



Finally Back on the Field

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTSWRITER

Growing up as an athlete who loves playing sports daily, to have it all taken away from you is more than devastating. Such was the case for Auburn's Elsa Smith, who has played soccer all her life, basketball a good part of it and had just begun playing lacrosse when everything came crashing down upon her.

During an eighth-grade basketball game Smith sustained a minor patella injury and was forced to miss a game or two. That minor muscle strain then started to bother the athlete increasingly and got progressively worse. However, she continued to participate in the sports that she loved.

As she entered Auburn High School, Smith suited up for the Rockets girls' soccer and basketball teams. Coming into the spring season she was looking for something to do and her guidance counselor, who was also the Auburn girls' Lacrosse coach, recruited her.

"I had considered joining the track team, but I am not crazy about running," she said. "So, I got a bunch of friends to go to the tryouts to see what lacrosse was all about. Almost immediately I fell in love with the atmosphere of the team and coaches - I decided to pick up a new sport."

While she was able to take part in all three sports her freshman campaign wasn't without pain. Fol-



Elsa Smith. Photo by Ayssa Gervasi

lowing the soccer season, she was at a lacrosse clinic doing a pivoting drill when she felt the pain increase.

Although she thought that she tweaked something in her knee she still didn't consider it major. The following day as she was running the stairs during practice, she felt the pain really spike. That weekend she found herself couch-ridden.

After not leaving the couch for two-plus days her mother decided that it was time to see her doctor, but nothing that could account for the pain was found and the three-sport athlete found herself totally discouraged.

"Over the next year and a half, I saw five or six different doctors and they all couldn't find anything wrong; they just told me to rest and ice it," Smith said. "It was very frustrating and I felt invalidated.

There were times that I couldn't walk and even had to take the elevator at school."

In addition to seeing all those doctors and getting no results, the once-active athlete was missing sports and being with her teammates.

"I tried not to think about it. Sports had been a big part of my life and not having it was very hard," she said. "Not playing for a month was crazy, but I couldn't imagine not ever playing any kind of sports ever again."

Despite the pain she continued to search out doctors. After visiting an orthopedic surgeon, she was referred to a nerve doctor who then referred her to the Pain

SMITH

continued on page 3

Oxford Planning Board Discusses Main Street Reconstruction Project

BY JANET STOICA
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

The board discussed the small parking island in front of the insurance agency near the CVS Pharmacy and how all the parking will be removed to the intersection of Sutton Avenue and Main Street. With the new Mass. Dept of Transportation (DOT) Project, it was mentioned that almost 10 parking spaces would be eliminated as well as three more slots on the opposite side of Main Street.

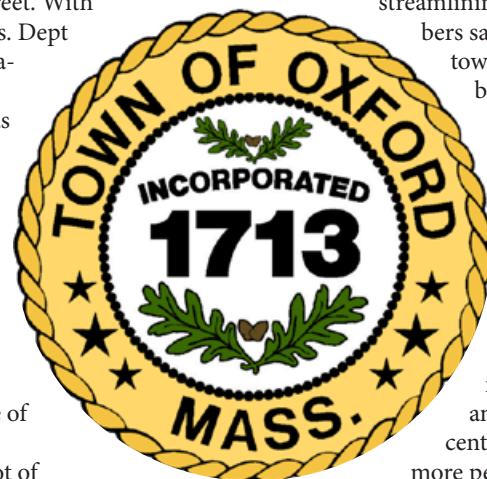
"That's a lot of parking spaces gone" it was noted. Town parking on the opposite side of the pharmacy lot was mentioned but it was also stated that half the downtown parking was being taken away and how it wouldn't be good for Main Street businesses. Planning Board

members said that the Main Street was booming on the weekends and the new Mass.DOT project would deter customers from visiting businesses. Extra parking spaces on Barton Street might be a positive however.

The Mass DOT's complete streets project is all about streamlining. Mem-

bers said that a town either builds a new parking lot or garage and the "Complete Streets" projects are about narrowing areas and concentrating on more pedestrian and multi-modal types

of transportation through the expense of parking at times. It was established that a letter should be sent to the Mass DOT explaining the loss of parking slots and the negative impact to local businesses in the downtown area.



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THE BUILDING AND PROPERTY MAINTENANCE INDUSTRY

Via Indeed and ZipRecruiter

- Property maintenance workers in Massachusetts earn an average salary of approximately \$46,700 to \$52,500 annually (\$22–\$25 per hour) as of early 2026, with top earners exceeding \$62,000–\$76,000. Pay varies based on experience and location, with higher wages found in cities like Boston (\$27+/hr) and Cambridge (\$28+/hr).
- Employment for general maintenance and repair workers projected to grow 4% from 2024 to 2034, adding roughly 159,800 annual openings

SMITH
continued from page 1

Cinic at Boston Children's Hospital for a consultation. After numerous months of seeing doctor who couldn't locate the source of the pain the Pain Clinic was able to do so in minutes. The diagnosis was Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) – a chronic neurological condition that causes an intense burning pain, usually in a limb after an injury. CRPS starts off small and eventually the pain becomes more intense and complex.

CRPS is widely considered one of the most painful chronic conditions known to medicine. It is often called the "suicide disease" due to its unrelenting pain. According to the McGill Pain Index it ranks high on their list ahead of childbirth, amputation and the pain associated with cancer.

"Everyone was so amazing at Boston Children's Hospital," Smith said. "I felt relieved and reinforced that the pain was real and it wouldn't be forever."

While there was optimism, there was also an eight-week program to go through at the hospital Monday through

Friday 8-4 where she would meet with medical doctors, physical occupational and recreational therapists. Originally the family would drive back and forth into Boston on a daily basis while spending the weekends at home, before finding an AirB&B and then a hospitality home to stay at.

"During this time, I missed my friends and the interaction at school," she said. "Coming home on the weekends I really didn't have time as I was exhausted and slept a lot."

As she continued to get better in Boston, Smith still had school work to complete. Working closely with her guidance counselor and teachers she tried to keep up to the best of her ability but still found herself with a good amount of work to catch up on when she eventually returned home.

