



Even though there was some ice to cope with, last year's Polar Plunge raised nearly \$4000 for Special Olympics. Special Olympics photo

Oxford Community Center brings Fourth Annual Fun Fest to Town

Pull on your winter drawers because the Fourth Annual Fun, Frost and Family Winter Festival on January 25 is going to get you outside, but there's lots of inside fun for those who prefer to stay toasty.

The jam-packed schedule will keep you busy all day and is sponsored by the Mass. Cultural Council, Oxford Cultural Council, Jane Malser Humanities Trust, Smolenski Millette Trusts and McDonalds Sellia Corporation.

Things get off to a chilly start at

10:30 a.m. with the Law Enforcement Torch Run Polar Plunge into Carbuncle Pond at 12 Carbuncle Drive.

Oxford Fire/EMS has supported this event since the first year of the festival and organizers are pleased to now welcome the Oxford Police Department onboard.

Those making the plunge will raise money for Special Olympics. Oxford's youth sports leagues – Oxford Youth Soccer, Oxford Webster Youth Football and Cheer, Little League and Lassie League –

have been challenged to compete against for the highest number of registered participants and the highest fundraising total.

Others can register as individuals or groups. There is plenty of parking for registrants and spectators.

Donations and registrations can be done at <https://fundraise.specialolympicsma.org/index>.

FUN FEST

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Oxford Seniors Benefit from Tax Work-Off Program

Town Census Forms Mailed Out and Dog/Cat Licenses have Arrived

BY JANET STOICA
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

Oxford's senior citizens can benefit from an important program established by town voters in May 2017. If you are over the age of 60 and own Oxford real estate, you may apply for the Senior Citizen Tax Work-Off program which runs from January 1 through November 15 annually. The program allows property owners 60 or older to volunteer services to the Town in exchange for a reduction in property tax of up to \$1,500 per fiscal year. This equals 100 volunteer hours at a rate of \$15.00 per hour. The amount of the tax work-off credit cannot exceed the total tax due for the fiscal year after any other exemptions have been allowed. Credit for your work hours will be applied towards your December tax bill that is due the following April 1.

Participants are exempt from State taxes but not from Federal, Social Security, or Medicare taxes. Participation in the program may affect your State Circuit Breaker Credit and you should consult with a tax professional. Applications can be obtained from the Town website at www.oxfordma.us or a paper

application can be picked up at the Town Manager's Office. All applicants are encouraged to read the full qualifications on the Town website.

The town has also mailed out its annual Town Census and Street Listing forms. The Town website states that citizens are requested to fill out and return the forms at their earliest opportunity which provides proof of residence to protect their voting rights, veteran's bonus, school enrollment projections, housing for the elderly and related benefits while also providing information for jury selection.

Oxford's 2025 animal licenses have arrived. Time to register your dog or cat! Please remember to include an updated rabies certificate if the animal was recently vaccinated. Also, if the animal has recently been spayed/neutered please include the certificate. And, if it is a new animal, you must either come into the office or mail all the necessary paperwork. New animals cannot be registered online. Cat licenses expire on January 31st and dog licenses expire on March 31st. The fee is \$15.00 if the animal is not altered and \$10.00 if the animal is altered.

Auburn Appoints Interim Town Manager

BY JANET STOICA
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

The Select Board has appointed Dori Vecchio, Assistant Town Manager/Human Resources Director, to serve as Interim Town Manager upon the retirement of current Town Manager, Ed Kazanovicz. Mr. Kazanovicz's retirement is scheduled for the end of January. At their January 13th meeting the Select Board voted to engage the services of Community Paradigm Associates, LLC to assist in the

recruitment of the Town Manager with the expectation of hiring the next Town Manager by late spring or early summer.

In October, Town Manager Kazanovicz had announced his retirement and had thanked the current and previous members of the Select Board and Auburn residents by stating that "it's been an honor and privilege to serve you and I will forever be grateful for your trust in me and for allowing me to serve this outstanding community." He cited his

initiatives and accomplishments in the areas of the new fire headquarters at the site of the former Chuck's Steakhouse, establishment of EMS Ambulance Service, police body cameras, adoption of financial policies resulting in the town's AA+ bond rating upgrade, creation of the OPEB (town retiree benefits) trust with a balance of \$10 million, Veterans Memorial corridor and parks, online permitting, senior housing development, construction and development of the Pappas

Recreation Complex, as well as middle and high school construction.

At that time, Mr. Kazanovicz also stated that there was still much to be done and that he would remain laser-focused until his departure to ensure a seamless and smooth transition. He thanked the town's management team including Assistant

AUBURN

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What About Those Three Stooges?

BY JANET STOICA
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

Are the Three Stooges relevant anymore? I say Yes! and we need their ridiculous slapstick antics now more than ever. They are silly and frivolous and it's just what we all need to take our minds off the everyday grind. After doing a non-scientific poll of 20 and 30 year olds, I have found that even these age groups are aware of who these three prolific physical-comedy clowns are. Brothers Moe and

Curly Howard as well as Larry Fine can still bring a smile to our faces. Moe and Larry's superior roles to the third Stooge never waver. The third Stooge was played by four different comedians. The original third wheel was Shemp Howard (Moe's brother) then brother Curly Howard (my personal favorite) followed by Joe Besser and finally "Curly Joe" DeRita. I was forced to grow up with the trio of Moe, Larry, and Curly. I say forced because it seemed that my older brother always controlled the TV

selections on Saturday morning. Most of the time I enjoyed these comedy brethren as much as he did but as I grew older and into my 20's my disdain for their silly humor became very real. I saw how much my boyfriends bonded with my brother if they happened to be surfing through TV channels together watching football, basketball, or baseball games. If the Three Stooges suddenly appeared, the channel switching would stop and their howls of laughter would begin as Moe poked Larry's eyes while proclaiming Why I Oughtta...or twisted Curly's nose or conked them over the heads with the loudest sound effects. It made me think how juvenile they all were and what a boy/man thing the Stooges were.

In my 30's my eyes would roll back if I walked into the living room to see the guys hooting and laughing at Moe, Larry, and Curly. The slapstick antics were absurd, ridiculous, and so very stupid I thought to myself. How can these guys even watch this stuff? I wondered why or how the Three Stooges could enthral adult men into behaving like children with their silly laughter but now I think I understand.

Who doesn't want to be transported back to the days of their childhood when life was simpler and you could watch these inane dopes pull punches on each other? The Stooges' levels of intelligence were in descending order of Moe, Larry, and Curly. Moe was the brains of the group with Larry and Curly distant followers in the common sense department. What was so funny about being clanged over the head with a cast-iron frying pan, kicked in the butt or poked and punched? Maybe it's because these actions are what we'd really like to do to someone sometimes but know it'll never happen so it's somehow amusing to watch these beloved numbskulls do such things to themselves.

