

localtownpages 

Natick

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Free to Every Home and Business Every Month

November 1, 2025

Natick Musician Graduates from 'School of Rock' to Budding Career

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

At a young age, Jake Wakstein's obsession with music began like many have: He saw a movie.

That film was "School of Rock," the Jack Black cult classic that must have likewise inspired millions to pick up and pluck at a guitar or other instrument. Wakstein was 7 years old when he first saw the movie, and the Natick resident said he watched it on repeat countless times.

"I totally fell in love with it."



Members of Love Scar are, from left, Elliott Judy (lead guitar), Oscar Lohr (bass guitar), Jake Wakstein (drums), and Darren Chraplak (lead vocals and rhythm guitar). Courtesy photo

MUSICIAN

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Keeping Local News Alive and Communities Connected

BY JENNIFER RUSSO

For the first time in our newspaper's history, the cost of postage has surpassed the cost of printing. On average, mailing services have increased in price by over 7% in the last couple of years. While the USPS may require this operationally, it does underscore the growing financial challenges facing local journalism today. Paper, ink, fuel, and distribution costs have all risen sharply in the past year, and while we've absorbed those increases for as long as we could, we now find ourselves at a turning point – and we need your help.

Despite these challenges, one thing hasn't changed: our commitment to providing free, local news that keeps our communities

informed and connected. Local journalism is not just about headlines — it's about people. It's about the high school team's championship win, the opening of a new family business, the celebration of a lifelong volunteer, the coverage of town meetings, and ensuring that every story is told.

When you open your community newspaper, you read about your neighbors, your schools, and the heartbeat of your area. You're seeing your community reflected in print - its triumphs, challenges, and spirit. Local news brings people together, fosters accountability, and preserves the stories that

SUPPORT

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Storywalk Honors Dedication, Experiences of Local Veterans

The 2nd Annual Veterans Storywalk on Natick Common will feature more than 155 local veterans' stories in a week-long installation celebrating the sacrifices and diverse experiences of those who served in the armed forces.

Running from Nov. 5 to 13, this public exhibit pays tribute to the hundreds of veterans from the area who have shared their stories with the Morse Institute Library's Veterans Oral History Project over the past 28 years.

The Storywalk consists of a series of signs installed along the sidewalks of Natick Common, each linking to the oral history of a veteran from the community.

The project highlights the courage, service, and personal histories of area veterans, making their lived experiences accessible to all.

Since its inception, the Veterans Oral History Project has engaged with over 350 veterans, preserving their memories and perspectives for future generations.

"We are deeply grateful to the veterans who have generously shared their stories," said Miki Wolfe, Library Director at the Morse Institute Library.

"Their voices enrich our community's understanding of military history and public service, reminding us all of the sacrifices so many have made for our country."

The 2nd Annual Veterans' Storywalk will open with a Ribbon Cutting on Nov. 5 from 1 - 1:30 p.m., and will then open to the public through Nov. 13.

Community members are encouraged to explore the Storywalk, reflecting on the meaningful contributions

of local veterans, and honoring their service through learning and listening.

The Veterans' Oral History Program actively collects stories from Veterans, and welcomes new stories to the collection.

To share a story, visit natickveterans.com or email NatickVets@minlib.net.

The Natick Veterans Oral History Project is funded by a grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, with additional funding from Commander E. Andrew Wilde Jr. USNR (Ret.) in memory of Gustavus R. Ide, Jr.

The Project is a collaboration between the Morse Institute Library and Natick Pegasus. The Morse Institute Library is a partner emeritus of the Library of Congress Veterans History Project.

For more information visit natickveterans.com.



The 2nd Annual Veterans Storywalk honors veterans with a display on Natick Common. Courtesy photo

"Through Q3 2025, Natick's housing market reflects strong underlying demand despite seasonal cooling. Median sale prices remain near \$1M, with homes still selling at or above list on average. While Q3 volume eased from the spring surge, the quick market times (just days to offer for many listings) show that buyers remain engaged. If you're considering a move, let's review how your property fits within these evolving trends, current inventory and craft a plan tailored to your goals." — Ted

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CLOSED UNITS (SOLD)				LISTING UNITS (RENT PENDING)			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q3 vs Q2	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q3 vs Q2
46	100	81	↘ -19.0%	73	114	82	↘ -28.1%
MEDIAN DAYS ON MARKET				MEDIAN DAYS TO OFFER			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q3 vs Q2	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q3 vs Q2
27	14	20	↗ +42.9%	9	5	7	↗ +40.0%
MEDIAN LIST PRICE				MEDIAN SALE PRICE			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q3 vs Q2	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q3 vs Q2
\$1.06M	\$1.17M	\$989K	↘ -15.6%	\$1.02M	\$1.24M	\$970K	↘ -21.8%
MEDIAN SALE \$ / SQFT				MEDIAN SALES PRICE AS % OF LIST PRICE			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q3 vs Q2	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q3 vs Q2
\$472	\$468	\$464	↘ -0.90%	100%	102%	100.3%	↘ -1.70%

54 Central Street, Wellesley, MA 02482

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David Moores Honored After 40 Years of Town Service

BY SANDY QUADROS BOWLES
EDITOR

David Moores received a proclamation and standing ovation from Natick select board members after completing 40 years of service to the town.

Moores began his work with the town in 1985 as a school custodian. From there, he moved up the ranks, eventually serving as custodial supervisor in 2017 and facilities maintenance manager in 2021.

He retired Oct. 10, on his 60th birthday. In a proclamation read at the Oct. 15 select board meeting, he was honored for earning “the respect and admiration of his peers and the public, within and outside town government for his professionalism, quality of work, calm demeanor and dedication.”

The proclamation continued that “through his integrity, lead-



David Moores was honored by Natick Select Board members for his 40 years of town service. Photo courtesy Natick Pegasus

ership and commitment to exemplary service, Dave has built a strong sense of pride and team among the men and women of the Natick Facilities Department.”

Moores was born and raised in Natick where he attended Cole Elementary School, Kennedy Junior High School and Natick High School, class of 1983.

Moores loved working for the Facilities Department so much that he recruited his son D.J. to follow in his footsteps, the proclamation noted.

Board members congratulated him as he travels the road to retirement “We wish him many happy healthy years with his family. Enjoy your travels on your Harley ... wherever the roads may take you.”

SUPPORT

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make each town unique. Without it, those small but powerful connections risk being lost.

Advertising revenue has always been a vital source of support for our papers, and we are deeply grateful to the local businesses that continue to support us. But as printing and mailing costs rise to historic levels, advertising alone can no longer carry the full weight of production. We recognize that our small businesses are facing similar pressures, and we would prefer not to raise advertising rates too much. Instead, we’re turning to you — our readers — for help.

This November, we’re launching our annual ‘Support the Newspaper’ campaign. Every donation, no matter the size, helps offset the rising costs of printing and distribution, ensuring that your paper remains free, local, and delivered right to your doorstep or mailbox. Your contribution isn’t just helping to print pages — it’s helping to keep civic engagement alive, preserving our

community history, and giving a platform to local voices that deserve to be heard.

We are endlessly thankful for your readership, your trust, and your belief in the value of local journalism. For decades, this paper has been honored to share your stories, celebrate your milestones, and champion the spirit of our towns. With your help, we can continue to do so for many years to come.

Please consider a donation, in any amount. To contribute to our community news, please visit <https://bit.ly/SupportTheNewspaper> or scan the QR code. Thank you for your support. We have been honored to be a part of your community, and we are excited to continue to bring you the news and stories that matter to you each month.



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Thanksgiving Dinners to be Delivered

Home-delivered Thanksgiving dinners will be distributed on Thursday, Nov. 27 thanks to the generosity of the Curtis family of Framingham.

The dinners will be distributed to Natick residents who are unable to prepare their own Thanksgiving dinner or are unable to join friends and/or family for the holiday.

Recipients must be home to accept the dinner. To request a dinner, call 508-647-6519 by Monday, Nov. 17.



