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A Splash of Color, A Message of Hope: Honoring Sam Hughes and Raising Awareness for Mental Health

By JENNIFER RUSSO

Sam Hughes was a bright light to everyone who knew him - he brought humor to any room, was kind, creative, a supportive friend, and full of promise. He was a talented athlete who loved playing basket-



The Buckley/Hughes family aimed to spread awareness of mental health and turn a tragedy into something positive with the Sam Hughes Memorial Colorful Run, will establish a scholarship in Sam's memory.

HOPE

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Stall Brook Accessible Playground to Soon Open

By DAVID DUNBAR

Four years later, Hallie Glassman's "silly dream" of an accessible playground is becoming a reality at Bellingham's Stall Brook Elementary School.

It's called Our PlayAbility, and the program remakes the elementary school's playground so that it is accessible to all students.

"Currently, the playground is not accessible to all students," explains Glassman who recently stepped away from teaching at Stall Brook in order to spend more time with her 18-month-old daughter. "Students who use a wheelchair, stroller, or walker as their primary means of mobility are only able to access the black top area independently. To access the play structure, these students would need to be car-



ried to it or wheeled through uneven woodchips."

Last month, the old playground was removed, and a ground-breaking was held for the new one. A ribbon-cutting cere-

PLAYGROUND

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HOPE

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ball and baseball for Bellingham teams and for fun on his own time. As his next-door neighbor, I remember the sound of the ball being dribbled on the pavement for hours as he and his siblings played, even in the rain.

Behind those sparkling blue eyes and beneath that vibrant spirit he shared with others, though, was a silent struggle with mental health, one that the current system failed to fully recognize and support. Last year, at 19 years of age, Sam sadly took his own life. It left behind a community that was heartbroken and searching for answers, but also a resilient family that made it their mission to shine light on the importance of mental health awareness.

Thinking about ways to honor Sam’s memory and help others, the Buckley/Hughes family is working hard to establish an academic scholarship in Sam’s name.



Already in the planning stages for next year’s event, the Buckley/Hughes family hopes the scholarship will support a student who can make change in a broken mental health care system.

“When Sam was enrolled at Worcester State University and faced some mental health issues, the counseling center there was really great. Priority for the scholarship will be for a junior or senior from Bellingham who is planning to attend school there and pursue a career in the mental health space,” shared Sam’s stepfather John Buckley.

“What we learned through this entire experience is that the mental health system is broken. We are hoping to help a student who can make a change,” said Buckley.

The goal is to raise \$25,000 to establish the Sam G. Hughes Memorial Scholarship, and to date, they have raised \$23,535 toward that number. Funds have been raised through direct donations, an online store that sells clothing and other merchandise with a custom-designed semicolon logo, and registrations to the first annual Sam Hughes Me-

morial Colorful Run held in late June.

With over 150 official signups and over 135 participants joining them on race day, people arrived wearing white and became covered in color before and during the run. Sam loved color, often wearing bright clothing and shoes, so the family felt this was a wonderful way to honor his memory. The family has also encouraged painting rocks to remember Sam and has set up a rock garden at their Bellingham home.

“I am especially grateful that so many of Sam’s friends were there. Sam started school in Bellingham in third grade and formed lifelong friendships through school and sports - Bellingham Youth Baseball and Basketball, town and travel teams, and BHS Baseball and Basketball. Sam’s coaches, many of whom donated toward the scholarship, also ran or volun-



“I am especially grateful that so many of Sam’s friends were there,” said Nicole Buckley, Sam’s Mom.

teered on race day,” shared Nicole Buckley, Sam’s mother.

“Navigating the mental health system is incredibly difficult. A diagnosis is just the beginning. Accessing care and consistent support can be overwhelming, and we need to do better as a society. Events like this help bring visibility, build community, and raise support for families facing these challenges,” she says.

With a core planning committee that includes John and Nicole Buckley, Jack Hughes, Jack Buckley, Mel Fucillo, Molly Hughes, Juliana Buckley, Ben Hughes, Shannon and Rick Lind, and Sue and John Garten, they are already in the planning stages for next year’s color run, intending to try and double the sign-ups and have it be an official timed event.

The family wants to give special thanks to AAFCPAs as their generous title sponsor, BHS Ath-

letic Director Michael Connor, Facility Use Coordinator Judi Simpson, and many volunteers who helped with the race and donations of snacks and water (the leftovers of which were donated to the Loaves and Fishes Pantry).

“If you think your child may be struggling with a mental health issue, don’t wait. Don’t let anyone dismiss your concerns or tell you everything is fine. Trust your instincts – get another opinion and seek help,” shares Nicole.

Stay tuned for news about next year’s Colorful Run. If you would like to donate toward the Sam G. Hughes Memorial Scholarship, you can do so here: <https://tinyurl.com/Sam-GHughes>

If you are struggling with thoughts of hopelessness or suicide, please call 988 or text TALK to 741741.

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Chuck Tashjian

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Send Editorial to:

bellinghambulletineditor@gmail.com

Advertising Director

Jen Schofield

508-570-6544

jenschofield@localtownpages.com

Creative Design & Layout

Michelle McSherry

Kim Vasseur

Wendy Watkins

Office Address

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PLAYGROUND

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mony for the new playground is scheduled for students September 12th. .

“We will have a fully functional playground for the school when classes resume in the fall,” says Glassman. She says such fully-accessible playgrounds also can be found in neighboring Blackstone and Franklin.

The idea of making Stall Brook’s playground accessible to all children started in the fall of 2021, when Glassman noticed a young student in a wheelchair who “really liked to swing.” It took two adults to wheel the youngster to the swing set and get him on the swing – and then two adults to take him off and wheel him away.

Next in making the “silly dream” come true were three, annual fund-raising events. Altogether, more than \$300,000 has been raised to transform Stall Brook’s playground. Ashley

Toscano is the president of the school’s Parent Teacher Organization and says, “We have students who need this playground. Let’s get this done!”

Ashley’s husband, Manny, worked closely with Glassman to raise funds. Amazon contributed \$100,000. “Our PTO supports the Our PlayAbility program 100%. Every child deserves to have recess where they can learn through play.”

“We got three quotes on the project,” recalls Glassman. “One was for a base model, one for medium, and one was over the top. We took medium.” A Blackstone company, UltiPlay, won the bid and the job.

“We want to thank all the organizations and individuals that made this possible,” says Toscano. “I’m really proud of our town coming together for this important cause.”

More information is available online: www.OurPlayability.com and also on Facebook.

From the Town Clerk’s office...

Wishing you a safe and happy summer from the Town Clerk’s office! Just because we don’t have any elections scheduled until next year doesn’t mean we’re not busy. We continue to process dog licenses, both new and renewals. If you’ve received a citation for a late license, please come in to pay as soon as possible. New dogs may be licensed at any time, just bring proof of rabies and spay/neuter certificate to the office with a check for \$15 per spayed/neutered dog and \$20 intact.

We also continue to process/maintain vital records. If you need a birth, death, or marriage certificate, please call the office ahead so we can have it ready for you. For those planning to get married – congratulations! While we take walk-in’s as availability permits, appointments are suggested to fill out paperwork. Per state law, there’s a mandatory three-day wait between filling out paperwork and issuance of the license, and that license is good for 60 days. As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to reach out at (508) 657 – 2833 or townclerk@bellingshamma.org.

Please join me in welcoming David Wyatt as the Assistant Town Clerk! We now have a full staff – come by anytime to introduce yourself and say hello!

Thank you,
Amy Bartelloni
Town Clerk

Harvest Fest Sept. 20 in Bellingham

Harvest Fest is making a comeback in Bellingham.

The event, a family-focused activity, is scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 20, at Bellingham’s Town Common from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. A rain date, if needed, is Sept. 27. The town’s two Baptist Churches — First Baptist Church and Bible Baptist Church — are organizing the day’s activities.

Harvest Fest began in 2017 and had a three-year run until COVID-19 forced the two churches to curtail the program. It’s being revived after a five-year absence.

For the youth, there will be pony rides, an obstacle course, gymnastic and karate exhibitions, hopefully a magician and other exciting activities. A Christian concert is also scheduled.

Many vendors will be on hand to promote and sell their products. The churches are still seeking sponsors and vendors. If interested contact Pastor Baron Rodrigues at (508) 844-1843.

After expenses are paid (police detail, permits, entertainment costs, etc.), any funds remaining will go to area food pantries.

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Yankee Quilters Build Skill ... and Friendship

Donate Your Old Housewares, Books & Clothing/Textiles Aug. 11-Oct. 4

By JUDITH DORATO O'GARA

Batting. If you don't sew, you might not think much about it, but it's essential to making a quilt cozy and warm, and it can be costly for the volunteers who comprise Yankee Quilters, Inc., a 501(c)(3) organization of quilters who make quilts to comfort cancer patients, veterans and others who need them. Starting August 11th through October 4th, 2025, the guild is asking you to clean out your closets and cupboards and donate your gently used textiles, household goods and books, so they can fundraise for batting, backing fabric, and guest lecturers. Specifically, the group is collecting:

- Clothes (in bags): men's, women's, & children's clothes, coats, shoes, scarves, handbags, wallets, fashion accessories, belts, backpacks, etc.
- Household Textiles (in bags): bedding, comfort-

ers, blankets, sheets, towels, linen, tablecloths, curtains, pillows, etc.

- Small Household Goods (in small tightly packed boxes): kitchen items (such as pots/pans, dishes, silverware, glasses, serving pieces and hand-held appliances), home decorative items, knick-knacks, toys, games, and small electronics
- Books & Media (in separate boxes): paperback, hard cover - all genres - *no encyclopedias or textbooks

Yankee Quilters always welcomes new members, including beginners. The group meets on the second Tuesday of the month at Emma's Quilt Cupboard at 7 p.m. from September through June.

A quilting class at Emma's is where Paula Colleton, who has lived in Bellingham most of her life, first heard about the group

in 2008. She's been quilting since 1976, as a young Mom who took an evening class with Gladys Glockner at Bellingham High School. "I was hooked," says Colleton, who also belongs to Thimble Pleasures Quilt Guild, "I couldn't get into it fast enough. It was love at first stitch." Glad she joined the "nice group of people" at Yankee Quilters, Colleton says, "I had no idea that the guilds did anything besides sew. I thought it was strictly a social thing, and it is, but each guild does so much more than get together and sew. They all have their own specific volunteerism."

Fellow member Cindy Lynch explains Yankee Quilters' Comfort Quilts was started by Joan Hallett, of Franklin, around 2000. These quilts are currently provided to cancer patients at Dana Farber in Milford. Other quilts have gone to First Concern PRC in Marlborough, Quilts of Valor, and Wrap the World with Quilts, a group that began at the start of the Ukraine war and provided quilts to Ukrainian refugees in Poland.

"To us, it's just a show of car-



Shown are members of the Yankee Quilters, which draws from area towns and is always welcoming new members. From Aug. 11th -Oct. 4th, they will be holding a fundraiser, accepting donations of used wares and textiles. Photo by Jim Lynch.

ing ,but for them, they're very grateful," adds Colleton.

"I personally love the group," says Lynch, Yankee Quilters' treasurer, whose mother, a Holliston resident, is a long-term member. Lynch travels a good distance from Monson to remain a part of the guild. "In a lot of ways they work together, they love to share. If one person is struggling with how to do something, there's always somebody else that has done it prior and will share that information. In some ways, it's a very diverse group in the sense that there are people who like doing things very structured, using patterns, and there are other people that take scraps and make it into some of the most gorgeous work out

there," Lynch says.

Sandie Husby, of Franklin, is one of those who likes to quilt from scraps. She has been quilting since 1986. A member of Yankee Quilters and purveyor of her own sewn work (The Lone Quilter), the Idaho native says, "I really enjoy the group. I get a kick out of them. Some of those women have known each other for 50 years, and they have stories." She encourages beginners to experience how welcoming the group is. "Whatever your skill level is, whatever you can do, you come in ,and you can help. If you want to come and hear the speaker, great! If you want

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QUILTERS

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to come in and do the comfort quilts and iron, great!”

In addition to the second Tuesday of the month, some members also meet at Emma’s on Mondays, from 10:30 a.m.-2 p.m. to work on comfort quilts.

“That, right now, is our best option for people who are learning to sew, to help them,” says Cindy. On Tuesday afternoons, from 1:30-4 p.m., the group holds an open sewing circle at Christ the King Lutheran church in Holliston.

