

Our Town Publishing changes hands, celebrates relocation

Tri-County Regional Chamber facilitates Milford ribbon-cutting event



Front row at ribbon-cutting, from left, Laura O'Callaghan, President & CEO of Tri-County Regional Chamber, Our Town Publishing new owners Jen and Marty Schofield, and Mass. Rep. Brian W. Murray of the 10th Worcester District.

By Judith Dorato O'Gara

On Friday, Jan. 23, Jen and Marty Schofield, new owners of Our Town Publishing, celebrated a grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony

at their new location at 9 Industrial Road, Ste. 107, Milford, Mass. The full-service printing company provides a range of marketing services for all clients, from consumer

to business, as well as publishes community newspapers reaching 28 Massachusetts

OUR TOWN

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Nipmuc students capture WWII memories in oral history project with Mendon Senior Center

By Theresa Knapp

A recent oral history collaboration between the Mendon Senior Center and the Mendon-Upton Regional School District brought history to life as local senior citizens shared firsthand memories, of childhood during World War II, with Nipmuc students.

Launched in January to align with the district's history curriculum, the project paired Nipmuc Regional High School students with "senior seniors" who recalled what it was like to grow up on both the American and European home fronts during WWII. Through personal interviews, students captured stories of sacrifice, resilience, and the small, everyday moments that defined wartime life.



Betsy Edsall, now of Mendon, shows Nipmuc students Molly (left) and Zoe a family photo that includes her brother, who served in the Navy, and her older sister, who worked as a "Rosie the Riveter" building B-25 bombers at a Kansas City plant. Photo by Theresa Knapp

WWII

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OUR TOWN

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towns from MetroWest. The reception drew many local professionals, along with Rep. Brian W. Murray of the 10th Worcester District and Laura O’Callaghan, President & CEO of the Tri-County Regional Chamber of Commerce, who was “thrilled” to help facilitate the ribbon-cutting event.

Our Town Co-President & CEO Jen Schofield expressed her gratitude to all who attended for their support.

“As both the owner and publisher of 16 area newspapers and a full-service print shop, Marty and I are incredibly



proud of the work we do—and even more proud of the relationships that have built this business brick by brick,” Schofield added, “This event is more than just showcasing our print shop, newspapers, products and services; it’s about building lasting

connections. Printing has always been a collaborative craft, and today is a perfect opportunity to share ideas and build new partnerships in a community we are so fortunate to be part of.”

“It was wonderful to see such a strong turnout from the newspaper’s clients and supporters,” said O’Callaghan. “The energy in the room and the enthusiasm for networking really spoke to the respect and support Jennifer and Marty have already earned as the new owners. And of course, nothing makes it official quite like oversized red scissors and a bright red ribbon!”

“I’m pleased to have Our Town Publishing in Milford and very impressed with the number of local community newspapers (it) publishes,” said Rep. Murray, who recognized Our Town Publishing with an official citation from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts at the celebration. Murray continued, “Today, it is so difficult to try to get current local information, and the papers that Our town puts together does just a great job of getting that information out to residents in the community. I was also very pleased to learn of the extent of full-service printing services Our Town offers to



(L to R) Nicole and Charles Tashjian, former owners of Our Town Publishing, chat with attorney Laurie Fowles.

businesses and residents in the community. It’s very important for folks who have printing needs to know they’ll be done locally, professionally and cost-effectively.”

Rep. Murray also gave a nod to the Tri-County Chamber for helping to bring exposure and attention to local businesses such as Our Town Publishing;

Tri-County Regional Chamber’s O’Callaghan extended her well wishes “to former owner Nicole and her husband, Charles, on their retirement - hopefully they are enjoying their free time somewhere sunny and warm.”

The Tashjians said they could not be happier to entrust the

company they built to Jennifer and Marty.

“With Jennifer’s 26 years in the industry and Marty’s technical experience, we know our employees, and the continuation of what has been established, will have a long life for the years ahead,” said Nicole Tashjian.

For more information on Our Town Publishing’s full-service printing, publishing and graphic design services, visit www.ourtownpublishing.com.

To learn more about Local Town Pages’ community newspapers, visit www.localtownpages.com.

For more information on the Tri-County Regional Chamber, visit tricontyinchamberma.org.



Our Town Publishing’s celebration afforded local professionals an opportunity to make connections with area businesses.

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14 Nipmuc students commit on recent Signing Days

On Feb. 11, nine athletes at Nipmuc Regional High School committed to their colleges for their respective sports, breaking the previous record for most signings in a single day. These sports included track and field, baseball, lacrosse, swimming, field hockey, and cross country. The event lasted an hour with spectators ranging from students, parents, and Nipmuc faculty.

Each athlete delivered a brief speech discussing the college they will be attending and reflecting on their athletic journey, including any advice they may have for younger athletes. As one athlete, Wes Ludwigson, said, "Advice I would give to a younger athlete is that there are always going to be good and bad days, but as long as you are willing to work through them, you will always make progress towards your goals."

Students recognized included:

- Sean Burchard: Mass Maritime (Baseball)
- Kira DeBaggis: St. Michael's

- College (Field Hockey)
- Brynn DiAnni: Smith College (Track)
- Josh Giancola: Johnson and Wales (Baseball)
- Jayden Lilburn: Central Connecticut State University (Lacrosse)
- Milka Lopez-Vazquez: St. Joseph's College (Lacrosse and Track)
- Cole McGovern: Westfield State (Baseball)
- Kayden McKibben: Bryant University (Swimming)
- Gavin Metcalf: Mass Maritime (Baseball)
- Wes Ludwigson: Vassar College (Track and Cross Country)

While this recent signing day brought excitement, it was the second opportunity that athletes from the class of '26 had to sign their intent to play their respective sport in college. The first signing day featured four student-athletes from the girls' soccer team. These girls were in the midst of a great season, having won the state championship the year before. This day was

special for these girls because they got the chance to celebrate their accomplishments, future plans, and love of their sport. Some may see each other in future games!

- Students recognized were:
- Kenzie Ellis: Providence College (Soccer)
 - Lyla Hill: Roger Williams University (Soccer)
 - Anya Montano: University of Connecticut (Soccer)
 - Riley Restic: University of New Hampshire (Soccer)

These two signing days were an incredible achievement for the athletic department. Overall, Nipmuc has 14 "commits" and could have more in the spring. The spring signing day would create an opportunity for athletes who are still in the commitment process. Our community is looking forward to watching these athletes grow at the next level. We hope that their success is an inspiration for younger athletes and a motivation to work hard for something you love.



(L to R) Gavin Metcalf, Josh Giancola, Cole McGovern, Sean Burchard, Kira DeBaggis, Kayden McKibben, Jayden Lilburn, Wes Ludwigson, Brynn Dianni on Nipmuc signing day. Missing from the photo is Milka Lopez-Vazquez. Courtesy photo



(L to R) Riley Restic, Anya Montano, Lyla Hill, and Kenzie Ellis on Nipmuc signing day. Courtesy photo

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Mendon welcomes new, returning police officers

By Sean Glenon, Special writer

The Mendon Police Department is proud to announce the hiring of two new police officers. Congratulations to both Harrison Quartarone and Joseph Thompson.

Officer Quartarone is a recent graduate from the MPTC (Municipal Police Training Committee) Academy in Marlborough. Before becoming a police officer, he was both a cadet for the Mendon Police Department

and a dispatcher for Metacomet Emergency Communications Center.

We would also like to welcome Officer Joseph Thompson back to the Mendon Police Department. Officer Thompson worked for the MPD back in 2023, and we are thrilled to have a great officer back.

The author is a senior at Stonehill College majoring in Criminology and a cadet with the Mendon Police Department.



The Mendon Police Department recently welcomed two new members, Officer Harrison Quartarone (center, green jacket) and Officer Joseph Thompson (center, blue suit). Courtesy photo

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St. Gabriel the Archangel Knights of Columbus donates \$1,500 to Upton Community Center Food Pantry

The St. Gabriel the Archangel Knights of Columbus Council 12897 has generously donated \$1,500 to the Upton Community Center Food Pantry. This contribution will make a significant difference in the lives of the Upton residents who rely on food assistance programs.

The donation helps the Upton Community Center Food Pantry to continue serving individuals and families in need within the community. Rising grocery prices and increased cost of living have made community partnerships more important than ever.

“We are incredibly grateful to the Knights of Columbus for their generosity and commitment to our community,” said Tania Paparazzo, Director of Elder and Social Services. “This gift will directly benefit Upton residents who depend on the Food Pantry to help put meals on their tables.”

Richard Provost of the Knights of Columbus, and long-time Upton resident, emphasized the organization’s dedication to charitable work. “Our Council is proud to support the Upton Community Center Food Pantry,” said Provost. “Our mission is to help those in need, and we are honored to contribute to a program that has such a positive impact on local families.”

The Upton Community Center Food Pantry, located at 9 Milford Street, is open to Upton residents on Mondays from 9:30 – 11:30 a.m., Wednesdays from 12 – 3 p.m., and Fridays from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. The Mobile Food Pantry also visits Millhaus apartments twice per month, with plans to visit Coach Road apartments in the coming months.

For more information about the Food Pantry or other services, contact the Upton Senior Center at 508-265-3768.

The Knights of Columbus is



Dan LaBastie, Matt Michel, Chris Nute, and Richard Provost from St. Gabriel the Archangel Knights of Columbus, and Tania Paparazzo (middle) from the Upton Senior Center. Courtesy photo

the world’s largest Catholic family fraternal service organization. Founded in 2001, St. Gabriel’s Council 12897 supports local community needs including sponsoring church, community, family, youth, culture-of-life and Council service-specific activities.

The Department of Elder &

Social Services supports low-income families, individuals with disabilities, and older adults by responding to individual and family needs. We foster positive intergenerational relationships, encourage community involvement, and serve as a valuable resource for the entire community.

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Financial Advisor Mark Freeman focuses on clients' success

Financial advisor Mark Freeman enjoys getting to know his clients. His aim is to help them clarify their objectives and then, working as partners, to create a financial plan that achieves their goals.

"I love this career because I love helping people," said Freeman. "I work for my clients because I care about them."

A Certified Exit Planning Advisor (CEPA) working for Edward Jones at his 77 West Main St., Hopkinton office, Freeman offers financial advice to business owners and individuals.

