

## Mendon receives \$500,000 grant for 201-acre property on Thayer Road

### Stewards needed for The Oak and Wall Farm Preserve

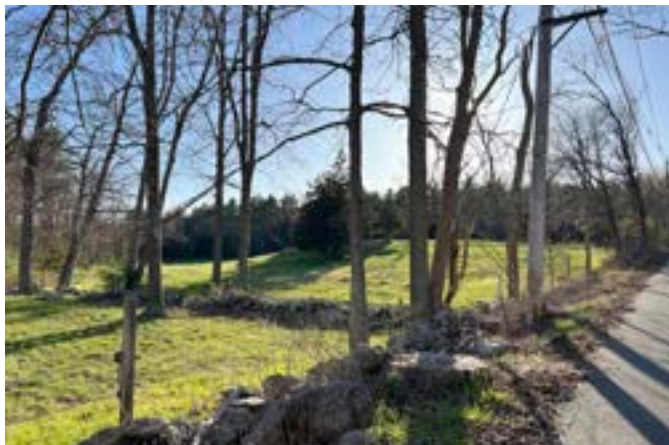
By Theresa Knapp

The Town of Mendon has received the final funding needed to preserve a 201-acre property on Thayer Road to be known as “The Oak and Wall Farm Preserve.”

The project was selected by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) to receive \$500,000 in assistance from the Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Grant Program. The property will be preserved for wildlife habitat, public trails, and aquifer protection.

The LAND Grant Program assists municipal conservation commissions in acquiring land for the protection of natural resources and passive outdoor recreation purposes.

Anne Mazar is Chair of



The Town of Mendon has secured a \$500,000 grant which is the last funding needed to protect The Oak and Wall Farm Preserve, a 201-acre property on Thayer Road. Courtesy photo

the Mendon Land/Energy Use Committee, and Chair of the Mendon Community Preservation Committee. She said this award is important because, without it, the project would have fallen through.

“This was a collaborative effort. Mass Audubon

has committed \$200,000, The Nature Conservancy has committed \$600,000, and the Town of Mendon voted [May 2024] to spend \$500,000 of CPA funds if we received the rest of the

#### THAYER ROAD

continued on page 16

## Nipmuc Regional High School students participate in Boston Choral Festival



Nipmuc Regional High School Choruses recently participated in the Boston Choral Festival. Photo courtesy Mendon-Upton Regional School District

MENDON — Nipmuc Regional High School choruses recently participated in the Boston Choral Festival.

On Oct. 25, about 20 Nipmuc singers took the stage at The Cyclorama at the Boston Center for the Arts in the Back Bay alongside the Cantata Singers. The

Arlington and Westborough High School choirs also participated. The performance took place after a day of immersive workshops, where students learned multiple choral movements.

#### NIPMUC

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Pictured left to right is Michael Penner, Executive General manager Imperial Cars, Ms. Natalie Webb, Air Force veteran and Thanks To Yanks Volunteer, Michael Shain, president, and founder of Thanks To Yanks. Yearly around Veteran's Day Imperial partners with Thanks To Yanks with their Hope For Heroes program, with a collection of important items for veterans that are in need of assistance. Shain says, "We are so very grateful for the commitment that Imperial makes to support our veterans." For more information on Thanks To Yanks, please like them on Facebook. Courtesy photo

### Letter of thanks to Mendon residents for support of Food Pantry

Letter to the Editor:

The Mendon Senior Center Staff, Council on Aging Members and Food Pantry volunteers would all like to express our gratitude to the residents of Mendon and to the Scouts for partnering with us as we help neighbors in need.

Your generosity has helped to replenish the food pantry as we head into winter.

Any Mendon resident experiencing food insecurity is encouraged to contact Janet Hubener, Outreach Coordinator, at 508-478-6175 for confidential assistance.

### Upton BVT students receive Adams Scholarship

6 students earn free tuition to public college or university in Massachusetts

UPTON – The John and Abigail Adams Scholarship is a merit-based program that provides tuition at a Massachusetts state college or university - 78 Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School seniors are the proud recipients of an Adams Scholarship. The award allows these students an option to further their vocational and career training with additional education, advanced training, and credentials.

The first-time score on a high school MCAS exam determines eligibility for an Adams Scholarship. Adams Scholars receive free tuition for up to eight semesters of undergraduate education at a Massachusetts public

college or university, renewable for eight consecutive semesters or four years. Recipients must use the tuition credit in the first fall semester following their high school graduation and maintain a GPA of 3.0 or better.

The following BVT Class of 2025 students from Upton are among 78 BVT students to earn a John and Abigail Adams Scholarship:

- Samantha Carroll, *Information Technology*
- Kylie French, *Painting & Design*
- Cassidy Lyon, *Health Services*
- Harmony Melendez-Torres, *Biotechnology*
- Ryan Poirier, *Advanced Manufacturing*
- John Simas, *Electronics*

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### CHRISTMAS TREE PICKUP \$10

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**Saturday Jan. 4, 2025**

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**EMAIL with questions to:**  
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## Upton Town Library Calendar of Events

9 Milford Street, Upton • 508-529-6272 • UptonLibrary.org • HOURS: Tues., Wed. & Thurs. 9-8 • Mon., Fri. & Sat. 9-4 • Sun. CLOSED

By Matthew Bachtold, Library Director and Lee Ann Murphy, Children's Librarian

### Learn tabletop games this Winter!

Modern tabletop games are a great, screen-free hobby to learn this winter. Assemble a colorful tile mosaic in Azul, or chart the course of history in 7 Wonders! Upton Library hosts a monthly game night where you can come to learn and play, and we also have copies of award-winning games for you to borrow and play at home.

Tabletop Game Night for Adults – Thursday, Dec. 19

Join our tabletop game series for adults! New games are featured each month such as 7 Wonders, Mysterium, and Azul. Meets every third Thursday of the month from 5:15 - 7:30 p.m. Beginners and experienced players both welcome. Register at [uptonlibrary.org](http://uptonlibrary.org).

### Teen Hangout

Tuesdays and Thursdays 2 - 5 p.m. (New program just for Teens)

Teen Hangout is a time just for tweens and teens! Every Tuesday and Thursday after school, we reserve the Classroom as a space for teens to hangout, play video games and board games, make crafts, read, and more. This is a drop-in program.

### SPECIAL EVENTS

#### Keep This, Toss That - For a Clutter-Free New Year

Virtual Event, Tuesday, Jan. 7 at 7 p.m.

New year, fresh start: join Organizing Humorist and best-selling author Jamie Novak as she shares her laugh-out-loud funny approach for what to do with all the stuff – without getting overwhelmed. This event is brought to you in collaboration with the Newton Free Library. Registration required. Please

note that this event is virtual and takes place live, it will not be recorded.

### Hot Cocoa Pastel Art

Thursday, Jan. 9, 6 - 7:30 p.m. Ages 12 - Adult

Participants will create a very colorful cup of hot cocoa that includes exciting contemporary art patterns, all while using oil pastels and construction paper. Register online to participate.

### Virtual Author Talk Series

View free online author talks, either live or recorded. Register and get more information at the library website, or at <https://library.org/uptontownlibrary>

#### Author Talk with T.J. Klune:

The Magic of Found Family - Wednesday, Jan. 15 at 7 p.m.

#### Author Talk with

Amanda Montell: Notes on Modern Irrationality - Thurs-

day, Jan. 23 at 2 p.m.

### Children's & Young Adult Events

Baypath Humane Society Visit – Dec. 23 at 3 p.m.

Join us as we welcome a representative from Baypath Humane Society, along with a furry friend! Michelle Kreeel will speak to us about fostering and/or adopting pets, and how to help their organization. This is a collaborative event with the Upton Senior Center. Ages 5 to 105 are welcome. Pre-registration required.

### Movies at the Library – Dec. 26 & 30

Join us for movies in our Greatroom. On Dec. 26, from 5 - 7:30 p.m., we will screen *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny*, rated PG-13, for ages 13+. On Dec. 30, from 1 - 3 p.m., we will screen *The Goonies*, rated PG, for ages 8+. No reg-



istration required.

### MONTHLY LIBRARY EVENTS – REGISTER NOW!

All programs and events require pre-registration at [uptonlibrary.org](http://uptonlibrary.org) or call 508-529-6272. Registrations open the month prior to events.

