

New Mendon Police Cadet Program one of few in Worcester County



The Mendon Police Cadet Program officially began on Nov. 20 with the appointment of cadets Harrison Quartarone and Nicholas Lucia. *Courtesy photo*

By Theresa Knapp

The Mendon Police Cadet Program officially began on Nov. 20 with the appointment of two cadets, Nicholas Lucia and Harrison Quartarone.

The program serves as a transitional role between

internships and full-time law enforcement positions, tailored to individual cadets' readiness and career paths.

Mendon Police Corporal Nicholas Erskine oversees the program under the direction of Lieutenant Donald Blanchette. Erskine

said, "The program was developed to bridge the gap between law enforcement education and real-world experience. It benefits both the community and the de-

CADET

continued on page 2

Olivia DaSilva founds Nipmuc's chapter of Bella's Closet, will offer free prom dresses on Jan. 31



Members of the Nipmuc Regional High School chapter of Bella's Closet including (L to R) Julia Lenfest, Charlotte St. Pierre, and founder Olivia DaSilva have collected more than 500 dresses to be given away. *Courtesy photo*

By Theresa Knapp

UPTON - Last winter Olivia DaSilva, now a senior at Nipmuc Regional High School, decided to start a chapter of Becca's Closet when she was looking for a prom dress for herself.

Becca's Closet was founded in memory of Rebecca ("Becca") Kirtman in Florida in 2003 after

she died at age 16 in a tragic automobile accident. Becca had started the program before she died and "helped hundreds of girls across South Florida attend their High School proms in style," according to beccascloset.org.

BELLA'S CLOSET

continued on page 10

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CADET

continued from page 1

partment by supporting essential operations while preparing the next generation of public safety professionals.”

He said both Lucia and Quartarone “demonstrated strong dedication to public safety and were selected as our first cadets.”

Lucia is a West Brookfield resident and senior at Fitchburg State University, enrolled in the 4+1 Police Program.

Quartarone is a Norfolk resident, MassBay Community College graduate, and dispatcher for the Metacomet Emergency Communications Center.

While in the program, cadets gain hands-on training in CPR, First Aid, mental health, and public safety fundamentals. They participate in ride-alongs, community outreach, various projects, and administrative tasks, providing an immersive look into policing.

The Mendon Police Department benefits through strengthening operational efficiency and building a future talent pipeline.



The Mendon Select Board appointed the first Mendon Police cadets on Nov. 20. (L to R) Select Board members Alejna Brugos, Michael Merolli, Michael Goddard, Brendan Chenelle, Jason Kuter; Cadet Nicholas Lucia and Cadet Harrison Quartarone; Mendon Police Chief David Kurczy, Corporal Nicholas Erskine, Officer Justin Kulesza. Courtesy photo

Erskine said, “By mentoring cadets, the department fosters leadership and recruits well-prepared candidates for law enforcement careers.”

And the Town of Mendon also benefits as cadets provide assistance with community events, lobby staffing, and non-emergency calls, which allows officers to focus on urgent matters while improving the public’s experience.

Erskine says the Mendon

Police Cadet Program is one of just a few in Worcester County that deeply integrates cadets into police operations. “This unique approach provides increased access to training and real-world experience while enhancing community engagement and operational capacity. The program demonstrates the department’s forward-thinking leadership and commitment to building a strong future for law enforcement.”

“The program demonstrates the department’s forward-thinking leadership and commitment to building a strong future for law enforcement.”

-Corporal Nicholas Erskine
Mendon Police
Cadet Program

Erskine says the program is cost-effective as cadets volunteer much of their time, and any paid hours are funded through existing department budgets. “Their initiative in purchasing certain uniform items underscores their commitment to the role.”

For more information on the cadet program, visit bit.ly/MendonPoliceCadetProgram.

Mendon Police Cadet Program eligibility requirements:

• EDUCATION:
High school diploma or equivalent and enrolled in college

• BACKGROUND:
No criminal record

• COMMITMENT:
Attend monthly training and abide by all rules and regulations set forth by the Mendon Police Department

For more information, including program benefits and how to apply, visit bit.ly/MendonPoliceCadetProgram

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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 JANUARY 2025

Upcoming Events:

To register for an event, click on the Library Event Calendar and registration link at the top of the library's homepage (www.taftpubliclibrary.org).

Michael Tougias to discuss King Philip's War

Join us on Wednesday, Jan. 29 at 7 p.m. when we welcome local author Michael Tougias back for a talk about King Philip's War. Mr. Tougias is the author of *Until I Have No Country: A Novel of King Philip's War* and *King Philip's War: The History and Legacy of America's Forgotten Conflict* which he co-wrote with Eric Schultz. 2025 marks the 350th year since the conflict which on a per capita basis was the bloodiest conflict in our nation's history. Mr. Tougias will discuss the Indian way of life in

17th century America, Colonial settlements, the events leading up to the war, and the battles and strategy applied by both sides. Following the talk, there will be a book signing. Michael Tougias is the author of many books including his latest *Extreme Survival* and *The Finest Hours, Ten Hours Until Dawn, Rescue of the Bounty, A Storm to Soon, There's a Porcupine in My Outhouse!*, and *The Waters Between Us*. Please register in advance for this program. Space is limited.

Adult Handcrafting Group

Let's get crafty! Join us on Wednesday, Jan. 15 and Wednesday, Feb. 5 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, Jan. 13 at 6:30 p.m. upstairs in the library to discuss *The Island of Sea Women* by Lisa See. 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 request them through interlibrary loan. Upcoming books for the Adult Book Club are as follows:

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

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. The book club will be discussing the 2024 Booker Prize winner *Orbital* by Samantha Harvey on Monday, Feb. 3 at 7 p.m.

Upcoming books:
 May (date TBD): National Book Award winner for Fiction *James* by Percival Everett
Slow Flow Adult Yoga with Katie Aissis of Sprouting Tree Yoga

Come join Katie Aissis of Sprouting Tree Yoga for Slow Flow Adult Yoga at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 14 upstairs in the library. This Vinyasa style yoga class links breath to movement in a dynamic sequence of

postures. Participants will build strength while also finding moments throughout the practice to quiet the mind and rest the body. This class is appropriate for all levels and no previous yoga experience is necessary. Please bring your own yoga mat. Please register for the program on our website.

Jill Vetstein: The Testing Child on Zoom

The Taft Public Library in conjunction with Beginning Years CFCE welcomes Developmental Specialist and Parent Educator Jill Vetstein for a virtual program for parents entitled *The Testing Child*. Vetstein will explore how to effectively intervene in your child's negative behaviors so you can focus on how to respond positively and actively to your child's needs.