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MUSICIAN

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By “it,” he may be speaking as much about a life rooted in music as about any movie. Wakstein had been influenced by his parents’ proclivities up to that point, the songs they’d played and listened to on the radio during his early childhood.

His mother, Anya Robinson, favored more pop-inflected songs, and Dave Wakstein, his father, bent more towards rock. Bands like Led Zeppelin, Aerosmith and Motley Crüe fell under this latter catalogue, music that seems to have made its mark on the young artist.

“That was all my dad’s doing,” said Wakstein.

Still, pursuing music as a career would require much more than those hours watching Jack Black on screen. It would mean many thousands of hours of practice and playing, and learning about the business and politics of being in a band.

Focus was the order of the day during those early years, when Wakstein was told he must choose and commit to an instrument. He decided on drums, and began taking lessons at Natick’s “Music Go-Round,” the town’s longtime destination

for local musicians.

There he was taught the fundamentals, how to hold sticks and read music. Wakstein then learned to mimic the drums of hits from bands like AC/DC and Steely Dan. In sixth grade, he started and played in the “Wilson Jazz Band,” which took its name from the town’s middle school he attended.

“It was really just to teach you how to be in a band,” said Wakstein.

During middle school, he would play as part of an ensemble at Wilson MS sporting events, covering anthems that might be mainstays at Fenway Park or Yankee Stadium. “It was fun,” said Wakstein, “but I really wanted to play rock and roll.”

He would later attend “School of Rock,” a one-week summer camp experience that took its name from the film that had supercharged Wakstein’s journey.

The camp was an intensive, crash course that sought to mimic a life rooted in music, playing in a band. The grand finale is a performance before and audience of parents. “I loved it. It was a great experience.”

So much so, added Wakstein, that he would join “School of Rock” in the organization’s lon-

ger-term programming. That meant weekly practice sessions, culminating in a performance at The Center for the Arts Natick (TCAN), the town’s most popular and visible venue.

During the shutdowns of 2020, Wakstein did as many others had: He used the sudden surplus of free time and seclusion to pick up a new pastime. But whereas most people began dipping toes into new hobbies, Wakstein took the opportunity to dive deeper into a craft he’d already been cultivating for years.

That meant picking up and adding the guitar to his skill set.

“I was playing all the rock and roll stuff that I love,” said Wakstein.

He joined the house band scene for the latter half of high school, an experience Wakstein said was a step up from the practices and venues of the past.

Auditions are required for admittance, as were regular local performances. “It was a really big step for me. It was a great learning experience.”

His house band tenure also brought lessons in leadership, as Wakstein took a central role in the group and began mentoring and teaching younger musicians.

Now in his senior year at Bos-

ton’s Berklee College of Music, Wakstein has experienced the trials and triumphs of a life in which music isn’t merely playing in the background—it’s a life built upon it.

The band he helped found in his early Berklee career fell apart on the eve of its first gigs in Boston and New York City venues, a fate that also met Wakstein’s subsequent band. No matter, he moved on to the next.

He’s currently part of a new group, one that seems to be gelling well. “Love Scar” is its name, a band whose goal is to move beyond cover songs and produce an EP (extended play) album of original music.

During these college years, Wakstein has played in other, more established bands in the local music scene, and declined an offer to join one of them full-time. He sees a future for “Love Scar,” and wants to devote his energies to making the band a success.

The group is currently working on filming a music video, and refining its song catalog. It’s yet another step in the marathon of a making music and a life, melding the two together.

“We’re still very primitive,” he said. “We’ll really hit the ground running when we release our new EP.”



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Fall is a Great Time to Sell, Says Nina Sable

BY CHRISTIE VOGT
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Mums are in bloom, leaves are changing, pumpkins are on the front stoop — now is an excellent time of year to sell your home, says real estate agent Nina Sable. “Fall is a great season to have your house on the market because it’s easy to create curb appeal through things like landscaping and harvest decor. You can also stage your home with fall accents, and the nice weather means people are still out and about shopping for homes,” Sable says. “This is a really good time to capture buyers.”

Sable says we’re still in a seller’s market, and home inventory continues to be low. But, she cautions, “just because there’s low inventory doesn’t mean everyone’s home is going to sell over-asking. There’s a myth that all homes are going over-asking, and that’s not actually true.” Nevertheless, if sellers want to maximize and streamline their home-selling



Sable Homes Metro-West Team

experience, Sable says she is the person to call, regardless of their situation.

“I’ve worked with a lot of different types of real estate and haven’t limited myself to one area or one type of home to sell,” Sable explains. “I know how to sell multiple types of properties — single family, mobile homes, multi-family, condos, unique homes, old homes; you name it.

Sable Homes Metro-West Business spotlight

I’ve sold hundreds of houses at this point and aim to keep that momentum going.”

Real estate has always been a part of her life, Sable says. Her father was a real estate developer and her grandfather was a multi-family housing investor. Sable got into real estate herself in 2015 after transitioning out of the senior services industry where she helped people find nursing homes and get better care while in such facilities.

Given this experience in senior services, one of Sable’s real estate specialties is working with families in crisis. “A typical fam-

ily I might work with is someone who is older, has health complications and who needs home care or different types of assistance in the house,” Sable explains. “I’m good at working with partners that help in that capacity, as well as packing up, preparing and selling the house.”

“With families in crisis, it’s often the case that a house has gotten ahead of them in terms of maintenance,” Sable elaborates. “I’m equipped to spend more time with them and help them figure out referrals that they’ll need, get them to the next step, and get them out of the house in a hurry without having to take the steps to fix it up first. I’m good at making sure the process doesn’t affect them.”

When working with all types of sellers, Sable says her approach is characterized by patience and attention. “I’m careful to go at their pace and listen to what they’re trying to achieve,” she says. “I work with them, I

don’t push them, and their timelines are respected and met.”

Sable’s ability to build trust and relationships with clients has been an advantage in this industry, she says. “Being a real estate agent is a very good job if you like to work with people. You get to learn about them in a way that’s so personal,” she says. “When the transaction is over, you actually miss them because you ended up spending so much time getting to know them. Likewise, I tell people that choosing a realtor you like is a really important piece because you may be working with them for quite some time.”

Whether you’re considering selling now, later in the year or in 2024, Sable says it’s not too early to get in touch. For more information, contact Nina Sable at 508-733-8935, nina.sable@raveis.com or visit www.sell-withsable.realtor.

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No matter what stage of your life you're in — caring for children, working toward retirement or planning your legacy — unforeseen events like a job loss, a major illness or even a stock market drop could derail what you're working so hard to achieve financially.

With your future at stake, you may want to get guidance from a financial professional who can develop a personalized financial

strategy to help you navigate life's curveballs.

Here are specific ways a financial advisor can help.

Create a customized long-term strategy. This is the first step to weather unforeseen events. You may have several long-term investing goals — your retirement, your child's education or perhaps a dream vacation. A financial advisor can help you build a strategy specific to your goals and risk tolerance. This will include prioritizing those goals, building a path toward each and pivoting your strategy as markets shift and needs change.

Set realistic expectations. Successful investing requires discipline and patience — most individual investors make their money over time, not overnight. Start by setting realistic timelines to reach each of your goals. And don't be surprised if you need to make trade-offs, like working an extra year to help fund your retirement dream home. It's re-

alistic to expect you'll hit some bumps in the road. Perhaps the markets will drop and the value of your portfolio may follow. (It's also realistic to expect they will rebound, as they have historically. Of course, past performance of the markets is no guarantee of what will happen in the future.) A financial advisor can help you keep your emotions in check no matter what comes your way and stay focused on the long term, knowing you have a customized strategy in place.

Diversify your investments. The foundation for your portfolio is your asset allocation, or how you divide your assets among stocks, bonds, cash and other investments. Different investments behave differently in various market conditions, so maintaining a good mix can help better weather market fluctuations than putting "all your eggs in one basket." Finding the right diversification mix, and keeping it balanced despite what the market does, can get complicated, but it's almost sec-

ond nature for a good financial advisor. All investments do carry risk, and asset allocation doesn't ensure a profit or protect against loss in a declining market.

