

Northbridge Town Meeting Set for May 5

School Budget Override Is a Key Issue

BY PATTY ROY

Voters will meet at Northbridge High School to consider a wide-ranging annual town meeting warrant that includes a proposed \$57.29 million operating budget for fiscal year 2027, a potential school spending override, and a series of capital and community investments.

The Annual Town Meeting warrant outlines 25 articles covering municipal operations, infrastructure, and long-term planning initiatives.

Budget and School Funding

At the center of the meeting is Article 3, which seeks approval of the town's FY27 budget totaling \$57,290,718 to fund general government, public safety, public works, and other municipal services.



In a closely watched measure, Article 4 asks voters to approve an additional \$3.39 million for the School Department. The funding is contingent on a successful Proposition 2½ override vote, allowing the town to exceed state tax levy limits to support education expenses. An override is a permanent increase in taxing authority. To pass, the measure must be approved by two thirds of the voters at the town

meeting and by the same margin at the annual town election.

Infrastructure and Public Works

Several articles focus on infrastructure improvements, including road repairs funded through state Chapter 90 aid and local borrowing

NORTHBRIDGE

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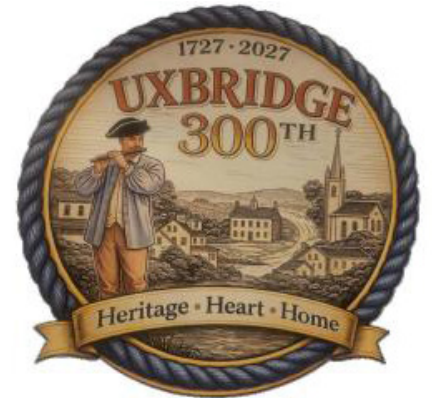
300th Anniversary Celebration Set to Kick-off in Uxbridge

June 27 Bonfire Scheduled

The Uxbridge 300th committee is inviting the community to come together in celebration as its kicks off a year long lead-up to the town's tricentennial with a grand bonfire on Friday, June 27, the date of the town's 299th birthday.

The celebration will take place from 4-10 p.m. at the Uxbridge Soccer fields off Sutton Street. It is being held in partnership with the Uxbridge Youth Soccer League, highlighting the strong spirit of collaboration and community pride that defines the town.

Committee members say the family-friendly evening will feature live music, food trucks and a vari-



ety of activities geared towards all ages. The evening will culminate in a bonfire, a nod to Uxbridge's rich history and anticipation of the 300th anniversary in 2027.

"This is a special moment for Uxbridge," said Amanda Gallarini, chair of the Uxbridge 300th Committee. "We are so excited to celebrate alongside our families, friends and neighbors. This event is just the beginning of a year filled with opportunities to come together, reflect on our history and build lasting memories as a community."

The June 27 bonfire marks the first of many events planned throughout the year. Upcoming highlights include a gold tournament at Blissful Meadows Golf Club and a "Legends & Lanterns" celebration in the fall for Halloween. Additional events will be announced.

Residents are encouraged to follow the 300th Committee on social media and visit its website for the latest updates and event details at www.uxbridge-ma.gov/300th-anniversary-committee.

The community also welcomes involvement from town residents and is actively seeking volunteers, sponsors, and donations to support this milestone celebration. Anyone interested in helping out are welcome to reach out for more information.

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NORTHBRIDGE

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(Article 6). Sewer and water system

investments also feature prominently, with funding proposed for wastewater treatment upgrades, infiltration mitigation, and equipment purchases.

A major allocation under Article 16 would direct more than \$1.1 million toward addressing contaminated drinking water wells and securing alternative water sources,

following identification by health and environmental officials.

Capital Projects and Facilities

Voters will also consider a \$1.7 million capital plan (Article 19) funded through free cash. Proposed projects include emergency vehicle replacements, roadwork, police equipment upgrades, and school transportation vehicles.

Another significant request, Article 22, seeks \$1.52 million in additional funding for the planned Senior Center/Community Center at the former Northbridge Elementary School site on Cross Street.

Building maintenance projects are included in Article 17, with funding earmarked for Town Hall repairs, school rooftop units, and recreational facility improvements.

Additional funds are proposed for historic preservation, open space, and community housing reserves.

Policy and Planning Articles

The warrant also includes several policy-related measures. Article 23 would allow certain alcohol license conversions, while Article 25 proposes a bylaw to study the feasibility of a municipally owned utility system. The study would examine electric and natural gas options but would not authorize implementation without further Town Meeting approval.

Other articles address revolving fund limits, financial agreements, and stabilization fund contributions.

Community Participation Encouraged

Registered voters are urged to attend, noting that decisions made at the meeting will shape Northbridge's financial and infrastructure priorities for the coming year.

The meeting will take place at Northbridge High School on Linwood Avenue in Whitinsville.

Community Preservation and Recreation

Through the Community Preservation Fund, residents will weigh funding for local initiatives, including \$294,000 for a Habitat for Humanity housing project and \$375,000 for new playground equipment at the Cross Street Tot Lot.

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Meeting House Ecumenical Service

The first ecumenical service of the 2026 season will be held Sunday, May 31 at 2 p.m. at the East Blackstone Quaker Meeting House, 129 Elm Street, Blackstone. The association's annual business meeting will take place immediately following.

Reverend Patricia Hatch will serve as guest pastor. Rev. Hatch serves as a community minister and is also an itinerant preacher. She has a Master of Divinity degree from Boston University and has served as a parish minister, a Minister of Christian Education and a hospice chaplain. She enjoys poetry, nature and inspiration of all kinds.



Music for the service will be under the direction of John Staples, organist and pianist at Mathewson Street United Methodist Church.

Three additional services will also be held this year: Sunday, September 13; a Thanksgiving service on Sunday, November 22; and the Association's Candlelight Christmas Caroling Service on Friday December 18.

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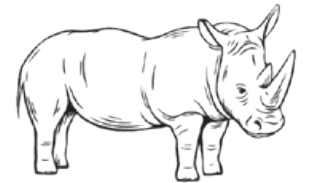
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Uxbridge Sets FY2027 Budget Ahead of Annual Town Meeting

BY PATTY ROY

Residents will gather for the Annual Town Meeting at 7 p.m. on May 12 at Valley Chapel, 14 Hunter Road, as town officials present a \$65.6 million preliminary budget shaped by rising costs and cautious revenue planning.

Town leaders say the FY27 proposal reflects a “level-service” approach—maintaining current services while managing significant financial pressures. The plan avoids using one-time revenues, aims to generate 2–3% in free cash, and steers clear of a structural deficit.

Rising Costs Drive Spending

Several major cost increases are influencing the budget:

- Employee benefits remain a key driver, with health insurance rising 11.5% for active employees and 12% for retirees.

- Retirement assessments are up 9.5%, part of a state mandate to fully fund the system by 2034.

- School-related expenses continue to climb, including a 31% increase in school choice assessments and higher out-of-district

special education costs.

Overall, the proposed budget represents a 4.29% increase, or \$2.7 million, over the current fiscal year.

Education accounts for the largest share of spending at roughly 45%, followed by employee benefits at 19% and public safety at nearly 12%.

Revenue Picture Remains Tight

Uxbridge continues to rely heavily on property taxes, its largest revenue source. The tax levy is expected to rise by the allowable 2.5% under Proposition 2½, along with an estimated \$500,000 in new growth from development.

State aid is projected at \$12.27 million, a modest 1.57% increase. Officials note that Uxbridge remains a “minimum aid” community, with funding increases failing to keep pace with inflation.

Local receipts, including motor vehicle excise taxes, permits, and fees, are expected to total \$4.47 million, reflecting a planned decrease tied to the creation of a new ambulance receipts reserve fund.

Financial Strategy and Stability

Town officials emphasize a conservative financial strategy. Free

cash—generated from prior-year surpluses—will be reserved for one-time expenses and capital projects, rather than ongoing operations.

Current reserve levels remain strong, with stabilization funds exceeding recommended benchmarks. Combined reserves are above 12% of the general fund, providing a cushion against future

uncertainties.

Ongoing Pressures and Unknowns

Several challenges remain on the horizon:

- All municipal and school union contracts are set to expire, with negotiations ongoing.
- Aging town and school buildings continue to require increased maintenance.

- State mandates, particularly in special education, add costs without corresponding funding.

- Inflation continues to drive up fuel, materials, and service expenses.

Officials also highlighted a growing gap between students

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Spectacular Spring art show winners announced

The Blackstone Valley Art Association is pleased to announce the winners of its annual Spectacular Spring art show! These artworks can be seen at the Uxbridge Community Art Gallery through June 6, 2026

First Place – Dale Hoopingarner “Serenity” photography. Dale took this image with a flatbed scanner. He carefully laid the flowers out on the scanner in an arranged composition. He had to think upside-down and backwards. Then he made the room pitch dark at night. The flowers were lit up by the scanner, while the background stayed black.