TAFT LIBRARY

continued on page 10

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Mendon Girl Scouts paint banner for veterans



Mendon Girl Scout Troop #65245 showed their gratitude to veterans by painting this banner which was displayed at Mendon's Annual Veteran's Appreciation Breakfast on Nov. 8 at the Mendon Senior Center. Courtesy photo

Hearts, Hugs & Hope:

Alzheimer's Support Group at Cornerstone at Milford

Jan. 14, 6 p.m. at Cornerstone at Milford Assisted Living and Memory Support Community, 11 Birch St., Milford. This group for caregivers meets in person. Dealing with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia isn't easy, so it is helpful to share your concerns and personal experiences with others who com-

pletely understand what you're going through. You will also learn about proven strategies to help you better care for your family member. Call 508-473-0035 to RSVP or contact Director of Compass Programming Jenn Hozempa at jhozempa@cornerstonemilford.com for more information.

Pet of the month: Meet Bo

Bo is a charming, laid-back cat who is looking for a place where he can settle in at his own pace and enjoy a balanced mix of attention and quiet time.

While he might not be the cuddliest cat at first, Bo absolutely enjoys the company of his humans, but only when he's ready. He prefers a calm environment and will appreciate a gentle approach as he adjusts to his new surroundings. Bo loves to watch the world go by from his favorite perch, but don't be surprised if, after a while, he'll come seeking your company for some quiet companionship or a good chin scratch.

Bo would thrive in a home where he can feel safe and secure, and where his space is respected as he gets comfortable. He would do best with a cat-savvy adopter who understands the importance of patience and



allowing him to bloom at his own pace.

If you're looking for a cat who's content to hang out in the same room but doesn't demand constant attention, Bo might just be your perfect match. He's ready to find a loving home where he can gradually build a bond with you—on his terms.

Could Bo be the purrfect addition to your home?

For more information, please visit the Milford Humane Society at milfordhumane.org

Mendon winter parking ban now in effect

No overnight parking between midnight and 6 a.m.

The Mendon winter parking ban is now in effect through March 31. According to the town's "No All Night Parking" bylaw, it is unlawful for the driver of any vehicle, other than one acting in an emergency, to park

said vehicle on any street for a period of time longer than one hour between the hours of midnight and 6 a.m.

Any vehicle in violation of this provision shall be subject to a fine and/or removal as directed by a police officer.

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When is a good time for a Roth conversion?



Mark Freeman, CEPA

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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 pen-

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

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Upton Special Town Meeting approves budget items, bylaw changes, compost program publicity, defeats upgrades to community message board

By Theresa Knapp

On Nov. 12, the Town of Upton held a Special Town Meeting that ran about two hours and processed the warrant which included 27 articles.

The meeting took about two hours and began with the election of a temporary Town Moderator as the Upton Town Moderator was unable to attend. Dawn Anderson, Grafton's Town Moderator, was appointed.

An article to \$1,500 to publicize a pilot composting program garnered one dissenting vote from the Finance Committee and required a standing vote before it passed; and an article related to a \$47,347 message board near Town Hall was defeated.

Publicizing composting program approved

Article 15 asked for \$1,500



Upton Town Meeting member Dave Ross expressed concern over a proposed community message board with an LED panel near Town Hall. Ross said it conflicts with the town's efforts to create a 'quaint historic New England downtown feel.' Photo source: Upton Community Television

in funding to print and mail a townwide notice to residents regarding a pilot town-wide composting program.

The majority of the Finance Committee recommended favorable action. FinCom Co-Chair Paul Flaherty said he was the one dissenting vote, adding "Whoever is going to do this composting is going to make money on it, otherwise they wouldn't be doing it. Why are we paying to advertise so somebody else can make money?"

Dominque Ross of the Green Designation Committee said the mailer is the only way to ensure everyone has access to information about the optional program. Ross said they have promoted the program on social media and through the schools but not everyone is getting the information.

Ross said, "The intention is

for this program to successfully reduce our waste tonnage which directly decreases our sanitation operation budget which would be a savings of far more than \$1,500, so this benefits residents in the long run."

Ross said residents who opt into the program will pay \$89.99 for six months and the compost is picked up every other week. Participants will receive a bag of compost in the spring. Ross said neighbors could share the expense of a bin to make the program more economical.

After a short discussion, Temporary Town Moderator Anderson called for a card vote which was too close to call and a standing vote was required. Anderson determined the motion passed 86-40, meeting the majority vote required.

Community message board defeated

One article was defeated which was a request for \$47,347 "to be used for refurbishment and/or installation of a new community message board with LED panel" near Town Hall.

This was to replace the existing sign that the Men's Club donated to the town approximately 20 years ago.

The Finance Committee recommended favorable action.

Town Meeting member Dave Ross expressed concern that "We're spending a lot of time and money revitalizing downtown, we want it to have that quaint historic New England downtown feel, and we're going to put a big lighted sign in the center of downtown?"

The motion was defeated by the required majority.

Special Town Meeting also voted to:

- Pay prior year bills (\$130);
- Amend FY25 operating budget and water/wastewater enterprise funds for collective bargaining agreements (\$96,310);
- Amend FY25 operating



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United Parish of Upton welcomes new Pastor

The United Parish of Upton unanimously called Pastor Emily Carle to be their next settled minister. Carle, a minister in the United Church of Christ (UCC), grew up in Central Connecticut where she and her family attended various UCC churches. Drawn to Mount Holyoke College in Western Massachusetts, she found her calling from participating in the various interfaith activities on campus. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Religion and Sociology. Afterwards, she went on to attend Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Kentucky for her Master of Divinity and Certificate in Educational Ministry.

Throughout her college and seminary years, Carle was involved in youth ministry, mission work, street ministry for people experiencing homelessness, pastoral ministry, and hospital chaplaincy. She is the author of the United Methodist Church's 2026 Mission Curriculum, Experiencing Emmanuel.

Carle has been involved in national church ministries such as the World Student Christian Federation, the UCC General Synod 34 and 35 worship team, the National UCC Join the Movement for Racial Justice Advisory Board, and the Churches Uniting in Christ Institute for Ecumenism.

Carle finds herself at the intersection of many varying interests, from crocheting and cleaning gravestones, to playing The Sims and watching sitcoms.

She understands her calling to center around connecting people to themselves, each other, to God, and to resources so all of God's creation may thrive. Knowing that many people have been hurt by systems of oppression and harmful theology, preaching healthy and responsible approaches to religion is of the utmost importance to her. As a pastor, her goal is to meet people where they are at on their life journey to find healing and wholeness. The Soul Fuel Cafe and Community Supper and Food Pan-



Pastor Emily Carle. Courtesy photo

try at UPU was a huge draw for Carle, who is passionate about food justice, building community, and utilizing the church building during the week.

Her partner, Rev. Sean Amato, is the pastor at Slatersville Congregational Church in North Smithfield, RI.

Pastor Emily's first Sunday at UPU is January 5. You can reach her at pastor@unitedparishupton.org.

