

## Jessica Stoddard Raises Funds for Her Mom's Transplant

BY JANET STOICA  
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

On Sunday, January 19, Jessica Stoddard, co-owner of Mirrored Beauty salon in Webster along with her business partner, Jess Ryan, and salon stylists Lisa Brian and Rachel Perez conducted a Cut-a-Thon fundraiser to benefit Jessica's mom Rosemary Stoddard, who is in need of a double lung transplant. Next-door business owner, Kate O'Connell, of On Point healthy nutrition also conducted an Ice Cream Scoop-a-thon to assist in the fundraising efforts.

Jessica's mom, formerly of Oxford, but now living in South Carolina, has a condition known as pulmonary fibrosis which is the scarring and thickening of the air sacs in the lungs. There is no cure and, in Rosemary's situation, the cause may have been her former work environment.

Duke University Medical Center will be the medical facility for Mrs. Stoddard's transplant but the family must raise \$30,000 for additional living and medical expenses involving their relocation for the six months of their stay in Durham, North Carolina. They will also be responsible for supplementary medical bills. Jessica's dad David Stoddard has muscular dystrophy. In 2015, Mr. and Mrs. Stoddard had moved to South Carolina to benefit Mr. Stoddard's

medical condition. Being an only child, Jessica jumped in immediately to help with the hefty expense amount.

With the kindness and generosity of all involved, the group was able to raise \$6,175 from their 10

just over 50% of our total goal of \$30,000 and have raised \$16,375."

When speaking with Ms. Stoddard for this article she mentioned that she had just returned from visiting her parents in South Carolina after not having seen her mom since October. It was definitely overwhelming to see her mom's change of physical condition over such a short period of time.

"Everyone's been so kind and generous," said Jessica, "so many local businesses and friends and family have been more than willing to help."

If you'd like to help, please visit the Mirrored Beauty salon located at 131 East Main Street (Friendly's Plaza) in Webster or phone them at 508-461-6109. Their hours are 9 a.m. - 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday; Friday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.; and Saturday 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Additionally, Duke University referred

them to the medical fundraising site Help Hope Live from Radnor Pennsylvania. They are a 501(c)(3) charitable organization Charity ID 52-1322317, have been in existence since 1983, and have a charity score of 99% earning it a 4-star rating (the highest rating).

Website: [www.helphopelive.org](http://www.helphopelive.org) To review and donate, click the "donate" tab and then "support a client campaign" by typing in Rosemary Stoddard. All donations are deeply appreciated.



From left: Kate O'Connell, Lisa Brian, Jessica Stoddard, Jessica Ryan and Rachel Perez

a.m. - 4 p.m. event. "Everyone wanted to help," said Stoddard, "we emailed and texted all our clients and also used Facebook to help us meet our goal which was \$1,500 so we were so grateful for the final amount that we did raise. It was amazing. Our team worked hard and we are so very thankful to all those who helped us with their contributions. In late March, early April, we hope to have another fundraiser at an Auburn bowling alley as well as a corn hole event and a motorcycle ride. We are

## Dudley Selectmen approve action plan in response to issues identified by state financial management audit

The Board of Selectmen requested the state audit in response to citizens' outcry over budget shortfalls and the need for Proposition 2 1/2 override elections during the summer of 2023.

The state Department of Revenue Division of Local Services (DLS) Financial Management Resource Bureau conducted the audit, which encompassed Dudley's government structure, fiscal planning, financial policies, information technology, and operational practices of its financial offices.

Over the course of five months, the state review team interviewed elected and appointed officials, department heads, and municipal office staff. The team examined town documents and financial data, including town bylaws, locally accepted statutes, special acts, annual budgets, warrant articles, tax recapitulations, balance sheets, receivable reports, revenues and expenditures, and independent audit reports.

The report was published on December 26, 2025 identified 16 areas of concern and made recommendations for changes to practices.

The DLS recommendations included converting the elected Treasurer/Collector to appointed, forming the government study committee to address the town's decentralized form of governing, creating a budget bylaw, a revolving fund review, an update to the federal Fiscal Recovery Funds Compliance report,

discontinued use of reserves and one-time revenue for the operating budget, discontinue Treasurer's use of a manual cashbook, and a cleanup of the Treasurer's cashbook and Tax Title/Foreclosure records.

"This review was initiated at the request of a group of residents who raised concerns about town audits, override votes, and called for a general forensic audit," Town Administrator Jonathan Ruda said. "It's important to recognize that the recommendations in the state report are a direct result of that public demand for greater transparency and accountability."

At the Board of Selectmen's January 27 meeting, Mr. Ruda presented an action plan that sets goals, identifies involved parties, establishes a timeline, and key performance indicators for each of the 16 items identified by the state.

"The Board of Selectmen has voted to move forward with the plan to implement 16 recommendations from the Financial Management Review conducted by the state," Mr. Ruda said. "These recommendations provide a clear path forward to strengthen the town's financial practices and governance."

One key recommendation among the 16 is to create an independent Government Study

### DUDLEY

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## Charlton appoints new Fire Chief Rob Barton

\$13,000 State Grant Awarded; Fire Captain Opening

BY JANET STOICA  
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At their December board meeting, Charlton Selectmen appointed Rob Barton as the town's new Fire Chief. Barton has served 24 years on the line as Captain of Group 1. Fire Chief Barton was sworn into his new position at the January Selectmen's meeting and succeeded Fire Chief Edward



Knopf who retired in December after a 23-year career with the Charlton Fire Department.

Additionally, the Fire Department was recently notified by Governor Maura Healey's office that "the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security and the Department of Fire Services has awarded the department

Charlton Fire Chief Barton - Please credit Charlton Fire Dept.

\$12,974.97 for state fiscal year 2025 funding for their Fire Safety Equipment Grant Program."

The department has also posted a vacancy for a full-time Captain/Shift Officer. Further details can be found on their web address: [www.townofcharlton.net/158/Human-Resources](http://www.townofcharlton.net/158/Human-Resources). Applications on their website will be accepted until February 25, 2025.

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# Webster's Town Hall Renovation Receives No Bids for Restoration

Connecticut Housing Project Access Road Update, Wentworth New Deputy Police Chief

BY JANET STOICA  
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cal area. Future plans are unknown at this time.

