

Nipmuc DECA has strong performance at state conference



The Nipmuc DECA chapter on stage at the Massachusetts State Career Development Conference in March. Courtesy photo

By Caelan Squires
Special student writer

Students from Nipmuc Regional High School competed at the Massachusetts State Career Development Conference (SCDC) in Boston from March 12-14. 60 Nipmuc DECA students competed against more than 4,000 others in both projects and role-play events. Over

the three days, students networked with peers and professionals from across the state and attended workshops focused on leadership and career readiness.

At the conclusion of the conference, Nipmuc DECA had a strong showing, with 21 students qualifying for the International Career Development Conference

(ICDC), which will be held this April in Atlanta, Georgia.

Here are the State Champions from Nipmuc DECA:

- Sean Bailey placed 1st in Hotel and Lodging Management.
- Madelyn Weibe, Abby

DECA

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Message in Texas vase prompts its return to Upton descendant

Bud vase likely donated to church bazaar in 1940s

By Theresa Knapp

What began as a simple estate sale purchase in Texas has turned into a cross-country story of history, memory and connection, culminating in the return of a small glass vase to the family of the woman who once owned it.

Gwen Glass of Texas bought a hand-painted bud vase at an estate sale in fall 2023. Months later, in January 2024, she heard something rattling inside and carefully removed a tightly tucked note.

The message read: "Mrs. Ernest Wellman, Upton Massachusetts, Dec. 9, 1940."

Intrigued, Glass set out to find



Texas resident Gwen Glass bought this vase at an estate sale in 2023, a few months later she discovered a handwritten note inside dated Dec. 1940 from Mrs. Ernest Wellman of Upton. With the help of the Upton Historical Society, Glass recently returned it to Wellman's descendants. Photo courtesy Gwen Glass

VASE

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VASE

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the family behind the note, hoping to return the vase. Initial efforts proved unsuccessful, and she eventually set the item aside. But more than a year later, she decided to try again. This time, an online search led her to the Upton Historical Society.

Glass contacted the group through Facebook, asking for help in locating relatives of "Mrs. Ernest Wellman." She said she expected nothing in return, but felt compelled to try.

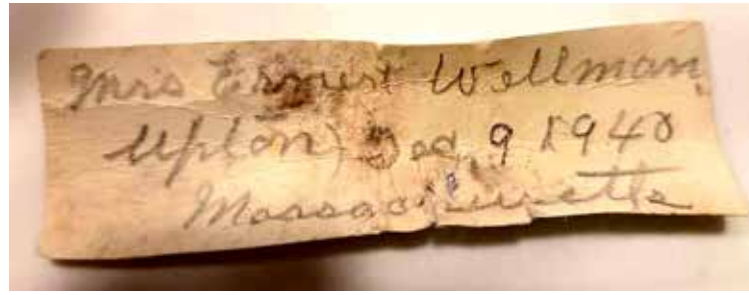
"It was like finding a message in a bottle," Glass said, noting the vase had traveled from Massachusetts to Texas. After the recent loss of her mother, she said the discovery took on deeper meaning, reinforcing how everyday objects can carry unexpected emotional weight.

Members of the historical society, including local researcher

Barry Lynn, began tracing the name on the note. They identified the original owner as Hazel Wellman (1893–1977), wife of Ernest Wellman (1895–1979). The note, written when Hazel was 47, had remained hidden inside the vase for 85 years.

Genealogical research revealed the couple had two children, Donald Wellman and Dorothy "Dot" Wellman Francis. Further investigation into family records and obituaries led to Dorothy's descendants. One of whom, Mary Hurlburt - a longtime member of the Upton Historical Society - turned out to be Hazel Wellman's granddaughter.

When contacted, Hurlburt immediately recognized her grandmother's handwriting and was deeply moved by the discovery. She recalled her grandmother's love of flowers and said she likely owned many vases, possibly donating some to church events over the years as the church was



The note that started it all, "Mrs. Ernest Wellman, Upton Massachusetts Dec. 9, 1940". Photo courtesy of Upton Historical Society

very important to her.

Hurlburt, who grew up in Upton and later moved to Maryland, said she was thrilled by the unexpected connection and eager to have the vase returned. She told Lynn, "It was meant to be."

After the vase was returned to Mary Hurlburt, the Upton Historical Society received this message from Gwen Glass in Texas:

"Mrs. Hurlburt received it and the items I sent. I got a beautiful letter from her with a picture too. I am so glad this ended this way."



Mary (Francis) Hurlburt is the granddaughter of Hazel and Ernest Wellman. She recognized the handwriting right away, and expects her grandmother may have donated the vase to the First Congregational Church of Upton for an auction. Photo courtesy of Upton Historical Society

Lynn says that members of the historical society were grateful to play a role in reconnecting the piece with its family, bringing a decades-old message full circle. For those involved, the journey of the small glass vase, and the note hidden inside, has become a reminder of how ordinary objects can carry

extraordinary stories across generations and miles.



Gwen Glass of Texas, pictured here with her late mother, found the 1940 handwritten note in a vase that once belonged to an Upton family. Photo courtesy of Upton Historical Society



Hazel Wellman, pictured here with her husband Ernest, was a lifelong Upton resident and wrote the note that was found inside the vase. Photo courtesy of Upton Historical Society

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Upton to consider expanding/renovating 30-year-old DPW facility

Project could add an estimated \$464 in annual taxes

By Theresa Knapp

Upton voters will decide this spring whether to fund a proposed renovation and expansion of the town's 30-year-old Department of Public Works facility, a project officials say is needed to address safety concerns, regulatory compliance and growing demand.

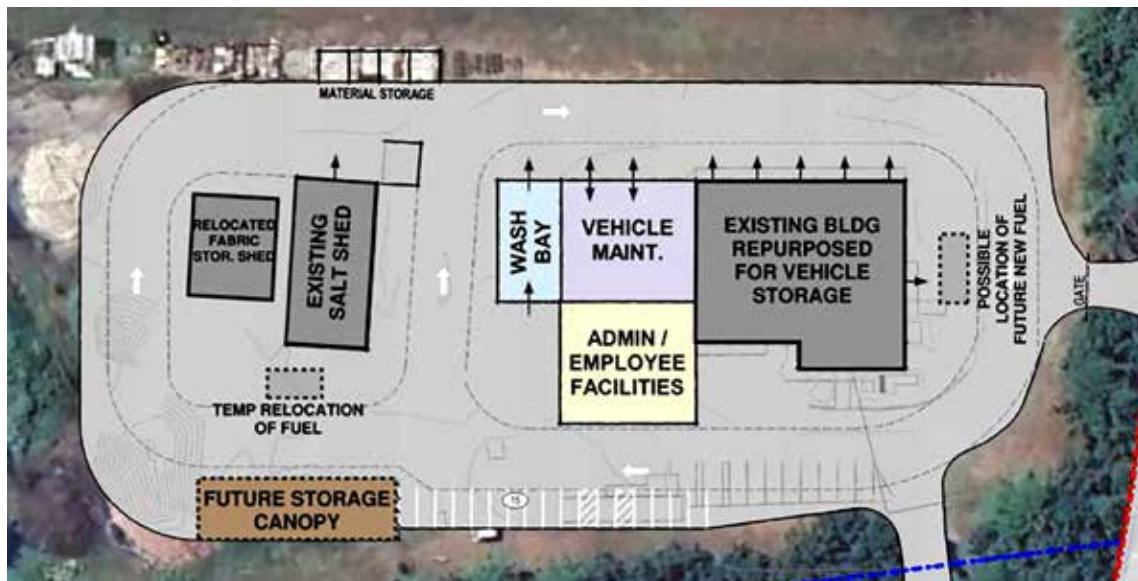
The article will go before Annual Town Meeting on May 7. If approved, a ballot vote will follow at the May 12 town election. The request follows a November 2025 vote authorizing \$2.5 million for design and planning.

In an informational video to residents posted on YouTube, DPW Director Dennis Westgate said the existing facility at 100 Pleasant St., built in 1995, has reached the end of its useful life and no longer meets operational needs. Since then, the town has seen significant growth, including increases in population (by

Based on borrowing \$18.5 million over 25 years, officials estimate the cost would add about \$116 per quarter to the tax bill of a home assessed at \$750,000.

57%), road mileage (31%), and water users (43%) and sewer users (62%).

In the seven-minute video, Westgate said, "The DPW touches all of the infrastructure in the town. We have 19 full-time employees that are involved in maintaining 80 miles of road, maintaining town-owned facilities, snow and ice removal operations, maintaining a fleet of 24 vehicles, repairing and maintaining water and sewer mains, drinking water treatment and distribution, wastewater collection and treatment, maintaining



Upton Annual Town Meeting will be asked to vote on a proposed renovation and addition to its DPW facility. Image source: <https://bit.ly/UptonDPWproject2026>

buildings, culverts, bridges and dams, emergency response management, flood prevention, trimming trees and roadside brush, parks, cemetery, and forestry maintenance, hurricane, wind-storm cleanup, removal of road-

way hazards, support of police, fire, and EMS departments." He said, the building was originally designed as a "big garage" and can now only accommodate 10 of the department's 24 vehicles indoors which slows

response times during winter storms and emergencies.

