

Grafton's Business Scene

BY CHRISTINE GALEONE

Whether you're ready or not, the holiday season officially begins next week. And although it's a season filled with good cheer, the preparations can sometimes be a bit stressful.

Thankfully, Grafton businesses and organizations will be helping people to prepare for the holidays. And they'll do so in fun and festive ways.

with Santa. The cost of admission is a new, unwrapped \$10 toy for Toys for Tots or a \$10 cash or Venmo donation. There will also be a separate all-you-can-eat buffet that you can buy tickets for by Dec. 4. For more information, you can visit the Santapalooza 12 Facebook page.

On Saturday Nov. 30 – which is Small Business Saturday – in North Grafton, Angel Hair Alpacas will hold its annual open house



On Sunday Dec. 8, the Grafton Recreation Department will hold its 29th annual Grafton Celebrates the Holidays event. The event will include a craft and vendor fair from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Grafton Municipal Center, festivities at "Frosty Stops" throughout Grafton from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m., Santa's arrival at the Common around 4:30 p.m. and the lighting of the Common around 4:45.

This year, on Saturday Dec. 14 from 7 p.m. until 11 p.m., Highfields Golf & Country Club will host the 12th annual Santapalooza. The concert will feature music from Candy Criminals, Electric Flannel, Ripple Effect and The Schmactoids. There will also be raffles, a 50/50 raffle and photos

from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. In addition to fun, educational farm tours and free refreshments, there will be pop-up vendors selling things such as fudge, gift items and jewelry. Its own farm shop will be selling knitted garments and yarn.

On Saturday Dec. 7 and Sunday Dec. 8, the 2nd Annual Blackstone Valley Festival of Trees will be held at Northbridge Town Hall's Great Hall from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. The free event includes several decorated holiday trees with different themes and gifts, which will be voted on and raffled off. All proceeds benefit the Blackstone Valley

Voters Reject MBTA Zoning Law

BY PATRICIA ROY

At the Nov. 9 Special Town Meeting, voters turned down an amendment to the town's zoning bylaw that would bring the Millbury into compliance with the state's MBTA Communities Act.

The proposed zoning change was turned down by a simple majority of the 356 voters present.

The Communities Act, passed in 2021, mandates that 177 communities that either host MBTA service or abut a town that offers the service, have a least one sizable zoning district that allows multi-family housing "by right", that is, without requiring special permit zoning changes. Multifamily housing is defined as three or more units.

Since the town is adjacent to Worcester and its commuter rail station, the Communities Act called for Millbury to institute a zoning overlay district to allow

multifamily housing. An overlay district is a type of land use zoning that "lies" on top of the existing zoning and potentially covers underlying districts or portions of them.

In the town meeting warrant, the Planning Board wrote their purpose in proposing the bylaw was to encourage the production of a variety of housing sizes and types to provide access to permanent housing for people with a variety of needs, ages, household types, and income levels. They noted the plan would also increase the supply of available housing that is also affordable to low and moderate income households and to increase the tax base through private investment in new housing development.

The overlay district was outlined as 61.5 acres in the down town area. According to Planning Director Conor McCormack, there would have been a capacity for

777 residential units. The buildings would be allowed a maximum height of three stories and 40 feet. The structures would need to look like three story town homes and not like city-like dwellings, he said. Parking space requirements would be one for each studio and one bedroom unit and two for each two bedroom unit.

The deadline for compliance with the act is Dec. 31 2024.

The Planning Board had previously voted 3-2 to recommend passage of the overlay article after months of study, state guidance and public hearings.

The MBTA Communities Act does not provide funding for housing development, McCormack said, but does require that 10 percent of units be set aside as affordable.

MBTA

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MBTA

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The state set Dec. 31, 2024 as a deadline for the town to agree to the overlay district. By missing that deadline, the town may become ineligible for certain state grants.

Roadway Advisory Committee member Thomas Perry told the meeting he didn't want the town to lose out on the state "Complete

Streets" grant money that provides accessible travel options for people of all abilities, including cyclists and pedestrians.

The Communities Act zoning has been adopted by 82 of the municipalities affected by their proximity to MBTA services.

The metro- Boston town of Milton rejected the Communities Act and currently is in litigation with the state for non-compliance. Holden has not met their 2023

action plan deadline and residents of Rockport on the North Shore have launched a federal lawsuit to prevent a glut of new building in the oceanfront town.

Before the vote was taken, town zoning consultant Judi Barrett of Barrett Planning Group, said if the article didn't pass, the state would likely refer it back to the community as they did with Wellesley.

Red Flag Warning

BY PATTY ROY

On November 4, Sutton Fire Chief Matthew Belsito issued a strict "no burn order" for the town of Sutton. It applies to all outdoor fires including wood and propane-fueled fire pits, Solo-type stoves, chimeneas, outside fireplaces and other patio and yard accessories. In fact, the state is under a no burn order, so Millbury and Grafton, that goes for you, too.

Leaf burning is against the law in Massachusetts and the open burn season with a local permit does not begin until January, so if you smell smoke, call 911 immediately to report it.

Weather conditions have combined to create prime conditions for spreading brush fires – a record dry spell, sunny days and windy conditions.

Sutton is part of the state Fire District 7 as are Millbury and Grafton. The district comprises 28 municipalities that assist each other with firefighting and training.

"We have responded to a number of brush fires within the town," said Sutton Fire Chief Matthew Belsito, who is also chairman of District 7.

Sutton Fire has also responded to half a dozen fires at the request of the Fire District 7 Strike Team (includes Grafton, Millbury,

Northbridge and Upton) and Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) Task Force.

Members of Sutton Fire as well as firefighters all over the state have been extremely busy this fall and are getting tired, Chief Belsito said.

"Firefighters don't quite when they're tired – we stop when the incident is over," he said.

Their dedication has been on show over the very busy fall fire season. Chief Belsito said it's due

to "many years of collaboration and training in strengthening communications, putting policies and procedures in place and planned preparation drills between all public safety entities."

State public safety official and MEMA

have also augmented the work to create one cohesive unit to better serve residents in both firefighting and mitigating serious incidents throughout the state.

For right now, all residents should be very mindful of any open flame or ignition source and be as cautious as possible especially with leaf collection machinery and grilling.

One bright spot is Sutton's forestry equipment is in "tip top shape," the Chief said.

"It's very well maintained, cleaned and thoroughly inspected after every single call to ensure we are ready to roll out for the next response at 100 percent."



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State Gives Conditions for Feedback Earth

On Oct. 24, Feedback Earth, Inc. agreed to an order from the state that it would immediately cease bringing any solid

waste into its facility at 109 Creeper Hill Road, Grafton and also that it would not bring in any solid waste or other unauthorized materials for

recycling or conversion into animal feed.

At the time the order was written, the ban included lobster shells.

