

Put me in coach - I'm ready to play!



Grafton Little League held its Opening Day on May 2 accompanied by the Grafton Middle School Band playing the National Anthem and Take Me Out to the Ballgame.



Grafton's Business Scene

BY CHRISTINE GALEONE
 CMGaleone15@gmail.com

With the beautiful spring weather beckoning people to enjoy the outdoors, some may look for intriguing or entertaining events in neighboring states. But with the high cost of fuel these days, not everyone can afford to travel. Fortunately, Grafton residents can find life-enriching

events close to home. Both businesses and organizations have engaging events on the horizon. Beginning Wednesday June 17, people can come together to appreciate the outdoors while supporting small businesses. The Grafton Farmers Market, which will be held every Wednesday from 2 p.m. until 6 p.m. will return for the season on that day. It's returning to the Grafton Common. With a variety of vendors (which vary each week), the volunteer-run market works hard to achieve its goal of providing "fresh, local food directly from farmers to consumers." Its vendors offer an array of local produce, baked goods, jams, syrups, candy, natural skincare items, handcrafted gifts and more. Another anticipated event is happening in town Saturday, June 20. Starting at 9 in the morning and going until 3 p.m. is the 58th Annual Antiques



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 continued on page 3

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Town Meeting Just Made Quorum to Approve Yearly Budget

Millbury voters approved a \$62.9 million fiscal 2027 budget during the town's Annual Town Meeting on May 5, with little debate from the minimum quorum of 100 residents in attendance.

While the overall budget passed with little discussion, several capital spending articles generated some heat among residents.

One voter questioned the use of Capital Improvement Fund money for one-time school-related purchases and repairs, arguing those expenses should be included in the school budget. School Committee Chair Christopher Wilbur explained that including those items in the operating budget would artificially increase future school budget levels. Planned school projects include exterior door replacements at Millbury Jr./Sr. High School and Elmwood School, a new pickup truck with a snowplow, and technology Wi-Fi licensing.

Also criticized by voters was the school budget increase of 4.1 percent. Additional questions were raised over Department of Public Works requests to replace a 1995 vehicle and rebuild the town's aging salt shed. DPW Director Matt Stencel said the original estimate for the salt shed project was approximately \$2 million, but officials reduced the projected cost to about \$311,000.

Voters rejected a proposed zoning article that would have required new construction projects to provide adequate on-site parking. Residents voiced concerns about existing downtown parking shortages and how the rule could affect redevelopment projects. The measure required a two-thirds majority but failed to secure even a simple majority vote.

A citizen's petition seeking additional water body protections was held without action at the request of petitioner Terry Burke Dotson.

Town Meeting voters also approved several additional warrant articles, including authorization for the town to seek state approval for six additional all-alcoholic restaurant and club licenses to support development at The Shoppes at Blackstone Valley.

Other approved measures included:

- Creation of a revolving fund for the Cemetery Department.
- A \$5 increase in dog license fees.
- Use of sewer retained earnings to construct a new \$1.7 million sewer pump station on Rayburn Drive.
- Zoning changes within the Bramanville Village District increasing minimum lot sizes and setback requirements.
- Approval of two additional zoning amendments requiring two-thirds support.

Residents also received positive news regarding planned roof replacement projects at Millbury Junior/Senior High School and Elmwood School. Wilbur reported that competitive bidding reduced the total estimated cost from the previously approved \$19.9 million to approximately \$15.5 million, a savings of more than \$4 million.

Wilbur said 11 general contractors and six subcontractors submitted bids for the projects.

"It's all good news so far," Wilbur said. "So, we're going to hope that continues."

Construction is expected to be completed around Oct. 1. Summer programs normally held at the junior/senior high school and Elmwood School will be relocated, primarily to Shaw School. Officials also noted that public access to the high school track may be temporarily restricted during construction for safety reasons. A live camera feed will be made available for residents to monitor project progress.

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GRAFTON*continued from page 1*

and Arts Fair, which will be held on the Grafton Common. Admission is \$5.00. A fundraiser for the Grafton Historical Society, the fair will feature antiques and collectibles vendors. There will also be antique appraisals (for a small fee), music and places to buy food.

