



# Bellingham BULLETIN

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Bellingham's Favorite Hometown Newspaper

April 2025

## Bellingham Library's 3rd Annual Art & Photography Show Showcases Local Talent

By JENNIFER RUSSO

Each year, the Bellingham Public Library hosts an art and photography show that encourages local creatives to submit their work and showcase their talents. Residents of all ages are able to enter into the competition and the works are judged by a panel of artists and scholars. At the reception, the public can then vote for their favorites in the categories of children's art, mixed media, drawing, painting, photography, and digitally enhanced photography. In addition to the winning picks from the judges, there is a Best of Show winner and a People's Choice winner.

This year's submissions were impressive, with over sixty-five pieces entered. There was a tie for the **People's Choice** win,



Rebecca Daigneault's painting, "Springfield", won first place in the Paintings category and also Best in Show.

**TALENT**

*continued on page 2*

## Bellingham's Earth Day Cleanup April 26th

*Sign Up Now and Help Keep Your Community Beautiful!*

By DAVID DUNBAR

One hundred fifty medium-sized bags stuffed with roadside trash. "Almost half a ton of it," recalls Dylan Labonte.

Results from last year's Earth Day Clean Up, which was carried out by almost 100 volunteers. Labonte, Bellingham's Health Agent, coordinates the annual effort to clean up many of the town's major streets including Lake, Hartford, and Maple.

And this year, they'll do it again. On Saturday, April 26, at 9 a.m., volunteers will gather at Town Hall. "This is an opportunity for people to give back to their community, to help keep it clean," explains Labonte.

"We'll be picking up general trash alongside the road including water bottles, broken glass, fast-food boxes... all the stuff that people toss out of their car windows as they drive along our streets," according to Labonte.



Laura Renaud and Dylan Labonte pose at the appreciation luncheon for volunteers after the cleanup last year. "It was a wonderful day," says Labonte, "a great feeling seeing the town clean."

**CLEANUP**

*continued on page 2*




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## TALENT

continued from page 1

with John Andonian's *Aurora Over Tromso* and Ben Hughes' *Sam's Pudding*.

In the category of **Children's Art**, Zoey Zulawnik took first place with *Gnome Home*. Second place went to Mackenzie Novack's *The Mysterious Apple*, and third place went to Zack Spitzer for *Looking Otter*.

In the **Mixed Media** category, the winner was Lia Vichi with *Spring's Approach*. Second place went to Eileen Bailey's *Love & Light*, and the third-place winner was Kylar Jones with *Notes from Biology*.

From the **Drawing** entries, first place went to Rebecca

Daigneault for *Word Hamster*. Second place was won by Kay Ebwa for *Sun Feb 17th*, and third place went to Natasha Vaux for *Orchidea della Morte*.

The first-place winner in the **Paintings** category was Rebecca Daigneault, with her piece *Springfield*, which also won the **Best of Show** award. Second place went to Eileen Bailey's *Out Beyond*, and the third-place winner was Verne L. Thayer for his painting of the *William Hayward Tavern*.

In the **Photography** category, Steven Vaux took first place with *SamSara*, the second-place win went to Dawn Murphy for *At the Farm - Lutzhorn Germany*, and third place went to Richard Berg for *Scituate Light*.

Lastly, in the **Digitally En-**



"Sam's Pudding" by Ben Hughes, one of the publicly voted People's Choice winners.

**hanced Photography** category, first place went to Bharadhwaj Harihara Subramanian for *Veil of Dawn: Sunrise over Blackrock Vol-*



Zoey Zulawnik's painting "Gnome Home" took first place in the Children's Art category.

*cano*. Second place was won by John Andonian's *Hamnoy Village*, and third place also went to Bharadhwaj Harihara Subramanian for *Nobska Reflection*.

The annual art and photography show has become one of Bellingham's favorite events, and

winning entries can be viewed on the library's walls throughout the rest of the year. Come check out the amazing talents of your neighbors! Congratulations to the winners and thank you to everyone who participated.

## CLEANUP

continued from page 1

Labonte identifies the messiest streets based on complaints by residents over the past year. He will then assign volunteers, transport them to the streets, and keep in touch with them

by cellphone. "This year, we're giving out reuseable totes," says Labonte, "plus everything else volunteers need to be safe and effective."

This cleanup effort has been going on annually for about 10 years in Bellingham. Volunteer support comes from schools and especially sports teams, residents of the town, and about two dozen local businesses that supply vests, gloves, bug spray, drinking water and a nice lunch at the end of the cleanup.

"This is a team effort and includes other town departments like Inspectional Services and the Conservation Commission,"

according to Labonte. He's looking into making cleanup efforts more often than once a year.

"Everyone is welcome," explains Laura Renaud, Assistant Health Agent, who adds, "Volunteers should wear proper attire – long pants, long sleeve shirts, no open shoes. Those under 12 years of age must be accompanied by an adult." Cleanup will run from 10 a.m. until noon, and then refreshments will be served.

If you'd like to sign up, please contact Renaud at (508) 966-5820 or email lrenaud@bellinghamma.org and do it by April 18.

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## Blackstone Valley Amateur Radio Club Offers Demo April 5th

The Blackstone Valley Amateur Radio Club will conduct an amateur radio demonstration Sat., April 5, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St.

The club will operate two radio stations outside the library as an introduction to ham radio.

An indoor display will feature the history of ham radio, its purpose, the benefits of the ham radio hobby and the public

service hams render during national emergencies and natural disasters. Some vintage radio equipment will be displayed as well as a continuous Morse code demonstration.

Experienced hams will welcome visitors, explain the day's proceedings and answer questions regarding their hobby.

Questions may be directed to Mickey Callahan, K1WMC, at micke@comcast.net

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# 3rd Annual Bellingham Business Expo April 5th

The third Annual Bellingham Business Expo will take place at the Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, on Saturday, April 5, 2025, from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. The free event will be dedicated to local businesses sharing information, giveaways and pamphlets about their products and services with the Bellingham community.

“Our goal for the businesses is to get them to have the opportunity to meet members of the community in a non-sales environment, where the attendees can get their questions answered about what the businesses do, and how they may be of service to the community members,” says Bernadette Rivard, Bellingham Public Library Director.

For questions on the event, please contact Bernadette Rivard, Library Director at [library@bellingshamlibrary.org](mailto:library@bellingshamlibrary.org) or (508) 657-2776.

For information on the Bellingham Business Association, visit [www.bellingshambusinessassociation.org](http://www.bellingshambusinessassociation.org).

## BWOT April Events

### Muffins with the Easter Bunny

The Bellingham Women of Today will welcome the Easter Bunny for their annual Muffins with the Easter Bunny on Saturday, April 5th, from 9–11:30 a.m. at St. Blaise Church Hall, 1158 S. Main St., Bellingham.

Admission fee is \$5 per child with a maximum charge of \$15 per family. Children can meet the Easter Bunny while you are welcome to take your own photos. We will offer muffins, homemade cinnamon rolls, bagels, juice, milk and coffee. Food and beverage items are \$1-2 each. There will be free crafts and coloring pages for kids as well as raffle items. All proceeds will benefit local BWOT charities.

### Letters from the Easter Bunny

The Easter Bunny is so busy preparing for the big day the Bellingham Women of Today will be helping him send personal letters to anyone on your list. The cost is \$3 for each letter or two for \$5. Send the name and address of recipient before April 5th along with your name and phone number, including any information you would like added to the letter with a check made payable to BWOT. Mail to BWOT, PO Box 405, Bellingham, MA 02019

# From the Town Clerk...

Happy spring! By now you should have returned your census forms and dog licenses. Licenses are due April 1st for renewals, and as of May 1st a \$25 late fee per household will be assessed. Please take care to get your licenses before the fees go into effect. Owners who are up to date on rabies information may renew online. Others may send a form and check into the Town Clerk’s office or the drop box outside. All information may be found on the Town Clerk’s website at <https://www.bellingshamma.org/384/Town-Clerk>.

Also on the Town Clerk’s website is information about the local election, including offices up for election on June 3rd, as well as timelines. Nomination papers for the following offices may be obtained at the Town Clerk’s office during normal business hours: one 3-year Select Board position, one 3-year Town Moderator position, one 3-year Town Clerk position, four 3-year Constable positions, one 3-year Library

Trustee position, 2 3-year Planning Board positions, 2 3-year School Committee positions, and one 5-year Housing Authority position. The Town Clerk’s website will be updated weekly as to who’s pulled papers for each position. Nomination papers will be available until April 11th and must be returned by April 15th.

Also, with spring around the corner our marriage intention appointments are picking up! While we’ll process the paperwork in person if available, we recommend you call and schedule an appointment. Both parties must be present to fill out the paperwork. A photo ID is required and there’s a fee of \$25. Please be advised there is a three-day wait for the license, and that license is valid for 60 days. As always, please call or email any questions and we’d be happy to help. (508) 657-2831 or [townclerk@bellingshamma.org](mailto:townclerk@bellingshamma.org).

AMY BARTELLONI  
INTERIM TOWN CLERK

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# Bellingham Public School District Child Find

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B and Massachusetts General Law 71B each school system is responsible for identifying children three to four years of age that are suspected of having a potential disability. We provide free screening during the school year to determine whether your child may possibly have a delay and may require specialized educational services prior to Kindergarten. If you have concerns about your child’s development, please contact Kim Baker for Stall Brook, [kbaker@bpsdk12.org](mailto:kbaker@bpsdk12.org) or Maryann Mello at DiPietro, [mmello@bpsdk12.org](mailto:mmello@bpsdk12.org) to schedule an appointment for screening.

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# NY Times Best Selling Author Dan Heath Discusses the Power of Reset

By JENNIFER RUSSO

So many times, we find ourselves feeling stuck or uncertain - perhaps facing an obstacle in our work or personal lives that seems difficult to move or climb over. We have trouble seeing beyond it when we are in the moment of the struggle. While we innately have the tools to be able to triumph over these things, it can be difficult to know where to begin.

In a recent Author Talks series session, which is brought to our community by the Bellingham Library in partnership with the Library Speakers Consortium, *New York Times* bestselling author and speaker Dan Heath discusses strategies from his latest book, *Reset: How to Change What's Not Working*. While the book is geared toward people in leadership positions in order to help them make positive changes in their organizations, many of the strategies can be applied toward everyday situations we find ourselves facing.

Dan, who also runs a podcast where he interviews people from many different professions about

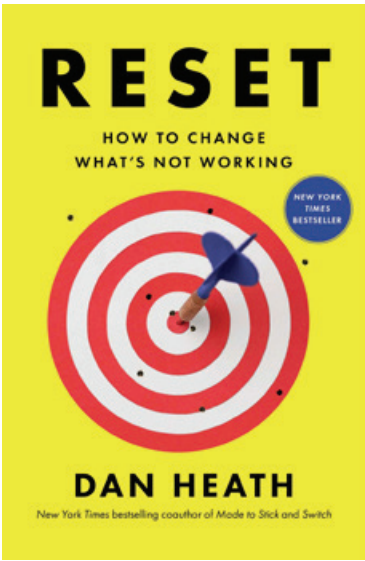
the highs and lows they experience in their work, talked about how when we run into a situation we perceive as a block (or boulder), we often try pushing harder in order to get it to move out of our way, which isn't always the best answer.

"We have the agency to change things instead of being stuck in an equilibrium we don't like. Sometimes we just need to reset the system in order to see the results, and in order to do that we need to find the leverage points," shared Dan.

The inspiration for looking deeper into this subject surprisingly came during the pandemic, as he was in a drive-thru attempting to pick up dinner for his family and ended up in a line of over fifty customers that was pouring out into the street.

"I kept thinking, what's actually broken here and how could it be changed to be more efficient," Dan says.

Dan shared that finding the leverage points is a bit of a detective process but can happen with a solid strategy. He says that in



business, a lot of those answers are on the front lines, so it's important to look there first. If you are a leader, your attention is often spread across the business, so things can get missed.

"Another important thing to do is to study the bright spots, those things that are working well, and discovering why they are succeeding," says Dan.

He used the example of a student's report card, where they



Author Dan Heath was one of the featured writers in Bellingham Public Library's Author Talks series.

had a good grade in one subject, but poor grades in others.

"It's easy to look at where the problem is, but looking at where the successes are helps us to see what's working. Then, when we focus on those positive elements, we can apply them to the other things that we may be struggling with."

Another strategy he offered is to consider not only the goal, but the goal OF the goal. He illustrated with a car dealership survey example.

"When the survey was first created, its goal was to understand how they could ensure customers were satisfied, get feedback and make improvements as necessary, but over time the score of the surveys themselves became the main goal, with customer satisfaction falling second. They lost the original goal," shared Dan.

So, how do these insights help us? When we make a goal, we need to understand what we are trying to accomplish and stay focused on that to stay on track. If we have that clear, final goal in mind, we can more easily identify bottlenecks that arise and consider alternate pathways. We can focus on what works along the way, those bright points in the journey, and apply those to pain points. But one of the most important tools we have, according to Dan, is motivation.

"Motivation is THE most important fuel for any change, personal or professional."

Dan's book and other titles are available online or at local bookstores. To learn more, visit [heathbrothers.com](https://heathbrothers.com) and for more information future Author Talks events, go to <https://libraryc.org/bellingham/upcoming>.



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# Family-Run Affordable Junk Removal Takes the Stress Out of Cleanups

By CHRISTIE VOGT  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

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

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

As a family-owned and operated company, Schadler says Affordable Junk Removal has lower overhead costs and is more accessible than national competitors. "I answer my phone 24 hours a day," he says. "I was on vacation in Italy and Portugal, and I was still answering my phone on the beach. When you call us, you get me — not an automated machine!"

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

During the business's early days, Schadler provided junk removal on nights and weekends



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

Schadler says his wife Christine "was equally as involved" in getting the business off the ground. "She handled the back-end while I did the heavy lifting, all while she was working at EMC," he says. "Fast forward 17 years, and we both work full time managing the company as well as other endeavors. Business is doing great; it has grown tremendously to a fleet of trucks and dumpsters, and we've also been able to buy a pizza place, The Corner Market in Holliston."

In addition to delivering an in-demand service to the community, Schadler is appreciative that Affordable Junk Removal has helped provide a work-life balance that suits his family. "It allows me to be able to do what

## Business spotlight

I like doing and spend time with my kids," he says. "I'm home to see my babies play softball and do all that stuff. We are also able to give back to the communities we serve."

