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May 8 - June 11, 2025

Mendon Senior of the Year nominations due June 1

By Theresa Knapp

Nominations for the Mendon Senior of the Year award are due by June 1.

The chosen Mendon resident, aged 60 or older, generally exemplifies a spirit of public service and has made a positive difference in the community.

The nomination form lists the selection criteria as "Past and present contributions to the community [and] how their positive attitude inspires others."

The Mendon Council on Aging will select the winner, and the award will be presented at a dinner in September.

Tom Irons is a charter member of the Mendon Lions Club, established in 1974, which has been hosting the Mendon Senior of the Year annual dinner since it began in 1978.

"The Senior of the Year was one of the first proj-



Mendon Senior of the Year plaques list the names of all previous winners (1978-present) and hang in the Mendon Senior Center. Courtesy photo

ects we did when we first started," Irons said. "That, and the Country Fair."

Irons says past recipients have been elected officials, groups of people, community volunteers, a barber, local historians, and more. "A good candidate would be basically anyone who has done a lot of good deeds."

Nomination forms are

available at the Mendon Senior Center or online at www.mendonma.gov from the Council on Aging home page or bit.ly/MendonCOASeniorNomination2025. Please drop off or mail nominations to the Senior Center at 62 Providence St., Mendon. For more information, call 508-478-6175.

Newly formed Friends of Upton Seniors seeks members



Sue Perry and her husband Dave next to the jukebox at the recent Senior Soirée held on March 28. Photo source: Friends of Upton Seniors

By Theresa Knapp

The Friends of Upton Seniors (FUSE) was formed in the fall of 2024. The private non-profit (501(c)(3)) collaborates with the Upton Council on Aging (COA) and the Upton Elder and Social Services (ESS) Department, to raise funds to supplement the ESS budget so more programs

and activities can be offered.

"The purpose of the group is to encourage socialization and improve quality of life by providing support for social events, services, and programs at the Upton Com-

FRIENDS

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Flanagan named to Siena College Deans List for Fall 2024 & Women's Soccer Captain Spring 2025

Cate Flanagan of Mendon was named to the Siena College Deans List for the fifth consecutive semester in Fall 2024. To qualify for Deans List, students must achieve a cumulative grade point average of 3.5 or higher. Cate is a 2022 graduate from Nipmuc Regional High School and is currently a Junior at Siena College where she is majoring in Economics, minoring in Management and playing soccer on their Division 1 Women's Soccer Team. Flanagan is a member of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee, The National Society of Leadership and Success, and this past March was also appointed Team Captain of the Women's Soccer team.



Alzheimer's Support Group at Cornerstone at Milford

On Tuesday, May 13, at 6 p.m., the Cornerstone at Milford Assisted Living and Memory Support Community (11 Birch St., Milford) will host a meeting of the Hearts, Hugs & Hope: An Alzheimer's Support Group.

This group for caregivers meets in person. Dealing with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia isn't easy, so it is helpful to share your concerns and personal experiences with others who completely understand what you're going through. You will also learn about proven strategies to help you better care for your family member.

Our guest this month will be Jay Marsden, of Marsden Law, P.C. who will present on the topic of "Elder Law."

Call 508-473-0035 to RSVP or contact Director of Compass Programming Jenn Hozempa at jhozempa@cornerstonemilford.com for more information.

This group meets on the second Tuesday of the month.



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TAFT LIBRARY

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Friends of the Taft Public Library Meeting

The Friends of the Library meetings are typically held on the last Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. downstairs in the Art Holmes Community Room, unless it falls on a holiday or during a school vacation. All are welcome (and encouraged) to attend! If you plan on attending, it's always a good idea to call the library at 508-473-3259 or email the Friends at friendsoftaftlibrary@gmail.com to confirm the date and time of the meeting. The group will do its best to post any meeting changes on the Taft Library website.

TAFT CHILDREN'S NEWS - MAY 2025

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

Itty Bitty Story Time

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

Story & Craft Time

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

Alphabet Storytime

It's all about the alphabet! Each week we will focus on a different letter. We will read a couple of books, sing songs, and learn about the letter of the week! Wednesday mornings at 10:30 a.m.

Please note there is NO Alphabet Storytime on May 14.

Coffee and Conversations & Puppet Storytime Dates: Wednesday: 5/14 and 6/25. Coffee & Conversations is from 9:30 - 10:30 a.m.

Join us for an informal playtime where families will be able to build social connections and learn about early childhood development and family-friendly resources. The library will supply Muffin House Muffins!

Please stay for the 10:30 a.m. Puppet Storytime. Join Newton & Friends of Through Me to You Puppetry for songs and stories. At the end of the 30-minute show, children can greet the puppets. Geared for children 2 to 5 years old, but all ages are welcome!

Lego Club

Back by popular demand! During this one-hour building session we will be led by the "Lego Lady" Kim Steadman! No need to bring any Legos! This program is great for all ages... if they don't eat the Legos! Tuesday: 5/13 and 6/10 at 4:30 p.m.

Puppet Storytime with Leigh Baltzer

Join Newton & Friends of Through Me to You Puppetry for songs & stories. At the end of the 30-minute show, children can greet the puppets. Geared for children 2 to 5 years old, but all ages are welcome! Register today for Newton's visit back to the Taft on Tuesday 5/20 and 6/17 at 4:30 p.m.

Preschool Kidding Around Yoga with Meredith Daelhousen

We will learn yoga poses, dance, sing, and meditate. This class is all about fun. All abilities are welcome! Mats are available, or feel free to bring your own. Wednesday, May 28 and June 11 at 9:30 a.m.

Music & Movement with Deb Hudgins

Join Deb Hudgins for a 30-minute music and movement theme-based program which features singing and guitar music for young children (infants &

preschool). Join us on Tuesday, May 27. The program starts promptly at 10:30 a.m.

Tutors with Tails

Meet Sprite! Sprite is a therapy dog who loves children and love books. Sprite and her owner Janet will visit the Taft on the last Tuesday of each month. Register today for the opportunity to read to Sprite! Spots are limited.

Book Clubs

8-12 Book Club: We will be reading: *The Lost Library* by Rebecca Stead and Wendy Mass. The book club discussion will be held downstairs in the library on Tuesday, May 27 at 5 p.m. The book club will include a discussion, pizza, and refreshments.

Graphic Novel Book Club:

Join us on Tuesday, May 13 at 5 p.m. to discuss this month's book pick! This month we will be reading: *Next Stop* by Debbie Fong. Pizza and refreshments will be served.

6-9 Book Club: We will be reading: *Pets Rule! My Kingdom of Darkness* by Susan Tan. The book club discussion will be held downstairs in the library on Tuesday, June 10 at 5 p.m. The 45-minute book club will include a discussion, pizza and an activity. Books are available at the upstairs circulation desk.

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How to control the deadliest animal on the planet!



Jim Mazzuchelli, owner of WPC Pest Control

Mosquito and tick populations are on the rise again as the country transitions to the Spring season. While these pests are certainly nuisances, they can also transmit harmful diseases like Zika virus, West Nile virus, Lyme disease, and more, which is why WPC Pest Control is helping to advocate for increased awareness of mosquito and tick prevention this season.

“One of the best ways to fight off mosquito and tick bites and subsequent disease transmission is to apply insect repellent

before going outside,” said Jim Mazzuchelli, owner of WPC Pest Control.

