



Bellingham BULLETIN

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Bellingham's Favorite Hometown Newspaper

December 1, 2025

BHS Wins 1st State Championship in Volleyball

By KEN HAMWEY, *BULLETIN* SPORTS WRITER

A popular adage suggests that “the third time is a charm,” and that’s how Bellingham High’s volleyball fans viewed the matchup against No. 3 seed Case High in the Division 3 State final.

The Blackhawks suffered two consecutive losses to Ipswich in the Division 4 State playoffs in 2023 and 2024, but top-seeded Bellingham prevailed against the Cardinals, winning the championship, 3-1, at Billerica High on Nov. 15. The scores were 27-25, 28-26, 21-25, 25-18.

The triumph gave BHS its first State title in volleyball, and it also gave coach Steve Mantegani his 100th victory.

“I’m very proud of our kids,” Mantegani said. “They never got down, and they remained enthusiastic about winning this title. For me, I’m pleased to see how the program has evolved. When I started 10 years ago, I inherited a 0-20 team, and my first season ended with a 3-17 record.”

CHAMPIONSHIP
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Mia Milani emphasizes that Bellingham High is No. 1 in the Division 3 State Tournament. Courtesy Photo

Bellingham Vets Share Experience with BMS Sixth Graders

By JUDITH DORATO O’GARA

“Honor.” “Service.” “Dedication.”

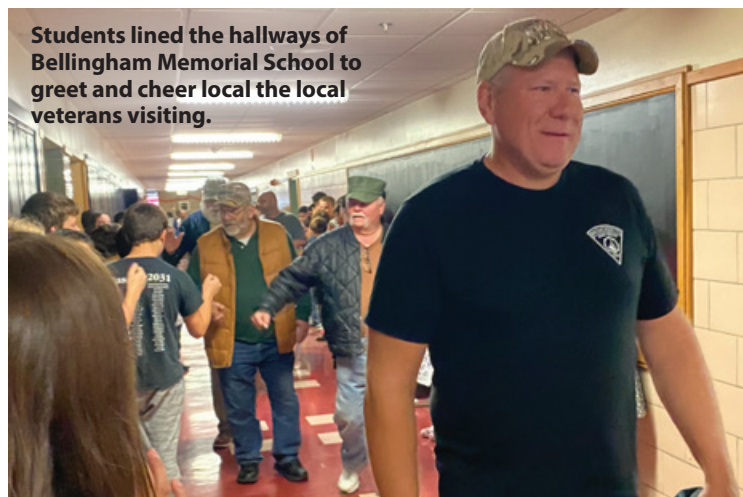
Those were responses of Bellingham veterans visiting one

sixth grade class as to how they would summarize their experi-

BMS

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Students lined the hallways of Bellingham Memorial School to greet and cheer local the local veterans visiting.



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CHAMPIONSHIP

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Mantegani credited Case for the closeness of all four sets.

"There were only mini runs," he noted. "The biggest run was in the fourth set. The score was 15-15, and we clinched the title by going on a 10-3 run. Going into the final set, the totals for both teams were 76-76. Case has a program with lots of tradition. They never give up and have quality players, like hitters Madilyn Botelho and Kayla Dowdell who kept us on our toes."

Bellingham's season ended with a 22-2 record and Case was 22-3.

The Blackhawks' four captains expressed their thoughts on the school's latest crown.

*Senior Val Nolan (outside hitter who had 18 kills and 10 digs) — "We wanted this so badly after losing twice to Ipswich. Case applied pressure, but we relied on confidence. They were scrappy and kept the sets close, but the key for us was to stay poised. We



Bellingham High's volleyball team celebrates the program's first State championship. Courtesy Photo

were hungry for a State title, and it really feels great."

*Junior Sophia Soto (libero who had 18 digs and 8 assists) — "This championship means everything. We're a close-knit group, and my best friends are on the team. The third time was a charm, because we're all about hard work and being intense. Case tested us, but we were cool under pressure and played Bellingham-style volleyball."

*Junior Mia Milani (outside hitter who had 19 kills, 13 digs and the clinching kill) — "We put in a lot of work, and I'm thank-

ful for this championship. I'm also thankful for my teammates and this program. We're about 100 percent effort and a never-give-up attitude. Our motto was all in."

*Senior Jacobi Houston (setter who finished with a career 1,000 assists) — "It's great to be a champion. It took three years, but we all focused on a title. We didn't want to be 0-for-3. Our championship is a testament to a strong work ethic and consistency."

Milani, the TVL's MVP, took her game to a higher level in the

third set against No. 4 seed Lynfield in the Final Four semifinals.

Behind by 20-15, she registered four of her 11 kills during a 12-5 run to finish the deciding set at 27-25, enabling the Blackhawks to advance to the title match. The final tally was 25-17, 25-14, 27-25.

"It's such a long way to 25, and anything can happen," Milani said. "They're a great team, but we just leaned on each other and didn't give up."

BHS won all three of its home matches before the Final Four by 3-0 margins

They defeated the Scituate Sailors, 25-23, 25-13, 25-12, behind the consistent play of Milani who had 14 kills, 2 aces and 5 digs.

After a slow start, Mantegani got the results he wanted by stressing, "The key to winning in the tourney requires an all-out effort against everyone."

The Blackhawks' next foe was 16th-seeded Notre Dame of Worcester, and the Rebels were eliminated with little difficulty. BHS won, 25-10, 25-14, 25-12.

Milani had 14 kills, 4 aces and

4 digs and Nolan had 12 kills, 1 ace and 8 digs.

No. 9 seed Weston was strong and tough, but the Blackhawks beat the Wildcats, 25-21, 25-15, 25-21.

"This match was a good test for us because Weston has been a Division 3 powerhouse," Mantegani said. "They were state champs in 2023, and last year they were runners-up to Medfield. They're a great program."

Soto excelled for the Blackhawks, registering 19 digs and 5 aces.

The tourney matches left no doubt that BHS was a legitimate No. 1 seed, was a deserving TVL Small Division champ, and a dynamic State champion.

Five playoff matches that involved winning 15 sets and losing only one speak volumes about the coaching job Mantegani did and the relentless work ethic of his players.

Blackhawk volleyball deserved the spotlight they received when their bus arrived in Bellingham after winning the State title. The police and-fire escort to the high school was enjoyable, as was the journey that led to a state crown.

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BBA Presents Bellingham's Holiday Celebration December 13

Vehicles Wanted to Join in Holiday Parade at 4:30

The Bellingham Business Association will present Bellingham's Holiday Celebration, on Saturday, December 13th, 2025.

Decorated vehicles will be featured in a parade, which will roll at 4:30 p.m. from Bellingham Middle School, 130 Blackstone St., Bellingham to the 300th Park, located in front of the Municipal Building. There, a tree-lighting will take place.

Afterwards, one and all are invited to head down to Spartan Fitness, 17 N. Main Street, for more holiday festivities.

For updates, visit the BBA's Facebook pages.

Reach out to:

Sue Grady: contact@bellinghambusinessassociation.org

Jenn Altomonte: jenaltomonte@bellinghamma.org

Chief Miller, Bellingham Fire: fireadministration@bellinghamma.org

To sign up for the parade, visit

https://tinyurl.com/BellinghamHoliday2025

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Santa Foundation Sees Need Rise

Giving Trees Placed in Many Local Locations

By JUDITH DORATO O'GARA

Last year, the Santa Foundation, whose mission is to plant seeds of hope by providing holiday gifts for families in need, assisted 716 local families last year. The 501 (c) 3 nonprofit has seen the need jump this year, with over 750 families reaching out for help by mid-November.

You can help.

The Santa Foundation has placed Giving Trees at various locations around town. Tags on the trees represent the wishes of a member of a family in need, and those with generous hearts are encouraged to take a tag and fulfill a wish to help neighbors enduring tough times feel the joy and comfort of the holiday season. Giving Trees will be located at:

- Advanced Auto, 45 Pulaski Blvd. Bellingham
- Grove Street Auto, 79 Grove Street, Franklin
- James Breakfast & More, 850 Franklin St., Wrentham

- King Street Cafe, 390 King St., Franklin
- Middlesex Bank, 1000 Franklin Village Drive, Franklin
- Norfolk Credit Union, 194 Main St., Norfolk
- Postal Center, 279 E Central Street, Franklin
- Postal Center, 9 Medway Rd., Ste. C, Milford
- Postal Center, 14 Milliston Rd., Millis
- Salon Elan, Inc., 9 Summer St., Ste. 102, Franklin
- Franklin Tile, 168 Grove St., Franklin
- Mak's Roast Beef & Breakfast, 451 W. Central St., Franklin

In addition to the Giving Tree locations, although no trees are put up at the following locations, these community partners graciously collect and deliver gifts for The Santa Foundation:

- Franklin Police Department, 911 Panther Way, Franklin
- Medway Police Department, 315 Village St., Franklin
- Norfolk Fire Department, 117 Main St., Norfolk
- Wrentham Police/Fire Department, 89/99 South St., Wrentham
- Douglas Police Department, 29 Depot St., Douglas
- Norfolk Sheriff's Department, 200 West St., Dedham

The Santa Foundation's Dick Timmons says the foundation is grateful for community support, adding, "If you are too busy to buy a gift this year, a Venmo donation of any amount is appreciated and will help the Santa Foundation fulfill its mission."

For more information on the Santa Foundation, visit www.sfjoy.org.

From the Town Clerk's Office...

Happy holidays from the Town Clerk's office! Wishing you safe and happy holidays and a happy new year. As soon as we turn the calendar & before you even get used to writing 2026, expect to see your census in the mail! We work hard all year 'round to make sure our census data is up to date and accurate. Maintaining accurate information for the state is one reason it's so important to fill out and return that form as soon as possible. If the census is not returned in a timely manner, you will be marked as an "inactive voter." Eventually, this will result in a removal from the voter rolls, so please make sure to keep that up to date and accurate.

Along with the census, you'll find a dog license form. If you have a new dog, please return that form to our office along with rabies vaccine information and spay/neuter certificate.

We'll process and return your tag by mail. For renewals, if your dog is up to date on their rabies vaccine in our database, you'll be able to renew that license online in January.

We're also excited to have a new system for requesting vital records by mail. This includes birth, death, and marriage certificates, though we advise you to call ahead and make sure we have the record and it's not restricted. So far, this system has been going wonderfully, and we're hopeful it makes record requests and access a little easier for our residents.

If you have any other suggestions or comments, please reach out to the office! We can be reached at townclerk@bellingshamma.org or (508) 657-2830.

AMY BARTELLONI
TOWN CLERK

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ence in the military in one word.

The veterans in this classroom were part of a bigger effort organized by Jim Hastings, of the Bellingham Veterans Council to teach Bellingham Memorial School students about how they, as young people just a bit older than these students, entered the military. The veterans shared their individual experiences, and although each story was unique, they shared a common theme of camaraderie, duty and service to the country.

Jim Hastings, Chair of the Bellingham, MA Memorial & Veterans Day Committee, noted that he's wanted to collaborate on a program like this for many years and was pleased the effort finally came together. Students lined the hallways to greet and cheer veterans as they made their way to the auditorium, where students had prepared the musical piece, "This Land is Your Land." After this, the veterans presented the 6th graders with a plaque commemorating their visit.



Kevin Calnan, Commander, VFW Post 7272 presented the 6th grade class with a plaque commemorating their visit.

Following the meet and greet in the auditorium, a handful of students led groups of veterans to their 6th grade classroom, where the veterans talked about their experiences and answered student's questions. Although most alluded to some dangers they faced, with

more than one repeating the sentiment, "My mother didn't want me to enlist," veterans spoke of how they learned the importance of discipline and honor, the sacrifice of moments with family, the life experience of living so closely with fellow soldiers who became lifelong friends, the benefits of traveling the world, and the GI bill to further their education.

Veteran Jim Evans described the 6th graders he encountered as "inquisitive, with wonderful questions." Evans joined in, he said, because "It's important to let the kids know what the military is all about and how we felt about the military."

Matthew Marino, an Army veteran from Operation Desert Storm, agreed. He feels the



About 25 local veterans visited Bellingham Memorial Middle School to talk with 6th grade students on November 6th.



knowledge is helpful to kids when "they start figuring out their path and if they want to go into service or not." Marino was pleasantly surprised to meet two honor students considering the military.

"They said they were thinking about going into the military in the classroom as (sixth) graders. That's pretty big," said Marino.

Veteran Scott Daigle also wanted to share, feeling that in

today's world there was a "distraction from history, distraction from patriotism, so today, for me, is a way to address that," he said.

"They asked good question," said veteran Dan Letourneau, of the students, adding, "I think that the kids need to know a lot about what went on as veterans. How we serve, and the good and bad of serving."

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Bellingham Honors Its Veterans

By JUDITH DORATO O'GARA

Veterans Day, organized by the Bellingham Memorial & Veterans Day Committee, was celebrated at a packed house on November 11, 2025 at Bellingham Public Library with a theme of celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps. In addition to keynote speaker Command Sergeant Major Jeremy Bunkley, (who did not speak due to regulations with the government shutdown), guest speakers and US Army veterans Matthew Linehan and Karl Johnson participated, winning Bellingham Middle School essays on Veterans Day were read, and Rep. Mike Soter spoke. Participating clergy included Pastor Baron Rodrigues of First Baptist Church and Father David Mullen, of St. Brendan's. Bellingham Boy Scouts presented the colors, and Bellingham's Oliver brothers sang the National Anthem and Amazing Grace.

The Bellingham Memorial & Veterans Day Committee includes Jim Hastings, Chair, Chris Condon, Sam Cowell, Lori Fafard, Matt Linehan, Nick Mobilia and Paul Saliba.



Out of 34 entrants to the Bellingham Memorial Middle School Veterans Day Essay Contest, essays by these girls stood out. From left, Tanvika Darsi (3rd place), Lori Fafard (Veteran's Day Committee), Sophia Carpentier (1st place), Haileigh Savard (honorable mention), Breagha Briggerman (honorable mention), and Ava Tancrell (2nd place).



Robert and Joseph Oliver sing "Amazing Grace."



