

Uxbridge voters approve full school budget and key capital investments

BY BRITTANY AMALFI

In a strong show of support for local education, residents at Town Meeting voted overwhelmingly to approve the Uxbridge Public Schools Fiscal Year 2027 budget, which includes the full 2.5% increase to the town appropriation over FY26 requested by the School Committee.

The vote followed several months of discussion and budget review, and it now ensures continued support for the district's approximately 1,670 students attending Taft Early Learning Center, Whitin Intermediate School, Uxbridge High School, and the Independence Project.

The approved budget will fund educators, specialists, academic programs, student services, and operational needs throughout the district. Community support was instrumental in securing the



budget's passage, with residents, school employees, parents, and community advocates participating throughout the budget process and at Town Meeting.

School officials also recognized the efforts of faculty, staff, and members of the Uxbridge Teachers Association who attended Town Meeting and advocated for the needs of students and schools. The School Committee was commend-

ed for its leadership throughout a rigorous and transparent zero-based budgeting process that began last fall.

Town Meeting also approved several important capital investments designed to improve educational facilities and technology infrastructure across the district:

- Uxbridge High School Tennis and Pickleball Courts — \$250,000
- Districtwide Technology Touchscreen Hardware Transition — \$88,000
- Districtwide Technology – Network Overhaul— \$197,000
- Whitin Intermediate School Gymnasium Floor Replacement — \$30,000

These projects are intended to

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After graduating from BVT's Plumbing program, Kaelynn Kennerknecht of Bellingham will continue her employment with Notturmo Home Services. Photo submitted

BVT Signing Day Celebrates Skilled Seniors

Co-Op program connects 180 students to high-skill, high-wage jobs

The Cooperative Education (Co-Op) program at Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT) held its 6th annual Career

Signing Day on May 15. The ceremony recognized the senior Co-Op and career placement students, who proudly announced their career or military plans and signed commitment letters to work with their employers after graduation.

Vocational Director Kerri Balamaitis welcomed the soon-to-be graduates, parents, instructors, industry partners, and school administrators before highlighting each student's achievement in their trade area and the Co-Op program.

The Class of 2026 produced record-setting Co-Op numbers, with 180 students participating in the program. Since March of 2025, students have worked more than 75,000 hours and earned a combined total of more than \$1.3 million in wages. The Co-Op experience is made possible through partnerships with a growing number of local businesses that support students each year, demonstrating the program's positive impact on the local workforce and community.

During the ceremony, students signed employment contracts with representatives from local companies, including A.S Jones, Adaptive Plumbing & Heating, AFDJ Contracting, Armed

SIGNING DAY
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SIGNING DAY

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Systems, Marty's Auto Service, Medway Oil & Propane, Milton CAT, Nicks Landscaping, Northbridge Smiles, Notturmo Home Services, nVent, Pace Auto Service, RJM Custom Autobody, Rob Roy Hair Salon, Scott Caffrey Plumbing, T&J Plumbing & Heating, Tegra Medical, Top Notch HVAC, Valente Plumbing, Heating & AC, Waters Corporation, Wayne J. Griffin Electric, and Z&E Landscaping.

Career Signing Day reflects a growing upward trend of students pursuing employment over post-secondary education. These modern vocational students are heading directly into industry careers with high-skill, high-wage employment, while continuing to build experience through full-time work and on-the-job training.

For more information about the

school, the Cooperative Education program, and Signing Day, visit www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/signingday.

About Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT):

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.

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Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness comes to Uxbridge in June!

The Town of Uxbridge is proud to announce an upcoming event highlighting recent Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grants awarded to the Town. The event is free, and light refreshments will be available.

The event is an interactive session on Saturday, June 13 at 12:00 noon at the Uxbridge Senior Center at 36 South Main Street. Those who attend will help create the design for the Gray Rock Pocket Forest, located on the site of the former Gray Rock Estate at the corner of E Hartford Ave and Crown and Eagle Rd. The first interactive session was held in January. This session will build on ideas developed then, as well as work done in the interim by the "Posse", the group responsible for administering the project. Such work includes a land survey to determine legal borders, wetlands

delineation, and an informal inventory of existing native trees and invasive species. This project is built upon the philosophy that the public's involvement ensures its relevance and ultimate success.

