

## Dudley's Library Director, Nicole Messier, Brings Enthusiasm and Style to Town

BY JANET STOICA  
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

She's been giving her all to the Pearle Crawford Library for over a year now and it shows. Nicole Messier not only lives locally but with her years of library experience and knowledge of what libraries are truly about in 2025, she brings a wealth of knowledge and joy to her position that has spread itself happily among the town's residents who visit the Mecca of wisdom and entertainment.

She began her career in Charlton as a Library Coordinator for the school's kindergarten and first graders. It was an entry level position and she absolutely loved it. After moving on to be Charlton Library's Administrative Assistant and then their Assistant Library Director she found her ultimate destination at the Crawford Library. Ms. Messier has her Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration which she received from Framingham State University as well as a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science which she acquired from the University of Rhode Island. "I've received a really well-rounded education working in the library system," she said, "I decided to take the leadership track toward a director's position. The first assignment I had after becoming the Library Director was updating our five-year Strategic Planning Report."

"We've also completed a public survey asking residents about what they expect from their library and received 250 responses. It was very revealing and interesting to get to know what people want and that we're not only about books these days. We've learned and seen that many of our users use the library as their "third space" after work and after home. People are involved in every aspect of learning from genealogy to book clubs to research. We also want to help close the digital divide and to stay up-to-date with technology. Libraries have become a real people entity."

"You won't be shushed here," said Director Messier, "we want to be inclusive to everyone in



**MESSIER**  
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## Webster's Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Process Underway and Town Hall Aging

BY JANET STOICA  
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It's that time of year again for all cities and towns to get their departmental budgets in order for the upcoming fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025 and Webster is in the thick of it or is it the thicket? "Right now our numbers reflect \$64 million of expenditures for our town budget," said Rick LaFond, Town Administrator, "it's the second year in a row that our state aid dollars have stayed the same \$800,000 - \$900,000. We received \$2 million from the state two years ago. This lesser amount has a great effect

on us. We are fortunate to have about \$6 million in our stabilization fund and \$6 million in our Free Cash but this cannot be considered a permanent solution nor should it be."

Webster's school budget, like all other cities and towns, is the largest piece of the budget pie and comes in at approximately \$28,260,000 which is a 5.5% increase over fiscal year 2025. Increases include those amounts required for special education which are currently noted as 40%

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## Webster's Route 16 and 395 Intersection Improvements Continue

BY JANET STOICA  
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As many local travelers are aware, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation has begun intersection improvements at Route 395's entry and exit ramps on Route 16. Thus far, it appears preliminary work is progressing in an orderly fashion where hydraulic hammer chisels attached to power equipment are

making short work of the granite and earthy hillsides surrounding the ramps near Sutton Road and Route 16. Safety nets have been installed near each chiseling site to prevent loose stones and other debris from flying onto the roadway, construction barrels have assisted in forming a narrow two-way vehicle bypass, and Webster's Police have maintained their presence to ensure a smooth traffic flow.

According to the DOT's

informational site, the proposed project involves installation of traffic signals or roundabouts at the I-395 northbound and southbound ramps including road resurfacing and geometric improvements. Additional work includes road widening for bicycle and pedestrian accommodation specifically reconstructing of existing sidewalks and construction of new sidewalk sections. The widening and sidewalk construction will require extension

of the Mill Brook sluiceway as well as modifications to the bridge slope paving. Related work includes minor drainage modifications and upgrades, as well as updated signage and pavement markings. This \$12,476,375 project is currently listed as 4 percent complete.

Once this project is complete,

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## BUDGET

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of the total school budget.

No doubt about it, the town's grand and beautiful town hall is in need of renovation. The flooding that occurs on the east side of the building (library side) does not lend itself to the stability of the building's footings. There are aging concerns that definitely should be addressed.

The building was built about 100 years ago in 1927-28 and a 2019 RFP (Request for Proposal), sought to hire an architect to develop an independent analysis

of the buildings' structural, architectural, and materials needs, with an emphasis on the retention and restoration of the buildings' historic exterior elements and the retention of significant interior details and spaces.

The town hall is the headquarters of the town's administration and houses the town's departments and their employees. The auditorium remains and continues to facilitate a limited number of community events and elections. Town Hall is the anchor of the historic downtown. It is part of a municipal complex in the Webster Municipal Build-

ings Historic District (National Register, 2012) that includes the Gladys E. Kelly Public Library (2018), the Webster Civil War Soldiers & Sailors Monument (Veteran's Memorial Court of Honor), and the historic Bartlett and Sitkowski schools (renovated into affordable housing and Senior Center). It is the most prominent and busiest building in downtown Webster.

"The building is not falling down," said Mr. LaFond, "but it certainly needs to be assessed. We will look into our debt service to fit this in with minimal impact to taxpayers."

## MESSIER

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helping with their needs. We had a Dudley resident visit here who asked about a weekly mahjong group. She told us she'd been traveling to the town of Holland to play but we accommodated her and we now have a group of about 15 players enjoying mahjong. We want to serve everyone--children, teens, and adults. We look forward to the speakers we've brought in to present different subjects."

"Just recently, on February 14, the library hosted a Legislative Breakfast to advise our patrons where our funding comes from. Our current budget is level funded but additional funding needs are included as well. We want everyone to enjoy the library. We receive state aid and endowment funds and our trustees are always there for us. Deb Coggans, our Library Assistant, raised \$1,700 last year for our Summer Reading Program for children and adults. Deb has been a great asset for the library. She runs the circulation desk and also has 15 years of library experience."

"I enjoy programming and bringing the people in," said Ms. Messier, "It's a great feeling to enjoy your job and to bring people in. It's getting to know your community. We want to remain relevant by offering new experiences to our residents as we continue to grow and present that life-long learning experience. We're looking forward to

having computer classes as well as additional classes like resume writing and how to make business flyers and posters including AI technology. We now offer borrowing of Hot Spots and have mobile Wi-Fi through funding from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. We just bought five more Hot Spots with discounts offered by the library for lending."

When asked what the last book was that she read, Ms. Messier replied that she had enjoyed an audio book by the name of "More or Less Maddy" by Lisa Genova. A fictional work about a young girl in a bipolar manic episode told from the perspective of the young girl, her sister, and her mother.

"You should swing by and visit us," said Director Messier, "we're more than a library! We have museum passes, recommendations on all types of subject matter, and are also a Library of Things such as a food dehydrator, a cordless drill, a sewing machine, knitting kits, and even memory kits for people suffering from dementia and memory issues." Check out the library's website for more information: [www.crawfordlibrary.org](http://www.crawfordlibrary.org) Pearl L. Crawford Memorial Library, 40 Schofield Avenue, Dudley MA 01571. (508) 949-8021. Hours: Mon & Thurs 10am-8pm; Tues/Wed/Fri 10am - 5pm; Saturday 10am - 2pm year round.

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**WEBSTER**

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however, the big question will be how drivers will respond to the roundabout(s)? Will local drivers follow the traffic rules and understand that any vehicle that has already entered the roundabout has the right of way? Will drivers



play roulette with their driving habits and try to cut off those vehicles already in the roundabout? Hopefully, drivers will remember the rules of the road and wait their turn to enter the roundabout (rotary) after any other vehicles have driven by their entry point. Well, at least it won't be like Worcester's crazy Kelly Square, their current "improved" peanut island intersection is still as wacky as ever! And let's hope that the Federal funding for this job is not slashed before the project is completed.

