



Auburn News Roundup

BY JANET STOICA
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

Auburn's Dori Vecchio has been named new town manager by the Selectboard at their May 22 meeting. Vecchio received her Master's Degree in Public Administration from Clark University and her Bachelor's degree from Worcester State University. Prior to this role, she worked as the assistant town manager/human resources director in Auburn. She was the town administrator for Blackstone and also worked 23 years in the city of Worcester where she served in multiple roles, most recently as the director of human resources. She also served as Worcester's finance manager/grants supervisor and the

director of administration for the city manager.

Auburn will host its Independence Day Celebration along with Fourth of July fireworks on Friday, June 27 (rain date July 2). Festivities will begin at 5 p.m. with fireworks slated to start at 9:30 p.m. at the Pappas Recreation Complex. There will be food, vendors, kids' games, Rock & Roll Racing, and train rides. The Grand Entrance will begin at 6:45 p.m. with the American Legion Tuttle Post and Vietnam Veterans followed by a concert by The Outriggers at 7 p.m. Free WRTA and AA Transportation shuttle service pickup from Pakachoag School, the Senior Center, and Auburn Mall.

On Sunday, June 22, at Worcester's Polar Park located at 100

Madison Street, Auburn will take over the seats for the WooSox game vs. the Buffalo Bisons with a start time of 1:05 p.m. Tickets can be purchased on the website go-fevo.com/group/towntakeover25.

The Farmers and Cultural Market began on Thursday, June 5, and continues every Thursday through August 28 from 4-7 p.m. also at the Pappas Complex. Free outdoor concerts follow with groups listed on the town website.

At the May 20 Annual Town Elections, approximately 15 percent of town voters went to the polls. With most candidates running unopposed, the follow-

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Goings-On in Oxford

BY JANET STOICA
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According to Tony Sousa, Oxford assistant town manager, the town was recently honored with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission's 2025 Resiliency Award at a banquet held on June 12.

"At the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission's annual dinner, the town of Oxford was honored to receive the 2025 Resiliency Award recognizing leadership in climate preparedness and hazard mitigation," he said.

This award celebrated the town's completion of the Oxford Hazard Mitigation & Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Plan—a comprehensive strategy developed to identify local climate risks and prioritize critical investments that will make Oxford more resilient to storms, flooding, and extreme weather.

Highlights of the plan included:

- A detailed assessment of vulnerable infrastructure, flood-prone areas, and emergency response capacity
- Targeted actions such as culvert replacements, emergency shelter upgrades, and nature-based storm-water improvements
- A strong emphasis on equity, with outreach to seniors, low-income households, and historically underserved neighborhoods
- A clear roadmap to pursue state and federal funding for implementation



With the plan now formally approved by FEMA and the state, Oxford is well-positioned to launch priority projects and aggressively pursue grants to support this important work.

"The town of Oxford extended sincere thanks to CMRPC and to the many local boards, departments, and community members who contributed to shaping this achievement. A proud milestone for Oxford—and a meaningful step forward in building a stronger, more resilient future," Sousa said.

The Oxford

Farmers Market will kickoff its Summer Season on Friday, June 20, from 2 – 6pm at Joslin Park and will

be held every third Friday of the month through October on the following Fridays: July 19, August 16, September 20, and October 18. Residents and friends are encouraged to check out the fresh fruits, vegetables, and crafts offered.

Movies on Main will also begin its season on Wednesdays beginning July 9 when the movie Moana 2 will be shown. Additional dates include July 16 – Wicked; July 23 – The Unbreakable Boy; July 30 – If; August 6 – Dogman; August 13 – The Minecraft Movie; and August 20 – Raya and The Last Dragon. Movie goers should arrive early to settle in so as not to disturb others. Please also bring your chairs, blankets, and bug spray. All movies begin at sunset.

Meet Oxford's Karate Kid

BY PATTY ROY

In just a few weeks, 13 year old Gabby Amato will head to Malmo, Sweden as part of the AAU National Karate Team where she will showcase her talent in a contest that will include top competitors from around the world.

It's a journey that began at her family's dojo, Bushi Karate Club on Main Street, Oxford when Gabby was just four years old. In the intervening years, she has worked her way up to a junior class first degree

black belt, a designation for those under 16 years, she explained.

The AAU team requires competitors to place in sanctioned tournaments throughout the year. Along with local competitions, the Amato family hits the road to compete about every other weekend. That makes for a busy competition season and lots of trips to mid-Atlantic states, her mom and Sensei Leah Amato said.

The big catalyst for Gabby's national team success was medaling in several events at the AAU Na-

tional Team qualifiers in Las Vegas. There, in the mega-sized Horseshoe Casino convention center, she placed second in short weapons, wielding a sai, a trident-like triple-pronged dagger (think Ninja Turtle Raphael). She also placed second in long weapons, using a bo staff (think Donatello).

Gabby grabbed a third place medal in Kata, the choreographed movements that simulate fighting an opponent. The moves can include punches, blocks, kicks and stances executed

in a specific order.

This training technique "mimics a fight, it's like a dance routine," Leah Amato said.

Gabby said, "Las Vegas was my first super-big tournament and I felt like I did pretty well, even though I was nervous."

There was probably no need to be nervous since she trains about 15 hours a week at the dojo and has

KARATE

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KARATE

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been working since the fall with private strength and conditioning coach, Ashlee Nosed. Gabby also uses an elite Kata coach, Cincy Castro out of New Jersey, who schools her in the discipline that emphasizes transition and flow from one posture and movement to another, teaching the student proper form and position, while improving muscle memory and focus.