The Schadlers say that Bellingham has been an excellent hometown for both Affordable Junk Removal and their Resell-



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

ables shop, and they are proud to have many repeat customers and friends in the area.

One of the best parts of his job, Schadler says, is meeting and getting to know new people and developing relationships with returning customers. "We are really grateful for the re-

peat business and the chance to form connections with residents across the MetroWest area," he says.

To receive a free junk removal estimate, call (774) 287-1133 or visit [affordablejunkremoval.com](http://affordablejunkremoval.com).

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# Bellingham Author to Hold Book -Signing April 26th

Bellingham resident and retired Assistant DA Mike McHugh recently published his first novel, *Three-Leaf Clover*. The book is one of top sellers on Amazon's US Military Historical fiction list. The author will hold a book signing at the Bellingham Barnes and Noble, 270 Hartford Ave., Bellingham, on Saturday April 26 from 1 to 3 p.m., an event organized by Kate Laprise, Bellingham Barnes and Noble store manager.

McHugh served as a prosecutor for 40 years in the Worcester County DA's office and was the senior prosecutor in the Major Felony Unit, where he handled murders, home invasions, bur-

glaries, masked robberies and other serious felonies. The author retired on July 19, 2022, and currently teaches criminal law, criminal procedure, Intro. to Corrections, Intro. to Criminal Justice, and creative writing at Mt. Wachusett Community College in Gardner and Leominster.

McHugh's writing led to his career in law.

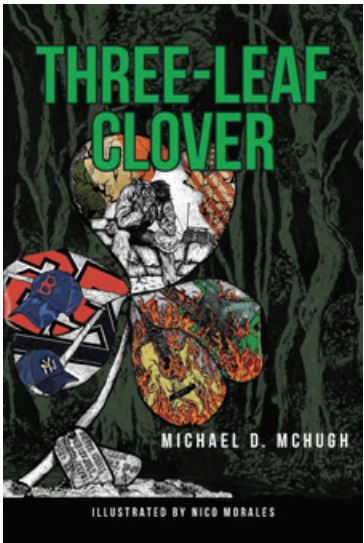
"I started writing as early as in high school, and I was the sports editor," says McHugh, who was encouraged by his mother, a schoolteacher, to pursue writing as a career. McHugh went on study journalism, again becoming a sports editor first

for Worcester State College and then for UMass Amherst's newspaper, *The Collegian*. Later, he attended Penn State on scholarship for his master's. After working as a news reporter first for the *Fitchburg Sentinel* and later for the *Worcester Telegram and Gazette*, covering police and fire as well as sports, McHugh was hired in the press office of MA District Attorney John Conte, who encouraged him to attend law school. McHugh, who by then had a young family, took a new direction at Western New England University School of Law.

Back to his writing roots, the author is busy in his retirement from his law career. He is cur-



rently working on two more books, one entitled *The Photographs*, inspired by his father's experience in WWII, and the other about a cold-case homicide. He credits his wife, Elena



Rosemere, for her informal work as his editor.



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## Bellingham Board of Health Votes Reduces Number of Tobacco Permits

Bellingham, MA, February 26, 2025 – During the Belling-

ham Board of Health meeting held on February 4th, 2025, at 7 p.m. at 10 Mechanic Street, Bellingham, the board voted unanimously to reduce the number of available Tobacco Sales permits from thirty (30) to twenty-seven (27). Tobacco sales

permits are issued on an annual basis. All twenty-seven permits have been allocated for 2025. If you have any questions regarding 2026 Tobacco Sales permit applications, please contact the Board of Health office at (508) 966-5820.

### Storm Drains are NOT for Dumping!

Have you ever wondered what happens to the water flowing down a storm drain after a storm? Stormwater, the runoff water after it rains or snows, flows from parking lots and streets into storm drains so that the pavement won't be flooded. Underground pipes then channel the stormwater directly to the nearest waterway, usually with little or no treatment. So whatever flows down a storm drain comes out in a nearby waterway, such as a wetland, stream, pond, or the ocean.

**Please help keep our local waters clean:**

- Never dump anything down storm drains – this includes litter, sand, leaves, pet waste, motor oil, or paint.
- Clear sand, leaves, litter, debris, and snow away from storm drains.
- Support municipal efforts to conduct regular street sweeping and catch basin cleaning.
- Participate in a neighborhood cleanup or storm drain marking project.

**For more information, visit our community's website or go to [www.stormwatermatters.org](http://www.stormwatermatters.org).**



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**Municipal Spotlight**

# Bellingham's Assessors Office Fills a Variety of Roles

By KEN HAMWEY,  
BULLETIN STAFF WRITER

Betsy Cournoyer has been a town employee in Bellingham for three decades, but 28 of those 30 years have been in the assessors office, giving her a wealth of knowledge about real estate and all the rules and regulations that deal with property assessment.

A native of Bellingham, the 66-year-old Cournoyer was appointed Administrative Assessor in 2000, when she became responsible for all phases of property assessment and office administration. "My duty is to determine the full and fair market value on real estate and business personal property in the town," she emphasized.

That comment sounds like the function of the assessors office is rather basic and fundamental. Far from it! Cournoyer and her two staff members have a plethora of other roles to fulfill, and a quick tally finds there are nine other tasks that are dealt with on a daily basis. They include:

- **Property record card** — Every property owner can call, visit or email the office to ask any questions about any aspect of their property. "There are codes on property record cards, and if there are any questions about the parcel data, they can contact us," Cournoyer said. "We'll explain the contents of the property record card."
- **Property ownership update** — The office performs a daily update of property ownership via its link with the Registry of Deeds. "We're responsible for updating property ownership, and this is done on a daily basis," Cournoyer said. "Our database is the foundation from which other town offices consult."
- **Copies of documents** — Because of the assessors office link to the Registry of Deeds, it can provide copies of any legally record document, such as deeds, trust changes and homestead status. "This information is online, and we're pleased to assist property owners to navigate through the Registry of Deeds website," Cournoyer offered.



**Betsy Cournoyer has a variety of tasks to deal with as Bellingham's Administrative Assessor.**

- **Personal exemptions** — The assessors office provides and approves personal exemptions for the legally blind property owner, seniors over 65 with financial limitations and veterans with disabilities and/or qualifying awards. "We perform taxpayer outreach to ensure applications are received by the April 1 deadline," Cournoyer noted. "The contact can be by phone, by mail or even going to a property owner's home. We do everything possible so that the taxpayer doesn't miss the opportunity to get the exemption for which they qualify."
- **Small business exemptions** — The assessors administer small business exemptions, utilizing the confidential list of qualifying business provided by the Division of Employment and Training.
- **Tax work-off personnel** — "It's the responsibility of the assessors office to ensure that the senior tax work-off deduction appears on tax bills for the third and fourth quarters in accordance with state statutes," Cournoyer said.
- **Abutters list** — "Our office issues abutters lists for any town department, taxpayer or developer," Cournoyer said. "We provide up-to-date lists upon request."
- **Parcel tax maps** — The assessors office maintains parcel tax maps, which are required by law and updated annually. "The maps show the shape of one's parcel and may be helpful for builders, homeowners and town officials," Cournoyer said.
- **Auto excise bills** — The assessors office issues motor vehicle excise tax bills and abatements. "We work with the Registry of Motor Vehicles to determine current registration status," Cournoyer said.

Cournoyer, a graduate of Bellingham High and Bryant University, earned her bachelor's degree in business administration. Her office staff includes Tara Stewart (assistant assessor) and Michelle Nowlan (principal clerk). "Tara is responsible for inspecting new construction, sales inspections, and field reviews," Cournoyer said, "and Michelle is the face of the office, taking calls and assisting at the counter."

Cournoyer enjoys her role and said, "I developed passion for real estate after my first house was built." She truly likes all facets of the job. "Every day is different," she said. "I also like the public interaction and all the research involved with parcel creation."

There are, however, challenging times. "What's most challenging is trying to convince a property owner that the value of his/her parcel is sound and accurate," she noted. "Excise tax bills can be difficult issues as well, because the statutes are very restrictive."

Bellingham has a three-person Board of Assessors who review and process abatements and personal exemption applications. The members, who meet monthly or as needed, are Lynn Roy, Grace Devitt and Sue Silva.

Cournoyer's office rarely has a quiet day, primarily because there are many local departments and committees seeking information. "We interact with inspectional services, the town clerk, the treasurer/collector's office, planning and zoning boards, the school department, town counsel, and the police and fire departments," Cournoyer said. "We also deal with utility companies."

The assessors are like an unsung athlete on a sports team. They don't get much notice, but their contributions are many and very often crucial.

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# Bob's Beer and Wine a Local Favorite – From Beverages to Big Wins

By Jennifer Russo

In Bellingham, one local package store has become a favorite place for both beer-lovers and lottery enthusiasts. Those looking to grab a six-pack of their favorite brew or a Mega Millions or Powerball “quick pick” come in hoping that they will be the next big winner.

Bob's Beer and Wine, which has been under the same ownership for over twenty-five years, has an excellent selection of local, domestic, and imported beers, wine, premium cigars, and a range of tobacco accessories. They have built up a reputation over the years for superior customer service and are on a first-name basis with many of their regular customers.

What they have really become known for recently though, is their good fortune. With over 160 books of scratchers available, as well as other lottery games, Bob's has garnered some attention for selling multiple high-winning tickets. In October of 2024, one very lucky person won \$4 Million on a ten-dollar scratch ticket purchased there. A few months later in January, the store sold two more big prizes of \$100k each on scratch tickets. They have also sold two \$1 Million tickets, two



\$100k tickets and had a \$50,000 Powerball winner in the past. For Keno-aficionados, there is also a Keno screen with an area to grab a seat to play one game or many.

“We're so happy for our winners and hope the luck keeps coming!” shop owner Mr. Patel said. “Maybe next time, it'll be you!”

Local news outlets have recognized Bob's Beer & Wine as one of the state's luckiest retailers, so it's no surprise that word is spreading fast. Locals have started to take notice, with regulars and newcomers alike stopping in to purchase what they hope will be lucky tickets. Some customers have even made a tradition of stopping by for their

## Business spotlight

weekly lottery tickets, hoping that the streak will continue.

“I wasn't even planning to buy a ticket today, but after hearing about the streak I figured - why not?” said one excited customer. Others have even started referring to the shop as the ‘Lottery Gold Mine of Bellingham!’

Mr. Patel also mentioned that he has other businesses in this area of Massachusetts including both Blackstone Smoke Shop and DDM Cannabis in Blackstone and JDM Cannabis in Mendon, which also provide



quality products and friendly service.

“We would like to thank all of our loyal customers for giving us their business. We appreciate it so much and look forward to seeing them again and again,” says Mr. Patel.

Bob's Beer and Wine is located at 220 Pulaski Blvd in Bellingham, MA and is open 7 days a Sun - Thurs (5am - 10pm) and Fri - Sat (5am - 11pm). They can be reached at (508) 883-4363.

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# Portfolios Care About Asset Allocation, Not Your Emotions.



Glenn Brown, CFP

Investing is a journey with greed, fear and uncertainty creating market fluctuations and volatility to portfolio values. While the cause always changes, one thing remains constant - portfolios don't care about your emotions.

## Sounds harsh? Maybe.

Consider the last time your investments performed based on how you feel? This isn't the chicken or the egg. Investments don't react based on how you feel, they react to your actions and choice of asset allocation or lack thereof.

## What is Asset Allocation?

Asset allocation is a foundational strategy of dividing an investment portfolio across different domestic and international asset classes—such as stocks, bonds,

real estate, hard assets, and cash equivalents—to balance risk/reward and reduce volatility. This allows investors to participate in returns over time by staying invested throughout market, macroeconomic and geopolitical cycles.

## This Time is Different!

Really? Let's take a trip down memory lane the past 25 years.

Recall Y2K, Four Horsemen, Dot.com Bubble, 9/11 Recession, Iraq, No Income Verification Mortgages, \$150 Oil, Housing Bubble, Financial Crisis, 0.1% Cash, Great Recession, Quantitative Easing (QE), Flash Crash, QE2, Debt Ceiling, Government Shutdown, Greece, Taper Tantrum, QE3 - Shock & Awe, FANG, Brexit, 2016 Election, Tax Cuts, China Trade War, 9 Fed Rate Hikes, COVID Shutdown, 3X Stimulus, 9% Inflation, Ukraine, 10 Fed Rate Hikes, 2022 Non-Recession, Magnificent 7, Trump II. Throughout all these events, asset allocation ensures not all investments in a portfolio are moving in unison.

Asset allocation is not influenced by emotions; it is a strategically, diversified portfolio spread across different asset classes to help smooth out market fluctuations and reduce overall risk. For example, if stocks are down, then bonds or real estate or gold may be performing well to help offset.

## S&P 500 Index ≠ Asset Allocation.

Many believe investing in the S&P 500 index is the same asset allocation. It's not.

Being broadly diversified across U.S. large companies represents one asset class. Due to an average annualized return of ~13.9% over the past 15 years, recency bias has investors "setting it and forgetting it".

## Asset Allocation at Work.

Most under age 45 (and some older) don't recall "The Lost Decade" when the S&P 500 index total return including dividends from 2000-2010 was -9.1%. Correct, \$1 million invested on Y2K was ~\$910,000 ten years later.

Elsewhere from 2000-2010, positive returns and outperformance was captured in index funds of developed international stocks, emerging market stocks, U.S. small cap stocks, U.S. high-yield bonds, U.S. REITs (Real Estate Investment Trusts), commodities, gold, cash and U.S. bonds.

Speaking of the U.S. Aggregate Bond index, \$1 million invested became ~\$1,840,000. Because of this divergence, the S&P 500 index didn't catch up to the U.S. Aggregate Bond index until 2017, or 17 years later. If you're in the distribution stage of your life (i.e. retirement), that's not good.

Asset allocation models vary and ideally are based on timelines for the need of funds in a financial plan, not your age. How one invests a Roth IRA, Traditional IRA or taxable brokerage account could be different and should align with "when" and "how much" the plan projects to draw from each account.

## Ignore at Your Own Risk.

When investors ignore asset allocation, they risk making decisions based on emotion. During market highs, greed sells lagging asset classes. During downturns, fear sells into panic without a plan back into the long-term strategy. These emotional responses create market timing and remove your foundation.

So remember, during times like these, your portfolio cares about

asset allocation — a foundational strategy to help you manage risk, smooth out market volatility, and stay on track to meet timelines of your financial goals.

