

Multiple generations put heart into art in shared space

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

Holly Chin's journey with the performing arts in Natick began about a decade ago. She ran a vocal studio in those days, and oversaw her group the "State of Mind Performers."

Her students ranged from elementary, middle and high school students.

Then came the Covid pandemic, and the hurdles it presented to in person teaching and activities like Chin's.

Stoic philosophy counsels that obstacles can be reframed as opportunities. "The impediment to action advances action," wrote Marcus Aurelius, the most famous stoic. "What stands in the way becomes the way."

During the challenges of



Young performers are all smiles. Photo courtesy of Holly Chin.

the shutdown, Chin said participation in her program only became more robust. The adoption of Zoom meetings helped make social

connection still possible, and those relationships became all

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Hateful graffiti on school wall prompts call for unity, inclusion

BY SANDY QUADROS BOWLES
 EDITOR

Hate has no place in Natick.

That was the message shared by the Town of Natick, its public schools and police department after the discovery of a swastika and racial slurs painted on the exterior of the Lilja Elementary School.

A school staff member called the police at about 11:45 a.m. Sunday, May 17 after a parent observed the graffiti and called him directly about 45 minutes before, according to Natick police.

The area where the graffiti was found is generally out of public view but does have a playground. The last school day activity ended at 6 p.m. Friday, May 15.



The graffiti was removed and an investigation into the incident continues. The incident prompted a response shared with the community and signed by the Town of Natick, the schools and the police department.

"The Town of Natick, the Natick Police Department and

GRAFFITI

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Library fencing reflects town’s heritage



The fence, with its references to town history, will be restored a section at a time. Courtesy photo

Visitors to Bacon Free Library will be seeing some changes to the exterior, one that reflects the area’s rich history. The historic fence around the building is being restored through support from the Natick Community Preservation Fund. The work is being done

section by section this spring, the Natick Historical Society reports. Versions of the fence date back to the 1840s. The land remains today, as it has long been, Nipmuc homelands and a sacred site for descendants of the Nipmucs,

Massachusetts, and Praying Indians who lived here in the 1600s and early 1700s. The alternating cross and arrow motifs in the fence reference the history of the Praying Town of Natick established in 1651. The fence was last restored in 1970.

Missing this summer kickoff would be criminal



Perfect Crime will rock out at Memorial Beach June 20. Courtesy photo

The Perfect Crime is coming to Memorial Beach. But there’s nothing criminal about this experience. The band Perfect Crime will perform from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Saturday June 20 at Memorial

Beach to kick off the summer. Group members say they “fell victim to classic rock before it was classic.” So get ready to greet the season with a criminal dose of rock and roll.



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the more essential in a world of in-person restrictions.

“It just grew over the years,” said Chin.

With the program’s popularity came suggestions from parents that Chin expand her offerings, and bring them under the umbrella of a new nonprofit organization.

Thus was born the Natick Academy for the Performing Arts. NAPA offers programs in music, dance, musical theatre, voice coaching, improv and acting.

“I saw that there was a need for more stuff in this area,” said Chin.

But fulfilling that need created another: finding a reliable and suitable space to host her performers.

On a visit to Whitney Place, Chin felt she had stumbled on a possible solution.

The assisted-living space has been a longtime fixture in the town, overlooking a stretch of Route 9 from its westbound-side location.

“I was like, I want it. There’s a lot of promise here. Unless you have a home, an auditorium to do these things, you’re always looking for a place.”

Whitney Place has proved a boon both for its residents and for the visiting performers.

Chin’s students have found a reliable and welcome venue to practice and perform. And residents of the assisted-living space serve sometimes as audience and actors themselves.

Being in the facility, said Chin, brought the theater to the senior residents.

“It’s not easy for them,” said Chin of their new Whitney Place neighbors. Many seniors in such



Fun with Dr. Seuss. Photo courtesy of Holly Chin



Listening onstage. Photo courtesy of Holly Chin

facilities seldom have visitors, and are practically cut off from the world outside those walls.

“They come and they watch and they observe,” said Chin of the seniors. That led to a production of “Guys and Dolls” starring Whitney Place residents, in addition to the production of the play put on by middle school students.

Whitney Place has become a testament to the power of place. As host to the Natick Academy of Performing Arts, it serves as

that rare bridge between generations, an intersection where people of vastly different lifespans and experiences interact and learn from one another.

It’s a bridge built from the universal planks of the performing arts.



NAPA students perform Disney’s Aladdin Kids for residents of Whitney Place in Natick. Photo courtesy of Holly Chin



Giving their best cat look. Photo courtesy of Holly Chin

“It’s really special for the kids to get that kind of exposure,” said Chin. The senior residents of Whitney Place, she added, are feisty and hilarious, and welcome the energy that the younger crowd brings.

A club for performing seniors

has been slated for the fall season, and a joint performance has been planned in which middle school students will sing with the seniors.

“I think it would be so special for them,” said Chin. “It’s going to be pretty cool.”



NAPA students entertain Whitney Place residents during a holiday sing along. Photo courtesy of Holly Chin



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Pass the popcorn and the praise: Young filmmakers shine

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

Natick students recently gathered at Lincoln-Sudbury High School for a very special watch party.

The Natick youth delegation was there Thursday, May 7 to showcase and sit for a screening of short films they'd created.

The event, "Emerging Voices," featured 10 shorts from local filmmakers. The creators ranged from high school students to veterans of the (short) silver screen.

Karin Trachtenberg is a local actor, director and producer who mentored the students and helped bring the film fest to fruition.

Trachtenberg is co-founder of "Third Act Productions," a women-led, independent film company that produces and pro-

motes films shot from a female point of view.

Trachtenberg co-created the company with Julia Trueblood and Liz Bishop, two fellow producers and actors who share her vision for the medium of film. "Emerging Voices" was born of a wish to support and encourage the newest crop of young filmmakers.

