

## One Room School House Opens in Oxford

An idea so old, it's new again

BY PATTY ROY

**P**atti Benvenuti and Gina Furmanick are a mother/daughter team of educators who are launching a new school housed in Oxford's Zion Lutheran Church. Called the Freedom Academy, it will be an updated version of the one-room school-house with students from ages 4 – 7 years attending for the first year. As students grow older, additional years will be added on, so no one ages out of the school.

Gina was a five year veteran of the Auburn public school system, teaching first grade, when the

idea to open her own school hit her.

"Last year, I just didn't feel the passion that I had felt. And then I thought there was so much about schools as they are that I didn't agree with and I didn't like and that I knew could be better," she said.

As she listened to a podcast one day, an ad came on for a conference in Florida called Turning Point Academy for teachers who were tired of the usual, constrictive public school routine.

"I sent it to my mom and said, 'I think this is something we should go to,'" Gina related.

So Patti, a former nursery school teacher, joined her daughter on the trip and they found it to be an "incredible" experience.

"That kind of sparked this whole thing," Gina said. The pair have a warm and friendly aura, and a real enthusiasm for early learning and a respect for childhood.

Next, Patti learned of a one-room school house in Virginia that was literally created out of a carport. Kids were all different

### SCHOOL HOUSE

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## Oxford Receives \$206,000 Blighted Property Grant and 2025 Community Greening Award

BY JANET STOICA  
[jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com](mailto:jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com)

**T**ony Sousa, Assistant Town Manager advises that Oxford Town Manager Jen Callahan recently announced that Oxford is the recipient of a state Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant award of \$206,000 to restore a blighted property into a pocket park. Additionally, the Worcester County Horticultural Society recognized the town of Oxford with its 2025 Community Greening Award, honoring their Grow Native for Pollinators Campaign which took place at the New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill. The award celebrated municipal efforts to enhance environmental stewardship, engage the public, and promote sustainable horticultural practices. Oxford's campaign has transformed local landscape, both literally and figuratively, by encouraging residents, businesses, and civic groups to convert traditional lawns and hardscapes into native plant habitats. At the heart of the campaign is a community-wide challenge to plant one acre of pollinator-friendly native habitat, a goal that is already halfway met with over 20,000 square feet

planted to date.

"This award is a testament to the power of community-driven stewardship. From our students to our seniors, Oxford residents have embraced the Grow Native for Pollinators Campaign with purpose and pride. Together, we have shown that small changes in our yards and neighborhoods can create lasting impacts for our environment and future generations," stated Town Manager Callahan, "Through a creative mix of public events, school partnerships, civic engagement, and municipal infrastructure improvements, the initiative has brought environmental education and action to every corner of town. From low-mow zones and rain gardens to bee houses made by schoolchildren, Oxford's approach combines science, sustainability, and shared civic pride."

Highlights of the campaign include Celebrate Pollinators Day, educational festivals, and outreach booths at community events; youth participation through the Girl Scouts, National Honor Society, Worcester State University interns, and public-school art programs; distribution of hundreds of native plants, garden kits, and

sunflower seed packets; creation of rain gardens, low-mow zones, and expanded stormwater education initiatives; and engagement of 80+ volunteers and 30+ local partners.

The Summer Bandstand Concert Series continues through the summer at Joslin Park on Sundays with music from the East West Trio on July 27; Reminisants on August 3; Rock Blockerz on August 10; East Woodstock Cornet Band on August 17; and Double Shot on August 24. July and August concerts are held from 3-5 p.m. and are funded through the Janet Malser Humanities Trust.

The town is also still looking for a Conservation Commission volunteer. The Conservation Commission protects wetlands in the town by administering the Massachusetts Wetlands Protect Act and the town of Oxford Stormwater Management By-Laws Chapters 66 and 67. The Commission also provides assistance to other town boards and departments regarding natural resource protection. The Commission generally meets on the first and third Wednesday of each month to hold public hearings for proposed projects falling under their jurisdiction.



## Zach Benton and His Musical Merriment

BY JANET STOICA  
[jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com](mailto:jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com)

**H**ow can you forget a name like Zach? He's certainly one of a kind and, as an Auburn resident, has been entertaining in the area for quite some time. If you'd like to enjoy his tribute to The Beach Boys, he'll be performing at the Gladys E. Kelly Library in Webster on Thursday, August 7, at 6:30 p.m. Check him out and enjoy his entertainment. Is it a coincidence that he once opened for The Beach Boys when they played at Meadowbrook Farm (now known as the BankNH Pavilion) in Gilford New Hampshire? And here he is over 15 years later playing their fun-in-the-sun style.

Zach's originally from the Lakes Region of New Hampshire and began his interest in dance and theater at a young age while also learning xylophone and drums in fifth grade. A few years later in high school he took up guitar. He and his buddies had their own band calling themselves Mahi Mahi. "Thank goodness this was before TikTok and other social media," laughed Zach, "or I would be busy tracking down any videos of us so I could remove them! It's okay that our performances are lost to time."

After enjoying musical theater in high school, Zach began his solo guitar career and went semi-professional. This is when he opened for The Beach Boys in New Hamp-

shire. He sang a program of cover songs and his own originals. While furthering his education at Keene New Hampshire State College, he and his buds formed the Affirmative Jackson Band and played plenty of gigs on campus, but he's been solo for quite a few years now. At Keene State, he obtained his American Studies Degree cum laude with an emphasis on history and cultural analysis. He also won the Robin Dizard American Studies Award by unanimous department vote.

"After college, I stayed in Keene and began a public access TV

### BENTON

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SCHOOL HOUSE

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ages and they did academics in the morning and did homesteading-type activities in the afternoon. It was very hands-on with animals and farm-style care.

So, it was off to another seminar where the woman who led it was a public school teacher with 30 years' experience and a similar sense of frustration.

Gina and Patti came back loaded with enthusiasm for the school project; they got their spouses on board and sprang into action finding and furnishing a

space.

The initial spur  
The initial motivation driving Gina was the student conduct she was dealing with every day.

"I was seeing the behaviors in school and how much time the kids are spending sitting at a desk. Not actually doing much of anything," she said.

Gina was convinced there were better ways to run a classroom. Though she had only 18 students, it felt more like 50.

"My job ended up being a behavior manager because I wasn't doing much teaching," she said. "I had kids throw chairs at

me, I was chasing kids down the hallway, evacuating my classroom because the kids were so violent."

Things can get choked up between teachers and administration, too, where it's hard to get problems addressed in a concrete way.

"I just think that kids deserve so much more," Gina said.

Freedom Academy Motto  
If the Freedom Academy could be defined by a single motto, it would be "Long Live Childhood."

"I have watched the system fail to protect the innocence of children and accept violent and disruptive behaviors in the name





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Patti Benvenuti and Gina Furmanick are opening a one-room school called the Freedom Academy.

of inclusion and building resistance, Gina states in an enrollment form.

Freedom Academy was born from a deep longing for a return to faith, family, character and curiosity. There is a move across

the country for these hands-on, smaller schools, Patti said. The academics will focus on

SCHOOL HOUSE  
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## SCHOOL HOUSE

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foundations in reading, writing, and math with a strong phonics-based curriculum.

Little kids love being with the older ones, Patti said.

The school will be focused around work stations, with instruction based on ability level rather than age. This removes the

limitations of grade levels being completed in one academic year.

The classroom space is filled with the child-sized tables, chairs, backpack stations and boot trays.

Students will enjoy lunch at a large shared dining table, practice manners, chat, and take part in cleaning up to help build a sense of community.

After lunch, it's time to head outdoors to apply what the kids

have learned. Daily activities can include caring for a garden, exploring, preserving food, and learning to care for animals at some point in the (hopefully) near future.

There will also be time for open-ended play, the true work of childhood, where children use their imaginations, bond with each other and make memories.

The arts, music, physical edu-

cation, science and social studies are incorporated into the hands-on, project-based curriculum.

Throughout everything, Gina and Patti want to keep the emphasis on routine, kindness, independence and responsibility. They hope to open with 15 – 20 students and grow from there.

Open houses will be held from 9-11 a.m. and 5-7 p.m. on July 30 and 9-11 a.m. and 5-7 p.m.

on August 6 at 70 Main Street Oxford (inside Zion Lutheran Church.)

Check out FreedomAcademyMA.com, on Instagram. com@FreedomAcademy\_MA or facebook.com/profile.php?id=61577115601887#

## BENTON

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show," said Zach, "I also began filming comic sketches and music videos." He was picked up by an Australian TV station where his videos still play. "Public access gave me great insight into these types of TV stations," he said, "but then COVID came along and put many videos on hold."

He is a current member of ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers) and also of BMI (Broadcast Music, Inc) that represents songwriters, composers, and music publishers.

Today, his main employment is working at a Marlborough public access TV station and as a Youth Coordinator assisting middle school reporters with their show interviewing members of the local

community. He is also involved in a Marlborough acting camp where his students rehearse and then hold a screening night for the filming of their finished product. He has a sci-fi comedy movie called The Hay Man on TUBI television which can be accessed at fawesome.tv/movies/10649421/the.hay.man and has also performed family concerts at the Auburn Public Library as well as in the towns of Hamilton, Wenham, Lexington, Southwick, Ludlow and Northborough; he also released a Greatest Hits Collection of his 20 years in music which can be heard at youtube/qfV-CbFC6M?feature=shared.