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

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

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# The Sun will Come Out Tomorrow:

## Annie Takes Center Stage at BFCCPS

By JENNIFER RUSSO

Most people are familiar with the red-headed spitfire of an orphan named Annie, whether it be from the comic book series, the old radio show, the well-loved 1982 movie starring Aileen Quinn, or from a Broadway production. The story follows the poor, fiery, yet charming ten-year-old during the time of the Great Depression, as she dares to escape a New York City orphanage run by a cruel woman who doesn't like kids, tries to find her parents, and accidentally ends up in the care of one of the wealthiest men in the country.

The students at the Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School (BFCCPS) chose the heartwarming story for their annual musical this year and delivered a wonderful performance that had the audience on the edge of their seats and humming along to songs like "It's the Hard-Knock Life" and "The Sun Will Come Out Tomorrow."

Charlotte Mantilla did a wonderful job capturing the independent and caring Annie, and Lila Branson nailed the part of Miss Hannigan, who we all have a love/hate relationship with. Mr. Warbucks was played by Jack Renaud, who went from gruff businessman to tender father. Sophia Bourgeois, who played his assistant Grace Farrell, did well at showing a patient and elegant air. Petty criminals Rooster and Lily, played by James Jaeggli and Violet MacDonald, had the crowd chuckling with their great facial expressions and bumbling antics.

The rest of the cast played a number of characters, including the orphans, housekeepers, the butler Drake, Officer Ward, Mr. Bundles the laundry man, radio personality Bert Healy, a variety of radio station acts, produce peddlers, a want-to-be New York star, the judge, Sandy the dog, and of course President Franklin D. Roosevelt.



Orphanage matron Miss Hannigan, played by Lila Branson, brought lots of comedy to the show.

All of the handmade set pieces and props were very well done, and BFCCPS students played in the orchestra pit, as well as running the lighting and sound, creating digital art for the backdrop screen, helping to direct, and swapping out scenes during the show.

Overall, *Annie the Musical* was a remarkable success, and audience members were already commenting that they are looking forward to seeing what show the school chooses to do next



Jack Renaud as billionaire Mr. Warbucks and Charlotte Mantilla as orphan Annie, had great chemistry on stage.



A happy ending for all in Ben Franklin Charter's production of Annie.

Spring. Its happy ending left everyone feeling positive, with the message of being hopeful and resilient despite challenges. Congratulations to the students, staff, and crew of the production for delivering another fantastic show!



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# Bellingham Democratic Town Committee Scholarship & Other News

The Bellingham Democratic Town Committee is pleased to announce that it will again be sponsoring a \$500 scholarship to be awarded to a member of the Bellingham High School Class of 2025. The scholarship is a direct cash grant, which can be applied at the recipient's discretion to expenses that the student incurs while pursuing college or any other kind of advanced training. Applications are available through the BHS guidance office.

In addition to preparing for the scholarship award, the work of the committee continues. The group hosted an appearance on Wednesday, February 5, in the Arcand Room with guest speaker Djuna Perkins. Ms. Perkins is a Democratic candidate for District Attorney of Norfolk County. Members were very interested to hear about her extensive background as a prosecutor and as a defense attorney, and her plans for the office. She talked extensively about her cri-



Members of the Democratic Town Committee (Chair Lora Davidson is second from left) with guest speaker Djuna Perkins (second from right).

tique of some existing problems related to the Karen Read case and to the Stoughton police sexual abuse case that is now being brought by Federal prosecutors rather than by the District Attorney's office. Members of the committee also brought to Ms. Perkins's attention the Theresa Corley case, which is so important to Bellingham residents. As

a longtime prosecutor, Ms. Perkins emphasized her support for the police and the crucial work they do, as well as her determination to root out abuses when they occur.

### Upcoming meetings:

**April 2:** Regular meeting at 7 p.m.: networking and guest speakers

**April 11:** Town Caucus. Doors in Arcand Room (Town Hall) open at 10; meeting begins at 10:30. All registered Democrats in town are eligible to attend and to run to become a delegate to the state convention.

**May 7:** Regular meeting at 7 p.m.: networking and guest speakers

**June (date TBD):** Summer Kickoff annual fundraiser

**June 11:** Awarding of scholarship, Bellingham High School

**June 28:** Bellingham Pride Fest

Regular monthly meetings of the Bellingham DTC are always held in the Arcand Room at Town Hall. All Democrats in Bellingham are invited to attend meetings and are eligible to run to become delegates to the convention. For more information, please contact Patricia Keppler at (508) 966-0003.

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# Eye-Opening Surgery: Corneal Transplant Gives Patients a Clearer Outlook on Life

DAN LIU, MD  
MILFORD FRANKLIN EYE CENTER

In May 2023, a landmark surgery was performed at NYU Langone Health: a whole eye transplant. During this surgery, the entire eye – in addition to a portion of the face – was transplanted from a donor into a living human recipient for the purposes of facial reconstruction. While we are likely decades away from performing eye transplants that can restore vision, there are more than 49,000 transplants of a different kind performed in the United States annually which can successfully improve vision and save sight: corneal transplants.

### What is the cornea?

The cornea is the transparent, dome shaped surface that acts as the front window to the eye. It plays a crucial role in focusing light rays entering the eye in order to allow us to see clearly. When the cornea is damaged, it can become scarred, swollen, or

opaque. In these cases, the visual effects can vary from increased light sensitivity, blurry vision, or even impaired vision to the point of blindness. Fortunately, for many individuals experiencing corneal damage, a corneal transplant, also known as a keratoplasty, may offer the opportunity to restore vision.

### Who needs a corneal transplant?

There are various conditions, both genetic and acquired, that can affect the cornea and necessitate a corneal transplant. Common conditions include:

- **Corneal dystrophies:** These are inherited conditions that cause progressive clouding or scarring of the cornea. Fuchs' dystrophy is the most common of these dystrophies, which often runs in families. This is a condition in which the innermost layer of cells in the cornea, the endothelial cells, no longer

function in keeping the cornea clear. As a result, fluid can build up in the cornea, causing it to be swollen and cloudy. Some patients with Fuchs' dystrophy experience debilitating glare, whereas other patients can experience significant loss of vision.

- **Keratoconus** is a common condition for which corneal transplants are performed. In patients with keratoconus, the cornea becomes increasingly cone shaped over time rather than remaining dome shaped. This can lead to loss of vision as light rays bend or refract aberrantly off the irregularly shaped cornea. Individuals with keratoconus may experience progressive astigmatism and a decrease in vision.
- Other acquired conditions that may affect the health and clarity of the cornea include eye infections which can cause significant scarring, or even previous eye surgeries that can result in damage to the cornea.

### What is a corneal transplant?

In diseases in which the cornea cannot be repaired with medications alone, an ophthalmologist who specializes in performing corneal transplants can restore the clarity and health of the cornea, as well as vision. In these sight saving surgeries, the diseased cornea is replaced with a clear, healthy cornea from a human donor who has generously chosen to donate their organs after death. Luckily, in the United States, there is a well established infrastructure for tissue procurement such that people who require corneal transplants do not need to be on a prolonged waiting list in order to have surgery. By replacing the damaged tissue, a corneal transplant can

significantly improve a person's vision, enhance their quality of life, and reduce symptoms like pain or sensitivity to light. In this era of modern medicine, corneal transplants are very successful and last up to 10 to 15 years, with many lasting more than 30 years.

### Are there different kinds of corneal transplants?

Since the introduction of corneal transplants in the 1900s, these surgeries have evolved to become more efficient with faster healing times and better visual outcomes. Corneal transplants can be full thickness or partial thickness transplants.

- **Penetrating keratoplasty (PK):** Also known as a full thickness corneal transplant, this is the most traditional form of corneal transplant. In PK, the diseased cornea is removed by the surgeon, the donor cornea is sized to fit the patient's eye, and stitches are used to place the donor cornea in the eye. The surgery is performed when the cornea is severely scarred or damaged, affecting all of its layers.
- **Descemet's Stripping Endothelial Keratoplasty (DSEK):** In DSEK, only the innermost layer of the cornea, called the endothelium, is replaced. The rest of the corneal layers remain intact. This surgery is often used to treat conditions that affect the endothelium, such as Fuchs' dystrophy.
- **Descemet's Membrane Endothelial Keratoplasty (DMEK):** DMEK is a more advanced version of DSEK and is considered one of the most effective corneal transplant procedures for treating endothelial dysfunction. In DMEK, only the thinnest layer of tissue with endothelial cells are transplanted. Because of its precision, DMEK has a faster recovery time and better visual outcomes than traditional PK or DSEK procedures.

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EYE

continued on page 13





Ladies of St. Anne members enjoyed a paint night in March led by Crystal, from Listen to Your Art.

## Thoughts of Spring Inspire Paint Night Projects

Watering cans, garden gnomes, and butterflies were some of the projects chosen by Ladies of St. Anne members for the March 14 Paint Night meeting. Following the business portion, Listen to Your Art owner-instructor Crystal, helped members with paint and supplies needed to complete their projects. Paint Night is so much fun it is the third year in a row the Ladies have asked Crystal to bring her product and expertise to help us create and take home completed signs to display. We are already talking about next year's Fourth Annual Paint Night!

The April meeting will be a baby shower to benefit Abundant Hope in Attleboro, MA, on April 10, at 7:00 p.m. Items needed range from diapers sizes 1 thru 3, to clothes sizes 3 thru 24 months,

to baby wipes, formula, blankets, etc. Also at this meeting, a representative of Tastefully Simple will attend to talk about and offer samples of the products available for purchase.

The Sodality will offer a Mother's Day Basket raffle. Members are asked to bring an item to be used in this raffle with them to the April 10 meeting so that we can assemble the basket(s) that night and begin selling raffle tickets at the weekend Masses. What would you like to receive on Mother's Day? That would be a great item to donate...you may win it!

The Ladies of St. Anne Sodality is guiding Stations of the Cross after Communion service, about 9:20 a.m., each Friday during Lent at St. Blaise Parish, 1158 South Main St., Bellingham, MA. ALL are welcome!

### EYE

*continued from page 12*

#### Do I need a corneal transplant?

To determine whether you would benefit from a corneal transplant, a thorough evaluation by an ophthalmologist is necessary to determine whether a transplant is appropriate. At Milford Franklin Eye Center, we have corneal transplant surgeons who perform additional

testing to evaluate the patient's eye health, including measurements of corneal thickness and imaging scans. We also have established relationships with eye banks, which are organizations that procure donated tissue and screen for quality.

For more details, see our ad on page 12.

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# Moonlight Program in Practical Nursing to Host Child Safety Fair & Open House, April 10

The Moonlight Program in Practical Nursing (Post-Secondary) will host a Child Safety Fair and Open House on Thursday, April 10, at Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School at 65 Pleasant Street in Upton. The nursing students and staff invite you to join them for a fun, informative evening on safety awareness, followed by the annual Practical Nursing Open House for adults interested in a life-changing career in healthcare.

The Child Safety Fair will run from 3-6 p.m. in the cafe annex. Nursing students will provide parents, children, and attending families with information and resources to help keep children safe in and outside the home. They will also offer engaging presentations and demonstrations on bicycles, car/booster seats, fire, backyard/playground,

and water safety. The free event includes fun activities to engage children and help them learn about safety. Meet your Upton police/firefighter/EMTs, an interactive vehicle display, and more.

The Practical Nursing Open House will run from 6-8 p.m. Nursing students will greet you and share more details about the part-time, 60-week evening program requirements, the admissions process, and how to enroll. Tour the practical nursing classrooms, speak with faculty and staff, observe the state-of-the-art equipment, and participate in a Q&A session.

The affordable program offers small class sizes and accepts in and out-of-district applicants. For more information about the program and to register for the Open House, visit [www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/pnopenhouse](http://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/pnopenhouse).



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# Bellingham Public Library News & Events for April

For updates about library programs and services, please visit [www.bellinghamlibrary.org](http://www.bellinghamlibrary.org).

Additional details on library calendar at <https://bit.ly/4eJRLSh>

## Holiday Closing

Closed Monday, April 21st (Patriots' Day Holiday)

## Highlighted Programs

**Virtual Author Talk With Jodi Picoult – Wednesday, April 2nd from 7-8 p.m.**

Step into Spring with us as we chat with the highly acclaimed bestselling author Jodi Picoult about her newest novel, *By Any Other Name*. Jodi Picoult is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of twenty-nine novels. This event is held in partnership with the Library Speakers Consortium and is funded by the Friends of the Bellingham Library.

For more information and to register for the Zoom link, <https://libraryc.org/bellingham/70728>

**3rd Annual Bellingham Business Expo – Saturday, April 5th from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

This “Showcase Bellingham Business Day” will feature giveaways, pamphlets, and more. Door Prize - \$100 Visa Gift Card to one lucky attendee, courtesy of the Friends of the Library. The event will also include the following presentations:

- 10:30 a.m. – NCK Bellingham Karate Demo
- 11:00 a.m. – Blackstone Valley Amateur Radio Club Presentation
- 11:45 a.m. – Bellingham Garden Club – Propagating Plants from Seeds Presentation

## Recognizing Linda Lord's Dedication to the Bellingham Public Library

Thursday, April 10th from 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Please join us for the unveiling of Linda Lord's name on the Memorial Plaque, which honors long-serving Library Trustees for their dedicated service. Linda served on the Library Board of Trustees for over a decade before continuing her support as the Treasurer of the Friends of the

Library. Registration preferred, not necessary.

## PETTY – Celebrating the Music of Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers

Saturday, April 12th from 1-2 p.m.

Presented for the third consecutive year by Blackstone Valley Music, a nonprofit music school located in Uxbridge. The group features Douglas High School assistant music director Sam Masoud on keyboard/harmonica/vocals, BVT senior Jaden Roddick on bass, BVM executive director Mark Mandeville on rhythm guitar/vocals, Sutton High School junior Charlie Randall on drums, and Grafton Music School music director James Briand on lead guitar/vocals. For more information, please visit [www.blackstonevalleymusic.com](http://www.blackstonevalleymusic.com) or call (508) 278-7211. This program is made possible by funding from the Friends of the Bellingham Library.

