide all interested parties an opportunity to comment on the proposed VMP, a public ZOOM hearing will be held at the following location:

Topic: Next Era Energy VMP Public Hearing
Time: Mar 22, 2024 09:30 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83719636411?pwd=N3pYdnprRHU5bHlsejBaVk9FbnBrZz09>

Meeting ID: 837 1963 6411
Passcode: 756915

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Passcode: 756915

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83719636411>

Plans Available for Public Review Prior to Hearings:

Section 11.05 (3)(d) of the Row Management Regulations provide: “At least 21 days prior to the end of the public comment period, the applicant shall send a copy of the proposed VMP to the chief elected official, the Board of Health, and the Conservation Commission in affected communities upon their request.” Such request should be made to:

James Hopfer
Principal Forester
East Region Vegetation Management
425 N. Williamson Boulevard
Daytona Beach, FL 32114
Telephone: 386-212-1385
James.Hopfer@nexteraenergy.com

Copy of the proposed VMP is available for review at the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources website at <http://www.mass.gov/agr/pesticides/rightofway/plans.htm>. It is also available for review at the Reference Desk of the following public libraries:

Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St, Bellingham, MA 02019

Written Comments Requested

The public hearings listed above will give interested parties the opportunity to present data, views or arguments, orally or in writing concerning the proposed VMP. Persons giving testimony are also requested to provide written comments. Written comments in advance of the hearing dates are welcome. The Department will accept written testimony concerning the NextEra Energy VMP until the close of business (5pm): Friday, March 22, 2024

Commentary should be sent to:
Rights-of -Way Program
Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources
225 Turnpike Road, 3rd Floor
Southborough, MA 01772

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Municipal Spotlight

Energetic Riedle Adjusting to His Role as DPW Director

By KEN HAMWEY
BULLETIN STAFF WRITER

Jesse Riedle has been on the job as Bellingham's Department of Public Works director for one year, and it seems like he's settling into that role very nicely.

The 35-year-old, who succeeded Don DiMartino after he retired last March, has overseen several major projects since he took the DPW reins. Two very visible undertakings are the completion of widening the downtown intersection at Routes 126 and 140 and the reconstruction of South Main Street.

"Both those projects have greatly helped with our traffic flow," Riedle said, "but the credit should go to Don DiMartino for his planning and design."

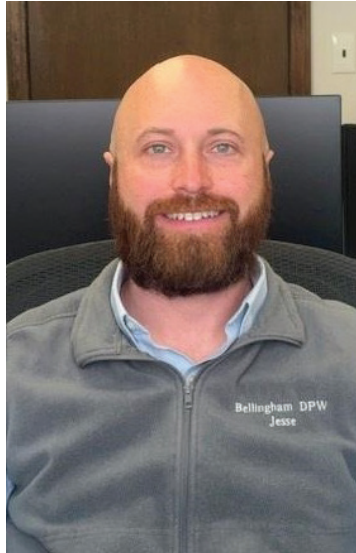
Three other improvements that Riedle has overseen in his first year are the replacement of well No. 12 at Cliff Road; the preliminary design, engineering and permitting for improved treatment at the Hartford Avenue water filtration facility; and new

sidewalks at various locations.

"Replacement of well No. 12 will increase the amount of water available and also improve the quality of raw water," Riedle offered. "The anticipated work at the Hartford Avenue plant will also increase water quality; and new sidewalks will improve infrastructure and provide more pedestrian safety."

When Riedle was hired in 2018, he began as a facility foreman, focusing on water treatment, water storage tanks and wells, and the sewer pumping stations. Two years later, in 2020, he was promoted to Assistant DPW Director. During his three years assisting DiMartino, Riedle's top priority was to improve the quality of drinking water by reducing the amount of TTHM (by-products of organics and chlorine).

"We succeeded in that mission, lowering the amount of TTHM to an acceptable level by refining treatment techniques," he noted. "Before arriving in Bellingham, I worked for the



Jesse Riedle has settled in nicely as Bellingham's DPW Director.

Holden DPW for four years as a water operator."

Riedle has listed seven areas he hopes to maintain, improve or upgrade in his second year. That list includes water, roads, parks, trash pick-up, snow removal, sewerage and stormwater control.

"Water quality is the front-runner," Riedle emphasized. "We'll aim to acquire federal and state grants. Roadway improvement is high on the list, and that's an area where we also can get grants to lessen the burden on taxpayers. We'll also push for upgrades at our parks, which include Silver Lake, Arcand Park, Richardson, and High Street. We'll strive to keep snow removal and road salting at a high level.

"Trash pick-up is a comprehensive program that not only includes recyclables, but also disposal of appliances, and bulky (burnable) items. Residents can also dispose of heavy metal items and mattresses (two per year). The recycling center will accept electronics, tires, and propane tanks."

Ten sewerage pumping stations and stormwater will also be monitored. "We want to stay ahead of any major repairs and oversee an aging sewerage system," Riedle said. "And we want to reduce any negative by-products in our stormwater system."

Directing a department that includes five managers, 22 DPW employees and three clerical employees, Riedle enjoys serving the public and handling a director's challenges and responsibilities.

"I like public involvement and the need to increase public safety," he said. "It's important to create positive improvements in town, and I'm thankful for the staff I have to make any necessary upgrades. I'm eager to hear concerns from the public and to prioritize their issues by getting the funding to remedy what's on their minds."

Riedle will continue to work closely with other town departments to assist with their objectives and requests. "We have a mostly new crew of DPW em-

ployees, along with some experienced veterans who are dedicated and eager to make a difference," he said. "I'm just thankful to be a part of it."

"We'll continue to communicate effectively with the schools on snow removal," he noted. "We'll respond quickly to police requests about safety issues and when the fire department needs plowing done for street access or at various municipal parking lots. We'll monitor the senior center and library parking lots for whatever is needed, and we'll continue to assist at the Taft Museum when needed."

Riedle is indeed a people person, and that quality shines brightly when he discusses the attributes he believes are necessary to direct a DPW.

"Patience is very important," he said. "I try to be more patient and meet people where they're at. I'll strive to be objective by seeing other points of view. A willingness to learn is a key because there's always room to grow, especially with changing regulations. Dedication is a must if a director wants to see projects completed, and drive is a plus. That helps one to push forward and not to take no for an answer to a nagging issue."

Riedle suggests that residents call the office to alert the DPW if drinking water is discolored, if road signs are missing, or if traffic lights are malfunctioning.

Crediting DiMartino for refining his skills, Riedle describes his predecessor as "dedicated and a great leader."

Jesse Riedle gets high marks for his rookie year as DPW Director, and he's intent on maintaining high standards in all the areas that fall under his department's umbrella.

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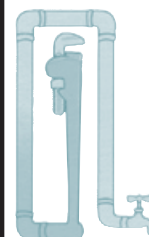
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At or Near Retirement? Time to Say Bucket!

Those at or near retirement face many decisions.

Transitioning from a paycheck that builds savings to taking distributions from a lifetime of investing is a top challenge.

Retirees view risks differently, including market volatility, sequence of returns, interest rates, inflation, health, and longevity to outlive money. Still, the greatest risk is behavioral as gone are the days of throwing new money at poor planning and decision making.

Some retirees completely change strategies. Others attempt to align investments to high yields (and unintended risks) to meet income needs. Many overcompensate to a feel-good cash amount.

While noble, these “retirement strategies” lack in spending expectations, aspirational goals, variables, and opportunity costs. When market, economic or political turmoil depresses portfolios, fear drives many to react irrationally. This leaves them without a strategy and no new money to throw at poor planning and decision making.

How to approach a sustainable retirement income strategy?

The Bucket Strategy. In its simplest form, it’s a retirement income strategy based on segmenting assets to when they’re being spent. This creates a cash cushion to cover income gaps early in retirement years, while maximizing remaining assets over longer periods.

Time horizons and number of buckets are flexible, to start I propose 3 buckets.

Bucket #1 needed in 1-3 years is cash, money market and CDs in a taxable account. Liquidity, safety, and low taxation to access



Glenn Brown, CFP

funds are key.

Bucket #2 needed in 4-6 years is a mix of investment grade bonds, low-volatility stocks and hard assets diversified across ETFs (exchange-traded funds) in taxable accounts and traditional IRAs.

Bucket #3 needed in 7+ years is a mix of diversified growth investments and if applicable, real estate, concentrated stock, and legacy investments across taxable, traditional and Roth IRAs. Given Roth IRA’s tax-free benefits, these are the last funds to access.

As time moves forward, buckets are replenished in a tax efficient manner by either selling, transferring, and/or distributing (i.e. RMDs) assets from Bucket #3 to #2 and Bucket #2 to #1.

Easy? Let’s discuss critical prerequisites.

Know your income gap. “We spend \$8K a month, so we need \$96K income a year.” No, spending doesn’t equal income needs. Say a spouse receives \$20K in social security and other gets \$35K starting next year. So Year 1 income gap is \$76K (\$96K - \$20K) while Year 2 is \$41K.

All work and no play... What of your aspirational goals in retirement? Don’t wait until 75 to start, instead spend ahead and under control by planning a block of years and \$ amount. For example, “From ages 62-72, add \$20K extra per year for more travel.”

What of future liabilities? A mortgage ending? New vehicles needed? A remodel or home repair? Moving to reduce costs and taxes? Assisted living? Gifting to help adult kids?

Build your cash flow analysis. By factoring income sources, assets, growth rates, planned distributions, living expenses, one-off expenses, liabilities, inflation, and taxes, we see positive or negative cash flows this year and in future years.

Negative cash flow, a.k.a. your income gap, varies each year.

Consider:

- 2024 -\$52K
- 2025 -\$44K
- 2026 -\$65K
- 2027 -\$34K
- 2028 -\$21K
- 2029 -\$24K

Bucket #1 is \$161K, #2 has \$79K and #3 is remaining assets seeking long-term growth.