Yet, many people don’t make it a priority to protect against these biting pests by taking this simple action. Those who do may not realize that there is a correct way to use repellent for it to be effective.

To properly apply insect repellent for maximum protection against mosquitoes and ticks, follow this five-step method from the National Pest Management Association (NPMA):

1. Look for a product containing an active EPA-registered ingredient, such as DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon-eucalyptus or IR3535.
2. Read the product label and follow the instructions carefully. If sunscreen is also being worn, repellent should be used over top of sunscreen.
3. Shake the product well. Then, hold it about 6-8 inches away from exposed skin and spray evenly in a sweeping motion.
4. Spray the palms of hands to

apply the repellent to the face and ears, being sure to avoid eye and nostril contact.

5. Apply the repellent over clothing, which should completely cover feet and ankles.

“Another great way to avoid contact with mosquitoes specifically is to remove any standing water around the yard to deter mosquito breeding,” said, Jim Mazzuchelli of WPC Pest Control.

A licensed pest control professional can work with a homeowner to help identify these hot spots. The ultimate protection would be to have your yard treated by a professional pest control operator. You will get the knowledge and protection needed to combat these dangerous threats. Your loved ones deserve it.

For more information, visit nobugsnopests.com to schedule a complete inspection and treatment.

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United Parish of Upton offered prayer in support of social justice



UPTON - Led by Rev. Emily Carle, members of the United Parish of Upton gather in front of the church on Easter morning to offer a prayer for the world in support of social justice. Submitted by United Parish of Upton

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Upton Town Library Calendar of Events

9 Milford Street, Upton • 508-529-6272 • UptonLibrary.org • HOURS: Tues., Wed. & Thurs. 9-8 • Mon., Fri. & Sat. 9-4 • Sun. CLOSED

By Matthew Bachtold, Library Director and Lee Ann Murphy, Children's Librarian

Friends of the Upton Town Library News:

Spring Book Sale on May 17 at the Upton Community Center (9 a.m. - 2 p.m.). This is one of the Friends' major fundraisers and proceeds go to Museum Passes and other great community benefits. If you are able to give volunteer help, please join the Friends for a Set-Up Party on Friday, May 16, at 7 p.m. in the Community Center. All are welcome!

The June Friends Celebration concludes another successful year of fundraising and events. Come join the Friends and hear about upcoming plans as well as ways you can be a Friend. All are welcome and new ideas encouraged. At the Upton Community Center on Thursday, June 12, from 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Adult Events

Saturday Board Game Terraforming Mars – Saturday, May 10, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. For ages 16 - Adult

Join us in learning how to play Terraforming Mars. Compete

for the most victory points as you take actions to convert the planet Mars. Registration required. Register online at uptonlibrary.org.

Plant Swap – Saturday, May 31, 9:30 - 11 a.m.

Calling all plant enthusiasts! Bring your plants, cuttings, and seeds to the library for a plant swap! Exchange your old plants for new ones and chat with other plant parents and gardeners. Please only bring healthy plants with no pests, mold, or disease. Plants can be potted in soil or cuttings in water, and preferably labeled if possible. Please only bring pots that you are willing to part with. Indoor and outdoor plants are welcome. Registration is encouraged, but not required.

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

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

up to experienced drummers. Registration is requested. *Now a monthly program, sponsored by Friends of the Upton Library

An Afternoon of Acoustic Fun with Singer-Songwriter P.E. James – Friday, June 13, 2 - 3 p.m.

Join us as P.E. James performs sing-along songs mixed in with folk tunes, standards, show tunes, early rock and roll, and favorites of the 1920s through the 1960s and 70s. For more information about P.E. James or to listen to his recordings, check out his website www.pejames-music.com.

Virtual Chat with YA and Adult Author Edward Underhill: A "Together With Pride" Event – Monday, June 9, 7 - 8 p.m.

Please note this is a virtual program that will take place via Zoom. Registration is required to receive the link to access the Zoom Webinar via email.

Transgender author Edward Underhill will be joining the Boyden Library as part of the "Together With Pride" initiative, in partnership with other local Foxborough organizations to celebrate and support the community. He will discuss his

two newest books; *The In Between Bookstore* (Adult debut released in January 2025) and *In Case You Read This* (YA released in May 2025) with Teen Librarian Jennifer Huston. This program is hosted by the Boyden Library, Foxborough, is brought to you in collaboration with a multitude of MA & NH libraries, and is sponsored by the Friends of the Ashland Public Library.

Virtual Author Talk Series

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

Author Talk with Liann Zhang: On Writing a Brilliant, Dark, and Diabolical Thriller - Wednesday, May 14 at 7 p.m.

Author Talk with Lisa Jewell: Explore Unexpected Twists and Turns - Tuesday, June 10, at 2 p.m.

Children's & Young Adult Events

Spring StoryWalk Begins! – Thursday, May 1 at VFW Playground

Stop by the VFW Playground anytime dawn to dusk, to enjoy the library's Spring StoryWalk, *Bird Builds a Nest* by Martin Jenkins. A StoryWalk is a self-guided picture book activity, put together with separate story page panels that families can enjoy one at a time with their children. No staff is involved with this event, so enjoy it any time that fits your schedule! Our spring StoryWalk will run May 1 through June 14. For ages 3+. The StoryWalk® Project was created by Anne Ferguson and developed in collaboration with the Kellogg-Hubbard Library in Montpelier Vermont. StoryWalk® is a registered service mark owned by the Kellogg-

Hubbard Library.

Oreo Cookie Taste Test – Friday, May 9 at 1 p.m.

Tweens and teens can join us to sample popular Oreo flavors and determine a winner for the best flavor! Participants will compare six different flavors and rank their favorites. Please contact Lee Ann Murphy at lmurphy@cwmar.org with any food allergy questions. Donations made by Price Chopper and Wegman's! For ages 8 to 12. Please register. This event coincides with an early release day for the Mendon-Upton Regional School District.

Monthly Library Events – Register now!

All programs and events require pre-registration at uptonlibrary.org or call 508-529-6272. Registrations open the month prior to events.

Baby Storytime – Fridays at 9:30 and 10:30 a.m.

Baby Storytime is for ages birth to 3 and is held on Fridays. This is a 20-30-minute lapsit program featuring stories, songs, and nursery rhymes. Pre-registration required.

Preschool Storytime – Thursdays at 9:30 and 10:30 a.m.

Preschool Storytime is for ages 3 to 5 and is held on Thursdays. This is a 45-minute program featuring stories, songs, rhymes, and a craft. Pre-registration required.

Saturday Storytime – Saturday, May 17 at 9:30 a.m.

Once a month we offer a 30-45-minute Saturday Storytime, blending Baby and

UPTON LIBRARY

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How to cope with market volatility



Mark Freeman, CEPA

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The financial markets always go through periods of instability. And we may see more of that now, given concerns about tariffs, inflation and the economy. As an investor, how can you deal with this volatility?

Some investors try to take advantage of market ups and downs by attempting to follow the age-old advice to “buy low and sell high” — that is, they seek to buy stocks when they feel prices have bottomed out and

they sell stocks when they think the market has reached a high point. In theory, this is a great idea, but in practice, it’s essentially impossible, because no one can really predict market highs and lows.

Rather than trying to anticipate highs and lows, your best strategy for coping with the price fluctuations of the financial markets is to diversify your investment portfolio by owning a mix of stocks, bonds and other types of securities. Different types of financial assets can move in different directions at any given time — so, for example, stocks may be up while bonds are down, or vice versa. If you only owned one of these types of assets, and the market for that asset class was down, your portfolio could take a bigger hit than if you owned a variety of asset types.