Her wins move Gabby on to the 13th Annual World Union of Karate-do Federations (WUKF) tournament in Sweden.

Before that, she has a tournament in Fort Lauderdale over the July Fourth holiday.

Gabby is a student at the Advanced Math & Science Academy in Marlborough and seems poised beyond her years as she respectfully bows when entering and exiting the dojo's training floor. There's lots of homework to keep up with, but she has learned to master time management at a young age. Her teachers were "pretty good" about making allowances for her travel to Las Vegas, she said.

A day at a big competition starts around 8:30 a.m. with a group warm-up. At a smaller contest, Gabby will start with stretching, do some breathing exercises and check

her hydration.

"Sometimes, I don't compete until around lunchtime, so I'll cheer other people on," she said. "I like to help out with kids who have less experience at comps than I do. I try to make sure they know what they're doing and where they're going," she said.

The trip to Malmo is mainly about competing, but there is time built in for sightseeing activities. That should be fun since Gabby has made lots of friends on the competition circuit.

Leah Amato said the cool thing about karate is that no one has to mimic anybody else's journey. Gabby plans to continue AAU karate through college, but practitioners



First degree black belt Gabby Amato practices Kata movements.

can develop their own timeline.

"That's just Gabby's path," Leah said of the competition route. "We have pre-schoolers through retirees."

"Part of what make karate work is it's your journey and what you want to get out of it. So we have people who just come to train. You can also step away and come back in 10 years," she said.

There are also people who want

to do high-level competitions and go on to become teachers and Bushi Karate works on mentoring them.

Leah also competes from time to time and she appreciates the family time.

"It's one of the few things you can do as a parent-child combo, she said. "You can coach baseball, you can coach softball, but you can actually do this with your kids."





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Sheriff Swears in Officers from Auburn, Grafton and Oxford

On Friday, June 6th, 2025, Worcester County Sheriff Lew Evangelidis administered the Correctional Officers Oath to the 16 graduating recruits of the Sheriff's Office's 63rd Basic Recruit Training Academy (B.R.T.A.) at the department's Training and Command Center in West Boylston. Among the 16 graduates were Officers Thomas Henriquez of Auburn, Joseph Richardson of Grafton, & Michael Sputo of Oxford.

The Worcester County Sheriff's Office is committed to ensuring public safety across the cities and towns in Worcester County. The department recognizes the importance of building a team that reflects the diverse community it serves. The graduates of B.R.T.A. #63 represent a highly qualified group of recruits, each bringing unique skills and experiences to their new roles as correctional officers. These officers come from nine different towns throughout Massachusetts and include 6 individuals who are either active members or veterans of the U.S. Army.

The Worcester County Sheriff's Office Academy offers a paid, full-time program lasting 13 weeks,

designed to equip recruits with the skills needed to manage and maintain the care, custody, and control of inmates at the Worcester County Jail & House of Correction. The academy includes both classroom instruction and hands-on training.

While at the academy, recruits undergo extensive training in various aspects of corrections. This training includes skills such as de-escalation techniques, the duty to intervene, fire safety, defensive tactics, and first responder protocols. They also receive education in suicide prevention, mental health issues, and substance abuse awareness.

In addition, recruits engage in daily physical fitness sessions, take weekly assessments on classroom material, and benefit from regular guest lectures and demonstrations provided by a range of public safety partners.

"After 13 rigorous weeks of training, I present the best and brightest in corrections today," commented Worcester County Sheriff Lew Evangelidis. "The Worcester County Sheriff's Office Training Department is one of the best in the state, and I can



From left: Officers Thomas Henriquez of Auburn, Joseph Richardson of Grafton and Michael Sputo of Oxford.

confidently say that these individuals are ready to join the ranks as full-time corrections officers and contribute to successfully executing our mission. Congratulations to these graduates as they begin their new careers."

Before starting the academy, applicants must complete a writ-

ten exam, a physical fitness test, a background check, and a psychological screening. To ensure fairness and impartiality, Evangelidis has implemented a policy that prohibits letters of recommendation from politicians and gives preference to hiring individuals who have served our country.

The Worcester County Sheriff's Office is accepting applications for its 64th Basic Recruit Training Academy, which will begin in September 2025. To learn more about what it takes to be a correctional officer, please visit worcestercountysheriff.com/careers/correctional-officer-academy.

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Thank Goodness for Our Parents...

BY JANET STOICA
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Having recently experienced the holidays of Mother's Day and Father's Day, we've all thought deeply about our parents or caregivers. Rich, poor, or in-between, without our parents and caregivers none of us would be here. For sure. I don't mean just biologically. I mean spiritually, morally, and physically. For the most part, our parents/caregivers

made us toe the line. They kept us clean, safe, and warm. They nurtured us as if we were their lion cubs. Just don't let anyone or anything stand between us babies and our parents or there would be hell to pay. They would lay down their lives for us. As we grew from dependent infants, who couldn't even hold our dainty heads up without their cradling us in their soft arms, into toddlers who tested their patience as we managed to find