Come June 2024, review and confirm your spending rate, rerun cash flow with updated values, then raise 50% of 2027 (~\$17K) from Bucket #2 to #1. In most tax efficient manner, move 50% of 2029 (~\$12K) from Bucket #3 to #2.

Rinse/Repeat every 6 months for ongoing 2.5 to 3 years of cash to cover income gaps. This reduces fear and large withdrawals,

provides lifestyle confidence, and participates in long-term investment growth over market cycles.

More to consider than space allows, so 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. 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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Hiking Ruins of Southern New England

BY MARJORIE TURNER HOLLMAN

Are you interested in history, archeology, geology or simply enjoy getting outside for a walk? If so, *Hiking Ruins of Southern New England* is the book for you (available for pre-order, to be published April 2, 2024). The first section of the book offers basic practices for safely spending time outside walking trails. The guide documents in total forty locations in Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. Detailed maps and directions make this a really useful tool for discovering places to walk that you may never have heard of.

You will find detailed histories of the various destinations included. Both authors are academics, located in Connecticut. Not surprisingly, that is where the majority of the listed trails are found. Several trails are also identified in Rhode Island and the remainder are in Massachusetts.

Terms I had never heard of, like firebacks (the back of stone fireplaces), are explained. Color photos help readers understand



Triad bridge abutment

what to look for when visiting specific areas. Reading each chapter is not just an archeological education. The authors include historical information about each area, with explanations of the significance of these sites. An unspoken but clear point is that history and archeology are inextricably intertwined.

Helpful details in each chapter include an address, information about trail surfaces, whether dogs are welcome and how to get there. The work required to accumulate all this information is considerable and difficult to obtain without actually visiting each trail. If you are looking for information to help make educated decisions about visiting outdoor

destinations, this book is a great place to start. Understanding what is not obvious, yet in plain sight, will add to the simple enjoyment of exploring the outdoors.

If locals in the Bellingham area are interested in exploring ruins nearby, you need only venture to the High Street athletic fields in Bellingham. Head to the back of the field. Look for the trail kiosk and follow the red arrows to the Upper Charles River. (Yes, the mighty Charles does flow through Bellingham, although it is of modest size as it passes by us.) Next to the river you will find stone foundations partially buried by brushy plants. Bellingham's first place of worship (the Baptists) was on High Street. The stone foundations next to the river could be what remain of an early Bellingham home, perhaps a Baptist congregation member? The Charles River at this same spot hosts remnants of a dam that was most likely a seasonal power source for inhabitants.



War Memorial Park, West Bridgewater

Stone remnants of a mill race remain just off a trail behind Stall Brook Elementary School. Water power was essential to operating mills throughout New England. The Stall Brook in Bellingham was a seasonal source of power, but the mill is long gone. The remnants of the dam squeeze the Stall Brook into an impressive steep cascade that then flows into the Charles River, not far downstream.

West Hill dam, in Uxbridge, Massachusetts, has foundation walls that appear to have been a barn or house structure. The ruins are quite near the swimming area, next to a trail in the Army Corps of Engineers' flood control area.

Stony Brook Wildlife Sanctuary in Norfolk hosts stone structures that once were essential to the operation of the various mills that were constructed at the site over the centuries. The picturesque dam and cascade are visible remains of the mill infrastructure that was an essential part of the local economy in days gone by.

An impressive stone structure can be found at the Mowry Conservation area in Smithfield, Rhode Island. A part of the Woonquatucket watershed, this area also hosts stunning rock overhangs, carved out by the swiftly flowing river that bisects the property.

A treasured town landmark, War Memorial Park, in Bridgewater, features an intricate network of canals and sluiceways. The channeled water powered multiple industries located at the

site over several hundred years.

Stone walls are found almost exclusively in New England and New York State, (in the U.S.) and are reminders of the strenuous labor expended by farmers to create boundaries, mark the edges of roads, and enclose grazing animals. Walls meandering through woodland were built on the edges of open farm fields. Once the land ceased being farmed, shrubs, then trees soon filled in the open spaces.

Triad bridge bridge abutment
The more you get outside, the more of these nearly forgotten ruins you will discover. Keep your eyes open. Look alongside streams where dry laid stone structures tell the story of power sources erected in a bygone era. You may be surprised at the quantity of ruins that remain in your own community.

The variety of ruins included in *Hiking Ruins of Southern New England* will expand your understanding of life in New England in earlier times. The detailed maps of the sometimes rugged trails included are worth the cost of the book. The multiple color photos with explanations of what each structure reveals is eye-opening. After seeing the distinct characteristics of these stone structures, you will get better at recognizing the various types of ruins that remain in plain sight. Sometimes you may discover that they are right around the corner from where you live.

Spring is coming. Make plans to get outside and start exploring and have fun!

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BWOT Spring Events

Muffins with the Easter Bunny

The Bellingham Women of Today will welcome the Easter Bunny for their annual Muffins with the Easter Bunny on Saturday, March 16th, from 9 – 11:30 at St. Blaise Church Hall, 1158 S. Main St., Bellingham.

Admission fee is \$5 per child with a maximum charge of \$15 per family. Children can meet the Easter Bunny while you are welcome to take your own photos. We will offer muffins, homemade cinnamon rolls, bagels, juice, milk, and coffee. Food and beverage items are \$1 - \$2 each. There will be free crafts and coloring pages for kids as well as raffle items. All proceeds will benefit local BWOT charities.

Peeps Diorama Contest

Get creative with your Peeps and create a marshmallow masterpiece!

We encourage families, local businesses, and organizations to get in the spirit and build a PEEPtastic creation of fun and imagination. Entry fee is a box of cereal and a package of juice boxes to be donated to the Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry. Entries will be displayed in the St. Blaise Church Hall during the BWOT Muffins with the Easter Bunny event on March 16 from 9 – 11:30 a.m. Voting will be conducted by the public at that time and winners announced at 12 p.m. Prizes will be awarded to the winner in each category and a grand prize to the “People’s Choice” entry. Registration is required and must be received by Saturday, March 9. Entry categories will be Adult /Individual, Child (up to age 13) and Family/Group/Team. More information and registration forms can be found on the BWOT Facebook page or by email request

to bellinghamwomentoday@gmail.com.

Letters from the Easter Bunny

The Easter Bunny is so busy preparing for the big day the Bellingham Women of Today will be helping him send personal letters to anyone on your list. The cost is \$3 for each letter or two for \$5. Send the name and address of recipient before March 18th along with your name and phone number, including any information you would like added to the letter with a check payable to BWOT. Mail to BWOT, PO Box 405, Bellingham, MA 02019 or email your info to bellinghamwomentoday@gmail.com pay via Venmo @ meloniedkm before March 18th.

Pots Of Gold

Let the Bellingham Women of Today surprise a child with

our prefilled “Pot of Gold” for St. Patrick’s Day. Your child/children can receive a Leprechaun hat filled with lots of St. Patrick’s Day themed toys and treats! (suggested ages 3-10) Order deadline

is March 10th, and the cost is \$20 each. Delivery will be on March 16, 2024. Contact: bellinghamwomentoday@gmail.com for orders and inquiries.

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 FOR UPDATES

BBA to Feature New Member Lunch this Month

The Bellingham Business Association is celebrating new members this month with a “Bring a New Member” lunch at Grumpy’s, 190 Pulaski Blvd., Bellingham, on March 13th at noon. It’s \$25 total for members, and guests are free. Great time to

check out the group and network with us! New members pay \$75 dues for the rest of this year and all of next year during the membership drive.

Nominations for the new board will also take place at this meeting, with elections in April.

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The Return of Everett the Leprechaun!

1. Brooks and Kathryn are part of a 10-unit condo association. On St. Patrick’s Day, Everett the leprechaun slips in the association’s parking lot and is injured. Everett sues the condo association and is granted \$100,000. The association assesses each condo owner \$10,000 to pay for the damages. Would Brooks and Kathryn’s condo policy help pay for the assessment?

2. Bryan and Kristen hear a loud bang in their garage. When they open the door, they see water spewing everywhere from a burst pipe. Bryan must have left the garage door open overnight! Would this be a covered claim even if the pipe froze because Bryan forgot to close the garage door?

Question 1 Answer: Yes, if they have loss assessment coverage
Question 2 Answer: Yes

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iStent Inject and Microgoniotomy for Glaucoma

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

What is glaucoma and how is it treated?

Glaucoma is a chronic disease defined by characteristic optic nerve damage. It is a multi-factorial disease with over 300 different anatomic variations and affects over 40,000,000 people worldwide. Glaucoma is a slowly progressive and irreversible disease and, in most cases, causes a painless loss of eyesight. It is, in short, “the silent sneak thief of sight”. The damage to the optic nerve is commonly caused by a fluid imbalance, or pressure, in the eye, as well as possible alterations in the blood flow to the optic nerve. It is well established that lowering the intraocular pressure can slow the process of optic nerve damage. The degree of pressure lowering necessary to prevent optic nerve damage is individualized for each person and each optic nerve. The greater the optic nerve damage, the lower the intraocular pressure is needed to achieve stability and prevent further optic nerve dam-

age and further visual field loss.

If glaucoma is left untreated you may experience vision loss and eventual blindness. Treatment strategies for glaucoma are individualized to achieve the greatest lowering of the intraocular pressure with the least amount of risk to the individual’s eyesight and well-being. Commonly, in the United States, topical medications are used as a first line of treatment. In many situations, multiple medications are tried to achieve the desired pressure level. Unfortunately, there can be difficulties with compliance, cost and side effects with many of these medications and laser therapy is commonly substituted as a first line of therapy.

What is the iStent® trabecular micro-bypass stent?