And you can further diversify within individual asset categories. Stocks can be domestic or international, large-company or small-company — and these

groupings can also move in different directions at the same time, depending on various market forces. As for bonds, they too don’t always move in a uniform direction, or at least with the same intensity — for instance, when interest rates rise, bond prices tend to fall, but longer-term bonds may fall more than shorter-term ones, which are closer to maturity with fewer interest payments remaining. Conversely, when rates are falling, longer-term bonds may be more attractive because they lock in higher yields for a longer time. Consequently, one diversification technique for bonds is to build a “ladder” containing bonds of varying maturities.

Some investments, by their nature, are already somewhat diversified. A mutual fund can contain dozens, or even hundreds, of stocks, or a mixture of stocks and bonds. And different mutual funds may have different investment objectives — some focus more on growth, while others are more income-oriented — so, further diversifica-

tion can be achieved by owning a mix of funds.

Furthermore, some investors achieve even greater diversification by owning alternative investments, such as real estate, commodities and cryptocurrencies, although these vehicles themselves are often more volatile than those in more traditional investment categories.

While a diversified portfolio is important for every investor, your exact level of diversification — the percentages of your portfolio devoted to stocks, bonds and other securities — will depend on your individual risk tolerance, time horizon and financial goals. You may want to consult with a financial professional about creating the diversified investment mix that’s right for your needs.

Ultimately, while diversification can’t guarantee profits or protect against all losses, it can help you reduce some of the risks associated with investing and better prepare you to deal with the inevitable volatility of the financial

markets — two key benefits that can help you over the many years you’ll spend as an investor.

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

Mark Freeman, CEPA
Edward Jones Financial Advisor
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Hopkinton, MA
508-293-4017
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THIS ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN BY EDWARD JONES FOR USE BY YOUR LOCAL EDWARD JONES FINANCIAL ADVISOR.

You must evaluate whether a bond or CD ladder and the securities held within it are consistent with your investment objectives, risk tolerance and financial circumstances. Including callable bonds may increase the interest rate risk of a bond ladder. Bonds may be called prior to maturity, which could result in lower yields with new investments.

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UPTON LIBRARY

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Preschool storytimes featuring stories, songs, rhymes, and a craft. Can't join us for our weekday programs? This event is just for you! For ages 0-5. Pre-registration required.

Drop-In Storytime – Monday, May 19 at 9:30 a.m.
Our Children's Department offers a Drop-In Storytime session, once a month. No registration required! This is a blend of our Baby and Preschool Storytimes; however, no craft will be provided. We will feature stories, songs, rhymes, and fun! This will be held in the Greatroom and will be a larger group size. For ages 0 to 5.

Music & Movement – Monday, May 12 and Monday, June 2 at 9:30 a.m.
This program features Deb Hudgins and is an interactive program, perfect for children and their caregivers to enjoy together. Deb plays guitar and sings, and is sure to incorporate

stories, dancing, fingerplays, games and more at each of her fun, themed performances. This program is partially funded through a grant with Beginning Bridges CFCE in Uxbridge. For ages 1 to 5. Pre-registration is required.

Storybook Art Club – Tuesday, May 20 at 10 a.m.
This program meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month. Children will enjoy a picture book and create a craft inspired by the story!
This month will feature books by Antoinette Portis and recycled art materials. Pre-registration required. For ages 3 to 5.

LEGO Club – Wednesday, May 21 at 4 p.m.
This group meets the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month from 4 - 5 p.m. This group is led by Library Director, Matthew Bachtold.
We provide the LEGOs while you have fun building and making new friends. This program is for ages 3 to 12. Pre-registration is required.

Tween Book Club – Thursday, May 15 at 6:30 p.m.
This club is especially for our middle grade patrons, ages 10 to 14. This group reads popular middle grade titles selected by our members. This month, we will be discussing the title *Louder than Hunger* by John Schu. We welcome new members all year round! Pre-registration required.

Crafternoon – Thursday, May 22 at 3 p.m.
This is a new drop-in program that will meet the 4th Thursday of each month. Children can make a simple craft using materials such as crayons, scissors, paint, and glue. This month, we are making cupcake liner spring flowers! For ages 3+. No registration required.

Kids' Book Club – Wednesday, June 4 at 4 p.m.
Our book club members explore popular juvenile chapter books on the first Wednesday of each month from 4 - 4:45 p.m. We will be discussing *Kivame's Magic Quest: Rise of the Green Flame* by Bernard Mensah. This group is now for ages 7 to 10.

We welcome new members all year round! Pre-registration required.

Chess Club – 1st Tuesday/Thursday each month, 2 - 5 p.m.
Learn to play chess or just play with new players. We will have a student from BVT to help teach those new to the game. For ages 8 to 16. No registration required.

Crafting Club – 2nd Tuesday/Thursday each month, 2 - 5 p.m.
Feeling crafty? Join us as we create new projects each month. Beading, crochet, painting – the possibilities are endless! For ages 8 to 16. No registration required.

Gaming Club – 3rd Tuesday/Thursday each month, 2 - 5 p.m.
We've got a Play Station 5 and tons of board games and we'd love to have tweens and teens join us! New games each session! For ages 8 to 16. No registration required.

Magic the Gathering: Commander – 4th Tuesday each month, 4 - 6 p.m.
Join us for an introduction to the popular card game, Magic

the Gathering - Commander format. We will be joined by local patron, Josef Vargas, as he shares his knowledge with those wanting to learn and play! If you have a Commander deck, please bring it to play. For ages 8+. Please register.

Upton Reads Book Group
An eclectic mix of contemporary literary fiction with meetings on the second Tuesday afternoon and Thursday evening of each month in the Community Center classroom, with a Zoom remote option.
Tuesday, June 10 at 12:45 p.m., and Thursday, June 12 at 6:45 p.m.: *Harlem Rhapsody* by Victoria Christopher Murray.

Fic or No Fic Book Group
An adult book group led by Librarian Micaela that alternates fiction and non-fiction selections. Meets on the last Wednesday of each month at 6:45 p.m.
Wednesday, May 28 at 6:45 p.m.: *The Gardener of Lashkar Gah: A True Story of the Afghans Who Risked Everything to Fight the Taliban* by Larisa Brown.

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

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Spring cleaning is greener with Affordable Junk Removal

There are plenty of reasons to call a junk removal service. Maybe walking through your basement has gotten difficult or there is no more room in the attic? Perhaps you are planning to move, and you need to declutter before your open house?

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

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

Jay Schadler started his business in 2005. Back then, it was just him and a beat-up pickup truck taking small jobs and working nights and weekends when he could. As the years rolled on, his business grew, but his commitment to customer service never wavered. Now he's got a staff of ten, along with eight trucks, servicing eastern and central Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island.

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

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

Business spotlight

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

Working with Affordable Junk Removal is simple. First, you can load stuff yourself if you want by renting a 15-cubic-yard dumpster for a week and chucking up to a ton of your unwanted stuff. If you need to get rid of more weight, then Jay prorates that tonnage—you never pay for what you don't use.