I spend a lot of time getting to know my clients. We talk about their financial challenges, and their proposed solutions. Many times I find people are focused on the wrong problem," Freeman said.

A frequent problem is minimizing taxes. He noted many clients, while saving for retirement, inadvertently create, "a tax time bomb." Freeman explained, "If you invest in a diversified portfolio year after year and don't deal with taxes while saving, it could come back to bite you in retirement," in the form of large tax bills. For other clients, "once you establish some type of wealth, taxes become an

important part of the discussion since the best way to increase wealth is by keeping more of it," said Freeman. He added, "Helping people avoid tax issues is a primary focus. I work hard to keep a client's money in their pockets and out of Uncle Sam's."

Another issue faced by many of Freeman's clients is being in a "job prison," working in a position they dislike because they feel they need the income. "But after reviewing their finances, we often find they can change careers or do something else," he said. Freeman noted he was in that same situation himself until he realized he could afford to change careers.

Freeman added, "I am also trying to make sure that my clients' money outlasts them." One of his first tasks when meeting a new client is to run an analysis of their finances to make sure their funds will support them for their lifetime.

With a mechanical engineering degree from the University of Massachusetts Lowell, Freeman worked in two other industries before establishing his finance career in 2017. Even though his first two jobs were outside his training, Freeman said he was hired by Edward



Jones, "one, because I have the ability to analyze data quickly and, two, because I always try to figure out a better way to do things. I bring those skills to my finance clients."

Freeman also tries to understand his clients' motivations. "When I propose a plan, I ask 'how do you feel about it.' If there is something bothering you, I need to fix that," he said.

Much as he partners with his clients, Freeman has developed relationships with the towns where he works and lives. Part of the Hopkinton business community, he has supported many local organizations and nonprofits.

Making their home in Holliston since 2005, he and his wife have raised their now college-aged twins in the town. Freeman currently volunteers as a business advisor for the Holliston High DECA Club, an interna-



The team of Financial Advisor Mark Freeman and Office Administrator MaryKate Morin of Edward Jones in Hopkinton helps clients define their objectives and develop a plan to achieve those goals.

tional nonprofit organization that prepares emerging leaders and entrepreneurs in marketing, finance, hospitality, and management.

Summing up his work objective and the relationship he has with clients, Freeman said, "My job is to understand what is important to you and figure out how to make it happen."

For more information call Freeman at 508-293-4017 or

email him at Mark.Freeman@EdwardJones.com.

I think you already have the correct photo and caption but here is the caption again: The team of financial advisor Mark Freeman and office administrator MaryKate Morin of Edward Jones in Hopkinton helps clients define their objectives and develop a plan to achieve those goals.

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Upton Town Library Calendar of Events

9 Milford Street, Upton • 508-529-6272 • UptonLibrary.org • HOURS: Tues., Wed. & Thurs. 9-8 • Mon., Fri. & Sat. 9-4 • Sun. CLOSED

New – English Conversation Circle Wednesdays 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. starting March 25

For beginner to intermediate English speakers, join us for an hour weekly to practice English vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation skills. Register for a month at uptonlibrary.org.

CHILDREN'S & YOUNG ADULT EVENTS

Boston Bruins PJ Drive - Feb. 1 through March 15. Sponsored by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) and Cradles to Crayons, the library is collecting brand NEW pajamas, with tags, for babies through teens. Donations may be dropped off to our donation box in the lobby. If you are a family in need, please contact the Department of Children and Families at 508-929-1000.

AbriKidabra - March 14 at 10 a.m. Join us for a fun magic show with professional magician, Mike Bent, of AbriKidabra!™. Mike combines amazing magic, big laughs, audience participation and hilarious surprises for a one-of-a-kind, interactive experience.

For ages 3 to 12. Registration required. **This event is currently full, but we are maintaining a waitlist*

Maple Sugaring Event – March 21 at 11 a.m., offsite. Join Children's Librarian Lee Ann Murphy and Riverbend Farm Park Ranger Sherine Hamade to learn all about maple sugaring! Blackstone River & Canal Heritage State Park (Riverbend Farm) is located at 287 Oak Street, Uxbridge, MA 01569. For ages 5 to 12. Registration required. **This event is currently full, but we are maintaining a waitlist*

Read with Copper – March 26 at 4 p.m. Join Copper the Therapy Dog and have him be your reading partner! This is a 1-on-1 experience for your child to read their favorite reading material to Copper. Copper is a large English Chocolate Lab! He is certified through Animal-Assisted Therapy Services (AATS) of Massachusetts and will be guided by his owner and handler, Wendy Hodge. For ages 5 to 12. Registration required. Timeslots are 15 minutes each.

Spring StoryWalk – March 30 through May 2, at VFW Play-

ground. Stop by the VFW Playground anytime it's open to enjoy the library's Spring StoryWalk, "Fletcher and the Springtime Blossoms" by Julia Rawlinson. A StoryWalk is a self-guided picture book activity, put together with separate story page panels that families can enjoy one at a time with their children.

ADULT EVENTS

Drum Circle with Dave Curry - Sat., April 4, 7 - 9:30 p.m. Ages 8 - Adult

Join facilitator Dave Curry for an evening of freestyle drumming. Instruction and extra drums are provided, but you can also bring your own drums and percussion instruments. No prior experience is necessary, so the circle is suitable for beginners on up to experienced drummers. Registration is requested.

Tabletop Game Night for Adults – Thursday, March 26, 5:15 - 7:30 p.m.

Join our tabletop game series for adults! Meets every fourth Thursday of the month from 5:15 - 7:30 p.m. Beginners and experi-

enced players welcome!

Virtual Author Talk Series

View free online author talks, either live or recorded. Register and get more information at the library website, or at <https://library.org/uptontownlibrary>

Author Talk with Shoshana Walter: America's Failed Response to the Opioid Crisis - Tuesday, March 24 at 2 p.m.

BOOK GROUPS

Monthly book groups are facilitated by Upton Library staff. We also reserve book copies for local private book groups, contact us for more information!

Upton Reads Book Group

An eclectic mix of contemporary literary fiction with meetings on the second Tuesday afternoon and Thursday evening of each month, with a remote call-in option.

Tuesday, April 14 at 12:45 p.m., and Thursday, April 16 at 6:45 p.m.: *One Thousand White Women* by Jim Fergus.

Fic or No Fic Book Group

An adult book group led by Librarian Micaela that alternates fiction and non-fiction selections. Meets on the last Wednesday of each month at 6:45 p.m. Wednesday, March 25 at 6:45 p.m.: *The Librarians* by Sherry Thomas.

Tween Book Club – March 19 at 6:30 p.m.

This club is especially for our middle grade patrons, ages 10 to 14. This group reads popular middle grade titles selected by our members.

Kids' Book Club – April 1 at 4 p.m.

Our book club members explore popular juvenile chapter books on the first Wednesday of each month from 4 - 4:45 p.m. For our March meeting, we will be discussing the title *Oris & Timble: The Beginning* by Kate DiCamillo. This group is now for ages 6 to 9.

MONTHLY LIBRARY EVENTS – Register Now!

Most programs and events

require pre-registration at uptonlibrary.org or call 508-529-6272. Program details can be found on our website on our Event Calendar. **Registrations open the month prior to events.*

Baby Storytime – Fridays at 9:30 & 10:30 a.m., ages birth to 3
Preschool Storytime – Thursdays at 9:30 & 10:30 a.m., ages 3 to 5

Saturday Storytime – March 28 at 9:30 a.m., ages birth to 5

Drop-In Storytime – March 9 at 9:30 a.m., ages 1 to 5

Music & Movement - March 16 & April 6 at 9:30 a.m., ages 1 to 5

Storybook Art Club – 3rd Tuesday each month at 10 a.m., ages 3 to 5

LEGO Club – 1st & 3rd Wednesdays each month at 4 p.m., ages 3 to 12

Crafternoon – 3rd Thursday each month, 3 - 5 p.m., ages 3+
Tween Book Club – 3rd Thursday each month at 6:30 p.m., ages 10 to 14

Kids' Book Club – 1st Wednesday each month at 4 p.m., ages 6 to 9

Chess Club – 1st Tuesday each month, 4 - 6 p.m., ages 5 to 14

Crafting Club – 2nd Tuesday each month, 4 - 6 p.m., ages 5 to 14

Gaming Club – 3rd Tuesday each month, 4 - 6 p.m., ages 5 to 14

Magic the Gathering: Commander – 4th Tuesday each month, 4 - 6 p.m., ages 8 to 16

FreeDrum Circle – 1st Saturday each month, 7 - 9:30 p.m., ages 8+

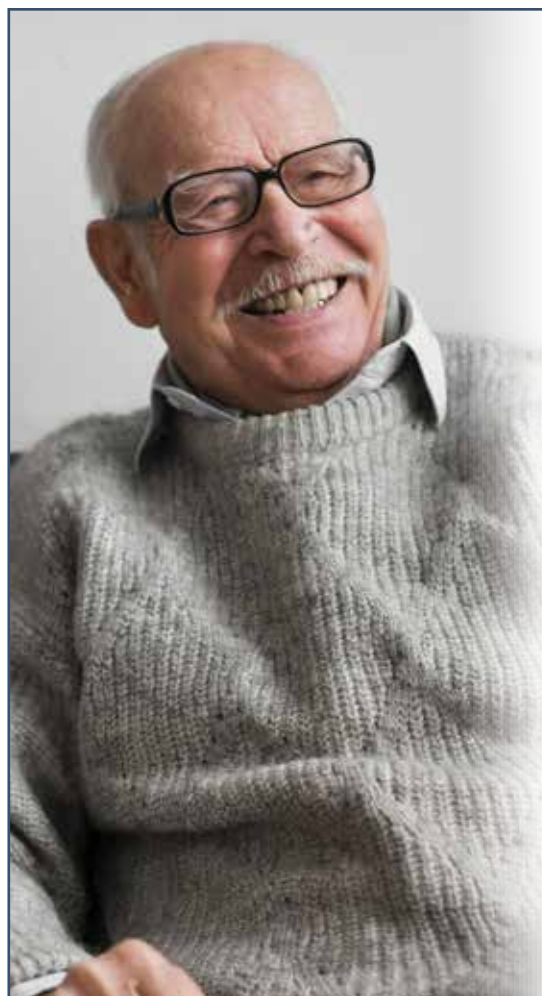
Tabletop Game Night for Adults – 3rd Thursday each month, ages 16+

Upton Reads Book Group – 2nd Tuesday and 3rd Thursday each month

Fic or No Fic Book Group – last Wednesday each month

Virtual Author Talks – varies, see our website

For more information or assistance with any library services, call 508-529-6272 or email mbachtol@cwmar.org



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Rising prices may not dominate headlines the way they did a year or two ago, but if you're retired, you're probably still feeling them. Even when overall inflation cools, the costliest expenses — like health care, utilities, insurance and property taxes — tend to rise faster than broad inflation numbers sug-

gest. That creates a squeeze that can make you question whether your income plan is built to last.