Minimally invasive glaucoma surgical procedures, so-called MIGS involve alterations of the drainage area that are performed inside the eye. The iStent® trabecular micro-bypass stent is a surgical therapy for patients who have mild to moderate open angle glaucoma and have been

tried possibly on topical medications or laser therapy. It is designed to improve the aqueous outflow to better lower the intraocular pressure and reduce the need for medications. The iStent® is the smallest medical device approved by the FDA to date. It is placed in the eye into the drainage area, so-called Schlemm’s Canal through the trabecular meshwork. The iStent® is an elective procedure. The iStent® is potentially beneficial in helping to reduce the number of glaucoma medications and drops needed to control this condition.

What is microgoniotomy surgery?

Microgoniotomy surgery (using the iAccess trabecular trephine device from Glaukos) is another type of MIGS. This procedure provides control of the eye pressure at lower risk than more traditional glaucoma surgeries. It alters the eye’s drainage system to lower the eye pressure and reduce the need for medications. Microgoniotomy can be done standalone or combined with iStents during cataract surgery in a tissue sparing fashion



to improve resistance to outflow in glaucoma. This tissue-sparing procedure can help lower the pressure even more compared to implanting iStent alone. During this procedure and ophthalmologist (Eye MD/ surgeon) will make 3 trephination cuts in a part of the eye’s drainage system called the trabecular meshwork. This will allow fluid to leave the eye much easier.

Benefits (how the surgery can help)

The goal of the iStent and microgoniotomy surgery is to lower your eye pressure and help preserve vision. It will not bring back vision already lost from glaucoma. After implantation, many patients are able to better control their eye pressure with fewer medications.

Risks

As with any surgery, there are risks with the iStent and microgoniotomy procedure. The surgery may not lower the eye pressure or control the glaucoma even when it is properly performed. In addition, sometimes there can be complications that do not appear in the early post operative period but may develop days, months or years later. Further treatment or surgery to treat those complica-

tions may be needed. As with any intraocular surgery, there may be loss of vision, blindness, loss of the eye, as well as bleeding, infection and injury to the eye or nearby body parts.

At Milford Franklin Eye Center, we use state-of-the-art technology and lasers to diagnose and treat a variety of eye problems, including glaucoma. We offer high-definition optic coherence tomography testing (OCT) that can predict glaucoma before it even happens. We also offer laser treatment when medications alone are not enough. All our offices are equipped with OCT and state-of-the-art computerized visual field testing. We operate in a state-of-the-art surgery center close to home, here at the Cataract and Laser Surgery Center of Milford. All our surgeries are performed with an anesthesiologist in the room and an IV lane, in case of an emergency. No office-based surgery! We were among the first surgeons in New England to introduce this new technology and we offer stellar outcomes closer to home. With 22 years of established experience and tens of thousands of procedures performed, we are happy to offer state-of-the-art medical and surgical eye care and now the iStent inject /microgoniotomy for treatment of glaucoma closer to home than ever before.

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District Receives \$71,000 in Fire Department Funding

The towns of Uxbridge, Bellingham, Millville, Blackstone, and Medway have all been selected to receive additional state funding from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) for their respective fire departments.

The announcement, made by the EOPSS's Department of Fire Services on February 2nd, unlocks a total of \$5 million in grant funding to be distributed to municipal fire departments across the state.

Worcester County's 8th

district is receiving a total of \$71,133. The Uxbridge Fire Department will receive \$12,200, Bellingham Fire Department will receive \$18,560, Millville Fire Department will receive \$5,983, Blackstone Fire Department will receive \$15,435, and Medway Fire Department will receive \$18,955.

The EOPSS emphasizes the flexibility of the use of the funds. The fire departments will be reimbursed for all purchases of new equipment, or upgrades and improvements to current equip-

ment. Because each fire department has unique needs, they will have complete discretion over the allocation of the grant money. Overall, the EOPSS hopes that this funding will make the dangerous job of firefighting safer.

This grant is available through funding by a five-year bond bill that is now in its fourth year. The program aims to ensure local fire departments are able to continuously update equipment, facilities, and training processes to provide safer and quicker responses.

"Our firefighters are willing to show up to work each day to risk their lives in service to our safety. The very least we can do as a state legislature is ensure each department is sufficiently funded to serve and protect us and them-

selves," commented Rep. Soter, who further emphasized the importance of guaranteeing that all our first responders, especially our firefighters, are properly funded to keep themselves and our district safe.

Bellingham Garden Club of MA 2nd "Garden Tea Talk" Available

The Bellingham Garden Club of MA invites all garden enthusiasts to join them in celebrating the art of gardening by subscribing to their new podcast, "Garden Tea Talk." The second episode in the series of 15-20 minute podcasts focuses on "Getting Ready for Spring."

Each segment features joyful garden talk, including interviews, comments, Q&As, speakers, helpful garden tips, advice and more.

You can subscribe to the free podcast at : <https://forms.gle/GzFPMQmPjZhJWHX66> or find them on Spotify, iHeart.com, or the group's BGCM YouTube Channel

The Bellingham Garden Club of MA can be reached by email at bellinghamgardenclubofma@gmail.com, on their website at www.bellinghamgardenclubofma.com and on FaceBook: <https://m.facebook.com/people/Bellingham-Garden-Club-of-MA/100081187121553/>.

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Local Artists Shine at Bellingham Library

By JENNIFER RUSSO

Bellingham residents with an artsy side were invited to enter their works into the Bellingham Library's Art & Photography Competition in February in the categories of People, Places or Things. There was also a Children's Art category. The Community Room turned into a proper art gallery, with beautiful pieces of art covering every wall.

When guests arrived at the reception, they were given two raffle tickets, where they could win one of the winning photos from the inaugural competition in 2019 (donated by those winners), and a People's Choice voting card where they could enter in their personal favorite to be announced later that evening. They marveled at the talent of the artists and hovered over their favorite pieces, taking in every detail.

Middleboro-native musician Ric Allendorf played some acoustic tunes and light refreshments were served. He sang some original songs as well as popular covers, as attendees



1st Place winner of the Art-People category and winner for Best in Show - Eileen Bailey's "Unconditional Love"



Musician Ric Allendorf sets the tone with a great acoustic set.



An art reception attendee ponders his decision for the People's Choice award.

complimented his smooth vocal tone, discussing among themselves which artworks they felt stood out the most and making comments about how they didn't know their friend or neighbor was so talented.

With 65 submissions, the judges certainly had their work cut out for them to choose who would receive 1st, 2nd and 3rd place for each category.

Winners of the 2024 competition were:

Children's Art

1st - Analiese Bastille with "Ivy's Painting"; 2nd - Zachary Spitzer with "Godzilla Z"; 3rd - Lyra Krpata with "N"

Photography - Places

1st - Steven Vaux with "Reflections of Past"; 2nd - John Andonian with "Majestic Monument"; 3rd - Roger Simmons with "Abandoned House"

Photography - Things

1st - Christine Chito with "Light as a Feather"; 2nd - Gail Eckberg with "B.F.F."; 3rd - Stephanie Marcott with "Black Crowned Night Heron"

Art - People

1st - Eileen Bailey with "Unconditional Love"; 2nd - Natasha Vaux with "Dancing Through Life"; 3rd - Ali Rheume with "Appreciate the Little Things"

Art - Places

1st - Verne L. Thayer with "Glowing Path"; 2nd - Diane Choquette with "Chicken of the Sea"; 3rd - Kay Lock Kolp with "Riverbend Farm"

Art - Things

1st - Michelle Ravinski with "Fruit Bowl"; 2nd - Kay Lock Kolp with "Jay's Bears"; 3rd - Gayle Abrams with "Romantic Evening"

The **Best of Show** winner was Eileen Bailey's "Unconditional Love" and the **People's Choice Winner**, with the majority vote of reception attendees was John Andonian's "Galactic Lighthouse."

"It was a pleasure to plan and host this event," says Library

Director Bernadette Rivard. "After we did the photography show in 2019 for Bellingham's 300th anniversary, I knew it was something I wanted to do again. COVID changed that and so many other plans, but it's back! We look forward to hosting this each year just before February school vacation, as it gives us the ability to display the artwork for a full week after the event."

Thank you to everyone who entered and congratulations to all of the winners! An online gallery of this year's entries can be found on the library's website: <https://www.bellinghamma.org/library>

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Sober Softball Builds Connections and Community

By DAVID DUNBAR

Options for those in the national drug/alcohol addiction and recovery field are huge. These days, some of the best stories are coming from the local baseball field.

Which is precisely where something called “Sober Softball” is preparing to open its new season for 2024.

“Anyone can join the team, as long as they are sober,” explains Lisa Trusas, a Senior Recovery Coach with Chris’ Corner in Milford. “We are looking for people in recovery and those who are allies. The practices are usually held in Upton or Milford and games are on Sundays in Worcester. We are ordering new jerseys, so the sooner the better to join. April 27th is the kickoff, and it starts with a single pitch tournament. May 5th is when the regular season starts. Come join the summer Sober Softball team!”

Chris’ Corner, located at 12 Main Street in Milford, is a newly established location, currently providing virtual recovery-oriented care and support to help individuals, children, and families, with mental health and substance use disorders to improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential, according to its website.

Sober softball players come from surrounding towns, including Bellingham and Franklin. For \$60 which includes a jersey, you can join and it’s open to men and women. More information is available at www.chriscornermilford.com or by calling (508) 552-8080.

Matt Dickie is from Bellingham and learned about sober softball from a friend last March. “He was talking about softball, and I told him I used to play years ago and was interested in playing again. So, he asked me to join the team at Chris’ Corner. I decided I wanted to participate, because I hadn’t played in such a long time, and I missed it. I missed the bond you have with your teammates the excitement of the game and the competition.”

Nick Pinto is the coach of the team. “I’ve been coaching going on three years... I used to play in the sober softball league for a different team and wanted to get my community into it, because sobriety made me scared at first because I didn’t know if I could have fun or what life was going to be like and I wanted to build connections and support for the people in my community.”