All three founders are mothers in different stages of the parenting journey, and were inspired by that perspective to showcase the talents and stories of teens.

Those spry cinematographers, writers, directors and actors comprised the creativity on display at "Emerging Voices."

One of those films at the festival was "Paint, Draw, Steal," a short by Natick High School sophomore Emma Rose. Her film considers the effects of artificial intelligence on the lives and work of artists and creators.

It's an increasingly salient societal topic, which in part explains the enthusiasm for the film. Its showing at "Emerging Voices" marked the film's fourth appearance on the film festival circuit.

"We're all talking about that," said Trachtenberg of the rise in AI computer-generated content.

The film was personal for Rose, whose parents are artists themselves.

Lisa Olivieri is an educator at Natick High School, and was gratified to see two of her students' work appear at the local film festival. Emma Rose was one, as was NHS student Jona-



Emerging filmmakers bring their messages to the screen. Jonathan Pereira is in the top row, second from right. Sean Sullivan photo

than Pereira.

He, along with classmates Kyle Ng, Lucas Vendig and James Pomakis, screened their short film "Fresh Meat," at the fest. The film centers on the struggles of male freshmen working their way through their first year of high school.

"Fresh Meat" was inspired by the popular "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" story, a book and film that feature the travails of a less-than-popular middle-school boy.

"He gets pushed around," said Pereira of the protagonist of his short film. The story, he added, "has some meaning behind it."

But finding a kindred spirit, the beleaguered boy at the center of "Fresh Meat" summons the courage to envision a life lived a little bit closer to the cool kids' table.

"He gets a little bit of hope," said Pereira.

While his fellow filmmakers were occupied with other obligations the night of the film festival, Pereira attended the event to see his work shown in front of a live audience.

"It was a good time. We got to see a lot of good films," Olivieri teaches advanced video production, documentary filmmaking and digital photography at NHS. Her students

shot their short films using a combination of cell phones and traditional video cameras.

"I love watching kids make their films," said Olivieri. "To watch what's in their heads translate onto film. It's exciting to see films get put out into the world, not just for the grade."

As part of bringing the films to fruition and to the festival, Trachtenberg helped get local businesses to sponsor the creative work.

"We had a lot of submissions from Natick and I wish we could have taken them all," she said. "It's always nice to get a bunch of people together in a room and watch a film."

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Young people say ‘aloha’ to Luau Night



Giving hula hoops a whirl. Courtesy photo

Natick adopted a Hawaiian vibe as Luau Night was celebrated at the Cole Center. The event, part of the Fantastic Friday series, was a blast, Natick Recreation and Parks staff report. Youngsters could enjoy limbo, hula hoop contests and a snow cone station. The center was full of island vibes and laughter, staff members report.



How low can you go? This guy nearly hit the floor. Courtesy photo



Island smiles abounded. Courtesy photo



Lining up for a classic cool island treat, snow cones. Courtesy photo

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Ten financial steps to take before and after your wedding day



Gary Shilman, Financial Advisor

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Getting married is a major decision that comes with a financial to-do list that's arguably more important than choosing a venue or a cake. Talking openly about money can help set you and your partner up for a stronger future.

What financial conversations should I have with my fiancé?
Head into your marriage

with honest conversations about money, including these four topics:

1. Discuss how your families handled finances when you were young, whether you're a spender or saver and what debt you're willing to take on.
2. Share how much you each earn, spend and save. Discuss assets and debts, including mortgages, student or auto loans and credit card balances; your partner's debt can become joint debt after marriage.
3. Align on a budget as a couple that reflects the life you want to build – where you'll live; what you'll spend on housing, travel and hobbies; and how often you'll review your finances together.
4. Talk through your goals. Make separate lists of short-, medium- and long-term financial dreams and compare them. You'll likely find some common ground, and where you don't, look for ways to compromise. A financial advisor can help.

Should I ask for a prenup?
Couples with significantly different assets or debts, those expecting large inheritances or those blending families are more likely to want to consider a prenuptial agreement. A prenup outlines how assets, debts, future income, inheritance and even spousal support will be handled during the marriage and if it ends, but it cannot address child custody.

Should my new spouse and I blend our finances?
Regarding couples blending finances, there's no one right answer. Some couples combine everything, others keep accounts separate and many land somewhere in between. Agree on who pays which bills, how major decisions get made and what spending threshold triggers a check-in.

What financial tasks should we complete after getting married?
Once you're married, these six tasks deserve attention.

1. Take advantage of the special enrollment period, which typically lasts 30 days after getting married, to update employer benefits such as health insurance. Revisit retirement plan contributions if your combined income has grown.
2. Review insurance coverage. Combining homeowners or renters, auto and umbrella policies can often reduce costs. Make sure you have enough life insurance.
3. Update beneficiaries on insurance policies, retirement plans, investment accounts, bank accounts and real estate.
4. If you change your name, order multiple copies of your marriage certificate. You'll need them to update your Social Security card, financial accounts, and employer and medical records.
5. Update your W-4 with-holding to reflect your new marital status and ask a tax professional whether filing jointly or separately makes more sense.

6. Work with an attorney to create or update your will, medical directive, and financial and health care powers of attorney. Your estate plan should reflect your new life together.

Marriage is a fresh start.
With honest conversations, careful planning and the right professional support, you can build a financial foundation as strong as your relationship.

Contact Gary Shilman to discuss your financial needs, wants, and wishes.

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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

Business spotlight

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 price and customer service. When you call Affordable Junk Removal, you aren't connected to an any-



mous 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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GRAFFITI
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Natick Public Schools unequivocally condemn this act," the statement read. "Antisemitism, racism and hate have no place in Natick. We recognize the harm that incidents like this cause for our students, families, staff and all members of our community and we do not minimize it."

The police are working to identify those responsible and hold them accountable.

They shared a message they described as just as important. "We remain committed to continuing the work of education, dialogue and community partnership to confront hate and foster a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment for all."