He said, "Today, the DPW

DPW

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Upton Historical Society receives donation from UniBank

The Upton Historical Society is pleased to announce that UniBank has generously donated \$1,000 in support of the Society's ongoing efforts to preserve and share the history of the town of Upton, Massachusetts. With this contribution, UniBank becomes a Heritage Champion Sponsor of the organization. Founded in 1968, the Upton Historical Society is a private non-profit organization incor-

porated under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 180. The Society works to collect, preserve, and interpret the historical records and artifacts that tell the story of Upton and its residents. The Society's mission is to enrich the community by preserving historical records, artifacts, photographs, recordings, and mementos of Upton's past, and to share and celebrate that

history through research, publications, exhibits, tours, programs, events, and educational initiatives. The Town of Upton, Massachusetts, originally chartered in 1735, has a rich heritage that the Society strives to document and make accessible to the public. "The support of community partners like UniBank is essential to our work," said Barry

Lynn, Chairman of Sponsorship at the Upton Historical Society. "Their generosity helps ensure that the stories, documents, and artifacts that define Upton's history are preserved and shared with future generations." The Upton Historical Society is funded through member dues, private donations, fundraising activities, and sponsorships. Contributions such as UniBank's

Heritage Champion sponsorship allow the organization to continue maintaining its collections and expanding public programs that highlight the town's history. For more information about the Upton Historical Society, upcoming programs, or how to support its mission, please visit the Society's website Upton History Museum & Historical Society or contact the organization directly at 508-529-6600.

Antiques and collectibles Appraisal Day May 2 to benefit 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 relaxed day of discovery. Everyone is welcome. Professional Appraisers, who are donating their services for the event, include:

- Wayne Tuiskula, Auctioneer/ Appraiser, Central Mass Auc-

tions 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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DPW
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facility is much more than a garage to store equipment. The DPW now has a full-time equipment mechanic to service and maintain the fleet of 24 vehicles. As a result, the facility does not provide for the storage and draining of toxic fluids, thus creating a safety hazard for employees and compliance issues for the town. As a result, the site is not compliant with several DEP and EPA regulations, and the town could

be fined for these violations. The facility does not have adequate ventilation for exhaust fumes when vehicles are being maintained inside. This issue directly impacts employees health and safety. The current facility lacks an indoor wash bay and lacks adequate storage for many pieces of equipment, which means they are stored outside. Storing expensive equipment outside reduces their life expectancy." The building also lacks locker rooms, sufficient restrooms, and adequate office space. The proposal before Town Meeting calls for renovating and

updating the existing structure and constructing an addition with a vehicle maintenance area and wash bay designed to meet DEP standards. Plans also include ADA-compliant office space, locker rooms and up-graded employee facilities. "The proposed renovation expansion project has been scaled down to keep the cost as low as possible," Westgate said, adding "While the DPW committee acknowledges this is a significant request, we all know that if we continue to delay doing the project now, it will cost considerably more in the future."

The project is estimated to cost between \$17.5 million and \$19.5 million, including \$2.5 million in design costs (previously approved by Town Meeting), and an "expected construction cost not to exceed \$17 million," according to the information outlined in the video. Based on borrowing \$18.5 million over 25 years, officials estimate the cost would add about \$116 per quarter to the tax bill of a home assessed at \$750,000. The full video can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/UptonDPW-project2026>.

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Risks Threatening Gen Z's Retirement — and How to Tackle Them



Mark Freeman, CEPA

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While older generations worry about having enough money for retirement, many Gen Z workers aren't even starting to save. Research in 2025 by Edward Jones and Morning Consult shows that nearly half haven't begun setting money aside for their golden years, and only 22% are contributing to a workplace retirement plan.

The culprit is a perfect storm of financial pressures that can make saving for the future feel impossible.

One of the biggest challenges this generation faces is debt. High-interest credit card balances and persistent student loan payments leave many feeling they're just trying to stay afloat, rather than planning decades ahead.

The cost of living doesn't help either. Nearly 60% of Gen Z renters are considered "rent-burdened," spending more than 30% of their pre-tax income on rent, according to a StreetEasy analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data. Rising prices driven by inflation and tariffs squeeze budgets further, moving retirement savings down the priority list.

The nature of work has also changed. Gen Z is more likely than previous generations to hold gig jobs, contract positions or other flexible work arrangements that often don't include employer retirement plans, according to Pew Research. Even when plans are available, only

22% participate. Feeling overwhelmed by jargon, confused by investment choices or focusing only on today's experiences and technology can all delay participation. These early gaps may lead to catch-up needs later in life.

Unfortunately, Gen Z has little faith in the retirement safety net. Only about a third of Gen Z-ers say they believe Social Security will still exist when they retire, according to the latest information from the CATO Institute.

Fortunately, there are steps Gen Z can take now to get their retirement savings off to a good start:

- **Start small:** Even a few dollars per paycheck builds a savings habit and gets compounding interest working in their favor. Early momentum matters more than starting big.
- **Let compounding do its work:** Small, consistent contributions can grow dramatically over time, especially when they have decades to

accumulate.

- **Use a workplace retirement account:** For anyone with access to a plan, enroll and contribute at least enough to receive any employer match. It's one of the few forms of "free money" available.
- **Open an IRA:** If no plan is available through work, take charge by opening an individual retirement account (IRA).
- **Simplify investing:** If the choices feel confusing, consider options such as a target date fund, which reduces complexity and helps keep you properly invested without needing expert advice.
- **Use found money:** Direct tax refunds, bonuses or gig income into retirement savings to boost progress without straining the monthly budget.
- **Automate contributions:** Automatic transfers make saving effortless. Review this annually and increase contributions as income grows.
- **Build confidence:** If invest-

ing feels overwhelming, look for quick financial education resources from an employer, plan provider or reputable nonprofit organization. Even a little knowledge can make decisions easier.

The path to retirement doesn't require perfection — just progress. Building consistency early helps create choices, security and financial breathing room later in life.

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

Mark Freeman, CEPA
Edward Jones Financial Advisor
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Hopkinton, MA (508) 293-4017
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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

By Upton Library Staff

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

*Save the Date – Spring book-sale is coming Saturday, May 16, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Reading with Friends – April 28 at 6 p.m.

Do you love to read? Join the Friends of the Upton Town each month for a quiet reading group. We'll start with refreshments and then read on our own anywhere in the library. Discuss books or not! It's a silent reading group every month! The first two Reading with Friends will be held on Thursday, April 2 and Thursday, April 23 from 6 - 7 p.m.

New Museum Pass – Children's Museum of Franklin

Come check out the newest museum pass offered at the library! We now have a pass for the Children's Museum of Franklin, offering half price admission for up to 4 people. This and all other museum passes can be checked out by going to

the library website, calling the library, or visiting the circulation desk.

Quilt Raffle – Tickets on sale now!

The Friends of the Upton Town Library are raffling off a beautiful quilt generously donated by the Thimble Pleasures Quilt Guild. Tickets can be bought at the circulation desk and are \$5 each or 3 for \$10. More info and view the 60" by 60" quilt on display at Upton Library. Drawing will take place May 16 at the spring booksale.

New Program – English Conversation Circle

Wednesdays 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. For beginner to intermediate English speakers, join us for an hour weekly to practice English vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation skills. Facilitated by a library volunteer. Register for a month at uptonlibrary.org, and please refer anyone that might benefit from improved English conversation skills to call us if they need assistance.

CHILDREN'S & YOUNG ADULT Events

Boston Bruins PJ Drive - Thank You!

Thank you to all of the families who donated to our Boston Bruins Pajama Drive, aiding local families in need. This year we collected 17 pairs of PJs that will help keep children warm. If you are a family in need, please contact the Department of Children and Families at 508-929-1000.

Movie Event - April 21 at 1 p.m. Join us for an afternoon at the movies in our Greatroom! Bring your own snacks and enjoy a PG-rated movie, suggested for ages 5 to 12. Visit our Event Calendar on our website for movie title details.

Rainforest Reptiles - April 22 at 10 a.m.

This event is currently full. Please register for our waitlist. Join us for an educational program with Rainforest Reptiles! A trained herpetologist will present exciting animals including a

red or yellow-footed tortoise, a monitor or tegu lizard, a 6-10 foot boa or python, and a small, American alligator. For ages 3 to 12. Registration required.

Pajama Storytime - April 29 at 6 p.m. Join us for a special evening storytime! Feel free to wear your most comfy pj's as we share stories, songs, rhymes, and fun! For ages 3 to 8. Registration required.

ADULT EVENTS

Drum Circle with Dave Curry - Saturday, May 2, 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. *Now a monthly program on the first Saturday of each month, sponsored by Friends of the Upton Library*

Tabletop Game Night for Adults – Thursday, April 23, 5:15 - 7:30 p.m.

Join our tabletop game series for adults! Meets every fourth Thursday of the month. Beginners and experienced 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 **Brad Taylor**: On Writing Action-Packed

and Suspenseful Spycraft - Tuesday, April 14 at 7 p.m.