"I have a friend, Dave Allen, who is also involved with some of my videos and we liken ourselves to Abbott & Costello, the comedy duo who were famous during the 1940's and 1950's," he said.

Zach very much enjoys per-

forming live while playing for many libraries and senior centers. His music encompasses The Beatles, Motown, and, of course, The Beach Boys along with hits from the 50's, 60's and 70's. He has written two children's books which can be found on Amazon and Kindle: "Atticus the Elf" and "Betsy Robin."

He's certainly a showman keeping himself right up front enjoying live performances and making his audience laugh and dance. Check out Melodious Zach at <https://melodiouszach2.wixsite.com/melodiouszach>. Zach is currently working on a script for his next movie and will be hosting a late-night family show to be viewed on YouTube.

Zach can be reached at [melodiouszach@gmail.com](mailto:melodiouszach@gmail.com)



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# A Prominent Local Building Bears a Prominent Local Name

BY HELEN POIRIER

When towns were formed and the roadways were being laid out, it was not uncommon to name a road after a person of importance to the town. Even better, some buildings were named to commemorate a person and what they had done for the town. In Auburn there are two roads, and a building named after the Merriam family. The streets came first and can be found on what was originally part of the 400 acres at Oxford gore where the Merriams lived in 1728. Several generations of the Merriam Family resided in this area of town on Merriam Street and Merriam Terrace which are off Bryn Mawr Avenue.

The Merriam family migrated from Hadlow, County Kent, England where William Merriam was a clothier. William's three sons sailed on the ship, Castle in 1638 to Massachusetts where Joseph eventually settled in Concord. A descendant of Joseph and Dorothy (Brooks), Josiah and his son, Josiah Jr. aided the cause in Concord by being part of the Captain Joseph Hosmer's company of Minutemen, as members of the committee to inspect the Minute Men, and members of the Committee of Correspondence for Concord from 1778-1782, and a delegate to the State Convention. The Oxford North Gore, that was annexed for Auburn, comprised 738 acres, laying between the north line of Oxford, as it then existed, and the Leicester south

line. Around 1785 James Merriam built a simple Cape style farmhouse on the site that was originally part of the "County Gore" which fell between Worcester, Leicester and Oxford. James built the house after he purchased the land from Thomas Gleason in 1783. The Merriam and Gleason families sold the house back and forth for about 100 years until it passed out of the family. That house is located at 36 Merriam Street. In 1838, Ebenezer Jr. married Clarissa Cummings of Vermont and moved from Vermont to Auburn bringing along their children Leander and Lucy. In 1852, Leander enrolled in the military for Oxford according to his vital records. By the 1860 census he was listed as a miller and living on Central Street. The family moved to Millbury by 1865 when the census listed Leander as working at a sawmill. In 1874 he was making deliveries with a team and wagon, which were stolen when Leander left them for a short time on the road in Millbury. The team was found in Hubbardston the next day and the culprit was arrested. Another news article in the Worcester Daily Spy, told how Leander and his mother were riding on Millbury Street and were run into by a double team which



Leander Merriam endowed the Auburn Public Library

damaged Leander's wagon and harness. It was a hit-and-run and the offending driver was never found. The Merriams were living in Auburn when Leander's father, Ebenezer, died in 1891. His mother, Clarissa, was living with her daughter Lucy in Worcester when she died in 1903 at the age of 97. Between 1870 and 1900 the Merriam family cannot be found in the state census, but in the 1900 census Leander was listed as 66 years old and living at 16 Central Street. Through the years he worked as a butter salesman for a local creamer and a produce dealer. It also seemed that he supplemented his income with taking in boarders. In 1910, Leander donated \$8000 to the town of Auburn so that a public library could be built. The dedication of the Merriam library was held on June 27, 1911. Leander wanted the building to be in memory of his parents and sister. It was built on the original Mellish homestead. In the dedication speech given by Reverend William Streeter, a cousin of Leander, it was said, "the brick and the stone of this building represents three vital principles of the life of the donor.

Love of the town, love for kindred, love for humanity..... a gift to the town of Auburn to perpetuate the name of Merriam and to live in the lives of a future generations as an elevating influence." Leander became a trustee of the library from 1913 through 1924. There was evidence that Leander was involved with town politics as it was stated in an article on May 17, 1913, that he had been a Republican all his life and he was listed in the Republican caucus posting for January 1921. He was mentioned in another article that same year regarding the Grange and how Leander's father was one of the members who helped plant the maple trees around the town common. The news article mentioned that Leander had his great grandfather's knife which he carried during the Revolutionary War. In his will, Leander left the town \$5000 with the stipulation that the principals be safely invested and the income used for maintenance of the library in such manner as its trustees or director may determine. Leander was an avid reader and collector of vintage books, and his way of passing on his love of reading was to build the library so the town could enjoy his passion. In the next installment the longest tenured librarian director, Mona Adshead, will be the point of interest. This article is made possible by the Auburn Historical Society & Museum, 41 South Street. The museum is open Tuesday and Saturday mornings 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and may be reached at auburnmuseum@verizon.net, 508-832-6856 or auburnhistoricalmuseum.org. You can also follow us on Facebook at Auburn Historical.

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## bankHometown promotes Likes to Learning and Development Officer

**b**ankHometown recently announced that Alexandra Likes has been promoted to learning and development officer, based at its 182 Main St., Putnam, Connecticut office.

Likes, of Dudley, has 12 years of experience in banking. She rejoined bankHometown in 2018 as learning and development specialist, was promoted in 2021 to

senior learning and development specialist, and then promoted to learning and development manager in 2022. As learning and development officer, she will manage a team of learning and development specialists across the Hometown Financial Group family of banks, which includes bankESB, bankHometown, North Shore Bank and Abington Bank, a division of North

Shore Bank. She will travel across the Hometown Financial Group footprint to provide training and staff support.

Likes earned an associate's degree in business administration from Cambridge College, and is currently working toward a bachelor's degree in business administration from Nichols College.

## Worcester State University Gets a Boost from Cornerstone Bank

**C**ornerstone Bank, a community bank with locations throughout Central Massachusetts, is donating \$15,000 a year for the next three years, a total contribution of \$45,000, to Worcester State University's STEM Connections program.

The gift continues Cornerstone Bank's generous multi-year support of various STEM initiatives at Worcester State.

"This donation is personal for me," said Cornerstone Bank President Randy Webber, who graduated from Worcester State University with a B.A. in business administration and sits on the board of the Worcester State Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the mission of the university. "I cherish my time spent at Worcester State, and I'm proud to be able to support the academic endeavors of students there now."

The university's STEM Connections program focuses on engaging junior and senior high school students from Worcester public high schools in fun and informative hands-on laboratory and data analysis projects at the Worcester State campus. Professors from chemistry, biology and environmental science lead the program, and a Worcester State student serves as the teaching assistant. The participants take field trips, hear from local experts, and participate in a variety of learning activities to encourage a love for science. The program also introduces pathways to higher education in STEM fields. Students gain valuable knowledge and skills about navigating the college application process through presentations by the university's admissions and financial aid teams.

The program is one of the university's signature summer educa-

tional programs, said Worcester State Vice President for University Advancement Tom McNamara, adding, "The Cornerstone STEM Connections program has a tremendous impact on students by igniting their enthusiasm for science, building confidence, and enabling them to envision a future college education in STEM. We are tremendously grateful to Cornerstone Bank for providing this multiyear support. This gift represents an important investment in the future workforce for our region."

"I hope this donation helps open doors for students the way Worcester State helped me build a strong foundation for a rewarding

career at Cornerstone Bank," said Webber. "The future is bright."

About Cornerstone Bank  
Cornerstone Bank was formed in 2017, born of a long history of supporting the community, and providing a strong foundation to help people and businesses thrive. Serving Worcester County, Cornerstone Bank's local presence and community-based banking model enables a unique ability to deliver outstanding service, with a personal touch. Cornerstone provides the highest level of service and expertise for individuals, businesses, and community organizations with branch locations throughout Central Massachusetts.

## Local Girl Named National and International AAU Champ

**G**abby Amato, 13, of Oxford has been having great success in local, national and now international karate competitions.

A junior class first degree black belt, Gabby recently took a Gold medal in long (weapons) Kobudo at the AAU Nationals in Florida. She also won a Silver medal in short Kobudo. In the long weapons, Gabby used a bo staff and in the short, she wielded a sai, the trident-like triple dagger.

She also won a Gold medal and was named World Champion at the WUKF Worlds in Sweden in Long Kobudo.

Gabby has been training since age 4 at her parents' dojo Bushi Karate Club in Oxford.