**Let's Talk About Fossils! – Tuesday, April 22nd at 10:30 a.m.** For ages 8 through adult. Steve Emma will bring speci-

mens and will have a PowerPoint presentation. There will be fossils to give away too! He will talk about the Carboniferous period in geological history as well as how he got to love fossils! Bring a fossil for Steve to try to identify. Steve is a graduate of URI with a BS in Natural Resources (botany, horticulture.) who has taught sciences at middle school, high school, and college levels. Steve is past president of the RI Mineral Hunters Club. He authored the book *Carboniferous Plant Fossils of North Attleboro, Massachusetts: An Amateur's Guide* and co-authored two published science articles on plant fossils. This school vacation week program is made possible by funding from the Friends of the Bellingham Library.

## Ongoing Children's Programs

**The Baby Bunch – Mondays at 9:30 a.m.**, for infants 0-18 months and their caregivers.

**Ring a Ding – Mondays & Thursdays at 10:15 a.m.**, no sessions April 21st and 24th

**Read to Freedom the Reading Dog – Mondays from 5:30-7 p.m.** Check the calendar for details and sign up for a 15-minute time slot!

**Sensory Story Time – Tuesdays at 10:15 a.m.**, no session on April 22nd.

For children ages 2-5 of all abilities (younger siblings always welcome). Please register for each session you'll attend.

**Bi-Weekly Lego Builders – April 7th at 4:30 p.m.** (only one session this month!)

An open hour to use your imagination with Legos! We will save and display your creations for two weeks.

**Adult/Child Book Clubs – For kids in grades 1-3, 4-6 or 7-10 and an adult in their life who loves to read.** Meets monthly. If you are interested in joining, those in grades 1-3 should contact Melissa Denham, [mdenham@cwmar.org](mailto:mdenham@cwmar.org), grades 4-6 should contact Amanda Maclure, [amaclure@cwmar.org](mailto:amaclure@cwmar.org), and grades 7-10 should contact Diane Nelson, [dnelson@cwmar.org](mailto:dnelson@cwmar.org).

## LIBRARY

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LIBRARY

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After School Programs

Registration mandatory for children in grades 4-6 to attend the ASK program. Registration for new participants takes place each day after school between 2:30 and 4:45 p.m. Hours vary for both programs on early release days, so please check the library calendar.

- ASK Program hours 2:30-4:45 p.m.
- The Teen Room is open for grades 7-12 from 2-4:45 p.m.
- Check the library website for details on the programs.

For ASK: <https://www.bellinghamma.org/288/Elementary-Middle-School>

For Teen Room: <https://www.bellinghamma.org/354/Programs>

Adult Programs

Yoga for the Seasons – Spring Thaw

Tuesdays at 8:30 a.m. Check the library calendar for details and to register.

**A Novel Idea: A New Book Club for Adults** – Tuesday, April 1st from 6:30-8 p.m., Book discussion with light refreshments. This month, we are discussing *Nigerians In Space*, by Deji Bryce Olukotun. If interested, please contact Diane Nelson at [dnelson@cwmar.org](mailto:dnelson@cwmar.org).

English Conversation Groups

Practice speaking English with other adult English language learners in a relaxed, comfortable place. Drop-in sessions offered on the following dates/times. Attend as often as you wish!

Monday, April 7th from 1-1:45 p.m.

Tuesday, April 8th from 6-6:45 p.m.

Wednesday, April 16th from 11-11:45 a.m.

Thursday, April 24th from 5-5:45 p.m.

**Needlecraft Night** – Wednesdays from 6-8 p.m.

All skill levels are welcome. Please bring your own materials. No registration.

**Writing Group for Adults** – Tuesday, April 8th at 6:30 p.m. An evening of reading and listening facilitated by local area writers Amy Bartelloni and Marjorie Turner Hollman. Reading limit is 9 minutes per reader, with a brief opportunity for positive, personal comments only. To participate contact Marjorie Turner Hollman at [atmarjorie@marjorie-turner.com](mailto:atmarjorie@marjorie-turner.com).

**Friends of the Library Annual Meeting** – Tuesday, April 8th at 7 p.m. Email [library@bellingshamlibrary.org](mailto:library@bellingshamlibrary.org) for Zoom link.

Library Board of Trustees Meeting – Thursday, April 10th at 7 p.m. in the Conference Room at the library.

**Virtual Ask-A-Lawyer Program with Attorney Brian T. Salisbury** – Monday, April 28th, Free 20-minute appointments 5 p.m.-7:30 p.m. Local attorney

Brian T. Salisbury of the law firm Doherty, Dugan, Cannon, Raymond & Weil, PC will meet with you through Zoom to discuss any legal questions you may have. Register to receive the Zoom link close to the appointment date. Please note: Unless otherwise agreed in writing, Attorney Salisbury will not provide legal representation in any legal matter discussed.

**Bellingham Genealogy Club** – Monday, April 28th at 6 p.m.

Bring your laptop or use one of our Chromebooks! Run by librarian Catherine Perreault, a former genealogical researcher at the New England Historic Genealogical Society, this club is a chance to learn and be social with other genealogy enthusiasts. Registration preferred but not necessary.

**Virtual Author Talks** – to register for these talks, go to: <https://library.org/bellinghamma>. Recordings of these talks are also available on the library website in the days following the event.

Wednesday, April 2nd at 7 p.m., Virtual Author Talk with Jodi Picoult

Tuesday April 8th at 2 p.m., Virtual Talk with Smithsonian Horticulturist Matthew Fleming

Thursday, April 24th at 7 pm, Virtual Conversation with Bestselling Author Gregg Hurwitz

New Online Resource!

The library is now subscribing to **Fiero Code**, a learn-to-code platform that uses gamification to teach coding skills to people of all ages. Patrons with a Bellingham Library card can access Fiero Code at: <https://app.fierocode.com/sign-in?club=1450>.

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# Bellingham Senior Center Highlighted Events April 2025

*The Bellingham Senior Center is located at 40 Blackstone St., Bellingham. Reach them at (508) 966-0398 or online at [www.bellinghamma.org](http://www.bellinghamma.org)*

**Good Vibes Lunch Club:** An idea to bring good-hearted, grateful, generous people together. “We’re coming together to support our service community,” says Josie Dutil, director of the Senior Center. It’s \$20 plus the cost of lunch, and Dutil has

the details. Contact her at (508) 966-0398 or [jdutil@bellinghamma.org](mailto:jdutil@bellinghamma.org). First lunch planned for Tuesday, April 15, at noon.

**April Birthday Party - April 24.** It will be another great meal of teriyaki beef tips from Chef de Jour. Please sign up for the party by 3 p.m., April 18, so we can give them an accurate count on the number of people that plan to attend.

**Spiritual Book Club:** The Club meets via Zoom on Mondays at 9 a.m. Discussion will be about A Return to Love by Marianne Williamson. Please call host Josie Dutil at (508) 657-2705 to join or for more information.

**Coffee & Conversation:** Join the clever, smart, sociable folks who turn out for C&C Tuesdays at 9:30 a.m.!

**The Knitters & Quilters Group** meets each Monday at 9 a.m.

**Musical Baseball Show:** Friday, April 18, 1 p.m. FREE. Includes baseball songs, Trivia, free CD raffle and more. Entertainment by Howie Newman, singer-guitarist and former sportswriter. Howie covered the Red Sox for many years and was also a radio broadcaster for the Lowell Spinners. This performance is supported in part by a grant from the Bellingham Cultural Council, a local agency, supported by the Mass. Cultural Council, a state agency. Reservations required; please call the Senior Center at (508) 966-0398.

**Strength & Stretch Barre:** Lisa Lentini will lead this full body,

low impact “Pop-Up” class including legs, arms, hips, glute and core, with tiny pulsing movements. Barre focuses on toning, alignment, strength, balance and flexibility. We will be using low weights or your own body weight. Please call ahead to let us know you’ll be coming.

**Wanna play some pinball?** The Senior Center is offering a trip to the ElectroMagnetic Pinball Museum and Restoration Arcade in Pawtucket, RI, for only \$10. You can play all day on hundreds of machines. Friday, April 25, from 9:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. Carpooling from the Center is available. Please let us know you’re coming at (508) 966-0398. Bring your lunch and drinks.

**Home Health Care:** Please join Amanda Regan of SALMON Home Care on Tuesday, April 29, at 11:30 a.m. for an informational presentation on home services, skilled nursing, occupational, physical therapy or hospice you or your loved one might qualify for. Call (508) 966-0398 to reserve your spot.

**Volunteers Needed:** With the opening of the expanded new commercial kitchen at the Senior Center coming closer, volunteers are needed to make sure everything runs smoothly. Help is needed in the café and dining room. Tasks include setting

tables, servicing the coffee bar, washing dishes, serving and preparing food, greeting visitors, and more. Each volunteer needs to do a CORI background check. To find out more, call

Senior Center Assistant Director Terri Graham at (508) 657-2710.

**Fourth Annual Health Fair:** Join us on Friday, May 2nd for our 4th Annual Health Fair from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. where you can get your healthy aging questions answered by the many vendors who will be present. Come and find out all about the services and tools out there that will help you “age in place.” The first 150 who sign up ahead of time will be able to order a FREE lunch provided by event sponsors Atria Draper Place. If you would like to volunteer to help set up and take down the Health Fair, please sign up with Terri Graham: [tgrham@bellinghamma.org](mailto:tgrham@bellinghamma.org) or call (508) 657-2710.

**Meet The Candidates:** Coming up to the Annual Town election in June, the Senior Center will present candidates to answer your questions. Town openings include those on the Select Board, School Committee, Planning Board, Town Moderator and Town Clerk. Tuesday, May 20, from 9-11 a.m.

## Mass Parks for All Aims to Connect Open Space Enthusiasts

On February 18, Mass Parks for All launched its new Friends of the Friends web page (<https://www.massparksforall.org/friends>) as part of its Friends of the Friends Campaign. The page includes listings and contact information (<https://www.massparksforall.org/find-friends>) for some 200 (and growing) park friends groups and other groups that

promote preservation of and access to open space from every corner of Massachusetts.

The organization aims to unite those who have an interest in preserving, protecting and expanding these essential, often historic assets that play such a vital role in keeping us physically and mentally fit. For more information, visit <https://www.massparksforall.org>.





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# McGovern Delivers Remarks on Hunger in America

## Slams Trump & Republicans for Proposed Cuts to Food Assistance

As Donald Trump prepared to deliver his first address to Congress since returning to office, Congressman Jim McGovern (D-MA), one of Congress’s leading voices in the fight against hunger, delivered a powerful speech from Ginny’s Helping Hand, a local food pantry in Massachusetts, calling out Trump and Republicans in Congress for their attacks on food assistance programs.

“Tomorrow, Donald Trump will stand at that podium and lie,” McGovern said in his remarks, “He’ll lie about the economy—claiming everything is going great, even as more people fall behind. He’ll lie about helping workers—as he hands out more tax breaks to billionaires. And he probably won’t even mention hunger—even though 47 million Americans now struggle to put food on the table.”

McGovern slammed the drastic food assistance cuts pushed by Trump and congressional Republicans, warning that they would take food away from children, seniors, veterans, and working families. McGovern noted that most people who are on SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) are children, seniors, and Americans with disabilities. Of the rest, the major-

ity are employed—but make so little they still qualify for food assistance.

Standing among shelves of food that would soon be distributed to struggling families, McGovern shared powerful stories from Massachusetts residents who rely on SNAP to get through the month—including a 79-year-old veteran in Springfield, a family from Worcester, and a mom in Fall River—who all fear they will not be able to afford to put food on the table if Republican budget cuts reduce benefits for their families.

“At the end of the day, a budget is a moral document. And this Republican budget? Let us just call it what it is. Republicans are stealing from the American People so they can give more tax breaks to their billionaire donors,” said McGovern at the conclusion of his remarks. “And I believe that is just plain evil.”

McGovern and Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) also wrote to Merkley Ask Secretary Rubio to Restore Funding to China Human Rights NGOs that monitor and advocate for human rights in China. The letter appeals to Secretary Rubio as a former Chair (2017-2018) of the Congressional-Executive Com-

mission on China (CECC)—a bipartisan and bicameral body that monitors human rights and rule of law in the People’s Republic

of China—which Representative McGovern (2019-2020) and Senator Merkley (2021-2022) have both also served as Chairs for.

Find the text of the letter at <https://tinyurl.com/ChinaNGOs>.

## Sen. Rausch to Chair Environment & Local Govt. Committees

State Senator Becca Rausch (D-Needham) has been tapped by Senate President Karen Spilka to lead not one but two policy committees that likely will see significant legislation move through their subject areas this term, including proposals directly from Governor Healey.

Senator Rausch was reappointed as Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, her third consecutive term at the helm, which should receive an anticipated environmental bond bill from the Governor once filed. Senator Rausch also returns as Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government, which she led during her first term and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, thrusting the committee’s work into the spotlight in order to ensure local governments could continue to function. Governor Healey has already refiled her Municipal Empowerment Act, proposing changes to local procurement rules, local taxation

options, hybrid access to public meetings, and more.

“I am deeply honored and proud to chair not one but two legislative committees for the Massachusetts Senate this term, and truly grateful to Senate President Karen Spilka for her confidence in my leadership and policy-shaping skills and experience,” said Senator Becca Rausch. “The Environmental Committee’s work on plastic reduction, water, wetlands, air, trees, pesticides, environmental justice, and more is critical to achieving our climate action goals, and increasingly important as the federal administration slashes the EPA’s budget and turns its back on environmental protection. Likewise, the work of the Municipalities Committee impacts every town and city in the entire Commonwealth

and provides a significant opportunity to empower our local government partners, improve efficiency, and enhance access to public bodies and resources. These positions carry responsibility to help mold legislation and policy that directly impact our families, businesses, and communities, and I look forward to the important work ahead.”

Rausch is one of only four Senators to chair two joint committees this session. She will also serve as Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on the Census, her second consecutive term in that position, and as a member of five additional Joint Committees: Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities; Election Laws; Revenue; State Administration and Regulatory Oversight; and Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development.



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# The b.LUXE *beauty beat*

## Gray-Blending for Women: Embracing Your Gray Hair in 2025

BY GINA WOELFEL

You may remember our “Gray-Blending” article from last March. Since then, a growing interest in blending gray hair has been all over social media. You’ve got questions, and we’ve got the answers! Here’s your updated guide to gray-blending, with everything you need to refresh your look in 2025.

