

Norfolk Native to Run the Boston Marathon for Stroke Awareness



Kylie Breen training for the Boston Marathon.

By GRACE ALLEN

Kylie Breen never really liked running, but maybe she didn't have a reason to do it until now. The Norfolk native will run the Boston Marathon on April 21 for Tedy's Team, the charity that raises awareness about strokes. She will run the 26.2 miles from Hopkinton to Boston in honor of her aunt, who suffered a stroke in 2021 at age 51.

The marathon, said Breen, is a symbol of strength and resilience, qualities her aunt embodies too. Running the Boston Marathon for Tedy's Team was a natural fit, and Breen was lucky enough to get the coveted charity bib.

"I knew, when I decided to run Boston, that I wanted to pick a charity that would mean something to my aunt, who's also my godmother," said Breen. "She suggested Tedy's Team and I applied. It's a huge honor to run for them. I am so grateful I can do this."

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Wrentham Select Board Digs in Heels on MBTA Communities Act

By JOE STEWART

Wrentham's Select Board's resolve against the MBTA Communities Act remains firm following a special Town Meeting on December 16 where residents overwhelmingly rejected a proposed overlay zone for high-density housing. The 542 to 53 vote sent a clear message to state officials, even in the face of subsequent legal developments and deadlines.

The initial Town Meeting, held in the packed King Philip Regional High School auditorium, saw passionate debate on the proposed bylaw. While the Planning Board recommended approval, citing minimal impact to Wrentham through designated subdistricts near Elysium Street and East Street, residents voiced concerns about the financial burden and local control. Interim Town Manager Michael King presented projections estimating the potential cost to the town at between \$4 million and \$13 million annually if all 750 allowable units were built.

Opponents, including Select

Board members Chris Gallo, the late Joe Botaish, and Michelle Rouse, characterized the state law as "extortion" and an unfunded mandate. They urged voters to reject the bylaw, citing ongoing litigation in Milton and the need for further analysis from the State Auditor. Their arguments resonated with attendees, who cheered their calls for local autonomy. Leo Immonen, Conservation Commission Chairman and long-time resident, argued for compliance with the law, a stance that was met with jeers from the crowd.

SJC Rules MBTA Communities is Constitutional


Since the December vote, the legal landscape has shifted. On January 8, the Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) ruled the statute constitutional, affirming the Attorney General's authority to sue non-compliant communities. The SJC also determined that the state's initial regulatory process was

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MARATHON

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Tedy's Team was started in 2005 by Tedy Bruschi, the New England Patriot's former linebacker and three-time Super Bowl champion, after suffering a stroke at age 31. The charity increases awareness about stroke signs, symptoms, and their long-term impact on survivors.

Breen's aunt, Tracy Branstrom, has made a full recovery after her stroke but her journey was long and arduous. Tedy's Team has been a source of support and inspiration for Branstrom, who now helps spread the word about the signs of stroke.

Tedy's Team uses the acronym BE FAST to help people quickly recognize common warning signs of a stroke: (B) Balance Difficulties; (E) Eyesight Changes; (F) Face Drooping; (A) Arm Weakness; (S) Speech Difficulties; and (T) Time to Call 911.

Breen, 24, graduated from King Philip High School in 2019 and went on to study marketing communications at Endicott College, graduating in 2023. She played sports in both high school



Tracy Branstrom, left, with Breen.

and college, but says running was often used as punishment by coaches if a sports practice did not go well. She decided two years ago to try and shed those negative connotations by starting to run seriously. She even joined a running club. This past November, she ran the Boston Half Marathon.

"It was an incredible experience," said Breen, who was energized by the supportive crowd. "It was the farthest I'd ever run, and I think I healed my relationship with running."

Breen says it's been a challenging winter for training but also rewarding. It's made her more appreciative of her own good health.





"One thing that Tedy's Team emphasizes is that when the training gets hard, you think about your 'Why,'" said Breen. "My 'Why' is my aunt. Knowing what she went through in her recovery gives me the motivation to get up and run in the morning."



Branstrom exercises during rehabilitation from her stroke.

Breen knows the cheers of spectators lining the way from Hopkinton to Boston will help propel her forward on April 21. The Boston Marathon, after all, is iconic for the crowds cheering on the runners, most of whom have a compelling story about why they're running.

KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS OF STROKE

- B** Balance Difficulties 
- E** Eyesight Changes 
- F** Face Drooping 
- A** Arm Weakness 
- S** Speech Difficulties 
- T** Time to Call 911 

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TEDYSTEAM.ORG @TEDYSTEAM

Tedy's Team developed the acronym BE FAST to help people quickly recognize stroke symptoms. (Courtesy of Tedy's Team)

Visualizing crossing the finishing line is also helping her as she puts in the daily miles to get ready for the race.

"I am picturing the end goal, crossing the finish line and the relief I will feel that all the hard work has paid off," said Breen. "But what I really think about as I train is seeing my aunt at the finish line. I know we will celebrate together because she's

been alongside me through this whole process, as a support system and in fundraising, too. I'm so glad I can share her story."

Breen has set a fundraising goal of \$13,000 for Tedy's Team. To help her reach her goal, visit www.givengain.com and search for Kylie Breen.

To learn more about Tedy's Team and its mission, visit tedysteam.org.

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flawed, requiring a re-do. The state quickly responded, publishing emergency regulations on January 14, largely mirroring the previous version, and setting deadlines for non-compliant communities: February 13 for filing an Action Plan and July 14 for enacting compliant zoning.

Despite these developments, the Select Board is holding its ground. At a Select Board meeting on January 28, Interim Town Manager Michael King expressed concern about signing the Action Plan given the overwhelming vote against the overlay zoning and has sought advice from Town Counsel. The board directed King to investigate the possibility of forming a consortium with other non-compliant towns. Select Board member Bill Harrington inquired about this option, signaling a potential unified front against the state.

The financial implications of non-compliance are also becoming clearer. King noted that the state recently awarded Wrentham a \$19,000 discretionary grant for firefighter safety, but included a notification that future discretionary grants will be contingent on MBTA Communities Act compliance. This suggests a broader impact on town funding beyond just the initial zoning requirements.

While the Select Board has continued to press the State Auditor for an unfunded mandate determination and a compre-

hensive financial impact analysis, a response is still pending. King indicated the Auditor will respond “soon.” Despite the pressures from the state, Wrentham appears prepared to continue its opposition. As Select Board member Anderson declared, “Let the fight begin!”

Select Board Calls for Unfunded Mandate Determination

At a February 4th Select Board meeting, Gallo reiterated the town’s commitment to complying with the law, but emphasized the need for further information before any decisions are made. He highlighted the desire for a ruling from the State Auditor on whether the law constitutes an unfunded mandate, as well as a comprehensive fiscal impact analysis. Gallo assured residents that Wrentham remains in compliance and will continue to be so if the required Action Plan is submitted by the February 13 deadline.

Public comment at the meeting revealed a range of perspectives. Leo Immonen stressed the importance of compliance, highlighting the SJC’s ruling and the potential for a court-appointed special master to override local zoning regulations if the town remains non-compliant. Tim Rouse criticized the MBTA Communities Act as a “gift to developers,” while Andrea Murphy expressed support for the Select Board’s cautious approach.

Following public comment, the Board discussed the Action Plan and appointed Mike King as the new Town Manager. King

shared that Town Counsel has advised that neither the Town Manager nor the town itself can be held liable for actions outside their control, such as a Town Meeting vote against a compliant bylaw. He also confirmed that the previously rejected overlay district can be brought back for another vote at the Town Meeting, provided the Planning Board issues a positive recommendation.

Senator Rausch Highlights “Middle Housing”

Adding another layer to the discussion, State Senator Becca Rausch, in a February 5th interview, emphasized the importance of local decision-making in housing matters. She highlighted Wrentham’s proactive approach in its 2022 Master Plan, particularly the plans for repurposing the Wrentham Development Center, similar to Medfield’s successful redevelopment of the Medfield State Hospital grounds. Rausch pointed to various state funding programs and initiatives aimed at supporting housing development, including a \$200 million bond measure for senior and veteran housing, and the Affordable Homes Act, which allocates \$5 billion over five years to increase housing.

Rausch also stressed the need for “middle housing” – starter homes that enable young families to build equity and contribute to the community. She cited successful collaborations in other towns, such as Plainville’s redevelopment project led by “Diary of a Wimpy Kid” author Jeff

Kinney, and Medfield’s Bellforge Arts Center, which has generated significant economic activity in Medfield.

Planning Board & Select Board Approve Action Plan

Finally, a joint meeting was held on February 11 between the Planning Board and Select Board. This meeting centered on finalizing the Action Plan and charting a path forward.

Planning Board Chairman Mike McKnight presented the draft Action Plan, outlining the next steps in the process. He confirmed that the Planning Board intends to move forward with the same bylaw and two overlay zones proposed at the December special Town Meeting. However, another Public Hearing will be scheduled to allow for further public comment. While McKnight acknowledged the possibility of revising the bylaw and zones based on public input, he expressed skepticism about the potential for substantial changes.

Select Board member Michelle Rouse questioned whether the Planning Board planned to engage in more extensive public outreach beyond the hearing. McKnight responded that they did not but emphasized that the Planning Board and Select Board could convene again after the public hearing to discuss any feedback received.

The discussion then turned to the possibility of collaborating with other non-compliant communities. Select Board member Jim Anderson inquired about Town Manager Mike King’s ef-

orts to connect with other towns facing similar challenges. King reported that 31 communities were required to submit Action Plans by February 13, with only nine having done so thus far. He also noted that two communities, Marshfield and Middleboro, had voted against submitting an Action Plan altogether.

Addressing the potential for changes to the proposed zoning, Select Board member Bill Harrington asked what would happen if modifications were made. McKnight clarified that any changes to the zoning bylaw, whether to the existing zones or the introduction of new ones, would need to be brought before Town Meeting for approval. King reiterated this point, emphasizing that ultimately, any zoning changes must be approved by the Town Meeting.

Select Board member Chris Gallo summarized the key requirements for compliance, stating that the town must submit the Action Plan by February 13 and schedule a vote on a compliant zoning bylaw change at an upcoming Town Meeting. He reiterated the three primary reasons behind the initial rejection of the bylaw: waiting for the outcome of the Milton litigation, waiting for an unfunded mandate determination, and waiting for a fiscal impact analysis.

With these points clarified, the Select Board directed King to submit the Action Plan by the

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Family-run Affordable Junk Removal takes the stress out of cleanups

BY CHRISTIE VOGT
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Whether it's one old fridge in the garage or an entire home of unwanted goods, the team at Affordable Junk Removal offers a cost-efficient, stress-free approach to waste management. "You don't lift a finger," says owner Jason Schadler, who started the company along with his wife Christine in 2005.

The business offers same-day service for both residential and commercial clients across eastern and central Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island. In addition to junk removal, the company rents 15-yard dumpsters.

As a family-owned and operated company, Schadler says Affordable Junk Removal has lower overhead costs and is more accessible than national competitors. "I answer my phone 24 hours a day," he says. "I was on vacation in Italy and Portugal, and I was still answering my phone on the beach. When you call us, you



get me — not an automated machine!"

Schadler says the company has an environmentally friendly approach to disposal in which it recycles items when possible, properly disposes of non-recyclables and resells many items at the Schadlers' secondhand store, Resellables. "We opened that store in Bellingham because we hated to see things thrown away," Schadler says. "We have four kids and sustainability is extremely important to us."

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Business spotlight

During the business's early days, Schadler provided junk removal on nights and weekends when he wasn't busy working at a machine shop. Eventually, the business grew into a full-time endeavor, and the Schadlers invested back into the company with new equipment and techniques. "When I first started, for example, we didn't have any tarps. I'm driving around and things are flying out of my truck," Schadler laughs. "I'm like, 'Oh my god, I need a tarp.'"

Schadler says his wife Christine "was equally as involved" in getting the business off the ground. "She handled the back-end while I did the heavy lifting, all while she was working at EMC," he says. "Fast forward 17 years, and we both work full time managing the company as well as other endeavors. Business is



Christine and Jason Schadler, shown here with their children, started Affordable Junk Removal in 2005.

doing great; it has grown tremendously to a fleet of trucks and dumpsters, and we've also been able to buy a pizza place, The Corner Market in Holliston."

In addition to delivering an in-demand service to the community, Schadler is appreciative that Affordable Junk Removal has helped provide a work-life balance that suits his family. "It allows me to be able to do what I like doing and spend time with my kids," he says. "I'm home to see my babies play softball and do all that stuff. We are also able to give back to the communities we serve."

As for Norfolk and Wrentham in particular, Schadler says they are proud to have many repeat customers and friends in the area. Christine spent her child-


hood holidays in Norfolk, where her aunt and uncle live, and she learned to blow glass at Luke Adams Glass Blowing in nearby Norwood. The Schadler family also frequents Supercharged in Wrentham, one of her son's favorite spots.


One of the best parts of his job, Schadler says, is meeting and getting to know new people and developing relationships with returning customers. "We are really grateful for the repeat business and the chance to form connections with residents across the MetroWest area," he says.