### UPTON LIBRARY

continued on page 12

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# Mendon Senior Center news for Dec. and Jan.

**COA Holiday Dinner**  
Wednesday, Dec. 11 at 12 p.m.  
Dick and Betty Ferrucci are generously sponsoring the annual COA Holiday Dinner. Seating is limited. Please contact the senior center to inquire about reservations.

**Miscoe 6th Grade Chorus Holiday Program**  
Thursday, Dec. 12 at 10:30 a.m.  
The Miscoe students can't wait to perform for you. Please save the date and contact the center to reserve a seat and consider staying for lunch.

**Minstrels Holiday Performance**  
Thursday, Dec. 19 at 11 a.m.  
The Mendon Minstrels will be offering us a festive holiday performance, followed by a luncheon. Space is limited for this popular event, please contact the Senior Center to register.

**Western themed New Years Eve Celebration**  
Dec. 31 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
Let's celebrate the incoming New Year together! Join us at the center for a festive Western themed New Years Ever Party. Enjoy an assortment of tasty appetizers and delicious desserts with friends and toast the new year! A donation of \$5 per person is requested. Please stop in or call to register at the Senior Center.

**Weekly Programs: Call for more information and availability.**  
- Shopping Van – Monday 9 a.m.  
- Walking Group – Mon/Wed/Fri 8:30 a.m.

- Chorus – Mondays 1 a.m.  
- SHINE Counseling – Mon. 12:30 p.m.  
- Chair Exercise – Tues/Thurs 9 a.m.  
- Lunch – Tues/Thurs 12 p.m.  
- Hand, Knee & Foot – Tuesday 1 p.m.  
- Panera Bread – Wednesday 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
- Qigong – Wednesday 10 a.m.  
- Cribbage – Wednesday 9:45 a.m.  
- Genealogy – 1st/3rd Wed 1 p.m.  
- Mah Jong – Wed/Thurs 1 p.m.  
- Knitting Group – Thursday 1 p.m.

**Outreach Assistance**  
Senior Center Outreach Coordinator, Janet Hubener is available to offer free confidential counseling, caregiver support, and information and referral services on aging issues for seniors and caregivers. This position is grant funded in part under a state grant. Home visits are available, please contact Janet at 508-478-6175.

Individuals who can help transport parishioners to local churches/house of worship. Please contact Janet Hubener.

**Social Security Adopts New Income Rules for SSI Benefits**  
The Social Security Administration has dropped a long-standing policy of counting financial help from friends or family for buying food as income that affects eligibility, and payment amounts for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) - part of a suite of changes to the program that could boost benefits for hundreds of thousands of economically vulnerable older adults and people with disabilities.



**Guided Meditation for Stress Reduction**  
Friday, Jan. 10 at 11 a.m.

Faith Kennedy, certified instructor, will offer a one-hour guided meditation for stress reduction and relaxation on Friday, Jan. 10 at 11 a.m. with tips for continuing success at home. Space is limited, so call 508-478-6175 or stop by the senior center to reserve your space early. Faith will then offer crystal bowl therapy. Crystal bowl sound therapy is an ancient practice in which sound healers produce different sound frequencies with quartz crystal singing bowls to restore balance and harmony in the body. The cost is \$25 per person. Call or stop by the senior center to register.

**REAL ESTATE TAX EXEMPTIONS**

While taxes cannot be avoided, some taxpayers may be entitled to partial relief via

a "real estate tax exemption." A tax exemption is a discharge from the obligation to pay all or a portion of a tax. There are several types of exemptions each with its own requirements; one that is age related (65 years or older detailed below), others given due to blindness, surviving spouse or veteran's status. Mendon's Principal Assessor, Sherrie Bates will be at the Mendon Senior Center on Wednesday, Jan. 22 at 1 p.m. (with a snow date of Feb. 12 at 1 p.m.) at the Mendon Senior Center, 62 Providence St. Mendon to review the requirements and to answer any questions. Please stop by or call the senior center at 508-478-6175 to register.

Applications for all of these exemptions are due no later than April 1, 2025. If you are unable to come to our presentation on Jan. 22 please contact the Assessor's office 508-473-2738 for confidential assistance.

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**Ad Artwork Deadline** is the Wednesday 8 days prior to publication date.

**Reader Submission Deadline** is the 25th day of the month preceding the publication date. For example, items should be submitted by Feb. 25 to be included in the March issue.

**Please submit to:**  
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# Consider these year-end financial moves



Mark Freeman, CEPA

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As we enter the holiday season, your life may well become busier. Still, you might want to take the time to consider some financial moves before we turn the calendar to 2025.

Here are a few suggestions:

- **Review your investment portfolio.** As you look at your portfolio, ask these questions: Has its performance met my expectations this

year? Does it still reflect my goals, risk tolerance and time horizon? Do I need to rebalance? You might find that working with a financial professional can help you answer these and other questions you may have about your investments.

- **Add to your 401(k) and HSA.** If you can afford it, and your employer allows it, consider putting more money into your 401(k) before the year ends — including “catch-up” contributions if you’re 50 or older. You might also want to add to your health savings account (HSA) by the tax-filing deadline in April.
- **Use your FSA dollars.** Unlike an HSA, a flexible spending account (FSA) works on a “use-it-or-lose-it” basis, meaning you lose any unspent funds at the end of the year. So, if you still have funds left in your account,

try to use them up in 2024. (Employers may grant a 2½-month extension, so check with your human resources area to see if this is the case where you work.)

- **Contribute to a 529 plan.** If you haven’t opened a 529 education savings plan for your children, think about doing so this year. With a 529 plan, your earnings can grow tax deferred, and your withdrawals are federally tax free when used for qualified education expenses — tuition, fees, books and so on. And if you invest in your own state’s 529 plan, you might be able to deduct your contributions from your state income tax or receive a state tax credit.
- **Build your emergency fund.** It’s generally a good idea to keep up to six months’ worth of living expenses in an emergency fund, with the money held in a liquid, low-risk account. Without such a

fund in place, you might be forced to dip into your retirement funds to pay for short-term needs, such as a major car or home repair.

- **Review your estate plans.** If you’ve experienced any changes in your family situation this year, such as marriage, remarriage or the birth of a child, you may want to update your estate-planning documents to reflect your new situation. It’s also important to look at the beneficiary designations on your investment accounts, retirement plans, IRAs and insurance policies, as these designations can sometimes even supersede the instructions you’ve left in your will. And if you haven’t started estate planning, there’s no time like the present.
- **Take your RMDs.** If you’re 73 or older, you will likely need to take withdrawals — called required minimum

distributions, or RMDs — from some of your retirement accounts, such as your traditional IRA. If you don’t take these withdrawals each year, you could be subject to penalties.

These aren’t the only moves you can make, but they may prove helpful not only for 2024 but in the years to come.

Contact Mark today to discuss this topic or any of your financial goals.

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# Meet Shade

Are you a superhero on the lookout for a masked sidekick? Shade is ready to show you just how loyal he can be. He will be by your side no matter what the adventure and, if you can't take him with you, he will wait patiently by the door until you return.

Shade is as charming as he is striking, with a sleek grey and white coat that gleams like polished steel. His whiskers seem to go on forever, complemented by ear tufts and, of course, the signature mask that adds to his mysterious allure. But don't be fooled by his good looks—Shade is no ordinary sidekick. With a sharp mind and a voice

that commands attention, he's as intelligent and vocal as they come. Ready to save the day, one purr at a time.

Everyone knows that a superhero only needs one sidekick which suits Shade just fine. Shade was surrendered with a group of cats and kittens when the owners moved. Now he is ready to be someone's one and only companion.

Shade has been perfecting his sidekick pose! All he needs now is a cape and his own superhero. Could that be you? If Shade sounds like your right-hand man, please visit the Milford Humane Society at [www.milfordhumane.org](http://www.milfordhumane.org).



## Henry David Thoreau Foundation scholarship applications now available

Each year, the Henry David Thoreau Foundation awards scholarships to eight to ten top-ranking high school seniors from Massachusetts who demonstrate the potential for environmental leadership and intend to pursue

interdisciplinary environmental studies in college.

Each Henry David Thoreau Scholar receives a four-year scholarship of up to \$25,000. In addition, Thoreau Scholars are eligible for an environmental in-

ternship stipend, which usually takes place between junior and senior year.