Fortunately, you often can adjust without drastic cuts that affect your lifestyle. Start by understanding where the pressure comes from and how to build more flexibility into your plan.

Inflation hits retirees differently. You've likely noticed your grocery bill, prescription drug costs and heating expenses haven't returned to "normal." Even small increases compound over time and can chip away at your buying power.

If your income plan was created years ago, it may assume lower inflation or relatively stable price increases over time. Recent years have shown that's not always the case.

Why some income plans feel strained. Any plan relying on fixed withdrawals or rigid budgets can feel tight when living costs rise. If you're

drawing from investments, you may hesitate to increase your withdrawals because of market volatility. And if you depend on fixed income sources like Social Security or a pension, yearly cost of living increases may not keep pace with your expenses. You might live 25 to 35 years in retirement, giving small annual cost increases decades to add up.

What you can do without sacrificing stability. A few adjustments can help you stay ahead of rising costs and maintain your financial confidence.

First, review your withdrawal strategy. Ask your financial advisor about flexible approaches that increase income when markets and portfolios perform well and pull back during tougher times. This protects your long-term plan with room to respond to rising prices.

Next, rebalance your portfolio. You may uncover opportunities to shift toward in-

vestments with more consistent income or better tax efficiency. Sometimes a small tweak can generate extra cash flow without increasing overall risk.

Finally, look at your income sources. You may be less affected by rising costs if you delay taking Social Security, work a part-time job, add inflation-protected bonds or create predictable lifetime income with annuities, if they're appropriate for your situation.

Don't overlook health care:

Health care costs often grow faster than general inflation. Medicare premiums and out-of-pocket expenses can rise annually, and the need for long-term care remains a big financial uncertainty for retirees. Building health care-specific inflation into your plan now can help prevent surprises later. Any savings you have in a health savings account can help you cover health care costs. And many pharmaceutical companies offer financial assis-

tance programs to help pay for costlier medications.


Stay flexible and informed: Today's retirements look different from those of even a decade ago. The key is staying flexible, reviewing your plan regularly and making small adjustments before pressure builds. A financial advisor can help you find the right approach to navigating rising costs without disrupting the life you've worked hard to build.

Contact Mark today to discuss this topic or any of your financial goals.

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The blurry truth:

Understanding and addressing the rise of Refractive Errors

By: Roger M. Kaldawy, M.D.
Milford Franklin Eye Center

Have you noticed more people wearing glasses these days? It's not just a feeling. Refractive errors, those eye conditions that blur our vision, are becoming increasingly common, particularly nearsightedness (myopia). This article explores what these errors are, why they're on the rise, and what we can do about it.

What are Refractive Errors?

Our eyes are intricate organs, acting like sophisticated cameras. Light enters, is bent (refracted) by the cornea and lens, and ideally focuses perfectly on the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye. This focused image is then sent to the brain, allowing us to see clearly.

Refractive errors occur when the eye's shape prevents light from focusing correctly on the

retina, resulting in blurry vision. Common types include:

- **Myopia (Nearsightedness):** Close objects are clear, but distant objects are blurry. This happens when the eye is too long, or the cornea is too curved, causing light to focus in front of the retina.
- **Hyperopia (Farsightedness):** Distant objects are clear, but close objects are blurry. This occurs when the eye is too short, or the cornea isn't curved enough, causing light to focus behind the retina.
- **Astigmatism:** Vision is blurry or distorted at all distances. This happens when the cornea or lens is irregularly shaped, preventing proper light focus.
- **Presbyopia:** This age-related condition makes focusing on close objects difficult. As we age, the lens loses flexibility, hindering its ability to change shape and focus up close.

This is why many over 40 need reading glasses.

Why the Rise?

The increasing prevalence of refractive errors, especially myopia, is a global concern. While the exact causes are still being researched, several factors are believed to contribute:

- **The Screen Time Surge:** Our modern lives involve significant screen time – smartphones, tablets, computers, and televisions. This constant close-up focus strains the eyes and may contribute to myopia development and progression.
- **The Great Outdoors:** Studies suggest that spending time outdoors, especially in childhood, has a protective effect against myopia. The wider range of distances the eyes focus on outdoors, along with increased natural light exposure, may be beneficial.



ments like atropine eye drops, multifocal contact lenses, or orthokeratology.

- **Surgery:** Refractive surgery like LASIK or PRK may be an option for some, but consult with an eye doctor to discuss risks and benefits.

The Future of Vision Care:

Researchers are actively exploring new prevention and treatment methods, investigating the roles of genetics, environment, and lifestyle. New technologies, such as advanced lens designs and drug therapies, are also being developed.

The increasing prevalence of refractive errors is a significant public health issue. By understanding the causes and taking proactive steps, we can protect our vision. Remember, regular eye exams are essential. If you have any concerns, consult an eye care professional.

Milford-Franklin Eye Center: Your Partner in Eye Health

At Milford-Franklin Eye Center, our dedicated team of ophthalmologists and optometrists, supported by highly trained staff, are available to treat various eye problems, including refractive errors. We offer a dedicated optical shop with a children's boutique, providing quality glasses and contacts. We also provide world-class cataract surgery and advanced treatments, including procedures that can eliminate the need for glasses in select cases. All surgeries are performed in our accredited surgical facility. Our in-house optical shop crafts glasses while you wait, and new patients receive a complimentary pair of select frames. We offer after-hours, same-day emergency appointments and Saturday availability. With over four decades of dedicated service, Milford-Franklin Eye Center is committed to delivering advanced eye care close to home.

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- **The Genetic Factor:** Genetics play a significant role. If your parents or siblings have myopia, you're more likely to develop it.
- **The Urban Influence:** Urban environments often have limited green spaces and encourage indoor activities, potentially contributing to the myopia rise.
- **Lifestyle Shifts:** Changes in diet, like increased processed food consumption, and reduced physical activity may also play a role, though more research is needed.

What Can We Do?

While we can't entirely eliminate the risk, we can take steps to minimize the impact and potentially slow myopia progression:

- **Limit Screen Time:** Encourage children and adults to take regular breaks. A helpful tool is the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes of screen time, take a 20-second break to look at something 20 feet away. This allows the eye muscles to relax and refocus, reducing strain.
- **Embrace the Outdoors:** Aim for at least 1-2 hours of daily outdoor activity, especially for children.
- **Maintain a Healthy Lifestyle:** A balanced diet and regular physical activity are crucial.
- **Regular Eye Exams:** Comprehensive eye exams are essential, especially for children. Early detection and treatment are key.
- **Corrective Lenses:** Glasses or contacts are the most common and effective correction.
- **Myopia Control:** For children with progressive myopia, doctors may recommend treat-

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A HELPING HAND...

Food Pantry at United Parish of Upton

March 17, 31 and April 14 from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.:

The Food Pantry serves residents from Upton as well as nearby towns. Proof of income or church affiliation is not required. We offer non-perishable food, toiletries, paper products and infant needs. Donations can be dropped off in our donation shed located outside the church office on 1 Church Street, Upton.

Community Supper May 19

March 19 Community Supper: on the third Thursday of each month from September through June at 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., our Faith in Action committee provides a delicious and nutritious meal for the community. Everyone is welcome. Please call the United Parish of Upton church office at 508-529-3192 by March 13 to make your reservation. If you forget to reserve, please come anyway. We always make extra and would love to serve you.

If your nonprofit organization is located in Upton or Mendon and provides free services to Upton and/or Mendon citizens, email editor@uptonmendonfreepress.com for consideration to be listed in this section.

Robyn Nasuti earns internationally recognized achievement for performance in luxury real estate

Upton, MA | Feb. 26, 2026 — Robyn Nasuti with Realty ONE Group Suburban Lifestyle earned The Institute for Luxury Home Marketing’s Million Dollar GUILD™ recognition for experience, knowledge, and expertise in million-dollar and above residential properties. Robyn is a Certified Luxury Home Marketing Specialist™ (CLHMS), part of an exclusive group of real estate professionals who have completed The Institute’s training and have a proven performance in the upper-tier market.

“Agents who have earned the GUILD™ recognition are performing at the highest level in their community,” said Kathleen Bibbins, Director of The

Institute. “It takes a superior level of service to be successful and consistently close sales at or above one million dollars. We want to recognize this performance and give these elite professionals the earned distinction that they are the agent of choice for affluent buyers and sellers.”

The specialized training and ongoing membership with The Institute provide Nasuti with the knowledge and tools to better serve affluent clients. The GUILD™ recognition provides evidence of the successful commitment to service at the highest level. “I believe quality customer service is second to none,” said Robyn.

Robyn has been in real estate



Robyn Nasuti
ABR, ASP, SRS, GREEN, SRES, MBA

since 2006 and specializes in Central MA. She has closed more than 400 properties and 200 million in sales as of December, 2025.

Koda the Comfort Dog visits Milhaus seniors

On Feb. 11, Friends of Upton Seniors (FUSE) hosted its second Coffee Hour for Seniors who live at Milhaus Apartments. The Coffee Hour provides a way for Seniors to socialize with other residents and learn about services provided by the Upton Senior Center.

This year’s special guest was Koda the Upton Police Department’s Comfort Dog. Everyone was very happy to see Koda, and he loved all the attention. Koda’s handler is Officer Ciara O’Connor who is the School Resource Officer. Koda is a black lab and is about 5 months old. He is in training to be a therapy dog.

FUSE appreciated Office O’Connor bringing Koda to visit seniors and look forward to seeing them again soon!