Members, says Cindy, whose husband finishes many of the comfort quilts with a long arm machine, “are there to have fun, to enjoy what they’re doing, to pass it on to new people, to share their experiences. We are a low budget guild, so we look to each other’s knowledge for each of us to build our craft.”

The Yankee Quilters do some other fundraising, putting some of their creations in a consignment shop, Mermaid and the Mariner in Monson, as well as holding a “Staycation” four times a year at Christ the King in Holliston, a weekend that includes dinner Friday night, lunch and dinner Saturday, and bagels on Sunday. The cost is \$100 for members and \$125 for no-members, with the next scheduled for October 24-27, 2025.

Right now, if you would like to support the Yankee Quilters with donations of household items between August 11th and October 4th, contact Cindy at (508) 560-5846 or email yankeequilters11@gmail.com to arrange for pickup, or simply drop items off at the Community Collection Day, September 6, 2025, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Prime Storage, 302 Hartford Ave., Bellingham.

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Municipal Spotlight

Superintendent Marano Is Upbeat About The 2025-26 School Year

By KEN HAMWEY,
BULLETIN STAFF WRITER

Bellingham’s schools are scheduled to open on Wednesday, Aug. 27, and Peter Marano, who’ll begin his 10th year as the town’s Superintendent of Schools, is optimistic about the year ahead.

“Even with a reduction in staff, I’m confident about the upcoming performance of our students for the 2025-26 school year,” Marano said. “Our administrative team and staff are laser-focused on what we need to accomplish.”

The 52-year-old Marano spent considerable time in several key roles before taking the school district’s reins. He began as a guidance counselor, was Middle School principal, then became Director of Guidance. Later, he was chosen High School principal before becoming Superintendent. Marano, who’s in his 25th year as an educator, earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Assumption College and has a PhD in educational administration.

As the new school year approaches, Marano provided The Bulletin with his thoughts about a variety of topics.

***THE 2025-26 BUDGET** — The budget for the new school year presented problems. “We faced significant financial challenges that required us to make difficult decisions to present a balanced budget,” Marano said. “Unfortunately, this included the reduction of 11 teaching positions. These decisions were not made lightly and were the result of extensive analysis and discussion within the administrative team and School Committee.” Marano said that administrative roles were restructured and streamlined “to ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness while not adding additional money to the budget. This restructuring resulted in a reduction and consolidation of administrative positions. The school department initially requested a \$3.8 million budget increase but was advised to trim that figure to \$1.6 million.

- **ENROLLMENT** — Last April, the enrollment for the five schools was 2,064, which was an increase of only 17 from 2024. Despite a plethora of new homes being built in Bellingham, Marano, who’s married and has two children, said: “We’re stable with our enrollment, which is hovering around 2,000.” The Superintendent also noted that a study last fall revealed that enrollment “will remain steady for the next five years.”
- **CURRICULUM** — “Our curriculum is in good shape,” Marano said. “We have high quality instructional materials, which have been approved by the Department of Education. They’re research-based and will provide students with a well-rounded education. The focus is to ensure that our staff is teaching with fi-

delity and providing students with vigorous grade-level content. In the years ahead, we will have a full math review in Grades 7-12.”

- **STAFFING** — A native of Franklin, Marano had to implement staff reductions but “was able to maintain the integrity of class sizes.” The average class size in the district is 18-22 students. “We have an outstanding staff that’s dedicated to and focused on school achievement,” he emphasized. “What’s remarkable about our teachers is that they’ll do whatever it takes for our children.”

- **TRANSPORTATION** — The cost for a student to ride on a school bus has remained at \$300 for five straight years. And, if parents meet the deadline, there is a \$100 discount. About



Bellingham School Superintendent Peter Marano has lots to say about the year ahead.

1,200 students are bused. “We’re pleased the cost has not increased and we’re also pleased with Vendetti Bus Company for providing outstanding service to the district,” Marano noted.

- **HEALTH/WELLNESS** — Each of the five schools has coverage with a registered nurse. An LPN (licensed practical nurse) also is available to fill in and provide support wherever needed. “Our nurses do a great job and during my time as Superintendent, this group is among the best I’ve been associated with,” Marano offered.

SUPERINTENDENT
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Business spotlight

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Not everything ends up in a landfill—not if Jay can help it. He first tries to either recycle or



donate items. Only after he tries to repurpose items do they end up at the transfer station.

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

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

And speaking of pricing, Jay is upfront about it. His website shows the truck sizes and prices, so you can save time knowing your costs before you call for

an appointment. There aren't any hidden costs or surprise fees with Affordable Junk Removal.

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

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

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

Contact Affordable Junk Removal and Dumpster Rental and let a local small business take care of everything for you. Call Jay Schadler at (774) 287-1133 or visit us online at AffordableJunkRemoval.com.

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Town of Bellingham Prepared to Assist During Extreme Heat

By DAVID DUNBAR

When the temperatures rise, it's uncomfortable for most people. But for the 2,000 older residents who live in Bellingham, it can be dangerous.

Summers are getting warmer and with it can come heat cramps, edema, exhaustion and heat stroke especially for those over 65 years of age.

"Seniors may be the most vulnerable," explains Fire Chief William Miller, but also at risk are children playing outdoor sports and adults who work outside in the heat. Other vulnerable populations include people with chronic medical conditions, pregnant individuals, the homeless, and people without access to air conditioning."

Globally, Swiss Re Group's 2025 SONAR Report showed extreme heat claimed 500,000 lives last year. More than hurricanes, tornadoes, severe rainstorms, blizzards or floods. One study published in the August 2024 Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) identified 311 deaths in the U.S. due to extreme heat in 2004; in 2023, the number of deaths had risen to 2,325.

"We need to be prepared," says Chief Miller. And during the heat, he suggests limiting exposure to the sun by staying indoors, drink more water than normal, turn on your home air conditioning (if you have it), take cool showers and baths.

"Consider visiting one of our



At the Bellingham Fire Department headquarters: Chief William Miller. "We want to be out there, here for town residents," says the Chief.

cooling stations... the Senior Center or the library" he suggests. "And watch out for your neighbors, especially the elderly. Do some door knocking," he adds with a smile.

Josie Dutil, Bellingham Senior Center executive director, says, "In the past, the Center has stayed open until 8 p.m. for anyone who may need to escape the heat. We open at 8:30 a.m., and our building is a good place to cool down." The library, during high heat, will be open from 9:30 a.m. until 8 p.m.

"Our mission," explains

Dylan Labonte, the Bellingham's Health Agent, "is to get the word out. We try to make citizens aware of the services that are available to them and the kind of weather that's coming."

Labonte gets weather forecasts from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and shares them on the town's website under the Health Department tab. The town also alerts residents through the use of Facebook, Instagram, other social media and a combination of text, phone, and email. Labonte adds, "Watch the weather



Bellingham Town Health Agent Dylan Labonte receives weather updates from the state every week, more often when needed. During extreme heat, he urges residents to call 911 if they're not feeling well.

on TV."

He has a message for kids. "You think you're invincible, but you're not. You need to hydrate and stay out of the sun until the heat emergency is over." And a message for sports coaches: "Let the players take more frequent water breaks. Try to play in the shade. And consider cancelling a game and re-schedule it when the weather cools down."

If you have a weather-related concern or question, you can contact Labonte at (508) 657-2860. You might also visit www.mass.gov/info-details/extreme-heat-resources for additional information.

"The old line about, 'if you don't like the weather in New England, just wait a minute' has some truth to it," says Chief Miller. He says it's almost like there's a weather bubble around Bellingham where the north part of town gets one kind of weather, and the south gets a different kind. Or a forecast storm misses the town completely.

Be on the alert this summer for really hot weather. July is usually the hottest month of the year, followed by August. According to The Weather Channel and Yale Climate Connections, "2025 is shaping up to be the second hottest year on earth."

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SUPERINTENDENT

continued from page 5

• **ATHLETICS** — Marano labeled the job Michael Connor has done as Bellingham High’s Athletic Director as “terrific.” The sports portion of the school budget is 1.5 percent or about \$540,000. “Our teams have experienced success and Michael saved \$30,000 last year by utilizing the two, small athletic buses his department purchased,” Marano said. “Fees to compete vary by sport, but families that are economically disadvantaged can qualify for

a reduction. He’s also done a nice job creating a robust internship program for students.”

• **EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITY** — “I would like to see more students participate in extra-curricular activities,” Marano said. “Since no cuts were implemented, we still provide many opportunities, like sports and clubs, for students to engage in and feel connected to the school community.”

• **2025 SENIOR CLASS** — Ninety-eight graduates or 68% of the class of 2025

will attend a four-year college or university. Twenty-four, or 17% will attend two-year colleges or trade schools; 16 (11%) will join the work force; and five (4%) will join the military.

• **CUSTODIAL STAFF** — Marano is very pleased with the work of the schools’ 20 custodians. “They’ve worked hard this summer to get the buildings ready for the new school year,” he said. “They keep the buildings well-maintained, healthy and safe.”

*UPDATE ON PRINCIPALS

- Laurie Crawford at Stall Brook Elementary. “A veteran teacher at Stall Brook, she has great perspective and is excited about her new role,” Marano said.

- Kerri Sankey at DiPietro Elementary. “Dr. Sankey is in her third year as principal,” Marano said. “She’s a tremendous leader who’s student-focused.”

- Emily Luurie at Keough Academy. “Dr. Luurie returns to Bellingham after being Stall Brook’s principal,” Marano said. “She’s an excellent leader with great experience in special education.”

- Josh Hanna at the Memorial School. “Josh was the interim principal but now is in his first year as principal,” Marano said. “Previously a principal at Franklin High, he’s got experience and a collab-

orative and thoughtful approach.”

- Megan Lafayette at the High School. “Now in her ninth year, she works diligently to develop great programs at BHS,” Marano noted. “She’s focused on work-based experiences.”

• **GOALS FOR 2025-26** — Marano lists four objectives for the new school year. “We want to increase student achievement,” he said. “We also want to increase performance on state testing. Another goal is to see more participation in extra-curricular activities. And, very importantly, I want to ensure that we meet the needs of all students.”

• **THE DISTRICT’S FUTURE** — Marano believes that a feasibility study of the district’s future should be done at some point. “The study should include the condition of the five schools,” he said, “because it would lessen any last-minute decisions.”



BHS OP GRAD
Class of 2024

On Friday, June 7th, the Bellingham High School Class of 2024 attended the Annual Operation Graduation All-Night Grad party at Urban Air Adventure Park. The goal of this event remains keeping our senior graduates safe while having an amazing time together for one last night after graduation. The Operation Graduation Committee is made up of a group of senior parents who volunteered their time over the past year to plan for this night. The planning for a safe night began over a year ago when a group of junior parents met in the High School library and ended Saturday, June 8th at 5am, sending our kids home after a night of creating lasting memories. The committee would like to express our sincere appreciation to the parents, families, Bellingham School Administration and local businesses that donated their time and resources to make this night a huge success. Thanks to all the generous donations from the community and local businesses, the committee was able to grant scholarships totaling \$6,000 to 15 deserving seniors as they embark on the next phase of their professional/educational journey.

WE WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND A VERY SPECIAL *Thank you* TO THE FOLLOWING SUPPORTERS THAT HELPED MAKE THE NIGHT POSSIBLE

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Your Money, Your Independence

One Big Beautiful Bill - A Planning Perspective



Glenn Brown, CFP

Depending upon your news sources and social media algorithms, the One Big Beautiful Bill (OBBB) is either the worst bill ever and people will die, or it will unleash a new era of prosperity for the US economy. The truth is that it will do neither of these things.

Like all things with Washington, OBBB has the good, the bad and the political virtue signaling (i.e. \$1,000 Trump Accounts for U.S. citizen newborns).

From a financial planning perspective, let's review the 5 areas of broadest impact.

1. Extension of 2017 Federal Tax Cuts. The current tax rate structure, including a top marginal tax rate of 37%, remains in place permanently. It was to expire this year, meaning if you're in the current 12%, 22%,

24% tax brackets, a 3% or 4% increase would have happened. While some disagree with this act, they'd be celebrating if Massachusetts went from 5% to 1% income tax.

Also permanent is the estate tax and gift tax exemption, which prior to 2017 was \$1 million. Today, it is \$13.99 million per individual, adjusts for inflation and is a flat 40% tax on excess over the exemption.

