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Vol. 3 No. 2 Free to Every Home and Business Every Month Feb. 13 - March 12, 2025

Jackie's Boutique offers free prom dresses

Boutique in memory of MHS '15 Jackie Gray who died in 2016, offers more than 1,000 dresses

By Theresa Knapp

With prom season just around the corner, Jackie's Boutique is getting ready to provide free gowns and accessories to girls in Milford and nearby communities.

The boutique is located inside Milford High School and is operated by Sandy Gray. Sandy and Ron Gray's daughter Jacqueline ("Jackie" and "Jax") Gray died at age 19 after a car accident on July 4, 2016. She was a 2015 MHS graduate.

"We do it to keep Jackie's spirit alive, it's all about Jackie for us," said Ron Gray. "There's a lot here; it can be painful, but it really fulfills us. Sandy finds her peacefulness here, you have to try to find it somewhere."

"When something like this



One of Jackie Gray's favorite shows was "Say Yes to the Dress." Here, Sandy Gray, Jackie's mother and founder of Jackie's Boutique, holds a sign she shares with girls who choose a dress at the shop. Photo credit: Theresa Knapp

happens, you learn that you need to find fulfillment, you need to do something," said Sandy Gray, a school nurse within the Milford school

district. "You ask, 'What do I do now?'" and I would

JACKIE'S

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Nipmuc Sophomores win Best Evaluation Award in Plant the Moon Challenge



Nipmuc Regional High School fielded six teams in the Plant the Moon Challenge, with a total of 20 students from the Engineering 1 class. Photo courtesy Mendon-Upton Regional School District

MENDON — Mendon-Upton Regional School District Superintendent Dr. Maureen Cohen and Nipmuc Regional High School Co-Principals John Clements and Mary Anne Moran are proud to share that Sophomores Luke Calabrese and Liam Flanagan

have won the "Best Evaluation of Results" award in the high school division of the international Plant the Moon Challenge.

The award was announced

AWARD

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Mendon Senior Center news for February and March

Senior Center Inclement Weather Policy: It is the policy of the COA to align with the Mendon School system cancellations and delayed openings. 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.

Great Backyard Bird Count & Raffle on Feb. 14-17: The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days. Anyone can take part from beginning bird watchers to experts. The Audubon Society can create a real-time snapshot of bird populations in order to understand how bird populations are changing from year to year. Please visit the official website at birdcount.org for more information. Additionally, you are invited to enter a free raffle for a gift certificate to Wild Birds Unlimited. The winner will be drawn at random at the Friends of Mendon Elders monthly meeting on Feb. 10.

Valentine's Luncheon &

Antique Valentines on Feb. 13 at 11 a.m. and 12 noon: Plan to join us for a special Valentines meal. We'll be serving an Italian entree, salad, garlic bread and dessert! Our COA Co-Chair Earl Pearlman will serenade us with piano ballads while lunch is served and enjoyed. Registration is required for this special event and the cost is \$5pp. Space is limited. Prior to lunch, join us for a "Show and Tell" presentation of beautiful Antique Valentine cards by Wayne Phipps at 11 a.m. Call 508-478-6175 or stop by the Center to register.

Tri-Valley Lunch Program, Be Our Guest: If you want an alternative to eating home alone but don't want to feel the pinch in your wallet, why not consider this friendly, affordable option at the Mendon Senior Center? Our volunteers will make you feel right at home. The varied Tri-Valley menus offer nutritious, delicious choices. Lunch is served 12:00 noon on Tuesdays and Thursdays for \$3. Transportation is available. Come be our guest! Your first meal is on us! *(New diners only please)*

Thank you to our friendly Tri-Valley lunch servers: Phil Cieply, Betsy Edsall, Rosie Hare, Julie King, John Lauzon, Peg Nogueira, Dona Son, Carolyn Wass and Diane Howell. Additional servers are needed. Training is provided. If you'd like to volunteer once or twice a

month, please contact Amy Wilson Kent at 508-478-6175!

February Tri-Valley Lunch Menu
Thurs., Feb. 13: Non-Tri-Valley meal, Valentine's Luncheon, Italian Entrée, Salad & Garlic Bread \$5

Tues., Feb. 18: BBQ Chicken & Potatoes Au Gratin

Thurs., Feb. 20: Teriyaki Beef & Steamed Rice

Tues., Feb. 25: Meatballs with onion gravy & Bowtie Pasta

Thurs., Feb. 27: Pork Riblet with sauce, Carrots & Coleslaw

Friendly Reminder! Meals are served at 12:00 noon. The cost is \$3 donation per meal. Reservations must be made 48 hours in advance. Transportation is available. Call to schedule. Meals are subject to change.

Mendon History with Jim Buckley

Join us on Tuesdays, Feb. 18 and March 18 at 11 a.m. when life-long educator Jim Buckley, a Milford resident, volunteers his time to dip into his treasure trove of Mendon stories and share with us some of the more exciting people and events of our town's past. Jim has written over 1,400 published historical stories, including dozens that highlight stimulating stories from Mendon's past. Please stop by or call the Mendon Senior Center at 508/478-6175 to register for this free program.

New Players Welcome!



The Mendon Senior Center offers a variety of recreational activities including:

- Cribbage—Wednesdays 9:45 a.m. The Cribbage group is always looking for new players, stop in Wednesdays at 9:45 a.m., all levels welcome.
- Hand, Knee and Foot Card game—Tuesdays 1 p.m.
- Mah-Jong—Wednesdays & Thursdays 1 p.m.
- Brain Games—Thursdays at 11:30 a.m.

Fitness Programs: Please call the center for more information about our exercise programs- availability and costs. Try the first class for free—new participants only.

Chair Exercise: This popular chair yoga program is held on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9 a.m. The 45 minute class offers the same benefits as traditional yoga, like boosting strength, flexibility and mental well-being. The practice is great for older adults, people with health con-

ditions, and those who work at a desk all day. New Thursday Session starts Feb. 20. Cost: Eight week session for \$40

Qigong: Wednesdays at 10 a.m. for six weeks for \$30. Qigong, pronounced Chee-gong, is a practice that utilizes gentle stretching and breathing exercises. Upon finishing this class students will feel relaxed yet energized.

Mendon Senior Walking Group is on winter hiatus: The Mendon Senior Walking Group will resume its routine in the spring. If you are interested in joining us or have any questions please don't hesitate to contact group leader Diane Howell at 508-473-3081 or email her at: diane.m.howell@icloud.com

New Afternoon Exercise Program! FREE Session

MENDON SENIOR CENTER

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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 FEBRUARY 2025

Upcoming Events:

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

Adult Handcrafting Group

Let's get crafty! Join us on Wednesday, Feb. 19 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, March 10 at 6:30 p.m. upstairs in the library to discuss *The Only Woman in the Room* by Marie Benedict

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, April 14 at 6:30 p.m.: *Last of the Mohicans* by James Fenimore Cooper

Footnotes Nonfiction Book Club

The Footnotes Nonfiction Book Club typically meets downstairs in the library on a quarterly basis. This year the group will read and discuss five nonfiction titles. Those interested are asked to stop at the downstairs desk to sign the Footnotes registration sheet and pick up a copy of the latest book. The book club will be discussing *The Mysterious Case of Rudolf Diesel* by Douglas Brunt on Thursday, March 27 at 7 p.m.

Upcoming books in the Footnotes series:

June (date TBD): *How the Word is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America* by

Clint Smith.

Slow Flow Adult Yoga with Katie Aissis of Sprouting Tree Yoga

Come join Katie Aissis of Sprouting Tree Yoga for Slow Flow Adult Yoga. 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 18 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.

