



## Bay Path Receives \$7,500 Lemelson-MIT Grant

Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School has been awarded a prestigious \$7,500 Lemelson-MIT InvenTeam® grant, placing the school among just eight high schools nationwide selected for this year's cohort. The grant will support Bay Path students as they design and build an invention aimed at making sandy beaches more accessible for people who use wheelchairs.

The project, launched by science teacher and InvenTeam® facilitator Kristine Wade, focuses on improving mobility, safety, comfort, and overall independence for wheelchair users navigating beach environments, an area where accessibility remains a significant challenge. Over the next eight months, the student team will develop a fully functioning prototype designed to address these obstacles with innovative engineering and user-centered design.

The InvenTeam® will present its initial progress during a local mid-year review in February, followed by a national debut at EurekaFest® in June, where student inventors

from across the country gather to showcase their solutions to real-world problems.

Team member and student communications leader Jazzelle said that each student takes part in a different process as they develop the invention.

"Some days we go through group-related activities that help us minimize or choose which ideas we want," she said. "This can include brainstorming, figuring out how different technical parts can go together, researching how different mechanics work, giving presentations of our ideas, prototyping together, and just trying to help everyone on the team understand the given topic."

Sound complicated? Yes, it can be. But the goal is co-operative learning with a focus on solutions.

According to Jazzelle, "There is a lot of trial and error, but an idea is never shot down. Other days, there are models made - whether it is online using CAD software or using materials we have in the classroom - that aids us into getting closer to picking what design

we want for our wheelchair."

Each student is assigned a team: communications, technical, sustainability, or financial.

"Right now, the technical team is doing a lot of the work as we are still in the prototyping and brainstorming phase. The technical students work with people's ideas and try to make it a reality. They are the ones that create models with CAD software and 3-D print them to show and explain to the team," she explained. "Sustainability and financial will play a bigger part once our prototypes become bigger and more realistic. Communications is still trying to get the word out to more people about our invention."

The Communications team is also dealing with media requests and is in contact with a speaker who has volunteered to talk about his experience with wheelchairs, Jazzelle said.

Progress has been excellent.

### GRANT

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## Chris Robert of Webster Looks to Webster's Future

BY JANET STOICA  
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

His goal is to make Webster's downtown a better place, more attractive for more businesses, and a destination for the local population to relax, chill, and mingle.... a gathering area to enjoy and appreciate. Chris Robert, Webster resident and entrepreneur, has brought his most obvious touches to the once vibrant and energetic town of Webster by delivering a unique and distinctive paddleboat, The Indian Princess, to the town's largest asset, Webster Lake; a high-tech and sophisticated museum known as the Samuel Slater Experience; and a host of additional developments all for the benefit of the town.

Mention must also be made of other families/organizations who benefitted the Webster community like the Remillards, Beckers, Janet Malser, Kunkels, Richard Nowak, Ivascyns, Hubbards, Pappas Family, and the Webster Five Foundation to name a few. Apologies if I have not included other commendable donors. They and Mr. Robert are the current supporters of the town, much like Samuel Slater and Chester C. Corbin were in the early years of Webster. The town is indeed privileged to have these wonderful, giving, and admirable sponsors who believe in the town and look to improve it for the benefit of all residents.

Recently, Mr. Robert has focused on a 244 Main Street building that he has updated and renovated to include a barbering shop that is open seven days a week. The storefront has a burnt-wood appearance that is unique and has attracted multiple other retail inquiries. He has also installed a large weather-proof map of downtown Webster on the building's façade. The map depicts the downtown stores that once graced Main Street. "Residents can check out the shops from years past," said Chris. "I'm still looking for a theatre venue though. My goal is to make our downtown more attractive. My contractor, David Ford of Thompson Connecticut,



has been instrumental in detailing the uplift of 244 Main and other building owners have contacted him about updating their building appearances. We looked at upgrading the town hall, but the costs kept increasing with building codes playing a role as well. The goal is to attract more people to downtown and a theatre would be ideal for shows and other events."

The former State Theatre located at 253 Main Street was also a consideration but the section that housed the 900-seat theater's movie screen was demolished years ago and made into a parking lot.

Other considerations of Robert is a commuter rail from Worcester

### WEBSTER

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# Webster's Community Cat Connection Participates in Trap/Neuter/Return Program

BY JANET STOICA  
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

Feral cats might appear to be beautiful and adorable fur babies from afar, but they can become a nuisance and hazard to not only humans but to the cats themselves.

For years, Webster's Community Cat Connection (CCC) has been a faithful, steadfast, and reliable participant in the Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR) Program

benefitting local residents and feral felines. Barbara Hassett of the CCC states "Our Surrender Coordinator, Patty Cournoyer, has been working with local trapper, Trapper Jack, from Oxford, in several known cat colonies in Webster and neighboring towns. Recently, they came across some very small kittens, on their own. One of them is in an incubator. Another one that was brought to the shelter on Saturday only weighed one pound and was ravenous when we put

some food in front of him. We named him Ash. He had worms and fleas that he was treated for. He never would have survived the winter on his own."

"I don't think people realize the extent of what we do for the community. There are several large cat colonies where we have been trapping. Once the older cats are trapped, they are spayed/neutered and returned to their colony where some kind person has most likely set up some type of shelter



and food for the cats. The kittens will go into foster care and once they are spayed/neutered/vaccinated, will come to the shelter. I may have mentioned to you before that we have a record number for kittens this year. If we aren't notified of these colonies, or if homeowners near them aren't cooperative and unwilling to let our

**CONNECTION**  
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**GRANT**  
continued from page 1

"As of lately, we have gotten closer to narrowing down what we want to prototype on a larger scale," she said. "This will give us a big step in the right direction to see what will work and what will not when our ideas are applied to a real wheelchair."

The Lemelson-MIT InvenTeam® program, now in its 21st year, supports invention education in high schools while working to expand participation among communities historically underrepresented in patenting, entrepreneurship, and STEM fields. The initiative fosters creativity, technical skill development, and collaborative problem-solving, giving students firsthand experience in engineering design and invention processes.

"We are incredibly proud of our students and grateful for this opportunity," said Wade. "This grant allows our team to pursue an invention that can make a meaningful impact on accessibility and inclusion."

The InvenTeam® students are Alivia, Ava, Brian, Christopher, Cole, Emily, Gianna, Jady, Jazelle, Jordan, Julianis, Logan, Matilda, Michael, Nicholas, Olivia, Paul, Perry, Ryan, Sawyer, Shafick, Victoria, Warren, Yadiel and Zachary.

Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School are residents of Auburn, Charlton, Dudley, North Brookfield, Oxford, Paxton, Rutland, Southbridge, Spencer, and Webster.

Follow the team's progress on Instagram: bpinventeam.



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# Free Books from Dolly Parton - Imagine That!

## Thanks to Dolly's Imagination Library

BY JANET STOICA  
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

Elizabeth Procter-Gray, Secretary of the Friends of Webster's Gladys E. Kelly Library, wants local families and kids to know about their Free Book Program.

"We all know that we can borrow books from local libraries, but did you know that Webster kids can get free books to keep? It's true! All children aged birth-5 years who are residents of Webster can receive one free book per month mailed to their home. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library and the Friends of the Gladys E. Kelly Library offer this opportunity to help every child develop a love of reading early in life," said Procter-Gray.

Webster is the only town in Worcester County that is enrolled in this program.

Webster parents, sign your kids up at the library at 2 Lake Street in Webster. Just tell them you want your child or children enrolled in the Imagination Library. It's that simple. Think how excited your children will be to find a special present arriving in the mailbox just for them every month. It's like having 12 holidays per year! If you

have questions, please phone the library at 508-949-3880.

Dolly calls her free book program "The Imagination Library." It is a book-gifting program that mails high-quality, age-appropriate books to children from birth until their fifth birthday at no cost to the family.

### HOW IT WORKS:

**Eligibility:** Children are eligible if they live in a community where a local partner (affiliate) has adopted the program. There are no income requirements.