“I found a group of people,” adds Pinto, “that I call family, and we’re here for everybody to help everyone and build everyone up, come together for a common cause of just having a better day than yesterday without using drugs or alcohol. It’s my favorite support system to show that you’re not alone out there, the opposite of addiction is connection... alone I can’t, but together we can!”

And from the Chris’ Corner website: “Our leadership team and staff bring years of experience, both working with substance abuse as well as facing our own demons and coming out the other side. We know change is possible, and we’re here to give you the tools to create your own success story.”

“I’m not sure who came up with the idea of sober softball,” adds Trusas. “We are in a league with other sober facilities whether they are sober houses, other recovery centers and detoxes.”

She continues, “Nick runs the Sunday night AA meeting in Worcester, and he is the one who approached us with sponsoring a softball team. He has more than three years in recovery and has played and coached our team. We joined the league in the summer of 2022. So, the team is named after our recovery center, but the sponsors are the Regional Substance Navigation Program, Christopher W. Swindell Foundation, and the Law Offices of Melanie Solomon.”

“It’s just about us coming together and building relationships and support and building each other up and having fun and showing people that sobriety doesn’t have to be boring.”



Sober softball team Chris’ Corner from last fall. Coach Nick Pinto is kneeling and on the left. Regular season play will begin May 5.

says Pinto. “We can all come together and have a great time – win or lose, it’s for fun. It’s a great opportunity for people to feel part of something.”

“Sober softball,” says Bellingham’s Matt Dickie, “offers amazing support especially for those who are struggling. You don’t have to go through so-

briety alone. You know why? Because you can’t. Trust me, I know. So, c’mon out and join the team. It will be the best decision you’ve made in a while.”

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Learn More About Our Nonprofit Groups! Visit WorkingMom Social Club and Bellingham Lions on Facebook!

BVT Budget Subcommittee to Hold Public Hearing

As the Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District 2023-2024 Budget Subcommittee prepares the FY25 annual budget, it remains committed to building a sustainable operational budget, mindful of its obligation to complement assessments requested of its thirteen member communities.

While creating an operational budget involves many steps, the Budget Subcommittee embraces a multifaceted, mindful approach that requires collaboration among its school community members and informed stakeholders. From October to March of each year, the Subcommittee holds working sessions to examine, discuss, investigate, research, expand, delete, or otherwise modify its proposed budget, which is submitted to the District School Committee for approval

before it seeks districtwide support.

The FY25 proposed budget includes multiple mitigation strategies to reduce assessments despite ongoing inflationary pressure. Such as holding the budget impact of the employee health insurance premium to an increase of 4.5%, mitigating increasing electric costs via solar farm credit offsets, a systemwide electric analysis saving roughly 125,000 kilowatt-hours annually, and applying additional state revenue from Chapter 71, Regional School Transportation Reimbursement Fund, to reduce the assessment of its thirteen town municipalities. The District continues to pursue competitive grant opportunities, but grant funds, by design, do not serve as a renewable source for daily operational expenses. Therefore,

blending local assessments with secured grant resources is highly beneficial.

The finance committee members, who review the proposed budget request each year, often commend the cost-effective approach of competing and securing external revenue dollars as inventive and resourceful.

The Budget Subcommittee has seized every resource and examined every opportunity for cost-savings to enhance and protect the investment of district taxpayers to develop a plan worth supporting. A public hearing will be held at BVT on March 14, 2024, beginning at 5:00 p.m. in the Cafeteria, 65 Pleasant Street, Upton, MA. It is an opportunity for residents to consider the proposed FY25 Budget, which puts needed resources behind supporting student success.

Cocoa Bombs a Hit for Valentine's at LoSA

Group to Hold Game Night March 14th

At the February 8th meeting of the Ladies of St. Anne, set up and ingredients to make cocoa bombs for Valentine's Day were supplied. The casings were milk, red or white chocolate hearts which could be filled with cocoa,

marshmallows and crushed red and white peppermint pieces. Everyone made one or two bombs to share with loved ones on the holiday. The success of the recent bake sale was shared with all members and we want to thank

everyone in the community who bought baked goods and made donations to this fundraiser benefiting the Scholarship Fund.

The March meeting of the Ladies is Game Night, on March 14 at 7 p.m. in the Parish Hall. Hope you can make it!

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Bellingham Democrats Plan Caucus

The Bellingham Democratic Town Committee will be holding its annual caucus on Saturday, March 9 (snow day is Saturday, March 16), at 10 a.m. The caucus will be held in the Arcand Room at Bellingham Town Hall. ALL BELLINGHAM DEMOCRATS are invited to attend this caucus to meet the committee and to hear short speeches from Democrats running for a variety of offices and presentations on various referendum questions.

The chief purpose of the caucus is to elect delegates to the Massachusetts State Democratic

Convention which will be held at the DCU Center in Worcester on June 1. The convention, which attracts Democrats from across the state, will feature speeches by major state-wide office holders and will vote to endorse candidates running in the Massachusetts primary in September. The Bellingham Democratic Town Committee holds its regular meetings at 7 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month. All Bellingham Democrats are welcome to attend.

For more information, call Patricia Keppler at (508) 966-0003.

Save the Date!

The 2nd Annual Bellingham Business Expo, April 6th, 9 - 12

Bellingham Public Library is continuing its partnership with the Bellingham Business Association to sponsor a Business Expo where local residents can come to the library to meet representatives of local businesses to learn more about their prod-

ucts and services in a non-sales environment. Details, including links for vendor applications, are available at: <https://www.bellinghamma.org/library/pages/bellingham-business-expo>.

BVT Invites You to Be Involved

Your Expertise Can Help Vocational Programs Thrive

Are you interested in sharing your expertise with others? Look no further than the Program Advisory Committee at Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT). BVT depends on its advisory members to help create an on-campus environment that mirrors the diverse global workforce and encourages its students to strive for success in a career of their choosing, whether traditional or non-traditional.

The school is known for meeting modern industry's rigorous and relevant standards with a rich offering of career vocational-

technical shops under three pathways: Service, Technology, and Construction. With insight from its advisory members, the 18 shops have state-of-the-art tools and equipment that provide students with industry experience and skills to prepare them for the present and future developments of their trades. The advisory committee regularly meets with business leaders, industry professionals, and alumni to review the program curriculum, make equipment recommendations, and provide insight on industry trends, all to ensure that students are prepared for the workforce.

BVT is always looking for new members. If you are an industry professional with experience in one of the program areas and want to contribute, join the committee, and become more involved with the school by completing the Program Advisory Committee Membership Form on the school website, www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/advisory-committee. The advisory board meets twice yearly, in March and October, in the late afternoon or evening. The obligation is minimal, but the impact is lasting.

Xaverian Brothers HS Announces 2nd Quarter Honor Roll

Dr. Jacob Conca, Head of School at Xaverian Brothers High School, is pleased to announce that 657 students have been named to the honor roll for the second marking period of the 2023-2024 school year.

The following students from Bellingham achieved honors:

Bellingham

- Matthew Wilson, First Honors, 10
- Kelton Stanley, First Honors, 11
- Jacob Stifel, First Honors, 12
- Benjamin Perkins, Second Honors, 8
- Cameron Stifel, Second Honors, 9
- Luke Douglas, Second Honors, 12

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Coming Up at the Bellingham Senior Center

The Bellingham Senior Center is located at 40 Blackstone St., Bellingham. Reach them at (508)

966-0398 or visit www.bellinghamma.org.
St. Patrick's Day Party: The

Bellingham Police Department will present its annual celebration on Wednesday, March 13, at

11:30 a.m. at the Coachman's. It is FREE, so sign up now by calling the Senior Center at (508) 966-0398. Space is limited.

Bellingham COA: The COA provides support and leadership to our senior community through advocacy and by implementing educational, nutritional, recreational and wellness programs to meet their needs. Our next public Board Meeting will be at the Center on March 12 at 11 a.m.

Lunch & Learn: Join State Rep Mike Soter for a free lunch as part of the Rise Up Initiative on Thursday, March 28 at noon. Must register ahead of time.

Juice and Joints: Certified holistic health practitioner Mary Alice Harbour will be presenting "Come taste and learn about how to make a juice that will help with your joints." Tuesday, March 19, 11:30 a.m. Please call ahead.

Quilling: Presented by our Quilling Queen, Helen Whiting. It's an art form that involves the use of strips of paper that are rolled, shaped, and glued together to create decorative designs. \$10 per person; helps pay for supplies. 9 a.m. until noon on Friday, March 15. Call ahead to reserve your spot!

Bingo Cancelled: On Wednesday, March 13, there will be no Bingo games at the Center.

The Art of Pysanky: Ukrainian Easter Egg Workshop: Thursday, March 14, 1 p.m. Explore the colorful world of Pysanky as you learn this wax-resist technique handed down through generations of Eastern Europeans. This

class, taught by Celeste Langlois, is free and made possible through a Bellingham Cultural Council grant. Please call ahead to reserve your spot.

Saturday Coffee at the VFW: On the last Saturday of each month, from 9-11 a.m., visit the Bellingham VFW on South Main Street for free coffee and assorted goodies including bagels.

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

Coffee & Conversation: Join us every Tuesday for a popular free-wheeling discussion beginning at 9:30 a.m. And on the second Tuesday of every month, a Select Board member will be in attendance.

2024 Pride Fest: The second annual Pride Festival will be held at the Town Common on Saturday, June 29, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Josie Dutil, chair of the Bellingham Pride Fest Committee, is also the Director of the Senior Center, and you can reach her by calling (508) 966-0398. And you can visit the Facebook page, Be You Bellingham, for more information.