I guess even as kids we knew those bursts of injury-producing acting were fake but they sure did make us laugh. I think we thanked our family genes that we were not as stupid as the Three

Stooges were to each other. We could feel superior to their dumb jokes and jabs at each other. Their reasonings and solutions to problems they encountered were very basic and juvenile. As our eight- and nine-year-old brains saw what was happening in those old black-and-white shows, we instinctively knew it was all bogus and we knew we would never be in those situations or ever encounter the types of people the Stooges met and interacted with. At an early age I do recall thinking how ridiculous they all were as I didn't know any grownups who ever acted the way they did. It sure was fun while it lasted and I can still watch my three favorite Stooges in small doses. There seems to be a special and amusing attraction for males to be greatly fascinated by the Boys of Slapstick. It's the bond of childhood memories that should never be broken. Nitwit, imbecile, nyuk, nyuk, nyuk. Soitenly!



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Oxford 2025 Town Census

The 2025 Street Listing/ Town Census forms have been mailed out. Be sure to fill yours out and return to the Town Clerk's office to be certain you remain on the voter rolls. The Town Clerk's office is located at 325 Main Street, Oxford. Hours are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. ; Wednesday 9 a.m. – 7 p.m. and Friday 9 a.m. -12 p.m.

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2nd Friday: The YankeeXpress South: Charlton, Dudley, Webster
2nd Friday: Blackstone Valley South: Douglas, Northbridge & Uxbridge
4th Friday: The YankeeXpress North: Auburn, Oxford
4th Friday: Blackstone Valley North: Grafton, Millbury & Sutton

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Blackstone Valley Xpress/©2025
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FUN FEST

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cfm?fuseaction+donor Drive. event&eventID=851.

The First Congregational Church will host a pancake breakfast at 11 a.m., sponsored in part by Oxford McDonalds.

Weather-permitting free horse drawn carriage rides will pick up at the corner of Church Street between noon and 3 p.m.

Also from noon to 3 p.m., activities will continue on Oxford Town Common on Main Street. WXLO 104-5 will provide music and a prize wheel. Minute -to-

Win-It games, food trucks, free hot chocolate and smores will be available at group firepits.

Clowning with LeeLee will provide glitter tattoos and magic shows at 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. on the bandstand. The Wishing Tree wishes from 2023 and 2024 will be available for your perusal. Feel free to add your own wishes for 2025. Youth sports leagues will be on hand with registration information for their 2025 seasons.

The Army Corps of Engineers will present displays and information on Hodges Village Dam trail. NE King Fu will also have Tai Chi and Kung Fu demonstrations.

Indoor fun is at the Vendor

Fair at the Oxford Community Center gymnasium where Stephen George and Nancy Marshall will perform. Kids can get creative with cookie decorating in the OCC lower level.

Other out-of-the-weather options include an Art Exhibit and children's crafts with Miss Kelcy at the Oxford Free Public Library and Bingo at the Senior Center.

Parking is available behind the Community Center and Town Hall. The Oxford Senior Shuttle Van will take folks from place to place with stops marked at each downtown location.

AUBURN

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Town Manager, Dori Vecchio; Police Chief Todd Lemon; Fire Chief Steven Coleman; Deputy Chiefs Scott Mills and Glen Johnson; CFO Karen Harnois; DPW Director Joanna Paquin; DDIS Director Darlene Coyle; IT Director Mike Marino; Town Clerk Ginger Buteau; School

Superintendent Beth Chamberlin; all Division Heads and their Assistants; and all other Town Personnel who helped to advance the betterment of Auburn.

His closing remarks were "after 30 years of being employed by the town, I am prepared to write my final chapter. Auburn and its residents will always hold a special place in my heart. Thank you."

Yachtley Crew Returns to Indian Ranch

The nation's #1 Yacht Rock Band, Yachtley Crew, returns to Indian Ranch in Webster, MA this summer on Thursday, July 24, 2025. Tickets go on-sale this Saturday, January 18th at 10:00 AM at www.indianranch.com. A limited number of Low Dough Early Bird General Admission tickets will be available for just \$20 through January 24th, while supplies last.

Yachtley Crew is a seven-piece SoCal band who burst onto the club scene in 2017, selling out countless local venues before starting a nationwide Yacht Rock craze and being noticed by the legendary Jimmy Buffett, who signed them to his own Mailboat label prior to their new deal with Earache/Universal Records.

The band's 2023-released Seas the Day EP include fan favorites such as Boz Scaggs' "Lido Shuffle,"

Ace's "How Long," Robbie Dupree's "Steal Away," the Bee Gees' "How Deep Is Your Love," and all-time Yacht Rock pioneer Christopher Cross' "Ride Like the Wind." Other songs in the band's exhilarating live sets include Toto's "Africa," Looking Glass' "Brandy," and Rupert Holmes' "Escape (The Piña Colada Song)." Seas the Day was produced and mixed by Grammy Award-winning Chris Lord-Alge (Stevie Nicks, Keith Urban, Bruce Springsteen, Green Day), and it features the band's first

original song "Sex on the Beach," accompanied by a video with a guest appearance by Access Hollywood and iHeart Radio host, Mario Lopez.

Yachtley Crew is proud to fly the flag of Yacht Rock for each and every generation that loves good fun and good-time music, and they very much look forward to sharing new and classic Yacht Rock tunes and are set to help one and all navigate the as-yet-uncharted waters of 2025, and beyond.

Indian Ranch offers music lovers a chance to see some of the greatest country, classic rock and pop bands steps from Lake Chargogoggmanchaggagggchaubunagungamaugg. Nestled between pine trees, the amphitheater offers the ability to see the stage from anywhere in the audience. More than a concert venue, Indian Ranch opened Samuel Slater's Restaurant and is also home to the Indian Princess paddlewheeler and Indian Ranch Campground. Tickets are on sale now for Get The Led Out on June 6th, Little River Band on July 6th, Rumours: The Ultimate Fleetwood Mac Tribute Show on July 20th, and Tyler Hubbard on August 18th. More shows will be announced soon.

Tickets for Yachtley Crew on Thursday, July 24, 2025 go on-sale



Saturday, January 18, 2025 at 10:00 AM. A limited number of Low Dough Early Bird GA tickets will be available for just \$20, January 18-January 24. Gates open at 5:30 PM and showtime is 7:00 PM. Tickets are available online at www.indianranch.com, by calling 1-800-514-ETIX (3849) or at the Indian Ranch Box Office. All events are rain or shine. No refunds. Indian Ranch is located at 200 Gore Road in Webster, MA outside of Worcester and less than an hour's drive from Boston, Providence, Hartford and Springfield. For more information, visit www.indianranch.com.

