



Santa and the Grinch will be traveling through Grafton neighborhoods on Saturday, Dec. 21 from 2-6 p.m. to collect presents for Toys for Tots.

## Blackstone Heritage Corridor Honors Volunteers and Supporters as 'Champions of the Blackstone'

The Blackstone Heritage Corridor, a nonprofit collaborating with community partners to provide strong leadership to preserve, promote and celebrate the Blackstone Valley's resources for current and future generations, held its 2024 "Champions of the Blackstone" awards reception to recognize dedicated volunteers and recipients of the John H.

### Suzanne Buchanan Volunteer of the Year Award

Phil Johanson, of Sutton, earned the Suzanne Buchanan Volunteer of the Year Award, recognizing his role as the Trail Ambassador leading hikes in the Massachusetts section of the Corridor. Buchanan had served as the volunteer program coordinator for 23 years.

each honored as recipients of the John H. Chafee Leadership Award, recognizing individuals who have worked on projects that promote cultural heritage, environmental conservation, economic development, and the quality of life in the Blackstone River Valley. The award honors the late senator's legacy of making environmental matters a priority, including successful

## Grafton's Business Scene

BY CHRISTINE GALEONE

The late singer and actress Dale Evans once said, "Christmas, my child, is love in action." It's a simple but profound observation that many people would agree with.

It's also one that reflects this season of giving. Thankfully, the season is alive and well among Grafton residents, businesses and organizations.

One very distinctive person who's known for spreading Christmas cheer is Santa. On Saturday, Dec. 21, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., the Grafton Fire Department – which has been spreading lots of joy itself by collecting toys for Toys for Tots – will once again escort Santa and his buddy, the Grinch, through neighborhoods in Grafton. A tracking link will be available once they set off on their journey.

The Grafton Police Department has also been bringing joy to kids by continuing to help an area nonprofit. Last month, the GPD held

its annual Fill the Cruiser event at Homefield Credit Union. The toy drive benefitted Toys for Kids and Teens, the nonprofit run by Blackstone Valley veterans that provides new toys and bikes for area families in need during the holidays. Additionally, the GPD recently raised \$1,500 for Project New Hope Inc., a nonprofit that serves veterans.

Like Homefield Credit Union, Highfields Golf & Country Club also helped kids in need by hosting a toy drive. It recently hosted the 12th annual Santapalooza concert and a separate buffet to collect toys and donations for Toys for Tots.

Savers Bank also helped bring joy to local kids in need. It partnered with the Grafton Food Bank to collect new toys for kids in the area.

Recently, Gaudette Insurance Agency and UniBank were two of the sponsors the 2nd Annual

**GRAFTON**  
continued on page 2



Blackstone Heritage Corridor Executive Director Devon Kurtz (right) stands alongside the 2024 "Champions of the Blackstone," who were recognized for their efforts as volunteers and leaders at a Dec. 5 reception in Whitinsville.

Chafee Leadership Award.

"Our dedicated supporters and volunteers are the fabric of the Corridor and play a vital role in the preservation of its historic, natural and recreational resources," said Blackstone Heritage Corridor Executive Director Devon Kurtz. "Their commitment has improved the quality of life for the communities within the Corridor and we are deeply thankful for their service and leadership."

The awards reception, sponsored by Rushford & Sons Brewery of Upton, was held Dec. 5 at the Singh Performance Center at Alternatives' Whitin Mill in Whitinsville.

"Suzanne showed us that the natural and cultural resources in the Blackstone Heritage Corridor can be the basis for exciting recreation and a vibrant quality of life," said Dennis Rice, Chair of the Board of Directors. "Phil Johanson realizes this vision on every hike, carefully researching each site, developing descriptions of landmarks, identifying guest speakers and warmly welcoming participants to each outing."

### John H. Chafee Leadership Awards

Bruce Curliss, of North Providence, R.I., and Richard Keene, of North Smithfield, R.I., were

advocacy for the preservation and development of the Corridor.

The National Park Service nominated Curliss, noting his advocacy for indigenous rights and environmental stewardship. Curliss serves as the waterways advocate for the Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band and executive director of the Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone. His most prominent project includes writing and narrating "Kittacuck Speaks," a film that brings to life the indigenous perspectives of the

**HERITAGE**  
continued on page 2

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## HERITAGE

continued from page 1

Blackstone River.

Keene was nominated by Jeff Harris and Elizabeth Faricy of the North Smithfield Heritage Association, where Keene has been president since 2018. They noted that Keene has embodied the qualities of outstanding leadership, and through the association has advanced cultural heritage through cemetery restoration projects, historical preservation, and the dutiful protection of natural areas.

### Student of the Year Awards

Jack Carlin, of Uxbridge, and William Dempsey, of Framingham, earned the Student of the Year Award, recognizing outstanding students who have worked on projects that promote cultural heritage and environmental conservation in the Valley.

Carlin and Dempsey were nominated by Ranger Viola Bramel of West Hill Dam for executing Eagle Scout projects in the park

## GRAFTON

continued from page 1

Blackstone Valley Festival of Trees that was held in Northbridge. The free event benefited the Blackstone Valley Emergency Shelter, which helps the homeless in the Blackstone Valley.

The Grafton Country Store, the Grafton Common gift shop, has been helping regional veterans. It's selling tiny hand-knitted winter

hats to benefit Veterans, Inc., a Worcester-based nonprofit that provides a vast array of services for veterans throughout New England.

### Partner of the Year Awards

East Providence Historical Society and The Geezers Trail Crew each earned the Partner of the Year Award, recognizing outstanding partner organizations that have worked on projects that promote cultural heritage, environmental conservation, and the quality of life in the Valley.

### Volunteers-in-Parks Recognition

The event also celebrated volunteers with the National Park Service's Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) program for dedicating over \$1 million in service and 31,233 volunteer hours over the past year.

Millbury Street Elementary School recently held the school's annual Pajama Drive. The successful drive, which is connected to the national nonprofit Pajama Program, collected 520 pairs of pajamas (which are paired with donated books from Scholastic) that will bring warmth and cheer to homeless and low income children

throughout Worcester County.

The VIP program, a program of the National Park Service and administered by the Blackstone Heritage Corridor, is made up of over 250 volunteers that share their time and expertise with visitors throughout the Valley.

Park volunteers who serve 250 hours earn a complimentary America the Beautiful Pass, providing them free access to more than 2,000 federal recreation sites. Nineteen of BHC's volunteers earned a 2024 pass: Sue Ciaramicoli, Richard Keene, John Marsland, Paul Schaefer, Al Menard, Keith Hainley, Betty Mencucci, Bruce DeVault, Al Salemi, Brian Garrett, Charlie Wilson, Cheryl Thompson, Justine Brewer, Christine Watkins, Kim Walker, Pat Giles, Bill Ela, Norma Bedrosian, and Ken Ethier.