**Registration:** Parents or guardians can check availability and register their child at the Gladys E. Kelly Library front desk.

**Delivery:** Once enrolled, the child receives a brand-new book in the mail every month, addressed to them personally. The first book is always *The Little Engine That Could*.

**Cost:** The program is entirely free to families. The Dollywood Foundation covers the program's overhead while local affiliates secure funds to cover the cost of the books and shipping fees for their specific area.

According to the Imagination



Weston LaFramboise enjoys his Imagination Library books courtesy of Dolly Parton.

Library's website, in 1995, Dolly Parton launched an effort to benefit the children of her

home county in East Tennessee. Dolly's vision was to foster

a love of reading among her county's preschool children and their families. The new program gave each child a specially selected book each month. By mailing high quality, age-appropriate books directly to their homes, Dolly wanted children to be excited about books and to feel the magic that books can create. Moreover, she could ensure that every child would have books, regardless of their family's income. Since its launch, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has set and surpassed many goals and milestones. National replication, which started in 2000, allowed more communities to adopt the program. State-wide coverage was established in Tennessee in 2004. Furthermore, international growth provided expansion in Canada (2006), United Kingdom (2007) and Australia (2014). The first book order in 1995 totaled just over 1,700. Today, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library sends more than one million books per month to children around the world inspiring them to Dream More, Learn More, Care More and Be More.

## WEBSTER

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to Webster. "A new train station would have to be built," he said, "and with Oxford's interest in the commuter rail, it would be viable. The train would also make a stop in Auburn, and we have quite a good amount of interested people in the commuter-rail idea."

"Yes, there are lots of empty storefronts in town but with increased traffic it would bring more businesses and sales. I would like to bring beauty to Webster and by the end of 2026, I hope to bring that to

town. Everything I do, I thoroughly enjoy doing. There could be artist lofts in all these empty buildings."

With the several businesses he has owned, Robert stated that he has received the most pleasure out of helping people. About eight years ago, he learned about a hospital in Tanzania. There were 80,000 acres that would be available to feed the local population. He assisted the local population in establishing a fish incubation area to expand their economy by growing and selling the fish. Soon corn will become one of their large crops to help feed the local population.

"Once the corn is harvested, we'll buy equipment to process corn, but we won't be a grower of corn. All of this will be owned by the charity we established. One of our goals is to provide summer school next year to get the population productive enough to sustain themselves and to build a better Tanzania," said Robert.

It's very clear that Chris Robert is moving in a most positive direction for the residents of Webster and, hopefully, more forward-thinkers will join him in his vision for a robust and thriving downtown.



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## Webster Senior Center

5 Church St., Webster  
508-949-3854

### DECEMBER EVENTS

Monday, Dec. 8 - Soup Social from Christopher Heights at 11:30 a.m. Register.

Wednesday, Dec. 17 - Birthday cupcakes from Life Care of Auburn at 12 p.m.

Thursday, Dec. 18 - Cookie Social from Lanessa extended Care at 12 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 19 - Holiday party with catered luncheon at 11:30 a.m. Ticketed seating. Musical performance by Daniel & Mary Clark at 1-2:30 p.m. Scratch ticker Christmas Wreath Drawing and 50/50 Drawing. Sponsored by Friends of the Webster Senior Center and Mass Cultural Council.

December movies every Wednesday at 1 p.m.

Dec. 10 - Red One

Dec. 17 - A Christmas Carol

Mondays: Chair Dancing at 9:30 a.m.; Knitting/Crochet at 10 a.m.

Tuesdays: Bingo at 1 p.m.

Wednesdays: Chair Dancing at 9:30 a.m.; Six Card Pitch at 1 p.m.

Thursdays: Video Chair Dancing at 9:30 a.m.; 13 Card Pitch at 1 p.m.

Fridays: Video Chair Dancing at 9:30 a.m.; Bridge at 10 a.m.;

Mahjongg

at 1 p.m.

Lunch is served at 11:30 a.m. Tuesday - Friday. Please call three days in advance to reserve a spot for lunch, 508-949-3845.

The SHINE Counselor (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Elders) is available at the Senior

Center by appointment to offer free, unbiased and confidential counseling on health insurance and Medicare. Call 508-949-3845 to schedule an appointment.

Tri-Valley Elder Services 508-949-6640.

Transportation, SCM Elderbus 800-321-0243 Please call two days in advance.

WCAC Fuel Assistance 508-754-1176

Webster/Dudley Food Share - Tuesday & Thursday mornings 508-943-9171

Webster Housing Authority Golden Heights 508-943-1634 WEBSTER/DUDLEY Veterans Services 508-949-3855

Webster Community Outreach 508-943-1212

The Senior Center will close at 1 p.m. on Dec. 24 and Dec. 31. Closed all day on Dec. 25.

## Charlton Public Library - December Highlights

Movies - Tuesdays, 1 p.m. (Dexter Hall)

Dec. 9 The Roses • Dec. 16 The Naked Gun • Dec. 23 Best Christmas Pageant Ever • Dec. 30 Freakier Friday

### RECURRING PROGRAMS

Play Games! Mondays, Dec. 8, 15, 22, 12:30-2 (Cribbage/Scrabble)

Tiny Tots Storytime Tuesdays, Dec. 2, 9, 16, 10 a.m. (ticketed)

Baby Storytime Wednesdays, Dec. 10, 17, 10 a.m. (drop-in)

Preschool Storytime Fridays, Dec. 5, 12, 19, 10 a.m. (ticketed)

Lego Club Friday, Dec. 5, 3:30 p.m. (drop-in)

Fiber Arts Group Thursdays, 1-3 p.m. (drop-in)

Workshops & Crafts Festive Card Design (Dec. 6, 1:30)

Book Ornament Craft (Dec. 10, 10:30)

Snowman Bookstack Craft (Dec. 16 & 17)

Needle-Felted Melted Snowman (Dec. 23, 4 p.m.)

Crafternoon (Dec. 26, 2:30)

Hot Chocolate Paint & Sip (Dec. 29, 10:30)

STEM & Learning

Young Scientists (Dec. 11 & 18, 10:15)

Adulting 101 for Teens (Dec. 16, 5 p.m.)

Intro to IndieFlix & Great Courses (Dec. 9 & 13)

Intro to Craftsy (Dec. 16 & 20)

Technology Help Drop-in: Saturdays (Dec. 6, 13, 20) 10-12; Tuesdays (Dec. 9, 16)

4:30-5:30 One-on-One: Thursdays & Dec. 23 (registration required)

### SPECIAL EVENTS

Therapy Dog Visit - Dec. 8, 4 p.m.

Friends Meeting - Dec. 9, 3:30

Cookie Swap - Dec. 9, 6 p.m.

Book Discussion (The Vegetarian) - Dec. 11, 6 p.m.

CULE Yule Holiday Recital - Dec. 11, 6:30

Support Group - Dec. 18, 6 p.m.

Death Café - Dec. 18, 6 p.m.

Gentle Yoga - Dec. 20, 10 a.m.

SARJ Acoustic Jam - Dec. 20, 12 p.m.

Noon Year's Eve Party - Dec. 31, 11 a.m.

January Sneak Peek

Puzzle Race - Jan 3, 10:30 a.m.

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# Worcester County Sheriff's Office Launches Annual Winter Coat Drive

With winter approaching, the Worcester County Sheriff's Office and the

Worcester County Reserve Deputy Sheriff's Association got its 12th Annual Winter Coat Drive



## CONNECTION

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trappers onto their property, the cats will go unfixed and the size of the colony can double and triple in no time."

Their mission statement affirms that they operate and maintain a community-based, no-kill cat rescue and shelter to benefit cats which have been abandoned, abused, or at risk for starvation, disease, and overpopulation. They strive to educate the public to the benefits of spay/neuter, low-cost veterinary care, and alternatives to euthanasia as well as to facilitate public awareness through workshops and programs.

They offer the following services:

- \*Trap feral cats if necessary and have them spayed or neutered so they may be released in accordance with proper trap and release laws.