2. Expanded Standard Deduction and Child Tax Credit. Recall in 2017, the standard deduction was dramatically increased while many subjective write-offs were eliminated. This resulted in 90-93% of tax filers taking the standard deduction over the last 8 years, up from 68.7% tax filers in 2016.

3. New Senior Tax Deduction. Tax on Social Security benefits was not eliminated, however through 2028 there is an additional \$6,000 deduction per individual for those 65 and older. This equates to 88% of tax filers not paying a federal tax on their social security benefits.

4. State And Local Tax (SALT) Deduction Cap Raised. OBBB temporarily raises the SALT deduction cap to \$40,000 from \$10,000, with a 1% annual increase

through 2029. Good news for deductions on mortgage interest, property taxes and sales tax. However, it's reduced by 30% if modified adjusted gross income (AGI) exceeds certain thresholds, such as \$500,000 for joint filers.

The OBBB ensures continued federal deductibility of PTET for pass-through entities, like S corporations and partnerships. These will pay state income taxes at the entity level, effectively bypassing the individual SALT deduction cap.

5. Permanent Small Business Tax Relief. This includes the 20% Qualified Business Income (QBI) deduction for pass-through businesses and 100% bonus depreciation for new capital investments. The maximum Section 179 expensing amount is increased, and immediate Research & Development (R&D) expensing is restored with a catch-up deduction option.

Other notables that caught my attention:

- Vocational and trade schools now qualify for 529 Plan expenses.
- Bronze and catastrophic insurance plans qualify as HSA expenses.
- No tax on overtime (\$12,500) and qualified tips (\$25,000).
- Paid leave tax credits are permanent and expanded.
- Increased childcare expense credits.

Finally, Congress got involved with student loan reform rather than defer to executive orders.

To curb the blank-check effect, OBBB has eliminated "Cost of Attendance" loan limits for graduate students and parents of undergraduate students.

Like the pre-existing caps on how much undergraduates can borrow (\$12,500 annually, \$57,500 aggregate), moving forward universities must deal with parents' ability to borrow capped

at \$20,000 annually and \$65,000 in aggregate per undergraduate. Graduate student caps are now \$50,000 annually and \$200,000 in aggregate.

It's a start to address the cause and not just the effect.

More to consider beyond this limited space, talk with your Certified Financial Planner to learn how you and your family can benefit.

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

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

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The best time to water your yard is in the early morning or late evening when it's cool outside. Watering when it's hot and sunny is wasteful because most of the water evaporates before the plants have time to drink it.

Also, when you're helping your parents water the yard, make sure not to water the plants too much—remember that a little sprinkle goes a long way!

Check Back Each Month for more Helpful Ways to Save!

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Celebrating Creativity and Connection Through Art

By JENNIFER RUSSO

I was recently looking for something to do on a Monday night and happened to come across an event at the Bellingham Library that sparked my interest. It was called “Pass the Painting,” an opportunity for local adults to meet and come together to collaborate in a uniquely artistic way.

The concept is simple, but powerful. Each artist begins with a blank canvas and a set of watercolor paints. They can paint anything they want on their canvas for exactly ten minutes, then must pass their work on to the person to their left. That art-



Cecily Christensen, Reference Librarian, ran the Pass the Painting event.



Artists were eager to add their own unique touches to each painting.

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ist then adds their own touches based on what inspired them. The canvas travels full circle until

everyone has their original piece of art that has been transformed by everyone who contributed.

ART
continued on page 11



The end result was a collection of fun, colorful and one-of-a-kind works, not to mention the social connection!

ABMI-TV Concerts on the Grass 2025



MENDON TOWN BEACH

Wednesday Aug 6. Free Pony Rides 6:30pm – 7:30pm.,
6:30pm – 8:30pm *Vinyl Echo* (power trio)

Wednesday Aug 13. Free Pony Rides 6:30pm – 7:30pm.,
6:30pm – 8:30pm *Alexander's Jazztime Band* (jazz standards)



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ART

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"Events like this help the community, because they are educational and creative, as well as being a social outlet," says Cecily Christensen, Reference Librarian and the event's organizer.

"While this is a free event, donations are accepted. The donations go to the Friends of the Library, and funds are used to purchase materials for events like this and other types of programs, like special speakers covering many topics, author presentations, and a myriad of children's programs, including our Summer Reading Program."

What began as an individual vision quickly evolved into a collaborative masterpiece for everyone. I started with a sunset over some purple and blue waves, and by the time the painting returned to me, it had a shore with a beach umbrella, some shells, a boat, and a kite. One painting began with some grass and developed into a scene with a tree and a tree swing, flowers, and a beautiful sky. Another was more abstract, starting with a flame and ending with other elements such as a water drop, a feather, a geometric design, and some cool octopus' legs.

Interestingly enough, more than half the paintings did show a summer scene. Cecily shares that when they did the event back in the fall, there was a lot of colorful foliage. It goes to show we are inspired by our surroundings every day.

Like in life, we may imagine something a certain way, but others add their perspectives. Shared experiences are almost always richer and more beautiful, and whether seasoned painters or first-time dabblers, attendees walked away with more than just a finished piece – they left with inspiration and connection with new people in the community.

"People should join the next event, once it is scheduled, because they are a great time! They're free-of-charge and a wonderful way to meet new people in the community while doing a fun activity," says Cecily. "This summer, we also have Summer Reading Bingo for adults, and the Friends of the Library are funding a grand prize. The winner will be drawn at the end of the summer."

Look for more upcoming events at the Bellingham Library here: <https://www.bellinghamma.org/792/Library-Event-Calendar>

Society of St. Vincent de Paul to Sponsor 15th Annual "Friends of the Poor Walk"

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, St. Blaise Bellingham Conference is participating for the fifteenth year in the nationally sponsored "Friends of the Poor Walk." The Walk will take place on Saturday, September 27th, 2025, rain or shine. The walk registration begins at St. Blaise Church, 1158 South Main Street, Bellingham at 8 a.m. Each

walker will register and pick up their T shirt, snack and beverage. The walk begins at 9 a.m. going down to the common around the common several times and back to the church. You may choose to do the walk virtually completing a 1.5 mile walk on your own anytime during the month of September.

How to Have a Sting-Free Summer



Jim Maxxuchelli, owner, WPC Pest and Termite Control

From backyard barbecues to sunny beach days, families across the country are enjoying the warm weather. To make sure Americans can safely enjoy their summer, WPC Pest and Termite Control and the National Pest Management Association (NPMA) are sharing how to avoid stinging insects.

"Every year, more than 500,000 people visit the emergency room to be treated for insect stings," said Cindy Mannes, senior vice president of public affairs for NPMA. "Stinging insects can become aggressive and dangerous if provoked, which makes working with a licensed pest control professional a must for homeowners."

Jim Mazzuchelli, owner of WPC Pest and Termite Control, is sharing these tips on how to avoid painful stings this summer:

Wasps



Wasps, including yellowjackets and the misnamed bald-faced hornet, are commonly encountered during late summer, when colonies are largest. Avoid attracting these insects and keep them out of your home by removing garbage frequently, keeping trashcans covered and ensuring all doors and windows are properly screened. Sweet-smelling perfumes should also be avoided, as the scent can attract yellowjackets.

Hornets



European hornets can be deterred from your home by changing exterior lights to yellow bulbs, storing garbage in sealed receptacles and removing fallen fruit from trees. If a stray hornet is giving you unwanted attention, avoid swatting at the insect. Instead, blow gently from a safe distance to shoo it away.

Africanized Bees



Africanized "killer" bees can become hostile if threatened and have been known to chase people for more than a quarter of a mile. Because they look similar to European honeybees, only a licensed pest control professional can identify and remove a nest. If you live within 100 miles of an area where Africanized bees are common, do not approach any nest.

DIY removal of a stinging insect nest is never recommended, as the process requires specialized training and equipment. Call your local professionals at WPC Pest and Termite Control at (508) 435-2211.

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St. Blaise Vendor Fair Set for September 13

BVT Students Earn 135 Medals at SkillsUSA Competitions in 2025

The Annual Vendor Fair is planned for Saturday, September 13, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the grounds of St. Blaise Parish, 1158 South Main Street, Bellingham, Mass. Admission is free and open to the public.

CALLING ALL VENDORS! Vendor spaces are 20x20' and available for \$30 per space and tables are \$5 each. Located right on Route 126, the site offers major roadside visibility. To rent a space or get additional information, you can contact Jay Castonguay at jaystjohn2006@yahoo.com. August 25 is the deadline to reserve your space. We already have 10 vendors signed up, so don't miss out on the spaces still available! Maximum capacity is 36.

As always, Grandma's Attic will feature old and new treasures for just the right bargain hunter.

The Brotherhood of St. Joseph the Worker will be offering hamburgers, hotdogs and other delicious food items for sale.

The Ladies of St. Anne will have some amazing fruit cups, yogurt parfaits and desserts for sale to either eat on the grounds or to take home and share with family and friends. Tables to sit and enjoy your lunch will be set up in the food area.

Hope to see you there to get a jump on shopping...remember Christmas will be just about 3 months away!

UPTON – Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT) students proved their vocational-technical ability at the annual SkillsUSA National Leadership & Skills Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, June 23-27. The event is the world's largest showcase of career and technical education students.

The highlight of the conference is the SkillsUSA Championships, where thousands of outstanding career and technical education students – all state contest winners from across the nation – compete in hundreds of hands-on skill and leadership competitions. Students work against the clock and each other, proving their expertise in occupations such as electronics, computer-aided drafting, precision machining, medical assisting, and

culinary arts.

In the third and final stage of the SkillsUSA competition series, BVT students competed with impressive results. Once again, the student competitors demonstrated their career-technical expertise and proudly claimed four gold and three bronze medals. The contestants who medaled or those in the top five who met a threshold contest score for their event as an indicator of proficiency were also awarded skill point certificates.

“Our students welcome the opportunity to compete at the

SkillsUSA District, State, and National Championships against themselves and other highly skilled vocational-technical students,” said Superintendent-Director Mr. Anthony E. Steele II. “In 2025, our students proved their technical skills are among the best in the country by earning 135 medals at all three levels.”

To see the list of BVT students who placed in the top 10 at the 2025 SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference Championships, visit www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/skillsusa.

Bellingham Lions Second Annual Barktober Fest

The Bellingham Lions Second Annual Barktober Fest will be held in October 2025. Start thinking of creative costumes to dress your dog in for our Costume Contest. We are also looking for pet-related businesses to have a table at our event as well as raffle items. Follow our Facebook page for details on the date, time and place. If you would like to participate or have any questions, please message us through our Facebook page or contact Robin Ewing at romitlog@hotmail.com.

The 2025 Bellingham Lions Golf Tournament Was a Success!

The Bellingham Lions would like to thank all who golfed, sponsored, donated and volunteer to make this year's Golf Tournament held at Blissful Meadows on Monday June 16 a great success. All monies made go to two \$1,500 scholarships to graduating students who reside in Bellingham as well as to those in need within our community, state and country.

Our sponsors are a major part of why we are able to hold this tournament year after year. A big thank you to A Plus Tire, Alexander Auto, Arigna, Azza Law, BBA, Bellingham Business Association, Bill O'Connell, Blackhawk Brands, CBJ Environmental, Coldwell Banker, Crank

It Over, CTE, Dairy Queen, David Wolf DDS, Dean Bank, Diamond Overhead Door, Douglas Snook Attorney, Dunkin, Future Bearings, Inc., G&L Electric, Henry's Auto, iMass Mobile Cell & Tablet Repair, Jennifer Altamonte, Jolicoeur, Kimball sand Company, Lake Street Auto, Liz Tavern, Middlesex Bank, New England Chapel, Paraco Gas, Patriot Auto, PJs Bar & Grill, Poli Group, R. Brian Paving, Spot Light and Thundermist.


Those golfing in our tournament are always impressed with the raffle items we offer, which are donated by local businesses and residents. For that we want to thank Arigna, Bellingham Italian Pizza, Bellingham Palace, Black-

hawk Brands, CBD Relief, Chili's Coachmen's Lodge, Country Market Place, Craft Roots Brewery, Ernie's Liquors, Grumpy's Happy Tails Market, Hockomock YMCA, Liquor World, Lowell's Restaurant, Marshall's Jewelers, NCK Bellingham, Ninety Nine Restaurant, O'Reilly's Auto, Piete Jewelers, Primo Pizza, Rubber Chicken, Shelley Bakehouse, The Wellness Path and Unos.