The stipulation included an exclusion of a final load of lobster shells that were due to arrive at Feedback Earth, Inc. on or about October 24 so long as the facility processed the shells within 24 hours.

The order also stipulated that all operations at Feedback Earth were to cease if the state were to get complaints about odors.

Feedback Earth was also cautioned to clean up and legally dispose of all unprocessed food materials that do not meet the definition of "fresh unwanted food" at the facility.

They were further ordered to cease and desist from creating a public nuisance condition.



GRAFTON

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Emergency Shelter. The free event will also include children's activities. Two of the event's sponsors are Gaudette Insurance Agency and UniBank. Additionally, there's a preview party Dec. 6 that people can buy tickets for.

At Off the Common Antiques, the multi-artisan, multi-vendor shop that has a wide array of Christmas and winter-themed hand-crafted and antique ornaments and décor, on Saturday Nov. 23, the Baptist Church of Grafton will be selling its homemade apple pies. The proceeds will fund the church's efforts to help those

in need. Last year, the proceeds raised helped provide local Haitian immigrants with winter clothes, and they helped provide food to the Grafton Food Bank.

The Grafton Country Store, the Grafton Common gift shop that sells gifts, jewelry, décor and accessories, among other things, boasts a wide selection of holiday gifts (including many featuring snowmen, reindeer and cardinals), Christmas wreaths, ornaments and décor. Currently, it's also selling tiny hand-knitted winter hats to benefit Veterans, Inc., a local nonprofit that provides a vast array of services for veterans throughout New England.

Preparing for the holidays is much less stressful when you focus

on the warmth and merriment. Have a happy, healthy Thanksgiving!

Contact Christine with your business news items at cmgale-one15@gmail.com.



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December Events at the Sutton Historical Society

Join the Sutton Historical Society on Tuesday, December 3 at 6:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall of the First Congregational Church, 307 Boston Road, for the annual Christmas Potluck. Bring your favorite appetizer, main dish or dessert, and welcome in the holiday season with other local history buffs.

On Saturday, December 7 from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., the Society will host visitors at our historical locations as part of the town-wide Chain of Lights event (suttonchainoflights.weebly.com). Stop by the General Rufus Putnam Museum, 4 Uxbridge Road, to learn about Sutton's rich history; visit our blacksmith at the M. M. Sherman Blacksmith Shop, 6 Singletary Avenue; take photos of family and friends in the Eight Lots School House, 54 Eight Lots Road.

On Saturday, December 14 from 4 pm – 8 pm, the Society will be participating in the second annual Manchaug Stroll, 9 Main Street, (valfa.com/event/manchaug-stroll) sharing the history of Manchaug Village and the holiday customs of the French-

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Canadian immigrants who lived and worked in the Village.

End 2024 at our signature event, the annual Last Night Cannon Firing by our cannon crew on Sunday, December 31, at the M. M. Sherman Blacksmith Shop, 6 Singletary Avenue. Arrive by 11:55 pm or you will miss this unique event.

All events are free and open to members and the general public of all ages. Information about the Society, membership forms, and event updates can be found at sutton1704.org.

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Are your protection plans in place?



Tim Furbush, CFA

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Have you ever thought about how much you have to protect? Between your family, your finances, your independence and your legacy, it can be quite a lot — and that's why it's important to have the right protection plan in place.

Let's look at these areas of need and some possible protection solutions:

- **Protecting your income** – An injury or severe illness could prevent you from working for some time. And

if that happened, your family's finances could become strained. To help guard against this possibility, you may want to consider disability income insurance. Your employer may offer some type of coverage, but it's likely to be short term and may not be enough to help close the income gap you might face, so you may want to consider purchasing your own policy.

- **Protecting your family** – If you were no longer around, how would your family's lifestyle be affected? Could they stay in the same house? Could your children afford college or another type of post-secondary education? If you have adequate life insurance, the answer to these questions can be "yes." Again, you might get some coverage from your employer, but it may be insufficient, so you may want to explore additional protection through a personal policy. In determining how much coverage

you'll need, you'll want to weigh several factors: size of mortgage and other debts, number of children, spouse's income and needs, and the legacy you'd like to leave.

- **Protecting your goals** – You may have some important financial goals, such as sending your children to college and achieving a comfortable retirement. To protect these goals, you'll need strategies to help prepare for them, which could include investing in an education savings plan and contributing regularly to your IRA and 401(k) or other retirement plans.
- **Protecting your financial independence** – Hopefully, you will be able to remain financially independent your entire life. But this independence could be threatened by the need for some type of long-term care. Consider this: A private room in a nursing home costs, on average, more than \$116,000 a year, while the services of a home health

aide are more than \$75,000 a year, according to Genworth, an insurance company. Medicare generally does not cover these costs or types of needs and would typically only pay for a short period. You might be left with significant bills or creditors and possibly dependent on family or loved ones. To help protect yourself from these threats, you may want to consult with a financial professional, who can offer long-term care solutions.

- **Protecting your legacy** – When you work hard your whole life, you may want to leave something behind to your loved ones. A comprehensive estate plan can help ensure your family — and the charitable groups you support — will receive the resources you'd like them to have. An estate plan can be somewhat complex, involving various documents and arrangements, including a will, living trust and various powers of attorney, so you'll need to work with a qualified legal

advisor, and possibly your financial professional.

As we've seen, "protection" can take many forms. So, try to follow all the protection strategies you need to enjoy the life you've envisioned for yourself and your family.

Contact Tim for assistance with your personal finances.

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It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year to Use Affordable Junk Removal

BY LINDA CHUSS

With so much to do around the holidays, give yourself the gift of space by using Affordable Junk Removal to help prepare your home for the season. “Life is hectic, we are all so busy in our daily lives that we don’t notice how quickly we are being overrun with junk” said Jason Schadler, who founded the business in this area 20 years ago. “It’s nice to park your car in the garage during the cold months, but maybe you need to make room there first, and we can help with that.”

With Affordable Junk Removal, you can rent a dumpster or have their Junk Removal Professionals come to haul away items that have been gathering dust and taking up precious

Business spotlight

space. Setting an end-of-year or New Year’s resolution to clean up a neglected basement or attic is a great start. You can even put a dumpster rental on your gift list. Sometimes the biggest challenge is not knowing where to begin, and that is where Affordable comes in.

“You can load your own dumpster or have our truck guys do all of the work for you,” Schadler explained. “And rest assured, we don’t just take everything to the landfill. We try and recycle as much as possible. Clothing and household items are donated to local organiza-



tions that help our friends and neighbors. We also take some items to Resellables secondhand store in Bellingham. That keeps them out of landfills, gives them a new life, and helps us keep our prices down. We’re always looking for ways to be more cost effective because customers appreciate our reasonable prices.”