# 30 Years in Business for Local Bookstore, Café and Giftstore

**B**ooklovers' Gourmet is pleased to announce the landmark celebration of 30 years in business. The independent bookstore, gift shop and coffeehouse is located at 72 East Main Street, Webster. Plans to mark the occasion throughout the month of April include: Customer Appreciation Days on April 4 and 5, where patrons can spin-the-wheel for raffle prizes, contribute a leaf to a Memory Tree and enjoy complimentary cupcakes and cookies from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. both days. A book release party for local poet Robert Eugene Perry and his newest release "I Dreamt I Was Water" will take place on Saturday, April 5 at 1 p.m. followed by an Open Mic. Throughout the month of April, "The Promise of Spring," photographs by Don McCallister of Oxford will be featured in the cafe art gallery.

The store will co-host an After Hours Networking Event with The Webster Dudley Business Alliance on Tuesday, April 8 from 5-7 p.m., with state and town officials and members of the local business community in attendance. An author appearance by Brad Timm, wildlife biologist passionate about education and conservation, will take place on Saturday, April 12 from 2-4 p.m. Brad will talk about his new book Wildlife Out Your Window. For more information about any of these events or to sign up for the Open Mic, email [deb@bookloversgourmet.com](mailto:deb@bookloversgourmet.com) or call 508-949-6232.



# Applications Available for Law Enforcement Scholarship

**A**scholarship of \$1,500 honoring the memory of Ronald J. Denault, highly respected police officer at both the state and local levels, will be awarded again this June to a Charlton student in the Class of 2025. To be eligible for consideration for this award, a student must be a Charlton resident who is planning to further his/her education in pursuit of a career in

law enforcement or criminal justice. Applicants may be graduating from a public or private high school or from a home-schooling program that has been approved formally by the School Committee. Ideally, applicants will show evidence of scholarship, leadership, and community service. Interested students should submit a completed application packet no later than April 30.

The application packet will include the following: an application form (available from the high school guidance office at Shepherd Hill or Bay Path, at the Charlton Public Library, or at the Charlton Police Station); a one-page essay summarizing why the applicant is interested in a career in law enforcement; two letters of reference; and documentation of academic scholarship.

Details regarding all requirements will be included with the application form. Further questions may be directed to Dr. Linda Denault, who can be reached at 508-248-7711(H) or 508-328-7817(C). Completed application packets should be mailed to the Ronald J. Denault Law Enforcement Scholarship Committee c/o P.O. Box 352, Charlton City, MA 01508

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In case you missed our previous event or were unable to attend as we had a full house, we're excited to announce that Viking Cruises are back!

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# Town of Dudley Seeking Individuals to Serve on the Government Study Committee

The Town of Dudley is seeking individuals to serve on the newly formed Government Study Committee, a key initiative recommended in a recent state financial management review.

This committee will evaluate the town's government structure and recommend solutions to improve coordination, communication, and efficiency. The Board of Selectmen will appoint

members who must approach this study with an open, fact-finding mindset, free from any predetermined agendas.

The development of this committee follows a financial management audit conducted by the state Division of Local Services (DLS) at the request of the Board of Selectmen, after repeated calls from residents. The audit covered concerns over budget shortfalls,

Proposition 2 ½ override elections in the summer 2023, and ongoing fiscal challenges, including staff turnover due to better-paying opportunities elsewhere.

A key finding of the report emphasized that Dudley's decentralized government structure lacks essential coordination and communication, hindering its ability to function effectively and efficiently. Addressing this issue

will be the primary focus of the committee's work.

Committee responsibilities will include reviewing the town's organizational structure, identifying inefficiencies, researching best practices in peer communities, and gathering input from town officials and residents. The study will begin in May 2025 and conclude by May 2026, when the committee will present its findings and recommendations to the Board of Selectmen. These recommendations may lead to further action at the May 2026 Annual Town Meeting.

The town seeks individuals with relevant experience in local government, finance, management, public administration, or related fields who can contribute

a fresh, objective perspective. To ensure impartiality, appointments will be made at the discretion of the Board of Selectmen based on qualifications, experience, and the ability to engage in an unbiased, fact-driven approach.

Interested individuals should submit a letter of interest, including a brief background of qualifications, to the Dudley Board of Selectmen at townadmin2@dudleyma.gov by March 31, 2025. TOWN OF DUDLEY MASSACHUSETTS Public Information Office Debbie LaPlaca 71 West Main Street Office: 508-949-8030 Public Information Dudley, MA 01571 Mobile: 508-847-2206 dlaplaca@dudleyma.gov

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## Country Bank donates more than \$900,000

Country Bank, a full-service financial institution serving Central and Western Massachusetts, reporting over \$900,000 in donations for 2024. The bank's philanthropic efforts supported non-profits across its business area, with 462 organizations receiving grants over the year.

Additionally, Country Bank team members dedicated 1958 hours of volunteer service, demonstrating their ongoing commitment to giving back. Furthermore, 39 team members served on 95 non-profit boards and committees. Recognizing the importance of financial literacy, Country Bank hosted seven Credit for Life Fairs for more than 2000 high school seniors, educating them on credit, budgeting, and the long-term impact of financial decisions. Additional classes were conducting at various schools across the region and Christina's House, a home for women and children who are facing homelessness.

As part of its annual Season of Difference campaign, Country Bank partnered with the WonderFund to support those involved with the Department of Children and Families system throughout Central and Western Massachusetts. Through this collaboration, the bank contributed over \$20,000 reinforcing its commitment to making a meaningful difference in the lives of vulnerable children and families.

Among the organizations receiving support were Junior Achievement, EcoTarium, Main South CDC, Venture Community Services, Why Me/Sherry's House, Boys & Girls Clubs,



Behavioral Health Network, Way Finders, HomeFront Strong, United Way of Pioneer Valley and Central Mass., The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, Worcester County Food Bank, Juniper Outreach, Square One, Friends of the Homeless, along with 22 senior center and 23 food pantries.

Mary McGovern, President and CEO of Country Bank said the bank is dedicated to its communities.

"At Country Bank, our commitment to enriching the communities we serve is at the heart of everything we do. We take great pride in supporting organizations that make a meaningful impact, whether through financial contributions or the dedication of our team members."



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# Charlton Public Library Presents Art History Lecture Series: Women Painters Through the Centuries

The first of a three-part art lecture series by noted art historian Martha Chiarchiaro will take place on Saturday, March 22, from 11 a.m.-12 p.m. in Dexter Hall at the library, 40 Main Street. This presentation will focus on women painters through the centuries. For the past several years, museums around the world have held a campaign called #5: promoting the public's knowledge of at least five women artists. In this presentation, Martha will explore the highlights of fourteen women painters over the past five centuries. As a sampling, we'll view the drama of Artemisia Gentileschi, the glamour of Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun, the maternal paintings of

Mary Cassatt, and the boldness of Georgia O'Keeffe. By the end of the presentation, you'll have a better understanding of the tremendous contribution made by women artists over the past five centuries.

These programs are free and open to the public. Registration is requested but not required. This program is supported in part by a grant from the Charlton Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.