German Conversation Club

Are you looking for a place to practice what German you remember or to improve your German vocabulary? Conversa-

tions 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, Feb. 24 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.

TAFT LIBRARY

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Please submit to:
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AWARD

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during the Plant the Moon Challenge (PTMC) Closing Symposium and Awards Ceremony, which was held virtually on Jan. 15. It caps off the international STEM competition run by the Institute of Competition Sciences for the fall 2024 season.

Under the guidance of engineering teacher James Gorman, Nipmuc Regional High School fielded six teams in the competition, with a total of 20 students from the Engineering 1 class. This was the first time that Nipmuc Regional High School participated in the PTMC.

Selected from hundreds of projects submitted from around the world, the "Best Evaluation of Results" award recognizes Luke and Liam for the strength of their methods of evaluation for their experiments on lunar soil plant growth using the aid of an inoculant, which is a bacteria added to the soil. Judged by a panel of experts, their project was one of four high school submissions to be named "Best in Show Winners," with the other categories including "Experimental Design," "Plant Growth," and "Innovation."

"Watching Luke and Liam develop their engineering design skills and tackle each challenge methodically was impressive," Gorman said. "They started

with basic questions about lunar soil composition and engineered sophisticated solutions for plant growth in space. Their 'Best Evaluation of Results' award validates their work and their growth as young engineers."

The students performed experiments throughout the fall to test the impact of nutrients, fertilizers, or other modifications on simulated lunar soil. The goal was to determine the best methods for growing nutrient-rich food during future space missions to the Moon or Mars.

Over the course of an eight-week experiment, Luke and Liam studied the growth of round black Spanish radishes in simulated lunar soil, applying an inoculant called UltraBio by HardyGro, a mixture of bacteria, organic nitrogen, and other ingredients such as mycorrhizae, a type of fungal root. Their plants reached up to 12 centimeters in height during one of the trials, which also involved periodic soil moisture readings and further post-experiment analysis. Judges credited Luke and Liam for their exceptional scientific methodology, including a hypothesis presentation with clear acceptance and rejection criteria, impressive data analysis, and a strong evaluation of results.

The science projects were made possible through grants that Gorman sought from the Massachusetts Space Grant Consortium, providing a grant of \$1,200 to cover the costs of registration and the materials.

Luke and Liam's project utilized advanced soil moisture sensors provided in the SDG sensor kit provided by MaxIQSpace. The successful partnership between Nipmuc and MaxIQSpace began in 2023, when the school earned designation as a "center of excellence" in Space STEM, Education, and the "Internet of Things" from the Virginia-based STEM education company.

"The Plant the Moon Challenge has given our students the opportunity to engage in rigorous, long-term scientific research," said Co-Principal Moran. "This is a testament to the power of project-based learning in preparing students for success in STEM fields, including space exploration."

Throughout the course of their project, Luke and Liam received guidance from NASA intern and Texas A&M doctoral student Jessica Atkin. Looking ahead, Luke and Liam plan to continue their research under Jessica Atkin's mentorship, conducting further soil analysis and experiments while refining the amounts of soil inoculant used in their future trials.

"Having a professional to consult and brainstorm with was incredibly beneficial for our research and experimentation process, as it allowed us

to consider ideas we wouldn't have otherwise and to point out variables we had not identified," Liam said. Luke said the project made him realize the importance of research in forming scientific experiments. "Before you jump into testing stuff, you really need to understand what you're trying to solve," Luke said. "Doing good research at the start totally changed how I thought about our experiment."

Co-Principal Clements and Superintendent Dr. Cohen congratulated Luke, Liam, and all of the Engineering 1 class at Nipmuc Regional High School for their successful first season in the PTMC. "This achievement perfectly demonstrates Nipmuc's commitment to authentic STEM education," said Co-Principal Clements. "We're grateful to engineering teacher James Gorman and all our STEM educators for creating these transformative learning opportunities," said Superintendent Dr. Cohen. "The success of Luke, Liam, and the entire Engineering 1 class exemplifies how Nipmuc is preparing its students through authentic learning opportunities in order to address complex challenges, even growing food in outer space."

Submitted by the Mendon-Upton Regional School District

Mendon dog licensing and street listings

From the Town of Mendon

January is the time of year when we mail out the Annual Street Listing (a.k.a. town cen-

sus) and remind residents that they need to license their dogs. Our vendor will be mailing out the street list forms sometime

during the week ending January 11, 2025. Please take the time to review the information and make changes as neces-

sary. Once complete, sign the form and return it to our office

DOG & STREET

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Key decisions for retired couples



Mark Freeman, CEPA

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Once you and your spouse retire, you'll have some decisions to make — decisions that could affect your quality of life in your retirement years. What are these choices?

Here a few of the most important ones:

- **How much should you withdraw from your retirement accounts?** By the time you retire, you may have contributed for decades

to an IRA and a 401(k) or similar employer-sponsored retirement plan. But once you retire, you'll probably need to draw on these accounts to help pay your living expenses. Consequently, both of you will need to be sure that you don't withdraw so much each year that you risk running out of money later in your retirement. One common guideline is to aim for an annual withdrawal rate of 4%, but everyone's situation is different based on age, pre-retirement income, lifestyle, health, travel plans and other factors. (Once you turn 73, or 75 if you were born in 1960 or later, you will have to take certain amounts, based on your age and account balance, from your traditional IRA and traditional 401(k) each year.)

- **When should you take Social Security?** The answer to this question depends on many factors, such as your age and other sources of income. You can take Social Security

as early as age 62, but your monthly payments will typically be bigger if you wait until your full retirement age, which will be age 67 if you were born in 1960 or later. And if you can afford to wait even longer, your payments will "max out" when you reach age 70. Your decision on when to take Social Security can affect your spouse — and vice versa. If the lower-earning spouse claims Social Security before their full retirement age — again, age 67 — their own retirement benefit and any potential spousal benefit will be reduced. (Spousal benefits are given to the lower-earning spouse if their full retirement benefit is less than half the other spouse's full retirement benefit.)

- **Should you downsize?** If you live in a big home and your children are grown, you may find it economical to downsize. Of course, this is also an emotional decision, but you may find that you can

save money by moving into a smaller home.

- **Where should you live?** Some states are far more expensive to live in than others. You'll want to weigh your decision carefully, considering the cost of housing, food, income and real estate taxes, transportation and health care in whatever state you choose.
- **Have you finished your estate plans?** If not, now is the time. You'll want to work with your legal professional to create whatever documents are needed — a will, living trust, power of attorney — to help ensure your assets go where you want them to go, and that your financial and health care choices will be protected if you become physically or mentally incapacitated.

Of course, many of these same issues will apply if you are single, divorced or widowed. But if you are married, you and your spouse will want to discuss

all your choices and then decide which steps to take. Once you've got your plans in place, you may well find that you can fully enjoy your retirement years.

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

Mark Freeman, CEPA
Edward Jones Financial Advisor
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Hopkinton, MA
508-293-4017
Mark.Freeman@edwardjones.com

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DOG & STREET

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as soon as possible. Forms can be returned via email (census@mendonma.gov), via regular mail, in person, or dropped in our drop box outside the lower level door. Please don't wait to fill them out. These forms have a habit of hiding in the mail pile.

Dog registration forms will be included in the street listing mailing. Please utilize the checklist to make sure we have everything necessary to process the licenses. If you aren't sure, just call, we are happy to help. The

easiest way to register your dogs is online at <https://unipaygold.unibank.com/customerinfo.aspx>. Use this link to pay and we will mail the tags to you.

Otherwise, you can come in person, or you can mail the forms with the appropriate fee with a stamped, self-addressed envelope and we will mail your tags back.