Smith has now completed the eight-week program with Boston Children's Hospital and, according to the athlete, the pain has decreased considerably. There is some residual pain, but it is nothing like before. Doctors told her that the pain will continue to decrease over the next eight months although there is a chance it may never disappear completely.

After having missed four full seasons of sports Smith is glad to be able to once again put on the Rockets jersey and take to the field with

her lacrosse teammates this spring.

"It is so amazing to be back on the field. I was crying happy tears after playing in my first game, I had missed sports so much," she said. "Technically this is my first full varsity season and it's an adjustment. My body is not used to playing lacrosse and is still trying to figure things out."

Although back on the field and ready for action Smith feels that she has underperformed. She is, however, more than ecstatic to be back on the field. Recently she was able to net her first goal of the season.

As the season moves forward, Smith is looking to use her coping skills and strategies to improve her game while getting back to being herself on and off the field. She has been able to play the full game, but during timeouts and at the half she is doing stretching and exercises so that she is ready and able to continue.

As the junior competes for the Rockets lacrosse team she has begun to think about the future of her sports endeavors. Smith says she will be back on the lacrosse field next spring during her senior campaign and knows that she will not be playing basketball as she has not been as passionate about it since entering high school. Soccer is currently up in the air, but she is leaning more toward playing it next fall.



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Auburn BOH Holds Dangerous Dog Hearing

Inspection of 7 Coachman Lane Discussed

BY JANET STOICA
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

The Board of Health (BOH) listened to a report of a dangerous dog residing at 29 Cedar Street which was presented by Animal Inspector Tanya Corbo. Corbo reported to the board that the dog's owner, Justine Lavallee, is now in full compliance with the town's animal control regulations. The dog has since been licensed, the owner has paid all outstanding fines associated with the dog, and has updated the rabies vaccine as well as micro-chipped the animal. Corbo also reported that there were no reports from neighbors that the dog had been roaming the neighborhood and that the animal has been secured

in the yard.
"As far as we know and that the dog does have a basket muzzle when she leaves the property. In the meantime, it took multiple visits to get everything done [in compliance]. On one visit I went there with one of the town engineers to take a look at the property and the dog run," she said. Supposedly, the dog cannot be tethered. Corbo then presented a photo of a dog run to show the board. The dog run was measured to be approximately 170 feet to the neighbor's house and 208 feet on the edge. On Corbo's second visit to the property, she noted that the fence is possibly 12-feet high. It was also noted that Lavallee indicated that the price for the fencing was unaffordable. She also

stated that her house was now for sale.
Corbo also said that outside of the 10 x 10 concrete barriers, the owner was in compliance with their orders. Apparently, when the dog was clipped to the run it did not appear to get free of the collar. Board members raised questions about when local children are disembarking their school buses the run did not appear to be the best solution. The health board determined that the dog was secure in its present state.
The address of 7 Coachman Lane was then discussed regarding an occupant's phone call relating to mold and pest activity. The board conducted an emergency housing inspection on April 24 and found numerous housing

code violations. Property owner, Ryan Davison, was then contacted and a site visit on April 27 was arranged with him, the health board, and the Building Department. Davison then stated that he had purchased the property about a year ago with a lease arrangement. Since then, smoke and CO detectors were installed which the Auburn Fire Department deemed to be in compliance. A sewer leak was located, identified, and addressed. Other areas needing to be focused on include loose electrical connections, holes in the walls, light fixtures, HVAC work, and concern for mold remediation. Davison has indicated that due to occupant residency, it is a challenge to remedy the additional situations.

Adult Course in Building Maintenance

Bay Path Career Technical Institute for Adult Learners will offer a Building Maintenance training program from June 29 through July 31, 2026, providing hands-on instruction for individuals interested in entering the property maintenance field.
The program includes 150 hours of classroom instruction and 50 hours of online learning. Topics covered include basic plumbing,

electrical work, heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, facilities cleaning and sanitizing procedures, documentation and record keeping, drywall and window repair, patching holes and repairing fixtures, exterior maintenance, and tool and equipment usage.
Students will also have the opportunity to earn several industry-recognized credentials, including OSHA 10, OSHA Asbestos Aware-

ness, and OSHA Scaffolding Safety certifications.
Classes will be held Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Students are required to bring their own lunch.
In addition to technical training, the program offers career support services including one-on-one resume building, interview coaching, and access to an online job board tailored to enrolled students.

According to information provided by the program, property maintenance workers in Massachusetts earn an average annual salary between approximately \$46,700 and \$52,500, with higher wages available in cities such as Boston and Cambridge. Employment in the maintenance and repair field is projected to grow 4 percent from 2024 to 2034.

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SOUR GRAPES

by Tim Jones

Auburn Town Meeting Approves FY2027 Budget, Capital Projects

BY PATTY ROY
proy@YankeeXpress.com

Voters gathered for the Auburn Annual Town Meeting on May 5, where they approved the town's fiscal year 2027 budget, capital improvement projects, bylaw amendments, and several infrastructure-related articles following discussion on a variety of issues.

Town officials reported that the total FY27 appropriations amount to approximately \$91.8 million, including the operating budget, capital improvement plan, abatements, and additional warrant articles.

The Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School assessment to the town rose by some \$300,000 over last year due to an increase in the number of Auburn students attending the school combined with an increase in the state required foundation budget. Health insurance overall for the school jumped by 13.2 percent or \$1.2 million. A more than \$500,000

increase in retirement expenses is also anticipated.

The Auburn Public Schools budget was approved at \$33,968,107, an increase of \$1.28 million over the FY 26 budget. This is equal to a 3.93 percent increase over the FY26 appropriated budget.

One of the evening's major actions was approval of the town's five-year Capital Improvement Plan under Article 4 on the town meeting warrant. The plan includes projects for numerous departments, including police, fire, highway, engineering, schools, the library, senior services, parks, information technology, and Auburn Community Television. The FY27 capital program totals nearly \$5.8 million and will be funded through a combination of free cash, borrowing, retained earnings, stabilization funds, and other revenue sources.