Martha Chiarchiaro has brought history to life through the art of

the times for more than 30 years. She received her Masters' Degree in History of Art from Williams College and provides a variety of art history presentations for the Worcester Art Museum, for WISE (the Worcester Institute for Senior Education) libraries, garden clubs, senior centers, and other organizations. As noted on her Seeing History website (seeinghistory.org), Martha's specialty presentations related to specific periods, artists, and activities provide an in-depth look at the life and times of people through their art.

## National Quilting Day Exhibit and Demonstration at Charlton Public Library

Saturday, March 15 is National Quilting Day and Cornerstone Quilters Guild is holding their Third Annual Quilting Day Exhibit and Demonstration in Dexter Hall from 10:00-2:00. The room will be filled with many different types of quilts, and participants will host demonstrations of hand and machine quilting techniques highlighting the diverse world of quilting from traditional to modern to contemporary. They will also be available to answer questions. They will have information about their workshops and community outreach as well. This event is free and open to all; no registration is required.

The Cornerstone Quilters Guild is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in the spring of 2000. The Guild has over 100 members from the Central Massachusetts and Northeast Connecticut areas. They welcome everyone with an interest in the art of quilt making, both beginners and experienced quilters alike!

Charlton Public Library is located at 40 Main Street in Charlton, Massachusetts.

For more details, including the full DLS audit report, responding action plan, and related information, visit: [www.dudleyma.gov/town-administrators-office/pages/state-financial-management-audit](http://www.dudleyma.gov/town-administrators-office/pages/state-financial-management-audit).

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# Programs & Events @ the Pearle L. Crawford Library

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March 18: A Walk to Remember  
March 25: Brian's Song  
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Please join us during the month of March to  
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**GENTLE YOGA**  
Mondays in March - 10- 11 a.m.  
Join our new yoga instructor Patricia, for a  
blend of "on the mat" yoga class with chair  
yoga modifications too. This truly is a one  
size fits all class. Bring your own mat. Wear  
layers, do not eat heavily 1.5-2 hours before  
class. Registration is required to receive  
weather cancellation notifications.

**MOVIES @ THE PEARLE!!**  
Tuesdays at 1 p.m.  
This month's theme is: Books we love that

**VISIT THE LIBRARY ON PI DAY**  
Friday, March 14th and you will receive a  
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**"COOK THE BOOK" BOOK CLUB- DIN-  
NER IN ONE BY MELISSA CLARK**  
Monday, March 24 - 6- 7 p.m.  
"Cook The Book" Book Club will meet on the  
4th Monday of every month at 6:00.  
Pick one recipe from the book - Dinner In  
One by Melissa Clark. The dishes don't have  
to be complicated or fancy, any recipe from  
the book is fair game, except alcoholic  
beverages-sorry!  
Prepare the recipe at home and share it at  
the library. We cannot reheat or keep food  
warm, so consider this when choosing your  
recipe. You are responsible for bringing  
serving utensils.  
We will provide paper goods and utensils  
for eating. Registration is required.

**KNIT & CROCHET GROUP**  
Thursday 5:30-7:30 p.m. and  
Friday 10a.m.-12 p.m.  
All stitchers are welcome for this informal  
group. Bring your project and enjoy the  
company!

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

**LOCAL 4 LIFE- AMAZING ANIMALS!**  
Saturday, March 22 - 10- 11 a.m.  
"LESSONS AT THE LIBRARY"  
Learn about the traits of farm animals,  
the life cycles and needs of these animals.  
Hands-on educational programs for families  
with children ages 3-12 years old.  
This program is supported in part by a grant  
from the Dudley Cultural Council, a local  
agency which is supported by the Mass  
Cultural Council, a state agency.  
Registration is required.

**CRAWFORD LIBRARY BOOK GROUP**  
Thursday, March 27 @ 6-7:30 p.m.  
Book: All the Colors of the Dark by Chris  
Whitaker  
Books are available at the circulation desk  
for checkout one month prior to discussion.  
Everyone is welcome! No registration  
required.

**DIGITAL COMIC BOOK DESIGN  
COURSE WITH TINKER & CREATE**  
Thursday March 20 - 4 – 5 p.m.  
Tinker and Create will help your ideas and  
visions come to life by helping you learn  
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ogy! You'll learn about graphic design,  
creative writing, literary analysis, and  
characterization. Registration is required.  
This is a 6-week series for 3rd - 8th graders  
(ages 8 to 14). \*Please note that you are  
signing up for all 6 weeks.

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

**QUILTING GROUP**  
Wednesdays @ 1:30 p.m.  
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how to be one? All skill levels are welcome  
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**STORYTIMES AT THE PEARLE**  
10-10:45 a.m.  
Tuesday-Pre-K Power (best for ages 3-5)  
Wednesday-Toddler Time (best for ages 0-3)  
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**GRAPHIC NOVEL BOOK CLUB**  
Thursday, March 13 - 6-6:45 p.m.  
Each month we will meet to discuss the  
graphic novel of the month. Copies of the  
book will be located at the circulation desk in  
the Children's Room. Best for ages 8 and up.  
No registration required. This is not a drop  
off program.

**POKEMON CLUB**  
Thursday, March 20 - 6-6:45 p.m.  
Join us for Pokemon Club! Each month we  
will have exciting crafts and activities! Best  
for ages 6 and up. No registration required.  
This is not a drop off program.



# Battered Spouses

BY JANET STOICA  
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

Just the thought of anyone laying a hand on their spouse, be it woman or man, makes my blood boil. So much so that it shocks me that my anger could be so intense. Then, I remember it's because I was told about this evil behavior from my mom's childhood. I have never seen anyone display such criminal behavior to anyone in my family. My parents were always good to each other and set good examples for my brother and me. They had their arguments but never raised a finger to the other.

I was told, however, of an absolutely horrible experience that happened to my maternal grandmother when she was set upon by my maternal grandfather, Wladyslaw Nawrocki.

When I think of that event which happened when my mom was a young girl playing in the backyard with her three siblings, I am right there with them and I can imagine myself standing by my mother's side and holding her and rescuing my grandmother, Felicia, after that ugly traumatizing scenario occurred. My grandfather died well before I was born into this world but I always told my mother that if I had been alive during that horrible wife-battering episode I would surely have killed him myself.

My grandfather was a widower in the early 1900's. He had lost his first wife and had fathered many children with her. She must've been the saint of all saints, God bless her. Wladyslaw was an officer in the Kosciusko Society of

Webster still in existence on Lake Street/Dresser Street known as Bush Hall. He was a dandy as they would say in the 1920s. A very meticulously dressed guy who always had the nicest appearance and from what I can tell from old photos, he was very good looking. But under that façade, his home environment was the complete opposite of what he portrayed to outsiders. He was gruff, demanding, and surely unlovable. My mom (who was the oldest child of his second family) said that he would have my grandmother, Felicia, make him steaks and such while she and her siblings would have bread soaked in milk for their meals.

He was born in Germany/Prussia to an unwed mother and his father was a high-level officer in the Prussian Cavalry. Wladyslaw's father took care of his son sending him to a military academy where he learned how to be an officer as well. He spoke German and Polish.

My grandmother, Felicia, emigrated from Poland with her niece in the early 1900s during the great waves of immigrants when the doors to this country were always open to immigrants. My grandmother's niece, Josephine, was intent on finding my grandmother a suitable spouse and came upon Mr. Nawrocki. My grandmother always said she was mesmerized by my grandfather during their courting but after marrying him she realized who he truly was, a bombastic and overbearing man. It was too late. Three babies were born one after another for three years in a row. Three sisters and then a few years later, my uncle.