- \*Assist with placement of abandoned and surrendered animals due to household moves thus finding them proper homes so they are not left behind to live on their own.

- Rescue pregnant mother cats and abandoned kittens affording them proper medical care and homes.

- Assist with the placement of feral cats and kittens in finding forever loving homes.

- A friend to animals by offering all of the above to local communities.

The CCC's hardworking and loyal volunteers will seek out the abandoned and over-populated areas reported by residents and observed by their volunteers to assist those who are affected by the unfortunate circumstances.

TNR is the only effective and humane approach to community cats who are abandoned or un-owned and live outdoors.

According to the Alley Cat Allies site, scientific studies show that TNR effectively addresses the community cat population by ending the breeding cycle, meaning no new kittens are born to a community cat colony. It addresses community concerns, reduces shelter intake, and reduces calls to animal services, all of which saves cats' lives. When cats are free from the burdens of mating and reproducing, their relationships improve with the people who live near them (think: no more kittens outdoors or yowling, roaming, fighting, or spraying). Additionally, many diseases associated with reproduction are prevented.

As a non-profit organization, the CCC is always grateful for donations of pet food and cleaning supplies. They are currently fundraising for pet cages at their Webster facility. Monetary donations are also gladly appreciated. Your contributions are greatly welcomed and valued. If you would like to volunteer or assist at their Webster location for 1 hour or more, you will undoubtedly enjoy their warm and loving pet population.

If you are aware of feral cat populations in your area, please contact the CCC for more information on how you can assist your neighborhood and the local fur baby population.

Their phone number: 508-949-0779. They are located at 289 Thompson Road, Webster MA 01570. Hours: Tuesday - Thursday 4 - 7 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

underway. This effort is aimed at providing 4,000 brand-new winter coats to residents in need throughout the county.

Locally, the drive kicked off on November 4 at the Webster Dudley Food Share, 4 Church Street, Webster. Sheriff Lew Evangelidis and members of his staff delivered thousands of coats directly to local service agencies and community members. The initiative helps ensure that

vulnerable residents stay warm throughout the coldest months, while reinforcing the Sheriff's Office's commitment to community support.

This year's drive has drawn strong backing from numerous local businesses and organizations.

"The Worcester County Sheriff's Office Winter Coat Drive aims to strengthen connections with law enforcement across dif-

ferent communities in Worcester County," Sheriff Evangelidis said. "When we distribute these jackets, the recipients express tremendous gratitude. This is a special time of year for the Sheriff's Department, and we are excited to connect with the community members we serve."

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BY LEE-ANN BARKHOUSE

**AWARENESS IN ACTION: THE QUIET STRENGTH BEHIND CONNECTION**

In every interaction, whether cheering from the sidelines, standing in line, or walking through town, our behavior leaves an impression. Self-awareness is the foundation of genuine connection. It's the pause that helps us notice our surroundings, choose our words with care, and respond with kindness rather than reaction.

When we take the time to understand how our tone, actions, and presence affect others, we elevate everyday moments into opportunities for respect and trust. Self-awareness builds relationships, strengthens communities, and reminds us that small courtesies often speak the

loudest.

**Q.** At my child's weekend soccer game, I often see parents yelling at referees, coaches, and even kids. What's the right way for adults to behave at youth sports? And what should bystanders do when it happens?

**A.** Sports are meant to teach teamwork, perseverance, and fun, not pressure or perfection. They also give children an important chance to learn, negotiate, and build their own skills—both on and off the field. When adults overstep, we unintentionally take those learning moments away.

The best thing parents can do is cheer for effort, not outcome. Applaud good plays on both sides, model sportsmanship, and

leave coaching to the coaches.

Our children learn how to win and lose by watching us. Let the loudest thing from the stands be your support, not your criticism.

For bystanders, the most effective approach is to stay composed and redirect the energy. Yelling back rarely helps and can escalate tension. Instead, model calm enthusiasm, cheer appropriately, and if behavior crosses a line, discreetly notify a coach or event official. Sometimes the most powerful statement is your example of restraint and respect.

And remember, this isn't just for kids' sports. Good sideline behavior applies at every level—from youth games to professional sporting events. Respectful fans make the experience better for everyone: players, coaches, referees, and fellow spectators alike.

unteers make a huge difference.

If you bring chairs, coolers, or strollers, be considerate of space. Be patient, kind, and flexible. When we practice small courtesies, we strengthen the fabric of our communities.

**Q.** I have noticed people letting their dogs pee in main foot-traffic areas, near store entrances and sidewalks where people walk. Is that acceptable?

**A.** Our furry friends bring us joy, but they also come with responsibilities. Allowing a dog to relieve itself in high-traffic areas can create unpleasant surprises for others, and not everyone appreciates stepping where your dog just went. Little ones may be crawling or playing nearby too.

A kind approach is to guide your dog to a grassy or less-traveled spot away from entrances, dining areas, or storefronts. Always carry bags or wipes, and if an accident happens, do your best to rinse or clean the area.

Being a considerate pet owner is more than following rules—it's showing respect for our shared spaces and neighbors. Those few extra steps demonstrate thoughtfulness, responsibility, and kindness in action.

ate how kind and professional you are" goes a long way.

If possible, tell a supervisor or fill out a customer comment card or online survey mentioning the employee by name. Many stores track positive feedback for recognition or bonuses, and your words could make a meaningful difference in that young cashier's day.

Kindness multiplies when we notice it. Taking the time to acknowledge good service not only rewards the individual, it also reminds everyone watching that courtesy and connection still matter.

**ETIQUETTE TIP OF THE MONTH**

**Disconnect to Reconnect** - Some of life's best moments happen when we're fully present—listening, laughing, and sharing time with the people who matter most. Setting aside our devices, even briefly, allows us to slow down and truly connect. Whether it's a family dinner, a walk with a friend, or a cup of coffee shared in real conversation, those simple moments of presence strengthen trust, deepen relationships, and remind others they're valued.

See you next month—and until then, keep showing up as your best self.

-Lee-Ann

**Q.** Our town hosts lots of public gatherings such as concerts, parades, and farmers markets. Lately, people seem unaware of basic courtesy. Any reminders?

**A.** Community events thrive when everyone shows up with courtesy and awareness. Simple acts like standing back so others can see, keeping walkways open, and saying "please" and "thank you" to vol-

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**Q.** I was at the grocery store and received wonderful service from a young cashier. He greeted me warmly, looked me in the eye, and truly made my day. What's the best way to compliment him? I'm sure most stores hear more complaints than praise.

**A.** What a lovely observation, and you are absolutely right! Positive feedback can brighten someone's day and reinforce great habits. When you receive exceptional service, start by thanking the person directly. A simple "You've been so helpful—I really appreci-

Have a situation you'd like help with? Write in or email ([info@investinuma.com](mailto:info@investinuma.com)) and your question may be featured in a future column. Let's build a kinder, more respectful world, one interaction at a time.

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

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**SPORTS**

# Bartlett Indoor Track Looking Forward to their Season

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Chris Nasis has inherited the Bartlett indoor track team this winter and is looking to help the team improve while having fun with the sport.

“Being my first year as the coach, it is important to me that I allow the kids to have the best experience that they possibly can,” Nasis said. “We don’t have a lot of practice facilities because a new school is being built, so we’ll be working more on strength and conditioning while bouncing between the two gyms to get our training in.”

According to the coach, one gym is padded where the team can practice their throwing, and the other gym is where they will practice their sprints. Obviously, the team will take advantage of the outdoors until the cold weather sets in and forces them inside.

“We don’t have large numbers and with the fact that we don’t have actual practice facilities these kids have been resilient,” Nasis said. “They have actually practiced running in the school hall when needed. They understand the situation and what they need to do if

they want to become good.”

Not having the numbers like some of the bigger schools and being a relatively young team Nasis is just looking to help the athletes improve day by day, making them better than the last while providing them the best possible experience that he can.