Gabby Amato with her gold medal from the WUKF International Competition in Sweden. Photo submitted

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## ETIQUETTE EXPRESS

## Making Everyday Interactions Better

BY LEE-ANN BARKHOUSE

*Etiquette & Leadership Coach  
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**E**tiquette is not complicated, it's thoughtful, intentional, and simple. When practiced with sincerity, it builds confidence, strengthens communication, and creates meaningful connections in every setting, both personal and professional. It's less about rigid rules and more about showing respect. Etiquette is reflected in how you carry yourself, how you treat others, and how you make people feel

in your presence. When you lead with kindness and self-awareness, people notice—and remember.

**Q.** What's the best way to recover when I forget someone's name—especially if we have met before?

**A.** Be sincere and own it with grace. Say, "I'm so sorry—I know we have met before, but I'm blanking on your name. Would you remind me?" A warm, honest approach is far better than pretending. Acknowledging the familiarity shows respect—and most

people will appreciate your sincerity.

**Q.** Everyone's on their phone at dinner. Is it really that rude if I am too?

**A.** Yes—this is still rude, even if everyone else is doing it. Using your phone at the table sends the message that your company is less important than your screen. If you are expecting something urgent, let others know ahead of time. Otherwise, give your full attention to the people in front of you. Connection starts with presence.

**Q.** Being back at the office, even with headphones on, my coworkers chime in from across the cubicle during my conversations, even when it doesn't involve them.

How can I ask them to stop without sounding rude?

**A.** Try this: "I appreciate your interest, but you're only hearing part of the conversation. I would really appreciate a bit of privacy, it helps me stay focused and respectful of the person I am speaking with."

This is direct, professional, and kind. Boundaries aren't rude, they are necessary. And sometimes, even well-meaning coworkers need a gentle reminder to stay in their own lane.

**ETIQUETTE TIP OF THE WEEK:**

Confidence is quiet. Consideration speaks louder. True polish isn't loud or flashy—it's in how you hold a door, pause to listen, offer a genuine thank you... or simply share a warm

smile. Master the small things, and the big moments will follow.

Have a situation you'd like help with? Write in or email [info@investinuma.com](mailto:info@investinuma.com) 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 ([www.investinuma.com](http://www.investinuma.com)), 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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## Summertime Fun at the Auburn Historical Museum

Twice weekly through August 12 the Auburn Historical Society & Museum will be offering a children's craft program every Tuesday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.. Each week will have a different theme based around books and writing. Children visiting the museum will also get a free book to take home and share.

July 26 Learn to write with brass tip pen and ink  
July 29 & Aug. 2 Learn to make a leather-bound journal  
Aug. 5 & Aug. 9 Make your own book/story  
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Also, this summer, the museum will be open in the evening on August 15 from 6-8:30 p.m. for tours, genealogy help, and research, all free of charge.

Lastly, the Parking Lot Craft Fair will take place on Saturday August 16 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Rain or Shine. Vendors are welcome to contact the Auburn Historical Society & Museum at [auburnmuseum@verizon.net](mailto:auburnmuseum@verizon.net) for more information or to reserve a space for \$15.

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](mailto:auburnmuseum@verizon.net) or 508-832-6856, [www.auburnhistoricalmuseum.org](http://www.auburnhistoricalmuseum.org) or follow us on Facebook at Auburn Historical.

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# Auburn and the American Revolutionary War

## The History of Privates Daniel Dodge, Robert Fitts & Abel Partridge

BY HELEN POIRIER

Just prior to the publication of a previous article on Col. Jonah Goulding a Minuteman Burial Marker was installed and dedicated to the four men who fought in the Revolutionary War for the town and are interred at the West Auburn Burial Ground. Jonah got most of the attention being an officer and an important family name in town, but the other Patriots were just as important to the war effort. Besides Jonah, Privates Daniel Dodge and Robert Fitts answered the alarm on April 19, 1775. Private Abel Partridge joined a few years later.

Daniel Dodge was born on December 14, 1760, in Dudley and died August 21, 1827, in (Ward) Auburn. He married Elizabeth Parsons on January 26, 1785 in Ward. Elizabeth was born in Palmer July 27, 1765. She died March 5, 1834 in Auburn. They had one child named Betsey who was born November 27, 1790 in Auburn. She married John Gates Barnard and had five children. Betsy died April 23, 1875 in Auburn.

As for Dodge's military record, he was listed in Capt. Peter Coburn's Company and served with the 11th Massachusetts Bay Provincial Regiment (1775) for eight months. This regiment served in the Siege of Boston until it was disbanded. Capt. Coburn commanded a Dracut Company and led them to Lexington on April 19, 1775. Dodge subsequently enlisted on June 26, 1778, for one year starting January 1, in Capt. Samuel Lamb's Company, under Col. Nathaniel Wade's Regiment, and served in Rhode Island.

In 1785 Dodge served the town as a hogreever; he answered calls about hogs that got into people's gardens. Dodge's family descendants seemed to have remained in Auburn well into the 1920s.

Robert Fitts was born in Sutton on March 27, 1757. According to the family story, he lived much of his early life with his uncle Abraham Fitts who was one of the founding families of this town. When Robert Fitts was a teenager, he became his uncle's substitute in the Revolutionary War. He was a private in Capt. John Crowl's company of Minutemen who marched with Col. Ebenezer Learned's regiment out of Oxford. He marched on the alarm of April 19, 1775, and served 10 days. It also seems that he appeared on a list of field officers on the return of Capt. William Campbell's company dated Oct. 7, 1775.



When Fitts married Phebe Patch on August 25, 1778 in Oxford he had only the clothes on his back as the family story continues. Phebe was born May 2, 1759 in Wenham and she died in 1842. Her parents were Andrew and Anna Dodge. Robert and Phebe reared 11 children. Robert died in 1831. His tombstone reads: "The sweet remembrance of the just, shall flourish when they sleep in the dust."

Abel Partridge was born in 1765 in Medfield, the son of Abel and Hannah (Cheyney) Partridge. He died October 28, 1826, in Ward. In 1801, he married Sarah Stearnes of Medfield. They had two daughters, Betsey, who was born in 1802 and married Isaac Willard, and Polly, born in 1804. According to the 1810 census four people were living in his house, one adult female over 44 and two female children under 10 years. The family doesn't seem to appear in the 1820 town census.

Private Partridge enlisted for the town of Ward, June 25, 1779,

in Capt. Cole's Company, Col. Denn's regiment, for 9 months. From February 20 - December 31, 1780, he was part of Capt. Wade's Company, Colonel Michael Jackson's 8th regiment. Continental Army. In a descriptive list dated January. 7, 1781; Capt. Abner Wade's company,

Col. Michael Jackson's 8th regiment roll listed Partridge as 17 years old, 5 feet, 7 inches. Complexion light, hair light, resident of Ward, enlisted February 20 by Lieut. Bancroft at West Point during the war.

He participated in Shays' Rebellion (1786-87) as a Lieutenant in Capt. Jonah Goulding's company of Regulators. Though there was a warrant issued for him, Partridge somehow managed to avoid arrest until the collapse of the rebellion. In 1787, special town meetings were held to address the General Court, the Governor and Council and Major-General Lincoln of Worcester on the behalf of all the men convicted of treason and sentenced to hang for their part in the rebellion. Partridge did petition the General Court for a pardon on February 7, 1787, and was released on bail in March. Partridge had to pay a fine of 100 pounds to the state, and "recognize in 300 pounds to keep the peace for 5 years." So, he had to behave or lose his money.

It also seemed that Partridge had his pension under an act of

the House of Representatives on March 18, 1818, but it had been suspended in May of 1820. He had U.S. Secretary of State John Quincy Adams bring to the House of Representative a petition from Partridge for a continuation of the pension granted him under the act of the March 18, 1818. The petition was sent to the Committee on Revolutionary Pensions. His annual allowance was \$96, and he had received \$181 by 1820. No record was found as to whether he got his pension reinstated. Abel remained in Auburn until his death in 1826.

Future articles will look at the Revolutionary War soldiers buried in the Center Burial Ground next to the First Congregational Church.

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 and auburnhistoricalmuseum.org or follow us on Facebook at Auburn Historical.



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# MassBay Community College Noted Students

The following local residents have been named to the MassBay Community College President's List, earning this academic honor for the Spring 2025 semester.

- Lisa Sage of Auburn, who studies General Studies:Math
- Samantha Keeler of Auburn, who studies Liberal Arts: Political Science

To be eligible for the MassBay President's List, students must be enrolled in 12 or more college-level credits, achieve a 3.7 grade-point average or higher, and be in good standing with the College.

The following residents have been named to the MassBay Community College Dean's List, earning this academic honor for the

Spring 2025 semester.