Felicia protected her children from my grandfather as best she could. When he arrived home from his watchman's job at the Stevens Linen Mills, the children were told to be quiet and not speak as they lay in their beds lest they disturb Wladyslaw. If it was the weekend, then the liquor would appear after he arrived home from Bush Hall. His alcohol-infused behavior was atrocious. Such a nice guy, everyone said, he helped us write letters home to Germany and Poland. What a nice guy.

Then, his full fury was unleashed on a mid-summer's day as my eight-year-old mom and her siblings were playing happily in their backyard. Wladyslaw made a demand to my grandmother who back-talked him. That was unacceptable to him. In a few long strides he was standing in front of her and unleashed a punch to her chest that sent her reeling backwards into the bathroom where she smashed the back of her head against the wall. My grandmother was a beautiful and statuesque woman who I'm convinced was a happy and wonderful woman before she married Wladyslaw. After Felicia composed herself and tried to catch her breath, she managed to get to the backdoor of the attic apartment they lived in and called out for my mom who came running to her in a flash. "I flew up those back stairs," my mom always said. The damage

my grandfather's punch had done was horrific. A huge bruise on my grandmother's chest that also appeared straight through to her back. Her head was not in good shape either. That's all I remember from my mom's narrative.

My grandmother, however, somehow managed to have a court hearing where the judge advised my grandfather to stay away from the family. He ended up living in one of their home's other apartments in one separate room and was banned from going near my grandmother. My grandmother took in laundry to meet expenses. Felicia (Dzienisewicz) Nawrocki was a woman before her time, she is my Hero, she was brave, she was a fabulous mother and protector of her children, she was a Survivor. Because of her ability to deal with evil, she has passed on her strength and intestinal fortitude to me. I attribute my own honesty and integrity to her. My ability to overcome the most unfortunate of circumstances. I could never put up with this kind of corrupt behavior and I would never expect anyone else to.

According to Sydney Hyer of the Coalition Against Domestic Violence "The origins of the Battered Women's Movement is in the early 1900s. Up to this point, men were allowed legally to beat their wives. Even the Supreme Court had argued against forms of protection for wives, claiming

it would lead to false accusations. The movement was able to gain support at the same time as the American Temperance Movement. Alcohol and intoxication contributed to violence against women. Suffragettes like Elizabeth Cady Stanton favored temperance and thought it would reduce incidences of violence. The movement was also able to gain momentum when the government realized addressing violence against women would appease female citizens. The first step in the movement would be protecting these women within their own marriages. Alabama and Massachusetts were the first states to criminalize assaults by husbands against their wives in 1871, followed by North Carolina in 1874. Maryland even included legal consequences against offenders."

No one, ever, ever, ever should accept violence from their spouse. You are human, you are awesome, and you are SOMEBODY! If you find yourself in a horrible and violent situation please phone the National Domestic Violence Hotline (800) 799-7233. Please remove yourself from a horrible situation. Abby's House of Worcester (508) 756-5486 will also help you with a safe space for you and your children along with many services to get you on your way to a new beginning. Don't wait, don't put up with abuse! The porch light is on at Abby'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.

### 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



### 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](http://www.apa.org/gradpsych/2012/11/first-impressions)

### 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 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/In-

deed5questions], five questions to ask yourself before a job interview include:

- 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/Indeed-PersonalStrengths] 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.

### INTERVIEW PREP

continued on page 9

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# 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](http://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 Face-

book, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, 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
10. Follow relevant influencers in your industry

Source: [bit.ly/LinkedInProfileTips2024](http://bit.ly/LinkedInProfileTips2024)

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

### INTERVIEW PREP

continued from page 8

For helpful detailed responses, visit [bit.ly/HBR10CommonInterviewQuestions](http://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](http://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](http://bit.ly/Indeed51QuestionsToAsk).

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

#### “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


A full list can be found at [bit.ly/MuseGreatestWeakness](http://bit.ly/MuseGreatestWeakness)

### 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/](http://positivepsychology.com/emotional-intelligence-interview-questions/)



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# 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 reverse chronological order) 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](http://www.indeed.com/career-advice/Résumés-cover-letters/10-resume-writing-tips)

Coursera [[www.coursera.org](http://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](http://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/](http://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 titles, 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/](http://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](http://coursera.org), [forbes.com](http://forbes.com), [indeed.com](http://indeed.com), and Columbia University.

**TOPOGRAPH**

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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,

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 ré-

sumé. Put this list in a grid"

### Consider "Apply for me" Tools

Sites like Ladders and Lazy-Apply 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 their existing networks and building new relationships. If online ap-

### 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](http://www.nasa.gov/what-is-artificial-intelligence)

plications 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, geo-political landscape and overall economic changes, recruiters use tools like AI to help them quickly find top

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

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

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

Type "Create a list of key skills this job is looking for and

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SPORTS

# Bay Path Looking To Go Back-To-Back

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

The Bay Path Girls basketball team finished the regular season with a 15-3 record capturing their second straight Colonial League Championship. The Minutemen grabbed their first league title in some time last winter and were able to go back-to-back this season. Although Bay Path has been able to capture its second straight league title, the team is more focused on going back-to-back in winning the State Vocational Championship.

“Our goals coming into this year were the same as last year: win the league title, qualify for the Clark Tournament, qualify for the State Vocational Tournament and then get to the Division 2 State Tournament,” Minutemen coach Randy Schulman said. “We lost a few key players from last year’s team, but we knew that we had a good nucleus coming back this year.”

One of the key contributors returning this winter was senior guard Ali Welton. After averaging 12 points per contest last season, the senior improved her scoring to 15 a game this year and was the team’s leading scorer. As a four-year varsity starter, she is a solid all-around player who sees the floor well and can shoot from

three-point range as well as knocking down the mid-range shot.

Another four-year varsity starter for the Minutemen is Kendall Bond, who like Welton, is an all-around player that brings a tremendous leadership to the team. The forward / center averaged 10 points a game this year and can pull down a rebound when needed.

Hannah Cavan is another four-year varsity player, but has only started the past three seasons. According to the coach, she is a hustler, runs the floor and grabs a lot of rebounds for the team while giving the squad an inside presence.

“Hannah is tenacious on the boards although she is not super big,” Schulman said. “All three of these girls have been playing together since the sixth grade. They play well together and know what the other is thinking or doing at almost any given moment.”

First-year varsity player Dayzyah Wintzel has been giving the Minutemen an intimidating presence in the center position. The senior, being one of the tallest girls on the squad, has really helped the Minutemen with her play. Schulman noted that with Wintzel playing center, he has been able to move Bond out of that position and into a forward position. The first-year

varsity player has recorded numerous double-digit rebounds this year and has a willingness to pass the ball if needed.

Running the offense down the court is senior Kortnie Adams. The Bay Path point guard controls the team’s offense, is a very solid player and has a great basketball IQ.

“She doesn’t score a lot of points,” the coach said. “But she contributes a lot of assists and is a very scrappy and gritty player on defense.”

Bay Path also had a couple of solid juniors to contribute this season in Allie Klar and Arianna Gonzalez. Sophomore Kayla Schroeder was the team’s best defensive player, a hustler that usually was given the task of guarding the opposition’s best guard. Unfortunately, she got hurt and the coach was unsure if the sophomore was going to make it back onto the court during the team’s post-season run.