The world of hair color is undergoing a significant shift, with more women opting for gray-blending techniques instead of fully covering their gray hair. While gray-blending has been around for years, a surge in demand for low-maintenance hair color has brought this innovative technique into the spotlight. By seamlessly blending natural grays with soft highlights and translucent color, gray-blending creates a fresh, modern look that feels soft and natural. Unlike traditional hair dyes that often leave a harsh line of regrowth, gray-blending offers a lived-in style that celebrates the beauty of aging, giving women more freedom and flexibility with their hair coloring routines. Women aren’t just accepting their gray hair—they’re embracing it as a symbol of strength, confidence, and individuality!

### The Classic Approach to Gray Coverage

For years, there were three basic levels of gray coverage:

- **Full Coverage:** This all-over, one-process coloring technique provides 100%

gray coverage. Imagine wearing opaque wool tights. This application creates a uniform color that matches either your natural shade or your desired color but often results in a noticeable line of regrowth at the roots.

- **Demi-Permanent Coverage:** This method uses less pigmented dye to offer about 80% gray coverage. It provides a softer approach, allowing some natural gray tones to show through, similar to wearing sheer, colored pantyhose.
- **No Coverage:** This approach is a full gray embrace that leaves your natural gray and silver hair to take center stage. Using a clear gloss and brightening shampoo can eliminate brassiness and add shine. It’s like wearing sheer, nude pantyhose—subtle, simple, and naturally beautiful.

Modern hair dyes offer a broader spectrum of colors and a more vibrant finish than their predecessors but still require salon visits every 4 to 6 weeks. Many women continue to use the same hair color for years, believing that their natural shade remains unchanged, even though their original hair color has likely shifted significantly.

It’s easy to fall into a routine with hair coloring. While full coverage may have worked in the past, it’s important to consider whether it remains the best option for you today.

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GRAY-BLENDING INFORMATION

### Why is Gray-Blending For Women So Popular?

Embracing natural gray hair can be challenging for many women. Transitioning from a solid hair color to gray is often a significant emotional commitment. The rising popularity of gray blending offers a modern way to integrate gray hair with your natural or chosen color. It’s an excellent option for those looking for a low-maintenance way to incorporate more gray into their style without immediately making a complete silver commitment.

### How To Transition To Gray-Blending

For clients who’ve been coloring their hair for years but want to gray-blend or transition back to their natural color, there are several options available:

#### 1. Highlights and Lowlights:

If you’re looking to minimize the appearance of gray roots, a stylist can strategically apply highlights or lowlights around your face, which softens the look of regrowth and adds dimension without creating a stark line of demarcation. Additionally, incorporating a few carefully placed highlights near your part can lift gray strands closer to your silver color. At the same time, a toner (used after bleaching or coloring to help neutralize brassiness and unwanted undertones, resulting in a more desired and customized color) can help unify the overall appearance.

#### 2. The Big Chop:

If you’re ready to take the plunge, cutting your hair short



and allowing it to grow out naturally is a great option. It typically takes about 1.5 years for your hair to reach shoulder length, but regular trims can help eliminate any unwanted color.

#### 3. Complete Silver Transformation:

For many, the desire to go completely silver in one sitting is tempting. While some can achieve this in one session, it’s a lengthy and costly process that can take up to 12 hours and may not always provide the results you expect.

Regardless of your method, a toner or tinted gloss is always recommended to ensure maximum brightness and a beautiful finish.

### The Timeline for Gray Blending

The timeline for transitioning to gray hair varies for each individual. Factors such as your hair’s health, the coloring method you choose, and the rate at which your hair grows will all influence your journey. Your stylist will typically want to see at least three to four months of hair regrowth to assess your gray pattern. While this timeline can differ from person to person, it serves as a general guideline that helps your stylist create the most effective color

plan for you moving forward.

Once you start the transition process, you can expect your maintenance and upkeep to be about eight to twelve weeks apart, depending on your chosen method. Typically, it takes about 3 to 4 salon visits to complete the process and get your hair to the desired state.

The best part? Nothing is permanent! If gray blending isn’t your style, you can always return to your traditional color. Your stylist supports you every step of the way and ensures you look and feel your best.

### Curious How Gray-Blending Can Work For You?

Visit b.LUXE Hair & Makeup Studio for a complimentary color consultation. Our expert stylists will help you navigate the world of gray-blending and find the perfect solution for all your needs.

2025 is the year for you to embrace your gray hair with style and confidence!

Scan the QR code for more information about gray-blending, including before-and-after photos of real clients. To book a consultation, go to bLUXE.com.

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# SAFE Responds to WCVB Story on Opioid Abatement Fund

SAFE is thankful to Mike Beaudet and WCVB for highlighting the opioid abatement fund expenditure concerns in a recent news segment (<https://www.wcvb.com/article/opioid-fighting-windfall-sitting-unspent-massachusetts-municipal-coffers/63854693>).

SAFE Coalition has worked with over a dozen communities in Massachusetts to advise, coordinate, and deliver community services related to opioid abatement funds. “Families and individuals who have been impacted by the opioid epidemic deserve these funds to go to support and recovery,” says SAFE CEO and co-founder Jen Levine. “We want to help make that process as quick and seamless as possible.”

Founded in 2015, SAFE is the only nonprofit in southeast Massachusetts offering wrap-around, zero-cost substance use and mental health services to individuals and families. We have close, first-hand knowledge of the opioid crisis’s impact today and the complex landscape of municipal abatement funds.

Opioid fund expenditure plans are incredibly specific, seeking impact through seven key strategies including supporting people in treatment and recovery, building greater connections to care, offering harm reduction (like Narcan, fentanyl test strips, and safe syringe programs), supporting parents and families, and preventing misuse through prevention education.

SAFE has a team dedicated to understanding this expenditure strategy and working with municipalities to get it right the first time. “We can appreciate how this unique funding source can create gaps in municipal knowledge related to spending,” Levine says. “Our hope is to bridge that knowledge gap so funds can be allocated accord-



ing to set timelines and expectations.”

Families and individuals have been impacted by the opioid epidemic for over 20 years. “By utilizing these funds, we honor all those who have struggled or are currently struggling and encourage people to get care before crisis” says Levine.

SAFE works directly with communities to deliver targeted services based on their highest needs. SAFE’s services are designed to support individuals at every stage of their recovery journey, from individual and family support groups to youth education initiatives, peer-led programs, mediation, and counseling services.

We also provide practical resources such as diaper and car seat banks, medication take-back events, Narcan training, trauma-centered yoga, and CPR instruction – all designed to address the broader social and environmental determinants of substance misuse and mental health.

Through a trauma-informed, culturally responsive approach, we ensure that individuals in the community can readily access the critical services they need to improve their overall health, safety, and well-being.

For more information on the SAFE Coalition, visit [www.safe-coalitionma.org](http://www.safe-coalitionma.org).

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# 'Their Eyes Light Up!'

## Toshiba Grant Funding Enhances Skill Development at BVT

Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT) has received a \$3,390 STEM grant from the Toshiba America Foundation. The school has used the supplemental funds to purchase an oscilloscope training board and ten oscilloscopes for its Engineering & Robotics program. The equipment is necessary to enhance students' understanding of circuit board functions and teach them how to adjust waveforms to produce desired outcomes.

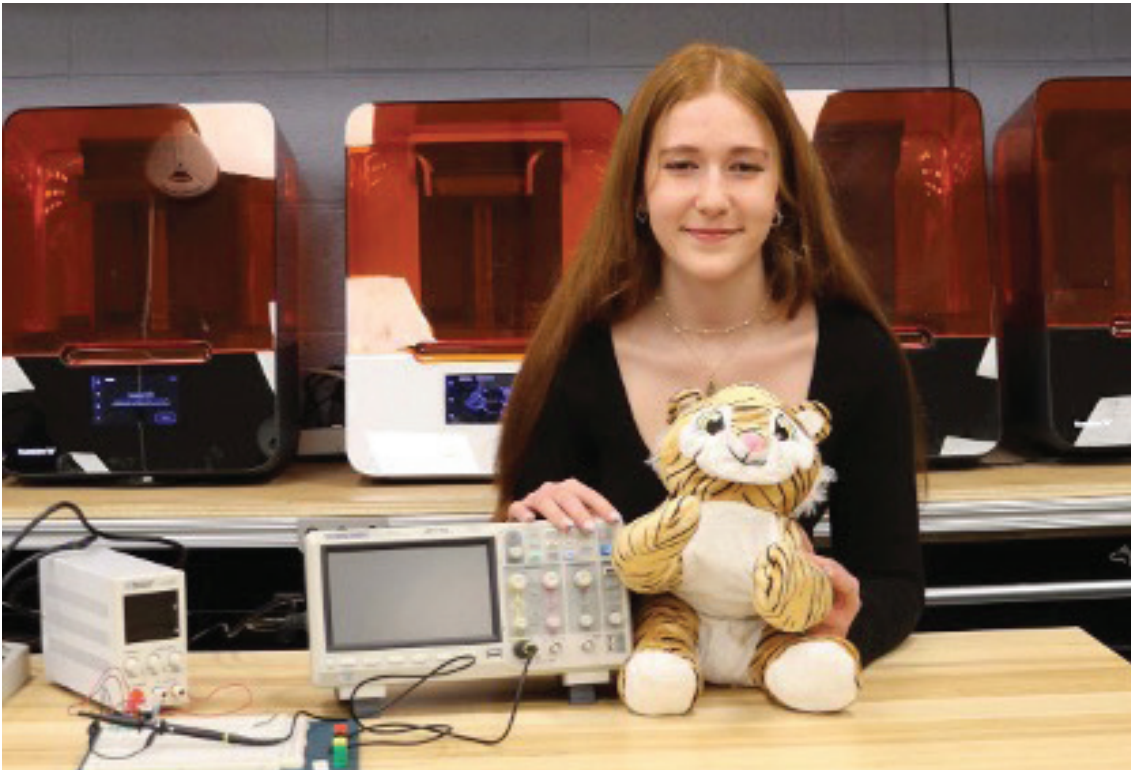
Recently, sophomore students in Mr. Timothy Oliveira's digital electronics course used the grant-acquired equipment in a fun and engaging assignment. Using the instructor training board, Mr. Oliveira demonstrated how students should use an oscilloscope, a diagnostic instrument, to draw a graph of an electrical signal and create a circuit board to illuminate the eyes of a stuffed animal to complete the critter project successfully.

"Learning how to use the equipment properly was important to me," said Charlotte Lewis of Uxbridge, a sophomore in the Engineering & Robotics program at BVT. "I enjoyed creating a circuit board and adjusting wave-

forms to produce a pulsing light in the eyes of the plush tiger. I'm confident that the skills learned through this project will continue to help me in the future."

"Understanding how to use an oscilloscope is crucial for troubleshooting, designing, and maintaining electronic circuits. Our students need oscilloscope skills to prepare for and pass certification examinations that assist with employment," explained Mr. Oliveira. "With an increasing demand for skilled technicians, preparing our students with in-demand skills to meet employer needs and expectations increases their employability."

"As a grant recipient, we are proud to provide our students and teachers with the tools and equipment they need without impacting our tax-payers," said BVT's Superintendent-Director, Dr. Michael Fitzpatrick. "Increased access to modern industry equipment paired with inquiry-based approaches to our curriculum makes learning here interesting and fun while preparing our students for success in STEM-related careers. It is exciting to see the moment they grasp the subject matter, and their eyes light up!"



Charlotte Lewis of Uxbridge, a sophomore in the Engineering & Robotics program at BVT, has completed the critter project and holds a plush tiger with pulsing eyes.

## Milford Church to Hold Electronics Recycling Day April 26th

The First Congregational Church of Milford is sponsoring an Electronics Recycling Day on Saturday, April 26, 2025, from 8 a.m. to 12 noon. The church will ensure that 99% of dropped off items will be reused and recycled.

All computer monitors, computers, parts and accessories,

faxes, copiers, printers, scanners and TV's can be recycled. Recycling fees range from \$5 to \$40 per item. Cell phones can be recycled at no charge and will be donated to charities that recycle and reuse them. The recycling vendor will erase and shred all hard drives at no additional cost.

This event is an easy and fun way to dispose of the old electronics in your garage, basement, attic and offices. So start setting them aside now and bring them to the church parking lot

on Saturday, April 26th. A drive through process will allow those donating to quickly drop off their items where help will be available.

Drop off in the church parking lot at 4 Congress St., Milford. (Opposite Draper Park, next to the Post Office). Please enter the lot from the Church St. entrance, cash only payments, please.

For more information contact the church office at (508) 473-5259.

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# Some Positive Changes, but Rules Package Not Transparent Enough, Says Soter

State Rep. Michael Soter (R-Bellingham) continues to push for reforms to the internal rules governing the Massachusetts House of Representatives and Senate, saying legislators need to be more transparent in how they conduct business and accountable to their constituents.

On February 25, Representative Soter supported multiple Republican-sponsored reform measures filed as amendments to a comprehensive House rules package as well as a separate rules package that will govern the operations of the joint legislative committees of the two branches for the 2025-2026 session.

Soter noted that, although the initial rules proposals released prior to floor debate contained several positive reforms, he believes the reforms do not go far enough; the House rejected nearly all the caucus' amendments, with the exception of a proposal to require the House journal to specify if a member participated in a vote remotely. The House and joint rules proposals were ultimately both approved on votes of 128-23, with

Representative Soter opposed.

The rules package includes a requirement that House committees post bill summaries online prior to being taken up for a vote and provide a minimum notice of 72 hours for committee hearings. Legislators will also now be required to be physically present to participate in a committee hearing, although members of the public can continue to participate remotely.

While supporting these changes, Representative Soter and House Republican colleagues had advocated for the following:

- mandate that the annual internal audit of the House be conducted by the state auditor, pursuant to the new law that was overwhelmingly approved by the state's voters last fall;
- require that the House comply with all such audits undertaken pursuant to the voter-approved law;
- prohibit House committee polls from being open for less than two hours;

- require a 12-hour notice for members prior to a House poll being released;
- give members more time to review bills and file amendments before bills come to the floor for debate;
- provide members one hour to review consolidated amendments, which are often lengthy and detailed;
- require a two-thirds vote to extend sessions beyond 9 p.m.; and
- give House Ways and Means 60 days to approve or disapprove all bills referred to the committee (with the exception of the General Appropriations Act) and allow the bill's original sponsor to petition for the bill's release if the committee fails to act within the specified time frame.