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Wrentham Opens New Gravel Operation

By JOE STEWART

TL Edwards, an Avon-based asphalt supplier, has initiated operations at its new gravel pit at 775 South Street near Wampum Corner. Owned by Terry Edwards in Avon, the property has not yet been reassessed for tax purposes.

With this new operation, Wrentham now has three gravel operations. The SM Lorusso quarry at 78 Elysium Street is owned by Bird Corp. in Dallas and provides about \$75K of tax revenue to Wrentham, and the Aggregate Industries operation at 400 Green Street is owned by Aggregate Industries in Dundee, MI and provides about \$110K in tax revenue to Wrentham. Nearby in Plainville, the Lorusso gravel pit at 30-40 Cross Street is owned by Plainville Corp. and provides about \$70K of tax revenue to Plainville.

TL Edwards, a family-run business incorporated in 1969, operates an asphalt facility in Avon that utilizes both virgin gravel and MADOT-approved recycled process materials as an environmentally friendly alternative, while also managing its own quarry in Stoughton to ensure quality control. Beyond asphalt and aggregate, the company operates a retail yard in Plymouth, offering a wide range of materials for residential and commercial projects, including loam, sand, mulch, cobblestones, and granite.

According to public records, Wrentham acquired the 18-acre property through a tax taking from the estate of Carmella Marra in October of 2003 to satisfy outstanding property taxes. Edwards acquired the land at auction from the Town of Wrentham for \$3.2M in June of 2023. During the intervening two decades, Wrentham per-

formed repeated environmental cleanups. The cleanups were funded both by town expenditures authorized by Town Meeting and by securing grants, both state and Federal, including a \$200K Brownfield Remediation grant from the US EPA in 2008.

Wrentham also appointed a committee, the Marra Property Reuse Committee, also known as 775 South Street Advisory Committee, to assess what to do with the property. The committee was composed of Ravi Nadkarni, Everett Skinner Jr., Edward Goddard, and Sandra Adams. It provided its feedback to the Select Board in 2011.

Goddard served as the committee's chair and recalled that the committee discussed many reuse options, including building a new elementary school, building veteran housing, selling for gravel extraction, selling for housing development, leasing for use as a hotel, and retaining as open space.

By March of 2020, following successful completion of multiple environmental cleanups totaling more than \$250K, Wrentham received releases from the Department of Environmental Protection and the US Environmental Protection Agency, enabling the town to proceed with making a decision about what to do with the property.

Following purchase of the property in 2023, Edwards sought permits to develop the property. At a Conservation Commission hearing in March of 2024, Jude Gauvin, P.E. of OHI Engineering, said they plan to create three ponds to capture stormwater with a 100-year storm capacity, six catch basins along South Street, and a privacy berm which will keep water from leaving the project site onto South Street.



TL Edwards Gravel Operation South of Wampum Corner in Wrentham.

At a Planning Boarding hearing in May of 2024, Gauvin summarized the gravel operation, indicating that about 730,000 cubic yards of gravel would be removed over four years and that at its peak, about 100 trucks per day would transport the gravel along 1A, with more than 85% expected to travel south on 1A to I-495.

During public comment, concerns were raised about dust control and water runoff as well as traffic. Gauvin explained that spraying and stabilizing the slopes would help minimize dust and that discussions had taken place with public safety about police details, and a traffic management plan would be sent to the State.

In a subsequent Planning Board hearing, Gauvin noted that comments from another firm, Beals & Thomas, which performed a peer review of the plans, had been addressed--most of the comments related to drainage. At the September 2024 Planning Board hearing, the Board agreed to a "tree planting" waiver so long as the owner pursues residential development following gravel extraction.

And, at an October 2024 Conservation Commission meeting, the Commission's Agent, Darryl Luce, reported that he had checked the newly installed erosion control measures and that operations would be starting soon.

Mike King, Wrentham Town Manager, shared that proceeds from the sale were allocated at the November 2023 Town Meeting to the feasibility study for major renovation or replacement of the Roderick Elementary School (\$1.1M) and design of the Public Works/Land Use Building Facility (\$800,000). The remaining funds, approximately \$1.5M, have been placed into the Capital Stabilization Fund, essentially a savings account for future capital expenses. King highlighted that this sale enabled the town to move ahead with projects important to the town without impacting tax payers.

Lions Polar Plunge Set for March 29

The annual Lions Polar Plunge will be held on Saturday, March 29 from 9 to 11 a.m. at Lake Pearl Beach Pavilion in Wrentham. The Plunge is organized by the Norfolk, Wrentham and Plainville Lions Clubs to raise money for the Massachusetts Lions Eye Research Fund.

The Lions Polar Plunge is a

fun, social event with food, drink, and music. Lions Club members and the general public are welcome to plunge and help raise funds for necessary medical eye research. Plungers are encouraged to come in costume for the jump into the cold lake water.

All money raised benefits Mass Lions Eye Research Foun-

dation, which provides funding to Boston-area medical institutions with the hope to someday eradicate preventable blindness.

To register as a plunger, or sponsor a plunger, visit www.lionspolarplunge.org. Questions? Email wrenthamlions33k@gmail.com.

Wrentham Lions Club 2025 Scholarship Applications Available

The Wrentham Lions Club will offer four (4) scholarships to area graduating seniors, including one scholarship for qualified adult residents seeking to con-

tinue their education.

Applications are available now and will be accepted until March 14. Scholarship criteria, applications, and directions for

submittal can be found on the Wrentham Lions website: www.wrenthamlions.org.

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Living Healthy

The Blurry Truth: Understanding and Addressing the Rise of Refractive Errors

By: ROGER M. KALDAWY, M.D.
MILFORD FRANKLIN EYE CENTER

Have you noticed more people wearing glasses these days? It's not just a feeling. Refractive errors, those eye conditions that blur our vision, are becoming increasingly common, particularly nearsightedness (myopia). This article explores what these errors are, why they're on the rise, and what we can do about it.

What are Refractive Errors?

Our eyes are intricate organs, acting like sophisticated cameras. Light enters, is bent (refracted) by the cornea and lens, and ideally focuses perfectly on the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye. This focused image is then sent to the

brain, allowing us to see clearly. Refractive errors occur when the eye's shape prevents light from focusing correctly on the retina, resulting in blurry vision. Common types include:

- **Myopia (Nearsightedness):** Close objects are clear, but distant objects are blurry. This happens when the eye is too long, or the cornea is too curved, causing light to focus *in front* of the retina.
- **Hyperopia (Farsightedness):** Distant objects are clear, but close objects are blurry. This occurs when the eye is too short, or the cornea isn't curved enough, causing light to focus *behind* the retina.
- **Astigmatism:** Vision is blurry or distorted at all distances. This happens when



the cornea or lens is irregularly shaped, preventing proper light focus.

- **Presbyopia:** This age-related condition makes focusing on close objects difficult. As we

age, the lens loses flexibility, hindering its ability to change shape and focus up close. This is why many over 40 need reading glasses.

Why the Rise?

The increasing prevalence of refractive errors, especially myopia, is a global concern. While the exact causes are still being researched, several factors are believed to contribute:

- **The Screen Time Surge:** Our modern lives involve significant screen time – smartphones, tablets, computers, and televisions. This constant close-up focus strains the eyes and may contribute to myopia development and progression.
- **The Great Indoors:** Studies suggest that spending time outdoors, especially in childhood, has a protective effect against myopia. The wider range of distances the eyes focus on outdoors, along with increased natural light exposure, may be beneficial.
- **The Genetic Factor:** Genetics play a significant role. If your parents or siblings have myopia, you're more likely to develop it.

ful tool is the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes of screen time, take a 20-second break to look at something 20 feet away. This allows the eye muscles to relax and refocus, reducing strain.

- **Embrace the Outdoors:** Aim for at least 1-2 hours of daily outdoor activity, especially for children.
- **Maintain a Healthy Lifestyle:** A balanced diet and regular physical activity are crucial.
- **Regular Eye Exams:** Comprehensive eye exams are essential, especially for children. Early detection and treatment are key.
- **Corrective Lenses:** Glasses or contacts are the most common and effective correction.
- **Myopia Control:** For children with progressive myopia, doctors may recommend treatments like atropine eye drops, multifocal contact lenses, or orthokeratology.
- **Surgery:** Refractive surgery like LASIK or PRK may be an option for some, but consult with an eye doctor to discuss risks and benefits.

The Future of Vision Care:

Researchers are actively exploring new prevention and treatment methods, investigating the roles of genetics, environment, and lifestyle. New technologies, such as advanced lens designs and drug therapies, are also being developed.

The increasing prevalence of refractive errors is a significant public health issue. By understanding the causes and taking proactive steps, we can protect our vision. Remember, regular eye exams are essential. If you have any concerns, consult an eye care professional.

What Can We Do?

While we can't entirely eliminate the risk, we can take steps to minimize the impact and potentially slow myopia progression:

- **Limit Screen Time:** Encourage children and adults to take regular breaks. A help-

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Living Healthy

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As winter forges on, we are forced to deal with ice and snow and poor weather conditions. We have to be vigilant with our driving and certainly walking on icy streets. Slips and falls, and especially auto accidents, can create more damage than just a bump and a bruise. If you are experiencing the following symptoms for more than three days from an accident or fall, you should seek professional help: back pain, neck pain, headaches, nausea, difficulty concentrating, focusing with reading, or difficulty sleeping.

Michael H. was rear ended while stopped at a red light. He immediately felt a twinge in his

neck and his lower back, but thought it was ok. As time went on, however, the pain intensified and he started to get headaches. Since he didn't normally get headaches, he knew something wasn't right.

A friend told him to seek the help of Dr. Goldstein at The Holistic Center at Bristol Square. Dr. Goldstein performed a consultation and examination and explained how he could eliminate his discomfort and pain. Once under care with Dr. Goldstein, Michael's symptoms started to resolve. His headaches became less frequent and were less intense until they went away altogether. His neck and lower back

pain improved with chiropractic adjustments and a home exercise program. Today, Michael has resumed all the activities he enjoyed prior to the accident.

If you have had a slip and fall, or have been in an auto accident and are experiencing symptoms call The Holistic Center at Bristol Square, at (508) 660-2722 and book an appointment today. The Center is located at 1426 Main Street in Walpole.

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Dr. Rochelle Bien & Dr. Michael Goldstein

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deadline, ensuring Wrentham's continued compliance with the MBTA Communities Act while preserving the opportunity for further discussion and potential revisions to the proposed zoning bylaw.

With the July 14 deadline approaching, Wrentham faces a critical juncture. Balancing the desire for local control with the legal and financial implications of non-compliance, town officials and Town Meeting voters must carefully weigh their options and chart a course that best serves Wrentham's interests.

EYES

continued from page 6

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The b.LUXE *beauty beat*

Confidence From The Top – Wigs & Toppers For Hair Loss

By GINA WOELFEL

Hair is a big part of how we express ourselves, and if it starts to thin or fall out, it can feel disheartening. But there's good news! At b.LUXE Hair and Makeup Studio in Medway, we're here to help with compassionate, personalized solutions designed to restore not just your hair but your confidence, too.

Last year, Heather Cohen, the owner of b.LUXE Hair and Makeup Studio expanded its services by introducing natural and synthetic wigs and toppers to help address hair loss and thinning. Many women face hair loss due to various factors such as stress, alopecia, medication side effects, and cancer treatments, often without an easy, non-medical solution for support.

Two years ago, Heather was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, and the medication her doctors prescribed to help control her condition caused significant hair thinning. This experience gave her a deeper understanding of her client's struggles and a renewed passion for helping them feel beautiful.

"As a salon owner with access to the best hair care products in the business, I never imagined I would experience hair loss myself," Heather explained. "Over the years, I've worked with many clients dealing with this same issue, but I never had the right solutions to offer them."

Heather tried using extensions but found them uncomfortable due to her fragile hair and not as versatile as she had hoped.

"That's when I discovered wigs and hair toppers,"

Heather revealed. "They completely transformed my look and boosted my confidence! I knew I wanted to offer these options at my salon."

With a small team of her most experienced stylists, Heather set out to obtain the education and certification needed to provide exceptional hair replacement and supplemental services.

The b.LUXE Studio now offers a wide selection of high-quality human hair and synthetic wigs and toppers, all designed to look and feel completely natural. With a diverse range of styles, colors, and textures available, you can book a consultation with our wig specialists to try on samples and discuss your options. During the consultation, we carefully take scalp measurements to ensure your wig or topper fits perfectly and securely. Each piece can be custom-colored and styled for a flawless, natural blend. You'll feel both confident and comfortable with your new hairstyle.

Human Hair Wigs

Our human hair wigs offer a natural-looking and versatile solution for those seeking a realistic alternative to their own hair. These wigs are made from the highest quality human hair, closely resembling natural hair's texture, shine, and movement. They can be cut, colored, and styled just like your own. Advanced craftsmanship, such as lace fronts and monofilament tops, creates a lifelike hairline and scalp. A monofilament wig features a transparent mesh layer with each strand hand-tied, providing a more natural look and

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HAIR LOSS SOLUTIONS

feel that allows for versatile parting. These wigs offer a secure, comfortable fit that stays in place without shifting. While they do require some upkeep, human hair wigs are durable and long-lasting and can be heat-styled to provide various styling possibilities.