Rev. Baron Rodrigues offers a Veterans Day prayer.



Karl Johnson (left) and Matthew Linehan (right) are shown here flanked by Jim Hastings, (left) and Sam Cowell (right)



Bellingham veterans place a wreath remembering the town's lost veterans following the Veterans Day ceremony.

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It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year to Use Affordable Junk Removal

By LINDA CHUSS

With so much to do around the holidays, give yourself the gift of space by using Affordable Junk Removal to help prepare your home for the season. "Life is hectic, we are all so busy in our daily lives that we don't notice how quickly we are being overrun with junk" said Jason Schadler, who founded the business in this area 20 years ago. "It's nice to park your car in the garage during the cold months, but maybe you need to make room there first, and we can help with that."

With Affordable Junk Removal, you can rent a dumpster or have their Junk Removal Professionals come to haul away items that have been gathering dust and taking up precious space. Setting an end-of-year or New Year's resolution to clean up a neglected basement or attic is a great start. You can even put a dumpster rental on your gift list. Sometimes the biggest challenge

Business spotlight

is not knowing where to begin, and that is where Affordable comes in.

"You can load your own dumpster or have our truck guys do all of the work for you," Schadler explained. "And rest assured, we don't just take everything to the landfill. We try and recycle as much as possible. Clothing and household items are donated to local organizations that help our friends and neighbors. That keeps them out of landfills, gives them a new life, and helps us keep our prices down. We're always looking for ways to be more cost effective because customers appreciate our reasonable prices."

Changes in legislation have made it increasingly more difficult to dispose of certain items,



like mattresses, for example. It is now state law that most textiles and mattresses must be recycled. "Finding places to take mattresses is a challenge and the fees for disposal have gone through the roof," said Schadler.

Items like these carry a separate recycling fee that the commercial transfer stations charge because of how labor intensive that recycling is. "People are usually shocked at the cost, and we find ourselves educating the customer as to why these fees exist. Here at Affordable, we view ourselves as an avenue our clients can turn to when they have these items and want them disposed of legally, safely and properly."

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crew and trust us. We do a good job, are fast, efficient, and reliable. We come when we say we will and if anything unexpected comes up, we communicate. We live here too, we are your friends and neighbors, we sponsor your little league teams and run into you at the grocery store. We are your local guys." A quick look at the many years of positive online reviews attests to this.

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Glenn Brown, CFP

My work focuses on financial planning and aligning priorities, but the season upon us is also a reminder to pause, reflect, and reduce stress. December can feel like a sprint between holiday preparations, kids stressed over exams and shows, travel plans, shopping, and year-end deadlines, it's easy to get overwhelmed.

Consider focusing on three simple actions: slow down, show up, and spend ahead. Small steps that help you stay grounded and intentional amid the season's demands.

1. Slow Down: Protect a Few Quiet Moments

In a world that rarely pauses,

now is a good time to tap the brakes:

Block "no-plan" time. Take a day away from work or schedule a low-pressure activity, like a walk on a rail trail in the winter air, grabbing coffee and browsing local shops, or finally enjoying a hobby you've been putting off. Unscheduled space lets everyone reset.

Put phones away for an evening. Board games, walks to see holiday lights, or uninterrupted conversation often do more for connection than any planned outing. Families who pick one evening a week to unplug together often create the best memories of the month.

Say "no" without guilt. Skip traditions or gatherings where being there feels more like an obligation than an opportunity to share joy. Focus on the experiences and events you'll remember and talk about in 10 years. Plan next-day commitments thoughtfully so you can fully enjoy the evening. There's nothing worse than being distracted or leaving early because "I have to do ___ tomorrow," when it could be handled earlier or later. Thoughtful "no's" free up space and make your "yes" moments richer.

2. Show Up: For Your People, Your Community, and Yourself

Presence is often the best gift, and showing up can take many forms:

Support school and community events. Attend concerts, games, or fundraisers, even when they feel small or routine. Kids notice which events adults treat as important. Your presence often matters more than a perfectly wrapped gift.

Choose local when possible. Small purchases at neighborhood shops or restaurants make a difference and keep spending aligned with your values.

Reach out intentionally. A quick note of appreciation or a short call to a teacher, coach, colleague, or friend can leave a lasting impact. Small gestures often create bigger memories than elaborate gifts.

Show up for yourself. December is also a time to reflect on the year. Take 30-60 minutes to review and journal your accomplishments from the past year.

3. Spend Ahead: Raise Cash and Mark Your Calendars

Planning ahead prevents stress later:

Set aside cash now. Travel, home renovations, summer rentals, or other big-ticket aspirational items happening in 2026? Don't wait until "when the time comes" or, worse, reacting to market changes. Allocating funds now reduces stress, supports budgeting, and ensures trips are booked, contracts signed, and projects scheduled.

Mark key dates. Add school breaks, work deadlines, travel plans, and major milestones to your calendar. Early planning creates a roadmap for the year ahead, helps avoid last-minute stress, and ensures everyone in the household is aligned.

These steps reduce stress and give you confidence in completing your aspirational goals next year. These actions make the year ahead feel more manageable and intentional.

Closing Thoughts

By slowing down, showing up, and spending ahead, you can finish the year grounded, organized, and connected to what matters most.


If you'd like help balancing your money, priorities, and peace of mind, talk with your Certified Financial Planner.

Wishing you and your family a wonderful holiday season.

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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1. Fin the elf has an at-home business making and selling holiday wreaths. If a client goes to pick up a wreath at Fin's house and slips on ice and is injured, would Fin's traditional homeowner policy cover the injuries?
2. Connell is working hard in Santa's workshop when he accidentally smacks his hand with a hammer. Connell's hand is severely broken. Will Santa's workers compensation policy pay for the claim even through it was Connell's own fault for getting hurt?
3. Sarah hosts all the elves at her house on Christmas morning. She orders a custom Reese's cake for all the elves to enjoy, but the cake is destroyed during the shipping process. Would Sarah's home insurance cover the damage to the destroyed cake during the shipping process?

Answers: 1. No, Fin needed the Permitted Incidental Occupancies endorsement included on his policy to cover minor at-home business exposures. 2. Yes, the workers compensation policy would pay. 3. No, there is no coverage.



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“Light Up the Town” this December with Bellingham Lions Club

The Bellingham Lions Club is proud to announce the return of its annual **Holiday House Decorating Contest**, a festive tradition that brings sparkle, creativity, and community spirit to neighborhoods across town.

Beginning **December 1**, residents are encouraged to deck their homes in holiday cheer and join the celebration. Participation is open to **all Bellingham residents** and displays representing **all holidays** are warmly welcomed.

Entries will be judged on **presentation, theme, creativity, and overall “wow” factor**. To ensure everyone has a chance to enjoy the dazzling displays, participating homes must be lit and visible from **6 p.m. to 9 p.m.** on the evenings of **Friday, December 19, Saturday, December 20, and Sunday, December 21**. A list of participating addresses will be shared publicly so families can tour and enjoy the festive sights.

Residents must **register by Monday, December 17**, and winners will be announced on **Monday, December 24**. To register, visit the **Bellingham Lions Facebook page** starting December 1 for the official registration link.

This contest is a wonderful way to bring joy to our community and celebrate the season together. We look forward to seeing the creativity and spirit of Bellingham shine bright.

For questions or more information, please contact Brian Salisbury at bellinghamlights@gmail.com.

The Bellingham Lions Club continues its proud tradition of community service and holiday celebration. Let’s light up Bellingham and make this season unforgettable!

Menorah Lighting to Be Held at Gilly’s House

BY GRACE ALLEN

Gilly’s House in Wrentham will once again host a public menorah lighting in celebration of Hanukkah. This year’s gathering is scheduled for Monday, December 15 at 7 p.m. The outdoor ceremony will feature traditional music and Chanukah treats, including donuts, chocolate gelt, and hot apple cider.

Open to people of all ages and all faith backgrounds, the menorah lighting highlights the second night of Hanukkah, the Jewish eight-day Festival of Lights. The holiday commemorates both the victory of Jewish freedom fighters over the Syrian Greeks and the miracle in which a small amount of oil kept the Temple menorah burning for eight days.

The story of Hanukkah underscores the triumph of light



ven. Gillmeister notes that celebrating Hanukkah publicly carries particular meaning today given the rise in antisemitic incidents across the country and around the world.

“The menorah lighting is all about Jewish unity,” she said, adding that the themes of Hanukkah resonate across all faiths.

Organizers say community participation has grown each year, and the support continues to be deeply appreciated.

For questions about the event, email barbara@gillyshouse.com.

over darkness and the enduring pursuit of religious freedom. Sharing that message publicly is an important part of the holiday tradition.

Gilly’s House—a residential program supporting young men in recovery—was founded by Barbara Gillmeister and her husband in memory of their son Ste-

Gilly’s House is located at 1022 West Street. Guests are asked to park at the Little Red Schoolhouse lot, 944 West St., because on-site parking at Gilly’s House is limited. Additional parking is available on Hancock St., near the former post office and Sheldonville Country Store.

Reducing Pollution This Winter

What you can do to prevent stormwater pollution on your property

- 1) Shovel as soon as possible after a snowstorm. As a result, less ice will form and you won't need to use as much salt or de-icer. 
- 2) Use safe and effective alternatives to salt. Remember that salt is not effective below 15 degrees Fahrenheit. Sand or kitty litter will give you traction when it's too cold for salt. 
- 3) Plant native species, that are salt tolerant, near paved areas. Not only will these species be able to survive despite the road salt, they will also act as a protective buffer for local waterways. 
- 4) Make sure the storm drains closest to your property are clear of snow and other debris. Do not shovel snow into storm drains since they empty directly into local creeks. 

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Managing Risk at Different Stages of Life



Todd Miller

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As an investor, you will always need to deal with risk of some kind. How can you manage the risk that accompanies the volatility of the financial markets? The answer depends somewhat on where you are in life.

When you're starting out ... If you're early in your career, with perhaps four or five decades until you retire, you can likely afford to invest primarily for growth, which also means you'll be taking on a higher level of risk – because risk and reward are positively correlated. But, given your age, you will have time to overcome the market downturns that are both inevitable and a normal part of investing. Still, even at this stage, being over-aggressive can be costly.

When you're in the "middle stages" ... At this time of your life, you're possibly well along in your career and working on at least a couple of financial goals, such as saving for retirement and your children's college education. You'll want to begin adjusting the balance in your portfolio between assets with higher growth and those with lower growth since there will be progressively less time

to rebuild losses. You'll need to decide on the balance between risk and growth that's right for you.

When you're a few years from retirement ... You may have already achieved some key goals – perhaps your children have finished college and you've paid off your mortgage. As a result, you may have more money available to put away for retirement. Growth still matters because your retirement could be 25 or 30 years long, and you'll need investments that can keep up with inflation. But you'll also need investments designed to help provide for your income needs in retirement and provide more stability. Also consider reducing your exposure to higher-risk investments and instead consider investing more in stable dividend-paying stocks, government and investment-grade bonds, and cash.

When you're retired ... Once you're retired, you might think you should take no risks at all with substantial assets held in cash. However, you could spend two or three decades in retirement, so you may need some growth potential in your portfolio to stay ahead of inflation. A more balanced mix between equities and fixed income is generally appropriate. Establishing a withdrawal rate that's appropriate for your lifestyle and projected longevity can help reduce the risk of outliving your money. Of course, if there's an extended market downturn during any time of your retirement, you may want to temporarily lower your withdrawal rate.

Managing investment risk is a lifelong process that evolves with your goals, responsibilities and time horizon. While you'll look for balance among your investments based on your life stage, having a balanced and

diversified portfolio doesn't fully protect against a loss. Still, aligning your strategy with your stage of life can help navigate market volatility and stay on track toward long-term success while avoiding emotional investment decisions. The key is staying informed and making intelligent choices that reflect your current income needs and future aspirations.

For more information contact:
 Todd Miller
 O: (781) 652 - 9573 call or text
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The b.LUXE *beauty beat*

Holiday Hearts Initiative:

b.LUXE Celebrates Community with Local Business Gift Card Giveaway

BY GINA WOELFEL

As December's festive spirit fills the streets of Medway and its surrounding towns, twinkling lights adorn storefronts and holiday shoppers bustle through local shops, creating a scene of seasonal joy. But there's a particular warmth spreading through our community this year, one that goes beyond the glow of decorations and holiday shopping. This month, b.LUXE Hair and Makeup is celebrating what we're calling the "Holiday Hearts Initiative," a tribute to the small businesses that make our communities thrive and the loyal customers who support them.

The concept is beautifully simple: **b.LUXE is Gifting Ten \$50 Gift Cards to Some of Our Favorite Local Businesses Throughout Medway, Franklin, And Hopkinton.** But here's where it gets truly special; these aren't gift cards FROM b.LUXE. Instead, we're empowering our fellow small business owners to pay it forward, giving them the freedom to award these gift cards to customers they feel are deserving, whether that's a loyal patron, someone going through a difficult time, or simply a face that brightens their day.

"December is the heart of the holiday season, and it reminds us what's truly important," explains b.LUXE owner Heather Cohen. "We've always believed in lifting each other up, and supporting the incredible small businesses in our area. It's not just a good business practice, it's the foundation of what makes these tight-knit communities so special. These businesses are run by our neighbors, staffed by our friends, and together they create the unique character that makes our community feel like home."

Each of these ten businesses brings something unique to our towns...