Author Talk with **Marjan Kamali**: On Courage, Turmoil, and the Transformative Power of Love - Thursday, May 7 at 7 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, May 12 at 12:45 p.m., and Thursday, May 14 at 6:45 p.m.: *Broken Country* by Clare Leslie Hall.

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, April 29 at 6:45 p.m.: *The Sirens' Call: How Attention Became the World's Most Endangered Resource* by Chris Hayes.

Tween Book Club – April 16 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. For our April meeting, we will be discussing

UPTON LIBRARY

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Family-run Affordable Junk Removal takes the stress out of cleanups

Whether it's one old fridge in the garage or an entire home of unwanted goods, the team at Affordable Junk Removal offers a cost-efficient, stress-free approach to waste management. "You don't lift a finger," says owner Jason Schadler, who started the company along with his wife Christine in 2005.

The business offers same-day service for both residential and commercial clients across eastern and central Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island. In addition to junk removal, the company rents 15-yard dumpsters.

As a family-owned and operated company, Schadler says Affordable Junk Removal has lower overhead costs and is more accessible than national competitors. "I answer my phone 24 hours a day," he says. "I was on vacation in Italy and Portugal, and I was still answering my phone on the beach. When you call us, you get me — not an automated machine!"

Schadler says the company takes an environmentally responsible approach to disposal, recycling whenever possible and properly handling non-recyclable materials. "With four kids, sustainability is especially important to us," he says.

During the business's early days, Schadler provided junk removal on nights and weekends when he wasn't busy



working at a machine shop. Eventually, the business grew into a full-time endeavor, and the Schadlers reinvested into the company with new equipment and techniques. "When I first started, for example, we didn't have any tarps. I'm driving around and things are flying out of my truck," Schadler laughs. "I'm like, 'Oh my god, I need a tarp.'"

Schadler says his wife Christine "was equally as involved" in getting the business off the ground. "She handled the back end while I did the heavy lifting, all while she was working at EMC," he says. "Fast forward 21 years, and we both work full time, managing the company as well as other endeavors. Business is doing great; it has grown tremendously to include a fleet of trucks and dumpsters, and we've also been able to buy a pizza place, The Corner Mar-

Business spotlight

ket in Holliston."

In addition to delivering an in-demand service to the community, Schadler is appreciative that Affordable Junk Removal has helped provide a work-life balance that suits his family. "It allows me to be able to do what I like doing and spend time with my kids," he says. "I'm home to see my babies play softball and be involved in their activities. We're also able to give back to the communities we serve."

As for Upton and Mendon



Christine and Jason Schadler, shown here with their children, started Affordable Junk Removal in 2005.

in particular, Schadler said they are very involved with these towns as their older son attended Blackstone Valley Technical High School. They support the police and fire departments.

One of the best parts of his job, Schadler says, is meeting and getting to know new people and developing relation-

ships with returning customers. "We are really grateful for the repeat business and the chance to form connections with residents across the MetroWest area," he says.

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Artificial Intelligence is Transforming Eye Care

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

Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming medicine, and ophthalmology is one of the fields experiencing its impact firsthand. For patients, this means eye diseases can be detected earlier, monitored more accurately, and treated more effectively. Although AI may sound futuristic, it is already integrated into clinics and hospitals, enhancing vision care and improving patient outcomes.

The Complexity of the Human Eye

The human eye is an intricate organ. At its core is the retina, a thin tissue layer containing millions of light-sensitive cells that convert light into signals the brain interprets as vision. Because the retina's structures are microscopic and delicate, early disease detection can be challenging. Even experienced ophthalmologists rely on advanced imaging technologies to identify subtle abnormalities.

AI as a Diagnostic Assistant

AI now assists doctors in

analyzing these images in ways that were previously impossible. Sophisticated algorithms can review detailed scans of the retina and optic nerve, comparing them with thousands or even millions of other images. By recognizing patterns difficult for the human eye to detect, AI can help specialists identify early signs of disease, guiding faster and more accurate diagnoses. Importantly, AI does not replace physicians; it acts as a powerful assistant, helping ophthalmologists interpret complex data and make better-informed decisions.

Early Detection of Eye Disease

One major benefit of AI in eye care is early detection. Many conditions, including diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and age-related macular degeneration, can damage vision silently before patients notice symptoms. By the time vision changes are apparent, disease may already be advanced. AI analyzes retinal images to detect subtle abnormalities that might otherwise go unnoticed. In some clinical settings, FDA-approved AI tools

automatically screen for diabetic retinopathy, identifying patients who need specialist evaluation.

Accuracy and Consistency in Monitoring

AI also enhances accuracy and consistency. Imaging technologies such as optical coherence tomography (OCT) generate highly detailed three-dimensional retinal images, enabling specialists to examine microscopic layers of the eye. AI algorithms can measure retinal thickness, detect fluid accumulation, and monitor optic nerve health with remarkable precision. This reduces variability in interpretation and allows doctors to track even minimal changes over time, improving diagnosis and monitoring of glaucoma, diabetic eye disease, and macular degeneration.

Predicting Disease Progression

Advanced AI tools can also predict disease progression. By analyzing large databases of retinal scans and patient outcomes, these systems estimate which patients are at higher risk of vision-threatening complica-



tions. Predictive insights allow physicians to intervene earlier and tailor treatments more effectively, shifting care from reactive to proactive.

Expanding Access to Care

AI is expanding access to eye care as well. Tele-ophthalmology programs in rural or underserved areas enable patients to have retinal images captured locally, which are then analyzed using AI to determine who requires further specialist evaluation. This approach improves efficiency, reduces unnecessary travel, and ensures that serious conditions are not overlooked.

AI in Surgical Planning

AI is influencing surgical care, particularly cataract surgery. Advanced algorithms analyze detailed eye measurements, assisting surgeons in selecting the optimal lens implant for each patient. These tools improve surgical planning and increase the likelihood of excellent postoperative vision. At Milford-Franklin Eye Center, we integrate AI and advanced technology to deliver high-quality care. Our state-of-the-art retinal imaging systems detect disease early and accurately, while multiple OCT scanners provide extraordinary detail of the retina and macula, aiding in the diagnosis and monitoring of macular degeneration and diabetic eye disease.

Milford-Franklin Eye Center and Technology

Every patient at Milford-Franklin Eye Center benefits from the highest level of our commitment to advanced technology. When it comes to glaucoma treatment, we were the first in the region to adopt the newest Direct SLT laser system, which uses advanced eye-track-

ing technology to track the eye during treatment and complete the procedure in about 1.2 seconds. Surgical care is equally advanced. Our accredited ambulatory surgery center in Milford was the first in the area to adopt the Unity cataract surgery system and offers laser-assisted cataract surgery. With our ORA system, we can verify lens implant power in real time during surgery to ensure the most precise visual results.

Commitment to you

Milford-Franklin Eye Center outcomes rival those of major Boston hospitals while keeping care close to home. We offer same-day emergency care, Saturday appointments, and a full-service optical shop with an on-site lab. Our QUAD A-accredited surgery center provides the highest level of safety and comfort, with anesthesiologists and IV sedation available for every procedure. Unlike practices performing office-based cataract surgery without anesthesia support, we ensure world-class care in a fully accredited facility.

The AI Revolution and Commitment to the Community

Living in the communities we serve, we remain dedicated to advancing ophthalmology through technology, AI, and patient-centered care. From early detection to precise surgical interventions, artificial intelligence is transforming vision care and helping patients preserve sight, improve quality of life, and access the best care close to home.

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Upton Historical Society to host 'Tea with Martha'

The Upton Historical Society invites the community to step back in time for a special program, Tea with Martha, held at the United Parish on Thursday, June 4, at 11 a.m. Attendees will enjoy an engaging, firstperson portrayal of Martha Washington, brought to life through a dramatic reading by Cheryl Lampshire, D.M with the assistance of Patty Lynn.



The event offers a unique opportunity to explore the wit, wisdom, and daily experiences of America's original First Lady. Following the presentation, guests are welcome to stay, mingle, and enjoy light refreshments.

Free Event - Reservations are requested by May 22. To RSVP, email UptonMAHistoricalSociety@gmail.com or call 508-529-6600.

Upton election information

The Town of Upton's annual town election will take place on Tuesday, May 12, from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. in the gymnasium at Nipmuc Regional Middle/High School.

The last day for voter registration for the annual town election is May 2.

Offices to appear on the May ballot are:

- Moderator** (1 seat): 1-year term
- Select Board** (1): 3 years
- Board of Assessors of Taxes** (1): 3 years
- Board of Health**: One for three (3) years
- Mendon Upton Regional School District Committee** (1): 3 years
- Planning Board** (1): 5 years
- Recreation Commission** (1):

- 3 years
 - Trustees of Public Library**(3 seats): 3 years each
 - Board of Commissioners of Trust Funds** (1): 3 years
 - Upton Housing Authority** (1): 3 years
 - Upton Housing Authority** (1): 1 year
 - Finance Committee** (1): 3 years
- Source: www.muptonma.gov

Upton's Annual Town Meeting will take place on Thursday, May 7, at 7 p.m. in the auditorium at Nipmuc Regional Middle/High School. The last day for voter registration for Annual Town Meeting is April 27. Source: www.uptonma.gov

UPTON LIBRARY

continued from page 6

the title *Dreamslinger* by Graci Kim.