**W**ebster's Town Hall Renovation RFP (Request for Proposal) has received no

The town's second Business Outreach Breakfast was held on Tuesday, January 21, and according to Town Administrator Rick



responses as of January 17, 2025, the last date for submissions. Apparently, Mr. Chris Robert chose not to make a submission. Mr. Robert had expressed an intense interest in the renovation with the objective of bringing a greater level of upscale entertainment to the lo-

LaFond, it went very well. "We had about eight business/property owners as well as town officials on our Economic Development Com-

**WEBSTER**  
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## ED STEARNS DRESSED MEATS

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<p><b>\$75.00</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7 LBS CHICKEN LEG QUARTERS OR</li> <li>2 LBS HAMBURG</li> <li>3 LBS BONELESS PORK RIBS OR</li> <li>1 PACKAGE (1 1/2 LB) NY SIRLOIN STEAK</li> <li>3 LBS PORK CHOPS OR</li> <li>1 1/2 LB NEW YORK SIRLOIN STEAK</li> <li>3 LBS BONELESS CHICKEN THIGHS OR</li> <li>2 LB HOT DOGS</li> <li>3 LB HAM STEAK OR</li> <li>1 LG BEEF OR CHICKEN CHILI</li> <li>1 PACKAGE (1 1/2 LB) OF SAUSAGE OF YOUR CHOICE OR</li> <li>1 PACKAGE OF MARINATED CHICKEN BREAST (OF YOUR CHOICE)</li> </ul>	<p><b>\$100.00</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 LBS BONELESS CHICKEN THIGHS OR</li> <li>1 RING OF YOUR CHOICE OF SMOKED SAUSAGE</li> <li>3 LBS HAMBURG OR</li> <li>2 LBS HOT DOGS</li> <li>3 LB BONELESS PORK ROAST OR</li> <li>3 LBS BONELESS CHICKEN BREAST</li> <li>2 LBS STEW BEEF OR</li> <li>1 PACKAGE OF MEATBALLS OF YOUR CHOICE (ITALIAN, CHICKEN OR DORITO AND CHEESE)</li> <li>1 1/2 LB HAM STEAKS OR</li> <li>1 1/2 LB NY SIRLOIN STEAK</li> <li>1 PACKAGE (1 1/2 LB) COOKED CHICKEN WINGS OF YOUR CHOICE OR</li> <li>1 LB OF OUR BACON OF YOUR CHOICE</li> <li>2 1/2 LB POT ROAST OR</li> <li>1 PKG MARINATED CHICKEN BREAST</li> </ul>

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# AG Delays Approval on Citizen Petition Articles in Dudley

The state's Attorney General (AG) has delayed giving approval to two articles that were passed by a majority vote at the October 21 Special Town Meeting in Dudley.

The AG's office has 90 days to review and approve town meeting articles or advise on an amendment once the articles have passed. Unless the town hears otherwise within that 90 day window, the articles are considered vetted and approved. This was the case with all but Articles 14 and 15.

In a January 23 letter to the town, the Attorney General's office took an extension of 90 days to further consider the two citizens' petition articles, possibly signaling that something is problematic about them, but nothing will be known for certain until the AG issues a ruling, according to Debbie LaPlaca, Public Information Officer for the town.

The new deadline for a decision is April 25, 2025. According to Town Administrator Jonathan Ruda, the citizens presenting

the petitions at the Special Town Meeting were cautioned by Dudley Town Counsel that there were defects in their articles, but the petitioners chose to proceed with the articles anyway.

Ruda stated, "I expect any guidance, amendments, or disapprovals by the Attorney General's office will align with the verbal opinions publicly provided to the petitioners, which were subsequently reinforced by a written opinion from Town Labor Counsel prior to the October Special Town Meeting."

Article 14, passed by majority vote, sought to amend the Dudley General Bylaws related to the Town Administrator's annual review, powers and duties and other activities.

Article 15, passed by majority vote, sought to amend the Dudley General Bylaws related to Personnel Policies and Procedures, its purpose, personnel board establishment, responsibilities and method, and the role of Human Resources Manager.

# Warm Stews, Warm Hearts

The Dudley Woman's Club will host its popular annual meeting "Stew and A Story of Giving" on Thursday, Feb. 13 at Dudley Town Hall, 71 West Main Street. Social hour will begin at 6:30 p.m. and stews will be served at 7 p.m.

Join the more than 70 members

as the Dudley Woman's Club (DWC) donates \$500 each to representatives from Our Bright Future, Together We Blossom and the JAK-L Foundation and listen to their stories of giving.

As part of Stew and Story, the DWC will also send donation checks to Literacy Volunteers of Central

Mass., Make-a-Wish of Mass. & Rhode Island and Animal Assisted Therapy Services.

The Club's voluntary February Giving Project is disposable diapers in any size for the Webster-Dudley Food Share. Learn more about the DWC at dudleywomansclub.org.

# Scholarship Opportunity for Webster Students

The Webster Lions Club is currently accepting applications for the George Sellig Memorial Scholarship. The recipient will be selected based on the students academic performance, community service and financial need. The \$1,000 award is presented each year to a graduating high school senior, who is a resident of

Webster and will be continuing his or her education in an accredited college program.

The scholarship is named in honor of former Webster Lions Club president, George Sellig. Mr. Sellig was once a teacher at Tourtellote Memorial High School, a Webster Selectman and a superintendent of the former

Webster-Dudley School Union.

Applications are available at the Bartlett High School and Bay Path Regional Technical High School Guidance Departments or by contacting Dr. John Kalinowski at 508-943-7434 or jkalinowski100@aol.com. Applications must be received by May 1, 2025.

## DUDLEY

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Committee. Selectmen said they will follow the DLS recommendation by forming a committee of qualified individuals who possess no predetermined agenda, and task them with objectively evaluating the town's government structure by, in part, interviewing officials, surveying residents, and examining

practices in other communities.

According to the Action Plan adopted by selectmen, this committee is to be established by May 2025 and have its work finished with a report of findings by February 2026.

"The Board of Selectmen is committed to following through with these recommendations and will ensure the Government Study Committee has the support and resources needed to carry out

their work," Mr. Ruda said, adding, "We believe this process will help improve policies, rebuild trust, and better position the town for the future. Given that the call for this review came from the community itself, it is now important for all residents, including those who pushed for the review, to support the findings and the work ahead to move the town forward."

# Worcester Welcomes Viking Cruises!

**Tuesday, February 18 - Total Wine's Meeting Room**

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# February Programs & Events at Pearle L. Crawford Library

40 Schofield Avenue, Dudley 508-949-8021

Check out our event calendar at [www.crawfordlibrary.org](http://www.crawfordlibrary.org) or sign up for our eNewsletter by calling 508-949-8021.

The library is closed on Monday, Feb. 17

## GENTLE YOGA

Mondays 10-11 a.m.  
Join our new yoga instructor Patricia, for a traditional "on the mat" yoga class with chair yoga modifications. This truly is a one-size-fits-all class. Bring your own

mat. Wear layers, do not eat heavily 1.5-2 hours before class. Registration is required to receive weather cancellation notifications.

## MOVIES @ THE PEARLE!!

Tuesdays at 1 p.m.  
This month's theme is: "Books we love that were made into movies we love."

February 18: "Atonement"  
February 25: "Everything Everything"

No registration required.

## LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST

Friday, Feb. 14 7:30 a.m. – 9 a.m.