Molly's Apothecary in Medway has been crafting hand-made natural soaps, lotions, and

bath products since 2006. Run by sisters Ann and Margaret at Medway Mill, the business was born from a mother's love—named after their mom Molly and started when Ann's son experienced skin issues and she wanted an all-natural solution. Their commitment to using only the finest oils, butters, and essential oils has made them a destination for those seeking natural, thoughtfully made skincare.

www.mollysapothecary.com

Muffin House Cafe in Medway needs little introduction to locals. Since 2014, owner Sheldon Strasnick has been creating what many claim are the best blueberry muffins since the legendary Jordan Marsh bakery. Opening at 5 a.m. daily, this family-owned cafe serves not just their famous muffins but breakfast sandwiches, lunch options, and specialty coffees. The success speaks for itself—the original Medway location has grown to six shops throughout the region.

www.muffinhousecafe.com

Over in Hopkinton, **Swoon Central Boutique** has been a gathering place for women since 2014. More than just a clothing store, Swoon has become a community hub where friendships flourish over trendy apparel, jewelry, and gifts. The boutique recently welcomed new owner Alaina Chagnon, a local kindergarten teacher who previously loved shopping at Swoon and now brings fresh energy and passion to this beloved space.

www.swooncentral.com

Terrazza Gift Shop in Franklin has been transporting customers to the Tuscan countryside since 2004. Specializing in gifts, jewelry, home decor, and garden accents inspired by French Country and Italian landscapes, this Franklin Village treasure offers everything from elegant Italian pottery to serene landscape prints. The moment you walk through their doors, the bubbling fountains and scents of lavender and vanilla create an instant escape. **www.terrazzagifts.com**

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Apricot Lane Boutique in Franklin joined our community more recently, bringing the 30-year-old California-based franchise's philosophy of local ownership and personalized service to East Central Street in 2022. Owner Marta McNulty curates unique styles weekly, ensuring that women of all ages can find flattering, timeless, and affordable fashion. The boutique's relaxed atmosphere and knowledgeable fashion consultants make every shopping trip feel special. **www.apricotlaneboutique.com**

Comer Teng Jewelry Studio, also in Franklin, represents the beautiful intersection of art, sustainability, and entrepreneurship. Husband and wife team Sean Comer and Paulina Teng (PT) create lightweight, hypoallergenic jewelry and accessories from wood, leather, acrylic, and upcycled materials in their home studio. Their commitment extends beyond beautiful design—they use only recyclable packaging materials and donate monthly to organizations making the world better. **www.comertengstudio.com**

JK Cafe and Catering on West Central Street in Franklin serves up small bites, charcuterie boards, and handcrafted beverages in a welcoming atmosphere. Owner Kelsey Lindsey has created a space where the community gathers for everything from banana nut chai lattes to pressed sandwiches and loaded pasta salads. Open Tuesday through Saturday for both cafe and catering services. **www.jkcateringandevents.com**

Medway Cafe on Main Street is where the town comes together. This sports-themed American restaurant and bar serves up generous portions of



comfort food like fresh seafood dinners and tender steak tips, alongside cold drinks and plenty of TVs for game day. They've earned their loyal following the old-fashioned way: quality food, fair prices, and a friendly atmosphere where everyone feels at home. **www.medwaycafe.com**

Fiori and Fern recently moved to a stunning new location at 138 East Central Street in Franklin, featuring floor-to-ceiling windows that showcase two floors of curated gifts, home decor, plants, and fresh weekly flowers. Owner Michelle Greenwood, with her background in corporate merchandising, has created a unique shopping experience that goes beyond beautiful blooms to include artisan jewelry, candles, and thoughtfully selected home goods. **www.fioriandfern.com**

Finally, The Parlour at **Chat Noir Nail Studio** in Medway brings a touch of French elegance to nail care. Named after a historic French cabaret, owner Jillian Cohen has built a boutique salon in the West Medway Historic District that stands apart from typical walk-in nail salons. Known for meticulous service, rigid safety protocols, and a cozy atmosphere, Chat Noir offers everything from basic manicures to nail art and reconstruction services. **mysite.vagaro.com/theparlouratchatnoir**

What ties all these businesses together is their commitment to more than just transactions. They're building relationships, creating customer experiences, and investing in our communi-

ties. They sponsor local teams, host workshops, employ our neighbors, and show up for events that matter.

"When we support local businesses, we're doing more than making a purchase," reflects Heather. "We're investing in the character of our community, keeping dollars circulating locally, and building the kind of towns we want to live in. This **Holiday Hearts Initiative** is our way of saying thank you to the business owners who pour their hearts into serving us, and to the customers who choose local."

If we remember one thing this season it's that the holidays aren't just about what we buy, but how we build each other up. Maybe you're grabbing your morning coffee or treating yourself to a manicure, or searching for the perfect gift. Every choice to shop local creates ripples of positive impact.

So this December, as you check off your holiday lists and finish your shopping, consider making your next stop one of these wonderful local businesses—or any of the other incredible small shops throughout Medway, Franklin, Hopkinton and our surrounding towns. Supporting them supports us all.

The Holiday Hearts Initiative continues through December. Visit these businesses in person to experience the local love for yourself.

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Bellingham Assessing Results of Aging Survey

By DAVID DUNBAR

Bellingham is on a path to make the town a place where even more residents want to grow up and grow old.

It's called the "Age & Dementia Friendly" initiative. Recently two dozen members of its task force gathered at the Senior Center to hear a summary of results from a community wide survey conducted by the University of Boston over the past summer.

Statewide, more than 200 cities and towns are designated as Age & Dementia Friendly and include Franklin, Milford, Mendon, Worcester and Boston.

"It was so informative," says Kay Page, Chair of the Council on Aging, "we learned so much and we thank the residents for completing the survey. We are excited to get started on our efforts to make Bellingham an Age and Dementia Friendly town -- one you can grow up and grow old in."

The University's survey questionnaire drew 1,374 mailed-in responses (100+ more were completed online). Three focus groups were held with 31 total participants. Key informant interviews were held with nine municipal employees, officials and community leaders.

"Bellingham demonstrates strong community values and existing assets that support aging in place, particularly through the well-regarded Senior Center and municipal services," according to the UMASS report.



The Age & Dementia Friendly Task Force recently met at the Senior Center for a presentation of the University of Massachusetts' survey about the needs, wants, and desires of the town's senior population. The Task Force will look into what can be done to make Bellingham a place where people want to grow up and grow old.

Senior Center Director, Josie Dutil, observed, "We received so much community feedback about our center and already have plans to increase some hours of service to reach those who are still working but would like to attend occasional evening and weekend events. Be on the lookout for our tackling of low hanging fruit topics in the near future."

An hour-long summary was presented by UMASS's Caitlin Coyle and Kathy Burnes. Coyle said the next steps should "prioritize and find topical areas to drill down into and find specifics that will be important and attainable." She noted that an action plan should follow. "We want early wins," she said, and to develop a budget for year one.

One of the key areas that residents expressed concern about was housing. State Representative Mike Soter, who attended the meeting, said, "I hear all the time that if I sell my house, I have nowhere to go." He continued, "We

need more affordable options, so we can keep people in Bellingham."

One of the "Strategic Recommendations" of the UMASS report was to support housing solutions, including ADU (Additional Dwelling Unit) information sessions and aging in place workshops. Another urged addressing financial security through expanded tax work-off programs and advocacy for subsidized housing.

"My mom doesn't want to leave her home," said Fire Chief Bill Miller, who is also a member

of the Task Force. At the presentation, he noted that "What we are talking about is spot on. Pick a topic and keep nibbling on it!"

In the survey, more than half the respondents reported living in Bellingham for at least 35 years. Currently, 25% of town residents are aged 60 and older. Projections indicate that by 2040, those 60-plus will be 34% of the town's population.

In addition to housing, other areas to work on include transportation and accessibility, civic engagement and employment, health and caregiving, programs and services offered at the Senior Center, communication and information, and social activities and inclusion.

Top programs wanted by survey responders include day trips, wellness programs, indoor fitness and lectures, guest speakers or cultural events. Top services requested include lunch or other food offerings, senior tax work-off program expansion, more professional services, in-home programs, information/referral about local resources.

Task Force member and Town

Health Agent Dylan Labonte mentioned, "We might not have to reinvent the wheel; maybe we just need better communications." Coyle added, "Successful outcomes can be awareness... informing people of existing programs."

"We have to leave a legacy for our children," noted Planning Board member Bill O'Connell. "We can't forget everything we've done well... just don't make any mistakes again."

"We are excited to have taken this initial step in what will be a journey travelled together as a community towards ongoing Age & Dementia Friendly practices and infrastructure improvements making Bellingham a community our residents feel confident to age in place," said Center Director Dutil.

You can read the entire 96-page report and/or the nine-page summary from UMASS at www.bellinghamma.org. Click on Departments and select Council on Aging

For more information about the Age & Dementia Friendly initiative go to www.mcoaonline.org/age-dementia-friendly/

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EVO ICL: Is this the New Lasik?

By: ROGER M. KALDAWY, M.D.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, LASIK became the crown jewel of refractive surgery. Patients rushed to correct their vision, thrilled by the idea of being free from glasses and contacts. Over time, however, some of LASIK's limitations became clearer: cutting and thinning of the cornea, potential for worsened dry-eye symptoms, night-vision issues, and concerns about corneal stability — especially in thinner corneas — as well as challenges in achieving precise intraocular lens calculations if cataract surgery is needed later in life.

A new technology has since emerged in the United States — the EVO Visian ICL (often simply called “EVO ICL”) — and its adoption has grown rapidly since FDA approval in 2022. Designed for adults with moderate to high myopia, with or without astigmatism, EVO ICL offers a compelling alternative to LASIK.

What makes EVO ICL different — and increasingly preferable?

Unlike LASIK, EVO ICL does not remove or thin the cornea. The lens is placed behind the iris and in front of the natural crystalline lens, leaving the corneal architecture untouched. There is no flap creation, no tissue removal, and no weakening of the cornea.

Because the cornea remains intact, the risk of corneal ectasia — a rare but serious complication associated with LASIK — is virtually eliminated in properly screened patients. EVO ICL also tends to minimize dry-eye symptoms, since the corneal nerves are not disrupted as they are during laser-based procedures.

Night-vision problems such as glare or halos, often reported after LASIK, are less common with EVO ICL. Because the eye's optical system remains more natural and unaltered, patients frequently report crisp, high-quality vision even in dim light.

Another major advantage is that EVO ICL is reversible and additive rather than subtractive. The lens can be removed or replaced if needed, preserving the

eye's natural anatomy. This feature becomes especially important later in life when cataract surgery may be needed. Since the cornea is untouched, calculations for premium intraocular lenses — such as multifocal implants that restore both distance and near vision — remain highly accurate.

Across the country, surgeons are reporting rapid growth in EVO ICL procedures since its approval. More patients are asking for it, more practices are offering it, and the procedure has quickly become a mainstream choice for vision correction.

Clinically, LASIK remains an excellent option for patients with mild to moderate myopia, healthy corneal thickness, and no significant dry-eye history. But for patients with thinner corneas, higher prescriptions, greater astigmatism, or those thinking ahead to future cataract surgery, EVO ICL is quickly becoming the preferred option. Many surgeons are now offering it even for mild myopia because of its safety, comfort, and strong outcomes.



In short, LASIK may now represent the past for many patients and practices, while EVO ICL stands as the future of refractive correction. Both have their place, but the shift is unmistakable: more people are choosing EVO ICL for its safety, reversibility, comfort, and compatibility with future vision care.

At Milford Franklin Eye Center, we are proud to be at the forefront of this evolution. Dr. Roger Kaldawy is among the first surgeons in the region to offer EVO ICL technology in our state-of-the-art surgery center. With over 30,000 intraocular procedures — and an even higher number of laser cases — Dr. Kaldawy brings unparalleled experience to

this advanced form of refractive surgery. He and his colleagues are committed to helping you achieve your vision goals: reducing your dependence on glasses and contacts while protecting your long-term eye health.

If you're ready to explore true refractive freedom — and considering a meaningful gift of sight this holiday season — contact us for a consultation and discover why EVO ICL may be the procedure of tomorrow, available today.

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Bellingham Fire Department Reaches Out

Plenty of families showed up for the Bellingham Fire Department open house on Saturday, November 1st at the Bellingham Fire Station, 28 Blackstone St., Bellingham.

Children climbed aboard emergency vehicles, checked out firefighter apparatus and even enjoyed some pizza with first responders.



Arthur Newman finds himself a lot taller in the seat of a fire engine.



The first responders shared good cheer...and pizza!



Dave Howard and Kaytlyn Galas keep an eye on kiddos exploring emergency vehicles.



Little Finley gets an early start on CPR skills.

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Municipal Spotlight

Smooth Transition for Laydon as Town Administrator

By KEN HAMWEY,
BULLETIN STAFF WRITER

Joe Laydon labeled Denis Fraine's 37 years as Bellingham's Town Administrator as "a rarity in municipal government."

The 52-year-old Laydon, who succeeded Fraine in September, joked, "I already had big shoes to fill and then the municipal building was named for Denis shortly after I started," adding that the stability in the Town Administrator position was one of the reasons that attracted him to Bellingham. After three months in that role, it's becoming apparent that Laydon is the right person at the right time to take the administrative reins.

A native of Sutton who's lived in Northbridge for the last 17 years with his wife and three daughters, Laydon has a background that's tailor-made to be a Town Administrator. He relies on four key attributes that are crucial for success — patience, curiosity, persistence and being approachable.

"Patience is needed when interacting with staff, boards and the public," Laydon noted. "It helps to limit overreacting and leads to making good decisions. Curiosity involves a willingness



Joe Laydon's experience in municipal government makes him a good fit for Bellingham's Town Administrator position.

to learn more about issues. Persistence is a key if you believe something, and it isn't achieved on the first try. So, you stay with it. Approachability is important in providing customer service. Local government is all about customer service. We are always trying to improve residents' lives, whether it be their child's school, public safety, or their neighborhood."

Laydon previously was Town Manager in Upton for three years before arriving in Bellingham. He also served as interim Town Administrator and Assis-

tant Town Administrator in Littleton before working in Upton. And, during a period of 20 years before his roles in Littleton, he was Town Planner in Grafton, Weston, Stoughton and Wayland.

"My planning experience will be helpful in Bellingham," Laydon said. "Planners play a crucial role in consensus building; they interact with residents on potential projects and develop relationships with business owners. A planner is also involved in grant management. Applying for grants and being successful in securing funding is so important for towns because of limited resources."

Working in Littleton and Upton, however, enabled Laydon to gain the knowledge and experience needed to manage a town of Bellingham's size. Upton's population is 8,200 and Bellingham's is 17,600.