Mark your calendar for next year's golf tournament to be held on Monday June 15, 2026, at Blissful Meadows. If you have any questions, please message us through our Facebook page or email Elena Rosemere at erosemere@mindspring.com.

BELLINGHAM PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT NOTICE OF DESTRUCTION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION RECORDS

In compliance with the Student Records Regulation, Chapter 71 and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Regulations, 603 CMR23:06, notification of the destruction of temporary school records is given to all students who received special services and who transferred, terminated, withdrew, were released from these services, or graduated from the Bellingham Public School District during the 2017-18 school year.



Contact the Student Services Office at 508-883-1706, to make an appointment to obtain or examine the original copies of your special education student file prior to August 9, 2025. *All unclaimed student records meeting the above criteria will be destroyed after the deadline.*



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WHY YOU NEED A WILL
Wills can distribute your property, name an executor, name guardians for children, forgive debts and more. Having a will also means that you, rather than your state's laws, decide who gets your property when you die.

WHY YOU NEED A HEALTH CARE PROXY
A health care proxy is a document that names someone you trust as your proxy, or agent, to express your wishes and make health care decisions for you if you are unable to speak for yourself.

WHY YOU NEED A DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY
A Durable Power of Attorney provides extensive power to the individual who is assigned that role. Absent an appointed Agent in a Durable Power of Attorney, it would be necessary for a family member or loved one to petition the court to become the guardian over the incapacitated person.



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BBA Plans Upcoming Events

Having just come off the heels of Bellingham’s Pride Fest at the end of June, the Bellingham Business Association (BBA) is gearing up for a busy fall. On September 15th, the organization will hold its 2025 Scholarship Golf Tournament at Blissful Meadows Golf Club in Uxbridge, and on October, 25th, members will once again participate in the Halloween Trunk or Treat. Then, on November 5th, the group will once again present its Taste of Bellingham.

For more information about these and other BBA initiatives, visit www.bellinghambusinessassociation.org or email contact@BellinghamBusinessAssociation.org.

Destination: Island of Misfit Toys

All are welcome to the Island on December 6, 2025! It’s easy to get there...just walk into St. Blaise parish hall and be transported. Doors open at 9 a.m. Rudolph has already told us he will be there!

You don’t have to pack a thing, because there will be fun and games for kids and adults, food and drink, and shops to help you find the perfect gift for loved ones or for you!

Donations of items for the main raffle table, such as air fryer, Instapot, sports game tickets, gift cards, will be gratefully accepted! Contact Sue Garten, suegarten25@gmail.com or the St. Blaise parish office, (508) 966-1258.

Bellingham Public Library News & Events for August

For updates about library programs and services, please see the library website, www.bellingham-library.org.

Additional details about library programs are available on the library calendar at <https://bit.ly/4eJRLSh>

Closed Saturday, August 30th for the Labor Day Weekend

Summer Programs for Children including Summer Reading Info!

Summer Reading 2025 - Level Up at Your Library

Level Up at Your Library this summer with our reading program based around games, play, puzzles, and skill-building! Track how much you read either by the number of minutes or number of books, and win prizes as you make your way through the game board-styled reading tracker! Summer Reading runs until August 16th.

Special Programs

The programs listed below with an * are supported by the Rockland Trust Charitable Foundation, Friends of the Bellingham Library, and a grant from the Bellingham Cultural Council, a local agency, which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

Mr. Vinny the Bubble Guy at the Bellingham Town Common* – Thursday, August 7th at 6 p.m.

Gear up for School* – Friday, August 15th

We’re wrapping up summer reading and gearing up for another school year! Bring your tracking sheets to redeem any remaining prizes and grab some supplies you may need for school.

Friends of the Library Book Sale, week of August 18th. Check library calendar for details!

Weekly Programs

Summer Story Time with Junior Librarians – Wednesdays at 10:15 a.m. through August 13th. Summer story and craft with our Junior Librarians (summer volunteers in grades 3-6). For ages 2-5 (siblings welcome) - No registration needed.

Green Thumb Club at the Bellingham Town Common – Wednesdays at 1 p.m. through August 13th . A weekly program where families can come plant different types of seeds during each session and watch them grow throughout the summer! Please register.

Krafty Kids – Thursdays at 1 p.m. through August 14th

A weekly craft program for families! Please register for each week that you would like to attend.

Fri-Yay Open Play – Fridays, August 1st and 8th. In the Community Room from 10:15-11!

Ongoing Children’s Programs

The Baby Bunch – Mondays through August 11th at 9 a.m. For infants 0-18 months and their caregivers.

Ring a Ding – Mondays & Thursdays through August 14th at 10:15 a.m. For ages 0-5. Songs, dancing, instruments, beach balls, a parachute, and a story = a lot of noisy fun!

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

Sensory Story Time – Tuesdays through August 12th at 10:15 a.m. For children ages 2-5 of all abilities (younger siblings always welcome). Please register for each session.

Lego Builders – Mondays through August 11th at 4:30 p.m. For Grades K to 3 – Drop in.

Adult/Child Book Clubs –For kids in grades 2-4, 5-7 or 8-11 and an adult in their life who loves to read. Meets monthly. If you are interested in joining, those in grades 2-4 should contact Melissa Denham, mdenham@cwmares.org, grades 5-7 should contact Amanda Macclure, amaclure@cwmares.org, and grades 8-11 should contact Diane Nelson, dnelson@cwmares.org. Check the library calendar for details.

LIBRARY
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LIBRARY

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After School Programs for Fall of 2025

We will be scheduling registration for the ASK Program in late August. Check the library calendar for registration dates and details about the Library After School Programs!

Adult Programs

Summer Reading for Adults – Bellingham Library Bingo!

Adults (ages 18+) – Pick up a Bingo Card at the Library and read books over the summer that meet the bingo card description and be entered to win prizes! Program ends on August 23rd!

Book Discussion Group – Generally meets the 1st Monday of the month at 6:30 pm. Attend in person or on Zoom. Contact Cecily Christensen, cchriste@cw-mars.org, for more information.

August 4: **The Collected Regrets of Clover** by Mikki Brammer

September (date to be announced): **Rough Sleepers** by Tracy Kidder

A Novel Idea: A New Book Club for Adults – Tuesday, August 5th from 6:30-8 pm

A Novel Idea is a new book club designed for adults who love to read. Read a book every month and discuss it with the group while enjoying light refreshments. This month, we are discussing **One Summer in Savannah**, by Terah Shelton Harris. If interested, please contact Diane Nelson at dnelson@cw-mars.org

English Conversation Groups

Practice speaking English with other adult English language learners in a relaxed, comfortable place, and meet new friends as we learn by talking together. Conversations will

be facilitated by a library staff member or volunteer. Drop in classes offered weekly on the following dates/times.

Tuesday, August 5th at 4 p.m.
Thursday, August 21st at 5 p.m.

Yoga for the Seasons: Summer Series

Tuesdays at 8:30 a.m., August 12th and 26th. Check the library calendar to register.

Friends of the Library Monthly Meeting – Tuesday, August 12th at 7 p.m.. To attend email library@bellingsham-library.org for the Zoom link!

Needlecraft Night – Wednesdays from 6-8 p.m. Come and join us on Wednesdays. All skill levels are welcome, including beginners. Please bring your own materials.

Library Board of Trustees Meeting – Thursday, August 14th at 7 p.m. in the Conference Room at the library.

Writing Group for Adults – Tuesday, August 19th at 6:30 p.m. Hybrid meeting. Join us at the library or on Zoom! Writers, readers, listeners – come join us! Local area writers Amy Bartelloni and Marjorie Turner Hollman welcome local writers to share what they are working on. Works of fiction or non-fiction are welcome. Reading limit is 9 minutes per reader, with a brief opportunity for positive, personal comments only. To participate contact Marjorie Turner Hollman at marjorie@marjorieturner.com.

Bellingham Genealogy Club – Monday, August 25th from 6-7:30 pm.

Bring your laptop or use one of our Chromebooks on the fourth Monday of the month to work on your family history! For the summer this program will be run by new library staff member and Framingham State University graduate and history

major, Molly Garten. This club is a chance to learn and be social with other genealogy enthusiasts. Use the free resources provided by the Bellingham Public Library and get help tracing your tricky ancestors from the other members. Registration is preferred but not necessary!

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

Tuesday, August 5th at 2 pm – Birds with Smithsonian Biologist Jay Falk

Wednesday, August 20th at 7 pm – Online Talk with Bestselling Author Casey McQuiston

Thursday, August 28th at 2 pm – Online Talk with Organizational Psychologist Dr. Tasha Eurich

Franklin LGBTQ Alliance August Events

Rock Painting and Party Games, Thursday August 7th from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Franklin TV and Radio 23 Hutchinson St., Franklin

Join us as we paint some rocks and play some more games! If the weather is nice, it will be outside on the yard. If not, it'll be inside as per usual.

Mini Golf, Saturday August 16th from 5-7 p.m. at Putts and More 750 Concord St., Holliston
Join us as we go mini golf-

ing! This is an outdoor mini golf course. Admission is \$12 per person. There is also a snack bar including hot dogs, cheese pizza, chips, various drinks, and ice creams.

Queer Book Club, Wednesday August 20th from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Franklin TV and Radio 23 Hutchinson St., Franklin

Join us as we discuss *Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution* by Susan Stryker. It is about "the increasing awareness

of trans people and trans issues; the rise and fall of many different

organizations and publications over the past century; the build-

ing of and challenges to medical resources and healthcare access."



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Red Cross:

Make an Immediate Difference by Giving Blood or Platelets Now

Boston,MA — The American Red Cross urges all donors to give blood or platelets now to keep the blood supply strong this summer. Type O blood products are most needed on hospital shelves – especially in the face of summer challenges that can quickly cause blood and platelet reserves to drop.

In addition to summer fun and holidays, severe summer weather can have a sudden impact on the ability to collect blood and platelets. Scheduling and keeping donation appointments are crucial this month to ensure blood products are constantly available in the weeks to come for all patients, including those in trauma situations that may require several lifesaving transfusions.

All blood types are needed, and donors who don't know their blood type can learn it after donation. Book a time to give blood or platelets by visiting RedCrossBlood.org, calling 1-800-RED CROSS or by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App.

Upcoming blood donation opportunities nearby

- Thursday, August 7, 2025, Franklin Elks, 1-6 p.m.
1077 Pond Street, Franklin
- Saturday, August 16, 2025, St. Mary's School, 9 a.m.- 2 p.m.
1 Pleasant St., Franklin
- Thursday, August 21, 2025, Franklin Elks, 1-6 p.m.
1077 Pond Street, Franklin
- Thursday, September 4, 2025, Franklin Elks, 1-6 p.m.
1077 Pond Street, Franklin

How to donate blood

Simply download the American Red Cross Blood Donor App, visit RedCrossBlood.org, call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or enable the Blood Donor Skill on any Alexa Echo device to make an appointment or for more information. All blood types are needed to ensure a reliable supply for patients. A blood donor card or driver's license or two other forms of identification are

required at check-in. Individuals who are 17 years of age in most states (16 with parental consent where allowed by state law), weigh at least 110 pounds and are in generally good health may be eligible to donate blood. High school students and other donors 18 years of age and younger also must meet certain height and weight requirements.

Blood and platelet donors can save time at their next donation by using RapidPass® to complete their pre-donation reading and health history questionnaire online, on the day of their donation, before arriving at the blood drive. To get started, follow the instructions at RedCrossBlood.org/RapidPass or use the Blood Donor App.

For more information about the American Red Cross, please visit redcross.org or CruzRojaAmericana.org, or follow us on social media.