Volunteer milestones were also celebrated. Those earning a five-year pin include Bill Beitler, Jeffrey Brodeur, Abigail Epplett, William Marengo, Skye Pechie, and Steve Pechie. Justine Brewer earned a 15-year pin, Susan Shea earned a 25-year pin, and Val Stegmoen earned a 30-year pin.

By participating in this season of giving, we receive feelings of comfort and joy that can carry us into the New Year. Likewise, experiencing and appreciating the beauty of Christmas that Dale Evans spoke of could benefit us all. Happy holidays!

Contact Christine with your business news items at [cmgaleone15@gmail.com](mailto:cmgaleone15@gmail.com).

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# UniBank – Woven into the Fabric of the Blackstone Valley Community for over 150 Years

BY JENNIFER RUSSO

The history of banking goes back to ancient times, as a way of securing the funds of the community, but also strategically using assets to build it to a greater potential. More than just a system of dollars and cents, banking was really about ensuring that the people had what they needed to thrive, investing in the local economy and providing stability through jobs and other area programs.

Now, with more modern systems in place, many banks have seemingly lost that original idea – that sense of community and an individualized touch. UniBank stands apart in this regard, with their priority being local families, businesses, non-profits, and employees.

“The vast majority of our employees live in the Blackstone Valley area, and we believe in supporting our local residents and merchants because that is who our employees are and who they engage with in their daily lives. Wherever an institution’s headquarters is tends to be where the focus and attention is paid,” shares UniBank CEO Michael Welch.

“We are intimately involved with

## Business Spotlight

the community we are in. With our headquarters right here in the Blackstone Valley, our future focus is always going to be here, even as we expand. We are very mindful in that we do not want to become a “big bank” headquartered in a large metro area. We want to support those living and working in our neighborhoods.”

UniBank, which has been serving the community for over 150 years, takes pride in being one of the bigger employers in the area, while embracing the personalized attention and recognition that every customer is important – from a family opening a first checking account for their child to a business looking for a \$20 million construction loan. They enjoy getting to know the people they serve and growing with them, holding fast to the belief that true success is shared.

“As people bank with us, ev-



erything goes right back into the community. We are not considered a stock bank, so we don’t have an obligation to serve any shareholders – our mission has only ever been to serve this area. We stand by the idea that by doing good, everybody does well,” says Welch.

And they certainly do good. Along with offering various types of banking for individuals and businesses, investment guidance, competitive loan rates, and IRAs, UniBank is a supporter of the Whitin Community Center in Whitinsville, Uxbridge’s First Night celebrations, local homeless shel-

ters, churches of all denominations, local libraries, The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, youth athletic organizations, and more. They are also a founding partner of the Worcester Red Sox (WooSox).

UniBank will soon be opening a new full-service branch across from Polar Park in Worcester, so they can help provide services to those in an area that is in an era of revitalization, fostering even more growth opportunities there.

Being native to the Valley area himself, Welch considers the bank and everyone it serves a family.

“Because we are local, people

have direct access to the decision-makers at the bank, which I know is unusual, but I really think it makes all the difference,” he shares. “We live here too, and we care about everything our customers care about. We also want to see our community thrive and we are extremely proud to empower everyone to achieve their goals, whatever that looks like for them.”

Learn more about UniBank, their mission, community outreach, and the services they provide by visiting their website at <https://www.unibank.com/>

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# Must Be Santa!

On Sunday, December 8 Grafton residents gathered at spots all over town to Celebrate the Holidays as part of the community's annual tradition run by the Recreation Department.

Merrymakers could shop, join in activities, eat or be entertained at 37 different Frosty Stops. They included businesses, churches, museums and civic buildings like Grafton High School, public library,

police and fire departments.

Of course, the highlight of the day was the arrival of the Jolly Old Elf himself – Santa Claus- pulling up to Grafton Common in a fire truck.



Clockwise from left: After climbing down from the Fire Department's Tower 1, Santa Claus extends a warm greeting on a cold and blustery night; Girl Scouts entertain the crowd on the Common with holiday songs; Upon a signal from Santa, the Gazebo is alight with holiday cheer. Patty Roy photos

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# When is a good time for a Roth conversion?



Tim Furbush, CFA

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In life, you often get second chances — and the same is true with investing. To illustrate: You might not have been able to contribute to a Roth IRA during your working years due to your income level, but you may get that opportunity as you near retirement, or even when you are retired — through a Roth conversion.

Why is a Roth IRA desirable for some people? Here

are the key benefits:

- **Tax-free withdrawals** — You put in after-tax dollars to a Roth IRA, so you can withdraw your contributions at any time, free of taxes and penalties. And if you've had your account for at least five years and you're at least 59½, you can also withdraw your earnings free of taxes.
- **No RMDs** — With a traditional IRA, you'll have to start taking withdrawals — called required minimum distributions, or RMDs — when you turn 73, or 75 if you were born in 1960 or later. But there's no RMD requirement with a Roth IRA — you can essentially leave the money intact as long as you like.
- **Tax-free legacy for your heirs** — When your heirs inherit your Roth IRA, they can withdraw the contributions without paying taxes

or penalties, and if the account has been open at least five years, they can also withdraw earnings tax free.

But even if you were aware of these advantages, you might not have been able to invest in a Roth IRA for much of your life. For one thing, you might have earned too much money — a Roth IRA, unlike a traditional IRA, has income limits. Also, a Roth IRA has only been around since 1998, so, in the previous years, you were limited to a traditional IRA.

As you approach retirement, though, you might start thinking of just how much you'd like to benefit from a Roth IRA. And you can do so by converting your traditional IRA to a Roth. While this sounds simple, there's a major caveat: taxes. You'll be taxed on the amount in pre-tax dollars you contributed to a traditional IRA and then converted to a Roth IRA. (If

you have both pre- and after-tax dollars in your traditional IRA, the taxable amount is based on the percentage of pre-tax dollars.)

If you have large amounts in a traditional IRA, the tax bill on conversion can be significant. The key to potentially lowering this tax bill is *timing*. Generally speaking, the lower your income in a given year, the more favorable it is for you to convert to a Roth IRA. So, for example, if you have already retired, but have not started collecting RMDs, your income may be down.

Timing also comes into play with the financial markets. When the market is going through a decline, and the value of your traditional IRA drops, you could convert the same number of shares of the underlying investments and receive a lower tax bill or convert more shares of these investments for what would have been the same tax bill.

Finally, you could lower your tax bill in any given year by stretching out your Roth IRA conversions over several years, rather than doing it all at once.