Grafton Recreation recently announced that one of its popular free fun family events will return on that same day. On Saturday June 20 from 10 a.m. until noon – with 10 to 11 being sensory friendly – at Millbury Street Elementary School, kids can explore a variety of big rigs during Big Truck Day.

Another free family event that's happening soon is being hosted by Houlden Farm Sunflower Shanty at Houlden Farm in North Grafton. Kids Festival welcomes children and their families. On Saturday June 13 starting at 11 a.m., there will be performances, live music, food trucks and ice cream.

Houlden Farm's Sunflower Shanty will also hold an event for adults. On Friday June 5, it will celebrate its seasonal

reopening from 5 p.m. until 10 p.m. with live music by Laquerhead.

For people who would like to buy Memorial Day plants/flowers, there are at least three Grafton businesses that sell beautiful flowers. They can be found at Perreault Nursery & Landscape Supply in North Grafton, Koopman Lumber in North Grafton and at Pete's Oasis at Blackstone River Farm in South Grafton.

Finally, for people who would like to observe Memorial Day with other members of their community, the Trustees of Soldiers and Sailors will hold a Memorial Day parade that will march to the Grafton Common for an 11:30 a.m. ceremony that will honor fallen members of our military.

Many people are grateful to have several fascinating opportunities to enjoy the outdoors nearby with friends, family and neighbors. And as we appreciate the freedom to enjoy those opportunities, we also deeply appreciate the freedom that so many of our brave military members gave their lives to protect.

Local Author Suzy Langevin Releases New Contemporary Romance American Royalty, Blending Politics, Scandal, and Heart

Local author **Suzy Langevin** announces the release of her new contemporary romance, *American Royalty*, a witty and heartfelt novel set against the high-stakes world of Washington politics and viral fame.

Perfect for fans of *Red, White & Royal Blue* and modern rom-coms with sharp banter and emotional depth, *American Royalty* follows Jasmine Lewis, a recent Georgetown graduate who lands a coveted role in the communications office of a rising presidential candidate. Her career is on the fast track—until she's assigned to manage the public image of Trip Ashworth, the candidate's scandal-prone, heartbreak-making son.

After Trip's messy breakup with a pop superstar inspires a viral hit song, Jasmine must rehabilitate his "playboy prince" reputation before it derails his potential presidential campaign. As their



reluctant partnership evolves into something deeper, Jasmine faces a

choice: spin the headlines behind the scenes, or risk becoming one herself.

"*American Royalty* proves love can survive politics, paparazzi, and even a viral breakup song," early praise notes, highlighting the novel's blend of romance, humor, and modern media culture.

A Grafton-based author, Langevin brings a fresh voice to contemporary romance, combining sharp, character-driven storytelling with timely themes of public image, ambition, and authenticity. *American Royalty* marks her latest release, appealing to readers who love smart heroines, messy heroes, and slow-burn tension with real emotional stakes.

American Royalty is available in ebook and print formats through major retailers including Amazon.

Langevin is the winner of the 2024 RWA Golden Heart Award, and her short fiction has been featured in several anthologies and magazines.



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Grafton Annual Town Meeting

Voters poured into the May 11 Annual Town Meeting that was held at the Grafton High School Auditorium, spilling over into a planned overflow area for extra seating.

The meeting decided the Fiscal Year 2027 balanced operating budget at \$82,264,860 with a proposed contingency budget of \$1,370,363.

Several major infrastructure projects were approved by voters including the \$5.5 million roof replacement at the Grafton Middle School, contingent upon the passage of a Proposition 2 ½ override at the ballot box on May 19.

Other warrant articles included easements on the Marryiam



Jim Gallagher

Road culvert and the Shrewsbury Street bridge project. Also included was the restoration of historic Currier & Ives prints.

The meeting opened with the presentation of the 2026 Outstanding Citizen Award to Andy Shelbark for his extensive work with veteran databases and a dedication plaque in memory of longtime resident Jim Gallagher. He served on various town boards and committees including the Veterans Advisory Committee, Cable Oversight Committee, Community Preservation Committee, the Grafton Housing Authority and Grafton Little League.

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.