Human Hair Wig Pricing: \$1000 - \$4000 | Includes cutting, coloring and styling

Human Hair Topper Pricing: \$400 - \$1300 | Includes cutting, coloring and styling

Synthetic Wigs

Modern synthetic wigs have transformed the hair loss experience by providing realistic, low-maintenance options that resemble natural hair. Advanced synthetic fibers now mimic real hair's texture, shine, and movement. Many of these wigs feature lace fronts and monofilament tops, which create a lifelike hairline and scalp appearance.

One advantage of pre-styled synthetic wigs is that they retain their shape even after washing, making them ideal for individuals seeking a quick and hassle-free solution. Additionally, they are lightweight and comfortable, and they hold their style well in various weather conditions, including humidity and rain. With proper care, synthetic wigs offer a convenient and affordable way to feel confident and polished every day.

Synthetic Wig Pricing: \$200 - \$700 | Includes cutting, coloring and styling

Toppers

Human hair toppers are non-permanent hair accessories designed to enhance a person's natural hair's volume, length,



or coverage. These toppers are made from real human hair and blend seamlessly with existing hair to create a natural, fuller look. They are available in various styles, colors, and lengths, can be dyed or cut to match your desired style, and are typically secured with clips, tape, or integrated bands. Toppers are ideal for individuals experiencing hair thinning, patchy hair loss due to alopecia, or anyone looking to change their hairstyle without making a permanent commitment.

A Unique and Compassionate Approach

At b.LUXE, we take a unique and compassionate approach to hair loss, recognizing that each individual's journey is different. Heather's experience with hair loss due to rheumatoid arthritis medication has inspired the studio's commitment to providing realistic and empathetic solutions tailored to each client's needs. In addition to offering effective hair replacement options, b.LUXE embraces a holistic approach to beauty and well-being. We've designed our Scalp Spa Treatments to nourish and rejuvenate. They feature detoxifying scrubs, nutritive oil applications, and soothing massages to enhance scalp health, calm the mind, and address issues such as dryness, itching, oiliness, clogged follicles, and hair thinning.

Prioritized Client Comfort

At b.LUXE, we genuinely care about supporting you throughout your journey, offering a warm, safe, and welcoming space where you can feel at ease and valued. Our experienced team is here to guide you every step of the way, providing personalized one-on-one services in a private setting. We're deeply committed to your comfort and well-being, ensuring you receive the utmost care and attention with solutions thoughtfully tailored to your unique needs.

For clients experiencing hair loss due to cancer treatments, we are proud to partner with The MGH Cancer Center at Newton-Wellesley Hospital to provide effective hair loss solutions.

You're never alone here—we're with you every step of the way, offering expertise and compassion at every turn.

For more information and to view our introductory consultation video, scan the QR code to visit our "Hair Loss Solutions" page. To schedule a consultation, you can book online or feel free to contact our team directly at (508) 321-1624.

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Your Money, Your Independence

Homebuying in March: A Smart Time to Make Your Move?



Glenn Brown, CFP

March signals the beginning of homebuying season as the weather improves and more sellers list homes after waiting through the slower winter months.

Some buyers will wait in hopes of aligning closing with the end of school year; thus, buyers in March may have less competition and more options.

Before scrolling Zillow, open houses, and finding a real estate agent, let's discuss things you need to implement.

Define Your Priorities.

Think about what you need in a home, make a list, and then prioritize #1-25, as not everything can be #1 or 1A. Consider factors like location, bedrooms, outdoor space, designated areas (i.e. office, kids' playroom), open concept, amenities, etc.

Also know your preferences: move-in ready v. fixer-upper, few neighbors v. neighborhood, and public v. private school. And whatever you do, don't let listing photos redefine your priorities.

Do Your Research.

Research the local market to understand pricing trends and gain an idea of what to expect when making offers. Learn what's going on with schools, public safety, property taxes, new ordinances, and city/town infrastructure. Also, if you don't want to live on a busy road, know the existing commercial and industrial zones.

Get Pre-Approved for a Mortgage.

This shows sellers that you're a serious buyer and can afford the property. Pre-approval also helps you understand how much you can borrow. Don't confuse pre-approval with ability to pay, as an underwriter is viewing your financial situation today - not what you have planned.

Explore Loan Options.

When buying a home, securing the right mortgage is critical. Here are some common types:

Conventional Loans - Not backed by the government, these are offered by banks or private lenders. Down payments are 5-20% with required credit scores higher than 620, best rates for scores 780+. Benefits include competitive rates

and flexible terms, however, there are limits on the amount borrowed.

FHA Loans - Government-backed Federal Housing Administration loans are designed to help first-time homebuyers or those with lower credit scores qualify for a mortgage. Down payments are as low as 3.5% for credit scores of 580 or higher. While lower down payment and easier to qualify, Private Mortgage Insurance (PMI) is required, which increases overall costs.

Jumbo Loans - A type of mortgage that exceeds the conforming loan limits set by the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA). Down payments are often 20%+ with higher credit scores, incomes, and investment assets.

Adjustable-Rate Mortgages (ARMs) - Offer a lower initial interest rate for a fixed period, typically 5, 7, or 10 years, then adjusts based on market conditions.

Down payments are 5% or more with eligibility similar to conventional loan requirements. Ideal for those expecting to refinance or move again in 5-7 years. There's a risk of higher payments as rates adjust or if the refinancing or move doesn't (can't) occur.

Understand the Full Costs.

At closing you may need more than the down payment, this includes escrow (property taxes and insurance), prepaid interest, and other closing costs for \$5-15K additional. This can be rolled into the mortgage, so get a breakdown from your lender to avoid surprises.

About that Financial Plan.

As a CFP, I've helped many clients with their homebuying (and selling) process. What eases stress is knowing what happens AFTER moving into your new home. Knowns include a new monthly budget, adjusted cash flow expectations, spending timelines on renovations, and

any short-term lifestyle compromises. Additionally, we've run scenarios planning for the unexpected, family additions and/or desire to change jobs for greater work/life flexibility.

Through planning, you're confident in aligning your home with your financial independence.

The opinions voiced in this material are for general information only and are not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual.

Glenn Brown is a Holliston resident and owner of Plan-Dynamic, LLC, www.PlanDynamic.com. Glenn is a fee-only Certified Financial Planner™ helping motivated people take control of their planning and investing, so they can balance kids, aging parents and financial independence.

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Massachusetts Firefighting Academy
Career Recruit Class #BW33 Graduation • February 14, 2025

Wrentham firefighter Michael Motta graduated from the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy on Feb. 14. The intensive, 10-week program involves classroom instruction, physical fitness training, firefighter skills training, and live firefighting practice. (Photo courtesy Department of Fire Services)

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Wildlife Rehabber Offers Advice on Avian Flu in Area

BY GRACE ALLEN

Avian flu has many people in the area concerned. A highly contagious and often fatal disease for domestic birds, it has the potential to wipe out entire flocks within days. The H5N1 strain has spread from wild birds to backyard flocks and even to mammals, including dairy cattle and pets.

Norfolk-based wildlife rehabber Susan Siegel runs the non-profit Return2Wild, which rescues and rehabilitates orphaned and injured animals. Siegel agreed to answer some questions about the outbreak for readers of Local Town Pages.

Locally, what is the impact of avian flu? What are you seeing?

Since January 1, avian flu has been confirmed or highly suspected as the cause of death for 25 waterfowl (mostly geese), and seven raptors (hawks and owls). One eagle displayed symptoms but could not be captured. These deaths occurred within a 10-mile radius of Norfolk.

In Norfolk and Wrentham, we know eight geese, four hawks, and one owl succumbed to the disease. There are certainly more deceased animals that we haven't found. Early on, all deceased animals were tested, but now that we know avian flu is in the state and in our area, they are not testing all casualties. However, deceased eagles and snowy owls are being tested, as the state is closely monitoring the impact to these species of concern.

If you see a sick or deceased eagle or snowy owl, please report it to MassWildlife (Mass.Wildlife@mass.gov, 508-389-6300) and immediately contact Andrew Vitz, State Ornithologist (Andrew.Vitz@ma.gov, 508-389-6394).

What advice would you give to pet owners, specifically cat and dog owners?

Cats in particular are highly susceptible to this strain of avian flu. It can be lethal to felines. Domestic cats should be kept indoors as they will prey upon and consume a weakened or deceased bird. They will also bring that virus into your home.

Dogs can contract avian flu through direct contact—rolling, sniffing, playing with or consum-



On January 21, a Norfolk firefighter rescued a Canada goose frozen in ice on Highland Lake.

ing a bird infected with the virus, whether the bird is dead or alive. Dogs may or may not become ill, although it can be lethal in dogs. My advice would be for dogs to be kept leashed if you are hiking in an area where waterfowl or their excrement is prevalent. You don't want them tracking goose poop into your house.

What advice would you give to people who raise chickens or ducks?

Backyard chickens and ducks are sadly very susceptible to bird flu. It's recommended to keep your flock from free-ranging in areas open to wild birds. Homes with backyard chickens should not have wild bird feeders near their coops. You should wear proper PPE, including an N95 mask, gloves, and gown/clothing cover when handling chickens and their feces. Wash your hands immediately after handling chickens and dispose of your PPE. Wash your clothes if they have come in contact with the birds or their droppings. There is no reported risk to consuming eggs from local growers or farm stands.

If your flock experiences several unexplained deaths, contact our regional USDA official, Ryan Bevilacqua (Ryan.Bevilacqua@USDA.gov). Do not dispose of the birds until you are directed to do so.

How can people protect themselves?

While the risk of human exposure to HPAI (highly pathogenic avian influenza) or H5N1 (the strain) is currently quite low, it can occur in those with direct exposure to concentrated levels of the virus. This means it can occur if handling a flock of infected birds, touching an infected bird/animal without proper PPE, and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes. The virus is transmitted (bird to bird, bird to mammal) via inhalation or ingestion of viral particles. It is found in respiratory secretions and feces of infected animals. This is why PPE is necessary when handling infected animals and why handwashing after contact is so important. Avian flu thrives in cold weather, and the colder it is, the longer it survives. In low temperatures, the virus can live on surfaces for days or weeks. It can live on your skin for hours. Washing your hands with soap and water can kill and remove the pathogen. Cleaning surfaces (including fabrics) with household disinfectants is also effective.

What about backyard birdfeeders? Should people take them down?

Although songbirds could technically be infected, they are not the target of this particular strain. We are not seeing a significant number of infected



Susan Siegel with the goose before it was transported to Tufts Wildlife Clinic to be evaluated. Later, the goose was confirmed to have avian flu and was humanely euthanized.

songbirds. Cleaning your feeders and birdbaths weekly is a great idea, however, to reduce contamination by avian flu or other microbes. The easiest and most effective way to do that is with a 10% bleach solution. Do this outdoors, not in your kitchen sink. Remove any organic matter from the feeder and soak it in a large bucket of water with a cup of disinfecting bleach for 10 minutes. Rinse well and dry.

What should homeowners do if they find a dead bird in the yard?

If there are one or two birds, you should put on an N95 mask and gloves, place an old towel over the bird, pick up the bird (do not hold it against your clothes) and dispose of it in a double trash bag along with the towel, and place in your outdoor trash barrel. Do not bring it indoors.

If you see five or more deceased birds of any species, they must be reported to MassWildlife: <https://www.mass.gov/forms/report-observations-of-dead-wild-birds>. In cases of five or more birds, MassWildlife may want to test them, so follow their directive prior to disposal.

Who can people call with questions or concerns?

Your local animal control officer is your first point of con-

tact for collection of deceased birds or to report a sick bird. In Norfolk, contact Hilary Cohen (hcohen@norfolk.ma.us, 508-528-3206 #7). In Wrentham, contact Lexi Klenk (aklenk@police.wrentham.ma.us, 508-384-2121).

Currently, many wildlife rehabbers will not admit sick birds into their clinics due to the contagious nature of avian flu. Sick birds must go to Tufts Wildlife Clinic in Grafton for evaluation or euthanasia. I am happy to answer questions: Return2Wild-info@gmail.com.

Is there anything else you think is important for people to know?

Limiting the spread of the virus is of utmost importance. The greater the spread between species, the greater the chance of viral mutation and human impact. It's important not to leave deceased animals in the environment, as it will contribute to the spread of this disease to birds of prey (raptors), as well as other mammals such as foxes, coyotes, bobcats, and opossums. With wildlife baby season fast approaching, mothers will gladly bring home a dead goose for dinner. That would not be good.

For more information about Return2Wild, visit return2wild.org

1776 Financial Services Offers the Scott Dittrich Memorial Scholarship

1776 Financial Services is proud to offer a scholarship to one King Philip Regional High School senior who will pursue a business-related major at a four-year college or university. The scholarship is a progressive one given out over the four years of study.