You'll want to consult with your tax advisor before embarking on this conversion — but if it's appropriate for your situation, you could find that owning a Roth IRA can benefit you and your family for years to come.

Contact Tim for assistance with your personal finances.

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# Clang, clang, clang went the trolley!

On Sunday, December 8, residents lined up for courtesy rides to more than 40 stops around town as part of the 25th Annual Millbury Chain of Lights holiday celebration.

The day was gloomy, but spirits were high as people found plenty of good eats, songs of good cheer and lots of good times for the kiddies with visits from Santa and Mrs. Claus, the Grinch and even Mr. Vinny the Bubble Guy.




Left, Archer Reed, age 2, meets the Grinch.

Below, Kenzie Wanjau and her parents take in a visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus at the Asa Waters Mansion.



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# Willard House & Clock Museum Announces Recipient for the 2024 David G. Gow Memorial Scholarship for Horology

Nationwide annual scholarship program dedicated to professional careers in clockmaking and conservation. A third clockmaker joins the Gow community.

Establishing a long-term plan to support the study of horology (the study of time and timekeepers) and assist those working toward a professional career in clockmaking and restoration, the family of former Willard House & Clock Museum conservator, David G. Gow and the museum is pleased to announce the 2024 Gow scholarship recipient.

with a brick-and-mortar business. She has apprenticed under several clockmakers around the country.

When asked why she moved to clockmaking, she said, "Unlike pianos, clocks feature a nearly endless variety of mechanical designs and technology. There are many different occupations in creating a clock, from metalsmiths and dial painters to cabinet makers." Hohman continues, "I may never run out of new facets to explore within horology. [The] overlap from musicians to horologists is simply fascinating."

Supporting a specialized trade and growing a community of clockmakers

"We celebrate Jennifer's entry into the Gow scholarship community," says Callum Gow of the scholarship review board. "Her growing body of technical knowledge and experience owning a new clockmaking shop makes her uniquely qualified as a scholarship recipient." Callum continues, "we look forward to hearing about her success and challenges in her career."

"Today, the Gow family with the collaboration of the museum trustees and staff, established the memorial scholarship to help worthy students obtain this specialized training. The details:

- Any US-based student that has begun the journey into the profession of clockmaking qualifies.

- \$5000 will be awarded and the money may be used attend advanced courses provided by various clock and watch making

schools across the country.

Applications for the 2025 scholarship are due by November 4, 2025. The recipient will be announced on December 16, 2025.

## WILLARD HOUSE

*continued on page 8*

### Introducing Jennifer Hohman



Jennifer Hohman of Springboro, Ohio was among a select group of applicants competing for the scholarship. Jennifer transitioned from a 15-year career as a Registered Piano Technician and piano teacher to a full-time clockmaker

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# \$800 in Meals Fed Veterans and Families This Holiday Season Through Centerline Mechanical and Project New Hope, Inc.'s Food Drive

The second annual Thanksgiving Food Drive, organized by Centerline Mechanical LLC, a local full-service HVAC company in Hopedale, surpassed its goal of providing Thanksgiving meals to Veterans and their families. In

support of Project New Hope, Inc., local contributors donated food items to help the organization continue its mission of assisting Veterans and their families. Project New Hope proudly serves members of the Army, Navy, Air

Force, Marines, Coast Guard, and Reserves. Last year, the food drive provided over 200 individual food items. This year, \$800 in meals were collected which greatly surpasses prior efforts. The students and faculty at Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT), along with the rest of the community, helped to make this large donation possible.

Project New Hope had requested specific items to create a warm Thanksgiving meal for Veterans to enjoy with their families. Each year they hold the "Turkey for Vets" program to give back to the Veterans who have served this country, as well as their families, by providing them with a Thanksgiving meal. Generous donations out-poured from the community and items included cranberry sauce, stuffing, canned green beans and carrots, dinner rolls, apple juice, squash, gravy, and 5 lb bags of potatoes. Additionally, \$20 supermarket gift cards were donated, allowing Veterans to select a turkey, ham, fish or other item to complete their Thanksgiving dinner.

"Project New Hope Inc.'s 'Turkey for Vets' program is more than just a holiday meal—it's a way to honor and support veterans and their families during a time of financial uncertainty. By providing traditional Thanksgiving essentials and gift cards, we aim to ease the burden for those who



Food collected for Veteran's Thanksgiving meals

have served, ensuring that they can enjoy a warm and meaningful holiday," said William H. Moore, Project New Hope Inc. Executive Director, "In a year where inflation has made basic needs harder to meet, we are proud to stand by our veterans, offering both practical support and a message of gratitude for their service and sacrifices."

In light of "Turkey for Vets" program, Centerline Mechanical was eager to help the organization with this mission. Julian Picard, owner of Centerline Mechanical, is a BVT alumni who graduated from the school's Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) program.

"Our goal is to play a part in

making this Thanksgiving the most enjoyable as possible for those who have dedicated all that they had to protect this country," said Centerline Mechanical LLC owner Julian Picard. "Thank you to everyone who contributed to this food drive, together we were able to serve those who have served."

This collective effort not only honors the sacrifices of our Veterans, but also reinforces the importance of community and gratitude during this season of giving.

For more information on Project New Hope, Inc. and their mission to serve Veterans and their families, visit [www.projectnewhopema.org](http://www.projectnewhopema.org).

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## WILLARD HOUSE

continued from page 7

To learn more about the Gow Memorial Scholarship for Horology, go to: <https://willardhouse.org/david-gow-scholarship>

[org/david-gow-scholarship](https://willardhouse.org/david-gow-scholarship)

To donate to the Gow Scholarship, call the museum at 508-839-3500; mail a check to the museum or hit the DONATION button on the Willard House & Clock Museum homepage but-

ton at <https://willardhouse.org>. Please indicate the donation is for the Gow Scholarship.

Located at 11 Willard Street in North Grafton, MA, Willard House and Clock Museum exhibits more than 90 Willard clocks in the birthplace and original workshop of the Willard clockmakers, along with family portraits, furnishings and other family heirlooms. The work of all three generations of Willard clockmakers, focusing on the famed brothers, Simon Willard and Aaron Willard are displayed. The Museum tour includes the original Willard House built in 1718, the original 1766 clock-making workshop, and three modern galleries.

Willard is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Visit the Willard House and Clock Museum website at [www.willardhouse.org](http://www.willardhouse.org)

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# Christmas Village delights all ages at Asa Waters Mansion

Armand White was the benevolent keeper of the Christmas Kingdom on the third floor of the Asa Waters Mansion. White's late wife, Dee, collected the dozens of themed houses, carousels,

lighthouses and figurines that are so impressive they have earned a permanent home in the Mansion, in a room named for Dee White. "I come up here and kind of babysit it," White said. "I let the

kids touch, I don't care. Nobody's going to notice."