Changes in legislation have made it increasingly more difficult to dispose of certain items, like mattresses, for example. It is now state law that most textiles and mattresses must be

recycled. “Finding places to take mattresses is a challenge and the fees for disposal have gone through the roof,” said Schadler. Items like these carry a separate recycling fee that the commercial transfer stations charge because of how labor intensive that recycling is. “People are usually shocked at the cost, and we find ourselves educating the customer as to why these fees exist. Here at Affordable, we view ourselves as an avenue our clients can turn to when they have these items and want them disposed of legally, safely and properly.”

Affordable has many repeat customers. “When people call, they reach me, not some automated corporate call center,” he

said. “They know me and the crew and trust us. We do a good job, are fast, efficient, and reliable. We come when we say we will and if anything unexpected comes up, we communicate. We live here too, we are your friends and neighbors, we sponsor your little league teams and run into you at the grocery store. We are your local guys.” A quick look at the many years of positive on-line reviews attests to this.

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Healthier Baking in the Blackstone Valley

BY CHRISTINE GALEONE

My favorite part of a traditional Thanksgiving dinner is the cranberry sauce and, of course, the slice of apple pie for dessert. Each is festive and comforting. And despite having different flavor profiles, both are delicious.

So, why not combine the two flavors? This variation on the traditional baked apple blends the two tantalizing tastes while eliminating the fat and much of the added sugar. It's also a gluten-free and nut-free dessert that can be enjoyed by many.

Although this simple dessert does contain a significant amount of naturally occurring sugar, it doesn't have a lot of added sugar. Even if you choose dried cranberries that are lightly sweetened, the total amount of added sugar is less than what you'll find in many desserts.

And dried cranberries retain much of the nutrients that are in raw cranberries. They contain vitamin E, vitamin C, vitamin K and manganese. They're also a good source of fiber and antioxidants. Cinnamon has antioxidant properties as well. Finally, apples are heart healthy and believed to also be beneficial for lung health.



ALLERGY FRIENDLY BAKED CRAN-APPLES

Ingredients:

2 Medium to Large Apples (McIntosh or Gala are both great choices)
¼ Cup of Dried Cranberries
1 Tbsp. of Pure Maple Syrup
Dash of Cinnamon

Directions:

Pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees.
Wash the two apples and remove the peels from the top third of each apple.
Remove the cores and seeds from both apples.
In a baking dish, mix together the maple syrup and cranberries.
Stuff the apples with the mixture.
Place the stuffed apples in the baking dish.

Sprinkle each apple with cinnamon. Bake at 350 degrees for approximately 35 minutes. Let them cool a little, but serve them warm. Makes two servings.

For Thanksgiving, if you're looking for a lighter dessert option that will be a welcome sight to guests with nut allergies or gluten intolerance, this simple and delicious dessert may be the solution. Have a happy Thanksgiving, and happy (healthier) holiday baking!

People First Food Pantry Winter Coat Drive

Help keep a child warm this winter by donating new winter coats, gloves, mittens, hat and scarves. Infant sizes through adult large are needed. These donations will be distributed to children age 0 – 18 served by the food pantry. Donations are being accepted at the People First Food Pantry, 19 Douglas Street, Uxbridge on Tuesday nights from 6:30 – 7:30 p.m. Donations are also being accepted at the Uxbridge Police Station and the Hannaford Supermarket.

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Christmas by Candlelight Returns to Old Sturbridge Village

Experience the Magic of the Holidays

Old Sturbridge Village announces the return of Christmas by Candlelight, a cherished celebration of New England's festive holiday traditions. Tickets are now on sale to the public for

select dates in November and December. The Village will transform into a stunning winter wonderland beginning November 29, featuring over 85 beautifully decorated trees

on the Christmas Tree Trail, over 80 wreaths, hundreds of candles illuminating the pathways, and more than a mile of garland used to adorn the historic buildings. Each evening of the program will



kick off at 4:30 p.m. with a magical lighting ceremony.

Visitors can experience a variety of activities, including knitting Christmas stockings and baking traditional holiday treats. Guests can stroll through the picturesque village and cross the enchanting Christmas Wish Bridge, a scenic path lined with trees along the Quinebaug River. Children will have the chance to meet Santa and Mrs. Claus in their new cabin, where they can share their holiday wishes. Visitors are also encouraged to participate in the annual Gingerbread House contest, where creative entries will be displayed for public voting.

"Christmas by Candlelight is a celebration of the cherished traditions that make the season truly special," said Rhys Simmons, Director of Interpretation at Old Sturbridge Village. "Our goal is to transport you back in time with an experience that delights all the senses. Picture twinkling lights adorning the trees, the enticing aromas and flavors of mulled cider and freshly baked gingerbread, and the familiar sounds of holiday carols echoing all around."

This year's Christmas by Candlelight will feature an array of live entertainment, including historical performances and readings of Christmas tales for children. New this year is "Upon a Midnight

Clear – An Acoustic New England Christmas," a musical journey showcasing local artists reinterpreting classic carols.

In addition to the festivities, guests can explore the origins of classic traditions such as nutcrackers and gingerbread, along with a remarkable miniature nativity scene featuring over 600 pieces. The Richardson House will showcase Italian Christmas customs. There will also be plenty of opportunities for holiday shopping at the Miner Grant Store and the Ox & Yoke Mercantile.

"This event has become a tradition for so many guests year after year, and many families look forward to it as the highlight of their holiday season," continued Simmons. "We invite everyone to experience the joy of the season, relish in classic traditions, and create new memories with loved ones this winter at Christmas by Candlelight."

Christmas by Candlelight is made possible by generous sponsors: Cornerstone Bank, Country Bank, G&F Precision Molding, and Southbridge Credit Union. For more information on tickets and full event details, visit the Old Sturbridge Village website, www.osv.org.



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Here's Looking at Your Photos

The Blackstone Valley Art Association is sponsoring the 13th Annual Anything Goes Photography Show – this show is open to the public! Prints from all styles of digital cameras, film cameras, cellphone cameras, point-and-shoots, SLRs, cyanotypes, and

other photo-related artwork are warmly welcome!

The drop-off date for the show is Saturday, January 4, 2025 from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at the BVAA Community Art Gallery at 5 South Main Street, Uxbridge. The opening reception for the show is Friday,

January 10, 2025. Each participant may exhibit two photos, which will be judged for cash prizes. Applications, hanging guidelines for the show, and drop-off details can be found at bvaa.org. A portion of all sales goes to support the work of Open Sky in the community.

As part of this community photography show, the BVAA will host a series of free photography workshops on composition, shutter speed, depth of field, and other topics. Check out our BVAA.org website and social media as we set up that schedule. Partial funding for BVAA activities comes from Local Cultural Council Grants.