The scholarship is given in memory of 1776 Financial Services co-founder Scott Dittrich, who passed away in March of 2023. Throughout his lifetime, Scott demonstrated the extraordinary ability to regularly engage others and influence change and was dedicated to serving the community.

For more information or to apply for the scholarship, students should contact the King Philip High School guidance office.

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Guest Column

Science on the Brink

By G. GREGORY TOOKER

There are few in this Commonwealth of Massachusetts, an acknowledged bastion of education and learning, who would reject the long-accepted basic principles of biology, chemistry and physics. Disturbingly, however, some now in positions of power are chipping away at the foundations of knowledge that are a product of thousands of years of evolutionary thought.

With the help of social media, one informational source upon which an astounding portion of the nation's citizens are totally dependent for news, well-established scientific facts are being questioned and rejected by some. One example, widely discussed in many circles, is the effectiveness of vaccines in preventing and controlling pandemic-provoking diseases. It is alarming that a growing portion of U.S. citizens will refuse inoculation based on unsubstantiated arguments that proven vaccines are dangerous, especially after having recently experienced the devastating effects of a worldwide event.

Climate change is another example, where the inability or refusal to look at the well-researched and intricate detail of this phenomenon has caused many to reject it is happening

at all. Look at the snowstorms blanketing states along the Mason-Dixon line they say. Global warming...hogwash! In answer to this response, your writer invites our readers to open the pages of an insightful book written a generation ago by Art Bell and Whitley Strieber, "The Coming Global Superstorm" (Simon and Schuster, 1999). Ironically, warming ocean and atmospheric temperatures and the resultant effect on the Atlantic gulf stream and other oceans across the globe, were predicted to spawn devastating weather events similar in nature to what we are experiencing now.

The rejection of carbon-free energy sources such as solar and wind technology and a return to fossil fuel-generated energy ignores the generally accepted principle that this will further accelerate climate change and result in devastating weather events. Many opine that the horse has left the barn at this point and we'll just have to ride it out. Your writer believes there is still time to avoid the worst of the consequences if we all act together, accepting well-researched scientific conclusions. Time is growing very short.

Opinions expressed in the Guest Column do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.

Blair Crane Recognized as Tree Warden of the Year

Massachusetts Tree Wardens' and Foresters' Association (MTWFA) presented the 24th annual Seth H. Swift Tree Warden of the Year award to Blair Crane, the Tree Warden and Director of Public Works for the Town of Norfolk.

MTWFA President Ed Olsen presented the Silver Tree Award to Blair Crane at the association's 112th annual meeting and conference on Jan. 7.

Blair is a United States Air Force Security Police Veteran and was a business owner prior to starting his career in public service many years ago. Beginning his public service career in a small Berkshire town, Blair was the town's Highway Superintendent, Tree Warden, Harbormaster and even the official "Measurer of Wood and Bark."

For the past six years, Blair has worked for the Norfolk Department of Public Works and has been the Tree Warden and DPW Director for the past five years. While being responsible for multiple facets of the DPW, he believes that taking care of the town's trees and helping to educate the public as the Tree Warden is not just a responsibility but also an incredible honor.

The Massachusetts Tree Wardens' and Foresters' Association is the nation's oldest urban and community tree protection organization, founded in 1913



MTWFA President Ed Olsen, right, presents the 2025 Tree Warden of the Year Award to the Town of Norfolk's Blair Crane. (Photo courtesy Town of Norfolk)

for the protection and preservation of trees. The position of tree warden is a municipal one, mandated under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 87, with the charge to protect public shade trees within the 351 cities and towns of the Commonwealth.

For more information about the position of tree warden and about the association, visit the association's website: <https://www.masstree wardens.org/>.

The association plans to hold a commemorative tree planting in the Town of Norfolk to honor Blair Crane's award.

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Swirl Into Spring with Apricot Lane

Dresses, Sets, and a Variety of Accessories are Waiting for You!

By JANE LEBAK

With spring around the corner and days getting longer, it's time to brighten up the wardrobe with lighter colors, breathable fabrics, and plans for warmer weather.

"Springtime means dresses," says Marta McNulty, owner of Franklin's Apricot Lane Boutique. "Last year, we became the town's dress destination, and it's easy to see why."

Apricot Lane is a sweet little boutique tucked behind the Starbucks on Route 140. Stocked with hand-selected fashions, the shop hits the sweet spot between fashionable and practical, keeping costs down and always targeted toward local tastes and needs.

This spring's dress selection covers all the bases, from formal to semi formal to casual events. Apricot Lane can outfit you for an evening wedding in Boston Common or a mid-afternoon wedding in a countryside barn. They can get you set up with a sundress for the beach or even just a t-shirt dress to run errands.

Colors this season are mostly lighter, shades of beige, pink and baby blue, and Marta's personal favorite, the combo dresses. "It's a dress which has a crochet top, tank or cap sleeves, and airy cotton from the waist down."

Another trend this season is the denim dress. "These aren't GenX denim dresses. Blended with Tencel, today's denim dresses are light and flowy, beautifully tailored, and flattering for any figure." Marta says, "We're used to denim being bulky, but these have to be seen to be believed. Seen, touched, worn, and then loved."

For cooler evenings, you can pair the dresses with the perfect cover-up. "We have adorable shrug sweaters and little jackets. Because they're cruelty-free, vegan leather jackets are the current status quo, and we have many of those," Marta adds.

Last year, many of Apricot Lane's customers wanted outfits for country music concerts. Marta says, "We'd combine glittery tops and denim skirts, or we'd pair an airy cotton dress with a light jacket, a coordinating pair of sunglasses, and statement jewelry pieces."

Coordinating separates is Marta's specialty. Her initial experience as a visual merchandiser for both H&M and Bloomingdales taught her how to quickly pair not only colors that work together, but also interesting texture combinations and different styles. These blends create a person's own signature look. "You can come in and build an entire capsule



**Business
spotlight**



wardrobe with several carefully-selected pieces," she says.

In choosing this spring's lineup, Marta continues Apricot Lane's commitment to chari-



table causes. Beaded bracelets by Noble Venture are made by survivors of human trafficking in Nepal, Haiti, and Guatemala, and sales help them rescue other victims. Clothing from Vero Moda, a Denmark brand, is made from 100% recycled materials, and their manufacturing process is certified eco-friendly. ESW face masks are cruelty-free and also biodegradable, so after you use one, you can compost it in your yard...or even in a house plant.

largest no kill shelter," says Marta. "They look great, and you feel great wearing them." The current season features Molly Bracken, Elan, Another Love, Vero Moda, Good American, Hidden, Vervet Denim, Kinsey Designs and Kendra Scott jewelry collection. "I source from all over the world," says Marta. "This year, a number of Canadian brands stood out as very high quality, and strikingly different, so I'm introducing Franklin to new brands, like DEX, R.D. Style, and B.Young. I think they're going to love them."

Stop over at Apricot Lane, at 342 East Central Street in Franklin, to pick up a summer-accented necklace, and maybe spend an hour in the spacious changing rooms trying on every piece of your brand new capsule wardrobe. Or, just visit their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/apricotlane-franklin>.

Let Apricot Lane get you ready. Ready for spring, ready for concerts, ready for drinks with friends...ready for anything.

table causes. Beaded bracelets by Noble Venture are made by survivors of human trafficking in Nepal, Haiti, and Guatemala, and sales help them rescue other victims. Clothing from Vero Moda, a Denmark brand, is made from 100% recycled materials, and their manufacturing process is certified eco-friendly. ESW face masks are cruelty-free and also biodegradable, so after you use one, you can compost it in your yard...or even in a house plant.

"We just brought in WMP, Wear Me Pro, a line of sunglasses that makes a donation for every pair sold to the Arizona Humane Society – the state's

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HELP WANTED: A guide to getting your next job

You've landed an interview, now to prepare

By THERESA KNAPP

Congratulations, the company has noticed your résumé and they've scheduled an interview with you. Now what?

Now you prepare. Getting a job is difficult and time-consuming. The more prepared you can be, the more confident you can be, and the more successful you can be.

For the employer, the purpose of the job interview is to assess the candidate's skills, their motivation, and to see if they are a good fit with the company's culture and mission.

For the candidate, the interview can help assess if the job description is accurate, if you're comfortable with the "feel" of the company and its representatives, etc.

Your "elevator pitch" should be "u-nique"

An elevator pitch is your introduction. The pitch should be 30 to 60 seconds long and should address your professional history, accomplishments of which you're most proud of, and relevant career goals which tie in with the job for that you're applying.

The pitch should end with a fun fact about yourself, something that can help you stand out from the other candidates. It should be positive and not too personal.

Many employers receive hundreds of applications for each job. It will help your chances if you have a memorable interview. What makes you "u-nique"? Employers often ask each candidate

- What past accomplishments are you most proud of?
- What three things do you want to get better at this year?
- What skills do you have that you've noticed differentiate you from your peers?
- What would your past or present colleagues say is the best thing about working with you?
- Where do you want to be in three or five years?

Take some time to think about your answers. An interview is the time to shine, to identify areas in which you are proud, and to share those accomplishments. Let the employer know what skills and energy you'll bring to their company.

If you're wondering how to highlight your strengths in an interview, Indeed [bit.ly/IndeedPersonalStrengths] says focus on quality not quantity, back up your strengths with examples, and provide original answers to routine questions – you want to provide the answers they're looking for while standing out from the competition.

10 common job interview questions and how to answer them

According to the *Harvard Business Review* [bit.ly/HBR10CommonInterviewQuestions], the following questions are often asked during a job interview:

- Could you tell me about yourself and briefly describe your background?
- How did you hear about the position?
- What kind of work environment do you prefer?
- How do you deal with pressure or stressful situations?
- Do you prefer working independently or on a team?
- How do you keep yourself organized when balancing multiple projects?
- What did you do in the last year to improve your knowledge?



- What are your salary expectations?
- Are you applying for other jobs?
- Can you explain a time gap on your résumé?

Be prepared to respond to these questions with the answer and, when appropriate, why that is the answer.

For helpful detailed responses, visit bit.ly/HBR10CommonInterviewQuestions.

"What is your greatest weakness?"

Another often-asked and often-dreaded interview question is, "What is your greatest weakness?" The purpose of this question is to see if you're honest, self-aware, and open to self-improvement; it gauges your emotional intelligence.

According to themuse.com [bit.ly/MuseGreatestWeakness], there is a simple formula to answer this question:

- Clearly describe your weakness [ex. Delegating]
- Give a short example of a time your weakness affected your work [ex. The meeting started late because I did all the prep work myself, I should have delegated.]
- Talk about what you've done to improve your weakness. [ex. I now look to my team or coworkers to ask for assistance at the beginning of a project.]

When answering the question, be sure to answer concisely and focus on the solution, not the weakness. And always leave the answer on a positive note.

"Do you have any questions for us?"

At the end of most interviews is one last question: "Do you have any questions for us?" Your answer should always be "yes" even if the employer has answered every question you had. It is important you ask at least one question, preferably 1-3 questions as time allows. Suggestions include:

- How would you define success in this role?
- How is success measured in this role?
- What is the most challenging aspect of this role or this team?
- What do you like about working here?
- How many other members are in this department?
- How would you define company culture?
- What opportunities do you offer for professional development?
- Questions related to information on their website, blog, or social media
- What are the next steps in the hiring process? [this should not be your only question]

It's always best to ask some of these questions during the interview but be sure to save one or two questions for the end.

For the "70 best questions to ask in an interview," visit bit.ly/Indeed51QuestionsToAsk.

This article includes original content and information from Indeed.com, themuse.com, Harvard Business Review, and PositivePsychology.com

INTERVIEW PREP

continued on page 14

First impressions count

According to the American Psychological Association, first impressions can have a real impact on your professional success. Ways to strengthen your chances of making a good first impression include:

1. **Know your audience:** Know who you're interviewing with so you can speak to them directly
2. **Exude confidence:** Speak slowly and calmly, make eye contact
3. **Field questions gracefully:** Don't get defensive, you don't know an answer, it's okay to say so
4. **Prepare and practice:** You cannot overprepare
5. **Be a good listener:** Pay attention, make eye contact, nod, don't interrupt or finish their sentences

Source: www.apa.org/gradpsych/2012/11/first-impressions

Preparation is key

- Read the job description thoroughly, research unfamiliar terms and acronyms
- Research the company through its website, blog, and LinkedIn page
- Search for company reviews on sites like GlassDoor, Indeed, Jobcase, etc.
- Search for the company in the news, is there anything about the culture, stock, etc., you should (or should not) discuss during the interview? A quick Google search could reveal important information
- Be familiar with the office location (even if it's a virtual position or interview)
- Have your elevator pitch ready

the same list of questions so they can make accurate comparisons, and they often hear similar answers from each applicant. By sharing something unique about you – that you can directly relate to the job responsibilities – your chances of standing out can increase. Do you speak several languages? Do you have a unique hobby? Did you audition for American Idol? Were you at the 2004 Red Sox World Series Game?