He invites young Aubrey to hide a snowman and she carefully picks out the front yard of a house to place him.

He invites the kids to hide a snowman and they love it, he said. He recalls a family of brothers who used to rush to hide a black and white Dalmation figurine.

"They're probably grown up now, but I still can't find it," he said.

At the age of 82, White continues to cherish the event in the historic building where he spent 27 years on a task force dedicated to its restoration.

"This is one of the happiest days of the year for me," he said, adding that the happy days don't happen so often since his wife died. "I get rejuvenated and I'm glad I came. I talk to people, the kids are so happy and it makes me happy. Everybody needs that."



## Enrollment Now Open for Massachusetts Home Energy Assistance Program

Eligible Massachusetts households can now apply for financial assistance for the 2024-2025 heating season

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities today announced that the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) enrollment period for the 2024-2025 winter heating season will open on October 1. This critical program provides financial relief to eligible households to help them pay their winter heating bills, ensuring they can keep their homes safe and warm during the colder months.

HEAP is a free, statewide resource that assists eligible renters and homeowners by paying a portion of their winter heating bills directly to their heating companies. Starting Oct. 1, homeowners and renters can apply online or through local administering agencies across the state. The assistance period

runs from Nov. 1, 2024, to April 30, 2025. HEAP offers grants that do not need to be repaid; however, households must meet specific eligibility requirements to qualify.

"No resident should have to worry about heating their home during the winter," said Secretary of Housing and Livable Communities Ed Augustus. "With high costs continuing to strain household finances, the Home Energy Assistance Program is more critical than ever. We urge anyone in need of heating assistance to explore their eligibility by applying online or visiting the nearest administering agency. Please share this valuable information with loved ones or neighbors who could benefit from this support during the colder months."

Eligibility is determined by several factors, including household size and the combined gross annual income of residents 18 and older. Qualifying households, including those with the cost of heat included in the rent, can receive assistance for all heating sources, including oil, electricity, natural gas, propane, kerosene, wood and coal. Households do not need to be on public assistance or have unpaid heating bills to qualify.

For more information find your local HEAP agency.

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## Prayer



Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil (intention), Amen.

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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## BVT Regional Announces John and Abigail Adams Scholars

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



Congratulations, BVT Class of 2025 Adams Scholars!

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 members of the Class of 2025 have earned a John and Abigail Adams Scholarship (students are listed alphabetically by town):

### Bellingham

Kiele Sarnie, Construction Technology.

### Blackstone

Braedon Ando, Culinary Arts; Nathaniel Cook, Biotechnology; and Keira Kelliher, Health Services.

### Douglas

Michaela Boulette, Biotechnology; Haley Chamberlain, Cosmetology; Conner Champagne, Information Technology; Justin Dooner, Engineering; Tyler Grybowski, Information Technology; Emily Muniz, Engineering; Om Patel, Engineering; Liam Peach, Multimedia Communications; Samantha Pinto, Health Services; and Willow Windoloski, Engineering.

### Grafton

Audrey Bell, Engineering; Raghav Dave, Electronics; Nora Iadarola, Multimedia Communications; Christopher Joiner, Biotechnology; Keyara Jones, Health Services; Ella McCann, Advanced Manufacturing; Owen O'Packi,

## SCHOLARS

continued on page 11

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**SCHOLARS**

*continued from page 10*

Multimedia Communications; Brodie Remillard, Electronics; Joshua Siefert, Engineering; Carly Simpson, Health Services; and Daniel Warfield, Electronics.

**Hopedale**

Kallie Allen, Biotechnology; Nathaniel Allen, Information Technology; Anthony Bucchino, Engineering; Eric Deppe, Engineering; Connor Griffin, Electrical; Gabriella Griffin, Health Services; Riley Jackson, Information Technology; Jacob Noble, Engineering; Declan Reilly, Information Technology; and Christopher Russell, Biotechnology.

**Milford**

Nicolas Alvarez-Benincasa, Construction Technology; Lacey Coffman, Multimedia Communications; Gregory D’Orazio, Advanced Manufacturing; Adriana Hawkins, Culinary Arts; Matthew Hunter, Biotechnology; Charbel Jebara, Electronics; Ryan McGuire, HVAC/R; Jack Nevens, Information Technology; and Joel Puri, Engineering.

**Millbury**

Wyatt Darrell, Engineering; Mason Diosomito, Engineering; Joshua Gould, Information Technology; Jayden Quang, Engineering; and Luke Rutkiewicz, Engineering

**Millville**

Julia Trujillo, Health Service

**Northbridge**

Ava Bates, Cosmetology; Steven Caya, Engineering; Sosie DerKosrobian, Health Services; Zabel DerKosrobian, Information Technology; Conner Gomez, Engineering; Mara Keane, Electronics; Dylan Leeds, Engineering; Haley Marston, Dental Assisting; Markas Petone, Health Services; and Alexa Seward, Engineering.

**Sutton**

Jeffrey Brooks, Electronics; Emma Cliadakis, Culinary Arts; Colton Corash, Electronics; Morgan Gervais, Advanced Manufacturing; Benjamin Hicks, Electronics; William Kelly, Construction Technology; Caroline Martin, Engineering; and Jacob Rajotte, Information Technology

**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.

**Uxbridge**

Alexi Cox, Electronics; Samantha Fairhurst, Health Services; Dylan Ryan, Engineering; and Mikaela Swanson, Biotechnology.

*About Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT):*

Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School serves the towns of Bellingham, Blackstone, Douglas, Grafton, Hopedale, Mendon, Millford, 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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LIVING WITH LUKE

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# Luke's Friends

BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

The Golden Retriever is a breed known to have lots of friends. Luke Valentino is no exception. Intelligent and social, he craved interaction at an early age. He'd sit in the front yard, a live teddy bear, and watch the big dogs stroll by. "You look like my biological mother. Sort of. Want to come over?"

I imagined how difficult it must have been for Luke to leave his litter mates—to then sense that something was missing. His new bed smelled of lavender. His new home had comfy rugs. His new parents had gentle voices and soft hands. Still, something wasn't right. He nuzzled his blankets and whimpered. "Where are my sisters and brothers? I'm lonely!"

My heart broke.

Our plan was to house two pups following Lincoln's passing. I even wrote a story titled "Two in the Queue." I wanted to double the dog fun. Then something changed. I blame a 2 am. incident that happened in the backyard during an icy March night. Luke zoomed away from me to steal another piece of mulch. I lunged for him and ended up pulling a groin muscle. I hobbled back inside with a sore crotch and naughty pup. Something inside me stirred. I was too old for two pups. On the bright side, memories of Luke's siblings began to fade. Crocuses bloomed. Luke lifted his leg to pee over them and mark his territory. "Luke was here." The grass truly was greener at his new home—especially where

he watered it!