For more information, visit [www.thoreauscholar.org](http://www.thoreauscholar.org). The deadline to apply is Feb. 1, 2025. *Source: www.thoreauscholar.org*

## Christmas Brass Concert on Dec. 20

The Birch Alley Brass Ensemble will present a concert at Valley Chapel in Uxbridge on Dec. 20 at 7 p.m.

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.



*Wishing you a happy*  
**Holiday Season and a wonderful**  
*New Year.*

*Please note our special holiday hours*

<p><b>Christmas Eve</b> Tuesday, December 24th 8:30 AM to Noon</p> <p><b>Christmas Day</b> Wednesday, December 25th Closed</p>	<p><b>New Year's Eve</b> Tuesday, December 31st 8:30 AM to 3:00 PM</p> <p><b>New Year's Day</b> Wednesday, January 1st Closed</p>
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*Hours may be subject to change due to weather. Visit [CharlesRiverBank.com](http://CharlesRiverBank.com) for up-to-date information.*

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# Upton Senior Center news for December

## Grief Support Group

Tuesdays at 1 p.m.

The loss of a loved one is painful and difficult but you are not alone. Find compassion and comfort at this grief support group led by Robin Natanel.

## Mindful Meditation

Friday, Dec. 13 at 1 p.m.

Calm your mind and body so you can acknowledge and accept your thoughts, feelings, and sensations without judgment through Mindful Meditation with Robin Natanel.

## Senior Dinner sponsored by Upton Men's Club

Friday, Dec. 13 at 5 p.m.

Join us for a delightful dinner sponsored by the Upton Men's Club. December's menu features shepherd's pie from Rose Garden Restaurant in Upton. Free to Upton seniors thanks to the generosity of the Upton Men's Club. RSVP by Dec. 9. Shuttle service available. Doors open at 5 p.m.

## Upton Memory Café

Wednesday, Dec. 18 at 2:30 p.m.

The Upton Memory Café was designed by Nipmuc High School volunteers to meet the needs of individuals affected by Alzheimer's and dementia in Upton and surrounding communities. If you or your loved one are experiencing problems with memory or thinking, we encourage you to attend the Memory Café. It is a great opportunity for engagement, socialization and support. If you are interested in attending our next Memory Café, please contact the Senior Center to register.

## Nipmuc High School Music Department

Thursday, Dec. 19 at 11:30 a.m.

Support the Nipmuc High School Music Department! Join us for a morning of melodies with a performance by the talented students of the Nipmuc

High School Music Department. Light refreshments will be served. Don't miss this chance to celebrate the next generation of musicians and performers.

## Friends of Upton Elders Meeting

Thursday, Dec. 19 at 1:30 p.m.

We are excited to announce the formation of The Friends of Upton Elders, a new charitable organization dedicated to enhancing the lives of seniors in our community through fundraising and outreach initiatives. We invite residents of all ages to join us in our mission! Come learn more about how you can contribute to this meaningful cause and help us make a positive impact in the lives of Upton elders.

## Holiday Party

Friday, Dec. 20

Yankee Swap Social at 10:45 a.m.

Join us for a jolly good time at our annual Yankee Swap Social. You bring the gift, we'll supply



the fun! To participate, register with the senior center and bring a NEW, wrapped gift valued at \$10 or above. Light refreshments will be served.

Holiday Party at 12:30 p.m.

We'll wrap up the afternoon with our annual Holiday Lunch. Enjoy the sounds of Generations Barbershop Quartet while we feast on a porchetta lunch from Upton Country Sooper!

RSVP by Dec. 16. \$8 fee.

## BayPath Humane Society

Monday, Dec. 23 at 3 p.m.

BayPath Humane Society will visit with a special furry friends to share information about fostering or adopting a rescue pet. All ages welcome! Baypath Humane Society of Hopkinton is dedicated to providing shelter, care, humane treatment, and loving homes for stray or unwanted companion animals.

## A HELPING HAND...

### Upton Food Pantry hours

Dec. 17 & Jan. 7 - 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. - The Food Pantry serves residents from Upton as well as nearby towns. Proof of income or church affiliation is not required. We offer non-perishable food, toiletries, paper products and infant needs. Donations can be dropped off in our donation shed located outside the church office at 1 Church Street, Upton.

### Community supper on Dec. 19

Dec. 19: Community Supper - on the third Thursday of each month from September through June at 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., our Faith in Action committee provides a delicious and nutritious meal for the community. Everyone is welcome. Please call the church office at 508-529-3192 by Dec. 13 to make your reservation. If you forget to reserve, please come anyway. We always make extra and would love to serve you.

If your nonprofit organization is located in Upton or Mendon and provides free services to Upton and/or Mendon citizens, email editor@uptonmendonfreepress.com for consideration to be listed in this section.



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# Government oversight in ensuring ethical referrals between Optometrists and Ophthalmologists

Ethical referral practices between optometrists and ophthalmologists are vital to maintaining trust in the medical profession and safeguarding patient welfare. However, financial incentives, kickbacks, and other self-serving practices often threaten these principles. In such cases, government intervention becomes essential to uphold ethical standards and enforce legal compliance. High-profile cases, such as those in Rhode Island, Texas, and Louisiana, highlight the significance of government oversight in addressing violations and protecting patients.

### The Importance of Patient-Centered Referrals

Optometrists are ethically and legally obligated to prioritize patient well-being when making referrals. Considerations like quality of care, proximity, and insurance network compatibility should guide these decisions.

Unfortunately, certain practices undermine this ethical standard:

### Referrals Outside the Insurance Network

Some optometrists refer patients to providers outside their insurance networks, leading to avoidable out-of-pocket expenses. When motivated by financial gain or kickbacks, such referrals prioritize profits over patient interests.

### Conditional Referrals Based on Financial Agreements

In some cases, referrals are tied to agreements where ophthalmologists return patients post-surgery, regardless of clinical necessity. Often, these arrangements include expectations of eyeglass purchases from the referring optometrist's office.

### Quid Pro Quo Referrals

Financial incentives between optometrists and ophthalmologists create biased referral patterns. These quid pro quo

arrangements prioritize mutual financial benefit rather than the best interests of the patient.

### Referrals to Office-Based Cataract Surgery (OBS)

Optometrists sometimes refer patients to ophthalmologists performing surgeries in office-based settings instead of accredited centers. These office setups lack MD anesthesiologists, compromise emergency readiness, and charge extra fees not covered by Medicare. Patients are frequently unaware of these risks or additional costs, leaving them vulnerable to suboptimal care.

### Government's Role in Preventing Unethical Practices

To counter unethical referrals, federal laws like the Anti-Kickback Statute and the False Claims Act (FCA) play a crucial role:

#### Anti-Kickback Statute

This law prohibits any form



of payment or incentive to influence referrals. For example, in Rhode Island, Dr. Paul Koch faced allegations of accepting kickbacks for patient referrals. The government's investigation resulted in a settlement, underscoring the importance of holding violators accountable.

#### False Claims Act (FCA)

Referring patients out of network for financial gain can lead to fraudulent billing practices. In Texas and Louisiana, healthcare providers faced legal action for filing false claims tied to unethical referral arrangements, resulting in significant settlements.

#### Education and Monitoring as Preventative Measures

Governmental agencies like the Office of Inspector General (OIG) and state Attorneys General must promote transparency in referral practices. Routine

audits, mandatory reporting, and educational initiatives help identify and prevent unethical behavior. Collaboration between professional societies, licensing boards, and regulatory bodies can establish clearer guidelines and ensure widespread compliance. If you sense unethical referral by your optometrist you are encouraged to refer this optometrist to the OIG.

#### Ensuring Ethical Referrals: Questions Patients Should Ask

Patients can protect themselves by asking critical questions when receiving referrals from an optometrist to a specific ophthalmologist and no one else:

- Why are you referring me to this specific ophthalmologist or surgeon?
- Why aren't you giving me a

#### GOVERNMENT

continued on page 9

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GOVERNMENT

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- choice of multiple ophthalmologists/ surgeons so I can choose based on my best interest?
  - Is the surgeon you're referring me to within my insurance network?
  - Why not refer me to a local ophthalmologist who is closer and in-network?
  - Does the surgeon perform surgeries in a licensed, accredited center or an office-based setting?
  - Are there additional out-of-pocket costs for the recommended surgery in this ophthalmologist office-based surgery center?
  - Is the surgeon local, or part of a distant franchise practice?
  - Where will I be seen in case of an emergency—locally or hours away?
  - My neighbors and friends had excellent results with local ophthalmologists—why not refer me to one of them?
- Asking these questions empowers patients to make informed decisions about their care.