Mendon Senior Center hosts Minstrels concert, luncheon



The Mendon Senior Center hosted a holiday concert and luncheon on Dec. 19. Attendees enjoyed music by the Mendon Minstrels Chorus directed by Dave Clinkman. Courtesy photo



Volunteer Phoebe Bates serves "Grinch punch." Courtesy photo

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Decades of service to the community: Welcoming a new provider and exploring what's new in eye care for 2025

By Roger M. Kaldawy, M.D.
Milford Franklin Eye Center

Milford-Franklin Eye Center has proudly delivered outstanding eye care to the community for decades. We are excited to announce that Dr. Mark Barsamian has joined our team as a vitreoretinal specialist and Chief of our Retina Service. Dr. Barsamian will see patients every Thursday in our Franklin office, enhancing access to advanced care for retinal disorders.

With locations in Milford, Franklin, and Millis, outreach services to Marlborough, and an award-winning surgery center in Milford, we are the leading provider of medical and surgical eye care in the region. Our dedicated team of 58 professionals, including experienced surgeons and four optometrists, is committed to providing comprehensive, high-quality care. As one of

the few ophthalmology practices in Massachusetts with a licensed surgical facility, we eliminate the need for patients to travel long distances for procedures like cataract surgery.

Dr. Roger Kaldawy, Medical Director of the Cataract Surgery Center of Milford, has completed over 30,000 cataract surgeries and introduced bladeless laser-assisted techniques to the area. He is among the first surgeons in New England to perform the iDose TR implant for glaucoma, an innovative drug delivery system recently featured on Boston's Channel 5. Dr. Kaldawy also holds distinctions in corneal transplantation and has trained numerous ophthalmologists in advanced surgical techniques.

Dr. Dan Liu, a fellowship-trained corneal specialist, brings expertise in cataract surgery

with ORA technology, corneal transplants, keratoconus management, and glaucoma procedures. She provides comprehensive care for conditions like macular degeneration, diabetic eye disease, and dry eye. Dr. Liu is board-certified and an active member of professional ophthalmology organizations.

Dr. Barsamian, a board-certified vitreoretinal specialist, focuses on the medical and surgical management of retinal disorders. He completed a two-year surgical fellowship at The Ohio State University and is an active member of organizations like the American Society of Retina Specialists. Outside of work, he enjoys cycling and family activities.

Our optometry team includes Dr. Shalin Zia, who specializes in routine eye care, contact lens fitting, and managing eye dis-



eases; Dr. Michael Adams, with expertise in corneal pathology and specialty contact lenses; Dr. Donald Conn, who completed his residency in Ocular Disease and Primary Care and provides comprehensive eye care for all ages; and Dr. Purvi Patel, a seasoned optometrist with experience in diabetes, glaucoma, and public health. Together, they offer exceptional care for patients of all ages.

What's New in the Eye World for 2025?

The year 2025 marks a pivotal moment in the realm of eye care and ophthalmology, with groundbreaking innovations poised to revolutionize the way we diagnose, treat, and prevent vision impairments. From cutting-edge technologies to pioneering research, the landscape of eye care is undergoing a transformative shift.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) continue to play a pivotal role in enhancing the precision and efficiency of eye care. AI-powered diagnostic tools are becoming increasingly sophisticated, capable of detecting subtle signs of eye diseases like diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and age-related macular degeneration (AMD) at earlier stages. This early detection empowers healthcare providers to intervene promptly,

significantly improving patient outcomes.

In the realm of surgical procedures, minimally invasive techniques are gaining prominence. Femtosecond laser technology, for instance, is revolutionizing cataract and refractive surgeries, offering faster recovery times and enhanced precision. Additionally, robotic-assisted surgery is emerging as a game-changer, enabling surgeons to perform intricate procedures with unparalleled accuracy and dexterity.

Gene and stem cell therapies are also making significant strides in treating previously untreatable eye conditions. Researchers are exploring innovative ways to repair damaged retinal cells and restore vision in patients with inherited retinal diseases. While still in their early stages, these therapies hold the promise of transforming the lives of countless individuals.

The integration of telemedicine into eye care has accelerated, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Remote consultations and monitoring allow patients to access expert care from the comfort of their homes, particularly beneficial for those in rural or underserved areas. Telemedicine also facilitates the sharing of medical

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Mark Barsamian, D.O.

Dan Liu, M.D.

Michael R. Adams, O.D.

Shalin Zia, O.D.

Donald L. Conn, O.D.

Dr. Purvi Patel, O.D.

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SURGERY CENTER MILFORD
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A HELPING HAND...

Community supper on Jan. 16

Jan. 16: Community Supper - on the third Thursday of each month from September through June at 5:30 to 6:30 pm, our Faith in Action committee provides a delicious and nutritious meal for the community. This month we are serving breakfast for dinner! Everyone is welcome. Please call the church office at 508-529-3192 by Jan. 11 to make your reservation. If you forget to reserve, please come anyway. We always make extra and would love to serve you. United Parish Upton, 1 Church St.

Upton Food Pantry hours

Jan. 21 and Feb. 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 United Parish Upton, 1 Church St.

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.

EYE CARE

continued from page 8

images and data, enabling specialists to collaborate seamlessly across geographic boundaries.

In the realm of contact lenses, advancements in material science and design have led to the development of more comfortable and durable lenses. Smart contact lenses, equipped with sensors and microelectronics, are on the horizon, offering the potential to monitor vital health parameters like glucose levels and eye pressure.

As we navigate the future of eye care, personalized medicine is gaining traction. By analyzing an individual's genetic makeup and medical history, healthcare providers can tailor treatment plans to maximize efficacy and minimize side effects. This personalized approach is particu-

larly relevant for complex eye conditions like glaucoma and AMD, where treatment options vary widely.

In conclusion, the year 2025 marks a period of extraordinary progress in the field of eye care and ophthalmology. From AI-powered diagnostics to revolutionary surgical techniques and groundbreaking therapies, the future holds immense promise for improving vision and quality of life for individuals worldwide. As technology continues to advance and research breakthroughs emerge, we can anticipate a brighter future for eye health.

Why Choose Milford-Franklin Eye Center in 2025?

Our commitment to excellence, advanced technology, and patient-centered care sets us apart. We provide world-class cataract surgery and advanced

treatment options close to home, with results that rival major Boston centers. All surgeries are performed in our accredited surgical facility, never office-based, ensuring the highest standards of care and no additional out-of-pocket surgical fees. Our in-house optical shop crafts glasses while you wait, with new patients receiving a complimentary pair of select frames. We also offer after-hours, same-day emergency appointments, and Saturday availability to accommodate busy schedules.

With over four decades of dedicated service, Milford-Franklin Eye Center is proud to deliver advanced eye care, close to home. Welcome 2025!

For more details, see our ad on page 8.

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BELLA'S CLOSET

continued from page 1

DaSilva discovered Becca's project and passion while looking for a place to donate her own dress. "I realized that prices were very high, especially considering all the additional costs of prom [shoes, accessories, hair, makeup, flowers, tickets, transportation], and while I am fortunate enough to afford it, I knew that not everyone could."