We look forward to seeing your artwork! For more information, email infor@bvaa.org



The 2024 first place winner was "Mother, May I" by Sarah Lemansky.

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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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District Attorney Partners with Autism Resource Center to Expand Adaptive Swim Class Offerings for Neurodivergent Children

Worcester County District Attorney Joseph D. Early, Jr. recently partnered with the Autism Resource Center to help expand adaptive swim program offerings to more families of neurodivergent children across Worcester County.

The classes include basic swim skills, as well as water safety training. They also include a home safety workshop for parents/caregivers to provide information and resources to protect against elopement.

“We know that children with Autism Spectrum Disorder are 160 times more likely to drown than their peers without adequate water safety instruction,” said Mr. Early. “We want to prevent such tragedies. These swim classes will help children be safe, help give parents some peace of mind, and also allow children to have fun in an environment adapted to their needs.”

The Autism Resource Center first began setting up the Adaptive Swim Program last year with the support of the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism.

“The Swim and Safety Program is truly about prevention and accessibility. Our goal is to provide swim lessons to as many children and young adults with autism as possible,” said Kristen Cariglia, Director of the Autism Resource Center.

“By training more Water Safety Instructors across our region to increase the number of adaptive lessons and funding for participants, children are able participate in these potentially lifesaving lessons in close

to home. We are beyond thrilled to be partnering with the Worcester County District Attorney’s office. With their support, we are able to make these lessons accessible to double the number of children and train more swim instructors to provide them.”

Through the funding provided by the District Attorney’s Office, the program has been training additional instructors and expanding to new locations across Worcester County. Classes are currently offered at Worcester Fitness, the Worcester JCC, British Swim School of Milford and Orchard Hill Athletic Club in Lancaster. There are plans to add additional classes soon.

“Providing water safety skills to the community is at the forefront of preventing drowning incidents,” said Janine LaPrade, the adaptive swim class instructor at Worcester Fitness. “Many times, accessibility is a substantial roadblock to acquiring these survival techniques. The partnership created by the District Attorney’s office, the Autism Resource center, and swim academy sites of Worcester County will increase the number of trained instructors, the number of sites providing lessons, as well as an increase in families served all in hopes of reducing the tragic accidents that can occur, especially within this population.”

The District Attorney’s office provided \$10,000 to help cover the cost of swimming fees and additional staff training needed to expand the adaptive swim program. The prevention program money was funded through the office’s Drug Forfeiture Community Reinvestment Program, which uses money seized from drug crimes to provide funds for community initiatives in Worcester County as a crime prevention and intervention tool.

These swim classes are open to the entire community and registration is free. Contact the Autism Resource Center at www.autismresourcecentral.org/swim for additional information and registration.

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LIVING WITH LUKE

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Luke Has a Relaxing Spa Day

BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

We weren't necessarily looking for a new groomer. But sometimes the best things happen when you're not looking.

"I think I know that dog." The owner of a pet grooming service not far from my home noticed Luke behind the front desk at the local gym where I teach. A hectic morning (with no one available to watch our most loyal family member) inspired the decision to take Luke along to my Tuesday morning Zumba class.

"How do you manage to bring your dog to work?" I've been asked. "I grab his leash and go," I've said. I'm someone who concentrates on all that can go right, versus all that could go wrong. On that Tuesday morning, the odds were stacked in my favor. Coloring outside of the lines proved worthwhile.

"My ancestors may be from Scotland, but I swear I'm part Latino. These rhythms are in my bones." A leashed Luke laid down comfortably, head over paws, while my Zumba students



danced in the group fitness room. I winked over at him every now

as though to say, "thank you for being patient," and he broke into



Luke experiences Shear Love with his groomer, Rachel Nieminen

smile. "Do the Ricky Martin song, Momma." Dogs know who we are and love us unconditionally. Little did Luke know that he was about to meet a person from his past.

"Luke? You're at Zumba?" the groomer asked.

"Hey! What's going on?" Luke wiggled and whimpered while he pretended to work behind the front desk. Dog Groomer and Happy Client reunited while I learned about the dog grooming salon located close to my gym. My mind connected convenient dots. I could drop Luke off, teach class, then come pick him up afterwards! This new dog groomer would be extremely compatible with my schedule!

I wanted to acclimate Luke to the new place before his first Drop Off, so stopped in after class. "Look! A dog bed and stuffed animals!" Luke found the break room. "There are even pillows on the couch, just like at home!" Gone were the quivers of the past as he stepped into a dog-scented salon and buried his face in my lap. "I don't want to go."

Still, had Luke grown a bit too comfortable with the cozy climate of this particular pet parlor? He

hopped up on the shaggy pink couch designed, perhaps, for a freshly groomed poodle.

"Be easy, Luke," I commanded while he exposed a more confident side, thrashing a pillow back and forth.

The friendly groomer whose canine expertise dates back nearly 25 years, took Luke's behavior in stride. "Do you want to see the grooming studio?" Luke stared up at his friend, a decorative pillow stuffed in his mouth. "I thought you'd never ask!"

The prospective client sniffed around the floor, smiled and assumed his signature move, putting on the brakes when something felt wrong. "Your shop meets my standards, but I don't want anything to do with that high table. I have a height trauma, triggered by a time when my parents, though well intentioned, allowed me to jump off the deck stairs. I wasn't developmentally ready."

Thankfully the groomer, who reportedly has been "bit, peed on, barked at and pooped on," comes to the grooming table with several

LUKE

continued on page 13

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REAL ESTATE

Planning to Sell Your House in 2025? Start Prepping Now

If your goal is to sell your house in 2025, now's the time to start prepping. Even though it might seem like there's plenty of time between now and the new year, you should get a head start on any updates or repairs you want to make now. Now is the time to start thinking about what you need for your next home and then taking those steps to prepare to list. Survey data exists that says 47 percent of sellers are taking longer than a month to get their home ready to sell, so starting that process early can mean more flexibility. By starting your prep work early, you'll give yourself plenty of time to get your house market-ready by the end of the year. But be sure to partner with a great agent before you get started, so you have expert insight into what repairs are worth it based on your local market.

Starting early is key: To get the best price and sell quickly, it's important that your home looks its

best. That means it's up to you to make the necessary repairs, declutter, and even consider updates that could add value as part of getting your house ready to list. By starting now, you can tackle things one task at a time. Whether it's fixing that leaky faucet, refreshing your landscaping, or painting a room, getting an early start gives you the flexibility to do the job right and with as little stress as possible. Because, if you wait to knock items off your list later on, they could quickly stack up and get overwhelming. There are some important repairs to make before selling a house, so don't be in too much of a hurry to get your home listed, if you move too fast, buyers see right through the fact that you skipped important home renovations. This might end up costing you time and money.