Are you 70 years old or older? Your dog fees are waived! However, you still have to provide up to date rabies information.

Remember, answering the annual street listing AND registering your dogs is Massachusetts law. Thank you for doing so at your earliest convenience.

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 - Active enrollment in e-statements – you must sign into your online banking account at least once every 12 months to keep enrollment active. Limit one account per customer holding position of primary account holder. Minimum balance of \$10 to open the account. Other restrictions may apply, inquire for details.

Mendon public safety log

Between Dec. 25 and Jan. 18, 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, traffic hazards, parking complaints, vehicle lockouts, 911 calls (accidental and abandoned), alarms (fire, burglar), smoke and odor investigations, suspicious activity, document and warrant service, civil complaints, found property, welfare checks, fraud, and provide general assistance to citizens.

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

- Dec. 29** at 7:49 p.m., Mary Dr., threats
- Dec. 30** at 6:31 a.m., Millville St., electrical emergency
- Dec. 30** at 9:23 a.m., Davenport Dr., suspicious activity
- Dec. 31** at 2:06 p.m., White Rd., shooting
- Jan. 1, 2025**, at 6:07 p.m., Dudley Rd., structure fire
- Jan. 10** at 8:06 a.m., Miscoe Rd., carbon monoxide alarm
- Jan. 10** at 5:05 p.m., Miscoe Rd., disorderly conduct
- Jan. 12** at 6:38 p.m., Asylum St., harassment
- Jan. 17** at 1:52 p.m., Millville St., shoplifting
- Jan. 17** at 7:32 p.m., Taft Ave., harassment

Source: www.mendonpolice.com/

MENDON SENIOR CENTER

continued from page 2

Wednesdays at 1 p.m.

You asked, we listened. In order to gauge interest, we will be holding a three-week Chair Exercise class on Wednesdays Feb. 26, March 5 and March 12 at 1 p.m. This 45-minute class is comparable to our T/TH morning classes. This brief session will be grant-funded by the Friends of Elders, giving new participants an opportunity to try is on for size for FREE! If space permits, existing members may also join in. Call or stop by the center to register.

Shine Health Insurance Counseling: Certified SHINE counselors are available to assist you with questions about Medicare. SHINE services are free and unbiased: we are available to discuss all options related to Medicare and additional coverage, and we do not sell any plans. Call the Mendon Senior Center at 508-478-6175 to make an appointment or call the Regional SHINE Office in Milford at 508-422-9931. SHINE (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone) funded through the federal agency, Administration for Community Living and administered through the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs.

Get Help Paying for Medicare Costs: Apply to the Medicare Saving Program (MSP) to save up to \$3,000/year on Medicare costs! MSP will pay for some or all of Medicare premiums, deductibles, copayments and co-insurance. Depending on your income, MSP will pay for your Medicare Part A & B premiums and cost sharing, or Medicare Part B premium, as well as lower your prescription costs. For more information go

to Mass.gov/Medicare Savings or contact a SHINE counselor at the Senior Center.

Food and Fuel Assistance – Help is Just a Call Away: If you or someone you know is having trouble making ends meet this winter, please consider contacting the Mendon Senior Center. Our helpful Outreach Coordinator Janet Hubener is available 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. Additionally, the Mendon Food Pantry, housed at the senior center is well stocked and available to Mendon residents in need. Call 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

A warning from Mass. Department of Transportation: EZDriveMA customers who receive unsolicited texts or emails, also known as smishing, are urged NOT to click on the link. Scammers are claiming to represent the tolling agency and are requesting payment for unpaid tolls. The amount several customers have received is \$6.99.

Targeted phone numbers seem to be chosen at random and are not associated with MassDOT. Mass DOT maintains that (1) EZDriveMA will never request payment by text, and (2) all links associated with EZDrive MA will include www.EZDriveMA.com

The FBI is aware of the EZ-

Drive smishing scam which is part of a series of such scams.

Stay alert to these types of scams, delete any smishing texts received and contact www.EZDriveMA.com with any questions about EZDrive MA notifications.

March Programs—register early!

Comedy Program: Dave Kanés'- Jokes My Irish Father Told Me—jokes, one liners and stories, March 13 at 11 a.m.

Dine-out: Roast House, Blackstone, March 19 11:30/12

Blackstone Regional Animal Shelter Tour, Tuesday, March 25 at 1 p.m.: The Mendon Senior Center invites interested animal lovers to join us for a brief meeting at our center to learn about opportunities to socialize and play with shelter animals prior to being adopted to their forever home. Current volunteer Janice Muldoon-Moors and shelter personnel will discuss this innovative program. Following this gathering, we will travel as a group on the Senior Center Van to the shelter for a brief orientation to the facility. Applications will be available there for anyone wishing to help. Please plan one and a half to two hours for this program-including travel. Please call or stop by the center to register for this program.

2025 Overnight Trip, Niagara Falls, registration now being accepted! This Niagara Falls trip offered by Diamond Tours is scheduled for Sept. 29 thru Oct. 3 from the Mendon Senior Center. It is on the American side so that passports will not be needed. It includes 4 nights lodging in the Niagara Falls area, 8 meals: 4 breakfasts and 4 dinners. A guided tour of the falls on the Maid of the Mist, cruise on the Erie Canal, scenic drive through wine country, guided tour of Buffalo and a visit to Buffalo Transportation Pierce Arrow Museum. The price is \$685 pp based on double occupancy. Final Payment is due by June 22. Please register at the Mendon Senior Center. Checks are to be made out to Friends of Mendon Elders (please add 'trip account' in memo) Call Beverly Fior, 508-473-8382 for more information.

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Start the New Year with Affordable Junk Removal

There are plenty of reasons to call a junk removal service. Perhaps, after the cheerful festivities of the holiday season, navigating your basement or venturing into the attic has become a bit more challenging. Maybe you are planning to move, and you need to declutter before your open house?

Figuring out who to call can be challenging. If you contact one of the big haulers, they route you to a phone center where they've never even heard of your town, plus their pricing seems vague and full of extra fees. No wonder you've let the stuff pile up—it's too much of a hassle to get rid of it!

Or you can call Affordable Junk Removal and let a local small business with deep community roots take care of everything.

Jay Schadler started his business in 2005. Back then, it was just him and a beat-up pickup truck taking small jobs and working nights and weekends when he could. As the years rolled on, his business grew, but his commitment to customer service never wavered. Now

he's got a staff of ten, along with eight trucks, servicing eastern and central Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island.

Affordable Junk Removal specializes in house and estate cleanouts. If your garage, attic, or office is overflowing with stuff, take back your space and let the pros do the heavy lifting.

Jay and his team have handled it all. They've dismantled above-ground pools, hauled away ancient hot tubs, taken down old fencing, and stripped away worn carpeting. They'll come for a single item, or they'll clean out an entire house. And they can take almost anything. They can't accept hazardous materials, brush, dirt, or concrete, but everything else is fair game for them to take away.

Not everything ends up in a landfill—not if Jay can help it. He first tries to either recycle or donate items. Only after he tries to repurpose items do they end up at the transfer station.

Working with Affordable Junk Removal is simple. First, you can load stuff yourself if you want by renting a 15-cubic-yard dump-

Business spotlight

ster for a week and chucking up to a ton of your unwanted stuff. If you need to get rid of more weight, then Jay prorates that tonnage—you never pay for what you don't use.

If you don't want to be bothered with the dumpster, they've also got a driveway special where they'll take away a truckload of your unwanted things if you pile it up. Or if you don't want to lift a finger, then you can point at the items, and the team will fill up their truck and haul away your unwanted things. However you do it, you're left with more space and more peace of mind.

