

## Charlton/Oxford's Route 20 Construction to Continue into December 2024

BY JANET STOICA  
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

Route 20 road construction has progressed to the breaking point for drivers along busy Routes 12 and 20 in the Oxford and Charlton area, but according to the Mass. Dept. of Transportation's website, the following activities will continue.

The MassDOT's Design-Build Program for this project was awarded to D. W. White Construction, Inc. and TranSystems in November 2022. Construction activities are in progress. Weather and unexpected circumstances make all construction activities subject to change without notice, but they will do their best to keep area drivers/residents updated.

### Temporary Lane Closures, March through November 2024

MassDOT will implement temporary lane closures on Route 20 in both directions, between Richardson Corner Road in Charlton and Main Street (Route 12) in Oxford from March 4 through the end of November 2024. The closures are necessary for activities related to reconstructing Route 20. At the completion of this construction season, which is expected to be late November/early December, the roadway will reopen to four lanes of traffic throughout the corridor.

Work will occur in two stages:

- During the first stage of construction (March through July),



work will occur on the westbound side of the roadway and traffic will be shifted to one lane in each direction on the eastbound side.

- During the second stage of construction (anticipated to be

July through November), work will occur on the eastbound side of the roadway and traffic will be shifted

### CONSTRUCTION

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## Bartlett High School Renovation Groundbreaking, Town Meeting articles, Budget, New Conservation Agent

BY JANET STOICA  
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Webster's May 13 town meeting warrant has been completed and is under review by town counsel. The next step is a review by the town's Select Board. Among items on the warrant will be approval for a new fire engine to replace a 30-year old model with costs within the town's levy limits. The school budget is also part of the warrant with a 3.2 percent increase from the previous fiscal year.

"Our additional Chapter 70 aid will decrease dramatically for fiscal year 2024-2025," said Town Administrator, Richard LaFond, "This current year we received \$2.4 million in additional state aid and for 2024-2025, Webster will only receive an additional \$900,000, a substantial drop in funding. Last year we had an inflation increase. The funds are based on town incomes and larger urban communities are receiving larger amounts. The state aid formula accommodates income levels and Webster is not alone, it's a state-wide situation." Every student



Richard LaFond, Webster Town Administrator

coming into all school systems must be educated per an unfunded state mandate.

Water and Sewer Department funding is also included in the town meeting articles. Last year, \$33 million was allocated for the PFAS treatment plant and this year requires an additional \$10 mil-

### WEBSTER

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## CONSTRUCTION

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to one lane in each direction on the westbound side.

Existing turn lanes at Route 12, Route 56, and Richardson Corner Road will be maintained, but left turns into or out of other side streets and driveways along Route 20 will be restricted. U-turns will be accommodated at the intersections of Route 12, Route 56, and Richardson Corner Road. Access to local businesses will be maintained.

### Speed Limits Reduced in Construction Work Zone on Route 20

MassDOT has issued a work zone speed limit to reduce the posted speed limit on Route 20 within the project work zone, between Route 12 and Richardson Corner Road, until further notice. The posted speed limits will be

further reduced during active work hours for the safety of the roadway users and workers.

Speed limits are reduced in the following areas:

- Richardson Corner to Route 56: the speed limit has been reduced from 50 MPH to 45 MPH. During active work hours, the speed limit will be further reduced to 40 MPH.
- Route 56 to Thayer Pond Drive: The speed limit has been reduced from 40 MPH to 35 MPH. During active work hours, the speed limit will be further reduced to 30 MPH.
- Thayer Pond Drive to Route 12: The speed limit has been reduced from 45 MPH to 40 MPH. During active work hours, the speed limit will be further reduced to 35 MPH.

Dynamic message signs will be posted to show the reduced speed limit during active work hours and advance warning signs will be used onsite to notify the traveling public of the reduced speed limits.

### Wide Loads Prohibited from Work Zone on Route 20

MassDOT has issued a restriction prohibiting vehicles carrying wide loads over 8 feet, 6 inches from traveling through the Route 20 Reconstruction Project work zone, between Route 12 and Richardson Corner Road. The travel restriction is in place 24 hours per day, seven days per week until further notice.

All vehicles carrying wide loads should avoid the work zone, seek alternate routes, and contact MassDOT's Commercial Truck Permits Office for more information.

### Traffic and Staging Considerations

The project will involve complete reconstruction of Route 20 in the Towns of Charlton and Oxford over approximately 4 years. Typical work hours will be 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Some work may vary depending on traffic volumes between 5 a.m. to 7 p.m.

There will occasionally be night and weekend work for some demolition and off-peak work that needs lane taking to execute the work.

Access will always be maintained for emergency services and the project team will be in contact with first responders to maintain communication throughout the performance of the contract.

All major operations will be confined to fixed work zones. Travel speeds will be reduced through work zones for the safety of their workforce and the traveling public.

To minimize traffic impacts, the project will:

- Minimize construction vehicles turning movements within the project limits to reduce congestion
- Use water spray for dust suppression
- Maintain intersection access and traffic in each direction on Route 20
- Maintain proper signage and markings
- Provide temporary roadway lighting for safe nighttime travel
- Provide safe construction access/egress
- Maintain resident and local business access/egress

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# Director of Finance & Ops Finalist for Dudley-Charlton Regional School District to be Announced Soon

BY JANET STOICA  
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

Regional School Superintendent Steven Lamarche's recent report to the Regional School Committee included an update on the search for a new Director of Finance and Operations. In his report, Mr. Lamarche stated that there were two finalists who would be presented to the School Committee at their April 9 meeting.

The Dudley-Charlton Education Foundation "Heroes Among Us" reception was to be held on April 6 at Southbridge's Wellsworth Hotel.



This year's honorees include: Loretta Andre, Leo Biron, Scott Cushing, Emily Dabrowski, Adrienne Daniels, Jennifer Desto, Tammy Ducharme, John Grondalski, Elizabeth Hurley, and Kim Lundquist. The Heroes are honored for their dedication to students and staff.

Tenth grader, Lyllian Brazen, is the recipient of the Youth Art Month Award which is a celebration of the visual arts. Her design will be spotlighted in their virtual exhibit and she also received a monetary award.

School Committee fiscal year budget priorities were also pre-

sented and included maintaining existing staff size and programs without reductions, reviewing cost savings in the areas of specialized transportation rather than contracted service models, capital plan architectural review of all school facilities, and solar power options for all district schools. Additionally, supporting budget increases by reducing annual usage of excess and deficiency support to \$500,000 annually and increasing contingency line items to match usage to budget. They also seek to reduce reliance on school choice by 20 percent (\$180,000).

## WEBSTER

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lion. It is a nationwide mandate. The public is invited to attend the Water and Sewer Commission's public hearing that includes an update on the Per-and Polyfluoroalkyl Substance (PFAS6) including construction costs. A Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Representative will be present to answer questions. Hearing date is Thursday, May 2 at 6:30 p.m. in the Town Hall Selectmen's

Meeting Room, 350 Main Street, Webster. Please consult the Town website for further information.

"The town has a new Conservation Agent, Joseph Wigglesworth," said Mr. LaFond, "Mr. Wigglesworth formerly served as Chairman of Webster's Conservation Commission. Duties include accepting applications for determination of building regulations, property inspections in compliance with State regulations, issuing orders to comply with State statutes, and overall to be an advisor and enforcer for the Conservation Commission.

Training commission members is also part of his position. His new position began on April 2."

On Monday, April 8, groundbreaking for the Bartlett High School renovation project will begin. "Renovations include new design and utilization of the existing high school. It will involve using the 'shell' of the high school for a complete renewal," said Administrator LaFond, "this will take approximately three years for completion of the \$101 million project. After Webster was awarded the initial Mass. School Building

Association funding, we were fortunate to receive another appro-

priation after COVID so Webster received additional state aid."

Lake Chargoggagoggmanchauggagoggchaubunagungamaugg



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## MOVIES @ THE LIBRARY

All showings are on Tuesdays at 1 p.m. only in Dexter Hall. No registration required. Free popcorn!

April 9: PATERSON starring Adam Driver. 2016. Rated R. Run time 118 min.

April 16: WONKA starring Timothee Chalamet, Olivia Cole-

man. 2023. Rated PG. Run time 112 min.

April 23: BRIGHT STAR starring Ben Wishaw, Abbie Cornish. 2009. Rated PG. Run time 119 min.

April 30: STEALING BEAUTY starring Jeremy Irons, Liv Tyler. 1996. Rated R. Run time 119 min.

## SILVER NEEDLES KNIT & CROCHET GROUP

Thursdays from 1-3 p.m. Upstairs Reading Room. No registration required. Bring your

current project and relax with friends. All are welcome regardless of skill level.

## MEDICARE INFORMATION SESSIONS WITH BCBS MASS. REPRESENTATIVE

This series will be held in the Community Meeting Room - No registration is required.

Tuesday, April 16, 6-7:30 p.m. Medicare Health Plan Options (For existing Medicare enrollees)

Tuesday, April 23, 6-7:30 p.m. Medicare Supplement Plans or

Medicare

Advantage Plans - which is best for me? For those new to Medicare or members wanting to make changes.