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Oxford Senior Center Events

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Open Monday – Friday 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Email: seniorcenteratoxfordma.us
Website: www.oxfordma.us
Lunches are served on Tuesdays and Fridays, prepared by our own in-house cook! Please call at least 48 hours in advance to reserve a lunch or come in and sign up. We offer DINE IN for \$5 and TAKEOUT for \$6.
Weekly Activities: Mondays and Fridays at 10 a.m. Cribbage

Tuesdays at 9:15 a.m. Strength & Balance w/ Donna Freeland. Cost \$3 per class
Wednesdays at 9:15 a.m. Chair Yoga w/ Heidi Gambaccini. Cost \$3 per class
Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 10 a.m. Needleworkers (Knitting, Crocheting, Needlepoint). Bring your favorite project and come join the group for conversation and laughs.
Wednesdays at 1 p.m. Chair Volleyball. Lots of laughs and only two rules (1) stay seated (2) have fun!
Thursdays at 10 a.m. Domi-

noes
Monthly Activities: “Let’s Talk Oxford History” – 2nd Tuesday of each month at 1 p.m. Sponsored by the Oxford Historical Commission.
Blood Pressure Clinic – 2nd Tuesday of each month at 11 a.m.
Men’s Coffee Group – 2nd Wednesday of each month at 10:30 a.m. Coffee and pastry are served.
Tri-Valley Inc. Options Counseling - 3rd Tuesday of each month from 12:30pm – 2:30pm. By appointment.
SHINE (Serving the Health

Insurance Needs of Everyone) – 3rd Wednesday of each month. By appointment.
Book Club – 1st Friday of each month at 12:45p.m. Reserve your book from the Oxford Public Library.
Movie Matinee – 2nd Friday of each month at 12:45 p.m.
BEANO – 4th Friday of each month at 12:45 p.m. Arrive by 12:30 p.m. to purchase your BEANO sheets.
Special Presentations:
Tuesday, January 28 at 12:30 p.m. “Aging Gracefully: A Fall

Prevention & Wellness Workshop.” Presented by UMASS Injury Prevention Department. Friday, January 31 at 1 p.m.
Terrarium Gardening presented by Therapy Gardens.
Cost is \$3 per person. Must sign up, space is limited.
Need help completing paperwork? Fuel Assistance, MassHealth applications or re-certifications, SNAP etc., we can help. Call us at 508-987-6000 to make an appointment.

Country Bank Announces Promotions

Mary McGovern, President and CEO of Country Bank, is delighted to announce Melissa Mann’s promotion to Vice President of Customer Experience and Michael Dias to Product Marketing & Business Insights Officer.
Mann offers a unique blend of skills, including completing New England School for Financial Studies through Massachusetts Bankers in 2019. She is currently working on completing her Project Management Certification through the Project Management Institute which shows her ongoing commitment to professional development and has prepared her well for this role. She will continue to lead and manage the Bank’s Sales and Customer Experience programs and strategies, showcasing her dedication and leadership.
Michael Dias has been promoted to Product Marketing & Business Insights Officer. Michael has been a driving force in integrating

data analytics into the Bank’s marketing strategies. With an MBA in Data Analytics from Western New England University and his recent certification as a Certified Financial Marketing Professional (CFMP) from the American Bankers Association, Michael’s strategic mindset and forward-thinking approach have been key in integrating data analytics into the Bank’s marketing strategies.
“We are excited to announce the well-deserved promotions of Melissa and Michael,” said Miriam Siegel, Chief Culture and Development Officer at Country Bank. “Their hard work, dedication, and contributions have been instrumental to the Bank’s success. We take great pride in supporting our team members’ commitment to continuous professional and personal growth, empowering them to explore the many rewarding career paths in community banking.”

TOPOGRAPH

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3 BR	\$1851	\$55,400

*Rent may be adjusted based on annual income limits provided by HUD.
**Minimum Income Requirement does not apply to households receiving housing assistance such as Section 8 or MRVP.

Eligibility Requirements:
•Must meet all income and background eligibility requirements under the Tenant Selection Plan approved by EOHL.
•Minimum 1 person per BR

Maximum Income per Person/People Household Size (2024 limits, provided by Worcester MA, HUD Metro Area)

1 person	2 people	3 people	4 people	5 people	6 people
\$68,500	\$78,250	\$88,050	\$97,800	\$105,650	\$113,450

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Dean's Lists

Bernadette E. Lesieur of Oxford was named to the Dean's List at Saint Michael's College for the Fall 2024 semester. Students who complete at least 12 credits of classes and achieve a grade point average of at least 3.5 in a particular semester are cited on the Dean's List for that semester.

Saint Michael's College is a selective, Catholic college just outside Burlington, Vermont. Young adults here grow intellectually, socially and morally, learning to be responsible for themselves, each other and their world.

Zoe Picard of Auburn has been named to Wofford College's Fall 2024 Dean's List. Wofford College, established in 1854, is a four year, residential liberal arts college located in Spartanburg, South Carolina. It offers 27 major fields of study to a student body of 1,800 undergraduates. Nationally known for the strength of its academic program, outstanding faculty, experiential learning opportunities and successful graduates, Wofford is recognized consistently as a "best value" and for its commitment to student success and accessibility for low- and middle-income students. The college community has 12 sororities and fraternities as well as 20 NCAA Division I athletics teams.

The following local residents have been named to the MassBay Community College Dean's List, achieving this outstanding academic honor for the fall 2024 semester.

- Lisa Sage of Auburn, who studies Business Administration
- Samantha Keeler of Auburn, who studies Liberal Arts: Political Science
- Matthew Frappier of Oxford, who studies Computer Information Systems

MassBay Community College is located in Wellesley Hills. To be eligible for the MassBay Dean's List, students must complete at least six credits of college-level courses, be in good standing with the College, and earn a grade point average of 3.5 or higher.



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Oxford Free Public Library

Saturday, Jan. 25
12 – 3 p.m. Art Exhibition:
Town of Oxford's 4th Annual Fun,
Frost and Family Winter Festival

For all ages. There is also a
drop-in-craft project and their
families in the Basement meeting
Room.

Tuesday, Jan. 28
10 a.m. Hooray for Pre-K Storytime

For children ages 3.5 – 5 years
old and their caregivers. Songs,
rhymes, stories and crafts. A different
theme each week. No registration
required, but space is limited.
Come to the Storytime Room
prior to the start of the program
where tickets will be given out.