Representative Soter also supported several Republican-sponsored amendments to the joint rules, including proposals to:

- require roll call votes on conference committee reports, supplemental appropriations bills, and other substantive matters taken up in formal sessions conducted after July 31 in the second year of a legislative session;
- require a two-week notice of all matters to be taken up at a formal session conducted after July 31 in the second year of a legislative session;
- create a new joint rule requiring copies of audits of the General Court conducted by the state auditor to be published on the General Court website within 72 hours of receipt;
- require either branch of the General Court to request an opinion of the Supreme Judicial Court whenever they have a conflicting opinion with a constitutional officer relative to the constitutionality of legislation;
- prohibit joint committee polls from being open for less than two hours; and

- require a 12-hour notice for members prior to a joint committee poll being released.

Representative Soter noted the new House rules are now finalized and in place, but the joint rules must still be agreed to by the Senate, and any differences will likely have to be worked out in conference committee.

In addition, Rep. Soter has continued to oppose additional funding to the state's emergency assistance shelter system, saying a newly-enacted supplemental spending bill lacks sufficient reforms to help ensure the program's long-term financial stability. Soter voted against the enactment of the supplemental spending bill on February 26, saying he could not support allocating another \$425 million to the program unless additional steps are taken to improve transparency and guarantee accountability for the state's taxpayers. The bill is now on Governor Maura Healey's desk for her review and signature.

## Art in Bloom: Peace, Love and Understanding

Exhibition Dates: April 29-May 29, 2025; Opening Reception: Friday May 9th, 6-7 p.m.

Lotvin Family Gallery, Hopkinton Center for the Arts

98 Hayden Rowe St., Hopkinton

The Hopkinton Center for the Arts (HCA) is thrilled to announce the twentieth annual Arts in Bloom exhibition. This year's event will be juried by the renowned Joseph Fontinha. Fontinha will curate the exhibition and select six exceptional works to receive awards, with cash prizes totaling over \$1,000 for the winning artists.

Additionally, members of the Hopkinton Garden Club will select up to eight pieces of art to create complementary garden displays. These garden pieces will be showcased during a public reception on Friday, May 9th, at 6 p.m.

Joseph Fontinha, initially trained and educated as an oil painter, has recently expanded

his artistic practice to include video, installation, animation, and performance-based work, all deriving from his background in painting. Fontinha holds an MFA in Visual Studies from Lesley University, an MA in Art Education from Boston University, and a BFA in Studio Art from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design. His work has been exhibited in numerous galleries. With 23 years of experience as an educator, Fontinha now serves as the Director of Fine and Performing Arts K-12 for the Fall River Public Schools district.

Entry to view the exhibition is always free. Gallery Hours: Monday-Friday, 9am-6pm, Saturday & Sunday, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. The HCA is pleased to offer private and group docent tours upon request. For details, call (508) 435-9222 or visit [www.hopartscenter.org](#).

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# New Hope, Inc. Opens Emergency Shelter – House of Hope

On February 27, 2025, Massachusetts State Senator Paul Feeney, Massachusetts State Rep. Jim Hawkins, donors, project staff, and honored guests gathered together to celebrate the completion of New Hope, Inc.'s brand new emergency shelter, House of Hope. House of Hope combines two of New Hope's existing shelters into this state-of-the-art facility, which will house up to 14 individuals and families, as well as pets. Each individual living area is fully furnished and offers a private bathroom, with climate control capabilities.

"Today, is a very, very special occasion for New Hope, for the shelter participants, for survivors across Massachusetts and our neighboring states, for the anti-violence movement, for the community, for our donors and supporters, for New Hope's staff, and for the legacy we are all making today," stated Diana Mancera, New Hope CEO.

"This new shelter is not just a building – it is a sanctuary of hope, a place where safety and new beginnings are possible for

those who need it the most. Our mission has always been to be a safe haven for survivors," added Zoryana Djula, Senior Director of Residential Services at New Hope.

Video messages were also shared from US Representative Jake Auchincloss and Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll.

The \$7.5 million project to build House of Hope started in 2019 by New Hope's then-CEO Marcia Szymanski, and the capital campaign continued through the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding for House of Hope's construction came from a federal community project grant secured by Congressman Jake Auchincloss; state funding through the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, state budget, and American Rescue Plan Act funds; and private donations.

The highlight of the ceremony was hearing from one of New Hope's current shelter participants, "Lee": "New Hope has given me the most help I've ever received. I am grateful to



the staff that show up every single day to put in the work to help all of us obtain our goals. With the help of New Hope, I know I am set up for success [for when I transition out of shelter]."

New Hope, Inc. is a sexual and domestic violence agency serving 41 communities in southeastern and south central Massachusetts. Its comprehen-



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sive services include a 24-hour hotline, 800-323-HOPE (4673); emergency shelter; counseling and community-based advocacy services; SAFEPLAN court advocacy; civilian police advocacy; supervised visitation services; RESPECT, an intimate partner abuse education and prevention program; and prevention edu-

cation and outreach services. All survivor services are free and confidential and are available to everyone affected by sexual and domestic violence.

For more information about New Hope, visit [www.new-hope.org](http://www.new-hope.org).

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# Registration Open for 26th Annual Earth Day Charles River Cleanup

The 26th Annual Earth Day Charles River Cleanup will take place on Friday, April 25, and Saturday, April 26, 2025, and registration is now open! This much-loved event brings together over 3,500 volunteers each year to rejuvenate the parks, forests, playgrounds, and paths surrounding the Charles River and its tributaries, ensuring the areas remain clean, safe, and beautiful for everyone to enjoy.

"The Charles River Earth Day Cleanup invites the community to help improve the health of the Charles River and park ecosystem by amplifying individual commitment into a shared mission," says Charles River Conservancy Executive Director Laura Jasinski. "The Conservancy is thrilled to unite volunteers once again for the 26th year."

"As the final bank before the Charles River Dam that re-

ceives upriver trash from many miles and tributaries, the Esplanade depends each year on the Charles River Cleanup to remove that waste before it slips to the Harbor," says Jen Mergel, Executive Director of the Esplanade Association (EA). "The EA team is so grateful to partner for decades with our sister non-profits, our friends at DCR, and so many amazing volunteers across generations and geographies to ensure the health of the Charles (Quinobequin) for decades to come. Please join us!"

The Cleanup is part of the national American Rivers' National River Cleanup® initiative, which has collectively removed more than 32.5 million pounds of trash from waterways across the United States. Since its inception in 1999, the Charles River Cleanup has mobilized thousands of volunteers annually to remove litter and invasive plants and assist with

park maintenance along the Charles River's 80-mile stretch and within the 1,100 acres of Emerald Necklace parkland surrounding the Muddy River, a vital tributary of the Charles.

"The Muddy River, the central waterway of the Emerald Necklace parks and a major tributary to the Charles, has had an eventful year," says Karen Mauney-Brodek, President of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy. "From the removal of the last fenced-off work areas of the Muddy River Restoration Project, to our ongoing community visioning process for its health and future in partnership with the Charles River Watershed Association, and to ecological threats that remind us just how important these waterways are: now more than ever, it is crucial that we come together this spring and do our part to care for our shared urban ecosystems!"

"We are so grateful to the thousands of volunteers who turn out to remove trash from the banks and parks and roadways near the Charles," said Emily Norton, Executive Director of Charles River Watershed Association. "We look forward to the day when this cleanup isn't necessary, but until then, this amazing turnout demonstrates how much people care about a clean, healthy Charles River."

Cleanup volunteers make a lasting difference by improving local environmental health and fostering a sense of stewardship for their rivers and communities. The event empowers participants to give back to their communities, strengthen their connection with nature, and cultivate lifelong habits of environmental care. "Every year I hear from volunteers that this is one of their favorite activities to do with us—folks love picking

up litter and removing invasive plants from the river's banks as part of a larger, watershed-wide effort," says Sonja Wadman, Executive Director of the Waltham Land Trust. "You can see how fun and rewarding it is by the huge smiles on their faces."

To get involved, learn more and register for the Charles River Earth Day Cleanup, visit <https://www.charlesrivercleanup.org>.

The Charles River Cleanup is coordinated by the Charles River Conservancy, the Charles River Watershed Association, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, the Esplanade Association, and the Waltham Land Trust, in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and Senator Will Brownsberger.



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# Franklin & Bellingham Rail Trail 5K Run and Walk on May 17th

By J.D. O'GARA

Lace up your sneakers and come outdoors for the Franklin & Bellingham Rail Trail's 14th annual 5K Run and Walk on Saturday, May 17th at 9 a.m. Enjoy the outdoors while supporting the continued development of the Southern New England Trunkline Trail (SNETT). The Run and Walk will begin at Southern New England Trunkline Trail (SNETT) Grove St. Trailhead, with parking available at 210 Grove Street, Franklin (Waters Corporation parking lot).

This event is open to participants of all ages and fitness levels, making it a great outdoor activity for families and community members. Plenty of water and refreshments will be available during and after the race. Whether you're running, walking, or simply enjoying a scenic stroll along the trail, the 5K offers an opportunity to reconnect with nature and support a great local cause.

All proceeds will go towards the committee efforts to advocate for trail improvements.

Sue Fleurette, chair of this year's 5K, explains the 30 members who comprise the

The Franklin & Bellingham Rail Trail Committee (FBRTC) have been busy continuing to advocate for improved trail safety.

The group oversaw grading improvements last year, and about four months ago, the installation of rapid flashing signs, paid for by a grant, on Lake Street. The FBRTC also recently applied for a DCR grant for four new benches on the trail, two in Franklin and two in Bellingham, from Grove to Center Street.

"It's a Mass Trails grant, and it's an 80/20, so they would cover 80% of it, and we would, as a committee, cover 20%. Our fingers are crossed, and we think it will all go through. We should know by June," says Fleurette.

Future plans for the SNETT include work to be performed by the town of Franklin to extend the trail into downtown Franklin, and work to be performed by DCR to rehabilitate the trail in West Bellingham and Blackstone.

Fleurette explains that the work toward downtown Franklin encompasses about a mile and half of the rail trail.

"That's a huge undertaking," says Fleurette, of Bellingham, adding, "We acquired the land through CSX, so there's a lot going on there, and it will be a big boost to small businesses, but that's pretty far out. It takes a long time and may take years to complete it." The town of Franklin expressed its intent to purchase approximately 19.51 acres of unimproved land from



Franklin & Bellingham Rail Trail's 14th Annual 5K Walk and Run will take place on May 17th this year, a fundraiser for all ability levels aimed at improvements to the trail.

Photo used courtesy of the Franklin & Bellingham Rail Trail Committee

Grove Street to Union Railroad line, Franklin from CSX Transportation, Inc. last November.

The SNETT, which stretches from Franklin through Douglas to the Connecticut border, continues to be a valuable resource for the community. Fleurette notes that the trail has seen an all-time high daily average of 189 people.

And you can join them on May 17th, at 9 a.m., supporting this open space.

Registration is now open, with an early registration fee of \$30 for adults, \$25 for kids and free for seniors 70 years and older. To secure your spot, sign up early. Participants who sign up prior to midnight April 30 will receive a commemorative race gift. Learn more and register at <https://www.tri-valleyfrontrunners.com/fbrtc/FBRTC5K.php>.



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In addition to the 5K, Fleurette explains that events will take place this spring on the Rail Trail. She advises to check the website for some planned story walks and other events.

The Franklin Bellingham Rail Trail Committee is always looking for volunteers, and Fleurette would personally love for more folks from her neighborhood of Bellingham to take part. For information, visit [www.franklinbellinghamrailtrail.org](http://www.franklinbellinghamrailtrail.org).



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# Sports

## BHS Wrestlers Shine in Post-season Tournaments

By KEN HAMWEY,  
BULLETIN SPORTS WRITER

Bellingham High's co-op wrestling team, which finished 8-8-1 in dual meets, experienced some well-deserved success in post-season tournaments.

Seven boys placed at the Division 2 Central Sectional, which was held at Bellingham High, enabling them to advance to the state tourney. Three of those who placed attend Blackstone Valley Tech, which is a co-op partner with Bellingham's program. The trio includes sophomore Anthony Golini of Mendon who finished first in the 106-pound weight class; senior Joel Puri of Milford placed second at 113 pounds; and senior Cody Phillips of Milford took second in the 165-pound class.

The other four boys who placed all attend BHS. They include junior Tyler Campbell who finished fourth in the 120-pound class; senior Jack Davidson who

was fourth in the 190-pound category; senior Ryan Cochrane who was fifth in the 138-pound class; and sophomore Lucas Lahousse who took sixth in the 144-pound group.

At the Division 2 State Tournament at Salem High, Campbell finished fourth and Puri claimed fifth. Both advanced to the All-State Meet at Methuen where they competed hard but were unable to move on to the New England Tournament.

Ella Costa of BVT, who lives in Milford, also represented Bellingham at the State Meet but did not place.

BHS finished fifth overall at the sectional.

"I can't say enough about our team," said Tom Forbes who's been the Blackhawks' coach for 20 years. "Our wrestlers earned honors in seven of the 14 weight classes at the sectional. We've been a co-op team (Medway also is part of the group) for eight

years, and we have a good formula for success.

"Anthony was a sectional champ, and he's been a pleasure to coach. He's likeable, works hard and is eager to learn. He's got two more years with us. The other six boys who placed are also terrific competitors who strive to keep improving. Four of the seven kids all had 20-win seasons."

Forbes was pleased with the efforts of Campbell and Puri who advanced to the All-State Meet. "They know how to grind it out," he said. "Their work at the State and All-State Meets is a testament to their ability and their desire to improve. Joel's second win at the State Meet was the 100th of his career."

Forbes also had high praise for Costa. "Ella battled hard and did well," he said. "She wrestled at the varsity level for us and is a fierce competitor."



Bellingham High wrestlers who competed in post-season meets are, front row from left, Ryan Cochrane, Joel Puri, Tyler Campbell and Ella Costa; back row from left, Cody Phillips, head coach Tom Forbes, Anthony Golini, and assistant coach Kevin Kivior. Missing from photo are Jack Davidson and Lucas Lahousse.

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# Sports

## BHS Girls Quintet Continues to Build, Improve

### Blackhawks Split In D-3 Tourney

By KEN HAMWEY,  
BULLETIN SPORTS WRITER

The Bellingham High girls' basketball team entered the post-season playoffs hoping to take another step forward in its effort to emerge as a respected team in the Tri Valley League.