Second Place – Young Farwell “A Girl in a Traditional Korean Dress” oil painting. Young painted this image of her granddaughter, when her granddaughter turned

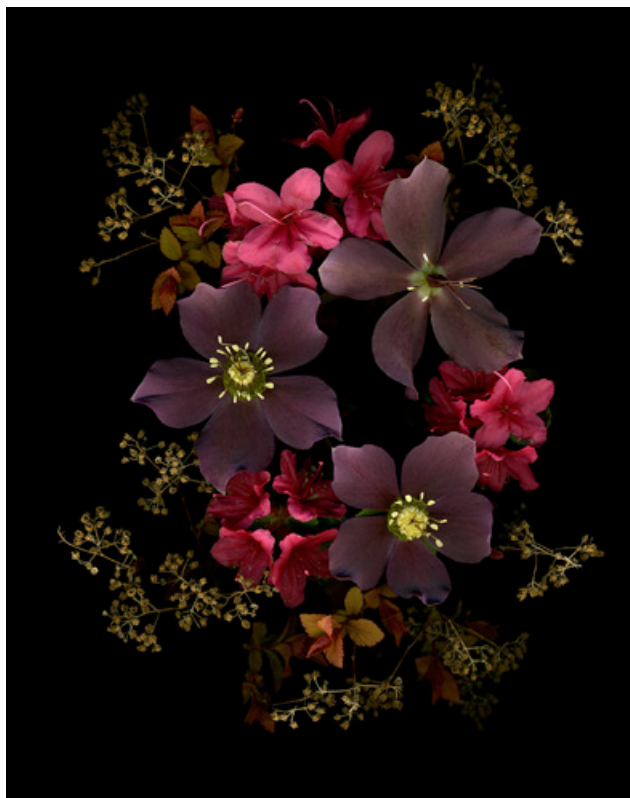
one. A tradition in Korean culture is to have a special celebration when a child turns one.

Third Place – Cheri Holland “Submerged Tulips in Motion” photography. Cheri filled a fishtank full of water. She anchored the tulips down inside the fishtank, in the water. She carefully dropped drops of milk into the fishtank. She took photos as the milk swirled through the water.

Honorable Mention – Laura Cenedella “Golden Finch” acrylic painting. Laura ran a free workshop at Open Sky in Whitinsville on how to paint birds. This is one of the pieces she created to help participants learn how to make a bird painting.

Honorable Mention – Marcia Ciak “Flowers” watercolor with pen and ink painting. Marcia loves to gather fresh flowers and celebrate their beauty in paintings.

Honorable Mention – Dave Skillins “Douglas State Forest” cut paper. Dave cuts up tiny pieces



Dale Hoopingarner “Serenity”

of colored paper and carefully arranges beautiful artwork of local scenes.

Thank you to everyone who participated in this community art show!

The BVAA Community Art Gallery is open nearly every Saturday from 10-3 as a drop-in art studio. Stop on by with your art supplies, or we'll have supplies for you to borrow. You can enjoy the latest art show, chat, make art, and explore your creativity! Free! All are warmly encouraged to visit. Check BVAA.org to make sure the gallery will be open on a given Saturday, as we are all volunteers and sometimes we can't make it in. Email info@bvaa.org for more information.

BLACKSTONE VALLEY Xpress

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Deborah Wheelock DAR Chapter Students Honors

Last month, students and their families filled the historic Sime Wheelock House. Members were present to recognize

2026 Good citizens from local high schools and hear the winning essays of students at Whitin Middle School.

Good Citizen chair Judy Thomas introduced the students chosen from the class of 2026. Nicky Ann Leske of Uxbridge

High School, Julia Ferrasino from Nipmuc Regional High School and Julia St. Gelais from Blackstone Millville Regional High.

In a tradition dating back to 1934, just one graduating senior is elected as the class “Good Citizen” based on depend-

ability, service, leadership and patriotism. Each of the honored students talked about their plans for college and majors in international relations and nursing. They received a certificate, official Gold Citizen pin to wear on their graduation gown and \$1000 award toward higher education expenses.

American History chair Jane Keegan announced five Uxbridge 7th graders in Kathleen O'Brien's class entered the national DAR American History essay contest for grades 5-12.

Two winning students were announced – Amyra Jalotra was first runner-up and a winner at chapter, state and Northeast Division levels, as was Sri Gurram.

ENTER TO WIN TICKETS TO SOUTHWICK'S ZOO! Find the Hidden Animals in This Month's Editorial Pages! There are 10 animals scattered throughout this issue's articles. Scan the QR code below and submit the list of animals you have found for your chance to win a Grand Prize of a Family 4-pack of general admission tickets to Southwick's Zoo during the 2026 season. Multiple runner-up 2-pack general admission tickets will be awarded. Submit by June 12, 2026 to be included.



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Panel 2: Dog: "YOU'LL HAVE TO PICK FROM THE MAIN MENU UP ON THE WALL BEHIND ME. THE CAFE DOESN'T OFFER SPECIALS ANYMORE, SO WHAT DO YOU WANT?" Cashier: "TIK TAP TIK TAP"

Panel 3: Dog: "OH, NOTHING SPECIAL."

A Career of Courage and Public Service

Kevin Barry Inspires at Plummer Place

Members of the Dull Men's Club gathered at Plummer Place, home of the Northbridge Senior Center, for a memorable presentation by Kevin Barry, whose life story of courage, discipline, and public service left a lasting impression on all in attendance.

Raised in Hopedale and a graduate of Hopedale High School and Worcester State University, Barry went on to serve in the United States Marine Corps before embarking on a distinguished career in law enforcement. He was selected for the Rhode Island State Police from a highly competitive pool of 4,300 applicants competing for just 34 positions, graduating from the academy in 1994.

Over the course of his career, Barry served in a variety of specialized roles, including narcotics, detective work, and as part of a high-level drug detection team targeting organized crime. Follow-

ing the events of 9/11, he contributed to federal efforts as a member of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force and trained at the FBI Academy in Quantico. Reflecting on his years in uniform, Barry noted, "My career: the days were long, but the years were short."

Barry also shared personal insights and candid observations, emphasizing the importance of discipline, teamwork, and integrity. He spoke about the rigor of state police training in New England, the realities of working in high-pressure environments, and even the unique experience of working with a German Shepherd in the K-9 unit that required learning commands in German. Now retired from active law enforcement for five years, he has turned his focus to his own business, "Picked to Serve."

A lively discussion followed the presentation, with many expressing appreciation for Barry's willing-



ness to share some very candid and thoughtful moments of his career. Events like these continue to enrich the Northbridge Senior Center's offerings, bringing meaningful experiences and fostering community connection.

For more information about upcoming programs at Plummer Place or the Dull Men's Club, please contact Amy Cowen, program and volunteer coordinator, at (508) 234-2002.

- Submitted by Amy Cowen

UXBRIDGE ATM

continued from page 3

leaving the district through school choice and those entering, further straining education finances.

What Residents Should Know

For the average homeowner, the impact of the budget is reflected in the property tax bill. Based on current estimates, a home valued at \$537,392 would see approximately \$6,814 annually, with the largest portion funding local schools.

Town leaders say the FY2027

budget is designed to balance fiscal responsibility with maintaining essential services.

Residents will have the opportunity to review and vote on the town meeting warrant at the May 12 Town Meeting.



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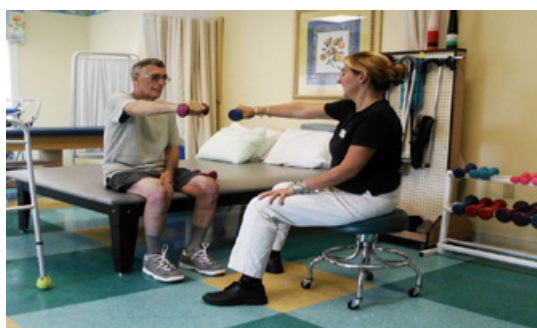


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A Guest Lecture at the Willard House & Clock Museum

“One for the Revolutionary Road: Taverns and Beer in the American Revolution” by Dr. Malcolm F. Purinton

On Saturday, May 9th at 2:00 PM, the Willard House & Clock Museum invites the public to step back into the measured rhythms of the eighteenth century for an engaging lecture by Dr. Malcolm F. Purinton, exploring the vital role of taverns and beer in shaping Revolutionary America.

Titled “One for the Revolutionary Road: Taverns and Beer in the American Revolution,” the

program offers a timely reflection on how everyday spaces—and the people who gathered within them—helped set the course of history. This program has been made possible through the generous support of the Gaudette Insurance Agency.

In an age before instant communication, taverns functioned as the ticking heartbeats of their communities. Much like the cadence of a finely crafted clock,

these gathering places kept time with the social, political, and economic life of the colonies. Here, over mugs of beer and shared news, colonists debated ideas, organized resistance, and forged a collective identity that would ultimately drive the American Revolution forward.

The Earliest Version of Social Media Dr. Purinton will address how taverns served as essential hubs for civic life in both rural and urban settings. From post-church conversations to town meetings and elections, these spaces bore witness to pivotal moments in American history. Decisions made around tavern tables reverberated far beyond their walls, influencing events as significant as protests and acts of defiance, including those leading up to the Boston Tea Party.

“Like a well-made clock, the Revolution didn’t happen all at once—it was built moment by moment,” said Dr. Purinton. “Taverns were where those moments accumulated— where ideas were tested, loyalties were debated, and, over a pint or two, a shared sense of purpose began to keep time across the colonies.”

A Runup to the Third Annual Grafton Beer Festival

This special lecture also serves as a celebratory precursor to the Third Annual Grafton Beer Fest hosted by Rushford & Sons Brew-



consider how time -kept, marked, and experienced- shapes human events.

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Gaudette Insurance Agency is a third-generation family business founded in Grafton in 1926. As an independent agent, they represent more than 20 different insurance companies. Commitment to the community has always been at the forefront of Gaudette Insurance Agency. From local sponsorships to participating in events throughout the community, Gaudette is proud to go the extra mile and contribute to the improvement of local civic life.

Learn more about Gaudette at gaudette-insurance.com

About Willard House and Clock Museum – Planning for The Next 50 Years

Located at 11 Willard Street in North Grafton, MA, Willard House and Clock Museum exhibits more than 90 Willard clocks in the birthplace and original workshop of the Willard clockmakers, along with family portraits, furnishings and other family heirlooms.