Keep a long-term outlook. It's easy to become distracted by the latest headline, expert prediction or market swing. However, if these events don't change your long-term outlook, there probably isn't a reason to make changes to your strategy. In fact, these declines often present good opportunities if you're a long-term investor, so use them to your advantage — your financial advisor can show you how.

Keep your emergency savings well-funded. This is your "rainy day" fund, and an unexpected event may constitute a rainy day. For most people, maintaining three to six months of total expenses in emergency savings is appropriate. The specific amount depends on factors like your risk of unexpected expenses or temporary loss of income, and how much you value

being confident that you can weather financial emergencies. A financial advisor can help you determine what your emergency savings should look like.

Unexpected events are part of life. You can't predict them, but you can prepare for them. No matter what is going on around you, having a professional by your side can help set you up to navigate them confidently.

Contact Gary Shilman to discuss your financial needs, wants, and wishes.

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The Real Cost of Delaying a Furnace Replacement



Alexandra McKerman



Ryan McKerman

HEATING INSIGHTS

As fall turns to winter, many homeowners are busy preparing for the colder months ahead - changing filters, checking thermostats, changing the batteries in the smoke detectors and CO2 detectors, and stocking up on firewood. But for those with aging furnaces, there's another question that's harder to ignore - should we repair or replace?

At first glance, postponing a furnace replacement might

seem like a budget-friendly option. After all, repairs often cost less upfront than a full install. But experts warn that waiting too long can result in hidden costs that quickly outweigh any short-term savings.

Efficiency Loss = Higher Bills

Older furnaces tend to operate at much lower efficiency levels than today's high-performance systems. In fact, a 20-year-old furnace might be operating at only 60-70% efficiency,

meaning up to 40 cents of every heating dollar is literally going up the flue. Newer models routinely achieve 95%+ efficiency, translating into significant monthly savings on energy bills.

Put simply, every winter you keep an old furnace running, you're likely paying more than you need to for less comfort.

Safety Risks

It's not just about efficiency. Aging systems can develop cracks or leaks in their heat exchangers, which may allow dangerous gases like carbon monoxide to enter your home. Even small leaks or improper venting can pose health hazards, especially for children, older adults, or those with respiratory issues.

Routine maintenance helps reduce these risks, but it can't always offset the wear and tear that naturally accumulates over decades.

Unplanned Emergencies

Few things are worse than a furnace failing on the coldest night of the year. Emergency repairs can be costly, and find-

ing parts for older models can be difficult or even impossible. Plus, when you're desperate for heat, you may end up settling for a "quick fix" rather than making the thoughtful, informed choice you would have preferred in the fall.

Financing Options Make Replacement Easier

The good news is that replacing a furnace doesn't have to break the bank. Many reputable local companies, including Pro Comfort Control, offer financing options, rebates, or seasonal promotions to make the transition more manageable. Some even include perks like free smart thermostats or extended labor warranties to add long-term value.

A Smart Investment in Comfort and Peace of Mind

While it's tempting to delay a replacement one more season, the long-term math rarely adds up. Between rising utility bills, mounting repair costs, and potential safety issues, delaying can cost more, in dollars and in peace of mind, than acting now.

Local experts like Pro Comfort Control specialize in high-quality installations and can help you choose the right system for your family's comfort and peace of mind. Pair the system with our "No Payment til 2026," and you'll have optimal comfort for your home and bank account over the holidays!

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Help Needed in Retiring Cemetery Flags

Volunteers are needed to help respectfully retire U.S. flags from Natick cemeteries Saturday, Nov. 15 and Sunday, Nov. 16.

Each year, following Veterans Day on Nov. 11, volunteers help to remove the flags from local cemeteries before harsh winter conditions set in and damages them.

Anyone interested in volunteering for this effort should reach out to Volunteer Services



Manager Grace O'Donnell at 617-500-2632 or e-mail godonnell@natickma.org for more information

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Rebuilding Self-Confidence, One Wig at a Time

BY JUDITH DORATO O'GARA

Heather Cohen has always loved making women feel beautiful, but the owner of B.LUXE Hair and Makeup Studio lights up when she talks about her latest professional focus, making high-quality realistic wigs for women with hair loss and not only helping them feel whole, but beautiful, again.

"There's nothing I would rather do than be here working on the wigs. I loved my business as a whole since the day I opened it," says Cohen, "but the impact I make on hair loss clients far exceeds anything I thought I would be able to do for people."

The stylist herself felt the upheaval of hair loss four years ago, when a medication she was on caused her own hair to fall out. Not only was it personally devastating, but since her career centered around beautiful hair, succumbing to baldness was simply not an option. That was when she began her several years-long research process.

Cohen estimates she's spent thousands of dollars researching different vendors and materials for her specialized wigs. Since her salon caters primarily to Caucasian women, her wigs are created for that demographic, although, she explains, she learned a lot from a huge black women's hair industry, where wigs are accepted as mainstream. She also learned how to find ethically-sourced hair.

"I don't want to get involved with anyone who is taking advantage of somebody who economically might be struggling, and they're paying them \$2 for their thick, beautiful ponytail. If you see a wig that's inexpensive, the hair is not being ethically sourced or, it did not come from a human head, or they're getting what we call 'drain hair,'" she says.

Cohen is upfront about the cost. "A custom human hair wig can be anywhere from \$1,000 to \$4,000, and it really does depend on the length," she says. That's why Cohen undertook training to receive the correct credentials for a National Provider Identifier (NPI) number, so her clients can use insurance and health savings accounts (HSA).

"There are reasons for hair loss where your health insurance will actually help pay for a cranial prosthetic, which is a really cool word for a wig," she explains.

The entrepreneur spends a lot of time networking with health care providers to build her client base. Others have discovered her through social media support groups and word-of-mouth.

Krista Sirignano found Cohen through a friend, after struggling for decades with alopecia.

"Heather really knows her stuff when it comes to wearing wigs or any type of hairpiece. She took so much time and care with me until we found the perfect fit that made me feel com-

fortable and really good about myself," she says.

Rhonda Parker, whose hair had also thinned due to medications, had tried synthetic wigs, but "after seeing how really beautiful and natural the human hair toppers and wigs looked on, I decided to go that route. On my way home from B. LUXE I stopped by my daughter's house, and she thought my hair looked beautiful, not even realizing it was a topper. As I am always self-conscious, that was the best feeling ever!"

"I always tell people when you first wear alternative hair, it's like exercising a muscle. The more you do it, the easier it gets," says Cohen. "And nobody knows, because nobody is as critical of you as you."

This niche takes commitment, however.

"You can't dabble in wigs," says Cohen, "It's all or nothing, because my wig clients truly need a partner. They need to be able to call me on Friday morning and say, 'I can't get this wig on right. It's crooked. I need to come in today,' and I have to be available to them. You really need to make the decision that you're going to leave the chair behind."

Someday, though, Cohen hopes to train stylists, and by 2026, she envisions her own brand of wigs, noting, "I feel like I've definitely cracked the code on like what feels comfortable, what feels good, what looks natural, and what stays on, and I want to be able to create that line and be able to give



Heather Cohen, owner of b.LUXE Hair & Makeup Studio in Medway, is passionate about helping women with hair loss come out of hiding.

it to everybody."

Cohen has employed her new skills for breast cancer organizations such as the Susan B. Komen Foundation (www.komen.org), and the Gloria Gemma (www.gloriagemma.org).

This month, she'll work with Runway for a Cause (<https://runwayforacause.org>), currently planning its annual NYC fashion show.

Cohen feels immense reward from her new career focus, receiving a sense of giving back.

"Working with hair loss clients and giving them back that level of self-confidence makes me feel like I'm paying the universe back for all of the good that has happened to me," she says, "It's really amazing to help people just feel better and know they don't have to hide."