My pup may not have a sibling (yet) but he certainly has a lot of friends, credit to watching and studying them as a puppy. As though humbled by their greatness, he'd lie down and wait for them to respond to his request to meet and greet. "Are you my biological mother? I was separated from my parents at birth."

Weeks turned into months and Luke's skin wizened to the unkind laws of the jungle.

We learned that not all dogs are friendly, and many are reactive. A silver lab once lunged for his soft, puppy ear during a dog-walk and nose-to-nose greeting. "YOWZA! THAT HURT!" The owner, apologetic, explained that his dog, a rescue, had not been socialized. I took him to the dog park when he was about six months old. The decision led to more trauma. "Come on, triangle-eared dude! Let's play!" Innocent and immature, Luke barked in the face of a German Shepherd that was not into playful puppies. A wrestling match ensued. Things went from bad to worse until I found myself prying the shepherd's mouth from my pup's neck. Thank goodness for Luke's fluff! I held my emotions together to break up the dog fight, then teared up in the car. "I'm sorry, Luke. That was not okay." He popped his head from the sunroof of his dog crate and smiled. "I'm over it, Momma." I was soon to learn that Luke was not over it. In fact, the attack would leave a scar on his heart and mind.

Two years flew by. A dog walker casually strolled by our front yard with her muzzled German Shepherd, who happened to be new to the neighborhood. Luke darted across the yard after her. "You're not going to hurt me or my

family, and you will not set foot on my grass!" He barked and snarled and showed his teeth. In his mind's eye, this was the dog who had nearly killed him. I intervened immediately. "I'm so sorry." My heart went out to the dog walker. I knew exactly how she felt. We do our best to domesticate our dogs, but sometimes their primal colors emerge. A dog is still a dog. Luke instinctively knew to protect his family from a dog he perceived to be a threat. Thereafter, I hired a dog trainer and learned how to best deal with Luke's trauma. Now I'm more selective about who Luke will socialize with. I offer him scheduled playdates with dogs whose parents are my friends.

His besties, listed alphabetically, have captured both our hearts.

## HAVEN

Haven is a feisty, little English Cream with a surprisingly big ap-



petite for wrestling big dogs. The first time she met Luke, she submitted with grace, slowing crouching to the ground to lie down. "I'm okay. I won't hurt you. I just want to play rough." She yielded to a downward dog pose that Luke couldn't resist. "Bring it on." The two dogs chased and nipped, gal-

loped and whipped, flopped and flipped like a pair of dogs from a Dr. Seuss book. Haven's speed and agility complements Luke's defensive bear hugs. If given the opportunity, he'll hold her in place until she springs from his clutch for another round of Chase. Luke and Haven are a pair of opposites, attracted by a love for play

## KODA

Koda is an adorable husky, most likely to be found buried at the bottom of a leaf pile. Nothing quite



compares to the sight of a soft-faced husky who has just plunged headfirst into a pile of leaves to track the delicious scent of a varmint. Koda is a member of Luke's morning Dog Walking group (there are six dogs in all) and one of his more peppery friends. "You are one crazy girl, but I love ya to pieces." The two dogs often share quick play sessions on my front lawn.

## NESSIE

Nessie is a sassy and strong Vizsla (a mix-breed) rescued from South Carolina. The two friends met on the street and forged an interesting relationship. "Excuse me. I'm not sure about you." Anxious and sensitive, Nessie set boundaries early on with a dog who appeared harmless, but one never knows. Better safe than sorry is Nessie's mantra. Luke behaved charmingly, sitting like a gentleman and allowing her to decide how much attention she'd like from him. He's long since ended up winning her heart over. The two share robust playdates in her spacious fenced-in yard. "Luke's over! Luke's over! Luke's over!" I pull up in her driveway and Nessie's hollers flood our car. Luke fidgets and whines



from his dog crate in the trunk. "Hurry up, Momma! Nessie needs me!" I park, activate the lift of the hatch, and circle around to unzip him. He soars like Superman from the back of my car, dashes to the edge of Nessie's wrought iron gate, and stares into her hazel eyes. "Let me in, Nessie."

## OBI

Obi is Luke's favorite pillow thrashing, body slamming, stuffed animal mangling Labrador buddy.



Luke and Obi have shared an affectionately aggressive relationship for years. Obi loves to tease Luke with beloved toys and play Keep Away. "Give me back my lamb, Obi!!!" Luke barks like a seal in the poor dog's face. Obi, laid-back and resilient, shakes it off. "I'm not finished with it yet, Luke." Did I mention Obi also has a lake house, and a boat?

## ROCCO

Luke's friendship with Rocco emerged slowly yet assuredly. Rocco was the new pup who took the place of Luke's sweet, Golden friend Bruno, who passed away last December at the age of ten. Upon entering a home that no longer included his buddy, Luke was confused. He ignored the new pup completely and searched the floors. "Where's Bruno? I smell him, but I can't find him. Where'd he go?" He sniffed Bruno's bed while we

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**LUKE**

continued on page 13



REAL ESTATE

# Should you sell your house or rent it out?

When you're ready to move, figuring out what to do with your house is a big decision. Today, more homeowners are considering renting their home instead of selling it. Recent data from Zillow shows about two-thirds (66 percent) of sellers thought about renting their home



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

before listing, with nearly a third (28 percent) taking that possibility seriously. Compared to 2021, when

fewer than half (47 percent) of homeowners considered renting before selling, it's clear this trend is on the rise.

So, should you sell your house and use the money toward your next home or keep it as a rental to build long-term wealth? Let's walk through some important questions to help you determine the right path for your financial and lifestyle goals.

Is your house a good fit for renting? Before you decide what to do, it's important to think about if it would make a good rental in the first place. For instance, if you're moving far away, managing ongoing maintenance could be difficult. Other factors to consider are if your neighborhood is ideal for rentals and if your house needs significant re-

pairs before it's ready for tenants. If any of these situations sound familiar, selling might be a more practical choice.

Are you ready for the realities of being a landlord? Managing a rental property involves more than collecting monthly rent. It's a commitment that can be time-consuming and challenging. For example, you may get maintenance calls at all hours of the day or find damage that needs to be repaired before a new tenant moves in. There's also the risk of tenants missing payments, not taking care of your property or breaking their lease, which can add unexpected stress and financial strain. Landlords have to fix things like broken pipes, temperamental HVAC systems, and structural damage, among other

essential repairs. If you don't have a few thousand dollars on hand to take care of these repairs, you could end up in a bind.