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ter and the Cataract Surgery Center of Milford, our mission is clear: to provide ethical, patient-focused care in a licensed and accredited surgery center closer to home. Our local ophthalmologists are in-network, community-based, and have served the region for over 40 years.

- Unlike office-based surgery models, our accredited and licensed surgery center features:
- A full-time MD anesthesiologist for every procedure.
- IV-based anesthesia for optimal safety and comfort.
- No hidden fees or out-of-pocket costs for Medicare-covered procedures.

Patients being referred for cataract surgery in office-based settings are advised to seek a second opinion. Always question what your optometrist recommends. If you have doubts, call us. We will answer your questions. At our center, you'll receive world-class care close to home. Our commitment to your safety and well-being is unwavering. You always come first.

For more details, see our ad on page 8.

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# Join Speech Invaders Toastmasters and work on presenting skills

Speech Invaders Toastmasters welcomes you to join our club or just attend a few meetings to help you become a more effective communicator, public speaker and presenter. We are a supportive (and fun!) club open to all who are

interested in improving self-confidence, networking, or communication skills.

The group meets every Thursday from 12 to 1 p.m., in-person at Waters Corporation, 5 Technical Drive, Milford, or virtually through Microsoft

Teams. To see the club calendar and to get the meeting link to join virtually, visit [speechinvaders.toastmastersclubs.org/calendar.html](https://speechinvaders.toastmastersclubs.org/calendar.html).

For more information, contact [abigail\\_epplett@waters.com](mailto:abigail_epplett@waters.com).

## NIPMUC

continued from page 1

The two-hour concert was a performance of Monteverdi's Vespers of 1610, and a celebration of the Cantata Singers' 60th anniversary. The Vespers is a large-scale work scored for soloists, choirs, and orchestras. It

allows for a wide range of expression and sound.

The Cantata Singers organized the festival and hope it will become an annual event, with different high school groups participating each year.

"We were delighted to be invited by the Cantata Singers to participate in this year's Boston Choral Festival," Choral Director Simmonds said. "Our students did an exceptional job

preparing for the performance and were incredible during the festival."

"I am incredibly thrilled with our students for their performance at the Boston Choral Festival," Mendon-Upton Nipmuc Regional School District Superintendent Maureen Cohen said. "Their hard work, talent, and dedication were evident, and they made our entire school community proud."



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# Taft Public Library Calendar of Events

29 North Avenue, Mendon • 508-473-3259 • TaftPublicLibrary.org • HOURS: Tues. & Wed. 10-7 • Thurs. 3-7 • Fri. 12-5 • Sat. 9-12 • Sun. & Mon. CLOSED

## ADULT PROGRAMS DECEMBER 2024

*Please Note:* The Taft Public Library will be closed on Tuesday, Dec. 24 and Wednesday, Dec. 25. It will be open from 10 a.m - 2 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 31 and closed on Wednesday, Jan. 1. Enjoy the holidays!

### Upcoming Events:

To register for an event, click on the Library Event Calendar & Registration link at the top of the library's homepage [www.taftpubliclibrary.org](http://www.taftpubliclibrary.org).

### Winter Solstice Story & Song

Celebrate the Winter Solstice with haunting legends of light, evergreen traditions, and entertaining tales surrounded by traditional and original music and song. Join master storyteller Diane Edgecomb and Celtic harper Margot Chamberlain for a fascinating look at the enchanting stories by winter

holiday traditions. Featured stories include the beautiful Scandinavian "Legend of the Mistletoe," humorous English Wassail traditions, and the poignant Swiss legend of the Christmas Rose. Lovely instrumental melodies evoke the warmth of the season, rounding out the event. Tuesday, Dec. 10 at 7 p.m. Registration required as space is limited. Register at [www.taftpubliclibrary.org](http://www.taftpubliclibrary.org). The program is supported by a grant from the Mendon Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council.

### Dustin Pari presents Ghosts of Christmas Past

Join Dustin Pari of SYFY television's Ghost Hunters and Ghost Hunters International for a festive, frightful, and fun program that takes the cobwebs off of a classic tradition, the Victorian Christmas Ghost Story. Dustin explains the history of

this oft forgotten practice, shares a few timeless tales, and recounts some real-life stories of holiday visits from the ghosts of Christmas past. Tuesday, Dec. 17 at 7 p.m. Registration is required.

### Adult Handcrafting Group

Let's get crafty! Join us on Wednesday, Dec. 18 at 2 p.m downstairs in the library and get your craft on. Bring your own craft project, whatever it might be, to work on while you visit. Intended for adults. No registration is required. Crafts are NOT supplied.

### Adult Book Club

The Adult Book Club will meet next on Monday, Dec. 9 at 6:30 p.m. upstairs in the library to discuss *Oh William!* by Elizabeth Strout. For upcoming book clubs contact the library at 508-473-3259 to request copies of the books or log in to your account from our website to re-

quest them through interlibrary loan. Upcoming books for the Adult Book Club are as follows:

- Monday, Jan. 13 at 6:30 p.m.: *The Island of Sea Women* by Lisa See
- Monday, Feb. 10 at 6:30 p.m.: *The Mercies* by Kiran Millwood Hargrave
- Monday, March 10 at 6:30 p.m.: *The Only Woman in the Room* by Marie Benedict
- Monday, April 14 at 6:30 p.m.: *Last of the Mohicans* by James Fenimore Cooper

### Footnotes Nonfiction Book Club

The Footnotes Nonfiction Book Club typically meets downstairs in the library on a quarterly basis. This year the group will read and discuss five nonfiction titles. Those interested are asked to stop at the downstairs desk to sign the Footnotes registration sheet and pick up a copy of the latest book. Upcoming books in the Footnotes series:

- Thursday, Jan. 9 at 7 p.m.: *American Jezebel: The Uncommon Life of Anne Hutchinson, the Woman Who Defied the Puritans* by Eve LaPlante
- March (date TBD): *The Mysterious Case of Rudolf Diesel: Genius, Power, and Deception on the Eve of World War I* by Douglas Brunt
- June (date TBD): *How the Word is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America* by Clint Smith

### Awards Book Club

New to our slate of adult book clubs is Awards Book Club! Hosted by Taft Library Assistant Jane Blackwood, the Awards Book Club meets on a quarterly basis to discuss fiction and non-fiction award winners of the



year. Jane selects from the books that took home the coveted Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, the Booker and more! Stop at the downstairs circulation desk to pick up the latest Awards book for discussion:

### Upcoming books:

- February (date TBD): *Booker Prize winner for Fiction Orbital* by Samantha Harvey
- May (date TBD): *National Book Award winner for Fiction James* by Percival Everett

### German Conversation Club

Are you looking for a place to practice what German you remember or to improve your German vocabulary? Conversations in German is no pressure, just fun! Lead by Library Assistant (and Mendon resident) Monika Schmid, the group typically meets the last Monday of each month. Registration is required. To register, visit our website. Next club date: Monday, at 6 p.m.

### Taft Library now has Mango Languages!

Visit the Taft Public Library website for access to the Mango

### TAFT LIBRARY

*continued on page 11*

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**TAFT LIBRARY**

*continued from page 10*

Languages platform. If you have an interest in learning a language, Mango provides lessons in over 70 languages. Children can try their hand at language learning with Mango Little PIM, a platform designed just for them, and for those interested in learning American sign language we provide access to Mango ASL. Mango's Intuitive Language Construction methodology helps build skills in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, culture, comprehension, and retention. To see all of the Mango options the Taft Library offers scroll down the left-hand side of our webpage to the Databases section.

**Friends of the Taft Public Library Meeting**

The Friends of the Library meetings are typically held on the last Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. downstairs in the Art Holmes Community Room, unless it falls on a holiday or during a school vacation. All are welcome (and encouraged) to attend! If you plan on attending, it's always a good idea to call the library at 508-473-3259 or email

the Friends at friendsoftaftlibrary@gmail.com to confirm the date and time of the meeting. The group will do its best to post any meeting changes on the Taft Library website.