Bellingham Senior Center Highlighted Events August 2025

- The Bellingham Senior Center is located at 40 Blackstone St., Bellingham. Reach them at (508) 966-0398 or online at www.bellinghamma.org.
- Summer Walking-Upper Charles Holliston Rail Trail:** Thursday, August 14, at 8:30 a.m. Meet at the Cross St. parking lot in Holliston. We will be stopping for breakfast at a café about halfway through the walk. The walk is free and usually attracts 10 or so folks who want some fresh air and exercise. Call Lisa Loo at (508) 966-0398.
- 50+ Job Seekers:** Every month, Career Coach George Armstrong is at the Center and ready to help you find a great new job.
- Lobstah Rolls:** State Rep. Mike Soter will once again give back to the community, specifically seniors. He'll be serving lobster rolls and chicken sandwiches Thursday, August 21, at 5 p.m. Call ahead to reserve your spot: (508) 966-0398.
- VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE –** We are seeking volunteers to assist in the kitchen and dining room. If you're interested in helping as well as making new friends, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Assistant Director Terri Graham at (508) 657-2710.
- SHINE SUMMER SCHEDULE --** For August, SHINE councilors will be in the office every other Wednesday from 9 a.m. - Noon. We can accommodate in-person appointments or telephone calls during that time.
- Spiritual Book Club:** The Club meets via Zoom on Mondays at 9 a.m.
- Discussion will be about *Start Where You Are - A Guide to Compassionate Living* by Pema Chodron. Please call host Josie Dutil at (508) 657-2705 to join or for more information.
- Coffee & Conversation:** Join the clever, smart, sociable folks who turn out for C&C Tuesdays at 9:30 a.m.!
- The Knitters & Quilters Group** meets each Monday at 9 a.m.
- BESG Birthday Party:** Thursday, the 28th. It should be a great dinner. Mickey G is preparing a complete turkey dinner.
- BESG Annual Yard Sale:** approaches. Saturday, September 13, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Senior Center. Donations being accepted.





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SAFE to Commemorates Overdose Awareness Day with Community Vigil in Franklin



Family members remember lost loved ones at last year's vigil.
Photo used courtesy of the SAFE Coalition.

WHAT: Public vigil
DATE: Sunday, August 31st
TIME: 5-6 p.m.
PLACE: Franklin Town Common

Franklin, Mass.—International Overdose Awareness Day (www.overdoseday.com) will be marked this year in Franklin with a community vigil from 5–6 p.m. on August 31 at Franklin Town Common. Additionally, SAFE will work with community members to plant memorial flag displays in Franklin, Wrentham, Norfolk, and Medway. This annual event is intended to end overdose, remember those who have died, and acknowledge the grief of those left behind.

The vigil is hosted by SAFE Coalition (www.safecoalitionma.org) a local nonprofit committed to inclusive and judgement-free support for substance use prevention, harm reduction, treatment, recovery, and family support.

Franklin's IOAD vigil is one of several events SAFE is hosting across southeastern Massachusetts. "Each year, we have the privilege to come together as a community and remember those we've lost to the disease of addiction," said Jen Levine, CEO and co-founder of SAFE. "It's important to place the flags and hold these vigils because they create a space to meet, talk, and be with others who have felt similar losses."

The threat of overdose is both serious and urgent. Massachusetts experienced 1,763 fatal overdoses in 2024, and more than 80,391 people died from overdose nationwide. Each loss sends ripples of grief through fami-



lies, schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods. This year, thousands of communities worldwide will participate in IOAD, a time to honor those who have died or suffered due to overdose. Established in 2001, IOAD seeks to reduce the stigma of drug-related deaths, remember those who died of overdose, and create change that reduces the harms associated with drug use.

The theme of IOAD 2025 is "One Big Family, Driven by Hope." It reflects the idea that while overdose fractures families and communities, it also reveals how deeply connected we are—and how powerful we can be when we show up for one another. This year, we honor those we've lost by standing together in hope, compassion, and action. Participate in the global day of acknowledgment using the hashtags #OneBigFamily #DrivenByHope #IOAD2025 #EndOverdose.

With support groups, educational courses, events, training, support services and more, SAFE provides a whole-person, whole-family, whole-community approach to addiction, prevention, and recovery.

SAFE is seeking volunteers to help plant and remove memorial flags for IOAD. Visit <https://www.safecoalitionma.org/ioad> to sign up and learn more.

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The b.LUXE *beauty beat*

Struggling with Hair Loss? Here's the Confidence Hack You Might Not Know About

BY GINA WOELFEL

Believe it or not, your Flexible Spending Account (FSA) or Health Savings Account (HSA) could be the hidden hero in your hair loss journey.

For people dealing with hair loss, the physical and emotional challenges are only part of the story. There's also the cost! What most don't know is that, in many cases, you can use your pre-tax healthcare dollars to help cover the expense. A wig can be considered a qualified medical expense and eligible for reimbursement with pre-tax funds from an HSA or FSA under specific conditions. And if you're working with your insurance, b.LUXE is here to help make it as easy (and stress-free) as possible.

FSA & HSA: Beauty + Health in One Swipe

Think FSA and HSA funds are just for prescriptions and copays? Think again. If you're struggling with hair loss caused by medication or a medical condition—such as alopecia, hormonal imbalance, stress, or treatments like chemotherapy or radiation—

you may be able to use your HSA or FSA funds to help cover the cost of a wig.

Insurance Reimbursement

Depending on your individual insurance plan and circumstances, you may also be eligible for full or partial reimbursement from your health insurance provider. Coverage varies, but many of our clients have successfully used their benefits to help offset the cost of their wig or topper. At b.LUXE, we are uniquely qualified to assist you through the insurance reimbursement process and can provide the necessary documentation and guidance to help you maximize your benefits.

Yes, We'll Help with the Paperwork

We know insurance can be confusing and overwhelming—but that's where your friends at b.LUXE come in. We're here to guide you through the process and help you gather the right documentation to submit your claim with confidence. Our goal is to make everything as simple and stress-free as possible.

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It's important to note that every insurance policy is different, and b.LUXE cannot guarantee coverage. Typically, to qualify, you'll need a doctor's prescription or a Letter of Medical Necessity stating that the wig is medically required—not just for cosmetic reasons. Be sure to keep all related documentation and receipts, including those for wig maintenance, cleaning, or repairs. We always recommend checking with your provider before your appointment to understand what your plan may cover.

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At b.LUXE in Medway, Massachusetts, we're redefining what it means to support clients going through appearance-related health changes. This isn't a one-size-fits-all beauty counter—it's a private, welcoming, and judgment-free studio designed for personalized service, real conversations, and expert care.

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— Heather Cohen

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We've all heard the phrase “you can't put a price on feeling confident,” but we'd like to gently challenge that: you can and should invest in your well-being.

If you're facing a recent diagnosis, going through medical treatment, or simply trying to reconnect with your sense of self, you're not alone. At b.LUXE, we understand how personal hair loss can be—and **we're here to support you every step of the way.** When you work with b.LUXE, you're getting a partner in your journey back to feeling great about the way you look.

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Exsultet! has openings for Soprano 1 and 2 singers for the 2025-2026 season. Auditions will take place on Monday, August 25th at 7 p.m. at First Congregational Church, 725 Washington Street, Holliston, Mass.

• Exsultet! rehearsals for the 2025-2026 Season will be on Monday nights from 7-9 p.m. in preparation for

our two concert weekends. We typically perform our Holiday Concert in early December and our Spring Concert in April/May.

- To audition, download the audition piece, *Seal Lullaby*, from our website, and prepare to rehearse and sing it with the group. At the end of rehearsal, you will be asked to sing your part in a trio or quartet. Come prepared to sing, work hard, and have fun!
- Please contact Carrie Klimeczko at carrie7975@gmail.com for more information and to schedule a specific audition time.
- Visit www.exsultet.us to learn more about the audition process.

Thanks to Yanks Supports Clear Path for Veterans

Pictured L-R is William Johnston of Clear Path for Veterans New England (www.clearpathne.org), a nonprofit that offers programs and services that empowers veterans, and Michael Shain of Thanks To Yanks, a local charity that serves those who serve our nation. Due to the generosity of others, Thanks To Yanks was able to donate Girl Scout cookies to Clear Path. These cookies will be given to local veterans. For more information on Thanks To Yanks, please like them on Facebook.



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SAFE Offering Programs for Teens through August 13

Franklin: Wednesdays the SAFE Office, 31 Hayward St., 2C, Franklin

Drop-in Cafe: Wednesdays 2–4 p.m.
A judgement free, safe space for teens to hang out this the summer and build community. Snacks, beverages provided.
Teen Mentorship: Wednesdays 2–4 p.m.
Mentorship helps teens develop a deeper understanding

of themselves, expand their wellness toolbox, learn how to foster responsible decision making, and build a supportive network of peers. This program integrates proven strategies to help participants build resilience, self-confidence, and adaptability. Registration Required
(https://www.safecoalitionma.org/summer-teen?blm_aid=46786561)

- Resources include:**
- Guest speakers, workshops, guided discussions, and activities in a safe and fun space
 - Skills for managing stress, uncomfortable feelings, and navigating peer pressure
 - Tools for building and maintaining healthy relationships and friendships



- Strategies for handling home and family challenges
- Support with managing schoolwork and adapting to new environments
- Development of personal responsibility and self-advocacy skills
- Supportive peer network and community connections

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Gilly's House to Host Free Summerfest Celebration

Gilly's House invites the public to its annual FREE Summerfest Family Fun Sober Event, taking place on Sunday, August 17 from 12 to 4 p.m. at the Wrentham Developmental Center Fairgrounds, located at 131 Emerald Street, Wrentham.

The annual celebration brings the community together to honor recovery, connection, and healthy fun in a safe, substance-free environment. Admission is completely free, and all food and activities are provided at no cost, thanks to the generosity of sponsors and community partners.

The afternoon will feature:

- Live music and entertain-

- ment from MC Michael Petit and DJ Jeff Hall
- A wide variety of family-friendly activities, including a circus workshop, water slide, bouncy house, petting zoo, dunk tank, dragon foam, and arts & crafts
- Hamburgers, hot dogs, chips & drinks (sponsored by the Norfolk Lions Club)
- A restaurant cook-off featuring many local restaurants
- A special guest appearance by Pat the Patriot, mascot of the New England Patriots
- Recovery resources and local vendors on site

tham, was founded by David and Barbara Gillmeister in memory of their son, Steven, known as "Gilly" by his friends. The nonprofit's mission is to provide a structured sober environment along with life-skills development to help residents reintegrate successfully into the community.

As a nonprofit sober home and community resource, Gilly's House relies on the support of donors and sponsors to make Summerfest a continued success. To help keep the event free for all, visit www.gillyshouse.com for sponsorship opportunities.

For questions or to get involved, please contact Maureen at maureen@gillyshouse.com.

Gilly's House, a sober recovery home for men located in Wren-



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Free Summer Lunches for Youth Return to Local Communities

North Attleboro, MA -The Hockomock Area YMCA is proud to announce the return of its Free Summer Lunch Program, providing nutritious meals to youth ages 1–18 at multiple locations across the region. This initiative, part of the YMCA’s ongoing commitment to food access and community well-being, ensures that children and families have access to healthy meals throughout the summer months when school is not in session.

Beginning the week of June 23, free lunches will be available at the following sites:

- Memorial Elementary School – Milford
12 Walnut Street, Milford, MA
Monday through Friday | 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. through – August 15
- Bellingham Public Library
100 Blackstone Street, Bellingham, MA
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday | 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. through – August 14

- Jackson Elementary School – Plainville
68 Messenger Street, Plainville, MA
Tuesdays & Thursdays | 12:15 p.m. – 1 p.m. through – August 14

No registration is required, and all children and teens are welcome to participate. A free lunch will be given to each child and the adult accompanying them. Meals are served in a safe, welcoming environment, and families are encouraged to attend together.

“This program is about more than just food—it’s about community,” said Jim Downs, CEO of the Hockomock Area YMCA. “We are proud to partner with local schools and libraries to ensure that no child goes hungry during the summer.”

The Summer Lunch Program is part of the YMCA’s broader food access efforts, which include weekly food distribution and year-round support for families facing food insecurity. For more information, visit <https://www.hockymca.org/summer-lunch-program>.

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Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made avail-

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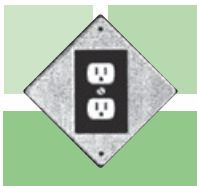
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Back to School Eye Health and Computer Vision Syndrome

BY: ROGER M. KALDAWY, M.D.
MILFORD FRANKLIN EYE CENTER

Don't Wait: Now Is the Time to Book Back-to-School Eye Exams

As the back-to-school season quickly approaches, families everywhere are checking off their to-do lists — backpacks, notebooks, shoes, and clothes. But amid all this preparation, there's one essential task that often gets forgotten: scheduling your child's eye exam.