Kids' Book Club – May 6 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 May meeting, we will be discussing the title *Magnolia Wu Unfolds It All* by Chanel Miller. This group is 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 – April 11 at 9:30 a.m., ages birth to 5

Drop-In Storytime – April 27 at 9:30 a.m., ages 1 to 5

Music & Movement – April 13 & May 4 at 9:30 a.m., ages 1 to 5

Storybook Art Club – 3rd Tues-

day 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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DECA*continued from page 1*

- Mullins, and Lyla Hill placed 1st in Franchise Business Plan.
- Savannah Carr and Kylie Yoon placed 2nd in the Community Giving Project.
 - Maddie Fernandes, Kayleigh Fountain, and Gretchen Merrill placed 3rd in Integrated Marketing Campaign - Service
 - Drew French, Adam Dubowik, and Caelan Squires placed 4th in Business Services Operations Research
 - Jack Calvey and Cooper Chaves placed 4th in Finance Operations Research
 - Alex Varney and Hasith Alturu placed 5th in International Business Plan
 - Zach Duplessis, Vinnie Ge-

remia, and Lucas Lambert placed 6th in Buying and Merchandising Operations Research

- Mithra Balaji and Chloe Kelly placed 6th in Franchise Business Plan
- Along with these students, the following students were recognized as state finalists:
- Ella Bandstra and Lianna Vasilakeris in Hospitality and Tourism Operations Research
 - Allie Basoli and Pat Garvey in Business Solutions Project
 - Kevin Ruddock in Innovation Plan
 - Cormack Devenney in Hospitality and Tourism Professional Selling
- Qualifying students will now work to prepare for ICDC, where they will represent Nipmuc on a global stage.

The author is a member of the Nipmuc Writing Center

Mendon Town Meeting set for May 12

Mendon's Annual Town Meeting will take place on Tuesday, May 12, at 7 p.m. at Miscoc Hill School.

When finalized, the warrant will be posted at www.mendonma.gov.

Upton Senior Center programs and activities

Upton Men's Club Senior Dinner Friday, April 10 at 5 p.m.

Join us for Stuffed Shells at this month's Senior Dinner—sponsored by the Upton Men's Club. This complimentary event is for Upton senior residents only. Sign up by April 3 at the Senior Center! Transportation is available. Save the date for the last Senior Dinner until September: Friday, May 8 at 5 p.m.

Mindful Meditation Friday, April 10 at 1 p.m.

Calm your mind and body so you can acknowledge and accept your thoughts, feelings, and sensations through Mindful Meditation with Robin Natanel.

Crafts with Betty Friday, April 17 at 10 a.m.

Welcome Spring with cards and paper flowers. Bring your creativity and leave with a handmade treasure! All materials will be provided. Register by April 14.

2nd Annual Senior Soirée – Selling Out Fast! Friday, April 24 at 5 - 8 p.m.

Join us for a fun-filled evening of dinner, dancing, and disco vibes! Dust off your bell-bottoms, lace up your dancing shoes, and get ready for a groovy night with friends. Cost is \$10 per person, and advance payment is required to reserve your

spot. Registration closes on April 13 or when the event is sold out!

SAVE THE DATES

Free Haircuts for Upton Seniors Monday, May 4 from 9 - 3 p.m.

The Upton Senior Center is excited to begin offering free monthly haircuts for Upton seniors at the Upton Community Center. Appointments are required and must be scheduled in advance by calling the center at 508-529-4558. During each appointment, stylists will lightly mist the hair, provide a haircut, and finish with a blow-dry style, with or without styling products. Please note that roller sets are not available, as stationary sitting dryers are not on site. Participants are kindly asked to arrive with clean hair for their appointment. We are very grateful to Liv Salon for generously donating their time and talent in support of our senior community!

Town Meeting Thursday, May 7 at 7 p.m. Transportation is available if reserved in advance

Town Voting Tuesday, May 12. Transportation is available if reserved in advance.

Tri-Valley Caregiver Estate Planning Presentation Mon-

day, May 18 from 1 - 3 p.m.

Upton Food Pantry

Do you need food assistance? The Upton Community Food Pantry is open to all Upton residents!

NEW Hours of Operation:
Mondays 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.
Wednesdays 12 - 3 p.m.
Fridays 10 - 1 p.m.

Are you unable to come at these days and times? Transportation or home delivery available on request. Call for more info or to make an appointment: 508-529-4558.

Mobile Food Pantry Wednesday, April 15 at 10 a.m.

Join us in the Millhaus lobby for a selection of non-perishable items, donated bread and bakery goods. The UCC Food Pantry is seeking donations:

- Hearty Soups
- Baked beans
- Canned meats (chicken & ham)
- Cereal
- Instant potatoes
- Grated cheese
- Juice
- Coffee
- Shelf stable milk
- Granulated sugar
- Laundry detergent
- Shaving cream
- Gift cards & monetary donations also accepted.

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Elden H. Barrows Memorial Scholarship applications available

The Mendham Brush Association (Brothers of the Brush) is pleased to announce the 2026 Elden H. Barrows Memorial Scholarship. The late Elden

H. Barrows was a founding member of the Brothers of the Brush and the first president and leader of the organization during Mendon's 300th Anniver-

sary Celebration.

Two \$500 scholarships will be awarded to graduating seniors who reside in Mendon and attend a local high school with the intent to assist students with the cost of higher education, or tools and educational materials for entering a trade. The awarding of scholarships is specific to graduating high school seniors who live in Mendon and who have provided service to their community and support to local organizations, families and or individuals in a manner consistent with the purpose of the Mendham Brush Association.

For an application to this scholarship, go to your school's Counseling Office, or email the Scholarship Committee Chair Alan Greenberg at greenie175@verizon.net.

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Miscoe Hill Middle School awarded grant for Investigating History curriculum

The Miscoe Hill Middle School has received a grant from the One8 Foundation to implement Investigating History, an Applied Learning social studies curriculum for grades 3-7.

Through the Investigating History curriculum, students engage in Applied Learning coursework to reach a deeper understanding of the past and present. The Applied Learning approach prepares students for

success beyond the classroom by encouraging real-world problem-solving, content knowledge and soft skills. The Investigating History curriculum tasks students with asking and answering meaningful questions to become informed, engaged and skilled participants of a diverse democratic society.

The grant funds will support teacher professional development and the purchase of edu-

cational materials. Teachers and school leaders will have access to community events, and students will have opportunities to connect with industry professionals who can provide feedback on Investigating History coursework through events, showcases and classroom visits.

Investigating History Magnify, a team within Investigating History, will work directly with Miscoe Hill educators to help

implement the curriculum.

"We are grateful to the One8 Foundation for the opportunities this grant provides," said Miscoe Hill Principal Anne Corron. "The Investigating History curriculum will engage students by connecting history to current events and introducing content that reflects the experiences of our students. We look forward to bringing this work into our classrooms."

"Our partnership with the One8 Foundation continues to bring meaningful resources to our schools," said MURSD Superintendent Dr. Cohen. "This grant builds on Miscoe Hill's existing Applied Learning work and will help expand opportunities for both students and educators."

For more information, visit <https://one8.org/>, www.mass.gov/investigatinghistory, and <https://www.doe.mass.edu/>.

West Upton visioning public forum set for late April

According to the town website, a public forum will be held during the week of April 27 to

share the results from the West Upton visioning workshops. As of press time, the date

had not been posted but will soon be posted at www.uptonma.gov. When the date is

set, it will take place at 7 p.m. in the Community Center Community Room.

For more information, visit <https://www.uptonma.gov/m/newsflash/home/detail/151>

Seeking nominations for 2026 Mendon Senior of the Year

The Mendon Council on Aging is accepting nominations for the 2026 "Senior Citizen of the Year." The deadline to submit is June 1.

Since 1978, a deserving person (or persons) has been awarded the annual distinction of Senior Citizen of the Year. The chosen

Mendon resident, age 60 or older, generally exemplifies a spirit of public service and has made a positive difference in the community. Written nominations on forms provided will be accepted until June 1 and the award will be presented in September.

Nomination forms are avail-

able at the Mendon Senior Center or on-line at www.mendonma.gov from the Council on Aging home page. Please drop off or mail nominations to the Senior Center at 62 Providence Street, Mendon.

Please call 508-478-6175 with any questions.

Swan Dale and Quaker Cemetery plants, decoration should be removed

After April 20, the Swan Dale Trustees will remove any old plants and decorations from lots in the Swan Dale and Quaker

cemeteries in Mendon. If there is anything left on April 20, it will be discarded and disposed of at the Trustees' discretion as

cemetery cleaning will be taking place. Lot owner cooperation is appreciated to keep the cemetery well maintained.

Mendon annual election to be held May 19

Mendon's annual town election will take place on Tuesday, May 19, at Miscoe Hill School, 148 North Avenue. The polls will be open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

To register to vote online or check your status, visit <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ovr/>.

For more information, visit www.mendonma.gov.