5:30- 7 p.m. Curate Your Sentimental Keepsakes

For all ages. In this program
headed by Susan McCarthy of
ALessClutteredLife.com, you'll
work through simple writing activities
that will help you narrow in
on the items that best tell the story
of your life. Registration is not
required, but encouraged.

Wednesday, Jan. 29
10 a.m. Terrific Tots Storytime
For children ages, 2-3.5 and
their caregivers. Onsgs, rhymes,
stories and crafts. Pick up a ticket
before the program starts.

Thursdays, Jan. 30
11 a.m. Baby Besties Storytime
For babies 0-12 months or
pre-walkers and their caregivers.
Stories, lap bounces, songs with
scarves and shakers. Tummy time
and free play. Pick up a ticket before

the program starts to attend.
3 p.m. Knitting, Crocheting,
Reading and Embroidery Group
For adults in the Reading Room
2 p.m. Movie Matinee for all
ages in the Downstairs Meeting
Room

Saturday, Feb. 1
11 a.m. – 2 p.m. Indoor LED
Mini Golf
For all ages in the Downstairs
meeting room
Tuesday, Feb. 4
10 a.m. Hooray for Pre-K Storytime

For children ages 3.5 – 5 years
old and their caregivers. Songs,
rhymes, stories and crafts. A different
theme each week. No registration
required, but space is limited.
Come to the Storytime Room
prior to the start of the program
where tickets will be given out.

4-5 Clay and Copper Heart
Craft
For children 5-12
Register online at the library
website or Facebook.
Wednesday, Feb. 5
10 a.m. Terrific Tots Storytime

For children ages, 2-3.5 and
their caregivers. Songs, rhymes,
stories and crafts. Pick up a ticket
before the program starts.

5-6 p.m. Paint Party for children
ages 5 and up.
Paint a silly or realistic bird
with Miss Deb. In the Downstairs
meeting room. Register online or
Facebook.

Thursday, Feb. 6
11 a.m. Baby Besties Storytime
For babies 0-12 months or
pre-walkers and their caregivers.
Stories, lap bounces, songs with
scarves and shakers. Tummy time
and free play. Pick up a ticket before
the program starts to attend.

1-3 p.m. Knitting, Crocheting
and Embroidery Group
For adults, in the Reading Room
Tuesday, Feb. 11
10 a.m. Hooray for Pre-K Storytime
For children ages 3.5 – 5 years
old and their caregivers. Songs,
rhymes, stories and crafts. A different
theme each week. No registration
required, but space is limited.
Come to the Storytime Room

prior to the start of the program
where tickets will be given out.
4:30 – 5:30 p.m. Paint A Love Sign

For children 5- 12, paint an
acrylic paint sign with Miss Deb.
Register online or Facebook.
Wednesday, Feb. 12
10 a.m. Terrific Tots Storytime
in the Storytime room.

For children 2-3.5 years and
their caregivers.
Thursday, Feb 13
11 a.m. Baby Besties Storytime
For babies 0-12 months ore pre-
walkers and their caregivers.

1- 3 p.m. Knitting, Crocheting
and Embroidery Group
For Adults in the Reading Room
Saturday, Feb. 15
10 a.m. Saturday Storytime
Children are invited to the
Saturday Storytime Birthday Party!
For kids up to age 6. Siblings are
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Comedy returns to Samuel Slater's Restaurant in Webster on Friday, February 21 featuring Juston McKinney plus special guests Andrea Henry and Jeff Koen for a night of laughs. Doors open at 6:30 PM; show starts at 7:30 PM. Tickets are on-sale now at www.samuelslaters.com.

Juston McKinney has multiple appearances on the Tonight Show, Conan O'Brien and one-hour specials on Comedy Central. He also has two one-hour specials on Amazon Prime and his latest special "On the Bright Side" you can see for FREE on this Youtube

channel. Throw in some appearances at the TD Garden for Comics Come Home, a Showtime special with Rob Gronkowski, and you can see why NH Magazine named him "Best of New Hampshire" and the New York Times called him "Destined for stardom."

Andrea Henry has appeared on Comedy Central's "Open Mic Fight," "Nickelodeon's Search for America's Funniest Mom 3," "NBC's Last Comic Standing" and "Yuk Yuk's Great Canadian Laugh Off." She was the opening act for The Last Comic Standing Tour, Gary Gulman, Caroline Rhea, and



Juston McKinney

E's Chelsea Handler. She also participated in Comic in Residence, Butterfinger's Stand-Up Comedy Showdown, The Rhode Island Comedy Festival and The Boston Comedy Festival.

Jeff Koen is a comedian and actor who stars in the cult classic independent film Heavy Times. Koen performs standup in and around the Boston area and has toured New England theaters opening for many national headliners. Koen also recently won \$10,000 on America's Funniest Home Videos.

Samuel Slater's Restaurant at Indian Ranch offers a variety of events year round, along with seasonal concerts at Indian Ranch amphitheater, the Indian Princess paddlewheeler and Indian Ranch Campground.

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Ongoing activities:
The Blood Pressure Clinic is the first Monday of each month from 10:30 – 11:30 a.m. Provided by the Care Central VNA and Hospice Inc. No charge. First come, first served.

Mondays – Adult coloring, 10:30 a.m. Enjoy this relaxing hobby; Canasta at 12:45 p.m. \$2

Tuesdays and Thursdays at 11 a.m. Feb. 4 and Feb 18. Corn-hole.

Mondays and Wednesdays - Walking Club, both days at 9 a.m. at Auburn Mall; Knit & Stitch, Monday 10 -11:30 a.m.; Wednesday 9:30 -11 a.m.

Wednesdays - Tech Clinic (be sure to check calendar) 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.; Pitch at 1 p.m.; Cribbage at 6 p.m.

Thursdays – Bingo at 12:45 p.m.; iPad Club at 1 p.m.

Fridays - Bridge 12:45 p.m.; Dominos at 12:45 p.m.; Pitch 6:30 p.m.

Instruction:
Wednesdays - American Sign Language at 1:30 p.m. No fee. With Laurie McGarry and her service dog Princess. Learn to communicate with ASL.

Fridays - Meditation class at 11 a.m. Free with Usha Verma; Quilting – 12 p.m.

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Mondays at 11 a.m. Tai Chi \$3 donation with George Chase, certified instructor. Slow, rhythmic patterns of movement.

Tuesdays and Thursdays - Chair Dance at 10 a.m. with Forty Arroyo, \$3. Seated exercise with upbeat music.

Tuesdays - Gentle Flow Yoga at 11 a.m. with Angie Lavache, certified fitness instructor. \$3. Slow-paced for strength, flexibility and mobility.