Why Eye Health Should Be a Top Priority This School Year

Vision plays a central role in learning. Whether reading from the board, using a tablet, or completing homework, children rely on their eyesight throughout the school day. With digital learning becoming more prevalent, eye health matters now more than ever. A comprehensive eye exam could be the key to preventing learning struggles, missed milestones, or behavioral issues tied to undiagnosed vision problems. Unfortunately, vision disorders often go undetected. In fact, *1 in 17 preschoolers and 1 in 4 school-*

age children have a vision problem that remains untreated — problems that can cause kids to fall behind or struggle academically.

Book Now — Avoid the Rush

Late summer is one of the busiest times of the year for eye doctors. Appointments fill up fast. Booking your child's exam now ensures they're seen before the first day of school — giving them the best possible start to the academic year.

The Critical Role of Routine Eye Exams

Eye exams are more than just a quick vision check. They help identify problems early and connect families with treatment options. Regular screenings and exams also help prevent future complications, including potential permanent vision loss. Here's what every parent should know:

Five Key Steps to Protect Your Child's Vision:

1. **Know the Value:** Understand how important vision care is to your child's development and academic performance.

2. **Screen Early and Often:** Make sure your child receives regular vision screenings using trusted tools and trained screeners.
3. **Refer When Needed:** If a screening reveals a concern, follow up promptly with an eye care professional.
4. **See an Eye Doctor:** Choose an optometrist or ophthalmologist experienced in pediatric eye care for a full evaluation.
5. **Follow Through:** Stick to treatment plans and share exam results with schools or caregivers as needed.

Watch for These Signs That Your Child Needs an Eye Exam:

- Frequent squinting or head tilting
- Holding books or devices very close
- Complaints of headaches or eye fatigue



- Trouble concentrating on reading or close-up tasks
- Sensitivity to light or frequent tearing

- **Position Screens Properly:** Keep the monitor about 20–28 inches away and slightly below eye level.
- **Reduce Glare:** Use shades, reposition screens, or apply anti-glare filters.
- **Encourage Blinking:** Remind kids to blink often and use lubricating drops if needed.

- **Use Correct Eyewear:** Make sure your child's glasses are up-to-date, especially for screen work.

If you notice any of these, don't wait — book a comprehensive exam as soon as possible. And remember: *When in doubt, moms always know best.* Trust your instincts. Get a second opinion.

Digital Learning and Eye Strain: A Growing Concern

Screens are everywhere — tablets, laptops, smartboards — and kids spend hours a day using them. This puts many students at risk for Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS), also known as Digital Eye Strain.

Symptoms of CVS Include:

- Blurry or fluctuating vision
- Eye burning or stinging
- Light sensitivity
- Frequent headaches
- Neck or shoulder pain

CVS typically develops after two or more hours of continuous screen time, especially if the screen is too close, too bright, or used without proper eye correction.

Tips to Prevent Digital Eye Strain:

- **Follow the 20-20-20 Rule:** Every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

Despite the buzz around blue light glasses, there's no scientific evidence they help with eye strain. The American Academy of Ophthalmology does not recommend them.

Choosing the Right Glasses for Kids

If your child needs glasses, the right pair makes all the difference. Look for:

- Durable, child-friendly frames
- Comfortable fit
- UV protection for outdoor play
- Skip the blue light lenses — focus on fit and function

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EYE

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Bellingham Garden Club of MA Holds Fundraiser

The Bellingham Garden Club of MA hosted its 1st **"Food Insecurity Fundraiser,"** on Saturday, May 17th at the DoubleTree Hotel in Milford.

The goal was simple to support food insecure families and to help put fresh food on their table in line with our **Mission of the Bellingham Garden Club.**

Local businesses and companies came together to donate funds, food gift cards, distribute food, volunteer, showcase their businesses, provide edible plants for purchase and to support the fundraiser with the proceeds going to families in need of assistance during this critical time with so many cuts to federal and state programs.

Some of the wonderful supporting companies included;

- Silver Sponsor: Dean Bank in Franklin, MA @ dean-bank.com
- Bronze Sponsors: Chili's Grill & Bar_Bellingham @ www.chilis.com & RJD Construction, Bellingham <https://rjdconstruction.org/>
- Business Supporters: Eden's Roofing in Milford, MA edensroofing@aol.com

Outback Steakhouse in Bellingham, Garden Pizza in Milford & Home Depot in Bellingham, MA



The Cares Committee at the DoubleTree Hotel in Milford, also has an amazing mission of their own and generously donated space for the event.

Below are some of the pics for everyone to enjoy and of a family that benefited by the fundraiser with local fresh food!

If other companies would like to help support our Mission Statement monetarily or otherwise, they can visit our website at:

<https://bellingshambgardenclubofma.com/>

Many thanks! Contact us at bellingshambgardenclubofma@gmail.com.



EYE

continued from page 22

Our Commitment to Your Family's Eye Health

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- **Special Back-to-School Offer:** All new patients — children or adults — receive a free pair of select eyeglasses

From standard eye exams to advanced medical care, we provide full-spectrum services under one roof — no referrals needed.

Don't delay. Now is the time to schedule your child's back-to-school eye exam. Let's make sure your child has clear vision and the confidence to succeed this school year. Call us today or book online — appointments are filling fast!

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Sports

Carney Impacted BHS Girls' Track Program

Sprinter to Compete at Trinity College

By KEN HAMWEY,
BULLETIN SPORTS WRITER

Olivia Carney's career in track at Bellingham High was not only dynamic, but it also was impactful.

The 18-year-old Carney, who'll be competing for Trinity College next year, set three individual school records and was part of four relay teams that also set BHS records.

Carney didn't stop there.

The 5-foot-3 sprinter helped the Blackhawks' outdoor squad go undefeated during the dual-meet season last spring, capturing

the first Tri Valley League championship in the 46-year history of the girls' program. She capped off her senior year by winning the TVL's Small Division Most Valuable Player Award and won the 100-meter event at the Division 5 State Meet.

"Olivia is hands down the best sprinter that Bellingham High has ever had," said Peter LaCasse, the girls' and boys' outdoor coach. "She combines speed and outstanding power to compete at a high level. Our coaching staff believes she'll have a lasting impact on the future of Bellingham High girls' track."

Carney competed two years for the indoor team but was on the outdoor squad for a five-year stretch. She ran the 55-meter and the 300-meter events indoors. Her outdoor events included the 100 and 200-meter runs, the long jump and the 4x100-meter relay. She finished her senior year of outdoor track unbeaten in the TVL.

A senior captain on the outdoor team, Carney led by example and was very supportive of her teammates. "I was honored to be chosen and liked the responsibility," she said.

A native of Philadelphia, Carney should have a bright future in Hartford, Conn., where she'll compete for Trinity College.

"Finishing my final year at BHS was a bittersweet feeling," Carney said. "I had great teammates and friends, but now I'm looking forward to a new chapter of my life. I'm excited about being part of a college program that has a good tradition, and I'm eager to see what I can do to add to the reputation Trinity has in track."

Carney's reputation at BHS was impeccable. Her indoor records were 7.33 seconds for the 55-meter run and 1:51.03 for the 4x200 relay. Her outdoor records include 12.32 seconds for the 100; 25.54 seconds for the 200; 45 feet, 6 inches for the long-jump relay; 50.83 seconds for the 4x100 relay; and 1:48.34 for the 4x200 relay.

Seven records are no doubt meaningful and thrilling, but the personable Carney, who's a team-first competitor, rates the girls first TVL championship as her top thrill. "That was special," she noted. "Winning the 100 at the Division 5 state meet and being selected as the TVL's Small Division MVP my last year were also enjoyable achievements."

Carney's best meet was last spring's TVL all-division competition that included both the large and small-division schools. BHS finished sixth out of 12 teams but topped all the small-division schools. "I won the 100 and 200-meter runs and our 4x100 relay team finished first," she emphasized. "That enabled me to



Olivia Carney set records in the 100 and 200-meter events at Bellingham High School.

stay unbeaten in all our league events."

A finesse runner, Carney's strengths are speed and quickness, a high track IQ and outstanding technical skills. "I also try to maintain my speed at a comfortable pace," she said. "When I leave the blocks, I try to get into good position, but if need to improve it, I'll turn on the speed and aim for the lead."

Carney's favorite event was the 4x100 relay. "It's less stressful and more enjoyable to be part of a group effort," she offered. "It's great, because it provides a real sense of a team effort."

Carney was always quick to praise her teammates at BHS. She cited four colleagues who were high caliber contributors. "Emanoela Barreto (400, hurdles, long jump and relay); Caleigh Hayes (400, hurdles); Emma Carroll (100, 200, triple jump and relay); and Caleigh Elder (javelin, 100 and relay) were outstanding in their events and played key roles," she noted.

Carney also lauded her two coaches — Lacasse and indoor coach Sam Cowell.

"Coach LaCasse is a great motivator who's knowledgeable and who stresses a team-first approach," she noted. "He's vocal about his expectations, but he allowed us to set our personal goals. Coach Cowell creates a family bond. He's amazing and very knowledgeable."

A TVL all-star both indoors and outdoors, Carney relies on an athletic philosophy that emphasizes a passionate competitive spirit. "Winning is important, but I love competing," she said. "That's what it's all about."

She also respects the valuable life lessons she's learned from sports. "I've learned how to be a good teammate and how to be a quality leader," she said. "Competing in track has also helped me to be resilient and to be responsible and accountable."

Carney's role model throughout her BHS career has been her mother (Dana). "She's never missed a meet and she's encouraging and supportive," Carney offered.

During the summer, Carney has focused on improving her speed, endurance, intensity and technique leaving the blocks. She's acutely aware that hard work will help create a smooth transition to Trinity. "I'll be running and competing against opponents who are 20 or older," she noted. "They'll have an edge over me, so I've got to be ready. Strengthening my mental toughness will help."

"Olivia will blossom at the college level because of her natural talent and willingness to be coached," LaCasse said.



Olivia Carney was a member of Bellingham High's long-jump relay team that set a school record.

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Sports

Sullivan' Grid Goal — A Third Straight TVL Title

By KEN HAMWEY,
BULLETIN SPORTS WRITER

Sam Sullivan is all about achievement.

The Bellingham High senior has captured Tri Valley League honors in football and basketball, he'll be a captain in football, and he's an honor-roll student (3.5 GPA).

Sullivan was also selected as a marshal by the faculty during his junior year — to organize the march for the senior class at its graduation ceremony in June. A member of the ski club, he plans to play football in college and has seven schools showing interest, three of which are Division 1 programs.

The 6-foot, 180-pound receiver/safety, who can also play quarterback, obviously is versatile. But, what makes him special is his team-first approach. His goals for the football season emphasize just how team-oriented he is.

"My No. 1 goal is for us to win the TVL Small Division championship for the third straight year," Sullivan said. "That would be the first time in the program's history that BHS has accomplished that. Three in a row would be a dynamic achievement."

Sullivan knows what occurred when the Blackhawks captured their last two crowns — he competed and was a key contributor. "As a sophomore, we started out 0-3, but went unbeaten in league play. Last year, we opened with a 1-3 record but again went undefeated in the TVL. We know about overcoming adversity and being resilient. Both comebacks were amazing."

Sullivan's other team goals include qualifying for the playoffs and going on a deep run. "My personal objectives are to win the TVL Most Valuable Player Award in the Small Division, to increase my interceptions and tackles and to be the best captain I can be," he noted.

The 17-year-old Sullivan knows what it takes to reach all-star status. He was an honorable mention choice in the TVL for football and basketball. A power forward last year in basketball, he led the Blackhawks in scor-

ing. As a junior in football, he was named the Defensive Player of the Year in the Small Division and he took team honors for Defensive Back of the Year.

Sullivan's top thrill in football so far is his selection as a captain. "The coaches and players vote, and it shows they respect me," he said. "I'm honored, and I'll strive to lead by example, be communicative, and be supportive."

Winning the TVL's Defensive Player of the Year Award is a close second in terms of thrills. "It was exciting to be selected and showed that opposing coaches liked my work ethic," he said.

Sullivan has had some impressive games but he rates last year's 35-6 triumph over Medfield as the best. "It was senior night," he recalled. "I had one interception and 10 tackles, nine of which were solo efforts, and I was chosen Player of the Game. That was a big win on a memorable night."

What makes Sullivan a prime-time player is his style. He's aggressive on both sides of the ball. "I compete with lots of tenacity and passion," he said. "I enjoy playing defense because I like contact and I like pursuing opponents. I rely on staying relaxed. As a receiver, I like controlling the ball and being in position to change the outcome of a game. Going one-on-one is exciting, and blocking is also fun."