Is there a better day to express your love of libraries? Join us on Valentine's Day as we hear representatives from CW MARS, Mass Library System, Mass Board of Library Commissioners, and Central Mass Library Association explain library funding priorities in the FY2026 MA state budget. This is a wonderful opportunity to show your support for libraries and gain a better understanding of library funding. State Rep. John Marsi and State Rep. Todd Smola will be on site to hear from residents.

Refreshments will be served at 7:30 a.m.. Meeting starts at 8 a.m..

## Registration required COMMUNITY YOGA WITH ERIN

Saturday, Feb. 15 10-11 a.m.  
Traditional "on the mat" yoga class with 15 minute relaxation at the end. Bring your own mat. Wear layers, do not eat heavily 1.5-2 hours before class.

## No registration required BOOK TALK - "NATIVE LINKS: THE SURPRISING HISTORY OF OUR FIRST PEOPLE IN GOLF" BY MARK WAGNER

Thursday, Feb. 20, 6-7 p.m.  
Join us as Mark tells the gripping stories and long-lasting oral histories of our First People in the game of golf. The book is available for purchase or checkout with your Library card.

"Native Links: The Surprising History of Our First People in Golf" is an entertaining and insightful narrative that makes the case that Indigenous history is a leading strand in our country's DNA and that is true for golf as well. No Registration required.

## Local 4 Life- Prolific Plants! Saturday, Feb. 22 10 a.m. – Noon "LESSONS AT THE LIBRARY"

Learn about the parts of plants, the life cycles and the needs of plants.

Hands-on educational programs for families with children ages 3-12 years old. This program is supported in part by a grant from the Dudley Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency. Registration is required.

## "COOK THE BOOK" BOOK CLUB-"TRUE COMFORT" BY KRISTIN CAVALLARI

Monday, Feb. 24 6 -7 p.m.  
"Cook The Book" Book Club will meet on the fourth Monday of every month at 6p.m.

You will pick one recipe from the book selected for the month-the dishes don't have to be complicated or fancy, any recipe from the book is fair game, except alcoholic beverages-sorry!

Prepare the recipe at home and share it at the library. We cannot reheat or keep food warm, so consider this when choosing your recipe. You are responsible for bringing serving utensils. We will

provide paper goods and utensils for eating.

## CRAWFORD LIBRARY BOOK GROUP

Thursday, Feb. 27 6-7:30 p.m.  
Book: "Demon of Unrest" by Erik Larson

Books are available at the circulation desk for checkout one month prior to discussion.

Everyone is welcome! No registration required.

## MAHJONG AT THE PEARLE

Every Wednesday 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Fels Community Room  
The game consists of players competing to form distinct sets or pairs of tiles, similar to gin rummy. Everyone is welcome. No registration required.

## QUILTING GROUP

Wednesdays at 1:30 p.m.  
Are you a quilter? Would you like to learn how to be one? All skill levels are welcome to this informal group. Bring your projects and join the fun! No registration required.

## KNIT & CROCHET GROUP

Thursday 5:30-7:30 p.m. and Friday 10 a.m.-12 p.m.  
All stitchers are welcome for this informal group. Bring your project and enjoy the company!  
No registration required.

## DUNGEONS & DRAGONS GAME

Thursdays, 6-7:30 p.m.  
Come join in the world's number one role playing game. This program is geared towards kids and teens that are looking to learn more about playing and some short adventures!  
No registration required

## STORYTIMES AT THE PEARLE

10-10:45 a.m.  
Tuesdays -Pre-K Power (best for ages 3-5)  
Wednesday-Toddler Time (best for ages 0-3)  
Friday-Open Baby Play (best for ages 0-12 months-pre-walkers)

No registration required. Siblings always welcome!

## SCHOOL VACATION WEEK

Make Your Own Penguin Stuffie!  
Tuesday, Feb.18 10:30-11:15  
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## CRAWFORDLIBRARY

continued on page 5

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**WEBSTER**

*continued from page 2*

mittee and State Rep. McKenna's staff," said LaFond. "We decided to meet quarterly going forward. It's becoming a very effective opportunity to discuss on-going projects in Webster, answer questions, and provide feedback."

Regarding Dr. and Ms. Sharma's, Thompson, Connecticut Housing Project for 16 single family units and eight duplex units using a sole access road through Webster's Brian Avenue, the two jersey barriers that Webster placed at the end of the dead end street remain. LaFond has received and responded to complaints by the Thompson, Connecticut owner Sharma seeking removal. He has also communicated with the Thompson Selectmen who also inquired about the barriers.

"I have assured both Ms. Sharma and the Thompson Selectmen that Webster public safety officials have been to the site on multiple occasions – even with apparatus, to ensure that there is adequate safety access to the Sharmas' driveway (in Thompson), LaFond said. "Our appeal of Thompson Planning and Zoning Commission's approval of the special permit for 16 single family units and eight duplex units is based on the same grounds as our appeal to the original approval (improper notice, public safety, and infrastructure impact on Webster) remains pending in Connecticut Superior Court. I would also like to thank our Director of Economic Development, Ann Morgan, for her diligence and expertise."

The Selectmen's Meeting Room was tested and analyzed by DD Acoustical Specialists regarding its sound conditions to diagnose and recommend improvements

of its audio broadcasts. It was determined that the room has three times the reverberation than recommended for audio broadcasting. Installation of ceiling and wall baffling is the recommended solution with an estimated cost of approximately \$30,000. Sufficient funds are available in the Cable Access Account should the Cable Advisory Board's decision be to move forward along with consultation by IT Director Greg Robert.

LaFond also stated that "Lieutenant Gordon Wentworth is officially Webster's new Deputy Police Chief effective February 2, 2025. He will be introduced at the February 10 Board of Selectmen meeting in his new capacity and be sworn into his new position. I am very, very pleased by the succession planning within the Police Department."

**CRAWFORD LIBRARY**

*continued from page 4*

penguin stuffie to call your very own! We'll supply all the materials, including a rainbow wishing star to place inside your penguin, and a take-home bag with a birth certificate! This program is for ages 6-12 and registration is required.

(Please note that there is another program immediately following this one to make a different stuffie - please only choose ONE session.)

**MAKE YOUR OWN ALIEN STUFFIE!**

Tuesday, Feb.18 11:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Join us during school vacation to make an adorable NO SEW alien stuffie to call your very own! We'll supply all the materials, including a rainbow wishing star to place inside your alien, and a take-home bag with a birth certificate! This program is for ages 6-12 and registration is required. (Please note that there is a different stuffie

program just prior to this one - please be sure you are only signing up for ONE session.) Registration is required.

**ED THE WIZARD - ALCHEMY LAB!**

Wednesday, Feb. 19 10:30-11:15 p.m.