You are cordially invited to come to the interactive event.

Get involved with this project: Become a Citizen Scientist to monitor water quality and insects before and after dam removal. Plant native wetland species after dam removal.

Become a Posse member to guide the development of the Pocket Forest.

Join the Friends of the Gray Rock Pocket Forest to receive newsletters and notification of events.

If interested, contact David Tapscott at the Board of Health (dtapscott@uxbridge-ma.gov or (508)278-8600).

UXBRIDGE

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enhance learning environments, improve access to technology, and maintain school facilities for students and staff.

Town Meeting also approved funding for a formal engineering study of the turf field and track at Uxbridge High School. The facility has been in service for approximately 15 years, exceeding its original 10-year design lifespan.

The study will provide critical data needed to evaluate the condition of the field and track and guide future planning for a facility used extensively by student-athletes and community organizations.

And finally, residents authorized the Year 4 extension of the district's student transportation contract with Vendetti Motors, Inc. The agreement, valued at \$2,147,885, will provide transportation services from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027.

The outcome of Town Meeting reflects the community's continued commitment to public education and the success of Uxbridge students. With the FY27 budget and capital projects now approved, district leaders can move forward with planning for the upcoming school year while continuing to focus on responsible stewardship of taxpayer resources and maintaining strong educational opportunities for all students.

11th Annual Family Fun Fishing Day held on May 16th

A great day of family fun, with three sets of siblings among the winners

The 11th Annual Family Fun Fishing Day was held on May 16 where over 225 participants and their families gathered at River Bend Farm on a gorgeous Saturday. The event is organized by Open Sky Community Services and the Blackstone River Water-

Department of Conservation & Recreation, and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife.

In addition to the fishing competition, the day included free raffles, children's activities, face painting, and food from Pizza Box Pizza Truck, Sweet Wise Ice-

while learning about and enjoying the beautiful Blackstone River.

Organizers would like to recognize Benjamin Plastering and Bass Pro Shops for their financial support of Family Fun Fishing Day.

For the first time this year, the winners included three pairs of siblings, Keren and Mauricio Melo, Nathaniel and Jasmine Hazard, and Therese Raymond and John Nordquist. Winners for each age group are listed below:

ADULTS:

Longest fish – Therese Raymond of Westborough, 20" fish

Most fish caught – John Nordquist of Northbridge, 27 fish

13-17:

Longest fish – Nathaniel Hazard of Worcester, 8 1/2" fish

Most fish caught – Keren Melo of Framingham, 3 fish

9-12:

Longest fish – Mauricio Melo of Framingham, 9 1/4" fish

Most fish caught – Dylan Cote of Uxbridge, 8 fish

8 AND UNDER:

Longest fish – Nico Skorupa of Hopedale, 8 1/2" fish

Most fish caught – Jasmine Hazard of Worcester, 3 fish



Left, Mauricio Melo and right, Jasmine Hazard. Photos supplied by Tara Corcoran of Open Sky

shed Association in partnership with the Blackstone River National Heritage Corridor Volunteers-in-Parks Program, the Massachusetts

Cream Truck, and Las Lemonade. This inclusive, free event provides an opportunity for people of all ages and abilities to come together,



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Northbridge Senior Center hosts heartwarming “The Art of Cats” program

Last week, the Northbridge Senior Center welcomed community members for a special cat-themed program celebrating the enduring fascination and love people have for cats! The event was hosted by artist Siobahn McDonald and brought together cat lovers for an afternoon filled with laughter, creativity, and shared memories.

Throughout history, cats have inspired art, literature, and culture, and the program gave attendees the opportunity to reflect on the special role cats have played in their own lives. Participants shared heartfelt, humorous, and memorable stories about beloved feline companions.

The room was filled with many laughs as guests exchanged stories and experiences, discovering just



how much joy and companionship cats have brought to generations of people! Adding to the event's charm were handmade clay cats

and decorative cat bowls crafted by participants, showcasing both creativity and appreciation for these beloved animals. The unique

pieces added a personal and artistic touch to the gathering. For more information on the Northbridge Senior Center or its programs and

events, please call (508) 234-2002.