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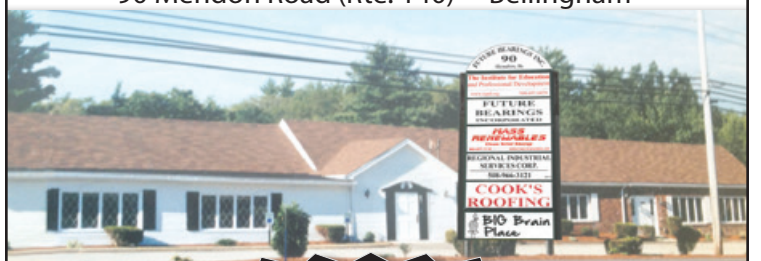
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Donation Funds Outdoor Tree-Climbing Elements at Hockomock YMCA

The Bernon Family Branch of the Hockomock Area YMCA has installed new outdoor tree-climbing elements as an enhancement to its outdoor challenge course in Franklin. The new climbing elements were funded by a generous donation from longtime Y supporters Paula Rooney and Gerry Shaw, and will be used extensively in spring and summer 2024 with youth participating in the Y's Before & After School Care and Summer Camp programs, as well as local school groups visiting the Y.



In late August, the Franklin Y installed Monkey Hardware systems on trees on its property, each providing a different climbing level of accessibility. These kits effectively turn the trees into climbing walls and are paired with the TRUBLUE iQ auto belay system. The TRUBLUE auto belays allow climbers of all ages and skill levels to climb heights safely. Rather than pulling the young climber upwards, they allow climbers to ascend the tree on their own power, while providing rest as needed during the climb with its catch and hold technology. Once the

climber has reached the top of the climb they have chosen, the auto belays use magnetic braking technology to lower the climber back down slowly and safely to the ground.

"These new elements have brought the kids together in a new way that I have not seen in a long time. When a camper was climbing their whole group would be watching and cheering them on to reach the top," said Ashley Dumas, Youth Program Director at the Bernon Family Branch. "It gave the kids some-

thing to work towards and accomplish."

The Hockomock Y is grateful for this generous donation. The Franklin Y's camp and playing fields also feature Grandma's Place, an outdoor pavilion with weatherproof tables and seating, which was also built with funds donated by the Rooney & Shaw family.



"From their decades in leadership at Dean College in Franklin to their contributions as Board members of our Hockomock Area YMCA, Paula Rooney and Gerry Shaw have a long history of supporting youth and families in the Franklin community," said Jim Downs, Hockomock Area YMCA CEO. "Our Y staff

and members are so appreciative that they continue to find new ways to enhance operations at our Y and help us provide an even better experience for the youth we serve."

For more information on the Hockomock Area YMCA, including camp, visit www.hockomockymca.org.

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Sports

BHS Grid Banquet Salutes TVL Division Champions

Domercant, Kelley, Perkins Take Top Honors

By KEN HAMWEY,
BULLETIN SPORTS WRITER

Bellingham High's post-season football banquets usually are a time to celebrate a winning season and sometimes a league championship. And that's what occurred at the Blackhawks festive gathering on Feb. 4 at Savini-Pomodoro's Restaurant in Blackstone.

The 2023 football team, which finished its season with a 7-4 record, won the Tri Valley League's Small Division championship and kept the Blackhawks' tourney streak alive at five straight.

Mental toughness, an unbreakable bond and a strong culture were the attributes that coach Dan Haddad emphasized in his remarks before a host of players were honored.

Twenty-seven awards were presented to competitors from the middle school, junior varsity and varsity levels. Senior quarterback Dasha Domercant won the Most Valuable Player award for the second straight year, running back Corey Perkins was selected as the Offensive Player of the Year while tight end/linebacker Connor Kelley was chosen as the Defensive Player of the Year.

Here's what the trio had to say about the awards they received:

Domercant — "I'm blessed to win the MVP award for the second time. Lots of hard work and dedication enabled me to capture that honor."

Perkins — "I'm honored to be chosen. The coaches believed in me and I had God on my side."

Kelley — "It means a lot. I've always strived to be a leader. A strong work ethic and dedication played a key role in my success."

The journey that culminated with the TVL title was a wild ride for the Blackhawks. They started their season short-handed and were winless in their first three games. The losses to Blackstone-Millville, Westwood and Medfield were by a total of five points.

Capturing the TVL crown and qualifying for the playoffs seem so distant and unrealistic. But, as Haddad said: "The players refused to give up." They turned their season around by relying on mental toughness, team chemistry and grit.

BHS then rolled, defeating Ashland, Dedham, Medway, Millis and Dover-Sherborn before entering the Division 6 playoffs. During the tourney, the

Blackhawks downed Maynard/AMSA then lost in the quarter-final round to Stoneham. The Blackhawks' 20-13 triumph over Norton clinched the division title on Thanksgiving Day.

Haddad credited four elements that enabled his players to become mentally tough. They were family, love, brotherhood and discipline.

"Mental toughness can take a team a long way," Haddad said. "Seventy percent of coaches would favor having talent, but I'd rather have a team that's mentally tough. When a squad has that attribute, it's difficult to beat them. So often we had to come from behind but the kids said, 'now it's our turn,' and that gave me confidence."

A good example of resilience during the season was the victory over Dedham. BHS trailed by 14 points but rallied for a 21-20 triumph.

"That game was the catalyst that sparked our six-game winning streak," Haddad suggested. "Dedham had 28 seniors and they were an awesome group. But we forced two turnovers that played a big role in the victory. One turnover stopped their momentum, and we scored on the other."

The 0-3 start faded into the background when mental toughness emerged.

Haddad credited other factors in the turn-around. "The players stayed focused on the task at hand, didn't show any signs of panic, and relied on a positive culture," he emphasized. "Winning the division title after the way we started was a great lesson for our younger players."

Haddad always praises his staff of assistants when he's detailing his team's success.

The varsity coaches are Dan Haddad Jr. (offensive coordinator), Chris Haddad (defensive coordinator), Derek Fernandes (quarterbacks, safeties and jayvee head coach), and Parker Silva (special teams). The sub-varsity coaches are John Pendlebury (middle school/freshmen), Tom Taylor (middle school/freshmen defensive coordinator), Kyle



Coach Dan Haddad is all smiles as three of his top players pose with their awards at Bellingham High's football banquet. They include, from left, Conner Kelley (Defensive Player of the Year), Dasha Domercant (Team MVP), and Corey Perkins (Offensive Player of the Year).

Pendlebury (middle school/freshmen offensive coordinator), and Jamie Dutremble (offensive line).

"They're all football guys," Haddad said. "I'm demanding and require a lot of their time, but they give it willingly. They're a hard-working group that sets the tone for the success of our culture."

Next year's captains will include Mason Jacques (receiver, cornerback), Ryan Cochrane (receiver/cornerback), Wyatt Callery (tight end/linebacker), and Max Gamble (receiver/cornerback).

The award winners:

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Unsung Hero — Aidan Cullinane.

Lineman of the Year — Ryan Clune.

Most Improved — Kawan Ribeiro.

Defensive Player of the Year — Tyler Hayward.

Offensive Player of the Year — Liam Lopez-Aileni.

Team MVP — Jaxen Elder.

JUNIOR VARSITY

Unsung Hero — Colin Piccirilli

Lineman of the Year — Thiago Oliveira.

Receiver/Back of the Year — Jason Piselli.

Defensive Player of the Year — William Lahousse.

Offensive Player of the Year — Camron MacGregor.

Team MVP — Mason Alger.

VARSITY

BHS Coaches Award — Senior Isaiah Tobin, guard, line-

backer

Blackhawk Award — Junior Max Gamble, receiver, cornerback

Unsung Hero — Sophomore Samuel Sullivan, receiver, safety

Workhorse Warrior — senior Connor Prentice, offensive, defensive lineman

Most Improved — Sophomore Markus Whittaker-Sprah, tackle, linebacker

Rookie of the Year — Freshman Jacoby McCarthy, offensive, defensive tackle

Special Teams Player of the Year — Senior Gian Mendez, kicker, defensive end

Defensive Lineman of the Year and King of the Weight Room — Senior Sean Dutremble, guard, defensive lineman

Defensive Linebacker/Back Player of the Year — Sophomore Wyatt Callery, tight end, linebacker

Defensive Player of the Year — Senior Connor Kelley, tight end, linebacker

Offensive Lineman of the Year — Senior Donovan Turner, center, defensive end

Offensive Back/Receiver of the Year — Senior Anthony DaSilva, receiver, cornerback

Pancake Award — Senior Donovan Turner, center, defensive end

Offensive Player of the Year — Senior Corey Perkins, running back, linebacker

Team MVP — Senior Dasha Domercant, quarterback, cornerback

PUBLIC NOTICE

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Division of Wetlands and Waterways Southeast Regional Office

508-946-2700

Pursuant to 33 U.S.C. 1341 and M.G.L. c. 21 §§ 26 - 53, notice is given of a 401 Water Quality Certification application for the repair of a gas pipeline anomaly (Dig 5977) at Mile Post (MP) 1.503 along existing ROW off S Main St in Bellingham, Massachusetts. Work will consist of the excavation and repair of the existing pipeline. The work will be conducted by Algonquin Gas Transmission, L.L.C., 890 Winter Street, Suite 320, Waltham, MA 02451. Written comments should be sent to MassDEP Southeast Regional Office 20 Riverside Drive, Lakeville, MA 02347 within twenty-one days of this notice.

Any group of ten persons, any aggrieved person, or any governmental body or private organization with a mandate to protect the environment who submits written comments may appeal the Department's Certification Failure to submit written comments before the end of the public comment period may result in the waiver of any right to an adjudicatory hearing.

Sports

Priscella a Major Plus for BHS Basketball Program

BY KEN HAMWEY,
BULLETIN SPORTS WRITER

Ross Priscella's four years of high school basketball at Bellingham High include some impressive achievements.