Five questions to ask yourself as you prepare

According to the job search engine Indeed.com [bit.ly/Indeed5Questions], five questions to ask yourself before a job interview include:

HELP WANTED: A guide to getting your next job

Digital footprints, yours and theirs

By Theresa Knapp

According to Business News Daily, “It’s no longer that a great resume and a solid interview dictate whether you get a job offer. Your personal social media profiles can potentially seriously affect your professional life.”

Business News Daily suggests the following tips for passing social media screenings:

1. Don’t erase your profile: This can imply you have something to hide and does not guarantee the profile is

completely deleted (but do remove inappropriate content)

2. Use social media to your benefit: Use your socials to promote content that shows your knowledge, professionalism, achievements, etc.
3. Google yourself to see what others will see when they do the same
4. Consider making your profile private: It is legal for employers to check public social media accounts, and

be wary of hiring managers requesting information beyond what’s available online (this is similar to employers asking inappropriate questions during interviews and should raise a red flag)

Source: www.businessnewsdaily.com/2377-social-media-hiring.html

There are ways to make social media work to your advantage during the interview process, including updating your social media profiles with up-to-date information, this includes Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Tik-

Tok, X – anywhere you have an active account; and like/follow companies that interest you and companies where you are interviewing.

LinkedIn.com offers the following tips to improve your LinkedIn profile:

1. Choose the right profile picture
2. Add a background photo
3. Make your headline more than just a job title
4. Record and display your name pronunciation

5. Grow your network
6. List your relevant skills
7. Request recommendations
8. Showcase your passion for learning
9. Add comments

Follow relevant influencers in your industry

Source: bit.ly/LinkedInProfileTips2024

This article includes original content and information from Business News Daily and LinkedIn.

INTERVIEW PREP

continued from page 13

"What's your greatest weakness?" possible responses

When a potential employer asks this question, and they usually do, the following topics can be good answers as long as the ‘weakness’ is not directly related to the job you’re seeking. For example, if you’re applying to be a salesperson, you would not

say your weakness is cold calling; and if you’re applying to be an auditor, you would not say your weakness is math.

Other possible responses relate to:

- Public speaking
- Delegation
- Time management
- Writing
- Organization
- Attention to small details

- Cold calling
- Confidence
- Decision-making
- Explaining complex or technical topics
- Feedback, giving or receiving
- Grammar
- Math
- Patience
- Self-esteem

- Understanding when and how to say no

MuseGreatestWeakness

A full list can be found at bit.ly/

What is emotional intelligence?

Questions like “What is your greatest weakness” test your emotional intelligence, to see how you would behave, engage, and react in certain situations. Other questions used to gauge emotional intelligence, and could easily be asked during an interview, include:

1. How do you de-stress after a bad day at work?
2. What’s something you’ve achieved that you’re most proud of and why?
3. Who are some of your top role models, why do they inspire you?
4. How do you celebrate success?
5. How do you respond when a co-worker challenges you?
6. Have you ever had to change your behavior, either at work or home, if so, why did you have to change, and how did you change?
7. How do you recover from failure?
8. When have you felt demotivated, and what did you do to overcome this?
9. How would some of your closest friends describe you?
10. What kind of behavior makes you angry/annoyed?

Source: positivepsychology.com/emotional-intelligence-interview-questions/

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For rates and info on advertising your business, please call Jen at 508-570-6544 or email: jenschofield@locaaltownpages.com

HELP WANTED: A guide to getting your next job

Résumés, cover letters, and references

By THERESA KNAPP

Résumés and cover letters are important because they help job seekers convey their qualifications, experiences, and skills to potential employers. Your resume and cover letter should be tailored to each specific job and should mention several of the qualifications listed in a job description.

Many companies use an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) so it is important to use as many keywords from the job description as possible as this will increase your chances to make it past the initial filter.

Résumés

Résumés provide a first impression to the employer and should put your best foot forward. The ideal resume is one page long, but two pages is common.

The layout should include your name, email address (be sure it is a professional email address), and phone number at the top of the page, your home address is not necessary. The next section can be a Professional Summary or Objective (optional), then Experience (in paragraph or bulleted list form. Follow this with Education, and end with an optional Achievements or Skills section.

Do not include a Reference section on your resume. According to indeed.com, resume tips to help you land an interview include:

- Look for keywords in the job posting and include those on your resume
- Review resume examples for your industry
- Résumés should be simple and brief
- Include concrete achievements and metrics when possible
- Include only relevant information
- Use a professional font, 12 points, black font (unless your industry prefers color and creativity)

- Margins should be one inch (expand to 1.15 or 1.25 inches if you don't have a lot to fill the document)
- Call attention to important achievements within a job description or in a separate "Achievements" or "Skills" section at the bottom of the resume
- Proofread, proofread, proofread
- Make multiple versions of your resume

Source: www.indeed.com/career-advice/Résumés-cover-letters/10-resume-writing-tips

Coursera [www.coursera.org] suggests using action words such as *generated, reviewed, crafted, analyzed, developed, compiled, arranged, secured, collaborated, documented, presented, administered, refined, produced, accomplished, increased, grew, improved, managed, delivered, transformed, fulfilled, engaged, negotiated,* etc.

For 150 resume action words, visit www.coursera.org/articles/resume-action-words. According to Forbes.com, the top skills to put on your resume in 2025, if applicable, are:

- Data analysis and project management
- AI and machine learning
- Software engineering and IT infrastructure
- Critical and strategic thinking
- Problem-solving
- Adaptability and agility
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Communication skills

Source: www.forbes.com/sites/rachelwells/2025/01/10/top-skills-to-put-on-your-resume-in-2025/

Cover letters

If a job description says a cover letter is not required, you don't have to submit one. If it says a cover letter is optional, it's in your best interest to submit one.

A cover letter is a short letter that accompanies your resume

and illustrates how your experience would directly relate to the specific position to which you're applying.

According to the Columbia University Center for Career Education, the goal of a cover letter is to highlight your qualifications, showcase your motivation, and reflect your voice and written communication skills. To write an effective cover letter, you should review the job description and research the company and its values and mission. The Columbia website says, "As you craft your cover letter, use examples that demonstrate your relevant skills, knowledge, and interests."

The standard format includes a heading that matches your resume (centered), the address of the company (against left margin), then a salutation (if no name is given use "Hiring Manager or the title mentioned in the job description). The first paragraph is the introduction where you say what job you're applying for and why; and the second paragraph (this could be two paragraphs, if need be) can highlight one or two skills or experiences and how they are relevant to the job for which you are applying. The last paragraph is a conclusion where you recap what you would bring to the organization and your interest in the position, and thank them for their consideration.

Source: <https://www.careereducation.columbia.edu/resources/how-and-why-write-great-cover-letter>

References

References are typically not requested until a job offer is pending, though some companies may request them up front.

Be sure to alert the people you are using as references so they are not surprised when they receive an email or phone call related to your application.

Carefully consider who in your current job you can use as a reference that will not compromise your current work situation.

When choosing your references, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) says you should find colleagues you can trust, pay attention to ti-

ties, be prepared (always keep an updated list of references, keep them updated with current information), follow up after they provide a reference with a thank you note and tell them if you got the job. And finally, never misrepresent your references or yourself.

Source: www.aauw.org/resources/career/boost-your-career/providing-references/

This article includes original content and information from the American Association of University Women, coursera.org, forbes.com, indeed.com, and Columbia University.



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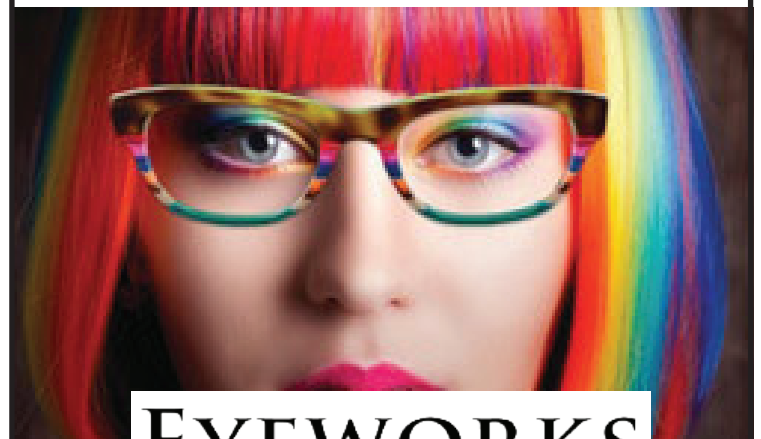
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HELP WANTED: A guide to getting your next job

Job search and technology, what you need to know about AI

BY VICTORIA RAYEL
CAREER COUNSELOR AND
LIFE COACH

If you're thinking about starting the new year with a new job, it's important to be clear about your job targets, ideal industry,

find top applicants and expedite the process.

To stand apart in this market, you need to know what to expect when it comes to technology in the job search. Three tips to ensure you don't get lost in the application 'black hole' include

application materials match the job for which you're going. You can use tools like Jobscan and free AI Chatbot's (ex. ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini) to help make sure you match the skills and experiences the job requires.

For example, upload your

Type "Create a list of key skills this job is looking for and list where they come up on my résumé. Put this list in a grid"

Consider "Apply for me" Tools

Sites like Ladders and LazyApply apply to jobs on your behalf for a fee. You will fill out a series of questions, select the jobs that are interesting, then the tools will submit your application. Job searching can be a tedious task, and technology can help you save time in applying. Now you can spend more time on important things like interview preparation, upskilling, and the next tip.

Networking

Roughly 15% of positions are filled through online applications, so it is suggested job seekers spend at least 50% of their job search time on reconnecting with

WHAT IS "ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE"

According to NASA, citing the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019, "Artificial intelligence refers to computer systems that can perform complex tasks normally done by human-reasoning, decision making, creating, etc."

www.nasa.gov/what-is-artificial-intelligence

their existing networks and building new relationships. If online applications are not helping you get interviews, start having conversations. Coffee chats, phone calls, networking events, LinkedIn Group discussions, Discord, Facebook and any community groups you're involved in can be an amazing resource to connect to people.

Finally, don't let AI intimidate you. It's time to embrace the new normal and leverage technology to help you succeed.

location, pay, and have a résumé. With an increasing number of applicants due to a changing business environment, geopolitical landscape and overall economic changes, recruiters use tools like AI to help them quickly

using artificial intelligence (AI), helpful automatic tools, and networking.

Use AI to Beat AI

When applying for a position, it's important to make sure your

résumé and the job description into ChatGPT, then try these prompts:

Type "Select three accomplishments from my résumé that match this job best" or

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Unclaimed Property Day was held on Feb. 1

But it's not too late to search!

On February 1, State Treasurer Deborah B. Goldberg and the National Association of Unclaimed Property Administrators (NAUPA) celebrated National Unclaimed Property Day.

In 2021, to increase awareness of unclaimed property, NAUPA launched the first National Unclaimed Property Day. Then and now, it is a day to encourage everyone to search missingmoney.com to determine if a state is holding their property.

The Unclaimed Property Division is currently holding over \$3.4 billion. Treasurer Goldberg urges all citizens to review the state's comprehensive list for all amounts at FindMassMoney.gov or call the live call center at 888-344-MASS (6277).

"Take a minute to check for your name or a family member, a friend, and even a business

that might be listed," said State Treasurer Deborah B. Goldberg. "Our team is ready, willing and able to walk you through the process and reunite you with your property."

Unclaimed property includes forgotten savings and checking accounts, un-cashed checks, insurance policy proceeds, stocks, dividends, and the contents of unattended safe deposit boxes. Most accounts are considered abandoned and are turned over to the state after three years of inactivity. In 2024, the Treasury processed over 131,000 claims and returned \$191 million in property to its rightful owners.

There is no time limit for a person to recover this property and, in many cases, claimants will receive interest. Searching is always free by using FindMassMoney.gov.

King Philip Regional School District, Healthy KP Coalition Launch Billboard Campaign

On February 14, Superintendent Dr. Rich Drolet, the Healthy KP Steering Committee and Healthy KP Substance Use Prevention Coalition Coordinator Karen Becker announced the launch of a new billboard campaign to encourage parents to start conversations with their children about the dangers of drugs and alcohol.

The six-month campaign will feature a series of eye-catching billboards placed along Route 1 in both Plainville and Wrentham, each delivering messages aimed at parents, encouraging them to take action by initiating dialogue about substance use with their children.

These billboards emphasize the importance of open, honest, and ongoing discussions between parents and their children, reinforcing the vital role parents play in shaping their children's decisions about substance use.

"Parents and guardians often underestimate just how much of an impact their words and actions can have on their children's choices," said Coalition Coordinator Karen Becker. "Sometimes, as a parent, it can be easy to think that you don't have the same influence as your child's



A new billboard along Route 1 in Plainville promotes Healthy KP's campaign to help parents start important conversations with their children about substance use. (Photo courtesy King Philip Regional School District)

friends or the media, but the truth is, parents are still the most important voice in their child's life. We want to remind parents that they can make a real difference."

In addition to the billboard campaign, the coalition has launched a newly designed website, healthykp.org, which provides parents with online resources, conversation starters, and practical strategies to help navigate discussions about drugs and alcohol.

These resources are designed to support parents in establishing a truly open dialogue — allowing children the chance to share freely and honestly — while also setting healthy expectations and boundaries.