- Benjamin Osterman of Auburn, who studies Nursing
- Terrence Walsh of Oxford, who studies Computer Aided Design
- Matthew Frappier of Oxford, who studies Computer Information Systems
- Kamryn Fogg of Oxford, who studies Liberal Arts

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# Southwick’s Zoo announces birth of three cheetah cubs

Southwick’s Zoo is thrilled to announce the birth of three cheetah cubs, a significant milestone for the zoo and its animal care team. Born in early May to Nya, a female



Two of the three newborn cheetahs are pictured here. Courtesy photo

cheetah from Southwick’s Zoo and part of the Zoo Association of America’s (ZAA) Animal Management Program (AMP), the cubs are healthy and thriving under expert care. Shortly after giving birth, Nya experienced complications and rejected the cubs in her litter. Female Cheetahs are generally good mothers, even though only 5% of cheetah cubs reach adulthood in the wild. While rejecting cubs is not typical, it is not an uncommon behavior for first-time cheetah mothers. To ensure the cubs’ survival and well-being, Southwick’s experienced animal care staff stepped in to raise them behind the scenes, providing round-the-clock feeding, monitoring, and support for their social development. “These cubs are already showing off their energy and personality,” said Betsey Brewer, Executive Vice President of Southwick’s Zoo and Board Chair for ZAA. “They’ve kept our team on their toes, and it’s been a joy to

watch them grow and explore each day. The work our team has done to care for these cubs is nothing short of extraordinary.” Over the summer months, they will move into the cheetah habitat for public view, where guests can watch as they continue to develop. Cheetahs are listed as Vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), with fewer than 7,000 individuals remaining in the wild. Through its participation in the ZAA’s AMP, which focuses on population management and species sustainability, Southwick’s Zoo plays an important role in the

conservation of this iconic species. “These cubs represent more than just an exciting moment for the zoo,” Brewer added. “They’re part of a larger purpose—to help secure the future of a species that’s facing real challenges in the wild. At the same time, they allow us to inspire the next generation of advocates.” Southwick’s Zoo will continue to share updates on the cubs, including names, photos, and videos, on its social media platforms in the upcoming weeks.

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## SPORTS

## A Pure Natural at Throwing

BY CHRISITOPHER TREMBLAY,  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

As a freshman entering Auburn High School Isabel Zukowski decided that she was going to be a three-sport athlete for the Rockets. That year she took part in field hockey during the fall, basketball in the winter and golf in the spring, but that would all change come the beginning of her sophomore year. The now incoming senior had been at field hockey practice when the girls head track and field coach, Karyn Ferdella, approached her following the day's activities.

"She came up to me in the hallway after watching me do field hockey drills and asked me to join the track and field team," Zukowski said. "She told me that she thought that I'd be good at throwing the shot put. I don't know how she figured I'd be good at that while playing field hockey, but I decided to give it a try even though I had never heard of the sport."

The sophomore went home and told her mother about the sport and she had the same expression as her daughter. When she told her what she had signed up for, her

mother was all confused as she had no idea what the sport was either or what it entailed.

Zukowski was beyond scared when she first got to the tryouts, but after Coach O'Brien (the Auburn throwing coach) calmed her down and ran her through the process of throwing the shot-put things were ok. Although she now knew what she was doing, she was not that great at it.

"The first time that I threw the shot-put I was not any good at all," she said. "I took one step and threw it – it only went about 15."

Shot-put is an event where an athlete propels a heavy spherical weight called a shot as far as they possibly can from a designated circle. It is more of a push from the shoulder; a test of strength, speed, endurance and explosive power using either a glide or rotational technique to generate momentum.

Despite never having lifted a shot-put, never mind not knowing what it was, Zukowski made it to the State Tournament and then continued onto the All-State Meet in her very first year in the sport.

"When I went to the States I didn't really know much about what was going on and thought

that it was just another regular meet," Zukowski said. "When I got there I realized that all the girls were all good and at the All States they were really good; then I realized I was there with them so I must be good too."

Following the successful season that she had in the winter during her very first year attempting the event, she decided that she would forgo golf and throw the shot in the spring, as well as trying the discus. Zukowski noted that the discus was lighter than the shot-put and figured that she might like it better. And while the discus requires more technique and has to come off the fingers, she has come to love both events equally.

To date her best shot-put throw is 37.7", while she has tossed the discus a best 116' 4".

"I know many coaches speak in hyperbole when discussing their best athletes, but Isabel is truly one of a kind, Ferdella said. "In my 24 years as head coach, I can unequivocally say that we've never had an athlete quite like her. What she has accomplished in the world of track and field in such a short time is nothing short of remarkable."

This past season as a junior



Isabel Zukowski, Rockets Track and Field star

Zukowski once again went to the States where she finished fourth in the discus and added a third-place finish in the shot put allowing her to move onto the All States.

"Making the All States two years in a row was simply amazing to

find that I was doing things right and people were recognizing me for it," she said. "Congratulations

## SPORTS

continued on page 11

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after that, July 5-6, anyone with a birthday in March will receive free tickets. (The museum will be closed July 4.)

The free weekends will continue through September 5-7. See the complete breakdown below.

The Twelve Weeks of Summer special also features a raffle for gift certificates for local restaurants and shops. Every "birthday person" will receive two free tickets for

the raffle, which will be drawn on Sunday, September 7. All museum visitors may purchase raffle tickets as well.

Raffle participants include Book-lovers' Gourmet, Samuel Slater's Restaurant, The Rose Room Café, Webster Lake Gifts, and Prestige Nails and Day Spa.

Museum open hours are Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sundays noon to 4 p.m. Last

admission is at 3 p.m. For more information, go to [samuelslaterexperience.org](http://samuelslaterexperience.org) or call 508-461-2955.

January : June 20-22; February: June 27-29; March: July 5-6; April: July 11-13;

May: July 18-20; June: July 25-27; July: August 1-3; August: August 8-10; September: August 15-17; October: August 22-24; November: August 30-31; December: September 5-7

## About Samuel Slater Experience

Samuel Slater Experience opened in 2022 to tell the story of Samuel Slater, the beginnings of the American Industrial Revolution, and Slater's impact on mill towns such as Webster, Massachusetts. The museum uses advanced digital technology with immersive video and interactive exhibits to recreate two time periods: the early 1800s and the early 1900s.

## SPORTS

continued from page 10

came from my family, friends and peers, while the support from the community was really nice."

As she gets ready to take part in her senior campaign her goals remain the same as they have every year prior. The only goal Zukowski has for herself it to get better than she was the year before, not only in personal records, but strength-wise as well. She would also love to make it back to the New England in the shot-put in both the winter and indoor seasons. This past year she made it to the finals where she finished ninth.

Participating in the discus at the All States this past year Zukowski found that things didn't go all that well for her.

"The circle was a little wet but everyone else was throwing in the same circle," Zukowski said. "It just wasn't my day."

The Auburn girls team has won the Southern Worcester County League (SWCL) indoor Championship two years in a row and Zukowski would love nothing more than to make it three years in a row before departing. Personally if she could capture an individual championship she'd be thrilled. She won't be doing anything special to get ready for the upcoming track seasons outside of playing a lot of field hockey in the fall while spending time in the gym doing cross-fit, lifting and conditioning.

"As a former trained dancer, Isabel understands her body, making her comprehension of the mechanics of shot put and discus

both swift and precise. She also understands how to harness her explosive power and, most importantly, she understands how to demonstrate poise and grace under pressure," the Auburn coach said. "Isabel, along with throwing coach, Jack O'Brien, put in many, many long hours perfecting her throwing style. She is a determined athlete who arrives first and stays late and I cannot say enough about her and what she has brought to our team. She is an inspiration to her teammates and always handles herself with class."

Although it's still over a year away before she heads out to college but the soon to be senior has been speaking to coaches.

"It's definitely a possibility and I've been thinking a lot about it lately," Zukowski said. "I have started talking to the coach from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst about me throwing there."

Whether she gets to continue throwing the shot-put or discus on the collegiate level its already been one hell of a few years taking part in the two events for Auburn and one she never saw coming.

"When I first started throwing the shot-put, I absolutely never thought that I'd come to this in such a short time," Zukowski said. "This was a sport that I had literally no idea what it was and I was just picking it up because it looked like fun."

Who knew fun could become so successful in only two short years.

## ZUKOWSKI'S NOTABLES FOR HER JUNIOR SEASONS

Indoor:

- Undefeated throughout the entire regular SWCL season in the

shot-put

- SWCL All-Star
- 1st place - shot-put at SWCL Championships (37'7")
- 2nd place - shot-put at the Division 4 State Championship (36'3")
- 8th place – shot-put at the All-State Meet of Champions (36' 6.75")
- 20th place – shot-put at the New England Championship (34'2")
- Holds the school record for the shot-put with a throw of 37'7", breaking the previous record of 36'5" held by Nicole Keller in 1997

Outdoor:

- Undefeated throughout the entire regular SWCL season in the shot-put and the discus
- SWCL All-Star
- 1st place – shot-put at the SWCL Championship (34' 2.5")
- 1st place – discus at the SWCL Championship (109'7")
- 1st place – discus at the Division 1 District E Championship

(108'4")

- 2nd place – shot-put at the District E Championship (34' 8")
- 3rd place – shot-put at the All-State Meet of Champions (37' 3.75")
- 9th place – shot-put at the New England Championships (37')

- Holds the school record in the shot-put (37'7") breaking her own record of 36' set in 2024
- Holds the school record in the discus (116'4") breaking the previous record of 115'5" set by Liz Gregoire in 1976



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# Oxford Middle School Quarter 4 Honor Roll