The three entities stressed that "Natick is committed to proactive efforts that protect all who call Natick home."



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Your Money, Your Independence

Avoid the F.I.R.E. trap: Why true independence is flexible

**Glenn Brown, CFP**

In the world of personal finance, few concepts have captured the public imagination quite like the “FIRE” movement (Financial Independence, Retire Early). The premise sounds intoxicating: live in extreme frugality, sacrifice your lifestyle to save half your income, hit a precise mathematical milestone, and exit the workforce forever.

It looks perfect on a spreadsheet. But as a Certified Financial Planner, I see a glaring, human flaw in this hyper-fixa-

tion on a “magic number.” It turns money into a rigid prison rather than a tool for living. True financial independence isn’t about hitting an artificial finish line and pulling up the drawbridge; it is about building a life flexible enough to handle reality and generous enough to share.

The myth of the flat-line life

The fundamental math of traditional FIRE assumes your life will remain perfectly linear. It projects your future based on your current lifestyle, locking you into a permanent state of hyper-calculated spending to protect your safe withdrawal rate.

But life does not stay flat. A rigid financial plan leaves absolutely no room for the unpredictable, beautiful, and sometimes expensive shifts in our personal journeys.

What happens if you choose to care for aging parents down the road? What if you want to fund a loved one’s education, marry someone with a

different financial reality, or navigate a medical curveball? If your financial plan breaks the moment your life expands, it isn’t independence. It’s a self-imposed constraint disguised as freedom.

Reclaiming the power of flexibility

Instead of racing toward an arbitrary retirement date, a healthier approach is to design a wealth strategy around being “Work Option-Ready.”

Financial independence shouldn’t mean doing nothing; it means having the power to choose what you do, when, and with whom.

When you build a plan focused on flexibility rather than an escape hatch, you don’t have to view your career as a prison sentence to endure. You gain the agency to take a sabbatical, pivot to a lower-paying but more fulfilling role, or launch a passion project. Money is a tool for personal sovereignty, not just a metric for tracking how quickly you can stop contribut-

ing your talents to the world.

The generosity premium

Perhaps the deepest flaw of the hyper-frugal milestone mindset is its inherent isolation. When your entire identity is wrapped up in protecting a fixed lump sum, spending money becomes a chronic source of anxiety. This often forces people to say no to shared experiences or decline opportunities to support their community because any extra expense threatens their spreadsheet.

True wealth is social, not just mathematical. A sophisticated financial plan accounts for a “generosity premium.” It explicitly builds in the margin required to share your success, support causes you care about, and show up financially for the people in your life when it matters most.

True independence means having enough abundance to be altruistic without compromising your future.

Freedom is a behavior, not a metric

Do not let internet trends convince you that financial success is a race to a rigid finish line. The goal of comprehensive financial planning isn’t to cross an artificial boundary and stop living; it is to ensure your financial foundation is strong enough to weather life’s changes and flexible enough to let you live and give abundantly.

That is the kind of financial independence worth pursuing.

The opinions voiced in this material are for general information only and are not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual.

Glenn Brown is a Holliston resident and owner of PlanDynamic, LLC, www.PlanDynamic.com. Glenn is a fee-only Certified Financial Planner™ helping motivated people take control of their planning and investing, so they can balance kids, aging parents and financial independence.

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Swoon over June programs at Morse Institute Library

Plenty of chapters to be written with a lively June ahead at Morse Institute Library. Here is a sampling of events.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

Lapsit Storytime, Monday June 1, 8, 15, 29, 10 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., Stories, bounces, songs, and bubbles for babies newborn to 24 months and their grownups. Gather in the Story Craft Room in the Children's Department on the Lower Level. No registration required.

Children's Pride Craft, Wednesday, June 3, 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Make your own rainbow hand kite. This is a craft event recommended for children grades K-5. Drop-In, no registration needed.

Pajama Time Stories, Wednesday, June 3, 10 and 17, 7:15 p.m. Join Miss Susan for a few songs and lots of stories in the Children's Library. 45 minutes of stories and songs. No registration is required.

Saturday Storytime at the Farm, Saturday, June 6, 10:30 to 11:15 a.m. Stories, songs, and rhymes at the Natick Community Organic Farm. This is a drop-in program and is geared toward preschool aged children and their grownups, but all ages are welcome. The meeting is in the barn, so this program will happen rain or shine. No registration is required.

Boredom Busters-Solve It!, Wednesday, June 10, 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Building, creating

and mystery activities. Today's is Solve It! Try your hand at mazes, word or number finds or hidden pictures. Recommended for kindergarten through grade 5. Drop-in, no registration required.

Game On!, Saturday, June 13, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. A day of board games in the children's department. Games will be out on tables. Families with children of any age are welcome to stop by. No registration is required.

Start with STEM Saturdays, Saturday, June 20, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tabletop STEM activities. No registration required, all ages welcome.

Children's Summer Reading Kickoff 2026, Tuesday, June 23, 2 to 8 p.m. The Plant A Seed, Read summer reading kickoff event takes place out on the library front lawn, or Lebowitz Meeting Hall in case of rain. In addition to summer reading sign-ups, lawn games will be played. This event is drop in - no registration required. Can't make it to the kickoff? Families can come to the children's department any day or time after the event to sign up for summer reading and pick up their reading kit.

Open Art: Parade Wear, Tuesday, June 30, 3:30 to 4:45 p.m. Drop into the children's department and make parade wear. Geared for kids from preschool through early elementary. No registration required.



ALL AGES PROGRAMS
Bookmobile at the Farmers Market, Saturday, June 6, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Bring your library card to check out books, audiobooks, bestseller speed reads, and DVDs for all ages. Natick Common.

Open Mic Night, Tuesday, June 9, 7 to 8:30 p.m. Singers, poets, musicians, writers, and performance artists are welcome! Performers can sign up for a five or ten-minute slot on a first come first served basis. No registration is required.