BLACKSTONE VALLEY Xpress

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4th Friday: Blackstone Valley North: Grafton, Millbury & Sutton

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Millbury Public Library – June 2026 Events

Tuesday, June 2	6-7:45 p.m. — The Millbury Writers' Society	Travel Petting Zoo
6:00-7:00 p.m. — Pokémon Club	Thursday, June 11	4-4:30 p.m. — Barn Babies
Wednesday, June 3	6-7:30 p.m. — Cribbage Club	Travel Petting Zoo
10:30-11:30 a.m. — Story Time	Monday, June 15	4:30-5 p.m. — Barn Babies
6-6:45 p.m. — Spring Cupcake Decorating Class	3-5:45 p.m. — Book Club Movie Night: A Haunting in Venice	Travel Petting Zoo
6-7:30 p.m. — The Blackstone Poets Society	Wednesday, June 17	Wednesday, June 24
6-8 p.m. — Dungeons & Dragons for Adults	10:30-11:30 a.m. — Story Time	10:30-11:30 a.m. — Story Time
Thursday, June 4	6-7:30 p.m. — The Blackstone Poets Society	4:30-7:15 p.m. — Best Laid Plans: An Old Hollywood Whodunnit
6-7p.m. — Career Technical Initiative (CTI) Program Info Session with Bay Path	Thursday, June 18	6-7:45 p.m. — The Millbury Writers' Society
6-7:30 p.m. — Cribbage Club	6-7:30 p.m. — Cribbage Club	Thursday, June 25
Wednesday, June 10	Friday, June 19	3-3:45 p.m. — EcoTarium Presents: Animal Adaptions!
10:30-11:30 a.m. — Story Time	CLOSED for Juneteenth	6-7:30 p.m. — Cribbage Club
5:30-7:45 p.m. — Cribbage Tournament at Millbury Public Library	Monday, June 22	Tuesday, June 30
	4-5p.m. — Adult Book Club	5-7p.m. — Van Gogh's Iris: Learn to Pastel Paint
	Tuesday, June 23	
	3-3:30 p.m. — Barn Babies	
	Travel Petting Zoo	
	3:30- 4p.m. — Barn Babies	

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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SOUR GRAPES

by Tim Jones

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OH, NOTHING SPECIAL.

The Grafton Gazebo 5K Road Race

The Grafton Gazebo 5K Road Race presented by Homefield Credit Union, Connections Physical Therapy and UniBank MA returned for its 35th year on May 9. Runners powered through the rain or shine event in more rain than shine. Awards were handed out for the top 3 in 10 age groups! Sponsored by Smith Solutions Plumbing, Gaudette Insurance Agency, Inc., Jackie Crawford-Ross: Massachusetts Living, and supported by O'Malley Family Chiropractic.

RACE RESULTS:

5k MALE OVERALL RESULTS

- 1.Aidan Gilmore
- 2.Will Faden
- 3. Vincent Piarulli

5k FEMALE OVERALL RESULTS

- 1.Kaylee Gladu
- 2. Kerry Phelan-Li
- 3. Alexandra Abbruscato

MALE 01 - 08 CATEGORY

- Colin Papazian
- Connor Hanrahan
- Owen Williams

FEMALE 01-08 CATEGORY

- Laiken Johnson
- Lucy Jahn
- Esme Weagle



MALE 9-11 CATEGORY

- Aiden Antwi
- Theo Zash
- Zach Brophy

FEMALE 9-11 CATEGORY

- Olivia LeBoeuf
- Ivy Mussler
- Julianne Duffy

MALE 12-14 CATEGORY

- Benjamin Butler
- Nolan Walker
- Bretton Pliakas

FEMALE 12 - 14 CATEGORY

- Arianna Gaffney
- Stella Muse
- Alice Reinke

FEMALE 15 - 19 CATEGORY

- Cristal Martinez

MALE 20 - 29 CATEGORY

- Aryan Mayor
- Trentin DuBois
- Edward Matatall

FEMALE 20 - 29 CATEGORY

- Katie Mason
- Bea Pierrepont
- Megan Meek

MALE 30 - 39 CATEGORY

- 1.Brian Hong
- 2. Alphonsa Brimmage
- 3. Sean Mayer

FEMALE 30 - 39 CATEGORY

- 1.Ashley McPherson Ivest
- 2. Christine Rojcewicz
- 3. Jennelle Alera

MALE 40 - 49 CATEGORY

- Eric Bauman
- Allan Villatora
- William Muse



FEMALE 40-49 CATEGORY

- Veronika Skoromnik
- Heather Havalotti
- Nicole Hero

MALE 50-59 CATEGORY

- Jeffrey Perras
- Carlos Dian
- Eric Slaney

FEMALE 50 - 59 CATEGORY

- Lisa Zhou
- Jennifer Holland
- Dawn Anderson

MALE 60-69

- Kenneth Barrett
- Brian Shea
- David Ndegwa

FEMALE 60 - 69 CATEGORY

MALE 70 - 99 CATEGORY

- Shawn Mcavey
- Michael Grossman

FEMALE 70-99 CATEGORY

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Christopher's Homemade Ice Cream Has Scooped its Last