During debate on the capital plan, town meeting voters also approved a measure requiring all over-the-road municipal vehicles to display "Property of the Town of Auburn" markings on both front door panels along with a permanently affixed town seal

before purchase.

Residents additionally approved \$550,000 for road improvements and \$30,000 for a new Town Hall access control system.

Under Article 16, voters approved \$25,000 for assessor's office training, inspections, professional services, and mandatory state compliance work. Another article appropriated \$27,000 from Free Cash to replace the roof at the town's historical museum.

Town meeting voters also approved amendments to general bylaws involving land disturbance and building permits. One amendment triples building permit fees when land-disturbing activity occurs before a permit is issued.

A controversial citizen petition concerning rent control for mobile home parks generated extensive public testimony before being postponed.

Voters further approved measures involving the Potter Farm Estates development, including removal of a \$100,000 bond requirement and acceptance of several subdivision roads.

During the meeting, the town recognized the retirement of

Superintendent Dr. Chamberlain and the departure of School Committee Chairman Jess Harrington.

Voters also fixed salaries for elected officials for FY27, including compensation for the moderator, Select Board members, and

town clerk.

The meeting nearly ended before the final warrant article was addressed after a motion to dissolve was introduced, but voters ultimately chose to continue and complete the warrant.



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AUGUST 15 • 1PM

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Pure Prairie League
AUGUST 23 • 1PM

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Auburn Public Library — June 2026 Calendar

MONDAY, JUNE 1
1:30–2:15 p.m. — Preschool Storytime with Miss Caitlin (ages 3–6)
4–4:45 p.m. — Lego Club
6–7 p.m. — Ted Reinstein: “Greetings from Breed’s Hill: Fact & Folklore on America’s 250th” (ages 16+)

TUESDAY, JUNE 2
10–10:45 a.m. — Baby-Toddler Storytime with Miss Caitlin (ages 0–3)
2–3 p.m. — Room Booked
3:30–4:30 p.m. — Kids Crafternoon
5:30–7:30 p.m. — Knitting Group
6–7 p.m. — Teen Crafting (Grades 6–12)

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3
10–10:45 a.m. — Baby-Toddler Storytime with Miss Andrea (ages 0–3)
11–11:45 a.m. — Alphabits (ages 3–6)
2–3 p.m. — Virtual Author Talks: Best State Fair Crafts with Smithsonian Curator Mary Savig
2:30–4 p.m. — Teen Volunteers (Grades 7–12)
6–7 p.m. — Adult Crafting Hour

THURSDAY, JUNE 4
1:30–2:15 p.m. — Young Scientists with STEM BEGINNINGS (ages 3–6)
6–7 p.m. — Auburn Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting

SUNDAY, JUNE 7
Library Closed

MONDAY, JUNE 8
1:30–2:15 p.m. — Preschool Storytime with Miss Caitlin (ages 3–6)
4–4:45 p.m. — Lego Club
5:30–6:30 p.m. — Book Club

TUESDAY, JUNE 9
10–10:45 a.m. — Baby-Toddler Storytime with Miss Caitlin (ages 0–3)
2–3 p.m. — Room Booked
3:30–4:30 p.m. — Kids Crafternoon
5:30–7:30 p.m. — Knitting Group
6–7 p.m. — Teen Crafting (Grades 6–12)

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10
10–10:45 a.m. — Baby-Toddler Storytime with Miss Andrea (ages 0–3)
11–11:45 a.m. — Alphabits (ages 3–6)
2:30–4 p.m. — Teen Volunteers (Grades 7–12)
5–5:45 p.m. — Children’s Book Club (4th & 5th Grade)
6–7 p.m. — Adult Crafting Hour

THURSDAY, JUNE 11
3–5 p.m. — Dungeons & Dragons (Grades 8–12)
7–8 p.m. — Virtual Author Talks: “Apocalyptic Mayhem, Lava-Spitting Llamas, and One Very Sassy Cat”

SUNDAY, JUNE 14
Library Closed

MONDAY, JUNE 15
4–4:45 p.m. — Lego Club

TUESDAY, JUNE 16
10–10:45 a.m. — Baby-Toddler Storytime with Miss Caitlin (ages 0–3)

2–3 p.m. — Room Booked
3:30–4:30 p.m. — Kids Crafternoon
5:30–7:30 p.m. — Knitting Group
6–7 p.m. — Teen Crafting (Grades 6–12)

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17
10–10:45 a.m. — Baby-Toddler Storytime with Miss Andrea (ages 0–3)
11–11:45 a.m. — Alphabits (ages 3–6)
5–5:45 p.m. — Children’s Book Club (2nd & 3rd Grade)
6–7 p.m. — Adult Crafting Hour
Thursday, June 18
2–3 p.m. — Virtual Author Talks: “Nurturing Future Generations: Stories from the Heart of Grandfatherhood”
6–7 p.m. — Unusual Oddities in Auburn’s History (ages 18+)

FRIDAY, JUNE 19
Library Closed (Juneteenth)

SUNDAY, JUNE 21
Library Closed

MONDAY, JUNE 22
4–4:45 p.m. — Lego Club
5:30–6:30 p.m. — Friends Meeting

TUESDAY, JUNE 23
10–10:45 a.m. — Baby-Toddler Storytime with Miss Caitlin (ages 0–3)
2–3 p.m. — Virtual Author Talks: “Simple, Sustainable, and Powerfully Delicious Meals”
2–3 p.m. — Room Booked
3:30–4:30 p.m. — Kids Crafternoon
5:30–7:30 p.m. — Knitting Group
6–7 p.m. — Teen Crafting (Grades 6–12)

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24
10–10:45 a.m. — Baby-Toddler Storytime with Miss Andrea (ages 0–3)
11–11:45 a.m. — Alphabits (ages 3–6)
6–7 p.m. — Adult Crafting Hour

THURSDAY, JUNE 25
10–11 a.m. — Tom Knight Musical Puppet Show: “Movin’ on Up!”
3–5 p.m. — Dungeons & Dragons (Grades 8–12)

FRIDAY, JUNE 26
10:30–11:30 a.m. — Drawing Funny Ocean Animals with Cartoonist Rick Stromoski (ages 7–14)

SUNDAY, JUNE 28
Library Closed

MONDAY, JUNE 29
10–10:45 a.m. — Session 1: Arthropod Petting Zoo with Professor Bugman (ages 3–12)
11–11:45 a.m. — Session 2: Arthropod Petting Zoo with Professor Bugman (ages 3–12)
4–4:45 p.m. — Lego Club

TUESDAY, JUNE 30
10:30–11:15 a.m. — Children’s Concert with Rock-a-bye Beats
2–3 p.m. — Room Booked
3:30–4:30 p.m. — Kids Crafternoon
5:30–7:30 p.m. — Knitting Group
6–7 p.m. — Teen Crafting (Grades 6–12)

Express Etiquette: Making Everyday Interactions Better

Etiquette & Leadership Coach helping people show up with confidence, kindness, and credibility.