Mercy Otis Warren: A Voice of the Revolution, Monday, June 15, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. This program explores Mercy Otis Warren's multifaceted role as a poet, playwright, and prolific writer who used her voice to influence the revolutionary cause. Discuss with Warren how her satire, poetry, and compelling plays captured the spirit of independence and challenged the political status

quo. Perfect for history enthusiasts, students, and families, award-winning educator and historian Michele Gabrielson's portrayal reveals insights into the life of one of America's most influential female voices of the 18th century. Registration is suggested, but not required.

Herb Gardening With Blackstone Valley Veggie Gardens, Tuesday, June 26, 6:30 to 8 p.m. Store-bought herbs, either fresh or dried, can really put a strain on the wallet. Why not grow your own? Kate, Certified Master Gardener and owner of Blackstone Valley Veggie Gardens, will teach how to grow a variety of common herbs and instructions on indoor and outdoor growing, harvesting and preserving these tasty treats. Registration is strongly preferred.

Art on Exhibit through June: Featuring local artists including Elizabeth Tepper, Rob Dunlavey, Nelson Hammer, Natick High School Art Students, Natick Elementary School Student Art, Liliana Glenn, Pam Kainz, Wellesley Society of Artists, and Robert Carley.

TEEN PROGRAMS

Teen Summer Reading, June 27 through Aug. 15. Teens ages 11-18 can read anything they like to participate in Teen Summer Reading. No registration is needed. Just log each day you read or listen to an audiobook using a Google Form or in person in the Teen Room or on the Bookmobile. More details on the library website.

Teen Take and Make: Pride Rainbow Standee, Monday, June 8, 2 to 9 p.m. In celebration of Pride Month, stop by the Teen Room to pick up a Take & Make craft kit to paint a rainbow standee. Wooden standee, paints, and paint brush provided in the kit. For teens and tweens, ages 11-18. Available until kits run out. No registration is required.

Teen MakerLab To-Go: Make Your Own Laser Speaker Kits, Monday, June 22, all day. Make a laser speaker. Put on a laser light show with this wireless speaker and sound visualizer STEM kit

from Kiwi Co., For teens and tween, ages 11 to 18. Registration is required.

ADULT PROGRAMS

Rainbow Heart Puzzle Mosaic, Wednesday, June 3, 2:30 to 4 p.m. Create a mosaic using colorful upcycled puzzle pieces, a preprinted image, and glue. The finished piece will be placed in a 4.5 x 4.5 frame. Registration is required.

20s and 30s Book Club, Wednesday, June 3, 7 to 8 p.m. This is a group of 20- and 30-something book lovers in Natick who will meet once a month to discuss a book that they have decided on and all read. Every month members will vote on the next book to read and do a guided discussion on the book we have read, as well as have time to mingle and talk about the book in smaller groups. This month's book we will be reading is "Leviathan Wakes" by James S.A. Corey. Copies will be held for members at the circulation desk to borrow while supplies last. Libby and Hoopla are available for digital copies too. No registration is required.

MIL Stitchers, Saturday, June 6, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Morse Institute Library Stitchers is a service-oriented knitting and crocheting group that meets one Saturday a month working collaboratively to create handmade items for various nonprofit organizations. No registration is required; new members are always welcome!

Chat and Chew Book Club, Friday, June 12, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Bring a lunch or snack and discuss books you've read recently. There's no assigned reading, so you get to read what you want! Drop in if you have time, or register to get event reminders. Registration is optional.

World Wide Knit/Crochet in Public Day - Saturday, 6/13, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Join your neighbors and stitch together! This event will take place on the front lawn of the library, on the corner of E. Central St and Washington St. Please bring your own chair and knitting/crocheting. In the event of rain

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MORSE

continued on page 11

MORSE*continued from page 10*

we will meet in the Morse Room of the library. No registration is required.

Needle Felted Wildflower Hoop, Wednesday, June 17, 1 to 2:30 p.m. Get ready for a needle felting class to create a felted landscape showcasing mountains and vibrant wildflowers. Using a barbed needle, loose wool fibers and a felt-backed embroidery hoop, learn how to “paint” with wool. Even newcomers will learn a lot in this 90-minute class. Gain the basic skills of needle felting, walking away with a finished piece, and the confidence to continue a felting journey independently. Registration is required.

Genealogy Group, Tuesday, June 23, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Join Morse Research Librarian Schuyler to learn about the library and other online resources to start researching your family history. Stop by with your questions, or if you have started your research, let us know how it’s going. This is a great space to share ideas and strategies to help you start, and grow your family tree. Registration is required.

Rainbow Diamond Art Painting, Wednesday, June 24, 3 to 4:30 p.m. Learn about diamond painting and work on a rainbow animal portrait. At the end of the class, you’ll be given everything you’ll need to complete the painting at home. Like a combination of cross-stitch and paint-by-numbers, diamond painting is the new

creative hobby that’s taking the crafting world by storm. Apply colorful resin rhinestones to richly-pigmented canvas paintings and create Visually dazzling, mosaic diamond artworks that sparkle, shimmer and shine. Registration is required.

Bachata Dance Workout, Thursday, June 25, 7 to 8 p.m. Get ready to move to the infectious rhythms of Bachata, a dance from the Dominican Republic. This class is all about having fun and moving the body. The class will focus on high-energy follow-alongs that get the heart pumping with bachata footwork. Liz’s goal is for participants to feel energized, move their bodies and get a taste of social dancing. This class is designed for every body type. Participants of all abilities are welcome, and the program can provide physical modifications and adaptations to ensure everyone can fully participate and enjoy the movement. No prior dance experience is needed, and no partner is necessary. Wear shoes you can spin in and bring water. Registration is required.

Scratch Art, Saturday, June 27, 3 to 4:30 p.m. Using a scraper tool, participants will follow the outlines of a design to reveal the engraved picture beneath. Registration is required.