It's a case of bad news, good news. While West Street ice cream shop Christopher's has closed up after 13 years, former owner Bill Schroeder, wife Deb and son Christopher, are pleased to announce that new owners and a new name are in the works- Blackstone Creamery hopes to open in the space by the end of May.

The closing announcement on Facebook drew hundreds of responses, most as sweet as the ice cream itself and full of the tasty memories that accompany a finished cone.

"People have been really thoughtful and nice," said Schroeder. "It was bitter-sweet."

Christopher's was named after Bill and Deb's son, guar-



Christopher Schroeder with his parents Deb and Bill.
Edd Cote photo

anteeing personal pride in operating the business. But even the most cherished endeavour has its inevitable end and for understandable reasons.

"My wife is a retired schoolteacher, and I want to spend some time with family this summer," Schroeder said.

One of the joys of operating the ice cream parlor was seeing so many familiar faces year after year, he added. It was a special place to occupy within the community.

While the Schroeders will miss the company of their customers, they rest assured in the knowledge they are putting the business into safe hands.

"We'll be working with Blackstone Creamery on the transition," he said.

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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Which retirement plan is right for your business?



Jamie DeCaire

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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 retire-

ment 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.

- Owneronly 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 requirements 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.

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Sutton Senior Center Social Activities & Groups

Morning Coffee - Monday thru Friday at 9 a.m.

Rummikube - 1st & 3rd Tuesday each month at 12 p.m.

Darts - Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m.

Cribbage - Wednesdays at 1 p.m.

Computer Club - Thursdays at 10 a.m. A social gathering for all skill levels led by Paul Holzwarth

Pitch - Thursdays at 10 a.m.

I'm Sorry - Fridays at 9 a.m. A fun and easy-to-learn card game

Bingo - Fridays at 1 p.m. presented by The Friends of Sutton Elders

Book Club - Our reading group meets monthly hosted at Sutton Library

Reverse Painting - Thursdays at 2:15 p.m.

Movie & Popcorn (see newsletter)

Golden Billiards Club - Mondays at 10 a.m.

Wednesday and Friday home cooked meals every month (see newsletter for dates and times)

New England Wood Carvers - Saturdays 11 a.m.-3 p.m.(space is limited/sign up at senior center)

A nurse will check your blood pressure, height & weight

Chair Yoga - Mondays at 10:45 a.m. and Thursdays at 1:15 p.m.. Yoga exercise while seated, focused on stretching and relaxation led by certified instructor Crystal Lee

Cardio Barre - Tuesdays at 12:15 p.m. Higher intensity workout with a lot more physical movement led by certified instructor Crystal Lee

Zoomba Gold - Mondays via ZOOM at 2 p.m. with Dawn

Line Dancing - Wednesdays at 9 a.m. Beginner Level & 10 a.m. Advanced Level with Paul

Muscular Strength & Range of Motion Exercise - Fridays at 9 a.m. with Crystal Lee

Tai Chi & Swords - Tuesdays at 11 a.m. led by certified instructor Gary LaChapelle

Tai Chi - Thursdays at 9 a.m. Gentle & flowing movements for a low-impact workout led by certified instructor Gary Lachapelle

Gentle Mat Yoga - Mondays at 12:15 p.m. Combination of gentle positions to increase mindfulness, breath and flexibility led by certified instructor Crystal Lee

Kung Fu Fitness - Tuesdays at 11 a.m. An upbeat combination of various karate moves led by certified instructor Gary LaChapelle



2026 SkillsUSA competition



Star diesel technology students from across the state competed in the 2026 SkillsUSA competition at Advantage Truck Group in Shrewsbury. From the left are Millbury resident and senior in the automotive technology program at BVT Jonathan Tremblay, Anthony Pinsonault, Patrick Urquhart, Dyland Slotnick, John Harrigan, Aidan McKeon, Nathan Feeley, Jacob Paolino, Syrus Sullivan, George White and Remy Mercier.
Submitted photo

Make Room for Spring with Affordable Junk Removal

There are plenty of reasons to call a junk removal service. Maybe walking through your basement has gotten difficult or there is no more room in the attic? Perhaps you are planning to move, and you need to declutter before your open house?