Jay and his team beat the big waste haulers on both price and customer service. When you call Affordable Junk Removal, you aren't connected to an anonymous call center. Your phone call goes right to Jay.

And speaking of pricing, Jay



is upfront about it. His website shows the truck sizes and prices, so you can save time knowing your costs before you call for an appointment. There aren't any hidden costs or surprise fees with Affordable Junk Removal.

Affordable Junk Removal is fully licensed and fully insured, and they'll treat your property with care and respect.

They also have a thriving commercial business, working with contractors and roofers to clear away debris and keep the job site clean. They can even handle commercial and residential emergencies with same-day service.

Jay and his family are deeply involved in the community. He and his wife, Christine, run the Corner Market restaurant in Holliston. It's not uncommon for someone to reach Jay at the restaurant, order a sandwich, and then schedule a junk removal appointment. Yes, the local small business really can handle everything!

Contact Affordable Junk Removal and let a local small business take care of everything for you. Call Jay Schadler at 774-287-1133 or visit us online at ataffordablejunkremoval.com.

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Macular degeneration: What it is and how to treat it

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

Macular degeneration is one of the leading causes of vision loss, particularly among older adults, significantly impacting the quality of life for millions worldwide. This article examines macular degeneration, its symptoms and signs, diagnostic methods, current treatments, recent therapeutic advancements, and available care options.

What is Macular Degeneration?

Macular degeneration, often called age-related macular degeneration (AMD), is a progressive eye condition affecting the macula, the small central area of the retina responsible for sharp, detailed central vision. AMD is categorized into two primary types: dry (atrophic) and wet (neovascular).

- **Dry AMD:** The more common form, comprising 85–90% of cases. It occurs due to gradual thinning of the

macula and the accumulation of drusen, yellow deposits under the retina. Vision loss progresses slowly in most cases.

- **Wet AMD:** Though less common, it is more severe, responsible for most advanced vision loss cases. It results from abnormal blood vessel growth under the retina, causing leakage, bleeding, and scarring, often leading to rapid vision loss without treatment.

Symptoms and Signs

Symptoms of macular degeneration vary by type and stage. Common signs include:

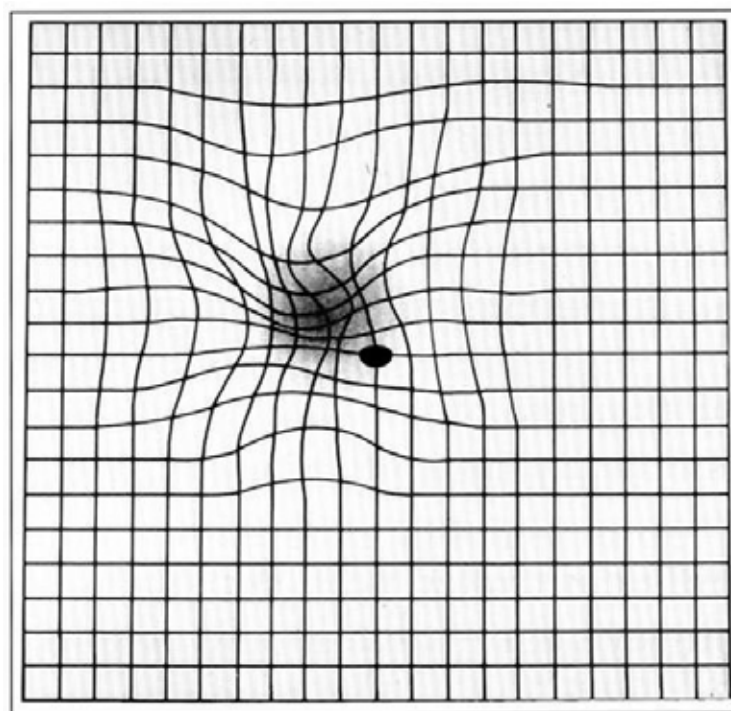
- **Blurred central vision:** Early signs may include difficulty reading or recognizing faces.
- **Distorted vision (metamorphopsia):** Straight lines may appear wavy or distorted.
- **Difficulty adapting to low light:** Challenges in transitioning from bright to dim environments.

- **Central blind spots (scotomas):** Dark or empty areas in the central field of vision.
- **Reduced color perception:** Colors may seem less vibrant over time.

Diagnostic Testing

Accurate diagnosis is vital for managing AMD effectively. Key diagnostic tools include:

- **Comprehensive eye exam:** Identifies early signs such as drusen or retinal changes.
- **Amsler grid test:** Detects distortions or blind spots in central vision.
- **Optical coherence tomography (OCT):** Offers detailed cross-sectional imaging of the retina, highlighting thinning or fluid accumulation.
- **Fluorescein angiography:** Highlights abnormal blood vessel growth and leakage in wet AMD.
- **Fundus photography:** Captures high-resolution retinal images to monitor changes over time.



Current Treatment Options

Treatment depends on the type and severity of AMD:

- **Dry AMD:** While no definitive cure exists, lifestyle modifications and supportive care can slow progression:
 - **Nutritional supplements:** The AREDS2 formula (antioxidants, zinc, and copper) reduces the risk of advanced AMD.
 - **Lifestyle changes:** A healthy diet rich in leafy greens, omega-3 fatty acids, avoiding smoking, and UV protection are essential.
- **Wet AMD:** Treatment focuses on halting abnormal blood vessel growth:
 - **Anti-VEGF therapy:** Medications like ranibizumab (Lucentis), aflibercept (Eylea), and brolucizumab (Beovu) inhibit vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF), reducing abnormal vessel formation.
 - **Photodynamic therapy (PDT):** Combines a light-sensitive drug with laser activation to target abnormal vessels.
 - **Laser therapy:** Less commonly used, this destroys abnormal blood vessels with laser energy.

- **Gene therapy:** Experimental approaches aim to deliver protective genes to the retina, reducing the need for frequent anti-VEGF injections.
- **Long-lasting drug delivery systems:** Innovations like the Port Delivery System (PDS) with ranibizumab provide sustained medication release, minimizing injection frequency.
- **Stem cell therapy:** Research explores using stem cell-derived retinal pigment epithelial (RPE) cells to replace damaged macular cells.
- **New pharmacological agents:** Drugs like complement inhibitors (e.g., pegcetacoplan) target previously untreatable stages of dry AMD and geographic atrophy.

Living with Macular Degeneration

Managing AMD extends beyond medical treatment and includes:

- **Low vision aids:** Magnifiers, special glasses, and electronic devices maintain independence.
- **Support networks:** Connecting with groups and counseling provides emotional and practical support.
- **Routine monitoring:** Regular follow-ups ensure timely interventions and management adjustments.

New Therapeutic Advancements

Advancements in AMD research are offering improved outcomes:

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A HELPING HAND...

Upton Food Pantry hours

Feb. 18 and March 4: 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 Street.

Community supper on Feb. 20

Feb. 20: Community Supper - on the third Thursday of each month from September through June at 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., our Faith in Action committee provides a delicious and nutritious meal for the community. This month we are serving breakfast for dinner! Everyone is welcome. Please call the church office at 508-529-3192 by Feb. 14 to make your reservation. If you forget to reserve, please come anyway. We always make extra and would love to serve you at United Parish Upton, 1 Church Street.

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.

Upton public safety log

Calls between Dec. 25 to Jan. 25 included suspicious and disorderly persons, neighbor disputes, lost/missing person

The Upton Police Department and Fire Department provided a wide range of services between Dec. 25 to Jan. 25 related to motor vehicle violations, disabled and suspicious motor vehicles, traffic enforcement, preventative patrol, road hazards, abandoned and accidental 911 calls, well-being checks, suspicious persons, summons service, court appearances, fundraiser-possible scams, identity theft, solicitation, lost/missing/found property, general assistance, and animal issues.