Tuesday, April 30, 6-7:30 p.m. Caregivers overview of Medicare and Health Plan Options (For those trying to help a family member or friend understand Medicare).

Saturday, April 13, 9:45-10:45 a.m. Community Yoga in Dexter Hall. Registration is required.

All ages and levels are welcome. Wear comfortable clothing and please bring your own yoga mat.

Tuesday, April 16, Poetry Open Mic Night 6:30-7:30 p.m. To celebrate National Poetry Month, we are hosting a Poetry Open Mic Night at the Library with guest facilitator Joe Fusco, Jr. from the Worcester County Poetry Association. Participants are welcome to read their own poetry or something by a favorite poet. Registration is requested so that we have an idea of the number of participants. Generously sponsored by Friends of the Charlton Library.

Wednesday, April 17, Death Café 1-3 p.m. in Dexter Hall. No registration required.

Death Cafés provide a safe environment to gather, eat cake, drink tea or coffee, and enjoy open-minded conversation about dying and death. Questions? Email [kwalker4@mac.com](mailto:kwalker4@mac.com).

Thursday, April 18, Alzheimer's Caregiver Support Group 6-7:30 p.m. Community Meeting Room. No registration required. Led by experienced caregivers and offers information, resources, and strategies specific to caring for someone with Alzheimer's and other Dementias along with support for transitioning to different care settings. Co-sponsored by Tri-Valley and Charlton Public Library.

Saturday, April 20, 12-1:30 p.m. SARJ (Saturday Acoustic

Roots Jam) Dexter Hall. No registration required. An acoustic only music jam. Open to all 18+. Join us to play or just to listen!

Thursday, April 25 p.m. 6-8 p.m. CULE (Charlton Ukulele League and Ensemble) Community Meeting Room. No registration required. Experienced musicians and newbies all welcome. Questions? Email [Cule5632@gmail.com](mailto:Cule5632@gmail.com)

Thursday, April 25, 6-7:30 p.m. "An Evening with Robert Frost." Historical production in Dexter Hall. Registration requested. Join talented historical actor Stephen Collins for his production of an evening of Frost, a unique, interactive performance that begins with a short biographical introduction into the poet's life. This event is co-hosted by the Charlton Public Library and the Charlton Senior Center and supported in part by a grant from the Charlton Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass. Cultural Council, a state agency.

Friday, April 26, 1-2 p.m. Critical Thinking Discussion Group . Plutarch's Lives (Cleopatra) by Plutarch in the Sibley Reading Area (Main Floor). No registration required.

No experience with critical thinking discussion groups is necessary. Books/materials are available for checkout one month prior to discussion. Questions? Email [saga3@charter.net](mailto:saga3@charter.net).

## SAVE THE DATE!

Saturday, May 4, 10-11:30 a.m. Sourdough Starter Workshop with Sourdough Brandon.

Dexter Hall . Registration required. Learn how to make, maintain, and store a sourdough starter from a sourdough baker and food blogger. You'll leave with many tips and tricks on how to keep your sourdough starter active, what to make with your starter, and even leave with some free sourdough starter! Free and open to all; however registration is required for this event.



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## ONGOING EVENTS:

Mondays, 10 -11 a.m. Sensory Bin Exploration. Bins will be filled up with sand, rice, dirt, dry pasta, and more! This program is geared towards ages 2 to 5, but siblings are welcome.

Mondays 3:30 – 4:30 Origami and Paint, Children's Room

Tuesdays 10 – 11 a.m. Story-time

Tuesdays 3:30 – 4:30 Build Tuesdays Magnet tiles (4/16; 4/23) or Lego Club (4/30)

Tuesdays 6-7:30 p.m. Literacy Volunteers – ESL classes

Wednesdays 10 – 10:45 a.m. Stuffed animal storytime

Saturdays, 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. Yoga with Julie. All levels welcome. Bring your own mat.

Saturdays, 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. Apple Country Music Together. A music and movement program available to children from birth to age 6 and their families.

## SPECIAL EVENTS:

Tuesday, April 16 10 – 11 a.m. National Library Day Party for kids! Dress up like a librarian to help us celebrate. Cardigans and glasses encouraged. Library themed story time and book craft. Every child will leave with a book to take home.

Thursday, April 18 6 p.m. Functional and fabulous embroidery for mending. Learn how to blur the lines between the garment and the mending. We will explore the many ways we can combine basic embroidery stitches to achieve an elevated look. Materials will be provided, but feel free to bring something from home that you need mended, as well!

Monday, April 22 all day Take-home pea plants for Earth Day. Plant your own seed in the lobby or grab a pre-sprouted plant to take home. While supplies last. For adults and kids.

Monday, April 22 6:30 – 8 p.m. Adult Book Group

Saturday, April 20 12 – 2 p.m. Horse 101. Lindsay from Winterberry Homestead will be here

teaching us about horses. Safety working around horses, learn how horses think, along with nutrition and shelter needs.

Tuesday, April 23 6-7 p.m. Herb butter making for adults

Monday, April 29 6 p.m. Adult board game night

Tuesday May 7 A state-of-the-art, hands-on children's museum focused on STEAM education (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math). Kids can experience stations that include robots, virtual reality, 3D print-

ing, art, engineering, and more! For kids grades K to 6. STEAM museum sessions at 3:30 -4:15 p.m.; 4:15- 5 p.m. and 5-5:45 p.m. Please register for only one session.

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**Native Websterite \* Daughter of Henry Fitzback, former Treasurer at Stevens Linen and former Chair of the Chamber of Commerce, and Alice Madura Fitzback. \* Graduate of St. Joseph School, Bartlett High School and the University of Massachusetts. \* A Bachelor of Arts and three Advanced Degrees, including an MS in Management for Organizational Effectiveness. \* Over 40 years of experience in public service and leadership in government, church, and social organizations - with a special focus on strategic planning and implementation, budgeting, policy and regulatory development, emergency preparedness and response, human resources management, and communication. \* 30 years of Government service (US EPA Senior Executive). \* Dedicated to Webster:** Chaired the Webster Personnel Advisory Board; Member of the Historical Commission; Served on the Town Administrator Screening Committee; Member of the Library Strategic Planning Committee; Served on the Board of Directors for the Friends of the Gladys E. Kelly Library; Supporter of the Veterans Program, Building Bridges; Former Junior Warden at the Church of the Reconciliation; Over 30 year sponsor of a Scholarship for a BHS senior interested in public service and/or ethical business.

I humbly seek your vote on May 6th. With my many decades of experience in public service and my dedication to Webster, I stand ready to work for you on day one. As a pensioner, I understand the importance of using every dollar wisely and that means having the vision to anticipate the needs of our changing community and plan accordingly. Thank you for your consideration!

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# Pearle L. Crawford Library Programs and Events

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## "THE COLOR PURPLE"

Movie Afternoon @ The Pearle  
Thursday, April 4 @ 1:00  
Join us for a showing of the 2023 movie "The Color Purple" starring Fantasia Barrino and Taraji P. Henson.

## MEET THE STAFF

Thursday, April 4  
4:00-6:00  
Stop by and meet our awesome staff! The Pearle's staff welcomes the opportunity to get to know you and your needs so we may serve you better! Refreshments are provided by The Friends of the Pearle L Crawford Memorial Library.

## SOLAR ECLIPSE CELEBRATION!

Monday, April 8  
Starting at 10:00am  
10 am: Solar glasses will be handed out along with Eclipse themed snack bags\*  
2-4 pm: Eclipse viewing on front Library lawn  
6 pm: Movie @ the Pearle "Little

Miss Sunshine" starring Greg Kinnear and Abigail Breslin  
\* Supplies limited, 1 per person

## ADULT BOOK GROUP

Monday, April 22 6:00PM-7:00PM  
All are welcome to join our adult book group for a discussion of this month's title, The Perks of Being a Wallflower, by Stephen Chbosky  
Copies of the current title are available at the circulation desk one month prior to the meeting.

## MONET'S GARDENS: INSPIRATION FOR A CREATIVE LIFE

Wednesday, April 24  
1:00-2:00  
Illustrated lecture presented by Ellen K. Duzak  
Impressionist painter Claude Monet created and perfected his beautiful gardens over 40 years at Giverny, France. It was and still is truly a visible feast. His life, his paintings, and his gardens offer us a unique guide to living a rich and fulfilling life today.

Ellen Duzak is a retired Professor of Psychology at Becker College. She later taught for a decade in the WISE Senior Education Program at Assumption College. She has long admired the paintings of the Impressionists and is an avid gardener and lover of nature.  
Registration required, space is limited.

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## QUILTING GROUP

Wednesdays @ 1:30PM  
All quilters and would-be quilters are invited to join our new group. Bring your projects!

## KNIT & CROCHET GROUP

Thursday 5:30PM - 7:30PM and Friday 10:00AM-12:00PM  
All stitchers are welcome for this informal group

## DUNGEONS & DRAGONS GAME

Thursdays, 6:00-7:30  
Are you looking to play a game that contains action, adventure, and drama?  
Come play the world's number one role playing game.  
This program geared towards kids that are looking to learn more about playing and some short adventures!