What should you focus on: Feeling motivated to start chipping away at that to-do list, but not sure where to start? Marzeotti Group is trained to identify home inspector items so these can be done before they are called out after you are under agreement. They range in order from: paint, improve the kitchen, bath, landscaping, worn carpet or flooring, touch-up paint outside, replace non-working appliances to name a few. While that data gives you a starting point, it shouldn't be

seen as a comprehensive list. What buyers want in your area may be different, and only a local agent will have this in-depth understanding. For example, if homes in your area are selling quickly with updated kitchens, your agent might suggest focusing on minor kitchen improvements rather than spending money on other areas that won't offer as much return. They'll also help you figure out if tackling larger projects, such as replacing your roof or upgrading your HVAC system, is worth it based on other recently sold homes.

It's not just big-ticket items that can have an impact. Your agent will also speak to some of the smaller details – like cleaning up your yard, adding fresh mulch, or painting your front door to make a real difference in how buyers feel about your home. This type of expert eye is crucial to help your house sell fast and for top dollar.

Thinking of selling your house next year? Don't wait until the last minute to get it ready. By getting a head start now, you can ensure everything is in place by the time the new year rolls around. Call The Marzeotti Group for a free consultation today or your trusted Realtor.



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

LUKE

continued from page 12

years of experience. She studied Animal Science at Becker College, worked at Tufts University and, more recently, has spent time in the brush, bathe, shampoo, cut and nail trimming trenches.

Luke, a happy client, thoroughly enjoyed his spa day experience, which included a blueberry bath, a traditional Golden Cut, specialized attention,

and the Autumn patterned scarf which barely fit around his big head.

My two-year-old Golden received an excellent report from his groomer. "Luke was a chill dog who goes with flow," she said. "He's very smart. He has a stubborn side, but he knows that haircuts and baths are part of life."

What does Luke have to say about the diva treatment?

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Assonet Ledge and the Phantom Fires

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

Within the Freetown/Fall River State Forest, many strange occurrences related to King Philip's War and the Wampanoag people that once called the area home can be witnessed. The forest covers over 5,000 acres within the city of Fall River, the town of Lakeville and one-third of Freetown. The publicly-owned preserve has over fifty miles of unpaved roads and trails. The forest is also home to a 227-acre Wampanoag reservation. Author and historian Christopher Balzano has written extensively on the area

called the Bridgewater Triangle and the Freetown Forest which lies within the triangle.

What can be seen on occasion in different areas of the woods are what witnesses call phantom fires. When the beholder of the phenomenon investigates, they find that the fires give off no sound, smoke or heat. The glow of the fire is contained to a small area above the ghostly flame. As soon as they appear, they vanish, leaving no trace of a blaze in the spot. In some cases, the woods are so thick or difficult to navigate that it would be improbable or senseless to set up a camp in the particular spot where

the fire is seen.

Many believe the phantom fires are a residual haunt, a moment in time recorded long ago and replaying when the conditions are right. The fires are replays of the past when Indigenous people camped on the land. They tend to appear randomly within the forest, giving the illusion that someone or something has set up camp for the night.

One of the most haunted places within the Freetown State Forest is a rocky outcropping called Assonet Ledge. The cliff one sees today was mostly formed by the Fall River Granite Company in the 1800s. For years, local youths have used it as a gathering place for parties. Not so for the Wampanoags, who shunned it due to the negative energy surrounding the precipice. It is not recorded how much of a ledge or rocky outcropping existed before the company began quarrying, but there had to have been some sort of cliff for them to discover and commence digging the granite from the earth. The presence of an existing ledge of some sort gives credence to the Wampanoags relating the

fear of a ledge before the company began taking the granite from the area.

Shadow people are often seen in the surrounding forest. Reports of hideous-looking creatures flitting among the trees and brush have scared many a visitor to the preserve. Some people who climb to the top of the Assonet Ledge report a very heavy feeling of sadness suddenly overcoming them. The feeling becomes so intense that they are compelled to leap off the edge to their possible demise.

Several people have died from falling over the ledge or drowned in the waters below. Some who have taken the plunge claim they were pushed by an unseen force—which may be a mystical creature called a Pukwudgie, known to entrance people to the top of the cliff before pushing them over. Pukwudgies are small creatures of Indigenous lore. They can appear and disappear at will. They reside predominantly within the area called the Bridgewater Triangle, where they remain mostly unseen. Many people in the region of the triangle, either residing there or

visiting, have witnessed Pukwudgies roaming about. They are said to be very dangerous. When seen, do not approach or attempt to communicate with them, as they will surely lure you to your death.

One of the main theories about why the ledge may hold such negativity dates to King Philip's War. Many of the Natives, knowing that capture by the English meant torture, dishonorable death or being sold into slavery, chose to climb to the top of the ledge and jump off rather than face the indignity of surrender.

To this day, visitors roaming the area of the ledge hear what sounds like war whoops and see the ghosts of warriors moving about the trees and rocks of the ledge. The area where the state forest sits is obviously magical, whether it be positive or negative energies permeating the land. Legends, haunts and strange tales abound in the forest. It is obvious the Indigenous people were aware of the unworldly powers the woods held—and still do.



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SPORTS

Millbury Boys Basketball

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

The past two seasons the Millbury boys basketball team have compiled a 34-9 regular season record while earning a top five seeding in the Division 4 State Tournament. Each season they made it into the Final 4 where unfortunately the team fell to Wareham, the eventual state champions.

In 2023 Millbury never had a shot and eventually went down to defeat by 28 points; last year it was a much different story. While the Woolies still lost to Wareham they did it with much more grace taking the champs to overtime, where they would only lose by 2 points.

"It was a tough loss, but it was a great experience for the kids and hopefully they learned from it," Millbury coach James Donnelly said. "A lot of those high-level players in Division 4 will be gone this season and it should be back to normal, that is, except for Bourne."

Millbury lost seven seniors, four of them starters, to graduation, including one of the best athletes in the league in Kenny Donnelly. Despite the large number of vacancies left by the seniors Donnelly's goals are still the same as they were a year ago.

"We're coming in with the same goals; we believe that we can compete for a state championship," he said. "We'll still be in contention - it's our mission and we've put together a schedule that should allow us to make a run once again."

While the Woolies did say goodbye to seven seniors, they will have seven athletes, all but two want to play basketball on the collegiate level, returning.

Last year's sixth starter, wing Mathias Waire will be one to contend with this winter and should be one of the key components to Millbury's success. According to the coach, Waire is very difficult to guard on the high school level. He is not only strong but possesses a perimeter-oriented game and can really shoot the ball.

If the outside shot is not there, he has the ability to drive to the hoop and finish. The third-year player will be the Woolies go-to guy this season and can basically



do anything that is asked of him on the court.

"Mathias is 6'2", strong and skilled," Donnelly said. "We are going to rely on him a lot for offense; he's a bona fide scorer and tough to match up against."