In Upton, Laydon oversaw filling vacancies in key department positions, managed outside financial consulting services within the Finance Department while coordinating the hiring of a Treasurer Collector and Principal Assessor, reorganized separate building, planning, conservation and Zoning Board personnel into a consolidated Department of Land Use and Inspectional Services, and secured more than \$5 million in grant funding, including \$4.2

million Mass Works/Housing Works funding for water/sewer extension project.

Laydon's start in Bellingham comes at a difficult time. "Municipal finances and state funding are constrictive, and that limits resources for providing services," he said. "Plus, we have to consider maintaining physical facilities and infrastructure (schools and roads). We'll have to identify and prioritize what needs to get done."

Caroline Lacroix, on board as the Human Resource Director/ Assistant Town Administrator, will team up with Laydon and coordinate specific follow-up work on a variety of issues with department heads.

Laydon got off to a good start when the time arrived to deal with Bellingham Power Choice on energy supply. "We've reduced the cost of electricity supply starting Dec. 2025 and continuing until Dec. 2026," he said.

Laydon no doubt will be involved in providing advice to the Select Board on matters like traffic, public safety, tax rates, vacant warehouses, etc. "I got a call about traffic on my second day of work," he said. "With public safety, we'll try to maintain staff levels and have the resources to help residents maintain their property and keep neighborhoods safe."

Laydon believes that external communication about town issues could improve, and residents could benefit from knowing more about municipal departments. He attends coffee sessions each month at the Senior Center to provide information and learn more about the seniors' needs.

Committing to Bellingham for the long-term, Laydon feels his previous municipal positions "all gave me relevant experience that helped me to be effective in the roles I had in each community. I'll strive to implement and execute the Select Board's policies and to manage the day-to-day operations of our departments to achieve those policies," he emphasized. "And, if there's a grant that will help us in a specific area, we'll apply for it."

Laydon graduated from Sutton High School where he was a two-time National Honor Society student, peer tutor and a four-year varsity soccer player. He later earned a bachelor's degree in social science and technology policy from Worcester Polytech Institute, and his master's degree in city and regional planning is from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.

When he has time, Laydon enjoys skiing, biking, hiking with his dog and spending time with his family.

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Local Social Supports Help Feed Neighbors in Uncertain Times

By DAVID DUNBAR

It has been a confusing, frustrating past month for the 1,019 recipients of SNAP benefits in Bellingham. First, benefits were halted temporarily during the federal government shutdown, then half the benefits would be paid, but nobody seemed to know when and how much. And now the government is open again, SNAP is back, but food insecurity continues.

Roughly 42-million low-income Americans receive monthly benefits from SNAP – the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – also known as the Food Stamp Program. Slightly more than one million in Massachusetts receive SNAP benefits according to the Department of Transitional Assistance. The program provides food-purchasing assistance for low- and no-income people to help them maintain adequate nutrition and health.

The Senior Center can help. Social Services Coordinator Lisa Loo assists people in finding af-

fordable health insurance, less expensive heating fuel, and food, among other things.

“Here at the Center, we want to make our older adults aware that there are food donations coming in at least three days a week (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday),” explains Loo. “Hot lunches are donated from a local charter school and available for pick up inside after 1 p.m. Some days, we may receive only five lunches and other days, up to 15-20. We receive, when available, donated eggs and dairy on Tuesday mornings after 10 a.m.”

She continues, “We also have bread and pastries donated from Shaw’s and Panera Bread. Occasionally, we have items donated from the Muffin House. We have the YMCA pop-up food pantry on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 3 p.m. It is first-come, first-served.”

The Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry at St. Blaise Catholic Church serves 70 to 80 people on Tuesdays every week. “Since

1990,” explains Sue Durkin, the Pantry’s director, “we have been feeding the hungry. And the number of needy Bellingham residents has gone up. Since COVID, it has doubled.”

If you need food, there are many choices at the Pantry including frozen meat, fresh produce, dairy items, breads, low sugar cereal, cans of tuna, peanut butter and much more.

Items can be picked up on Tuesdays between 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. If you would like to donate food or provide financial support, contact Durkin at (508) 966-2862.

The local YMCA has a weekly food program. “And our numbers have tripled,” says Director of Food Access Programs Alyson Delano. “We typically see around 75 families at our walk-in pantry every week, and we are currently up to 150 families.”

The pantry is located at the North Attleboro Branch (in the childcare parking lot) and is available to anyone regardless of the



Lots of bread products are delivered to the Senior Center every week and are available for visitors to help themselves.

town that they live in. It’s open on Wednesdays 12:30 - 2 p.m. and 5:30 - 6:30 p.m., or on Thursdays 7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Address: 300 Elmwood St in North Attleborough.

“We are seeing people who have no food at home and are trying to source their next meal,” says Delano.

Although SNAP benefits have been restored, longer-term consequences remain. Brief disruptions to food access can affect pregnant women and children. Research indicates that children who grow up with food insecurity are more likely to struggle in

school, experience developmental delays, and face higher rates of anxiety, depression and behavioral challenges that can persist into adulthood.

Some additional places to check for food supplies include the Medway Village Food Pantry, (508) 533-6401; Blackstone/Millville Food Pantry, (508) 883-6873; and in Milford check out the Daily Bread Food Pantry, (508) 478-4225 and Tri-Valley Nutrition Program, (508) 478-8102.

And for an update on local SNAP activity visit: www.mass.gov/SNAP.

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Bellingham Democrats Wrap Up the Fall Season

The Bellingham Democratic Town Committee recently wrapped up the fall season with a November meeting that was highlighted by an internal fundraising effort to raise money to benefit the St. Blaise Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry. The Food Pantry, which provides much needed support for hungry Bellingham families has experienced rapid growth in demand over the past two months. Committee members voted to use \$250 from the group's treasury in combination with individual donations

from members and guests at the meeting to provide a \$750 gift to the food pantry. A check was presented to Sue Durkin, Director of Loaves and Fishes, and Rosemarie Marsh, Coordinator, on November 11.

The committee also heard from guest speaker John Griffin of Partners in Democracy. His group advocates for ballot questions that will increase access to the polls for more voters. He provided details on expected ballot questions and encouraged committee support for them in

the upcoming election. Finally, individual members reported on their participation in Hands Off and No Kings rallies in various towns over the past few months and participated in a discussion of both local and national issues.

Democratic Town Committee meetings are open to all Bellingham Democrats and Unenrolled voters who share our values. One need not be a member in order to participate, although new members are always welcome to enroll officially. Meeting times are expected to change in the

new year to the third Tuesday of every month, at 7 p.m. in the Town Hall. The exact meeting room is uncertain, so look for the room location posted that evening on the front door of Town

Hall. There will be no regular meeting in December.

For more information, please contact Patricia Keppler at (508) 966-0003



Bellingham Democrats donate \$750 to the St. Blaise Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry. Pictured (L-R): Pat Keppler, DTC Co-Chair, Rosemarie Marsh, Coordinator of the Food Pantry, Sue Durkin, Director of the Food Pantry, Kevin Keppler, DTC Treasurer

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BVT 2025 Annual Report Now Available

Upton, MA – Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT) is proud to announce that its **2025 Annual Report** is now available. Covering the FY25 fiscal year, the report highlights distinctive achievements of students and staff and key financial information.

“As responsible stewards of your regional vocational technical high school, we continue to take cost-saving measures to protect your investment while providing high-quality career

and technical education,” said **Superintendent-Director Anthony E. Steele II.**

Included is the entrepreneurial journey of Kevin Healy and Noah Boudreau (Electronics, Class of 2019) in the Alumni Spotlight, “It Takes A Spark.” As founders of Smart Escape LLC, they’re revolutionizing safety and successfully demonstrating how a BVT education continues long after graduation.

Read this story and others at: www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/annualreport.

FBRTC Announces Grant Award for Benches on SNETT

Franklin, MA - The Franklin & Bellingham Rail Trail Committee (FBRTC) is pleased to announce that it has been awarded a MassTrails Grant from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The funding will be used to install additional seating along the Southern New England Trunkline Trail (SNETT).

MassTrails grants are awarded by DCR to support the development, maintenance, and improvement of recreational and shared-use trails across the Commonwealth.

This grant will provide the majority of funding needed to install four new benches along the 2.8-mile stretch of the SNETT between Grove Street in Franklin and Center Street in Bellingham. The remaining funds will be provided by FBRTC and its generous community sponsors and donors.

"These new benches will greatly improve comfort and accessibility for all trail users," said Darren McNamara, FBRTC President. "The most common feedback we've received is that the lack of seating made it dif-

ficult for some—particularly those with mobility challenges—to fully enjoy the trail. This project demonstrates how local advocacy groups like FBRTC can work hand-in-hand with state agencies to improve quality of life in our communities."

FBRTC is a volunteer-led advocacy organization dedicated to the development and maintenance of the Southern New England Trunkline Trail. Earlier this year, the committee played a key role in advocating for the use of Community Preservation Act funds in Franklin to purchase disused freight rail land—extending the SNETT by 1.75 miles into downtown Franklin. The group's ongoing priorities include improving the Franklin-Bellingham section of the trail and advancing connectivity toward Blackstone.

FBRTC extends its sincere thanks to the Massachusetts DCR, as well as to state and local officials, sponsors, and donors who supported this successful grant application.

To learn more or get involved, visit fbrtcommittee@gmail.com.



Bellingham Garden Club of MA Shares Food Insecurity Podcasts

After this fall's lack of funding for SNAP, the Bellingham Garden of MA hopes to make Bellingham residents aware of recent Garden Tea Talk podcasts around the issue of food insecurity and resources in Bellingham. Downloadable resources for families is available in Part III of the series.

Check out these podcasts on Spotify and at bellinghamgardenclubofma.com.

Garden Tea Talk: Food Insecurity

Episode 22: Part I:

"SNAP Benefits Crisis and the Government Shutdown."

<https://tinyurl.com/GardenTeaTalk22>

Episode 22.C: Part II: "SNAP Cutbacks & Food Pantries Impact,"

LIVE interview

<https://tinyurl.com/GardenTeaTalk22C>

Episode 22.d: Part III: "SNAP Resources & Community help,"

<https://tinyurl.com/GardenTeaTalk22D>



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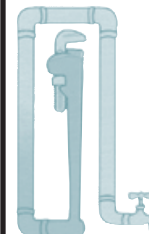
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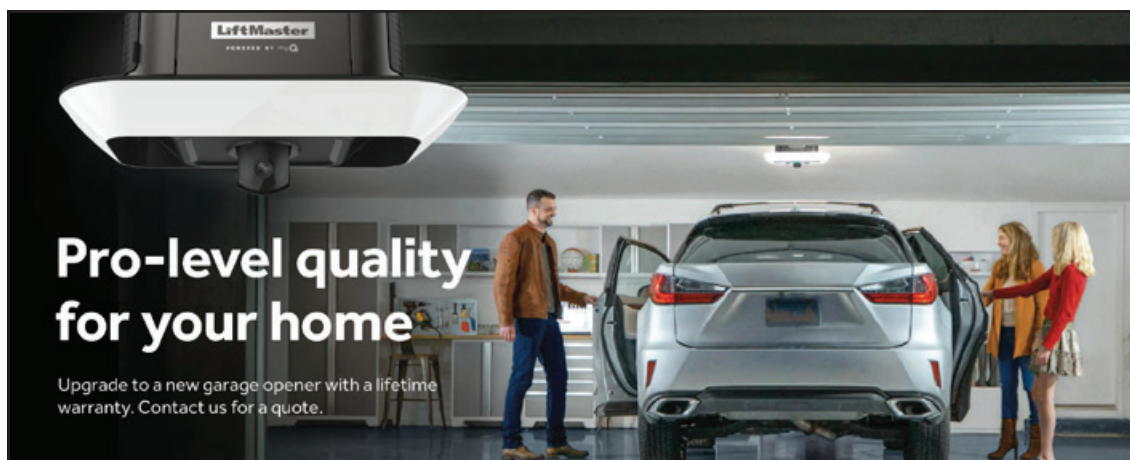
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Bellingham Public Library Highlighted News & Events

For, please visit, www.bellinghamlibrary.org.

Holiday Closings

Closing at 1 p.m., Wednesday, December 24th, Christmas Eve

Closed, Thursday, December 25th, Christmas Day

Closing at 1 p.m., Wednesday, December 31st, New Year's Eve

Closed, Thursday, January 1st, New Year's Day

Special Programs

Winter Wonderland – Friday, December 12th 6-7:30 p.m.
Family Program

Join us for a night of winter crafts, activities, and photo stations to celebrate the season!

Red Cross Blood Drive – Saturday, December 13th 9 am to 1:30 p.m. Register at redcross-blood.org

School Vacation Week Programs – check the library calendar for dates and times

Sharks of New England – best for ages 8 and up

New Year's Eve Party – for families

Adult Programs

Book Discussion Group – Generally meets the 1st Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. Attend in person or on Zoom. On December 1, we will be discussing *The Women* by Kristen Hannah. Contact Suzanne at salpert@cw-mars.org, for more information.

A Novel Idea Book Club for Adults – Tuesday, December 2nd, from 6:30-8 p.m., *Reformatory* by Tananarive Due. If interested, please contact Diane Nelson at atdnelson@cw-mars.org

English Conversation Group – Thursday, December 11th from 5-5:45 p.m. A place to practice speaking to become more fluent in the English language. No registration.

Yoga: Slow Down & Warm Up – Kripalu Yoga For Winter – Tuesdays at 8:30 a.m. Check the library calendar for details.

Friends of the Library Monthly Meeting – Tuesday, December 9th at 7 p.m. To attend email library@bellingham-library.org for the Zoom link!

Needlecraft Night – Wednes-

days from 6-8 p.m. All skill levels welcome. Please bring your own materials.

Library Board of Trustees Meeting – Thursday, December 11th at 7 p.m.

Writing Group for Adults – Tuesday, December 16th 6:30 p.m., In person on Zoom! Listen and share. Reading limit 9 minutes per reader, with a brief opportunity for positive, personal comments only. Contact Marjorie Turner Hollman at marjorie@marjorieturner.com.