BY LEE-ANN BARKHOUSE

Etiquette Express: Interview Skills in Today's Job Market

It is that time of year when resumes are getting dusted off. High school and college students are searching for summer jobs and internships. Others may be considering a career change or reentering the workforce after being downsized. No matter where you are in your career journey, interviewing today can feel a little intimidating.

The workplace has changed. Many first interviews are now virtual, employers are moving quickly, and artificial intelligence has entered the conversation. The question many people are asking is: how do I stand out while still sounding genuine and professional?

Here are a few common questions I have been hearing lately:

Q. Is it okay to use AI tools like ChatGPT to help with resumes or interview preparation?

A. Yes, absolutely, if used thoughtfully. AI can be helpful for organizing ideas, improving wording, or practicing interview questions. Just make sure your resume and responses still sound like you. Employers are looking for authenticity, personality, and communication skills, not something that feels overly polished or scripted.

Q. Is it unprofessional to take a virtual interview from your car or a public space?

A. Sometimes life happens and schedules can be challenging. However, whenever possible, choose a quiet location where you can focus and present yourself professionally. Good lighting, limited distractions, and being

fully present during the conversation still matter, even through a screen.

Q. Does eye contact matter during a virtual interview?

A. It does. Looking into the camera occasionally helps create connection and confidence. It shows attentiveness and engagement. Small things like posture, listening carefully, smiling naturally, and avoiding multitasking can leave a lasting impression.

One of the best pieces of interview advice I can offer is simple: practice, however do not over-rehearse. Think through your experiences and accomplishments ahead of time so you feel prepared and confident. Listen carefully to each question, pause before responding, and allow your personality to come through naturally.

Technology may continue to change the hiring process, however professionalism, kindness, confidence, and genuine conversation never go out of style.

Etiquette Tip of the Month

In a world of quick replies, multitasking, and constant notifications, one of the most professional things you can do is simply be present.

Whether you are interviewing for a first job, changing careers, or networking with others, listen carefully, pause before responding, and give the conversation your full attention. People may forget exactly what you said, however they will remember how you made them feel. Genuine connection, confidence, and kindness still stand out in every room and on every screen.

Keep showing up as your best self,

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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Resident Lodges Procedural Complaint about Town Meeting

BY JANET STOICA
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

At the Select Board's meeting on May 11, resident Alan Rafferty presented his views on alleged procedural violations during the May 5 town meeting. Rafferty cited Town Moderator Doreen Goodrich for designating Assistant Town Moderator Charles Baker to take her place for the Article 26 Rent Control Vote.

Rafferty stated "Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) Chapter 39 Section 14 requires that when an elected moderator cannot act, a temporary moderator may be elected." He stressed the word "elected" as it pertained to being elected at the town meeting and not being designated by the town moderator stepping aside. Rafferty further stated that "the floor was never given that vote." He then held up a copy of the electronic voting board showing Charles Baker's vote as one who had voted for himself as temporary modera-

tor which, Rafferty stated, was a violation of MGL as well. After citing a third violation, he requested that the town rescind the Article 26 voting and ask for a review by town counsel while also including Article 26 on the warrant for the next town meeting. The Select Board members made no comments following Rafferty's statements.

Apraxia Day

The board voted to designate May 26 as Apraxia Day in Auburn to raise awareness. Apraxia is a neurological disorder characterized by the brain's inability to properly plan and sequence muscle movements despite a person having the desire and physical ability to perform them. It often affects speech or limb movements, resulting from stroke, tumor, or neurodegenerative damage. Treatment focuses on speech, occupational, or physical therapy. Resident Barbara King was presented with a Commonwealth Citation for her efforts in raising awareness for childhood Apraxia.

Around Town

Town Collector, Catherine Spanos and her staff, reported on the amounts and types of billings that the town had sent out including real estate, personal property,



motor vehicle excise, trash, and sewer. Explanations were given about how to pay and where to pay these bills including in-person, via U.S. Mail, online, or via the town hall drop box. Collections for Fiscal Year 2026 included \$58 million in total bills, receipts from town departments \$6.7 million, school receipts \$1.88 million, government revenue \$29 million, and earned interest of \$1.6 million.

Kristen Pappas, Director of

Recreation and Culture, reviewed and gave updates for upcoming town events including the Farmers and Cultural Market that begins June 4 and will run every Thursday (weather permitting), Independence Day Celebrations, and Food

Truck Events. More info can be found on the town website, www.auburnma.gov.

The town emergency management plan was reviewed, naming the high school as the town emergency shelter. It was also noted that the emergency generator replacement had been rectified Town Manager Dori Vecchio

said, and she praised the involvement of the fire and school departments. An update of the new fire station was then given including a groundbreaking date of June 4 with a completion date expected in late 2027.

A discussion and board vote was taken on town manager goals and objectives. The board voted to approve the goals and objectives as amended. Town Manager Vecchio stated that she was concerned

about funding for staffing, building, and street paving studies. Those were the three areas that she had concerns with.

"These studies are dependent on funding and whether the town can move forward. Maybe we can push those off another year depending on funding," Vecchio stated, "but they will still be a priority." She hoped to receive funding at the fall town meeting to complete the studies within the fiscal year and looked to no-cost studies to save the town funds.