Figuring out who to call can be challenging. If you contact one of the big haulers, they route you to a phone center where they've never even heard of your town, plus their pricing seems vague and full of extra fees. No wonder you've let the stuff pile up—it's too much of a hassle to get rid of it!

Or you can call Affordable Junk Removal and let a local small business with deep community roots take care of everything.

Jay Schadler started his business in 2005. Back then, it was just him and a beat-up pickup truck taking small jobs and working nights and weekends when he could. As the years rolled on, his business grew, but his commitment to customer service never wavered. Now he's got a staff of ten, along with eight trucks, servicing eastern and central Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island.

Affordable Junk Removal specializes in house and estate cleanouts. If your garage, attic, or office is overflowing with stuff, take back your space and let the pros do the heavy lifting.

Jay and his team have

handled it all. They've dismantled above-ground pools, hauled away ancient hot tubs, taken down old fencing, and stripped away worn carpeting. They'll come for a single item, or they'll clean out an entire house. And they can take almost anything. They can't accept hazardous materials, brush, dirt, or concrete, but everything else is fair game for them to take away.

Not everything ends up in a landfill—not if Jay can help it. He first tries to either recycle or donate items. Only after he tries to repurpose items do they end up at the transfer station.

Working with Affordable Junk Removal is simple. First, you can load stuff yourself if you want by renting a 15-cubic-yard dumpster for a week and chucking up to a ton of your unwanted stuff. If you need to get rid of more weight, then Jay prorates that tonnage—you never pay for what you don't use.

If you don't want to be bothered with the dumpster, they've also got a driveway special where they'll take away a truckload of your unwanted things if you pile it up. Or if you don't want to lift a finger, then you can point at the items, and the team will fill up their truck and haul away your unwanted things. However you do it, you're left with more space and more peace of mind.

Jay and his team beat the big waste haulers on both

Business spotlight

price and customer service. When you call Affordable Junk Removal, you aren't connected to an anonymous call center. Your phone call goes right to Jay.

And speaking of pricing, Jay is upfront about it. His website shows the truck sizes and prices, so you can save time knowing your costs before you call for an appointment. There aren't any hidden costs or surprise fees with Affordable Junk Removal.

Affordable Junk Removal is fully licensed and fully insured, and they'll treat your property with care and respect.

They also have a thriving commercial business, working with contractors and roofers to clear away debris and keep the job site clean. They can even handle commercial and residential emergencies with same-day service.

Jay and his family are deeply involved in the community. He and his wife, Christine, run the Corner Market restaurant in Holliston. It's not uncommon for someone to reach Jay at the restaurant, order a sandwich, and then schedule a junk removal appointment. Yes, the local small business really can handle everything!



Contact Affordable Junk Removal and Dumpster Rental and let a local small business take care of everything for you. Call Jay

Schadler at (774) 287-1133 or visit us online at AffordableJunkRemoval.com.

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Healthier Baking in the Blackstone Valley

BY CHRISTINE GALEONE
Cmgaleone15@gmail.com

With sunshine flooding through the windows, birdsong floating from the trees, and floral scents wafting on a warm breeze, thoughts may drift to summer vacations. And along with those summer vacations come fun activities and, of course, fun snacks.

Thankfully, whimsical summer snacks aren't limited to foods loaded with sugar and artificial colors. Brookies, which can be unhealthy if bought in many stores or made with outrageous amounts of sugar, can be healthy enough to occasionally eat as part of breakfast. These breakfast brookies are easy to make and will disappear

faster than the season.