The 5-foot-10, 165-pound point guard has been a captain twice, a Tri Valley League all-star as a junior and was chosen to the Barry Hutchinson all-tourney team last December. His accolades also extend to the classroom. His 3.75 GPA made his selection to the National Honor Society as a junior an easy decision for the BHS faculty.

Priscella doesn't take any days off when basketball concludes. He'll be playing centerfield in his fourth season of baseball next month, and he also participated in unified basketball last fall, competing and interacting with special needs students.

The 17-year-old Priscella is the total package, but there's one element that's eluded him — a state basketball tournament berth.

"That's been one of my primary goals," he emphasized. "At the start of the season, my objectives were to compete for the TVL Small Division title and qualify for the playoffs."

Priscella and his teammates have missed out on tourney appearances three times — once because of the pandemic and twice because the Blackhawks fell short of qualifying. At the Bulletin's deadline, BHS was facing a Herculean task to earn a berth.

A late season, one-point loss to Dedham left the Blackhawks in an untenable position. Before the setback, they were No. 40 in the tourney's power rankings but needed to get to No. 32 to qualify. Losing to Dedham left BHS at 6-13 with only one game (Greater Lowell) remaining on the schedule.

"I'll be deeply disappointed if we don't qualify," Priscella said before the Dedham defeat. "We're accustomed to being in the playoffs in baseball, but my favorite sport is basketball, and to miss out on post-season play will hurt."

Failing to get a playoff date will be a regret that Priscella

knows will take time to fade. "I'll hold on to that regret, but I still have to get ready for baseball in a month and help our team qualify for the tourney for the fourth straight year, he said."

Coach T.J. Chiappone, who's in his 14th year as the Blackhawks' coach, calls Priscella "the best point guard in the TVL's Small Division." The coach is sold on Priscella's strengths. "He's got a high hoop IQ, he's fast and quick, can handle the ball, sees the floor well, and he's got the ability to drive or shoot a mid-range jumper."

Priscella's per-game averages this season are all team highs — 14.8 points, 4.7 rebounds, 3.1 steals, and 2.7 assists.

"I like to drive and find an open man," Priscella noted. "I enjoy playing the point because I can control the tempo and determine the outcome of a game. I also like breaking a press."

A victory over Dedham earlier in the season rates as Priscella's best game. He scored a career-high 25 points and went 11-for-11 at the free-throw line. "That was a quality win," he offered. "It was a Small Division game, and I improved my foul shooting."

A native of Bellingham, Priscella labeled a double-digit win over Medway last year as his top thrill. Choosing that game indicates he's a team-first competitor.

"The game was at Bellingham, and it was Senior Night," he recalled. "Earlier that season, Medway beat us by a huge margin. We wanted to win the rematch for our seniors. We did, and that was satisfying."

Priscella respects the Blackhawks' other captains — Tyler Ladouceur and Joe Corsi — and a quartet of key contributors.

"Tyler and Joe have high hoop IQs and they play hard," he said. "All three of us lead by example and can be vocal. Four other solid players are Max Gamble, Haroun Mafhoum, and Dasha and Jerry Domercant."

Priscella's future definitely includes college, but he says playing basketball at that level is doubtful, because his choices are all Division 1 schools — the Uni-



Bellingham High's Ross Priscella, selected to the Hutchinson All-tourney team last December, draws lots of attention when he drives to the basket.



versity of Connecticut, Stonehill College, and UMass-Amherst. "I likely will play club ball, focus on academics and major in business," he said.

Relying on a competitive philosophy that emphasizes hard work, improvement and winning, Priscella has learned valuable life lessons from sports. "Athletics can teach how to overcome adversity and to be resilient," he emphasized. "Other lessons are how to become good leaders and teammates and how to build relationships."

"Ross has been the face of the program for the last two years," Chiappone said. "He's a great ambassador for the program and the school, and he's served as an outstanding role model for our younger players."

As far as role models go, Priscella points to his father (Steve) as "a mentor and an adviser," he said. "My father played at Quincy High and later at Boston University. He competed against Patrick Ewing in high school and faced Michael Jordan and Reggie Lewis in college."

While a two-time captain, a league all-star, and a Hutchinson all-tourney choice are terrific accolades, a humble Priscella notes, "All those honors are appreciated. My coaches and teammates played a role in all those achievements."

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Sports

Ex-BHS Coach Rigney Selected to Coach Medway High's Football Team

By KEN HAMWEY,
BULLETIN SPORTS WRITER

Ted Rigney might be just what the doctor ordered for the Medway High football team.

The Mustangs, who won only one game last year, hired Rigney in January as the Bellingham native became Medway's third coach in three years. A traditionally strong program with a rich tradition, the Mustangs are in need of some stability.

The 56-year-old Rigney previously was Bellingham High's varsity coach for seven years beginning in 2003. Before taking the Blackhawks' reins, Rigney was a Bellingham assistant (defensive coordinator) for 12 years during coach Dale Caparaso's tenure that included four Super Bowl crowns. Rigney later worked as an assistant coach in Hopkinton and Uxbridge.

As Uxbridge's special-teams coordinator and defensive line coach last year, Rigney and the Spartans had a dynamic run, compiling a 13-0 record and winning the Super Bowl by beating Amesbury (48-14). Rigney's son, Liam, was a captain on that squad, competing as a safety and wide receiver.

"I thought I'd be retiring from coaching last season," Rigney said, "especially after Uxbridge won the Super Bowl. But, when I heard Medway had an opening, I had to consider it. I've always had the itch to be a

head coach again but I wanted a perfect situation. Medway is perfect because of the logistics (Rigney teaches in Bellingham and lives in Uxbridge). I respect the town, its facilities are excellent, and the school turns out good athletes. There's no reason why the program should be struggling and I felt I could be a good influence."

A UMass-Lowell graduate who played four years of varsity football there, Rigney majored in criminal justice. He first was a policeman in Holliston for 10 years before turning to teaching. He's taught history at Bellingham High for 25 years.

When he played for Bellingham High at center and linebacker, his four varsity years produced only five victories. He also played for three different coaches.

"I know the importance of stability," he said. "I met most of Medway's players and I feel bad for the seniors. The key to success at Medway will be to establish stability and trust. Once those things are in place, then there's a solid foundation that will lead to winning. That's when the players, the school and the community can take pride in what's achieved."

Rigney's goals will not be about competing for the Tri Valley League Small Division title or qualifying for the playoffs. He'll stress daily improvement.



Former Bellingham head coach Ted Rigney is taking the reins of Medway High's football program.

As a player and as Bellingham's head coach, Rigney twice was faced with adverse conditions. His four-year playing career experienced only five triumphs, and the 2008 team that he coached went winless in 11 games. He learned a lot from both instances.

"During my four years of playing that ended in 1984, we learned to never quit even if things weren't going our way," Rigney emphasized. "We just kept moving forward and kept competing. When I coached, my 2007 team went 9-2, my best year as a head coach. But, in 2008, we were young, and what worked in 2007 didn't work in 2008.

"The kids on the 2008 team taught me a lot. They didn't quit, they bought into what we were doing and were willing to try anything new. I was grateful for their resilience. They taught me to weather the storm, and they taught me how to be patient. And I learned not to be afraid to make changes."

Rigney is a firm believer that some necessary ingredients are needed before Medway can talk about its experience, depth and athleticism. "The key attributes that have to be developed are mental and physical toughness, a high football IQ and technique," he said. "Athleticism, depth and experience will be

taken care of if we have the first three qualities."

When he coached as an assistant to Caparaso at Bellingham, he saw what the priority was that eventually led to success. "A process, or a system, has to be in place first," he noted. "When that's established, talent surfaces. We won four Super Bowls at Bellingham because the kids bought in, and they had talent. That led to a winning system."

Because of their proximity, Rigney hopes Medway and Bellingham will develop a gridiron rivalry, and he's acutely aware that his Mustangs will face the Blackhawks on Oct. 10.

"My students at Bellingham High and some of the athletes have been great, wishing me future success," Rigney said. "When we play at Bellingham, it will be a bit weird. I'll be in the opposing locker-room, and our uniforms will be blue and white instead of black and white."

Rigney, who met his players on Jan. 13th, will strive to earn players' trust. "I've heard the talent and the numbers are good. What's needed is to get everyone on the same page."

Medway's voluntary off-season program got underway in mid-winter. It includes weightlifting, plyometrics and speed training. "That will continue through the winter and into the summer," Rigney said. "During that time there won't be a football on hand. When the pre-season begins, then it's all football."

Rigney has experience competing in the high-caliber TVL. "It's one of the premier leagues in the state," he said. "We won Super Bowls at Bellingham because teams like Holliston, Westwood, Hopkinton and Millis got us ready to compete in our Super Bowl encounters. I have tremendous respect for the teams in the TVL."

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Calendar

March 1

Dean College presents *She Loves Me*, Main Stage, 99 Main St., Franklin, 7:30 p.m., www.dean.edu/box-office

March 2

1st Saturday Family Fun, 11 a.m. to 12 noon, Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham

Dean College presents *She Loves Me*, Main Stage, 99 Main St., Franklin, 2 & 7:30 p.m., www.dean.edu/box-office
New England Country Dance,

March 3

Dean College presents *She Loves Me*, Main Stage, 99 Main St., Franklin, 2 p.m., www.dean.edu/box-office

March 4

Book Discussion group, 6:30 p.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, The Little Paris Bookshop, by Nina George, contact cchriste@cwmars.org for more information.

March 5

Presidential Primary Voting Day, 7 a.m.-8 p.m., Bellingham High School Gymnasium

March 8

FPAC presents *Tarzan*, 7:30 p.m., THE BLACK BOX, 15 W. Central St., Franklin, <https://www.fpaonline.com/events.php?id=1696>

Connecting Women Leaders Luncheon, presented by Tri-County Regional Chamber, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Cornerstone, Milford, <http://tinyurl.com/connecting-womenleaders>

March 9

Bellingham Democratic Caucus, 10 a.m., Arcand Room at Bellingham Town Hall.