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Your Money, Your Independence

Use November to Finalize Year-End Success and Plan for 2026



Glenn Brown, CFP

November is a pivotal month for financial planning — the time to measure progress, make final strategic tax decisions for 2025, and prepare for 2026. Wait until December, and your finances might get lost somewhere between pumpkin pie and ugly holiday sweaters.

Here's what you do now to stay in control.

1. Review Your Planning Goals

Have you met savings and investment targets? Paid down debt? Improved spending habits? Reviewing your progress helps identify what to accelerate before December 31 and where

to focus in 2026.

2. Tax Planning Strategies

November is ideal for evaluating tax opportunities while there's still time to act.

- Does a Roth conversion or switching future 401(k) contributions to Roth make sense?
- If converting, what's your projected 2025 tax bracket, and how much room remains before moving up a bracket?
- Are you or a grandparent planning to gift more than \$19,000 to a child's 529 Plan?
- Are you self-employed and opening a Solo 401(k)? The plan must be created by December 31, though contributions can be made until your 2026 tax-filing deadline.

Regulatory Update & Gifting: The OBBB Act of 2025 made many TCJA provisions permanent, including lower income tax brackets and the higher standard deduction, so the expected 2026 "rate reset" won't occur. Some temporary provisions — like higher SALT deduction limits and expanded child/education incentives —

phase down later. Consider whether realizing income, Roth conversions, or charitable deductions in 2025 could improve your long-term tax plan.

The annual gift tax exclusion remains \$19,000 per recipient for 2025, and the federal lifetime gift and estate tax exemption rises to \$15 million per individual starting January 1, 2026. The top estate and gift tax rate stays 40%.

3. Open Enrollment and Workplace Benefits

Open enrollment is your yearly chance to review benefits:

- Does your health plan still meet your needs?
- Should you fund an HSA or FSA for pre-tax medical savings?
- Do supplemental life, disability, or dependent care benefits make sense?

Use Your FSA Before It Expires: FSAs are "use-it-or-lose-it." For 2025, employers may allow up to \$660 to carry over into 2026, or a 2½-month grace period—not both. If you don't use it, it's gone — unlike that leftover Halloween candy you somehow keep eating

through March.

4. Evaluate Your Investment Portfolio

Review your asset allocation and rebalance if needed. Diversification across asset classes — not just equities — helps manage risk.

If nearing retirement or expecting major expenses, plan how to access funds efficiently. Tailor your strategy by account type (taxable, traditional, Roth, HSA) to balance liquidity, growth, and tax efficiency.

5. Cash Flow & Emergency Savings

Review cash flow and savings. Retirees using a Bucket Strategy should replenish cash to cover short-term income gaps over 2–3 years. Working individuals should maintain 3–4 months of liquidity and access to credit (e.g., HELOC) for unexpected expenses.

6. Don't Forget Your RMDs

For 2025, the Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) age remains 73. Inherited IRAs from non-spouses after 2019 require annual RMDs within the 10-year rule. Penalties have been waived through 2025 but take

effect January 1, 2026.

Conclusion

November is a month for reflection, gratitude, and preparation. Reviewing finances now can set you up for a stronger 2026 — and help you avoid that awkward moment when you realize you splurged on "holiday gifts" for yourself.

If you're unsure where to start, connect with your Certified Financial Planner® to finish 2025 strong and position yourself for success in the year ahead.

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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Service council seeks donations to help neighbors during the holidays

The Natick Service Council is kicking off the holidays with its Season of Support Fundraising Campaign to help provide essential support to families, teens and seniors during Thanksgiving and the holidays.

Every holiday season, the Natick Service Council aims to ensure that all neighbors can celebrate with joy, dignity and peace of mind.

The campaign is raising funds for a Thanksgiving program that provides gift cards of \$100 to \$150, based on household size, for clients to prepare a meal that reflects their traditions and preferences.

Money is also raised for a holiday program that provides gift cards for teens (\$150) and seniors (\$50) plus gifts for children.

The goal is to raise \$100,000 to meet the needs of the community.

Established in 1962, Natick



Service Council has been dedicated to serving the most economically disadvantaged members of the community. The council helps clients meet basic needs for food, housing, utilities and programs for children with the goal of promoting self-sufficiency. The council is guided by the motto, "Neighbors Helping Neighbors" with an ultimate goal of serving community members with dignity, compassion and confidentiality.

For more information, visit natickservicecouncil.org.

Kindness to be Celebrated with Variety of Community Events

Kindness costs nothing and can make a person's day or even change their life.

In celebration of Kindness Week, Nov. 8 to 15, and the Spark Kindness Caught Being Kind community campaign, a series of events is scheduled in Natick to promote and celebrate kindness.

A community kindness celebration will take place from 1 to 3 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 9 at Connor Heffler Park. The community will gather for an all-ages event to honor those "caught being kind." These are individuals whose everyday actions make life brighter for others.

An open door meal will be served at 4:30 p.m. Monday, Nov. 10 at the Natick Elks Club, 95 Speen St. A community meal will be served. Anyone interested in preparing or donating food for the meal or serving at the event should email enolan-greer@sparkkindness.org.

"Raising Caring, Resilient

and Values-Guided Children (in an Age of Anxiety)" will be presented at 7 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 13 at Natick High School. Dr. Richard Weissbourd of Harvard's Making Caring Common Project will discuss what young people need most from adults today.

He will discuss the root causes behind the growing mental health crisis and rising hopelessness in youth, how parents and caregivers can foster kindness, empathy, and a sense of purpose in their children, the vital role of meaning and connection in an achievement-driven culture and why adult well-being matters, how to care for yourself while caring for your children.

This presentation will offer insights and strategies to help families raise emotionally healthy, caring kids while also supporting caregivers' own mental health and resilience. The program is free and open to all caregivers,



educators, and community members, includes time for questions and answers with Dr. Weissbourd and will offer book sales by Ten Trees Books.

The mission of Spark Kindness is to build a kind, resilient and welcoming community where no one feels alone, bullied, unsupported or unconnected. The organization supports families, schools, organizations, coaches, artists, faith and community leaders in building a culture that empowers youth and promotes kindness and respect.

For more information, visit sparkkindness.org.

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The Short Term Rental Report

Direct Bookings: The Next Frontier in Vacation Rental Success



Dave Menapace, President

Why professional hosts are embracing independence from the big booking platforms

In the world of short-term rentals, one phrase has been gaining momentum among professional hosts and property managers: **direct bookings**. A direct booking happens when

a guest reserves a stay directly with the host or management company, rather than using an online travel agency such as Airbnb, Vrbo, or Booking.com. Instead of relying on those major platforms to handle transactions, the property owner becomes the merchant of record through their own website, email, or even a phone conversation.

So why the shift? The answer lies in **control, connection, and cost**. With a direct booking, property managers communicate directly with guests from the start, creating the opportunity to describe the property in detail, answer questions, and highlight what makes the home unique. That personal touch often builds stronger trust and sets the tone for a better guest experience.

From a financial perspective, direct bookings help operators retain more of their income.

Traditional online travel agencies often charge significant fees, sometimes as high as 15 percent, that reduce both the guest's savings and the owner's bottom line. By booking directly, guests save money and hosts keep more of the revenue. Being the merchant of record also allows the operator to hold the funds, providing more flexibility and consistency in enforcing cancellation or payment policies.

However, direct bookings are not without challenges. Unlike Airbnb or Vrbo, which offer automated guest verification and certain fraud protections, property managers handling direct reservations must create their own systems for screening guests. This includes running background checks, verifying age, collecting signed guest agreements, and maintaining secure payment processes. There is also the potential risk of chargebacks

if a guest disputes a transaction with their credit card company, so understanding small claims procedures or having protective policies in place is essential.

Another challenge lies in visibility. Large booking platforms invest millions in search engine optimization and advertising, meaning their listings almost always appear before an independent website. As a result, most management companies find it difficult to rely solely on direct bookings for new guests. The smart approach, as many professional operators have discovered, is to use those larger channels for initial exposure and then convert guests into loyal repeat visitors through direct channels.