Other athletes that Donnelly will be looking to help the team to get beyond the Final 4 will be juniors Aiden Phillippo and Jimmer Donnelly in addition to Nolan Clark.

Phillippo is a shooting guard that has improved his game where last year he found himself a swing player due to the team's depth. The junior shoots the ball at a high clip and is an excellent defender on the ball and Donnelly is looking for him to have a breakout season.

Jimmer Donnelly is a true point guard who can also find the bottom of the net and is an excellent defender. The coach calls him a clutch shooter that is not bothered by the opposition's defense; he seems to thrive in high pressure games.

Clark is strong and fast, and yet another athlete that can shoot, but it's his defense that standouts the most.

"He can defend all types of players; he'll play the bigs or take on the lead guard," the Millbury coach said. "He is a nice player to have on your team and much like Aiden, I'm hoping that he has a breakout year."

Last season Clark and Phillippo

were squeezed out due to the fact that the Woolies not only had a lot of talent in front of them but were playing winning basketball.

Sophomore Jayden Delaleu and freshman Ryan Nikiforow may be young but will bring a lot to the court this winter. Delaleu is a kid with a future, according to the coach. The sophomore has exceptional talent and Donnelly is excited about being able to coach him for the next three years.

"Any team would love to have an individual with his talent on their roster," Donnelly said. "He is super skilled and full of potential. We know what he's going to be this year, there is nothing that he can't do and has already proven his worth last year as a freshman."

Nikiforow, is another talented athlete who should be making an impact for the Woolies this year as a freshman. He has a basketball skill set and is a very smart player. At 6' 3" he can shoot and sees the floor well and can step right in and play as a first-year player.

One other player Donnelly is looking to have a good season this winter is Abdul Bangura, a football

player who is exceptionally strong and a superb athlete who possesses a nice skill set on the court. He will do whatever is needed of him to help the team win and be successful. On the boards he will be a handful to opposing teams.

The coach is very optimistic about the team's season. He knows that they all want to get into the State Tournament and make a run through it.

"All of these kids play hard and, although young, are highly coachable," he said. "They're all willing to make sacrifices in order to get to the State Championship. In addition to their talent, they have an

awesome coaching staff and a supportive community behind them."

Donnelly just wants his players to step onto the court and play a high-level game while getting better each day. If the team can follow the coach's philosophy then they should be able to reach their ultimate goals.

"We have no breaks in our schedule, it's ruthless, but that's the way we want it," the coach said. "It will allow us to prepare and hopefully, we will be able to give those teams tough-fought games night in and night out. We believe that we can play with anybody."

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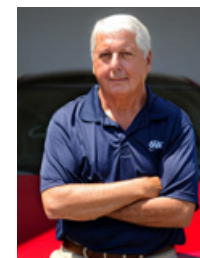
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Mobile Car Inspection Service – How Easy is That?



BY JOHN PAUL

Q. Have you ever considered a mobile car inspection service? This would be a great service for consumers that are thinking of buying a used car.

A. For my first 20 years at AAA I ran the AAA Diagnostic Center (just inspections, no repairs), and we inspected used cars every day. When we discontinued the service, I considered a mobile diagnostic company as a part time venture. I had the diagnostic equipment, hand tools, jacks, ramps etc. I had even lined up a former post office van as my mobile office. Once I looked at the overall expenses (insurance was staggering) and the importance of a work-life balance, I decided to leave it to someone else.

Q. An odd thing happened yesterday with my 2019 Hyundai Santa Fe. It has about 34,000 miles on it and is well maintained. I was driving home, which was 39 miles away. I was getting three quick beeps which happened about 4 times during that trip. It wasn't lane departure which sounds different. No indicator light came on. The car seemed to run fine so I'm not sure what this could be. Any ideas?

A. Intermittent problems are always the hardest to diagnose. It is possible one of the sensors was blocked. This could happen if you were driving in a heavy downpour.

The other possibility is one of the doors or liftgate wasn't completely closed. At this point I would wait and see if the beeping repeats itself. If it does try to log when it did it and if there was anything odd, such as weather, rear seat occupants or cargo in the hatch area. Any notes you can make will help the technician find a solution.

Q. My beloved 1997 Maxima GLE recently succumbed to rust and had to be permanently retired. After searching for years for a car I liked more than 'Maxi', I found that I really enjoyed the new 2025 Camry SE - so I bought one three weeks ago. It puts a smile on my face every time I drive it, so I was a bit surprised by your quick review today of the new Camry which left you unimpressed. My question is: Did you drive the SE or the LE? Someone I know recently rented a new Camry LE and was also not as impressed as I am with the SE. Perhaps it may well be that any new car made in this century would be a major change for me or could there be a big difference between the LE and the SE driving experience? One more quick question- I have always used and trusted Michelin tires after a bad experience with Dunlop tires. My new car has fancy Bridgestone tires. Are they considered as reliable as Michelins?

A. The Toyota Camry that I drove was I believe a LE, I found it to be a fine car, not exciting but

solid. The hybrid option and improved fuel economy make it a winner. The Camry in almost any year and version is a great car, not exciting but well-crafted and comfortable. Add in the suite of standard safety features in the 2025 model year make makes it easy to recommend. Still to me if the Camry were ice cream it would be vanilla, maybe French vanilla and your Maxima would be Rocky Road. As for the Bridgestone tires. I think they rival Michelin in some areas and perhaps surpass Michelin with their run-flat tires.

Q. My wife has a 2017 Chevrolet Traverse with approximately 95,000 miles. We have had continuing issues with the traction control light coming on as well as the message to service Stabilitrak. When that happened, the car has gone into limp mode. We then pull over, turn it off and wait a few minutes and it is fine until the next time. We've brought it to several mechanics who have: Advised that we needed new tires (which we did); needed a new battery (which we did); throttle body needed cleaning (done); transmission fluid was low and that was causing the slip that activates traction control. (Done) All of these generally result in short term fixes. Any suggestions?

A. The issue may be a poor connection at one of the ABS brake/wheel sensors or modules. The issue is that any code clears itself after about 40 restarts. To properly diagnose the issue, you need to get into a shop that can scan all the modules as soon as possible after the light comes on. Some other possibilities are the accelerator pedal sensor or brake pedal position sensor.

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QCC receives grant from Greater Worcester Community Foundation

QCC to fund wraparound support for math and English readiness

Quinsigamond Community College has received a \$12,500 grant from the Greater Worcester Community Foundation (GWCF). QCC will use the funds

The success rates in credit classes for students who participated in a Bridges to College program are compelling," said Dean of College & Career Pathways Carol King.

provides non-credit programming in English and math for students considering college. The program includes support from a case manager, who offers guidance with higher education processes such as interacting with professors and reading a syllabus. Case managers also connect students to resources such as tutoring, counseling and the college's food pantry. "Students considering this program should know that they will be fully supported and gain the skills and confidence to succeed at QCC and beyond. Our staff takes the time to get to

ing a relationship with students and making them feel comfortable in

a college setting," Lewis continued.



for its Bridges to College program, a support program to prepare students for college-level math and English courses.