FPAC presents *Tarzan*, 2 & 7:30 p.m., THE BLACK BOX, 15 W. Central St., Franklin, <https://www.fpaonline.com/events.php?id=1696>

March 10

FPAC presents *Tarzan*, 2 p.m., THE BLACK BOX, 15 W. Central St., Franklin, <https://www.fpaonline.com/events.php?id=1696>

March 12

Writing Group for Adults, 6:30 p.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, 9 minute time limit for readings, to participate, contact Margorie Turner Hollman at marjorie@marjorieturner.com

Friends of the Library Monthly Meeting, 7 p.m., email library@bellingshamlibrary.org for Zoom link.

March 13

BBA New Member Luncheon, 12 p.m., Grumpy's 190 Pulaski Blvd., \$25 members, guests free

March 14

Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District 2023-2024 Budget Subcommittee public hearing, 5 p.m. p.m., Blackstone Valley Tech (BVT) Cafeteria, 65 Pleasant Street, Upton, MA

Ladies of St. Anne Sodality meeting, (game night) 7 p.m., St. Blaise Parish Hall, 1158 S. Main St., Bellingham

March 15

FPAC presents *Tarzan*, 7:30 p.m., THE BLACK BOX, 15 W. Central St., Franklin, <https://www.fpaonline.com/events.php?id=1696>

March 16

Muffins with the Easter Bunny, 9 - 11:30 a.m., St. Blaise Church Hall, 1158 S. Main St., Bellingham. \$5 per child; maximum \$15 per family. Children can meet the Easter Bunny while you are welcome to take your own photos. Muffins, homemade cinnamon rolls, bagels, juice, milk, and coffee available, \$1-2. Free crafts and coloring pages, raffle items. Proceeds to local BWOT charities.

FPAC presents *Tarzan*, 2 & 7:30 p.m., THE BLACK BOX, 15 W. Central St., Franklin, <https://www.fpaonline.com/events.php?id=1696>

March 17

FPAC presents *Tarzan*, 2 p.m., THE BLACK BOX, 15 W. Central St., Franklin, <https://www.fpaonline.com/events.php?id=1696>

March 18

Virtual Ask-A-Lawyer Program with Attorney Brian T. Salisbury, 20-minute appointments 5 p.m.-7:30 p.m., register through Bellingham Public Library website.

March 22

Dean College presents *Choreographers' Concert*, 7:30 p.m., Main Stage, 99 Main St., Franklin, 2 p.m., www.dean.edu/box-office

March 23

Family Fest & Home Show, 10 a.m.- 2 p.m., presented by Tri-County Regional Chamber, Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical High School, 147 Pond St., Franklin, over 100 home-related vendors, mac n cheese cookoff, Ed the Wizard, pie-eating contest, Smokey the Bear, Easter Bunny (take your own pics), and more. Admission \$5 or an item for the Franklin Food Pantry.

Dean College presents *Choreographers' Concert*, 7:30 p.m., Main Stage, 99 Main St., Franklin, 2 p.m., www.dean.edu/box-office

March 29

Party for the Pantry, a Musical Fund-raiser for the Franklin Food Pantry, 7 p.m., featuring The Pub Kings, South Street Six and 3 others,

Friday, March 29, 7 p.m., GlenPharmer Distillery. To benefit the Franklin Food Pantry! 21+ event, tickets \$40 at <https://interland3.donorperfect.net/weblink/weblink.aspx?name=E188424&id=82>

Bellingham DTC Supports Loaves & Fishes Pantry

The Bellingham Democratic Town Committee decided to give its annual holiday donation to the Loaves and Fishes Food Pan-

try at St. Blaise Church in order to support the pantry's mission of helping Bellingham residents coping with food insecurity.



L-R: Kevin Keppler, DTC treasurer, Sue Durkin, director of Loaves and Fishes, and Nina Benajmin, DTC secretary and Loaves and Fishes volunteer.

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Bellingham Public Library News & Events for March

For updates to library programs and services, please visit www.bellinghamlibrary.org. Additional details about library programs are available on the library calendar at <https://bit.ly/3xMECCt>

March Hours

Monday - Thursday 9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., Friday & Saturday 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Please note that the library is scheduled to have a boiler replacement sometime soon and will close for a time while the work is being done. Updates of the project will be posted on our website and Facebook pages.

Highlighted Programs

Coming in April! Save the Date!

The Second Annual Bellingham Business Expo, April 6th from 9 a.m. to 12 noon

The library is continuing its partnership with the Bellingham Business Association to sponsor a Business Expo where local residents can come to the library to meet representatives of local businesses to learn more about their products and services in a non-sales environment. Details, including links for vendor applications, are available at: <https://www.bellinghamma.org/library/pages/bellingham-business-expo>

Virtual Author Talks

The library will now host up to three virtual author talks each month! Register to attend the live talk, but if you miss it, you can still view the talk in the archive on our website. Go to: <https://libraryc.org/bellinghamma> to see the list of upcoming and archived talks, and to register to attend. The March author events are:

- Wednesday, March 6th at 4 p.m.: The Power of Friendships with NPR Legal Affairs Correspondent Nina

Totenberg

- Thursday, March 14th at 4 pm: 20 Years of Dragon-Riding in YA Fantasy with International Bestselling Author Christopher Paolini
- Thursday, March 21st at 7 p.m.: On Retelling Greek Classics: An Exploration of the Modern Epics with Madeline Miller

1st Saturday Family Fun - Saturday, March 2nd at 11 a.m. to 12 noon

We will be making crafts that celebrate the start of the Spring season! Drop in!

Parenting in the 21st Century: Technology & Mental Health, 6-7 p.m.

The second presentation in our Parenting in the 21st Century Series. Dr. Ankita Jain and Michelle Gaudet will present a workshop on Technology & Mental Health. In this one-hour discussion, Michelle Gaudet and Dr. Ankita Jain will discuss the pros and cons of technology, how to teach your child/teen to set limits and boundaries with their use of technology, strategies to effectively support your child/teen around friendships, and most importantly, the link between social media and mental health issues.

The final presentation in the series is on April 9th and will cover Balancing Work and Family Life.

Ankita Jain, M.D. is Co-Founder of Sukoon Direct Primary Care in Franklin, and is one of the Direct Primary Care Physicians. She is Board Certified in Family Medicine and also specializes in Addiction Medicine.

Please register. This is a hybrid program, so you can attend virtually through Zoom or in person. When you register you will be asked which way you will be at-

tending. The Zoom link will be sent out close to the event date.

History for Homeschoolers - Tuesdays at 11:30 am 6-week program starting on March 12.

Let's learn Bellingham History! A Partnership with the Bellingham Historical Museum. Homeschool families are invited to join a 6-week program where participants will learn about Bellingham town history! Weeks 2 and 4 will meet at the Bellingham Historical Museum and the remaining weeks will meet at the library. This program will be held on Tuesdays from 11:30-12:30 and is geared for ages 8 and up, younger siblings are welcome with a parent/guardian present for the program. Please register for each weekly session that you plan on attending.

After School Programs

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

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

Ongoing Children's Programs

First Saturday Family Fun - Saturday, March 2nd 11 a.m. Spring crafts!

Ring a Ding - Mondays & Thursdays at 10:15 a.m. Drop in!

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

Sensory Story Time - Tuesdays at 10:15 a.m. Please register for each session.

Adult/Child Book Club - For kids in grades 4-6 or 6-9 and the adult in their life who loves to read. Meets monthly. If you are interested in joining, those in Grades 4-6 should contact

Amanda Maclure, amaclure@cwmar.org; grades 6-9 contact Diane Nelson, dnelson@cwmar.org. Check the library calendar for details for March.

Adult Programs

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

Our upcoming titles are:

March: *The Little Paris Bookshop* by Nina George

April: *My Friend Anne Frank* by Hannah Pick-Goslar

May: *The Reading List* by Sara Nisha Adams

Library Board of Trustees Meeting - Thursday, March 14th at 7 p.m. in the Conference Room.

Writing Group for Adults - Tuesday, March 12th at 6:30 p.m.

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

Friends of the Library Monthly Meeting - Tuesday, March 12th at 7 p.m. Email library@bellinghamlibrary.org for the Zoom link

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

Monday, March 18th starting at 5 p.m.

Local attorney Brian T. Salisbury of the law firm Doherty, Dugan, Cannon, Raymond & Weil, PC will meet with you in-

dividually through Zoom to discuss any legal questions you may have. Appointments are 20 minutes long and are free. Appointments are between 5 and 7:30 pm. Register for an appointment and you will receive the Zoom link close to the appointment date. You will be asked to choose an appointment time when you register. Note: Your registration with your email address will go to Attorney Salisbury so he can send you the Zoom link. Please note: The Bellingham Library Ask-A-Lawyer Program is a limited pro bono legal service provided by Attorney Brian T. Salisbury and is strictly limited to 20-minute consultations regarding legal questions that you may have. Unless otherwise agreed in writing, Attorney Salisbury will not provide legal representation in any legal matter discussed.

Yoga for the Seasons

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

Bellingham Skein Artists - Wednesdays at 6 p.m. Do you enjoy knitting, crocheting, or any of the other fiber arts? Join us on Wednesdays! All skill levels are welcome, including beginners. Please bring your own materials. No registration required.

Drop in Sewing/Craft Night

Varying Thursdays from 5:15 to 7:45 p.m., check the library calendar for dates.

Join members of your community for a night of sewing, quilting, knitting, or any other creative project you are working on. This is an independent setting for you to work on your current project. Please bring your own supplies- supplies are not available. Please bring a project to work on independently. No classroom instruction. Adults only, for safety no children permitted.