Upton also provided occasional mutual aid to Grafton, Hopkinton, Milford, and Northbridge; and daily mutual aid to

Hopedale police, fire and EMS. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Other entries of note include:

- Dec. 25** at 5:47 p.m., Walnut St., shots fired
- Dec. 27** at 12:56 p.m., Main St., well-being check
- Dec. 28** at 1:55 p.m., Pleasant St., hunter complaint/inquiry
- Dec. 28** at 7:03 p.m., Prospect St., suspicious person
- Dec. 29** at 3:37 a.m., Crockett Rd., breaking and entering a motor vehicle
- Dec. 30** at 2:12 p.m., Walnut St., power outage
- Jan. 1** at 8:18 p.m., Hartford Ave. North, neighbor dispute
- Jan. 1** at 11:06 p.m., Hartford Ave. North, neighbor dispute
- Jan. 5** at 2:07 p.m., Briarwood Ln, larceny
- Jan. 6** at 8:33 a.m., Pleasant St,

- suspicious motor vehicle
- Jan. 7** at 3:37 p.m., School St., harassment prevention order
- Jan. 9** at 10:52 a.m., Dairy Dr., warrant of apprehension
- Jan. 9** at 11:04 a.m., West St, prisoner transport
- Jan. 9** at 1 p.m., car seat installation
- Jan. 10** at 4:28 p.m., Pleasant St., disorderly person
- Jan. 13** at 8:47 a.m., Main St., trespass order
- Jan. 14** at 5:33 a.m., Milford St., water leak
- Jan. 21** at 7:49 a.m., Milford St., lost/missing person
- Jan. 24** at 9:39 a.m., N Main St., suspicious person
- Jan. 25** at 11:09 a.m., Fowler St., suspicious package/material
- Jan. 25** at 12:57 p.m., South St., suspicious person

Source: Upton Police Department

EYE CARE

continued from page 8

Macular degeneration presents significant challenges, but early detection and proactive management can preserve vision and improve quality of life. If you experience symptoms or have risk factors, schedule a comprehensive eye exam with an eye care professional.

At Milford Franklin Eye Center, we use state-of-the-art technology to address a variety

of eye conditions, including macular degeneration. Our dedicated retina specialist focuses on treating retinal eye diseases and AMD, utilizing the most recent treatment modalities discussed in this article. With advanced equipment rivaling the best teaching eye hospitals, we proudly offer world-class eye care close to home.

For more details, see our ad on page 8.

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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

New Children's Programs!

Storybook Art Club – Feb. 18 at 10 a.m. 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 and illustrator Rachel Isadora. Participants will use materials such as scissors, glue, paint, and coloring materials. Pre-registration required. For ages 3 to 5.

Crafters' Noon – Feb. 27 at 3 p.m.

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 torn paper hearts! For ages 3+. No registration required.

Adult Events

Heartline Workshop: Power of Palmistry – Saturday, Feb. 15, 1-2:30 p.m. Ages 14 - Adult

This workshop focuses on the heartline marking in the palm, which speaks to our emotional system—how we give and receive love and show up in the world. There are four heartline types,

each with unique characteristics, likes, and dislikes. Participants will learn about the heartline types, identify their own, and learn how to engage with the people in their lives with different heartline types.

Puzzle Swap - Wednesday, March 5, 1 - 2 p.m.

Need to swap an old puzzle out for a new one? Bring in a gently used puzzle with no missing pieces to participate in our Yankee Swap of puzzles (either 500 or 1,000 pieces). You will walk away with a new-to-you puzzle of your own! You may bring more gently used puzzles to swap with other patrons afterwards. There will be a table set up with a puzzle going, so feel free to stay and help put it together! To attend this event, please register on the library website.

Drum Circle with Dave Curry - Saturday, March 15, 7 - 9 p.m. Ages 8 - Adult

Join facilitator Dave Curry for an evening of freestyle drumming. Instruction and extra drums are provided, but you can also bring your own drums and percussion instruments. No prior experience is necessary, so the circle is suitable for beginners on up to experienced drummers.

Registration is requested.

Virtual Author Talk Series

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

Author Talk with Lee Hawkins: I Am Nobody's Slave - Tuesday, Feb. 18 at 2 p.m.

Author Talk with Dan Heath: Power of Reset and How to Change What's Not Working - Wednesday, March 12 at 2 p.m.

Author Talk with Clara Bingham: How Women's Liberation Transformed America - Thursday, March 20 at 2 p.m.

Children's & Young Adult Events

PJ Drive – Feb. 1 through March 15

It's the Annual Boston Bruins PJ Drive to support Cradles to Crayons and our local Department of Children and Families! We are collecting brand new pajamas, with tags, in our lobby until March 15. Sizes can be for babies through adults and items will go to local families in need. This is for donations only. If you are interested in receiving a donation, please contact DCF at 508-929-1000. This event is also sponsored by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commission-

ers (MBLC).

Poop Museum – Feb. 19 at 6 p.m.

The Poop Museum is the place to come for those who are curious and have questions about poop! The Poop Museum covers the serious science of poop and pooping, and is delivered with the silliness that you might imagine accompanying a program about poop for young kids. It is the perfect combination of fun, fabulous, and fascinating facts, so that kids (and parents) never forget what they learned. For ages 5 to 12. Registration required. *This program is generously sponsored by a grant from the Upton Cultural Council.

Movie Event – Feb. 20

Check the Upton library website for details about our monthly movie events!

Game Day – Feb. 21 at 1 p.m.

Join us for an intergenerational event as senior citizens and library patrons ages 3 and up join together for an afternoon of fun and games! We will host giant board games, classic board games, puzzles, and more! Registrations for seniors may be done by calling the Senior Center at 508-529-4558. Registrations for children may be done via our Event Calendar online. For ages 3+. Not a drop-off event.

CactusHead Puppets – March 8 at 10 a.m.

The town of Hamelin has a

rat problem, and there's only one person who can help! Join puppeteers John and Megan Regan as they present the classic tale "The Pied Piper," with multiple puppetry styles, and plenty of dancing rats! For ages 3+. 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.

UPTON LIBRARY

continued on page 17



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Pet of the Month: Giorgio Armani

When this well-dressed man arrived at the Milford Humane Society with his stunning green eyes, his perfect tuxedo markings and his aristocratic airs, it was obvious he was Giorgio Armani.

Giorgio Armani had a difficult time adjusting to life at our humble shelter. He cannot tolerate mixing with his subordinates. While Giorgio has mellowed over the years, he still has very exacting standards and he likes his things just so. Much like the most demanding boss you have ever worked for, he has been known to lash out when his standards aren't met. He may have you walking on eggshells until you learn his ways. Soon

you will understand that the demands he places on you are for the good of the company, or home, and he will reward your loyalty with love.

Once he trusts you, Giorgio will be delighted to welcome you into his office. He will rub against your legs purring and he will follow you around checking your work as you go.

Currently, Giorgio is looking for a very special assistant, we mean adopter. Requirements for the position:

- Patient and thick-skinned
- This position may require a second and third interview.
- To meet Giorgio Armani, please visit the Milford Humane Society at www.milfordhumane.org
- Previous experience working for an exacting boss or with difficult pets.
- No small children or other pets
- A quiet home with a space



Giorgio can call his own

- Patient and thick-skinned
- This position may require a second and third interview.
- To meet Giorgio Armani, please visit the Milford Humane Society at www.milfordhumane.org

Friends of Mendon Elders 2025 Scholarship Program

The Friends of Mendon Elders are pleased to announce our 2025 Scholarship Program. The program is open to students who are enrolling in part-time or full-time post-secondary studies at an accredited two-or four-year college, university, or vocational-technical school for the entire upcoming academic year (2025-2026).