The work of all three generations of Willard clockmakers, focusing on the famed brothers, Simon Willard and Aaron Willard are displayed. The Museum tour includes the original Willard House built in 1718, the original 1766 clock-making workshop, and three modern galleries.

Willard is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

house, which will be held on the museum grounds on Saturday, May 16th, beginning at 2 p.m.

Seating for the lecture is limited, and advance reservations are strongly encouraged.

To reserve your spot, please visit: <https://willardhouse.org/events/calendar/2026/5/9/one-for-the-revolutionary-road-taverns-and-beer-in-the-american-revolution>

Dr. Malcolm F. Purinton is an Assistant Teaching Professor in the History Department at Northeastern University, where he teaches courses on World History, the British Empire, and the histories of Boston and colonial America, with a particular focus on beer history. He is the author of *Globalization in a Glass: The Rise of Pilsner Beer through Technology, Taste, and Empire*, which traces the global spread of one of the world’s most popular beer styles.

This lecture continues the Willard House & Clock Museum’s tradition of connecting horology with broader cultural and historical narratives, inviting visitors to

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Which retirement plan is right for your business?



Mark Freeman, CEPA

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If you're a local business owner, a workplace retirement plan can be a powerful tool – helping you manage taxes, strengthen employee retention and build personal financial security.

Many in your situation, however, assume retirement plans are complicated or only suitable for large companies. The reality is quite different. Today's retirement plan options encompass

businesses of every size, from solo entrepreneurs to companies with dozens of employees.

The key is understanding which plans work best for different kinds of businesses:

Self-employed individuals or businesses without employees. Three commonly used retirement plans:

- Simplified employee pension (SEP) plans are relatively straightforward, low-maintenance, lower-cost and flexible on how much you contribute each year.
- Owner-only 401(k) plans are ideal if you're willing to accept additional cost and complexity in exchange for benefits like higher contribution limits and borrowing options.
- Owner only defined benefit plans work best for owners with high, steady income who want to maximize their retirement contributions and guaranteed retirement income. These plans come with required annual

funding and greater administrative complexity.

Businesses with employees can also consider an SEP plan, although it only allows for employer contributions. Other plan options include:

- The SIMPLE IRA (savings incentive match plan for employees) can work well for companies with 100 or fewer employees seeking a low-maintenance option. Employer contributions are required, and it has lower contribution limits compared to other plan types.
- Traditional 401(k) plans offer maximum flexibility by allowing both employee salary deferrals and employer contributions that can be adjusted based on business performance. These plans have added costs and administrative responsibilities.
- Safe harbor 401(k) plans are ideal if you want to maximize your own retirement contributions without complex testing require-

ments and you're willing to make required employer contributions.

- A cash balance plan is often paired with another plan type, such as a 401(k), to allow greater retirement savings. It works well when you have a smaller company with high-earning employees and consistent cash flow, and you're comfortable making required contributions.

Each plan type involves different eligibility requirements, establishment deadlines, contribution limits, complexity and costs. In determining a workplace retirement plan that's right for your business, you'll want to consider your number of employees, desired contribution levels, comfort with required employer contributions and willingness to handle administrative responsibilities. And, of course, the goals for your business and your own retirement are important criteria.

Fortunately, you don't have to navigate this decision alone. A

financial advisor can help you evaluate the trade-offs among different plan types and select the option that best fits your situation. They can explain how various plans work and guide you through the setup process.

Starting a workplace retirement plan is an investment in your future, your business and your employees. With professional guidance, you can find a plan that helps everyone build financial security while positioning your business for continued success.

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

Mark Freeman, CEPA
Edward Jones Financial Advisor
77 West Main Street,
Hopkinton, MA (508) 293-4017
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Uxbridge Historical Society Events in May

On Sunday, May 17 from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. at the Cornet John Farnum House (c. 1710) several local gun collectors will be on hand to display rare examples of the Bay State Arms shotguns and rifles. The Uxbridge Historical Society also holds one in its own collection which it will display for viewing.

The Bay State Arms Company was originally founded in Worcester but had a presence in Uxbridge from 1873 – 1874. After reorganization, in 1884, William Davenport and Joseph Day established operations on the Mumford River in the old Seth Read gristmill, built in 1777 and one of the town's earliest industrial sites.

The Society will also host a special Memorial Day Open House on Monday, May 25 from 8 a.m. – 11 a.m. Stop by the Farnum House to watch the Memorial Day Parade and enjoy complimentary coffee and donuts while visiting Uxbridge's oldest home, recently renovated. Both events are free and open to the public.

Open Farm Day for Families at The Refuge at Lyric Farm



The Refuge at Lyric Farm will hold its inaugural Open Farm Day on Sunday, May 17 from 1 – 4 p.m., 130 Stanphyl Road, Uxbridge. Rain date is Sunday, May 31. Tickets are \$5 and are available at lyricfarm.com/events/open-farm-day/. Community members are encouraged to buy their tickets in advance.

The Refuge at Lyric Farm is a non-profit rescue farm offering lifelong sanctuary to special needs animals while creating meaningful, hands-on experiences for people of all ages.

Guests will be able to meet animal residents up close, play lawn games, visit the bake sale, enjoy live music and explore the grounds through a scavenger hunt.

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New England Stone Walls

BY THOMAS J. MCLAUGHLIN

No matter where you go in the New England woods, you're bound to come across the iconic 19th century stone wall. They can be seen everywhere, including on the Midstate Trail.

It's commonly believed that the early New England farmers made these walls as they uncovered frost heaving rocks while plowing their fields each spring, which surely happened. But as to why and when the walls were built, it depends on the wall and who you ask.

Robert Thorson, a landscape geologist at the University of Connecticut, the founder of The Stone Wall Initiative, and the author of Stone by Stone, shares this view, "The walls are simply a disposal pile." But Tom Wessels, an ecologist and the author of Reading the Forest Landscape, says that the earliest New England farmers fenced in their livestock with wooden split rail fences, which was much easier than lugging heavy stones up a hill to build a wall. Wessels believes that farmers would throw the rocks in a rock dump rather than putting time and effort into constructing an extensive network of walls.

Nearly a quarter of a million miles of stone walls were constructed throughout our region according to Thorson. Wessels calculates that central New England alone has 125,000 miles of stone walls, a length that could wrap around the equator five times or extend more than halfway to the moon. Wessels believes that most of these walls were built in thirty years and that if these walls were in the Mediterranean, rather than New England, they would be the eighth wonder of the world.

Some walls are older than others, depending on when the area was first settled. Walls were built between 1750 and 1850, when New England farms were in their heyday. But according to Wessels, most of the stone walls you see today in Central New England were built between 1810 and 1840, during a period known as "Sheep Fever."

New England was about to experience the most profound change to the landscape since the Ice Age. It was an event that would see more than 80 percent of our forests cut down, hillsides eroded to bare rock, and natural habitats wiped out.

It was a shift from the small farm to larger commercial farming. Between 1810 and 1820 the number of textile mills in the region processing



Merino wool multiplied threefold.

It all began after France and Spain invaded Portugal in 1807, then Napoleon and his French army invaded Spain in 1808, toppling Spain's King Ferdinand VII.

A Bostonian financier, William Jarvis, was appointed by Thomas Jefferson to be the U.S. Consul to Portugal. During the chaos of Napoleon's conquest of Spain, Jarvis seized the opportunity to obtain the previously restricted and much sought after Merino breed of sheep, known for its fine, soft wool. He imported 4,000 of them back to his farm in Weathersfield, Vermont.

Those 4,000 sheep eventually surpassed a million and a half in

the next two decades. The boycott of British goods during the War of 1812 was an additional boon to New England's farmers. Wessels believes that it was during this thirty-year period that most of New England's stone walls were built to pen the Merino sheep.

But by 1840, as prices plummeted, new markets opened, and land became available for farming in the west; New England's sheep farms were being abandoned, and by 1900 more than half of the cleared land was reforested once again. Today, these picturesque walls that once meandered through fields and pastures can be found throughout our forests.

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Douglas and Uxbridge Earn Housing Choice Community Designation

Douglas and Uxbridge have been named among 29 newly designated Housing Choice Communities, a recognition announced April 13 at Gill Town Hall by Kim Driscoll and

Juana Matias. Both towns earned the five-year designation under the Rural and Small Town category by meeting state housing production thresholds over the past five years and

implementing best practices in planning and zoning. The designation provides Douglas and Uxbridge with exclusive eligibility to apply for the Housing Choice Grant Program through the Community One Stop for Growth. Communities also receive added priority and consideration across nine additional state programs, potentially unlocking funding for infrastructure and development initiatives.

In past funding rounds, Housing Choice grants have supported a range of local projects, including wastewater and infrastructure improvements to enable new housing, upgrades



to enhance public safety and accessibility, and the rehabilitation of underutilized properties.

The designation is part of the Commonwealth's broader Housing Choice Initiative, which aims

to encourage housing production through incentives, technical assistance, and policy reforms designed to expand housing options statewide.



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National Grid Assistance at the Uxbridge Senior Center

Life can be hard, but finding assistance shouldn't be. The Uxbridge Senior Center is proud to present Connect to Caring with National Grid. Meet with Customer Advocates at the Uxbridge Senior Center, located at 36 South Main Street in Uxbridge, to help you with options to manage your energy bill and ways to save money.