Tuesday Fiber Arts & Other Crafts – alternating Tuesdays, December 9th and 23rd, from 6-7:45 p.m.

Bellingham Genealogy Club – Monday, December 22nd from 6-7:30 p.m.

In person or on Zoom! Bring your laptop or use one of our Chromebooks on the fourth Monday of the month. Registration required; all registrants will receive a Zoom link.

Job Search Help: Magnetic Introductions – How to Have them at Hello – Virtual Program- Wednesday, December 10th at 9 a.m.

Catherine Johns wrote the book on communication. What do you say about yourself, your work and the value you offer? Have more impact by attending this virtual program.

Register at the link on the library calendar:

Who Gets to Fly? – How NASA Chooses Its Astronauts – Virtual Program

Wednesday, December 10th at 7 p.m. with Solar System Ambassador David S. Ball. Register at the link on the library calendar: <https://www.bellinghamma.org/792/Library-Event-Calendar>

Virtual Author Talks – register at: <https://library.org/bellinghamma>. Recordings of these talks are also available on the library website in the days following the event.

• Tuesday, December 2nd at 2 p.m. – **Scheming Wives & High Stakes Hilarity with author Sue Hincenbergs**

Chat & Craft for Adults – Make a Rustic Button Wreath or Tree

Monday, December 15th at 6:30 p.m. All materials will be provided (but you are welcome to bring our own buttons if you'd like). Contact Suzanne at salpert@cw-mars.org. Registration required.

Multicultural Festival Committee Members Wanted

The library is planning to host Bellingham's first Multicultural Festival. If you are interested in learning more about the committee and what is involved, please contact Library Director Bernadette Rivard at brivard@bellinghamma.org or (508) 657-2776.

Friends of the Library Program Supply Wish List – Can you assist library programs by purchasing one of these items? Many items are under \$10! <http://bit.ly/3KJiV2i>

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Emily Letourneau's Holiday Fundraiser December 14th

Help Support Boston Children's Hospital by Having Breakfast with Santa

Bellingham, MA - Today, *Team Emily* announced that their annual holiday fundraiser in memory of Emily Letourneau will take place on Sunday, December 14th, at St. Blaise Church. Enjoy Breakfast with Santa from 9 to 11 a.m. or participate virtually to support Boston Children's Hospital.

Since 2002, the Letourneau family has organized annual fundraisers in Emily's memory to give back to Boston Children's Hospital for the compassionate care Emily received. Born in December 2000, Emily was quickly diagnosed with Zellweger's Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder with no cure.

"My family will forever be grateful for the compassionate care that Emily received at Boston Children's Hospital during her short life, treating her as a child and not as a case study," shared Caitlyn Letourneau, Emily's older sister. "Today, Boston Children's treats more children with rare diseases than any other hospital in the country, and it's our family's mission to keep Emily's mem-

ory alive by supporting this life-changing work. As we approach what would have been Emily's 25th birthday this December, we are filled with gratitude for the friends and community members who continue to join us in honoring her and supporting this incredible organization."

What: Emily Letourneau's Breakfast with Santa:

When: Sunday December 14th, 2025, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Where: Saint Blaise Church 1158 S Main St, Bellingham, MA 02019

Donation: \$12pp, \$6 children 6-12, and children under 6 FREE

Other Ways to Donate Virtually: \$20 for 12 chances or for a \$10 donation you get 5 chances to win a gift card holiday wreath.

Raffle drawing on Sunday December 14th, 2025, at 11 a.m.

<http://secure.childrenshospital.org/goto/TeamEmily25>

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Officials Celebrate SNETT Trail Extension

Boston, MA - a cold morning in mid-November, State Rep. Jeffrey N. Roy (D-Franklin) was joined by Congressman Jake Auchincloss, local Franklin town officials and members of the SNETT Rail Trail Committee to celebrate the acquisition of rail line from Grove Street to Union Street.

“This is a tremendous win for the community and will truly boost the crossing neighborhood in Franklin,” said Rep. Roy. “The extension of the rail trail will give families and individuals the opportunity to walk, bike and run through Franklin and beyond. I want to thank Congressman Auchincloss, Franklin officials and the Franklin Bellingham Rail Trail Committee for their persistence and commitment to

Franklin’s resources and continuing to offer recreational and economic development options to the community.”

Rep. Roy worked with Congressman Auchincloss to get CSX, a freight train company, and Franklin officials to provide a pathway for the town to acquire the rail line to turn it into an extension of the rail trail. That would connect the current trailhead on Grove Street to Union Street and extend the line across town. This extension makes the Southern New England Trunkline Trail an 80-mile recreation trail extending from Franklin to Connecticut.

“The rail trail extension is game changing in making Downtown Franklin a compelling destination both for locals and people

from further afield. Franklin will be the ideal starting point for a family walk or bike ride combined with a visit to local businesses,” said Paul Stamp Vice President of the Franklin Bellingham Rail Trail Committee.

Massachusetts contributed \$700,000 towards the purchase of the line and has committed and addition \$1 million to prepare the trail for use.

Cobi Frongillo, Past President of the Franklin & Bellingham Rail Trail Committee and former Franklin Town Councilor, added, “Our community has pushed for this connection for years, and it’s finally moving forward thanks to the persistence of town leaders and the leadership of Representative Roy and Congressman Auchincloss.”



BBA Wraps Up a Busy Season

The Bellingham Business Association extends thanks to everyone who took part in its Halloween Trunk or Treat Stroll. (Bellingham Bulletin was thrilled to participate!) The BBA also wishes to thank all those who participated in a great golf tournament at

Blissful Meadows. Next year’s tournament is scheduled for 9/21/26.

Finally, more thanks extend to those who took part in the an-

nual Taste of Bellingham at the Bellingham Senior Center.

The BBA Holiday party will take place on December 10th, at Savini’s Pomodoro, 476 Rathbun St., Woonsocket. \$50 pp includes dinner, drink, door prize, bingo card and surprise entertainment. Attendees (and guests) are encouraged to bring an unwrapped toy to donate. RSVP by December 5 to contact@BellinghamBusinessAssociation.org.

Also this month, save the date for Bellingham Holiday Celebration coming up on December 13th. Businesses and organizations should get their trucks/trailers ready to display some lights in the parade through town! It’s shaping up to be a great event!

For more information, reach out to Sue at contact@BellinghamBusinessAssociation.org.

Save the Date for BWOT Muffins & More with Santa

Bellingham Women Of Today will welcome Santa with a variety of muffins, cinnamon rolls and more on Saturday, December 13th from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at Saint Blaise Church Hall, 1158 S. Main St. in Bellingham. Admission is \$5 per child; maximum \$15 per family. Children can meet Santa, and parents may take their own photos. Food items will be available for \$1-\$2, and there will be free crafts and coloring pages for kids, as well as holiday items for sale. All proceeds will benefit local Bellingham Women Of Today charities and High School scholarships.

BWOT 3rd Annual Quarter Auction a Success

On Friday, November 7, the Bellingham Women of Today hosted their third quarter auction vendor event at the Bellingham Senior Center. The fun night for all involved 10 Vendors, auction items, door prizes, and over 40 raffles.

Thanks to all who participated and donated to the event.

About the Bellingham Women of Today

The Bellingham Women Of today is a nonprofit civic organization that has served the Bellingham and surrounding

communities for over 35 years. It is one of six Massachusetts chapters of the United States Women of Today.

In October, the BWOT hosted Convention in Mansfield for 70+ Members from all across the US. We are always looking for new members. We meet in the Bellingham police station conference room on the 2nd Monday of each month starting at 7:30 p.m. from September through June, and we are open to anyone 18 years and older. For more information, visit bellinghamwomentoday@gmail.com or find us on Facebook.



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St. Blaise Misfit Toys Fair December 6

Everyone is invited to visit the Island of Misfit Toys, say hi to Rudolph and all the Misfits as they enjoy the Fair on their Island Mountain! St. Blaise is hosting the Misfit Toys Fair on December 6, 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. This annual event brings together folks from Bellingham and surrounding communities for a day of fun and games for all, and it's a great way to support the parish and the community. Local businesses have donated many wonderful donations of gift cards and prizes, which will be included on our main raffle table and drawn at the end of the day. Also, one of the raffle items will be a handmade apron covered in scratch tickets of varying amounts.

Members of the Fair committee and the Holy Stitches have been working for months creating unique quilts, afghans, and jewelry art, which will be available, along with other items, in our Country Store. Store helpers will be happy to assist any-

one wishing to create Christmas gift baskets. The Country Bake Shop will offer homemade treats as well.

The Craft Table will also feature Christmas decor, wreaths and ornaments, handmade jewelry, fabric key rings, bookmarks, tissue holders, and bible covers.

Enjoy coffee, donuts and breads in the Cafe beginning at 9 a.m., then our amazing Cafe workers will serve lunch from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Grab a bag of free popcorn to enjoy as you play the adults' card game or a kids' game set up near the Misfits Island Mountain. Kids can also get free coloring sheets and Nativity scene kits to complete. Bring your camera to take pictures at our snow scene with Rudolph and all the Misfit Toys, and watch "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer."

For more information or questions you can contact Sue Garten, suegarten25@gmail.com. Hope to see you there!



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Sports

Football Roundup

By KEN HAMWEY,
BULLETIN SPORTS WRITER

Bellingham High's football team lost an opportunity to advance in the Division 6 playoffs, losing to defending champ Hudson, 21-17, before a large crowd at the Morgan Bowl on Nov. 7. The Blackhawks led, 17-15, after Anthony Barrasso kicked a 34-yard field goal into the wind late in the fourth quarter. But, Hudson's Hawks capitalized on penalties and rallied for a comeback triumph.

The winning drive began with less than three minutes to go at Bellingham's 44. Quarterback Logan Dome ran four times for 30 yards, putting the Hawks into the red zone. On the sixth and final play of the drive, the QB turned and pitched to Jeremy Torres for the winning score. BHS had 50 seconds left, but a fumbled kickoff gave the ball back to Hudson.

Both teams took turns with the lead. BHS led, 6-0; Hudson was up, 15-12 and 15-14; then the Blackhawks regained the lead at 17-15 before Torres' winning TD.

Besides Barrasso's field goal, Bellingham's scores included a 25-yard run by Mason Alger in the first quarter and an eight-yard run by Sullivan in the third period.

BHS coach Dan Haddad labeled the loss as "very, very difficult."

"To still be in the game at the end and battling, that's what I'm most proud of," he said. "We lost it on the mental part of the game. That's on me for not coaching it better. Also, they got over 30 yards in penalties at a key time, and that's just difficult to overcome."

Sullivan (two interceptions) and Wyatt Callery (12 tackles) drew praise from Haddad for their defensive work.

Below are summaries of the Blackhawks other four games before they close out the season against Norton on Thanksgiving.

BHS-DOVER-SHERBORN

BHS extended its winning streak at Anderson Field to four games by downing Dover-Sher-

born, 23-7. The triumph gave BHS a 4-2 record.

Cam MacGregor's 10-yard pass to Callery in the second quarter gave the Blackhawks a 6-0 lead and Barrasso's 35-yard field goal closed out the half with BHS ahead, 9-0.

The Raiders scored and kicked an extra point in the first minute of the final quarter, cutting their deficit to 9-7, but touchdowns by Sullivan (one-yard run) and Alger (two-yard run) and two PATs by Barrasso put the contest out of reach.

Defensive standouts for BHS were Jacoby McCarthy (2 tackles, 4 tackles for loss), Michael Demers (2 tackles, 3 tackles for loss), and Callery (3 tackles, 3 tackles for loss, 1 sack). Key offensive efforts included Jaxen Elder's 120 yards rushing on 20 carries and MacGregor's 153 total yards and one TD pass.

BHS-MEDFIELD

Eric Ormberg has coached the Medfield Warriors football team for 15 years, and he's pleased when Bellingham is successful — except when the Blackhawks are the Warriors' opponents.

That was the case when BHS played Medfield on Oct. 24. The Warriors trounced Bellingham, 48-7, remaining unbeaten at 7-0. Bellingham resident and School Committee member Ormberg called the triumph "bittersweet."

The Blackhawks were competing without MacGregor, their starting quarterback, out because of illness. Sullivan filled in for MacGregor and scored on a 20-yard run on the game's first drive. Barrasso kicked the extra point for the Blackhawks' only points.

BHS-MEDWAY

The Blackhawks lost their second straight game when they were shut out by Medway, 21-0, on a rainy night at Hanlon Field.

The Mustangs scored twice in the second quarter and once in the final period to improve their record to 5-3. The Blackhawks were 4-4.

The Mustangs defense and offense competed at a high

level. Their coach, Rigney, Bellingham High's head coach for seven years, has links to five Super Bowl champions. As a Bellingham assistant for 12 years, he was part of four Bowl champions, and he earned another title as an assistant at Uxbridge.

The game marked the second time Sullivan had to play quarterback with MacGregor still sidelined.

"We had some mental breakdowns," Haddad said. "We just need to execute better and to rely on mental toughness. Tough times don't last; tough people do."

BHS-NORWOOD

The Blackhawks ended their three-game losing streak by defeating Norwood, 21-9, in a consolation playoff game.

MacGregor returned at QB and threw two touchdown passes in the second quarter — a 10-yard toss to Alger and a 20-yard score to Piselli. Bellingham's final TD came in the third quarter on a 10-yard run by Alger, who finished with 105 yards rushing. Barrasso had one extra point kick and Piselli ran for a two-point conversion.

MacGregor threw for 92 yards, Piselli had three recep-



Bellingham's Sam Sullivan filled in at quarterback for three games.

tions for 30 yards and Nicholson had 2 tackles, 2 tackles for losses and a forced fumble. Callery had 12 tackles and a fumble recovery and McCarthy had 2 tackles, 2 tackles for losses and a forced fumble. The triumph gave BHS a 5-5 record.

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Sports

Rebuilding in the Past for BHS Girls' Basketball Team

By KEN HAMWEY,
BULLETIN SPORTS WRITER

The rebuilding of the Bellingham High girls' basketball program is near the finish line.