"I'm excited that the college has the opportunity to deliver more Bridges to College classes to prepare students for success in college-level math and English.

According to King, after taking the math Bridges to College class, 93% of students passed a college-level math class. Of the students who participated in an English Bridges to College class and subsequently enrolled at the college, 88% passed ENG 101 or 102.

The Bridges to College program

know the students and make them feel comfortable," said Director of Mentoring and Special Programs Kalan Lewis.

"As a new college student, it can be intimidating to ask for help and get connected with all the support services. Bridges to College offers a sense of belonging through build-

Join the Very Merry Dickens Carolers at the Samuel Slater Experience Dec. 8

The Very Merry Dickens Carolers will bring the music of the holiday season to the Samuel Slater Experience museum on Sunday, December 8, at 5 p.m.

A professional group of a cappella singers, the Very Merry Dickens Carolers look the part in period costumes. Their repertoire of 4-part harmony features a variety of styles, including traditional, swing, and jazz.

Holiday refreshments are included in the price of admission.

Tickets can be purchased online at <https://samuelslaterexperience.org>, by phone at 508-461-2911, or at the box office during regular open hours. Admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 12 and under.

Come spend a little time indulging in the holiday spirit on Webster's recreated "Main Street" at the Samuel Slater Experience museum, 31 Ray Street, Webster.

This event is sponsored by the Massachusetts Cultural Council as part of its festival grant program.

About Samuel Slater Experience
Samuel Slater Experience opened in 2022 to tell the story of Samuel Slater, the beginnings of the American Industrial Revolution, and Slater's impact on mill



towns such as Webster, Massachusetts. The museum uses advanced digital technology with immersive video and interactive exhibits to

recreate two time periods: the early 1800s and the early 1900s. For more information and tickets, visit www.samuelslaterexperience.org.



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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.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23

• Our Lady of the Valley Regional School hosts its 40th Annual Holiday Fair from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. at 74 Mendon Street, Uxbridge (behind St. Mary's Church). The OLV Holiday Fair, run through the Parents Guild, is one of the school's largest fundraisers of the year with funds going to support Catholic education and activities for over 230 students in the region. The Fair includes something for attendees of all ages, including over two dozen local vendors selling unique gifts just in time for the holidays.

Kids will have a great time participating in various activities, including a video game truck, bounce house, kids' crafts, inflatable ax throwing, a special kid's raffle table, a scavenger hunt, and much more. Santa will also be dropping in for free pictures. The Fair will also offer a variety of freshly made meals and baked goods. Pancakes will be served from 9-10 AM. Lunch options include a choice of a chicken parm sub, meatball sub, hot dog, or pizza, with fries also available. Snack options include fresh popcorn, soft pretzels, or chips. Additionally, there will be a wide selection of fresh cookies and baked goods available. The Fair offers multiple opportunities to win great prizes. In addition to the kids' raffle, participants can try their luck at the grand raffle, super raffle, and basket raffles, which feature over 50 unique baskets.

• A meet & greet with local author R. F. Mineo, will take place on Saturday, November 23rd, 1-3 p.m. At Booklovers' Gourmet, located at 72 East Main St., Webster. He will discuss and sign copies of his two suspense novels Fatal Conspiracies and Cargill Falls: The Mill Conspiracy. The event is free and open to the public. Signed copies will be

available for purchase. For more information call 508-949-6232 or visit rfmineo.com.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 25

• From 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. the Uxbridge Senior Center holds its annual Thanksgiving meal distribution for Uxbridge residents. At your request, the lunch can be delivered to your home or if you prefer, you can drive by the Senior Center to pick it up. The menu includes hot, sliced, turkey with gravy dinner with mashed potatoes, stuffing, vegetable and a roll, and cranberry sauce on the side along with a personal sized Table Talk Pie for dessert. The lunch is free and open to all seniors and the disabled. Please call the Center if you would like lunch or if you would like to donate.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30

• Holiday Lighting Celebration on the Douglas Common from 6-7 p.m. Carols by the Very Merry Dicken Carolers and photos with Santa or reindeer.

• Small Business Saturday Alpaca Farm Tours and Vendor Fair - Angel Hair Alpacas, 66 Weson St., North Grafton. Join us for our annual Small Business Saturday event and come meet our friendly alpacas from 10am – 3pm! We will have tours of the farm through the day and we love to talk everything alpaca! Learn about these magnificent and beneficial animals. We will also have several local vendors selling amazing local products so shop local and relax while finding that special holiday gift. Our farm store will be open for the most comfortable cold weather accessories you have ever worn and very special gifts! Free cookies and cider for visitors. No outside pets please. Our property is hilly and may not be accessible for everyone. We can accommodate a front yard alpaca visit on request. Parking is at the Willard House and Clock Museum which will also be open for tours with admission. www.angelhairalpacas.com

• Come join us at the Community Cat Connection on Saturday, November 30th for Shop Small Business "Caturday" from 10:00 to 2:00. Our elves (volunteers) have been busy, lovingly creating and donating unique craft items, purr-fect gifts for all of the cat lovers on your Christmas gift list. All proceeds will go towards caring for our kitty shelter residents. There will be a drop-off bin if you'd like to bring in kitty treats or toys for the cats. So come shop, meet the cats, and enjoy a holiday treat and beverage! The Community Cat Connection is located at 289 Thompson Rd, Webster.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1

• The United Presbyterian Church of Whitinsville invites everyone (kids and adults) to our annual Cookies and Carols event to be held on Sunday, December 1, 2024 at 4 PM in the church's sanctuary (51 Cottage Street in Whitinsville). We will kick off the Advent Season with the singing of Advent and Christmas Carols led by a guest organ player (William Cudmore) and pianist (Eileen Straub). William Cudmore has played for the Woo Sox. Eileen Straub is the church's Minister of Music. We will have activities for the kids and the singing of seasonal songs. The event will be capped by the eating of cookies and the drinking of punch. All are invited! For more information, please call the church office at 508-234-8220.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6

• A special viewing of the Blackstone Valley Festival of Trees will take place from 2-4 p.m. at the Great Hall at Northbridge Town Hall. Our local Senior Centers, including Northbridge, Uxbridge, Douglas, Sutton, Mendon, and Upton are invited to this event. During this exclusive preview, attendees will enjoy the melodies of local musicians. During the evening, we will be having our Preview Party, where those who have purchased tickets will enjoy a special time and celebrate and honor our donors and sponsors. Tickets for this event will be on sale now.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6 & 7