On Jan. 31 from 5 to 8 p.m., Nipmuc's Bella's Closet chapter will offer its first round of free prom dresses at Nipmuc High School. The local chapter has collected 500 dresses to date, some new, some used, and some donated directly from dress stores.



Nipmuc's chapter of Bella's Closet will hold its first free prom dress giveaway on Jan. 31 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Nipmuc Regional High School. Pictured here are chapter members Olivia DaSilva (founder of Nipmuc's chapter) and Charlotte St. Pierre. Courtesy photo

On Jan. 31 from 5 to 8 p.m., Nipmuc's Bella's Closet chapter will offer its first round of free prom dresses at Nipmuc High School

DaSilva says the local community has been supportive from the beginning. "I expected to only collect about 30 dresses from my first collection date, but got more than 100."

On the first Friday of every month, they collect dresses. Nipmuc's Bella's Closet has a rack in the lobby where people

can leave dresses, and chapter members gather them at the end of the school day then keep them in a storage closet.

DaSilva says she is also her Class Treasurer and is helping plan her senior prom. "Since I get to see both sides of prom, I feel like this is important to ensure that everyone can be included and have access to the resources they need. The high prices to host prom are not always accommodating for everyone, so being able to help out with one part can make a huge difference."

During the prom dress giveaway, students will enter

the high school through the main doors and stay to the right to find the second floor Blue Wing where dress racks will be set up for "shopping." Once prom-goers select a few dresses, they can use the restrooms to try on the garments as they search for their dream dress.

For more information or to sign up, visit <https://www.beccascloset.org/chapters/nipmuc-high-school/> or email dasilva025@student.mursd.org. You can also reach them on Instagram at <https://www.instagram.com/beccascloset/>.

TAFT LIBRARY

continued from page 3

Registration required. A Zoom link will be emailed upon confirmation of registration. Please contact Emily at Emurray@smoc.org or call 508-278-5110 with any questions.

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, Jan. 27 at 6 p.m.

Check out Mango Languages at Taft Library!

Visit the Taft Public Library website for access to the Mango 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 web site.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS JANUARY 2025

Registration is required for all programs. Please log onto our

website: 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 & Puppet Storytime

Dates: Wednesday: 1/29, 2/26, 3/26, 4/30, 5/28 & 6/25

Coffee & Conversations is from: 9:15 to 10:15 a.m., Location: 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.

Lego Club

Back by popular demand! During this one-hour building session we will be led by the "Lego Lady" Kim Steadman. No need to bring any Legos. This program is great for all ages...as long as they don't eat the Legos. Tuesday: 1/14, 2/11, 3/11, 4/8, 5/13 & 6/10 at 4:30 p.m.

Puppet Storytime

Join Newton & Friends of Through Me to You Puppetry for songs and 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! Register today for Newton's visit back to the Taft






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TAFT LIBRARY

continued on page 11

UPTON TOWN MEETING

continued from page 6

- budget to fund approved compensation plan for various non-union municipal employees (\$45,432);
- Fund street light conversion to LED fixtures (\$3,796);
- Fund radio system infrastructure upgrades (\$114,582);
- Fund police department drone (\$10,953);
- Fund fire department's Engine 3 valve repairs (\$19,451);
- Fund fire station flooring (\$26,375);
- Fund resurfacing and reconfiguring Town Hall parking lot (\$100,000);
- Fund operation and maintenance plans for wastewater facilities (\$95,000);
- Fund Milford Street water/wastewater design (\$62,000);
- Fund landscape design services for Route 140/Main St.

- TIP project (\$23,000);
- Fund mailing for composting program (\$1,500);
- Accept donation from Harvey J. Trask Trust (unspecified);
- Discontinue portion of Stoddard St.;
- Convey easement at Crocket Road for utilities;
- Change Cemetery Commission from elected to appointed;
- Petition General Court to amend Upton Town Manager Act;
- Amend Community Preservation Committee membership;
- Authorize the use of electronic tabulators at Town Meeting;
- Amend Small Cell Zoning Bylaw;
- Amend Zoning Bylaws to reflect MBTA Communities; and
- Amend Zoning Bylaws regarding Accessory Dwelling



Upton Town Meeting members stand to have their vote counted at the November Special Town Meeting. The only article requiring a standing vote related to a request for \$1,500 to publicize a pilot composting program to residents. Photo source: Upton Community Television

Units.
One article was withdrawn (a request for funding for radio system infrastructure upgrades for \$114,582); and two articles were passed over including

funding the use of electronic tabulators at Town Meeting (amount unspecified) and an amendment related to MBTA zoning uses permitted by special permit.

For more information and detailed results, visit bit.ly/UptonSTMfall2024results.
To watch the meeting on Upton Community Television, visit bit.ly/UCTVstmFall2024.

TAFT LIBRARY

continued from page 10

on Tuesday: 1/21, 2/4, 3/18, 4/15, 5/20 & 6/17 at 4:30 p.m.

Preschool Kidding Around Yoga

We will learn yoga poses, dance, sing, and meditate. This class is all about fun. All abilities are welcome! Mats are available, or feel free to bring your own. Wednesday: Feb. 12, March 12, April 9, May 14 & June 11 at 9:30 a.m.

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 & preschool). Join us on Tuesdays: Jan. 28, Feb. 25, March 25, April 29, & May 27. Program starts promptly at

10:30 a.m.

Tutors with Tails

Meet Sprite! Sprite is a therapy dog who loves children and love books. Sprite & 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.

Book Clubs

8-12 Book Club: We will be reading: *The Wish Giver* by Bill Brittain. The book club discussion will be held downstairs in the library on Tuesday, Jan. 21 at 5 p.m. The book club will include a discussion, pizza, and refreshments.

6-9 Book Club: We will be reading: *Stick Dog* by Tom Watson. The book club discussion will be held downstairs in the library on Tuesday, Feb. 4 at 5 p.m. The 45-minute book club will include a discussion, pizza and an activity.





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'Holiday Scams' presentation offered year-round advice

Presentation by state's Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation covered various topics, scenarios

By Theresa Knapp

UPTON – The Commonwealth's Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation offered a presentation called "Holiday Scams" at the beginning of the holiday season that offered advice to be followed all year long.

The event took place at the Upton Community Center with the OCABR representative Robin Putnam who discussed seasonal fraud, return policies, defective merchandise, warranties, lost or stolen packages ("porch pirates"), gift certificates,

passwords, credit card versus debit cards, identity theft prevention, the "grandparent scam," gift cards used as bill payment or bribes, spoofed phone numbers, and more.

Putnam said scamming is a multi-billion dollar business that is here to stay. "It's a \$52-\$55 billion industry that will never ever go away so I think it's important to talk about different red flags that you might see or hear because the more you talk about things that you're hearing, the less likely you're going to fall for something and you

might stop a friend for falling for something."