That is exactly how leading companies are using this strategy. After a guest books through Airbnb or Vrbo, they collect contact information during the

stay and later invite great guests back through a direct booking website, rewarding them with a lower rate while keeping the relationship in-house.

Looking ahead, direct bookings are becoming a **cornerstone of sustainable growth** in the short-term rental industry. As competition tightens and marketing costs rise, the companies that own their guest relationships will hold the real advantage. With thoughtful systems, consistent branding, and modern technology, direct bookings are no longer just an alternative—they are the future of professional vacation rental management.

Dave Menapace, President
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Plenty of New Chapters this November at Bacon Free Library

Check out what's happening at Bacon Free Library this November.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS All Together Preschool Storytime, Mondays and Tuesdays at 10 a.m.

Stories and songs. Program will be outdoors, weather permitting. Bring a blanket. If the weather is wet or below 55 degrees, storytime is moved indoors.

Lapsit Storytime, Wednesdays at 10 a.m.

Stories, bounces, and songs for babies up to 24 months and their grown-ups. Program is held indoors.

Jammin with You, Fridays, Nov 7 and 21 at 10:30 a.m.

Be prepared to laugh, dance, sing, and jam your way through 30 minutes of non-stop family fun. Program will be outdoors, weather permitting. Bring along a blanket. If the weather is wet or below 45 degrees, this program will be rescheduled.

Read to a Dog, Saturday, Nov. 15 from 10 to 11:15 a.m.

Kids can build confidence and practice their reading skills by reading out loud to a registered therapy dog. Children ages 5 and older can sign up for a 15-minute reading session with Sophie, a gentle golden retriever who loves belly rubs, stories, and cuddles. Registration is required for each child attending.

ADULT PROGRAMS

Virtual: The History of the Flying Santa of the Lighthouses, Monday, Nov 3 at 7 p.m. on Zoom.

Since 1929, Flying Santa has visited the men, women, and families of the Coast Guard who keep watch over coastal waters at USCG stations and lighthouses. Today, the nonprofit organization Friends of Flying Santa donates thousands of hours each year to ensure the success of the flights that visit the children of Coast Guard families from Maine to New York. Join Jeremy D'Entremont, historian of the U.S. Lighthouse Society and vice president of Friends of Flying Santa, to learn about the colorful history of the Flying Santa program from 1929 to the present day. Contact the library to register for the Zoom link.

"Singing Back the Buffalo," a streaming documentary film, is available Nov. 17 through Dec. 1

In collaboration with the Natick Historical Society sign up for the chance to stream and watch this film, which explores how Indigenous visionaries, scientists, and communities are rematriating the buffalo to the heart of the North American plains they once defined, signaling a turning point for Indigenous nations, the ecosystem, and our collective survival. Contact the library to register for the film.

Virtual: Fact & Fiction: The Art of British Spycraft will be presented at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 19 on Zoom.

Author, former UK resident, and Anglophile Claire Evans recounts her visit to Bletchley Park, the once top-secret hub of codebreakers vital to Allied intelligence during World War II.

Delve into modern British spy novels and the real-life characters and circumstances that inspired countless plot twists. Contact the library to register for the Zoom.

Virtual: Discussing "The Gilded Age Christmas Cookbook" with author Becky Libourel Diamond, Monday, Nov. 24 at 7 p.m. on Zoom.

The cookbook bridges the past and present, bringing back sugar plums and other confections not typically found in modern cookbooks, while revisiting some beloved favorites. This is a discussion, not a cooking demo. But, feel free to grab the book from your library or local indie bookstore to learn how to make some fantastic, historical treats.

Contact the library to register for the Zoom link.

Virtual: The Impact of 500 Years of Colonialism on the Abenaki and Wabanki Tribes with Anne Jennison, Tuesday, Nov. 28 at 7 p.m. on Zoom.

The "People of the Dawnland" (Abenaki/Wabanaki) of New Hampshire and the Northeast are the first Indigenous peoples in North America to have had contact with Europeans. In this program, Anne Jennison examines how European colonization of North America impacted generations of Abenaki/Wabanaki people and highlights the ways in which the Abenaki/Wabanaki people have acted as agents of their own change through education, self-advocacy, efforts to revitalize their languages and traditional arts, and by working with archeologists, anthropologists, and scientists to recover and



Bacon Free Library. Theresa Knapp photo

reveal more about their history and traditional knowledge. Contact the library to register for the Zoom link.

ADULT BOOK & FILM CLUBS

Mystery Book Club, Thursday, Nov. 6 at 1 p.m. on Zoom: *Iron Lake* by William Kent Krueger

History Book Club, Thursday, Nov. 13 at 11 a.m. on Zoom: *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* by Jill Lepore

Environmental Book Club, Tuesday, Nov. 18 at 7 p.m. on Zoom: *Our Moon: How Earth's Celestial Companion Transformed the Planet, Guided Evolution and Made Us Who We Are* by Rebecca Boyle.

Nonfiction Book Club, Saturday, Dec 6 at 10 a.m. on Zoom. *An Unfinished Love Story: A Personal History of the 1960s* by Doris Ke-

arns Goodwin.

Tuesday Book Club, Tuesday, Dec. 9 at 6:30 p.m. at the library: *The Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhon

Cinephile Mondays, last Monday of the month at 4 p.m. on Zoom. Watch and discuss films. Check the library website for the film of the month and to register.

The Bacon Free Library and Morse Institute Library offer passes for free or reduced-admission to 30 local museums.

The Bacon Free Library, 58 Eliot St., is open Monday through Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. with extended hours on Tuesday until 7 p.m. Saturday hours are 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The library is closed Sundays and for the holiday on Tuesday, Nov. 11 and Thursday and Friday, Nov. 27 and 28.

To register for programs including book clubs, and to learn more about library offerings, visit baconfreelibrary.org

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Halloween Displays Scare Up Some Fun



This guy can't decide if he's in or out of the celebration. Photo by Sean Sullivan



A bone-efied party on Bacon Street. Photo by Sean Sullivan



A pumpkined-up Red Sox fan on Webster Street. Photo by Sean Sullivan



An indecent proposal from Travis Kelce to Taylor Swift on Pond Street. Photo by Sean Sullivan

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Ten-foot pumpkin at 53 School Street Extension. Photo by Sean Sullivan



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State Approves Natick Housing Plan for MBTA Communities Act

BY SANDY QUADROS BOWLES EDITOR

Natick is in compliance with requirements set by the state for cities and towns that are designated as MBTA communities, the town has been informed.

The MBTA Communities Act requires cities and towns in the MBTA service area to allow the creation of multi-family housing without needing special permits in designated districts near transit stops. The goal is to increase housing density and make it easier to build housing, including affordable housing.

The law sets minimum requirements for these zoning districts, which must have a minimum gross density of 15 units per acre and be located with a half mile of a transit stop.

Natick submitted an application for the town's Center

Gateway, Downtown Mixed Use and Residential General zoning districts. These were deemed by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities as meeting the law requirements.

The district met the requirements, according to a letter from Secretary of Housing and Livable Communities Edward Augustus Jr. because of certain factors.

Approval was granted because the district comprises 266.2 acres; multi-family unit capacity is about 4,293 units; the gross density of the district is estimated at 19 units per acre and at least 75 percent of the land and housing unit capacity is within transit station areas.

Compliance allows Natick to apply for The MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund, which supports infrastructure projects related to housing.

Veterans Day Events Include Parade, Appreciation Luncheon

Natick veterans will be honored with a series of events in November.

The annual Veterans Day parade and ceremony will take place Tuesday, Nov. 11.

The parade steps off at 9 a.m. from the Natick police and fire departments, 20-22 East Central Street. Immediately following the parade, a commemorative ceremony will take place at the Morse Institute Library, 14 East Central Street.