Come join Ed the Wizard in his Alchemy Lab! You will be able to watch, volunteer, and learn as Ed the Wizard performs magic tricks using everyday household items. With vanishes and transfigurations, Ed the Wizard describes this program as a place "where Harry Potter meets real science." This program is ideal for children ages 7 and up with a grown-up.

No registration required.

**POKEMON CLUB**

Thursday, Feb.20 6-6:45 p.m.

Join us for Pokemon Club! Each month we will have exciting crafts and activities! Best for ages 6 and up.

No registration required. This is not a drop off program.

**Dean's Lists**

Kayla Rose Berthiaume of Webster, a senior majoring in Business, has been named to the Dean's List for the Fall 2024 semester at Anna Maria College, Paxton.

Maria Piekarczyk of Dudley has been recognized on the President's List at Norwich University of Northfield, Vermont for the Fall 2024 semester. Full-time undergraduate students, who earned a

semester grade point average of 4.0 are awarded President's List honors.

Patrick Murphy of Dudley has been named to the Dean's List at Norwich University of Northfield, Vermont for the Fall 2024 semester. Full-time undergraduate students, who earned a semester grade point average of at least 3.40 are awarded Dean's List honors.

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# Webster Homeowners - Get Your FREE New Water Meter Before It's Too Late

BY JANET STOICA  
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

Did you receive your bright orange postcard yet? It's from East National Water of Palmer, Massachusetts. The postcard details your mandatory water meter replacement procedure and has a phone number to call to schedule your appointment with the replacement meter technician. Yes, it's free and it only

takes about 30 minutes for your new water meter to be installed at your home. The technician is polite and knowledgeable, neat, and customer-friendly. Soon you'll be able to monitor your own water usage as often and whenever you'd like. So what's keeping you from phoning in for an appointment to have this done? There's no time like right now and it only takes a minute. Even their Customer Service representatives are polite and

kind. It's so easy a 6-year-old could phone it in, however, a responsible adult at least 18 years old must be present for the meter installation to take place. For security purposes, meter installers will be wearing company uniforms, using vehicles with company logos, and will be carrying a company issued photo identification and driver's license.

Webster is replacing all 5,400 residential water meters and expects these replacements to be

completed by year end 2025. East National Water reps have been diligently replacing water meters since July of 2024. Approximately 42% of replacements have been completed. The Water Department appreciates everyone's support to date. As of January 31, 2025, Quarter 3 water and sewer bills may reflect slightly lower than normal or slightly more than normal usage due to timing within the replacement schedule and alignment with automated billing software. The Water Department is aware of the situation and states that this is normal and will impact a small number of customers. Customers will only pay for metered consumption used.

There is no need to reach out to East National Water or the Webster Water Department until you receive that bright neon orange card with detailed instructions. Be on the lookout! The project includes the installation of Advanced Metering Infrastructure ("AMI") and replacement of all



water meters. The AMI system includes installation of gateways or collectors that transmit real-time data from the meters to the Water Department. This will assist the Water Department to detect leaks and system issues faster. The work will be completed by. For more information about the program please call 800-252-8556 or visit them at: eastnationalwater.com or contact Webster Water at 508-949-3861 from 7 a.m. – 3 p.m. Monday - Friday. Under Article II, Section 3 of the Water Rules and Regulations policy and Massachusetts General Laws, c. 165, Section 11D, Webster Water & Sewer is authorized to enter your premises.

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## Dean's List Worcester State University

The following local students have been named to the Worcester State University Dean's List for Fall 2024. Dean's list honors are awarded to matriculated undergraduate students who have earned a 3.5 GPA or higher. Full-time students must have earned a minimum of 12 credits and part-time students must have earned a minimum of 6 credits.

CHARLTON: Skylar R Adcock, Natalie S Boutiette, LeeAnn D Dagnese, Kiara J Dean, Lauryn P Dyer, Nicholas M Falcone, Sarah L Gosselin, Sean A Kirwin, Taylor Kochinkas, George S Koronis, Emma J Lanpher, Sydney M

Lizotte, Patrick J McManus, Austin S Michaelson, Richard J Payne, Jordyn M Poirier, Victoria R Roberts, Hannah R Sharma, Kyleigh Sutherland, Oliver A Weiland, Anthony T Zaleski, Ashlee E Zaleski

CHARLTON CITY: Kirsten E Cristo

DUDLEY: Amanda S Adamuska, Dominic M Beauchesne, Elena J Cronin, Daniel Durda, Lexus Erickson, Matthew P Ethier, Alec R Fasolo, Lauren L Gajewski, Adrian Golemo, Kaia T Gray, Ashley B Harvey, Keller G Holmes, Giovanna Krettli Oliveira Costa, Nolan M Legere, Virginia T Mayville, Manar Morgan, Natalie G Nayfeh, Ryan L Nguyen, Abigail M Peters, Alek J Poirier, Abigail E Reilly, Amanda L Schramm, Brett Spiewakowski, Alan J Standring, AnnMarie J Taylor, Athanasia R Towadros, Athanasios R Towadros

WEBSTER: ShyAnn J Bailargeon, Mariusz Bezak, Victoria M Bonneau, Emma J Christian, Jayden E Cuellar, Faith Davis, James C Evans, Benjamin F Gelineau, Jessica Guerrero, Camden L Heenan, Hlaing T Htoo, Sokleap Khem, Samuel A Kontoes, Kelly A Macario, Douglas Mercurio, Daniela A Narvaez, Kailey E O'Connell, Jasmine Osei-Bonsu, Garrett L Papierski, Daniel C Parker, Matthew R Powers, Yostina R Rezk, Victoria N Spitz, Christin E Walcek, Ronnie J West, Isabella L Williams

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# 114 Worcester Road in Webster Gets Cleaned Up & Restored

BY JANET STOICA  
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

The former LaPlante Brothers site on Worcester Road that sits across from the paintball amusement center between Pinehurst Drive and Tanner Road is finally getting the cleanup it has deserved after many decades of neglect. The eyesore has exhibited junk trailers and other detritus for years and years and the new property owner, Lamuscio Trucking LLC, and Webster's Conservation Agent Joseph Wigglesworth have embarked on a mutually agreeable clean-up plan with the town of Webster.

The trucking company's attor-

ney, David Dupont, has submitted plans that include selling off all remaining junk scrap with no intention of bringing in any of same. Lomuscio Trucking applied



for a junk permit to allow it to sell off all the existing junk and any other scrap metal. The five-phase plan includes language indicating

which parts of the junk property will be cleaned and in what order. It is estimated that each phase will be completed in three to four months beginning with phase one and will continue until all five phases have been concluded. Mr. Dupont has stated that since the ground usually is frozen through the month of March, no clean-up activities would be done until a thaw. Goals are to view and remove junk and scrap from the stream bed and vegetation within 25 feet of the stream bed and to move those items back about 25 feet. Work would be done during dry periods

and efforts taken to minimize impact to vegetation within the 25-foot zone. Much of the junk metal has never been cleaned for decades

with vegetation growing around and through the debris. All existing junk metal will be cleaned out from the stream bed and surrounding vegetation. Unfortunately, the need to cut vegetation is inevitable since none of the junk metal has ever been removed and has been discarded into the undergrowth in the area for many years. Straw wattles and hay bales will be used extensively to minimize further damage to the wetlands to prevent

further erosion. Clean-up work will expand toward Worcester Road and all residential properties abutting the junkyard until restoration is completed.