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new cabinet doors and drawers to get into to our teenage years when we might've told them to leave us alone because we already knew what we were doing. Our parents stood behind us, sometimes in silence, allowing us to explore within the boundaries they had set. When we flew the coop and left high school for trades or college, they sat home wondering what we were up to. Some parents experienced the "empty nest syndrome" never saying anything aloud to us but sitting at home marveling at

how empty and silent their homes now were since we weren't there for them to look after anymore. Maybe they threw themselves into work or volunteerism to fill the hours that they did not have to care for us any longer. Maybe they just coped as best they could. We were the center of their universe and now, we were gone. Perhaps at holidays or birthdays, we came back home to celebrate with them. The sparkle in their eyes when they saw us couldn't be missed. The joy they expressed at

seeing us home again was certainly unmistakable. They loved being our caregivers once again if only for a day or a weekend. When we left after the festivities ended, they appeared wistful and solemn. Most likely thinking how silent the house would become once more. They couldn't wait to answer the door when we arrived again. Suddenly, on one of our visits back home, we might have noticed that mom or dad weren't moving as fast as they used to and now it was our turn to cook the big holiday meal and take care of the cleanup afterwards. They might be a little more forgetful but they always had a big smile for us and their carefree laughs were still there. It was time for us to be their protectors now and to assume the roles they had always carried for us. We might then begin to reflect on all the sacrifices, large and small, they made for us. Saving their overtime pay so we could go with our college friends on a Spring Break vacation, helping us with a down payment on our first car, or even putting their own personal needs on hold so they could provide something more for us. They never stopped praying for our safety and to arrive home without incident. They devoted themselves to us completely and devoting ourselves to them as they age is the very least we can do. My parents have passed years ago, my dear Dad suddenly when I was 16 and my sweet Mom 10 years ago and this little tribute is for them. They've made me the caring and responsible individual I am today. God bless you, Mom and Dad, you were the best!



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ETIQUETTE EXPRESS

Making Everyday Interactions Better

BY LEE-ANN BARKHOUSE

Etiquette & Leadership Coach helping people show up with confidence, kindness and credibility.

Etiquette isn't about being fancy—it's about being thoughtful. In today's fast-paced world, small courtesies and everyday respect go a long way in building trust, connection, and community. Whether you're at work, out running errands, or simply spending time with family, how you treat others makes a difference.

Maya Angelou once said, "People will forget what you said, forget what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel."

Etiquette Express is here to offer practical tips and honest answers to modern etiquette dilemmas, big or small. Each month, you'll find a reader-submitted question along with a clear response, plus a practical etiquette tip you can try the next time you need it.

Q. My coworker micro-waves fish at lunch almost every day, and the smell takes over the whole office. What's the polite way to handle this?

A. Ah, the infamous office microwave mystery meal. If you have a friendly rapport, try something light like: "Hey, I know we all love our lunches, but the fish smell really hangs around. Any chance we could switch it up once in a while?"

If that feels too direct—or if it doesn't work—you could also ask your manager to send a general reminder about keeping shared spaces comfortable for everyone. It's a common issue, and it can usually be handled with a bit of tact and teamwork.

ETIQUETTE TIP OF THE WEEK: NAPKIN KNOW-HOW

Place your napkin on your lap as soon as you sit down. No

need to wait for the food. It's a small move that shows you're relaxed, confident, and ready to enjoy the meal. If you need to leave the table, don't place your napkin on your chair. Instead, set it loosely to the left of your plate.

Pro tip: Fold the napkin with the crease facing you. That way, when you dab your mouth, you're using the inside—keeping the outside neat.

Have a situation you'd like help with? Write in and your question may be featured in a future column. Let's build a kinder, more respectful world, one interaction at a time.

Lee-Ann Barkhouse is a certified etiquette and leadership coach who helps people show up with confidence, kindness, and credibility. At Invest in You, she shares practical tools to make everyday moments more thoughtful and meaningful—whether at work, at home, or right here in the community.

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SPORTS

8th Graders Looking to Take the Reins

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

When Oxford decided to field a girls' tennis program for the first time in 40 years, co-coach Joanne Grzembski, a middle school math teacher, started asking around for players. During the inaugural season last spring, the team had 20 girls come out; this year only 11 returned. Two of those players that have stayed put are now eighth graders and a big part of the Pirates' future on the tennis court.

Samantha Marrier and Malayna Vieira joined the program last spring during its first year and this year they are both integral parts of the Oxford team. While the duo doubled last year, a lot of times together, Marrier has found her way into playing first singles for the Pirates, while Vieira is holding down third singles. Both girls look to be the face of the team in the future.

"With four plus years left, these two look to be the future of this program," Grzembski said. "They are showing that hard work pays off. They are definitely the leaders

and are the ones that will be setting the tone for the future."

As seventh graders, both girls were eventually approached by the coach to come try out for the team. Marrier, along with two other friends, had an interest in the sport and decided to give it a try while Vieira had occasionally picked up a tennis racket with her family.

"My family enjoys playing tennis and I would play with them from time to time," Vieira said. "It was nothing serious; no scoring, just hitting the ball over the net. When my math teacher told us about the tennis program forming I gave it a try."

Although Marrier enjoyed playing doubles last spring, she found that she really likes playing singles.

"Last year I played doubles with Malayna, but this year I've found that I like singles much better," she said. "It allows me to feel in control of what is happening on the court."

Marrier believes that her serve and her ability to predict where the ball will go once it's hit are her strengths but needs to work more on her hitting. She plans on working on everything that she can this

off-season, while attending camps and taking lessons so that she is ready to take on next season, her first as a high school student.

"Sam has improved her game by leaps and bounds. Her serve has dramatically improved and she can put the ball wherever she wants," the co-coach said. "By playing number one singles she draws the toughest assignment, but she's doing alright as an eighth grader."