Winter Weather Advisory: Check CO Alarms and Keep Vents Clear of Snow

State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine is reminding residents to test their carbon monoxide (CO) alarms and keep dryer, furnace, and other exhaust vents clear of snow.

"Carbon monoxide is a leading cause of fatal poisoning, and home heating equipment is the primary source of carbon monoxide in the home," State Fire

Marshal Davine said. "As part of your storm planning, check your CO alarms to be sure they're working properly, and if an alarm is past the manufacturer's recommended lifespan, replace it."

Residents should also be sure to keep outside vents clear of falling, drifting, or shoveled snow. In January 2005, 7-year-

old Nicole Garofalo died when a heating vent was blocked by snow drifts outside, allowing carbon monoxide to accumulate inside her Plymouth home. This tragedy led to Nicole's Law, which requires CO alarms on every habitable level of a Massachusetts residence.

"Fuel-fired heating appliances like dryers, furnaces, boil-

ers, and fireplaces are all sources of carbon monoxide," State Fire Marshal Davine said. "If the vent or flue is blocked, this poisonous gas can reach deadly levels inside the home. Know where the vents on your home are, be sure to clear them when shoveling, and be careful not to blow snow onto them if using a snowblower."

Massachusetts fire departments detected nearly CO at nearly 5,000 incidents in 2022, officials said, and 90% of these calls were at residential settings. The poison gas can cause headache, fatigue, dizziness, and/or

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Library Resource of the Month – Meeting Rooms

PLEASE NOTE: As of this publication deadline, the town is in the process of finalizing the details on installing new boilers at the library to replace its 30+ year old heating system that has not been functioning well. We do not know the exact date that the work will begin but when it does, the library will be closed for a time while the systems are replaced, and meeting rooms will not be able to be used. Although room use will be approved for the foreseeable future, you should be aware that the reservation may be cancelled, and you will need to reschedule or find another location.

The library has 5 meeting rooms available for public use: Community Room, Conference Room, Program Room, Middlesex Savings Charitable Foundation History Room, and Study Room. The Community Room, Conference Room, and Program Room can be reserved by members of the community when not in use for library programs. The Middlesex Savings Charitable Foundation History Room and Study Room are available on a first-come, first-served basis with stipulations. Wi-Fi access is available throughout the building, including in all rooms.

Community Room

- Can be reserved when not already in use for library programs
- For groups of up to 80 people
- Free for community, town, and 501c3 nonprofit groups. Fees for other nonprofits and profit organizations, as well as use after library hours.
- Food and covered drinks are allowed

Conference Room

- Can be reserved in advance for up to a 3-hour time period
- Accommodates up to 12 people with 8 seated at the conference table and 4 other chairs available in the room
- When not reserved, the room is available on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Tutors cannot reserve the room but can use it under the first-come, first-served guidelines.
- Food and covered drinks are allowed

Middlesex Savings Charitable Foundation History Room

- Cannot be reserved in advance, and when in use, we reserve the right to permit people researching local history to still access the room even if it's in use.
- Accommodates up to 6 people with 4 seats at the table and 2 other chairs available in the room
- Food and drinks are prohibited in the room

Program Room

- Located in back of the Children's Room. Can be reserved by members of the community when not in use for library programs.
- Groups of up to 20 people
- Free for community, town, and 501c3 nonprofit groups, but there are fees for other nonprofits and profit organizations, as well as use after library hours.
- Food and covered drinks are allowed

Study Room

- Available on a first-come, first-served basis
- For groups of up to 4 people for quiet study or group meetings

- Available for high schools students (grades 8-12) to use individually
- Food and covered drinks are allowed

For more information about room use, go to the library's website at www.bellingham-library.org and click on the "Meeting Rooms and Reservations" link.

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SAFETY

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nausea at lower concentrations and death at higher concentrations. Exposure while asleep is particularly dangerous. Children, older adults, and people with lung or heart disease are especially vulnerable.

"We can't see, smell, or taste carbon monoxide, but we can detect it with working CO alarms," State Fire Marshal Davine said. "If your alarm sounds, get outside and call 9-1-1."

For more information on carbon monoxide and CO alarms, visit <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/smoke-and-carbon-monoxide-alarms>.



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Party for The Pantry to Take Place March 29 at GlenPharmer Distillery

Join local bands The Pub Kings and South Street Six for Party for The Pantry - a night of celebration, community, and making a positive impact. The fundraising event will take place on Friday, March 29 from 7 pm to 11 pm at GlenPharmer Distillery 860 W. Central Street in Franklin, MA. Dance the night away with sensational performances from local bands and take part in silent auctions, and raffles.

All proceeds from the event will support the Franklin Food Pantry, which offers supplemental food assistance, household necessities, and resource referral programs to individuals and families throughout the Franklin community. Since July 2023, The Pantry has experienced a 41% increase in demand for supplemental food assistance vs. the same time last year. Proceeds from the event will help The Pantry purchase much-needed items and pay for daily operations.



Tickets to the event are \$40 each and can be purchased at www.franklinfoodpantry.org. Please note this is a 21+ event.



Sponsorship opportunities are available for \$350 and include a listing on the event banner, mention on Myfm 101.3, social media posts on Myfm 101.3 and Franklin Food Pantry, and two tickets to the event. For more information, visit www.franklinfoodpantry.org/happenings/events.

Children's Museum of Franklin to Foster Fun, Learning & Connection

By J.D. O'GARA

A place children can discover, imagine, and grow, through play and exploration – closer to home. The Children's Museum of Franklin, an idea sparked by Franklin Moms and volunteers Erin Gallagher and Meg Hagen, is gaining momentum. The newly approved 501 c3 nonprofit aims to, eventually, secure a permanent location in downtown Franklin. Even without a location, however, the children's museum is planning a pop-up museum to be held on a bi-weekly basis in the new year in Franklin and surrounding towns.

"Once we acquire a permanent space, we'll build exhibits for children aged 10 and under, with classroom and lab space for additional programming, STEM programming for elementary and middle school-aged kids, and leadership/internship opportunities for high school and college students," says Hagen.

The idea for the children's museum began, say the founders, as a shared dream.

"Meg and I were at a mutual friend's house for brunch



Franklin moms, professionals, volunteers, and visionaries Meg Hagen, left, and Erin Gallagher, shown with their little ones, have created the Children's Museum of Franklin, a new 501c3 organization that will hold pop-up Indoor Mobile Museums around Franklin until it raises funds to land a permanent location in downtown Franklin. (Photo by Kyle Daudelin Photography.)

in June, talking about the Davis Thayer location as our original dream location," says Gallagher, "We laughed about it, but when we left, we said, 'Let's really do this.' Between us, Meg and I have five young kids, all seven years and younger. We are pursuing this with the goal of creating a common space for kids to learn and play both for our children and their peers—a spot where people can build community and foster connections, and really grow together. Having raised kids, especially through the pandemic, so many of our kids lost out on connection. This is an opportunity to bring that back."

The closest children's museums, about 45 minutes away, routinely draw patrons from an hour away. A Children's Museum in the heart of Franklin "would increase the vitality of the downtown and the pull of the community," says Hagen. Drawing families to "the downtown space would support the

local economy and local businesses. We want to give back to the town."

Both women, who've previously worked together as founding members of local support group Franklin Area Moms, already make supporting the town a priority.

Erin, a mom of three young children with a marketing and communications background, is currently Franklin Area Moms President. She also serves on the Franklin School Committee, is a member of the Franklin Master Plan Committee and is a volunteer foster care case reviewer for the Department of Children and Families.

Meg, a native of Raynham with a doctorate in pharmacy who lived five years abroad in Australia before settling in Franklin, holds a seat on the Franklin Conservation Com-

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mission and the Franklin Master Plan Committee. In the last several years, Meg has also taught preschool at the Franklin Children's School on top of being a mom to two young sons.

Facilitating Franklin Area Moms "gave us a sense of running a nonprofit, working with boards, building a network, and building a community," says Meg. "A lot of our mission and vision includes working in partnership and collaboration throughout the community." The two have enlisted elementary and early childhood education consultants for their board to design what the children's museum will look like, as well as an occupational therapist to ensure that space is inclusive for children of all abilities and sensory needs. In their planning process, they've sought feedback from various members of Town Council and officials from the Town, Dean College, and Franklin Public Schools.

A lack of space isn't stopping the two right now. The partners have looked to Tri-county Regional Vocational Technical High School carpentry students to build mobile exhibits for their pop-up Indoor Mobile Museum at different venues in Franklin and surrounding communities.

The Children's Museum of Franklin has the following Pop-Up Indoor Mobile Museum events planned, with more to come in Franklin and in neighboring towns:

- March 5, 2024, Franklin Public Library, 11 a.m.-2 p.m., 118 Main St., Franklin
- March 16, 2024, Franklin Public Library, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., 118 Main St., Franklin

Of course, fundraising will be essential to making this dream happen, and the duo have a four-part strategy that includes:

- A Founding Families program: Those local families that provide a minimum \$1,000 donation will be featured permanently on Children's Museum of Franklin

website and later, in the future permanent space.

- Grassroots fundraising: The Children's Museum will host various fundraising events, such as the Night at the Museum Gala, 7-10 p.m. on April 11th, 2024, at THE BLACK BOX, 15 West Central St., Franklin (<https://www.childrensmuseumfranklin.org/gala>)
- Corporate Fundraising: Hagen and Gallagher will reach out to potential corporate funders.
- Grants: Now that the Children's Museum of Franklin is an official 501 c3 nonprofit, the founders can apply for grants on the state and federal level, as well as to various foundations, depending on the space it finds.

To learn more or to become involved, visit the Children's Museum of Franklin's website, Childrensmuseumfranklin.org, as well as their Facebook and Instagram pages.



Students in the carpentry program at Tri-County have worked on mobile exhibits for the Children's Museum of Franklin.

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