In many brookie recipes, you'll find much more sugar. Consequently, you probably won't find as many healthy ingredients. Walnuts, for instance, contain healthy fats and can help fuel your energy. They're heart-healthy and brain-healthy nuts that are excellent sources of omega-3 fatty acids, protein and magnesium. And although people taking blood thinners and people with kidney stones may want to avoid them, cranberries are rich in antioxidants and contain vitamin C, vitamin E, vitamin K, manganese and a-type proanthocyanidins, which are only found in cranberries. They are believed to be helpful in preventing urinary tract infections and oral health problems. Fur-

thermore, they can reduce inflammation, aid healthy digestion, and help improve heart health.

Cocoa and dark chocolate chips are rich in magnesium and antioxidants. Additionally, cocoa contains selenium, iron, zinc and theobromine. Because of this, cocoa can help increase immunity, improve cognition, and it can improve muscle and nerve function. The selenium in cocoa may also help reduce the side effects from radiation therapy in people fighting cancer. Cocoa's flavonols and polyphenols also reduce the risk of heart disease. Additionally, eggs are excellent sources of protein, selenium, vitamins B5, B12 and B2.

Finally, the oats are whole grains that can provide energy.



They also contain fiber, which is good for digestive health. And they're a heart-healthy ingredient – which contains vitamins, minerals and antioxidants – that can lower cholesterol.

BREAKFAST BROOKIES

Cookie Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups of old-fashioned or quick oats
- ½ cup of dark chocolate chips
- ¾ cup of flour
- ¼ cup of brown sugar
- ¼ cup of granulated sugar
- 1 large egg
- ½ tsp. of baking soda
- 1/4 tsp. of salt (omit if using salted butter)
- 1 tsp. of vanilla extract
- ½ cup (1 stick) of butter (slightly softened)*

Directions:

In a large mixing bowl, mix the dry ingredients (except the oats and chocolate chips). In a separate large mixing bowl, cream the butter, brown sugar and sugar together. Add the egg and vanilla to the butter mixture and mix well. Gradually combine the mixed dry ingredients with the mixed wet ingredients.

Fold in the oats and chocolate chips.

*If cholesterol is an issue, you can use a plant-based butter like olive oil butter.

Brownie Ingredients:

- ½ cup of unsifted all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup of unsweetened cocoa
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ½ cup of sugar
- ½ cup of light tasting olive oil
- 1 tsp. of vanilla extract
- 2 eggs
- ½ cup of walnuts
- ½ cup of dried cranberries

Directions:

Combine flour, cocoa and baking powder in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, combine sugar, olive oil and vanilla extract. Add eggs to the mixture and beat well with a spoon. In a few increments, add the dry mixture to the wet mixture. Blend together with a spoon. Mix in walnuts and cranberries. Pour batter into a 8"x 8" baking pan. **Brookie Directions:** Scoop large spoonfuls of cookie dough onto the brownie mixture. Spread it evenly throughout the top of the pan. Bake in a pre-heated oven at 350 degrees for around 35-40 minutes. Brownie base should begin to pull away from the edges of the pan, and the cookie top should be golden brown. Let cool until warm. Cut into about 16 squares and enjoy!

People who enjoy both brownies and cookies will almost certainly love breakfast brookies. And without the artificial colors and heaps of sugar, they're a far better snack than cotton candy or snow cones. Happy (healthier) baking!



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Grafton Senior Center Programs & Activities



April, May and June birthdays were recently celebrated at the Grafton Senior Center.

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MONDAYS

Mahjong (Chinese Form) — 9:30 a.m.
Tone and Stretch Exercise — 9:30 a.m.
Social Knitting — 10:30 a.m.
Fall Prevention Exercise — 10:30 a.m.
Lunch — 11:45 a.m.
Pitch — 1:00 p.m.

TUESDAYS

Breathing & Healing Chair Yoga — 9 a.m.
Senior Exercise Class — 10:30 a.m.
Nutrition Class — First Tuesday of the month at 11:30 a.m.
Lunch — 11:45 a.m.
Pitch — 1 p.m.
Shopping Trip to Wal-Mart — Tuesday, May 19

WEDNESDAYS

Zumba — 8:45 a.m.
Walk the GHS Track — 9:30–10 a.m. through June 17
Quilting Group — 9:30 a.m.
Dull Men's Club — 2nd and 4th Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m.
Jog Your Noggin — Monthly at 10:30 a.m.
Book Club — First Wednesday of the month at 10:30 a.m.
Fall Prevention Exercise — 10:30 a.m.
Rummikub — 1p.m.
Tap Dancing — Every other Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.