For Vieira, singles was also part of her game this season at the beginning of the year prior to her breaking her toe. Since the injury, she has missed seven or eight matches over the last few weeks and knows that she'll have a lot of work to do once she returns to the court.

"I feel that when I get back I am going to have to work on my aim and where the ball goes on the court," she said. "My foot control on the court is my best asset, but I know that I am going to have to play more this summer to improve my game to be ready for next year."

Grzembski noted that Vieira is the third best player on the team and has improved considerably from last year, especially her back-



hand. Neither girl plays any other sport for Oxford, but Marrier said she may look into field hockey as a freshman next fall.

When the team gets back together next spring, the co-coach believes that there will be a good number of middle school athletes

on its roster, so they are going to need to overcome the opposition's size and strength. Marrier and Vieira will be entering their third season on the team and will need to guide the young team along, despite still being young themselves.

Summer Evenings at the Museum

The Auburn Historical Society & Museum will be offering evening hours at the museum at 41 South Street on the third Thursday in June, July, and August free of charge. Tours will be offered as well as help with research dealing with the town of Auburn, and genealogy. There is the interactive exhibit "Auburn Then and Now"

based on the book written by Richard Hedin, which is available for purchase, that patrons can enter a random drawing, and for the kids there's Delia's Picture Scavenger Hunt to do.

If you have been wanting to see what is in the museum, but can't make the Tuesday or Saturday regular hours, now is your chance

to visit July 17 and August 21 from 6-8:30 pm. Come and enjoy the exhibits, meet the volunteers who help keep the museum open year-round and more.

This article is made possible by the Auburn Historical Society & Museum, 41 South Street. The museum is open Tuesday and Saturday mornings 9:30-12:30 and may be reached at auburnmuseum@verizon.net or 508-832-6856, auburnhistoricalmuseum.org or follow us on Facebook at Auburn Historical.

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ing were elected: Library Trustees for 3 years, Vera Kirrane 1,519 votes and Nan Johnson 1,318; Doreen Marie Goodrich elected as Town Moderator with 1,340 votes; School Committee for 3 years, Samantha Raphael 1,624 votes; Board of Selectmen, Steven Chambers 1,625; Southern Worcester County Regional Vocational School Committee for 3 years, George Scobie, Jr. 1,658. Many precinct Representatives were also voted in.

The Assessors' office representatives will be conducting prop-

erty inspections for new sales and building permits as required by the state Dept. of Revenue. Orange door hangers will be left at those properties visited with contact information.

The Auburn Police Department will host a free summer event at Lemansky Park located at 22 Brayman Street on Tuesday, August 12 from 5 – 8 p.m. (rain date, Thursday, August 14). There will be Police and Fire demonstrations, live music, Touch-a-Truck exhibits, kids' events, and food trucks. Sponsors are welcome and should contact Lt. Stephanie Hayward at stephanie.hayward@auburn-masspolice.org

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Whole-Body Confidence at Prestige: Advanced Beauty & Wellness Services Now Offered

Lorri Ducharme, owner of Prestige Salon & Day Spa in Webster, is proud to announce exciting additions to the salon's offerings—designed to enhance both inner confidence and outer beauty.

certifications in body inking, she provides transformative services for clients healing from surgery, childbirth, or skin trauma.

"After breast reconstruction surgery, this service is truly

- Microblading & Powder Brows – Creates a natural brow appearance for clients with sparse or missing brows due to aging, alopecia, or chemotherapy.

These treatments are long-lasting, sun-safe, and can last up to two years.

Medical Aesthetics by Carly Rx Aesthetics

Carly Whitcraft, RN, brings over 20 years of healthcare experience and advanced aesthetic certifications to the Prestige team. Through Carly Rx Aesthetics, she delivers a client-focused, medically guided approach to facial rejuvenation and internal wellness.

"It's not about changing how you look—it's about enhancing what's already there," Carly explains.

"My goal is to help every client feel confident and refreshed in their own skin."

Her service offerings include:

- Jeuneau® Wrinkle Treatments – A modern neuromodulator that softens dynamic lines and refreshes facial appearance.
- SkinPen® Microneedling – FDA-cleared collagen induction therapy that improves skin tone, texture, acne scarring, and fine lines.
- Vitamin Wellness Injections – B12, Glutathione, Vitamin C, and Vita-Complex shots that support energy, immunity, and skin health.
- Custom Consultations – All treatments are tailored under the medical guidance of the LexRx Network of Boston, ensuring safety and clinical excellence.

Carly offers a spa-like experience backed by medical professionalism, making her services ideal for both first-timers and experienced aesthetic clients.



From left: Carly Whitcraft, Lorri Ducharme and Evlen Dasilveira

Prestige now features two highly skilled professionals: Evlen Dasilveira, a certified paramedical tattoo artist and permanent makeup specialist, and Carly Whitcraft, RN, a certified aesthetic nurse and founder of Carly Rx Aesthetics, a boutique medical aesthetics practice operating within the salon.

Paramedical Tattoo & Camouflage Artistry

Evlen Dasilveira brings specialized expertise in scar camouflage, stretch mark blending, and 3D areola reconstruction for breast cancer survivors. With a medical associate's degree and more than 24

life-changing. Clients say it helps them feel whole again," says Ms. Ducharme.

"It's like closing a difficult chapter and moving forward," adds Evlen, who partners with Harrington Hospital Cancer Center to offer restorative support to survivors.

Evlen's services include:

- Scar Camouflage – Permanent pigments blend scars, stretch marks, and areas of hypopigmentation with surrounding skin.
- Lip Blushing & Neutralization – Enhances lip color and shape, correcting dark patches or inconsistencies.