The Morse Institute Library is located at 14 E. Central St. and is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The library is closed Sundays and on Friday, June 19.

For more information or to register for programs, visit morseinstitute.org.

How to control the deadliest animal on the planet!



Jim Maxxuchelli, owner, WPC Pest and Termite Control

Mosquito and tick populations are on the rise again as the country transitions to the Spring season. While these pests are certainly nuisances, they can also transmit harmful diseases like Zika virus, West Nile virus, Lyme disease, and more, which is why WPC Pest Control is helping to advocate for increased awareness of mosquito and tick prevention this season.

“One of the best ways to fight off mosquito and tick bites and

subsequent disease transmission is to apply insect repellent before going outside,” said Jim Mazzuchelli, owner of WPC Pest Control.

Yet, many people don’t make it a priority to protect against these biting pests by taking this simple action. Those who do may not realize that there is a correct way to use repellent for it to be effective.

To properly apply insect repellent for maximum protection against mosquitoes and ticks, follow this five-step method from the National Pest Management Association (NPMA):

Look for a product containing an active EPA-registered ingredient, such as DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon-eucalyptus or IR3535.

Read the product label and follow the instructions carefully. If sunscreen is also being worn, repellent should be used over top of sunscreen.

Shake the product well. Then, hold it about 6-8 inches away from exposed skin and spray evenly in a sweeping motion.

Spray the palms of hands to apply the repellent to the face and ears, being sure to avoid eye and nostril contact.

Apply the repellent over clothing, which should completely cover feet and ankles.

“Another great way to avoid contact with mosquitoes specifically is to remove any standing water around the yard to deter mosquito breeding,” said, Jim Mazzuchelli.

A licensed pest control professional can work with a homeowner to help identify these hot spots. The ultimate protection would be to have your yard treated by a professional pest control operator. You will get the knowledge and protection needed to combat these dangerous threats. Your loved ones deserve it.

For more information, visit nobugsnopests.com to schedule a complete inspection and treatment. WPC Pest Control is located right here in Hopkinton!

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Coffee with a Cop keeps conversation perking



Coffee and conversation were on the menu as the Natick Community Senior Center recently hosted Coffee with a Cop.

Lt. Chad Howard, Sgt. Scott Lacerra, and Officer James Herbert of the Natick Police Department spent some time interacting with center visitors.

The officers reported they appreciated the opportunity to connect with residents, hear concerns and answer questions.

They said they enjoyed having some great conversations in a relaxed setting.



Officer James Herbert, left, and Sgt. Scott Lacerra chat with senior center friends. Courtesy photo



Sgt. Scott Lacerra shares a laugh with Coffee with a Cop visitors. Courtesy photo

Natick Fire receives grants to promote fire safety education



\$3,392.03 for the Senior SAFE program, which is delivered to older adults at senior centers, councils on aging and home visits.

The two programs are aimed at specific populations because children and older adults are disproportionately at risk of suffering fire-related fatalities, Linsky said.

“I am thankful to the Healey-Driscoll administration for facilitating the provision of these grants, as they are critical in averting the unnecessary tragedy of preventable fire deaths in our towns and across the Commonwealth,” Linsky said. “I look forward to seeing our dedicated firefighters out and about, helping to educate us and our neighbors of how to stay safe and prevent the incidence of dangerous home fires.”

The Natick Fire Department has received grants to help educate school-aged children and seniors about critical life safety education, State Rep. David Linsky has announced.

The department has been awarded \$8,579.85 through the Student Awareness of Fire Education program. This program sends firefighter-educators into the community to deliver lessons on fire safety to young people.

They also received

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Rotary Club honors nonprofits for their community involvement



Rotary Club members were proud to distribute more than \$10,000 in community grants. *Courtesy photo*

The Natick Rotary Club was proud to award over \$10,000 in grants to 13 local nonprofits at their recent luncheon.

These grants help support what club members described as incredible work happening in the area.

From food security and inclu-

sive programs to youth development and mental wellness, these organizations are making a real difference every day, club members stated.

Representatives from Kids Connect, Spark Kindness and the Natick Service Council were on hand to speak about

the impact the grants will have.

Grants were also awarded to Natick Community Organic Farm, Interact Club

at Kennedy Middle School, Open Door, Path for Adaptive Opportunities, Achievable Printing, MLK Dream Team, Horse SenseAbility, All Aboard,

Friends of Concert Hall and a Place to Turn Food Pantry.

“We’re honored to help you as you help our community,” club members said.

Frederick Douglass speech to be read June 19 on Natick Common

In observance of Juneteenth, The Natick Historical Society and Natick is United will host a community reading of Frederick Douglass’ noted 1852 speech “What is a Slave to the 4th of July” from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Friday, June 19 at the Natick Common.

Historian and Natick resident Brenna Greer will offer an introduction to the speech and facilitate dialogue after. Local drummer Bruno Giles will kick off the event with drumming at 10 a.m.

The Juneteenth celebration continues on Natick Common Saturday, June 20 with the Natick Center Cultural District’s Juneteenth event from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The event will include



A speech on slavery and July Fourth written by Frederick Douglass still resonates. *Natick Historical Society image*

food by Mig’s Dogs, fun activities and musical performances by Drum Nomads.

Anyone seeking more information or wishing to be part of the reading should email director@natickhistoricalsociety.org.

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Learn, dance and explore at June Senior Center events

The Natick Senior Center has a boon of June events. Here is a sampling:

Festival of cultures, Mexico-Mariachi fiesta, Thursday, June 25, 2 p.m. \$3. Celebrate the vibrant sounds and rich traditions of Mexico with a lively mariachi concert. Experience the energy and passion of this musical style, featuring spirited vocals, bright trumpets, and rhythmic guitars. From joyful rancheras to heartfelt ballads, mariachi music captures stories of love, heritage, and celebration.