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

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

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

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



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

Jay and his family are deeply

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

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

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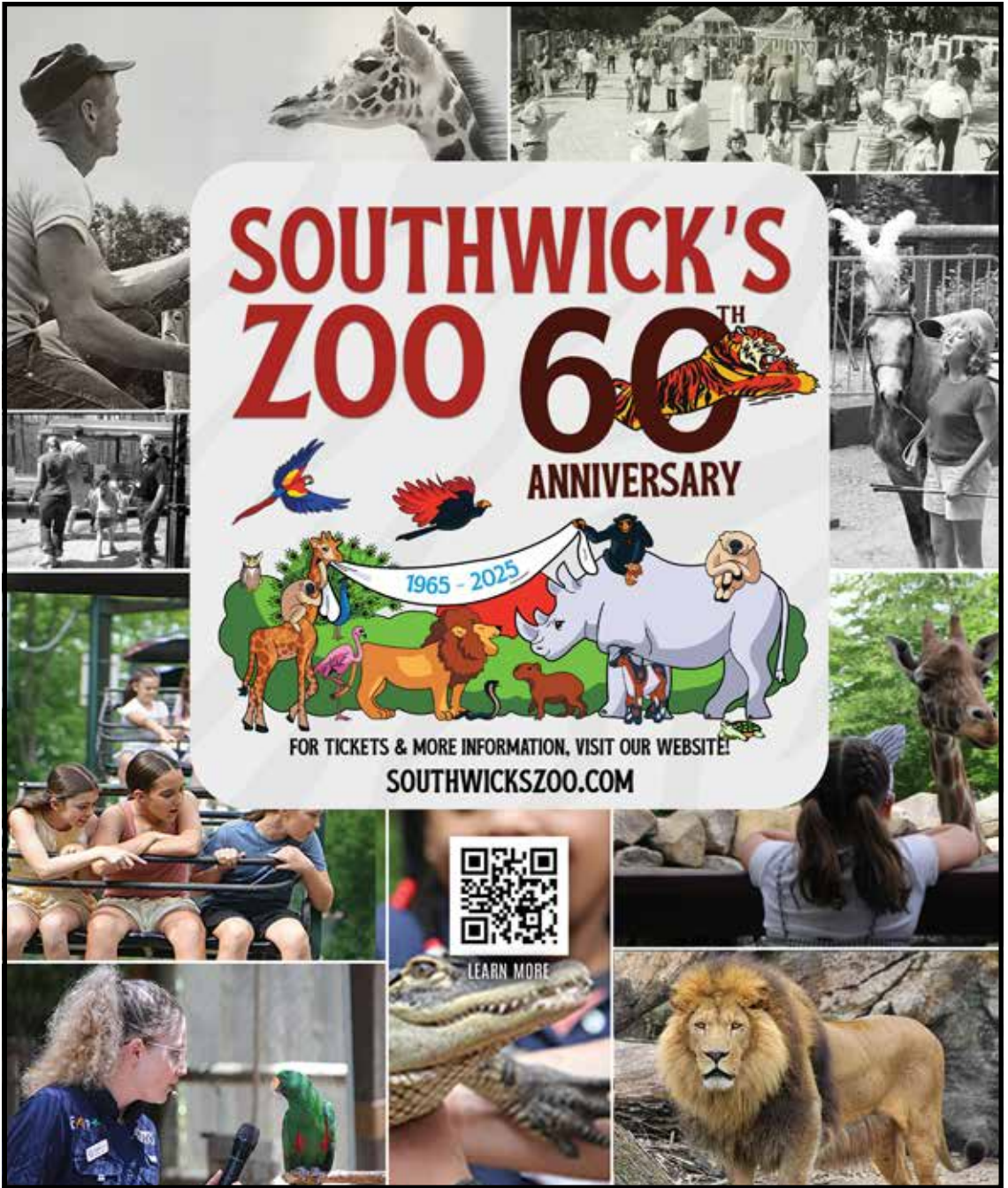
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Introducing the PanOptix® Pro IOL: A breakthrough in cataract surgery – and a first for Massachusetts

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

Cataract surgery has evolved dramatically over the past few decades, moving from a simple removal of the clouded natural lens to a transformative procedure that can restore full-spectrum vision. The introduction of advanced intraocular lenses (IOLs) has redefined the standard of care, allowing many patients to regain sharp vision at multiple distances without the ongoing need for glasses.

Now, a new generation of lens technology is poised to elevate outcomes even further: the Clareon® PanOptix® Pro Trifocal IOL. Alcon recently announced the official U.S. launch of this lens, with commercial availability starting in May 2025. I'm honored to share that I will be performing the first PanOptix Pro implantation in Massachusetts, bringing this groundbreaking innovation to

our community.

What Is the Clareon® PanOptix® Pro IOL?

The Clareon PanOptix Pro is Alcon's latest trifocal intraocular lens designed for use during cataract surgery. It builds on the success of the original PanOptix® IOL, which was the first trifocal lens approved by the FDA in the United States. This new version offers enhanced optics, improved light management, and a more seamless range of vision.

This lens features EN-LIGHTEN® NXT optical technology, a refinement that allows for 94% light utilization — the highest reported light transmission of any trifocal IOL on the market today. Compared to its predecessor, PanOptix Pro also boasts a 16% increase in contrast between intermediate and distance vision, delivering a sharper, more comfortable visual experience across the entire range.

Additionally, targeted diffractive refinements help redirect 50% of light previously lost to scatter toward useful focal points, greatly enhancing image clarity and reducing glare.

Why It's Better Than the Original PanOptix

The original PanOptix lens already offered excellent outcomes, allowing patients to see clearly at near (reading), intermediate (computer), and distance (driving) ranges. However, some patients experienced visual disturbances like halos or glare, especially in low-light settings. The Clareon PanOptix Pro addresses these concerns with:

- Improved contrast sensitivity
- Reduced light scatter
- More uninterrupted light distribution
- Enhanced optical image sharpness

These refinements translate to better night vision, clearer contrast, and greater patient



satisfaction, especially in visually demanding environments.

Another major improvement is the Clareon AutonoMe® preloaded delivery system, which allows for more precise, consistent lens placement during surgery — a benefit for both surgeons and patients.

- Key Benefits for Patients**
- Seamless vision across distances — from reading a phone to driving at night
 - Reduced dependence on glasses
 - Brighter, sharper vision
 - Low-light confidence, such as in restaurants or while driving at night
 - Built-in UV and blue light filtering for retinal protection

Risks and Considerations

While the PanOptix Pro IOL offers impressive advantages, it's important to remember that no intraocular lens is perfect for every patient. Some individuals may still experience mild visual disturbances such as glare or halos, particularly in the first weeks after surgery. The brain also requires time to adapt to trifocal optics, and some patients may need a short adjustment period.

The lens is not recommended for those with significant macular disease, irregular astigmatism, or certain other ocular conditions. A comprehensive preoperative consultation is critical to determine candidacy.

- Alternatives to the PanOptix Pro**
- For patients not suited to trifocal lenses, several other IOL options exist:
- Monofocal IOLs: Provide clear vision at one distance, typically requiring glasses for near or intermediate tasks
 - Multifocal IOLs: Offer multiple focal points, though with a more limited range than trifocals

- Extended Depth of Focus (EDOF) IOLs: Improve intermediate and distance vision with reduced halos, though near vision may still need support
- Choosing the right IOL is highly individualized and should be guided by lifestyle, eye health, and visual expectations.