The OCABR shared these statistics:

- 41% of all scams globally were related to online purchases in 2023
- 82.6% of people reported losing money to online shopping scams in 2023
- Consumers lost more than \$10 billion to fraud in 2023 (an increase of 14% from 2022)
- Social media scams increased by 58% in 2023 with losses exceeding \$500 million

"The demographic that most people think is getting hit is the seniors, it's really not, it's the 18 to 59 year olds," Putnam said to the audience. "They click on links before thinking about it, they don't verify businesses before they do some online shopping. It's your generation quite honestly that does the sleuthing and asks the questions and you're not falling for as many things."

Putnam offered ways to identify scams such as unsolicited phone calls, unwanted emails, or suspicious mailings, and warned consumers not to engage.

She also told consumers to be aware of anyone who asks them to verify or update account information or their social security number, or make a payment via mail or prepaid card to claim a prize, avoid punishment, pay taxes, or pay for shipping fees.

She highlighted the "grandparent scam" wherein someone calls pretending to be their grandchild (often crying in a way that makes it hard to determine if the caller is the real grandchild), saying they need money (often a large sum) for an emergency situation. The scam-



The Commonwealth's Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation works to:

- Protect and empower consumers through advocacy and education
- Ensure a fair playing field for Massachusetts Businesses.

The OCABR oversees the state's:

- Lemon laws
- Data breach reporting
- Home improvement contractor programs
- Do Not Call registry

For more information, visit mass.gov/orgs/office-of-consumer-affairs-and-business-regulation

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mer often says to keep the call a secret.

One of the many ways scammers choose victims is through social engineering. Scammers gather bits of information on

the internet, or through nefarious means, to put together known information that can be confirmed by the consumer; then, at the end, once the consumer feels comfortable, the scammer will ask for confirmation of Medicaid information, credit card information, social security number, etc.

Putnam said this is currently happening in Central and Western Massachusetts. She said never to give your information to a caller, but advised people to hang up and call the

SCAMS

continued on page 13

Upton Senior Center news

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.

Tai Chi Thursdays is Back!

Tuesdays at 2:15 p.m. & Thursdays at 11 a.m.

Can't make it to Tai Chi on Tuesdays? We've got you covered with Tai Chi on Thursdays at 11 a.m. Tai Chi is a series of slow, controlled movements and postures, along with deep breathing and meditation. Tai chi is often called "moving meditation" and can be adapted for

anyone.

Coffee & Conversation with the Town Manager

Friday, Jan. 10 at 9:15 – 9:45 a.m.

Join us for a casual and informative morning of Coffee and Conversation with Town Manager Joseph Laydon.

Mindful Meditation

Friday, Jan. 10 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.

Lunch & Learn: Protecting your Legacy

Wednesday, Jan. 15 at 12:30 p.m.

Protecting your Legacy: Advice on How to Best Protect Your Legacy with Estate Planning and Retirement Planning from a Financial and Legal Standpoint. This workshop will provide valuable insights into both estate planning and retirement planning, covering essential financial and legal aspects to help secure your legacy and ensure peace of mind for the future.

Attorney Amy Azza will discuss:

- The importance of wills, trusts, durable powers of attorney, and health care proxies.
- Effective strategies for avoiding probate.
- How to best protect your legacy and ensure your beneficiaries are taken care of.

Todd Miller, Financial Advisor at Edward Jones, will focus on Social Security, addressing key topics such as:

- How Social Security integrates into your retirement income plan.
- The optimal time to begin taking Social Security benefits.
- Insights on tax implications related to Social Security.

This session is specifically designed for individuals ages

55 and up who are nearing retirement. Whether you're just beginning your retirement planning or looking to refine your strategy, this informative session will answer critical questions and provide the tools you need to plan effectively for the future.

Lunch will be served thanks to the generosity of our speakers Todd and Amy.

Upton Memory Café

Wednesday, Jan. 15 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.

Wizard of Oz Sing Along

Wednesday, Jan. 15 at 2:30 p.m.

Join the Nipmuc Drama Guild and the Memory Café for a Wizard of Oz Sing Along! The Nipmuc Drama Guild will be performing The Wizard of Oz on Feb. 7-9. Join the cast for

a special costumed performance and sing along on Jan. 15 at 2:30 p.m.

This program is being offered in conjunction with our Memory Café and is open to all ages.

Senior Dinner sponsored by Upton Men's Club

Friday, Jan. 17 at 5 p.m.

Join us for a delightful dinner sponsored by the Upton Men's Club. January's menu features roasted chicken and potatoes from the Country Sooper. Free to Upton seniors thanks to the generosity of the Upton Men's Club. Shuttle service available.

Doors open at 5 p.m. RSVP by Jan. 13.

AARP HomeFit Workshop: Modify Your Home for Safety and Comfort

Wednesday, Jan. 29 at 2 p.m.

The AARP HomeFit Workshop provides information to participants on how to decide what type of home modifications are needed to stay in their home as they age. It also provides ideas and inspiration on making those modifications. The goal of the presentation is to educate participants on home updates that can make it easier for them to go about their daily activities while staying comfortable, independent, and injury-free in their home.

Free prom dresses on Jan. 31 at Nipmuc High School

Are you in need of a prom dress? Becca's Closet is an organization that collects new and used prom dresses and donates them. Come to Nipmuc High School on Jan. 31 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. to find your dream dress. Everyone deserves the

chance to sparkle!

For more information or to sign up, visit beccascloset.org/chapters/nipmuc-high-school/ or email dasilvao25@student.mursd.org. You can also reach them on Instagram at [instagram.com/beccascloset/](https://www.instagram.com/beccascloset/)

Mendon public safety log

Calls between Nov. 24 to Dec. 21 included assaults, disorderly conduct

Between Nov. 24 and Dec. 21, 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, numerous parking complaints, and vehicle lockouts.

Numerous other calls were

related to 911 calls, alarms (fire, burglar, panic), odor investigation, suspicious activity, noise complaints, document and warrant service, civil complaints, welfare checks, fraud, and more.