Magical City: A Collage Workshop, Monday, June 8, 10 a.m. \$5
Create a dreamlike urban landscapes using layered paper and mixed-media techniques. The project includes working with patterned papers, text-based pages, solid colors, and vintage elements like book pages and sheet music.
Learn to enhance materials with decorative punches, stamping, and hand-drawn details in gold, silver, and white. By the end of the workshop, participants will complete a collage ready to frame and display.

Broadway to Hollywood: Piano & Stories, Tuesday, June 2, 2 p.m. Listen and sing-along to piano music from composers Stephen Foster, George M. Cohan, Irving Berlin, Scott Joplin, Jerome Kern, Harold Arlen, Woody Guthrie, George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Duke Ellington, and Richard Rodgers as Richard Amir presents their songs and tell stories about Broadway, The Silver Screen, and The Great American Songbook.

State Songs of the USA, Wednesday, June 10, 1 p.m.
While many official state songs are little known, the selections in this lively program are instantly recognizable and deeply woven into America’s musical heritage. Through these familiar melodies, audiences will explore how music reflects the social climate, cultural values, and historical moments that shaped our nation. Each song offers a glimpse into America’s evolving identity, making this both an entertaining and enlightening celebration of the country’s 250th birthday. Sing along if the mood strikes.

The Magic of Makeup Artistry for Mature Skin, Thursday, June 18, 2 p.m. Discover

how to enhance natural beauty at any age with techniques for mature skin. This presentation covers the role of makeup, daily skincare routines, tips for different skin types, and the benefits of facial massage and somatic exercises. Enjoy a live demo and learn simple techniques to support skin and boost confidence.

Bereavement Support Group, June 4 and June 18, 11 a.m.
Meet with Jay Maenhout, who serves as the Bereavement Coordinator for West River Care, a home health and hospice provider based in Newton. Having experienced profound loss in his own life, he is dedicated to walking alongside others as they navigate grief. This group offers a compassionate space to feel supported, understood, and equipped with practical tools for healing. If you are grieving the loss of a loved one, you are not alone, and you are welcome here.

Meaningful Connections Memory Café, June 18, 11:30 a.m.
The Meaningful Connections Memory Café is a welcoming social gathering designed specifically for those living with dementia and their care partners. The focus is on connecting with others who are going through



similar experiences, reducing isolation, and promoting enjoyment. This month features guitarist and singer, Memo Rubio. Call Katie by Monday, June 15 at 508-647-6540, ext. 1908 to learn more and to register.

Gays for Patsy Line Dance Party, June 18, 3 to 5 p.m.
Experience a fun afternoon of beginner line dance lessons hosted by Gays for Patsy, a Boston based, non-profit dance organization that promotes country-western and line dancing in a supportive environment for the LGBTQ+ community and friends. No experience necessary. Everyone is welcome.

Dementia Friendly Natick Kickoff Event, Tuesday June 23, 1 to 3:30 p.m.
Dementia Friendly Natick signals the town’s commitment

to creating an environment in which individuals living with dementia, their caregivers and families are respected and included as part of the community. The event will include presentations by representatives of the Alzheimer’s Association, a Dementia Friends information session, chair yoga for individuals living with dementia and their caregivers and several resource tables.
Whether you are a person living with dementia or their caregiver, a family member, concerned friend or someone interested in learning more about this topic, we welcome you to join. Call Debbie Budd, 508-647-6543, for more information or to register for these programs.

The Natick Senior Center is located at 117 East Central St. and can be reached at 508-647-6540.

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Local food on the menu at Farmers Market



A variety of booths are set up. Photo courtesy Natick Farmers Market



Locally grown carrots are frequently offered. Photo courtesy Natick Farmers Market

The Natick Farmers market offers local produce to the community every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
During the warmer weather,

the market sets up shop at the Natick Common.
The market was founded in 1996 and 30 years later continues its mission to bring locally

grown or made foods to the community.
The market also provides a space for music, crafts and community gathering.

July 4 Community Picnic to blanket the Common



The community will gather for a picnic to celebrate the nation's birthday.

NATICK – The parade may be on hold for one more year, but the Friends of the Fourth will still be hosting a celebration. The Friends will sponsor a Community Picnic on July 4 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the Common.

Pack a picnic basket and join in the fun with games, contests and music. Bring blankets, chairs, picnic games to share with the neighbors. Do not bring grills or alcohol.

There will be lawn games such as corn hole, ladder golf and hacky sack. Board games include Uno, Yahtzee, cards and cribbage. There will also be face painting, tattoos, coloring and more.

The national anthem will play at noon. Children can decorate their bikes and trikes for a parade that rolls off at 2 p.m.

The Friends are seeking volunteers to help with the picnic, as well as the possible return

of the parade in 2027. For information, visit www.natick4th.org, or the Friends' Facebook page.

Tree falls on trail, Public Works hears it



Every hiker has experienced this. You're lost in your thoughts, savoring your surroundings and then, suddenly, the road less traveled becomes the road impossible to traverse.

That happened recently on the Cochituate Rail Trail. A fallen tree, and not a small

one either, blocked the path. But as the Natick Public Works Department Land Facilities and Natural Resources crew stepped in, removing the tree and clearing the way. Their efforts earned praise from the Friends of Natick Trails – and, no doubt, from trail travelers with a clearer path to a peaceful day.

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Downtown in bloom with hundreds of plantings



Potted plants add beauty. *Courtesy photo*



Plantings look striking against the brick wall. *Courtesy photo*



A geranium brings a splash of red. *Courtesy photo*



Twenty-five varieties of plants grace the downtown. *Courtesy photo*

One of the joys of summer is walking through downtown Natick surrounded by fresh blooming flowers and plants.

This may be magical, but it doesn't happen by magic. Tilly and Salvy's Bacon Street staff organized 207

plants in 25 varieties. Continued watering and supported are provided by the Natick Center Cultural District.