## HIGH HONORS

Grade 8 - Alexander Campbell, Bella Coghlan, Nikolas Coraccio, Ashlyn Halliday, Tucker Harrity, Ali Johnson, Tyler Melton, Catalina Montalvo, Gunjan Niroula, Brooke O'Connor, Joseph Peters, Savannah Pratt, Destiny Purcell, Colton Toedt, Jude Worden, Samuel Yogarathnam

Grade 7 - Sadie Crouch, Lily Dolbec, Zachary Dubsy, Liam Harrity, Willow Keller, Alana LaFrance, Sophia Meneguzzo, Maxwell Palaia, Megan Riley, Hunter Rodriguez, Heather Stebbins, Lilliana Tervo, Jordyn Torteson

Grade 6 - Saige Angell, Hazel Burlingame, Sadie Coghlan, Kaiden Corriveau, Brynn Czernicki-Nasis, Joshua George, Margaret Griffin, Kellen Harrison, Jackson Harvey, Stella Pantano, Jenna Shenette, Sarah Stebbins, Sadie Stewart, Raeann Teal, Marissa Worden, Makenzie Zwang,

## HONORS

Grade 8 - Michael Annancy, Zachary Barberio, Brenna Burke, Ethan Campbell, Mary-Jane Carey, Mason Case, Chase Checkoway, Kendra Cutroni, Viktorya Davis, Kellsey Dunn, Michael

Forbes, Marquis Gagne, Em-mary Gustafson, Jaiden Hamden, Ethan Hamilton, Brianna Judge, Victoria LaMountain, Chloe Lavallee, Samantha Marrier, Olivia Martinez, Nathan Mayo, Keigan McIlvaine, Kaliyana Padilla, Jayden Rosado, Ava St. Peter

Grade 7 - Marina Biancanello, Olivia Boulette, Abigail Burque, Karoline D'Alessandro, Max Figueroa, Brielle Fournier, Ava Graika, Jillian Gustafson, Brookelynn Mangano, Ashton O'Malley, Perdo Paniagua, Michael Peck, Ava Peters, Mateo Quintero, Clara Santana-Rocha, Jackson Stone, Rhegan Stopyra, Parker Tyrrell, Harrison Voas

Grade 6 - Clayton Almstrom, Diego Aponte, Gavin Brown, Eric Bunning, Bradley Bush, Lucas Bush, Amber Conway, Hadley Coraccio, Anthony Degaetano, Kendall Donnelly, Trevor Gould, Isabelle Gurney, Ethan Gustafson, Travis Kogbe, Isabella LaMountain, Joseph Menke, Ava Montalvo, Caroline Montalvo, Landon Morris, Tessa Peloso, Chad Sliwoski, Bradley Toedt, Liam Valipour, Avriel Vyff-Trice, Aislyn White, Lilliana Wood

# Hail and Farewell to the Chiefs

**A**uburn Police Chief Todd Lemon retired on July 14 after serving in the Auburn Police Department for 32 years when Deputy Chief Robert Scott Mills stepped into his new role as Police Chief.

Chief Mills began his law enforcement career with the Norwell Police Department in 1993, serving as a patrol officer before joining the Auburn Police Department as a civil service officer in 1997.

Shortly after, he earned a position in the Detective Bureau, where he served from 1998 to 2002. That year, he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant and returned to the Patrol Division.

In addition to his patrol supervisor duties, Chief Mills held numerous roles including report review, grant writing and administration, supervision of the Communications Center (including hiring, discipline, and training), firearms licensing, and serving as the custodian of the Evidence and Property Room.

In 2013, he was selected as the Detective Unit Supervisor, transitioning his oversight to the Detective Bureau and all crime scene investigations. During his time in this role, Chief Mills was involved in several significant investigations, including homicides, child fatalities, officer-involved shootings, and the tragic murder of Auburn Police Officer Ronald Tarentino, Jr.

From 2016 to 2022, Chief Mills also managed and maintained all Auburn Police Department



social media accounts, helping the department stay connected and transparent with the community.

Promoted to Provisional Lieutenant in 2022, he was soon after appointed Deputy Chief. In these roles, he assumed direct responsibility for the police budget, capital improvements, purchases, expenditures, and payroll. He successfully led the update of all department policies from their 2008 versions to current accredited standards.

Chief Mills also secured a \$94,000 grant to fund the department's Body-Worn Camera Program and oversees Internal Affairs and department accountability.

He also initiated the department's participation in the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Program. Today, he continues to manage both the police and standalone communications budgets.

As part of his vision for a more efficient department, he implemented a divisional reorganization using a three-lieutenant system. This structure added multiple layers of supervision and significantly reduced supervisory and total overtime expenditures in successive years.

Chief Mills is married to his wife, Niki and they have four adult children and two grandchildren.

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## TALES FROM BEYOND

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# I Am Waiting And Watching For You

## The Mistaken Vampire

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

One of the most famous Rhode Island vampires was never exhumed and exorcised as an alleged creature of the night, although she was taken from the family burial lot and reburied in a public cemetery on October 26, 1889, when the family sold their farm. Other than that, she would have remained anonymous; that is, until a group of legend-trippers stumbled upon her grave in the 1960s.

Nellie Louise Vaughn died on March 31, 1889, at the age of nineteen, presumably of pneumonia. She was first buried in a lot on the family farm. Small, private family plots were very common in Rhode Island and, in some cases, are still in use to this day.

As the story goes, a Coventry, Rhode Island high school teacher told a class of students about a vampire grave, just off Route 102 in South County, of a nineteen-year-old girl who died in the late 1800s. The teacher never gave a name or exact location. It can be assumed that this particular teacher was referring to Mercy Brown, the most famous case during New England vampire scare of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Being close to Halloween, a group of classmates gathered together one night to find the grave of the vampire. How

they came upon the historical cemetery remains a matter of mystery, but their travels landed them in front of an old burial yard behind an abandoned meeting house.

It did not take long for the seekers of the unknown to find what convinced them that their search was over. Just inside the cemetery sat Nellie's stone with the now-famous inscription, "I am waiting and watching for you." This ominous epitaph, along with Nellie's age at the time of death and the date of her death closely matched the teacher's description, and another Rhode Island vampire was born.

Since then, countless people have paid a visit to the graveyard looking for the grave where, as legend states, no moss, lichen or grass will grow. It was also related that the grave continues to sink into the earth. There is no stone marking her plot, as it has been removed and stored away in an undisclosed location for preservation. Nellie's burial plot remains unmarked, but there are a few areas in the burial yard where people claim she is buried, and all of them for the most part, have plenty of vegetation on them. Unfortunately, the cemetery has been subject to much vandalism—so much so that there is a neighborhood watch, as well as police patrols on a regular basis.

Another aspect of the Nellie Vaughn saga involves the alleged sighting of a young woman in the graveyard and an ethereal voice emanating from nowhere saying, "I am perfectly pleasant." In the book *New England Ghost Files*, Charles T. Robinson states that people have heard the words echo through the air while in the cemetery and have spotted the visage of a young woman near the alleged grave site of Nellie Vaughn.

Acclaimed author and paranormal investigator Christopher Balzano once stated that we have a tendency to immediately blame a haunting on the most famous person in the area. Unfortunately, there is no indubitable evidence on the paranormal side that even if there is a voice calling out to the visitors, it is actually Nellie's. We already know she was never accused of being one of the spectral visitors blamed for sucking the life from family members in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. If anything, there is an old beautiful historical cemetery and meetinghouse that should be left alone and respected. There is no need to waste your time traveling miles up a winding road to see, well, nothing.



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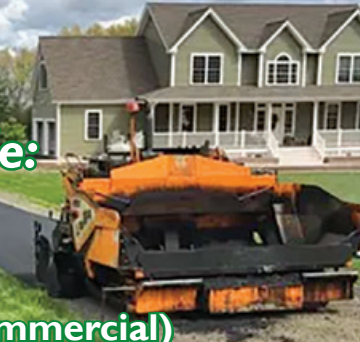
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## LIVING WITH LUKE

amyleclaire@hotmail.com

## When Luke Acts Human

The hairs on his back stood high and his shoulders bulged like a lion's. "How is this possible? You smell like Mom's cleaner, but you look like me."

The dogs were real, yet somehow intangible. However intriguing, the truth surfaced in no time. "Ah. Now I understand. You are there

with the story. He tilted his head to my voice then glanced at me. "I see."

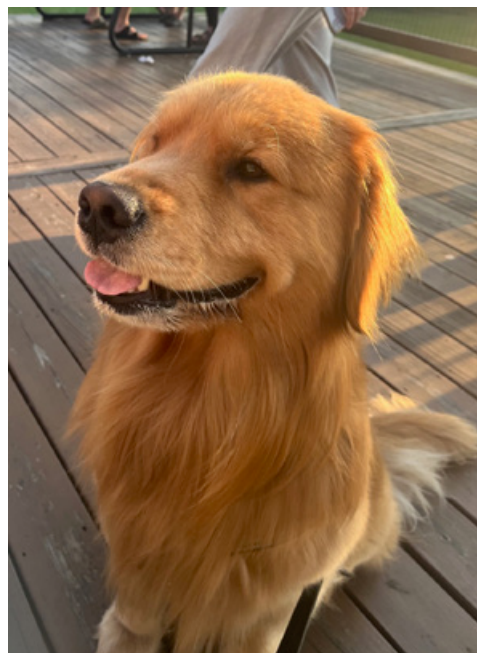
Before long, Luke became a regular couch potato. "Make sure you put on Luke's shows." I made sure the last person left in the house would turn on the Dog Channel, should Luke be left alone.