Bob Pingeton, who took the coaching reins in 2022, knew he had some major work to do after his first season. The Blackhawks finished with a 3-18 record and he lost a key player — center Maya Jackson — early in the season to an ACL injury. His second year didn't show much improvement after the girls posted a 4-19 record, playing without capable forward Maggie Kane, who spent two seasons battling cancer and dealing with an ACL injury.

Last year, however, Pingeton's labor started to yield positive results. The culture had changed, and the players had adjusted to his style. When he arrived in Bellingham, he was the program's fifth coach in 10 years. Last season, his squad went 12-12, which included a tourney triumph over Dedham and a loss to powerful Norwell.

"I'd say we're far along in rebuilding, but there's still work to do," Pingeton emphasized.

"What we focused on during the last three years was being consistent in practice, buying into a new system, and improving skills."

Four seniors graduated from last year's team, three of whom were starters, but there are 10 returnees with varying amounts of experience.

"We're still young but we do have experience," Pingeton said. "Our other strengths include athleticism (speed and quickness), depth, a good basketball IQ, and shooting. We lack size, so boxing out will be the key to getting rebounds."

Pingeton listed three goals for this season, which gets underway on Dec. 12 at home against Dracut.

"First, we want our players to trust, respect and be accountable to one another," he said. "We want to be competitive in every game and we want to qualify for the tourney and strive to go on a deep run. My objectives are realistic because of our overall team strengths."

The Blackhawks' two captains — Kane and Deb Kalem

— personify the strengths that Pingeton noted. Kalem, unfortunately, may miss the entire season because of an ACL tear suffered last spring in lacrosse.

"Maggie has good leadership qualities," Pingeton said. "A senior forward, she leads by example, and we need her to rebound. She can also drive to the hoop and score by shooting three-pointers. We'll miss Deb, who worked hard on defense and hustled all the time. A junior who plays guard, she's got a love for the game and will be a leader from the bench. Both our captains are vocal."

Freshman Nicolette Hayes, who started last year as an eighth-grader, not only scored 257 points, but also displayed lots of all-around ability.

"Nicolette averaged 11 points and 2 steals a game," Pingeton noted. "She plays basketball all year long at the varsity and club levels. A two-guard, we'll rely on her to score, distribute the ball, play defense and get steals. She'll draw plenty of attention from opponents and see the best defenders, night after night. But, I expect she'll handle that well."

Sophomore Liz Glynn, who averaged 5.5 points last year, will start at forward. "Liz is physically strong and can get to the rim," Pingeton offered. "She knows how to get position and rebound and she can also shoot threes."

Kaleigh Simpson averaged 15 minutes off the bench last year as a freshman. She, too, has all-around talent. "Kaleigh has a high hoop IQ," Pingeton said. "A 5-foot-7 point guard, she's an effective passer, has good court vision and could average double figures. Kaleigh can score, drive and find open teammates."

Another sophomore, Stephanie Painchaud, will play center. "Our tallest player at 5-10, Stephanie has the size to rebound and defend," Pingeton said. "She's also a good mid-range shooter."

Caleigh Hayes, who's played two seasons on the varsity, is a very athletic junior guard. "Caleigh is a good defender who can also get to the rim," Pingeton said. "She might be our best ath-



Co-captain Maggie Kane, who leads by example, can score, but she'll be counted on to rebound.

lete and will have a bigger role this year."

Three players who got varsity experience last year are senior forward Hayley Higgins and sophomore guards Shannon Marino and Paige Kane. Pingeton expects the trio to be effective contributors this season.

Lauren Fraine will again be the jayvee coach and also serve as a varsity aid. David Simpson has been added as a volunteer assistant coach.

Dracut, Watertown and Nipmuc have been scheduled as non-league games, and Pingeton also has BHS hosting a tourney in mid-February. That tournament will include Sandwich, Ded-

ham and Blackstone-Millville on Feb. 16 and 17. BMR will oppose Bellingham in the opening round.

Also serving as the head coach of Bellingham's golf team and Franklin High's girls tennis squad, the 52-year-old Pingeton has a common-sense coaching philosophy.

"Winning is important but reaching one's potential is vital," he said. "When players hit their competitive peak, then winning and enjoyment follow. And, valuable life lessons can be learned from athletics. I want our players to be able to handle adversity, be resilient and lead on and off the court."

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Sports

A Bright Future For BHS Field Hockey Team?

By KEN HAMWEY,
BULLETIN SPORTS WRITER

The Bellingham High field hockey team has a phrase to describe its 3-18 season, and it provides a hint about how different next year could be. They words say: “there is so much our record does not show.”

The Blackhawks ended their regular season at 2-17 and had a power ranking of 30. That made them eligible for the playoffs, and it was a testament of how strong the opponents were on their schedule.

BHS won a play-in game to open the tourney by blanking Franklin County Tech, 4-0. Next up was a tough test, facing No. 3 seed Dover-Sherborn who defeated the Blackhawks, 4-0. The Raiders, however, are one of the premier teams in the state.

Here are some facts about the regular season that likely will benefit the Blackhawks going forward.

- Freshman forward Emme Henchey scored two goals in the Franklin County game, giving her 11 goals and 5 assists for the season.
- BHS won the best sportsmanship award for the TVL Small Division. “That’s a huge accomplishment considering our record,” said coach Kerry Cowell. “It says so much about the girls.”
- Ashley Kamin (senior midfielder) was voted as a TVL All-Star and Ella Park (junior defender) and Hayley Higgins (senior midfielder) were honorable mention choices.

- Seven out of 11 starting players will return next year and four are freshmen.
- The Blackhawks goal differential was -1.7 (five matches were one-goal losses).
- The Medfield factor is telling. “We got stronger as the season progressed,” Cowell said, “Medfield is a good example. They were ranked No.4. We lost our first game against them 8-0. When we played them again at the end of the season, we held them to 2-0 and it was zero-zero until the third quarter.”
- Many of the players are multi-sport athletes. “We will continue to do our best to come together for a winter league,” Cowell said. “And, the new captains will run captains practices during the summer. I’m working on revamping our schedule for next season to play more teams that are compatible with us.”

The thinking now among the field hockey community at BHS is “wait ‘til next year,” a phrase that loyal Red Sox fans lamented ever year after a not-so-good season. World Series championships took time to achieve but they became a reality.

At Bellingham High, field hockey is definitely looking like a program that’s ready to embrace success — in the won-lost standings and in the power rankings.

Bellingham Senior Center Upcoming Events

The Bellingham Senior Center is located at 40 Blackstone St., Bellingham. Reach them at (508) 966-0398 or online at www.bellinghamma.org.

Bellingham Lion’s Club FREE Sit-Down Lunch: At the Senior Center Saturday, December 6 from noon to 1 p.m. Enjoy a turkey luncheon, pie for dessert, drinks all from the popular restaurant PJ’s. And there will be raffles, prizes, and, perhaps, a visit from Santa.

Please call the Senior Center at (508) 966-0398 to reserve your spot. Seating is limited.

Christmas Party at the Senior Center. Thursday, December 11 at noon. \$15 per person. Entertainment, including a sing-along; on the menu from Micky G’s will be stuffed chicken breast and all the fixings!

New Year’s Eve Party at the Center. Tuesday, December 30, from noon to 3 p.m. \$5 per person. Nifty decorations... entertainment... great food including appetizers, pizza and salad.

Our Lady of Fatima Shrine, 101 Summer St., Holliston: Come walk with us on Wednesday, 12/17. We’ll meet at the Senior Center at 4:45 p.m. We have volunteer car drivers; no bus transportation is available. Please contact Lisa Loo at (508) 966-0398 to volunteer to drive or to reserve your spot for the walk.

The Sharing Tree: Please help us brighten the holidays for seniors who might not have fam-

ily nearby and consider visiting our “Sharing Tree” at the Senior Center. Tags on the Sharing Tree will request gift cards, and we encourage you to consider further supporting our community by purchasing gift cards from local Bellingham establishments.

For those who may not drive, there’s a GATRA van that can get the recipient to any location in town to enjoy and redeem their gift card. Our Sharing Tree will be up at the Senior Center through December 12.

The Giving Tree

For 22 years, Senior Center “Knitters” have produced hats, mittens, scarves, and more to donate to the St. Blaise Food Pantry, Milford Hospital and local nursing homes. Purchased goods are also accepted, and it’s not too late to donate. Please bring your contribution to the Senior Center as soon as possible. Items will be shared before Christmas.

annual drive is underway. Please consider donating a new, unwrapped toy (or several). Donation box is at the Bellingham Municipal Center. Drive continues to 12/8.

Snow Angels:

If you are interested and available to volunteer to help an elderly or disabled neighbor in need with snow removal this winter, please call the Senior Center at (508) 966-0398 to be on the volunteer list.

Coffee & Conversation: Every Tuesday at 9:30 a.m. New town manager Joe Laydon will attend the first Tuesday of each month.

Spiritual Book Club: The Club meets via Zoom on Mondays at 9 a.m. Discussion will be about *Quantum Healing* by Deepak Chopra. Please call host Josie Dutil at (508) 657-2705 for more information.

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BVT Inducts 57 Students into National and Technical Honor Societies

Upton, MA – On Thursday, Nov. 6, a group of 57 students from Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT) were inducted into the James S. Mullaney Chapter of the National Honor Society (NHS) and/or

the Paul Sullivan Chapter of the National Technical Honor Society (NTHS) during an induction ceremony.

While the NHS and the NTHS are two distinct organizations with different focuses and criteria, at BVT students

can be members of one or both chapters. NHS membership honors those who have met rigorous academic standards and who exemplify scholarship, leadership, service, and character. NTHS membership recognizes students who demonstrate academic

and technical excellence in their CTE program, as well as character, skills, and work ethic.

2025 National Honor Society and National Technical Honor Society Inductees



New members of the NHS and NTHS were honored during an induction ceremony at BVT on Nov. 6. (Photo courtesy of Blackstone Valley Tech)

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Free Play on Story of Christ December 5th & 6th

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Blackstone Valley will celebrate Christmas with the musical production, Savior of the World: His Birth. This musical production was commissioned by The Church of Jesus Christ & premiered in 2000 at the Church's Conference Center Theater in SLC, UT. We feel grateful to be performing it here locally!



story of Jesus Christ's birth in this uplifting musical drama that weaves scripture and original music into the story of Mary and Joseph, Zacharias and Elisabeth, and humble shepherds seeking the newborn Christ child.

Tickets are free but they are necessary as seating capacity is limited. Showtime is approximately 1 hour. Performances are Friday, December 5th and Saturday, December 6th from 7-8 p.m. at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (91 Jordan Rd., Franklin). Visitsavioroftheworldtickets.org to reserve your tickets now!

Our Blackstone Valley Stake cast is comprised of more than 50 actors and singers drawn from local congregations and will have full costuming, set, sound & lighting. Come experience the sacred

Did You Know?

You Can Discover the Power of Coding with Fiero Code!

Are you ready to unlock the world of coding? Whether you're a total beginner or looking to sharpen your skills, Fiero Code is here to help! As a free online coding resource, available through the Bellingham Library, Fiero Code offers an interactive, self-paced way to learn how to code—no experience required!

At the Bellingham Public Library, we're committed to helping our community build skills for the future.

What is Fiero Code?

Fiero Code is a fun and engaging platform designed for learners of all ages, but especially great for kids and teens who want to explore programming. It offers step-by-step lessons, hands-on projects, and exciting challenges.

What Can You Learn?

With Fiero Code, you'll dive into real-world programming languages and skills, including:

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- HTML, CSS & JavaScript – Build and style your own websites

- Python – Learn one of the most popular programming languages used by professionals.
- SQL & Databases – Discover how to manage and organize data.
- Game Development – Create and design your own video games.
- React and Node – Everything you need to get a job in web development.

Why Learn to Code?

Coding isn't just about computers—it's about problem-solving, creativity, and future job skills! Whether your child dreams of designing video games, creating apps, or simply wants to try something new, coding is a valuable skill in today's digital world.

And the best part? It's all free with your library card!

How to Get Started

- Visit www.bellinghamlibrary.org and find the Fiero Code link on the Online Resources page.
- Sign up with your library card.
- Start coding! Explore courses, build projects, and level up your skills.

Yankee Swap & Christmas Gala for Ladies of St. Anne

Forty Ladies brought gifts of dancing animals, cozy throws, angels and wine as well as many other gifts to celebrate the early start of the Christmas season. Some received gifts they kept, but there were a few who went shopping to steal/swap the gift of another, all with a smile and a wink! It's always one of our favorite laugh-filled evenings. We thank Mrs. Claus for guiding us through the festivities.

Our December meeting is the Christmas Gala on December 11, 6 p.m., at Willowbrook Restaurant, in Mendon, MA. A buffet dinner including Steak Tips, Chicken Parmesan, Baked Haddock, vegetables, rolls, salad, coffee, tea and dessert will be offered at \$40 per person. Please contact Ann-Marie Lavalley-Kell, (508) 488-8528 or Monique Boucher, (508) 566-3736, for information.



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BFCCPS Accepting K-8 Applications

Public Charter School Offers Roundtrip Bus Service to 10 Communities

The Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School (BFCCPS), located in Franklin, Massachusetts, has begun accepting applications for the upcoming 2026-2027 school year. The 30-year-old regional public charter school for students in Kindergarten through Grade Eight, is one of the oldest and most successful charter schools in Massachusetts.

Siblings of currently enrolled students will have priority enrollment status; thereafter applicants from communities in the school's district will have a chance at securing a spot for their child through the annual enrollment lottery to be held on February 25, 2026. Applicants from outside of the region (who reside within the state of Massachusetts) will be eligible for enrollment should additional spaces remain after all sibling and regional applicants have been placed.

For the 2026-2027 school year, 100 spaces will be offered

for Kindergarten, and students at all other grade levels will receive a waiting list number. Offers for Grades 1-8 would be contingent upon currently enrolled students electing not to return next year.