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Local Student Earns Dean’s List Recognition

Kenney Huynh of Auburn has been recognized on the Dean’s List at Norwich University for the spring 2025 semester. Full-time undergraduate students, who earned a semester grade point average of at least 3.40 are awarded Dean’s List honors.

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Revolutionary Patriots Honored with Burial Marker



Members of the General Ebenezer Learned Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution at West Auburn Cemetery.

BY HELEN POIRIER

The General Ebenezer Learned Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), working together with the William G. Pomeroy Foundation and the Auburn Historical Society & Museum, was able to obtain a Minuteman Burial Marker for the West Auburn Burial Ground. This marker honors the four Revolutionary War patriots who are buried there. The patriots being honored were Colonel Jonah Goulding, and Privates Daniel Dodge, Robert

Fitts, and Abel Partridge. Colonel Goulding, Robert Fitts and Daniel Dodge answered the call on April 19, 1775. The dedication was held on Tuesday, June 17 at the burial ground. Thanks to all who helped to make the dedication happen including, Ray Robichaud & the Auburn Cemetery Department, Massachusetts State DAR regent, Carolyn Nutt, State Historian, Charlene Goddard Lyle. Also Kathryn Toomey and Margaret Freeman of the Worcester Registry of Deeds, Sari Bitticks, president,

and Zach Washburn of the Auburn Historical Society and Museum who help obtain the written documentation need to prove ownership of land, military records, and vital records of the patriots. The Auburn Board of Selectmen and former town manager, Edward Kazanovicz for the support of the project, when originally proposed. Also, the Oxford Jr. ROTC color guard, Auburn CERT, and Auburn Sportsmen’s Club who helped on the day.

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TALES FROM BEYOND

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Harrie's Jailhouse Restaurant

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

51 Warwick Street in Middletown, Connecticut is not your average building in the middle of a residential neighborhood. It never was. The 1850 facility once housed the Pameacha Jail, which included the sheriff's residence and a dozen brownstone prisoner-holding cells. The cells were later removed and brought to Haddam, Connecticut for use in their jail, which has now been closed for a decade as of this writing. What remains of the actual cells at the Warwick street location consists of a small room with windows and an outside stairway where the cells once sat. Only one section remains of one of the cells where patrons can still dine. The building later housed a restaurant called Bread & Water, but a fire in April 2017 damaged a good portion of the structure and forced its closure in 2019. Just prior to closing, Bread & Water was chosen among 8,500 eateries across the state as South Region Restaurant of the Year. In 2020, Carrie Carella, owner of NoRa Cupcake Co. and Heather Kelly went in search of a place that

was unique in character and history. They found 51 Warwick Street to be the perfect place. In March of 2021, they opened Harrie's Jailhouse Restaurant as an elevated pub fare restaurant. Harrie's specializes in signature sandwiches and cocktails where one can relax at the bar downstairs, on the outdoor patio, or at seating on the first floor. The restaurant's name is a combination of Heather and Carrie, who have both since had their fair share of paranormal experiences.

The building houses a permanent resident by the name of Sarah. Sarah is a little girl ghost who may have lived in the building at one time after it ceased to be a jail house. Heather and Carrie have learned to live in harmony with Sarah who they have concluded was between the ages of eight and ten years old when she died. Sarah likes to play with the lights, create sudden drafts, throw things and take items off the tables and bar, dropping them to the floor. Sarah does not limit her exploits to the owners and staff at the restaurant. Many patrons of Harrie's have witnessed strange events presumed to be caused by her. One patron witnessed the remote control

for the television fly off the TV and bounce off the bar. Some come to the restaurant in hopes of witnessing the child ghost while dining or enjoying a drink. Often, Sarah does not disappoint. Heather and Carrie admitted they sometimes have to appease Sarah by putting a mocktail out for her when she starts acting up. Whether it is totally effective or not in pleasing the ghost, they are not sure, but they believe it makes her feel included and comfortable with the people who work or visit of the place.

Next door to the pub is the old town almshouse that has been converted into apartments and a section for a small business. Almshouses were where people of the town in need would reside. This included the poor, elderly and disabled citizens within the town. Often, there was a farm of some sort where they grew much of their own food. Sometimes they worked at menial jobs to help support their way. The old almshouse building is also haunted by some of the long deceased tenants who most likely spend their last days in the poorhouse. In 2012, Ghost Hunters investigated both places and found

them to be still alive with the spirits of those who once tenanted them. The haunting of both buildings go back much further and can be assured the ghosts will still be around for years to come. Such places tend

to leave a certain psychic scar on the property due to the reason why they were invented in the first place; to house the poor and suffering or hold the not so nice people in society.