Tuesdays – Classic Cardio Blast at 1 p.m. with Angie Lavache. Strength and cardio activities to improve health and fitness. \$3 donation.

Wednesdays and Fridays Strength & Balance class at 10 a.m. \$3 with Lin Hultgren, ACE certified fitness instructor. Strengthen and tone your body.

Special events:
Monday, Feb. 3 – Big screen movie, “The Neon Highway” two unlikely prospects take their shot at the Nashville big time.

Monday, Feb. 10 Caregiver Support Group, 1- 2:30 p.m. For those caring for loved ones with Alzheimers or dementia. Guest speakers, information about community resources and support.

Monday, Feb. 10 Bill Reidy, veteran singer and guitarist will entertain with folk, pop, classic hits, sold oldies and country. RSVP to the center.

Tuesday, Feb. 11 at 1 p.m. Sam’s Stems Flower Arranging class. \$15 due at registration.

A hands-on class will help you create beautiful floral designs to brighten your space or give to someone. Materials provided. Call 508-832-7799.

Tuesday, Feb. 11 at 2 p.m. Enjoy a sweet treat dipping strawberries, pretzel rods, and marshmallows in melted chocolate. Free with only 15 spots available. Call 508-832-7799.

Thursday, Feb. 13 – Chat with Auburn Police Officers over lunch, dessert or just a cup of coffee. At noon. They will answer any questions you may have.

SHINE (serving the health information needs of elders) is a state program that provides free health information. To make an appointment with our SHINE counselor, Patrick Morris, call the senior center at 508-832-7799.

Monday, Feb. 10 at 1 p.m. for the Caregiver Support Group, for those who are caring for a family member with Alzheimer’s or dementia. Guest speakers, information about community resources and a supportive environment. For more information, call Usha Verma at 508-832-7799.

Monday, Feb. 17 at 9 a.m. Veterans Agent David Adams will host a coffee hour at the Senior Center.

Tuesday, Feb. 18 – at 1:30 p.m. Grief and Loss Support Group, facilitated by Metrowest Hospital. Call 508-832-7799 to register.

Wednesday, Feb. 19 at 1 p.m. Fire Safety for Seniors. Presented by Auburn Fire Dept.

Monday, Feb. 24 at 1 p.m.

“Her Majesty” The story of Queen Elizabeth, a one woman show by Sheryl Faye. Tea and refreshments will be served. Call the center for reservations.

Tuesday, Feb. 25 at 1 p.m. Diabetes Workshop with Dr. Anil Chawla, a 25 year veteran researcher at UMASS, will share his knowledge of the disease.

Thursday, Feb. 27 at 10:30 a.m. Depression Workshop with Vrushank Patel, Pharm.D, Auburn Pharmacy.

Transportation - The Auburn Senior Center and the WRTA offer a transit service for the residents of Auburn who are age 60 and over and for people with disabilities of all ages. This is

a shared ride service that will pick you up at your home. The van may make stops to pick up/drop off other

passengers while you are on the way to your destination. Call the WRTA to set up an account and schedule service. 508-752-9283.

We’re looking to start a Men’s Club that is low-key, pressure-free and dedicated to good talk and good company. Stop by the Senior Center desk so we can plan a meeting day.

Enjoy a free lunch during your birthday month at the Senior Center courtesy of FASCA. Call 508-832-7799 at least two days in advance and tell them “It’s my birthday!”



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SPORTS

Working His Way Up the Oxford Ladder

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY.
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Oxford's Nolan Remington first stepped onto the basketball court for the varsity team as a freshman and although he received very little playing time that year, he has been taking things one day at a time. Now as a junior, the Pirate forward is the only returning player from last year's team.

After only seeing the court on occasion during his freshman campaign because of the talent in front of him, Remington became a starter midway through his sophomore season and now as the only returning starter he is the face of the team.

"As an eighth grader I was playing for the junior varsity team and did get called up to the varsity team that year on occasion, to basically sit on the bench and watch and learn. I did get into a game and I scored my first two varsity points," he said. The next season I was on the varsity team but only saw minutes here and there; I was a bit nervous, but it helped me to where I am today."

Prior to that second season Remington worked hard on his game, especially his low post moves and shooting. Primarily that year, Remington found himself as a power forward who didn't shoot all that much; his role was to rebound and play defense. It was around the seventh game when the Pirates found themselves without some of their starters so the then sophomore got the start.

"It was against Leicester and I played one of my best games scoring 17 points and I think that was the reason the coach had me starting the rest of the season," Remington said. "I had a good game, but it was the guards who created the openings for me to get into the lane and score."

Remington's basketball career began at the age of five and being on the taller side he was tapped as the center, a position that he was okay at playing. Around his middle school years he realized that he could not only play the game competitively, but also began scoring. He would utilize his family; his father and older brother Evan (who he played with on the high

school level) to help him improve his game.

Over the years he continued to work on his game and as a junior he believes that his best attribute on the court is his shooting. Through the early games this year he has been averaging 21 points and 10 rebounds per game.


Coming into this year as the only returner and a team captain Remington knows that he has to elevate his game while helping the younger players to step up their game.

"As a captain I've got to go out and play hard while making sure that everyone is ready to compete," he said. "I want to encourage them to play to the best of their ability and if they do something wrong I'll take them aside and talk to them. As a team, we'll grow and get better."

The team is young and will get better as the year goes by and Coach David Alderich sees the junior being a main part of getting the team to be successful in the future.


"He shows up early and leaves late," the coach said. "He's a bit on





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the quiet side, but he is coming out of his shell and has been directing the team more lately. He's improving and if we can get into the State Tournament that would be nice, but I think he's going to be even better next year."

As Remington and his Pirate teammates continue to grow on the court, the junior is hoping that they can once again get invited to play at the Clark Tournament as well as participate in the States.

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TALES FROM BEYOND

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Moll Pitcher

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

This story is an excerpt from the book *Strange New England* by Thomas D'Agostino and Arlene Nicholson published by Arcadia Publishing.

New England is full of tales regarding witches, wizards and other seers who made their living through the telling of fortunes, but few ever reached the celebrity of Marblehead's own Moll Pitcher.

Moll Pitcher was the granddaughter of famed Marblehead wizard John Dimond who was known to magically guide ships to safety during storms from atop Burial Hill in the small village. Moll was born Mary "Moll" Dimond in 1736 in a house called the Old Brig at the foot of Burial Hill.

Moll was of medium stature, possessing an unusually large head, with a pale, thin face, arched eyebrows and long brown hair. She was also a very wise and intelligent woman who had an uncanny knack for reading people by how they moved or acted.