Do you understand the costs? If you're considering renting primarily for passive income, remember, there are additional costs you should anticipate. You still need to pay your mortgage and property taxes, even if the rent doesn't cover all of it.

Insurance, landlord insurance typically costs about 25 percent more than regular home insurance, and it's necessary to cover damages and injuries.

Maintenance and repairs, plan to spend at least 1 percent of the home's value annually, more if the house is older.

Finding a Tenant: This involves advertising costs and potentially

paying for background checks. Vacancies, if the property sits empty between tenants, you'll lose rental income and have to cover the cost of the mortgage until you find a new tenant.

Management and HOA fees, a property manager can ease the burden, but typically charges about 10 percent of the rent. HOA fees are an additional cost too, if applicable.

To sum it all up, selling or renting out your home is a personal decision. Make sure to weigh the pros and cons carefully and consult with professionals like those at The Marzeotti Group or another trusted real estate professional so you feel supported and informed as you make your decision.

LUKE

continued from page 12



all held back tears. Mesmerized by the leonine Golden, Rocco stared longingly at Luke and waited to be noticed. "Hi. My name is Rocco. I sometimes get into mischief, but I'm a good boy, too." Luke has since adjusted to his favorite Golden Family home and warmed up to a patient pup named Rocco.

ROSIE

These two friends, Golden and

Doodle, have been partners in crime for a few years now. "Hi Rosie. Can you come over to play?" Luke charms her from the front step while she strolls on past, her neck craned back to him while she stammers forward on the leash. "I. Have. To. Go. For. A Walk. Now. Luke." She fights her Dog Momma until a verdict is made.



"Hah!" She's unleashed. Rosie bolts like lightning towards Luke. He concentrates on his friend with stoic obsession, and remains aloof to her sudden presence, as though he's not interested. Then the two rumble and reveal their personali-

ties. Rosie, svelte and agile, gallops gracefully around the yard. Luke, a defensive back, body slams her to imitate a wrestling match. Rosie and Luke are a match made on Wildflower Drive.

Write to Amy at [amyclair.com](mailto:amy@amyclair.com)

Visit Luke @ [livingwithlukevalentino](https://www.instagram.com/livingwithlukevalentino) on IG

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TALES FROM BEYOND

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# The Crying Rocks

## John Onion and The Devil

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

At the edge of Cedar Swamp in Charlestown, Rhode Island, just north of the old Narragansett Indian school-house sits an outcropping of rocks called The Crying Rocks. The rocks are also located near School House Pond where a Narragansett boy named John Onion once challenged the devil. Both legends presented here are from our latest book, Ghost of King Philip's War.

According to Narragansett legend, the woods are so evil

that according to Jeff Belanger and Ray Auger from their podcast New England Legends, "nature herself recoils in fear." The evil that once took place at the rocks still reverberates to this day and the flora below sometimes oozes with the crimson red blood of those who met their fate at the base of the outcropping.

The rocks are about a quarter mile past the old Narragansett church. It is there that the sounds of babies crying echoes through the woods. A Narragansett named John Paul once

told Colonial Minister, Ezra Stiles of the terrible fate that befell many infants at the rocks. Children born out of wedlock or those born with an inflection, or became infirm were brought to the rocks and either left there to perish or thrown over the edge.

Times were different and the constant movement of the tribe to summer camps and winter camps, along with hunting, wars and other vigorous living, created little room for any weakness. Those who were thought to be frail and useless through severe birth defects or illness were left at the rocks. It is said that at one time a mass of tiny skeletal bones could be seen gleaming in the sun below the ledge. The bones may be long gone, but the spirits of the children still linger about the rocks.

People wandering by the rocks get an uneasy feeling or hear the sounds of babies crying. If one should dare venture out between the dark hours of 2 to 3 am, they may hear the rest-

less spirits at their most active moments.

Just a short distance from The Crying Rocks in Charlestown, Rhode Island is Schoolhouse Pond. The pond is frequented by locals who enjoy its beauty year-round. There is a darker side of the pond that is told by locals and old timers. The legend is of a Narragansett named John Onion.

John was a strong and brave Narragansett lad who was fond of visiting the pond, especially in winter when the frozen surface afforded him the pleasure of skating. John was fast on skates and always found the opportunity to challenge anyone who was there to a race. The result was always the same; John would out skate his opponent by a long shot. The other kids often tried to race John, but were no match for his strength and endurance on the ice. One evening, as the sun began to sink low in the Winter sky, John, in his confidence of his ability yelled out

to his friends, who had long packed their skates and were leaving the shore for home, "I can never be beat on skates. In fact, I could out skate the devil!"

John continued skating and suddenly, from behind, he heard another set of skates. He turned around to see who was so close behind him but saw no one. John began skating faster and faster but the sound of someone else on skates stayed right on his tail. Suddenly, he saw a dark figure closing in on him. No matter how fast he tried to skate, the figure kept gaining, skating faster and faster. John then remembered his words and in fear, rushed as fast as he could toward the shore where, in haste, never removed his skates, but instead ran all the way home with them still attached.

John never again dared to challenge anyone, especially the devil, to a skating match.

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SPORTS

# Two Sport Athlete on the Field and Parquet

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Camryn Kinne is a two-sport athlete at Sutton High School participating in field hockey and basketball. Over her four-year career on two rosters with the Suzies she has made seven trips to the State Tournament compiling an overall record of 13-7 (10-4 with the field hockey team in four appearance and 3-3 with the basketball team over the last three seasons).

During that time Kinne has seen the field hockey team go to the Final 4 the past two seasons, while the basketball team was a Final 4 participant two years ago. Last winter the hoop team, which was seeded eighth, was upset by the number 25 seed Hampshire Regional 40-39 in the first round. Kinne has also been on undefeated regular season teams with both sports.

Although the Sutton field hockey team has been able to go deeper into the State Tournaments, it's the sport of basketball Kinne loves the most. In fact, she has already committed to play basketball at Stevens Institute of Technology (SIT) in Hoboken, New Jersey, a Division 3 school that plays in the Middle Atlantic Conference. She plans to major in Business Marketing.

SIT was the first to offer the Sutton resident a scholarship; she continued talking to other schools but eventually decided that it was the best place for her.

"I did a lot of research and found that they were one of the best academic schools, not to mention they were successful on the basketball court," Kinne said. "The school is well positioned to New York, where I want to be in life (in terms of internships and lots of job availability)."

Sutton girls basketball coach John Doldoorian doesn't see any problem with Kinne playing on the collegiate level, especially with the senior's outgoing personality. He

"I just got used to him being the coach and was comfortable with him there. He was someone that I trusted," she said. "As I got older, I knew that I needed to branch out,



Camryn Kinne of the Sutton Suzies.

also believes that she is a natural and would have been fine no matter where she choose to continue to play basketball.