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Taft Public Library Calendar of Events

29 North Avenue, Mendon • 508-473-3259 • TaftPublicLibrary.org • HOURS: Tues. & Wed. 10-7 • Thurs. 3-7 • Fri. 12-5 • Sat. 9-12 • Sun. & Mon. CLOSED

ADULT AND TEEN PROGRAMS Upcoming Events:

Sheryl Faye Presents Abigail Adams

In celebration of America's 250th anniversary, The Taft Public Library is thrilled to have Sheryl Faye return on Tuesday, April 7 at 7 p.m. to present Abigail Adams. Blending live performance, immersive multimedia, original music, and visual design, Faye's program *Liberty and Legacy* reintroduces Abigail Adams not simply as a founder's wife, but as a fearless political thinker, advocate for women's rights, and moral compass during the American Revolution and the birth of a nation. To reserve your seat click on the Calendar & Events link on our webpage: www.taftpubliclibrary.org.

Diane Edgecomb Presents Channeling Rachel Carson: A Love Story for Our Time

On Tuesday, April 28 at 7 p.m. join us for a program with storyteller Diane Edgecomb. *Channeling Rachel Carson* is an inspiring and inviting performance with an accompanying workshop that rekindles our love and commitment to the natural world. From the true north of Rachel Carson's life work and the remote beauty of the Maine cottage where she

wrote *Silent Spring* to channeling powerful memories of our own key nature experiences, this performance brings to life the child-like sense of wonder Rachel wrote so movingly about at the end of her life. Registration is required as space is limited. Visit www.taftpubliclibrary.org and click on the Calendar & Events link. This performance is paid for in part by the Mendon Cultural Council, a local agency supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

Adult Handcrafting Group

Let's get crafty! Join the Adult Handcrafting Group on Wednesday, April 15 at 2 p.m. downstairs in the library and get your craft on! Bring your own craft project, whatever it might be, to work on while you visit. Intended for adults. No registration is required. Crafts are NOT supplied.

Slow Flow Yoga for Adults and Teens

Join Katie Aissis from Sprouting Tree Yoga for Slow Flow Yoga. This Vinyasa style yoga class links breath to movement in a dynamic sequence of postures. Participants will build strength while also finding moments throughout the practice to quiet the mind and rest the body. This class is appropriate for all levels, and no previous yoga experience is necessary. Please bring your

own yoga mat. Join us on 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:

Red Notice by Bill Browder, discussion on Monday, April 13 at 6:30 p.m.

How to Fly in Ten Thousand Easy Lessons and other poetry by Barbara Kingsolver in May.

The Silent Patient by Alex Michaelides in June.

Adult Book Club books can be picked up at the downstairs desk. For additional information on upcoming book clubs contact the library at 508-473-3259.

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! Stop at the downstairs circulation desk to pick up the latest Awards book for discussion.

The current book in the Awards Book Club discussion series is *The True True Story of Raja the Gullible* by Rabih Alameddine, winner of the 2025 National Book Award for fiction. Copies of the book can be picked up at the downstairs circulation desk. Discussion is on Tuesday, May 19 at 7 p.m. Contact the library at 508-473-3259 for further information.

Footnotes Nonfiction Book Club

Footnotes Nonfiction Book Club is back with a whole new slate of books to discuss in 2026! Led by Library Director Andrew Jenrich, the club will be tackling the following upcoming books:

There is No Place for Us: Working and Homeless in America by Brian Goldstone (Discussion on Thursday, May 14 at 6:30 p.m.).

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. Those interested can request a copy of the next book at the downstairs circulation desk.

German Conversation Club

Are you looking for a place to practice what German you remember or to improve your German vocabulary? Conversations in German is no pressure, just fun! Led by Library Assistant (and Mendon resident) Monika Schmid, the group typically meets the last Monday of each month. The group will meet on Monday the April, 27 at 6 p.m. Contact the library at 508-473-3259 for additional details. Registration is required. To register, visit our website.

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:

April: A book from a different time period

May: A book that made you smile

June: A book set in the summer

July: A book under 200 pages

The group typically meets on the last Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m.

Assistance from Jenna Gouin and the Blackstone Valley Partnership for Public Health

Jenna Gouin, MBA /MSOL will be on site at the Taft Library on Monday, May 18 from 9 - 11 a.m. to provide assistance filling out applications for MassHealth, SNAP, WIC, fuel assistance, Medicare, Social Security, Veteran's Benefits, and more. Ms. Gouin can also provide referrals to community organizations, mental health and substance abuse providers and give guidance in obtaining financial resources to address past due bills. Each session is 30-minutes long. Those interested can sign up for a 30-minute block of time by clicking on the Calendar & Events link on the Taft Library website (www.taftpubliclibrary.org).

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. All are welcome (and encouraged) to attend! 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. The group will do its best to post any meeting changes on the Taft Library web site.

TAFT CHILDREN'S NEWS

Registration is required for all programs. Please log onto our website: 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

It's all about the alphabet! Each week we will focus on a different letter. We will read a couple of books, sing songs, and learn about the letter of the week! Wednesday

TAFT LIBRARY

continued on page 13

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Area food pantries offer services to residents

The following food pantries offer services to area residents. Each location has varying hours and requirements so be sure to confirm information before seeking services.

UPTON

Upton Community Center Food Pantry, 9 Milford St.

Hours: Mon. 9:30-11:30 a.m., Wed. 12-3 p.m., Fri. 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Services: Residents may access the food pantry one time each week.

Donations: Financial donations can be dropped off at the Senior Center desk Mon-Fri from 9a.m.-4p.m. www.uptonma.gov/459/Upton-Community-Center-Food-Pantry

United Parish Food Pantry, 1 Church St.

Hours: Every other Tues., April 14, April 28, May 12, from 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Services: 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 St., Upton. Congregant dinners: Occur on the third Thursday of each month from Sept. to June.

Donations: Can be dropped off 24/7 at the Barnabas Barn along Church St., please check food for expiration dates. unitedparishupton.org/food-pantry

St. Gabriel's Food Pantry, 151 Mendon St.

Hours: Mon. & Wed. 9:15 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Tues. & Thurs. 9:15 a.m.-12 p.m.

Services: Helping parish families in need.

www.stgabrielsma.org

Daily Bread Food Pantry, 21 Exchange St., Milford

Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 6-7:30 p.m. Services: For Milford, Hopedale & Upton residents only; proof of address and household member info required.

Donations: Monetary donations accepted at "donate" tab on website www.dailybreadfood-pantry.org/

Source: www.uptonma.gov

MENDON

Mendon Food Pantry, 62 Providence St.

By appointment only, call 508-478-6175 for assistance.

Services: For Mendon residents in need who receive fuel assistance, SNAP (food stamps), are unemployed, and/or receive aid to dependent children or to those who are disabled and/or unemployed. Referrals from area churches, social agencies, or concerned citizens regarding seniors and families in need will also be accepted. Client names shall be kept confidential.

Donations: Non-perishable food products are accepted (check expiration dates) during Senior Center hours, preferably 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Monetary donations (checks preferred) and BJs gift cards are also accepted. For details, visit https://www.mendonma.gov/253/Food-Pantry-Thank-You-for-Your-Support.

Source: www.mendonma.gov

Recent Home Sales

Date	Mendon	Amount
03/27/2026	26 Maple St.	\$645,000
03/09/2026	6 Daniels Rd.	\$745,000

Date	Upton	Amount
03/23/2026	63 Rockwood Ln.	\$949,900
03/19/2026	3 Driscoll Ln.	\$315,000
03/13/2026	5 Sawmill Brook Ln.	\$350,000
03/12/2026	27 James Rd. #1	\$770,000
03/11/2026	11 Main St.	\$876,000
03/11/2026	27 James Rd. #2	\$750,000

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



The 2-bed, 3-bath, 2,392 square-foot home at 63 Rockwood Lane in Upton recently sold for \$949,900. Photo source www.zillow.com

Next Community Supper on April 16

The United Parish Church in Upton offers a community supper on the third Thursday of each month from September through June at 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., which includes a delicious and nutritious meal. The next supper will take place on April 16 when they will be serving Lemon Chicken and Rice. Everyone is welcome. RSVP is requested but not required. Please call the church office at 508-529-3192 by April 10 to make your reservation. If you forget to reserve, please come anyway. We always make extra and would love to serve you.

Sponsored by the Faith in Action committee

TAFT LIBRARY

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mornings at 10:30 a.m. Please note there is no Alphabet Storytime the last Wednesday of the month.

Music at the Blissful

6x Boston Parent Paper Family Favorite and National Touring Musician, Music at the Blissful (Evan Haller) from Boston, Massachusetts comes to the Taft for a high energy, fun-filled, interactive, movement-packed music experience for the whole family. Come join the fun as we sing, jump, shake, laugh and go slow and fast with Music at The Blissful.

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

Join Deb Hudgins on Wednesday, April 29 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 & pre-school). Coffee & Conversations is from 9:45 to 10:45 a.m. Join us for an informal playtime where families will be able to build so-

cial connections and learn about early childhood development and family-friendly resources. The library will supply Muffin House Muffins!

Lego Club

Back by popular demand! During this one-hour building session we will be led by the "Lego Lady" Kim Steadman! No need to bring any Legos! This program is great for all ages... as long as they don't eat the Legos! Tuesday, April 14 at 4:30 p.m.