"We know that kids who have clear expectations and supportive conversations with their parents are far more likely to make better decisions," Becker said. "We want children in our community to feel safe to speak openly about these topics with their parents. This campaign is about helping parents to provide that space for their children to ask questions and get answers. We're giving them the tools to have open, honest and ongoing conversations."

Formed in 2018, Healthy KP is a community-based coalition of volunteers from the tri-town communities of Plainville, Norfolk, and Wrentham, working together to prevent and reduce youth substance use. In December 2020, the coalition was

awarded a \$625,000 Drug-Free Communities (DFC) grant to help prevent and reduce substance use among youths, relying on evidence-based strategies, local partnerships and community outreach.

"This billboard campaign is an important reminder to parents that their voices are important. Ongoing discussions with your adolescent children about substance use can help prevent harm," said Superintendent Dr. Drolet. "I encourage parents to take advantage of the resources

available through the Healthy KP website, healthykp.org. Healthy KP's public outreach efforts are vital as we strive to foster a healthier, safer community for our youth. Through collaboration, education, and prevention efforts, Healthy KP is equipping families with the tools to navigate difficult conversations and make informed choices."

For more information about the campaign, resources for parents, or to get involved with Healthy KP, visit healthykp.org or email info@healthykp.org.

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Saturday: 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. **CLOSED** Sunday

Wrentham Annual Town Election Events

In anticipation of the Wrentham Town Election to be held on Monday, April 7, Wrentham Engagement is once again hosting two events to help Wrentham voters become better informed regarding the candidates on the ballot and the issues important to voting.

Candidates Forum

On Wednesday, March 12, Wrentham Engagement will conduct its second Candidates Forum beginning at 7 p.m. This will be held in the King Philip Regional High School auditorium. Candidates will be asked to answer questions related to current events and decisions that shape

Wrentham's governance and future. A Wrentham Engagement facilitator will ask questions submitted by the public. Last year, 14 of the 17 candidates on the April ballot appeared on stage to participate.

Voters are asked to submit questions through this form: <https://bit.ly/CandidatesForumQs>

Those unable to attend in person can watch the Candidates Forum live on Cable 8 and the Forum will be recorded. Cable 8 will also air the Candidate Profile recordings beginning on March 10 and running through election day.

Candidates on the Common

On Saturday, March 22, Wrentham Engagement will conduct its fourth Candidates on the Common event beginning at 11 a.m. This is a less formal setting where candidates will be introduced and then dispersed on the Town Common to participate in one-on-one or small group discussions with voters. This event also includes other activities such as the opportunity to purchase Girl Scout cookies and a voter engagement bingo game. In case of inclement weather, an alternate location will be announced. The event typically runs for about an hour.

Wrentham Voter Guide

In addition to these two events, Wrentham Engagement also produces a Voter Guide. The Guide provides background information provided by each candidate that synthesizes who the candidates are, why they are running, and what their priorities are. Residents can access the Voter Guide at www.wrentham-voterguide.com. Candidate profiles will be available by March 8.

Annual Town Election

On Monday, April 7, polls open at 7 a.m. at the Delaney Auditorium at Wrentham Elementary School on Taunton Street for the Annual Town Elec-

tion. Polls close at 8 p.m. More information about the election, including voter registration, is available on the Town website (bit.ly/ATE2025) and the Voter Guide.

Wrentham Engagement is a local, grass-roots effort to encourage greater awareness and engagement in the events and decisions that shape our town's governance and future. Wrentham Engagement is coordinating these events as an independent group of engaged voters and is not officially affiliated with or endorsed by the Town of Wrentham. To learn more about Wrentham Engagement or to join their email list, contact wrenthamengagement@gmail.com.

Swing Night Fundraiser for KPMA set for March 13

Join the King Philip Music Association for a "Swing Night" of music and dancing to support the KP Jazz Ensemble, which is headed to New York City in May for the prestigious Essentially Ellington Jazz Festival & Competition. Swing Night will be held on

Thursday, March 13 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. in the King Philip High School wooden gym.

Tickets are \$5 for students and \$15 for adults, available at the door or use the QR code to purchase or donate. Snacks and signature jazz mocktails will be

available for cash or Venmo. Learn some new moves and have fun while supporting the band.

This is the second year in a row KP has earned a spot among the top 25 high school bands from across the United States and Canada. They will also be

joined at the festival by five additional high school bands from around the world. For more information, visit <https://kingphilipmusic.weebly.com/jazz.html>.



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Wrentham Cultural Council to hold Poetry Night on March 12

The Wrentham Cultural Council invites poetry fans to a Poetry Night, scheduled for Wednesday, March 12 at 6:30 p.m. at the Old Fiske Museum, 55 East St., Wrentham.

Attendees can read two favorite poems as well as an optional haiku, or just come and enjoy a wonderful evening of listening to poetry. There is no charge to attend. Refreshments will be served.

Please contact Jeanie Mattila, host and event coordinator, at jean.matte6@gmail.com if interested in attending.

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College Admission Trends for 2024

One word to describe the 2024 college admission cycle - unpredictable! From increased competitiveness at state flagship universities and the confusing role of standardized test scores, to the growing interest in southern schools and the heightened selectivity of certain majors, the landscape is shifting rapidly. These trends are reshaping how students and families should approach the college search and application process. We will explore three of these key trends.

Trend #1: State Flagship Universities Are Becoming More Selective

State universities have traditionally served as strong, accessible, and affordable options for students. However, increased applicant numbers, both in-state and out-of-state, have significantly intensified competition. Using UMass Amherst's 2024-2025 admission cycle, preliminary data shows over 50,000 applications submitted. A 3.5 weighted GPA, which was once competitive, is no longer a guarantee for admission—not just to the Isenberg School of Management, but even for general admission. The average submitted SAT score is 1397, ACT is 31, and the GPA average is 4.05. Strong grades and test scores are no longer enough; students must show other strengths.

Key Points:

- **Engage in activities that align with your intended major** to demonstrate commitment and interest in your field of interest.

- **Demonstrate interest** by visiting campuses, attending virtual sessions, and engaging with admissions representatives.
- **Consider alternative campuses or honors programs** within the state system that may offer a strong education with slightly less competition.

Trend #2: The Heightened Popularity of Southern Colleges

Southern colleges have become increasingly attractive to students nationwide. A September 2024 Wall Street Journal article, "Sorry, Harvard. Everyone Wants to Go to College in the South Now," says it all. Students are drawn to affordability, warm weather, and the quintessential large-college experience filled with fun and football. Schools such as the UNC Chapel Hill are seeing skyrocketing demand, with an in-state acceptance rate of approximately 40% to ultra-competitive 7% out-of-state rate.

Key Points:

- **Look beyond the well-known schools**—consider strong yet less competitive options like East Carolina University and High Point University, which offer impressive academics and facilities.
- **Ensure cultural and academic fit**—the southern college experience can be different from that of the Northeast; consider factors such as campus environment and



Maryline Michel Kulewicz and Tracy Sullivan of College 101 Admissions Consultants

student body culture.

- **Understand the competition**—out-of-state students often face steeper odds, so apply strategically to multiple southern schools.
- **Visit campuses if possible**—seeing a school in person can help determine whether the location, community, and lifestyle align with your preferences.

Trend #3: Increased Competition for Selective Majors

Certain programs, such as business, computer science, engineering, and nursing, are becoming more competitive, especially in schools with direct-admit programs. Even universities with higher overall acceptance rates can have significantly lower admission rates for these specific majors. Students often assume they have a

"safety" school, only to find that gaining acceptance into their desired program is much harder than expected.

Key Points:

- **Have a viable backup plan**—if your first-choice major is business, consider a second major that also aligns with your career goals, such as economics; international relations or political science; or English (which provides transferable skills in communication and analysis).
- **Explain major flexibility in your application**—use the "Why this Major" supplemental essay to explain how you can reach your goal with either major.
- **Highlight interest alignment in extracurriculars**—demonstrate academic and career interest through

clubs, internships, research, or a part-time job.

- **Be open to transferring into a desired program later**—some schools allow internal transfers into competitive majors after the first year if students meet the requirements.

In a college admissions landscape that is increasingly difficult to predict, families must rethink the concept of "safety" and "probable" schools. Applicants can no longer assume admission based solely on GPA and test scores. Instead, college choices must have a thoughtful and authentic plan.

One of the most important messages I share with my students is to approach their applications as if they are telling a story about themselves. Each section of the application should highlight different strengths, passions, and values. The goal is not just to get into a college but to find the right fit. By aligning personal achievements with what each college seeks, students increase their chances of success in this evolving admissions process.

Good luck and enjoy the journey!

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Congressman Auchincloss Appointed to Energy & Commerce

Congressman Jake Auchincloss (D, MA-04) has been appointed to the House Committee

on Energy and Commerce for the 119th Congress. The Committee is at the forefront of

health care, technology, and energy policy. Rep. Auchincloss will serve on the Health, Energy, and Environment subcommittees. In particular, the committee has responsibility for matters including telecommunications, consumer protection, food and drug safety, public health and research, environmental quality, energy policy, and interstate and foreign commerce.

"I am focused on lowering the cost of health care. Energy & Commerce is the prime committee for policy that can reduce co-pays and premiums, empower

patients and doctors, and rein in the middlemen of corporate healthcare. I am excited to get working on legislation," said

Congressman Jake Auchincloss (D, MA-04)





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Clergy Corner

New Hope

BY PASTOR KYLE DEGAGNE
EMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH,
NORFOLK

“I Hope it doesn’t rain.” “I hope I get an ‘A.’” “I hope to find a wife.” I like the word “hope.” It describes well the longing we humans often feel deep inside. Our hopes can range from the seemingly insignificant, like ice cream, or much weightier matters of the heart, like healing. I remember as a fourteen-year-old being glued to the TV watching The Shawshank Redemption. You might recall Red’s classic line, “Hope is a dangerous thing, my friend.” But by the end of the movie, he reveals his hope, “I hope to see my friend and shake his hand. I hope the Pacific is as blue as it has been in my dreams. I hope.”

Hope. Hope lost. Hopeless. Oh, to be without hope. Somehow, we lose it in life. Somewhere along the way, it’s not there anymore. Perhaps it is because we lost too many times. Perhaps we endured just one too many disappointments. That once familiar friend, Hope, who brought us joy looking forward to the weekend, or waiting for a vacation, or being with a girl, is gone.

There is a book in the Bible called Proverbs. Its genre is classified as Wisdom literature. If you read through Proverbs long enough, you might feel like you are reading a series of fortune cookies; not because it suggests winning lottery numbers or predicts your future, but because it is filled with short bits of wisdom that are seemingly disconnected. Proverbs was written by King Solomon whose father was the giant slayer, David. Solomon is known to be one of the wisest and most wealthy kings in Jewish history. Even the Queen of Sheba was astounded at his wealth and wisdom.

Solomon said, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick.” Have you lost hope? Have there been too many losses? Too many tragedies? Too many trials? I have known lonely and sleepless nights when it seemed like all hope was lost; like I had nothing left to give or look forward to. Solomon was right. To be hopeless is to be heart sick.

What do we do? Is there any hope for a hope restored?

Konrad Adenauer was the first Chancellor of the Federal

Republic of Germany after the fall of Adolph Hitler. Nearing the end of his political career, he met with the American evangelist, Billy Graham. Graham tells the story:

I was invited to have coffee one morning with Konrad Adenauer before he retired as the Chancellor of Germany. When I walked in, I expected to meet a tall, stiff, formal man who might even be embarrassed if I brought up the subject of religion. After the greeting, the Chancellor suddenly turned to me and said, “Mr. Graham, what is the most important thing in the world?” Before I could answer, he had answered his own question. He said, “The resurrection of Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ is alive, then there is hope for the world. If Jesus Christ is in the grave, then I don’t see the slightest glimmer of hope on the horizon.”

If Jesus is alive, then there is hope. There it is. Hope has been restored.

An occasional column written by local clergy. The views expressed in the column do not necessarily represent the views of the publisher.

Norfolk Recreation’s Spring & Summer Program Registration Opens March 5

Norfolk Recreation announces the 2025 Spring and Summer Program registration is set to open on Wednesday, March 5 at 12:30 p.m. From music and sports programs for preschool aged children, STEM and art classes for school age, to exercise and enrichment programs for adults, there is sure to be something for everyone.

Additionally, registration will be open for the KP Youth Field Hockey program, which competes in the Commonwealth Field Hockey League in the fall. On March 30, registration opens for Liberty Flag Football which also runs in the fall. Details for these programs, as well as all the spring and summer offerings, can be found at NorfolkRec.com or by calling 508-520-1315.

Wrentham Voter Registration

A voter registration will take place on Friday, March 28 for the Annual Town Election of Monday, April 7. Any Wrentham resident who is not registered or will become 16 years of age on or before April 7, 2025 may pre-register/register to vote.

The registration will be held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Fiske

Public Library located at 110 Randall Road. Voter registration forms may also be downloaded from the Town Clerk’s page on the Town’s website: <https://www.wrentham.gov/265/Voter-Applications>.