While she has been playing both sports since a young age, it has always been basketball that held a place in her heart. Playing for the Sutton town recreational league, it was her father who not only got her into the sport, but was her coach for those early years.

but he was super helpful with my career."

While playing for the town team, she realized that she was a rather decent player on the court and when she had an early growth spurt she found herself to be taller than most of the other girls and was positioned under the net. Eventually everyone else caught up to her in size and now she considers herself average height.

"At my height now, I play wing or small forward and can shoot the three," Kinne said. "I've always been a decent shooter and three-point shooting is one of my best traits now, but it was something that I needed to work on to get my percentage up, especially if I wanted to get onto the court as a freshman."

As a freshman playing for the varsity team, Kinne did not think that she was one of the most skilled athletes on the floor, but she knew that she could shoot the ball with the best of them. That ability got her onto the floor and her defense and fundamentals kept her there.

Here coach definitely agreed with her assessment.

"She has always been a good shooter and has been able to progress to an even better shooter through the years," the Sutton Coach said. "When she was younger she watched and took it in, now she is a very passionate young lady with years of experience under her belt."

Freshman Kinne originally found herself coming off the bench, but when the team sustained some injuries she became

a starter by default. Although she knew that she belonged on the floor with the other girls, she still felt guilty being a freshman.

"That year there were two other freshman on the team and I was the only one getting the looks and I felt out of place," she said. "I know the coaches and my teammates had confidence in my ability but I definitely felt guilty at times. It must have been hard for them; I'm just lucky they weren't jealous."

According to the coach, although Kinne is a very talented individual, she does have one major flaw.

"She is way too hard on herself and wants to excel at all times while staying perfect on the court," Doldoorian said. "She can read the defenses well and has made herself into an inside shooter as well, but I have to keep telling her to not worry about being perfect all the time."

The senior knows that she has always been a perfectionist in just about everything that she does, but she has been working on it so that

SPORTS

continued on page 17

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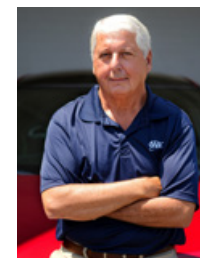
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THE CAR DOCTOR

jpaul@aanortheast.com

# Beware the Self-Fix for Check Engine Light



BY JOHN PAUL

**Q.** What do you think about disconnecting the negative side cable of battery for 10 seconds on 2017 Mazda CX-5? I want to reset the dash and get rid of the check engine light. Do all the other functions the computer controls stay set?

try to address the issue on my Car Doctor columns. Too often people get fooled into thing their headlights are on, but it is only the daytime running lights. Nearly every state has some variation of a law that requires headlights on one half hour after sunset to sunrise. This also includes during rain and when visibility is less than 1,000 feet.

the inside and outside of my windshield. Now I don't know if you are supposed to use it on the inside but I did. I'm hoping there are no bad reactions to its use both inside and out, time will tell. I will say this. There is going to be some serious swearing when that first bug hits my windshield.

**A.** Disconnecting the battery will clear the check engine light, but it will not fix the problem that turned on the light initially. Disconnecting the battery will typically clear memory items such as the radio presets, seat memory and the clock. It would be better to scan the computer for fault codes, repair the issue and then electronically clear the code. If the check engine light comes back on you still have more work to do.

**Q.** I own a 2020 Cadillac CT5 Sedan and it is a "Certified Pre-Owned" (CPO) vehicle. The car was used by the Cadillac Motor Company Northeast Zone Manager prior to my purchase. The car just turned 14,000 miles and I am truly pleased with the vehicle; and I have access to a nearby Cadillac Dealer that I have used for service with other Cadillacs that I have owned. The CPO runs out the end of next month and I went ahead and purchased an extended warranty through the Finance Manager at the nearby dealership. Then I just read that you do not endorse the purchase of an extended warranty! Did I make a mistake?

**A.** I have not seen the Invisible Glass, Glass Stripper product, but will look for it the next time I am at the store. No one is fussier than my wife when it comes to clean car windows. I typically use Sprayway window cleaner and recently discovered Scott Shop paper towels for glass. This heavy duty (and a bit pricey) paper towels do a nice job. When the windows are clean, I still go over them with a new microfiber towel.

**Q.** Years ago, I was involved in an accident because the incoming driver had no lights on. Today's cars have an auto setting on the light switch and the sensor activates the lights when dark enough. Unfortunately, I still see so many drivers not using this function and driving without lights. It's obviously dangerous. I suspect that the instrument cluster lights are illuminated, maybe giving the driver a sense the lights are on. Would you know if AAA or other driver safety organizations addressing this?

**A.** No mistake, a car like yours with many high-tech features is a very good candidate for an extended warranty. The dealer/manufacture's and (self-promotion) AAA's warranty are the only ones I would recommend. In my 40 years at AAA I have seen so many of the television and now internet warranty companies come and go. In many cases the consumer is left with nothing but an expensive piece of paper. You did the right thing.

**Q.** I wish to replace my six-year-old car battery (no problems yet, just age). Can I install a replacement myself without disturbing any electronics. Disconnect the negative terminal first then proceed with the positive. Just reverse procedure installing new replacement?

**A.** As a lead instructor for AAA's Defensive driver classes I would remind students of this issue of this all the time. This is especially true in your household has more than one car and one does not have automatic headlights. (This is the case in our household.) Also, periodically I

**Q.** I had been using Invisible Glass and found that lately it wasn't as effective as it used to be. You suggested another brand which I tried and found to also be not as effective as I would have liked. Today I tried Invisible Glass-Glass Stripper. It says to use it to prepare your windshield for something else like Rain-X. It is a very mild abrasive mixture. I have to admit, it did a great job on both

**A.** In most cars yes, you can install a new battery with no issues. Yes the clock, radio presets and memory functions will need to be reset. Some vehicle have anti-theft radios, you will need a radio code. With some cars the computer will need to relearn a few basics. This is usually nothing more than the engine may start and stall a couple of times after the battery is installed. Some European cars will need the battery/charging system reset or registered. The car will run fine but the car needs to know it has a new battery. At AAA when we change a battery, we use a memory saver, just to eliminate issues.

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# Sutton Chain of Lights Shines in the Snow

The Sutton Chain of Lights holiday celebration led the regional celebrations on Saturday, December 7 with a host of activities across town, all conveniently connected by trolleys.

Caroling at the Gazebo was a highlight and was especially beautiful this year with its sparkling dusting of snow.



and plenty of craft items for sale including Christmas decorations, jewelry and knitted items. Cub Scout Pack 243 where Cub Scout Evan Foster and his dad Ian sold candy bars.