Moll married a shoemaker by the name of Richard Pitcher on October 2, 1760, and had four

children, John, Rebecca, Ruth and Lydia. They later moved to nearby Lynn, where she soon gained a reputation far and wide for telling fortunes.

From royalty to rags, they came seeking the talents of Moll. Her cottage at the base of High Rock created the most appropriate atmosphere for her craft. She made predictions of events that would transpire up to ten, even twenty years later. It was said that she even predicted the outcome of the Battle of Breed's Hill. Generals such as Burgoyne, Pitcairn, Gage and even Washington were among those who heeded her predictions.

Sailors and sea captains came to see Moll before setting sail and would often postpone their journeys based on her predictions. In some cases, ships would sit at port empty for weeks until Moll gave a good prediction to sail.

Nearly every port an American ship sailed into around the world knew of Moll Pitcher, and many would inquire of those who came from her jurisdiction of any news, good or bad. Business people often sought her advice before making important decisions.

Moll used tarot cards and read palms on occasion, but her primary fortunetelling method was derived from tea leaves. She would boil the leaves and dump them into the client's cup. From there, she would read the leaves that settled at the bottom of the cup. Their position revealed the fate of the inquirer. If the leaves fell scattered, the client would be unfortunate in love. If they fell crowded together, that meant happiness and wealth. If they arranged themselves in a series of lines, the client would live a long life and have many children. If but a few remained in the cup, the inquirer would die young.

Whether or not her predictions held much preciseness is a matter of modern conjecture, but those who sought her wisdom in her day, took them as the wise words of a true seer. It is told that treasure hunters often sought out Moll for locations of lost booty. She would say something to the fact, "Fools, if I knew where money was buried, do you think I would tell you where it is?"

Moll Pitcher died on April 9, 1813, and was buried in the West Lynn Burial Ground. Her stone

states her name, Mary Pitcher, with her birth date of 1738. Her original grave was unmarked until 1887, when a proper monument was erected in her honor.

Molly may have gone to live

with the spirits, but her predictions live on in a book published in 1895 called *The Celebrated Moll Pitcher's Prophecies*.

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Luke Sees the Best in Others

BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

I've noticed that Luke sees the good in me, and in others. He'll watch how I wrap a present and break into a quiet smile as though to say, "My Mom is so good at folding seams." He doesn't notice that I misjudged how much paper I'll need for the gift size, or that the pattern is off the mark. Instead, he stares up at me with the curiosity of a chimpanzee.

"Santa is going to bring Luke presents." His head froze while his mouth stiffened to the thought of Santa Claus, another good person. He knows what Santa looks like and what he stands for. "Look who's here, Luke!" December brought forth vast displays of Santa Clauses: hip shaking Santas, squeaking Santas, and fire-truck riding Santas. Goldens behave like children until the age of seven, so it felt okay to play up the red suited hero of his dog-hood. "It's Santa! It's Santa!" He raced to every door in the house to catch a glimpse of Santa Claus riding in the back of the fire truck while the siren blared. Luke's December flame, however, came with exception.

The Catholic church bishop wore the wrong hat. He looked like Santa. He dressed like Santa. But something was all wrong. Luke noticed the bishop's "mitre" (a tall ceremonial hat) and growled from the gingerbread table in the basement of my town's church festival. "GRRR."

"Luke, please!" My dog's suspicion did not belong in the church. "That's not the real Santa, Momma." I shushed. I scolded. I hushed. Still, he wouldn't let it go.

"Leave it." I spat the command with firmness, as though we were on a walk and a big dog equally as handsome as Luke was on the other side of the road. Then I distracted him with another clutch tactic. I broke a gingerbread boy in half and gently placed it in his unearned mouth. He inhaled an arm and salivated. Call it a bribe, but the bishop became



a distant memory. (It's worth a mention that Luke's discrimination does not rest solely on a Catholic Church bishop. He doesn't care for, or accept, Mrs. Claus. Perhaps, her hair bun does not work for him).

Luke may have a few quirky preferences but, thankfully, he sees the good in most dogs, especially small ones. I've never owned (or particularly cared for) little dogs, especially those with rattling barks. Perhaps the gurgling and growling chihuahua who lived in the window of my childhood neighbor's home has led to my—distaste? Lack of understanding?—ignorance?—of small dogs. Hear me out. Little Chico had eyes that bulged while he choked on his own venomous growls. I don't know how much that doggie in the window cost, but one thing was for certain. Chico was certifiably crazy. His temper was hotter than a habanero. His growl was a low murmur, a ticking time bomb that haunted me. I never knew when Chico would snap and plummet through the window to grab my leg while I delivered the newspaper. However ruthless, I'm con-

vinced Luke would have loved little Chico. He allows them to snarl, jump up his chest and tap dance around him. "Those little dudes are hyper, but I love 'em to pieces." Perhaps as a big dog, Luke doesn't feel the need to compete with them. He only picks on dogs his own size. The cat has been a small friend of even greater intrigue.

"Where'd you go? Why'd you

hide? Can we be just friends?" I've always worried about the cat picking on Luke because of his size. His exuberance has sent crafty cats up trees, under beds, and behind closed doors.

A black cat named Regina, his first love, once emerged from her hiding spot to allow Luke to stare at her. The two locked eyes for timeless moments. "I won't hurt you. Promise. I just want to tell you that you have the most beautiful green eyes."

Luke is certainly not perfect. But his ability to see the good in others is something I hope will continue to rub off on me, just like the blonde hairs on my black clothing.

Write to Amy:
amyleclaire@hotmail.com

Find Luke on Instagram
@livingwithlukevalentino



REAL ESTATE

What will it take for prices to come down?

You may be wondering if home prices are going to crash.

Believe it or not, some people might even be hoping this happens so they can finally purchase a more affordable home. But experts agree

that's not what's in the cards and here's why. There are more people who want to buy a home than there are homes available

to purchase. That's what drives prices up. Nationally, home prices aren't going to be coming down anytime soon.

Prices depend on supply and demand. The housing market works like any other market – when demand is high and supply is low, prices rise. According to the latest estimates, the U.S. is facing

a housing shortfall of several million homes. That means there are far more people looking to buy (demand) than there are homes for sale (supply). That mismatch is the key reason why prices won't fall at the national level. The main driving force on pricing is the limited amount of inventory in most markets across the country. That issue is not going to be solved overnight or in the next twelve months.

How did we get here? For over 15 years, homebuilders haven't been building enough homes to keep up with buyer demand. After the 2008 housing crisis, homebuilding slowed significantly, and it's only recently started to recover. Even with new construction on the rise over the past few years, builders are playing catch-up. They're still not even keeping up with today's demand, let alone making up for years of underbuilding. As long as there's a housing shortage, home prices will remain steady or increase in most areas.