**CHILDREN PROGRAMS DECEMBER 2024**

Registration is required for all programs. Please log onto our website: www.taftpubliclibrary.org and find the events page to register along with more information for the programs.

**Itty Bitty Story Time**

Itty Bitty Storytime is designed for our youngest patrons birth to 3 years old. Join us for a lot of fun on Tuesdays and select Wednesdays at 9:30 a.m.

**Story & Craft Time**

Join us for Story and Craft Time! Perfect for the preschool-aged child. All sessions take place on Tuesday mornings at 10:30 a.m.

**Alphabet Storytime**

It's all about the alphabet! Each week we will focus on a different letter. We will read a couple of books, sing songs, and learn about the letter of the week. Wednesday mornings at 10:30 a.m. Please note there is

no Alphabet Storytime the last Wednesday of the month.

**Coffee and Conversations**

On Wednesday, Dec. 18 from 9:15 to 10:15 a.m., at Taft Public Library, 29 North Ave., Mendon Join us for an informal playtime where families will be able to build social connections and learn about early childhood development and family friendly resources. The library will supply Muffin House Muffins! Please stay for the 10:30 a.m. Puppet Storytime. Join Newton & Friends of Through Me to You Puppetry for songs & stories. At the end of the 30-minute show, children can greet the puppets. Geared for children 2 to 5 years, but all are welcome.

**Music & Movement with Deb Hudgins**

Join Deb Hudgins for a 30-minute music and movement theme-based program which features singing and guitar music for young children (infant and preschool). Join us on Tuesday, Dec. 17. Program starts promptly at 10:30 a.m.

**Storytime with Santa**

Join us on Monday, Dec. 16 at 9:30 a.m. for Storytime with Santa. Santa will be sharing some of his favorite books with us. Space is limited.

**Cookies with Santa**

On Monday, Dec. 16 at 6:30 p.m., Santa will join us via Zoom all the way from the North Pole! Santa will share some of his favorite things ... COOKIES! Not only will Santa be reading about cookies, but we will be decorating cookies from Hens & Chicks Cookie Company. To make this event even more fun, Deb Hudgins will join us to sing a few of our favorite holiday songs. Please visit www.taftpubliclibrary.org to register. You will be sent a Zoom link the day before the event. Cookie Kits are limited and will need to be picked up Dec. 12 - 14 during normal library hours.

**Science with Amanda**

On Thursday, Dec. 19 at 4:30 p.m., Amanda shows program participants how to create fake snow. Each monthly Science with



Amanda session explores a different scientific theme. Designed for children and families, this program encourages curiosity and learning in a fun and interactive way. Recommended for children ages 5-12 and their families. Registration is required. Please visit www.taftpubliclibrary.org to register. Science with Amanda is supported in part by a grant from the Mendon Cultural Council, a local agency supported by the Mass Cultural Council.

**Tutors with Tails**

Meet Sprite! Sprite is a therapy dog who loves children and love books. Sprite and her owner Janet will visit the Taft on the last Tuesday of each month. Register today for the opportunity to read to Sprite! Spots are limited.

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# Home Energy Assistance HEAP

Help is just a call away

If you or someone you know is having trouble making ends meet, please consider contacting the Mendon Senior Center. Our helpful staff, including Outreach Coordinator Janet Hubener, are here to offer confidential assistance with fuel assistance applications and nutritional support to Mendon residents of all ages.

The SMOC Fuel assistance program helps defray heating costs incurred between Nov.

1, 2024, and April 30, 2025 for eligible households (see household size/income guide below.)

Household size Income Limit:  
 \$49,196 (1 person), \$64,333 (2 people), \$79,470 (3 people), \$94,608 (4 people).

Please call for guidelines for larger households. Call Janet at the senior center at 508-478-6175. Help is just a phone call away.

## UPTON LIBRARY

continued from page 3

### Tabletop Game Night for Adults

Join our tabletop game series for adults! New games are featured each month such as 7 Wonders, Mysterium, and Azul. Meets every third Thursday of the month from 5:15 - 7:30 p.m. Beginners and experienced players both welcome. Register at [uptonlibrary.org](http://uptonlibrary.org).

### Baby Storytime – Fridays at 9:30 & 10:30 a.m.

Baby Storytime is for ages birth to 3 and is held on Fridays. This is a 20-30-minute lapsit program featuring stories, songs, and nursery rhymes. Pre-registration required.

### Preschool Storytime – Thursdays at 9:30 & 10:30 a.m.

Preschool Storytime is for ages 3 to 5 and is held on Thursdays. This is a 45-minute program featuring stories, songs, rhymes, and a craft. Pre-registration required.

### Saturday Storytime – Dec. 14 & Jan. 4 at 9:30 a.m.

Once a month we offer a 30-45-minute Saturday Storytime, blending Baby and Preschool storytimes featuring stories, songs, rhymes, and a craft. Can't join us for our weekday programs? This event is just for you. For ages 0-5. Pre-



registration required.

### Music & Movement – Dec. 16, Jan. 6 & 13 at 9:30 a.m.

This program features Deb Hudgins and her Pre-K Sing and Swing. It is an interactive program, perfect for children and their caregivers to enjoy together. Deb plays guitar and sings, and is sure to incorporate stories, dancing, fingerplays, games and more at each of her fun, themed performances. This program is partially funded through a grant with Beginning Bridges CFCE in Uxbridge. For ages 1 to 5. Pre-registration is required.

### LEGO Club – Dec. 18 at 4 p.m.

This group meets the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month from 4 - 5 p.m. This group is led by Library Director, Matthew Bachtold, and is for ages 5 to 12. We provide the LEGOs while you have fun building and making new friends. Pre-registration is required.

### Kids' Book Club – Jan. 8 at 4 p.m.

Our book club members explore popular juvenile fiction titles on the first Wednesday of each month from 4 - 4:45 p.m. Due to our usual meeting date falling on New Year's Day, our meeting has been moved to the second Wednesday for this month. We will be discussing *Dory Fantasmagory: Tiny Tough* by Abby Hanlon. This group is for ages 8-12. We welcome new members all year round. Pre-registration required.

### Tween Book Club – Dec. 21 at 6:30 p.m.

This club is especially for our middle grade patrons, ages 10 to 14. This group reads popular middle grade titles selected by our members. This month, we will be discussing the realistic fiction title *Willodeen* by Katherine Applegate. We welcome new members all year round. Pre-registration required.

### Upton Reads Book Group

An eclectic mix of contemporary literary fiction with meetings on the second Tuesday afternoon and Thursday evening of each month in the Community Center classroom, with a Zoom remote option.

Tuesday, Jan. 14 at 12:45 p.m., and Thursday, Jan. 16 at 6:45 p.m.: *First Lie Wins* by Ashley Elston.

### Fic or No Fic Book Group

An adult book group led by Librarian Micaela that alternates fiction and non-fiction selections. Meets on the last Wednesday of each month at 6:45 p.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 29 at 6:45 p.m.: *The Backyard Bird Chronicles* by Amy Tan.

For more information or assistance with any library services, call 508-529-6272 or email [mbachtol@cwmar.org](mailto:mbachtol@cwmar.org)

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# Upton public safety log

## Calls between Oct. 25 and Nov. 24 included illegal burns, brush fires, immediate threats

The Upton Police Department and Fire Department provided a wide range of services between Oct. 25 and Nov. 24 related to motor vehicle violations, disabled and suspicious motor vehicles, traffic enforcement, preventative patrol, house lockouts, road hazards, wires down, building checks, various alarms, abandoned and accidental 911 calls, gates opened/closed, community policing, well-being checks, noise complaints, summons service, court appearances, fundraiser-possible scams, identity theft, solicitation, fraud/forgery, lost/missing/found property, car seat installations, and animal issues (lost, injured, complaints).