For more information, visit www.natickma.gov/617/Veterans-Day

Following the parade and ceremony, the town will host a Veterans Day Appreciation luncheon at 11:30 a.m. at the Natick Community Senior Center, 117 East Central Street.

The luncheon is sponsored by the Charles River Rotary Club, Town of Natick Veterans Services, Community Services Department, Natick Firefighters Local 1707 and the American Legion Post 107.

Active-duty service members and veterans who are willing to participate are wel-



come to participate in the annual reading event at the town's elementary schools.

Volunteers will read a Veterans Day book to a kindergarten or first grade class. This is an opportunity to help teach students about the importance of Veterans Day.

The reading event is scheduled from 10 to 11 a.m. Wednesday, Nov. 5 and Thursday, Nov. 6. Volunteers can choose the day most convenient for them.

To participate, contact Grace O'Donnell, Volunteer Services Manager, at 617-500-2632 or godonnell@natickma.org



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Grant to Bolster Streetscape Design, Infrastructure

Natick has received \$500,000 to improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and streetscape design along the Main Street corridor in Natick Center, State Rep. David P. Linsky, D-Natick, has announced.

These design improvements will seek to enhance multimodal access to the Natick Center MBTA Station, the Cochituate Rail Trail, the town's MBTA Communities district, and the Natick Center Cultural District, while also providing community development opportunities.

The funds were awarded by the Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED) under the FY2026 Community One Stop for Growth Program.

Natick's successful application to the One Stop program signi-

fies the town's commitment to continued improvement in local infrastructure and resources, Linsky said.

The FY2026 Community One Stop for Growth program consists of 13 different grant programs that fund economic development projects, allocates funding to applicants for planning, zoning, construction, and infrastructure related local projects.

"I was pleased to see Natick receive this award, as this funding will be crucial to the planned infrastructure improvements to Natick Center and Natick as a whole," said Linsky. "I am thankful to the Executive Office of Economic Development for facilitating and delivering this funding, and I look forward to



State Rep. David P. Linsky Courtesy photo

seeing the impact of this award in Natick's bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure."

Trail Supporters Build a Bridge to Pickerel Pond Island

Friends of Natick Trails are pleased to report that the Pickerel Pond Island bridge was recently completed.

This effort marks the first time Natick has tried to build a bridge this long with volunteers. Their work opens up a beautiful overlook of the pond for all hikers.

This was no easy task. Volunteers literally got into the water to help with the project.

The organization thanked Massachusetts Audubon staff for their guidance.

The bridge is complete but their efforts aren't. Friends of

Natick Trails report that they plan to use their newly discovered skills at other locations in the future.

As its name implies, the pond is a great spot for pickerel fishing. The pond has also been a popular spot for skating and sledding in winters gone by.

The Friends of Natick Trails is a non-profit corporation. The group assists in the development and enhancement of Natick's trail networks, featuring the Co-chituate Rail Trail.

For more information, visit friendsofnaticktrails.org.



Volunteers weren't afraid to get wet. Courtesy photo



The final result. Courtesy photo



A map shows the bridge location. Courtesy photo



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Gun Buyback Brings in 56 Weapons



The gun buyback at the Hartford Street Presbyterian Church was deemed a success. *Courtesy photo*

Fifty-six weapons and a significant amount of ammunition were collected Oct. 11 at a gun buyback event.

The effort, which took place at the Hartford Street Presbyterian Church, allowed residents to safely dispose of unwanted and unsecured firearms.

While some weapons were rusty, Natick Select Board member Richard Sidney re-

ported, “there were also some pretty good weapons.”

He described the event as “all in all, a very successful afternoon.”

The event was sponsored by Citizens for a Safer Natick and the Natick Interfaith Clergy Association and was supported by the Natick Select Board, Natick Police Department and the Middlesex Sheriff’s Office.

Funding was provided through the MetroWest Health Foundation.

Residents returning rifles and shotguns received \$50. Handgun returns received \$100 and assault weapons \$300.

Ice cream coupons were gifted to those returning BB guns.

All firearms were accepted with no questions asked.

Natick’s First Female Firefighter Retires



Firefighter Glynnis Lee has retired after nearly 25 years on the Natick Fire Department. *Courtesy photo*

Natick’s first female firefighter was honored by the Natick Fire Department upon her recent retirement.

Firefighter Glynnis Lee was appointed to the Natick Fire Department on April 5, 2001. She was part of the original group of paramedics that were hired to bring the department to the ALS (Paramedic) level.

She was also the female hired in the Natick Fire Department. During her tenure, FF Lee has worked on A1, and across all stations before spending the last several years assigned to Engine 2 in South Natick.

The department thanked her for her many years of service to the Town of Natick and wished her a long, happy and healthy retirement.



Courtesy photo

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Senior Center Events Scheduled for November

Here is a sampling of November's events at the Natick Community Senior Center.

Functional strength training, Mondays Nov. 3 through Dec. 29 at 11 a.m. Fee is \$45.

Strength and core fitness Mondays and Wednesdays Nov. 3 to Dec. 31 at 9 a.m. Fee is \$68.

Sculpt and stretch, Mondays Nov. 3 to Dec. 29 at noon. Fee is \$36.

Exercise basics, hip, knee, spine. Tuesdays and Thursdays, Nov. 4 to Nov. 25 at 10 a.m. Fee is \$30.

Bolly X – Bollywood dance inspired workout, Thursdays Nov. 6 to Dec. 18 at 9 a.m. Fee is \$30, drop-in class is \$7.

Dance Cardio with Shawn,

Fridays Nov. 7 to Dec. 19 at 9 a.m. Fee is \$20, drop-in class is \$7.

World Travels with Sophia, Japan. Monday, Nov. 3 at 1 p.m.

Tech workshop with Natick High robotics club, Monday, Nov. 3 at 3 p.m. Pre-registration required.

Open studio art, Wednesdays Nov. 5 to Dec. 10 at 9:30 a.m. Bring your own supplies.

Travel talk with Diana, Galapagos Islands, Tuesday, Nov. 4 at 1 p.m.

Lunch together, chicken fingers, French fries and dessert. Eat-in only. \$7. Wednesday, Nov. 5 at noon.

Wheel of Fortune game show, compete for prizes by solv-

ing word puzzles in a live game. Wednesday, Nov. 5 at 1:30 p.m.

Lost restaurants of yesteryear, history, trivia and personal memories of eateries from years gone by. Wednesday, Nov. 12 at 1 p.m.

Boston Tea Party tasting, a deep dive into America's Revolutionary past, complete with tea tastings. Monday, Nov. 17 at 1 p.m. Fee is \$5.

Festive holiday soups, learn how to make a variety of soups for the holidays. Recipes will be shared. Thursday, Nov. 20 at 1 p.m. Fee is \$5.

The Natick Community Senior Center is located at 117 E. Central St. and can be reached at 508-647-6540.



Natick Community Senior Center. Theresa Knapp photo

Meet Gloria - a Regal and Gorgeous Kitty Looking for her Forever Home!

Gloria is a stunning, 5-year-old, big, fluffy orange (with just a touch of white) kitty who came to us as an owner surrender. Gloria's personality is as warm as her coat. She loves cozy spots, whether it's a sunny windowsill or a soft blanket, and she'll happily keep you company with her soothing purr. Gloria is affectionate and happiest when she's lounging near her favorite people and soaking up attention on her terms.



Like any queen, Gloria has her preferences. She can get a little grumpy when brushed or fussed over too much, and she needs someone who can recognize when she's had enough. Still, her beautiful coat doesn't maintain itself — Gloria appreciates having a dedicated caretaker who can care for her fur properly,

with patience and respect for her boundaries. However, it can't be all work and no play... this outgoing girl isn't afraid to make a fool of herself with a catnip toy!

Gloria also prefers to be the star of the show. She does not appreciate the company of other cats and would thrive best as the only pet in the household and in an adult-only home.