The Blackhawks got good results in their first-round game in the Division 3 Tournament by defeating 14th-seeded Dedham. Their second-round game against No. 3-seed Norwell, however, was an indication they've still got some work to do to reach elite status. Norwell, the South Shore League champs, lived up to its ranking by downing BHS, 57-40 and improving its record to 21-1.

Seeded 19, BHS opened the playoffs by soundly defeating Dedham, 47-27, a triumph that was not only convincing, but also perfect in executing coach Bob Pingeton's game plan.

"We stressed defensive intensity as our top priority, and secondly, we wanted to box out and get into good position to rebound," said Pingeton. "We got

straight A's in those two areas."

The Blackhawks forced the Marauders into 23 turnovers and scored 24 points off those miscues. "We disrupted their offense by getting 11 deflections and 18 steals," Pingeton said. "We played with great anticipation, and the girls seemed like they were really comfortable on defense."

Both teams finished with 40 rebounds, and center Liz Glynn led the Blackhawks with 11.

Jumping out to a 4-0 lead on Dedham's court, BHS led after the first quarter, 11-7, then held the Marauders to one field goal in the second stanza. The Blackhawks led at intermission, 17-9, then took a commanding 34-18 lead after the third quarter.

Eighth-grader Nicolette Hayes led Bellingham with 13 points, and four other teammates flirted with double-figures. Co-captains Anabella Barrasso and Caleigh Elder had 9 and 7 points, respectively, while Kaleigh Simpson and Luci Walden each had 6. Megan McNamara topped Dedham with 7 points.



BHS coach Bob Pingeton has his girls' basketball team on the upswing.

"Nicolette was excellent in her first playoff game," Pingeton offered. "She hit three big three-pointers and played her best game on defense. Caleigh kept everyone calm, and she had 3 assists and 10 rebounds. Luci was top-notch on defense, her best game of the season."

Don Savi, who's coached Dedham's girls team for 20 years, was effusive in his praise of Bellingham.

"They played well, and they're so quick," Savi emphasized. "We didn't shoot well, and we rushed our offense. Bellingham can shoot and for a team with not much size they showed great athleticism. They're also well-coached."

The win gave BHS a 12-11 record, and Dedham finished at 11-10.

Against Norwell, the Blackhawks couldn't match the Clippers' size or limit Madison Oliver's overall talent. The 6-foot senior scored 30 points.

The key statistic was offensive rebounding. Norwell grabbed 19 offensive rebounds, resulting in 22 points, while the Blackhawks had six offensive rebounds that produced only five points. The Blackhawks, nevertheless, competed intensely in defeat.

BHS trailed at halftime, 29-20, but were outscored, 18-9 in the third quarter, enabling Norwell to take control with a 47-29 lead. Oliver put the Clippers in the driver's seat by connecting for 18 points in the decisive third stanza.

"Madison has been the South Shore League's MVP for the last three years," said Norwell coach Matthew Marani. "Our game plan was to get the ball to Madison, use our size inside and control the boards. Madison has offers to play at several Division 1 colleges."

The contest was decided in the first three minutes of the third period. The Clippers capitalized on five BHS turnovers, went on a 9-0 run and extended their lead to 38-20.

Oliver opened the quarter by driving for a lay-up, Alex Cassidy scored inside off a rebound putback, then Oliver maneuvered for a lay-up before connecting on a three-pointer. Senior guard Reagan Dowd, who shared league MVP honors with Oliver, finished with 12 points.

Hayes led the Blackhawks with 16 points and Elder had 10.

"Bellingham's backcourt was impressive," said Marani. "Elder

is a tough competitor. She willed them to stay in the game in the first half. Hayes is awesome and has a bright future."

Pingeton lauded the way his Blackhawks battled, but he was acutely aware that limiting Oliver was the only way his squad could stay in contention.

"Oliver is a special player," he emphasized. "She dominated the third quarter and hit three three-pointers. She's so athletic and such a good rebounder. But our kids brought lots of energy and tenacity, and they keep battling."

The Blackhawks trailed by 21 in the third quarter, but cut their deficit to 11 midway through the final period.

Pingeton praised Elder and Hayes for their efforts. "Caleigh set the tone and kept us in the game early on," he said. "Nicolette led us in scoring in both playoff games. She doesn't get nervous; she's poised, and her defensive game sometimes gets overlooked."

BHS landed three players on the Tri Valley League all-star team — Elder was a first-team selection, and Barrasso and Hayes were honorable-mention choices.

"We beat Dedham by focusing on defense and rebounding," said Elder. "It was a great team effort and we were inspired by our fans' support. Against Norwell, we gave an all-around effort but they were so formidable. And, Oliver is truly a great player."

"Our practices for Dedham were intense, and because of our preparation, I thought we would beat them," added Barrasso. "Norwell was the No. 3-ranked team. We gave 100 percent but we also knew they presented a big challenge."

Hayes noted, "I was pleased with the way I played in my first tourney games. In both games we played hard. Growing up I developed a love for basketball and learned to play hard or don't play at all."

Credit should go to Pingeton, who took the coaching reins three years ago, and his wins per season are three, four and now 12. BHS finished with an overall record of 12-12.



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Sports

Winter Sports Roundup

BHS Cheer Team Excels In Post-season Meets

By KEN HAMWEY,  
BULLETIN SPORTS WRITER

The Bellingham High cheer-leading team will be competing at the national level after qualifying in three post-season events. Coach Tracey Elliott's squad captured second-place honors at the Tri Valley League meet in Bellingham, then advanced to the Regionals where it finished fourth at Framingham High. BHS, Foxboro, East Bridgewater and Duxbury all advanced to the State meet at Worcester State.

The Blackhawks, who compete in the Small Co-ed Division, tied for third with Duxbury at the States and that enabled them to move on to the National meet in Orlando, which was scheduled after the Bulletin's deadline. East Bridgewater was first at the States and Foxboro finished second. All four teams were within three points of one another.

"At the TVL meet, we did an amazing job," Elliott said. "We made a few mistakes, but we were glad to advance. At the Regional, we weren't at our best and were a bit nervous. But we were pleased to get a berth in the States.

Elliott said the team's effort at the State meet "was absolutely the best performance I've seen in my 10 years as Bellingham's coach."

"An opposing coach mentioned that our team set the tone for the competition," Elliott noted. "They did a great job, and I'm extremely proud of their effort. Our prime focus now is to be ready for the Nationals (known as AmeriCheer International). I've always stressed that we want to be better than yesterday."

The cheerleading team includes seniors Marissa Dell and Gabriel Egan; juniors Abigail Walker, Siarra Darrigo, Natalie Doran, Lyric Healy and Amelia Sanford; freshmen Madeleine Egan and Olivia Walker; eighth-grader Aibhlinn Cunningham; seventh-grader Bridget Walsh; and three alternates — freshmen Juliet Cardova-Flynn and Stella Lane; and junior Lolanta Komponets.

HOCKEY

Bellingham High's ice hockey team didn't know what to expect when new coach Tony Patete took the reins last winter. Now they know.

The 52-year-old Patete and his energetic staff wanted a culture change, and they were serious and dedicated in their approach. A culture change was needed, because the Blackhawks' three-year record before Patete's arrival was 3-52-4.

"The players saw how serious and dedicated the coaching staff was, and that led to winning our first game over Stoughton," Patete offered. "They developed an intense work ethic, especially in practice, and they helped to change the culture by believing they could win. They also built confidence as the season moved along."

Their confidence during a four-game stretch towards the end of the season was at an all-time high when they defeated Norton, Tri-County Vocational and Holliston and lost to Medway. BHS finished its season at 6-15.

"The kids have a totally new mindset, now," Patete emphasized. "The juniors said they can't wait for next season to start, and all the players said they want to play in the spring

and summer leagues. And they want to play club hockey in the fall."

Asked to provide some names of the key players responsible for the turn-around, Patete said: "I can't give you five or six, because our turn-around was a total team effort. A different line stepped up each night, we got very good goaltending, and our defense improved as the season moved along."

The Blackhawks' final power ranking was 36, four slots shy of qualifying for the tourney.

INDOOR TRACK

The Bellingham High girls' track team finished its Tri Valley League dual-meet season with a 3-2 record and the boys' squad was 1-4.

In the TVL Showcase Meet, Olivia Carney placed first in the 55-meter dash and set a school record of 7.33 seconds. Jenna Dormady placed fifth in the 600-meter run at 1:49.15 and Jack Taylor placed sixth in the mile at 4:52.48.

At the MSTCA Rising Championship, Ella Barreto

placed fourth in the 55-meter hurdles at 10.18 and first in the 600 at 1:48.89. Mason Alger placed fourth in the 55-meter dash at 7.02 and Alannah Doyle was sixth in the shot put at 27 feet, 7 inches.

In the MIAA Division 5 Championship Meet, Carney placed third in the 55-meter dash at 7.40 and Dormady placed eighth in the 2-mile at 12:22.42.

Two school records were set during the indoor season — Carney in the 55-meter dash in 7.33 and Carney, Emma Carroll, Barreto, and Dormady in the 4x200-meter relay in 1:51.03.

Five competitors were chosen to the TVL all-star team and five were selected as honorable-mention choices. The all-stars are Barreto, Carney, Dormady, Gabe Egan, and Taylor. The honorable-mention choices are Brady Carroll, Emma Carroll, Eli Cowell, Bryan De Almeida, and Emma Smith.

The Blackhawks' girls' squad ended its season with the TVL Sportsmanship Award.


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Franklin Town News on Facebook to keep up-to-date with articles, events, giveaways and contest announcements for Franklin!



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# Sports

## Fillion Settles into Role as BHS Athletic Trainer

### Her Input Big Key in School's Fitness Center

By KEN HAMWEY,  
BULLETIN SPORTS WRITER

Rebecca Fillion, who's known to students as "Becka," is closing in on her first year as Bellingham High's athletic trainer. Comfortable with her transition to BHS, she says she "likes being a positive figure in student-athletes' lives."

That comment doesn't surprise Athletic Director Michael Connor, who saw the 33-year-old Fillion as a valuable addition to the athletic department — in a variety of ways.

"Becka has raised the bar in the athletic training room and has made an indelible impression on our student-athletes," Connor emphasized. "And, her background as a physical fitness coach was a big plus in the redesign of our weight room/fitness center."

Connor not only is impressed with Fillion's athletic training skill-set, but he also admires her work ethic.

"In addition to teaching two classes most days at 5 and 6 a.m. at a fitness gym in Natick, Becka arrives at BHS daily at noon and is on site until the final game/practice of the day with responsibility for hundreds of home games each year between mid-August and mid-June," he noted. "If the Blackhawks are compet-

ing, Becka is there."

The BHS weight room/fitness center has undergone a major facelift after 24 years, and it's up-and-running now. Fillion was heavily involved in the layout of the facility, helped choose much of the equipment and provided insight into the workout routines, which can be accessed by checking out the school's athletic page on [Bellinghamk12.org](http://Bellinghamk12.org).

What was once a room filled with old equipment now boasts a "CrossFit" feel with equipment provided by Gronk Fitness.

Connor notes that the upgraded fitness center meets a variety of needs.

"We now have space to serve the needs of 16 sports and the 400-plus student-athletes who annually participate on more than 55 interscholastic teams," he said. "And, we also use the facility for physical education classes."

The weight room/fitness center incorporates both a turf space for yoga, balance balls, battle ropes, and push sleds, and more traditional spaces for cardio fitness (bike, elliptical, rowing, and treadmills). There's also room for cable equipment, dumbbells, five-squat/bench racks, and 6,000 pounds of weights.



Rebecca Fillion played a major role in the redesign of Bellingham High's weight room/fitness center.

Funding for the fitness center was achieved in a very efficient manner — from user fees, savings on transportation costs and from community sponsorships.

Fillion has developed seven

custom workout programs for coaches and players to implement for both in-season and out-of-season workouts.

"Where programs for football/wrestling/throwers may have similarities, they differ dramatically from the needs of cheerleaders or baseball/softball players," Connor said. "While the space will be used during school hours for phys ed classes, we envision that some teams, supervised by coaches, will make use of the space before school, after school and evenings (effectively available from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.)."

The programs along with photos of the weight room/fitness center are available for review on the athletic training section of the athletics web page.

Fillion's athletic background is extensive and compact. She earned her bachelor's degree in athletic training in 2014 at the University of New Hampshire

where she was an honor student. She was certified and licensed as a trainer before she was hired at Lawrence Academy, a private boarding school in Groton that had students at the freshman, jayvee and varsity levels.

"There were many high-level athletes there from all over the country who were serious about playing sports at Division 1 colleges," Fillion noted. "I later worked for seven years at Dr. Stephen Simpson's orthopedic office in Ayer in a variety of roles. My final position before coming to Bellingham was as Uxbridge High's athletic trainer. I left after a year when budget issues and cuts were prevalent."

A native of Ashland, Fillion was not only a promising athlete at Ashland High, but also a three-time state champion. "I competed in softball for three years and was a cheerleader for four," she said. "One state title came in cheerleading, and we were two-time state champs in softball."

Fillion views her primary function at BHS as "a trainer who evaluates, treats and prevents injuries."

"What I like about working at Bellingham High is the multitude of sports available," she said. "More sports mean more challenges, which keep me on my toes and enable me to use my skill-sets more. This is my third school setting, and it's definitely the one with the most students competing. It's a challenge, but I try to be available for all of our student-athletes."

Fillion says she sees success when injured athletes return to compete. "It feels good to see kids get back onto a gym floor or a field," she offered. "But I also like it when athletes will stop by my office when they're out of season to chat or tell me something about what's going on in their lives."

Fillion is making a difference at BHS, and her fingerprints are definitely visible in the Blackhawks' upgraded weight room/fitness center, which is now more focused on CrossFit skills, agility, endurance and strength.

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# April 2025 at First Universalist Society in Franklin

## Climate: What will you do?

Sunday, April 6, 2025 @ 10 a.m.

The issue of climate change is an immense problem which can seem overwhelming. The Unitarian Universalist values of Justice, Equity, Transformation, Pluralism, Interdependence, Generosity and Love remind us of our responsibility to protect the earth and all beings from exploitation and to respect the interdependent web of existence.

Please join us for this Lay Led service as several members of FUSF's Climate Justice Team share personal perspectives and the steps they are taking to put

UU Values and their faith into action! They will also share examples of relatively simple steps one can take to make a difference.

You are cordially invited to continue the discussion after service over coffee and treats in our Fellowship Café.