Children 12 and under need to be accompanied by an adult.

## BASIC DRAWING ART CLASS WITH MRS. RAWSON

For ages 5-10  
Tuesday, April 16  
2:00-3:15  
Working on an easel and large paper, children will be taught to draw a variety of different animals, step by step!  
Space is limited, please register.

## BURPEE & RECORDS PETTING ZOO

Thursday, April 18  
More details coming soon!!

## MOUSE PAINT CLASS WITH MRS. RAWSON

For ages 3-5  
Friday, April 19  
10:00-11:00  
An interactive reading of the book "Mouse Paint". Listening and painting activity exploring the concept of color mixing with the primary colors.  
Space is limited, please register.

## DEB'S SING & SWING~HAPPY SPRING!

Thursday, April 25  
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Deb Hutchins interactive music program, join the fun!  
Music, stories, singing and dancing!  
Children 12 and under need to be accompanied by an adult.  
Sponsored by the Friends of the Library

## TODDLER STORYTIME

Tuesdays at 10:30  
Join Miss Courtney on Tuesday mornings for age-appropriate stories on a fun theme, followed by a simple craft.  
For ages 15 months-3 years.  
Children 12 and under need to be accompanied by an adult.

## PRE-K STORYTIME

Wednesdays at 10:30  
Join Miss Courtney on Wednesday mornings for age-appropriate stories on a fun theme, followed by a simple craft. For ages 3-6.  
Children 12 and under need to be accompanied by an adult.

## GUEST READER STORY TIME

Mondays at 6:00pm through April  
Each week there will be a guest reader along with activities.  
We are excited to welcome our guest readers!

## WIGGLES & GIGGLES

Tuesdays at 10:30 through April  
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Children ages 2-5 with a parent/caregiver will sing, move, play musical instruments, learn rhythm and listen to stories. Siblings are welcome.

Registration is required.  
Please visit [www.theyfcp.org](http://www.theyfcp.org) to register  
This is a YMCA Family & Community Partnership program.

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# Gowns are Free at Oxford's Prom Closet

BY JANET STOICA  
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

Michelle Aronson and Debra Mercure have been collecting prom gowns for high school students for five years now. They are dedicated high school teaching colleagues who saw a need and set about finding a solution. Many high school

fashionable and beautiful gowns and accessories. The young ladies who visit their prom gown outlet will attend their proms in the most elegant and kicky styles their tastes prefer. All at no cost.

"We wanted the kids to go to their proms without having to spend \$500 or more for their formal wear," said Aronson, "we had many community donations

extra cash they'll save by choosing one of these beautiful gowns. College books and fees are expensive. Now they can dedicate the money they're saving for college expenses. Some of these dresses are priced at \$900 and are just perfect. They borrow from us and wear the item for four hours and then clean and return it. It works out very well. The styles are from vintage to contemporary."

The Prom Closet also offers shoes, jewelry, hair pins, and accessories. It's really a one-stop shop. Many of the students visit with a favorite pair of shoes and go about searching for just the right complementary gown. "It's all about helping them have a good time," said Aronson, "We fit them and help adjust the gowns. We have sizes from 0 to 26. We carry over 600 dresses and currently have lent out about 50 but our appointment schedule is becoming more booked as the prom season of May nears. We have over 100 pairs of shoes from heels to flats. All of the girls who visit us are very appreciative. They are from local high schools as well as from the Worcester, Springfield, and Connecticut areas. The gowns are given in good faith, 80 percent are returned to us cleaned or we have them cleaned. We have several great volunteers but would look forward to having more volunteers. Volunteers are welcome to message on Facebook. There is a young woman who is a student at Nichols College and she is into fashion and is volunteering. I also have to mention Lisa Laconto of the Barton Center who is simply amazing!"

Recently, the Prom Closet relocated to The Clara Barton Center, 60 Clara Barton Road, North Oxford. The Center had reached

out to the Prom Closet when they announced they were closing and were about to donate their inventory to another location. The Center felt that the Prom Closet was a good cause and they have been very accommodating according to Aronson. "The Center is amazing," she said, "We are very much like a boutique now. We have a large boutique mirror as well as a pedestal viewing mirror, beautiful rolling display racks for our hundreds of gowns, and the atmosphere is just wonderful. A beautiful cathedral ceiling, plenty of room, a fireplace, wood floors, ceiling fans, and great lighting. Our atmosphere is very calm, private, and comfortable."

The Sweet Lou Flower Shop of Charlton has donated two floral wrist corsages for two lucky prom attendees and there is a box set up for the drawing. "Alex Diaz Salisbury, the owner, is super-creative," said Aronson. "He named his shop after his mother-in-law. All girls who visit the Prom Closet are eligible for entering their name for the beautiful wrist corsages. Of course, we do accept donations and were recently able to buy rolling racks for all the dresses. A total of \$1,000 was given by the Southbridge Lions Club and Al's Pest Control of Southbridge for which we are very grateful."

As Aronson was quick to mention, so many of us are used to picking by price tag but now with the beautiful array of gowns at their location that practice is unnecessary, you can select just



Michelle Aronson and Deb Mercure

about whatever catches your eye. The students are advised that this is a "borrow boutique" and that the dresses must be returned. They cater to students of all income levels. Many of them are grateful to save their money for future educational purposes.

Aronson and Mercure have used their connections to reach out to other schools telling them about their venture. They are on Facebook and Instagram "The Prom Closet at the Barton Center." Potential prom customers must visit the two social media sites to make an appointment where they can pick a time and set up an appointment to visit and try on gowns and/or accessories. Busy season begins at the end of February and goes through mid-April with June being the month for gown returns.

The Prom Closet, 60 Clara Barton Road, North Oxford MA. By appointment only. Visit them on Facebook or Instagram.



girls couldn't afford to attend their Senior Proms because of the large expenses involved. Aronson's and Mercure's dedication and persistence speaks volumes about their character and desire to fulfill the needs of students to attend one of the most significant social events of high school without having to spend hundreds of dollars for

and decided we could help with their gowns. Prom tickets are \$100 or more. When you add in the cost of their dresses, shoes, nails, makeup, and hair, the ultimate price is out of sight. Many of the girls are into thrifting and repurposing now so this works out very well for them. If they are going to college, they can certainly use the

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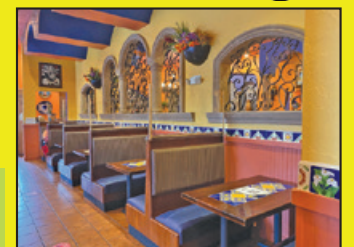
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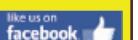


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**SPORTS**

# Shepherd Hill's First Ever All-State Champion Wrestler

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Shepherd Hill's Sawyer Ayotte grew up in a family where wrestling was all around him. His father was a high school wrestling coach and his three older brothers (Ethan, Owen, and Austin) all wrestled, but the sport was just not for the younger Ayotte. "When I was younger I really wasn't interested in wrestling. I'd go and watch my brothers, but I just didn't get into it; I tried it and had no interest whatsoever," he said. "It didn't upset my father, he figured I'd eventually change my mind and get into it when I was older."

While his brothers continued to wrestle all around him Sawyer tried other sports and although he was giving them a shot, nothing seemed to pique his interest and eventually he decided to give wrestling another try. This time around a spark was lit and he found wrestling gave him a feeling of self-worth.

"When I got out there I realized that I was responsible for everything that happened," Ayotte said. "There was no team, everything good or bad was all on me and I really liked that individuality."

During his freshman season, Shepherd Hill didn't have a big team, so he knew that he'd make varsity. That year he went 20-11



on the mat for the Rams; unfortunately, there was no tournament that year due to Covid.

"That season I found that I enjoyed winning, but more so hated losing," he said. "With that I wanted to improve so during the off-season I wrestled on two club

teams six days a week and participated in countless tournaments hoping to do better the next year."

Things definitely improved for Ayotte during his sophomore season as the SH grappler accumulated 40 wins, finished second at the Sectional Tournament, fifth at the State Tournament and sixth at the All-State Tournament but wasn't able to place at the New England Tournament going 2-2.

The disappointing showing angered the young wrestler as he expected to do better and wanted to end up on the medal podium so when things didn't go the way he was hoping for, he committed to a

With his new-found confidence the young Ayotte entered his junior campaign hoping to be a State Champion in his 150-pound weight class as well as one that placed at the New Englands.

Ayotte would conclude his junior season by going 36-4 during the regular season and would add another 12 wins to only two losses in the post-season. He was named a Wachusett Interscholastic League All-Star as well as the league MVP. During the post-season Ayotte would then go on to win championships at the Sectionals, the Division 2 States and the All-States. By capturing the title at the All-States he became the first ever wrestler to do so at Shepherd Hill.

"He trained hard all year round," Coach Ayotte said. "We definitely expected him to go pretty far this year; we were hoping for better results at the New Englands, but to have only one bad tournament, that's not too bad."