Gloria is genuinely one-of-a-kind with her lion-like mane, golden eyes, and regal personality. She would flourish in a relaxed home with an experienced cat owner who understands feline body language and is ready to spoil her with love, sunshine, and just the right amount of pampering. Are you the devoted cat lover ready to serve — and be adored by — Queen Gloria?

As we are closed to the public, adoptions are by appointment only. If you are interested in meeting Gloria, please fill out our online adoption application (<https://www.shelterluv.com/matchme/adopt/MWHS/Cat>). We will review all applications and make appointments for applicants we feel would provide a good and loving home for Gloria.

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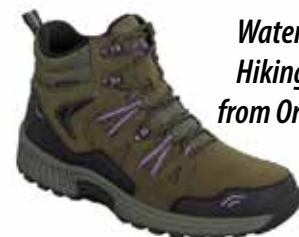
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by Tim Jones

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Sports

NHS Field Hockey Team Aims for Deep Playoff Run

BY KEN HAMWEY
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Meghan Pini's third year as Natick High's field hockey coach is a good example of how a team can keep improving on its regular-season record and how it can build playoff tradition.

Pini's first season ended with a 6-7-5 record and a No. 23 rank in the Division 1 power ratings. Natick, however, lost to Concord-Carlisle in the first round of the state tourney.

Last year, the Redhawks took a giant step forward, finishing Pini's second campaign with an 11-4-3 record and a No. 12 slot in the rankings.

Their playoff outcome also improved. Natick High split two games, defeating Waltham and losing to Belmont.

At Local Town Pages deadline, the current edition of the Redhawks had an 11-3-1 record and a No. 9 power ranking.

How Pini's forces will fare in the playoffs this month remains to be seen but a deep run is realistic.

And so are the goals she set at the start of the season.

"Our objectives early on were to be in the top 10 of the rankings, qualify and advance into the tourney, contend for the Bay State Conference's Carey Division title and build team chemistry on and off the field," Pini said.

All those goals, she suggested "are realistic" and she can make that claim based on the strengths of her team.

"We've got a good field-hockey IQ and we're skilled and athletic," Pini said. "The girls are also instinctive and coachable and they're adept with their decision-making. We lost eight seniors to graduation but we've got nine returnees who have experience."

The 30-year-old Pini, who played field hockey at Natick High School and Worcester State, knows that the playoffs can be surprising and also humbling. But, she also knows what the key ingredients are to succeed.

"Tourney survival is all about preparation, focus and staying healthy," she said. "Perhaps the most important aspect is to show up on game day. That means to



Coach Meghan Pini has guided Natick High's field hockey team to its third straight tourney berth. *Courtesy photo*

be in a serious mode, to be composed, and ready to execute."

Natick's senior captains, Keira Mangan, Gabby Pini (no relation) and Catherine Catching, all play on the defensive end and are a terrific starting point when assessing the Redhawks' talent.

The coach also likes their leadership styles. "They lead by example, they're supportive and they work well together," she said.

Mangan is a right back, Pini plays center back and Catching is the left back.

"Keira is a very smart player who's vocal and passionate about field hockey," Pini said. "An intense competitor, she's got good stick skills. Gabby is a solid three-year veteran who's got a high field-hockey IQ, she's well-skilled, has speed and quickness and is composed. Catherine is new to the defensive unit, having played forward before. She's scrappy, instinctive, and always gives 100 percent."

Junior goalie Natalie Boyer, who's started since she was a freshman, had eight shutouts last year. So far, she's compiled nine shutouts this season.

"Natalie keeps improving," Pini noted. "She reacts quickly, has very good instincts, commu-

nicates well, is fast with her stick and is resilient."

The Redhawks have three junior midfielders who have good endurance and are smooth in handling the transition game. They include Ella Tarka (defensive center midfielder), Jolee Flynn (attacking center midfielder), and outside midfielder Ally Flynn (no relation).

"Ella has a high field-hockey IQ, good stick skills and is a fine decision-maker," Pini offered. "She's the leader of the midfield. Jolee (eight goals) is our fastest player, has quick hands and is very athletic. Another good decision-maker, she displays lots of power. Ally is very gritty and athletic and never gives up."

Sophomore Anna Potter and junior Caylee Lynch (six goals) competed as jayvees last year but now are playing center forward and left forward, respectively.

"Anna is strong and powerful," Pini said. "An offensive threat, she's quick to the cage and hungry to score. Caylee is a lefty whose style is unconventional. She never quits, is very quick and aggressive and eager to score. She's a student of the game and strives to improve."

Pini also emphasizes that her assistant coaches are a big plus.



Natick High's field hockey captains are, from left, Catherine Catching, Keira Mangan, and Gabby Pini. *Courtesy photo*

They include a trio of varsity assistants (Erin Quirk, Lizzie Mazzola and Shelley Why); jayvee 1 coach Katie Grigley and her assistant (Molly Fair); and jayvee 2 coach Ann Burnes.

"They're all supportive, dedicated and knowledgeable," Pini said.

Relying on a competitive philosophy that focuses on reaching one's potential and enjoying sports, Pini believes that winning is the by-product of those aspects. "Sports also teach valuable life lessons," she added. "And, those include overcoming adversity, being resilient, accepting responsibility, and being accountable. Other good lessons are learning to be good leaders, quality teammates and building lasting relationships."

A native of Natick, Pini played

field hockey, ice hockey and softball at Natick High and was a senior captain in all three. She also was selected as female athlete of the year as a senior.

Pini played field hockey (midfielder) and lacrosse at Worcester State. After graduating from college, Pini was hired at the Kennedy Middle School in Natick as a physical education instructor. Her first coaching post was as an assistant Fitchburg State for two years, then she assisted Burnes for two years at Natick High.

Pini's style of field hockey leans towards a possession game with crisp passing and distribution. "We play with high intensity and a gritty nature," she said.

Those two attributes will be keys in keeping Natick High's field hockey program on an upward trajectory.

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Oh Dear, Be Aware of Deer Crossings This Time of Year

Drivers should be especially alert for deer this time of year, AAA Northeast and wildlife officials report.

From now through the end of December, deer are more likely to cross roads in Middlesex County and throughout the state

That increases the chances that vehicles will collide with the racing deer.

Fall is by far the worst season for deer collisions, the organizations report.

Nearly half of all 2024 deer crashes in Massachusetts — 44 percent — were reported in October through December.

In Massachusetts, there were 1,569 deer crashes from October to December 2024, equivalent to once every 84 minutes, according to the MassDOT Impact Crash Data Portal.

These crashes were most common near sunset, with 79% of crashes taking place outside daylight hours.

Middlesex County, where Natick is located, reported the second most crashes with 231. Only nearby Worcester County

had more with 270.

Bristol/Plymouth counties logged 229 crashes and Essex County reported 124.

Drivers can be especially vulnerable to deer strikes this time of year because deer rutting season happens during those months, when instinct drives deer to look for mates.

The fervor of reproducing often leads to erratic behavior, with the animals more likely to run into traffic, especially during dusk. Drivers should be especially alert during the evening rush and during overnight hours.

“Striking a deer can be extremely dangerous, with the animal possibly going through the windshield, seriously injuring or killing the driver and passengers,” said Mark Schieldrop, senior spokesperson for AAA Northeast.

But abrupt evasive maneuvers can be even worse, he said. Drivers should never swerve to avoid a deer, especially on country roads.

Going to the right could send the vehicle into a stationary

roadside object, such as a tree or light pole. Swerving to the left could result in a lethal head-on crash with oncoming traffic.

Even slamming too hard on the brakes could send the front end of the vehicle into a nose-dive, rolling the animal up the hood and through the windshield.

The consequences of deer crashes can be severe. In 2023, 218 people were killed and more than 40,000 were injured nationwide in crashes involving live animals, according to the latest data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

AAA offers the following tips for avoiding or mitigating deer crashes:

Scan the shoulders of the road in front of you. Deer may dash out from wooded areas adjacent to the road.

Obey the speed limit. Lower speeds will give a driver more time to react to unexpected animal movement.