Press release and photos submitted by Amy L. Cowen

BLACKSTONE VALLEY Xpress

Published on the 2nd and 4th Fridays of the month. Direct mailed to nearly 65,000 homes and businesses each month and available on news stands in the region.

2nd Friday: The YankeeXpress South: Charlton, Dudley, Webster
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4th Friday: The YankeeXpress North: Auburn, Oxford
4th Friday: Blackstone Valley North: Grafton, Millbury & Sutton

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Blackstone Valley Xpress/©2026
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Douglas Public Library Schedule

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 290 Main St., Douglas; 508-476-2695
 Hours: Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-8 p.m.; Saturdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
CHILDREN'S HAPPENINGS
 Tuesday, June 19 at 11:30 a.m. - Music & Movement with Deb Hudgins
 Wednesday, June 17 at 5:45 p.m. - Reading to Bryce (Registration Required)
 Monday, July 6 at 10 a.m. - Summer Story-

time (Registration Required)
 Wednesday, July 8 at 1 p.m. - Summer Reading Kickoff
 Thursday, July 9 at 10 a.m. - Summer Storytime (Registration Required)
TEEN HAPPENINGS
 Tuesday, June 16, June 30, and July 7 at 4 p.m. - Battletech Club
 Saturday, June 20, at 11 a.m. - Book Nerds, Heartstopper Volume 1 by Alice Oseman
ADULT BOOK CLUBS
 Monday, June 22 at 6:30 p.m. - Plot Twisters, Where He Can't Find You by Darcy Coates

ADULT HAPPENINGS
 Monday, June 15, June 22, June 29, and July 6 at 6:30 p.m. - Writers Accountability Group
 Wednesday, June 17, June 24, July 1, July 6 at 10 a.m. - Fiber Arts Friends
 Wednesday, June 24, July 6 at 5:45 p.m. - Fiber Arts Friends at Night
 Thursday, June 18 at 6 p.m. - Cookbook Collective, Theme TBD
 Saturday, June 20 at 10:30 a.m. - SFPL Gardeners

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Etiquette express: Making everyday interactions better

BY LEE-ANN BARKHOUSE

June is a season of new beginnings.

Across our communities, tiny kindergarten graduates proudly cross the stage, middle school students prepare for new adventures, high school seniors take their first steps toward adulthood, and college graduates launch into careers and opportunities that await them.

No matter the age, graduation is more than a ceremony. It is a milestone that marks growth, perseverance, and the start of a new chapter.

For graduates, this season often brings a mix of excitement, anticipation, uncertainty, and hope. While some people have a clear plan for what comes next, many do not, and that is perfectly okay.

One of the greatest lessons we learn in life is that our journeys rarely follow a straight line.

The world is filled with possibilities. Some opportunities arrive exactly as planned. Others appear when we least expect them. Be open to learning, exploring, and discovering what brings you joy and purpose.

As you move into your next chapter, be patient with yourself. New routines, unfamiliar environments, and changing responsibilities can feel uncomfortable at first. Growth often begins with uncertainty. Give yourself permission to

learn, adjust, and find your footing.

For parents, grandparents, family members, mentors, and friends, graduation is a time of both celebration and reflection. We take pride in the accomplishments of those we love while recognizing that a new journey is about to begin. It is a reminder to savor life's milestones, cherish the memories, and embrace the opportunities that lie ahead.

This graduation season, take a moment to celebrate how far you've come and embrace the opportunities that await in your next chapter. Whether you are receiving a diploma, cheering from the audience, or supporting someone you love, remember that every ending creates the opportunity for a new beginning.

Congratulations to the Class of 2026 and to graduates of every age! Your next chapter is waiting to be written.

Q. I am attending a graduation party for my friend's child, but I do not know the graduate very well. What is an appropriate gift?

A. Cash and gift cards are always appreciated because they allow the graduate to purchase what they need most. If

you prefer something more personal, consider a journal, a quality pen, a book on personal growth or etiquette, or another practical item they can use as they begin their next chapter. Thoughtful and useful gifts are always appreciated

Q. My child's friends are graduating. Do I need to buy gifts for all of them?

A. No. There is no expectation that you purchase gifts for every graduate you know. It is perfectly acceptable to give gifts only to those with whom you or your family have a close relationship. A heartfelt card and sincere congratulations are always meaningful.