The Connect to Caring program provides you with assistance programs and connects you with the resources your family needs, all under one roof, all in one day. National Grid Customer Advocates will be available to meet one on one on Wednesday, May 20 from 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. to discuss options to manage your energy bill and help you find assistance

including Discount Rates, Payment Plans, Budget Plans and the Arrears Management Program (AMP). No appointment is needed, please bring the following when you visit: if you receive SNAP, MassHealth, SSI or WIC, please bring your benefit card and/or program acceptance letter to enroll in the Discount Rate Program. Connect to Caring program is open to all interested individuals; you do not have to be a senior or Uxbridge resident.

Please join us on Wednesday, May 20 from 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. at the Uxbridge Senior Center. Please call the senior center with any questions at 508-278-8622 or email lbernard@uxbridge-ma.gov.

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Douglas Public Library Schedule

The Simon Fairfield Public Library's Upcoming Schedule. Please note that some events do require registration. If you have any questions regarding any events, please do not hesitate to contact the library at 508-476-2695 or email at us at douglas@cwmars.org.

290 Main Street, Douglas
508-476-2695
Hours: Mon-Thu 9am-8pm; Sat 9am-1pm

Please note that we will be closed on Monday, May 25th in observance of Memorial Day.

GENERAL EVENTS

Sat, 05/23 @ 9:00 - Memorial Day Book & Plant Sale

CHILDREN'S BOOK CLUBS

Wed, 05/13 @ 4:00 - Young Readers (Grades K-2), Lucy in the

City by Julie Dillemath

Wed, 05/20 @ 4:00 - Book Bunch (Grades 2-4), The Guardian Test by Christina Soontornvat

CHILDREN'S HAPPENINGS

Mon, 05/11, 05/18, 06/01 @ 10:00 - Spring Storytime (Registration Required)

Thu, 05/14, 05/21, 05/28 @ 10:00 - Spring Storytime (Registration Required)

Tue, 05/19, 06/02 @ 11:30 - Music & Movement with Deb Hudgins

Tue, 05/19 @ 3:30 - Lego Club II (Registration Required)
Wed, 05/20 @ 5:45 - Reading to Bryce (Registration Required)

TEEN HAPPENINGS

Tue, 05/12, 05/26, 06/09 @ 4:00 - Dungeons & Dragons Club (Full)
Tue, 05/19, 06/02 @ 4:00 - Battletech Club

ADULT BOOK CLUBS

Tue, 05/12 @ 6:30 - Intrepid Readers, In the Distance by Hernan Diaz

Tue, 05/19 @ 6:30 - SciFi Book Club, The Galaxy, and the Ground Within by Becky Chambers

Mon, 05/27 @ 6:30 - Plot Twisters, Party of Liars by Kelsey Cox

Thu, 06/04 @ 6:30 - Greatest Book Club Ever, The Midnight Feast by Lucy Foley

ADULT HAPPENINGS

Mon, 05/11, 05/18, 06/01, 06/08 @ 6:30 - Writers Accountability Group

Wed, 05/13, 06/03, 06/10 @ 10:00 - Fiber Arts Friends

Wed, 05/13, 06/10 @ 5:45 - Fiber Arts Friends at Night

Sat, 05/16 @ 10:30 - SFPL



Gardeners

Thu, 05/28 @ 6:00 - Cookbook

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JAMEY YAYLAIAN

Land Protection Session Planned for Douglas Property Owners

Douglas Open Space Committee is inviting local landowners to learn more about options for preserving their land at an upcoming informational session on Thursday, May 14, at 7 p.m.

The event will be held at the Douglas Municipal Center in the Resource Room and will focus on strategies to protect fields and forests while maintaining flexibility for landowners' future plans.

As part of the program, attendees will view a land preservation webinar from MassWoods. Addi-

tional insight will be provided by Lisa Moczymski, president of the regional Metacomet Land Trust, who will be on hand to answer questions and discuss local conservation opportunities.

Organizers say permanent land protection options can be tailored to individual property owners and may include benefits such as reduced or eliminated property taxes, estate planning advantages, and provisions like designated building envelopes for future generations. In addition to private benefits, land conservation helps

safeguard watersheds, preserve wildlife habitats, and protect farmland through agricultural preservation restrictions.

Residents interested in attending are encouraged to learn more by contacting openspace@douglas-ma.gov.

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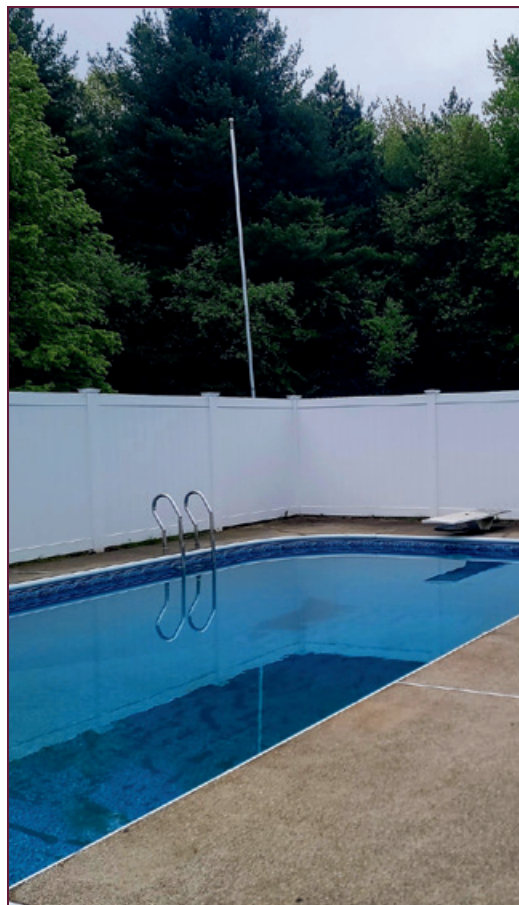
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Uxbridge Free Public Library

May Events Schedule

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ONGOING PROGRAM.

Teen Book-in-a-Bag
Available daily throughout the month (unless otherwise noted).

SUNDAY, MAY 11

All Day – Teen Book-in-a-Bag
10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. – Friends Book Donation Drop-Off
11:00 – 11:45 a.m. – Sound

Mind, Sound Body (Register)
4:45 – 5:15 p.m. – Blossoming Youth Yoga (Register)
5:00 – 7:00 p.m. – Friends Book Donation Drop-Off
6:00 – 6:45 p.m. – Science with A.m.anda (Register)
6:00 – 7:30 p.m. – Knit N’ Stitch Circle
7:00 – 8:00 p.m. – Gentle Flow Yoga (Register)

MONDAY, MAY 12

All Day – Teen Book-in-a-Bag

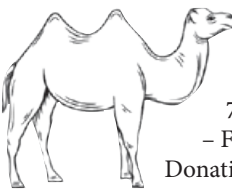
10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. – Friends Book Donation Drop-Off
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. – Toddler Tumble (Register)
1:00 – 2:15 p.m. – Senior Center Book Club

TUESDAY, MAY 13

All Day – Teen Book-in-a-Bag
10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. – Friends Book Donation Drop-Off
11:00 – 11:30 a.m. – Toddler Storytime (Register)
3:30 – 5:00 p.m. – Book-A-Librarian (3 sessions, Register)
4:15 – 5:15 p.m. – Sand in a Bottle (Register)

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14

All Day – Teen Book-in-a-Bag
10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. – Friends Book Donation Drop-Off
5:00 – 7:00 p.m. – Friends Book Donation Drop-Off



6:00 – 7:00 p.m. – Teen Boba Tea (Register)
6:15 – 7:45 p.m. Cardmaking Workshop (Register)

THURSDAY, MAY 15

Library Closed
All Day – Teen Book-in-a-Bag

FRIDAY, MAY 16

Until 5:00 p.m. – Teen Book-in-a-Bag
9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. – Spring Book, Bake & Plant Sale

SATURDAY, MAY 17

Library Closed

SUNDAY, MAY 18

11:00 – 11:30 A.M. – Baby Storytime (Register)
4:45 – 5:15 PM – Blossoming Youth Yoga (Register)
6:00 – 7:30 PM – Knit N’ Stitch Circle
6:00 – 7:30 PM – Henna by Jen! (Register)
6:30 – 7:30 PM – Bookies Book Club
7:00 – 8:00 PM – Gentle Flow Yoga (Register)

MONDAY, MAY 19

4:15 – 5:15 PM – Lego Challenge Build (Register)

TUESDAY, MAY 20

11:00 – 11:30 A.M. – Toddler Storytime (Register)

3:30 – 4:30 PM – Historical Fiction Book Club
4:15 – 5:00 PM – Seashell Painting (Register)

WEDNESDAY, MAY 21

11:00 – 11:30 A.M. – Music & Movement (Register)
6:00 – 8:00 PM – Virtual Fortnite Tournament (Register)
7:00 – 8:00 PM – Gentle Flow Yoga (Register)

MONDAY, MAY 26

11:00 A.M. – 12:00 PM – Sensory Play (Register)

TUESDAY, MAY 27

11:00 A.M. – 1:00 PM – Pop-Up Library at Senior Center
1:00 – 2:30 PM – Embroidery 101 (Register)
3:30 – 5:00 PM – Book-A-Librarian (3 sessions, Register)
4:15 – 5:00 PM – Birds on a Branch (Register)

WEDNESDAY, MAY 28

11:00 – 11:30 A.M. – Music & Movement (Register)
6:00 – 7:00 PM – Manga & Anime Club (Register)
6:30 – 7:30 PM – Quaker Girl Takes Washington’s Center Stage: The Influence of Dolley Madison (Register)

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BY LEE-ANN BARKHOUSE

The small moments still matter. As we welcome spring here in the Blackstone Valley, there's a natural sense of renewal all around us. The days are a little brighter, neighbors are out walking again, and we begin to reconnect in ways that winter often puts on pause.