The rest of the Bay Path team included senior Manaali Vaidya and freshmen Chloe Hosley and Liz Bennington.

Last year, after qualifying for the Clark Tournament, the Bay Path fell in the opening round and never got the opportunity to actually get to play at Clark University. This year they were hoping to erase that feeling and make it to the college but once again the Minutemen fell in the opening round at a neutral site.

Bay Path will now begin focusing on defending their large school division Vocational Title. Being the first team in Bay Path history to bring home the Girls Basketball Championship, the team knows they have a target on their backs.

“We knew coming into the year that teams would be looking to

give us their best game hoping to knock us down,” said Schulman. “Last year we snuck up on some schools, but it’s not going to happen this year, they know what they are getting in us.”

The Minutemen played a lot of

starting position as a freshman she knew she was going to have to elevate her game.

“I knew that entering high school the environment was going to be totally different to anything that I had been used to in the past,” she said. “I felt that I was going to have to work hard and play with determination.”

Entering the season the senior had no idea where she stood in terms of her overall point total and really didn’t think she was close to reaching the top of the mountain.

“Last year a friend and I sat down and tried to calculate the numbers to see if it was something that could be done and we came up with the conclusion that it was undoable,” Welton said. “This whole year the coaches were keeping it a secret as they didn’t want me to get it in my head.”

After scoring 30 points two nights earlier, Welton had the feeling that she was close and her suspicions eventually were leaked.

“I knew that I had to be close after scoring 30-points; everyone was acting real weird,” she said. “Then someone mentioned that I was five points away by mistake and spoiled the secret.”

Going into the senior night contest Welton found herself very nervous and having the jitters. Once she hit her first basket, bringing the milestone into site she continued to try and knock down that elusive three-point basket.

“I kept trying to hit the three to get the 1000 point, but things were not falling. In fact, the coach told me to go to the basket and take the two-points,” she said. “Eventually I hit the three and it was such a relieving feeling; I was very happy with the accomplishment and all my hard work had come full circle.”

Bay Path will now work on defending their Vocational Championship before they enter into the Division 2 State Tournament.



Ali Welton celebrates reaching 1000 points

quality teams during the regular season and are hoping that it helps them prepare for their return to the Tournament.

On February 12 during Senior Night at home Welton eclipsed the 1000-point threshold for her career, becoming only the second female and fourth athlete overall to accomplish the feat at Bay Path. Accomplishing the feat was nothing that was ever on the senior’s radar growing up playing a sport that she came to love. She was playing the game for fun, but to be able to do what she has done is a great tribute to her coaches, her family and her teammates as without them all she would not be where she is today.

Growing up playing the sport she never felt that she was a star or even one of the best players on her AAU teams, but when she got to high school and earned a

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TALES FROM BEYOND

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# Gillette Castle

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

Atop a hill called the Seventh Sister, the last of a group of knolls known as the Seven Sisters, sits a medieval-style, twenty-four-room castle in East Haddam, Connecticut overlooking the Connecticut River. This stone edifice was owned and designed by William Hooker Gillette, famous for his stage role as Sherlock Holmes. In fact, his performances as the master detective numbered 1,300, the third-highest number of stage performances of a role in history.

Gillette was born on July 24,

circled his property. Evidence of the railway still exists in the form of tunnels and the station, as the tracks were later torn up for hiking trails. Do not be dismayed, however, for one can still ride the famous span, as Lake Compounce Amusement Park later purchased portions of the railway to shuttle visitors around the pond located on the property.

Gillette died a widower with no children. His estate had no heirs, but in his will he ruled out the chance of his possessions going to unsavory prospects by adding the sentence that the property would never fall into the hands of

to once again entertain after a long winter of solitude in the locked-up mansion. Or perhaps just the site of the edifice evokes the imagination, thus creating vivid scenes from the past within

the mind's eye. Haunted or not, Gillette Castle State Park offers beautiful vistas of the Connecticut River and surrounding landscape, scenic hiking trails and a host of other outdoor activities.

Bring a lunch, take a tour and relish in the architect of the castle. The famous actor just might treat you to a small performance while you are there.



1853, son of former United States senator Francis Gillette and Elizabeth Daggett Hooker Gillette, descendant of Thomas Hooker, founder of Hartford. Even as a child, he was very inventive and outgoing in his pursuits of the stage. These traits would follow him into adulthood. During his lifetime, he wrote two novels and thirteen plays. He also produced and directed various plays starring none other than himself. His love of special effects led him to invent many stage tricks and lighting techniques. His last performance was at the Bushnell Theatre in 1936. Gillette died a year later on April 29, 1937. He is buried in the Hooker family cemetery in Farmington next to his wife.

His castle is a stone legacy born of an inventive and brilliant mind. Gillette designed the whole structure, right down to the slightest detail. The basic building took five years to construct. By 1919, the man who made Holmes famous was finally home. Through the years, he made enhancements upon his castle to suit his tastes. He also had a three-mile-long railroad that

some "blithering sap-head who has no conception of where he is or with what surrounded." In 1943, the State of Connecticut acquired the land and turned it into a park for all to enjoy, complete with camping, hiking, picnicking and, of course, tours of the castle. But is the medieval-style fortress haunted? The stone edifice imparts upon the gazer of the image a most confident feeling that Mr. Gillette could possibly still reside within.

Some have even claimed to see the ghostly image of the famous actor, smoking his calabash pipe, while touring the structure. Others claim to see the spirit of his gardener roaming the grounds, still tending to the massive landscaped flora. Many have felt sudden cold spots within the walls of the castle, but as it is made of stone, that could be entirely natural. There are reports of hikers and campers seeing the ghostly figure of someone moving about the castle holding a smoking pipe during the winter and spring hours when it is otherwise closed and locked tight. Perhaps it may be William Gillette in search of an audience

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LIVING WITH LUKE

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# More Than Words

BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

Professional writers are encouraged to “find their voices” when they write. Doing so is a process that develops gradually and takes time and self-reflection. We grow to write what’s in us to write, and to tell a story with structure, tone, cadence, and knowledge of language. Dogs, too, must find their voices. They can’t write notes or text their owners. “Out searching for a new stick. Would you mind grabbing me a new shin bone at the store today?”

How do dogs survive? How do they communicate their needs?

“HELP! HELP! HELP!” Luke learned to communicate early on, at seven weeks old to be exact. “I need to get out right now!” His 3 a.m. barking frenzy reflected a primal need to survive. New people. New bed. New rules. He wasn’t having it. Where were his warm brothers and sisters and puppy scented towels? His voice was high pitched and surprisingly loud. My husband and I felt like new parents trying to help our infant learn to sleep through the night. “We have to go get him, Jim,” I pleaded. “He



sounds terrified. He’s trying to tell us something.”

I trotted down the stairs, my own heart beating like a nervous kitten’s. “I’m sorry, Luke. Mummy’s right here.” I shuffled to the crate door, nearly tripping over my slippers to reach him. I smelled my puppy before I saw him. Little Luke had pooped all over himself. “Ohhhhhh. Gosh. Luke!! You poor thing.” I placed my hands beneath his armpits, lifted him up, and headed for the sink. He hung limp and apologetic. “I had an accident. I used my puppy voice, but you ignored me. I screamed. I howled. I was trying so hard to tell you something. You ignored me.”