What about next year? The majority of experts agree prices will

keep rising next year, but at a much slower, healthier pace. But it's important to note home prices vary by market. What happens nationally might not reflect exactly what's happening in this area. If your local market has more inventory available, prices could grow more slowly or even decline slightly. But in areas where inventory remains tight, prices will keep climbing – and that's what's happening throughout most of the country. That's why it's crucial to work with a local real estate expert like the Marzeotti Group who understands this market and can explain what's going here. If you're wondering what it'll take for prices to come down, it all goes back to supply and demand. With inventory still limited in most markets, prices are likely to remain steady or rise. To see what's happening with home prices where you live, contact the Marzeotti Group or another trusted Realtor. We can help you understand your market and make a plan that works for you.



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THE CAR DOCTOR jpaul@aanortheast.com

Old Battery Can Leave You Stranded in Winter



BY JOHN PAUL

Q. I purchased a 2014 certified preowned BMW from a dealer in 2017. It came with a Carfax report, so I know it has the original battery. I am not having any problems. How long can it last?

A. The average life of a battery in the Northeast is about five years, so based on that you are overdue. At the very least have the battery tested to see how it is doing. Have I seen batteries last 10 years, yes, but not often. If this were my car with what is typically the coldest part of winter approaching, I would replace the battery.

Q. Huge fan of your weekly articles. I have a question. Recently, in a Home Depot parking lot I drove over what I believe was a spray paint tube and it splattered in the back of my car. What can I do to get this off? I believe it is paint but it could be spray glitter. I was curious if taking it for detailing

would do the trick.

A. A detail shop would be best if you do not want to try to clean it yourself. A professional shop will try non-abrasive solutions first. They will use chemicals such as Prep-All, acetone, and Goof-Off. If that does not work, then a very light sanding with 2000 grit paper and then a buff and wax. The sooner you get to it the better the end results.

Q. I have four cars that I keep in storage. They are a 1984 corvette, 1962 Austin Healy, 1961 280 SL Mercedes and a 2000 Porsche 911. Can you please recommend a trickle charger that will last and keep batteries fresh?

A. First off, nice collection of cars. The two brands that I have had the best luck with are the Deltran Battery Tender. They have one unit that is switchable depending on battery chemistry. The other is from CTEK MXS 5.0. Both of these units are good quality and will keep the batteries fully charged/maintained and ready to drive next season. If it makes any difference Jay Leno uses the CTEK chargers.

Q. What do you think about disconnecting the negative side of battery for 10 seconds on 2017 Mazda CX5. I want to do this to reset dash and get rid of check engine light? Do all other electronics on computer stay set?

A. Generally, no, this clears the memory in the computer which also can clear the radio presets. The car may even start and stall a couple of times once the battery is reconnected. Clearing a check engine light never fixes a problem. When the issue is detected again the check engine will come back on. If it is an intermittent issue

or one you repaired the light should go off on its own.

Q. I love reading your column weekly, it keeps me updated on the automotive world. I do most work on my vehicles from my 1968 Oldsmobile to my 2018 Dodge Durango. Here is my issue my wife's 2013 Cadillac ATS. The car has a 2.0-liter engine, and it has an anti-freeze smell that comes and goes, and the engine light stays on for days and then disappears. I find no leaks or wet spots anywhere. I do notice that the antifreeze refill bottle gets full and does not drain after the car is warmed up. Any suggestions will be appreciated.

A. Start with a check of all of the fluids. Then a scan of the car's computer system to see why the check engine light is on. The cooling system in those cars is complicated with lots of places where there could be leaks. From the radiator itself to the numerous cooling lines that run up to the intake manifold. Anyone could leak very slightly but not enough to change the level very much. When I first see a surge or overflow tank acting up the first place, I think about is the pressure cap. Whether it is a cap on a radiator or one on a surge tank it is designed to allow vacuum to build and release to allow fluid to move. At a shop, a tech would test the cap with a pressure tester as well as pressurize the entire system to look for a leak and perhaps add a dye to the coolant. If this were me, I would get a good bright little flashlight and look at all the coolant hoses and the radiator, especially where the tanks attach to the core. If all looks good, then I would replace the pressure cap.

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TIPS ON FINANCIAL PLANNING

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When is a good time for a Roth conversion?

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



BY DENNIS ANTONOPOULOS

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.

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

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

SATURDAY, JANUARY 25

• Small Stones Festival of the Arts seventh annual fine arts and photography exhibit opens at noon through February 2, 2025 at the Brigham Hill Community

Barn in North Grafton. For this year's festival, 182 artists submitted a total of 544 artworks, from which 144 artworks representing 88 artists were selected by our jurors for the exhibition. Exhibition Hours Special Events • Sat., Jan. 25th: Noon – 5 p.m. • Sun., Jan. 26th: Noon – 4 p.m. • Tue., Jan. 28th: Noon – 9 p.m. • Wed., Jan. 29th & Thur., Jan. 30th: Noon – 4 p.m. • Fri., Jan. 31st & Sat., Feb. 1st: Noon – 6 p.m. • Sun., Feb. 2nd: Noon – 4 p.m.

• Awards Ceremony and Reception Sat., Jan. 25, 2 p.m. Artist Talks Sat., Jan. 25, 2:30 p.m. Fine Artist: JoEllen Reinhardt and Photographer: Jen Heck Gallery Talk with Master Certified Picture Framer, John Gaston, of Gastonart and Frame Tue., Jan. 28th, 7 p.m. – 8 p.m., Presented by the Worcester County Camera Club Juror Talks with our Notable Jurors Sun., Feb. 2nd, 2 p.m. Fine Art – Scott Nelson, Carol Arnold and Claudia Fiks

Photography – Frances Jakubek, Olivia Stone and Steven J. Duede

SUNDAY, JANUARY 26

• 38th Annual Lake Singletary Ice Fishing Derby and Pancake Breakfast. The derby will be held from 7 a.m. – 3 p.m. Donation is \$25 for adults and \$20 for children 12 and under. Sign-ups will be done at Engine Company 2, 207 West Main Street, Millbury. The pancake breakfast will be held at Engine Company 2 from 6-11 a.m. Adults \$7, Seniors \$6 and children 12 and under \$5. Rain date is Sunday, February 16.