Upton Police Officer Ciara O’Connor with Koda the Comfort Dog on a recent visit to Milhaus Apartments in Upton. Photo source Friends of Upton Seniors

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Kids@Play program registration now open

The Upton Recreation Commission is excited to offer our summer Kids@Play (grades K-6) and Leader In Training (L.I.T.; grades 7, 8) programs for 2026! These programs are open to residents of Upton and surrounding towns and run weekdays from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. with drop-off from 8 - 9 a.m. and pickup from 4 - 5 p.m. Extended day options are available for a small additional fee and allow drop-off as early as 7:30 a.m. and pickup as late as 5:30 p.m.

When Kids@Play participants arrive in the morning, they will be presented with a schedule of activities for the day. These include all the favorites such as kayaking, swimming, arts and crafts, sports, and all sorts of games. Kids@Play is excited to continue offering theme weeks/activities, dress up days, and much more this summer! The goal is that your kids have



the freedom to choose the activities that they will have the most fun with! The Kids@Play program also takes suggestions from kids (and parents) for these activities. Staffing is at a 6:1 ratio (vs industry standard of 10:1).

Optional field trips are also offered, with a full day of activities still happening at Kiwanis Beach for those who do not participate in the field trips. Field trip prices are dependent on costs for each venue. This year, field trips include PinZ bowling, Southwick's Zoo, Revolution Camp Day, and Urban Air, among others.

For more information, visit Uptonrec.com.

Sponsored News Release

Antiques & Collectibles Appraisal Day to benefit the Upton Historical Society

The Upton Historical Society will host an Antiques & Collectibles Appraisal Day on Saturday, May 2, at the Upton Community Center.

The event will offer free admission to attendees. Appraisals are available for \$10 per item or \$25 for three items, with proceeds benefiting the programs and preservation efforts of the Upton Historical Society.

From 9 - 10 a.m., appraisal appointments will be available exclusively for Upton Historical Society members. The event will be open to the public from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. To schedule your appraisal, please email upton-historicalsociety@hotmail.com. Walk-ins are also welcome.

Discover the value — and the stories — behind your treasured items with help from experienced experts and enjoy a



From Upton Historical Society

relaxed day of discovery. Everyone is welcome.

Professional Appraisers, who are donating their services for the event, include:

- Wayne Tuiskula, Auctioneer/Appraiser, Central Mass Auctions Inc., Appraiser on Antiques Roadshow; and

- Josh Chamberlain, Appraiser, Chamberlain Antiques

Experts will assess an extensive array of items, including furniture, Asian antiques, fine art, jewelry, sculptures, pottery, books, coins, watches, sports memorabilia, comics, and unique historical artifacts.

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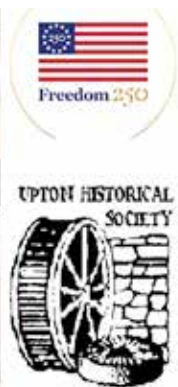
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Upton program to celebrate 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence



Nipmuc Regional High School students post with original 1776 handwritten copies of the Declaration of Independence, with the Town Clerks of Mendon and Upton. This was the first time the two historic documents had been in the same room since the American Revolution began. Source Upton Historical Society

Join the Upton Historical Society on April 23 at 6:30 p.m. at the Upton Community Center for a special program commemorating the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

In November, students at Nipmuc Regional High School were given a rare opportunity to examine the original handwritten 1776 copies of the Declaration of Independence as recorded in the town record books of Mendon and Upton — the first time the two historic documents had been in the

same room since the American Revolution began.

Through their research, students compared these two surviving handwritten copies, revealing how national events were recorded and experienced at the local level in 1776. While the students will not be presenting, members of the Historical Society will share the students' findings during the program and explore how our neighboring towns responded during the earliest days of independence.

The evening will also feature guest speaker Lindsey Cahoon,

Visitor Experience Manager at Old North Church & Historic Site. With more than a decade of experience in museum education and public history, Lindsey leads the day-to-day visitor experience at one of Boston's most visited historic sites, welcoming over 150,000 visitors annually. Her work supports Old North Illuminated's mission to inspire active citizenship through thoughtful, historically grounded, and socially responsible interpretation — including efforts to elevate Black and Indigenous histories

within the Revolutionary story. Come discover how the story of American independence

unfolded right here in our own communities. All are welcome to attend.

CALLING LOCAL ARTISANS!

Friends of Upton Seniors (FUSe) is hosting a Juried Craft Fair

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Applications at Upton Senior Center or email friendsofuptonseniors@gmail.com

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March is Judicial Outreach Month, meet Hon. Eustis on March 25

Stop by the Mendon Senior Center on March 15 at 1 p.m. to learn about the work of the third branch of government directly from Hon. Richard A.

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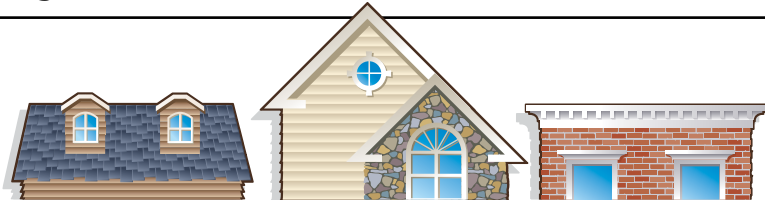
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How Much Home Can I Afford?

By the third quarter of 2025, the tide seemingly began to turn in regard to a housing market that had been marked by limited inventory since the onset of the



COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. According to market indicators from Redfin, the National Association of REALTORS® and Homes for Heroes, by the summer of 2025 things began to shift in regard to inventory (9.4 percent increase year-over-year). Prices also began to level

off, as the median existing home price in the United States was \$435,300 in June 2025, which marked a 2 percent increase from the previous year. Price reductions also became more common compared to 2024, signaling a cooldown in some segments.

Although affordability concerns still persist, many people may finally be ready to enter the home-buying arena. When doing so, it's essential prospective home buyers recognize how much they can comfortably spend on a home. Most experts suggest buyers combine lender affordability guidelines with an assessment of one's personal budget. These factors can help individuals determine a reliable budget when shopping for homes.

- Debt-to-income ratio: Lenders use various parameters to identify a borrower's creditworthiness. That includes figuring out a person's debt-

to-income ratio (DTI). Wells Fargo says DTI can be calculated by adding up all of a person's monthly debt payments and dividing them by gross monthly income. That number is multiplied by 100 to get a percentage. The lower the DTI, the less risky one is to lenders.

- The 28/36 rule: Part of the DTI equation may include the 28/36 rule utilized by many mortgage lenders. This is a standard guideline that can help one see if it's possible to afford a home loan. The 28 percent is allotted housing costs. The monthly housing expenses (principal, interest, taxes, homeowners insurance, private mortgage association fees) should be no more than 28 percent of one's gross monthly income. One's total monthly debt

payments, including housing, car, loans, student loans, and credit cards, should be no more than 36 percent of the gross monthly income. So if a prospective home buyer earns \$10,000 per month, or \$120,000 per year, the housing costs should not exceed \$2,800. Total debt payments, including housing, should not exceed \$3,600 per month.

- Personal budget considerations: Lenders may allow borrowers to borrow a certain amount of money, and buyers then go out and spend that much on a home. But to avoid living paycheck to paycheck and having all of one's money go toward a home, it is best to account for personal spending habits and savings goals. It's important to have an emergency funds account to pay for unexpected things like home repairs, or to account for instances when income may decline. Ongoing costs to manage the home also merit consideration, as do utilities and future renovations.
- Income-to-home price ratio: Some people abide by another general guideline to

shop for a home that costs no more than three to five times their annual household income. That means with an annual income of \$100,000, one should aim for a home priced between \$300,000 and \$500,000. The specific range will also depend on a person's existing debt.

- Interest rates and other factors: The interest rate on home mortgages as well as down payment also must be considered. Resources like Bankrate and Zillow provide home affordability calculators that will factor in interest rates, terms of a loan, down payment, and property taxes. Buying a home when interest rates are high means spending more over the life of the loan. Also, how much one puts toward a down payment has a big impact. Aiming for 20 percent means avoiding paying for private mortgage insurance (PMI).

There is no fail-safe way to determine how much home you can afford. Many factors are in play and are exclusive to buyers in the market for a new home.



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Did you know?

The market research experts at Business Research Insights report that the three-season sunroom market size is projected to nearly double between 2025 and 2035. BRI reports that 65 percent of homeowners prefer cost-effective sunrooms when seeking to extend their living space. The popularity of sunrooms can be traced to a number of variables, including year-round access to a home's surrounding landscape. That access might be hindered if the only spaces to experience nature is a patio, deck or another traditional type of outdoor living space. But sunrooms, particularly those equipped with heating and cooling, can bring homeowners in touch with nature during times of year when they might otherwise be compelled to steer clear of their outdoor living spaces due to less welcoming weather.

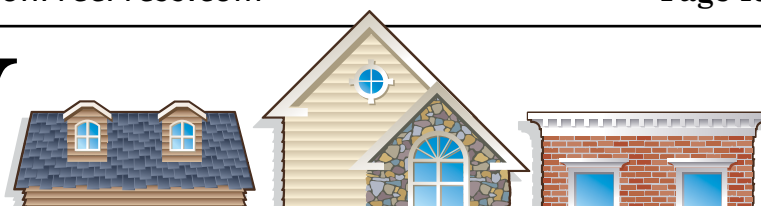
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HOME REVIEW



Planning for the Future with Flexible Living

BY TRACY LAROSA

The way we think about housing is changing—and flexibility is at the heart of it. Today’s buyers are no longer focused on the biggest home possible. Instead, they’re thinking ahead: how they want to live now, and how their needs may evolve over the next 10, 20, or even 30 years.

Less space, but better

One of the most noticeable shifts is a desire for less space, but better space. Many homeowners are intentionally downsizing or choosing homes with smaller footprints that are easier to maintain. One-level living is especially popular, offering convenience, accessibility, and long-term comfort without the need for stairs. Ranch-style homes, first-floor primary suites, and layouts with minimal level changes are in high

demand—and for good reason. They support aging in place while remaining functional for all stages of life.

Equally important is the rise of multi-purpose rooms. Homes no longer need a formal dining room that’s used twice a year or a dedicated guest room that sits empty most of the time.

Instead, buyers are looking for rooms that can adapt:

- A guest bedroom that doubles as a home office
- A dining area that functions as a workspace or homework zone
- A den or bonus room that can serve as a playroom for young children now and a media room for teens later

This flexibility allows homeowners to make the most of every square foot, adjusting how

they use their space as their lifestyle changes.