Much like his coach and father, Ayotte knew that his ability was capable of getting him deep into tournaments and, if he wrestled to the best of his ability, he should have a lot of success.

"Winning the All-States was great feeling, especially being the number two seed and not expected to win," he said. "I knew that I had the ability and the seeding didn't bother me; they don't mean anything."

Going into the All-State Tournament, Ayotte got a view of his side of the bracket in the 150-lb weight class and

knew that he should be able to get to the semi-finals with no problem. But he also knew that it would be a tough match in that round, as he was going up against a wrestler that he had split with during the season.

"I had a really good feeling going into the All-States and was extremely proud that all my hard



working off-season regimen. He continued to work hard, took part in numerous tournaments, but the biggest improvement came from attending a two-week wrestling camp in Missouri.

"We practiced three times a day, got a lot of drills and live work in," Ayotte said. "At practice I got dialed in on working on a couple of moves that I had learned and the coaching staff taught me how to fix a few things."

**WRESTLING**  
*continued on page 9*

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# Financial Wellness and Student Checking Account Launch

Savers Bank is proud to announce the launch of its Financial Wellness Program, aimed at providing financial education and resources to members of the community. As part of our commitment to fostering financial empowerment, we are also introducing a new student checking account product, Propel Student Checking, designed to help children 12 and over learn money management skills from an early age.

The Financial Wellness Program serves as a comprehensive hub for individuals seeking to enhance their financial knowledge. Whether you're looking to better understand budgeting, savings, investments, or retirement planning, the available tools offer a wealth of educational materials, calculators, and coaches

to help navigate the complexities of personal finance with confidence.

In addition to serving individuals, Savers Bank is dedicated to supporting businesses and non-profit agencies in their efforts to provide financial wellness resources. Through partnerships with Savers Bank, local businesses and non-profits can co-brand with Savers Bank and utilize the Financial Wellness Program materials to engage with their employees and communities to show their commitment to their financial wellness.

Furthermore, we are excited to introduce Propel Student Checking, a specialized checking account tailored specifically for students.

With features such as a customized debit card and mobile and online

banking capabilities with parental controls, Propel Student Checking is designed to help young people develop responsible money habits early on and lay the foundation for a lifetime of financial success.

"At Savers Bank we recognize the importance of financial literacy in empowering individuals and communities to achieve their financial goals," said Alan Melidossian, SVP Marketing, Retail Banking & Sales. "We are thrilled to launch our Financial Wellness Program and Propel Student Checking account in time for Financial Literacy Month as part of our ongoing commitment to promoting financial wellness in the communities we serve."

For more information about our Financial Wellness Program, Propel

Student Checking account, or to inquire about partnership opportuni-

ties for businesses and non-profits, please visit saversbank.com.

## Bartlett High School Athletic Hall of Fame Inductees for Class of 2024

The 11th Annual Induction Ceremony for the Bartlett High School Athletic Hall of Fame will be held at 6 p.m. on October 26 at the Richard A. Nowak Gymnasium, St. Joseph School, 50 Lincoln Street, Webster.

The new class of inductees includes 11 individual athletes, one contributor and a team. The following inductees are:

Paul Love, Class of 1928; David

Oleszewski, Class of 1965; Charles Satti, Class of 1967; James "Jamie" Hetherman, Class of 1979; Mark Begreen, Class of 1980; Joanne Starosta Grzembski, Class of 1988; Heather Mortell Gustafson, Class of 2007; Shawn Gatto, Class of 2015; Alexander Givens Perry, Class of 2015; Tyler Davern, Class of 2017; Anthony Grzembski, Class of 2017; John Bialy, Contributor; Boys Track Team, 1993.

A detailed listing of the sports

played and accomplishments will follow at a later date. The Committee will host a golf tournament at 1 p.m. on Saturday, June 22 at the Harrisville Golf Course, 125 Harrisville Road, Woodstock, Connecticut.

For information regarding the induction or golf tournament, please contact Athletic Director Anthony Paranto, 508-943-8552 ext.34028.

### WRESTLING

continued from page 8

work finally paid off," he said. "But, I was not satisfied as I still had to take part in the New England Tournament and that day I was not feeling great. I lost my two matches to the kid who ended up finishing second and the kid I beat in the semi-finals at the All-States."

Now that he has put a lot of championships on his resume, he still has work to do come next winter, his senior season. Ayotte wants to repeat what he did this year while adding New England Champion to that resume as well as setting the record for wins at Shepherd Hill; a record his older

brother Ethan holds. Sawyer currently sits at 116 wins over his first three seasons and finds himself one win behind his older brother's record and two from owning it.

Following high school, Ayotte would like to wrestle for a Division 1 college, but if that is not an option he'll take what ever is offered to him.

"I want to go out and become the best wrestler that I possibly can, while never quitting," he said.

If his past off seasons have been any indication of how he'll do in his senior year; Shepherd Hill may be looking at a back-to-back All-State Champion that may even become the first ever New England Champion at the high school.

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# Movie Night at the Museum with Silent Movie Entertainer Richard Hughes

Experience one of the greatest films from the Golden Age of Silent Movies with Clara Bow, the quintessential 'flapper girl,' in "IT" at the Samuel Slater Experience museum

On Friday, April 19, the silent movie era of the 1920s will come alive at Samuel Slater Experience when silent movie entertainer Richard Hughes presents "IT."

A pianist and historian, Hughes will share the adventure, drama, romance, and comedy which characterized the silent movies of the Roaring Twenties.

This show is a trip back in time. The first part begins with movie clips from newsreels, cartoons, slap stick comedy clips and



clips of groundbreaking movies.

Audience members will have an opportunity to synchronize sound effects like a wind machine, locomotive sounds, a slap stick, ahooga horn, and more to these movie clips.

Then we will screen "IT," starring Clara Bow with her leading man Antonio Moreno. Now if you don't know what "IT" is, come and get "IT" because "She's Got 'IT.'" In fact, there was a popular song called "She's Got It" that Richard will sing before

accompanying the film.



Clara Bow grew up as a tom-boy, loved sports and could out-pitch and out-hit all the neighborhood boys in baseball. She attended PS111 in Brooklyn and then graduated from an all-girls


By 1929, she rose to stardom and was the most popular actress at the box office. Not bad considering she was just 24 years old. Come and get some of This ... I mean "IT".

What goes around, comes



Silent movie entertainer Richard Hughes demonstrates sound effects.



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high school where she excelled in athletics. With all of her family problems, Clara escaped to Coney Island, Luna Park and Dreamland in summers. After all, it was only a street car ride away. She probably would have become an athletics instructor if that newspaper ad for a chance to become an actress wasn't published. Her father encouraged her to fill out the application and include a picture, which he paid for. Although she was one of 300 contestants at the audition, her self-confidence, determination, and ambition won her first place. With persistence and just being a pest around the studio agency, she got a small part in a local movie which started her career.

around ... Taylor Swift has just issued her new release with a song in the final track position entitled Clara Bow.

Admission is free. Popcorn and seltzer will be available for a donation.

Night at the Museum: Silent Movies with Richard Hughes at the Samuel Slater Experience, 31 Ray Street, Webster, Mass., Friday, April 19, from 5:30 -7:00 p.m., is sponsored by the Webster Cultural Council. Reservations are encouraged at [samuel Slater Experience.org](http://samuel Slater Experience.org).

### About Samuel Slater Experience

Samuel Slater Experience, which opened in March 2022, employs state-of-the-art 4-D digital technology to tell the story of Samuel Slater, the beginnings of the American Industrial Revolution, and the founding of Webster, Massachusetts, in the early 19th century.

The museum is located in the former National Guard Webster Armory at 31 Ray Street, Webster, Massachusetts, and open to the public year-round. Daily Schedule: Fridays & Saturdays: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday: Noon to 4 p.m. Ticket purchases for school trips, private events, and groups can be arranged directly with staff.

For more information and tickets, visit [samuel Slater Experience.org](http://samuel Slater Experience.org)





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## Webster Veterans

The Webster/Dudley Veterans Council would like to recognize both Paul and Kathleen Gilbert, owners of Kapa Foods of Webster, MA and Thomas Wilson, Band Director of Shepherd Hill Regional High School, for their unwavering support to our local Veterans. Each plays an integral part in the success of our events.

- Terence Conville



## Webster Senior Center Happenings

5 Church Street  
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The Senior Center will be closed Monday, April 15.

### ONGOING EVENTS:

Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:30 - 10:30 a.m. . Chair Dancing with Forty Arroyo. The perfect workout for any fitness ability. \$3 per class.

Mondays 10:00 a.m. KNIT/ CROCHET Mezzanine Level

Tuesdays 12:30 p.m. BINGO in the main activity room. Please arrive early to allow time to buy your sheets! Bingo sheets are not sold after 12:45 p.m.

Wednesdays 1 p.m. PROGRESSIVE PITCH in the Main Activity room

Thursdays, 10 a.m. Koffee Klatch. Get together to view tv series and events

Thursdays, 1 p.m. 13 Card Pitch and Cribbage in the Main Activity Room

Fridays 1 p.m. Mahjongg

### SPECIAL EVENTS:

Ice Cream Social sponsored by Webster Manor on Thursday, April 18 at 12 p.m. Sign up at the front desk.