A First for Massachusetts

Bringing the Clareon PanOptix Pro to Massachusetts is a milestone I'm proud to be part of. Our practice has always embraced cutting-edge technology to enhance patient outcomes, and this next-generation lens is no exception. Performing the first PanOptix Pro implant in the Commonwealth underscores our ongoing commitment to innovation, excellence, and personalized care.

We believe our patients deserve access to the latest proven technologies — not just to restore vision, but to improve how they live, work, and experience the world.

Why Milford Franklin Eye Center?

Cataract surgery is all about better precision, more safety, and excellent outcomes. At Milford Franklin Eye Center, I am proud to have been the first surgeon in the area and among the first in Massachusetts to offer bladeless laser-assisted cataract surgery — and the first in Greater Boston to implant the original PanOptix lens. We are now excited to bring the PanOptix Pro to our community.

The top five teaching hospitals in the nation offer bladeless laser cataract surgery — and so do we. All surgeries are performed at our state-of-the-art surgery center in Milford using advanced laser technology and

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EYES

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Mendon receives fire safety grants for gear and education

In April, the Healey-Driscoll Administration announced that more than 300 Massachusetts fire departments would receive over \$3 million in grants to support safety equipment for firefighters and life safety education for kids and older adults.

“Massachusetts firefighters do much more than fight fires –

they’re our first line of defense in any emergency,” said Gov. Maura Healey. “These grants will help firefighters protect themselves from injury and illness, rescue people in danger, and keep our most vulnerable residents safe from fires and other hazards at home. We are proud to be able to support these vital

first responders who never hesitate to answer a call for help.”

The Town of Mendon received a \$3,536.29 grant for safety equipment; a \$4,654.50 SAFE grant; and a \$2,190.91 Senior SAFE grant.

The awards are drawn from three grant programs coordinated by the Department of Fire Services.

those in need,” said Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll. “Through this program, we acknowledge that tremendous commitment by investing in the equipment they need to be safe in any situation.”

The Student Awareness of Fire Education (SAFE) Grant Program funds firefighter-educators who deliver age-appropriate fire and life safety education to school-age children. Since the grants’ inception in 1995, the number of Massachusetts children who die in fires has dropped to historically low levels, from two dozen or more per year to zero for nearly three consecutive years. This year’s awards will deliver more than \$1.1 million to 204 local fire departments.

“For 30 years, the SAFE grants have delivered life-saving lessons to Massachusetts’ kids and teens through our local firefighters,” said Secretary of Public Safety and Security Terrence Reidy. “This is just one of the powerful local-state partnerships that make Massachusetts one of

the safest places in the nation to live, work, and raise a family.”

In 2014, DFS launched the Senior SAFE Grant Program, which is geared toward another vulnerable population – older adults, who face a disproportionate risk of death or serious injury in a fire. Nearly \$485,000 will support alarm installation, fire safety education, fall prevention strategies, and other resources delivered by 203 local fire departments in partnership with local senior centers, councils on aging, and other community partners.

“People aged 65 and older are at greatest risk of death or serious injury in a fire at home,” said State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine. “The Senior SAFE grants make a difference by sending trained firefighters to conduct home safety assessments, install or replace smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, and help our seniors age in place safely and independently.”

Submitted by the Department of Fire Services

EYES

continued from page 10

premium lenses that correct for distance, near, and everything in between. Many cases of astigmatism are now fully correctable with these modern lens implants.

Our complication rates are among the lowest in the nation. One hundred percent of surgeries are performed under topical anesthesia — meaning no needles, no shots around or behind the eye, no stitches, and no scalpels. It’s truly no knife, no shots, no stitch surgery.

We have anesthesiologists present for all cases and we never perform surgery in an office space, unlike some other practices. We also do not charge additional fees for use of the operating room — another key difference. There is no longer

any need to travel hours for your cataract surgery. The most advanced care is already here, close to home.

It’s Time to Be Pro Panoptimistic!

The Clareon PanOptix Pro IOL is more than just an upgrade — it’s a significant leap forward in cataract surgery outcomes. With its groundbreaking light utilization, refined optics, and proven range of vision, it stands to become the new gold standard for patients seeking independence from glasses and sharp, vibrant vision at all distances. Experience cataract surgery results second to none — here, closer to home, at the Milford Franklin Eye Center.

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BVT Superintendent's Scholars Named

Dylan Leeds of Northbridge and Jayden Quang of Millbury

UPTON – Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT) seniors Dylan Leeds of Northbridge and Jayden Quang of Millbury were recently honored as BVT's 2025 Worcester County Superintendents' Association (WCSA) Scholar Award recipients at the WCSA Annual Scholars' Recognition Luncheon.

They are the recipients of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (M.A.S.S.) Award of Academic Excellence. The annual commendation, also known as the Superintendent's Scholar Award, is presented to the two seniors who exemplify the school's commitment to cutting-edge career technical training and rigorous academics. BVT is proud to recognize and celebrate the achievements of Dylan Leeds and Jayden Quang, who consistently demonstrate a commitment to academic excellence and continually contribute positively to their school community.

Dylan Leeds is a scholastically talented student who excels in and outside the classroom. Named a Commended Student in the 2025 National Merit Scholarship Program, a Rens-

selaer Medalist, and a member of the National Honor Society and the National Technical Honor Society, His dedication to academic and vocational studies was demonstrated in 2022 when he earned a gold medal in the Mobile Robotics competition at the SkillsUSA State Leadership & Skills Conference and again in 2023 when he earned the gold medal in the Mobile Robotics competition at the State Leadership & Skills Conference and the District V Leadership Conference—advancing to the National Leadership and Skills Conference where he placed in the top 10. A John & Abigail Adams Scholarship recipient, Dylan has made the Commendation List every term of his high school career. Dylan also participates in the cooperative education program employed at Primetals in Sutton, where he applies his mechanical engineering skills.

Dylan is excited to further his technical training and hands-on learning at Wentworth Institute of Technology, where he plans to earn a Bachelor of Science in the Mechanical Engineering program. He will be well-prepared to establish

his professional career in the traditional mechanical design and engineering industries, as well as emerging opportunities such as manufacturing and the development of biomedical and electromechanical devices.

Jayden Quang is the Distributive Clubs of America (DECA) Vice President of Hospitality, the Varsity Math Team Captain, and a National Honor Society and National Technical Honor Society member. He earned the Most Outstanding Student award in Engineering and Robotics in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years. His dedication to academic and vocational studies was displayed when he earned a silver medal in Mechatronics at the SkillsUSA State Leadership & Skills Conference in 2023 and 2024. A John & Abigail Adams Scholarship recipient, Jayden has made the Commendation List every term of his high school career. In addition to academic success, Jayden excels as a student-athlete on the soccer field—a contributing member of Colonial Athletic League boys champion teams in 2023 and 2024.

After analyzing multiple placement opportunities and



Dylan Leeds (left) of Northbridge and Jayden Quang (right) of Millbury have been named BVT's recipients of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents Award of Academic Excellence. They will graduate in May from BVT's Engineering & Robotics program. Courtesy photos

options that will strengthen his workforce entry options, Jayden is eager to further his education and training by studying computer science at the Georgia Institute of Technology.

"Dylan Leeds and Jayden Quang exemplify the modern career-technical student by demonstrating extraordinary commitment to career technical training and rigorous academics and are an inspiration for their peers and teachers. It is a pleasure to have them represent our school," said Steele. "It is equally exciting to see how they apply what they have learned at BVT and in their future professional endeavors."