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

Nov. 27 at 4:47 p.m., Bicknell Dr., larceny

- Nov. 30** at 6:23 p.m., Taft Ave., harassment
- Dec. 1** at 11:43 a.m., Cape Rd., larceny
- Dec. 1** at 2:18 p.m., Thayer Rd., vandalism
- Dec. 1** at 4:48 p.m., Hartford Ave. E., vandalism
- Dec. 2** at 8:12 p.m., Uxbridge Rd., disorderly conduct
- Dec. 4** at 8:54 p.m., Cemetery St., disorderly conduct
- Dec. 13** at 9:31 a.m., Millville St., threats
- Dec. 15** at 12:36 p.m., Milford St., disorderly conduct
- Dec. 17** at 10:44 a.m., Harrington St., assault
- Dec. 18** at 7:10 a.m., Providence St., assault
- Dec. 18** at 10:27 a.m., Uxbridge St., larceny
- Dec. 20** at 12:29 p.m., Main St., assault

Source: www.mendonpolice.com/

Mendon Senior Center news

Regular Weekly/Monthly Programs:
Chorus Rehearsals resume – Monday, Jan. 13, 1 - 3 p.m.
Chair Exercise – Tuesday & Thursday, 9 a.m. Call for availability and fees.
Lunch Club – Tuesday & Thursday, noon sign up 48 hours in advance. Transportation available
Hand, Knee & Foot – Tuesdays 1 p.m.
Qigong – Wednesday 10 a.m. Call for availability and fees.
Dine Out – Third Wednesday 11:30/12. Call for location.
Mahjong – Wednesday & Thursday 1 p.m.
Yarn Works – Thursday 1 p.m.
Food Pantry Assistance – First Friday 9-12 by appointment, Call Janet Hubener 508-478-6175

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.

Circuit Breaker Tax Credit
 A refundable tax credit for Mass residents age 65 or older who own or rent their principal residence in Massachusetts.

Eligibility guidelines:
 - Must be 65 or older by Dec. 31 of tax year.
 - Must own or rent a principal residence in Massachusetts
 - Must have total income that does not exceed certain limits
 - File a Massachusetts personal income tax return and complete schedule CB
 - Your income must not exceed the following (including Social Security, and other income not ordinarily taxed in Massachusetts.)

2021	INCOME FOR TAX YEAR:			2024
	2022	2023	2024	
62,000	64,000	69,000	72,000	
	Single:			
78,000	80,000	86,000	91,000	
	Head of Household:			
93,000	96,000	103,000	109,000	
	Married, filing jointly:			

Planning for Medicare – Countdown to 65 Wednesday, Jan. 29, 2025, at 11 a.m.

This presentation, led by a Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts representative, is geared towards individuals approaching 65 and Medicare Eligibility. Topics covered include health insurance information outside of employer sponsored coverage, such as an explanation of Medicare, the Medi-care enrollment timeline, Medigap and Medicare Advantage plans and programs available to early retirees, and Jan. 29 presentation for those who may still be working and looking to transition to Medicare. Please call 508-478-6175 or stop by the Mendon Senior Center to register for this free program.

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 Janet Hubener, Outreach Coordinator, 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.) Please call for guidelines for larger households. Call Janet at the senior center at 508-478-6175. Help is just a phone call away. Household size Income Limit:

1	\$49,196
2	\$64,333
3	\$79,470
4	\$94,608

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.

Blood Pressure Clinic
 Tuesday, Feb. 4 from 11 a.m. - 12 noon. The Salmon Family VNA and Hospice of Greater

Milford, in cooperation with the Mendon Board of Health, will be offering this free monthly Blood Pressure Clinic. Please call or stop by the center to register. Drop-ins are also welcome.

Create your own Valentine’s Day cards—Feb. 6

Stop in any time between 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. We will have all the supplies you need to make your own beautiful card! This program is free of charge.

Tech Talk – Have questions? Need help with your devices—smartphones, tablets, laptops? Come to the Mendon Senior Center to get your answers - Monday, Feb. 10 at 2:30 p.m. Senior center participants at the Mendon Senior Center have benefited from the informative Tech Talk lead by Nipmuc High School students in the past. If interested, please sign up at the senior center and be sure to include your questions or concerns when using any device i.e. cell phones, tablets, lap-tops they need assistance with including: Settings & Organization, Storage, Security Connections and Social Media. Please call 508-478-6175 or stop by the senior center to register for this free program.

Valentine’s Luncheon

Join us on Thursday, Feb. 13 at noon for a meat lasagna served with salad, garlic bread and a festive dessert. While eating, enjoy the beautiful piano ballads and songs performed by our very own Earl Pearlman of the Mendon COA. Call 508-478-6175 or stop by the Senior Center to sign up. The cost for lunch is \$5 per person. Space is limited.

Mendon History Talk w/ Jim Buckley

Tuesday, Feb. 18 at 11 a.m. Join Jim as he shares another the story from his archives of Mendon History Consider joining us for lunch afterwards. Sign up for one or both programs at the center or call 508-478-6175.

Senior Center Inclement Weather Policy: It is the policy of the COA to align with the Mendon School system cancellations and delayed openings. With a two hour delay, our morning exercise programs will be canceled and rescheduled. The center will remain open for information and referrals unless the Town Hall Closes. Please listen to Milford’s WMRC radio station following a significant snow fall for school cancellations. If you had a van ride scheduled for that day, we apologize but the van will not be running when the center is closed.

Recent Home Sales

Date	Mendon	Amount
12/20/2024	6 Elm Street	\$560,000
12/11/2024	4 Nipmuc Drive	\$1.20 mil
12/09/2024	157 Blackstone Street	\$725,000
12/06/2024	7 Dudley Road	\$1.10 mil
12/04/2024	3 King Philip Path	\$730,000

Date	Upton	Amount
12/20/2024	95 Mendon Street	\$740,000
12/19/2024	3 Chickadee Way #16	\$806,573
12/18/2024	15 W Main Street	\$1.50 mil
12/13/2024	244 North Street	\$755,000
12/12/2024	86 Fowler Street	\$592,450
12/11/2024	4 Hartford Avenue S	\$410,000
12/09/2024	12 Caden Court #12	\$630,000
12/06/2024	24 Plumbley Road	\$717,000
11/22/2024	40 Mendon Street	\$580,000

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



The 3-bed, 3.5-bath home on 26.11 acres at 15 W. Main St. in Upton recently sold for \$1.5 million. Photo source: RobynAndSean-MyHouse

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Teaching with Trout program hatched at Miscoe Hill Middle School

A 55-gallon aquarium recently arrived at Miscoe Hill Middle School in Mendon. The aquarium is part of the "Teaching with Trout" program offered through the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife), with funding from the nonprofit Mendon-Upton Education Foundation.

The aquarium is located in the Inspired Innovation Center at Miscoe Hill Middle School. On Dec. 10, it was stocked with 200 trout eggs.

Lauren Lajoie, a fifth-grade science teacher and middle school science department chair, established the aquarium and oversees the program alongside fellow fifth-grade teacher Nikoletta Karayan. Both teachers completed training from MassWildlife, which has offered the grow-and-release program to classrooms since 2013, connecting students with their local environment, teaching them about habitat health, and

introducing principles of environmental conservation.

"Students from both of our classes have already learned so much about how trout spawn and what type of environment they will thrive in," said Science Department Chair Lauren Lajoie. "It has been interesting for the students to discover new things about our lakes, streams and ponds, which our trout call home."

Students from fifth-grade science classes helped set up the aquarium, filling it with water and equipping it with a filter, chiller, and aerator.