Nasis is looking at two particular athletes on this year’s team to help provide the team with success. Cam Hast and Eryk Piwowarczyk taking part in their third and fourth seasons with the team, respectively, are on the Bartlett first year coach’s radar to not only help the team but help the coach as well.

Hast, a junior, has been part of both the indoor and outdoor track teams taking part in the shot put and discus. His personal best currently sits at 30 feet in the shot put, while he has thrown the discus 77 feet and he is hoping to continue to improve in both events this winter. The junior, who also plays football for the high school, has set a goal of throwing the shot put 35 by the end of the season.

While Hast is focused on his throwing skills, Piwowarczyk is an important member of the Indians’ running teams. Entering his fourth

year he is Swiss Army knife to the team running in a variety of events. The senior runs the 50-yard dash (his best time 6.84 seconds), 55 meters (8.04), 300 meters (45.08), 600 meters (1:48) and 1000 meters (3:17). He is also a high jumper who has cleared the bar at 5’8” and is looking to break the school record. The Bartlett high jump record was set in 2010 by George Katusi when he jumped 5’9”; Piwowarczyk is currently an inch away from tying that 15-year-old record. Once he takes control of the indoor record the senior can go after the outdoor record set by State Champion John Guerin (6’8” set in 1984).

“Eryk was named the team MVP last year during indoor track and we will defiantly plant him in the high jump as that’s where he seems to gravitate towards,” Nasis said. “He also seems to be very strong in the 300 and 600, but we’ll have to see.”

Both athletes are also looking to keep their grades up in the classroom.

The Bartlett coach is also very interested in seeing what freshman Karielyz Morales can do this season running indoor track

at Bartlett for the first time. She will run the shorter distances and dashes for the Indians and possibly the high jump or hurdles having the physical attributes to do so.

“Karielyz is the type of kid that all coaches want to have on their team,” he said. “She comes to practice each and every day and works extremely hard and I can’t wait to

see what she actually brings to the table.”

According to Nasis, the middle school coach has been working with the kids at the school and hopefully they will be able to make a smooth transition into the high school while wanting to continue to take part in track.

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# Out of the Woods and on the Road: The Midstate Trail in Sutton

BY THOMAS J. MCLAUGHLIN

“We have enjoyed doing it all, though naturally some parts are more attractive and scenic than others. There are sections with too much road walking,” George W. Outerbridge wrote in 1939. (Great Stories of the Appalachian Trail)

Outerbridge, a Pennsylvania gynecologist and the second

person to complete the Appalachian Trail (AT) in sections, was describing portions of the newly created AT in Massachusetts, New Jersey, and elsewhere in the 1930s.

The father of the AT (it was his idea), Shirley native Benton MacKaye, wanted an uninterrupted, unbroken wilderness trail even if it meant breaking up the trail. It was a big enough issue

to him that he had a falling out with Myron Avery over it. Avery, a Maine lawyer worked tirelessly to create the AT. MacKaye was against constructing Skyline Drive and the Shenandoah National Park, while Avery supported it.

Myron Avery was the first to hike the entire trail in sections. He wanted one long trail from Maine to Georgia, even if it meant occasional “road walking.” He believed that Skyline Drive and Shenandoah National Park would complement the trail, not detract from it as MacKaye thought.

Over the years the thousands of AT hikers compelled to complete the trail have borne out Avery’s view. While it’s desirable to have a wilderness trail, it’s not always possible. It’s better for it to be one continuous trail, whether it’s the 2,200-mile AT running through fourteen states, or the 92-mile Midstate Trail running through fourteen towns. Aside from the wilderness, a big part of the appeal of these trails is the distance they cover.

The routes aren’t set in stone. Both trails have dealt with development, have depended on private property access, and have been rerouted since they were created. Hundreds of miles of the AT have been rerouted in several states. Obviously, the 92-mile Midstate reroutes have been smaller.

But when it comes to “road walking” you would be hard pressed to find a nicer walk than on the country farm roads of the Midstate in Sutton.

Two and half miles of the Midstate Trail runs through Sutton with a mile and a half of it on roads—Douglas Road and Town Farm Road.

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state Trail. The farm is 12 miles into the hike from the southern terminus of the Midstate at the MA/RI border and 80 miles from the northern terminus at the MA/NH border. It’s a five-mile walk on the Midstate from Route 16 in the Douglas Woods.

This “five generations, five hundred acres” farm welcomes Midstate hikers, encouraging you to visit their Farm Store where they sell a variety of deli meats and other foods you can purchase for your hike. They

also offer daytime parking. For additional details you can visit their Midstate page on their website: [whittiers.com/midstate](http://whittiers.com/midstate).

“Most of our land along the Midstate Trail is preserved open agricultural land through the Massachusetts Agricultural Preservation Restriction. Our fields provide picturesque panoramic vistas along the trail even though our area is primarily over-the-road trail,” according to their webpage.

I walked here on a beautiful sunny afternoon in May when the sky was blue and the fields were green. Seeing hundreds of acres of wide open, rolling farmland is a rare sight to behold these days. If you’re not up for the walk to this area you can always drive here.

The leafy tree-lined Town Farm Road off Central Turnpike is also scenic with its stone walls and green pastures. It’s all uphill and it will give you a workout on any day, especially on a hot one. It’s at this point at the top of the hill where the north/south direction of the trail turns west, veers across the field into the forest and heads to Oxford.

TALES FROM BEYOND

tomdagostino.com

# The Ghosts of Cominicut Shoal Light

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

In 1868, the Cominicut light was established to warn mariners of the dangerous shoal extending from the west side of Cominicut Point in Warwick, RI near the entrance of the Providence River. In 1883, the present light, a cast iron spark plug style, was built and has remained on the small rocky atoll ever since. The light gives off a white flash every 2.6 seconds and stands at 58 feet high with a focal plane height of 55 feet. Its fog horn emits two blasts every 30 seconds.

In 1874, a five room abode was built at the light for the keepers to stay at instead of having to make the dangerous one mile rowboat trip out to the light from the offshore station. Horace Arnold was the first keeper to stay at the light. His young son allegedly died at the light when he fell from the tower. In 1922, Ellsworth J. Smith was given the position as keeper. He and his wife of six years, Nellie and their two young children, Russell, two years old and Robert aged five, would live at the light and together maintain the buildings

and grounds. This became a curse for the young Nellie who so wanted to socialize with the women on the mainland.

Nellie contentiously asked for her husband to take her to shore but he, being hard headed and insistent, constantly reminded her of their duties as keepers and the importance of seeing them through. She became depressed and even threatened suicide, but her husband shrugged it off and stoutly refused her wishes. One possibility of his refusal was likely that she was 26 years his junior and the issue was more a matter of jealousy. Her being still young and beautiful made her a certain target for suitors along the shore where he could not keep his eye on her.

It soon became too much for young Nellie and she made plans to put an end to her torment of loneliness and depression. In the medicine cabinet was a bottle of mercury bichloride pills, a very potent and deadly drug. It was commonly used in those days if very heavily diluted to treat various illnesses. On the morning of June 9, 1922, Smith rowed to the

Cominicut Village to procure some supplies. As soon as Ellsworth was out of sight, Nellie went to the medicine cabinet and took the bottle. She told five year old Robert that she was bringing Russell to bed. She put the toddler on her lap and gave him a tablet, telling Robert that it was candy. One tablet would have been lethal to such a small human. She then brought Russell upstairs, telling Robert she had some for him when she came back down. She returned and gave Robert two tablets and then took two herself. After trying to swallow the pills, Robert spit them out as he watched his mother fall into an unconscious state. He had ingested enough to make him very sick.

About 4 pm, keeper Smith moored his rowboat full of supplies at the light. He called out to his wife but received no answer. He entered the house with a load of groceries and saw his wife and Robert at the table. Robert was pale and too ill to move and his wife was deceased. He frantically searched the house for little Russell who he found upstairs in his bed, also deceased. He rushed Robert

ashore where a doctor was able to administer an antidote in time to save him. The light stayed dark that night as the authorities were notified to make sure navigators of the shoal knew this. Keeper Ellsworth could not bear to return to the light where tragedy took his family. Nellie and Russell were buried quietly in a grave near East Greenwich, RI.