He munched on his popcorn and learned to watch television with the expression of an avid sports fan. He'd smile while watching an actor sail through a field on a horse. He'd lift his ears to an Olympic swimmer. "I would love to swim in a lane!" He'd growl to the deep, philosophical scenes, such as that shown in the classic Ten Commandments, which features Charlton Heston at Mount Sinai. The sight of the burning bush and God's omnipresent voice seemed to move Luke. He lowered his head and grumbled, as though sensing a universal power.

## LUKE UNDERSTANDS SARCASM

My son, Ben, the youngest of our human family, often

messes with his dog bro. "Luke, go this way," he jests. Allow me to explain the joke's context. Luke was only a puppy when he experienced a unique trauma. A heavy, iron counter stool bobbed then fell over



BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

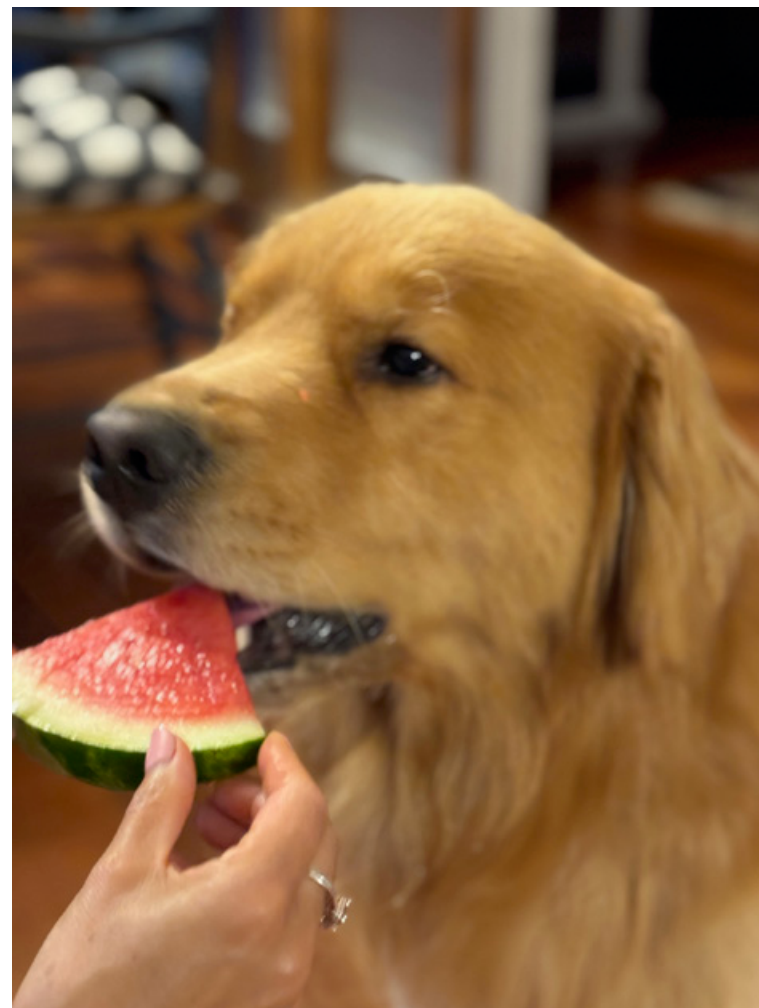
Luke had been watching me for weeks from his spot in the kitchen. He seemed mesmerized, as though I held up a slice of the moon. That's when I knew I had to share my watermelon with him. I kneeled by his side and angled the wedge so that he could bite off the sweet melon. He used his tiny front teeth to chisel the fruit from its rind, just as we do. Most of my dogs would have tried to swallow the wedge whole. Luke may as well have mentioned that the watermelon was on sale. "This is so good." He concentrated on the snack as would a bear cub a jar of honey. Sharing healthy food with Luke offers one example of how he's learned to act human. There are several others.

## LUKE WATCHES TELEVISION

The first time he noticed dogs on film, he nosed the television screen then backed off, just to be on the safe side. "How did you flatten yourself to fit inside the screen?"

for my entertainment. You are real, but also far away." Luke was onto the dogs on film.

"Look at how carefully the labs walk over the bridge, Luke!" I crooned. I wanted him to identify



on the kitchen floor with a thunderous bang. Luke backed off and yelped while the stool lied helpless. "You almost killed me!" The whole incident freaked little Luke out. Worse, it caused an indelible scar. He is now anxious around obstacles, particularly those with the potential to fall on him. Therefore, a simple trip from the deck to his dish (where the kibble rewards lie) causes discomfort, especially in a cluttered kitchen. Quirky? Perhaps. Nonetheless, Luke has a right to his feelings. One never knows when a Swiffer mop may drop. Not to mention the dangling beach bag, also suspect.

"Slow and steady wins the race." He noses the floor and takes the safer route. He's even calculated the best way to pace himself. A hasty sprint around the table has caused him to slide off balance, and away from his bowl. "Food. Food. Food." He's learned his lesson. He now takes the corner with a deliberate downshift. I gush while watching him slow down and master the corner. My dog understands physics. He finally arrives at his dish and inhales his reward. "I am such a good boy."

Sometimes big brothers get in the way.

"Go this way, Luke." Ben teases and gestures for Luke to do the unthinkable. "I-don't-like-that-

way, Ben." He retracts from Ben's hold so that his face creases like a Shar Pei's. I defend Luke vehemently. "You let Luke go the way he wants! He's not comfortable that way." Luke breaks free and approaches his bowl with a breach to his typical pace. He cannot stifle the urge to take the corner slowly. Big brother may toss another joke. Speed is key. Nonetheless, the entire incident is forgotten in a matter of two bites. His smile and jovial spirit convey a more fascinating trait. Luke is in on the joke. "My brother is a big tease, but I still love him."

## LUKE RELATES TO CHILDREN

Luke appreciates the smallness of children. He aligns his posture with theirs, often crouching down on the lawn to shrink himself when they come off the bus to say hello. "Lewwwwwk!" They chant his name, and he stares longingly until they arrive. Children carry joy, along with all kinds of trinkets, and Luke relates to them in full color. He even thinks he's one of them. "You are all so fun and happy like me!" He'll grab a dropped stuffed bear then romp in a circle. "Luke, give

## LUKE

continued on page 15



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## REAL ESTATE

# Why most sellers hire real estate agents today

**S**elling your house without an agent as a “For Sale by Owner” (FSBO) may be something you’ve considered. But you should know that, in today’s changing market, more homeowners are deciding that’s just not worth the risk. According to the latest data from the National Association of Realtors (NAR), the number of homeowners selling without an agent has hit an all-time low. And for the small number of homeowners who do decide to sell on their own, data shows



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

they’re still not confident they’re making a good choice. A recent survey finds three out of every four homeowners who don’t plan to use an agent have doubts about whether that’s actually the right decision and here’s why. The market is changing – not in a bad way, just in a way that requires a smarter, more strategic approach and having a real estate expert in your corner really pays off.

Here are just two of the ways an agent’s expertise makes a difference.

1. Getting the price right in a market that’s evolving. One of the biggest hurdles when selling a house on your own is figuring out the right price. It’s not as simple as picking a number that sounds good or selling your house for what your neighbor’s sold for a few years back, you need to hit the bullseye for where the market is right now. Without a Realtors

help, you’re more likely to miss the mark. We are pros when it comes to pricing properties and have their finger on the pulse of your local market. We understand current buying trends and can provide insight into how your home compares to others for sale nearby. Basically, we know what’s really selling, what buyers are willing to pay in your area, and how to position your house to sell quickly. That kind of insight can have a big impact, especially in a market that’s balancing out.

2. Handling (and actually understanding) the legal documents. There’s also a mountain of documentation when selling a house, including everything from disclosures to contracts and a mistake can have big legal implications. This is another area where having an agent can help. We have handled these documents countless times and know

exactly what’s needed to keep everything on track, so you avoid delays. And now that buyers are including more contingencies again and asking for concessions, we will guide you through each form step by step, making sure it’s done right and documented correctly the first time.

3. Selling your house quickly even in a shifting market. Now that the number of homes for sale has grown, homes aren’t selling at quite the same pace they were. But you can still sell quickly if you have a proven plan to help

your house stand out. Just remember, homeowners don’t have the same network or marketing tools an experienced agent does. So, if you want the process to happen fast, you’ll likely want a pro by your side.

Having the right agent and the right strategy is key in a shifting market. Connect with a local pro so you don’t have to take this on by yourself and so you can list with confidence, knowing you’ve got expert guidance from day one.