The Southbridge Garden Club will hold its annual Holiday Greens Sale at the Ruth Well Center for the Arts at 111 Main Street (Rt. 131) in Southbridge on Friday, December 6, from noon to 5 pm, and on Saturday, December 7, from 9 am to noon. The sale will feature a variety of hand-crafted items, including decorative wreaths, holiday centerpieces, door swags, and assorted decorations and greens. All items contain different types of live, fresh greens.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7

• The 2024 Sutton Chain of Lights will Take Place this year from 10 am to 4 pm Spend a day with your family and friends at the Town of Sutton's Annual Holiday Chain of Lights Event. Free trolleys and buses will transport visitors over rolling countryside to participating locations throughout historic

HAPPENINGS!

continued on page 19

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HAPPENINGS!*continued from page 18*

Sutton. Farms, unique specialty stores, church fairs, and area businesses welcome the holidays with musical entertainment, children's activities, food, fun and Holiday characters. Route information, maps, location descriptions and brochures are available at www.suttonlights.com

• Christmas Tea at the First Congregational Church of Oxford - 9:30am-2pm. Luncheon begins at 10:30am. Assorted desserts and tea served all day.

• State Senator Ryan Fattman's (R-Sutton) annual Breakfast with Santa at Waters Farm Preservation, Inc in Sutton. Free and open to the public, but seating is limited so reservations are required. Doors open at 9am and breakfast will be served at 9:30am. Breakfast will be followed by holiday crafts, pictures with Santa, and wagon rides around the farm, weather permitting. To reserve your tickets for the formal breakfast, please visit <https://bit.ly/breakfastwithsantatickets>.

• Annual Christmas Bazaar, St. Joseph's Parish Center, 68 Central Street, Auburn. 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Come and enjoy an old fashioned Christmas Bazaar and check out the Collectibles, Attic Treasures, Jewelry, Plants, Knit Goods, Holiday Décor, Toys, Candy & Baked Items and so much more! Take a chance on one of our many raffles. There is something for everyone! Free Admission. Plenty of parking available. Handicap accessible.

• On Saturday, December 7, the Blackstone Valley Festival of Trees will be open from 10 a.m. - 7 p.m. for free to the public at the Great Hall at Northbridge Town Hall. Along with the trees, there will be a scavenger hunt, prizes, and goodies for the children to enjoy. The Blackstone Valley Community Chorus will enchant audiences with a performance followed by the delightful sounds of the Whitinsville Christian School Middle School Strings.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8

• Breakfast with Santa at St. Denis Church Parish Hall, 23 Manchaug Road, Douglas. From 8 a.m. - 12 p.m. Adults \$10, Children (6-12) \$5. Enjoy Christmas movies and there's a prize for best Ugly Sweater. Bring your phone or camera for photos! Santa will be in his workshop, not in the main hall with the breakfast diners. Each family will have the opportunity to meet Santa and pose for pictures in a quiet, comfortable space. Visit saintdenischurch.com/santa

• The Very Merry Dickens Carolers will bring the music of the holiday season to the Samuel Slater Experience museum at 5 p.m. A professional group of a cappella singers, the Very Merry Dickens Carolers look the part in period costumes. Their repertoire of 4-part harmony features a variety of styles, including traditional, swing, and jazz. Holiday refreshments are included in the price of admission. Tickets can be purchased online at <https://samuelslaterexperience.org>, by phone at 508-461-2911, or at the box office

during regular open hours. Admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 12 and under. Come spend a little time indulging in the holiday spirit on Webster's recreated "Main Street" at the Samuel Slater Experience museum, 31 Ray Street, Webster.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14

• Jingle Jaunt 5K, Sutton Town Common at 10:30 a.m. Registration: \$22 Race Day Packet Pick Up 9:15-10:15 Mail checks to: First Congregational Church, 307 Boston Road, Sutton. No day-of registration. Sign up early, there may be a limit this year. T-Shirts for registrations received by November 28 or race closure Refreshments available. Wear some bells! Sorry, no strollers, roller blades, bicycles, walkers, wheel chairs or pets. Contact: 508-865-0198, howie189@verizon.net, or fccs@suttonfirstchurch.net

• The Douglas Winter Stroll will take place Saturday, December 14 from 4-7 p.m. with participation of organizations and businesses throughout Douglas. Do some holiday shopping, listen to carolers, explore the Museum and take part in special events and treats at the Library (special guest appearances, too!), visit the Orchard, get your trees and wreaths, grab an app or meal...best of all, take in the holiday lights on Main Street all the way up to the Common! For inquiries, please email Allyssa Gniadek allyssamanyak@gmail.com

• Cookies and Carols at 4 p.m. at the United Presbyterian Church of Whitinsville, in the church's sanctuary, 51 Cottage Street, Whitinsville. Everyone -kids and adults- is invited to this annual event. We will kick off the Advent Season with the singing of Advent and Christmas Carols led by a guest organ player William Cudmore and pianist Eileen Straub. William Cudmore has played for the Woo Sox. Eileen Straub is the church's Minister of Music. We will have activities for the kids and the singing of seasonal songs. The event will be capped by the eating of cookies and the drinking of punch. All are invited!

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• The Sutton Historical Society will partici-

pate in the second annual Manchaug Stroll, 9 Main Street, (valfa.com/event/manchaug-stroll) from 4 pm - 8 pm, sharing the history of Manchaug Village and the holiday customs of the French-Canadian immigrants who lived and worked in the Village.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20

• Christmas Brass Concert: The Birch Alley Brass Ensemble will present a concert at Valley Chapel in Uxbridge on Friday, December 20th at 7:00PM. The brass ensemble, directed by William Moffett, is made up of 35 student and professional musicians from area towns including Uxbridge, Upton, Hopedale, Mendon, Northbridge and Milford. This concert will feature Christmas music from around the world and is free and open to the public. This will be the 13th annual performance. The concert is funded in part by the Milford, Hopedale, and Uxbridge Cultural Councils.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21

• Celebrate the Winter Solstice with Christmas in New England, hosted by the Grass Roots Coffeehouse and the Rockdale Congregational Church, 42 Fowler Road, Northbridge. Karen Wilber, Amy Gallatin, Roger Williams, JD Williams, Dave Orlomoski, Krissy & Bob Dick will present a night of traditional, contemporary, original Christmas and Holiday/Seasonal songs. Prior to the show, come have a bowl of soup or chili, and at intermission have dessert. Proceeds go to the Church. Also we'll have our Cookie Walk at intermission. Buy a box for \$10 and fill it up with cookies baked by the congregation. Admission to the show is \$15 at the door only. Doors will be open at 6:30. Seating is at a first come/first serve basis. Concert at 7:30.

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November 22 - **Ed Sullivans**

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