It's a gentle reminder that we also have an opportunity to reset how we show up for one another.

In today's world, we are more connected than ever -and yet, in many ways, more distracted. We move quickly. We respond in short messages. We check our phones in between conversations. None of it is intentional, and yet it can leave others feeling unseen or unheard.

Etiquette today isn't about knowing every rule. It's about awareness. It's about how we show up in the small, everyday moments.

Holding the door. Looking up when someone is speaking. Taking a moment before responding. Following through when we say we will. These are simple things, but they carry meaning. They signal respect. They let others know they matter.

Maya Angelou once said that people may forget what you said or what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel. That feels especially relevant right now.

Here in our community - whether at the market, a local event, or simply passing someone on the sidewalk - we have opportunities every day to make a positive impression. Not in a grand way, but in a genuine one.

We don't need to be perfect. We just need to be present. Because how we show up in the smallest moments is what people remember most.

This spring let's keep it simple. A kind word. A little patience. A thoughtful pause. Small reminders that, together, make our community feel just a little more connected.

Q. Is it rude to check your phone during a conversation?

A. It can be perceived that way. Even a quick glance can signal that your

attention is elsewhere. When possible, give the person in front of you your full attention. It's one of the simplest ways to show respect.

Q. What if I'm busy and can't respond to messages right away?

A. That's completely understandable. A brief acknowledgment, "I received this and will follow up" goes a long way. It shows consideration and keeps communication clear.

Q. How can I be more present in everyday interactions?

A. Start small. Make eye contact. Listen without interrupting. Pause before responding. Presence doesn't require extra time, it simply requires intention.

ETIQUETTE TIP OF THE MONTH

Pause before you respond. A brief pause, whether in conversation, email, or text, allows you to respond with intention rather than reaction. It's a simple habit that brings clarity, respect, and thoughtfulness into every interaction.

See you next month, and may we all spring forward with confidence, kindness, and grace.

- Lee-Ann

Have a situation you'd like help with? Write in or email (info@investinuma.com) and your question may be featured in a future column. Let's build a kinder,

more respectful world, one interaction at a time.

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

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Tuesday – Dull Men’s Club (fourth Tuesday) 9:30 p.m.; Paint-

ing 10 a.m.; Mat Yoga 10 a.m.; Chair Yoga 11:15 a.m.; Pokeno 12:30 p.m.; Bridge 12:30 p.m.
Wednesday – Brew Crew (first Wednesday) 9:30 a.m.; Low Impact Aerobics 10 a.m.; Blackstobe Valley Strummers 10 a.m.; Book Club (third Wednesday) 10:30 a.m.; Ukulele Class 2 p.m.; Tap Class 2:30 p.m.

Thursday – Meditation 9:30 a.m.; Women’s Collective (second Thursday); Chair Yoga 11:15 p.m.; Mahjong 12:30 p.m.; Writing Your Way (second and Fourth Thursday) 2 p.m.
Friday – Stretch & Stengthen 9 a.m.

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Summit Campus and QCC Announce 3-Week Summer College Readiness Program

Summit Campus and Quinsigamond Community College’s Student Accessibility Services today announced the *Summer College Prep Program*, a new collaborative summer program designed to help rising high school juniors and seniors develop self-advocacy, strengthen academic skills and prepare for meaningful post-secondary options.

The three-week summer self-exploration and college readiness program will provide diverse learners with an immersive college experience on QCC’s campus that includes writing workshops and personal development sessions. The program also offers an optional dormitory living experience at

Summit Campus, called Summit Summer Launch.

“I have always believed that students with learning differences need an experience to show them what they may not be able to envision on their own. This program can impact a student’s vision of their future immeasurably and create a pathway to higher education that may not have seemed possible,” said Nikki Koppel, director of Summit Campus. “This partnership creates a supportive environment where students can grow academically and personally while gaining real insight into college life.”

“Quinsigamond Community College is proud to partner with

Summit Campus to support students in our community as they prepare for their educational futures,” said Kristen Proctor, director of Student Accessibility Services & Assistive Technology. “This program reflects our commitment to expanding access to college readiness opportunities and helping students see themselves as future college scholars.”

All accepted students will attend sessions on study strategies, time management, college expectations, self-care and stress management. The program will also offer a variety of social events and excursions.

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Uxbridge Senior Center – May 2026 Programs & Events

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OLDER AMERICANS MONTH (MAY 2026)

Theme: *Champion Your Health*
Focus on prevention, wellness, and active health management

SPECIAL EVENTS

Diabetes Health Luncheon
Date: Tuesday, May 12, 2026
Time: 12:00 p.m.
Presenter: Hannaford Pharmacy
Details: Education on diabetes prevention and management
Note: RSVP required

GOLDEN GALA

Date: Friday, May 15, 2026
Time: 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Location: VFW Post 1385, 13 Cross Road, Uxbridge
Cost: \$5 (advance purchase only)
Meal Options: Chicken Parm or Porchetta
Entertainment: DJ Trish
Sponsor: Uxbridge Elderly Connection

WALK & TALK PROGRAM

When: Mondays at 9:00 a.m.
Location: McCloskey School Parking Lot
Details:

Free walking group led by Wellness Coordinator Doreen Cedrone
Weather permitting
Registration and waiver required

HIGHLIGHTED DAILY & WEEKLY PROGRAMS

Mondays
Walk & Talk – 9:00 a.m.
Card Ga.m.es during lunch (no game May 25)
Tuesdays
Hannaford Shopping Shuttle – begins 8:30 a.m.
Knitting Club – 1:30 p.m.
Wednesdays
Community Shuttle – 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.
Lunch BINGO
Canasta – 1:15 p.m.
Scrabble – 1:15 p.m.

ONGOING SERVICES

Medical Transportation (appointment required)
SHINE Health Insurance Counseling
Veteran Services (by appointment)
Computer Tutoring (monthly)

Friday, May 8
12:00 P.M. – Mother’s Day Celebration (Elvis Tribute)
Tuesday, May 12
12:00 p.m. – Diabetes Health

Luncheon
1:00 p.m. – Book Club (“We All Live Here” by Jojo Moyes)
1:00 p.m. – Benefit Enrollment Appointments
7:00 p.m. – Spring Town Meeting
Friday, May 15
11:00 a.m.– Golden Gala
Monday, May 18
1:30 a.m.– Ask the Attorney
Tuesday, May 19
9:00 a.m. – SHINE Appointments
Wednesday, May 20
10:30 a.m.– National Grid Customer

tomor Care Event
Thursday, May 21
1:30 p.m. – Big BINGO
Monday, May 25
Closed – Memorial Day
Tuesday, May 26
11:00 a.m. – Blood Pressure Clinic
Wednesday, May 27
11:30 a.m. – Pop-Up Library
Thursday, May 28
1:30 p.m. – Movie: *Viva Las Vegas*
Friday, May 29
12:00 p.m. – Birthday Celebration

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Transportation requires 48-hour notice
Many programs require RSVP
Lunch reservations recommended for event days
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TALES FROM BEYOND

tomdagostino.com

Reuben Jenckes's Black Horse Tavern Ghost

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

This is an old ghost story dating back a few centuries. It is typical of the romantic tales of haunted places that Rhode Island has become famous for. This account has been told and retold in several antiquated tomes. A tavern called the Black Horse once stood in the middle of Scituate Village in Rhode Island. A man named Reuben Jenckes

owned the establishment and was cordial to all who entered its door, whether it was food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty or lodging for the weary.

As the story goes, the ghost of a Narragansett Indian haunted the building out of embarrassment for an event that took place many years before while he was alive and visiting the hostelry. Some claim he

also haunted the Black Horse Tavern because he preferred the nearby Pine Tree Tavern in life and wanted the business to migrate there.

The ghost haunted the family in the form of strange dreams. He would be seen by various family members in their dreams, pointing to someplace on the property before slowly walking toward where he was pointing. The vi-

sion was often followed by some sort of horrific nightmare.

One of the main recipients of the ghostly dreams was Reuben Jenckes's daughter, Lucy. He often appeared to her while she slept, pointing toward the carriage house. In her dream, she would be

compelled to follow him, but he would either vanish before reaching the destination of his quest, or she would suddenly wake up.

One night, she saw the man in her dreams, but this time, she did not wake up and could follow him as he moved toward the carriage house, with each turn, pointing the way. The ghost led Lucy Jenckes to a loft in the carriage house where a coffin lay in the rafters. The next day, Lucy ventured into the loft where she spied the coffin she had been led to in her nightly vigil. She slowly ambled, towed the box, and opened it. Inside she found a dressmaker's doll with its hair cut off. That is when an old tale came to light.

It is rumored that the Indian tried to scalp the doll in a drunken state, thinking it was a rude person who would not return his conversation. Thoroughly embarrassed by the act, the Narragansett chose to take his business down the road to the Pine Tree Tavern. The next night, the ghost requested that she remove the doll from the crime

scene. She removed the doll, and the haunting supposedly ceased. Guests of the tavern still insisted the man was making his presence known, as many were jolted out of sound sleep in the night by frightening war cries. Some claimed to be pulled out of bed by the hair.

The tavern was used as a meeting house and local social place. The second floor held ample amounts of revelers until all hours of the night. There were other tavern owners, so the exact timeline of the haunting is unclear in records but is said to have taken place before the 19th century.