Recognition of Retiring Superintendent

Board member Todd Kirrane cited Dr. Beth Chamberland, Superintendent of Schools, upon her retirement and many years of service to the Auburn Public Schools. "She has served on many different committees and has been a dedicated member of our community and I think it's fitting that this board offer a recognition upon her retirement to thank her for her many thousands of hours of serving our community." A motion was made and passed to recognize Dr. Chamberland for her dedication to the town.

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Adult learners at QCC benefit from \$38K Bridges to College grant

Quinsigamond Community College was recently awarded \$38,208 by the Healey-Driscoll Administration for its Bridges to College program, which helps low-income and entry-level adults transition to higher education.

Bridges to College is a free summer program that prepares participants for math and English courses, while simultaneously exposing them to the college environment.

"The Bridges to College summer

program gives students a free opportunity to refresh their English and math skills before the Fall semester begins," said Kalan Lewis, Director of Mentoring & Special Programs. "Participants gain confidence in college-level coursework, learn about campus resources and connect with faculty and staff who are committed to their success."

Since the program began in 2019, it has received funding from the Department of Higher Education and other key partners, including Hanover Insurance

Foundation and Greater Worcester Community Foundation.

Program data from 2019-2023 showed that of the students who completed the Bridges to College program, 70% received a C or higher in ENG 101 and 102; and almost 70% received a C or higher in a college-level math course.

For more information, visit QCC.edu/learn-qcc/adult-basic-education/bridges-college



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Exercise Classes at the Auburn Senior Center

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Senior Sweat - Mondays, 10 a.m.

This class emphasizes balance, stretching and strengthening. Also posture, coordination and essential muscle groups such as upper chest core and buttocks. Most of the class exercise will be in a chair or will use a chair for safety. This is a drop in class, you do not need to pre-register. \$3.00 donation per class. This class is taught by Dr. Harvey Clermont.

Yoga - Tuesday, 11 a.m.

Yoga for older adults is practiced with the use of a chair and incorporates breathing practices, focus and movement. Slow paced, work on strength, flexibility, mobility and holding postures. Angie Lavache is a certified fitness instructor. This is a drop in class, you do not need to pre-register. \$3.00 donation per class.

Chair Dance - Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30 a.m.

Chair dance encourages health and fitness for active people or those whose physical condition, restricted mobility, or age, limits their participation in conventional forms of exercise. Chair dancing is a fun, energizing and social activity suited for all ages - it's dancing with your soul. This class is taught by instructor Forty Arroyo. This is a drop in class, you do not need to pre-register. \$3.00 donation per class.

Gentle Flow Yoga - Tuesdays, 11 a.m.

Yoga for older adults is practiced with the use of a chair and incorporates breathing practices, focus and movement. Slow paced, work on strength, flexibility, mobility and holding postures. Angie Lavache is a certified fitness instructor. This is a drop in class, you do not need to pre-register. \$3.00 donation per class.

Classic Cardio Blast - Tuesdays, 1 p.m.

Get your heart pumping, muscles working through strength training, balance and flexibility. This class is taught by Angie Lavache, certified fitness instructor. This is a drop in class, you do not need to pre-register. \$3.00 donation per class.

Strength and Balance - Wednesdays and Fridays, 10 a.m.

Strengthen & tone your upper and lower body while improving your mobility and balance with these seated and standing exercises using a chair and light hand weights. Led by Ace Certified Fitness Trainer Lin Hultgren. All levels are welcome! Beginner and modification friendly. Make a

positive difference in your health today! This is a drop in class, you do not need to pre-register, \$3.00 donation per class.

Walking Club - Mondays and Wednesdays, 9 a.m.

The group meets every Monday and Wednesday. During the summer months, meet at Lemansky Field, 400 Oxford Street North, Auburn. During the winter months the group meets at the Auburn Mall-food court. Lace up your sneakers and join the fun! Call the senior center for the current time.

Meditation - Fridays, 11 a.m.

Meditation creates positive effects on your health, well-being, sleep issues, chronic pain, anxiety and depression. The class is led by Usha Verma. This is a drop in class, you do not need to pre-register. There is no charge for this class.

Pound Wednesdays, 9 a.m.

With Chris Lamothe, certified pound instructor. Cardio, conditioning, and strength training using weight drum sticks (rip sticks). A fun work out with upbeat music. \$3.00 donation per class. This is drop in class, you do not need to pre-register.

OMS April Students of the Month



Oxford Middle School recognizes students each month who exemplify our Be The 3 goals of Respect, Responsibility, and Safety as well as showing that attendance matters, displaying citizenship, and showing growth in a variety of ways. This month, OMS celebrates Jena Shennette, Hunter Perry, Megan Riley, and Harper Skowran as our April Students of the Month.

Free Boat Safety Inspections



The Tri-State Flotilla 10-2 of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary will offer free 2026 Vessel Safety Checks at two area boat ramps this June, giving boaters an opportunity to ensure their vessels meet federal and state safety requirements before the busy summer season begins.

The first inspection station will be held Saturday, June 13, at the Memorial Beach Boat Ramp at Nipmuc Cove on Webster Lake in Webster. A second event is scheduled for Saturday, June 27, at the Wallum Lake Boat Ramp in Douglas State Forest. Both stations will operate from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., with rain dates set for the following Sunday at the same times and locations.

Boat owners may bring a wide variety of watercraft for inspection, including kayaks, canoes, personal watercraft, sailboats, pontoon boats, ski boats and cabin cruisers. Vessels may be inspected either on trailers or in the water.

Qualified Coast Guard Auxiliary Vessel Examiners will inspect safety equipment and overall vessel condition, checking items such as registration and hull numbering, life jackets, fire extinguishers, navigation lights and flare expiration dates where required. Boats meeting Auxiliary safety standards will receive a 2026 Vessel Safety Check decal.

Organizers emphasized that the inspections are voluntary and educational. No citations, penalties or reports to law enforcement agencies are issued if problems are found. Instead, examiners provide guidance on correcting deficiencies and improving boating safety.

According to the Coast Guard Auxiliary, displaying a current Vessel Safety Check decal may also help boaters qualify for insurance discounts and signals to law enforcement that the vessel complies with safety regulations.