Upton also provided occasional mutual aid to Franklin, Hanover, Hopkinton, Medway, Milford, Northbridge, Spencer, State Police, Westborough, and daily mutual aid to Hopedale police, fire and EMS.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Other entries of note include:

- Oct. 25** at 11:38 a.m., Fiske and Hartford Aves., brush fire
- Oct. 25** at 12:28 p.m., East St., lost/missing person, returned home
- Oct. 26** at 11:03 a.m., Florence Cir., power outage
- Oct. 26** at 7:58 p.m., Fowler St., suspicious person
- Oct. 26** at 10:14 p.m., Main St., loud music complaint
- Oct. 27** at 12:23 a.m., Goss Pond Rd., loud music complaint
- Oct. 27** at 8:57 a.m., W. River St., extra patrols requested
- Oct. 27** at 4:01 p.m., Hartford Ave. North, neighbor dispute
- Oct. 28** at 9:54 a.m., James Rd., inspection/blasting
- Oct. 28** at 8:08 p.m., Fiske Ave., illegal burn
- Oct. 28** at 11:43 p.m., Milford St., disturbance, peace restored
- Oct. 29** at 9:39 a.m., Main St., neighbor dispute
- Oct. 29** at 9:52 a.m., East St., hunter complaint/inquiry
- Oct. 29** at 3:45 p.m., Westboro Rd., illegal dumping/littering
- Oct. 30** at 1:03 p.m., South St., larceny
- Oct. 30** at 2:12 p.m., East St., illegal burn
- Oct. 30** at 8:18 p.m., Pleasant St., suspicious person
- Oct. 31** at 1:03 p.m., Walker Dr., suspicious person
- Oct. 31** at 12:01 p.m., Milford St., fuel spill
- Nov. 1** at 9:18 a.m., Shannon Way, medical

- Nov. 1** at 11:27 a.m., Pleasant St., suspicious person
- Nov. 1** at 2:08 p.m., Mendon and Chestnut Sts., illegal dumping/littering
- Nov. 1** at 3:39 p.m., Taft St., vandalism
- Nov. 1** at 8:17 p.m., Main St., possible OUI operator, cleared
- Nov. 2** at 11:18 p.m., Main St., loud music complaint
- Nov. 3** at 2:07 p.m., Cross St., brush fire
- Nov. 4** at 9:16 a.m., Main St., neighbor dispute
- Nov. 4** at 10:12 a.m., James Rd., inspection/blasting
- Nov. 4** at 10:58 a.m., Main St., harassment prevention order delivered
- Nov. 4** at 5:08 p.m., Glen View St., unwanted person
- Nov. 5** at 8:36 a.m., James Rd., inspection/blasting
- Nov. 7** at 5:36 p.m., Jonathan's Way, noise complaint
- Nov. 10** at 2:42 p.m., Hopkinton Rd. and Cider Mill Ln., illegal burn
- Nov. 10** at 2:48 p.m., Hopkinton Rd. and Cider Mill Ln., illegal burn
- Nov. 10** at 7:58 p.m., Grove St., illegal burn
- Nov. 11** at 10:08 a.m., Mendon St., trespassing
- Nov. 12** at 10:18 a.m., School St., inspection
- Nov. 12** at 12:18 p.m., High St., immediate threat, summons/209A/trespass delivered
- Nov. 12** at 12:50 p.m., South St., vandalism
- Nov. 12** at 3:33 p.m., Westboro Rd., inspection/blasting
- Nov. 13** at 4:20 p.m., Chestnut St., bicycle safety violation
- Nov. 14** at 9:46 a.m., Peppercorn Trails, vandalism
- Nov. 14** at 4:14 p.m., Glen Ave., suspicious person, 209A obtained
- Nov. 14** at 5:12 p.m., Nathaniels Way, illegal burn
- Nov. 15** at 7:55 a.m., Sadler Rd., brush fire
- Nov. 15** at 8:08 a.m., Pleasant St., structure fire/box alarm, services rendered
- Nov. 15** at 12:10 p.m., Hopkinton Rd., illegal dumping/littering
- Nov. 15** at 6:19 p.m., East St., brush fire
- Nov. 16** at 2:38 p.m., Main St., disturbance, advised civil action
- Nov. 16** at 6:11 p.m., Elm St., illegal burn
- Nov. 19** at 6:01 p.m., Pond St., smoke investigation
- Nov. 20** at 6:39 p.m., Milford St., brush fire



- Nov. 20** at 2:01 p.m., East St., immediate threat, summons/209A/trespass delivered
- Nov. 20** at 2:05 p.m., W. River St., vandalism
- Nov. 20** at 4:34 p.m., Milford St., suspicious person
- Nov. 21** at 2:39 p.m., Fiske Ave., threats
- Nov. 22** at 3:37 p.m., James Rd., illegal burn
- Nov. 23** at 1:15 p.m., Westboro Rd., illegal burn
- Nov. 24** at 1:49 p.m., East St., shots fired, gone on arrival

Source: Upton Police Department

## Recent Home Sales

Date	Mendon	Amount
11/27/2024	117 Providence St.	\$775,000
11/26/2024	42 Quissett Rd.	\$650,000
11/25/2024	14 Forest Park Dr.	\$815,000
11/19/2024	92 Providence St.	\$490,500
11/15/2024	47 Washington St.	\$530,000

Date	Upton	Amount
11/21/2024	2 Breton Rd.	\$501,900
11/13/2024	30 Glenview St.	\$640,000
11/12/2024	6 Pease Rd.	\$775,000
11/06/2024	66 High St.	\$515,000
11/01/2024	10 Maple Ave.	\$665,000
10/31/2024	0 High St.	\$135,000
10/31/2024	1 Shoemaker Ln.	\$680,400
10/24/2024	46 School St. #A	\$665,000

Source: zillow.com / Compiled by Upton & Mendon Free Press



The 3-bed, 2.5-bath, 1,740-square-foot home at 46A School St. in Upton recently sold for \$665,000. Photo source: RobynAndSeanMyHouse

## Move guarantees that those who deserve coal this year will get it!

**NORTH POLE** — Santa Claus announced today that he has chosen **Medway Oil & Propane** as the exclusive resource for high-quality Reading Anthracite coal throughout the greater MetroWest region and eastern Worcester County.

According to one of Santa's elves, it was very important that Santa chose a company he could count on this winter. "We were delighted that Santa chose us again this year," said Jeffrey Mushnick, owner of **Medway Oil & Propane**. "We have coal that is quite suitable for keeping people warm this winter — and also for filling stockings and decorating snowmen! We offer the best quality coal in the region."

### Even the Naughty Will Get Something!

In a telephone interview this week, Santa Claus elaborated further on his decision. "We know that **Medway Oil & Propane** has been offering high-quality Reading Anthracite coal to their customers since 1954," said Santa. "It was natural for me to select the region's best coal supplier to handle all of the MetroWest requests we get for a lump of coal." Based on Santa's happiness with **Medway Oil & Propane**, the "naughty and nice" will want to consider them for coal, fuel oil and propane service.



### One FREE Bag of Coal!

Homeowners who heat with coal are invited to receive a FREE bag of coal with any coal delivery before January 31, 2025. Call (508) 533-6561 or 1-800-649-5949. Anyone wanting a few free lumps of coal for stocking stuffers should call for details. Santa hastily ended his press conference to return to his shop in preparation for visiting the MetroWest area later this month.



# Nipmuc Regional High School hosts Climate Change Challenge kickoff for educators statewide

UPTON — Nipmuc Regional High School recently hosted a successful Climate Change Challenge kickoff event to train educators on how to engage K-12 students in climate change education and action.

The two-day event consisted of a series of sessions on Nov. 14 and Nov. 15. Speakers from various backgrounds presented their ideas, including sessions led by representatives from MaxIQ Space, GLOBE Program, Mass Audubon, Cooler Communities, Wade Institute for Science Education, Blue Hill Observatory, Climate Interactive, Resource Modeling Association, TERC, and the Nipmuc History Department. Educators from 43 school districts across Massachusetts attended the event.

The year-long program was developed by Nipmuc science teacher and 2024 Massachusetts STEM Teacher of the Year Jim Gorman with assistance from Nipmuc history teacher and 2024 Massachusetts History Teacher of the Year Darcy Daniels.

The Climate Change Challenge is designed to empower students of all ages with the knowledge and skills needed to address climate issues through hands-on experiments and cutting-edge technology alongside

their peers and experts. Every month throughout the school year, students and teachers will have check-ins and webinars with partnering organizations to continue their climate change education. Students will present their findings at a symposium at the end of the year.