Scholarship details:

Deadline to apply is May 9, 2025 at 11:59 p.m. EST. One \$1,000 scholarship will be awarded.

Requirements:

- Applicants must reside in Mendon, MA
- Applicants must commit to complete 20 hours of community service.
- Applicants must submit a 200 word essay on a senior citizen (over the age of 60) who has had a positive im-

pact in their life, what that impact was and the result.

- Applicants must submit a Letter of Recommendation
- Applicant must provide a list of Extracurricular Involvement

Applications are available at the Mendon Town Clerks Office, Mendon Senior Center or by e-mailing kcieply@msn.com.

Completed applications and additional documentation should be dropped off or mailed to The Friends of Mendon Elders, 62 Providence Street, Mendon, MA 01756 Attention Scholarship Committee

Applications will be considered based on financial need, academic performance, participation in school and community activities and unusual personal or family circumstances.

The Milford Town Library is holding a Cat Supplies Drive to benefit the Milford Humane Society.
Wet or dry cat food, kitty litter, and toys can be dropped off in the collection bin in the library lobby though Feb. 14. For more information, call 508-473-2145 (ext.2) or visit milfordhumane.org

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The Friends of Mendon Elders is off and running for 2025

As we embark on an exciting new chapter in 2025, we are thrilled to announce and extend our heartfelt congratulations to our new President, Karen Cieply. With Karen's leadership and vision, we are confident that our mission will continue to flourish. However, we can't do it alone. We need your help and support to make this year a success. Let's come together as a community to champion the well-being of our seniors and make a positive difference.



Karen Cieply was recently named President of Mendon Elders.
Courtesy photo

The Friends is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization raising funds for the benefit of the senior center and the seniors it serves. New members are always welcome! Join us to learn more about the events and activities at the Senior Center. Catch up with members and enjoy some light refreshments prior to start of meeting!

Friends of Mendon Elders 2025 Current Slate of Officers:
President – Karen Cieply
Secretary – Joanne Mondor
Treasurer – Nancy MacLeod
Board Members:

Betsy Edsall, Ann Halsing, Kay Holmes, Tom Irons, Paula Malnati, Lana Mars, and Carolyn Wass.

Join the Friends of Mendon Elders! Are you passionate about making a difference in your community? The Friends of Mendon Elders is seeking new members to help support programs and services that benefit older adults. The Friends meet the second Monday of each month, excluding July and August. All are welcome,

ELDERS

continued on page 15

39 students from Nipmuc Regional High School Class of 2025 receive John and Abigail Adams Scholarship

MENDON — Mendon-Upton Regional School District Superintendent Dr. Maureen Cohen and Nipmuc Regional High School Co-Principals John Clements and Mary Anne Moran are proud to share that 39 students from the Nipmuc Regional High School Class of 2025 will receive a John and Abigail Adams Scholarship this year.

The John and Abigail Adams Scholarship is a statewide merit-based program that provides a credit toward tuition for up to eight semesters of undergraduate education at a Massachusetts state college or university. The award amount differs based on the student's chosen school.

This scholarship is available to students whose MCAS performance puts them in the top 25% of their district. To be eligible, students must score in the Advanced category on one of three high school

state assessment tests (English Language Arts, Mathematics, or Science and Technology/Engineering) and score in the Proficient or Advanced category on the remaining two high school state assessment tests. High school students take the MCAS tests in the spring of their sophomore year.

Co-Principals Clements and Moran each offered a message of congratulations to all the students for earning the scholarship.

"We are thrilled for this fantastic group of students," Co-Principal Clements said. "Earning this recognition is a credit to their hard work over the years."

"We are proud of what these students have accomplished during their years at Nipmuc," said Co-Principal Moran. "It's exciting to see them honored for their dedication to their studies and learning."

The following Nipmuc Re-

gional High School Class of 2025 students have earned a John and Abigail Adams Scholarship:

Juliet Alexander, Paige Anderson, Kayla Aubut, Alex Bandstra, Susan Barrows, Maxwell Bevivino, Mark Calabrese, Gavin Chace, Alissa Christensen, Olivia DaSilva, Samantha Driver, Maximos Fernandes, Jake Fernandes, Madeleine Gowen, Ava Garvey, Kenneth Hanson, Jack Harvey, Steven John, Zachary Johnson, Gwendolyn Kirstein, Bridget Klupa, Julia Lenfest, Maggie Lewinsky, Makary Mansy, Kyah Montano, Mina Megalaa, Isabelle Nicholson, Ashley Pisano, Diana Plotkin, Anna Rabidou, Alexander Ramsay, Benjamin Reitz, Elyse Rich, Gabriel Sicurella, Amelia Squires, Charlotte St. Pierre, Kayla Steel, Daphne Sweeney, and Jorvan Uppal.

Submitted by the Mendon-Upton Regional School District



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The Mendon Select Board
Community Preservation Committee
and Land Use Committee
will be having a Public Hearing on
March 5th, 6:35 PM at the Mendon Town Hall
to receive comments on the
Five-Year Land Use Program
(visit www.mendonma.gov on the Land Use
Committee page or the Town Clerk's Office).

We would like to hear your suggestions for CPA
and Land Use projects. All are welcome.
For questions, email
communitypreservation@mendonma.gov

TAFT LIBRARY

continued from page 3

**CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS
FEBRUARY 2025**

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

Itty Bitty Story Time

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

Story & Craft Time

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

Alphabet Storytime

It's all about the alphabet. Each week we will focus on a different letter. We will read a couple of books, sing songs, and learn about the letter of the week. Wednesday mornings at 10:30 a.m. Please note there is no Alphabet Storytime the last Wednesday of the month.

**Coffee and Conversations
& Puppet Storytime**

Dates: Wednesday: 2/26, 3/26, 4/30, 5/28 and 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 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.

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: 3/11, 4/8, 5/13 and 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 on Tuesday: 3/18, 4/15, 5/20 and 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: March 12, April 9, May 14 and 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: Feb. 25, March 25, April 29 and 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 and her owner Janet will visit the Taft on

the last Tuesday of each month. Register today for the opportunity to read to Sprite. Spots are limited.

**Malik the Magical Comedy
Entertainer**

Join us on Tuesday, Feb. 18 at 4 p.m. for a magical comedy show with Malik. Register today.

Book Clubs

Graphic Novel Book Club: Join us on Tuesday, March 18 at 5 p.m. to discuss this month's book pick. Pizza and refreshments will be served. This month we will be reading *Wagnificent: The Adventures of Thunder and Sage* by Bethanie Murguia. Books are available at the upstairs circulation desk.

8-12 Book Club: We will be reading *Nuts to You* by Lynne Rae Perkins. The book club discussion will be held downstairs in the library on Tuesday, March 4 at 5 p.m. The book club will include a discussion, pizza, and refreshments.

6-9 Book Club: We will be reading *Monkey Me and the Golden Monkey* by Timothy Roland. The book club discussion will be held downstairs in the library on Tuesday, March 25 at 5 p.m. The 45-minute book club will include a discussion, pizza and an activity. Books are available at the upstairs circulation desk.