Ongoing walk-throughs with Wigglesworth will occur at regular monthly intervals with the understanding that once the junk metal has been removed and the area has been restored to its natural state the Conservation Agent will approve the final restoration.

## Charlton Library Announces New Seed Library

You probably already know that Charlton Public Library lends books, movies, audiobooks, games, and a wide assortment of items in its Library of Things. Now Library Director Karen Wall is pleased to announce they will also be offering garden seeds in a program that began on Feb. 1

How will the seed library work? Stop by the main level of the library, choose your seeds, and plant them! When you harvest your crop later in the year, save some seeds, bring them to the Library, and they will be added back to the "growing" collection.

Seed collecting is the age-old process of harvesting and preserving seeds from one's garden or local environment. It is based in indigenous tradition and deeply tied to cultural preservation, agricultural practice, and community building. Sharing seeds collected from plants in our neighborhoods

increases access to resilient plants. The seed library aims to support our local ecosystem and combat food insecurity.

The library has a 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 the event calendar at charlton-library.org):

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.

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SPORTS

# Bartlett Basketball Holding Their Own

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

After playing near .500 basketball for the 2023-24 season, the Bartlett boys basketball team found themselves with a 29 seed entering the Division 5 State Tournament. Once there the Indians were tied at 55-55 and looking to go into overtime, but Minuteman Regional tossed up a half court shot to take the victory 58-55.

This year the team is relatively young, with only three seniors gracing their roster, but coach Alex Hetherman noted that the boys are still plugging along and at the time of this writing were a respectable 4-6 with their goals still intact.

“We want to go out and compete on a regular basis while hoping to make the Clark Tournament and get back into the State Tournament,” he said. “By the end of the season we want to be the best Bartlett team that we can be; if we do that then we won’t be disappointed.”

The Indians coach went on to say that unfortunately the team has not been to the Clark Tournament in some time (Bartlett last was invited to the Clark Tournament in 2019). Through the years the program has claimed eight Clark Titles in addition to getting to the finals more than any other team.

Hovering around .500 as the season moves along is a good beginning for the squad, but they have a big stretch ahead of them with some challenging games. Hoping to lead the Indians over the hump

and back into the tournaments is senior captain Cole Sebastyanski. The senior has been on the varsity team since his sophomore campaign and is averaging 12 points a

“All three have provided steady leadership this season and I hope that they can continue that as we hit a tough schedule coming up in the second half of the season and

nothing was given to him,” Hetherman said. “He’ll continue to lead us this year as well as into the next year. Last year he was averaging about 12 or 13 points, so he has

Smith. Sophomore center Tyler Whiting will also play a contributing role as well.

While the Indians have continued to be competitive they have



game this year while providing important leadership to the younger players.

In addition to Sebastyanski, Hetherman will be looking to senior guard Adam Urato, a good shooter, and senior forward Aiden Wolfram, a hard player who rebounds well and provides the team with great defense.

how we play could determine our season,” Hetherman said. “Like I said earlier – our main goal is to be the best Bartlett team that we can by the end of the season.”

Outside the seniors, junior captain Kenny Arpin, who is entering his third year on the varsity squad, will also be guiding this program throughout the year. According to the Coach, Arpin is not only the voice of the team, but they will go as far as he goes. The junior is averaging about 18 points per game and makes everyone around him that much better.

“He has earned everything and

made a decent jump this year with his scoring.”

The junior has taken nothing for granted, prior to the season he worked extremely hard and has already made a name for himself on the courts. In his first four games of the season, he scored 28, 26, 25 and 25 points respectively, and the word got around about his ability and teams are now scheming around him and his game.

Hetherman will also be looking to juniors Travis Russell, who has been starting since his sophomore season, LJ Villegas, the team’s big man at center and guard Lawrence

had their struggles as their home court has been under renovation for the past few seasons and have been forced to play games at the St. Joseph Elementary School and practice at Park Ave. Elementary School.

“It’s been a challenge for the boys being only able to play at St Josephs while practicing elsewhere,” the coach said. “Playing every day, on the road with no locker rooms makes things tough, but we are thankful to have the two elementary schools at our access. We can not wait until our new gym is ready next year.”

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TALES FROM BEYOND

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# Wee Witches of Chatfield Hollow

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

**W**itches in New England were very common in the days of old. Connecticut had more than its share wandering among the village folks, sometimes anonymously or in the case of Goody Wee, very well known. Killingworth's Goody Wee lived just outside the village with her daughter Betty, who was also known to work in the dark arts.

The farmer's of Killingworth sought good wood for their fences and pens and the only place to find the best timber was in Cedar Swamp, the home of Goody and Betty Wee. The two enchantresses lived in a small cottage in a valley called "Goody Wee's Crotch."

The two witches would demand money, gifts, or favors from the farmer who wished to haul his load of wood. If someone attempted to take a load of wood or split rails from the forest without paying their due, the load would continually fall off the cart before the poor transgressor could ascend the hill successfully to the main road. Many swore that the witches had help from the devil in their ploy to make such an otherwise

effortless task almost impossible.

Even the local wives had their run ins with Goody and Betty. If the Wees showed up at one's door, it was more than wise to give them what they wished, which was usually milk, bread, cloth, or other necessities the two sought for daily living. If they were refused, they would curse the churns that made butter and cheese, thus leaving the home with spoiled milk and no such provisions until their wish was fulfilled.

For many years the people of Killingworth were subject to Goody and Betty Wee's powerful enchantments. When they passed, the townsfolk figured they were relieved of the minions of the dark one, but were wrong. For even now, when the dark sets in upon the area of the town, there are reports of two ghosts roaming the valley where Goody and Betty lived. The forms of the two females are still watching over their domain that they once ruled with an evil eye, and according to the old folk, the help of the devil.