Every mother is guilty of something. This incident, a reminder

of my most unheroic moment as a Dog Mom, has scarred me. Luke was trying to tell me something, but I didn’t listen. Fear not, readers. While Luke aged, I grew wiser. I learned to listen more closely to what my dog was trying to say.

### I just want to play.

Luke initiates play with a peculiar voice. Sharp and relentless, the voice reflects that of a barking seal. His playful voice has grated on the nerves of parents at the dog park.

“My dog doesn’t like being barked at this way.” A Dog Mom expressed her disappointment to me one time. “He’s just not used to that behavior.” Meanwhile, an oblivious Luke carried on. “Let’s play! Let’s play! Let’s play! C’mon! You chase me, then I’ll chase you! The introverted hound turned his head away. My exuberant pup was learning an important lesson. The world doesn’t revolve around him. We discussed the matter during the ride home. “Dogs don’t like when you bark in their faces, Luke.” I spoke to his reflection in the rearview mirror. He popped his big head out of the sunroof travel crate and thought about it. “If dogs don’t like barking, then maybe they shouldn’t be in a dog park.”

### I’m very uncomfortable with you.

Luke’s ferocious bark is the one I’m most appreciative of, especially

when it happens at night. He uses a deep, magnificent roar to protect his home from predators. One night while he was in the backyard for a final check, I heard the distinct roar.



“Who’s that, Luke?” I hoisted open the upstairs window and watched him roar in the direction of our driveway. Apparently, someone or something was lurking in a shadowy corner of our home. “Woo. Woo. Woo. Woo.” He crouched down; broad shoulders bulging, hair raised. I imagined a wolf with yellow eyes and red gums showing his teeth at my dog. “Go Away! Go Away! Go Away!” The bark was extraordinary. Even I felt intimidated.

“Luke, get over here!” Jim was less enchanted. Luke turned his head to the voice of his intolerable leader and dashed back inside. “Good boy, Luke.” I needed to praise my dog for using his voice to protect us. I rubbed his ears. He sat proudly, chin lifted. “Thank you for telling Mummy about that bad guy.” He licked my hand. “Someone’s got to do the dirty work around here.”

The next morning, we realized that my son had left the light on in his car, casting the unusual effect that a person was seated there. Car burglaries are common. I imagined a scarfed thief scheming—right there in our driveway! Our dogs’ eyes and ears remain open to potential danger. Luke was doing his job.

### I’m seriously afraid!

If only the villain of Luke’s nighttime watches could see him at the groomer’s doorstep. “I. Just. Want. To. Be. With. You.” Luke doesn’t shake at the groomers. He quakes. He tells me how he feels with a full body vibration that breaks my heart. He digs his paws into the floor so that I must drag

him (sliding) from the doorway entrance. “It’s okay, Luke. You’re going to look so handsome!” I once followed him to the groomer’s table and held his paw while he had his nails trimmed. He shook atop the table like the victim of a Frankenstein science project (who also happens to be afraid of heights). I read his mind. “Cages, latches and locks. Sad faces. Noisy dogs, razor blades and scissors. This place is off.”

He nearly knocks me over to jump back into his travel crate in the parking lot and sits like a star pupil while I pull out. “I told you I’d be right back, Luke. You do look handsome,” I say to his reflection in the rearview mirror. He gazes out the back window. The groomer’s shop sign fades in the distance. “Next time I’m about to be chopped up and sold for pedigree beef, I’ll keep my looks in mind.”

### Time to eat.

I’m afraid that Luke has learned to use his intelligence as a weapon. Of course, he knows exactly when dinnertime happens and lets me know by resting conveniently beside his bowl an hour before. “Just in case you happened to forget,



Mom. This is where my bowl is located.” He’s developed a second habit to further my understanding. He’ll stand over his bowl, typically after I’ve rewarded him for coming back when called inside, and stare into it like a gambling addict fixed on a number. “Show me the money. My recall is outstanding.” I toss him a few kibbles. “Good boy, Luke.” I relish the jingle of good behavior. My dog could have roamed anywhere, but he ran back to me for a few dry kibbles. Has Luke learned to capitalize on the reward system?

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LUKE

continued on page 15



REAL ESTATE

# Why a pre-listing inspection may be worth it in today's market

**S**elling a house comes with a lot of moving pieces, and the last thing you want is a deal falling apart over unexpected repairs uncovered during the buyer's inspection. That's why it may pay to



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

anticipate potential issues before buyers ever step through the door. And one way to do that is with a pre-listing inspection. A pre-listing inspection is essentially a professional home inspection you schedule before putting your house on the market. Just like the inspections your buyer will do after making an offer, this process identifies any issues with the condition of your house that could have an impact on the sale – like structural problems, faulty or outdated HVAC systems, or other essential repairs. While it's a great option if you're someone who really doesn't like surprises, this may not make sense for all sellers.

While it can be beneficial for a seller to do, a pre-listing inspection isn't always necessary. For example, if your home is relatively new and you've been the only owner, you're most likely already aware of any big issues that could impact a sale. But for an older home, a pre-listing inspection can be very insightful and help you get ahead of any potential problems. The key is deciding whether the benefits outweigh the costs for your situation. Sometimes

a few hundred dollars now can get you information that'll save you a lot of time and hassle later on.

Why it may be worth considering in today's market. Right now, buyers are more cautious about how much money they're spending. And they want to be sure the home they're buying is worth the expense. In a market like this, a pre-listing inspection can be your secret weapon to make sure your house shows well. Here are just a few ways it can help. 1. Gives you time to make repairs: When you know about issues ahead of time, it gives you the chance to fix them on your schedule, rather than rushing to make repairs when you're under contract. 2. Avoid surprises during negotiations: When buyers discover issues during their own inspection, it can lead to last-minute negotiations, price reductions, or even a deal falling through. A pre-listing inspection gives you a chance to spot and address any problems ahead of time, so they don't turn into last-minute headaches or negotiation roadblocks. 3. Sell your house faster: if your house is listed in the best shape possible, there won't be as many reasons for buyers to ask for concessions. That means you should be able to cut down on negotiation timelines and ultimately sell faster.

But before you think about reaching out to any inspectors to get something scheduled, be sure to talk to a member of The Marzeotti Group or another trusted agent. We will give you advice on whether a pre-inspection is worthwhile for your house and the local market. Because it may not be as important if sellers still have the majority of the negotiation power where you

live. If your agent does recommend moving forward and getting one done, here's how they'll support you throughout the process. Offer Advice on How To Prioritize Repairs: If the inspection uncovers problems, your agent will sit down with you and offer perspective on what's going to be a sticking point for buyers so you know what to prioritize. After talking to your agent, you may decide not all of the repairs are worth it right now. Just be ready to disclose what you're not tackling. Some states require disclosures as a part of a listing – lean on your agent for more information.

While they're definitely not required, pre-listing inspections can be especially helpful in today's market. By understanding your home's condition ahead of time, you can take control of the process and make informed decisions about what to fix before you list and what to disclose.