Have a healthy summer with free activities

Great ready to stretch into a healthy summer as the Natick Recreation and Parks Department and the Natick Health Department present their Summer Wellness Series.

The schedule includes:

Pilates, Saturday, June 6, 9 to 10 a.m., J.J. Lane Park

Meditation, Wednesday, June 24, 7 to 8 a.m., Memorial Beach

Pilates, Wednesday, July 1, 7 to 8 a.m., Memorial Beach

Yoga, Tuesday, July 7, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., J.J. Lane Park

Yoga, Wednesday, July 8, 7 to 8 a.m., Memorial Beach

Pilates, Wednesday, July 15, 7 to 8 a.m., Memorial Beach

Pilates, Saturday, July 18, 9 to 10 a.m., J.J. Lane Park

Yoga, Wednesday, July 22, 7 to 8 a.m., Memorial Beach

Pilates, Wednesday, July 29, 7 to 8 a.m., Memorial Beach

All sessions are free and open to the public and are subject to cancellation due to weather and other circumstances. Waivers are required.

For more information, email recreation@natickma.org.

Spark Fest celebrates community connection

Celebrate kindness and connect with family, friends and neighbors at Spark Fest to be held from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday, June 7 at Little Free Diverse Library.

The library is located at Con-

nor Heffler Park, 90 Oak St.

The event will feature free food, activities and crafts.

This is supported by Spark Kindness, an organization that promotes connection, well-being and belonging for all.

Art in the Park June 7

Natick Art Association will host its twice-annual art fair, Art in the Park, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, June 7 at Shaw Park, 53 Eliot Street, Route 16, South Natick.

A collection of Natick Art Association will showcase their works, which will be available for sale. Live music will be performed. Offerings can include pottery, painting, jewelry and books.

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NATICK SPORTS

Coach Harless builds culture of consistency in volleyball



The Natick High School volleyball team. Courtesy of Bob Harless



Coach Bob Harless calling to his players as he coaches the Natick High School Boys' Volleyball team. Courtesy of Bob Harless

BY MATT HYLEN

As the Natick High School boys' volleyball team continues its impressive run this season, Head Coach Bob Harless has established a program built on culture, consistency, and unwavering commitment to excellence.

Coming off back-to-back Final Four appearances, the Redhawks are poised for another deep playoff run to complete their ultimate goal of winning a championship.

Harless, a 1992 Natick High School graduate who played football and baseball during his high school years, has brought a unique perspective to the program ever since he took over.

However, Harless' journey was not one you see every day.

After serving as captain of the football team in 1991, Harless eventually transitioned into coaching through his daughters' youth sports.

When his daughters began playing volleyball in middle school, his focus shifted to the sport, and he went on to coach both of them at the high school level, where they each became starting liberos for the program.

"I learned the game from longtime NHS coach Peter Suxho, who coached at Natick for more than 20 years," Harless explained. "One day, I walked into the NHS gym and asked Coach Suxho if he would teach

me the game of volleyball. He agreed, and over the next eight years I coached alongside him, by coaching both the NHS girls and boys programs, gaining invaluable experience and knowledge of the sport."

At the heart of the program's success is the strong culture that Harless has cultivated from the beginning. "I think the biggest key has been building a strong culture within the program," he said. "From the beginning, the goal has been to create an environment where players are committed to working hard for each other, competing every day, and taking pride in representing Natick volleyball. Once you establish that culture, success tends to build on itself."

That foundation has proven invaluable, as Harless has completely transformed the Natick boys volleyball program into an elite contender.

"Coming off the last two seasons and eventually losing in the Final Four two years in a row, we spent a lot of time reflecting on what made us successful and where we could continue to improve," Harless said. "In the offseason, our focus was on building consistency, strengthening team chemistry, and reinforcing the fundamentals that help us compete at a high level."

With that said, Harless is not alone in this endeavor. Brendan

Carroll, Harless' assistant coach, has been pivotal to the success of the team as well.

"Brendan played for NHS and has coached with me for many years," he explained. "We work very well together and have a similar coaching philosophy."

As the season progresses, that mindset of hard work and dedication has not faltered.

"Between games, our focus is always on preparation, consistency, and staying mentally engaged throughout the season," he noted. "We spend a lot of time reviewing fundamentals, game situations, and making sure the players understand both our strengths and the areas we need to improve. We also try to keep practices competitive and positive, so the players stay

motivated and continue building confidence as the season progresses."

What sets Harless' coaching style apart is his genuine connection with his players. Having coached for many years, including coaching his own daughters, he understands the importance of building trust and accountability.

"I think what works best is that I genuinely care about the players, both on and off the court," he noted. "I try to be approachable, honest, and supportive while still holding them accountable to high standards. Having coached for many years, including coaching my own daughters, I've learned that players respond best when they know their coach believes in

them and wants them to succeed as both athletes and people."

As the playoffs begin, Harless remains focused on the process rather than getting ahead of himself. "We try not to look too far ahead because in volleyball, you have to earn everything one match at a time," he said. "The most important thing for us right now is maintaining our intensity, staying disciplined, and continuing to build confidence as a team."

With experienced players, a strong coaching staff, and a team-first mentality, the Natick Redhawks appear well-positioned for a deep postseason run. As they chase another championship, this team's journey towards greatness is one that should be remembered for years to come.

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 REAL ESTATE CORNER

Small changes, big impact: Sable Homes on getting your home market ready



Nina and her team help sellers make smart, strategic updates that maximize value and attract buyers.

By JENNIFER RUSSO

When people think about increasing the value of their home, the first instinct is often a major renovation. A dream kitchen. A luxury bathroom. Maybe even knocking down walls. But according to the team at Sable Homes, the best return on investment is usually found in simpler, smarter updates that make a home feel cared for, functional, and move-in ready.