The BaNannies

The BaNannies are a mother/daughter duo who bring children's songs, both old and new, to life! With their silly and interactive songs, they'll have your littles singing and dancing along! The BaNannies will visit Taft on Monday, May 4 at 10:30 a.m.

Through Me to You Puppetry!

Miss Leigh, Sam, Newton & friends are back for what might be the only time this year on Tuesday, April 28.

4:30 p.m. Puppet Show

Join Newton & Friends of Through Me to You Puppetry

for songs and stories. At the end of the 30-minute show, children can greet the puppets. Geared for children 2 to 5 years, but all are welcome!

5:30 p.m. Puppet Making Workshop

Join Leigh to learn how to make your own puppet. You may not finish your creation, but you will be well on your way to having your own puppet. For ages 7 and up. Younger children welcome with a care-giver's assistance.

Book Clubs

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

8-12 Book Club: We will be reading: *Alice with a Why* by Anna James. Join us for our discussion on Tuesday, May 5 at 5 p.m.

Graphic Novel Book Club: Join us on Tuesday, May 12 at 5 p.m. for our next book club meeting. We will be discussing *Super Pancake* by Megan Wagner Lloyd & Abhi Alwar.

6-9 Book Club: *The Chicken Squad* by Doreen Cronin will be our next book! Hope you can join us on Tuesday, May 26 at 5 p.m.

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BVT's FY27 budget approved by School Committee

On March 12, the Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District School Committee approved the proposed FY27 budget, advancing a plan that emphasizes fiscal discipline, cost-saving measures, and continued investment in high-quality career and technical education. As a fiscally autonomous regional school District, all expenses are rolled into a single annual per-pupil assessment to its member towns, giving the District one "bite at the apple" each year.

As you review the FY27 budget report and consider your investment in BVT, you will see the proactive planning and strategic use of resources reflected throughout the document.

While the state estimates that vocational education should cost nearly twice as much as traditional education, BVT has consistently submitted budgets with per-pupil costs well below that estimate. Compared with its 25 sister vocational schools, BVT ranks in the bottom third for per-pupil expenditure, demon-

Town	Enrollment	Operation Ratio	Minimum Contribution	Transportation Capital Equip Retiree Med	Additional Assessment	Debt	FY 2027 Assessment
Bellingham	77	6.16%	1,098,162	177,164	94,169	-	1,369,495
Blackstone	60	4.80%	647,166	138,049	73,378	-	858,593
Douglas	132	10.56%	1,859,022	303,709	161,433	-	2,324,164
Grafton	92	7.36%	1,363,298	211,676	112,514	-	1,687,488
Hopedale	65	5.20%	801,305	149,554	79,493	-	1,030,352
Mendon	74	5.92%	1,274,871	170,261	90,500	-	1,535,632
Milford	204	16.32%	1,655,694	469,370	249,486	-	2,374,550
Millbury	77	6.16%	1,084,378	177,164	94,169	-	1,355,711
Millville	22	1.76%	240,117	50,618	26,905	-	317,640
Northbridge	167	13.36%	1,976,202	384,239	204,237	-	2,564,678
Sutton	72	5.76%	1,240,415	165,660	88,054	-	1,494,129
Upton	94	7.52%	1,580,831	216,278	114,960	-	1,912,069
Uxbridge	114	9.12%	1,861,710	262,295	139,419	-	2,263,424
TOTAL	1,250	100.00%	16,683,171	2,876,037	1,528,717	-	21,087,925

strating financial efficiency without compromising educational quality. These metrics reflect a strong return on investment for its member communities.

In addition to benefits, salary and wage are typically the largest drivers of school budgets. This year, BVT achieved a modest 3.9% increase in employee

health insurance benefits, well below the regional norm of 15–20% increases, which ultimately becomes a major component of the budget. The School Committee and the Teachers' Association worked amicably this year to settle the next three-year contract. The agreement includes increases well below the

The Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District School Committee has approved a FY27 budget of \$21,087,925.

Mendon's total contribution is \$1,535,632

- **Enrollment:** 74 students
- **Operation ratio:** 5.92%
- **Minimum contribution:** \$1,274,871
- **Transportation, capital equipment, retiree medical:** \$170,261
- **Additional assessment:** \$90,500*

Upton's total contribution is \$1,912,069

- **Enrollment:** 94 students
- **Operation ratio:** 7.52%
- **Minimum contribution:** \$1,580,831
- **Transportation, capital equipment, retiree medical:** \$216,278
- **Additional assessment:** \$114,960*

Regarding the "additional assessment," BVT officials say these are costs not captured elsewhere in the assessment, and they warn that noncompliance can lead to penalties, including a reduction in state aid.

"There are several necessary expenditures required to operate and maintain the District that are not fully funded by state aid and Minimum Contribution amounts. After careful consideration of all anticipated revenues and expenditures, the Additional Assessment bridges the gap in revenues to create a balanced budget.

"Reductions to the Additional Assessment must take into consideration Required Net School Spending (NSS) that is established and monitored by the state. Districts that are considered noncompliant may be subject to penalties, including future reductions in Chapter 70 aid."

Image source: www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/about/district/fy27budgetreport

current regional norm of 11% and is estimated to save the District approximately \$2 million over its duration.

"I am grateful for, and happy to report, that we have fostered and maintained the working relationships and awareness that allow our system to continually make adjustments to run more efficiently," said Anthony E. Steele II, Superintendent-Director. "Whether it is negotiating benefits and contracts to contain costs or applying for grants and seeking donations to supplement revenues, everyone at BVT is rooted in protecting quality career technical education at mindfully efficient expense."

In preparing next year's budget, our goal is to keep BVT's

high-quality vocational education as affordable as possible while maintaining the programs and supports our students need to succeed. That work also relies on the support of informed and engaged municipal partners like you. We appreciate your shared commitment to fiscal responsibility and educational excellence.

The proposed FY27 budget will be presented at 13 annual town meetings this spring, where it will seek community support. The full budget report is available for review on the school's website at www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/fy27budgetreport...

Submitted by Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional District

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Mendon Senior Center programs and activities, April-May

Mendon Council on Aging ~ Mission Statement

The mission of the Mendon Council on Aging is to assess the needs of Mendon's senior community and respond to those needs by developing, promoting and encouraging new and existing programs and services that allow for enrichment, independence, quality of life and the fostering of healthy aging with grace and dignity.

Need Support? Jenn Can Help!

Outreach Coordinator, Jenn Talamini, offers: Free and confidential counseling; caregiver support; information and referrals on aging issues; and home visits by appointment. Call Jenn 508-478-6175 ext. 2 for an appointment.

Sensitivity Alert

Please refrain from using strong fragrances or cologne before coming to the Senior Center, especially when attending exercise programs or crowded events. For some, it can cause headaches and various allergic reactions etc. Thank you for your understanding! Note – even strong fabric softener can be irritating to other guests with this sensitivity

Coffee with Cops: Building relationships one cup at a time

The Mendon Council on Aging, staff and the Friends of Mendon Elders invite you to meet officers from Mendon's Police Department on Monday, April 13, 10

a.m. prior to the Friends monthly meeting and Wednesday, April 15, 9:30 a.m. Coffee with Cops is meant to bring police officers and the community members they serve together—over coffee—to discuss issues and learn more about each other. Call 508-478-6175 or stop by the senior center to register. Walk-ins are also welcome.

Deeds, Homesteads, Trusts and Estates

On Tuesday, April 14 at 10 a.m. the Mendon Senior Center will host Worcester Registry of Deeds Registrar, Kathryn A. Toomey and Registrar of Probate Courts Registrar, Stephanie Fattman. Listen as the nuts and bolts on how the Registry of Deeds and Probate Court work together for the residents of Massachusetts. Join us in a dialogue about land ownership and how probate issues can legally affect what happens to your property. Introductory information and an overview will be provided about Deeds, Homesteads, Trusts and Estates. Save the date for this informative program! Please stop by or call the Mendon Senior Center at 508-478-6175 to register.

Senior Van Transportation

Our van service is available Monday thru Thursday for trips to medical appointments, local shopping or just coming down to the Senior Center. 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 call Shawna Timperio at the center 508-478-6175 to make your ride reservations, 48 hours or more in advance. Rides are based on availability. Medical appointments take priority. Ride donations are \$1 for local roundtrip rides/\$4 for out-of-town rides.

Tri-Valley Lunch Program

Tuesday, April 14

Buttermilk Chicken & Herbed Stuffing

Thursday, April 16

Hot Dogs, Baked Beans & Coleslaw

Tuesday, April 21

Birthday Bash!

Thursday, April 23

Breaded Mac & Cheese

Tuesday, April 28

Swedish Meatballs & Mashed Potatoes

Thursday, April 30

Chicken Cacciatore & Gemelli Pasta

Friendly Reminders!

Lunch Reservations must be made 48 hours in advance. Meals are served at 12 noon. The cost is \$3 donation per meal. Transportation is available. Call Shawna Timperio to schedule.

Friends 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. Wednesday, April 15 - BVT, Three Seasons, Upton and Wednesday, May 20 - Empire Buffet, Woonsocket, RI.