By now, three people had lost their lives at the Cominicut Light, but their spirits never left. Keepers would report hearing a woman crying on dark nights and sometimes hear a child playing. Items

would be moved about the lighthouse and a tool needed would suddenly appear as if taken from the boat by an unseen force. By the 1970s, there were no longer keepers living in the lighthouse and the ghosts of the Cominicut Light had all but been forgotten, but on a clear night, anyone sitting on Cominicut Point Beach, may spy a ghostly figure who appears to be working on the light, perhaps the ghost of Keeper Arnold's son, and the sound of a young child laughing followed by a woman crying.

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# He's Only a Dog

*A tribute to the small, bright truths a dog carries in his heart*

BY AMY LECLAIRE

Throughout my dog-owning years, I've often been questioned for the time and attention I offer my dogs. "Why would you want to bring him along? He's just a dog."

Luke may be just a dog, but he is also the only one who greets me every single day with a devotion untouched by mood or weather. "Hey Momma! I missed you! I love you! Let me go get you a sock so we can celebrate!" He wiggles toward me, a freshly laundered sock dangling from his mouth like an extra tongue.

"You're the best boy, Luke." I massage his ears. "You look so handsome today."

But Luke isn't concerned with praise. He operates with the quiet urgency of creatures who understand, better than we do, that joy is meant for right now. "Let's go get some fresh air!"

He's only a dog, yet he knows instinctively that fresh air and sunlight are medicine—not just for the body, but for the spirit. The backyard deck has become his small kingdom, an oasis where he studies the world with reverence: a squirrel flattening itself against a tree trunk; children spilling off the school bus with ribbons of color streaming behind them; a Chihuahua in a pink sweater skittering across the sidewalk. Luke watches it all with that tender, signature smile, as though absorbing the day and whispering, "Life is good."

Recently, I bought him an elevated outdoor cot (hoping to elevate his happiness too). "Look,



Luke – Mummy bought you a new bed for outside!" I set it down with the pride of a butler presenting a chair to the guest of honor.

"So comfy!"

He tap-danced around it as if auditioning for his own musical. "Is this a hand-me-down?" He sniffed the edges while I climbed aboard and curled up like a baby, coaxing him to join me.

"Luke has a new outdoor bed now!"



But he only hovered above me like a lion regarding his reflection in a clear pond. "You look just like me down there, Momma."

Luke may be only a dog, but he knows how to brighten an entire season—especially Christmas. His tail turns into its own metronome the moment he sniffs the stockings at the hearth.

"Santa's coming!!"

"That's right, Luke. Santa is coming to bring Luke some new toys!"

He adores Santa and everything attached to December: the pine-scented branches, the glittered bulbs, the glow of lights softening the edges of the dark. He's never tried to disturb a single ornament. Instead, he sits beside me, a gentle retail supervisor, while I separate gold bulbs from their packaging.

"Hey, that one's shaped like a banana!"

He tilts his head — another signature Luke gesture — and smiles

couch, a giant teddy bear begging for sugarplums, and waits with patient wonder.

"Is there a present for me?"

Of course there is. I help him unwrap the first of a generous stack, and his eyes bloom at the sight of a new frisbee. Paws up on the couch, he can barely contain himself.

"This frisbee is Kelly Green!"

Quicker than a Saint Nick elf, I remove the plastic ties and hand him a gift that cost under ten dollars. Yet Luke's gratitude is boundless. He radiates a joy so pure it could light a small village.

And in moments like this, I think to myself:

*He may be only a dog, but he carries the clearest truths — the ones we most often forget — right there in his heart.*

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REAL ESTATE

# New home inspection law in Massachusetts, what is it?

What home buyers and sellers need to know

Massachusetts has implemented a new law that significantly changes how home inspections are handled in real estate transactions. The law takes effect October 15, 2025 and applies to transactions entered into on or after October 15, 2025.

There are two very significant changes that this law brings moving forward: First, buyers are given the right to conduct a home inspection if they choose.



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

However, once under agreement, the buyer may choose not to conduct a home inspection. Second, sellers (and their agent) are required to provide buyers with a new disclosure form which details the rights and obligations of each party.

This law, part of the Affordable Homes Act, a statute passed in August 2024, aims to protect buyers' rights to conduct home inspections and introduces specific restrictions on how offers involving inspection waivers can be made and not made. The law is intended to prevent the seller or their agent from putting pressure on buyers to waive an inspection as part of the home purchase process. After several delays in late 2024 and early 2025, the final regulations were published by Governor Healey's Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities in June 2025. The regulations (760 CMR 74) provide the details on how the law will operate.

The law applies to purchase agreements dated after October 15, 2025, and only on the sale of residential buildings with one to four units, condominium units, and co-op shares tied to residential occupancy. First, sellers or their agent cannot state that they will only accept offers from buyers who agree to waive, limit, or forego a home inspection. As an example, this means that a seller cannot counter a buyer's offer with a provision that would remove the buyer's contractual right to conduct a home inspection. Second, sellers cannot accept an offer that waives the home inspection. During nego-

tiations, a buyer (and their agent) should not convey any intent to waive a home inspection. As a consequence of limitation being placed on sellers, buyers can no longer make their offer more attractive by indicating their intent to waive an inspection in advance of acceptance. Third, there is a new disclosure form requirement. Sellers or their agents will be required to provide the disclosure form to buyers and the form must be signed by the buyer and seller on or before the date of signing the first written purchase agreement. For most of Massachusetts, the first purchase agreement is the "Offer to Purchase" or "Contract to Purchase", although in some parts of the state, the first purchase agreement is the "Purchase and Sale Agreement." Regardless of what agreement is used, the new disclosure form must be signed at or prior to signing the purchase agreement.

The form confirms several things: seller represents and warrants that the purchase agreement is not contingent on the waiver or limitation of the buyer's choice to have a home inspection. A seller's acknowledgement that the buyer may have the property inspected by a licensed home inspector of the buyer's choice. A notice that the seller will provide the buyer with a "reasonable" period after entering into the purchase agreement to decide whether to proceed with the transaction.

What About Negotiations? The regulations state that the parties cannot include a provision in the purchase agreement that would "Render a Home Inspection Meaningless." This means that the parties cannot agree on an unreasonable limit on the buyer's ability to schedule, receive, or review a home inspection. It also means that the agreement cannot prevent the buyer from choosing not to proceed with the deal if the buyer is unsatisfied with the results of the home inspection.

As an example, the parties cannot agree that the buyer has just 12 hours from signing the purchase agreement to complete a home inspection and review the results. This provision would likely "render a home inspection meaningless" because it's highly unlikely the buyer could schedule a home inspection in that time frame and review the results.

But the regulations do allow for negotiations around two specific areas: First, it is permissible to agree to limit a buyer's choice not to proceed with the transaction if the aggregate estimated cost of repairs exceeds a reasonable threshold to be negotiated by the parties. Second, the parties can agree to reasonably limit a buyer's deposit refund if the buyer chooses not to proceed after the home inspection. While these areas are negotiable, they call for the agreement to be "reasonable." There is no single definition of "reasonable." It is used as a flexible standard and dependent on the totality of the facts and circumstances in the transaction.

There are however exemptions. For this complete list, reach out to a member of the Marzeotti Group or your trusted real estate professional.


Penalties for Non-Compliance. Failure to comply comes with harsh penalties. For sellers, a violation may be used as evidence of an intent to misrepresent or conceal a material fact about the home. For agents, a violation may be considered an unfair or deceptive business practice under Massachusetts consumer protection laws (Chapter 93A).

This law is designed to create a more level playing field for home buyers by ensuring all buyers have a fair opportunity to inspect a property. However, it removes the ability of the buyer and seller to negotiate around certain areas and introduces significant changes to how offers are structured

and what can be communicated before acceptance.

For more information on this


topic, please reach out to the Marzeotti Group or your trusted real estate professional.