Recent Home Sales

Date	Mendon	Amount
01/22/2025	17 Park Street	\$600,000
01/15/2025	70 North Avenue	\$675,000
01/10/2025	75 Neck Hill Road	\$595,000

Date	Upton	Amount
01/22/2025	8 Plumbley Road	\$825,000
01/08/2025	34 Milford Street	\$539,900
01/02/2025	29 Mechanic Street	\$650,000
12/31/2024	138-138A N Main Street	\$421,000
12/27/2024	165 W River Street	\$555,000
12/27/2024	18 Kiwanis Beach Road	\$1.32 mil
12/24/2024	19 Merriam Way	\$700,000

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



The 3-bed, 2-bath, 1,478-square-foot home on 2.78 acres at 29 Mechanic Street in Upton recently sold for \$650,000. Photo source: RobynAndSeanMyHouse

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JACKIE'S

continued from page 1

like to give to people who have a need, whether it's financial, social-emotional, special needs, whatever it is, because I know how much it's appreciated and because I know that's what Jackie would be doing."

The boutique opened in 2017 and helped many girls the first few years, says Sandy. Then the COVID-19 pandemic happened and students did not go to school or prom. Since then, the boutique – which is only open by appointment during school off-hours – remains relatively unknown to many students. The majority of current MHS students did not know Jackie and likely do not know the story behind the large set of dark doors on the second floor (Upper A-Wing) that read "Jackie's Boutique" in purple paint, Jackie's favorite color.

The space is a former custodial closet that the Gray family and friends worked to turn into a "vintage boutique" space with racks of dresses in various styles from size 0 to 28; shelves for shoes, bags, and jewelry; a dressing room; and lots of Jackie's influence (including her prom photos).

"With the help of lots of peo-



Jackie Gray at her prom in 2014.
Courtesy photo

ple, that's how this came about," said Ron.

"Little by little, I just spent time up here," said Sandy, organizing the space. "Jackie was a dancer and all about 'bling' so we incorporated a lot of bling in her honor."

There are more than 1,000 available, many in a satellite storeroom; all are donated and some are brand new with tags.

Shopping is by appoint-

Jackie Gray worked at JJ's in Upton

Jackie ("Jax") Gray worked at JJ's Ice Cream Shoppe in Upton while in high school and during vacations from Quinnipiac University where she was studying psychology.

There is a park bench dedicated to Jackie in the outdoor seating area at JJ's whose owners, John and Johnna Gorman, share Jackie's memory each year on Facebook, like this post from July 4, 2024.

"We lost this beautiful soul eight years ago today. Jackie was a loving daughter, sister, granddaughter, niece, cousin and friend to many. Her work with the Best Buddies organization at Milford High School highlighted her compassion and willingness to give back to her community. Jackie was an excellent student and accomplished dancer who then taught herself to skate so that she could be part of the Quinnipiac University Ice Cats dance team. Jackie had a passion for life that was extraordinary and contagious. We're missing Jackie Gray today and every day."

Source: Facebook @JJ's Ice Cream Shoppe #jjsforjax

Each year, the Grays offer free ice cream to a limited number of customers around July 4th.

"Those people are just an incredible family," said Ron Gray, adding JJ's sponsors various fundraisers throughout the year, including a fall golf tournament, in Jackie's honor.



Each July, JJ's Ice Cream Shoppe in Upton remembers Jackie "Jax" Gray who worked at JJ's during high school and college and who died after a car crash in 2016.

Source: Facebook @JJ's Ice Cream Shoppe



There is a bench in memory of Jackie "Jax" Gray in the outdoor seating area at JJ's Ice Cream Shoppe.

Source: Facebook @JJ's Ice Cream Shoppe

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"Some girls come in alone, some with their friends, some with their moms, and most of them want my help which is nice," said Sandy, adding visits can last one hour to a few hours. "I will stay up here until we can make something work, it's their moment. This is very individualized, I want them to have fun and take their time."

She added, "Most, if not all, of the girls really appreciate this and the parents are grateful for not having to spend money on a dress, which can be really expensive especially if the girls are going to more than one prom (or they get asked at the last minute)."

Sandy says the private shop-

JACKIE'S

continued on page 15



In addition to more than 1,000 dresses to loan, Jackie's Boutique inside Milford High School also loans accessories. Photo credit: Theresa Knapp

JACKIE'S

continued from page 14

ping experience during off hours in a quiet secluded space can also be ideal for students who might be shy or get overstimulated by the big-dress-shop experience. "At Jackie's Boutique, they can come in here, and hopefully be relaxed."

Sandy will help make arrangements for alterations, often at a very low cost.

They ask that dresses be returned to Jackie's Boutique and suggest a nominal fee to cover the cost of dry cleaning.

Jackie's Boutique lends dresses not just for proms but for other community events as well, including the Milford Youth Cen-



Jackie's Boutique offers an individual salon-style experience to girls looking for prom dresses. Photo credit: Theresa Knapp

"If you get a chance to sit it out or dance, I Hope You Dance"

~Jackie's Boutique motto

ter Fashion Show and the Best Buddies Pageant – Jackie was a member of the MHS Best Buddies chapter while in high school. They hope to increase their work with other community organizations in the near future.

"It's things like this that make me happy we can offer this," said Sandy, who runs the shop

herself but often has help from MHS students who need community service hours and Girl Scouts working on badges and awards.

To donate dresses or to request an appointment (girls do not need to be Milford residents), contact Sandy Gray at 508-245-2973.

ELDERS

continued from page 12

membership is not restricted to Seniors.

As a member, you will:

- Collaborate with a team of dedicated individuals to plan and host fundraising events.
- Help ensure that our senior programs remain accessible and impactful.
- Create a positive, lasting impact for seniors in our community.

For more information, please contact President Karen Cieply at kcieply@msc.com or 508-523-9273

Friends Dine Out — We invite you to join us for the Friends monthly Dine Out. Carpool with friends from the senior center the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 11:30 a.m. or meet at the restaurant at 12 noon. The cost of lunch is your responsibility but the company is free! Please sign-up at the senior center.

Wednesday Feb. 19 ~ Empire Buffet, 876 Diamond Hill Rd. Woonsocket, RI



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Upton Senior Center news for February and March

AARP Tax Prep: Sign Up for Free Tax Preparation and Filing

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide volunteers will help you prepare and file your return. The service is free and offered at our Senior Center. AARP volunteers are IRS certified and can help you file a complete and accurate return – both federal and state. The service is free. While AARP is focused on taxpayers who are over 50 and have low to moderate income, the service is open to anyone of any age. Appointments began on Monday, February 3 and continue each Monday through March 31.

Call the Senior Center at 508-529-4558 for more info and an appointment.

Upton Community Center Food Pantry

Do you need food assistance? The Upton Community Food Pantry is open to all Upton residents! Hours of operation are Wednesdays 12 - 2 p.m. and Fridays 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Are you unable to come at these days and times? Call us to set up an appointment. Contact us at 508-529-4558 for more information.

Save the Date

March 10 at 12 p.m. Hip Hop Chair Dance funded by the Upton Cultural Council

March 5 at 2 p.m. AmeriCorps Seniors Volunteer Presentation

March 28 Senior Soiree: Dinner-Dance

Free Featured Class Zumba® Gold Mondays in February at 2:30 p.m.

Discover the fun of Zumba® Gold for free! Join our upbeat dance class, all fitness levels welcome. Zumba® Gold uses Latin and International rhythms that feature low-intensity, low-impact exercises to help you safely reach your wellness goals. The moves are gentle on the joints and slower-paced offering the opportunity for greater range of motion at your own pace. This class is so full of fun and energy

you'll forget you're working out and think you're at a party! Free for the month of February

Grief Support Group Tuesdays at 1 p.m.

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

Mindful Meditation Friday, Feb. 14 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 Trip - Outback Steakhouse, Bellingham

Tuesday, Feb. 18 at 1 p.m.