## LUKE

*continued from page 14*

that back,” I command, and he lets it go. “I was just trying to fit in, Mom.” Luke adjusts to a toddler’s size even more, settling himself to the gentlest pose he can muster. “Can my daughter pet your dog?” He lifts his head. “Take your time, little cutie.” Toddlers giggle and tap his head. “Soft.” Luke sits patiently while they hug, climb, hang over his neck, and kiss him.

### LUKE COMMUNICATES SADNESS

“You’re leaving?” I’ll never stop feeling guilty when leaving Luke. I haven’t fully let go of the plan to make Luke a Daddy and adopt one of his own pups. After Lincoln passed, we grieved deeply but eventually warmed up to the idea of doubling our joy with two pups. The plan was to start with one, then add another. We trained Luke, brought him on adventures, and bonded with him. Then, somehow, we settled into family life with an ease and routine that countered the

thought of doing it all over again. Life had become comfortable. We could sleep late, trust Luke to hang in the house alone, travel with him, and give him the independence he needed in our yard. We were living the dream. But was being an Only lonely?

“I’ll be right back, Luke. Then we’ll play, okay? Promise.” I holler out to him from my car in front of our house. He sits on the step and watches my car roll onto the street, then manage its turn to pull away. My mind wanders. I imagine him sitting beside his own son or daughter.

“You always say that. But almost every morning you leave me here.” His head rests on his paws. My car is still in view. I notice him lift his head to keep on watching me.

“Daddy’s home, Luke!” I turn my music down and yell out to him.

“He’s boring.”

“Oh, Luke.” I fight the urge to pull back into the driveway and rescue him. But my dance hours pass as they always do and before long, I’m home again.

“I CAN’T BELIEVE IT’S YOU

AND WE ARE TOGETHER AGAIN!!” Luke’s joy in reuniting with me after two hours reminds me of this. He may know how to act like a human, but his dog-ness will always be his best quality.

Write to Amy  
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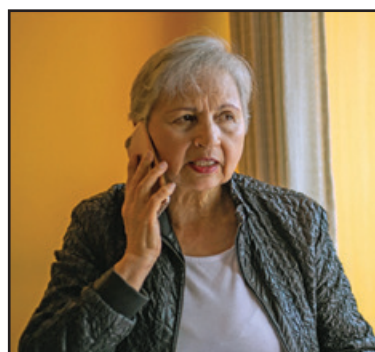
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## Bent Front Wheel Ok to Drive if There's No Vibration

**Q.** I brought my Honda Accord to the dealership because of a slow leak in the front passenger tire. I thought I might have gone over a nail, but the mechanic said there was nothing wrong. He did, however, say that the passenger front wheel was slightly bent. What do you think may have caused this and is it safe to drive? There did not seem to be a concern by the dealership.

**A.** If you do not feel any vibration then the wheel is most likely fine and there is nothing to worry about. Wheels

can be knocked out-of-round from a pothole or even bumping a curb. As for the tire leak, as good as new car dealers are with mechanical repairs, when it comes to tire issues I have had the best luck at tire stores. This is especially true when looking for very slow tire leaks.

**Q.** On my old Dodge pickup truck, I replaced the battery which went fine, however what I did not realize was my voltage regulator was failing. So, without realizing it, I was cooking the battery, and it boiled some, and got some battery acid on the

aluminum radiator. It caused a stain, white in color. I tried to remove it with metal polish including Noxon, nothing works. Do you have any suggestion to remove the stain, or should I just try aluminum paint?

**A.** I have used Eastwood Radiator black for regular radiators. For aluminum I would start with a gentle cleaning with baking soda and water and then rinse and see how it looks. Then use some alcohol to remove any residue. You could also try commercial air conditioner coil cleaner if there are some stains on the radiator fins. The condenser cleaner is the product used for cleaning the condenser coils of a house A/C unit. Aluminum is self-healing and although paintable, personally I would leave that as the last option. Readers do you have a better suggestion?

**Q.** I have a 2008 Toyota Corolla, is the brake fluid DOT 3 or DOT 4? And if the fluid in the master cylinder is conventional, can I add synthetic fluid? Also, I have always read only use brake fluid from a sealed container. So once the container is open, is the brake fluid okay to use?

**A.** When the car was new it was DOT 3 fluid, and you can use DOT4 or DOT 5.1 but not DOT 5 which is silicone based. All brake fluid is technically synthetic since it is a blended manufactured product. DOT4 has a higher boiling point than DOT3 and DOT5.1 is higher still; all are backwards compatible. What you would not want to do is use DOT3 in a car that requires DOT4 or 5.1 Again do not use DOT 5 silicone fluid which is not compatible with DOT 3, 4 or 5.1 fluids. As for the

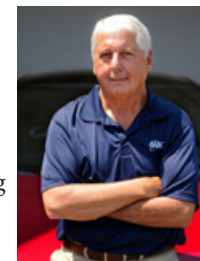
sealed container warning, brake fluid absorbs water, water is the enemy of a brake system. You want to store brake fluid in a sealed container, not one that is open to the air.

**Q.** I own a 2021 Kia Seltos with 29,000 miles on it. My engine light went on one day and the very next day the car stalled and died. It was towed to Kia dealership. My warranty ends soon. My car did have symptoms of recent recall: intermittent stalling and is now told to be abnormal oil consumption but my car was not part of the recall. My car has been sitting on the lot for weeks waiting for approval from Kia to cover total engine damage from lack of oil. The oil light never came on to warn me of this. The Kia dealership claims they are going back and forth with Kia technical assistance for approval. I have sent proof of all my oil changes, so I have kept up with maintenance. The Kia mechanic told me that they are trying to make a case about how it was not serviced at Kia and the non-factory oil filter could have caused this issue. Just would like to know your thoughts on this and is this common for a company to try to get out of the warranty? I am at my wits end!

**A.** Seems to fit the criteria for the recall. Did the engine have a recall to have different sensing software installed? Most engines in the 2014-2024 decade did. If that was not performed, then that may be an issue. Regarding maintenance, as long as you can prove the oil was changed at 6-month intervals and the correct grade of oil and a quality oil filter was used, there should be no reason to deny warranty coverage. Recall or not, your car has a 10-year 100,000-mile warranty or

5 year 60,000-mile warranty. As long as you maintained it, the coverage should be intact. Regarding the oil light, the oil light measures oil pressure not quantity so it is not unusual the light was not on. Regarding the oil filter, the Magnuson Moss law protects you. The Magnuson-Moss Warranty Act prevents manufacturers from voiding warranties or denying coverage simply because a consumer used a non-original part or had repairs done by a non-dealer shop unless they can prove that the aftermarket part or repair caused the defect.

**Q.** I have a 2010 Toyota RAV4 with 116,000 miles and a 2019 Toyota RAV 4 with 20,000 miles. Neither car accumulates much mileage in the course of the year. I am no longer taking the 2019 to the dealership, as I have found a very reliable local garage that does the work for a fraction of the cost of the dealership. That being said, I try to self-maintain certain items, if I can, and the replacement of an air cabin filter would now be one of them. I've read where they should be replaced on a yearly basis (or sooner if driving on very dusty roads), and with the beginning of the hot weather summer driving season, I would like to place fresh cabin air filters in each vehicle. What would be your recommendations? I have gone to Amazon.com, and of course there are many brands



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CAR DOCTOR  
continued on page 17

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## TIPS ON FINANCIAL PLANNING

dennis.antonopoulos@edwardjones.com

# Questions to ask your financial advisor

**Y**ou should always be able to ask as many questions as you'd like when working with your financial advisor. So, before you have your annual review, think carefully about what you'd like to ask.



BY DENNIS ANTONOPOULOS

Here are a few suggestions:

**Are my goals still realistic?** When you first began working with your financial advisor, you may well have articulated several financial goals. For example, you might have said that you wanted to pay for most of your children's college education, or that you'd like to retire at age 55, or that you hope to travel internationally every year during retirement. In fact, you could have many different goals for which you're saving and investing. When you meet with your financial advisor, you'll certainly want to ask whether you're still on track toward meeting these goals. If you are, you can continue with the financial strategies you've been following; but if you aren't, you may need to adjust them. The same is true if your goals have changed. You and your financial advisor will want to build a strategy to address any new or different goals such as emergency cash needs, having adequate insurance protection or estate planning.

**Am I taking on too much — or too little — risk?** Put market declines in perspective. The financial

markets always fluctuate, and these movements will affect the value of your investment portfolio. Suppose you watch the markets closely every day and track their impact on your investments. You may find yourself fretting over their value and wondering whether you're taking on too much investment risk for your comfort level. Conversely, if during an extended period of market gains your own portfolio appears to be lagging, you might feel that you should be investing more aggressively, which entails greater risk. In any case, it's important to consult with your financial advisor to determine your risk tolerance and use it as a guideline for making investment choices.

**How will changes in my life affect my investment strategy?** Your life is not static. Over the years, you may experience any number of major events, such as marriage, remarriage, loss of a spouse, birth of children or grandchildren, changing jobs or illness leading to early retirement. When you meet with your financial advisor, you will want to discuss these types of changes, because they can affect your long-term goals and your investment decisions.