While observing the development of the trout eggs, students also learn how to use water chemistry test kits and thermometers to monitor water quality and temperature.

Additional science classes will participate in the "Teaching with Trout" program after the holiday break and in the spring,

In the spring, all the trout will be released into local lakes and streams under MassWildlife's permission and oversight.

"Just a week has passed by, and some of the eggs have moved onto the alevin stage," Science Department Chair Lajoie said. "The classes are learning how to make close observations and create detailed drawings and notes. They're learning to ask questions about what is happening and getting answers to their curiosities."

Mendon-Upton Superintendent Maureen Cohen thanked Science Department Chair Lauren Lajoie and Teacher Nikoletta Karayan for spearheading the "Teaching with Trout" program at Miscoe Hill Middle School, MassWildlife for offering the program, and the Mendon-Upton Education Foundation for funding the project.

"This project in our Inspired Innovation Center is a great



Miscoe Hill Middle School recently introduced a 55-gallon aquarium to the Inspired Innovation Center as part of the "Teaching with Trout" program offered through MassWildlife. Fifth-grader Daniel Trostel takes a look into the tank. Photo courtesy Mendon-Upton Regional School District

example of our district's focus on creating deeper learning experiences that inspire our students and connect them to real-world issues," Superintendent Dr. Cohen said. "Thank you to the Mendon-Upton Education Foundation for making this possible and to our science teach-

ers for leading the way on this effort. Through this inspiring initiative, our young learners will be gaining a better understanding and appreciation for nature and wildlife conservation."

Provided by Mendon-Upton Regional School District



Miscoe Hill Middle School recently introduced a 55-gallon aquarium to the Inspired Innovation Center as part of the "Teaching with Trout" program offered through MassWildlife. From left to right, fifth-grader Navisha Jain and Lauren Lajoie, fifth grade science teacher and middle school science department chair, helped introduce the program. Photo courtesy Mendon-Upton Regional School District

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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

D&D Learn to Run a Game – 4 part series. 6:30 p.m. on Wednesdays, Jan. 15, Jan. 28, Feb. 12, Feb. 26. Also remote call-in option.

Learn how to run a tabletop role playing game, with a focus on Dungeons and Dragons.

This 4-part series is for anyone that wants to learn how to organize and run a game session or ongoing campaign. For players looking to advance into DMing, or parents/caregivers who want to start a game. All ages welcome, suitable for all experience levels. Please register separately for each part at uptonlibrary.org.

Tabletop Game Night for Adults – Thursday, Jan. 23

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.

Virtual Author Talk Series

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

Author Talk with **Seth**

Fishman: An Inside Look at Working with a Literary Agent - Tuesday, Jan. 28 at 1 p.m.

Author Talk with **Sabrina Sholts:** How We Create Pandemics, From Our Bodies to Our Beliefs - Tuesday, Feb. 4 at 2 p.m.

Author Talk with **Waughsig Rice:** Dystopian Tropes from an Indigenous Perspective - Tuesday, Feb. 11 at 7 p.m.

Children's & Young Adult Events

Movie Event: Mr. Popper's Penguins – Jan. 17 at 2 p.m. Join us in the Greatroom for a screening of the children's film, Mr. Popper's Penguins, rated PG. No registration required. For ages 5+. Snacks will be available from the Friends of the Upton Town Library and monetary donations are welcomed.

Dog Man Party – Jan. 25 at 10

a.m. Join us to celebrate the December release of the new Dog Man book and the upcoming Dog Man movie release. We'll have games, crafts, and fun. No registration required. For ages 5+.

Storybook Art Club – Jan. 21 at 10 a.m. – NEW! This is a new program that will meet the 3rd Tuesday of each month. Children can enjoy a picture book and create a craft inspired by the story. This month will feature author Lois Ehlert. Participants will use materials such as scissors, glue, paint, and coloring materials. Pre-registration required. For ages 3 to 5.

Craftroom – Jan. 23 at 3 p.m. – NEW!

This is a new drop-in program that will meet the 3rd Thursday of each month. Children can make a simple craft using materials such as crayons, scissors, paint, and glue. This month, we are making paper hot cocoa cups! For ages 3+. No registration required.

Monthly Library Events – Register now! All programs and events require pre-registration at uptonlibrary.org or call 508-529-6272. Registrations open the month prior to events.

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.

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 – Feb. 8 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.

Drop-In Storytime – Jan. 27 at 9:30 a.m.

Our Children's Department offers a Drop-In Storytime session, once a month. No registration required. This is a blend of our Baby and Preschool Storytimes; however, no craft will be provided. We will feature stories, songs, rhymes, and fun. This will be held in the Greatroom and will be a larger group size. For ages 0 to 5.

Music & Movement – Jan. 13, Feb. 3 and Feb. 10 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 – Jan. 15 and Jan. 29 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 – Feb. 5 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. We will be discussing *Disaster Squad: Wildfire Rescue* by Rekha S. Rajan. This group is for ages 8-12. We welcome new members all year round! Pre-registration required.

Tween Book Club – Jan. 16 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 title *Real* by Carol Cujec. This title is inspired by a true story. 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, Feb. 11 at 12:45 p.m., and Thursday, Feb. 13 at 6:45 p.m.: *Go as a River* by Shelley Read.

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



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SPORTS

Nipmuc Girls Basketball mixing old and new

Veteran quartet to join skilled set of youngsters this winter

By Chris Villani

The Nipmuc girls' basketball team welcomed a strong contingent of newer players this winter, so head coach Missy Vanslette is happy to have four returners who all have significant varsity minutes under their belt.

"That group has been leading the way," Vanslette said of her returners, juniors Maddie Fernandes, Kira DeBaggis, and Savannah Carr and senior Paige Anderson.

"We are going to rely on those four a lot to get the newcomers

up to speed."

Fernandes returns as the Nipmuc point guard this winter. Vanslette described her as both a "great kid" and a "gym rat" who looks to set up her teammates for success on the court. The coach said DeBaggis is the team's "battery."

"We go as she goes," Vanslette said. "She is a tough, hard-nosed, aggressive player who excels on defense, but her offensive game has also come a long way."

Carr, like Fernandes, is a



The Nipmuc girls basketball team with freshman Sadia Daigle wearing the team hard hat given out after each game to a deserving player. Photo source: Head Coach Missy Vanslette

captain. She plays both guard and forward and will be filling the stat sheets for Nipmuc all season. She scored in double figures against Northbridge.

"She is skilled and can score in many ways," Vanslette said. "Her shot has gotten much better."

Anderson, the senior, is a strong post presence and one of the team's most aggressive rebounders, her coach said.

In addition to the four return-

ing players, sophomore Ailish Mitchell and freshman Sadia Daigle are looking to earn minutes and a spot in the Nipmuc starting lineup.

"They have been working hard in practice, and they are willing to learn and learn our style of play," Vanslette said. "I think they are going to be strong contributors for us."