Deeds to such small towns with farming origins can become quite vague. What is clear is that licenses, which read for "Tavern, Ale, and Victualing House," were handed out to early settlers like the Potters, Manchesters, Smiths, and Hopkins in the mid-18th century. Reuben Jenckes probably owned the Black Horse after 1800.

The structure is no longer a tavern, and various owners have experienced some strange occurrences or nothing. Whether the ghost still wanders the confines of the structure is a matter of conjecture. The building has long been renovated and sits on the corner of Danielson Pike and Route 116 (East Road)

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SPORTS

A Look at Uxbridge Girls Tennis

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTSWRITER

Last year the Uxbridge girls tennis team went 10-8 during the regular season finding their way into the Division 4 State Tournament where they defeated Leicester in the first round. Unfortunately, the Spartans then had to head to Lynnfield to play the number one seed where they found themselves in a tough matchup and soon after taking to the court their season was over.

With a good amount of last year's squad returning to the courts this spring Uxbridge finds themselves in a good situation to go deeper into the tournament this year. Although the team has

one individual tennis player that jumps off the page, the

Spartans, as a team are bound for good things this season.

"I knew we had a lot of returning players coming back this year and that they would be competitive," Uxbridge

Coach Carlos Melgar-Petrain said. "Those underclassmen were able to get the fundamentals down last year and should be able to put them to good use this season."

Uxbridge, like many teams and sports, changed divisions this year with the MIAA's new alignment. Having played in the Southern Worcester County League (SWCL) in the past years Uxbridge sports was moved over to the Central Massachusetts Conference (CMAC) this year, where Melgar-Petrain believes that if his squad continues to win the games that they should while being competitive in the rest they will be ok come the end of the season.

At the time of this writing, the Spartan girls found themselves sitting in second place in the CMAC with an impressive 5-1 record. The major reason the Spartans are doing so well is their two top doubles teams that are a combined 11-0.

The first doubles team of senior Niamh McSweeney and junior Jordan Hilgenberg are 5-0 on the court. McSweeney, who is relatively new to the game of tennis brings a reserved feeling to the tennis court. Her partner, who like McSweeney,



brings athletics and a willingness to learn to the game complements one another. According to the coach, Hilgenberg pumps up McSweeney and McSweeney calms Hilgenberg down when she is too hyped up.

The sophomore tandem of Avery Woods and Zooey Pominville currently have posted a 6-0 record at the second doubles position. Both are athletes that participate in other sports as well as tennis. Woods plays on the field hockey team while Pominville is a basket-

ball player, but both are athletic and very much sports oriented. In the past the duo has seen the occasional playing time on the singles circuit, but this year they are true doubles team.

players that bring an athletic mindset to the game. Off the court the two are good friends, but on the court they are showing it to the rest of the league that they are a force to be reckoned with.

While the doubles squads are leading the team, the singles players are all holding their own, help-

ing the Spartans to where they are today. Senior Erin Roche, a second team SWCL All-Star last year, is playing in the top singles position. She took over the position late in the season last year and through the early part of this season has put together a 2-3 record.

"Erin was our second singles last year but was itching to get into that number one position," the coach said. "She challenged the then number one player and took over that spot. This year she has been better with her mindset on the court, while as a captain has been a leader off the court."

Right behind Roche is second singles player Sophia Simpson. The junior plays the sport more religiously throughout the year than most of her teammates and was named to the SWCL All-Star team last year as a doubles player. Prior to this season Simpson found herself on one of the last courts playing with a partner where, as a freshman, she made it to the finals ending as runners-up; last year

SPORTS

continued on page 19



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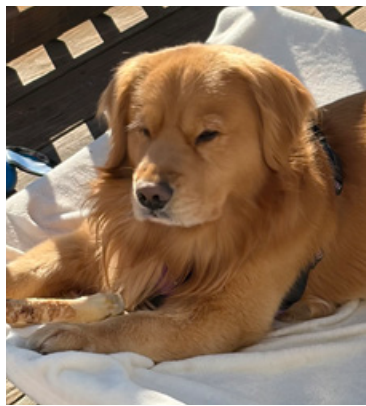
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LIVING WITH LUKE

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Luke, and the Shape of Everyday Love

a dog means sharing routines, space, and a steady companionship that gradually weaves itself into the structure of daily life. Over time, their presence stops feeling separate and starts to feel essential.

makes the absence disorienting. Not greater than other losses, but different - like something foundational has shifted. The grief reflects the bond. And the bond is worth understanding.

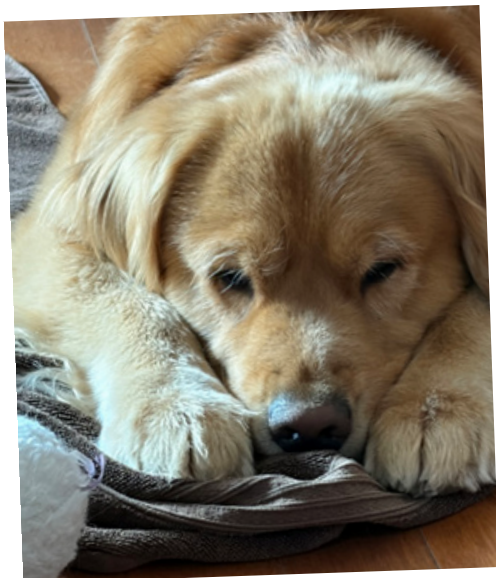
Living with Luke has given me a few answers.

BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

That depth of connection

Dog people share an unspoken understanding. The early mornings, the muddy floors, the constant responsibility - none of it feels like a burden once you've known the joy. We scroll through endless photos not out of boredom, but because each one captures a personality we feel lucky to witness. To those outside this quiet club, the devotion can seem excessive—confusing, even. Why invest so much emotion in an animal?

What binds us isn't just affection. It's the depth of connection. Living with



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The only thing I must prove to Luke is that I'm alive, present, and walking through the door. He isn't concerned with my accomplishments or failures. If anything, he seems to prefer me undone - no makeup, salt on my skin after long days teaching cardio dance classes.

Nothing compares to the greeting I receive when I come home.

Mom! You're back!

I collapse to the floor as Luke spirals around me in joy, performing what I've come to call "The Happy Dance." His excitement is so pure it feels medici-



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nal, dissolving the weight of an eight-class week. I laugh despite myself. Sometimes he laps at my ears until the tickling becomes unbearable, and my laughter only encourages him further. We meet each other there—in a moment that asks nothing and gives everything.

Happy Habits

Luke also reminds me, quietly and persistently, how to live well. He seeks sunlight. He wants to be outside - walking, wander-

ing, simply existing in the day. Thunderstorms aside, he doesn't waste energy on what he can't control. He doesn't hold grudges. He gravitates toward warmth - toward people, toward connection.

He has his own sense of duty, too. Ever watchful, he monitors the neighborhood with the seriousness of a seasoned guard.

Woo woo woo! Mom, I'm not trying to alarm you, but that van driver is definitely looney.

His instincts may be exaggerated, but his intention is not. He cares about his surroundings. He participates in life fully.

Quirky Routines

Dogs are masters of presence. They show up the same way every day—fully, faithfully, without hesitation.

Luke, one fine example, appears in the laundry room, nose first.

Hi Mom. You missed something.

Before I can intervene, he's trotting proudly through the kitchen, a pair of underwear dangling from his mouth like a



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LUKE

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SPORTS

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they were eliminated in the Quarter Finals. She has had no issue whatsoever moving from playing with a partner to being on her own this year and has put together a 3-3 record so far.

Rounding out the starters is senior Sophia Freire playing third singles for the Spartans this spring. When she first joined the team she found herself playing second double; last year she moved into third singles, where she continues to play this year and has amassed a 4-2 record.

"Sophia is one that likes to go out and have fun," Melgar-Petrain

said. "She loves playing at third singles because there is no real pressure on her there and is good in that spot."

As the Uxbridge coach, Melgar-Petrain has basically lets the girls figure it out while on the court and what needs to be done in certain situations.

"I can't tell them what to do while they are on the courts. I am not out there with them, and they need to decide what to do in the moment," he said. "I am lucky to have a multitude of sport athletes. I just have to teach them tennis and they're all sponges absorbing the knowledge."

With two-thirds of the season still on the docket Melgar-Petrain knows that his team has some

tough matches ahead of them where they will be playing top tier teams, but he is very optimistic with the way his girls will play.

"As we progress into the second half of the season the girls know what they are up against and how to play it out," the Spartan coach said. "We need to stay mentally and physically fit and we'll have a good chance of getting a high seed in the power rankings as we enter the tournament."

If Uxbridge can continue to hold their own, especially against the top teams they will find themselves with a decent seeding in the State Tournament and should be able to make some noise.

LUKE

continued from page 18



trophy. Ridiculous, yes - but dependable. He is as much a part of my daily rhythm as the sunrise.

In quieter moments, his presence softens. When I settle onto the couch, he waits.

Hi. It's just me. I was wondering if you might consider snuggling.

He doesn't jump or demand. He sits, steady and patient, making his case with nothing but eye contact. I give in. How could I possibly say no to the bear cub resting at my feet? He climbs up and rests his head on my chest, heavy and warm. I pet him

gently, aware of something I try not to dwell on too often: time moves differently for him.

Every moment, then, feels a little more significant.

Living with a dog doesn't just add something to your life - it rearranges it. Not loudly, not all at once, but in small, steady ways that become impossible to ignore. And maybe that's the answer. It's not that we invest too much in them. It's that they show us, every day, what it looks like to give without measuring, to stay without question, and to love without condition.