ADUs

Another major trend shaping future-focused housing is the growing interest in Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). An ADU offers incredible versatility. For many families, it’s a smart way to plan across generations. An ADU can house young adult children just starting out, potentially provide rental income to offset rising homeownership costs, and/or serve as a comfortable space for aging parents who want independence while remaining close to family.

Over time, the roles can reverse. Adult children may transition into the main home while older parents downsize into the ADU, maintaining proximity without sacrificing privacy. This kind of multigenerational



Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) offer incredible versatility – for many families, it’s a smart way to plan across generations.

living is becoming increasingly common, especially as Massachusetts ranks in the top 10% of the most expensive states in the country. With the cost of living continuing to rise, families are rethinking traditional housing models and embracing solutions that offer financial flexibility and long-term stability.

Ultimately, these housing

trends reflect a smarter approach to homeownership—one that prioritizes adaptability, efficiency, and thoughtful planning. Flexible layouts, multi-purpose rooms, one-level living, and ADUs aren’t just trends; they’re practical tools for building a home that works for you now, and well into the future.

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

To register for an event, click on the Library Event Calendar & Registration link at the top of the library's homepage www.taftpubliclibrary.org.

Medium Ellen Henry presents Connections with Spirit: Messages of Hope and Healing

Ellen Henry returns to the Taft Library on Sunday, March 15 at 2:30 p.m. If you happen to have a small item from your loved one, Ellen may offer to connect with them using that item. *Please note:* Attendance at a demonstration does not guarantee that you will receive a reading. Registration is required. Visit us at www.taftpubliclibrary.org to register.

Adult Handcrafting Group

Join the Adult Handcrafting Group on Wednesday, March 18 at 2 p.m. downstairs in the library. Bring your own craft project to work on while you visit. Intended for adults. Crafts are NOT supplied.

Slow Flow Yoga for Adults and Teens

Join Katie Aissis from Sprout-

ing Tree Yoga for Slow Flow Yoga. This Vinyasa style yoga class links breath to movement in a dynamic sequence of postures. Please bring your own yoga mat. Join us on March 24, April 14 and May 12 at 7 p.m. Registration required.

Adult Book Club

The Adult Book Club is led by Library Assistant Kris Heumann. The group typically meets the second Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. Upcoming book club discussions are as follows: In April, *Red Notice* by Bill Browder. Adult Book Club books can be picked up at the downstairs desk.

Awards Book Club

Hosted by Taft Library Assistant Jane Blackwood, the Awards Book Club meets on a quarterly basis to discuss fiction award winners of the year. Jane selects from the books that took home the coveted Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, the Booker Prize and more! The current book in the Awards Book Club discussion series is *The True True Story* of Raja the Gullible by Rabih Alamed-

dine, winner of the 2025 National Book Award for fiction. Discussion is on Tuesday, May 19 at 7 p.m. Contact the library at 508-473-3259 for further information.

Footnotes Nonfiction Book Club

Led by Library Director Andrew Jenrich, the club will tackle the following upcoming books this year: *There is No Place for Us: Working and Homeless in America* by Brian Goldstone (Discussion in early June, date TBD). *A Walk in the Park: The True Story of a Spectacular Misadventure in the Grand Canyon* by Kevin Fedarko. *Material World: The Six Raw Materials That Shape Modern Civilization* by Ed Conway. Dates of discussion for some of the upcoming books are to be determined. The Footnotes Nonfiction Book Club typically meets on a quarterly basis.

German Conversation Club

Are you looking for a place to practice what German you remember or to improve your German vocabulary? Lead by Library Assistant (and Mendon resident) Monika Schmid, the group typi-

cally meets the last Monday of each month. In March the group will meet on Monday the 30 at 6 p.m. Registration is required.

2026 Challenge Book Club

The library is beginning a new book talk series revolving around a monthly challenge prompt. Participants are encouraged to share the title or titles (and brief synopsis) of a book they've read or would like to read centered on the prompt. Prompts for the next few months of the club are as follows: **March:** A book by a woman author. **April:** A book from a different time period. **May:** A book that made you smile. The group typically meets on the last Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m.

Friends of the Taft Public Library Meeting

The Friends of the Library meetings are typically held on the last Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. downstairs in the Art Holmes Community Room, unless it falls on a holiday or during a school vacation. If you plan on attending, it's always a good idea to call the library at 508-473-3259 or email the Friends at friendsoftaftlibrary@gmail.com to confirm the date and time of the meeting.

CHILDREN'S NEWS

Registration is required for all programs. Please log onto our website at www.taftpubliclibrary.org and find the events page to register along with more information for the programs.

Itty Bitty Story Time

Itty Bitty Storytime is designed for our youngest patrons birth to 3 years old. Join us for a lot of fun on Tuesdays and select Wednesdays at 9:30 a.m.

Story & Craft Time

Join us for Story and Craft Time! Perfect for the preschool-aged child! All sessions take place on Tuesday mornings at 10:30 a.m.

and Wednesday afternoons at 1 p.m.

Alphabet Storytime

We will read a couple of books, sing songs, and learn about the letter of the week. Wednesday mornings at 10:30 a.m. Please note there is no Alphabet Storytime the last Wednesday of the month.

Music & Movement with Deb Hudgins & Coffee and Conversations at the Taft

Join Deb Hudgins on Wednesday, March 25 at 9:15 a.m. for a 30-minute music and movement theme-based program which features singing and guitar music for young children (infants & preschool). Coffee & Conversations is from 9:45 to 10:45 a.m. The library will supply Muffin House Muffins!

The BaNannies

The BaNannies are a mother/daughter duo who bring children's songs, both old and new, to life! The BaNannies will visit the Taft on Monday, March 23 at 10:30 a.m.

Music & Movement with Deb Hudgins

Join Deb Hudgins for a 30-minute music and movement theme-based program which features singing and guitar music for young children (infants & preschool). Join us on Tuesday, March 31. The program starts promptly at 10:30 a.m.

Book Clubs

Books are available for pick up at the upstairs circulation desk. Pizza and refreshments will be available.

Graphic Novel Book Club:

Join us on Tuesday, March 17 at 5 p.m. for our next book club meeting. We will be discussing *Otis & Peanut* by Naseem Hrab.

6-9 Book Club: *Pet's Rule! My Kingdom of Darkness* by Susan Tan

will be our next book! Hope you can join us on Tuesday, March 24 at 5 p.m.

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WWII

continued from page 1

Two students in Mrs. Darcy Daniels' U.S. History class were paired with one senior. To prepare for the interviews, the students created a list of questions they would ask, and the Mendon Senior Center shared the questions with the seniors so they could prepare.

Among the senior participants was Louisa Marlies Kehler, 88, of Grafton. Kehler was born in 1938, in a university town in southern Germany – she could see the Black Forest from the top floor of her home – and though she was just 3-6 years old during the war, her memories remain vivid.

"I really do remember it well. I don't know why," she said.

Kehler's father owned a car upholstery business with five employees before he had to become a soldier. "He had to go, they did not 'ask,'" he was told, she said adding, "My dad didn't come back. It was known that he was captured in the war and put in a prison camp."

Kehler described long hours spent sheltering in the basement during air raids. "When they put out the signs that looked like Christmas trees, it meant we were a target for bombings," she said. "During the war: basement, basement, basement — it was scary." She remembers her mother using her body to protect her daughter.

She said churches and relatives provided critical support, sending care packages that included small treasures, such as a ball from America.

She said they received their news on the radio. "My mom, she always turned it off when that guy [Hitler] talked, and she never raised her hand [in salute]," she recalled.

They later had to leave their



This is the childhood home of Louisa Marlies Kehler of Grafton (Kehler could see the Black Forest from the top floor). She was one of several seniors who shared their childhood experiences with Nipmuc students. The program was organized by the Mendon Senior Center and Nipmuc's U.S. History teacher Mrs. Darcy Daniels.

house during the French Occupation; the family returned to the home after the war.

Kehler eventually immigrated to the United States at age 21 after her husband, an inventor, sent her an engagement ring through the mail. They raised two daughters, Elvira and Victoria; and for many years Kehler was a coloratura soprano opera singer.

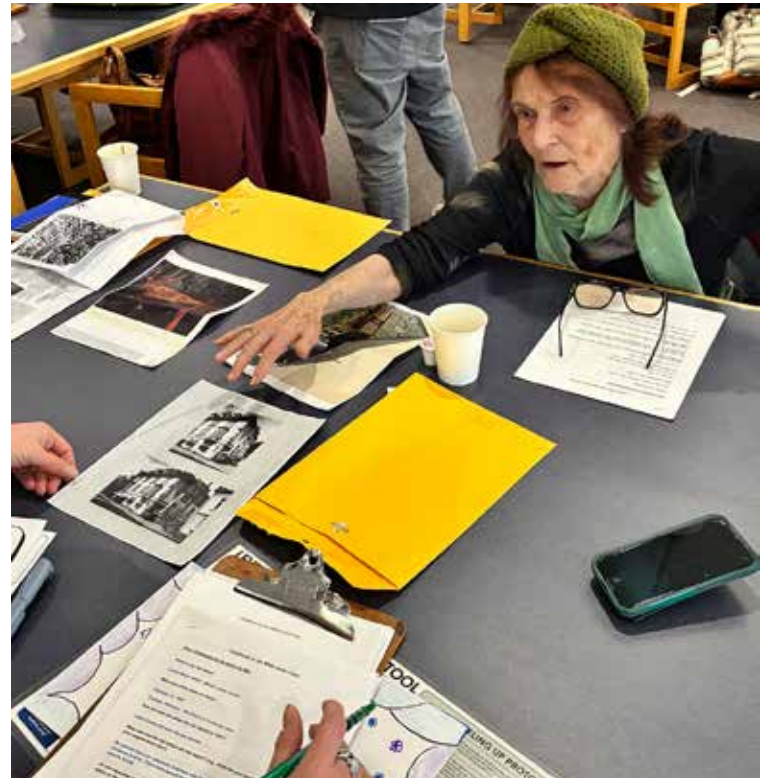
At the same time, in America, Betsy Edsall, now of Mendon, was growing up in a military family near an Air Force base in Kansas. Her brother served in the Navy and her older sister worked as a "Rosie the Riveter" at a Kansas City plant building B-25 bombers.