Officials encourage area boaters to take advantage of the scheduled inspection opportunities, noting that inland vessel examiners are limited and may not always be readily available during the boating season. Additional information or online scheduling is available at VesselSafetyCheck.org.



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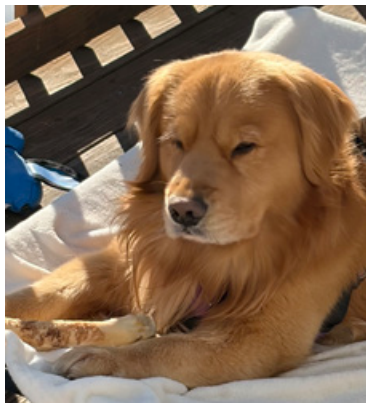
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LIVING WITH LUKE

amyleclaire@hotmail.com

Luke, and the Shape of Everyday Love

BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

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 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.

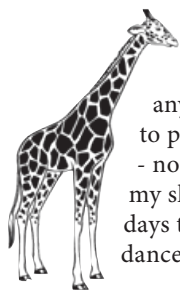
That depth of connection makes the absence disorienting. Not greater than other losses, but different - like something foundational has shifted. The grief reflects the bond. And the bond is worth understanding.

Living with Luke has given me a few answers.

Unconditional Love

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 medicinal, dissolving the weight of an eight-class week. I laugh despite myself. Sometimes he laps at my

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



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, wandering, simply existing in the day. Thunderstorms aside, he doesn't

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 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 wonder-

ing 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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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 can make you feel a little less



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

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.

bankHometown Promotes Bussiere to Vice President



Jo-Ann Bussiere has been promoted as vice president and branch officer of bankHometown's Oxford branch.

bankHometown is pleased to announce the promotion of Jo-Ann Bussiere to vice president, branch officer of the bank's 31 Sutton Ave., Oxford office.

In her expanded role, Bussiere will continue to lead branch operations while taking on a greater leadership role in driving retail

strategy, mentoring team members, and enhancing the customer experience across the bank's network. She will play an integral role in supporting the bank's growth and ensuring consistent delivery of high-quality service.

Bussiere joined bankHometown in 2016 as branch manager of its 131 Main St., Lancaster office. In 2019, she transitioned into the same role at the Oxford office, where she has continued to demonstrate strong leadership, operational excellence, and a deep commitment to both her team and the communities she serves.

An active community leader, Bussiere serves on the Webster Dudley Oxford (WDO) Chamber Event Committee. She is also a Mock Audit Team Member, a Dollar Scholars Mentor through the United Way Women's Initiative, and supports Financial Literacy programs for seniors and students.

TOPOGRAPH



Affordable Housing Opportunity 1 Ridge Rd., Auburn, MA 01501

Brand New Construction of one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments featuring modern appliances, washer and dryer in unit, and walk-in closets.

Program description:

- Resident income for affordable units are restricted to 80% of the area median income.
- Non-Smoking community

# of Units	# of bedrooms	Rent*	Maximum Income Limit (% AMI)	Minimum Income Requirement**
31	1 BR	\$1613	80%	\$48,000
43	2 BR	\$1734	80%	\$51,600
8	3 BR	\$1852	80%	\$55,400

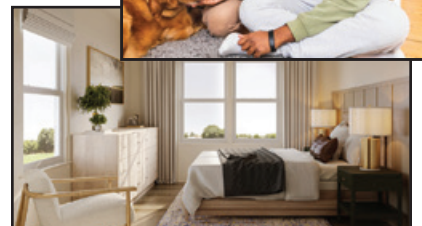
*Rent may be adjusted based on annual income limits provided by HUD.
**Minimum Income Requirement does not apply to households receiving housing assistance such as Section 8 or MRVP.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Must meet all income and background eligibility requirements under the Tenant Selection Plan approved by EOHLC.

Maximum Income per Household Size
(2025 limits, provided by Worcester MA, HUD Metro Area)

1 person	2 people	3 people	4 people	5 people	6 people
\$69,850	\$79,800	\$89,800	\$99,750	\$107,750	\$115,750



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If All Else Fails with Recalls, Write to Manufacturer

Q. I just had the ABS module replaced on my 2009 VW Jetta SportWagen. I later learned there was a 2017 Volkswagen safety recall that included 2009–2011 models, but I never received a notice. When I checked my VIN on the NHTSA website, it showed zero recalls. Since I needed the ABS module replaced, shouldn't my vehicle have been included? What

recourse do I have to seek reimbursement from VW?

A. Recalls do not always apply to every vehicle in a model year; they are often limited to specific production runs or factories. In this case, the recall called for a software update, with module replacement only if it failed testing afterward. It is still worth contacting both

Volkswagen and NHTSA. If the repair matches the recall condition and was performed before the recall was completed, manufacturers sometimes reimburse owners. Start with Volkswagen customer service at 1-800-893-5298 and the NHTSA Vehicle Safety Hotline at 1-888-327-4236. Recalls are sometimes expanded to include more vehicles. You can also send Volkswagen a let-

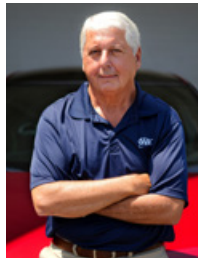
ter (not an email) with copies of your repair invoice and the recall notice and request reimbursement. For the cost of a stamp, it is worth a try.

Q. I inherited a 2008 Lexus RX350 that has been sitting outside in a driveway since before the pandemic. I am thinking about getting it back on the road. Where should I start?

A. Vehicles that sit, especially outdoors for years, can deteriorate quickly. Begin with a thorough visual inspection under the hood (checking belts and hoses) and inside the car. Look for rodent damage, as they often chew wiring and build nests. Check all fluid levels and top them off as needed. Replace the battery — do not try to charge or jump-start one that has been sitting that long. The fuel may be stale; depending on the level, you may need to drain the tank. If it is low, try adding five gallons of fresh gas. Be aware that the fuel pump may have failed. If everything looks okay and there are no warning signs (like sparks or smoke) when installing the battery, try starting the engine. If it runs, carefully test the brakes. Even if it starts and drives, have it towed to a shop for a full inspection. That should include checking for rust and corrosion, evaluating the brake system, replacing likely worn tires, changing all fluids, and assessing the engine and drivetrain.