Write to Amy - amyleclaire@hotmail.com

Visit Luke on IG livingwithluke-valentino

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THE CAR DOCTOR

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Clearing Up the Backup Camera

Q. My question concerns my 2016 Mazda6 backup camera. It is just not as bright as it once was. I have tried cleaning it with a Zeiss lens wipe and increased the brightness setting to max, but little has changed. Any thoughts on other steps I can take?

A. The first step is to check for any wiring or connection issues. Try gently moving the wiring or even tapping on the trunk lid to see if the image changes—if the camera flickers, that can point to a wiring concern. Also inspect the lens closely; over time, it can become hazy or pitted,

which reduces image quality. If there is no change, the camera itself may be nearing the end of its service life. It's not uncommon for backup cameras to degrade after eight - ten years due to moisture intrusion or sensor wear. A replacement camera from Mazda can be costly—around \$500-\$600 plus labor—so you may also want to consider a quality aftermarket option.

Q. I have a 2023 BMW 330 xDrive coming off lease in three months. I would like your insight on whether to buy it out for \$28,000 plus tax or start

a new lease. The interesting part is that by then the car will have only 3,000 miles. There is also the option of buying a BMW extended warranty.

A. Based on the numbers, you would likely be getting a very good deal by purchasing your BMW. At the time of writing, wholesale (trade-in) values appear to be in the \$30,000-\$33,000 range, while private sale values could be in the \$32,000-\$35,000 range, depending on condition and market demand. With such low mileage, keeping the car makes a lot of sense—especially if you're satisfied with it. As the factory warranty will expire in a few years, a BMW extended warranty is worth considering for peace of mind, given the potential cost of repairs.

Q. I see you mention Harbor Freight tools and equipment from time to time. Are the Icon brand tools as good as the "tool-truck" tools?

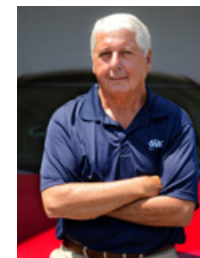
A. There is a lot of debate on this topic. I recently purchased four Icon 10-mil-

limeter sockets (two 1/4-inch drive and two 3/8-inch drive) for about \$10 total. By comparison, a single 3/8-inch drive deep socket from a tool-truck brand can cost \$20 or more. Considering how commonly 10mm sockets are used and misplaced, the value is hard to ignore. While tool-truck brands may still have an edge in finish and long-term durability, the Icon line offers very good quality for the price and is a solid choice for many users.

Q. My 2016 Toyota 4Runner seems to go through brakes at a rapid pace. I am not an aggressive driver—I tend to slow down gradually and avoid hard braking whenever possible. However, at 99,000 miles I have replaced the brakes and rotors at least four times and calipers three times. Right now the brakes vibrate at highway speeds, and I am taking it in again for service. It has been suggested that the parts my local garage uses may be inferior. (This last issue began after an emergency stop to avoid a collision.) Can you recommend high-quality parts so I don't feel like I'm replacing brakes every time I get gas?

A. Akebono makes excellent-quality brake components, and OEM Toyota parts are also very reliable. I have also had good results with PowerStop brake components, which offer coated rotors that help resist rust buildup. That said, the frequency of your repairs suggests something beyond just parts quality. In many cases, repeated brake issues are caused by improper installation, combined

with sticking caliper slide pins or seized caliper pistons. Brake vibration is often the result of uneven or excessive wheel lug torque, or rust and debris on the hub surface that prevent the rotor from mounting evenly. This can lead to what feels like "warped" rotors. Proper cleaning of the hub and correct torque using a torque wrench are critical. It would be worth discussing installation procedures with your shop or seeking a second opinion.



BY JOHN PAUL

Q. My 2019 Toyota Avalon warranty is over in August. Do car dealers accept service contracts from companies like CarShield and Endurance? I typically go to the dealer for maintenance. Is there a warranty company you would recommend?

A. This is always a difficult question. Keep in mind that extended warranties—more accurately called service contracts—cover repairs, not routine maintenance. Many dealerships will accept third-party service contracts, but coverage and ease of claims can vary widely. If you're considering additional coverage, it's often safest to go with a manufacturer-backed plan or

CAR DOCTOR
continued on page 21



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REAL ESTATE

Three Things That Are Not Going to Happen in Today's Housing Market



There's a lot of uncertainty right now and that's leading to some dramatic headlines. If you're thinking about buying a home, that



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

can make you feel a little less sure about your decision. A recent study by CNBC asked homebuyers what they're most worried about, and three themes kept coming up again and again: mortgage rates, the number of homes for sale and home prices.

But a lot of what you may be hearing on those is based more on misconceptions and not facts. So, let's break it down and separate fact from fiction.

Misconception #1: "I'll Just Wait, Because Mortgage Rates Are Going to Fall Dramatically"

One idea making the rounds on social is that mortgage rates are going to drop dramatically soon. So, it's better to wait to buy. But is that really what's expected? While

mortgage rates have come down a bit in the last few weeks, forecasts don't show a major drop ahead. The most likely scenario is that rates stay somewhere in the low 6 percent range this year. That's not a big change from where rates are now. Of course, this depends on where inflation and the economy go from here. But, based on what we know today, waiting for a big drop in rates may not work out the way some people hope. Not to mention, even with rates where they are today, it's already more affordable than a year ago. So, even if they don't change much, it's still better than it was.

Misconception #2: "There Are Too Many Homes for Sale Right Now"

You've probably heard inventory is up, and nationally, it is. The number of homes for sale is 8 percent higher than this time last year. But that's not a bad thing. In fact, it's one of the reasons buyers have a bit more breathing room right now. The problem is, the headlines are making something good, sound bad. They're focusing on how this is the most inventory we've had since 2019 or how many homes builders are building. That can make it sound like the number of homes for sale is rising too far, too

fast. But that's not what the bigger picture shows. Data from Realtor.com proves that, even though inventory is up compared to last year, it's still nearly 14 percent lower than it was during the last normal housing market (2017-2019). While it can vary a lot based on where you live, only nine states have more inventory than pre-pandemic today. That's a key reason why there still aren't enough homes for sale to trigger something like the crash back in 2008.

Misconception #3: "Home Prices Are About to Crash"

You've probably seen this one, too. The confusion comes from the fact that some metros are experiencing slight price declines. Influencers are running with that and saying prices are crashing but that's not the reality. Most areas are seeing prices rise, not fall and that's because many homeowners aren't selling because they don't want to give up the low mortgage rate they locked in a few years ago. That is limiting on how much inventory can grow. Since inventory is still below pre-pandemic norms, there aren't enough homes for sale to cause a price crash. Even in markets with more inventory, some sellers are choosing to pull their homes off the market instead

of cutting prices. Those are three big reasons prices aren't headed for a crash. Even in the markets experiencing mild declines, the price drops aren't enough to cancel out the big gains most homeowners have seen in the last five years. That's not a crash, it's just prices

moderating after a few record-breaking years.

Online posts are going to make things sound worse than they are. If you want a true, factual look at what's really happening in today's market, contact The Marzeotti Group or a trusted REALTOR.

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CAR DOCTOR

continued from page 20

one offered through a reputable organization such as AAA. Over the years, many aftermarket warranty companies have come and gone, sometimes leaving customers without coverage, so it's important to choose carefully and read the fine print.

My neighbor showed me pictures of his family's Rolls-Royce, which he claims was made in Springfield, Massachusetts. When I did some research, it looked like New Eng-

land was once an automotive hub. What happened?

Yes, there were once dozens of vehicle manufacturers in New England, particularly in the early 1900s. Some produced thousands of vehicles, while others built only a handful. The industry changed dramatically over time, especially during and after the Great Depression. There wasn't a single cause for the decline—it was a combination of factors such as labor costs, access to materials, supplier networks, and increasing competition from larger manufacturers in other regions. For example, General Mo-

tors closed its Framingham, Massachusetts plant in 1989. Today, companies like Factory Five Racing in Wareham, Massachusetts are among the few remaining low-volume manufacturers in the region. Events such as the Bay State Motor Festival in Framingham help showcase the area's rich automotive history, including brands like Knox, Stanley Steamer, and Indian Motorcycle.

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

SATURDAY, MAY 9

• Volunteer Work Session, Waters Farm, 53 Waters Road, West Sutton.

• The Friends of Charlton Public Library will hold a Book Sale on Saturday, May 9, from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in Dexter Hall, second floor inside the Charlton Public Library. Current members in good standing are invited to a



preview on Friday, May 8 from noon to 4:30 p.m. Donations of cash, check, and Venmo will be accepted during the sale.

SUNDAY, MAY 10

Antique Tractor Pull Competition at Waters Farm, 53 Waters Road, West Sutton. Registration for tractor owners starts at 9 a.m. The pull competition starts at 10 a.m. and ends when the last tractor pulls the heaviest load over the finish line. Free.

THURSDAY, MAY 14

• Time to stock up on summer books for your summer reading! The Friends of the Gladys E. Kelly Library, 2 Lake Street, Webster, are holding a book sale from 9 a.m. – 8 p.m. The sale will also run on Friday, May 15 from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. and Saturday, May 16 from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

You will find a wonderful selection of adult and children's books, paperback \$.50, hard copy \$1, coffee table books \$5 and a bag of books for only \$5. Also for sale: games, jigsaw puzzles, CDs and DVDs.