Edsall recalled collecting cans for scrap drives and families buying war bonds. She vividly remembers military planes flying very low nearby. "It was so low, I thought it was going

to crash," she said. Soldiers frequently visited her family's home for a homecooked meal. She also recalled her mother being 'creative' because of food shortages, remembering canned peas on toast as a frequent meal.

After the war, her brother wrote down his experiences; Edsall shared the detailed document during the interview.

Edsall was excited to share her



Among the senior participants was Louisa Marlies Kehler, 88, of Grafton. Kehler was born in 1938, in a university town in southern Germany – she could see the Black Forest from the top floor of her home – and though she was just 3-6 years old during the war, her memories remain vivid. All photos by Theresa Knapp

experiences with the Nipmuc students. "I remember so much about it as a 4- and 5-year-old, we had so many servicemen at the house, and you don't always get anybody to sit and listen."

For the students, the experience offered a perspective no textbook could provide.

"I liked it and learned a lot," said Zoe, an 11th grader from Upton. "It was different from

the classroom perspective, in the details and the personal stories."





"It was from a first-hand experience and different than a textbook," added Molly, an 11th grader from Mendon.


After the interviews, students incorporated their interviews, photos, and narratives into a podcast to later share at the Mendon Senior Center and the Upton Center.




Seniors who shared their memories of being a child during World War II also brought along memorabilia to share with the Nipmuc students. In this photo, Betsy Edsall of Mendon (front row, far left) poses with her family.

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 GOOD FRIDAY Service: 4/3 at 3-6pm Private Reflection	 EASTER SUNRISE Service: 4/5 at 7am Kiwanis Beach


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Miscoe Hill PTO Mattress Fundraiser

The Miscoe Hill Middle School PTO is excited to announce the launch of a new community tradition: the Inaugural Mattress Sale Fundraiser. For one day only, on Saturday, April 4, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the Miscoe Hill Gym will be transformed into a curated Sleep Gallery featuring luxury brands including Purple, Helix, Therapedic, Malouf, Tranquility Sleep Systems, Bedding Industries of America and Simmons Beautyrest Black.

The Strategy: This event isn't just a fundraiser; it's a budget solution. By bypassing traditional retail overhead and national advertising costs, the PTO offers the community premium sleep sets at 30-50% below retail value.

The Value: All mattresses are brand new, made to order, and come with full factory warranties. Twin mattresses start at \$199, fulls at \$289, queens at \$299, and kings at \$499. The sale also features adjustable power bases, CordaRoy Bean Bag/Nest chairs, sheets, and luxury pillows offered below retail the day of the event.



The Mission: Statistically, 1 in 10 people in our community will purchase a mattress this year. The PTO's goal is to keep those existing funds local to support Good Neighbor programs, Cultural Arts, and essential classroom supplies.

"Every purchase supports the students, even if you just want a pillow," says the PTO. The event offers 0% financing and delivery options.

For details about the fundraiser and to view a video showing how the Miscoe Hill Gym will be transformed into a luxury Sleep Gallery go to MiscoePTO.org.

Sponsored News Release

OBITUARY

Rufin Van Bossuyt

Rufin Van Bossuyt, (Van to his friends), 89, formerly of Upton, passed away peacefully on Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026 after a long illness. He was a gentle giant whose life was one of service to his family, his country, his employer, his community and causes which consumed him during his lifetime.

Van served in the U.S. Army during the Berlin Wall Crisis, stationed primarily at Fort Devens in Massachusetts. After his discharge, he spent 30+ years as System Arborist with National Grid, where he was responsible for vegetation control management across the system network. He was recognized as a specialist in the industry and was honored with the Utility Arborist Association (UAA) Lifetime Achievement Award for his innovative approach to vegetative management under high power lines, a technique which is still in use today. He served as president of UAA and developed a countrywide network of contacts which was legendary. He was also a founding member of the Edison Electric Institute (EEI) Vegetation Management Task Force. For several years after his retirement, he consulted and often testified as an expert witness in court cases concerning incidents which involved trees and power lines.

In addition to his professional career, Van was committed to public service. He served the Town of Upton as Selectman, Town Moderator and as a member of many town boards. In partnership with the MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, he played a role in the successful reintroduction of ospreys and bald eagles to the woods and waters of Massachusetts.

Van's lifelong passion for forestry began early. His interest in the decline of the American chestnut tree in the eastern forests of the United States and the effort to save and restore this iconic tree captured his attention in 8th grade. He never lost sight of the mission to bring chestnuts

back to the Appalachian range from Georgia to Maine. He served on the national board of The American Chestnut Foundation for many years and was a founding member of the MA/RI chapter.

After retiring, Van helped establish a seed orchard of American chestnut trees on the campus of the MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Headquarters in Westborough. In 2022, he was honored when the orchard was named for him in recognition of his volunteerism and generous support.

He graduated from Rutgers University with a degree in Forestry. Grateful for the assistance financing his education, he supported others by contributing regularly to the scholarship program of the Rutgers School of Bioscience. He was happiest when he was in the woods at the Upton State Forest or leading walking tours on conservation land in Harwich on Cape Cod. As one person remarked, walking in the woods with Van was like taking a course in dendrology.

Born May 13, 1936 in Morristown, New Jersey, Van was the son of Rufin Van Bossuyt and Elizabeth (Hark) Van Bossuyt. One of six children, he is survived by Victoria Johnson of Florida, David Van Bossuyt and his wife Melinda of California and Joyce Owens of Colorado, as well as nieces and nephews and step-nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his sisters, Elizabeth Ingram of Texas and Ruth Olsyn of Pennsylvania.

Van is also survived by his beloved wife of 39 years, Rena M. Richard, with whom he joyfully explored the world, touching every continent except Antarctica.

Vacationing in the house on Cape Cod and spending time on the water in his Grady White boat made the summers a favorite time of year. But the Westborough orchard was never far from his mind, and he devoted countless hours planting, pollinat-



ing, weeding and harvesting chestnut burs when he was in Upton.

When one considers the essence of a man, it is rare to hear words such as - kind, sweet, generous, gentle, quiet - all words used by his peers to describe Van. But they also spoke of his effectiveness as a leader- principled, professional, resourceful, tenacious, a role model who led by example and was highly respected by everyone with whom he worked.

It is a fitting tribute to a good man who made a positive impact on his world and left it a better place for his having been in it. He walked along this path called life and left behind a trail of beautiful memories.

Family and friends are invited to attend visiting hours from 9:30 to 11 a.m. on Friday, April 17, in the Pickering & Son Upton Funeral Home, 45 Main Street, Upton.

A Celebration of Life Remembrance will begin at 11 a.m. in the funeral home, followed by burial with military honors at Lakeview Cemetery in Upton.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to:

The American Chestnut Foundation, 50 N. Merrimon Avenue, Asheville, North Carolina 28804, OR New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill, 11 French Drive, P.O. Box 598, Boylston, MA 01505-0598, OR The Samuel Huntington Fund, Inc., c/o Amy Stacy, 170 Data Drive, Waltham, MA 02451-2222.

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Nipmuc Writing Center students collaborate with counterparts at Clough Elementary for newspaper writing workshop

As a team of potential future newspaper reporters learn more about the craft at Clough Elementary School, they're drawing upon the knowledge of their older counterparts at the newly launched Nipmuc Writing Center.

Mendon-Upton Regional School District Superintendent Dr. Maureen Cohen, Clough Elementary School Principal Liz Garden, and Nipmuc Regional High School Co-Principals Mary Anne Moran and John Clements recently shared that students from the Nipmuc Writing Center at Nipmuc Regional High School recently partnered with fourth graders to help refine their writing, providing a shining example of cross-school collaboration within the Mendon-Upton Regional School District.

This inter-school collaboration began in November 2025, shortly after Clough Elementary launched its Newspaper Club and Nipmuc's Writing Fellows Team was formed at the newly established Nipmuc Writing Center. Clough teacher Esther Willinski reached out to district administrators to explore the possibility of connecting her fourth-grade newspaper reporters with high school student writers.

Administrators introduced Willinski and Nipmuc Writing Center adviser Melissa Kinkela, and the two began planning the partnership. Both programs were new this school year and took several months to get fully established. By December, Clough's Newspaper Club published its first edition, allowing the high school students to review the younger students' work before the first in-person session.

The two groups met for the first time on Thursday, Feb. 5, at Clough Elementary. Kinkela created a presentation outlining the latest student articles, and mixed groups were formed for collaboration. As students huddled together with their iPads, articles were shared through Google Classroom, allowing the high school students to provide real-time feedback and editing suggestions.

The session began with a brief icebreaker before focusing on how to craft engaging headlines. Writing Fellows explained the difference between straightforward headlines and those designed to capture a reader's attention. Conversations then centered on improving structure, clarity and impact of news writing.

"All of the students were extremely engaged," Willinski said. "The conversations focused on the article that they were working on, and the high schoolers proved to be amazing mentors to my fourth graders, giving positive feedback and kindly moving them in the right direction, suggesting some changes to their articles with the goal of making them better."

The collaboration lasted about an hour and ended with a pizza lunch. The Nipmuc students also brought small gifts, including Nipmuc t-shirts, for the Clough students.

In total, 12 high school Writing Fellows worked with 11 Clough Newspaper Club members.

Clough principal Garden described the collaboration as a demonstration of the district's commitment to authentic engagement and hands-on learning opportunities for its students.

"This collaborative project shows what meaningful cross-district collaboration looks like," Principal Garden said. "To see our students in action was incredible as they worked to improve their writing and develop their skills, based on the feedback and insights they received from the older students."

Nipmuc co-principals Clements and Moran said the Nipmuc Writing Fellows demonstrated leadership and mentorship skills while reinforcing their own understanding of effective writing.

"We're glad to see our students make an impact on the younger generation from the community," Co-Principal Clements said. "Being able to share and explain their writing knowledge is a sign of learning that really sticks and it reflects the quality of education that they receive here."

"This has been so inspiring to see our older students partner with the younger ones within our community," Co-Principal Moran said. "To see our students take on the role of educators shows us the passion they have for learning and their gen-



In total, 12 high school Nipmuc Writing Fellows worked with 11 Clough Newspaper Club members during the collaborative event. Photo Courtesy Mendon-Upton Regional School District

erosity to share it with others."

Superintendent Cohen praised the students and staff members involved for creating a learning experience that benefits both groups.