Sound the horn with one long blast if you notice animals early enough. The sound may frighten



Deer are especially common on the roads this time of year, so caution is urged. Photo courtesy Mass Wildlife

them away.

Apply the brakes if a collision is unavoidable to lessen the energy of the crash.

Contact your insurance company to report any damage to your car, which generally falls under comprehensive coverage. Take photos of the damage if you can do so safely and without

entering the roadway.

Mass Wildlife urges drivers to also be aware of deer crossing signs and to reduce distractions to provide more time to react if needed.

Vehicle collisions with deer should be reported to the Massachusetts Environmental Police at 1-800-632-8075.

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Bookstore Writes New Chapter, One Volunteer at a Time



Volunteer to volunteer, books were transferred from the previous Ten Trees Book location to its new one nearby. *Courtesy photos*



BY SEAN SULLIVAN

In fire brigades of old, townsfolk showed and lined up in service of a community in need. In that era, when some structure was ablaze, buckets of water were passed hand to hand until they could be thrown on the flames.

On a sunny Sunday last month, locals likewise gathered to convey something essential from neighbor to neighbor.

Since its founding about a year ago, Ten Trees Books had operated out of its Main Street location. The small business shared space at The Hive, a retail incubator that seeks to give startups a smoother runway toward success.

Ten Trees has achieved liftoff during that time, and its founder decided it was time for the bookseller to venture out on its own.

It's a big move but not a distant one. Ten Trees found and has leased retail space just across Main Street, in the storefront that Calliope Paperie previously occupied.

That its new location is less than a stone's throw away posed something of a conundrum for the bookseller. Too close to transport its bound editions by truck, too far to shlep those hundreds of pounds of paperbacks and hardcovers by hand.

As a solution, a book brigade was suggested.

Ten Trees devotees and customers had heard about the plan, and stood side by side on Oct. 19 for the big move. Volunteers passed stacks of books from

one to the next, transporting the volumes to the store's new home.

To traverse Route 27, members of the brigade traveled the thoroughfare in small groups, where willing hands accepted those bundles of books and continued passing them toward their destination.

"You just grab a handful of books and pass them on to the next guy," said Kim Rickard. "We basically created a human chain."

She founded and owns Ten Trees, and was busy the day after with volunteers alphabetizing and organizing the tomes.

"I couldn't believe the outpouring from the community."

A relatively recent addition to Natick with her family, Rickard saw the need for a local bookstore and decided to fill it. The store was named as a tribute to the ten ash trees the town was forced to remove from the Natick Common due to their poor health.

They were replaced with a crop of new and diverse species, a gesture that Rickard saw as a nod to and a hope for the future. This reflected an ethic of community, she said, a sense of spirit that convinced the family they'd found their forever home in Natick.

Though the move for Ten Trees was a lateral and local one geographically, Rickard said she has high hopes for the budding bookstore.

"I really wanted it to be about how special Natick is," she said. "I think there's nowhere to go but up."

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Real Estate Corner

Holiday Home Staging and Winter Maintenance Tips



John McHugh

REAL ESTATE INSIGHTS

As the holiday season approaches, Natick homeowners are gearing up to showcase their properties to potential buyers. Working with staging companies and decorators for years, I have watched them make a lasting impression: it's essential to create a warm and inviting atmosphere that highlights a home's best

features. Tasteful holiday home staging and staying on top of winter maintenance can help you sell your home quickly and for top dollar.

Holiday Home Staging Tips

When it comes to holiday decorating, restraint is key. Aim for a welcoming atmosphere without overwhelming potential buyers. Here are a few tips to get you started:

- Opt for simple, elegant decorations that complement your home's style and decor
- Avoid bold or bright decorations that may be distracting
- Stick to a neutral color scheme, such as whites, silvers, or golds, to create a sophisticated look
- Add some greenery, like a wreath or vase with evergreen branches, to your

entryway or mantel

- Use candles or fairy lights to create a warm and inviting ambiance

Winter Home Maintenance Tips

Before the harsh winter weather sets in, it's crucial to prepare your home for the season. Here are a few essential tasks to add to your to-do list:

- Inspect your roof for damaged or missing shingles and repair them before winter weather causes further damage
- Clean your gutters and downspouts to ensure water flows freely and doesn't accumulate, causing damage to your home's foundation
- Seal any drafts or gaps in your windows and doors to keep warm air in and cold air out
- Disconnect and drain hoses from outdoor faucets

to prevent freezing and bursting

- Consider hiring a professional to inspect and clean your heating system to ensure it's working efficiently and safely

Outdoor Preparation

Your outdoor space is just as important as your indoor space when it comes to selling your home. Here are a few tips to make your outdoor space shine:

- Clear your yard of leaves and debris to make it look well-maintained and inviting
- Add some up-to-date door lighting to highlight your home's best features and create a warm ambiance
- Consider adding some winter-themed planters or decorations to your porch or patio

By following these holiday home staging and winter maintenance tips, you'll be well

on your way to creating a warm and inviting atmosphere that appeals to potential buyers. With a little creativity and planning, you can make your home shine this holiday season and sell it quickly and for top dollar. Staying informed and adaptable is key to success in this dynamic market. Keep up to date with the latest market trends and statistics: it's always good to know the fair market value of your home. Reach out now for a complimentary pricing and market analysis.

John McHugh has been a Senior Agent with Coldwell Banker for 24 years. He can be contacted at JohnSellsNow@gmail.com and 978-902-5646. Visit his website for home-buying/home selling tips and to search all properties: John-McHughRealEstate.com

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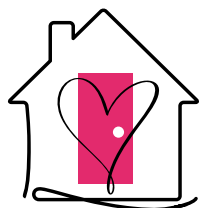
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Real Estate Corner

Recent Natick Home Sales

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The 3-bed, 3-bath, 1,720-square-foot house at 6 Megoonko Road in Natick recently sold for \$1,300,000. Image credit: www.zillow.com

Date	Natick	Amount
10/15/2025	8 Vernon Road	\$615,000
10/10/2025	3 Thoreau Court #8	\$332,000
10/10/2025	4 Post Oak Lane #15	\$420,000
10/10/2025	17 Morgan Drive #403	\$695,000
10/03/2025	7 Milk Street	\$1,350,000
10/02/2025	27 Hardwick Road	\$1,070,000
10/02/2025	59 Pond Street	\$980,000
09/30/2025	6 Megoonko Road	\$1,300,000
09/30/2025	11 Porter Road	\$1,720,000
09/30/2025	48 Silver Hill Lane #15	\$327,900
09/29/2025	3 Post Oak Lane #1	\$408,000
09/29/2025	1 Post Oak Lane #21	\$320,000
09/25/2025	19 Wellesley Road	\$685,000
09/25/2025	57 South Street	\$1,350,000
09/22/2025	47 Hartford Street	\$895,000
09/22/2025	2 Rockwood Road	\$1,420,000
09/19/2025	3 Village Way #4	\$267,700
09/19/2025	5 Waban Street	\$830,000
09/18/2025	3 Village Rock Lane #1	\$300,000
09/16/2025	57 Harvard Street	\$785,000
09/16/2025	226 Pond Street #3	\$1,200,000
09/16/2025	15-15A Moccasin Paths	\$2,400,000

Source: zillow.com Compiled: Local Town Pages

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- 3 teaspoons of curb appeal
- 2 tablespoons of smart pricing
- A generous splash of professional staging
- ½ cup of market magic
- A sprinkle of open house charm
- 3 heaping cups of the #1 real estate team in Natick

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat the market by preparing your home with care and attention to detail.
2. Mix in curb appeal and staging until your home shines inside and out.
3. Add smart pricing and stir until well combined with current market trends.
4. Fold in marketing magic, listing photos, and showings.
5. Don't forget the secret ingredient: #1 real estate team in Natick — this ingredient is crucial for the expertise, negotiation skills, and local know-how.
6. Let offers rise.
7. Serve with a smooth closing and a sweet new beginning

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