Sullivan started playing football as a 10-year-old. As a high school freshman, he got some reps at quarterback on the jayvees. His sophomore season on the varsity was productive — two interceptions and 51 tackles, 26 of which were solo efforts. Last year, he had a productive junior season — 35 solo tackles (70 total), two interceptions, six pass break-ups, and seven tackles for losses.

Sullivan played sparingly as a wideout, filling in for four games when Mason Jacques was sidelined.

The attributes that make Sullivan tick are a high football IQ, athleticism, his skills, a coachable nature and his leadership qualities.



Sam Sullivan likes his role as a wide receiver but he's also an all-star at strong safety.



Sam Sullivan was the Tri Valley League's Defensive Player of the Year as a junior.

Blackhawks coach Dan Haddad has high praise for his versatile captain.

"Sam is a tough, hard-nose player who's physical and smart on the field," Haddad emphasized. "Our opponents need to know where he is because he's a game-changer. As a leader, he has high standards and demands the same from his teammates. There is nothing he would ask of them that he hasn't already done. Most importantly, he's a great student, and even better, he's a great person."

Sullivan enjoys being part of the team's leadership unit and lauds the squad's other captains — senior Wyatt Callery (tight end/linebacker) and junior William Lahousse (lineman).

"Wyatt is a tremendous player who can block and catch," Sullivan offered. "He's also a quality leader. Another top-notch leader, William works hard, plays with energy and passion and can block and tackle."

Haddad also gets high marks. "Coach Haddad is caring, a great motivator, good with x's and o's, and wants success for his players," Sullivan said.

Calling his parents (Rob and Jen) and his grandmother (Judy) role models for their support and encouragement, Sullivan plans on majoring in finance in college. He likely will choose a Division 3 school, like Bates, Rensselaer Polytech, University of New England or Springfield. He's also been contacted by

"to reach one's potential." Life lessons he's learned from athletics are how to overcome adversity and to be resilient, how to lead and to be willing to accept responsibility and be accountable. "Another key lesson is that to be successful, you have to work for it," he emphasized.

There's little doubt that Sullivan and his BHS teammates will give 100 percent as they aim for their third straight TVL Small Division crown. Twelve seniors graduated from last year's team, and there are only three returning starters on offense and four on defense. They're young but capable of gaining experience on the job. Sam Sullivan is ready for pre-season practice later this month, and he'll be well-prepared for Bellingham's opener at Blackstone-Millville on Sept. 6 at 10 a.m.

three Division 1 universities — New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Fordham.

Relying on a competitive philosophy that focuses on winning, Sullivan said it's also important

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Sports

BHS Girls' Volleyball Team Is Built for Success

By KEN HAMWEY,
BULLETIN SPORTS WRITER

Steve Mantegani will begin his 10th year as the Bellingham High girls volleyball coach this fall, and it's obvious that his players have responded in a dynamic way. The Blackhawks are one of most respected teams in the area.

His squads have been state tourney participants for seven straight seasons; his 2023 contingent won the Tri Valley League Small Division title; and for the last two years BHS has advanced to the Division 4 playoff final, losing twice to Ipswich, which has now won four straight state championships and has a 51-game winning streak.

A change in the Division 4 alignment for 2025 will not allow the Blackhawks to get another chance to face the Tigers. BHS is moving up to Division 3, which includes Medfield, the defending state champ.

"We split a pair of TVL matches with Medfield last year," Mantegani said. "Division 3 has some very good teams with great traditions, like Wayland, Weston, Case and Cardinal Spellman."

Tourney action is a long way off, and Mantegani is acutely aware that success is achieved by "focusing on one game at a time." His two prime goals for this year reflect his cautious approach.



Coach Steve Mantegani with his captains — Val Nolan, left, and Jacobi Houston.

"We want to improve every year, and we want to build team chemistry," he emphasized. "Our other goals are to contend for the TVL Small Division title, qualify for the tourney and go as deep as possible. Our objectives are realistic because our players are eager to succeed and know the importance of focusing on the present."

The Blackhawks finished last year with a 20-4 overall record and lost only three seniors to graduation. Eleven players are returning, and most of them are experienced. Following is a brief profile of the players with comments from Mantegani.

***Val Nolan (senior, outside hitter)** — A two-year captain, she's been a two-time TVL all-star and was selected last year as a State Tourney Division 4 all-star. "Val is quick, athletic, and one of our keys on defense and serve receive. A four-year veteran, she's strong at the net as a primary attacker and recorded her 500th career kill last season. She's got a high volleyball IQ and lots of passion for the sport."

***Jacobi Houston (senior, setter)** — "A two-time captain, Jacobi has strong hands and is the quarterback of our offense. She makes good decisions, has a high volleyball IQ and has very good court vision. A leader in the off-season, she organized summer volleyball activities."

***Mia Milani (junior, outside hitter)** — She's a two-time TVL all-star, two-time Division 4 Tourney all-star, and an all-star selection on the Mass. Volleyball Coaches Association

all-state team. "Mia is a strong, athletic and powerful hitter. Our primary passer in serve/receive, she plays great defense and is big at the net. A very skilled competitor who's in her fourth varsity season, she recorded her 500th kill last season."

***Sophia Soto (junior, libero)** — Her awards include selection as a Mass. Volleyball Coaches Association all-star, Division 4 Tourney all-star, TVL all-star, and TVL Small Division MVP in 2023. "A four-year varsity player, Sophia recorded her 1,000th dig last season. She spearheads our serve receive and defense. A fiery leader, she brings lots of energy, is technically sound and is the best passer in the TVL."

***Aubrey Callery (sophomore, middle hitter)** — "Aubrey, who's in her third varsity year, is a quick, athletic hitter and blocker. She's strong at the net and I expect her to come into her own this season as a middle hitter."

***Mia Bartucca (junior, setter)** — "Mia is a second-year player who has great hands and is able to make all the sets. She's continuing to develop as a strong setter and is one of our keys to running our offense."

***Lyla McGilvray (junior, defensive specialist)** — "A two-year player, Lyla is a solid passer and a good server. She plays strong defense when called upon."

***Mady DeOliveira (junior, right-side hitter)** — "A second-year player who's able to play on the outside when needed, Mady had a great year on the right side. And, we're expecting more this season on that side. She's a solid hitter and blocker at the net and has a very level attitude."

***Caitlyn Hebert (junior, middle hitter/right-side hitter)** — "A second year player, Caitlyn is recovering from an ACL tear suffered in the Elite Eight match against Ursuline in last year's tourney. She was a force in the middle last year as a hitter and blocker. We're hoping to have her back for a portion of the season if her recovery goes well."

***Stephanie Painchaud (sophomore, middle hitter)** — "A second-year varsity player, Stephanie stepped in and played well in the Final Four and State final game after Caitlyn got hurt. A strong blocker and solid hitter, we're counting on her in the middle as she continues to develop."

***Alyssa Rancourt (sophomore, setter)** — A jayvee player last year, she was called up for the tourney. "Alyssa is athletic, quick, and a strong setter who jumps well. She has a strong serve and has the potential to play on the varsity as she continues to develop."

Mantegani's staff includes two assistants who'll be returning to coach the jayvees and the freshmen. Kayla Martinis is the junior-varsity coach and Mantegani's son, Justin, directs the freshmen.

The Blackhawks, who open the season at Millis on Sept. 3, will be a balanced team that relies on ball control. "If we control the ball, then we can run our offense," Mantegani said. "We'll pass effectively, we've got strong hitters, and we'll play solid defense."

With positive attributes of experience, depth, athleticism, a high volleyball IQ, a coachable nature and top-notch skills, Blackhawks' Girls Volleyball should see a successful season.

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New Book on RI Native Hero Coming Soon

Charleston, SC - “Jack” Downey, a Rhode Island native, is the subject of *New England’s Lifesaver: Coast Guard Legend Master Chief Jack Downey*, a new history by authors Captain W. Russell Webster, USCG (ret.) and Captain Michael A. Cicalese, USCG (ret.) to be published by Arcadia Publishing. During a storied forty-two-year Coast Guard career, Downey would be credited with saving more than 700 mariners in distress during five

thousand rescues in New England waters. Across thousands of missions, Downey and his crews rescued 11 passengers from the ferry *Sea Comet* and 108 elderly passengers from the *Pilgrim Belle*, and he participated in search-and-rescue efforts for the air crashes of JFK Jr. and EgyptAir 990. A natural-born leader, Downey was named the Coast Guard’s first Ancient Keeper for his lifetime commitment to keeping people safe on the seas.

August 2025 at Bellforge Arts Center

Summer Sounds with Boston Summer Opera
Wednesday, August 6, 6-8 p.m.

The Goonies: ‘Forge Films
Wednesday, August 13, 8-10 p.m.

Summer Sounds with Viruette and Mallcops
Wednesday, August 20, 6-8 p.m.

E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial: ‘Forge Films
Wednesday, August 27, 8-10 p.m.

Little Lies: A Tribute to Fleetwood Mac
Saturday, September 6, 3-7 p.m. (\$10)

Women in Music Festival
Saturday, September 20, 4-7 p.m.

For more information on these free shows or other low-cost ticketed events not listed here, visit www.bellforge.org/events.

First Universalist Society in Franklin – August Summer Services

First Universalist Society in Franklin (FUSF) is pleased to announce our Summer Sunday Worship Series for August 3 ~ 27, 2025. Please join us each Sunday as we explore the Unitarian Universalist (UU) values of Equity, Transformation, Generosity, Interdependence, Justice, Pluralism and Love. All services start at 10 a.m. Afterwards, we invite you to stay for cookies and conversation.

August 3: Interdependence and Pickles

Unitarian Universalism teaches us to honor the interdependent web of all existence. This is a broad concept that ranges from individuals’ roles in society to humanity’s branch on the family tree of living things to the stardust in our cells. Join us as we focus on exploring specific aspects of interdependence that involve pickles. FUSF member Ann Gillette Parsley, who is studying to become a minister, will lead the service and provide the pickles! (Please note, you will not have to eat the pickles -- all are welcome at UU churches, even people who do not like pickles.)

August 10: To Bee or Not to Bee

Visualize a meadow with an infinite view of beautiful flowers that vary in color, boldness, and scent. In the distance, a grove of fruit trees offers their seasonal bounty. Imagine how each trunk, branch, leaf, pedal or stem invites Earth’s creatures to thrive and live in natural harmony. Join FUSF member Deb Prudhomme to reflect on the importance of bees in the web of life and the 7th principle in Unitarian Universalism: Respect for the interdependent Web of all existence. Buzz in to reflect on our interconnectedness and for a hands-on project to support bees.

August 17: A Journey Toward Contemplative Activism

Our Unitarian Universalist Value of Transformation encourages us to “adapt to the changing world” and to “collectively transform and grow spiritually and ethically.” Transformation is a journey that involves continuous learning, adaptation, and self-discovery. Join us as Bobbi Gerlits, one of

FUSF’s lay leaders, shares details of her journey toward contemplative activism and provides us an opportunity to experience one form of this type of activism.

August 24: Carrying Our Values Into the World

Each Sunday we sing our Unison Affirmation and our Farewell Song, both of which speak of our values, of being together, supporting one another, and how we aspire to be out in the world. Join Rev. Bev Waring and Director of Religious Education Sara Allegetti for the last summer service of 2025, as we explore how everyone, of all ages, can take our good news of Unitarian Universalism out into the world. During this worship service we will be blessing backpacks, computer bags, and satchels of any type. This is a service for all ages.

The First Universalist Society in Franklin is a Unitarian Universalist Welcoming Congregation located at 262 Chestnut Street, Franklin MA. For further information about FUSF please explore our website at fusf.org or contact our minister, the Reverend Beverly Waring at (508) 528- 5348 or minister@fusf.org

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Ursprung holds a B.A. in Economics and Italian Studies from Brown University and an M.F.A. in Dance from Smith College.