"This is an amazing example of what can happen when students are given opportunities to lead and learn from one another," Superintendent Cohen

said. "Our high school students stepped into mentorship roles with care and professionalism, and our elementary students rose to the occasion with enthusiasm and creativity. Collaboration strengthens our school community and supports growth at every level."

Submitted by Mendon-Upton Regional School District

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When: Wed., March 18, 2026
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Mendon, MA

Where: Milford Town Library
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Free magic show for families of first responders, veterans, active military March 15

On Sunday, March 15 at noon, Thanks To Yanks is hosting a free children's magic show for families of first responders, and veterans, and active military members.

The event will feature magician Tommy James. Space is

limited and reservations are required.

The event will take place at the Italian Vets Milford with a pizza lunch to follow.

For tickets and more information, contact info@thankstoyanks.org.

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Get ready for the spring invasion!

Red flags that could indicate the presence of termite infestation

This year, WPC Pest and Termite Control and the National Pest Management Association (NPMA) are working to spread public awareness about termites during the spring of 2026. With spring on the horizon, termites will begin swarming and could seek out your home for their new nesting space. Because the damage from a termite infestation can easily go unnoticed, WPC Pest and Termite Control is educating homeowners and offering FREE inspections to help identify the top four signs that signal their home is infested.

“Experts with the NPMA estimate that termites cause \$5 billion in damage every year,” said Jim Mazzuchelli, owner of WPC Pest and Termite Control. “This could mean a costly repair bill for homeowners if they don’t spot and stop an infestation in its tracks. Unfortunately, most homeowners don’t recognize the signs of an infestation until it is too late.”

While pest professionals don’t recommend a homeowner inspect their home on their own, there are a few red flags that they should look out for that could signal the presence of an infestation. With the help from experts at NPMA, WPC Pest and Termite is sharing the top four signs that a home has termites:

- 1. Swarmer or Discarded Wings:** Swarmers, also known as reproductives, are young female and male winged termites. In the springtime, after the last freeze, termite swarmers will emerge from their nest to mate and search for a new location to start a colony, which typically includes our homes. Termite swarmers, or their discarded wings near windowsills and doors, are often the first (and only visible) sign of a termite problem.
- 2. Mud Tubes:** Subterranean termites, the most destructive termite species, build mud tubes to provide moisture while they travel between their colony and food source. Mud tubes are most often found near the home’s foundation and look like encrusted, dry dirt similar to the size of a drinking straw.
- 3. Wood Damage:** Termites tend to eat wood from the inside out, so wood that sounds hollow when tapped often signifies a termite infestation. Additionally, homeowners should also look for blistering pieces of wood.
- 4. Uneven or Bubbling Paint:** Uneven or bubbling paint is often a sign of moisture build-



Jim Mazzuchelli, owner, WPC Pest and Termite Control

up, which could mean one of two things – water damage or termites.

“If you suspect you have a termite infestation, it is best to contact a licensed pest control expert as soon as possible to stop the damage before it gets worse,” added Mazzuchelli. “It is also recommended that homeowners have an inspection done every year to ensure their home is safe from termites.”

For more information on this pest, or to contact a licensed pest control expert, please visit WPC Pest and Termite Control at NoBugsNoPests.com

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Mendon Senior Center programs and activities, March-April

Senior Van Transportation—

Our friendly drivers - Wayne Phipps and our newest driver Paul Sarah - are available to pick you up at your home and take you where you need to go within a 15-mile radius. If you have any mobility issues, the van does include a lift, and our drivers are trained in wheelchair securement. Please make your ride reservations at least 48 hours in advance by calling Shawna Timperio at the Senior Center, 508-478-6175, ext. 3. Ride fees are \$1 for local rides roundtrip and \$4 for out-of-town rides. Vanbucks are available, get a 12-punch card for \$10.

The Mendon Senior Center offers a variety of recreational activities including:

Cribbage - Wednesdays 9:45 a.m. The Cribbage group is always looking for new players, all levels welcome. **Hand, Knee and Foot Card game** - Tuesdays 1 p.m. **Mah-Jong** - Wednesdays & Thursdays 1 p.m. Please check our schedule regarding days and times.

"Are You Game?" – Beginning May 21

Our monthly event kicks off with eight lively games of B-I-N-G-O. More details coming soon!

Need support? Jenn can help!

Senior Center Outreach Coordinator, Jenn Talamini, offers: Free, confidential counseling, Caregiver support, Information and referrals on aging issues, Home visits are available by appointment. Call Jenn at 508-478-6175, ext. 2 for assistance.

March Birthday Bash – Tuesday, March 17 at noon

In honor of St. Patrick's Day

we will be serving homemade Shepherd's Pie, salad, bread, ice cream, and cake. Whether you have a March birthday or just want a fun afternoon out, join us. Entertainment by P. E. James. This program, sponsored by the Friends of Mendon Elders, is free for those celebrating a birthday in March. A donation of \$5 welcome from all others. Please registered at the center.

Elder Care Mediation

Wednesday, March 18 at 1 p.m.

Navigating Conflict for Seniors: Exploring Elder Mediation - Presented by MetroWest Mediation Services

Since 1979, MetroWest Mediation Services has been providing community and family dispute mediation. This elder care mediation offers an opportunity for seniors to address issues around future plans, current care, and familial responsibilities in a collaborative manner. Join us to enhance your skills, expand your knowledge, and make a positive impact on the lives of aging individuals and their families. Register at Mendon Senior Center or call 508-478-6175.

Friends Dine Out

We invite you to join us for the Friends monthly Dine Out. Carpool with friends from the senior center the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 12 p.m. or meet at the restaurant at 12:30 p.m. The cost of lunch is your responsibility, but the company is free! Please sign-up at the senior center. Upcoming dates: Wednesday, March 18 at TJ's Restaurant, Ashland and April

15 at BVT, Upton.

Upcoming Exercise Opportunities:

Tai Chi - This additional 60-minute class will be offered Tuesdays beginning March 24 at 10 a.m. following Chair Yoga. 8 weeks. Cost: \$40

Walking Group - Volunteer Opportunity

We're looking for an enthusiastic senior volunteer to help spearhead the Walking Group this spring. This role would include helping choose meet-up days/times and leading the group on relaxed, social walks. Please call director Amy Wilson Kent if you're interested.

What's Cooking with Betsy & Dona

The first of this new quarterly program, debuting Friday, March 27 at 12:30 p.m., will feature Betsy demonstrating her award-winning chicken vegetable soup, Sloppy Joes for Two, a simple salad, and dessert. Please sign-up at the center to reserve your space. A donation of \$5 is welcome.

History Series Kickoff – Tuesday, March 31 at 2 p.m.

We're pleased to launch our History Series with a presentation by the Museum of Work and Culture, a division of the Rhode Island Historical Society. Join us at the Senior Center for an informative and entertaining afternoon. Please stop by of call the center at 508-478-6175 to register.

Powerful Tools for Caregivers

Wednesdays, April 1 – May 6 1 - 2:30 p.m.

The Mendon Senior Center will be hosting a free six-week program this spring for caregivers, sponsored by Tri-Valley, Inc., designed to help caregivers take better care of themselves while caring for a friend or relative. Participants will learn to more effectively reduce stress, communicate effectively, make tough decisions, manage time and locate helpful resources.

To register or to request more information, contact Amy Wilson Kent, Director at the Mendon Senior Center at 508-478-6175 ext. 1 or Dawna Salkiewicz, Caregiver Specialist with Tri-Valley Inc. at 1-800-286-6640 x3157. Register early. Space is limited. Please let us know if either transportation or companion care are needed so you can attend this worthwhile program.

Ukulele Lessons – April 2, April 9 and April 16

Learn the fundamentals of ukulele playing. No experience necessary. Ukuleles are provided or bring your own. During this complimentary, three-part program, participants will learn how to tune, strum, fret, read chord diagrams and play fun songs. Register today for this free program! Our instructor Julie Stepanek lives in Western Massachusetts and for the past 15 years she has been teaching and making music at librar-

ies, schools and senior centers throughout New England.

Crystal Bowls/Meditation – Friday, April 17 at 2 p.m.

Join us at the Mendon Senior Center for a special 90-minute wellness program with certified instructor Faith Kennedy on Friday, April 17 at 2 p.m. This relaxing and restorative session features: Crystal bowl sound therapy, followed by a guided meditation and finishes with crystal bowl sound therapy. The benefits of these disciplines include improved memory and attention, reduced stress and anxiety, better sleep quality, lower blood pressure, and enhanced immune function. This program is subsidized with a state grant. The cost is \$25 per person. Call or stop by the senior center to register. Space is limited, so call 508-478-6175 or stop by the senior center to reserve your space early.

"A Penny for Your Thoughts"

Come join us at the Mendon Senior Center on Thursday, April 23 at 1 p.m. as we present the history of our one cent coin. The experts from Lisi Coin Appraisal will begin with a look at the cornerstone of our money, the one cent coin. We will trace it's interesting and humorous "History

MENDON SENIOR CENTER

continued on page 20

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Seeking crafters for May 30 juried craft fair

Showcase your hand-made goods at the Friends of Upton Seniors (FUSE) Summer Craft Fair. FUSE is having a juried craft fair on Saturday, May 30, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Upton Community Center located at 9 Milford Street in Upton.

The Craft Fair will feature unique handmade items from

local artisans. Crafters and artisans can reserve a 6' x 6' space for only \$30. The craft fair proceeds support activities for Upton Seniors.

Application forms are available at the Upton Senior Center or request an application via email at friendsopfup-tonseniors@gmail.com.

Sponsored News Release

Mendon Historical Society receives donation



Central One Federal Credit Union in Milford recently made a donation to the Mendon Historical Society. The check was presented by Nicholas Mazzarini, Milford Branch Manager. Ruth O'Grady, president; Ruth Cassinelli, past president, and Amy DeWitt, long time member, gratefully accepted the check on behalf of the Historical Society. Photo source Mendon Historical Society

MURSD selected for 2026 PEAK cohort focused on responsible use of AI in schools

The Mendon-Upton Regional School District has been selected as one of 14 school districts statewide to participate in the 2026 Partnership for Educators Advancing AI Knowledge (PEAK) Cohort, an initiative focused on the thoughtful and equitable use of artificial intelligence in education.