In today’s Massachusetts market, buyers are paying attention to details. A home does not have



Business spotlight

to be brand new to stand out. It just has to feel welcoming.

One of the biggest misconceptions sellers have is that they need to spend enormous amounts of money before listing. Most of the time, thoughtful updates outperform flashy renovations.

Fresh paint remains one of the easiest wins. Neutral colors help rooms feel brighter, cleaner, and larger, while also allowing buyers to picture themselves living there. It is affordable, relatively quick, and consistently makes a strong first impression.

Flooring also matters. Worn carpets, scratched hardwoods, or outdated vinyl can immediately age a property. Refinishing hardwood floors or replacing damaged flooring often delivers a noticeable boost in both perceived value and buyer interest.

Kitchens and bathrooms still carry weight, but Sable Homes advises homeowners to think “refresh” instead of “full gut renovation.” Swapping outdated hardware, replacing old light fixtures, painting cabinets, or installing modern countertops can dramatically improve the look of a space without the cost of a complete remodel.

In New England towns, where neighborhoods are filled with character and community pride, the exterior of a home sets the tone before buyers even walk inside. A tidy yard, clean walkways, updated house numbers, seasonal planters, and a freshly painted front door can create an emotional connection instantly.

Staging also plays a major role in helping buyers emotionally connect with a home. The best staging is not overly decorated or formal. Instead, it should feel clean, open, warm, and lived in just enough for buyers to picture their own lives there. Declutter-

ing countertops, removing excess furniture, maximizing natural light, and adding simple touches like fresh towels, cozy throw pillows, or fresh greenery can make spaces feel larger and more inviting. The goal is not perfection. It is helping buyers walk in and instantly feel comfortable.

Energy efficiency has also become increasingly important for Massachusetts buyers. Simple improvements like smart thermostats, updated insulation, energy-efficient lighting, and newer windows can make homes more attractive, especially as utility costs continue to rise.

What sets Sable Homes apart is how hands-on they are in helping sellers decide where to focus their time and money before listing. They can walk homeowners through their property room by room, offering honest guidance about which projects are likely to increase value and which ones may not be worth the investment.

Sometimes that means recommending a few simple cosmetic updates. Other times, it means helping sellers prioritize larger improvements that could significantly impact the sale price. Either way, the goal is the same:

helping homeowners make smart, informed decisions without unnecessary stress or overspending.

Sable Homes also connects clients with trusted local professionals when needed, helping coordinate everything from painters and flooring contractors to staging advice and photography preparation. For many sellers, having that guidance can make the process feel far more manageable.

“Selling a home is personal,” the team says. “People are balancing emotions, finances, timelines, and family decisions all at once. Our role is to help simplify the process and make sure they feel supported from beginning to end.”

At the end of the day, the best upgrades are the ones that make buyers feel comfortable, excited, and able to imagine a future there. Often, it is not about luxury. It is about care.

And according to Sable Homes, that is exactly what buyers notice most.

Learn more about Sable Homes at www.sablesellshomes.com or reach out to the team at 508-733-8935.

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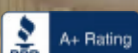
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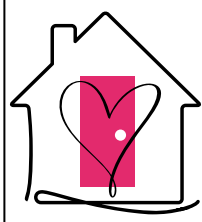
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\$1,240,000

05/13/2026

5 Bass Ter.

\$925,000

05/13/2026

30 Sienna Ln.

\$1,230,000

05/12/2026

63 Pond St.

\$579,000

05/11/2026

44 Village Hill Ln.

\$440,000

05/08/2026

89 W. Central St.

\$1,600,000

05/08/2026

9 Sherman St.

\$1,100,000

05/08/2026

16 West St.

\$600,000

05/08/2026

2 Walden Dr.

\$410,000

05/07/2026

12 Vernon Rd.

\$800,000

05/07/2026

18 Cottage St.

\$745,000

05/06/2026

54 Union St.

\$899,000

05/05/2026

29 Irving Rd.

\$2,240,000

05/05/2026

9 Village Hill Ln. #19

\$290,000

05/01/2026

3-3A Wilson St.

\$850,000

05/01/2026

7 Jackson Ct. #B

\$617,000

04/30/2026

7 High St.

\$735,000

04/30/2026

12 Floral Ave.

\$1,150,000

04/30/2026

81 Woodland St.

\$1,500,000

04/30/2026

3 Parsons Way

\$1,500,000

04/30/2026

26 Wellesley Ave. #B

\$1,110,000

04/30/2026

132 Howe St. #B

\$662,000

04/29/2026

45 Marion St.

\$895,000

04/28/2026

11 Village Rock Ln. #21

\$292,500

04/28/2026

7 Morgan Dr. #203

\$705,000

04/27/2026

22 S. Lincoln St.

\$982,000

04/27/2026

84 Pleasant St.

\$900,000

04/24/2026

3 Oxbow Rd.

\$840,000

04/24/2026

20 Florence St. #B

\$1,650,000

04/23/2026

8 Clifton Rd.

\$940,000

04/23/2026

27 Border Rd.

\$765,000

04/22/2026

8 Edwards Rd.

\$805,000

04/21/2026

40 Nouvelle Wy. #N441

\$835,000

Source: zillow.com

Compiled: Local Town Pages

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The 4-bed, 4-bath, 3,760-square-foot house at 89 W. Central St. in Natick recently sold for \$1,599,000.
Image credit: www.zillow.com

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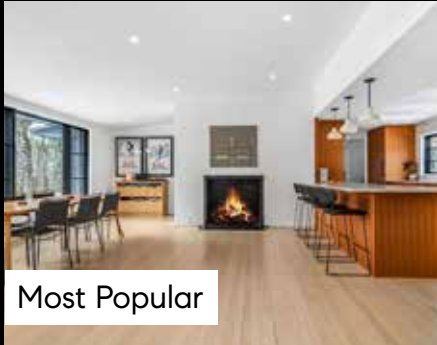
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