The school provides a well-rounded, rigorous academic program designed to educate the whole child providing courses in art, music, languages, technology, and physical education. In addition to our core academic and co-curricular classes, students in Grade 6-8 participate in weekly Classical Enrichment Courses and start Latin studies in Grade Six. Middle schoolers are also eligible to participate in our Spring Musical. Students in Grades 5-8 also have the opportunity to participate in overnight field trips each spring.

Round trip bus transportation is available with bus stops currently in Bellingham, Blackstone, Franklin, Norfolk, Mendon, Medway, Milford, Millis, Norfolk, and Wrentham.



BFCCPS alumni continue to excel at the high school level.

Please visit the school's website at www.bfccps.org for enrollment details, including applications.

Enrollment information sessions and building tours will be held on January 24th and February 7 from 10 a.m. to noon. **Please note that the enrollment period will come to a close on February 11, 2026 at 4pm.**

To learn more about the educational mission of the school or have enrollment-related questions, please contact the school's Communication Coordinator, Joanne Basile at jbasile@bfccps.org or (508) 541-3434 x104.

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Norfolk County Sheriff's Office Warns Residents about Jury Duty Scam

Dedham, MA – Sheriff Patrick McDermott and the Norfolk County Sheriff's Office are warning residents about an increase in calls by scammers claiming to work for the sheriff, or local police departments after two victims came forward after losing a total of \$6,700 in scams linked to "missed jury duty."

Both incidents occurred on Monday, October 27th. Both victims came to our office, after they had sent money to the scammers.

"The Norfolk County Sheriff's Office never makes calls like this, and neither do local police departments," said Sheriff McDermott. "Just hang up on anyone who is demanding money and acting like they are from our office, or another law enforcement agency, threatening you with arrest or detainment for things like 'missed jury duty' or an 'outstanding warrant.'"

LiveARTS String Quartet Draws Crowd to Historical Museum

On November 16, 2025, the LiveARTS String Quartet made a comeback appearance at the Franklin Historical Museum. The event was so popular 90 people attended, with standing room only after filling 70 chairs.

The classical music ensemble hopes to fundraise to present a full season of chamber concerts. To donate, visit <https://tinyurl.com/liveartsstring>.

For information, email liveartsma@gmail.com.

Photos by Mia Krishnaswami



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“Creating Comfort” Theme of Thimble Pleasures Quilt Show Theme

In keeping with its mission statement, Thimble Pleasures Quilt Guild has chosen “Creating Comfort” for the theme of its upcoming quilt show.

The guild members involve themselves in both local and national outreach charity programs that create comfort for others. For many years the members have been visiting local nursing and assisted living facilities to work with the residents in designing their own lap quilts. These lap quilts are then sewn by the guild members and returned to the residents during a Reveal Party. From February to October of this year the guild made a total of

136 lap quilts for these residents and many more extra lap quilts made for residents who were not able to attend the design session.

In addition to lap quilts, members also make:

- Fidget quilts that are distributed to nursing homes as well as to members’ family and friends
- Placemats for spring and for the winter holidays given to a local Senior Center drawn during a guild meeting
- Chemo caps donated to UMass Memorial Hospital or to local residents who are undergoing chemo therapy

• Brian’s Quilts, flannel-backed small quilts made for children for local police departments to carry in their cruisers to comfort a child in need due to accident, fire or family need.

• Kennel Quilts, a national program benefitting rescue leagues working in disaster-stricken areas. Kennel Quilts are sent out to areas of our country that are rescuing animals from forest fires, earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, or blizzards. More than 50 Kennel quilts have been distributed this year.

• Kitten Bags, a new project, that provides cotton drawstring bags filled kitten toys and treats for kittens adopted from the Blackstone Valley Regional Animal Shelter.

In addition to these projects the guild also donates full-sized quilts through its Comfort Quilt program. These quilts are given to those in need and to people whose story has touched our members with joy, loss, stress, illness, and in many other ways. These quilts are also donated to support groups such as the End of Life Program at Milford Regional Medical Center. Many

quilts have also been sent to the Ukraine to support refugees there as well as to areas of the United States which have experienced disasters.

You can see examples of these efforts at the Thimble Pleasures Quilt Guild biennial quilt show on March 15-16 from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at the Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School in Upton.

4 Precious Paws Rescue Fundraiser at The Greenhouse Pub

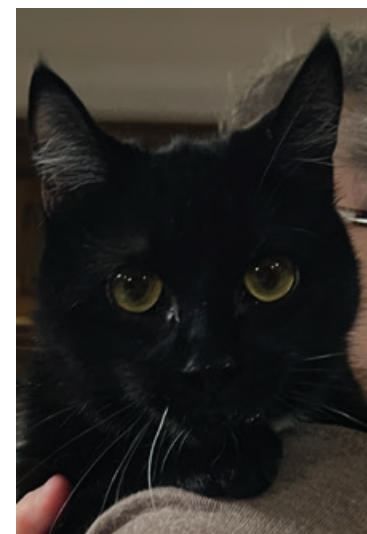
The Greenhouse Pub, 3 Cape Rd. Mendon, MA, 01756, will host a fundraiser for 4 Precious Paws Rescue, Inc. on Thursday,

December 4th, from 4:30 to 9 p.m. 4PP is a 501 (c) (3) public charity, dedicated to stray, surrendered, and abandoned cats and kittens. They specialize in pregnant moms, ensuring their health and safety with proper veterinary care. In addition, they raise the kittens in a clean, safe environment, providing them with activities for socialization.

4PP is presently raising money for Lil, a kitten born with a withered leg. Now that she is past the age of six months, she is eligible for surgery that will allow her to become a three-legged cat with balance, agility and grace.

Please join 4PP for good music, fine food, and raffles. Also, please visit the holiday table! Enjoy the music of David Laska from 4:30 to 6:30 followed by Dan Chauvin from 6:30 to 8:30.

Visit www.4preciouspawsrescueincma.com. Donations may be made in person, through Venmo and our QR code.



Lil needs surgery to amputate her leg. A fundraiser at The Greenhouse Pub in Mendon on December 4th will help her and other kitties the care they need.

Franklin’s Holiday Happenings & Gift Guide Now Online

This month! Franklin’s Holiday Happenings & Gift Guide is online and ready with ideas and inspiration. The Holiday Guide makes it easy to shop local this December.

Check out the guide at franklindowntownpartnership.org – the home of Franklin Downtown Partnership’s website. The easy-to-read guide lists special sales, promotions, activities, and events for the season from FDP business members. Make sure you check it out for shopping, places to dine, services, and

entertainment for the family.

The Holiday Guide includes unique gift ideas and special treats for upcoming holidays and other special occasions. The guide also includes special holiday-themed events and activities in town.

It’s the perfect preview for ideas before you go out shopping. It’s easy because it’s all local. Support your local economy and enjoy shopping for gifts, food, clothing, activities, and luxury services for yourself and others through December 31.

Follow the Downtown Partnership on Instagram and Facebook for updates on the guide and other events at:

<https://www.instagram.com/franklindowntownpartnership/> and

<https://www.facebook.com/franklindowntownpartnership.org/>

For more information go to www.franklindowntownpartnership.org.

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SAFE Wins \$40,000 Grant to Expand Services to Western MA

The SAFE Coalition has been awarded a \$40,000 grant from the Beveridge Family Foundation to expand services into Western Massachusetts. This generous funding will support the opening of a new office in Springfield in Spring 2026.

This expansion fills a critical gap and brings our barrier-free model to communities in urgent need. We're deeply grateful to the Beveridge Foundation for supporting our mission to deliver judgement-free, compassionate care where it's needed most!

Diaper Bank Receives Community Support

SAFE's Community Diaper Bank recently received an outpouring of support from both local and philanthropic partners. The Franklin Cross Country Team delivered over 3,000 diapers, 6,700 wipes, and formula, all collected during a diaper drive they hosted last month. The team even ran to the SAFE office to hand deliver the donations!

In addition, SAFE is deeply grateful to have been awarded a \$3,000 grant from Digital Fed-

eral Credit Union's "DCU for Kids" Foundation, helping us meet growing demand for essential baby supplies, not covered by public assistance programs like SNAP, across Southeastern Massachusetts. With diaper costs up 48% since 2020 and many families spending over \$1,000 per child annually, this support is more critical than ever. In the past month alone, SAFE has distributed over 2,000 diapers.

Beyond supplies, the Diaper Bank connects families to broader services like recovery coaching, mental health support, and education.

Want to support the Diaper Bank?

- Host a diaper drive: Email info@safecoalitionma.org to collaborate.
- Drop off donations at the SAFE office. Email intern@safecoalitionma.org to schedule.
- Purchase diapers through SAFE's Amazon wish list at <https://tinyurl.com/SAFE-Diaperbank>.

Rep. Soter Joins Colleagues to Protect MA Transit Workers from Assaults

Boston, MA – State Rep. Michael J. Soter (R-Bellingham) recently supported legislation that would add transit workers to an existing law providing penalties for assaulting a public employee while they are engaged in the performance of their duties.

House Bill 4645, *An Act relative to assault and battery upon a transit workers*, was engrossed on a unanimous vote of 160-0 by the House of Representatives on October 22. At press time, the bill still required Senate approval and Gov. Maura Healey's signature before it becomes law.

Rep. Soter said the House proposal will provide protections for transit workers under an existing statute governing assault and battery committed against a public employee. The law carries a penalty of imprisonment for not less than 90 days and not more than 2½ years in a house of correction or a fine of between \$500 and \$5,000.

House Bill 4645 also expands the current law by adding the crime of assault and battery by means of a bodily substance, such as "any human secretion, discharge or emission including,

but not limited to, blood, saliva, mucous, semen, urine or feces."

According to the Federal Transit Administration, assaults on public transit employees increased by 232% nationwide between 2014 and 2024. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority reported over 600 assaults on its employees in 2024 alone, 33 of which included a weapon and 38 of which involved the use of a bodily fluid in the attack.

House Bill 4645 now moves to the Senate for its consideration.

"Season of Hope" Wig Drive & Fundraiser through Dec. 31

This holiday season, Fringe Studio of Hopedale and Halo Salon of Bellingham are joining forces to spread beauty, kindness, and hope through the Season of Hope Wig Drive and Fundraiser, benefiting The Olivia Fund, a local nonprofit supporting families facing cancer.

From now through December 31, 2025, community members are invited to donate gently used, good-quality wigs—synthetic or human hair—at either Fringe Studio or Halo Beauty Salon. Each wig will be washed, refurbished, and styled before being

provided to individuals experiencing hair loss who lack insurance coverage or need financial assistance.

As a thank-you to donors, each person who contributes a wig or donation will be entered into a raffle to win a salon gift card or a gift basket filled with beauty products, tools, and surprises. No wig? Donations can be made at: <https://foundation.milfordregional.org/donate/online/> - select Olivia Fund with memo "Season of Hope". Winners will be announced on January 2, 2026.

Donation Drop-Off Locations:

- *Fringe Studio* — 178 Dutcher St, Hopedale, MA 01747
- *Halo Beauty Salon* — 334 Hartford Ave, Bellingham MA 02019

For more information or to get involved, please contact:

Brittany Pessotti at (508) 423-4802, brittanypessotti@gmail.com or Nicole Epstein & Jessica Small – (413) 272-1654, info@halobeautysalon.com.

Stony Brook Camera Club Meets in December

The Stony Brook Camera Club meets in person and virtually on Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. from September to June. In person meetings are held at the Anglican Church of the Redeemer, 195 Main Street, Franklin, MA. Our meetings feature speakers, competitions, image studies, and discussions of general interest. We also sponsor a number of photography activities and workshops throughout the year.

The SBCC includes and welcomes members of all abilities.

Meetings for December:

- December 12: Competition
- December 11 "Storm Chasing" by Robert Galluci
- December 18: "Flash for Flowers" by Bobbi Lane

Member Exhibition at the Norfolk Public Library beginning December 8 during library hours.

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CALENDAR

December 1

Book Discussion Group, 6:30 p.m., In person or on Zoom. Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, *The Women* by Kristen Hannah. Contact Suzanne at salpert@cwmar.org, for more information.

December 2

Busy Bees Holiday Bazaar, 9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m., Franklin Senior Center, 10 Daniel McCahill St., Franklin, handmade crafts

Virtual Author Talks, Scheming Wives & High Stakes Hilarity with author Sue Hincenbergs, 2 p.m., through Bellingham Public Library, register at: <https://library.org/bellingham>.

A Novel Idea Book Club for Adults, 6:30-8 p.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, *Reformatory* by Tananarive Due. Contact Diane Nelson at dnelson@cwmar.org

December 3

Busy Bees Holiday Bazaar, 9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m., Franklin Senior Center, 10 Daniel McCahill St., Franklin, handmade crafts

December 4

4 Precious Paws Rescue fundraiser, 4:30 – 9 p.m., The Greenhouse Pub, 3 Cape Rd., Mendon, music of David Laska 4:30 to 6:30 and Dan Chauvin from 6:30 to 8:30, plus raffles and a holiday table, <https://www.4preciouspawsrescueincma.com/>

December 5

Savior of the World: His Birth, 7-8 p.m., The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (91 Jordan Rd., Franklin), free, but reserve tickets at savioroftheworldtickets.org

Exsultet! to perform holiday concert, Baby It's Cold Outside, 7:30 p.m., Christ Lutheran Church, 113 Union Street, Natick, for ticket information, visit www.exsultet.us.

11th Annual Holiday Stroll & Sale, 4-8:30 p.m., Downtown Medfield, <https://bellforge.org/event/holiday-stroll-2025/>

December 6

Holiday & Vendor Craft Fair, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., Bellingham High School, 60 Blackstone St., Bellingham, sponsored by BHS Operation Graduation 2026

St. Blaise Parish Island of Misfit Toys Fair, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., St. Blaise Church, 1158 S. Main St., Bellingham, includes Country Store with crafts, handmade, handmade Christmas décor, games for adults and kids, great food 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., a homemade Country Bake Shop and raffles.