FRIDAY, MAY 15

• Booklovers' Gourmet, located at 72 East Main Street in Webster, is hosting "Fins and Feathers", a small works show of paintings by local artist Linda Littleton in its cafe

gallery May 1-30. The works will include watercolors, prints and acrylics of some of our favorite feathered friends and fish and may be viewed during normal business hours: Tuesday-Saturday 10 a.m.- 5 p.m., Wednesday 10 a.m.- 6 p.m. The public is invited to a meet the artist reception with light refreshments on Friday, May 15, 5-7 p.m. For more information call 508-949-6232.

SATURDAY, MAY 16

• The 11th Annual Family Fun Fishing Day at River Ben Farm, 287 Oak Street, Uxbridge will be held from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. with a rain date on Sunday. Fishing will take place until 1 p.m. with awards at 1:30 p.m. There will be activities for the whole family with food and ice cream available for purchase. All ages and ability levels are welcome. Fishing poles, bail and instruction will be available with pre-registration and participants are welcome to bring their own. Pre-registration will open on April 15 at openskycs.org/fishingday2026. This is a free event, but pre-registration is hosted by Open Sky Community Services and Blackstone River Watershed Association.

• Calling all Gardeners, Growers & Farmers to the 5th Annual Dudley Grows Together Plant Hop The Dudley Agricultural Advisory Commission is excited to announce the 5th Annual Dudley Grows Together Plant Hop, taking place on Saturday, May 16, 2026, from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM — rain or shine. The Plant Hop is a community event that gives local Dudley farmers and gardeners the opportunity to sell vegetable and flower seedlings directly from their homes or growing locations throughout Dudley. A map of participating locations will be created and distributed by the Commission so visitors from Dudley and surrounding com-

munities can easily travel from stop to stop to shop for locally grown plants. New this year, the Agricultural Advisory Commission seeks Dudley residents who are interested in participating as plant sellers. Gardeners are welcome to sell vegetable or flower seedlings and plants (please note cannabis and hemp plants are not permitted). Residents who would like to participate should sign up by emailing ameradaholsteins@charter.net or LLorkiewicz@dudleyma.gov so their location can be included on the official event map. The deadline to sign up as a seller is Monday, April 20, 2026.

• Saint Peter's Parish in Northbridge is having an Italian Chicken Dinner on Saturday, May 16th starting at 5:30 pm in the parish hall. Bring you family and friends for a wonderful meal and meet some new friends. Tickets are \$17 per dinner and include salad and dessert. To go meals will be available for pick up at 5:00pm. All orders must be purchased in advance by Tuesday, May 12th. Please call 508-234-2156 or email the parish office: parishoffice@stpeterrockdale.org for tickets.

SUNDAY, MAY 17

• The Friends of the Auburn Public Library cordially invite you to Afternoon Tea, a fundraiser, 1- 4 pm at the Pakachoag Center, 203 Pakachoag St. Auburn. Featured guest speaker Lewis Alderton, Beekeeper. Menu: A delicious assortment of finger sandwiches, savory delights, sweet treats and tea. \$30 per person in advance (cash, check, PayPal). Space is limited, please reserve your seat. Email friendsofauburn-plibrary@gmail.com to reserve a seat, for payment methods, or a brochure. Brochures are also available in the lobby of the Auburn Public Library.

THURSDAY, MAY 21

• The Metacomet Land Trust will hold its annual meeting on Thursday, May 21, 2026 starting at 6:30 pm with a business meeting and the presentation of Community Spirit awards at the Sutton High School auditorium at 383 Boston Road in Sutton. This will be followed at 7 pm by our guest speaker, Stefanie Covino. Covino is the Executive Director of the Blackstone Watershed Collaborative and she will discuss the importance of our land and water nexus. She will describe how the work of the Collaborative and Metacomet Land Trust is critical to the overall health of the communities where Metacomet works including Bellingham, Blackstone, Douglas, Franklin, Hopedale, Mendon, Millbury, Millville, Northbridge, Sutton, Upton, Uxbridge and Wrentham in south Central Massachusetts. We will also play a quick round of watershed trivia! Please join us as we all strive to know our watershed better. For more information, go to Metacomet-LandTrust.org.

• The Douglas Open Space Committee invites Douglas landowners to attend an informational session on how to protect their fields and forests. The event will be held on Thursday, May 21 at 6 pm at the Douglas Municipal Center at 29 Depot Street in the Resource Room. A MassWoods land preservation webinar will be shown and Lisa Mosczynski, President of the area's regional Metacomet Land Trust, will provide additional information and answer questions. Excellent permanent protection is available to landowners and can offer property tax reduction or elimination, be tailored to specific needs such as including a building envelope

HAPPENINGS!

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May 2026 Interpretive Programming at the Blackstone River Greenway Visitor Center at Worcester

All programs are free and open to the public. Registration is not required. Appropriate for ages 12 and up. An adult must accompany all children. Please wear appropriate footwear. Bathrooms and water are not available unless otherwise stated. Bringing bug spray is encouraged. Programming is subject to change or cancellation. For the most up to date programming information, call (774) 670-2200.

Reasonable accommodations available upon advance notice. To make a request, please contact Moneesha Dasgupta at (617) 645-0358 or moneesha.dasgupta2@mass.gov.

The Blackstone River Greenway Visitor Center at Worcester is currently closed due to winter storm damage. Interpretive programming is still occurring on the Blackstone Greenway. All programs begin at Parking Lot C,

205 North Main Street, Millbury.

Woodlands and Waterways Tour

Saturdays, 2 – 3 p.m.

Walk along the banks of the Blackstone River and learn about the life that it supports. We'll look for signs of wildlife as we discuss the ways we keep our watershed clean! Appropriate for ages 12 and up. The walk is ~1 mile over a paved surface with very slight inclines. Meet at Lot C

(205 North Main Street, Millbury, MA). Bathrooms and water are not available at this site.

Bike the Blackstone

Saturdays May 2, 16, and 30, 10 – 11 a.m.

Come with us on a bike ride down the Blackstone River Greenway. Enjoy the scenery and look out for wildlife as we ride along the river. Appropriate for ages 12 and up. The ride is ~6 miles over a paved surface with

slight inclines and declines. All riders 16 and under must wear a helmet. Meet at Lot C (205 North Main Street, Millbury, MA). Water is available at the midpoint of the trip, bathrooms are not available.

HAPPENINGS!

continued from page 22

for future generations and offer peace of mind for estate planning. Permanent protection also has great public benefits including watershed protection, habitat preservation for flora and fauna and permanent protection for our farmland through agricultural preservation restrictions. Come find out more! For more information email opensepace@douglas-ma.gov.

SATURDAY, MAY 23

• Second Annual Event! Free Kids' Clothing giveaway and Family Fun Day. Valley Chapel is hosting a fun day out for the family. From 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. at the Youth Center, 130 Douglas Road, Uxbridge.

MONDAY, MAY 25

• Parade Grand Marshal James Sundstrom will lead the Webster Memorial Day Parade. Schedule of Events for Memorial Day 6:30 a.m. Start at Veterans Home, Webster. 7:25 a.m. - 8:10 a.m. Cemetery visits in Dudley (Corbin, Village, Town Common). 9 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. Services at Dudley Town Hall, Calvary, St. Joseph, Sacred Heart, and Mt. Zion cemeteries.

11 a.m. Main Parade starts (Route 12/ Worcester Road to Webster Town Hall). 12:15 p.m. Urbanowski Memorial by the PAV Club.

JUNE 2

• BVT Band & Choir host concert at 7:30 p.m. in the Competition Center at BVT, 5 Pleasant Street, Upton. The music program at Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT) Conducted by Dr. Colton Cox, students will showcase their musical talents in a dynamic performance. The ensembles will perform a diverse selection of music spanning genres from folk and classical to pop and movie soundtracks and incorporate singing in multiple languages. This program is funded in part by grants from the Grafton, Northbridge and Upton Cultural Councils, local agencies which are supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency. Students, families and community members are invited to attend the free performance,

which is open to the public.

TUESDAY, JUNE 16

• Regional musician and Dan Kirouac will bring his successful and singer Dan Kirouac will bring his program THE MUSIC OF MCCARTNEY: The World's Most Successful Songwriter to the Oxford Free Public Library on Tuesday, June 16th at 6:00 PM. The program, delivered on piano and vocals, will explore the music of Paul McCartney from the Beatles years through Wings and into the 1980s, highlighted by informational commentary. Dan Kirouac is a 40-year veteran of the New England music scene, and has appeared in two long-term Beatles tribute bands from 2000 to 2022.

The program is free and open to the public. For more information, please call the library at (508) 987-6003. This program is sponsored by the Oxford Cultural Council, a local agency, which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

SATURDAY, JUNE 20

• Dudley's Town-wide Yard Sale! What better time for a yard sale than the end of spring-cleaning season? Office: 508-949-

8030 Mobile: 508-847-2206 The Dudley Recreation Commission has set its annual town-wide yard sale for 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. June 20, with a rain date of June 27. Residents are invited to set up and sell at their home or at the Dudley Town Hall where free 10x10-foot spaces are available in the parking lot on a first-come, first served basis. A site map, prepared by the Recreation Commission, will guide bargain hunters to the sale locations. Participants are encouraged to register for free by June 6 to be included in a map. The maps will be available for a \$3 donation at the Dudley Town Hall from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. To register, email recreation@dudleyma.gov with your name, address, phone and description of the items for sale, or stop by the Recreation Office at Town hall.

SATURDAY, JULY 18

• Northbridge Annual Fireworks Show. (Rain date July 19) Gates open at 5 p.m. Celebrate our nation's 250th birthday with an evening of music, activities, food and a spectacular fireworks display at Northbridge Middle School in Whitinsville.

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Saturday, June 13, 2026

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