About Blackstone Valley

Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT):

Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School serves the towns of Bellingham, Blackstone, Douglas, Grafton, Hopedale, Mendon, Milford, Millbury, Millville, Northbridge, Sutton, Upton, and Uxbridge. Located in the heart of the Blackstone Valley, BVT creates a positive learning community that prepares students for personal and professional success in an internationally competitive society through a fusion of rigorous vocational, technical, and academic skills. For more information about the school, visit www.valleytech.k12.ma.us.

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www.stgabrielma.org/2018/01/21/food-pantry/

Mendon Food Pantry

Mendon Senior Center, 62 Providence St., 508-478-6175
By appointment only.
bit.ly/MendonFoodPantry

Community supper on May 15

May 15: Community Supper - on the third Thursday of each month from September through June at 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., our Faith in Action committee provides a delicious and nutritious meal for the community. This month we will be serving pulled Hawaiian chicken for dinner! Everyone is welcome. Please call the church office at 508-529-3192 by May 9 to make your reservation. If you forget to reserve, please come anyway. We always make extra and would love to serve you.

If your nonprofit organization is located in Upton or Mendon and provides free services to Upton and/or Mendon citizens, email editor@uptonmendonfreepress.com for consideration to be listed in this section.

FRIENDS

continued from page 1

munity Center,” said founder and current president Steve Rakitin.

Donations to the group are tax-deductible.

FUSE has a Board of Directors and members who make an annual \$10 donation. Members can attend FUSE monthly meetings and volunteer to help with fundraising events approved by the Board of Directors. FUSE monthly meetings are held on the first Monday of the month (excluding holidays) at the



Logo for the Friends of Upton Seniors, a new non-profit group formed to raise funds to supplement the budget of Upton's Elder and Social Services Department. Image source: Friends of Upton Seniors

Upton Community Center. “We welcome people to join our group and attend our meetings,” said Rakitin, adding that FUSE members do not need to be Upton residents (but board members do).

Fundraising events being planned for the coming year include selling glossy, framed photos from the recent Senior Soirée, having a table at the fall Heritage Day celebration, and more.

The group is currently working on a Facebook page.

“This page will provide news about upcoming fundraising events as well as photos of

events such as the first annual Senior Soirée which was attended by over 70 people and was a huge success,” said Rakitin. “The seniors have been talking about this dance for weeks and are already looking forward to next year. We couldn’t have pulled this off without the generous support of the Upton Men’s Club and the Bloomer Girls.”

For more information about FUSE, email friendsofuptonseniors@gmail.com. Seniors are also encouraged to stop by the Community Center and check out the amazing events and activities that are happening every weekday.

The Upton Senior Soirée took place on March 28 and was a big success, according to organizers. Friends of Upton Seniors (FUSE) President Steve Rakitin says the event was the idea of Council on Aging member Sue Perry and was well-attended.

“We had 74 seniors plus volunteers helping with the food. We had hot dogs, sliders, fries, and root beer floats. The music was provided by a DJ and was ‘50s-‘70s-themed, and we even had a vintage jukebox which we used for photos. We also had high school yearbook photos of some of the seniors fishing on the big screen.”



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Mendon Senior Center News for May and June

Tri-Valley Lunch Program
Tired of eating at home alone? Why not consider this lunchtime alternative? Meals are served Tuesdays and Thursdays at noon. The cost is \$3 donation per meal. Reservations must be made 48 hours in advance. Transportation is available. Meals are subject to change.

Tues., May 13: Lasagna & Meatballs
Thurs., May 15: Craft Your Own Stuffed Baked Potato!
Tues., May 20: Beef Stew
Thurs., May 22: Roast Turkey with Gravy, Mashed Sweet Potatoes
Tues., May 27: Soup du Jour & Tuna Salad
Thurs., May 29: Teriyaki Beef and Steamed Rice

Elder Law Program, Wed., May 14, at 1 p.m.

The Mendon Senior Center will host a statewide program presented by the Massachusetts Bar Association entitled “Taking Control of Your Future: A Legal Checkup.” Attorney Jack Nealon from Hopkinton will touch on some important topics in this year’s 2025 resource guide (available for distribution) on a wide range of legal issues affecting the lives of seniors including how to protect your home and assets, power of attorney and health care proxies,

reverse mortgages, Medicare/Medicaid changes and alternatives to nursing home care. For more information or to register for this free program, call the Mendon Senior Center at 508-478-6175. Guides are available to participants first. There is vast subject matter.

Mendon Minstrels Chorus Spring Program: Stars, Skies & Heavens – Thurs., May 15, at 11 a.m.

This eclectic program of much-loved songs is sure to lift your spirits. Please call or stop by the senior center to register. Tri-Valley’s Bake Potato Bar, generously sponsored by the Friends of Mendon Elders is offered for your enjoyment following the program. Please sign up for program and lunch separately.

Pen Pal Ice Cream Social – Mon., May 19, at 4 p.m.

If you’re currently participating in this endearing program, be sure to save the date! You and your pen pal from Girl Scout Troop #65245 will be revealed to one another at the Mendon Senior Center. An ice cream social will follow the introductions.

Eat Healthier on a Tight Budget, SNAP Benefits
Need help buying groceries? SNAP can help! The Supple-

mental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, has the following eligibility guidelines: Household size 1/maximum gross monthly Income \$2608. Household size 2/maximum gross monthly income \$3525. If you need help applying for the SNAP benefit, contact Senior Center Outreach Coordinator Janet Hubener at 508-478-6175. Additionally, the Mendon Food Pantry is open the first Friday of each month by appointment. Call Janet Hubener for more information.

Mendon Senior Walking Group
Our walking group has resumed meeting, weather permitting, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 8:30 a.m. at various locations: Monday in Milford starting at the municipal lot across from Sacred Heart Church to Louisa Lake; Wednesday in Hopedale on the trail around the pond; and Friday in Uxbridge along the canal at Riverbend Farm. The average distance we walk is approx. 2 miles. We’re always open to different walking trails. We sometimes change it up a bit. Diane Howell, the group leader, requests email addresses and phone numbers to be sure

all are aware of any walking changes/cancellations. If you are interested or have questions, please don’t hesitate to contact Diane at diane.m.howell@icloud.com or call her at 508-473-3081. New Walkers are always welcome.

Hip Hop Dance Chair Exercise
The Mendon Senior Center welcomes back Rondae Drafts with an energizing exercise program for seniors set to music. This program, funded by the Mendon Cultural Council, is offered to you at no cost. Two complimentary sessions will be offered: Wed., May 28 at 2 p.m. and Mon., June 30 at 11:30 a.m. Please stop by or call the senior center to register for one or both groups.

Bocce Anyone?
The senior center’s Bocce court is available for use. Call the center at 508-478-6175 to let us know of our interest or to reserve a time.

New Players Welcome!
The Mendon Senior Center offers a variety of recreational activities including:

- Cribbage - Wednesdays 9:45 a.m. The Cribbage group is always looking for new players, stop on Wednesdays at 9:45 a.m., all levels welcome.
- Hand, Knee and Foot card game - Tuesdays 1 p.m.

- Mah-Jong - Wednesdays and Thursdays 1 p.m.
- Brain Games -Thursdays 11:30 a.m.

Please check our schedule regarding days, times, and availability. Don’t see your favorite game listed, please let us know what you’d like to see offered!