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LIVING WITH LUKE

amyleclaire@hotmail.com

Protecting Luke Amid Tick Season

BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

“Luke has a tick,” I state with panic, as though another head has grown from his neck, then stiffen my hold on him. “I’m okay with rough love, Momma, but this is starting to feel awkward.” I don’t want to lose sight of the blood sucker, who may realize that he (or she?) has been caught.

our cherished de-ticking tool, a small spoon with a sharp wedge cut out at the top, and one forever missing when we need it the most. “Where did you put it last?” His question feels counterintuitive. “If I knew where it was, then it wouldn’t be misplaced, right?” Luke maneuvers like a break-dancer while struggling to free his head from my hold. “I don’t know what’s happening here, but I just want to sniff the floor again.” A tick once attached to the skin on Luke’s throat. He was still a

the firmness of our care. They know that we are looking out for them. How could we not? I once scraped my knee and, weeks later, a barely visible scar held the scent of blood. Luke sniffed the wound and began licking the area. “Smells like an abrasion, Momma. Don’t worry. I’ll take care of it.” “FREEDOM!” Nothing spells RELIEF quite the way an extracted tick does. Luke races to his toybox, pulls out his stuffed lamb, and prances about the kitchen; proud of himself for enduring a mysterious ordeal. “Something



A tick’s gender (I later learned) is indicated by its scutum. Male ticks have a scutum that covers most of their back, and a female tick has a white halo on its half scutum. However interesting, this one needs to go. I part Luke’s fur and gag. My least favorite antagonist is shaped like a sunflower seed, its head burrowed in the meat on the back of Luke’s neck. One might think that by now (eight dogs in) the sight would be casual. My father used to pull bloated ticks off our dogs using a pair of pliers. He’d drop the pea-sized gluttons into a bucket of kerosene. “Hurry. Go find the scooper!” A tick sighting still rattles me. I command my husband to fetch

puppy, only six months old. That very parasite caused repeated (and irritable) scratching and, likely, the positive trace of Lyme disease found on a subsequent blood test. More testing indicated that he is asymptomatic and will be just fine, especially with the aid of a monthly pill. He could even end up testing negative the next time, according to the vet’s diagnosis. Nevertheless ... The surgery begins without a moment to spare. Daddy (having located the spoon) covers the tick’s body and pulls it slow enough to force it to detach from Luke’s skin. “Almost done, Lukey.” I rub his belly for emotional support. I do believe that, on some level, dogs sense and trust



caused parental tension. But what? I was so worried they’d never let me go, but I got myself out of that headlock, alright.” His enthusiasm is liberating. It appears we’ve all been freed from the tick’s hold. I wash my hands. Luke thrashes about the kitchen and celebrates the joy that is Living with Luke. Meanwhile, the tick scrambles to find a way out of the spoon’s dome. “Burn him alive.” I take a random shot at the tick’s gender and watch Luke chew on another stuffed toy. His red chili pepper squeals with joy. Then I imagine him at the shore of a lake, unable to swim due to joint pain. He breathes in the aroma of fresh water and looks away. “I used to love to swim. That was then.” He turns in a circle and lies down. “I’m discouraged.” “I’ll get the lighter.” This leech needs to pay. The flame pops to life. The tick senses its heat, and scrambles up the spoon’s dome with homely, curly feelers then slides back down, unsuccessful. I turn away. My soft heart stills. I’m disap-

LUKE

continued on page 11

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REAL ESTATE

Common Real Estate Terms Explained

If you're a first-time homebuyer, chances are you'll come across some terms you're not familiar with. And that can be overwhelming, especially while going through one of the biggest purchases of your life. The good news is you don't need to be an expert on real estate terms, that's your agent's job. But getting to know these basic terms will help you feel a lot more confident throughout the process.



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

Terms every homebuyer should know. Once you're familiar with this terminology, you'll have a better understanding of important details – from contracts to negotiations. So, when those big conversations happen, you'll feel informed, in control, and able to make the best decision for your unique situation. Having a

basic understanding of important real estate concepts before you start the home buying process will give you peace of mind now and could save you a fortune in the future.

Here's a breakdown of a few key real estate terms and definitions you should know.

Appraisal: A report providing the estimated value of the home. Lenders rely on appraisals to determine a home's value, so they're not lending more than it's worth.

Contingencies: Contract conditions that must be met, typically within a certain timeframe or by a specified date. For example, a home inspection is a common contingency. While you can waive these to try and make your offer more competitive, it's generally not recommended.

Closing Costs: A collection of fees and payments made to the various parties involved in your home purchase. Ask your lender for a list of closing cost items, including attorney's fees, taxes, title insurance, and more.

Down Payment: This varies by buyer, but is typically 3.5-20% of the purchase price of the home.

There are even some 0% down programs available. Ask your lender for more information. Chances are, unless specified by your loan type of lender, you don't need to put 20% down.

Escalation Clause: This is typically used in highly competitive markets. It's an optional add on in a real estate contract that says a potential buyer is willing to raise their offer on a home if the seller receives a higher competing offer. The clause also includes how much a buyer is willing to pay over the highest offer.

Mortgage Rate: The interest rate you pay when you borrow money to buy a home. Consult a lender so you know how it can impact your monthly mortgage payment.

Pre-Approval Letter: A letter from a lender that shows what they're willing to lend you for your home loan. This, plus an understanding of your savings, can help you decide on your target price range. Getting this from a lender should be one of your first steps in the homebuying process, before you even start browsing homes online.

You don't need to have all these terms memorized, but a little knowledge goes a long way. Brushing up on the basics now means

fewer surprises later – and more clarity when you buy a home.

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LUKE

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pointed with the tick, yet I cannot watch the execution. The tick was just being a tick. Parasites feed off the life of another. Such is what's meant to be.

"Buh bye." Nonetheless, the flush of the toilet resounds like the roar of a lion, and the burned corpse spins away in no time. I scratch my scalp. Is that a pimple or a tick?

"I think I have a tick!" I've gone mad.