Movie Matinee will feature "Oppenheimer" in two parts. Part 1 - Monday, April 22 at 1 p.m. Part 2 - Monday April 29 at 1 p.m. Running time 3 hours. Rated R.

Refreshments will be served. Sign up at the Senior Center.

The story of American scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer and his role in the development of the atomic bomb.

Friday, April 26 9:30 - 11:30 a.m. Free blood pressure screening at the Senior Center

Friday, April 26 10 a.m. Friends of the Webster Senior Center monthly meeting

LUNCH is served Tuesdays, Wednesdays Thursdays, Fridays at 11:30 a.m.

Donation of \$3.00 is appreciated. Please call 2 days in advance to reserve or to cancel a meal.

Mass Health application assistance available on Fridays from 9 - 11 a.m. at the Webster Senior Center. Call 508-949-3845. Assistance is also available by appointment at the Tri-Valley office in Dudley from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays and 1 - 4 on Wednesdays.

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Please stop by the Webster Senior Center or give us a call if you are interested in having a house number sign made for you.

## Webster Select Board Candidates Forum

Hear candidates for the Select Board discuss what they will bring to the job if elected to the board. The event will take place from 6:30 - 8 p.m. on Thursday, May 2 at the Gladys E. Kelly Public Library, 2 Lake Street, Webster.

There are two opening on Webster's board : one 3 year term

and one 1 year term. The invited candidates are Scott Dziedzic for a three year seat; Elaine Davies for a one year seat and Kaitlin Morin for a one year seat.

The public is invited to this forum that is sponsored by the Webster Democratic Town Committee.

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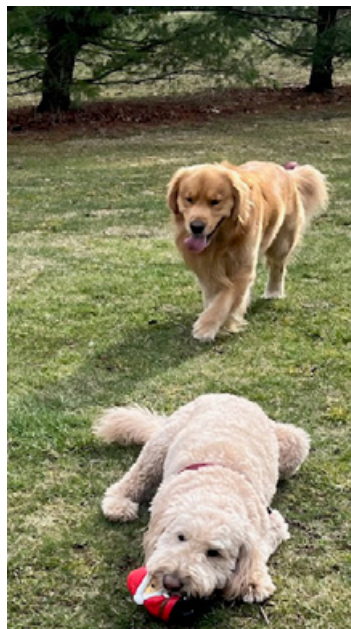
# A Mother's Love

BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

Something was different. Something wasn't adding up. I'm never up at 5 a.m. Nor do I shuffle down the stairs carrying a bright yellow container. Luke lifted his nose and sniffed out the truth. My dental retainer case would be the last to reach my suitcase. "Where's Mom headed?"

"I'll be back, Luke. I'll be back. I'm going to miss you so much." I kissed his head and embraced a bittersweet moment. I was headed for sunny Florida—no dog included. Would he be okay without me? Would the men of the household provide him with weekly playdates, surprise excursions and the daily assurance that he can sit outside on the front step as long as he's a good boy?

"Daddy and Ben are going to stay with you, Luke." He lifted his nose, skeptical.



Luke waits his turn

Would they remember Luke's shows?

I gazed out the window on the way to the airport. The sky was dark, unforgiving. I wasn't supposed to be awake this early. The song "Don't Cry Out Loud" by Me-

lissa Manchester, blared from the radio. Would Luke learn how to hide his feelings and keep it all inside? A lump settled in my throat. A dog will not leave our sides. Yet here I was leaving mine for a cheap stretch of sunshine.

A smooth flight led to an even smoother transition to the outdoors. Blue sky greeted me with a holiness that rallied New England greys. I felt optimistic about Palm Sunday and my pre-Easter vacation, while my parents pulled up to the sidewalk. We drove further away from home routines. Leisurely beach days gave way to dancing nights, poolside family reunions and sunny spirits. I followed Luke on his Instagram site (@livingwithlukevalentino) and sipped pina colodas. Luke offered up a virtual smile from his perch at a picnic table at Charlton's Treehouse Brewery. "Love you, Luke." I sighed. Life was good.

Until it wasn't

The report rained down on me like a New England storm, four days following my kitchen departure.

"Luke gets a D- today for his behavior with Rosie." Daddy's text was flat, lacking in tone.

Oh no! Luke has been an A student since he learned how to come when called at 8 weeks! Luke aims to please and is the most well-behaved of all my dogs! What happened? The tale of a dog unable to hide his feelings in the absence of his mother came to me through a series of elaborate text messages and one sorry phone call. Here's the story.

I had scheduled a playdate for Luke and Rosie at our house. Nothing new there. Rosie's Dog Mom, Kara, was one of Luke's favorite people. An energetic and kind-hearted schoolteacher, Kara typically manages playdates with a special dose of curriculum. She encourages turn-taking with outdoor toys, allows for competitive games of fetch, and stands by for rounds and rounds of Chase in the yard. Doodle and Golden, Rosie and Luke, gallop freely around the perimeter of my yard. Their collaborative speeds (and the energy!) is both fascinating and remarkable to watch. They exchange roles with profound dog communication. Luke jumps on Rosie's back. Rosie snarls then grabs Luke's favorite toy, a squeaking Santa, to assert her status. Luke remains patient but hits a wall after some time "You've had him the whole time, Rosie. My turn!" He barks at his friend's cheek again. She bounces off him and tests her limits, crossing into a



Momma is home!

neighbor's yard. "We're supposed to stay with our moms, Rosie." Luke sits like a king with a dirty face and waits for her to come back.

That cold March Monday was

Rosemary lunged at Luke and bit his ear. Hard. "Get back into your yard this instance!" Her bark was grave, furious even.

Luke barked back. "Leave me,



Rosie takes a turn with the Santa toy

different.

Luke approached the mailbox, paused, and sniffed. Was he hoping to find a letter from me—a message to say that, perhaps, I was on my way home? We'll never know for sure. Nevertheless, he turned to the street and did the unimaginable. He raced towards a truck and apparently the decision was conscious! "Get back here, Luke! It's not worth it!! You have too much going for you!!" Warrior

alone, Rosie!! You have your mom. I don't!" Thankfully, the driver, aware of looney Luke's behavior, slowed to a crawl. Unfortunately, a dog feeling abandoned wasn't through feeling sorry for himself. He dashed away, finally landing at the fox den beneath our neighbor's shed. "At least they'll love me here."

LUKE

continued on page 15

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REAL ESTATE

# There won't be a wave of foreclosures in the housing market

My team often gets asked about...when are the foreclosures coming as a result of the pandemic? We always respond, "we hope never". But here is the response from some of our lender friends.



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

There won't be a wave of foreclosures in the housing market. When mortgage forbearance plans were first announced and the pandemic surged through the country in early 2020, many homeowners were allowed to pause their mortgage payments. Some analysts were concerned that once the forbearance program ended, the housing market would experience a wave of foreclosures like what happened after the housing bubble 15 years ago.

Here's a look at why that won't happen.

1. There are fewer homeowners in trouble this time. After the last housing crash, over nine million households lost their homes to a foreclosure, short sale, or because they gave it back to the bank. Many believed millions of homeowners would face the same thing again this time. However, today's data shows that most homeowners exited their forbearance plan either fully caught up on payments or with a plan from the bank that restructured their loan in a way that allowed them to start making payments again. The latest data from the Mortgage Bankers Association (MBA) studies how people exited the forbearance program from June 2020 to November 2021.

Here are those findings:

- 39% left the program paid in full
- 20% made their monthly payments during the forbearance period
- 12% made up all past-due payments
- 7% paid off the loan in full
- 44% negotiated work-out repayment plans
  - 29% received a loan deferral
  - 14% received a loan modification
  - 0.8% arranged a different repayment plan
- 0.6% sold as a short sale or did a deed-in-lieu
- 17% left the program still in trouble and without a loss mitigation plan in place

2. Those left in the program can still negotiate a repayment plan. As of last Friday, the total number of mortgages still in forbearance stood at 890,000. Those who remain in forbearance still have the chance to work out a suitable plan with the servicing company that represents their lender. And the servicing companies are under pressure to do just that by both federal and state agencies.

3. Most homeowners have more than enough equity to sell their homes. For those who can't negotiate a solution and the 16.8% who left the forbearance program without a work-out, many will have enough equity to sell their homes and leave the closing with cash instead of facing foreclosures. Due to rapidly rising home prices over the last two years, the average homeowner has gained record amounts of equity in their home.

4. There have been far fewer foreclosures over the last two years. One of the less reported benefits of the forbearance program was that it allowed house-

holds with financial difficulties prior to the pandemic to enter the program. It gave those homeowners an extra two years to get their finances in order and work out a plan with their lender. That prevented over 400,000 foreclosures that normally would have come to the market had the new forbearance program not been available. Otherwise, the real estate market would have had to absorb those foreclosures.