Volunteer Opportunities:

Please contact director Amy Wilson Kent at 408-478-6175 ext. 1 if you are interested in any of the following:

• **Beautification Committee, Spring Clean-up**—April 17 at 9 a.m. If you enjoy putting outdoors and have a few hours to spare, come learn about the mission of our small, committed group of volunteers on clean-up day, Friday, April 17. We're looking for an enthusiastic senior volunteer to help spearhead the Walking Group this spring.

• **Walking Group Leader Wanted:** This role would include helping choose meetup days/times and leading the group on relaxed, social walks. If you enjoy staying active and connecting with others, we would love to hear from you!

• **Crystal Bowls & Meditation Workshop** Friday, April 17 at 2 p.m. Faith Kennedy will be offering

a crystal bowl and meditation workshop at the Mendon Senior Center for seniors in April. The benefits of both disciplines are vast. Meditation improves memory and attention, reduces stress and anxiety, improves quality of sleep, lowers blood pressure and boosts immune function. Before and after meditation, Faith will offer crystal bowl therapy. Crystal bowl sound therapy is an ancient practice in which sound healers produce different sound frequencies with quartz crystal singing bowls to restore balance and harmony in the body. The cost of the grant funded program is \$25 per person payable to Faith Kennedy. Call or stop by the senior center to register.

Medicare Savings Programs

Apply to Medicare Savings Programs (MSPs) now to save thousands a year on Medicare costs. What are Medicare Savings Programs? Medicare Savings Programs (MSPs) will pay for some or all of Medicare premiums, deductibles, copayments, and co-insurance. Depending on your income, MSPs will pay for your Medicare Part A & B premiums and cost sharing, or Medicare Part B premium, as well as lower your prescription costs. This is not an insurance

MENDON SENIOR CENTER

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UMass Memorial – Milford Regional holding 2nd Annual Senior Wellness and Resources Fair

UMass Memorial Health – Milford Regional Medical Center's Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC) is holding its second annual Senior Wellness and Resources Fair on Wednesday, May 20 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The Fair will provide seniors and caregivers the opportunity to connect with senior agencies, health services and other community support organizations in one accessible venue. The event will be held in the hospital's Atrium Café and is free of charge.

For questions, contact UMass Memorial – Milford Regional Community Benefits Manager and PFAC Secretary Michelle Sanford at 508-422-2827 or Michelle.sanford@umassmemorial.org.

About UMass Memorial Health – Milford Regional Medical Center

UMass Memorial Health - Milford Regional Medical Center is a full-service, regional teaching hospital that serves patients from more than 20 communities in Central Massachusetts. The 148-bed hospital

is a nonprofit, acute-care facility where more than 300 primary care and specialty clinicians are relentless in providing exceptional healthcare services to our community with dignity, compassion, and respect. Visit www.milfordregional.org to learn more.



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MENDON SENIOR CENTER

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plan. There is no asset limit. Who qualifies? Medicare beneficiaries who meet the following monthly income limits: At or below \$2,993 (individual) At or below \$4,058 (couple). Call the Mendon Senior Center at 508-478-6175 to make an appointment with a SHINE Counselor for more information!

April Birthday Bash – Tuesday, April 21 at 12 noon. Get ready for an afternoon of fun, friendship, and fabulous entertainment. This month we are delighted to welcome Gina O'Donoghue, whose beautiful vocals and impressive keyboard skills are sure to brighten everyone's day. Before the show, enjoy a delicious homemade meal featuring: Chicken Kiev and all the trimmings. Plus, cake! Whether you're celebrating an April birthday or simply looking for a cheerful afternoon out, you're invited to join us. Birthday celebrants eat free. A \$5 donation is kindly welcomed from all others.

"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 its interesting and humorous History 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. Also, we will 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. And we share with you valuable tips on the Do's and Don'ts for your Coins. We will wrap up our Program with a Free Verbal Coin Appraisal of up to 10 of your items. It is recommended that everyone should sign up for this Program as our Apprais-

als will follow the order of the sign ups. Register to attend this program at the Mendon Senior Center. Please sign up separately, if you wish to have an item appraised.

New Players Welcome!

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, stop in Wednesdays at 9:45 a.m., 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, times, and availability. We've had a request to offer traditional CANASTA. Please call Shawna Timperio if you are interested.

Learn How to Take Better Pictures

This six-week Beginner/Advanced photography class will begin Monday, April 27 from 10 - 11:30 a.m. Whether you want to perfect your Phone photography skills or are have a Digital camera of your own, our instructor Steve McGrath, an accomplished, professional photographer with over thirty years' experience, has something to offer. Learn how to create great images on your phone. Digital camera beginners, learn from an expert. Android and Apple Smart phones are welcome, and all models. Info about our instructor: <http://www.stevemcgrathphotography.com/classes>

The cost for this grant subsidized program is \$45 for six weeks, payable to the instructor. Please call 508-478-6175 or stop by the Mendon Senior Center to register. Class Dates: 4/27, 5/4, 5/18, 6/1, 6/15 and 6/22.

History Series – The Ammidon Inn Tuesday, April 28 at 2 p.m.

Our March program was a hit — lively, fascinating, and full of "I never knew that!" moments. Now we're taking the excitement right into Mendon's own backyard from the Industrial Revolu-

tion to the Ammidon Inn.

Local historian Rich Schofield will guide us through the remarkable story of the Ammidon Inn from the time of the American Revolution. You'll hear tales of travelers, patriots, and the early days of our town that shaped the nation. We'll gather at the Inn itself for an immersive look at this historic landmark. Transportation will be provided from the Senior Center — just hop on and enjoy the ride. Join us for an afternoon that's informative, entertaining, and full of Mendon pride. Sign up at the senior center or call 508-478-6175 ext. 3.

UPCOMING EVENTS – Save the Dates

Annual Town Meeting — Tuesday, May 12 at 7 p.m. and Election – Tuesday, May 19. 7 a.m. - 8 p.m. Both at Miscoe Hill Middle School, 148 North Ave., Mendon.

B-I-N-G-O-Thursday, May 21 at 2 p.m. Our monthly event kicks off with 8 lively games. More details to follow.

Volunteer Appreciation — Wednesday, May 27 at 11 a.m. by Invitation.

Pen Pal Ice Cream Socials — Senior Pen Pals will meet their Whitinsville Christian School counterparts at the Mendon Senior Center—4th Grade - Thursday, May 28 at 1:30 p.m. 5th Grade - Friday, May 29 at 1 p.m.

Planning for Medicare – Countdown to 65

Evening Program – Thursday, May 7 at 6 p.m.

This evening presentation, led by a Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts representative, is geared towards individuals approaching 65 and Medicare Eligibility. Topics covered include health insurance information outside of employer sponsored coverage, such as an explanation of Medicare, the Medicare enrollment timeline, Medigap and Medicare Advantage plans and programs available to early retirees, and for those who may still be working and looking to transition to Medicare. Please call 508-478-6175 or stop by the Mendon

Senior Center to register for this free evening program.

Women of '76 – Wednesday, May 12 at 2 p.m.

Join us As America Prepares to Celebrate its Founding! Step back in time and discover the untold stories of 5 courageous women, both patriot and loyalist, American and foreign born, who witnessed, chronicled and in some cases changed the course of the American Revolution. Register now for this theatrical tribute enacted by Rita Parisi of Waterfall Productions and grant funded by the Mendon Cultural Council, a member of the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

ELDER LAW PROGRAM

Wednesday, May 20 at 1 p.m.

The Mendon Senior Center will host a statewide program presented by the Massachusetts Bar Association entitled "Taking Control of Your Future: A Legal Checkup". Elder Law Attorney Jack Nealon from Hopkinton will touch on some important topics in this year's 2026 resource guide (available for distribution) on a wide range of legal issues affecting the lives of seniors including how to protect your home and assets, power of attorney and health care proxies, reverse mortgages, Medicare / Medicaid changes and alternatives to nursing home care. For more information or to register for this free program call the Mendon Senior Center at 508-478-6175. Guides are available to participants first. There is vast subject matter. Please let us know what topics you are most interested in.

Town Wide Yard Sale – Saturday, June 6. The Friends of Mendon Elders are gearing up for another fantastic Town Wide Yard Sale — one of our most popular community traditions!

Donate – Bring your new or gently used items to the Senior Center on Saturdays in May, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Host Your Own Sale – During those same Saturday mornings, we'll also be accepting applications from residents who want to host their own yard sale.

Applications will be available in April and should be returned in May on Saturday mornings only. **New This Year!** Prefer to stay right in town? We're offering yard sale spaces at the Senior Center for anyone who'd like to set up shop on-site. **Questions?** The Friends of Mendon Elders are always happy to help. friendsofmendonelders2024@gmail.com More details are on the way!

Reserve Your Space Today! All aboard for a Cape Cod Train Lunch Empire 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 on Wednesday, June 17, 2026. Trip departs: 9 a.m. from the Mendon Senior Center, 62 Providence Street, Mendon. The cost is \$168 per person. Stop by the senior center to reserve your space. Full payment and Meal Choice are due at time of booking. Please Make checks payable to: Friends of Mendon Elders c/o 62 Providence St., Mendon, MA 01756. Please Contact Beverly Fior at 508-473-8382 with questions. This trip is operated by Bloom Tours.