The cohort, led by MassCUE and Throughline Learning with support from EdTechTeacher and UMass Lowell's AI Teach Co-Design Lab, includes educators and administrators from districts across Massachusetts. The cohort's goal is to develop clear and responsible approaches to integrating AI into teaching and learning.

Mendon-Upton's participation runs from January through June 2026 and officially began in January with a kickoff summit at UMass Lowell. At the summit, the District was represented by Superintendent Dr.

Maureen Cohen, Director of Learning and Innovation Ryan Robidoux, Instructional Coach Maria Desruisseaux, and School Adjustment Counselor Ryan Capuzziello.

Through monthly meetings and guided planning sessions, Mendon-Upton's team will work alongside other districts to develop an AI implementation plan aligned with guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and best practices developed by Throughline Learning.

The District has identified three priority areas for the year: academic integrity, AI awareness and the development of clear policies and guidelines for staff and students.

"Our goal is to approach artificial intelligence in a way that supports learning and protects academic honesty, while simultaneously reflecting our District's

values," said Superintendent Dr. Cohen. "This work will help ensure our students and staff are prepared to use emerging tools responsibly and thoughtfully."

The kickoff summit featured professional learning sessions led by education and technology leaders from across the state and country, including keynote presentations from Justin Reich of the MIT Teaching Systems Lab and Shawn Rubin of Throughline Learning. Sessions focused on topics including digital wellness, student voice, instructional design, literacy in the age of AI and community engagement.

The Mendon-Upton Regional School District joins the following school districts in the 2026 cohort: Attleboro, Barnstable, Dedham, Fairhaven, Lawrence, Lowell, Nashoba, Newton, Norton, Pittsfield, Springfield, Watertown and Westford.

Submitted by Mendon-Upton Regional School District

MENDON SENIOR CENTER

continued from page 19

from Colonial Times to Today." During the program, we will play a few games like the "Price is Right" where you will have the chance to win a prize. We will also have a free raffle where we will give out additional prizes. In our program, we will tell you

which coins can have value and which ones do not, as well as what makes coins valuable. We will wrap up our program with a Free Verbal Coin Appraisal of up to 10 of your Items. Register is recommended as our appraisals will follow the order of the sign ups. Please sign up separately, if you wish to have an item appraised.

Fuel Assistance

If you or someone you know is having trouble making ends meet, please consider contacting the Mendon Senior Center. Our helpful Outreach Coordinator Jenn Talamini is available to offer confidential assistance with fuel assistance applications and nutritional support to Mendon residents of all ages. The SMOC Fuel assistance program helps defray heating costs incurred between Nov. 1, 2025 and April 30, 2026 for eligible households (see household size/income guide.) Please call for guidelines for larger households. Additionally, the Mendon Food Pantry, housed at the senior center is well stocked and available to Mendon residents in need.

Household size	Income Limit(s)
1	\$51,777
2	\$67,709
3	\$83,641
4	\$99,573

RSVP today for Mendon Senior Center Day Trip to Cape Cod

All aboard for a Cape Cod Train Lunch Tour! Join us for a delightful day trip to Hyannis featuring a scenic two-hour train ride with a chef prepared 3 course lunch with white glove service.

Beautiful coastal views and light narration along the way. After the train ride, enjoy free time to explore the shops and seaside charm of Hyannis. This is a trip you won't want to miss.

Date: Wednesday, June 17

Trip departs: 9 a.m. from the Mendon Senior Center, 62 Providence St., Mendon

Cost: \$168 per person
Stop by the Mendon Senior Center to reserve your space. Full payment and meal choice due at time of booking.

Please make checks payable to: Friends of Mendon Elders. Contact Beverly Fior at 508-473-8382 with questions.

This trip is operated by Bloom Tours

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Recent Home Sales

Date	Mendon	Amount
02/27/2026	4 Carby Dr.	\$570,000
02/19/2026	31 Cemetery St.	\$445,000
02/18/2026	62 Millville Rd.	\$400,000
02/05/2025	17 Colonial Dr.	\$825,000

Date	Upton	Amount
No sales since 01/26/2026		

Source: zillow.com / Compiled by Upton & Mendon Free Press



The 5-bed, 5-bath, 3,556 square-foot home at 17 Colonial Drive in Mendon recently sold for \$825,000. Photo source www.zillow.com

Chamber of Commerce held Legislative Breakfast in February



Last month, Rep. Brian Murray joined his colleagues from the legislature at the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce Legislative Breakfast at Galliford's Restaurant in Mendon. With Chamber members, they discussed energy costs, unemployment insurance and healthcare affordability, among several other issues. Photo source Rep. Brian Murray

Pet of the Month: Meet Miles

Miles has been waiting patiently since August for you to walk through the door and take him home. While he waits, he's been making the most of his time at the Milford Humane Society, playing with all the toys and finding all the highest spots with best views.

Miles was surrendered from a home with too many cats. He has made it pretty clear that he is not ready to share his home with another pet. But just take

one look at his handsome face and you know that he's the only pet you need.

For more information about

Miles, or any of the other cats in our care, visit the Milford Humane Society at www.milfordhumane.org.



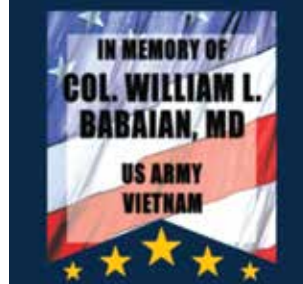
To meet Miles, please visit the Milford Humane Society at milfordhumane.org or call 508-473-7008 for more info

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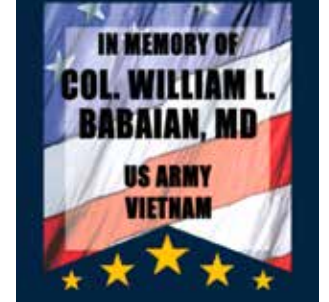
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HONOREE PORTRAIT Option

Flags are displayed for a two-year period in the town center and along the Memorial Day Parade route from before Memorial Day through Veterans Day.

The flags are \$250 each. A maximum of 52 flags are available and will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis.



SILHOUETTE MINUTEMAN Option

DESIGN OPTIONS

Flags can be dedicated to a specific individual(s) or have a more generic message. Flags recognizing an individual can include a photo, the person's name, branch of service, and any conflicts or theaters in which he/she served.

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- Download the form at MendonBrush.org OR
 - Pick up the form at the Taft Library, Mendon Post Office, Mendon Senior Center or the Mendon Town Hall
- Completed Forms & Payment must be Received by March 29

Have questions? Email us at mendonbrush@gmail.com
Put "Flag Committee" in the subject line

SPORTS

BVT wrestlers help co-op in new division

Bellingham competed well in first D1 season

By Chris Villani

The Bellingham wrestling co-op handled its first season as a Division 1 program this winter, often competing with schools with several times their enrollment. And a big part of the Bulldogs success was the performance of its athletes from Blackstone Valley Tech.

“We have had the co-op for seven years now,” said head coach Justin Mantegani. “We don’t have a ton of kids from there but the kids who do come, they are ready to compete. It’s been a nice boost to the program for sure.”

Bellingham won five dual meets this winter and also sent half a dozen wrestlers to the sectional tournament. Co-captain Anthony Golini won 26 bouts this winter and competed at the sectional meet.

“He has always been a rock, he’s great,” Mantegani said. “When I say ‘consummate teammate,’ there is no one better than him.”

Although Golini did not qualify for the state meet, he drove

to North Andover to be there to support his teammates as they wrestled.

“He is a great partner to have in practice,” his coach said. “You can’t ask for a better captain than him.”

BVT senior Donnacha Lambert stood out as a first-year senior with the program. Mantegani praised him for winning a number of his matches and helping propel the team to some dual meet wins.

Freshman Grayson Puri, another Valley Tech student, earned a spot in the state meet despite it just being his first year.

“He was a great addition to the team,” Mantegani said. “To qualify for states as a freshman is incredible.”

Mantegani said Puri’s experience in youth wrestling had him ready to succeed with the high school program.

“He is so coachable,” Mantegani said. “He is always asking questions and he wants to know how to do better. He’s also willing to work with the other kids.”

Bellingham only graduates



Anthony Golini (top) won 26 matches for Bellingham this winter and his coach called him the “consummate teammate.” Courtesy photo

three wrestlers from this year’s team, which Mantegani said should have the program set up for more success next winter. He

said he is hoping for a top-10 finish at sectionals and a winning record in the Tri-Valley League.

“We have a lot coming back, and it should be a better season for us,” Mantegani said. “I am really excited for next year.”

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SPORTS

Nipmuc's McKibbin wins state swim title

Senior takes crown in 100-meter freestyle



By Chris Villani

Kayden McKibbin just wanted to have a good time this year. A lifelong club swimmer heading to Bryant University next fall, the Nipmuc senior decided to join her classmates on the Grafton swim co-op during her final season.

"My goal was to have fun, see if I could get some school records, and see if I could win a state title," McKibbin said.

Check, check, and check.

McKibbin set program records in the 50, 100, 200, and 500 freestyles along with the 100 butterfly. She competed in states in both the 50 and the 100, and took home the state championship in the latter event.

"The state meet was super fun," McKibbin said. "I was really grateful I was there with my good friends on the team."

She said it was great to share

the moment with her teammates.

"I looked up at the board and I saw that it said 'first' next to my name and I was ecstatic thinking 'Oh my god, I did this,'" she said. "And then I saw all of my teammates cheering."

The camaraderie of high school swimming is exactly what McKibbin said she had in mind when she joined the program this winter.

"High school swimming is very team oriented and about cheering each other on and wanting to see each other do well," she said. "We are winning together, not just one person wins. It was great to have my team all there because I couldn't have done it without their support."

McKibbin started swimming when she was three years old

and the sport stuck with her. She competed in other sports before high school but said "swimming is the one I knew I had a passion for."

Now 17 years old, she has been a year-round club swimmer for the past decade. The Mendon resident committed to Bryant and will continue her swimming career with the Bulldogs next fall. She said the culture of the Smithfield, RI, school is what sold her.

"They are big on team support," McKibbin said. "I met the team and talked to the coaches and got to know them, and said 'This is where I can see myself.'"

Now that she has achieved her high school goals, McKibbin has her sights set on the future.

"I want to keep improving and stay focused," she said. "My goal is to keep getting better."

In one year of high school swimming, Kayden McKibbin set five school records and won a state championship. Source Kayden McKibbin

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