Luke trots into the bathroom. "What's going on in here? He grabs a sock from the laundry basket. I open his mouth and grab it back. He smiles and lifts a paw for me to hold. "Love you,

Momma." The two of us share a moment. I hug his big head and plant a kiss on his snout. He smells faintly of aloe from a recent backyard bath. He leans into my chest. The struggle of being a dog parent is real. We do not want to see our dogs in pain and will do anything to prevent it. Those who rescue dogs understand the concept viscerally. Something about a dog abused, malnourished, or sick sends fire through our veins, even though we know that pain is a part of life. We endure struggle like a champ. Yet the threat of a creature the size of a seed (or pea) is too much to bear. Why is that?

I sit cross-legged on the bathroom floor. Luke rests his head on my lap. His loyalty is unrivaled, yet one dog-quality stands out

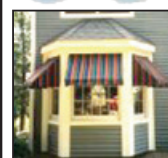
above the rest.

A dog is innocent. Luke would not hurt another living creature, unless doing so meant to protect, defend or survive. He doesn't possess the ego, pride or sinfulness of a human. He's not vindictive, selfish or malicious by nature. He's born with simplicity—to love and be loved.

"Love you, Lukey." He licks my chin and reminds me of how much I need him, just as much as he does me. We'll both go great lengths to protect each other. Man may be a dog's best friend, but Mom will always have his back.

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Evaporator Size is Key to Good AC Performance

Q. I have a 2009 Toyota Matrix, and my husband has a 2017 Subaru Crosstrek. Both cars do sit in the sun in our driveway, mostly with windshield/dashboard shades. It is surprising to me that my older Toyota has an air conditioner that works great! The Subaru on the other hand is really not great. I think it might help if my husband also maybe covers the hood in the hot weather? The mechanic said it was normal last year when he looked at it. He is a good honest mechanic. Do you have any suggestions or is this just the way this model is?

A. Most likely the difference is in the size of the evaporator (the part that removes the heat from the cabin). The Matrix uses a slightly larger evaporator than the Subaru so more heat removal equals more cool air. Also, at the time 2009 Toyota was not as concerned about miles per gallon and emissions as today. The system probably runs longer and uses more energy. Other than that, they both use the same refrigerant and are somewhat similar. As you noted, a foldup windshield screen can help keep the cabin cooler. On very hot days, start the car put the air conditioner on the MAX setting and

open the doors. You can even open and close the doors (fan motion) to push the hot air out of the car.

Q. I would like your opinion on the 2022 Subaru Forester Touring model before I go for a test drive. I am considering looking at a vehicle that has 27,907 miles (per the on-line listing of the dealership) at a listed price of \$26,295. My question is, is this a reliable year and model as far as used Subarus are concerned. You have given me helpful information in the past and would greatly appreciate your opinion.

A. The only issues I have seen/heard of with the 2022 Subaru Forester are some were plagued with issues with the navigation screens delaminating and some windshields needed replacement due to stress cracks. Pricewise, it looks like it is right on average with others for sale. I would say overall the 2022 Subaru Forester is a good choice.

Q. My wife and I are both high mileage drivers that fully expect to own our vehicles until the end of their useful life. We

have clocked over 200,000 miles on our last four vehicles, but her current Mercedes GLS has been somewhat disappointing, looking like it will require replacement before 140,000 miles. Due to the amount of time we spend behind the wheel, we trend toward luxury brands or higher trim levels from most vehicle manufacturers. Which vehicles should we be looking for to replace the GLS while maximizing our opportunity to find another 200,000-mile vehicle?

A. It has been my experience that as good as Audi, BMW and Mercedes Benz vehicles are to drive, once you get over 100,000 miles, they can be problematic. If I were looking for a luxury SUV with dependability, I would look at the Lexus TX (based on the three row Highlander), or smaller Lexus RX or RX hybrid, Acura MDX or Genesis GV80. Although on paper the Mercedes GLS looks better but dependability as it ages is where the problems are. With Lexus and Acura, you have very well engineered vehicles that, from my experience, as well as reader comments easily last 200,000 miles or more. The Genesis GV 80 is solid, reliable and yes it is a gussied up Hyundai but they did a very good job.

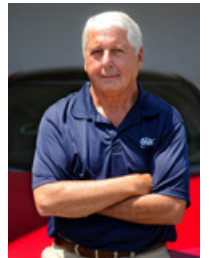
Q. I have a 2024 Nissan Frontier purchased in March 2024. I recently brought it to the dealer for an oil change after one year of driving. My mileage at the time was 2100 miles. The technician said that because I don't drive many miles that I should have the oil changed every

6 months. He also stated that if I do not do this, the warranty could become void. I thought that using synthetic oil that I could go 5k-10k miles between oil changes. What are your thoughts?

A. To maintain the warranty, you need to change the oil and filter every 7500 miles or six months, whichever comes first. After the warranty expires, you could stretch the oil changes, but I would only do that if you were vigilant about checking the oil. If this were my new truck, I would change the oil twice a year.

Q. I recently purchased a 2022 Buick Enclave; it is in like new condition but seems to have one problem. When I start it cold, there is some black smoke and soot on the tail pipe. I had the computer checked and there were no codes. Any thoughts?

A. This is a normal condition with many GM vehicles. This condition as a result of the fuel injector operation. GM uses a dual-pulse injection strategy during engine cold start to reduce the time required to bring the catalytic converter up to operating temperature. It is possible to see some black smoke, soot, rough idle, or even a minimal misfire, during the first minute of operation and should be considered normal.