If you choose to skip this step, you may be just as surprised as your buyer by what pops up in their inspection. And that could leave you scrambling. Would you rather fix issues now or risk trying to save the deal later? Connect with The Marzeotti Group or another trusted agent to see if this is a step that makes sense in your market.

it to me when I arrive home. "I just want to let you know how happy I am to see you, to spend time with you and just be together. He watches me take a rare seat on the couch. "I'm so happy you are sitting down, Mom. You work so hard to help others. I see you. I feel you. I want to be with you." He climbs up and collapses beside me. His head falls easily onto my lap.

"I love you, Momma." Sometimes a dog says what words cannot.

Visit Luke at IG  
livingwithlukevalentino

Write to Amy  
amyleclaire@hotmail.com

## LUKE

continued from page 14

"I could have run from our home to greet that cute Collie, but I stayed right here on the step." He rushes to the foot of his dish and waits for me to pay up. He inhales the kibbles, freezes for a moment, then looks up at me. "A dog's restraint in the space of another dog is one of the hardest learning tasks, Mom. Just a few more and we'll call it a day." Perhaps Luke, indeed, has become a capitalist.

## I love you.


My dog wiggles with a happy squeal, grabs his lamb and brings



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**Q.** I own a 2015 Honda Pilot with 44,147 miles on it. It runs great and looks great, so I have no practical reason to replace it. Today I had a state inspection performed at a local Honda dealership. The results showed that all inspection points were "Satisfactory" except the external drive belts and radiator hoses which were checked off as "Requires Immediate Attention." The customer service representative recommended that I seriously consider replacing the serpentine belt for \$250 and timing/water pump belt for \$2,350, but no pressure was applied to have this service performed today, except to say that if the timing belt fails the engine will be destroyed. My question is: should this service be performed on a vehicle with forty-four thousand miles? It does not seem that service that expensive should be necessary at this mileage, especially when vehicles these days are delivering

far more mileage with just regular oil changes. What do you think?

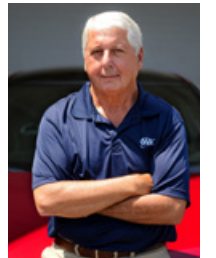
**A.** When the service is required, the onboard maintenance reminder will show service 4. This typically happens around 110,000 miles. Honda recommends timing belt change at 60,000 miles if driven in very hot or cold conditions. If it were my car I would wait until you see reminder 4 displayed. At this age it will probably happen closer to 60,000 just due to age. There was a time when we were lucky to see radiator hoses and fan belts lasting three or four years. Today we are seeing a 10 plus year life span on those. Since your car is getting close to that age, I would consider replacing the drive-belt and the upper and lower radiator hoses and carefully inspecting the other coolant hoses. Whenever in doubt get a second opinion.

**Q.** I have two new questions: My wife set up an app to start her new to her 2021 Lexus RX 350. Although it seems to work to heat up the car, when she goes to open the car door, the engine stops, and she has to restart it. Is that normal for some safety reason? Second, the steering wheel has the ability to warm up in cold weather. However, it only warms up across the two sides: not around the entire wheel. Is that normal? It seems rather foolish since the hands go from warmth to cold when turning the steering wheel.

**A.** Many vehicles with remote start will shut off when the door is opened, so yes normal. Regarding the heated steering wheel it can vary, generally with most cars the heat grid is made into the leather of the steering wheel cover and most of the wheel is heated. This may also be Lexus's attempt to get you to place your hands in the proper driving posi-

tion which is 3 and 9 (numbers on a clock). I looked at a Lexus forum and most owners commented that the entire wheel is not heated.

**Q.** We purchased a certified pre-owned 2021 GMC Sierra Denali. When you brake and hit around 13 mph it feels as if you are driving over a rumble strip. I brought it in for service, they say it is the tires. They said this is a characteristic of off-road tires. I then brought it to my mechanic, and he said either drivetrain or tires. What are your thoughts?



BY JOHN PAUL

**A.** At this point I would have the dealer swap out another set of tires from another vehicle and see how the car reacts. The Denali option is a luxury trim package that provides high-end features, and a quiet smooth ride. So even "off-road" tires should be smooth and quiet when slowing down. If the dealer temporarily swaps the tires and the feeling goes away then it is the tires, if it does not (and I do not think it will) then I would be looking at other problems. This could be an issue with the anti-lock brakes or the driveline.

**Q.** I inherited a John Deere garden-tractor that has not run in a decade. Where do I start to get it running? You once said you answer every question, even lawn tractor questions?

CAR DOCTOR  
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TIPS ON FINANCIAL PLANNING

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# Watch out for tax scams

It's tax season again — which also means, unfortunately, that it's time for the annual array of scams aimed at taxpayers. Fortunately, by being alert, you can protect yourself from these attempts to defraud you.



BY DENNIS ANTONOPOULOS

Your first line of defense is to recognize the warning signs of potential tax scams. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) cites these

common red flags:

**Promises of big payments** — If you've filed taxes for many years, either by yourself or with the help of a tax professional, you probably have a pretty good idea of whether you're getting a refund, and how much it will be. But scammers, often using social media, may promise huge refunds by essentially encouraging you to claim tax credits to which you're not entitled and then charging large, upfront

fees or a fee based on your refund amount.

**Suspicious websites** — Watch out for strange-sounding or misspelled web links — these can take you to harmful sites, rather than the official site of the IRS (IRS.gov).

**Solicitations from charity imposters** — The many natural disasters we've experienced in recent years has brought out great support from people wanting to help friends, neighbors and even total strangers. However, these catastrophes have also encouraged scammers who solicit contributions to bogus charitable groups. To determine whether an organization is a qualified charity that can receive tax-deductible contributions, visit the Tax Exempt Organization Search tool on IRS.gov.

**Threats or demands** — IRS impersonators may threaten you with large fines, or even arrest, if you don't make immediate payments of what they claim you owe.

You can protect yourself from many tax-related scams by knowing how the IRS will or won't communicate with you. Typically, the IRS will initiate contact with

you through regular mail delivered by the U.S. Postal Service. You can verify the legitimacy of any letter by visiting your secure IRS online account, under the "Notices and Letters" section.

Other ways the IRS will contact you:

**Email** — Only with your permission, with a few exceptions, such as criminal investigations

**Text** — Only with your permission

**Phone** — Only to discuss your case, verify information or set up a meeting

**Fax** — Only to verify or request employment information

**In-person visit** — Rarely done, and typically only following a letter

The IRS will not:

- Contact you or take payment on social media.

- Accept gift cards or prepaid debit cards as payment.

- Threaten to call law enforcement or immigration officials.

- Take your citizenship status, driver's license or business license.

- Leave pre-recorded voicemails (robocalls).

**A** I did a bit of research to see if there were any Honda technical service bulletins that would apply and did not find anything. Regarding the temperature sensor, there are actually three, an external sensor, an internal sensor, and a solar sensor. The system, since it is computer controlled, has some diagnostic capabilities. I am wondering if the dealer actually tested anything or just wrote is off as normal? If the dealer truly considers it normal, I would look for another 2021 CR-V and compare them. I suspect you will find a difference between the two vehicles.

brackets and wire connections. Yes, I do try to answer every email, usually within 24 hours.

**Q** I have a 2021 Honda CR-V. I am having trouble with the temperature setting inside the car during winters. Anything above 62 degrees on the dial blows hot air. Anything less than that blows cold air. The settings function normally and as expected during summer when the weather is warm outside. I had the dealership check it, but they said this is normal behavior as the temperature sensor is outside the car and not inside. All other cars I have been in function like an air conditioner in all seasons. Is something wrong with my car?