Upstairs in the sanctuary, a Creche or manger scene was arranged so that children could handle the figures while the story of the Nativity was read to them.

Kids enjoyed a holiday story time at the library while cousins Paitlyn and Natalie busied themselves decorating dinosaur ornaments, part of the dino-twist

the Children's Room added to this year's Chain of Lights. (There was also a T-Rex roaming the stacks).

At the First Congregational Church there were refreshments

## SPORTS

*continued from page 15*

it doesn't get into her head and affect her game.

"No one wants to do poorly and when I used to make mistakes I let it get to me and it wouldn't help my game," she said. "I had to learn to just let it go; it's part of the sport and no one is perfect – including me. I can now play freely and without pressure on myself so my game is much better."

Her sophomore season has been her best by far. It was a season that almost wasn't until the team was

granted an eighth-grade waiver to have enough girls to play. Kinne and her Sutton teammates were not expecting a trip to the Final 4 that year by any stretch of the imagination, but it will be one that lives in their memories forever.

However, that season is two years removed and the senior is hoping that she can help guide this year's team to an even better performance in the State Tournament. As the team's only senior and leader she wants to not only hold herself accountable on and off the court she wants the younger girls looking to her for guidance.

"I'm hoping that we can have a

great year; obviously it's my final ride with the team so I want to go out and do the best that I possibly can whether it's improving my scoring or any other stat to help this team win," Kinne said. "I need to focus and be there for the rest of the team."

Doldoorian sees no issue with his senior being the one the girls turn to. Last year he saw her connect with the handful of freshman that were on the team and knows that they are comfortable approaching her. Now he's hoping that she can help this team to be successful and go out on top.

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**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20**  
 • The Webster Senior Center will hold its annual Christmas party for Webster seniors at 12 p.m., 5 Church Street. Catered

luncheon by Mac's and live music by Steve Lyons. Contact the Senior Center for your ticket, 508-949-3845.

• The Birch Alley Brass Ensemble will present a concert at Valley Chapel in Uxbridge on Friday, December 20th 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, Northbridge, Upton, Hopedale, Mendon 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 Uxbridge, Milford and Hopedale 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. "Christmas in New England" has been performing concerts for over 20 years, at RCC since 2007. 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. The concert will take place in sanctuary of the Rockdale Cong. Church, 42 Fowler Road, Northbridge, MA. 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.

Join us from 6-8 p.m. for some light refreshments and good conversation, and shake a leg to the sounds of the Mason Tyler Band! Seating is limited so advanced registration is required. Please register by calling the Senior Center at 508-248-2231. Priority will be given to Charlton residents ages 60+. Registration will open to non-residents after Dec. 13. Charlton Public Library is located at 40 Main Street in Charlton, Massachusetts.

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 31**  
 • Finish up 2024 at the Sutton Historical Society signature event, the annual Last Night Cannon Firing by our cannon crew at the M. M. Sherman Blacksmith Shop, 6 Singletary Avenue. Arrive by 11:55 p.m. 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](http://sutton1704.org).

**THROUGH MONDAY, DECEMBER 30**  
 • "Christmas by Candlelight" is a cherished holiday tradition at Old Sturbridge Village, welcoming thousands of new and returning visitors each year. Guests are invited to watch demonstrations of classic Christmas projects, stroll through the decorated Village and Christmas Tree Trail, listen to stories and live music, taste sweet treats, ride the horse-drawn carryall, vote for their favorite gingerbread house, learn about the history of holiday traditions, visit with Santa, and more. It runs from 2-8 p.m. New this year: embark on a musical journey through the 19th century with "Upon a Midnight Clear: An Acoustic New England Christmas," presented by ClockJack Productions.

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**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27**  
 • The Charlton Public Library and Charlton Senior Center will host the Second Annual New Year's Eve Celebration for our Seniors!

**HAPPENINGS!**  
 continued on page 19

# Grafton FLEA MARKET

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The Very Merry Dickens Carolers brought Christmas cheer to the Samuel Slater Experience museum on December 8. The group, dressed in vintage Victorian attire, delighted the audience with the merriment of Christmas from long ago. The program was held on Main Street, Webster as it was in the early 1900s which added to the festive holiday atmosphere.

**HAPPENINGS!**

*continued from page 18*

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 4**

• The Samuel Slater Experience museum in Webster will host three-session rigid heddle loom weaving workshop for beginners from 12 – 3:30 p.m. The second and third classes will be January 11 and 18. A one-day rug weaving workshop for intermediate weavers will take place on Saturday, February 8. Local fiber artist Sharon Geyer will lead the workshops. Students will learn all basic weaving skills How to create a project planning sheet to calculate yarn requirements, how to use a wrapping peg, how to use the direct warping method as well as weaving tips and techniques that will lead to success. The basic workshop is \$150 with a \$15 additional charge for yarn. The fee for the rug weaving workshop is \$50. For more information, email [admin@samuelslaterexperience.com](mailto:admin@samuelslaterexperience.com).

or call 408-461-2955. Samuel Slater Experience is located in the former National Guard Armory at 31 Ray Street, Webster.

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 11**

• St. Peter's Parish in Northbridge is holding a Chicken Parm Dinner starting at 5:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall. Bring your family and friends for a wonderful meal and meet some new friends. Tickets are \$17 per dinner and include salad and dessert. To go meals will be available for pick-up around 5 p.m. All to-go orders must be paid for in advance. Please call the parish office at 508-234-2156 or email: [parishoffice@stpeterrockdale.org](mailto:parishoffice@stpeterrockdale.org) to purchase tickets or if you have any questions.

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 25**

• The 2025 Small Stones Festival of the Arts is open from 12 – 5 p.m. today at the Brigham Hill Community Barn in North Grafton. The Festival will run through February 2. The Barn, even in winter, is a

lovely, open locale for enjoying art. Parking is plentiful and the heating system is more than adequate to keep up with the winter weather! With the support of area artists and the Blackstone Valley community we look forward to an even more successful Festival in 2025. An awards ceremony will be held at 2 p.m. today. Artists' talks will also take place at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, January 25. The exhibit is open at the following times. There is no charge for admittance. Sunday, January 26: 12 – 4 p.m. Tuesday, January 28: 12 – 8 p.m. Wednesday, January 29: 12 – 4 p.m. Thursday, January 30: 12 – 4 p.m. Friday, January 31: 12 – 4 p.m. Saturday, February 3: 12- 6 p.m. Sunday, February 2: 12- 4 p.m. Juror Talks, 2 p.m. This is the final day of the Exhibition for 2025.

**THIRD WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH**

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