The following account will be of interest to the reader. J.B. Beer's History of Middlesex County, published in 1884, page 428, contains

a letter written by Martin Lord to Henry Hull. Martin Lord was a respected resident of Killingworth and lived on Roast Meat Hill Road. Henry Hull was the Town Clerk and served in that office for 49 years. In the letter, Lord relates several events in Killingworth's history including the legend of the witches. He wrote:

"In regard to the witches, I know nothing about them, only what I have heard, and perhaps that is as much as any one ever knew. I cannot give the name of the one that lived in Lane District. It has been reported, over and over again, about witches living in Chatfield Hollow. The old woman's name was Goody Wee, and her daughter's name was Betty Wee. There is a cut between the hills a little northeast of the Leander Watrous place, which has for nearly or quite a century been called 'Goody Wee's Crotch.' Undoubtedly, it was named after the supposed witch. It was formerly reported, the above named witches made their neighbors considerable trouble. For instance, they would enter the cream so it could not be worked into butter, and perform, according to the legends, other

equally strange feats. It was said a person could not reach the top of Cedar Swamp Hill with a load of rails, as they would all slide out of the cart, by the agency of witches. Those things were imagined before Webster's Spelling Book and Beckwith's Almanac were published. The witches aforesaid are declared to have been seen riding through the air on broom sticks. I have never learned how they sat on them. I do not think of anything more in particular to write."

"Yours Most Respectfully, "M. Lord."

Lord's writing provides some clues, including an approximate timeline of when the witches were

in Killingworth. Noah Webster first published his *American Spelling Book* in 1783, concluding that the accounts must have taken place before then. The witches lived in a cut in the hills northeast of Leander Watrous. The Watrous house still stands on Champlin Road. Northeast of the house would put them in Chatfield Hollow or on an old road that ran south from where the entrance to Chatfield Hollow Park now is. The road ran along a stream between hills which may have been the "crotch." The "Hill" was probably the steep hill coming out of Chatfield Hollow to where a traffic circle now resides.

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# Luke Turns Three Years Old

BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

Luke's birthday falls on the last day of January, topping the month off with sweet inspiration.

Readers may recall last year's birthday bust, when I found a deep scratch on his neck, the result of a rare encounter with an opossum. I rushed him to the vet and poor Luke had to wait half the day for song and celebration. This year, I wasn't taking any chances. I gave Luke two celebrations, the first of which has made headlines here.

We headed to his friend Obi's house, pup cakes and a numeral three candle packed. "We're going to Obi's house to have a party, Luke!" He popped his head from the travel crate sunroof and searched the streets for Obi. Dogs live in the moment. "I hear my friend's name. I know what he looks like. But where is he?" Cars, storefronts, other dogs walking with owners, and shops passed us by like a scene from a movie. Luke perked his ears to the sight of other dogs. Where was Obi?

"LUKE!!!" Obi was on the

opposite side of his massive lake house when we arrived. "THAT'S OBI'S HOUSE DOWN THERE! WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF THE CAR." I parked, circled to the back of my vehicle, popped open the trunk and unzipped the mesh door. I was just in time. Luke dove like Superman from his travel crate, nearly plunging through the fabric. "TIME TO PARTY!" Both dogs, ecstatic, reunited in a backyard flanking Singletary's frozen lake. "Happy Birthday, Luke!"

Meanwhile, the moms held mugs of hot tea by a slider door that made play far too convenient.

"We want to come in."  
 "We like to be out."  
 "It's time for us to be in."  
 "Can we go out please?"  
 "We want to play inside now."

The life of a Dog Mom is unglamorous, especially in January. We opened and shut the door dozens of times, letting out heat



Obi greeted his friend with a head poke and invitation to play Chase. Dog play had begun. A dark and light-colored male rolled, romped, chased, fought for the blue snake, cheated, grabbed ears, and teased.

and letting in the cold air. We used damp cloths to skate over a dirtied floor and filled bowls of water. "Why did we get a dog again?" We chatted and chuckled while our dogs caused trouble.

"Ha ha. You can't get me here." Obi, the master of cleverness hid behind a shrub with the blue snake. "A frustrated Luke barked. "It's my turn now!" Obi, kind to the core, gave up the snake. After a few more crazy games, we noticed Luke



sniff the frozen shoreline, testing his boundaries. A light bulb went off in his head. "I remember swimming here. What if I go ice skating instead?"

The ice was, indeed, safe, but we couldn't set the precedent that it

would stay that way. The appearance of a frozen pond is deceiving. I imagined for a horrifying second the image of my curious Luke, on a later day, realizing that his paw broke through and cracked the ice. He'd start to sink but he'd manage to—

"Luke! Come!" Obi's Mom commanded the rule with her sternest of voices. I gushed as my almost three-year-old dog rushed toward her voice. "Today is my birthday and I am so aiming to please!!" The choice to behave called for cake. I put the pup cakes on a plate, and lit Numeral Three. The flame quivered, as though aware of Luke's pressing stare. He didn't sit at my heels. He was nearly on top of them, following the flame's shaky path as though managing an eye exam. He lifted his nose to see better. "I am so worth it."

Something about his energy (intrusive, stalking) made me nervous. Luke wasn't a jumper, or a counter surfer. But birthday cupcakes were a whole different animal. What if he jumped on



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REAL ESTATE

# If Your House's Price is Not Compelling, it's Not Selling

There's one big mistake you need to avoid when you sell your house this year: setting your price too high. It might seem like overpricing gives you room to negotiate or could really boost



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

your profit, but the reality is, it usually backfires. In fact, almost 20% of sellers, one in five, have to reduce their price to get their house sold. And you don't want to be one of them. Here's why starting too high can lead to trouble, and how to avoid it.

Overpricing pushes buyers away. With mortgage rates and home prices where they are right now, buyers are already stretching their budgets to make a move. So, when they see a house that's priced too high, they're not thinking, "I can negotiate." They're more likely to think, let's go to the next and skip over your house entirely. An article from the Nation-

al Association of Realtors (NAR) explains: "Some sellers are pricing their homes higher than ever just because they can, but this may drive away serious buyers and if they skip over your listing, you'll miss out on the chance to get them through the door. That's the last thing you want because fewer showings mean fewer chances to receive an offer."

The longer your house sits, the more skeptical buyers will get. Here's the other issue, an overpriced house tends to sit on the market longer, and the longer a house lingers, the more buyers start to wonder what's wrong with it. Is there a problem with the house itself? Are you difficult to work with? Even if the only issue is the price, that extra time creates doubt. Setting an unrealistically high price with the idea that you can come down later doesn't work in real estate. A home that's overpriced in the beginning tends to stay on the market longer, even after the price is cut, because buyers think there must be something wrong with it. At that point, you'll have no choice but to lower your price to drum up interest. But that price reduction comes with a downside in that buyers may see it as another red flag, that

there's an issue with the house.

The key is to find the right price for your house. So, what's the secret to avoiding all these headaches? It's simple, call The Marzeotti Group or work with another trusted Realtor® or local real estate agent who knows the market inside and out, and who's going to be honest with you about how you should price your house. You don't want to partner with someone who just agrees to whatever number you throw out there. That's not an expert who's going to get you the best results. You want an agent who recommends a price based on their expertise. The right agent will use real-time data from your local market to help you land on a price that makes sense. One that grabs attention, attracts buyers, and still helps you walk away with a great return. Someone who has been there and done that – and done it well. That's the agent you want to work with.