MONDAY, JANUARY 27

• The Webster/Dudley/Oxford Chamber of Commerce will hold its Annual Meeting from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Samuel Slater Experience, 31 Ray Street, Webster. The guest speaker is John Gumpert of Camden Management, developer of the

Stevens Mill site in Dudley. Members are \$25 and non-members are \$30. Register at www.wdochamberma.com.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4

• The Charlton Public Library has variety of easy-to-grow vegetable, herb, and flower seeds as well as many books on seed collecting and gardening available to borrow. Seed selection may vary and will be available while supplies last. The Seed Library is possible through the generous support of Friends of the Charlton Library, Eden Brothers, Sow Right Seeds, Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Co., High Mowing Organic Seeds, Prairie Moon Nursery, Blackstone Valley Veggie Gardens, and the Charlton Garden Club. Save the date for these upcoming workshops at the Charlton Library with Blackstone Valley Veggie Gardens (register by visiting our event calendar at charltonlibrary.org):
Tuesday, February 4 at 6 pm: Life Cycle of Seeds
Tuesday, March 4 at 6 pm: Seed Swap
Tuesday, April 15 at 6 pm: Seed Starting
Charlton Public Library is located at 40 Main Street in Charlton, Massachusetts.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8

• Uxbridge Parents for a Safe Graduation Comedy Fundraiser, VFW Post 1385, 13 Cross Road, Uxbridge. Pasta Dinner and Dessert included. Cash bar, raffles, 50/50 drawing, auctions. An 18+ event. Tickets are \$30. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Show starts at 6:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 15

• The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce is hosting its 25th Anniversary Home & Community Expo at the Northbridge High School Field House, 427 Linwood Avenue. This is a unique chance for businesses, non-profits, and community organizations to connect with local residents to showcase their products and services. Register online at blackstonevalley.org/events or contact Liz O'Neil at 508-234-9090 or email loNeil@blackstonevalley.org.

THIRD WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH

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<div style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 5px; font-weight: bold;"> HAPPY HOUR 1/2 PRICE APPS: WEDNESDAYS & THURSDAYS (4PM-8PM) ONE PER PERSON MAX. PORTIONS MAY VARY. CANNOT BE COMBINED WITH OTHER OFFERS OR SPECIAL EVENTS. BAR: \$5 BEER • \$6 WINE • \$7 COCKTAIL <small>THAT INCLUDES TAX AND SERVICE</small> </div>	<div style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 5px; font-weight: bold;"> MUSIC BINGO & BURGERS 1202 PLUS TWO SIDES FOR \$25 STARTING AT 4PM • LIMITED TIME OFFER WHILE SUPPLIES LAST • DINE-IN ONLY </div>	<div style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 5px; font-weight: bold;"> PRIME RIB WEDNESDAYS 1202 PLUS TWO SIDES FOR \$25 STARTING AT 4PM • LIMITED TIME OFFER WHILE SUPPLIES LAST • DINE-IN ONLY </div>

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- Jan. 25: Peppercorn Hill Conservation Area, Upton, MA
- Feb. 1: Castle Hill Farm, Northbridge, MA
- Feb. 8: Wolf Hill Forest Preserve, Smithfield, RI
- Feb. 15: Hopedale Parklands, Hopedale, MA
- Feb. 22: Blackall/Ballou Farm, Cumberland, RI

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It's Over, the Holiday Gift-Frenzy Is Finally Over ...

BY JANET STOICA
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

Sweet January, at last. The more December holidays that pass the more I look forward to January when there is no pressure to rack your brain thinking of just the right gift for your family members, friends, etc. during the holiday season. Of course, just when you think you have gifted that most special item for a close family member or friend, you open your gift from THEM and Lo and Behold, it's one of the most unthoughtful and impersonal items you've ever laid your eyes on. Why do you bother yourself to search far-and-wide for their wondrous gifts every single blessed year? Why? Especially when you are not gifted in kind from the giftee? Why do you put yourself through this? Are you a glutton for punishment? Sadly, yes. In my case, I think I enjoy crazing myself. I must! Or, why in heaven's name do I make myself so fanatical coming up with awesome gifts? If there are two characteristics I freely admit I do have, it's creativity and the hunt for that perfect gift.

Since none of my relatives live in the area, none of them will ever read this article so I'll just write what I feel. Yes, yes, of course I know that "tis better to give than receive," but come on! It's absolutely great to receive gifts! Most especially if it's a well-thought-out and totally unexpected prize. Unwrapping a present is exciting and brings back childhood memories of when you believed in Santa and/or whomever was the bearer of amazing and cool bequests!

Wouldn't you agree that you are an 8-year-old child for one brief shining moment as you anticipate what's behind that

gift wrap or what's in that gift bag filled with multi-colored tissue paper? You've receive a beautifully-wrapped or gift-bagged beneficence. You hold it in your hand wondering what it could possibly be....a magnificent surprise, an unexpected treasure, something sure to stun you, right?

Well, what if it happened to be dish towels and an inexpensive candle with a globe topper? Please! These are items from a family member who I always thought loved me along with the all-expenses-paid two-week Cape Cod vacations I had taken her on in her younger years. All above items donated to my local senior center, thank you very much. I finally smartened up this year and bought her an inexpensive gift of a cocoa mug with a Ghirardelli hot chocolate packet. I used to receive thank you cards for all the very expensive gifts I always gave but for the past few years, I've been ghosted, not even a text message of thanks. Yes, I've finally taken Dear Abby's advice and that is to stop wasting my brain power and money purchasing presents for those who just don't care or appreciate your thoughtfulness. I'm done, it's over.

But! On the other hand, other family members and friends were wonderfully generous and surprising.....my dear aunt and her nephew and his wife surprised me with unexpected monetary bequests, a good friend's wonderfulness included a pair of beautiful Cape Cod earrings and a Willow Tree figurine, another friend gave me beautiful handmade Christmas tree ornaments, my sister-in-law and brother presented me with dining certificates (always a great gift), my nephew and his lady gave me

various special gifts, and my co-workers blessed me with unique and thoughtful presents along with a now-cherished memento about Wordsmiths, whom I certainly liken myself to as I write articles for two publications. I really appreciated the Wordsmiths gift, it was perfect!

I know that many people reading this might think that I'm being ungrateful but I will never feel that way especially when much thought is put into the gifts I enjoy giving and year-after-year you hope that your kindness and generosity will be reciprocated but it never is. I guess it's time to realize that your big-heartedness is going to waste and your feelings towards that person will never be returned.

I have finally given up. Give unto others as you would want to be. Just make sure "the others" feel the same way about you. "But it's all right now, I learned my lesson well, you can't please everyone so you got to please yourself." (Thank you, Rick Nelson and The Stone Canyon Band for your song lyrics.) And, that my friends, is it.

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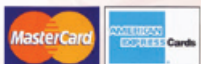


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