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

Prescription Drug Safe Disposal
Do you have old prescriptions at home, and you do not

MENDON SENIOR CENTER
continued on page 17



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Pet of the Month: Meet Coral and Cooper

Coral and Cooper are calling out to you! This melodic mother and son duo want to audition for a part in your family. They can't wait to greet you at the door with their charming renditions of today's most popular songs.

Cooper is a muscular orange tiger tux with large green eyes. He is playful, extremely affectionate and food motivated.

Coral is a beautiful petite tortoiseshell cat who craves attention from people equally as much as Cooper. And while she loves him dearly, she can't wait to have a home where she can find a space to stretch out alone sometimes.

Is your family group looking two new lead singers? Coral and Cooper are ready to sing their way into your hearts!



To meet Coral and Cooper, please visit the Milford Humane Society at milfordhumane.org or call 508-473-7008 for more info.




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Mendon Cultural Council Historic Scavenger Hunt on May 17

The Mendon Cultural Council will host a Historic Scavenger Hunt on Saturday, May 17, from 8 a.m. - 12 p.m. starting at Henry Clough School on North Avenue.

Participants will be hunting for 11 Historic sites in the Village of Mendon. Learn about their his-

tory and how they played a part in the history of Mendon. Prizes will be awarded. Registration via email to culturalcouncil@mendonma.gov or that morning between 8 a.m. and 8:30 a.m.

Rain date is Saturday, May 31.

Source: www.mendonma.gov



Recent Home Sales

Date	Mendon	Amount
04/18/2025	16 Forest Park Dr.	\$895,000
04/17/2025	14 Maple St.	\$630,000
04/07/2025	159 Blackstone St.	\$875,000
03/28/2025	4 Swandale Dr.	\$741,000

Date	Upton	Amount
04/11/2025	18 Fieldstone St.	\$445,000
03/31/2025	36 N Main St.	\$785,000
03/31/2025	89 Shannon Way #1	\$640,000
03/28/2025	74 Main St.	\$380,000

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



The 3-bed, 2-bath, 1,428-square-foot home at 74 Main Street in Upton recently sold for \$380,000. Photo source: [RobynAndSeanMyHouse](#)



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Website helps local veterans with information, job leads

Bill Gladwin has just retired and has taken up the responsibility of helping Mendon veterans.

Gladwin has created the www.VAhelp.us website to give quick access to invaluable information to veterans. It provides quick links to not only our national websites for veterans, but also information specific to Massachusetts.

Another useful purpose for VAhelp.us is direct access to O*NET [Occupational Information Network] OnLine which describes over 300 potential job positions from 20 different industries. From each industry, O*NET has these different segments, including:

- Occupation-Specific Information like Tasks & Technology Skills
- Occupational Requirements

with Work Activities, Detailed Work Activities & Work Context.

- Experience Requirements describing Job Zone, Training & Credentials & Apprenticeship Opportunities.
- Worker Requirements needing Skills, Knowledge and Education.
- Worker Characteristics having Abilities, Interests, Work Values and Work Styles
- Workforce Characteristics with Wages & Employment Trends and Job Openings on the Web
- More Information like Related Occupations and Professional Associations

For more information, visit www.VAhelp.us.

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MENDON SENIOR CENTER

continued from page 14

know what to do with them? The Mendon Police Station has a Med RX Return drop box, located in the entry to the station. The box is intended for the environmentally safe disposal of expired or unused medications. Medications that can be disposed of in the drop box include prescriptions, prescription patches, prescription ointments, over-the-counter medication, vitamins, and samples.

Fraud & Scams
Dean Bank returns to the Mendon Senior Center on Wed., June 25, at 11 a.m. to provide attendees with an update on some of the new trends they're seeing

in the area of fraud and scams. Bank experts from the Mendon Branch, Compliance & Security as well as Electronic Banking Operations will be on hand to answer your questions and provide tips on how best to respond to fraud attempts. They'll share stories of recent successes they've had preventing fraud from occurring with their customers and will offer resources to use in the event you or someone you know falls victim to fraud.

Charles Riverboat Cruise, Fri., Aug. 8
Come join Mendon Seniors as we travel to Boston, and take a 70-minute narrated tour, hosted by Charles Riverboat Company. This cruise is fully narrated. You will see the historic sights of Boston and Cambridge. Experi-

ence places from Beacon Hill to Harvard all while cruising the Charles River. Boat is climate controlled. After the cruise you will be treated to lunch at The Cheesecake Factory. Choose an entree from a fantastic menu and cheesecake for dessert, of course! After lunch take some time for shopping at the Cambridgeside Galleria Mall. Depart from the Mendon Senior Center at 8:45 a.m. and return at approximately 5:15 p.m.

For reservations, please contact Beverly Fior at 508-473-8382. Please make checks payable to: Friends of Mendon Elders and Mail to 62 Providence Street, c/o Bev Fior, Mendon, MA 01756. No Refunds after 7/8/25
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Wed., June 18 - Fri. June 20
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Bev Fior at 508-473-8382 for questions/information.
2025 Mendon Senior of the Year nominations accepted through June 1
Since 1978, some deserving person (or persons) has been awarded the annual distinction of Senior Citizen of the Year. The chosen Mendon resident generally exemplifies a spirit of public service and has made a positive difference in the community. Written nominations will be accepted until June 1 and the award will be presented in September. Nomination forms are available on the town website, at the post office and senior center. Please drop off or mail nominations to the Senior Center at 62 Providence Street, Mendon, MA 01756.

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SPORTS

Young Valley Tech Softball coming together

Freshman heavy team shows signs of improvement

By Chris Villani

With five freshmen and seven juniors on this year's varsity softball roster for Blackstone Valley Tech, head coach Peter Cardoza had a feeling there could be some growing pains this spring. But the Beavers are showing signs of promise every game and the coach feels like they will finish the year strong.

"I think we will get it, I think we can turn it around," Cardoza said following a 3-7 start. "It's been a tough year, but we have had some good games against some good teams. We just haven't always played well enough to get a win."

Valley Tech typically plays a game that involves strong defense and playing small ball, manufacturing enough runs to win. Cardoza said the team is not fully executing that strat-

egy yet, but numerous players have put together standout seasons, including junior Brooke Gniadek in the circle.

"She has pitched really well for us and she is also hitting close to .500," Cardoza said. "She has been super this year."

Julia Trujillo, one of only four seniors on the team, is a key power bat in the lineup. She hit well over .300 with a pair of home runs through the first half of the season.

Junior Olivia Hall is another mainstay in the lineup, and classmate Ella Foster has been stellar defensively at shortstop while also moving runners along and getting bunts down when needed at the plate. Coupled with yet another junior, Bella Raymond, Foster has been part of a strong middle infield that is Valley Tech's biggest strength



Pitcher Brooke Gniadek has been one of BVT's top players this year. Courtesy photo

defensively, Cardoza said. El-leigh MacNeil, a sophomore, has contributed in both center-field and at third base.

The talent has shown signs of gelling. Against Norton, a final four team a season ago, BVT scored four runs after being shut out against the same team in the tournament last year.

"We can compete with the best teams," Cardoza said. "But we need to play a good, clean game all the way around, and we are just not there yet."

Cardoza acknowledges that his youthful roster may be a year away, but there is still work to be done and promise for this season as well.

"We have a tough schedule,



Bella Raymond (left) puts a tag on a player during a recent game. Courtesy photo



Julia Trujillo reaches for a ball in the outfield. She has also been a big bat in the BVT order. Courtesy photo

but we are gearing up for improvement in the second half of the year," he said. "Hopefully we can pull off an upset and maybe make some noise in the playoffs."