**How are external forces affecting my investment portfolio?** Generally speaking, you will want to create an investment strategy based on your goals, risk tolerance and time horizon. And, as mentioned, you may need to adjust your strategy based on changes in your life. But should you also make changes based on outside forces, such as interest rate movements, political events, inflation, new tax legislation or news affecting industries in

which you have invested substantially? Try not to make long-term investment decisions based on short-term news. Yet, talk with your financial advisor to make sure your investment portfolio and spending strategy are not out of alignment with relevant external factors.

By making these and other inquiries, you can help yourself stay informed about your overall investment picture and what moves, if any, you should make to keep advancing toward your goals. A financial advisor is there to provide you with valuable guidance — so take full advantage of it.

*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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## CAR DOCTOR

continued from page 16

listed such as Puroma, EPAuto, Fun-Driving, Fram, Bosch, Pure-Flow. Bosch and Fram seem to be double the price of others, and I am not exactly sure if that's marketing or not. In any case, I would appreciate your thoughts as to which brand might be optimal for my two autos, which are driven mostly on local streets and highways.

**A**I replace cabin air filters when they are dirty, not just on time or mileage. Toyota makes it quite easy to check the cabin air filter. The filter sits behind the glove compart-

ment. Open the glove compartment and allow the door to fully open. You may need to move the stops to allow the door to drop down. Then the filter is located in a tray behind the glove box. Take out the filter if it is quite dirty and dusty replace it. If there is only a little dust, pollen leaves, shake it out and reinstall it. As for brands, I prefer the factory filter, then WIX filter products and the newer Bosch HEPA filter. Readers seem to highly recommend Puroma Cabin Air Filter with Activated Carbon. I have not tried this filter, but even vehicle manufacturers are recommending these charcoal/carbon filters to eliminate odors.



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

THURSDAY, JULY 31

• The Charlton Public Library Summer Concert series sponsored by Cornerstone Bank presents Tony Graham, a singer-songwriter from County Tipperary, Ireland, will perform. He has an extensive catalogue of songs ranging from traditional ballads to more contemporary Irish hits. His passion for Irish music shows through in his performances, as every song he sings tells a story. From 6-7:30 p.m. at Charlton Library, 40 Main Street. Free and open to the public. Additional parking is available at the Elementary School and Town Hall.

• Sutton Cultural Council summer concert series with Bad News Jazz & Blues Orchestra at 6:30 on the town common. Free.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 1

• Talk with Author - Revolutionary War Munitions: Joel Bohy, local author, *Bullet Strikes from the First Days of the American Revolution*, will share his knowledge of Revolutionary War munitions on Thursday, September 4th, at 7 p.m. in the First Congregational Church, 307 Boston Road. Revolutionary War Fascinating Facts: Charlotte Wilson will share fascinating facts about Sutton's citizens during the Revolutionary days on Tuesday, November 11th at 7 p.m. at the First Congregational Church, 307 Boston Road.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 2

• Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for the Fast Dog Café At 11 a.m. at Whittier Farms, 90 Douglas Road, Sutton right by the Milk Store at Whittier Farms.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 5

• Millbury Town Takeover at Polar Park, beginning at 6:45 p.m. Worcester Red Sox vs. Buffalo Bisons. Tickets purchased for the takeover night benefit a non-profit from Millbury, get tickets at [www.gofevo.com/event/millburytt](http://www.gofevo.com/event/millburytt)

THURSDAY, AUGUST 7

• The Millbury Farmers Market will take place at the Asa Waters Mansion, 123 Elm Street, Millbury, brought to you by the Friends of Asa Waters. Shop for locally baked food, fresh produce and handcrafted

goods. Enjoy live music and buy lunch from food trucks. The hours are 3 - 7 p.m.

Sutton Cultural Council Summer Series concert with Far From Eden at 6:30 p.m. on the town common. Free.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 9

Second Annual Hometown Heroes and Local Legends Concert at 2:30 p.m. at Mill Villages Park, 61 Main Street (Route 122A) South Grafton. Free to all. Bring a lawn chair and a friend. With Bob Jordan, Mike Ladd, Joe Kuras and a special mystery guest! Sponsored by the Grafton Cultural Council, Mass Cultural Council and Homefield Credit Union. Rain date is August 10.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 13

• Have Steamers at Sunset with the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce held at the Barn at Blissful Meadows Golf Club, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Celebrate summer with your friends, colleagues and chamber members at this signature event. Musical stylings by Caribbean Blue. Deck yourself out in your finest Hawaiian attire for a chance to win the coveted Golden Lobster Award.

Lobster \$110 (\$135 future members); steak \$90 (\$120) chicken \$80 (\$110) vegetarian \$75 (\$100). RSVP by August 6. Cash bar. (lobster is market price). All dinners include garden salad, steamers of corn chowder (chose when registering), baked potato, summer vegetable and light dessert. To

register, visit [blackstonevalley.org/events](http://blackstonevalley.org/events)

SATURDAY, AUGUST 16

The Auburn Historical Society Parking Lot Craft Fair will take place from 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Rain or Shine. Vendors are welcome to contact the Auburn Historical Society & Museum at [auburn,museum@verizon.net](mailto:auburn,museum@verizon.net) for more information or to reserve a space for \$15.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4

Local author, Joel Bohy, who wrote "Bullet Strikes from the First Days of the American Revolution" will share his knowledge of the fight for America's freedom at 7 p.m. in the first Congregational Church, 307 Boston Road, Sutton. Courtesy of the Sutton Historical Society.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6

• The Knights of Columbus #1562 of St. Mary's Parish presents the 2025 Annual Car Show & Community Event from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. at Uxbridge High School, 300 Quaker Highway, Uxbridge. Registration of cars begins at 8:30 a.m.

The event promises a day filled with classic and custom cars, family-friendly activities, local vendors, music, food, raffles and more - all in support of local charitable initiatives such as Camp Sunshine, Our Lady of the Valley Scholarship and Abby's House. All makes and models of cars are welcome, whether classic or muscle cars, motorcycles trucks or military vehicles.

Trophies (popular vote) 1 p.m.; Dash plaques (first 200); Food trucks, door prizes, raffles, 50/50 drawing, DJ, local emergency vehicles, Kids Fun Zone, face painting, balloons, caricatures and more!

Admission is free, but donations are appreciated. Vehicle entry fees, \$10 or donation.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

The Grafton Land Trust is hosting a "Good Dog Run" at the Lions Club property on Brigham Hill Road, Grafton. It will be a fun run for dogs and owners. Keep an eye on social media (Facebook and Instagram) for more information. If you would like to receive an email about the event, contact [admin@grafftonlandtrust.org](mailto:admin@grafftonlandtrust.org)

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7

• Then Grafton Land Trust will hold its annual dinner meeting at 6 p.m. at the Highfields Golf Club in Grafton. This year's speaker will be Dr. Stephen Mrozowski, the founding director of the Andrew Fiske Memorial Center for Archeological Research at University of Massachusetts Boston.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11

• 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.



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- September 9 From 1-4 p.m. En Plein Air/Outdoors Watercolor Painting Class for all levels. Join instructor, Victoria Chapman on location at Ferjulian's Farm in Hudson, MA to paint the beautiful landscape. To learn more and

enroll, visit: baypath.augusoft.net , browse Fun & Play.

- September 10 From 5:30-6:30 p.m. for 10 weeks. Yoga for All with Marie Hills. To learn more and enroll, visit: baypath.augusoft.net and browse Mind & Body, subhead Health & Fitness.
- September 15 From 4-6 p.m. Autumn Floral Sunflower Design class with Dawn Bagocius. To learn more and enroll, visit: baypath.augusoft.net and browse Fun & Play, subhead Hobbies & Crafts.
- September 17 From 6-8 p.m.

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# Fattman Announces Cultural Council Grants

State Senator Ryan Fattman (R-Sutton) announced that his district will receive \$336,000 in grants from the Mass Cultural Council. The grants provide funding to the Cultural Councils for every town in the district as well as culturally focused programs for local organizations and schools.

“Funding for organizations in my district to pursue cultural programs is invaluable,” said Senator Fattman. “It’s incredibly important that we continue to preserve the history of the Worcester-Hampden District and the people I represent which is possible, in large part, because of the cultural councils in each town.”

The following communities in the Worcester and Hampden district received Cultural Council grants:

|             |          |
|-------------|----------|
| Blackstone  | \$20,600 |
| Brimfield   | \$5,900  |
| Charlton    | \$17,700 |
| Douglas     | \$10,900 |
| Dudley      | \$16,600 |
| Holland     | \$5,700  |
| Hopedale    | \$9,300  |
| Mendon      | \$8,800  |
| Millville   | \$6,100  |
| Monson      | \$26,700 |
| Northbridge | \$22,000 |
| Oxford      | \$18,000 |
| Southbridge | \$29,700 |
| Sturbridge  | \$68,200 |
| Sutton      | \$10,000 |
| Upton       | \$12,100 |
| Uxbridge    | \$17,800 |
| Wales       | \$5,700  |
| Webster     | \$24,200 |

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