5. The current market can easily absorb over a million new listings. When foreclosures hit the market in 2008, they added to the oversupply of houses that were already for sale. That resulted in over a nine-month supply of listings, and anything over a six-month supply can cause prices to depreciate. It's exactly the opposite today. Total housing inventory at the end of November amounted to about 1.11 million units, down almost 10% from October and down over 13% from one year ago (1.28 million). Unsold inventory sits at a 2.1-month supply at the current sales pace, a decline from both the prior month and from one year ago.

A balanced market would have approximately a six-month supply of inventory. At 2.1 months, the market is severely understocked. Even if one million homes enter the market, there still won't be enough inventory to meet the current demand. If you have real estate needs, contact a member of the Marzeotti Group or a trusted real estate professional.



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If you pray three times a day, three consecutive days, you will receive your intention, no matter how impossible it may seem. Praise and Thanksgiving please the Heart of God. **Believer**

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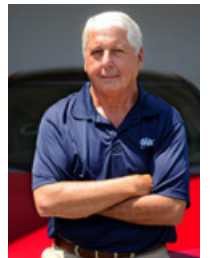


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**Several possible causes for sudden deceleration**



BY JOHN PAUL

**Q.** My father listens to your radio program and said to reach out to you with a question. My husband's car suddenly slowed down. It has happened twice on the highway, he'll be driving the slowdown happens, he pulls over to the breakdown lane, and the car barely moves. Any ideas?

**A.** This could be the result of a weak fuel pump, faulty sensor, or even the beginning of a catalytic converter issue. It could also be a bit of a driver error. In many cars today, if your left foot brake or your foot lands on the accelerator the car will lose power for several seconds and then return back to normal.

**Q.** I'm the keeper of six cars, one boat and a Quad in my family and you recommended a scan tool in the past and it has worked out well. One of the scan tool functions is a battery test. It seems okay, and will state good or bad, but I want to see more. I want

to read amp ratings and would like to test the boat and Quad battery, any thoughts?

**A.** The tester we use at AAA is made by B2Q and is very accurate, but pricey and the one I would always recommend for a professional. Recently I have been using a battery tester from Topdon (a company I never heard of until they sent me one) The tester is the Topdon BT100 and I have tested several good batteries and about a dozen "bad" batteries. My testing included a 12-volt Prius AGM battery, marine batteries, full sized AGM batteries and conventional batteries and so far, the testing is quite accurate when compared to more expensive tools. The one possible shortcoming is that the readings are not temperature compensated, which could mean that batteries tested at very hot or very cold temperatures may not be as accurate as a 70 degree day. This tester is about \$60 and recently sells refurbished online for \$30.

**Q.** I was wondering if you had any insight on this recall. I received a recall notice on my 2013 Hyundai Elantra back in October. The recall number is NHTSA 23V651000. It relates to the antilock brakes and brake fluid. As of today, Hyundai still does not have a fix for this. Have heard anything, or do you have any insight on this, i.e., why it's taking so long for them to find a fix for it?

**A.** The majority of the notifications went out in November, and it isn't unusual for the repair parts to take six months or more to ramp up. An example in our family we have a 2015 Volkswagen with an airbag recall. The recall is over a year old and just now the dealers are starting to have parts available for the repair. The recall on your car has to do with fluid leaking internally into the antilock brake system and there is a possibility of an electrical fire. Looking at the recall information, the repair looks relatively simple

and similar to one I had on my own car where the dealer replaced the antilock brake fuse and fuse box cover. I would call the 800 number for Hyundai customer assistance to get an update, since this repair seems relatively simple. If there is any consolation of the 3.3 million Hyundai and Kia vehicles, there have been 22 cases of smoke or fire, and no injuries or crashes. Although it's a safety recall and it should absolutely be performed, the chance of something happening based on the case numbers are very low.

**Q.** I am hoping you can help me with a reoccurring problem I have with my 2009 Chevy Malibu. The headlights are constantly not working. First one will not go on and then the other one will not work. We have changed the wires and tightened up the bulbs, but it still happens. The lights are not dead because if I press the unlock button on the car, both headlights will go on. But if I start the car usually one of them will go out again. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

**A.** The connectors to the headlights (low beams) have been especially problematic. After checking them for signs of melting I would check the four fuses, associated wiring, and ground connections. Although each headlight has its own power supply, the four bulbs share two grounding points. I would remove those ground wires and clean the connections of any rust and corrosion.

*John Paul is AAA Northeast's Car Doctor. He has over forty years' experience and is an ASE-certified master technician. He will answer readers' questions each week. Email your questions to [jpaul@aanortheast.com](mailto:jpaul@aanortheast.com). Follow John on Twitter @johnspaul and friend him on Facebook at mrjohnfpaul.*

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**TIPS ON FINANCIAL PLANNING** *dennis.antonopoulos@edwardjones.com*

# Can you save too much for a rainy day?

“Save for a rainy day” is an old piece of advice — and a good one. But is it possible to save too much?

To begin with, what defines a “rainy day” in terms of financial needs? It could be any number of things: a temporary loss of employment, a major home or car repair, a large medical bill, and so on.



BY DENNIS ANTONOPOULOS

If you did not have the money readily available to pay for these types of expenses, you might be forced to dip into your IRA, 401(k) or other retirement accounts, incurring taxes and possible penalties, as well as lowering the amount of money you’d have available for retirement. And that’s why it’s a good idea to build an emergency fund containing up to six months’ worth of total expenses, with the money kept in a liquid, low-risk account that’s separate from the accounts you use for your daily spending needs.

An emergency fund is valuable, but many people may be over-funding it. And while this isn’t the biggest financial mistake one can make, it could result in some

missed opportunities.

For one thing, when you keep money in a low-risk account, you can generally count on your principal being protected, which means the money will be there for you when you need it —but the flip side is that this money likely won’t grow very much, if at all. And if you’re going to achieve your long-term goals, such as a comfortable retirement, you need your investment portfolio to provide you with significant growth potential within the context of your individual risk tolerance. So, any excess dollars kept in your rainy-day fund might be used to help fuel some growth-oriented investments.

You could also use these dollars to help diversify your investment portfolio. If you only owned one type of investment, your portfolio could take a big hit if a market downturn affected just that asset class. But by owning a mix of stocks, bonds, government securities and other investments, you can help reduce the impact of market volatility. (Keep in mind, though, that diversification, by itself, can’t protect against all losses.)

Still, before deciding on what to do with extra money you might have in your emergency fund, how will you know if you indeed have too much? Up to six months’ worth of total expenses may be adequate for most people

— but everyone’s life is different. For example, if you have reason to believe your employment — or that of your spouse — may be in jeopardy in the near future, or if you anticipate the need for some renovations to your home, but not for a year or so, you might want more than six months of expenses tucked away in your emergency fund. Also, once you’re retired, you may well want to keep a year’s worth of expenses in the fund. If you need cash, you don’t want to be forced to sell investments when their price may be down, especially since you have less time for them to recover.

Ultimately, when thinking about how much to keep in your emergency fund, review your situation carefully and weigh as many variables as you can. And if you do decide your rainy-day fund is abundant, use any “overflow” in a way that can help you keep moving toward your financial goals.

*This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Please contact Dennis Antonopoulos, your local Edward Jones Advisor at 5 Albert Street, Auburn, MA 01501 Tel: 508-832-5385 or dennis.antonopoulos@edwardjones.com. Edward Jones Member SIPC*

## LUKE

*continued from page 12*

The scene of a suicidal Luke played out viscerally in my mind as the story was told. My heart sank. Luke needed his mother. The men in my household did a tremendous job caring for him, even walking him three times per day. Still, something was missing. I needed to call my pup. ‘Put Luke on speaker phone!’ (I was afraid Facetime might be coun-

terintuitive) “Hi Luke! Are you having a good day?” I spoke in the doggie voice he knew and loved. “Mummy’s coming home soon!” I envisioned the tilt of his curious, blockhead while he reconciled my voice through the phone. A call was okay, though pale in comparison to our in-person reunion.

“Luke!! I missed you so much! I dashed into the kitchen, tossed my bag aside, and planted myself on the floor. Luke grabbed his red-hot chili pepper, whimpered (overjoyed), and circled my lap. “Not

gonna’ lie, things have been rough, but I’m so glad you’re back!!!” We settled down on his family room bed just like old times. Luke licked my face, chewed his bone, and fell back into old habits.

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TALES FROM BEYOND tomdagostino.com

# Abram's Rock

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

This story is from our upcoming book, *Ghosts of King Philip's War* due out on July 22, 2024. The book is filled with legends, ghost stories, and haunted places from the war and subsequent skirmishes that took place years after the last treaty was signed. If you are looking for a nice small hike with a lot of his-

tory and perhaps a ghost, Abram's Rock is the perfect place to visit.

At the outset of King Philip's War, several tribes chose to remain neutral for various reasons. Most of the converted, or praying Indians sided with the English. Members of the warring tribes often dissented and pledged their allegiance to the colonies much like the Tories of the American

Revolution pledged their allegiance to the throne instead of fighting for independence from the mother country. This is the legend of one of those dissenters during King Philip's War called Abram by the English.