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SPORTS

Nipmuc/BVT Volleyball starts season strong

Co-op has sights set on deep playoff run

By Chris Villani

The Nipmuc/Blackstone Valley Tech boys' volleyball co-op could not have scripted a much better start to the season. The team won nine of its first 10 games, and the lone loss came with a shorthanded roster during April vacation week. Head coach Brian Gerard said his team has all the components of a winner.

"We have a lot of firepower, an excellent young setter, and defensively, we are excellent," Gerard said. "So we have all the pieces we need. It's just whether we are going to be our best friend or worst enemy in the latter half of the season."

Sophomore Dolan Comforti is a towering presence at setter, standing six-foot-six.

"He just keeps growing every year, it's nice to have a big kid like that in the front row," Gerard said of the BVT student. "He is very strong and he can set just about any ball."

Another Valley Tech product, co-captain Hadden Houatchanthara, is a strong club player who has become a go-to option for the team when it is in need of a point.

Nipmuc's Logan DeMarzo, a senior, has held down the middle and sends opponents ducking when he has the chance to wind up and spike a ball.

"He is very active in the front row and an absolute powerhouse," Gerard said. "He is



Nipmuc/BVT boys volleyball team could have the talent to make a run to the finals this spring. Courtesy photo

scary to dig." Also in the middle is BVT's Miles Guikema, a junior who Gerard said is continuing to improve. "He is having the best season of all of our hitters to date, he has been unstoppable," the coach said. "He doesn't jump as high as Logan in the middle, but he sees everything that is going on in front of him and nobody seems to be able to put enough hands up to stop him." The team welcomed back senior Albert Aweh-Hammond, who has battled injuries recently but has been yet another offensive cog for the team. On defense, the trio of Evan Donlon,

Miguel Machado, and co-captain Hunter Allen are all playing huge roles this spring.

Over the second half of the season, Gerard said Nipmuc/BVT's goal is to win the Tri-Valley League and they exited school vacation week undefeated in league play.

When it comes to the state tournament, Gerard said the only team that can stop Nipmuc/BVT is itself.

"Can we handle the pressure of a deep playoff run?," he said. "We want to get to the final four, and there is no reason we can't get to the finals. There's no reason it can't be us, so we might as well shoot for the stars."

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An illustration of a male handyman wearing a blue shirt, a red cap, and a tool belt. He is holding a power drill in his right hand and a clipboard with a checklist in his left hand. The clipboard has the word 'fixitlist' written on it.

The logo for 'Kartwheel Kids' features the text 'Kartwheel Kids' in a playful, rounded font. Above the text is a stylized illustration of a girl in a blue leotard performing a backflip or jump.

School's Out Summer 2025

A photograph of a group of diverse children sitting in a circle on a colorful mat, with their hands raised in the air, smiling.

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AGES 4-12

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<h4>2023 CHRYSLER VOYAGER</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$85/WK</p> <p>#D15012 • LX TRIM, HEATED SEATS</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$34,265 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$23,977</p>	<h4>2021 TOYOTA TACOMA 4x4</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$106/WK</p> <p>#TP5005 • SR TRIM, DBL CAB, 3.5L</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$42,605 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$29,677</p>	<h4>2022 DODGE DURANGO GT</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$117/WK</p> <p>#25149A • ALLOYS, AWD, 3.6L</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$48,595 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$32,677</p>	<h4>2022 GENESIS GV70 3.5T</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$138/WK</p> <p>#D14928 • NAV, HEATED LEATHER</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$64,700 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$38,977</p>	<h4>2022 TOYOTA CAMRY LE</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$74/WK</p> <p>#TP5050 • 25/34 MPG CITY/HWY</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$38,625 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$20,977</p>	<h4>2022 CHEVY SILVERADO 4x4</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$135/WK</p> <p>#47193 • CUSTOM, 2.7L TURBO</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$54,180 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$37,677</p>
<h4>2025 CHEVY TRAX 2RS</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$78/WK</p> <p>#125025A • HEATED SEATS, SUNROOF</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$28,565 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$24,977</p>	<h4>2024 TOYOTA TUNDRA 4x4</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$173/WK</p> <p>#TP5047 • SR5, CPO, ALLOYS, V6</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$58,405 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$48,977</p>	<h4>2018 JEEP CHEROKEE 4x4</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$71/WK</p> <p>#46893A • TRAILHAWK, ALLOYS</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$34,400 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$18,977</p>	<h4>2022 HYUNDAI TUCSON SEL</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$92/WK</p> <p>#D14852L • AWD, HEATED SEATS</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$36,750 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$25,977</p>	<h4>2023 TOYOTA COROLLA LE</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$74/WK</p> <p>#TP4677 • 32/41 MPG CITY/HWY</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$26,589 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$20,977</p>	<h4>2018 CHEVY CRUZE</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$46/WK</p> <p>#46886A • PREMIER, ALLOYS</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$32,395 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$12,977</p>
<h4>2021 FORD EDGE SEL</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$88/WK</p> <p>#P17266L • 2.0L TURBO, SUNROOF</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$40,395 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$24,977</p>	<h4>2024 VW JETTA SPORT</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$78/WK</p> <p>#47000 • TURBO, HEATED SEATS</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$29,550 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$21,977</p>	<h4>2020 LINCOLN CORSAIR</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$88/WK</p> <p>#124361A • SUNROOF, LEATHER</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$46,645 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$24,977</p>	<h4>2022 FORD BRONCO 4x4</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$134/WK</p> <p>#124-199B • TURBO, BIG BEND</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$43,995 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$37,977</p>	<h4>2019 SUBARU OUTBACK</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$64/WK</p> <p>#TP4638A • AWD, MOONROOF, V6</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$34,695 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$17,977</p>	<h4>2021 MERCEDES GLC 300 SUV</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$118/WK</p> <p>#TM25-197A • TURBO, LEATHER</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$50,800 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$32,977</p>
<h4>2022 CHEVY COLORADO</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$128/WK</p> <p>#C47287 • Z71 TRIM, 4X4, ALLOYS</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$44,290 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$35,977</p>	<h4>2018 HONDA CR-V EX-L</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$71/WK</p> <p>#TM25-075A • 27/33 MPG CITY/HWY</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$34,190 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$19,977</p>	<h4>2021 BUICK ENCORE AWD</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$83/WK</p> <p>#46830 • GX SELECT, 1.3L TURBO</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$32,225 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$23,377</p>	<h4>2021 MAZDA MAZDA CX-5</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$88/WK</p> <p>#46823 • MOONROOF, LEATHER</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$29,899 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$24,977</p>	<h4>2023 BMW X1 xDrive28i</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$113/WK</p> <p>#TP4816 • AWD, TWIN TURBO, NAV</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$51,595 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$31,977</p>	<h4>2022 RAM 1500 BIG HORN</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$131/WK</p> <p>#TP5159 • 4X4, HEMI, ALLOYS</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$45,710 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$36,977</p>
<h4>2023 TOYOTA HIGHLANDER</h4> <p>AS LOW AS \$127/WK</p> <p>#TP4692 • LE TRIM, ALLOYS, CPO</p> <p>NEW RETAIL PRICE: \$45,775 WHOLESALE PRICE: \$35,977</p>					

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Mike Penner
General Manager

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