Remember, if the price isn't compelling, it's not selling. Instead of pricing too high and scaring off buyers, work with us who knows how to price it right. We make sure your house hits the market with the right price, gets noticed, and gets sold.

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LUKE

continued from page 10

me and inadvertently caused my clothes to light on fire?

"Happy Birthday dear Loo-ewk. Happy Birthday to you!" Honestly, I couldn't wait for the song to be over. I blew the frightened candle out, tore off the paper wrapper, and flipped a peanut butter frosted pup cake (one inhaled in one second) to the floor. Meanwhile, Obi smacked his lips sideways as though making a llama impression in a game of charades. "Myyyyyy mmm---outh feeeels stiiiiicky."

The texture of the peanut butter had caused Obi to eat in slow motion. Luke noted his friend's vulnerability and sat like a shark in front of him. "Momma, I think Obi is allergic to peanut butter."

"Let him be, Luke," I chided, but we did allow Luke to lick the bowl when Obi was finished.

It's not every day that your dog turns three.

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THE CAR DOCTOR

jpaul@aanortheast.com

# Battery-powered ice scraper vs. elbow grease

**Q.** I have seen a number of commercials for the Keilini IceBuster 6; a battery-powered windshield ice scraper.

I was wondering if you have any experience with this device. Is it worth the price?

**A.** I have not tried it, but after watching their video, it looks like it wouldn't work much better than a traditional ice scraper. The idea of warm air and shaving the ice off the windshield using a rotating 200 RPM blade to me just doesn't look like it would work. This would certainly be the case on thick ice and substantial snow. Also, if you have ever left your phone in the car on a cold night the battery is usually discharged. I suspect the battery on this would do the same. I'm sure the company (which does not get more than 3-star reviews) sold plenty of them for the holidays. Readers, did you buy one and what is the verdict?

**Q.** I recently purchased a Tesla Model 3, used with only 9000 miles on it. Any advice for winter use?

**A.** Preconditioning the cabin while the car is plugged in helps maintain battery range. I would avoid using regen-

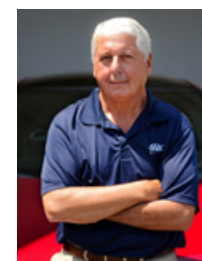
erative braking in the snow. It is like applying the brakes and can cause a skid. Also, unless this Model 3 is all wheel drive, winter tires or all weather (not to be confused with all season) tires are needed. Even with the weight of battery electric vehicles, tires provide traction. Some single motor EVs are rear wheel drive and with the instant torque of an electric car can easily skid. Similar to a gas car, where we recommend topping off your fuel tank in winter, also top off your car's battery. Electric cars are great when stuck in traffic since they use very little electricity, but starting the day with a battery at 90 percent will help prevent running out of electricity. Also, if you rely only on public charging, these stations can get crowded (especially with ride hailing drivers) if there is a prediction of extremely cold / wintery weather.

**Q.** I have a 2013 Nissan Sentra, I purchased four new sets of wipers, they all make a tremendous amount of noise. My mechanic suggested new wipers again, which we did, and the blades still chatter. What can we do?

**A.** I would start with cleaning the windshield. I have used Bon Ami powdered cleaner or Bar Keepers Friend to remove any waxy film and deposits. Then follow up with a good window cleaner. The Car Doctor's wife is a fan of SprayWay. Once you have purchased quality wipers, the next step is making sure the wipers are perpendicular to the windshield. Over time the arms bend and no longer provide good contact to the windshield. Sometimes just tweaking the wiper arms using an adjustable wrench as a tool can quiet the noise and chatter. If all of this does not work you may need to replace the wiper arms, which may not be keeping enough ten-

sion against the windshield.

**Q.** Could you answer a snow blower question? I took a Craftsman (MTD) with a "Powermore" engine from the curb. There was water in the fuel when I drained the tank, and a little reddish gunk in the float bowl. The tank is plastic. The float bowl is steel with a "brass" coating that wears off. I looked inside the engine intake hole and saw the intake valve. Is there a way to clean that, short of disassembly? Can I just run it that way? It's a 2015 model so it is only 10 years old and does not look like it had much use. I don't like these cheap engines, but that's what MTD has been using on all their brands for many years.



BY JOHN PAUL

**A.** A little outside of my area of expertise, but I have tinkered a bit with these engines. I have seen some of the valves rust into the cylinder heads and become unusable requiring replacement. At this point I would remove the spark plug and spray some Marvel Mystery oil in the cylinder and let it sit overnight. Rather than normal fuel, use some 50 to 1 two-stroke premixed fuel for the first startup attempt. The little bit of oil will help lubricate the engine and clean it up. Run it for a while and then switch to straight gasoline or better yet, non ethanol fuel and hope for the best. A tip for storing power equipment is to add some oil to the cylinder and then turn the engine over slowly until it reaches the compression stroke and then stop and reinstall the spark plug. This way the combustion chamber is sealed off and minimizes rusting.

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TIPS ON FINANCIAL PLANNING

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# Put your tax refund to work

Most of us probably don't enjoy preparing our taxes, but there's often a reward at the end — a tax refund. If you get a refund this year, how can you make the best use of it?

Of course, the answer depends somewhat on the size of your refund. Last year, the average tax refund was \$3,050, according to the Internal Revenue Service. Whatever the size of your refund, though, you'll want to maximize its benefit. Here are a few suggestions:



BY DENNIS ANTONOPOULOS

**Contribute to your IRA.** If you were to receive about \$3,000, it would go a long way toward funding your IRA for the year — but any amount would help. You still have until April 15, 2025, to contribute to your IRA for the 2024 tax year, but if you've already "maxed out" on it, you could use your refund for 2025. The annual contribution limit for a traditional and Roth IRA remains \$7,000, or \$8,000 if you're age 50 or older. And by getting an early start toward fully funding your IRA, you

can reduce the pressure of having to come up with large amounts later in the year.

**Build an emergency fund.** Your tax refund could help you start or expand an emergency fund. It's a good idea to keep up to six months' worth of living expenses in such a fund, with the money kept in a liquid, low-risk account, separate from the funds you use for your daily expenses. You might need to draw on this fund for unexpected expenses, such as a major home or car repair or a medical bill that's not fully covered by your health insurance. Without such an emergency fund in place, you might be forced to dip into your IRA or other retirement accounts to pay for these types of costs, and such a move could be expensive, resulting in taxes, penalties, and lost opportunities for growth.

**Contribute to a 529 plan.** If you have children or grandchildren and you'd like to help them further their education someday, you might consider investing in a 529 education savings plan. With a 529 plan, earnings and withdrawals are federally tax free, provided the money is used for qualified education expenses. Based on where you live, your 529 plan may provide state tax benefits, too. (It is possible, though, that 529 withdrawals could affect financial aid pack-

ages, depending on who owns the account.) A 529 plan can be used to help pay for college, accredited trade school programs, some K-12 expenses and even to help repay some student loans.