Abram was a renegade Christian praying Indian who deserted the Wampanoags during the conflict in favor of siding with

the English. Abram became very close friends with the English, so much so, that there were rumors circulating among the Wampanoag that he even had an English girlfriend. This made Philip, whose real name was Metacomb, very angry as Abram knew much of Philip's plans and strategies regarding the proposed annihilation of the enemy. Philip sought to take Abram back and sent a search party out to find him.


In the meantime, Abram had found a towering rock he used as a hiding place and lookout. The west side of the large boulder had a natural room formed by other large boulders. This was where he lived in seclusion for several months until he was found and captured. Philip, being merciful at the time, gave him a chance to live. Abram was given the choice of leaping from the massive formation three times or instant death. Abram chose to take a chance and leap from the rock. Some historians argue Abram voluntarily performed the act as a testament of his loyalty to Philip.

Tradition says he successfully

completed the first and second leaps unscathed, but the third one became his demise. Legend has it that his ghost can be seen leaping from the rock, then appearing again at the top for another leap. The third time the ghost attempts to leap, he vanishes. Perhaps he is still trying to complete the task he failed.

Whether a hike out to the rock reveals a ghost or not should not deter one from soaking up the history and atmosphere of the place.

Abram's Rock is in Village Park behind the Swansea Town Hall and Library complex at 81 Main St. The trail leading to the rock is easy and there are signs to follow. One trail heads straight toward the site while another takes hikers past the cemetery in a more circular route that is both pleasant and scenic. The natural room formation is still there and is called "Abram's Bedroom" as that is where he allegedly lived during his months of hiding.



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# Dudley appoints new director to oversee the Pearle L. Crawford Memorial Library

Nicole Messier brings to the Pearle L. Crawford Memorial Library more than 10 years of experience in public libraries and three years of experience as librarian at Charlton Elementary School.

The Charlton resident of more than 20 years assumed the role of director at the Pearle on February 21.

"The Library Trustees felt that the combination of Nicole's

previous library knowledge and experience, combined with her enthusiasm and energy, made her the right choice for Pearle's new Library Director," Library Trustee Patricia Korch said. "Now that the library is fully staffed, we look toward moving forward with expanded offerings that will benefit the community."

Messier holds a Bachelor of Business Administration and a

Master of Library Information and Studies, which is a specialized program for skills in building community outreach and developing library advocacy. "There is something special about a public library, especially a small public library," Messier said. "They offer us a chance to really connect with residents and bring value to the community."

The Pearle offers many great ser-

vices like hotspots, eBooks, eAudio, newspapers, DVDs, museum passes and programming galore.

"Gone are the days when a library is all about books, and being sssshhhhd," she added. "They are a place for providing access to information, and promoting literacy but it's also about offering an inviting and welcoming space that people want to visit. Every community deserves a place to learn, explore,

work, inspire, or connect. A place that is attentive to everyone's needs whether that's attending a toddler story time, aiding members in career readiness, or providing access to technology. The possibilities are endless!" Messier plans to focus on increasing services and trying out some new ones like digital literacy training and a Library of Things where you can borrow items like a drill or a metal detector.

# Bartlett's Student Industry Connects winners

Webster Middle School students Madisyn Derie, Angela Sarfo, Ava Reed, and AJ Perron whose projects were selected by industry professionals in the One8 Applied Learning Hub's Student Industry Connects (SIC) program. Students in Bartlett High School's Innovation Career Pathways (ICP) Programs of Advanced Manufacturing and Health-

care & Social Assistance programs along with Webster Middle School PLTW Gateway STEM classes submitted twenty-nine projects to SIC. Over 650 projects were submitted from 51 schools in Massachusetts! Later this spring, all student teams will receive personalized written feedback from industry professionals along with a virtual classroom visit from an engineer, data

scientist, biomedical engineer or a product designer.

Eryk and Michael, HS Engineering award winners, submitted their Automatic Guided Vehicle (AGV) project and the industry volunteers were impressed by their hard work, creative solutions, and polished presentation.

Here's what one volunteer said: "Great job on your project! The

report was well organized, easy to read, and contained a good description of the engineering process." They both won summer internships with Work-Based Learning Alliance.

Madisyn, Angela, Ava, and AJ were PLTW Gateway award winners for the exceptional "AR Helping Hand" project they submitted. Here is

what one volunteer said: "You all did an amazing job planning and drafting the car. I was amazed at the finished car and the decorations are so cute. Your team did a great job. The creativity and ingenuity of the design is unmatched." In recognition of their achievement, Medtronic will host their class for a visit to their robotics R&D center in Boston this spring.

# Ralph Crowley Jr. to deliver Nichols College Commencement Address

Pitter to receive honorary degree

Nichols College has announced that Ralph Crowley Jr., president and chief executive officer of Polar Beverages, will give the Commencement Address at the 2024 commencement exercises on Saturday, May 4.

Mr. Crowley has led Polar, founded in 1882 and the largest privately owned sparkling beverage bottler in the country, since 1992. Under his leadership, Polar has grown from an \$18M to a \$1B enterprise. Polar made several key acquisitions of manufacturing facilities that accelerated the growth of the company, including Adirondack Beverages in Scotia, New York, Polar South of Fitzgerald, Georgia and Polar Texas Bottling in Temple, Texas. Polar also gained significant market share through the distribution of seasonal Polar Seltzer flavors while concurrently embracing heritage recipes, such as Polar Orange Dry and Birch Beer, that reflect the company's roots.

Mr. Crowley was instrumental in bringing the Worcester Red Sox to Central Massachusetts and serves on the organization's Board of Directors. The Woo Sox play their home games in Polar Park. He and his siblings also own Wachusett Mountain Ski Area in Princeton, Massachusetts. He is widely known for his philanthropic leadership in Worcester and beyond and serves

on numerous nonprofit boards and advisory councils.

Mr. Crowley received a BA from Bowdoin College and an MBA from Clark University. He will receive an Honorary Doctorate in Business Administration, as will Amy Pitter, former chief executive officer of the Massachusetts Society of Certified Public Accountants.

Ms. Pitter led MassCPAs from 2015 until her retirement in December 2023. The organization represents 11,000 accounting professionals across the Commonwealth, including those serving in public accounting, business, government,

nonprofit and education. As CEO, Ms. Pitter developed programs to help accounting professionals prosper, while building the pipeline of accountants and increasing diversity in the profession.

Prior to her stint as CEO, Pitter served as commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue. She boasts more than 25 years of experience helping government agencies transform their businesses. She earned a BA from Connecticut College, an MA in accounting from Northeastern University, and a JD from New England School of Law.

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**NOTE:** Community bulletin board-type items are welcome for inclusion in the *Happenings!* section of the Xpress newspapers. Please allow enough lead time for publication. Email your calendar or event notice to [news@theyankeeexpress.com](mailto:news@theyankeeexpress.com).

**SATURDAY, APRIL 13**

• St. Peter Parish in Northbridge is having a Ham Dinner on Saturday, April 13 th starting at 5:30 pm in the Parish Hall. Bring you family and friends for a wonderful meal and meet some new friends. Tickets are \$17 per dinner and include salad and dessert. To go meals will be available for pick up at 5:00pm and all orders must be purchased in advance. "Pay It Forward" purchase an extra dinner and we will deliver it to someone in need in our local community. Please call the parish office at 508-234-2156 or email [parishoffice@stpeterrockdale.org](mailto:parishoffice@stpeterrockdale.org) to purchase tickets or if you have any questions.  
 • Meet author Ann Watt, whose debut book is a nursing memoir titled, "When Being a Nurse Was Fun: Tales From My Life as a Nurse", on Saturday, April 13,

1-2:30 p.m. at Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 East Main Street, Webster. This book signing and presentation is free to attend and signed books will be available for purchase. For more information or to RSVP, call 508-949-6232 or email [deb@booklovers-gourmet.com](mailto:deb@booklovers-gourmet.com). Ann lived in Worcester for a few years and was employed by UMass/Memorial at the University campus. The book starts with a few stories about her nursing training and employment at UMass.  
 • The First Congregational Church of Dudley (aka Dudley Hill Church, 135 Center Road) will host a turkey supper on Saturday, April 13, 2024. There are 2 seatings, one at 5 pm and the other at 6:15 pm. The meal is served family style with a menu which includes turkey, stuffing, mashed potato, turnip, squash, gravy, cranberry sauce, bread & butter, and golden gingerbread with homemade whipped cream. The price is \$18 for ages 13 and up, \$10 for children ages 6 - 13, and free for those ages 5 and under. Reservations are RECOMMENDED as there is limited seating. To make a reservation, please call 508-943-7320. Leave your name, telephone number, time of seating (5 or 6:15), and the number of adults/children you are reserving for.