THURSDAYS

Duplicate Bridge — 9 a.m.
Senior Bootcamp — 9:30 a.m.
Blood Pressure Clinic — 10:30 or 11 a.m.
Senior Exercise Class — 10:30 a.m.

Town Administrator Office Hours — 2nd Thursday, 11a.m.–12 p.m.
Council on Aging Meeting — 2nd Thursday at 1 p.m.
Cardio Barre Exercise — 12 p.m.
Lunch — 11:45 a.m.
Pinochle — 1:15 p.m.

FRIDAYS

Breathing & Healing Chair Yoga — 10 a.m.
Painting Independently — 10 a.m.
Lunch — 11:45 a.m.
Line Dancing — 1 p.m.
Watercoloring Class — 1p.m.
Writer's Group — 2nd and 4th Fridays at 1 p.m.

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BVT Competitors Earn 46 SkillsUSA Medals at State Conference

The 52nd SkillsUSA State Leadership & Skills Conference was held on May 1 at Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT). The annual event welcomed approximately 2,100 district champions along with notable dignitaries. It showcased vocational technical training at its finest.

BVT's Superintendent-Director Anthony E. Steele II said the school was honored to serve as the host

site for the opening ceremonies. "We've hosted the SkillsUSA Massachusetts State Conference and hands-on competitions for twenty years. It's an impressive undertaking for everyone involved."

BVT's student competitors achieved outstanding results and earned 46 medals: 19 gold, 24 silver, and 3 bronze. Madison Denise of Upton, a sophomore in BVT's Cosmetology program at BVT, was elected as a State Officer for

the 2026-2027 school year. These achievements are a testament to the students' hard work and dedication.

Gold medalists will advance to the SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference in Atlanta this June, where they will compete against top students nationwide. A complete list of medalists is available at www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/skillsusa.

The BVT students who earned medals at the State Leadership & Skills Conference are listed by hometown:

BELLINGHAM

Gold: Olivia Dalton, Biotechnology Bowl

BLACKSTONE

Gold: Hunter Savard and James Thibault, Additive Manufacturing
Silver: Ella Ruth, Welding.

DOUGLAS

Gold: Devin Drumheller, Mechatronics

Silver: Celina Culter, Health Knowledge Bowl; Hannah Gosselin and Makenzie Johnson, Career Pathways/Showcase Arts; Brady Morris, Additive Manufacturing; and Ryley Paterson, Engineering Technology.

GRAFTON

Gold: Caroline Brown, Advertising Design; Robert

Lazo, Mechatronics; and Evan St. George, Biotechnology Bowl

Silver: Luke Keenan, Health Knowledge Bowl; Karolina Malkowski, Medical Math, Cooper Often, Mechatronics; and Miya Vaillancourt, Nail Care

HOPEDALE

Gold: Ella Foster, Career Pathways Showcase Engineering

Silver: Hayden Tobin, Career Pathways/Showcase Arts

Bronze: Joe Bach and Ryan McGovern, Television Production

MENDON

Silver: Nathan Lucey, HVAC/R; and Payton Smith, Engineering Technology

Bronze: Benjamin Collins, Telecommunications Cabling

MILFORD

Gold: Ethan Dahmer, Biotechnology Bowl; Emily Kee, Health Occupations/Professional Portfolio; and Dominic Quintino, Cyber Security

Silver: Julien Awuku-Asante, Electronics Technology; and Olivia Guido, Painting & Design Technology

MILLVILLE

Silver: Lara Liedtke, Safety Poster Design

MILLBURY

Gold: Allison Garden, Career Pathways/Showcase Engineering; and Jonathan Tremblay, Diesel Equipment Technology

NORTHBRIDGE

Gold: Tarek Bensellam, Cyber Security; Autumn Gromelski, Restaurant Service; and Michael Reeves-Hall, State T-Shirt Design

Silver: Bella Baltramaitis, Engineering Technology; Liliana Carpenter, Restaurant Service; and

Elsa Richards, Health Knowledge Bowl

SUTTON

Silver: Ashley Levins, Nail Care Model

UPTON

State Officer Elect: Madison Denise

Silver: Justin Fransen, Mechatronics; Jacob Poirier, Additive Manufacturing; and Makenna Walls, Health Knowledge Bowl