**Pay down debts.** Your tax refund may give you a chance to reduce your debt load. But which debts should you tackle first? You could follow the "snowball" method by paying off the smallest of your loans or debts as quickly as possible. Or you could choose the "avalanche" route by making minimum payments on all debts and using extra funds — such as your tax refund — to pay off the debts that carry the highest interest rates. Either method could help you save money in the long term.

It's not often that you receive a financial windfall such as a tax refund — so think carefully about how you can maximize its benefits.

*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*

## Charlton Library PJ Drive

The Charlton Public Library, 40 Main Street, Charlton, is collecting new pajamas for children and teens through March 1 for the Annual Boston Bruins PJ Drive, and we need your help!

The Boston Bruins PJ Drive benefits the Wonderfund of Massachusetts and Cradles to Crayons. The drive aims to collect 5,000 pairs of new pajamas. Many of the donated

pajamas go to local Department of Children and Families (DCF) offices connected through the Wonderfund to benefit babies, children, and teens. Pajamas will also be given to the organization Cradles to Crayons, a longtime partner of the Bruins and the PJ Drive. Bruins forward P.J. Axelsson and his wife, Siw, started the PJ Drive during the Boston Bruins 2007-2008 season to

give back to their community. The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners works with the Boston Bruins to coordinate library participation in the Drive.

Donation boxes are available on the Adult and Children's levels of the Charlton Library. To view the Boston Bruins PJ Drive donation guidelines and more information about library.

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- Familiarity with AP style is a plus
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team
- Knowledge of the local area is highly desirable

If interested, please submit writing samples to [proy@yankeeshopper.net](mailto:proy@yankeeshopper.net)



**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.**

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16**

New England Country Music Club Dances  
The New England Country Music Club will sponsor the following dance with live Clas-

sic Country Bands at the Progressive Club, 18 Whitin St., N. Uxbridge.  
Feb. 16 – “The Farm Hands”  
Doors open at 12:15 p.m., music 1-5 p.m.; \$11 for non-members. Snacks may be brought in, cash bar for beverages. For more information, visit <http://www.Facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub>.

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18**

• Author/TV host Ronny LeBlanc of

Discovery and Travel Channel will be at the Charlton Senior Center to talk about UFOs in New England. He has appeared on such shows as “Expedition Bigfoot” and “Paranormal: Caught on Camera.”

• Charlton Special Town Meeting will be held at 7 p.m. at Charlton Middle School, 2 Oxford Road to take action on an article proposing to change the position of Town Clerk from an elected to an appointed position. The single warrant article was brought by a citizen petition.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22 AND SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23**

• Maple Sugaring Weekend: The sweet time of year has come around again. Not Valentine’s Day, it’s the annual Maple Sugaring Weekend on Feb. 22 and 23 at River Bend Farm. Guided tours will be offered at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. and last about 90 minutes. The event takes place at the Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park, 287 Oak Street Uxbridge. The program meets in the River Bend Farm Visitor Center. The program is free, but space is limited and pre-registration is recommended at <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/massachusetts-dept-of-conservation-and-recreation-104507862751>.

Limited spots will be available at the door on a first come, first serve basis. Appropriate for all ages. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Dress for the outdoors. The program will be held rain, snow or sun. For information on accessibility and reasonable accommodations, call 617-645-0358 or email [moneesha.gupta2@mass.gov](mailto:moneesha.gupta2@mass.gov).

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23**

• Model Railroad Club Annual Show and Sale: The Worcester Model Railroaders, Inc. is hosting its 32nd Annual Show & Sale, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., on Sunday, Feb. 23 at the Auburn Elks Club, 754 Southbridge Street, Auburn. Admission is \$6 for adults and children under 12 are free. Approximately 25 model railroad dealers are offering items

for sale as well as HO & N scale operating layouts available for viewing. Raffle tickets for two, complete 4’x8’ model railroad layouts (on display) will be available at the show. The 60’x 40’ Worcester Model Railroad Club (WMRC) layout will be open and operating using Digital Command Control and is only 15 minutes from the show at the Club, 14 Railroad Ave., Webster. For directions, visit [www.wmrr.org](http://www.wmrr.org). The WMRC is a non-profit club showcasing railroads in the New England area. For more information, contact Ralph Kimball at 508-868-5189, email [ralphkimball@charter.net](mailto:ralphkimball@charter.net) or visit: [www.wmrr.org/](http://www.wmrr.org/).

**TUESDAY, MARCH 11**

• The Charlton Senior Center will hold the Rainbow Café at 4 p.m., a monthly get-together for LGBTQIA+ community to have a safe space to gather. The first meeting was held Feb. 11. Those from other communities are invited to attend. In the Senior Center, 37 Main Street (lower level Town Hall), Charlton. Questions? Contact [michelle.drumm@townofcharlton.net](mailto:michelle.drumm@townofcharlton.net) or call 508-248-2231.

**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](http://blackstonevalley.org/events) or contact Liz O’Neil at 508-234-9090 or email [lonel@blackstonevalley.org](mailto:lonel@blackstonevalley.org).

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**Chip-In Food Pantry** is open to eligible Charlton and Dudley residents in need of food assistance. Open the third Saturday of every month from 9 a.m. -12 p.m. Products include meats, dairy, grains and produce, both canned and fresh. Charlton Town Hall, 37 Main Street. Contact Darlene at 508-248-3292 or email [ChipIn-FoodPantry@gmail.com](mailto:ChipIn-FoodPantry@gmail.com).

**Webster Dudley Food Share**, UCC Federated Church, 4 Church Street, Webster provides food to all Webster and Dudley residents in need. A non-profit organization that provides essential food and groceries. 508-943-9171 or visit [wdfoodshare@verizon.net](mailto:wdfoodshare@verizon.net). Open Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30 – 11 a.m.

**St. Joseph's Church Food Pantry** is open to parishioners and

all Charlton residents. The food pantry is located in the back of the church, off the driveway, by the garage doors. Visitors receive two bags of non-perishable groceries. Food pantry hours: Tuesdays, 6:30-7:30 p.m. and Wednesdays, 9-11 a.m. By appointment, contact Sister Agnes at 508-248-7862 or [stjocharlton@aol.com](mailto:stjocharlton@aol.com) if you are in need. St. Joseph's Church, 10 H Putnam Road Extension, Charlton.

**Community Café**, Charlton City Methodist Church. A hot lunch is served to town residents in need on the last Saturday of the month in a welcoming environment. For all ages. Serving from 12 – 1 p.m. A place for conversation and companionship.

# Comedy Returns to Samuel Slater's

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](http://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 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



Juston McKinney

events year round, along with seasonal concerts at Indian Ranch amphitheater, the Indian Princess paddlewheeler and Indian Ranch Campground.

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