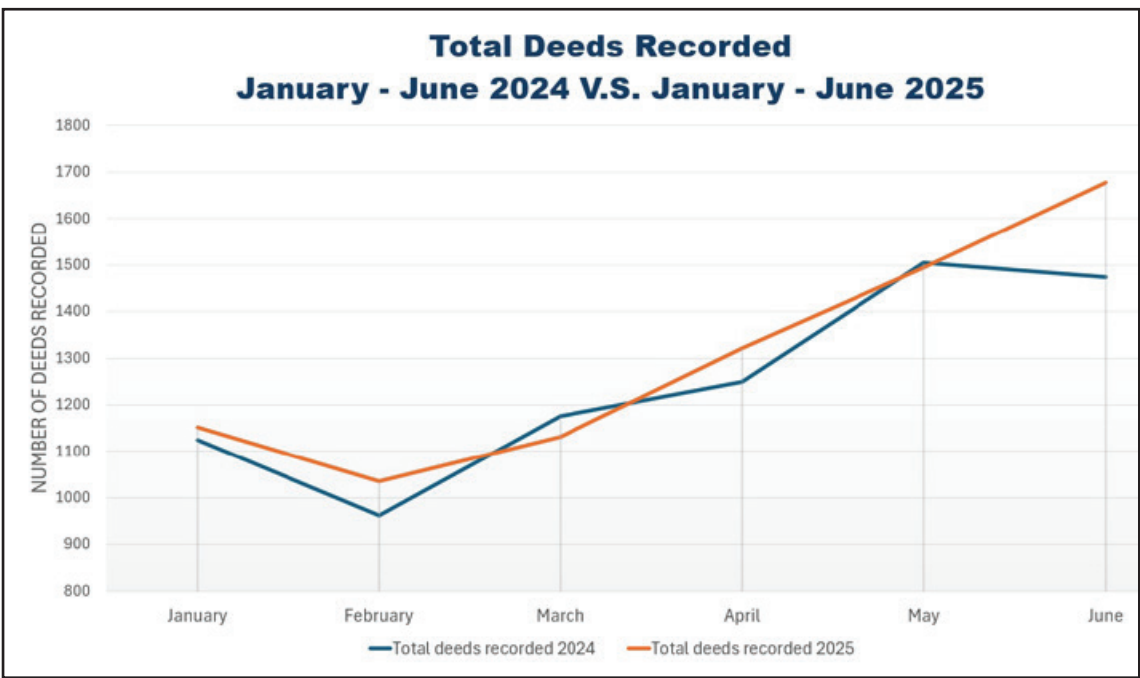
Norfolk County Real Estate Market Shows Notable Growth

Dedham, MA - Norfolk County Register of Deeds William P. O'Donnell reported that Norfolk County recordings for the month of June 2025 indicate a notable increase in overall real estate activity, with increases in both property sales and mortgage activity as compared to June 2024 and the previous month, May 2025.

The Norfolk County Registry of Deeds recorded a total of 10,433 documents in June 2025. This represents a 15% increase from June 2024 and an 8% increase compared to May 2025.

The total number of deeds recorded for June 2025, which reflect both commercial and residential real estate sales and transfers, was 1,677, up 14% from June 2024 and up 12% from May 2025. Looking at just commercial and residential real estate sales, a total of 1,012 properties were sold in June 2025. This figure represents a 13% increase from June 2024.

"The significant increase in deeds recorded and properties sold in June 2025 compared



to the same month last year demonstrates the ongoing demand for real estate within our communities," stated Register O'Donnell. "Even amidst various market factors, the consistent volume of transactions points to an active real estate landscape."

The average sale price for

commercial and residential properties in June 2025 was \$1,153,416, a less than 1% decrease from June 2024, and a decrease of 17% compared to May 2025. Additionally, the total dollar volume of commercial and residential sales is up, increasing 13% from last year and 2% from last month.

"The month of June saw a notable shift in the average sale prices on commercial and residential real estate as a whole marking the first time in 2025 that we haven't seen a year-over-year rise," stated Register O'Donnell. "This pause in upward trending property prices could offer a welcomed window

for prospective buyers, but we will need to wait and see if this trend continues."

For the month of June, lending activity showed a significant increase compared to the same month a year ago and the previous month. A total of 1,707 mortgages were recorded in June 2025, up 23% from June 2024 and 11% more than May 2025. The total mortgage indebtedness is also up, increasing 67% compared to June 2024, and up 2% compared to May 2025.

"The substantial rise in mortgage recordings, coupled with the increased mortgage indebtedness, indicates a strong and renewed confidence among buyers in securing financing," stated Register O'Donnell. "This positive trend in lending activity is a key indicator of the overall health of our local real estate market."

For more information on the Norfolk County Registry of Deeds, visit www.norfolkdeeds.org, or find them on social media channels.

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November 22-23

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December 5-6



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Register O'Donnell Promotes Foreclosure Assistance Programs

Dedham MA – Norfolk County Register of Deeds William P. O'Donnell today reminded Norfolk County homeowners who are struggling to pay their mortgage or facing foreclosure that there are consumer assistance programs available to help them out.

A statistical review of the first six months of 2025 compared to the same period in 2024 shows a decrease in foreclosures and notices to foreclose, the first step in the process. In the first half of 2025, a total of 29 foreclosures were recorded, down 38% from 2024, and 143 notices to foreclose were recorded, down 29% from last year.

"There is no question that this reduction in the number of foreclosures and notices to foreclose is good news," Register O'Donnell continued, "With that said, we realize that foreclosure activity has a human face associated with it, and there are still a number of our neighbors who have lost their homes, and even more are dangerously close to losing their homes."

To help those facing issues paying their mortgage, the Registry of Deeds has partnered with upstanding non-profit agencies by promoting their services when it comes to mortgage modification and foreclosure programs.

NeighborWorks Housing So-

lutions (NHS) offers a multitude of services with the aim of helping homeowners maintain safe, affordable, high-quality housing and grow their financial skills. NHS' services include rental assistance, emergency financial help, shelter and homelessness prevention, first-time homebuyer education and counseling, financial coaching, foreclosure prevention, affordable residential and small business loans, and the construction and management of high-quality rental housing across Southern Massachusetts.

Since 1965, Quincy Community Action (QCAP) has been providing anti-poverty services in the Greater Quincy region. This

includes basic needs such as food and nutrition, fuel assistance, affordable housing, quality early education and care, adult education and workforce development, and financial education. QCAP helps more than 100 communities, and more than 28,000 individuals benefit from QCAP services annually.

Homeowners can contact Quincy Community Action Programs at (617) 479-8181 x-376 or NeighborWorks Housing Solutions at (617) 770-2227. Another option available is to contact the Massachusetts Attorney General's Consumer Advocacy and Response Division (CARD) at (617) 727-8400.

"All of these agencies provide a range of assistance, from helping with the mortgage modification process to providing legal services to offering credit counseling," stated Register O'Donnell. "If you are having difficulty paying your monthly mortgage, please consider contacting one of these non-profit agencies for help and guidance."

For more information on these and other support options, go to the Registry's website at www.norfolkdeeds.org, click on the Support tab, and then click on the subtab that mentions Foreclosure Assistance.

Free Fun at HCA this Month

Sponsored by Dell Technologies

There's still time to catch a performance at the Summer Concert Series at HCA!

Sponsored by Dell Technologies, our outdoor amphitheater provides the perfect backdrop! You only need your lawn chair,

blanket, and picnic basket to enjoy an evening of rockin' good music. And don't worry, if the weather doesn't cooperate, we'll move the concert inside to our air-conditioned performance space.

To make the arts more accessible to all, this concert is on a pay-what-you-can basis.

August 3

Stoney's Wicked Din, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Sunday Summer Jazz series in our outdoor amphitheater.

HCA also has offered free dance workshops this summer. This month, it will offer a Salsa & Bachata workshop on August 5th, at 7:30 p.m.

<https://www.hopartscenter.org/event-details/free-adult-dance-workshop-salsa-bachata>

No partner required! Join

Laura Leones who, in addition to introducing the rhythms of salsa, will also demonstrate bachata dancing, a slower dance that originated in the Dominican Republic and is now danced all over the world.

HCA is located at 98 Hayden Rowe St, Hopkinton.

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Calendar

August 1

Franklin Concerts on the Common, 3-5 p.m. David Rak, 5:30pm - 7:30 p.m. Electric Youth and the Boston Show Band, 8 - 10:30 p.m. MOVIE

August 4

Book Discussion Group, 6:30 p.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, In person or on Zoom. Contact Cecily Christensen, cchriste@cw-mars.org. *The Collected Regrets of Clover* by Mikki Brammer
Bellingham VFW 7272 Cruise Night, 4 p.m., 940 S. Main St., Bellingham, vfw7272.org

August 5

Virtual Author Talks, Birds with Smithsonian Biologist Jay Falk, 2 p.m.- to register for these talks, go to: <https://libraryc.org/bellinghamma> .
A Novel Idea book club, 6:30-8 p.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, *One Summer in Savannah*, by Terah Shelton Harris. If interested, please contact Diane Nelson atdnelson@cw-mars.org
Voice of Franklin Toastmasters, 7:30 p.m., Franklin TV, 23 Hutchinson St, Franklin, MA. Practice your public speaking skills in supportive environment. For Zoom link, click “contact us” at <https://voiceoffranklin.toastmastersclubs.org> get link. Please try to arrive by 7:15.

toastmastersclubs.org get link. Please try to arrive by 7:15.

August 7

Mr. Vinny the Bubble Guy at the Bellingham Town Common, 6 p.m., presented by Bellingham Public Library, supported by the Rockland Trust Charitable Foundation, Friends of the Bellingham Library, and a grant from the Bellingham Cultural Council.
Franklin LGBTQ Alliance event, Rock Painting and Party Games, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m., Franklin TV and Radio 23 Hutchinson St., Franklin

August 8

Franklin Concerts on the Common, 3-5 p.m. BUS-14, 5-7 p.m. Paradise Flyer
Skull & Roses, Grateful Dead Tribute Band for “Days in Between/Jerry Week”, 7 p.m., with special guest Nate Burket, Niagara Coffee Haus, 8 Exchange St., Millis, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1467240087599>

August 9

Shred Day, 9 a.m.-12 p.m., Municipal Center Parking lot, 10 Mechanic St., Bellingham

August 10

Second Sunday Speaker Series: A Deep Dive into the

Rayner Postcard Collection, 1:15 p.m. Franklin Historical Museum, 80 West Central St., Franklin, Historical Commission Chair, Alan Earls, will discuss 100-plus postcard collection including some from the late 19th century. Due to Bridal Exhibit, seating limited.

August 11

Bellingham VFW 7272 Cruise Night, 4 p.m., 940 S. Main St., Bellingham, vfw7272.org

August 15

Franklin Concerts on the Common, 3-5 p.m. Matt Zajac, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. Pub Kings, 8 - 10:30 p.m. MOVIE

August 16

Franklin LGBTQ Alliance event, Mini Golf, 5-7 p.m., Putts and More, 750 Concord St., Holliston, \$12 pp.

August 17

Gilly’s House Summerfest FREE Summerfest Family Fun Sober Event, 12-4 p.m., Wrentham Developmental Center Fairgrounds, located at 131 Emerald Street, Wrentham

August 18

First day of school Blackstone Valley Tech Bellingham VFW 7272 Cruise Night, 4 p.m., 940 S. Main St., Bellingham, vfw7272.org

August 19

Writing Group for Adults -6:30 p.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, contact marjorie@marjorieturner.com
Voice of Franklin Toastmasters, 7:30 p.m., Franklin TV, 23 Hutchinson St, Franklin, MA. Practice your public speaking skills in supportive environment. For Zoom link, click “contact us” at <https://voiceoffranklin.toastmastersclubs.org> get link. Please try to arrive by 7:15.

August 20

Virtual Author Talks – Online Talk with Bestselling Author Casey McQuiston, 7 p.m., to register for these talks, go to: <https://libraryc.org/bellinghamma> .
Franklin LGBTQ Alliance event, Queer Book Club, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Franklin TV and Radio 23 Hutchinson St., Franklin, book: *Transgender History: The Roots of Today’s Revolution* by Susan Stryker.

August 25

Bellingham VFW 7272 Cruise Night, 4 p.m., 940 S. Main St., Bellingham, vfw7272.org
Bellingham Genealogy Club, 6-7:30 p.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham

August 27

Bellingham Public Schools, Norfolk Aggie and BFCCPS first day of school Virtual Author Talks – Online Talk with Organizational Psychologist Dr. Tasha Eurich, 2 p.m., to register for these talks, go to: <https://libraryc.org/bellinghamma> .

August 30

Coffee & Donuts with Veterans, 9-11 a.m., Bellingham VFW 7272, 940 S. Main St., Bellingham

August 31

International Overdose Awareness Day vigil, 5-6 p.m., hosted by SAFE Coalition, Franklin Town Common, www.safecoalitionma.org, www.overdoseday.com

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