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# Is All This Preventative Maintenance Needed?

**Q.** I am a few miles shy of 30,000 on my 2024 Subaru Forester, which I bought this April, when it had 22,000 miles. I do a lot of highway driving. At my first oil change, the Subaru dealer I took it to (not where I bought the car) told me I needed the following: differential service for \$189, front differential service, \$189.95, brake fluid flush, \$149.95, fuel injection service \$189. My question is, do I need this? They told me it's because it's a 4-wheel drive and this is for the 30,000-mile service.

**A.** Looking at the Subaru maintenance schedule, the only item that you are close to needing is replacing the brake fluid. This is something I think is beneficial every three to five years. The other items certainly can't hurt but, in my opinion, unless you drive in extreme temperature, routinely drive off road or use your car as an Uber or Lyft, the other items are not necessary.

**Q.** I have been reading your column for years when I lived in Boston and still read it now that I live in greater Charlotte. I'm about to purchase an inboard ski boat the weighs 4-4500

pounds with trailer. Unfortunately, this is at or over the max weight of my 2025 Volvo XC60. I'm not planning on towing the boat any great distance, the vehicle just has to run fine and be able to pull the boat out of the water on the launch ramp. I have a small RV with a V-10 engine if I were to tow the boat any distance. What modest used vehicle might you suggest that I look at?

**A.** The Volvo XC60 can likely tow the boat up the ramp. It does have a 3500-pound towing capacity. The issue is not the ability to pull up the ramp, it is the stopping and hilly terrain that could be a safety issue. The base engine in the XC60 and larger XC90 that has 5000 pounds of towing capacity have the same horsepower. If you don't want to take a chance with the Volvo, the next step are mid-sized vehicles like a Durango, Jeep Grand Cherokee 4Runner or full-sized SUV (just about anyone) or full-sized pickup truck. If you decide to go with a used SUV or pickup truck, have it inspected before purchasing it to reduce the chances of making

a poor choice.

**Q.** My question: what is the best way to fix a tail gate on my 2012 Toyota Highlander? It was bumped by another car in a parking lot and the tailgate was dented in the center. I had it repaired, but slowly the electric mechanism stopped working and just beeps twice, opens a little and then closes. Also, the tailgate hatch window opens only an inch. Any suggestions?

**A.** The first thing that needs to happen is to check the integrity of the wiring. A pinched or partially broken wire going to the door motors and glass release could be the issue. Also, if the hatch door is not aligned properly the pinch mechanism (which is part of the lift motors) starts to open, senses the extra force and closes again. The repair needs to start with a good visual inspection and then an electrical measurement at the switches to determine the issue.

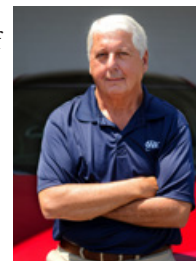
**Q.** I have a 2020 Genesis G80. I am retired and do not drive as often as before. I average about 5500 miles per year. My last oil change was on August 14, 2024, and the dealer said to have an oil change after one year or 38,000 miles. I have driven 6200 miles since then. (A total of 32,400 miles on the odometer). Should I go with an annual oil change after one year or wait until I hit 7500 miles of new driving? Also, my tires are the original ones (Michelin) and still have good tread and no cracking but are now over

five years old. Should I consider replacing the tires because of age?

**A.** The tires will probably be fine for at least another year maybe two. Sidewall and cracking in the tread will be the clue more than tread wear. Typically tires can last 40-80,000 miles or six to ten years. Your Genesis has a 10 year 100,000-mile powertrain warranty. As for the oil change, in my opinion a yearly or 7500-mile interval, whichever comes first is necessary. Not just to reduce engine wear but also to maintain the warranty.

**Q.** I recently just purchased a 2015 Volkswagen Golf and it has a message about the throttle. I had the codes read and it shows an issue with engine misfire on cylinders two and four. I am a DIY'er but this is my first Volkswagen, where should I start?

**A.** At ten years old spark plugs and ignition coils could certainly be the problem. You could certainly inspect the spark plugs and test the ignition coils. Although as a new to you vehicle and to establish a baseline of repairs, it may be easier and more cost effective to just replace the spark plugs and ignition coils.



BY JOHN PAUL

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## TIPS ON FINANCIAL PLANNING

dennis.antonopoulos@edwardjones.com

# Making the most of your Health Savings Account

When it comes to saving for healthcare costs, few tools are as powerful as a Health Savings Account (HSA). Yet many Americans don't take full advantage of it.

HSA's offer a rare triple-tax benefit. You don't pay taxes when you contribute money, your earnings grow tax-free and you don't pay taxes when you withdraw funds for qualified medical expenses.

It's like a retirement account specifically for healthcare costs. Since out-of-pocket healthcare costs for couples in retirement can be

high (over \$375,000 for those with Medicare and Medigap and nearly \$200,000 for those with Advantage plans, according to 2025 Milliman Retiree Health Cost Index), maximizing your HSA should be a priority.

Here are some things to consider:

**Ensure your eligibility.** To contribute, you must be enrolled in a high-deductible health insurance plan and cannot be on Medicare or claimed as someone else's dependent. You also can't have other health insurance coverage, though dental, vision and disability insurance are allowed.

For 2025, you can contribute up to \$4,300 for individual coverage (\$4,400 in 2026) or \$8,550 for family coverage (\$8,750 in 2026). If you're 55 or older, you can add an extra \$1,000 annually. HSA

contributions are generally made through monthly payroll deductions.

**Think long-term.** Many people treat their HSA like a checking account, spending the money as soon as medical bills arrive.

Another strategy, however, is to leave your HSA funds alone if you can afford to pay medical expenses out of pocket. This approach lets that money grow for future healthcare needs, including retirement.

This strategy transforms your HSA from a spending account into a powerful savings tool. You can always reimburse yourself later for those out-of-pocket medical expenses, even years down the road, so long as you keep your receipts.

**Invest for growth.** Most HSAs offer investment options, yet only 9% of account holders take advantage of them according to a 2025 Devenir HSA survey. The remain-

ing 91% keep their entire balance in cash, missing out on potential growth opportunities.

Consider investing at least a portion of your HSA funds, especially if you don't expect to need the money soon. Just keep enough cash available to cover any immediate and significant medical expenses you might face.

**Avoid early penalties.** Before age 65, taking HSA money for non-medical expenses means paying income tax plus a 20% penalty. But once you hit 65, that penalty disappears and your HSA works much like a traditional IRA for non-medical withdrawals.

Of course, using HSA funds for qualified medical expenses remains tax-free at any age, making it the ideal use for these dollars.

**The bottom line:** With healthcare costs continuing to rise, an HSA offers an opportunity to save

money while reducing your tax burden. Whether you're planning for next year's medical bills or healthcare costs decades away, maximizing your HSA contributions could be one of the smartest financial moves you make.

Whether you're planning for next year or catching up for 2025, your HSA can help turn today's savings into tomorrow's financial security.

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THIS ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN BY EDWARD JONES FOR USE BY YOUR LOCAL EDWARD JONES FINANCIAL ADVISOR

EDWARD JONES, MEMBER SIPC

## Worcester Talking Book Library Presents "A Christmas Carol" Theatrical Performance

On Saturday, December 6, at 2:00PM, the Worcester Talking Book Library will host actors Stephen Collins and Poornima Kirby from New Muse Productions for a funny, heartfelt journey through the Charles Dickens classic, "A Christmas Carol". This 1-hour adaptation shows Ebenezer Scrooge's transformation from a grumpy, selfish misanthrope to a generous, wise and kindly man full of the spirit of Christmas. With Stephen playing Scrooge and Poornima swiftly changing between the other characters, this fast-paced, playful adaptation keeps the beauty and humor of Dickens' original text, interspersed with melodious Christmas carols,

and even a lively English folk dance.

Come warm your heart and ring in the holiday season with this refreshing take on a familiar tale!