Savior of the World: His Birth, 7-8 p.m., The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (91 Jordan Rd., Franklin), free, but reserve tickets at savioroftheworldtickets.org

St. Gabriel's Christmas Fair, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m., 151 Mendon Street, Upton

December 7

Exsultet! to perform holiday concert, Baby It's Cold Outside, 2 p.m., First Congregational Church, 725 Washington Street, Holliston, for ticket information, visit www.exsultet.us.

Charles River Chorale Winter Concert, "Lift and Illuminate Our Voices, 2 p.m., Medway High School Auditorium, visit <https://our.show/crcwinterconcert>.

Proctor Mansion Inn Holiday Afternoon Tea, 1-3 p.m., All ages, musical entertainment, a variety of flavored teas, menu catered by The Vintage Tea & Cake Co., guided house tour of this unique, historic 1861 home available at the end. Space limited, info. at <https://proctormansion.com/products/annual-holiday-afternoon-tea/>

December 8

Bellingham Women Of Today meeting, 7:30 p.m., Bellingham Police Station conference room, 30 Blackstone St., Bellingham, find them on Facebook or at bellinghamwomenoftoday@gmail.com.

December 10

Job Search Help: Magnetic Introductions – How to Have them at Hello – Virtual Program, 9 a.m., Virtual program through Bellingham Public Library with Catherine Johns.

Register at the link on the library calendar: <https://www.bellingham.org/792/Library-Event-Calendar>

Who Gets to Fly? – How NASA Chooses Its Astronauts, 7 p.m., Virtual Program through Bellingham Public Library with Solar System Ambassador David S. Ball

Register at the link on the library calendar: <https://www.bellingham.org/792/Library-Event-Calendar>

December 11

Sip & Shop, 6 p.m., Liz Tavern, 15 N. Main St., Bellingham, over 20 vendors, a 50/50 raffle and cash bar while you shop and support young widow families.

Winter Wonderland, 4:30 – 7 p.m., Franklin Senior Center, 10 Daniel McCahill, Franklin, Bring the family for an evening of holiday cheer! Holiday decorations, live entertainment with Elvis, cookies & hot cocoa, caricature artist, face painting, photobooth, raffle baskets, and a visit from Santa!

Stony Book Camera Club, 7:30 p.m., "Storm Chasing" by Robert Galluci, Anglican Church of the Redeemer, 195 Main Street, Franklin

December 12

Winter Wonderland – Friday, December 12th 6-7:30 p.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, Family Program

December 13

BWOT Muffins & More with Santa, 9-11:30 a.m., Saint Blaise Church Hall, 1158 S. Main St., Bellingham. Admission \$5 per child; maximum \$15 per family. Meet Santa and take your own pics. Food & beverages \$1-\$2. Free crafts and coloring pages children, holiday items for sale, all proceeds to BWOT scholarships.

Red Cross Blood Drive, 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, Register at redcrossblood.org

FUSF Cookie Walk, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., The First Universalist Society in Franklin (FUSF), 262 Chestnut Street, Franklin, cookies sold by pound

Bellingham Holiday Celebration, 4:30 p.m. parade steps off from Bellingham Middle School, ends in tree-lighting at 300th Park, in front of Municipal Building, followed by a celebration at Spartan Fitness.

December 14

Emily Letourneau Memorial Pancake Breakfast Children's Hospital Fundraiser, 9-11 a.m., St. Blaise Church Hall, 1158 S. Main St., Bellingham, \$12 pp, \$6 children 6-12, and children under 6 FREE, also enter virtual raffle at <http://secure.childrenshospital.org/goto/TeamEmily25>

December 15

Gilly's House in Wrentham public menorah lighting for Hanukkah, 7 p.m., 1022 West St., Wrentham, outdoor ceremony with traditional music and Chanukah treats, including donuts, chocolate gelt, and hot apple cider.

December 16

Writing Group for Adults, 6:30 p.m., In person on Zoom, Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, Listen & share. Reading limit is 9 minutes per reader, positive feedback model. Contact Marjorie Turner Hollman at marjorie@marjorieturner.com.

December 18

"Flash for Flowers" by Bobbi Lane, Anglican Church of the Redeemer, 195 Main Street, Franklin

December 19

Bellingham Lions Holiday House Decorating Contest, 6-9 p.m. All Bellingham residents invited to light up your home and share the cheer. All holidays welcome. Deadline to sign up December 17 on the Bellingham Lions Facebook page. Questions to bellinghamlights@gmail.com.

Holiday Sip & Shop, 5-8 p.m., Flock & Flourish, 20 North Main St., Bellingham

December 20

Bellingham Lions Holiday House Decorating Contest, 6-9 p.m. All Bellingham residents invited to light up your home and share the cheer. All holidays welcome. Deadline to sign up December 17 on the Bellingham Lions Facebook page. Questions to bellinghamlights@gmail.com.

December 21

Bellingham Lions Holiday House Decorating Contest, 6-9 p.m. All Bellingham residents invited to light up your home and share the cheer. All holidays welcome. Deadline to sign up December 17 on the Bellingham Lions Facebook page. Questions to bellinghamlights@gmail.com.

When the Holidays Hurt: A Blue Christmas Vesper Service, 4 p.m., The First Universalist Society in Franklin, 262 Chestnut Street, Franklin, with Rev. Bev Waring, for those struggling with loss at Christmastime

December 31

FUSF New Year's Labyrinth Walk, 5-7 p.m. The First Universalist Society in Franklin (FUSF), 262 Chestnut Street, Franklin

Baby, It's Cold Outside

Exsultet to Perform Two Holiday Concerts

Kick off the holiday season with the exquisite sounds of Exsultet as we present our annual winter concert. This year's performance, "Baby, It's Cold Outside," features moments of ethereal beauty such as in the *Hebrides Lullaby*, the humor of *Cold and Fugue Season*, and classics like *Santa Claus is Coming to Town*. Celebrate the season's joyful moments and experience the warmth of music that brings families and friends together.

Concert Dates:

Friday, December 5, 2025, 7:30 p.m.

Christ Lutheran Church
113 Union Street, Natick

Sunday, December 7, 2025, 2 p.m.

First Congregational Church
725 Washington Street, Holliston

For ticket information, visit www.exsultet.us. Tickets will also be available at the door prior to the performance.

Whether you're a longtime concert-goer or joining us for the first time, this performance promises to be a memorable evening. Come and experience the magic of the season with songs that have become part of our most cherished traditions. Let's warm up together, because Baby, It's Cold Outside!

About Exsultet!

Founded in 2013, **Exsultet! A Celebration of Voices** is an auditioned women's chamber ensemble combining great music and poetry to inspire audiences with adventurous and innovative concerts. Exsultet's mission is to give women an opportunity to join together to make music, to showcase the works of up and coming composers and arrangers, to feature the talents of local musicians and actors, and to combine performance and advocacy by focusing on important community issues and partnering with other local organizations. For more details, please visit www.exsultet.us.

First Universalist Society in Franklin December Events

When the Holidays Hurt: A Blue Christmas Vesper Service

Sunday, December 21, 2025 @ 4 p.m.

Rev. Bev Waring

This meditative service will honor the complexity of feelings during the holidays. Grief is often the hardest emotion to express when it seems that everyone around you is happy or merry. Child care will be provided.



Come join the First Universalist Society in Franklin (FUSF) on New Year's Eve for a labyrinth walk, 5-7 p.m.

3rd Annual Holiday Cookie Walk

Saturday, December 13, 2025 - 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Select from a delicious assortment of homemade treats provided by more than 30 bakers. Cookies will be sold by the pound. Containers, decorated with your choice of holiday sticker, will be provided.



FUSF's third annual cookie walk will take place on the morning of December 13th.

New Year's Eve Labyrinth Walk

Wednesday, December 31st, from 5 - 7pm. All ages, free.

Candle lit walk through FUSF's 7-Circuit Petite Chartres Labyrinth. Finger labyrinths available for people who have mobility issues.

Labyrinths are found throughout the world with the oldest dating back thousands of years. In contemporary use, labyrinths

provide an opportunity for personal reflection, spiritual practice, or the reduction of stress.

Please allow about 30 minutes to walk. Socks are required. Booties that cover footwear will be provided for those who need shoes to walk.

Call Bobbi at (508) 446-5131 for more information and fol-

low the FUSF Facebook page for weather cancellations.

The First Universalist Society in Franklin (FUSF) is a Unitarian Universalist Welcoming Congregation located at 262 Chestnut Street, Franklin. For more information, visit Fusf.org, email info@fusf.org or call (508) 528-5348.

Did You Know?

You Can Discover the Power of Coding with Fiero Code!

Are you ready to unlock the world of coding? Whether you're a total beginner or looking to sharpen your skills, Fiero Code is here to help! As a free online coding resource, available through the Bellingham Library, Fiero Code offers an interactive, self-paced way to learn how to code—no experience required!

At the Bellingham Public Library, we're committed to helping our community build skills for the future.

What is Fiero Code?

Fiero Code is a fun and engaging platform designed for learners of all ages, but especially great for kids and teens who want to explore programming. It offers step-by-step lessons, hands-on projects, and exciting challenges.

What Can You Learn?

With Fiero Code, you'll dive into real-world programming languages and skills, including:

- Scratch & Block Coding – A great introduction for beginners to understand coding logic.
- HTML, CSS & JavaScript – Build and style your own websites

- Python – Learn one of the most popular programming languages used by professionals.
- SQL & Databases – Discover how to manage and organize data.
- Game Development – Create and design your own video games.
- React and Node – Everything you need to get a job in web development.

Why Learn to Code?

Coding isn't just about computers—it's about problem-solving, creativity, and future job skills! Whether your child dreams of designing video games, creating apps, or simply wants to try something new, coding is a valuable skill in today's digital world.

And the best part? It's all free with your library card!

How to Get Started

- Visit www.bellinghamlibrary.org and find the Fiero Code link on the Online Resources page.
- Sign up with your library card.
- Start coding! Explore courses, build projects, and level up your skills.

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FOR UPDATES

State Fire Marshal Urges Heating Fire Safety during Heating Season

Stow, MA - With temperatures falling, Massachusetts State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine is reminding residents protect themselves and their loved ones from some of the most common home heating hazards.

“Most of Massachusetts will see some of the coldest weather since last winter over the next few days,” said State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine. “Heating equipment is the leading cause of carbon monoxide at home and the second leading cause of residential fires. Whether you’re using gas, oil, solid fuel, or space heaters to keep warm, be sure you keep safe, too.”

State Fire Marshal Davine said there were more than 6,400 heating fires in Massachusetts from 2020 to 2024. These fires claimed eight lives, caused 153 injuries to firefighters and residents, and contributed to over \$52 million in damage. And in 2024 alone, Massachusetts fire departments reported finding carbon monoxide at more than 4,700 non-fire incidents.

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms

Every household needs working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms on every level of their home. Check the manufacturing date on the back of your alarms so you know when to replace them: smoke alarms should be replaced after 10 years, and carbon monoxide alarms should be replaced after 5 to 10 years depending on the model. If it’s time to replace your alarms, choose new ones from a well-known, national brand with the mark of an independent testing lab such as UL or Intertek/ETL. Select smoke alarms with a sealed, long-life battery and a hush feature.

Natural Gas and Oil Heat

If you have a furnace, water heater, or oil burner, have it professionally checked and serviced each year. This will help it run more efficiently, which will save you money and could save your life. Always keep a three-foot “circle of safety” around the appliance clear of anything that could catch fire. Never store painting supplies, aerosol cans, or other flammable items near these appliances. If you smell gas, don’t use any electrical switches or devices: get out, stay out, and call 9-1-1 right away.

Solid Fuel Heating

If you use a fireplace or a stove that burns wood, pellets, or coal, always keep the area around it clear for three feet in all directions. This circle of safety should be free of furniture, drapery, rugs, books and papers, fuel, and any other flammable items. To prevent sparks and embers from escaping, use a fireplace screen or keep the stove door closed while burning. Use only dry, seasoned hardwood and don’t use flammable liquids to start the fire. When disposing of ashes, wait until they are cool and shovel them into a metal bucket with a lid and place it outside at least 10 feet away from the building.

Have your chimney and flue professionally inspected and cleaned each year. Most chimney fires are caused by burning creosote, a tarry substance that builds up as the fireplace, wood stove, or pellet stove is used. If burning creosote, sparks, embers, or hot gases escape through cracks in the flue or chimney, they can cause a fire that spreads to the rest of the structure. Annual

cleaning and inspection can minimize this risk. Contact the Massachusetts Chimney Sweep Guild or Chimney Safety Institute of America to identify reputable local companies.

Space Heaters

Keep space heaters at least three feet from anything that can burn. Plug them directly into a wall socket, not an extension cord or a power strip, and remember that they’re for temporary use. Always turn a space heater off when you leave the room or go to sleep.

When purchasing a space heater, select one that’s been tested and labeled by a nationally recognized testing company such as UL or Intertek/ETL. Newer space heaters should have an automatic shut-off switch that turns the device off if it tips over. Unvented kerosene space heaters and portable propane space heaters are not permitted for residential use in Massachusetts, State Fire Marshal Davine said: they pose a great risk of fire and carbon monoxide poisoning.

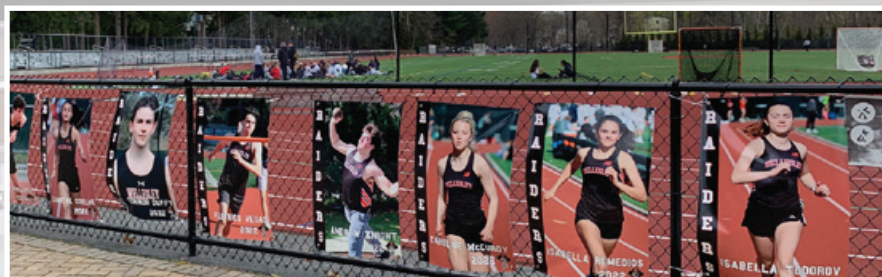
Create and Practice a Home Escape Plan

Everyone should have a home escape plan that accounts for two ways out of every room, and everyone should be able to open the doors and windows along the way. Remember that children, older adults, and people with disabilities may need extra assistance.

Find More Home Heating Safety Tips at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/winter-home-heating-safety>

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