Q. I am building a hot rod out of a 1965 Ford Falcon. The engine runs well and the body is relatively rust-free, but the paint is terrible. A body shop quoted \$10,000–\$15,000 for a repaint. I like the car, but not that much. Any alternatives?

A. You could try painting it yourself or see if a local vocational school would take it on as a project. Another option and one I like, if the metal is solid, is to embrace the patina. The surface rust, faded paint and exposed primer tells a story about the car. There are wipe-on clear coats that preserve the aged look while adding some shine. These can last six to twelve months before needing reapplication. Products are available from companies like Poppy's Patina and Vice Grip Garage.



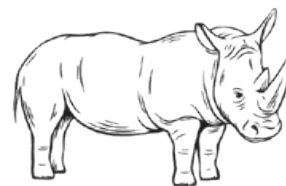
BY JOHN PAUL

Q. My 2025 Honda Pilot is one year old with only 3,500 miles. I lightly hit a curb while parking, scratching the tire and rim. During my one-year service, the dealer recommended a \$200 alignment as a precaution. I declined. Was that the right call?

A. If the vehicle tracks straight on a flat road and the steering wheel is centered; the alignment is likely fine. Typically, an impact hard enough to affect alignment causes more than cosmetic damage. That said, with curb strikes and our less-than-perfect roads, a periodic alignment check can be worthwhile preventive maintenance.

Q. I just read something about transmission fluid that stated: Some newer vehicles have sealed systems requiring service only if there is a leak. Are they really sealed, and do they not need service?

A. Many transmissions today do not have dipsticks to easily check fluid level and condition. The vehicle



CAR DOCTOR

continued on page 13



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Help your graduate use credit and debit cards wisely

As your new graduate prepares to step into the next chapter of life – whether that's more education or starting a career – one of the best things you can do is help them understand how to use credit cards, debit cards and prepaid cards wisely. They can be powerful financial tools, but without some basic knowledge, they can also lead to trouble.



BY DENNIS
ANTONOPOULOS

Here are a few things for graduates, whether from high school or graduate school, should know.

Credit cards have benefits – and risks. About 69% of Americans ages 18-29 have at least one credit card, according to the Federal Reserve. They can borrow money up to a set limit, pay it back and borrow again – a cycle known as revolving credit. Used responsibly, credit cards can help build their credit history, cover unexpected

expenses and even earn rewards like cash back or travel discounts.

On the cautionary side, if your child or grandchild doesn't pay the full balance each month, interest charges can accumulate quickly. Carrying a high balance relative to the credit limit can hurt their credit score. Perhaps most importantly, it's easy to fall into a debt cycle in which they charge more than they can pay, interest can add up to more than the original purchases cost, and they might even open new cards to cover old ones. It creates a hole that's hard to climb out of.

The key message is simple: pay off the balance monthly, pay on time and treat the card as a convenience, not a lifeline.

Debit cards can be a good option. Since debit cards draw directly from a bank account, they naturally limit overspending. But they aren't risk-free. Overdrawing the account can trigger fees, and debit cards generally offer fewer fraud protections than credit cards. Additionally, since you're spending your own money rather than borrowing, debit cards don't

help build a credit score. Still, for a young person just starting out, a debit card can be a practical way to manage day-to-day spending.

Prepaid cards can help teach the basics. Money is loaded onto the card before use, and your young adult can only spend what's already on the card. Because of this, there's no risk of debt, no credit history needed and no bills to pay.

Prepaid cards come in several forms. General purpose reloadable cards can be used anywhere cards are accepted. Payroll cards are sometimes used by employers to distribute wages. Gift cards are another option.

The downside is that prepaid cards typically don't help build a credit history, since transactions usually aren't reported to credit bureaus. Some also come with fees for activation, reloading or transactions. These fees can add up, so it pays to read the fine print.

Teaching your graduate the difference between these tools, and how to develop good habits for each, can help them build financial confidence for decades to come.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Please contact Dennis Antonopoulos, your local Edward Jones Advisor

at 5 Albert Street, Auburn, MA 01501 Tel: 508-832-5385 or dennis.antonopoulos@edwardjones.com. Edward Jones, Member SIPC

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CAR DOCTOR

continued from page 12

manufacturer will call these a no-maintenance "lifetime" fill. You can still change the fluid and check the level, but it is not as easy as it once was. Recently, I was looking up the fluid change interval on a BMW. The factory maintenance guide showed no service necessary. When I went to the transmission manufacturer's website, they recommended changing the fluid every 50,000 miles to prolong the life of the

transmission.

Q. I recently had my oil changed in my 2002 Honda Accord, and the shop recommended adding an oil additive to help protect the engine. The price seemed expensive just to add something to the oil, so I passed. Can oil additives affect the viscosity of the oil or cause any problems in modern engines?

A. Most modern engine oils already contain carefully balanced additive packages designed to meet the require-

ments of today's engines. In my opinion, additional oil additives are unnecessary. In fact, some additives can change the viscosity of the oil, which may affect how the oil flows during cold starts or under high-temperature conditions. In certain engines, especially those with variable valve timing or tight internal tolerances, using the wrong additive could potentially lead to performance issues. Now, if your car's engine is burning oil, then an additive may help reduce oil consumption and even visible smoke.

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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 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
• Please note that this schedule has been updated. Parade Grand Marshal James Sundstrom will lead the Webster Memorial Day Parade. Schedule of Events for Memorial Day: 8:30 a.m. Start at Veterans Home, Webster – leave at 9 a.m.; 9:10 a.m. Memorial Beach, Webster – leave at 9:30 a.m.; 9:40 a.m. Dudley Town Hall – leave at 10:20 a.m.; 10:30 a.m. Zmetra Memorial – leave at 11 a.m.; 12 p.m. Webster Town Hall – leave at 12:50 p.m.
• Blackstone Valley Tech 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.