New Muse Productions is a two-person theatre troupe bringing artistic, accessible, joyful live performances to senior centers, libraries and schools across Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Connecticut. They adapt classic works of theatre and literature into high-quality, memorized productions complete with simple costumes and set-pieces. Their aim is to delight and engage our audiences through the power of literature and live performance!

Stephen Collins is an accom-

plished actor and literature professor, with over 20 years experience performing solo theatre pieces and literature lectures across New England.

Originally from Cambridge, MA, Stephen studied English at UMass Boston and pursued a career in sales, before returning to what he truly loves; performing and teaching. His solo shows include presentations on the life and writings of Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, William Shakespeare, Robert Frost, the theater of the 40s and 50s, Irish Poets and more. His work with actress Poornima Kirby through New Muse Productions has reconnected him to the joy of collaborative theater. [http://](http://unlaunchedvoices.com/)

[unlaunchedvoices.com/](http://unlaunchedvoices.com/) Poornima Kirby is a classically trained actress, writer and director, based in Boston, Ma, specializing in classical and poetic texts, as well as co-created theater. She studied drama

at Vassar College, and trained in acting and Shakespeare performance at Shakespeare & Co. and

### PERFORMANCE

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## Job change?


Whether retiring or changing jobs, you'll want to know your retirement account options.



There are four potential options for your 401(k) when leaving an employer:

- Leave it in your former employer's 401(k) plan, if allowed by the plan.
- Move it to your new employer's 401(k) plan, if you've changed employers and your new employer plan allows for it.
- Roll the account over to an individual retirement account (IRA).
- Cash it out, which is subject to potential tax consequences.

We can talk through your financial goals and find the option that works best for you.



Dennis Antonopoulos

Financial Advisor

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

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5**

- also Saturday Dec. 6, Sunday, Dec. 7; 12-14; 19-23; and 27-30
- Olde Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, 2-8 p.m. Christmas by Candlelight, tickets required. Experience the history of Christmas festivities, relish old traditions and create new ones. [www.osv.org/event/christmas-by-candlelight](http://www.osv.org/event/christmas-by-candlelight)
- Vaillancourt Folk Art's Blaxton Hall Theatre, Sutton "A Christmas Carol" with Gerald Charles Dickens – Nov. 28 2-4 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. Nov. 30 1-3 p.m. and 5-7 p.m. This performance by Charles Dickens' great-great-grandson gives life to the beloved holiday ghost story. performance of The Christmas Carol. The two-hour performance includes intermission. This one-man tour-de-force includes Dickens portraying 26 different characters using different gestures, vocal changes and mannerisms. Due to length, the show is not recommended for children under the age of 8 years old. [Valfa.com/calendar](http://Valfa.com/calendar)
- Holiday Tree Lighting, 6 p.m. at the Auburn Fire Station Headquarters, 47

Auburn Street. Special appearance by Santa Claus. Cookies (sponsored by Central one), the Dance Dazzlers, AHS Marching Band & Chorus/SWIS Honor Choir/AHS Chamber Singers/ Boy & Girl Scouts/ hot cocoa, coffee and cookies baked by Bay Path Culinary Arts students.

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6**

- 9:30 a.m., Waters Farm Preservation, Sutton. Breakfast with Santa, sponsored by Sen. Ryan Fattman and Stephanie. Breakfast, photos, crafts. Free but reservations are required. <https://bit.ly/breakfastwithsantatickets>
- 4th Annual Oxford Holiday Extravaganza with 70 vendors, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. The Student Council will also host its Breakfast with Santa from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. in the cafeteria. Cost is \$5 per person, including breakfast and a photo with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Also, a raffle table set up with vendor-donated items, \$1 per ticket or 15 for \$10. Cash only for raffle and breakfast. The Holiday Lights Parade starts at the North Oxford Fire Station at 5 p.m. and concludes with the tree lighting at the Joslin Park Bandstand. Hot cocoa and treats for all.
- Sutton Chain of Lights from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., in various locations, Sutton. Celebrate Christmas in historic Sutton with businesses, churches and organizations in town for the annual Christmas and holiday season celebration. Hop on a free trolley for rides to more than three dozen locations to do shopping, enjoy delicious food, kids' activities and animals. The Sutton High School Band plays traditional carols and Christmas tunes at 5 p.m. on the Town Common and Santa Claus comes by to light the Town Christmas tree. Live performance by Sam James of the Kelly Clarkson Show

and The Voice at Vaillancourt Folk Art from 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

- Christmas Fair at First Congregational Church of Dudley, 135 Center Road 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Santa Claus, live entertainment, vendors, LBS gift shop, cookie corner, basket raffles, quilt raffle. Live auction starts at 1:30 p.m.
- Uxbridge First Holiday Night Parade and Celebration . The parade starts at 4:30 p.m. It begins at Rivulet Street and ends at the Town Common on Route 16. Local businesses, community groups, three high school marching bands, fire dancing, ice sculpture and the arrival of Santa & Mrs. Claus.

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7**

- Annual Christmas Bazaar, St. Joseph's Parish Center, 68 Central Street, Auburn, from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Come enjoy an old-fashioned Christmas Bazaar and check out the collectibles, attic treasures, jewelry, plants, knit goods, holiday décor, toys, candy, baked items and so much more! Take a chance on one of our many raffles. There is something for everyone! Free Admission. Plenty of parking available. Handicap accessible.
- Grafton Celebrates the Holidays. Start the day with a Pancake Breakfast at North Grafton Elementary School 46 Waterville Street with crafts, a book fair, and holiday photos from 8 - 11 a.m. Then visit designated Frosty Stops around town, 12-4 p.m. A trolley service will be available to help with transportation between key locations. Craft & Vendor Fair, 10 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. at Grafton High School, 24 Providence Rd., Grafton. Over 75 vendors featuring baked goods, home décor, jewelry, woodworking, activities and more. Enter to win a special

giveaway. Tea at the Museum: The Grafton Historical Society will host a holiday tea from 2-4 p.m. at 71 Main Street.

Community Strum: Apple Tree Arts will host a community strum-along or sing-along to holiday songs starting at 2 p.m. Events on the Common: 3:30-4:30 p.m. Boy Scout Troop 2019 will give away homemade holiday treats. 3:45-3:55 p.m. Beatz Dance Studio performs a holiday dance routine 3:55-4:10 p.m. Join the Grafton Girl Scouts in singing winter and holiday tunes. 4:10- 4:15 p.m. Join Rabbi Rachel as she shares a few words about Hanukkah. Santa's Arrival and Tree Lighting: The event culminates on Grafton Common with Santa's arrival at 4:15 p.m., followed by the official tree-lighting ceremony. For more information, visit [GraftonRec.com](http://GraftonRec.com)

- The 25th Annual Millbury Chain of Lights, a town-wide event to celebrate the holidays with local food, shopping and entertainment! From 10:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., various locations around town.. Enjoy nearly 40 stops in town for live music, holiday shopping, holiday figures like Buddy the Elf and the Grinch, raffles and food. Old-fashioned trolleys provide free transportation throughout the day. The event is sponsored by local businesses and concludes with a tree lighting and appearance by Santa Claus at the Millbury bandstand. [www.facebook.com/millburychainoflights/](http://www.facebook.com/millburychainoflights/)
- The Unitarian Church at 3 Grafton Common is having a traditional Church Faire and' Musical Program from 11:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Enjoy lunch with holiday music and shop local artisans for unique gifts not available anywhere else, fresh holiday greens, vintage Christmas decorations and jewelry extravaganza. Take a photo of your family in our Winter Wonderland photo booth. Free kids' crafts. Stay and enjoy a free performance by our church Hand Bell Choir at 2 p.m.
- Webster Dudley Business Alliance Holiday

Stroll on Main Street, Webster from 3-6 p.m. Local shops stay open late with treats, raffles, and festive displays. Great for holiday shopping and meeting Santa before the tree lighting. Webster Holiday Parade and Tree Lighting. Parade steps off from Town Hall at 5 p.m., followed by the tree lighting at 6 p.m. Scout troops, floats, and Santa along with live music, hot cocoa and caroling.