**THURSDAY, APRIL 18**

• At 7 pm at Vaillancourt Folk Art, 9 Main Street, Manchaug Village, Sutton. Christine Watkins, Sutton Historical Society, will tell the story of the devastating 1924 Manchaug Village fire on its 100th anniversary which burned over 10 acres, left 25 percent of the Village population homeless, destroyed the retail section of the village, and made national news. This presentation will include photos, newspaper summaries, and eyewitness accounts. Come hear how a small community, with the help of generous neighbors, persevered over a tragedy.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 20**

• Home Baked Ham & Bean Supper, April 20, 2024 at 5:00 pm in the Community House, 8 Court St, Uxbridge located behind the Uxbridge Town Common. Sponsored by the Uxbridge Congregational Church. Menu includes baked ham, home baked

beans, potato salad, coleslaw, brown bread, beverages & dessert. Donation of \$13.00 per adult, children under 6 free. Raffles will also be available. For reservations call 508.244.7849 Limited tickets will be sold at door. Come enjoy great food and fellowship.

**SATURDAY, MAY 4**

• The Millbury Nature Trails Committee will host an Arbor Day Tree Planting Event at 9 a.m. at the Brierly Conservation Area. Help plant trees and mark a new trail. Rain date is May 11. To register, visit the Nature Trails Facebook page.  
 • 9th Annual Family Fun Fishing Day - Open Sky Community Services and the Blackstone River Watershed Association are excited to co-host the 9th Annual Family Fun Fishing Day at Riverbend Farm in Uxbridge along with our partner organizations, the Blackstone River National Heritage Corridor Volunteers-in-Parks Program, Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife. This year's event will be held on Saturday May 4 from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. with a rain date of Sunday, May 5. Prizes offered in four different age groups will be awarded at 1:15 p.m. There will be activities for the whole family, as well as food and ice cream for purchase, free face painting and raffles. All ages and ability levels are welcome. Fishing poles, bait and instruction will be available with pre-registration and participants are welcome to bring their own. This is a catch and

release event for everyone from first time fishers to experienced anglers. Adults must accompany children under 12. Volunteer opportunities are available at [openskycs.org/fishingvolunteers](http://openskycs.org/fishingvolunteers). Pre-registration will open starting April 5 at [thebrwa.org/familyfishing2024](http://thebrwa.org/familyfishing2024). This is a FREE event, but pre-registration is required. Please contact Joanne Holahan at 508-278-5200 with any questions.  
 • At 7 pm at Vaillancourt Folk Art, 9 Main Street, Manchaug Village, Sutton. Christine Watkins, Sutton Historical Society, will tell the story of the devastating 1924 Manchaug Village fire on its 100th anniversary which burned over 10 acres, left 25 percent of the Village population homeless, destroyed the retail section of the village, and made national news. This presentation will include photos, newspaper summaries, and eyewitness accounts. Come hear how a small community, with the help of generous neighbors, persevered over a tragedy.  
 • Sutton Historical Society's first speaker presentation at 7 pm at Vaillancourt Folk Art, 9 Main Street, Manchaug Village, Sutton. Christine Watkins, Sutton Historical Society, will tell the story of the devastating 1924 Manchaug Village fire on its 100th anniversary which burned over 10 acres, left 25percent of the Village population homeless, destroyed the retail section of the village, and made national news. This presentation will include photos, newspaper summaries, and eyewitness accounts. Come hear how a small community, with

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**MOTHER'S DAY BRUNCH**

**MAY 12 • 10AM**



**AQUANETT**

**MAY 24 • 8PM**

# Proclamation for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of National Coin Week

The American Numismatic Association (ANA) is a non-profit, federally chartered educational organization that has sponsored National Coin Week since 1924. The theme for 2024 is "A Hobby for a Changing World:

100 Years and Counting." Coins, paper money and related objects have long been used to commemorate notable people, places and events throughout history; and the designs on United States money tell the story of our coun-

try's history, and help form our national identity. Local coin clubs across the country are celebrating National Coin Week by sharing their hobby with others. In our community, the Blackstone Valley Coin and Col-

lectibles Club of Uxbridge and the Nipmuc Coin Club of Oxford are ANA member clubs dedicated to promoting numismatics. Senator Ryan Fattman and the Massachusetts Senate have issued a citation for these clubs in sup-

port of National Coin Week from April 21-27, 2024 and thanks the clubs for celebrating with exhibits and activities to increase the knowledge of numismatics and promote the joy of collecting coins and paper money.

## Grange talks history of dyeing

From Aboriginal dug ochres to 19th century American laboratory experiments, humans have utilized Mother Nature's gifts (and in some cases exploited to extinction) to adorn themselves, create socioeconomic tiers, and decorate their environments. The Speakman Sisters draw from that history to rediscover historic colors and to create new shades from historic techniques and material.



On Tuesday, April 9 at 6 p.m., Jen Wood of the Speakman Sisters shares her years of experience in dyeing fabric at Dudley Grange, 139 Center Rd, next to Nichols

College. Come hear some interesting stories behind some of your favorite colors and how they helped to shape human history.

Wood has been a knitter, crocheter and yarn dyer for more than

two decades, has a BA in anthropology, and has had her work featured in a wide range of places, including the NE Fiber Festival, Worcester's StART on the Street festival, and Sturbridge's own Harvest Festival for several years now.

After her talk, the Grange will be honoring Ellis "Cappy" Bateman and Sylvia Bates for their 50 years in the Grange with the Golden Sheaf, and Mrs Bates for 65 years atop that. Mr Bateman passed away earlier this year, so the Grange is also Draping its Charter in his memory.

the help of generous neighbors, persevered over a tragedy.

### SATURDAY, MAY 11

• Rough Seas, Safe Harbor: Wings of Song Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish Church 16 East Main Street, Webster, 7:30 p.m. Admission to concerts is free, with a freewill offering collected at intermission. "Rough Seas, Safe Harbor" will take audiences on a huge sea voyage, much of it aboard a whaling ship that might have left New Bedford, Mass. in, say, the 1850s, and sailed practically around the world, separating crew members from their families for as long as four years.

These concerts are sponsored in part by the Monson and Sturbridge Cultural Councils, local agencies supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. Wings of Song is grateful for this support—and for the continued support of their many faithful audience regulars, supplemented by first-timers whom we're always glad to see!

Anyone needing more information is encouraged to email Music Director Cooke at nymcooke@gmail.com or Wings of Song President Carol Curtin at carolcurtin77@gmail.com.

### SATURDAY, MAY 18

• 4:00pm Bethel Lutheran Church/Grace Ministries of Auburn will be performing music concert "Peace & Praise" as they continue to celebrate their Centennial Anniversary. The program will include present as well as many past organists/music directors, choir members & musicians including hymns/anthems/contemporary music by choir members, bell choir and children's performances. A reception will follow. All

are welcome to either attend or participate in this festive, free-will offering event. For more information contact Adam Hanks at arhanks42385@hotmail.com.

• Save the date! Sutton Garden Club is pleased to announce that our Annual Plant Sale will be held on Sutton Common on Saturday, May 18th, 10am - 12Noon. SGC members will be dividing and potting up a variety of perennial plants from our gardens in preparation for the sale. Proceeds from the Plant Sale fund our community efforts, including our Scholarship Fund, plantings and maintenance at the Bandstand and Manchaug Square during the summer, decorations and wreaths for the Bandstand and Commons at Christmastime and also helps fund our Gardening programs during the year. Updates regarding the Plant Sale, including any in case of severe weather, will be posted on our Facebook page, <https://facebook.com/SuttonGardenClub>

### SATURDAY, JUNE 1

• Saint Peter's Parish in Northbridge will be holding a Yard Sale on Saturday, June 1st, 7:30am to 3:00pm in the parish hall. If you are moving, spring cleaning or just have too much clutter, bring us your gently used items for our yard sale. You may drop-off your donations every Saturday from 10:00-1:00pm April through May, starting on Saturday, April 6th at the parish garage. We are accepting kitchen items, home goods, toys, sporting goods, books, small furniture items, clothing for donation and much more. Please see our website for a complete list of what we are accepting. You may also call or email the parish office, if you have any questions: 508-234-2156 or email: [parishoffice@stpeterrockdale.org](mailto:parishoffice@stpeterrockdale.org).

### SATURDAY, JUNE 8

• Please join us for our Annual Community Yard And Plant Sale! As we've done in the past, we will rent spaces and tables, plus we'll do all the advertising and remember, our prime location can't be beat! Spaces Are \$25 For Non-Members. Tables Are Available To Rent For \$5 Each. Last year our Community Yard Sale and Plant Sale was so successful that we had to implement a wait list! We anticipate the same level of interest again this year, so don't delay in reserving your spot. We are very excited at the thought of gathering, again, with our church family and our neighbors on the church's front lawn. Call the church office, 508-832-2845, to reserve your spot! All are welcome! First Congregational Church of Auburn, 128 Central Street, Auburn.

### HIKES WITH BLACKSTONE VALLEY HERITAGE CORRIDOR HIKES

The following is a list of hikes in Massachusetts being led by volunteer Trail Ambassador Phil. Phil's hikes begin at 10 a.m. Saturday, April 20: Castle Hill Farm Hike, Whitinsville Saturday, May 4: Mendon Town Forest Hike, Mendon Saturday, May 18: Wallis Pond Loop Hike, Douglas Saturday, June 15: Douglas State Forest Hike, Douglas

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