THURSDAY, MAY 28
• The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce (BVCC) welcomes the "Main Street Matters Tour" to support local Blackstone Valley businesses. The event will be held from 8:30 a.m. – 10 a.m. at the BVCC offices, 670 Linwood Avenue, Suite 5, Whitinsville. This event is free and open to all local business owners and professionals. Main Street Matters Tour, to support local Blackstone Valley businesses. This event will take place on The Main Street Matters Tour is a statewide initiative designed to bring small business owners together for meaningful conversation, collaboration, and insight into the issues impacting local communities. Presented by National Federation of Independent business (NFIB), Retailers Association of Massachusetts (RAM), and The Massachusetts Restaurant Association (The MRA), this event provides an opportunity for attendees to engage directly with fellow business leaders, share challenges, and gain a deeper understand-

ing of current legislative and economic issues facing small businesses across the Commonwealth. Attendees will have the opportunity to discuss key topics including rising energy costs, health insurance premiums, Massachusetts tax rankings, labor mandates, and unemployment insurance concerns. The BVCC is also proud to partner with the Webster Dudley Oxford Chamber of Commerce to bring this important conversation to our business communities.

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.

SATURDAY, JUNE 6
• St. Patrick's Church Car Wash/Bottle & Can Drive St. Patrick's Parish, 7 East St, Whitinsville will be holding a car wash in the parking lot on Saturday, June 6th from 8am – Noon. \$10/car. Cash only. They will also be accepting donations of cans and plastic bottles (no glass) that are returnable in Massachusetts. All proceeds will support YIA service trip to Bowling Green, KY. Thank you for your support. For more information, call 508-234-5656.
• Annual Armenian Church and Community Yard Sale. The Soorp Asdvadzadzin Armenian Church, 315 Church Street in Whitinsville will hold its "Annual Church and Community Yard Sale" on Saturday, June 6th from 8:00am to 2:00 pm on the lawn facing Church Street. Vendor space will be available for a donation of \$15 per spot and a limited number of tables for a \$5 rental fee on a first come, first serve basis. If you were contemplating your own yard sale but don't have the space, you can't beat the green lawn and great traffic exposure along Church Street. The church will have its own fund-raising tables of donated goods to support humanitarian programs. Traditional Armenian Losh Kebab sandwiches and pilaf will also be available around lunchtime. Admission to the buying public is free with plenty of parking along both sides of Church Street or behind the church. For details and reservations, please email Jeff at katama@gmail.com.

SUNDAY, JUNE 13
• Dementia Friendly Charl-
Brunch
If you and/
or a loved one
are living with

dementia, join us for a welcoming, low-key social outing. Dementia Friendly Charlton is hosting brunch for those with dementia and their care partners on Saturday, June 13 from 10:30am to 12pm at the Charlton Federated Church, 64 Main St, Charlton. To help us plan, please register your interest in attending before June 8 th. Recognizing that unexpected situations may arise, cancellations can be made up to the morning of the event. To register, cancel or for questions: phone (508-248-5550) or email: dementiafriendlycharlton@gmail.com. Please provide name and number of attendees.

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 16 at 6 p.m. 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.
• The 7th Annual Church Street Sidewalk Sale 10 a.m.–2 p.m., rain or shine, on Church Street in Whitinsville, hosted by the Milltown Merchants. The event has grown into a community gathering featuring local shops, vendors selling handmade goods, food, family activities, young entrepreneurs, and opportunities for neighbors to come together and spend time in downtown Whitinsville. It's something many families now look forward to each summer. Seven years ago, several local Church Street

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TALES FROM BEYOND

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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 vision 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)

HAPPENINGS!

continued from page 14

shop owners came together with the hope of bringing the tradition back to life from its Baker's Dept. Store roots, not only as a shopping event, but as a true community gathering. Since then, the sale has grown into a yearly celebration focused on supporting local businesses, connecting neighbors, and bringing families and the community together. While guests can certainly enjoy shopping from over 30 local vendors, artisans, makers, and small businesses, the day is about much more than shopping. It is about community spirit, seeing familiar faces, meeting new ones, supporting local families, and spending a fun day together in the heart of Whitinsville. This year's event will feature local vendors, handmade goods, food, kids' activities, family-friendly entertainment, and a special Youth Entre-

preneur Area showcasing talented young business owners from the community. The Church Street Sidewalk Sale continues to be a reminder of what makes small-town communities so special, neighbors supporting neighbors and local businesses working together to create something meaningful for the community.

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.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15

• The Whitin Community Center (WCC) is excited to invite all automotive enthusiasts and families alike to celebrate the 12th Anniversary of our highly anticipated "Cars In The Park" event. Join us

for a day of automotive excellence and community fun from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the picturesque 7.5 acre Whitin Park, located at 60 Main St., Whitinsville. This year's Cars In The Park promises an unforgettable showcase of classic and contemporary cars, trucks, and motorcycles. Participants can vie for the prestigious Best In Show title and 25 other trophy categories, People's Choice Award, with the first 100 registered vehicles again this year receiving exclusive Show Dash Plaques and Goodie Bags. The event will also feature a selection of food trucks, exhibit vendors, a 50/50 raffle, and live entertainment, ensuring a fun-filled day for the entire family. Entry is complimentary for all spectators, making it the perfect summer outing. Last year's event had a turnout of over 300 cars! Vehicle owners are encouraged to register early and take advantage of a special \$10 donation fee before July 15th, after which

the registration donation will increase to \$20. Pre-registration closes on August 12, 2026. Registration for vehicles is available online at www.WhitinCommunityCenter.com, in-person at our Member Services Desk, or on the day of the event. Additionally, we are now welcoming applications from exhibit and food vendors looking to be part of this exciting event. Funds raised during Cars In The Park will directly support

the Whitin Community Center's mission as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to enhancing the health, well-being, and community spirit of the Blackstone Valley. For more information on vehicle and vendor registration, volunteering, or any other inquiries, please visit our website or contact Tammy Bodwell, Director of Operations, at Tammy.Bodwell@OurGym.org or call 508-234-8184 ext 118.



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