UXBRIDGE

Gold: Gabrielle Gannon, Career Pathways Showcase/Engineering; Lucas Jastremski, Biotechnology Bowl, and Julie Lafontaine, Painting & Design Technology

Silver: Taylor Jansen, Safety Poster Design

About Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School:

Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School serves the towns of Bellingham, Blackstone, Douglas, Grafton, Hopedale, Mendon, Milford, Millbury, Millville, Northbridge, Sutton, Upton, and Uxbridge. Located in the heart of the Blackstone Valley, BVT creates a positive learning community that prepares students for personal and professional success in an internationally competitive society through a fusion of rigorous vocational, technical, and academic skills.

Submitted by Elise Bogdan, Communications Specialist

Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional High School

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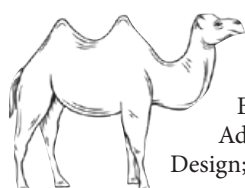
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BY LEE-ANN BARKHOUSE

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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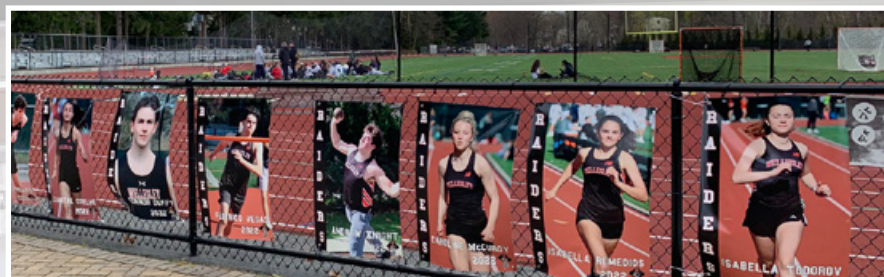


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TALES FROM BEYOND

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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 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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Community Comes Together to Support Local Man During Final Months

During one of the coldest nights of January, a man arrived at the Blackstone Valley Emergency Shelter carrying far

medical care, and a network of people focused on his well-being. Over the following months, his health continued to decline as he



more than the burden of homelessness. Exhausted and frail, he had been living out of his car while undergoing cancer treatments. That evening, he shared heartbreaking news with shelter staff — his doctors had told him his cancer was terminal. After each treatment appointment, he returned to a freezing vehicle to sleep, facing the physical and emotional toll of serious illness alone. Shelter staff and community partners quickly recognized that no one should have to endure such circumstances without support. Through a collaborative effort involving a community health worker, social workers from Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and UMass Memorial Health – Milford Regional Medical Center, along with assistance from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, arrangements were made to place the man in a skilled nursing and rehabilitation center in Milford. For the first time in months, he had warmth,

battled COVID-19, the flu, and pneumonia, moving between the nursing facility and the hospital. Despite the setbacks, he remained determined to reach one important milestone: seeing his daughter graduate from college. Working with the family, the school arranged to move the graduation ceremony forward. Last week, surrounded by loved ones, his daughter received her diploma at his bedside in a moment filled with pride, dignity, and peace. This week, the man passed away peacefully with his daughter by his side. Those involved say his story is both heartbreaking and inspiring — a reminder of what can happen when a community unites in compassion. Police officers, shelter volunteers, healthcare workers, social workers, and community organizations all became part of a circle of care that ensured he would not face his final months alone. He was not supported by a single organization, but by an entire community that cared.

– Submitted by Blackstone Valley Emergency Shelter

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LIVING WITH LUKE

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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 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 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

LUKE

continued on page 19

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LUKE

continued from page 18

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 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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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 letter (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.

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

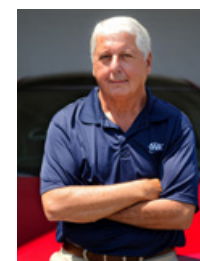
do they not need service?

A. Many transmissions today do not have dipsticks to easily check fluid level and condition. The vehicle 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 requirements 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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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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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 understanding 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 Charlton 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 8th. 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 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 Entrepreneur Area showcasing talented young business owners from 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. 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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KEVIN FLYNN & GUESTS
MAY 30

COMEDY NIGHT WITH
TONY V & GUESTS
JUNE 26

AMERICA 250:
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CONTACT US >>

Marci Komssi - Program Coordinator



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- 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

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