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TIPS ON FINANCIAL PLANNING

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The importance of setting strong financial goals

There's a quote about the importance of setting goals that says, "If you don't know where you're going, any path will take you there." You probably have dreams about



BY DENNIS
ANTONOPOULOS

retirement, vacations, hobbies and more. But if you don't have a strategy with financial goals in place, you may not make the choices

that can best set you on the path to achieve those dreams.

Setting goals helps define and showcase your purpose, passions, and priorities. And establishing your own strong financial goals can help you earn and enjoy a wide variety of short- and long-term achievements throughout your life. When you reach your financial goals, you can feel a sense of accomplishment in seeing your efforts literally pay off. But how do you get started?

• **Prioritize your needs and wants.** Think about the things that are most important to you and then outline them as financial "must-haves" and "wish-list" targets. Start with the big-ticket items and work through to ideas that may not cost as much. A must-have for many people is having enough to live comfortably through retirement. Being able to afford the college of your child's choice, without incur-

ring mounds of debt, is another. Your wish list, on the other hand, may include things like saving for vacations, hobbies, or entertainment expenses.

• **Create detailed short- and long-term goals within your financial strategy.** It's important to be specific about the goals you want to achieve and how much you'll need to achieve them. One way to do this is by making your goals measurable. Assign estimated dates and costs to each goal so you can plan how much to save and how much time you have before you need the money. For example, for your retirement goal, be specific about how many years before you want to retire. And once you do, how you plan to spend your time — perhaps traveling the world, turning your hobby into a business or taking your grandkids on outings. These can have vastly different price tags.

• **Be willing to compromise.** Reaching one, or more, of your goals may mean compromising. If your must-have is building your dream home but it's not looking quite affordable, you may need to make a trade-off — build it a bit smaller, work a year or two longer or trade in some of your wish-list goals so you can stay focused on your must-haves.

• **Hold yourself accountable to stay on track.** Once your strategy is in place, it's not a set-and-forget exercise. Actively tracking your progress and managing your decisions and actions can help you be better positioned to reach your

goals. Use time-tested principles for making financial decisions, not predictions. Diversify, own quality investments, and keep a realistic perspective, especially for your long-term goals. Maintain your focus and don't let your emotions control your investment decisions. It can be helpful to meet with a financial advisor at least annually to review your full financial strategy, address any changes in your life or your goals, and discuss your progress and new ideas.

As you achieve certain milestones, celebrate them. You may even want to refresh your outlook with new goals. Take pride in your ability to strategize and accomplish a personal financial goal for yourself by following the path you envisioned and created.

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

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• Charlotte Wilson will share fascinating facts about Sutton's citizenry during Revolutionary days at 7 p.m. in the first Congregational Church, 307 Boston Road, Sutton. Courtesy of the Sutton Historical Society.

www.thelastgreenvalley.org

Blackstone Heritage Corridor in 'Story Walks' Collab with Worcester Writers' Collective

Greenway Signs Feature Prose, Poetry of Locals Inspired by Region's Rich History and Imagery

The Blackstone Heritage Corridor in partnership with the Worcester Writers' Collective, proudly announces the launch of "Blackstone Story Walks," a new initiative that blends local history, creative writing, and the scenic experience of the Blackstone River Bikeway/Greenway.

The project features excerpts from original short stories and poems penned by Worcester-area authors, displayed along the southern section of the bikeway in Worcester and Millbury. Story panels are installed along the trail with accompanying QR codes, allowing visitors to access the full-length versions of each piece directly on their phones.

Designed to engage walkers, cyclists, and visitors of all ages, "Blackstone Story Walks" invites readers to explore both the physical landscape and the imagination it inspires.

"Blackstone Story Walks brings

our mission to life in a new way. It celebrates the creativity of this region – both past and present – while promoting local writers and inviting the public to interpret their



surroundings with fresh eyes," said Anya Wilczynski, Interim Executive Director of the Blackstone Heritage Corridor, a nonprofit providing strong leadership to preserve, promote, and celebrate the Blackstone Valley's resources since 1986.

Each writer drew inspiration from the Blackstone Valley – its landscapes, history, and symbolism. The featured works reflect a wide range of voices and themes,

from Indigenous heritage and notable local figures to poetic meditations on the river and the pathways it shapes. Every piece offers a unique and thought-provoking lens on place and identity.

"So much of our organization is centered on the belief that storytelling is a highly effective tool for building community," said Brett Iarrobino, a representative of the Worcester Writers' Collective.

"We've talked for a while now about how often we've run into original, local writing in exciting and unexpected places across Worcester County and New England, and we started to feel an urgency to bring that innovation to our city. Through this collaboration, we're proud to showcase voices that reflect the depth and diversity of Worcester and the entire Corridor."

To view the Blackstone Story

Walks signs, visitors can start their walk at the parking area at 205 North Main Street, Millbury and follow along the bike path. Signs will be visible at several bridges along the river.

For more information, visit: blackstoneheritagecorridor.org/

To learn more about the Worcester Writers' Collective, email: [worcestertwriterscollective@gmail.com](mailto:worcesterwriterscollective@gmail.com)



Oxford Middle School Students of the Month

Oxford Middle School recognizes students each month who exemplify our Be The 3 goals of Respect, Responsibility, and Safety as well as showing that attendance matters, displaying citizenship, and showing growth in a variety of ways. This month, OMS celebrates Kendall Donnelly, Gabriel Rodriguez-Carpenter, Declan Sharry, and Jordyn Torteson (not pictured) as our May Students of the Month.

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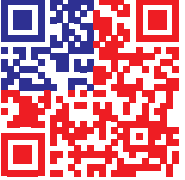
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