On Nov. 14, keynote speaker Massachusetts Deputy Climate Chief Jonathan Schrag addressed the crowd, highlighting the observable changes in communities with rising temperatures, and how climate considerations need to be woven into all aspects of governance and planning.

"We have to balance hope with fear of what a climate catastrophe looks like," Schrag said. "We have the opportunity to bend the curve."

Elementary educators from school districts across the state started the conference with intensive climate change education training, focusing on age-appropriate ways to introduce young learners to environmental science and sustainability.

MaxIQ.Space led hands-on workshops where teachers learned to use specialized STEM kits to help students monitor and analyze their immediate environment, from measuring comfort levels in their



Students share their experiences with climate-related projects with educators at the Climate Change Challenge kickoff at Nipmuc Regional High School. Photo courtesy Mendon-Upton Regional School District

classrooms to exploring local microclimates. The Wade Institute engaged educators in an innovative engineering challenge about rising sea levels, where teachers designed and built model barriers to protect coastal cities — an activity they can readily adapt to their own classrooms.

Nipmuc students demonstrated

their civics projects that addressed environmental issues, discussed their own monitoring projects using MaxIQ.Space technology, and shared their experiences with climate-focused science and engineering initiatives.

The afternoon sessions featured NASA's GLOBE program, introducing creative approaches to engage young students in climate science. For upper elementary grades, educators discovered how their students could participate in real climate research through GLOBE's Urban Heat Island Campaign. The day concluded with Cooler Communities sharing their Energy Detectives program and grant opportunities, highlighting how even

the youngest learners can take meaningful action on climate change.

On Nov. 15, middle and high school educators learned about MaxIQ.Space's environmental monitoring technology and explored NASA's GLOBE citizen science protocols. Teachers discovered ways to track urban heat islands in the classroom, analyzed 139 years of weather data from Blue Hill Observatory, and used the En-ROADS climate solutions simulator to model different policy scenarios.

The training emphasized providing students with authentic, real-world learning experiences

**CLIMATE**

*continued on page 15*

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CLIMATE

continued from page 14

connected to their local communities. The interdisciplinary nature of climate education was also highlighted, from social studies teachers learning strategies to implement environmentally-focused student civic action projects, to math teachers exploring how climate change impacts endangered species through mathematical modeling.

TERC, Inc. and Mass Audubon hosted displays highlighting successful student-scientist partnerships, while Nipmuc students presented their innovative science, engineering, and civics projects addressing climate challenges. Several students also shared their experiences from climate-focused internships.

"I'm proud to share that the Massachusetts K-12 Climate Change Challenge is continuing to build momentum in its mission to empower educators, by giving them the tools they need to prepare students to understand and address climate challenges while developing cru-

cial STEM skills," said science teacher and Climate Change Challenge coordinator Jim Gorman. "Climate change is one of the most pressing issues of our time, and we as educators have the power to make an impact."

"We've developed this challenge to fit our district's "Portrait of a Learner" framework, which encourages our students to grow into solution-seeking, innovative, mindful, and collaborative global citizens," Mendon-Upton Regional School District Superintendent Maureen Cohen said. "We're beyond proud to share this initiative with other districts, and I look forward to seeing how educators adapt this program to address the effects of climate change, both locally and globally. I thank all of our partners, staff, and participants for making this event a resounding success. "

Community members interested in learning more about the Climate Change Challenge or supporting the initiative can contact Jim Gorman at jgorman@mursd.org, or visit www.massclimatechangechallenge.org.

# Mendon public safety log

## Calls between Oct. 26 and Nov. 23 included brush fires, fight

Between Oct. 26 and Nov. 23, the Mendon Police Department and Fire Department responded to hundreds of calls, most of which were related to motor vehicles including traffic stops, crashes, erratic operators, disabled motor vehicles, parking complaints, and lockouts.

Numerous other calls were related to 911 calls, alarms (fire, burglar, panic), road hazards (wires, etc.), animal issues, suspicious activity, noise complaints, document service, civil complaints, welfare checks, fraud, lost/found property, assisting citizens/public, and more.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Entries of note include:


- Oct. 26 at 10:53 p.m., Teresa Dr., noise complaint
- Oct. 27 at 9:48 a.m., Millville

- St., stolen vehicle
- Oct. 27 at 6:08 a.m., Hartford Ave. W., structure fire
- Oct. 31 at 1:54 a.m., Blackston St., assault
- Nov. 1 at 11:47 a.m., Vincent Rd., larceny
- Nov. 1 at 3:03 p.m., Blackstone St., odor investigation
- Nov. 2 at 5:01 p.m., Providence St., fraud
- Nov. 2 at 8:30 p.m., Elm St., brush fire
- Nov. 6 at 3:10 p.m., Washington St., brush fire
- Nov. 7 at 10:03 a.m., Warfield Rd., brush fire
- Nov. 10 at 9:54 a.m., Deer Hill Rd., brush fire
- Nov. 10 at 4:03 p.m., Millville St., brush fire
- Nov. 14 at 12:08 p.m., Bates St., brush fire
- Nov. 14 at 3:04 p.m., Kinsley Ln., burglary
- Nov. 15 at 9:14 p.m., Northbridge St., brush fire



- Nov. 15 at 9:47 p.m., Nipmuc Dr., fight
- Nov. 18 at 9:56 p.m., Warfield Rd., information
- Nov. 22 at 4:04 p.m., Bates St., smoke investigation
- Nov. 23 at 3:48 p.m., Hartford Ave. W., brush fire
- Nov. 23 at 6:15 p.m., Uxbridge Rd., smoke investigation

Source: www.mendonpolice.com

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**THAYER ROAD**

*continued from page 1*

funding,” Mazar said. “The \$1.8 million will be used to purchase the conservation restriction and all the due diligence that goes along with a project like this.”

Mazar credits the Metacomet Land Trust for providing technical assistance throughout the grant process.

In September, the state awarded more than \$27 million to 59 grantees to develop parks and protect conservation areas. Read the full list of awardees at [bit.ly/EEAgrantsSept2024](http://bit.ly/EEAgrantsSept2024).

In its press release, the EEA said, “This [Mendon] property is surrounded by approximately 1,000 acres of undeveloped, mostly-forested land. This property contains two vernal pools and abuts the Mill River. The property is NHESP [Mass-Wildlife’s Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program] designated BioMap Core Habitat, and Rare Species Core with good habitat for the Eastern Box Turtle and a variety of freshwater species, as well. Conservation of this land will also contribute to protecting the largest drinking water aquifer in Mendon.”

Various parties own the 1,000 acres surrounding The Oak and Wall Farm Preserve, and a large portion of that land is under Chapter 61A which gives the land temporary protection and the town the right of first refusal if landowners decide to sell.

“There will be public access to the 201 acres through trails, but wildlife has access to all the acreage,” said Mazar, adding future trails “can be enjoyed with passive recreation activities that will not infringe on sensitive wildlife habitat, especially where animals nest or breed.”

Motorized vehicles will be prohibited.

Mazar credits Mendon voters for having the foresight to protect The Oak and Wall Farm. “These special properties help to make Mendon a very desirable place to live. With so many properties in our area being clearcut, paved and developed, it is important to protect these unique landscapes which enhance the beauty, history, rural character and quality of life in Mendon.”

The Town of Mendon and



**The Oak and Wall Farm Preserve in Mendon was one of 59 grantees to receive a grant from the state to develop parks and protect conservation areas. This 201-acre parcel on Thayer Road will be preserved for wildlife habitat, public trails, and aquifer protection. Courtesy photo**

Metacomet Land Trust will oversee the property. Mendon also has Volunteer Land Stewards who help maintain open space properties in Mendon. They build trails, add signage, remove invasive plants, provide maintenance, and enjoy the property. Volunteers are needed to steward The Oak and Wall

Farm Preserve.

Mazar said, “We do not have any volunteers assigned to this property yet, so if anyone is interested in being a Volunteer Land Steward, they can send an email to the

Mendon Land Use Committee at [landusecomm@mendonma.gov](mailto:landusecomm@mendonma.gov).”



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***What is a permanent conservation restriction?***

A permanent conservation restriction (CR) does not allow any development and requires the land be kept in its natural state in perpetuity. The Town of Mendon is purchasing the conservation restriction or "buying" the building rights. The property is monitored by a third party (usually a land trust or non-profit land protection organization) to make sure the conservation restriction is forever followed by the landowner. Metacomet Land Trust and the Town of Mendon will jointly hold this CR. CRs usually allow passive recreation (hiking, cross-country skiing, non-motorized bikes, etc.).