With Gratitude...


The Mendon Senior Center would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the bottle and can fund since its inception in 2011 to support the Mendon Senior Center transportation program. Your generosity is greatly appreciated. We are pleased to share that the Town of Mendon has committed to funding the center's transportation program now and into the future. The Mendon Council on Aging will continue to accept bottle and can donations and proceeds through its gift account, along with memorial gifts and other contributions. We encourage everyone to keep donating, as these funds help support programs and services that benefit seniors throughout our community. Finally, we extend our heartfelt thanks to Eldon Swanson for faithfully coordinating this project year-round for the past ten years. If anyone is interested in assisting Eldon with this task, please contact Amy Wilson Kent.



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First Unitarian Society of Upton Memorial Scholarship

The Unitarian Universalist Society of Grafton & Upton invites students from Upton pursuing higher education to apply for the 2026 First Unitarian Society of Upton Memorial Scholarship.

The scholarship was established with proceeds from the 1982 sale of the First Unitarian Society Church located at 120 Main St in Upton. The church was built and donated by William Knowlton in 1874 to the First Unitarian Society in Upton. The First Unitarian Society in Upton merged with the Unitarian Congregational Society of Grafton and established the Unitarian Universalist Society of Grafton & Upton in 1985.

The scholarship serves as a lasting memorial to the First

Unitarian Society in Upton's long-standing presence in the Upton community. The scholarship fund provides financial assistance to deserving students from Upton continuing their education.

Applications may be requested by emailing admin@uusgu.org and must be submitted by May 1. Recipients will be selected by May 15 and recognized at graduation or school award ceremonies.

Selection is based on academic achievement, family financial circumstances, number of children in college, and demonstrated social responsibility. Students whose families are members of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Grafton and Upton will receive first consideration.

Pets of the Month: Brook and Bean

Brook and Bean are little barn babies. Both girls were very shy when they arrived. As the weeks passed, Brook started to come around. This little tricolor tabby tux now seeks attention and loves to be pet. She does not yet enjoy being picked up, but she just melts into you and craves love and affection.

Her sister Bean isn't quite there yet; while Brook is cuddling up to you, Bean is trying to disappear into the corner. She will allow gentle petting but spooks easily. We are certain that with security and consistency Bean will discover all the benefits of attention that Brook has already discovered. The way to Bean's heart might just be through play. Both girls love their toys and can't wait to have a room to run around in.

Brook and Bean have waited four long months to find a loving home. All they really need now is a family



and a safe space they can call their own.

For information on meeting Brook and Bean, or the other

cats at the Milford Humane Society, please visit <https://www.milfordhumane.org/>

BVCC sings in Spring!

The Blackstone Valley Community Chorus presents *Songs of the Silver Screen*, on Sunday, May 3, at 4 p.m. The concert takes place at Valley Chapel at 14 Hunter Road in Uxbridge. *Songs of the Silver Screen* includes music from memorable moments of classic and modern movies from *The Wizard of Oz* to *KPOP Demon Hunters*. Admission is free, though donations are accepted and appreciated!

The Blackstone Valley Community Chorus is an enthusiastic group of more than eighty singers from towns throughout Central Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Singing under the direction of Diane Pollard

of Douglas, the BVCC has been committed to bringing musical performance opportunities to the Blackstone Valley for more than twenty years. Along with *Songs of the Silver Screen*, the BVCC will be performing at the Uxbridge Unified Choral Concert on March 24 and singing the National Anthem for the Worcester Bravehearts at Holy Cross Stadium on June 12 and for the Boston Red Sox at Fenway Park in September. For more information about these events, *Songs of the Silver Screen*, or how to join or support the chorus, visit the BVCC on Facebook or at www.bvccchorus.org.



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SPORTS

Nipmuc's Lefort makes Greek national Lax team

Will be one of few high school students in Euro championship in fall

By Chris Villani

Nipmuc High freshman Iliana Lefort will have the chance to compete in lacrosse at the international level after being named to the Greek national team.

The 15-year-old is one of only three high school athletes named to a team that will also include college players from top-notch programs like Duke and Virginia.

"I was really excited to make the team," Lefort said. "I had the opportunity to play at the Heritage Cup last May, we were the first U15 team for Greece, and I thought it would be a great opportunity to get to try out for the national team."

Lefort played with the Nipmuc junior varsity team last year as an eighth grader and is hoping to be part of the varsity program this spring. She has always loved sports and com-

petition, and joined the youth lacrosse program when she and her friends were eight years old.

"The coaches made it really fun to play, so I kept with it," Lefort said.

At first, lacrosse was just something fun for Lefort to do with her friends; but eventually she joined a club team and started to take the sport more seriously.

"It was like, 'Oh, I am actually pretty decent,'" she said. "I saw this opportunity to try out for the national team and I went for it."

As a member of the team, Lefort will spend the summer training for the 2026 European Championships in Spain. She and her teammates are slated to travel over the summer, taking on other international squads. Lefort said she can suit up for Greece because of her

family lineage.

"My grandfather lives in Greece, and through descent, I am able to be part of the team," she said. "It's a smaller country and I feel like it's different from here because everyone is so connected."

If Greece qualifies during the European tournament in November, they will have the chance to compete at the world championships in the summer of 2027.

"I think it's going to be a different experience, especially for our team because we have people of all different ages and different experience," Lefort said. "But getting to play at that level is going to help me keep improving."

Lefort, who also plays soccer and competes in indoor track and field, said she is hoping to help her team in any way



Nipmuc's Iliana Lefort will play for the Greek national women's lacrosse team this year at the European Championships. Courtesy photo

she can when they convene for training in Pennsylvania this summer. She said playing against older girls with the Nipmuc program has helped prime her for the high-level competition to come.

"It was fun and definitely a little intimidating at first, because there were kids who could be four years older than me," Lefort said. "At the end of the day, you're still playing lacrosse. It's still the same game."

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SPORTS

Despite youth, BVT Cheer posts best-ever season

Valley Tech earns program's first trip to New England meet

By Chris Villani

Half of the Blackstone Valley Tech cheerleading team this winter was made up of freshmen, but the Beavers' overcame any potential challenges stemming from inexperience and earned their first-ever trip to the New England championships.

"We had a great season," said head coach Nicole Boucher. "We have a lot of skill on the team and a lot of really hard working, talented athletes."

BVT placed first at the league meet and also won its division at the regional competition. At states, Valley Tech placed fifth, the best mark in program history. The result gave the Beavers a spot in the New England meet.

Boucher said the team's ability to motivate one another made the difference in the benchmark season.

"They shared the same focus and vision," she said. "They all worked really hard and they put in a lot of time outside practice and it all just came together perfectly."

Even more impressive is that five of the 10 members of the team are freshmen, including

league all-star Kinsley Magnuson.

Senior captain Angelina Morais also garnered an all-star nod, and Boucher praised her contributions.

"She is one of the most well-rounded athletes we have on the team," the coach said. "She led her team through a lot of trials and tribulations for a really successful season."

Junior Lillian Deschene served as a captain for BVT this winter as well. The roster also featured junior Ava Robinson; sophomores Hayden Tobin and Lanna Welch; and freshmen Meagan Curley, Sienna Gregory, Anya Hruzd and Nelyra Marquez-Zirkle.

Boucher stressed that everyone pitched in this winter, since every talented flier is depending on having a skilled and steady base.

"It definitely takes a lot of pieces to the puzzle," she said.

Valley Tech did have the advantage of having a great deal of tumbling talent coming into the year, and even some of its less experienced cheerleaders had strong gymnastics back-



With five freshmen on the roster, BVT cheerleading posted its best season in program history. Courtesy photo

grounds. Boucher said that was "vital" to the season, as was her team's willingness to be coached and its motivation after a subpar season a year ago.

"They were hoping for a fun year and possibly to make it to

regionals," Boucher said, referring to the meet her team would eventually win. "They saw the talent they had and, as we progressed each time, they got hungrier and hungrier to get to that next level."

With five freshmen and nine athletes returning next year, Boucher is hoping this campaign will set a foundation for the seasons ahead.

"The next few years are looking bright," she said.

EMASS senior softball league player registration now open

Players aged 50 and older welcome to join

Eastern Massachusetts Senior Softball (EMASS) is opening its annual registration campaign for men and women softball players aged 50 and older. With approximately 500 members, the league attracts players from towns across Eastern Massachusetts, with games played primarily in Wayland, Medfield, Ashland, and Framingham.

The EMASS season runs from late April through early October, including playoffs. Interested players can register for the EMASS 2026 season at <https://e-mass.org/current-programs>.

EMASS has six divisions that accommodate a range of skill levels. Two play doubleheaders on Saturday mornings, and four play on weekday mornings. EMASS has many seniors in their fifties and sixties who can still hit a ball over a 300-foot fence, run down a deep drive in the outfield, or turn a double play in the infield. Other divisions allow players whose talents may have diminished over time to enjoy playing with similarly skilled friends.

For more information about EMASS Senior Softball League, visit www.e-mass.org.

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