G'day, mates! Enjoy the Australian steakhouse experience with us as we dine at Outback Steakhouse in Bellingham.

Upton Memory Café

Wednesday, Feb. 19 at 2:30 p.m.



Upton Senior Center lounge area. Wendy Watkins photo

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 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, contact the Senior Center to register.

Intergenerational Game Day Friday, Feb. 21 at 1 p.m.

Join us for an intergenerational event as senior citizens and library patrons ages 3 and up come together for an afternoon of fun and games! We will host giant board games, classic board games, puzzles, and more!

Lunch & Learn: Aging Well

Wednesday, Feb. 26 at 12:30 p.m.

Daniela Masters, owner and founder of Aging Well Advocates, an aging life care management business, will be here discussing the "Aging Life Continuum of Care". This methodology offers a range of healthcare services for older adults, enabling them to transition smoothly between different care levels—from independent living to assisted living, memory care, and skilled nursing—based on evolving health needs. The goal is to provide continuous, appropriate support without requiring frequent moves to new facilities. Come join us to explore these options and get answers to any questions you may have from Daniela.

Did you know you can get the Upton Senior Center newsletter earlier online? Sign up at my-communityonline.com/organization/the-upton-center

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Mendon election nomination papers now available

MENDON - Nomination papers for the Annual Town Election are now available in the Mendon Town Clerk's office.

Interested candidates should visit the Town Clerk during normal business hours – Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. - to pick up the necessary papers.

Offices on this year's ballot include:

- Moderator
- Select Board
- Board of Assessors
- Board of Health
- Housing Authority
- Parks Commission
- Planning Board
- Taft Library Trustees (2 seats)



- Tree Warden
- Water Commission
- MURSD School Committee.

Please contact the Town Clerk's office 508-473-1085 with any questions you have about the process.

Source: www.mendonma.gov/home/news/annual-town-election-nomination-papers

UPTON LIBRARY

continued from page 10

This is a 45-minute program featuring stories, songs, rhymes, and a craft. Pre-registration required.

Drop-In Storytime – Feb. 24 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 – March 3 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. 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 – Feb. 19 & March 5 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 – March 5 at 4 p.m.

Our book club members explore popular juvenile chapter books 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. NEW AGE! This group is now for ages 7 to 10. We welcome new members all year round! Pre-registration required.

Tween Book Club – Feb. 20 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 *On a Wing and a Tear* by Cynthia Leitich Smith. We welcome new members all year round! Pre-registration required.

Teen Hangout – Tuesdays & Thursdays 2 - 5 p.m.

Teen Hangout is a time just for

tweens and teens! Every Tuesday and Thursday after school, we reserve the classroom as a space for teens to hangout, play video games and board games, make crafts, read, and more! This is a drop-in program. Stay tuned for NEW tween and teen programs beginning in March! See our Event Calendar for details.

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, March 11 at 12:45 p.m., and Thursday, March 13 at 6:45 p.m.: *The Wedding People* by Allison Espach.

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, Feb. 26 at 6:45 p.m.: *The Stars Turned Inside Out* by Nova Jacobs.

For more information or assistance with any library services, call 508-529-6272 or email mbachtol@cwmares.org

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SPORTS

Nipmuc Boys' BBall on Top of League

Dynamic scoring trio leading the way

By Chris Villani

A dozen games into the season, the Nipmuc boys' basketball team had already amassed 10 wins and a perfect record in the Dual Valley Conference. It's a fitting start for a team that set the bar high for itself at the start of the year.

"Our expectations are inside-out, not outside-in," said Head Coach Jason Gosselin. "We had a good season last year and returned quite a bit, so they had high expectations and they have done a great job setting the standard and going about their work."

Much of Nipmuc's offense runs through three players, James McKinney, Chase Kelly, and Logan DeMarzo. McKinney, Nipmuc's 6-foot-7 center, is averaging 17 points and 13 rebounds per game.

"He has just been excep-



The entire team, and a few alumni, after Nipmuc center James McKinney (21) scored his 1,000th career point. Courtesy photo

tional," Gosselin said. "He is a little bit of a cheat code at times because he poses a really

big matchup issue for our opponents."

McKinney surpassed the

1,000 point mark for his career earlier this season.

His classmate Kelly is right behind him in the scoring column at around 16 points per game and is shooting over 40% from three-point range. DeMarzo is also driving the offense at a 15-point clip per contest.

"It's been contributions top to bottom, but those three are definitely a huge part of the solution for us," Gosselin said.

A pair of juniors, Eben Consigli and Mason Kirkpatrick, have also jumped in and contributed multiple double-digit scoring efforts.

"They have had some great games for us," Gosselin said. "The depth of scoring has been great."

As a result, Nipmuc entered February in the driver's seat to

win the DVC and in a great position to secure a coveted spot in the annual Clark Tournament as well. The team had already clinched its place in the MIAA state tournament.

Gosselin said repeating as league champs and earning a top-four seed going into the Clark are among the team's biggest goals for the second half of the season. As the tournaments approach, he said he wants the team to continue to work hard on the defensive side of the ball and not become complacent just because they are such a strong offensive team. On offense, he said continued success will involve sharing the ball and playing together as a team.

"We will play anyone in the tournament," Gosselin said. "We just need to continue to handle our business."



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SPORTS

Valley Tech Girls Hoops thrives vs tough slate

New cast and stout defense leading the way

By Chris Villani

A tougher schedule has not slowed the Blackstone Valley Tech girls' basketball team. More than midway through the season, the Beavers had won more games than they had lost and put themselves on solid footing to earn spots in both the MIAA and state vocational tournaments.

BVT did it despite losing four starters from last year's squad.

"It was a slower start to the season as far as making sure that we had the right pieces to fill in those starting roles," said Head Coach Jacob Ramos. "But we picked up very quickly and became competitive right from the jump."

In addition to putting Ashland on the schedule, the Beavers are navigating a two-tiered Colonial Athletic League. The split between large and small schools means more games for Valley Tech against the other top teams in the league like Bay Path and Advanced Math and Science Academy.

Senior captain Audrey Bell is a leading scorer this winter at around nine points per game and a constant double-double threat, pulling down 10 rebounds per night.



Valley Tech girls basketball captains: Audrey Bell, Maya Lorion, Mara Keane, Brianna Lawton. Courtesy photo

"She is having a tremendous season," Ramos said.

Fellow captain Mara Keane earned similar praise from her coach, averaging eight points and eight boards per game.

"She can shoot, she can drive, and on defense she is always willing to guard the opponent's premier player," Ramos said. "She is a do-it-all threat."

A third senior captain, Bri Lawton, has stepped into a larger role this winter and averaged six points per game. Sophomore Julia Magill is another player who is seeing more court

time this winter. The starting point guard, she is scoring seven points per game and Ramos said she has "delivered for us in a major way."

Ramos also praised senior captain Maya Lorion as "a bright spot for us this season."

"She provides great facilitation and scoring on the offensive end, and is a fearless defender, leading the team in steals on the year," Ramos said.

The solid group of players has the Beavers eyeing the post-season. Not only would BVT like to win a few more games



Head Coach Jacob Ramos is happy with his team's defense this season. Courtesy photo

to lock up a spot in the states, but Ramos is hopeful that the tougher schedule will mean a better power ranking.

"It's something we are continuously trying to improve," he said. "Not just getting to 10 wins, but also setting ourselves up for a run in the MIAA tournament."

In order to go as far as possible,

Ramos would like to see his team get better on offense and from the free throw line to complement what has been a stellar defensive effort.

"We are only allowing 35 points per game and that always gives us a chance," he said. "Our defense shows up every night."

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