***What does a CR mean for The Oak and Wall Farm Preserve?***

This property will allow hunting with permission of the landowner and agriculture on a portion of the property. There will be public access to enjoy the beautiful property once the trails are created, which will be a volunteer effort. It will protect a very important medium yield aquifer that provides clean water to many of the wells in Mendon.

Clearcutting to build a subdivision, lawn fertilizers, pesticides and the impervious surfaces of driveways and roads, could have contaminated this aquifer, whereas trees and plants filter the water before it gets to the aquifer. Keeping the forests and fields intact will help provide climate change resiliency through ecosystem services such as erosion control, flood protection, natural cooling, absorption of carbon dioxide and release of oxygen into the air.

**Anne Mazar, Chair**

*Mendon Land/Energy Use Committee*

*Mendon Community Preservation Committee*



# UniBank wins four prestigious banking awards from Banker & Tradesman publication

WHITINSVILLE, MA – UniBank, the largest Mutual Community Bank headquartered in Central Massachusetts, recently received four GOLD awards from the Banker & Tradesman (B&T) publication.

Each year, B&T runs their “Best Of” awards program which asks customers who they think are the best financial institutions in Massachusetts with a range of specific product and service categories to nominate within. For 2024, UniBank received the highest award, “GOLD”, in four categories: Best Community Bank, Best Lending Institution, Best HELOC Provider, and Best Purchase Mortgage Provider.

Michael Welch, CEO of UniBank, said, “When we win awards that are based on the loyalty of our customers and the service that we provide to them, they are extremely satisfying. For over 154 years, our mission has been to serve the local communities for the betterment of people, businesses and non-profits. Beyond the banking



transactions, the foundation of each relationship we engage in allows us to tailor our services to the needs of our individual customers. Banking local, with an established locally based bank empowers our communities to thrive. We thank our customers who voted for us as their loyalty and trust is what propels us to be the best.”

UniBank is headquartered in Whitinsville, MA., with assets of \$2.6 billion as of June 30, 2024. A full-service, mutually owned community bank, UniBank has branches in Central Massachusetts and the MetroWest region of Massachusetts. UniBank is dedicated to contributing to the overall quality of life and economic health of the communities it serves, while maintaining an elevated level of financial soundness and integrity. UniBank is an Equal Housing Lender and Member FDIC. NMLS #583135. The company website is www.unibank.com.

# BVT Class of 2025, 78 Adams Scholar Recipients

### Earn Option to Advance Career Training at MA State College or University

UPTON – The John and Abigail Adams Scholarship is a merit-based program that provides tuition at a Massachusetts state college or university. 78 Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School seniors are the proud recipients of an Adams Scholarship. The award allows these students an option to further their vocational and career training with additional education, advanced training, and credentials.

The first-time score on a high school MCAS exam determines eligibility for an Adams Scholarship. Adams Scholars receive free tuition for up to eight semesters of

undergraduate education at a Massachusetts public college or university, renewable for eight consecutive semesters or four years. Recipients must use the tuition credit in the first fall semester following their high school graduation and maintain a GPA of 3.0 or better.

The following local members of the Class of 2025 have earned a John and Abigail Adams Scholarship:

#### From Upton

Samantha Carroll, *Information Technology*; Kylie French, *Painting & Design*; Cassidy Lyon, *Health Services*; Harmony Melendez-Torres, *Biotechnology*; Ryan Poirier, *Advanced*

*Manufacturing*; and John Simas, *Electronics*.

*About Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School:*

Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT) serves the towns of Bellingham, Blackstone, Douglas, Grafton, Hopedale, Mendon, Milford, Millbury, Millville, Northbridge, Sutton, Upton, and Uxbridge. Located in the heart of the Blackstone Valley, BVT creates a positive learning community that prepares students for personal and professional success in an internationally competitive society through a fusion of rigorous vocational, technical, and academic skills.

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SPORTS

# Valley Tech outlasts Nipmuc in holiday thriller

## Change of venue does not dampen rivalry matchup

By Chris Villani

The 14th installment of the Thanksgiving rivalry between Blackstone Valley Tech and Nipmuc saw a new venue and date for the game. With inclement weather in the forecast for Thanksgiving morning, the two teams tangled on Thanksgiving Eve on the turf field at Milford High.

But playing in a different location did nothing to lessen the enthusiasm for the fans supporting the two Upton schools, and they turned in a wild performance that ended with Valley Tech coming from behind to win 35-31.

“It was an excellent game,” said BVT Head Coach Anthony Landini. “We had a really big

crowd, and it was great for the fans because it was back and forth the whole game.”

Valley Tech scored with 30 seconds left in the game, down by three, to secure the win. Senior Jeremiah Thomas scored three touchdowns for the Beavers. Senior quarterback Alex Burgos scored from one yard out to account for the game winner.

The Burgos touchdown answered a touchdown by Nipmuc junior QB Josh Giancola, whose touchdown had given the Warriors the edge in the seesaw battle.



VS



“Offensively, it was a big day all around,” Landini said. “It was a highly intense offensive back and one of those where it felt like whoever had the ball last was going to win.”

Giancola added three touchdown passes to Logan De-Marzo. Nipmuc led for much of the game, but Valley Tech senior captain Alex Vosburgh gave his team its first lead of the night.

BVT finishes the season 6-5 with the victory, while Nipmuc drops to 4-7. The Beavers improved to 10-4 in the holiday

series. With the two schools separated by just a couple of football fields, they usually warm up on their respective fields and then the road team simply walks across Pleasant Street for the kickoff. The teams had to take a bus this time around, but the game was no less special.

“You could play the game in the parking lot, I don’t think it matters where we play, it’s just a matter of getting on the field and playing,” Landini said. “It’s a culmination of what you learned. You play as a team, you see some of the young kids coming back make some big plays, and it’s really a stepping-stone for both teams going into next season.”

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SPORTS

# Nipmuc girls soccer captures state title

**Warriors win first championship in 10 Years**

By Chris Villani

Kyah Montano scored more than 100 goals in her Nipmuc career, but none more significant than her tally against Medfield in the Division III state championship game that gave the Nipmuc Regional Warriors a 1-0 victory and the title.

“Every game was tough, every team played us tough, but we were resilient,” Head Coach Steve Khoury said. “The girls worked their butts off.”

Nipmuc did not suffer a loss after the second game of the season and finished with a 21-1-1 mark overall.

Khoury said Anya Montano was a huge piece of the puzzle after being moved to a defensive midfielder role to help solidify the defense. Montano’s conversion on a corner kick helped Nipmuc beat Norwell in the semifinals. Abby Mullins stepped up considerably as well and picked up an assist on the state title-winning goal.

Lyla Hill and Madelyn Weibe formed what Khoury described as a “great partnership” on the field.

“They read each other so well,” he said. “And they read the game so well.”

On defense, Riley Restic, a captain along with the Montano sisters and goalkeeper Mia Herron, was a defensive stalwart.

She marked Dover-Sherborn’s top player, a talented attacker with the ability to beat multiple defenders, and shut her down to help Nipmuc get to the Final Four. Herron, one of the top keepers in the state, “had to show it during the last two games” against Norwell and Medfield, her coach said.

Young players contributed for Nipmuc as well, including Lily Pereira and Cate Tengler, the latter of whom was the second-leading scorer during the regular season. Outside backs Julia Lenfest and Emma Watts turned in stellar seasons for the Warriors.

But at the head of the pack was Kyah Montano, who will be playing for High Point next year and whose 111 goals set a new program scoring record.

“She will go down as one of the best ever at Nipmuc, especially after bringing home a state championship,” Khoury said. “I think she stepped it up even more this year than in years past. She really put us on her shoulders, she wanted to win this thing.”

Nipmuc won back-to-back state titles in girls soccer in 2005 and 2006 and last won it all back in 2014. To get the program back to the promised land was meaningful for the players.

“They worked hard all season



Nipmuc celebrates after winning its first day title in a decade. Photo source: Nipmuc Athletic Director Chris Schmidt

long and you could see the elation at the end of the game,” Khoury said. “It’s a huge accomplishment for them, for the school, for the community, for everybody.”

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