Please call the Town Clerk’s office at 508-384-5415 with any questions.

Three KPMS Students Named Project 351 Ambassadors

Three King Philip Middle School students represented the district in Boston on Saturday, Jan. 25, as Project 351 kicked off a year of youth-led service.

The three students — Cecelia Varey, of Norfolk, Evelyn Miles, of Plainville, and Isabella Pennini, of Wrentham — have been named eighth grade service Ambassadors, joining representatives from the Commonwealth’s 351 cities and towns.

“My favorite part of launch day was the ability to meet so many new, like-minded people,” said student Ambassador Cecelia. “I found it was so much easier to make friends there than any other environment I’ve been in. It was also so inspiring to see how our actions could affect others positively. I was so used to my ideas and actions going unseen or not being very effective. But this

gave me a close look into what it was like to be a leader or a valued individual.”

On Saturday, Jan. 25, the student Ambassadors were joined by Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey, Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll, state Secretary of Education Patrick Tutwiler, and other community leaders for a day of service and celebration in Boston.

“The young people who serve with Project 351 are great examples of what makes Massachusetts a leader in so many important ways,” said Gov. Healey. “These Ambassadors demonstrate what is possible when we work together to make the changes we all want to see in our own communities. I’m proud to join them as they embark on this important year of leadership and service.”

Seventh grade history teacher

Lisa McIntyre and eighth grade history teacher Sean Jones will serve as advisors to King Philip Regional Middle School’s Project 351 Ambassadors.

“I know Bella, Evelyn, and Cecelia will seize every opportunity Project 351 offers, and we couldn’t be more excited to support them and share in this journey with them,” said McIntyre.

Project 351, a nonprofit organization, annually unites a class of unsung heroes for a transformative year of leadership development, enrichment, and impact through unifying statewide service campaigns.

“Throughout our time overseeing and participating in the Project 351 initiative, Sean and I have been incredibly fortunate to work with and support students who truly embody the spirit of service leadership,” said



Cecelia Varey, of Norfolk, Evelyn Miles, of Plainville, and Isabella Pennini, of Wrentham, posed for a photo with their advisors, seventh grade history teacher Lisa McIntyre and eighth grade history teacher Sean Jones. (Photo courtesy King Philip Regional School District)

McIntyre. “Project 351 is an extraordinary organization that empowers students to thrive, with giving back to others as one of its core values.”

This year, Project 351 celebrates its 15th year with a collective social impact on more than 1.4 million lives. Project 351’s an-

nual launch celebration honored the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King.

Launch Day kicked off 12 months of leadership development through Alumni mentor-

AMBASSADORS

continued on page 21

Town of Norfolk Announces Energy Program Start Date

Program Will Lower Electricity Costs and Offer Environmental Benefits

Norfolk will be launching its Community Choice Power Supply Program this spring to provide an energy program that is stable, affordable and incorporates additional renewable energy. Norfolk signed a 30-month contract with Direct Energy.

Beginning with the March 2025 meter reads, Norfolk's Program will offer two products with varying amounts of renewable energy content.

"We are excited to offer two options in our electricity program, allowing Norfolk ratepayers greater control over the energy they use along with lower and more stable pricing," said Justin Casanova-Davis, Norfolk Town Administrator.

The Norfolk Community Choice Power Supply Program is a municipal aggregation program which, according to Massachusetts law (M.G.L. c. 164, § 134), enables local government to combine the purchasing power of its residents and businesses so that it can provide them with an alternative electricity supply. Approximately 190 Massachusetts communities, to date, have cho-

sen to develop community choice electricity programs to benefit their residents and small business owners.

Residents will not notice any change in their electricity service. The only discernible difference will be that Direct Energy Services of Houston, Texas, will be printed under "Supplier Services" on Eversource's monthly bills starting in April 2025. Residents and small business owners will continue to receive one bill from Eversource and to send payments to Eversource for processing. There will be no interruption in billing, power, or customer service.

No action is required by ratepayers to participate in this cost-saving program. The Program will be operated on an opt-out basis, meaning that all Norfolk residential and business customers currently on Eversource's Basic Service will be automatically enrolled into the Program unless they choose to opt-out.

There are no enrollment, early termination, or cancellation fees attached to the Norfolk electricity program. Residents who

Product	Renewable Energy Content	Program Rate (per kWh)	Eversource Rate* (per kWh)	% Savings	Est Monthly Savings
Standard (default)	Meets MA renewable energy requirements	\$0.12550	\$0.13241	5%	\$4
Optional	10% MA Class I RECs above minimum state requirements	\$0.12970	\$0.13241	2%	\$2

*Eversource's Residential Basic Service meets MA renewable energy requirements and is in effect from February 1-July 31, 2025. Assuming usage of 600-kilowatt hours of electricity per month, residents can expect to see an average savings for that period.

choose to opt-out can also opt-in at a later date if they so choose at no cost. However, anyone switching from a contract with a third-party supplier may be subject to penalties or early termination fees charged by that supplier. Ratepayers should verify terms before switching.

Basic Service rates change twice a year or more, depending on rate class. As a result, the aggregation rate may not always be lower than the Basic Service rate. The goal of the aggregation is to deliver savings over the life of the program against Eversource's Basic Service. However, future

savings cannot be guaranteed.

Residents or business owners with a supplier block on their account must contact Eversource to request that the block be removed if they want to participate in Norfolk's electricity program.

Eversource has several programs to help income-eligible families and customers needing special assistance meet their energy needs. To learn more, visit eversource.com/content/residential/account-billing/payment-assistance/discount-rate.

Residents can visit colonialpowergroup.com/norfolk or call (866) 485-5858 ext. 1 to learn

more about Norfolk's Community Choice Power Supply Program, to opt-in or opt-out, or to change your product selection.

About Colonial Power Group

Based in Marlborough, Mass., Colonial Power Group is the leading aggregation consulting firm in Massachusetts. Colonial Power has been working with local governments since 2002 in the design, implementation and management of municipal aggregation programs.

AMBASSADORS

continued from page 20

ship and enrichment through Project 351's Service Leadership Academy.

"Bella, Evelyn, and Cecelia are just beginning their transformative journey with Project 351," said McIntyre. "These three young women exemplify everything King Philip stands for, and we have no doubt they will be an inspiration — not only through their accomplishments this year but well beyond. This is just the beginning for them."

Through Project 351, Ambassadors develop the skills and confidence to mobilize their hometowns in service campaigns that address critical issues, including hunger, clothing insecurity, and educational equity.

On Launch Day, Ambassadors traveled from across the state to convene at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum for a celebratory morning program. Wearing their signature navy tee, Ambassadors



King Philip Regional Middle School's three eighth grade Project 351 service Ambassadors — Cecelia Varey, of Norfolk, Evelyn Miles, of Plainville, and Isabella Pennini, of Wrentham — at the Jan. 27 King Philip School Committee meeting. (Photo courtesy King Philip Regional School District)

mobilized by Service Hero teams for an afternoon of service at La Colaborativa, Brighton High School, and Cradles to Crayons.

"On Launch Day, my favorite part was the sorting of clothes at Cradles to Crayons," said student Ambassador Evelyn. "The task itself was fun, and I really en-

joyed being able to help people."

In partnership with these community leaders, Ambassador service impacted more than 34,000 neighbors.

"We're so proud to have Cecelia, Evelyn, and Isabella representing KP," said King Philip Superintendent Dr. Rich Drolet.

"All three students are remarkable, and their efforts have not gone unnoticed. They make their families, King Philip Middle School, and our entire King Philip Regional School District proud. I can't wait to see what they're able to accomplish in the future."

About Project 351

Founded in 2011, Project 351 is a youth-led movement for change powered by an eighth-grade unsung hero and high school Alumni mentors selected to represent every city and town in Massachusetts. Youth are recognized by hometown educators for an exemplary ethic of service; values of kindness, compassion, humility, and gratitude; and devotion to equity and inclusion. The Ambassadors' 12-month term of leadership development and service is the foundation of Project 351's leadership model. High school, college, and career Alumni steward Project 351's mission and model of impact as mentors, program leaders, and governance. Through the 35ONE enrichment continuum, a new generation of leaders develops the skills, knowledge, and courage to achieve bold change. Click here for more information.

Sports

Wrentham Equestrian Eyes National Finals in 2025

BY GRACE ALLEN

At just 15 years old, Francesca Morando is already making waves in the world of competitive show jumping. With nearly a decade of riding under her belt, the Wrentham teen is preparing for a big year ahead, with national finals in her sights.

Morando was just 5 years old when she went on her first pony ride, at a carnival.

“I fell in love with the sport as soon as I threw my leg over the saddle,” she said. “I begged my parents to let me take lessons and I’ve been doing it ever since.”

Her passion for riding has grown into a commitment to success. She finished the year ranked number 2 in the nation out of 1,800 athletes in Children’s Hunter, with her horse Earro. She was ranked number 1 in New England in Children’s Hunter, also on Earro. She was Reserve Champion in USHJA Zone 1 (12-14 year-olds) on her horse Red Bull, and won the silver medal in the USHJA Hunter Team Northeast Challenge. She finished the last winter season as overall Circuit Champion in Ocala, Florida.

Though Morando’s accomplishments are impressive, she’s quick to share that her journey is about much more than just winning awards.

“I think the thing I like most about riding and competing is that it taught me to be humble and work hard,” Morando explained, during a phone call from Florida, where she is training for the winter. “I’ve learned that hard work pays off. It also taught me about the team aspect of the sport. It’s me and my horse working together. We are a team.”

Morando’s current equine



Francesca Morando was ranked number 2 in the nation in Children’s Hunter. She traveled to Lexington, Kentucky to receive her award at the U.S. Equestrian Federation ceremony on January 25. (Photo courtesy of Adam Brennan)

partner is Red Bull, a young horse imported from Europe a year ago. Red Bull is already proving himself an intelligent and patient companion, she said.

“I sold my old horse, Earro, because I needed to move up and didn’t want to push him past his limits,” she explained. “Red Bull is smart, patient, and he’s learned a lot since I got him. We both have our moments but we learn from them. We definitely have a bond now.”

Morando keeps a busy sched-

ule, which includes riding and gym sessions. Since January, she has been staying in Ocala, one of the largest winter-season horse circuits in the country. She trains from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Schoolwork, which is online, follows in the afternoons.

Show jumping—jumping over fences at different heights—is her favorite discipline. The adrenaline rush she experiences during the event is unmatched by any other sport, she says.

“The thrill and excitement of show jumping is just different. It’s not like a track meet or volleyball game,” she said, adding that other disciplines like dressage are also interconnected with jumping.

For Morando, success in equestrian sports comes down to more than just physical ability—it’s about the mental game. Patience, confidence, and focus are crucial attributes for any rider, she says.



Francesca Morando and her horse Red Bull.



Morando, jumping with her horse Earro, at Children’s Hunter in Kentucky.

“Patience is probably the most important quality. It takes time to build a bond with your horse and to understand how they move and respond,” she explained. “Confidence is huge, too. If I’m nervous, my horse can sense it, and it’ll affect our performance.”

While she’s pleased about her success so far, Morando remains grounded and aware that there’s always room for improvement. She credits much of her growth to her coach Annie Dotoli of Tibri stables in Chepachet, RI, as well as Annie’s mother, Fran Dotoli. Both have had a lasting impact on Morando’s approach to both riding and life, she noted.

“The Dotolis have forever altered my riding and way of thinking,” Morando said, calling the two women role models. “They teach me not only on the horse but off the horse too.”

In addition to her current success, Morando has big goals for 2025. She’s working toward qualifying for the national finals in Kentucky and Michigan. If all goes according to plan, she’ll be heading to these prestigious competitions later this year.

As for her future in the sport, Morando is determined to continue growing, learning, and competing at the highest levels.

“I’m always striving to improve my riding and knowledge of the horse,” she said. “I think I’ll qualify for the national finals, and the way things are going, I think I’ll do fine.”

For now, Morando continues to thrive in Florida, competing at some of the biggest equestrian venues in the country, including HITS Ocala and the World Equestrian Center. As she works toward her goals, there’s no doubt this young rider is one to watch in the years to come.

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Sports

KP Girls Hockey Team Aims for Long Playoff Stay

BY KEN HAMWEY
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

The King Philip girls ice hockey team is ready to make some noise in the Division 2 State Hockey Tournament.

Coach Ken Assad's Warriors, who've been to the playoffs three times in the last five seasons, have never advanced past the second round during those appearances. But, that situation doesn't seem to be relevant with his current cast.

"We certainly are hoping to have some staying power," said the 59-year-old Assad. "We're a very young team but we've got some key strengths. Our speed and skating ability are good, our hockey IQs are high, we're skilled and have depth (four lines). Our goaltending is also an asset and our defense is strong in spite of its youth."

At Local Town Pages' deadline, KP's record was 14-4 and had a power ranking of 11.

When the coach says his squad is "very young," he's not mincing words. Assad's roster of 27 has no seniors, four juniors, seven sophomores, five freshmen and 11 eighth-graders who get playing time.