- Auburn High School to City Hall, Auburn. Lighted Santa Parade & Tree Lighting. Live music begins at 4 p.m. at City Hall, parade begins at 4:30 p.m. After parade ends, at City Hall there will be a tree lighting, a visit from Santa, and live music. [bit.ly/AuburnSantaParadeTreeLighting2024](http://bit.ly/AuburnSantaParadeTreeLighting2024)

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10**

- "The Fright Before Christmas" with author and television personality Jeff Belanger sharing stories of ghoulies, ghosts, and things that go bump in the night during this darkest time of year. Be delightfully frightened during this multi-media program. Caution: this program is not for young children. Register. Millbury Library.

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13**

- The 2025 Jingle Jaunt 5K will take place on December 13 at 10:30 a.m. It takes place at the First Congregational Church, 307 Boston Rd. Sutton. Info and entry forms at [howie189@verizon.net](mailto:howie189@verizon.net) or [fcchs@sutton-firstchurch.net](mailto:fcchs@sutton-firstchurch.net). Registration: \$23 race day packet pick up. Wear some bells!
- Auburn Recreation and Culture Holiday Arts & Craft Fair at Auburn High School, 99 Auburn Street, Auburn. With 192 vendors, artisans, awareness groups and food trucks. 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. 508-832-7736.
- Manchaug Stroll. The historic Village of Manchaug will transform into a traditional winter wonderland for the 2025 Manchaug Stroll from 4-8 p.m. Hosted by Vaillancourt

**HAPPENINGS!**  
*continued on page 23*

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**HAPPENINGS!**

*continued from page 22*

Folk Art and District V House in partnership with the Sutton Fire Department, this free outdoor event celebrates the evolution of Christmas in a historic 1800s mill village. Perfect for families and friends, the Stroll offers a festive way to embrace the holiday spirit while enjoying history, music, and holiday treats.

**Event Highlights:** Live Music by Heartland Radio — Soak in the joyful sounds of Christmas as Heartland Radio performs live at Vaillancourt with a mix of holiday classics and non-traditional favorites, all delivered in the unmistakable style of Nashville's best country artists. Expect a lively mix of Christmas classics at District V!

• Douglas Winter Stroll, Douglas from 3-6 p.m. Do some holiday shopping, listen to carolers, explore the Museum and take part in special events, and treats at the Library (special guest appearances, too!), visit the Orchard, get your trees and wreaths, grab an app or meal...best of all, take in the holiday lights on Main Street up to the Common. For more information, email allyssamanyak@gmail.com.

• Santapalooza 13: Concert for A Claus: This event to support the Marines' Toys for Tots foundation will take place at the Highfields Golf & Country Club, 42 Magill Drive, Grafton.

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14**

• Enjoy a performance by the Very Merry Dickens Carolers from 5-6:15 p.m. at the Samuel Slater Experience, 31 Ray Street, Webster. Talented vocalists wearing period costumes sing in four-part harmony along the recreated 1910 Main Street. Buy tickets online or by emailing admin@samuel Slater-experience.org or call 508-461-2955.

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19**

• An 18th-Century Yuletide Celebration by Candlelight with acclaimed Boston area chamber ensemble, Musicians of the Old Post Road. 7:30 – 9 p.m. Enjoy a concert steeped in the seasonal spirit and soundscape of the Baroque and early Classical eras illuminated by hundreds of candles. This festive program transports audiences across time and continent, from the frost-laced hills of Ireland and the pastoral chapels of Germany to the colonial meetinghouses of New England. Performed on period instruments and with historically informed interpretations in Blaxton Hall, Vaillancourt Folk Art. Tickets are \$60 or \$150.

• The United Church of Christ Federated is pleased to invite all community members to its annual free, fun-filled Christmas Celebration on Saturday, December 6, from 1 to 3pm. The event aims to bring together families and friends to celebrate the joy of the holiday season.

This year's festivities will feature a variety of activities for all ages, including activities such as cookie decorating, crafts,

face painting, games with free prizes (everybody is a winner!), a scavenger hunt, Christmas pinatas, and more! Refreshments will be available. Santa Claus and his elves will be attending and will give gifts to all the children present! "We look forward to opening our doors and hearts to our neighbors, sharing the warmth of the season, and remembering the hope that is at the heart of Christmas", said Pastor Sabina Terrades.

The United Church of Christ is located at 4 Church St., Webster, across from Town Hall, 508-943-0061.

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20**

• Auburn Fire Rescue Department's traditional Santa Claus Tour by fire truck to visit kids and adults throughout town. Route begins at the Drury Square Fire Station. Please be patient as route completion depends upon traffic, weather and emergencies. Santa Tour: from 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. The Auburn Fire Rescue Department is expected to continue its traditional Santa tour by fire truck on Saturday, December 20, 2025. The route begins at the Drury Square Fire Station around 11 a.m. Note that times are approximate and depend on traffic, weather, and emergencies.

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25**

• Parishioners and volunteers from the Blackstone Valley United Methodist Church would like to cordially invite everyone to our Free Community Christmas Dinner, including the usual holiday meal favorites, roast turkey, potatoes, vegetables, squash, stuffing, cranberry sauce and dessert. This year's meal will be served on Thursday, Dec. 25, from 12 noon to 2 p.m. in the Blackstone Valley United Methodist Faith Hall at, 61 Linwood Ave. Whitinsville, MA. Parking is available behind the church accessible from Church Street.

The dinner is open to everyone free of charge. Please come join us for a joyous Christmas celebration that will include holiday fun, food, and fellowship with many from the community.

For more information, call the church office at 508-234-2275.

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 4**

• The New England Country Music Club will hold dances with live, classic country music Jan. 4 with the "South County Line" band and Sun. Jan. 18 at the Uxbridge Progressive Club, 18 Whitin St., Uxbridge. Doors open at 12:30 p.m., music 1-5 p.m. Admission charge, cash bar, snacks are allowed.

# December happenings at the Dudley Senior Center

December 4: the Dudley Senior Center will be celebrating December birthdays with cake and ice cream after the Tri Valley lunch.

December 10: Brown Bag Lunch at noon with your choice of ham or turkey breast. The cost is \$4 per person. Please RSVP and tell us your food selection by calling 508-949-8015 or sign up in the Dudley Senior Center.

December 11: Blood Pressure Clinic starting at 11 a.m. Please

stop by and have Cheryl check your blood pressure.

December 18: Potluck lunch combined with Memory Café from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Come and enjoy all your favorite Holiday Songs with Christmas Karaoke. We will be serving roast pork, mashed potatoes, carrots, peas and dessert. The cost is \$5 per person. Please RSVP for this event by calling 508-949-8015 or sign up in the Dudley Senior Center.

Monthly activities at Dudley Senior Center:

Tuesdays at 1 p.m. – Pitch League

Wednesday at 11:30 a.m. – The Dudley Senior Center Knitters

Tri Valley lunches served Monday and Thursday

Ask about our Book Club!

The Senior Center will be closed December 24 and December 25.

**PERFORMANCE**

*continued from page 21*

London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts. She has performed regionally at the A.R.T., Actors Shakespeare Project, Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theater, and Bay Colony Shakespeare. She has also appeared in several independent films, commercials, industrials and

voice-overs, and has worked as a teaching artist in the Boston Public Schools, Tufts Medical Center and Berklee College of Music. She is Artistic Director for Theatre of Eternal Values – America (a branch of an Italy-based international company) where she has written, directed and performed in several original productions. With New Muse, she has scripted or adapted three productions in which she also performs—sometimes playing

18 characters in a single one-hour performance. She is passionate about New Muse's mission to bring original live theatre directly to audiences where they live, work and play!

www.PoornimaKirby.com.

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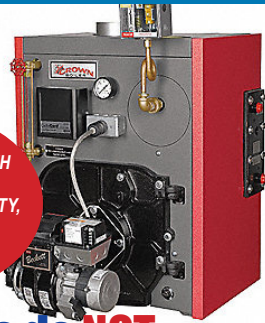
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