## CAR DOCTOR

continued from page 16

**A** Getting an old tractor to start is pretty similar to rescuing any old vehicle. Typically, the fuel system is usually the biggest issue. Drain the fuel tank, replace the fuel filter and clean out the carburetor. Depending on the condition, you may find the carburetor needs a rebuilding. Drain and replace the oil and spark plug(s). When the spark plugs are out, add some light oil to the cylinders. Check the engine turns over and there is spark. On the first attempt to start the tractor I would use premixed two-stroke fuel. The little bit of oil in the fuel will help lubricate the engine. Once it is running, let it fully warm up and then shut it down. Check the oil and belts and look for loose bolts,

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- Mail tax debt resolution advertisements.

If you have doubts about any offers or communications, whether supposedly from the IRS or not, you may want to contact a trusted, qualified tax professional.

Also, be on guard for your elderly family members, as senior citizens are frequent targets of scammers. If you talk to these family members regularly, see if you can find out about any unusual offers or solicitations they may have received.

Finally, if you believe you are a victim of monetary or identity

theft, you can report these issues using the IRS website at Identity-Theft.gov. You can also refer to IRS Publication 5027 — Identity Theft Information for Taxpayers.

Tax scams and identity theft are serious threats — so do whatever you can to defend yourself.

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

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- Roll the account over to an individual retirement account (IRA).
- Cash it out, which is subject to potential tax consequences.

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

**SATURDAY, MARCH 15**  
 • Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce will host its 25th Anniversary Home & Community Expo, the top event to promote your business to local residents and potential customers. Face to face networking opportunities. Bring your chowder to the "Best of the Valley" Chowder contest. Compete for the 2025 People's Choice and 2025 Judges' Choice awards. The Expo is being held at Northbridge High School, 427 Linwood Avenue, Whitinsville, from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.  
 • 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. Pollinator Meadow Volunteer Day at Willard House and Clock Museum. Help us plant trees, bushes and flowers, 11 Willard Street, North Grafton.  
 • St. Peter's Parish in Northbridge is holding a Corned Beef and Cabbage Dinner

beginning at 5:30 p.m. in the parish hall. Bring your family and friends. Tickets are \$17 per dinner and include potatoes, carrots, salad and dessert.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 16**  
 • The New England Country Music Club will hold a dance on Sunday, March 16 with Al Carter at the Uxbridge Progressive Club, 18 Whitin Street, North Uxbridge. Doors open at 12:15 p.m. and the performance is from 1-5 p.m.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 23**  
 The Dudley Woman's Club is bringing back its popular game, "Pocketbook Bingo" at PACC, 27 Harris Street. Webster. Door opens at 1 p.m. and Bingo starts at 2 p.m. Ten designer bags to win, raffles and best spirit contest for Best Table Décor. Tickets are \$35 per person in advance and \$40 at the door. \$280 reserves a table. Each ticket includes a book of 10 Bingo cards with three games each and one door prize raffle entry. Tickets available online at www.dudleywomensclub.org/pocketbookbingo.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 29**  
 • 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Family Fest and Home Show at Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School, 65 Pleasant Street, Upton. Bring the whole family along for an exciting day out! We've got a fantastic array of activities lined up that everyone, young and old, will enjoy. For the kids, there's a variety of fun activities to keep them entertained. Meanwhile, adults can explore the offerings from 100 plus vendors, featuring a wide selection of products and services for your homes and businesses. Don't forget to join in on the fun by voting for your favorite Mac & Cheese! Admission is free, just bring some canned goods for the local food pantries!

**FRIDAY, APRIL 4**  
 • The Holy Spirit Episcopal Church hosts a monthly Community Breakfast on the First Friday of each month from 8-9 a.m. A full breakfast will be served for a donation of \$5.00. Location of the event is Holy Spirit Episcopal Church located at 3 Pleasant St, Sutton.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 5**  
 • Simon Willard's Birthday Party from 12-3 p.m. Willard House and Clock Museum, 11 Willard Street, North Grafton.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 12**  
 • Former science teacher David Hagberg will offer a talk on tower clocks and why he has one in his house. At 2 p.m. Willard House and Clock Museum, 11 Willard Street, North Grafton.

**THURSDAY, APRIL 17**  
 • "Rendevous with Rachel Revere" presented by Histry at Play, LLC at Blaxton Hall, 9 Main Street, Sutton at 6:30 p.m. Presented by the Sutton Historical Society.

**SATURDAY, MAY 17**  
 • The Coast Guard is offering its 2025 Boat America Course from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. at the Webster Fire Department Classroom, 55 Thompson Road, Webster. Contact Public Education Officer Phil Kubat for registration or additional information. Call 508-478-3778 or email phil.uscgauux@verizon.net. To locate these and other USCG Auxiliary course (BA and BS&S) that will meet certification requirements, visit: [https://www.cgauux.org/boating/class\\_finder/index.php](https://www.cgauux.org/boating/class_finder/index.php).

**THIRD WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH**  
 • Coin Show at the VFW Post 1385, 13 Cross Road, Uxbridge, 3-7 p.m. Free admission, free appraisals.

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# Friends of Charlton Library Holding Yarn Sale

In preparation for its upcoming Yarn Sale, which will take place on March 29 from 10 am to 2 pm at the Charlton Public Library, 40 Main Street, Charlton, the Friends of Charlton Public Library is currently accepting donations of clean, unwanted yarn, knitting needles, crochet hooks, and knitting/crochet books. Donations can be placed in the designated bin behind the Circulation Desk.

Proceeds from fundraisers enable the non-profit Friends to support the mission of the Library by sponsoring a variety of programs, projects, and events, including museum passes, movies, author talks, music concerts and performances, and other cultural and educational experiences. The Friends of Charlton Public Library appreciate your continued support. For questions or more information, please email charltonfriends@gmail.com.

# Dudley seeking citizens' comments on its draft Hazard Mitigation Plan

The natural hazards that pose the greatest risks to Dudley include the potential for flooding, tornadoes, earthquakes, and more.

At a Dudley Board of Selectmen public hearing on February 24, hazard mitigation expert and town consultant Jamie Caplan presented a draft plan that covers disaster preparedness, response, mitigation and recovery.

Caplan's work, funded by the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance Program, began in July.

The updated Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies these risks and outlines actionable steps to mitigate them. With a FEMA-approved Hazard Mitigation Plan, the town becomes eligible for critical pre- and post-disaster mitigation grant funding from FEMA.

The town now seeks input

from residents to help our emergency management officials in their work to prioritize risks, identify vulnerable areas, and craft effective solutions. While we can't prevent natural events like winter storms, heavy rains, or earthquakes, we can mitigate their risk with proper planning and community engagement. Your participation will help make Dudley more resilient to natural hazards and climate change.

Please see the plan and downloadable comment form at <https://www.dudleyma.gov/home/news/dudley-hazard-mitigation-plan-public-review-and-feedback-form>

The deadline for citizens' comments is March 10, 2025.

For questions regarding this plan, please contact Fire Chief Dean Kochanowski at 508-949-8040 or [dudleyfirechief@dudleyma.gov](mailto:dudleyfirechief@dudleyma.gov).

[dudleyma.gov](https://www.dudleyma.gov).

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