**An Evening of Conversation Regarding Food Sovereignty and Access With special guest speaker Sister Anna Gilbert-Muhammad**

**Hosted by: the FUSF Food Justice Team**

Thursday, April 24, 2025, 7-8:30 p.m.

The FUSF Food Justice team invites you to share an evening of thoughtful discussion with our special guest, Sister Anna Gilbert-Muhammad. Sister Anna will focus on the current state of food justice, access and sovereignty issues in Massachusetts. This is a particularly timely topic given the current pressures on our food system from climate change and the rapidly changing policies at the federal level. Her discussion will include actions we can take to make an impact.

A reception with light snacks will follow. Donations to FUSF

will be gratefully accepted but are not required to attend.

Sister Anna Gilbert-Muhammad currently serves as the Equity Director and Food Access/Webinar Coordinator for Northeast Organic Farmer's Association - MASS Chapter (NOFA/MA). Anna is responsible for the alliances of NOFA/Ma, with groups working on food access issues, food policy and food sovereignty efforts. In her home town of Springfield, MA, Anna works with the "Youth Leader Organic Gardening/Cooking Program" at Home City Housing, "The Open Pantry Community Garden Project" and smaller projects

in the Boston and Springfield Area. Sister Anna wants to see all residents in all communities in Massachusetts have the access they deserve to fresh, wholesome food and to assist all that wish to grow food in their homes.

The First Universalist Society in Franklin (FUSF) is a Unitarian Universalist Welcoming Congregation located at 262 Chestnut Street, Franklin. Our Interim Minister is Reverend Beverly Waring. For more information about FUSF please visit [fusf.org](http://fusf.org) or contact us at [info@fusf.org](mailto:info@fusf.org); call (508) 528-5348.

# Library Resource of the Month – Universal Class Focusing on Financial Literacy

April is National Financial Literacy Month, so this is a great time to learn how to increase your financial well-being! The Bellingham Library subscribes to an online database called *Universal Class*, which offers over 600 continuing education courses on a wide range of subjects, many of them related to finance. They are free-of-charge for Bellingham Library cardholders and are self-paced and led by dedicated instructors.

Because of the extensive variety of subject matter, there is something for everyone! To help you with financial matters, here are just some of the courses available:

- Debt Reduction
- Accounting & Bookkeeping 101
- Personal Finance 101: How to Manage Your Money
- Retirement Planning
- Estate Planning
- Understanding Insurance Types

- Business Budgeting 101: How to Plan, Save, and Manage
- Investing 101: Stocks, Bonds, and Mutual Funds
- Investing 201: Intro to Commodity, Options, & Futures Markets
- Investing 301: Investment Banking

These courses include lessons, exams, assignments, discussion boards, and actual assessments of your progress. Because they are self-paced you can learn when you want on your own time, without a need to be online at a specific date or time. An instructor is available to monitor and assess your performance as well as help you locate additional resources if you need more help, and you will receive actual grades. Most of the courses can be completed within 10-20 hours.

Most courses offer International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET) continuing education units (CEUs). Universal Class,

Inc. is accredited as an Authorized Provider by IACET.

To access Universal Class, go to the Bellingham Public Library's website at [www.bellinghamlibrary.org](http://www.bellinghamlibrary.org). Click on the Resources tab, and then click Online Courses/Tutoring. You will need to create an account using your Bellingham Library

card number. Create your account today and start getting your finances in order!

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# Positive Trends Continue in Norfolk County's Real Estate Market

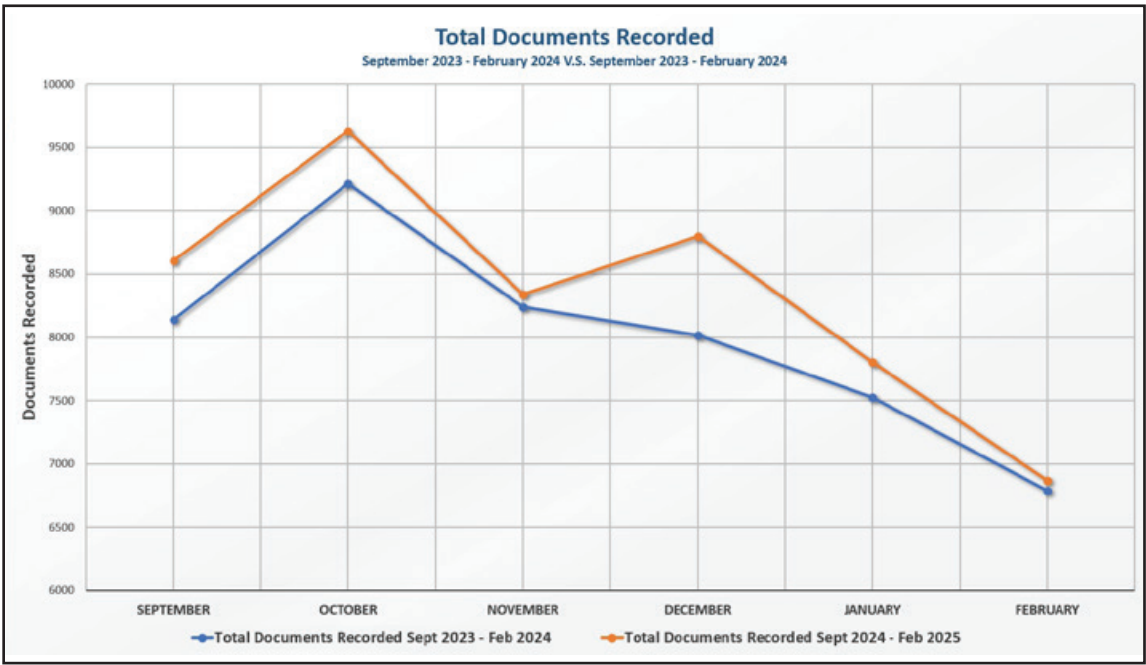
Norfolk County Register of Deeds William P. O'Donnell reported that Norfolk County recordings for the month of February 2025 indicate an increase in overall real estate activity compared to last year, including increases in both the total number of deeds and mortgages recorded.

The Registry of Deeds recorded 6,870 documents in February 2025. This was 1% more than in February 2024, but a 12% decrease compared to January 2025.

"Overall, the increase in document recordings compared to the previous year is a positive indicator for the real estate market, highlighting steady growth in both commercial and residential sectors. Despite a slight dip in activity from the previous month, the year-over-year growth suggests a consistent trend for the market," stated Norfolk County Register of Deeds William P. O'Donnell.

The total number of deeds recorded for February 2025, which reflects both commercial and residential real estate sales and transfers, was 1,035, up 8% from February 2024, but down 10% from January 2025. According to the Federal Reserve Bank, home listings in Norfolk County increased by 15% in February 2025 compared to February 2024.

"Since mid-2024, the real estate market in Norfolk County has experienced a sustained increase in the number of deeds recorded. This upward momentum has continued all the way up to the traditional homebuying season," noted Register O'Donnell. "We will need to wait and see if this trend persists, especially as we approach the peak months for real estate activity. Factors such as interest rates, economic conditions, and the inventory of available property will play crucial roles in determining whether the market can maintain its current pace."



The average sale price of commercial and residential properties for February 2025 rose to \$1,061,849, a 7% increase compared to February 2024, but a decrease of 14% from January 2025. The total dollar volume of commercial and residential sales

is also up, increasing by 4% from last year but down 30% from the previous month.

"Norfolk County is undeniably a sought-after location for both living and working, thanks to the vibrant communities and the dedicated efforts of municipal staff and leaders," remarked Register O'Donnell. "However, even as property listings increase, the limited property inventory is still unable to meet the high demand. Many would agree that

the market poses challenges for buyers, particularly those purchasing their first home."

The Norfolk County Registry of Deeds, located at 649 High St., Dedham, is the principal office for real property in Norfolk County. Residents in need of assistance can contact the Registry of Deeds Customer Service Center at (781) 461-6101 or email [registerodonnell@norfolkdeeds.org](mailto:registerodonnell@norfolkdeeds.org).



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# Calendar

## April 1

**A Novel Idea: A New Book Club for Adults, 6:30-8 p.m.,** Bellingham Public Library, *Nigerians in Space*, by Deji Bryce Olukotun. If interested, please contact Diane Nelson at [dnelson@cwmar.org](mailto:dnelson@cwmar.org).

## April 2

**Bellingham Democratic Town Committee meeting, 7 p.m.,** Arcand Room, Bellingham Town Hall, for information contact Patricia Keppler at (508) 966-0003.

**Virtual Author Talk with Jodi Picoult, 7-8 p.m.,** through Bellingham Public Library, a chat with the highly acclaimed New York Times bestselling author Jodi Picoult about her newest novel, *By Any Other Name*. For more information and to register for the Zoom link, <https://libraryc.org/bellingham/70728>

## April 5

**BWOT Muffins with the Easter Bunny, 9 a.m.- 11:30 a.m.,** St. Blaise Church Hall, 1158 S. Main St., Bellingham, \$5 per child; maximum \$15 per family, crafts & coloring pages, take your own pics with Easter Bunny, raffles, food items \$1-2 each.

**3rd Annual Bellingham Business Expo, 10 a.m. until 1 p.m.,** Bellingham Public

Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, free event for vendors and the public, questions to Bernadette Rivard, Library Director, [library@bellingshamlibrary.org](mailto:library@bellingshamlibrary.org) or (508) 657-2776

**Blackstone Valley Amateur Radio Club Demonstration, 10 a.m.- 1 p.m.,** Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, MA. Questions to Mickey Callahan, K1WMC, at [mickc@comcast.net](mailto:mickc@comcast.net)

**Bellingham Garden Club - Propagating Plants from Seeds Presentation, 11:45 a.m.,** Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham

## April 8

**Virtual Talk with Smithsonian Horticulturist Matthew Fleming, 2 p.m.,** through Bellingham Public Library. For more information and to register for the Zoom link, <https://libraryc.org/bellingham/70728>

**Writing Group for Adults, 6:30 p.m.,** Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, facilitated by Amy Bartelloni and Marjorie Turner Hollman. Works of fiction or non-fiction are welcome. Reading limit is 9 minutes per reader, with a brief opportunity for positive, personal comments only. Email [marjorie@marjorieturner.com](mailto:marjorie@marjorieturner.com).

**PULSE (Tri-County Regional Chamber Young Professionals) after Hours, 5:30-7:30 p.m.,** PINZ, 110 S. Main St., Milford, info. at <https://www.tricountychamberma.org/pulse-young-professionals-networking>

## April 10

**Ladies of St. Anne Sodality meeting, 7 p.m.,** St. Blaise Church Hall, 1158 S. Main St., Bellingham, Meeting will include baby shower for Abundant Hope in Attleboro, MA. Items needed range from diapers sizes 1 thru 3, to clothes sizes 3 thru 24 months, to baby wipes, formula, blankets, etc. Also, a representative of Tastefully Simple will attend to talk about and offer samples of the products available.

**Moonlight Program in Practical Nursing (Post-Secondary) Child Safety Fair and Open House, 3-6 p.m.,** Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School, 65 Pleasant Street, Upton.

## April 11

**Bellingham Democratic Town Caucus. Doors in Arcand Room (Town Hall) open at 10 a.m.;** meeting begins at 10:30

a.m. All registered Democrats in town are eligible to attend and to run to become a delegate to the state convention.

## April 12

**PETTY - Celebrating the Music of Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, 1-2 p.m.,** Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, presented by Blackstone Valley Music, a nonprofit music school located in Uxbridge.

## April 20



## April 22

**Let's Talk About Fossils! 10:30 a.m.,** Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham. For ages 8 through adult.

## April 24

**Virtual Conversation with Bestselling Author Gregg Hurwitz, 7 p.m.,** through Bellingham Public Library. For more information and to register for the Zoom link, <https://libraryc.org/bellingham/70728>

**An Evening of Conversation Regarding Food Sovereignty and Access with special guest speaker Sister Anna Gilbert-Muhammad, 7-8:30 p.m.,** First Universalist Society of Franklin, 262 Chestnut St., Franklin, Hosted by the FUSF Food Justice Team

## April 25

**Annual Earth Day Charles River Cleanup,** volunteer for a location at <https://www.charlesrivercleanup.org/>

## April 26

**Bellingham Earth Day Cleanup, 9 a.m.,** volunteers will gather at Bellingham Town Hall, sign up by contacting Laura Renaud at (508) 966-5820 or email [lrenaud@bellingshamma.org](mailto:lrenaud@bellingshamma.org) by April 18.

**Bellingham author Mike McHugh book signing, 1-3 p.m.,** Bellingham Barnes & Noble, 270 Hartford Ave., Bellingham, author to sign copies of his novel, *Three-Leaf Clover*, a top seller on Amazon's US Military Historical Fiction list.

**Electronics Recycling Day, 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.,** First Congregational Church of Milford, 4 Congress St., Milford (please enter lot from Church St.), items \$5-\$20 to recycle, cell phones donated to charity at no cost

## Local Realtor® Rallies Community to Support Troops, Vets

In a heartfelt effort to give back to those currently serving, or have served, our country, Kellie Dow, a dedicated real estate professional with REMAX Executive, organized a successful drive to collect essential supplies needed. The February "Show Your Love" initiative yielded a generous outpouring of goods from community members.

Recognizing the sacrifices made by service members, Kellie Dow partnered with Thanks to Yanks to ensure that the items collected, such as hygiene products, non-perishable snacks, coffee, playing cards and more, will be delivered directly to those overseas, and our veterans at home.

"The response from our community and my fellow REMAX Executive agents was truly incredible. I'm honored to have played a part in making a difference for our troops and veterans," said Kellie Dow. "REMAX Executive is proud to support

initiatives that strengthen our community and help those in need. The supply drive is just one of the many ways we give back to the community. I'm also President of the REMAX Executive Charitable Foundation, 501c(3). We have thirteen wonderful volunteer board members that help raise funds all year that directly helps local families. Since inception in 2009, the RCF has helped over 200 families by granting out over \$400,000." said Dow.

Thanks To Yanks, is a non-political 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to support military members, veterans, and their families. You can learn more at [www.thankstoyanks.org](http://www.thankstoyanks.org) Like and follow them on Facebook!

For more information about the drive or the REMAX Executive Charitable Foundation, please contact Kellie Dow at (617) 922-1552 or [kelliedowhomes@gmail.com](mailto:kelliedowhomes@gmail.com).





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