Star center/forward Kelly Holmes, who scored 34 goals and assisted on 18 others last year, graduated and finished her career as KP's all-time points leader. She had 100 goals and 68 assists for 168 points.

Her loss is huge but it didn't affect the goals Assad set at the start of the season. "Our top objective was to limit the amount of goals scored against us," he said. "After 18 games, our goals-against average was 1.17. Winning the Hockomock League title and qualifying for the tourney were our other goals."

KP's win over Stoughton last month gave it the league championship and going to the tourney has been achieved. The league title is the first in the program's history.

The Warriors two junior captains — goalie Kiki Lynch and center Cameron O'Shea — reflect the talent that Assad has assembled. At Local Town Pages deadline, Lynch had three shut-outs and a goals-against average of 1.17.



KP hockey coach Ken Assad with his captains — Cam O'Shea, left, and Kiki Lynch.

"Kiki and Cameron are quality leaders," Assad emphasized. "Kiki leads by example and by being vocal while Cameron is respected as a lead-by example captain. Kiki is aggressive in the net, she's instinctive and her technique is excellent. Her stickwork is excellent and she makes big saves. Cameron can shoot, blocks shots, and leads the attack with her passing. She does all the little things well."

Two wings — freshman Annabel Curran and junior Katie McGann — are capable forwards who can score. Last year, Curran had 18 goals and 10 assists and McGann had eight goals and five assists. After 18 games, Curran is the team's leading scorer with 17 goals and 12 assists.

"Annabel is a prolific scorer," Assad said. "She's got speed, a high hockey IQ and skates on our power play and penalty-kill unit. Katie can shoot, is fast, technically sound and can forecheck."

Sophomores Tayla McDuff (center) and Ella Morgan (right

wing) provide additional depth on the forward line.

"Tayla moves the puck effectively, is sound defensively and wins faceoffs," Assad noted. "And, she's got a high hockey IQ. Ella is shifty, has good moves, is physical and has a nose for the net."

Assad has six young forwards who are still developing and improving. The five wings are sophomores Rylan McKillop and Molly Murphy, freshman Tess Dangelo, and eighth-graders Molly Morgan and Chase Bright. Eighth-grader Stephanie Leblanc plays center.

"Rylan is still developing and will be a scorer," said Assad. "Tess is fast, physical and still improving while Molly (Morgan) can get to the net and score. Chase is rangy and can shoot and Molly (Murphy) has speed and can also shoot. Stephanie is a great skater with good hands and has the ability to be a good scorer."

Reserve goalies Olivia Klein

(sophomore) and eighth-grader Hayden McDuff are continuing to learn the nuances of being net-minders. "Both work hard and are striving to get to the next level," Assad offered.

Four veterans make KP's defense a major plus. They include junior Grace Leehan-Allen, sophomores Calleigh Brady and Erin Steck, and freshman Lanie O'Shea.

"Grace is in her third season," Assad said. "She's effective at moving the puck and she's a very capable shooter and skater. Calleigh started as an eighth-grader. She's smart, fast, physical and solid on power plays. Erin moved from forward to defense and has done a phenomenal job. A stay-at-home defenseman, she's got a very high hockey IQ. Lanie is fast, can shoot, plays smart, is physical and knows how to protect the puck."

Freshman Caitlyn McManus and eighth-graders Emma Richard and Lizzy Pelky are promising defensemen who continue to

develop in their roles.

"Caitlyn is strong and can shoot," Assad said. "Emma skates well and has a high hockey IQ. And, she plays smart on our power play. Lizzy can skate and shoot, and her hockey IQ is still developing."

KP's assistant coaches have been outstanding in their roles. They include Tim Langein (defense) and Kate Holmes (offense). "Both have a wealth of experience and relate well to the players," said Assad. "Tim's been with me all six years at KP and he also was an assistant at Franklin. Kate is Kelly Holmes' sister. She played at Northeastern University."

Assad's coaching background is not only lengthy, but also impressive. He first coached in Franklin's youth league and later served for 12 years as a junior-varsity and varsity assistant at Franklin High. He also coaches club hockey and helps with Franklin's summer league teams.

In 1983, it was Assad's overtime goal that broke a 4-4 tie against Falmouth and gave Franklin High its first state championship. In 2016, as an assistant to Chris Spillane, he experienced another state crown when Franklin defeated St. Mary's of Lynn.

Assad relies on a coaching philosophy that emphasizes winning, reaching one's potential and having fun. "If our players are reaching their potential and enjoying their athletic endeavor, then winning will follow," he said. "And, the life lessons I hope they learn are becoming quality teammates and leaders, overcoming adversity, and developing relationships."

Tourney time has arrived and KP seems completely focused. Its tough non-league schedule coupled with demanding league matchups should be the ingredients needed for advancing in the playoffs. Its non-league games came against Martha's Vineyard, Sandwich, Braintree, Westwood, Dedham, Longmeadow and Smithfield, R.I.

Another plus is the Warriors style — an up-tempo offense, fierce forechecking and a stingy defense.

Let the games begin.

Norfolk and Wrentham Tri-County Seniors Awarded John & Abigail Adams Scholarship

Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical High School honored 58 students from the graduating class of 2025 who have been awarded the John & Abigail Adams Scholarship.

The John & Abigail Adams Scholarship is awarded to Massachusetts public high school students who have demonstrated exceptional performance on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests. To qualify, students must score at the Advanced level in either the Mathematics or Eng-

lish Language Arts section, and at least Proficient in the other section. Additionally, their combined MCAS scores must place them in the top 25% of their school district.

Recipients of the John & Abigail Adams Scholarship are eligible for an undergraduate tuition waiver at any Massachusetts state college or university. This scholarship is valid for up to eight consecutive semesters of undergraduate education at a Massachusetts public college or university provided students

maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher during their college years.

Norfolk recipients: William Ford, Serenity Sullivan

Wrentham recipients: Noah Gable, Thomas Genereux, Martin McCrave

For more information about the John & Abigail Adams Scholarship and its benefits, visit the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website at (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/john-and-abigail-adams-scholarship>).

Joe Crookston to Perform at Circle of Friends Coffeehouse



Vega, Dar Williams, David Francey, John McCutcheon, John Gorka, and Judy Collins, among others.

Admission for this performance is \$25. Visit <http://www.circlefolk.org/> to purchase tickets or for more information.

Joe Crookston returns to the Circle of Friends Coffeehouse stage on Saturday, March 8 at 7:30 p.m. Doors open at 7 p.m.

Crookston is a force of nature on stage, with infectious rhythm drawing audiences in as he weaves through lap slide songs or fiddles an American Southern tune. He has toured with Gordon Lightfoot, headlined major US festivals, and received a Folk Alliance International "Album of the Year" award. Crookston has also played with Suzanne

The Circle of Friends Coffeehouse is a non-profit organization affiliated with Franklin's First Universalist Society. Concerts are presented in a smoke free and alcohol-free environment at the Society's handicapped accessible Meetinghouse, 262 Chestnut St. in Franklin.

Save the dates for these upcoming shows: The Kennedys (April 5), and John Gorka (May 17).

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2024 Real Estate Activity Recap

Norfolk County recordings for 2024 show greater real estate activity compared to 2023 with increases in both the total number of deeds and mortgages recorded.

In 2024, there were 103,165 documents recorded at the Norfolk County Registry of Deeds, a 1% increase from 2023. July was

the busiest month in 2024 for real-estate activity with a total of 9,827 documents recorded. It also tied August with the highest increase in document volume compared to their respective months in 2023, up 14%.

“In 2024 we began to see some positive trends in real estate recording activity, with nine

out of twelve months showing a rise in document recordings compared to 2023,” said Norfolk County Register of Deeds William P. O’Donnell. “This higher volume of activity in 2024 is largely due to an increase in the number of deeds and mortgages recorded compared to 2023.”

The number of deeds recorded in 2024, which reflect real estate sales and transfers, both commercial and residential, was 15,795 an increase of 4% from 2023. The number of property sales was also up, increasing 1% from the previous year. With a total of 899 transactions in one month, July had the highest number of property sales in 2024. Comparing months in 2023 to months in 2024, August showed the largest rise in property sales with an increase of 20%.

“The overall number of deeds recorded monthly in 2024 compared to 2023 reveals a consistent positive trend, with only two months out of the twelve showing fewer deed recordings than the previous year,” noted Register O’Donnell. “This indicates that the real estate market is performing decently, particularly in certain neighborhoods and property types in area communities.”

Property sale prices for 2024 appear to have increased slightly compared to 2023. The average sale price for all of Norfolk County, both commercial

and residential, this year was \$1,149,809 a 6% increase from 2023. December 2024 saw the largest increase from the same month in 2023, up 39%. The total dollar volume of commercial and residential sales for 2024 is also up, increasing by 7% from one year ago.

“There is no doubt that Norfolk County is a desirable place to live and work, a credit to all the communities and the municipal staff and leaders who have created such a vibrant area,” stated Register O’Donnell. “While many Norfolk County communities increased construction of new homes in 2024 the inventory of available property remains out paced by the demand, which can make it a difficult market for buyers, especially first-time home buyers.”

In 2024, Overall, Norfolk County’s lending activity increased compared to 2023. A total of 15,461 mortgages were recorded in 2024, up 6% from 2023. October had the largest increase in mortgage recordings compared to the same month in 2023, up 30%.

“2024 saw the average mortgage interest rate come down slightly, especially in late September and early October, and while rates may not have decreased as much as some would have liked, many individuals took advantage of the opportunity to refinance or take out new property loans resulting in a net

increase in mortgage recordings in 2024 compared to 2023,” stated Register O’Donnell.

The Norfolk County Registry of Deeds has been closely monitoring the foreclosure market. In 2024, there were 87 foreclosure deeds recorded, as a result of mortgage foreclosures taking place in Norfolk County, whereas in 2023, there were 73 recorded. Also concerning is in 2024, there were 380 notices to foreclose, the first step in the foreclosure process, compared to the 339 recorded in 2023.

For the past several years, the Norfolk County Registry of Deeds has partnered with Quincy Community Action Programs (617-479-8181 x376) and NeighborWorks Housing Solutions (508-587-0950) to help anyone facing challenges paying their mortgage. Another option for homeowners is to contact the Massachusetts Attorney General’s Consumer Advocacy and Response Division (CARD) at 617-727-8400.

“Over all the real estate market remained steady in 2024 with a slight rise in activity in the second half of the year compared to 2023.” O’Donnell continued, “As we move into 2025, we hope to see real estate activity continue to rise as we wait to see how mortgage interest rates and the inventory of available property impact the real estate market.”

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Real Estate Corner

Norfolk County's Top Real Estate Sales of 2024

During 2024, ten properties, a mix of commercial and residential, sold for more than \$25.4 million with an average price of \$78,823,200.

The following prices pertain to real estate sales from January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024.

The ten properties were:

10. 23-25 Bridge Street, Quincy, the 6-story, 60-unit apartment complex known as Hillside Residences, sold in March for \$25,450,000.
9. 2 Kay Way, Stoughton, a 118,200-square-foot manufacturing and warehouse facility built on 5.92 acres of land, sold in September for \$26,100,000.
8. 1 Richard A Stratton Way, Quincy, the five-floor, 89,507-square-foot Holiday Inn hotel, sold in May for \$30,498,000.
7. 1280-1300 & 1330 Boylston Street, Brookline, a 5.34-acre office park comprised of four commercial buildings totaling nearly 120,000 square feet, sold in May for \$41,000,000.
6. 122 & 130-132 Granite Street, Quincy, the 100,000-square-foot retail shopping plaza known as Granite Place, sold in May for \$41,500,000.
5. A multibuilding manufacturing facility totaling more than 212,000 square feet of space located at 10 & 20 Dan Road, Canton, sold in May for \$50,000,000.
4. 655 Washington Street, Weymouth, the 4-story, 160-unit luxury apartment complex known as Helix Apartments, sold in May for \$62,645,000.
3. 170-180 Main Street, Walpole, the 3-story, 161-unit Senior Living Community, known as New Pond Village, sold in August for \$66,000,000.
2. 33-39 Main Street, Medway, the 5-story, 190-unit high-end apartment complex built on 12.32 acres of land known as the Hathon, sold in December for \$75,600,000.
1. Upland Road, 1 Moderna Way, and 10 Forbes Drive, Norwood, Moderna purchased the 200,000-square-foot clinical development manufacturing facility they were renting from Alexandria Real Estate Partners in December for \$369,439,000.

The top sales were a combination of apartment complexes, research labs, warehouses, manufacturing facilities, and office space. The state and Norfolk County collected excise taxes totaling more than \$3,594,338 from these 10 sales.

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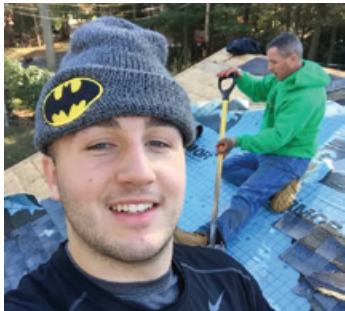
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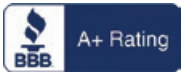
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