Nipmuc's goals are straightforward and similar to most

teams: Vanslette wants her team to be better by the end of the season than it was at the start. Nipmuc also wants to compete in the Dual Valley Conference with the likes of Sutton and Hopedale, two of the traditionally strong squads in the DVC.

"I think we are going to cause some trouble for some teams," Vanslette said. "We will be competitive."

As always, staying healthy will be critical. And the roster will need to continue to gel.

"It will depend on the mix of the veterans and the newcomers," Vanslette said. "But, if we reach our potential, we are going to have a successful season."

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SPORTS

BVT boys hoops resolve to improve In 2025

Beavers looking forward to more practice time



BVT Boys Basketball, shown here at their home opener in December, resolves to improve in 2025. Image source: Instagram @bvtathletics

By Chris Villani

The Blackstone Valley Tech boys' basketball team faced a number of challenges through the first part of the 2024-2025 season, with a new coaching staff forced to navigate a challenging schedule with very little

practice time.

First-year head coach Rich Cormier said he is excited just to get the chance to work with his guys more often outside of a game situation.

"I do think we are seeing improvement," Cormier said. "I

told the team this: I am really looking forward to having a full week of practice at the beginning of January. It's the longest stretch of practice we will have the entire season."

BVT did not have much time to get ready at the beginning of

the year. A late Thanksgiving meant the winter season started later than normal and the Beavers were rushed into games relatively quickly. Cormier said the team is still trying to figure out its rotation and quite a few guys are seeing floor time.

"We don't have a ton of experience in terms of guys who have played significant varsity minutes," Cormier said. "But the leadership has been really good."

Senior guard Charbel Jebara and senior forward Eric Deppe are Valley Tech's captains this winter.

"They do a great job setting the tone day in and day out at practice," Cormier said. "They kept the team positive through the tough stretch to open the season."

Two other seniors, Alex Burgos and Nick Whitlock, also returned this year after playing solid minutes in the past.

"They have both done a nice

job on the court steadying the ship at various points," Cormier said.

With some extra time to sharpen their skills in practice, Cormier said the team is looking to improve its execution on both ends of the floor. Having more time to review game film and see what is and isn't working can only help the cause, he added.

"I believe we had only five practices before our first game," Cormier said. "We hit that first game and we had only scratched the surface on what we were trying to accomplish."

Heading into 2025, Cormier said his team has more direction and, perhaps most importantly, more practice time to implement that vision.

"We have a nice sample size of what we have done to this point," he said. "We can see what we are doing well and where we need to improve in order to hit the new year running."

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<p>2022 CHRYSLER PACIFICA AS LOW AS \$81/WK #TP4745L • TOURING L, ALLOYS, V6 NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$34,265 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$22,977</p>	<p>2021 TOYOTA TACOMA 4x4 AS LOW AS \$116/WK #TP4783 • SR TRIM, DBL CAB, 3.5L NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$42,605 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$32,677</p>	<p>2023 DODGE DURANGO SXT AS LOW AS \$116/WK #D14655L • ALLOYS, AWD, 3.6L NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$48,595 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$32,677</p>	<p>2024 GENESIS GV70 3.5T AS LOW AS \$202/WK #TP4468 • NAV, HEATED LEATHER NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$64,700 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$52,977</p>	<p>2022 TOYOTA CAMRY LE AS LOW AS \$85/WK #TM24-1043A • 28/39 MPG CITY/HWY NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$38,625 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$22,977</p>	<p>2022 CHEVY SILVERADO 4x4 AS LOW AS \$126/WK #46796L • CUSTOM, 2.7L TURBO NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$54,180 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$35,477</p>
<p>2022 CHEVY TRAX LT AWD AS LOW AS \$74/WK #46610 • TURBO, PREMIUM AUDIO NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$27,565 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$19,977</p>	<p>2022 TOYOTA TUNDRA 4x4 AS LOW AS \$170/WK #TM24-1235A • LIMITED, SUNROOF NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$58,405 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$47,977</p>	<p>2019 JEEP CHEROKEE 4x4 AS LOW AS \$71/WK #TP4798A • LIMITED, ALLOYS, V6 NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$34,400 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$18,977</p>	<p>2022 HYUNDAI TUCSON SEL AS LOW AS \$99/WK #TP5045 • AWD, HEATED SEATS NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$36,750 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$27,977</p>	<p>2022 TOYOTA COROLLA LE AS LOW AS \$71/WK #TP4734 • 30/38 MPG CITY/HWY NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$26,589 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$19,977</p>	<p>2018 CHEVY VOLT LT AS LOW AS \$64/WK #46224A • HYBRID, ALLOYS, FWD NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$32,395 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$17,977</p>
<p>2021 FORD EDGE SEL AS LOW AS \$88/WK #P17398L • TURBO, NAV, ALLOYS NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$40,395 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$24,977</p>	<p>2023 VW JETTA 1.5T SE AS LOW AS \$81/WK #TP4857 • TURBO, HEATED SEATS NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$29,550 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$22,977</p>	<p>2020 LINCOLN CORSAIR AS LOW AS \$88/WK #124361A • SUNROOF, LEATHER NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$46,645 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$24,977</p>	<p>2022 FORD BRONCO 4x4 AS LOW AS \$134/WK #124-199B • TURBO, BIG BEND NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$43,995 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$37,977</p>	<p>2019 SUBARU OUTBACK AS LOW AS \$64/WK #TP4638A • AWD, MOONROOF, V6 NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$34,695 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$17,977</p>	<p>2023 MERCEDES GLC 300 SUV AS LOW AS \$164/WK #D14582R • TURBO, AWD, LEATHER NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$50,800 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$45,977</p>
<p>2022 CHEVY COLORADO AS LOW AS \$119/WK #46774L • LT TRIM, 4X4, ALLOYS NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$39,180 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$33,677</p>	<p>2018 HONDA CR-V EX-L AS LOW AS \$71/WK #TM25-075A • 27/33 MPG CITY/HWY NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$34,190 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$19,977</p>	<p>2021 BUICK ENCORE AWD AS LOW AS \$83/WK #46830 • GX SELECT, 1.3L TURBO NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$32,225 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$23,377</p>	<p>2021 MAZDA MAZDA CX-5 AS LOW AS \$88/WK #46823 • MOONROOF, LEATHER NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$29,899 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$24,977</p>	<p>2023 BMW X1 xDrive28i AS LOW AS \$113/WK #TP4816 • AWD, TWIN TURBO, NAV NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$51,595 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$31,977</p>	<p>2022 RAM 1500 BIG HORN AS LOW AS \$117/WK #124-476A • 4X4, V6, ALLOYS NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$45,710 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$32,977</p>
<p>2023 TOYOTA HIGHLANDER AS LOW AS \$120/WK #ST0665A • LE TRIM, ALLOYS, CPO NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$45,775 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$33,977</p>					

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Mike Penner
General Manager

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