Q. I am unable to attend a graduation party. Should I still send a gift?

A. A gift is not required if you cannot attend. Sending a congratulatory card is a thoughtful way to acknowledge the graduate's achievement. If you are particularly close to the graduate or family, you may choose to send a

ETIQUETTE
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Thriving after gray divorce



Mark Freeman, CEPA

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There's a growing trend of divorce among those ages 50 and older, often called "gray divorce." While finding yourself in this situation can feel overwhelming, it also can be an opportunity to reclaim your independence and create a life that reflects your dreams and values.

Today, one-third (36%) of divorcing adults are 50 or older (The Journals of Gerontology, 2022) and 77% of women who experienced gray divorce remain single 10 years after divorce ("Repartnering following gray divorce," 2019). While that might sound surprising, many women view this as a time to focus on goals, dreams and well-being without compromise.

Of course, there are financial realities to consider. Women older than 50 often experience a 45% drop in their standard of living after divorce (compared to 21% for men), and household income can fall by 23% to 40% in the first year ("The Economic Consequences of Gray Divorce for Women and Men," 2020). So, building financial confidence isn't just important; it's empowering.

If you are 50 or older and recently divorced, take the following steps with your financial

advisor. You don't have to do it all at once; small steps can help lead to greater financial security over time.

- 1. Find a financial advisor who truly listens.** If you've ever felt unheard or dismissed, don't settle. Your future deserves someone who respects your voice.
- 2. Get clear on your finances.** List your assets, debts, income and expenses to understand your financial situation — the first step toward taking control.
- 3. Create a flexible plan.** Include your current needs, short-term goals and retirement aspirations. Instead of feeling intimidated, you can let a financial advisor help make this simple and manageable.
- 4. Learn about money.** Read, attend workshops and join online communities focused

on women and finance. Every bit of knowledge adds confidence.

- 5. Build an emergency fund.** Work toward having three to six months of living expenses in a low-risk, liquid account. This may take gradual, consistent contributions, but ultimately, this cushion can help provide a sense of security as you navigate your new circumstances.
- 6. Review insurance and your employer benefits.** Make sure your medical insurance coverage is adequate. Consider long-term care insurance to help preserve your retirement assets.
- 7. Estate planning.** Work with an attorney to review beneficiary designations on bank and brokerage accounts while updating your will, powers of attorney and, as needed, a revocable living trust.

8. Social Security. If you were married 10 years or longer, understand your rights to Social Security benefits from your ex-spouse.

Rather than being the end, gray divorce can represent a new chapter. The future is yours to shape, and it can be as bold, bright and fulfilling as you want it to be.

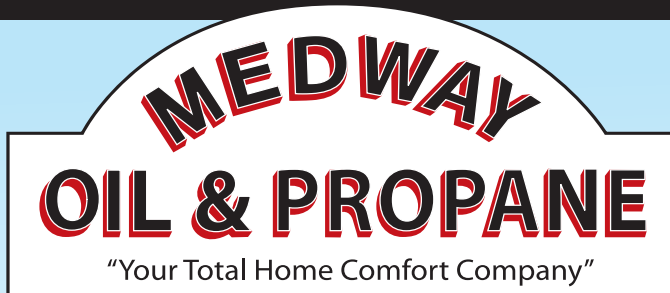
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ETIQUETTE

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gift, though it is not expected.

Q. Is it acceptable to attend a graduation party without bringing a gift?

A. Yes. While many guests choose to bring a gift or card, your presence and good wishes are what matter most. Never allow concerns about a gift to prevent you from celebrating someone's accomplishment.

Q: What should I write in a graduation card?

A. Keep it simple and sincere. Share your congratulations, express your confidence in the graduate, and offer encouragement for the future. A few heartfelt words often mean more than a lengthy message.

Etiquette Tip of the Month

When congratulating a graduate, make it personal. A sincere message highlighting a strength, accomplishment, or positive quality is often remembered long after the gifts are opened.

Warm regards,
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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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.

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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 com-

mercial 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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Business spotlight

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

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!

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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.

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SPORTS

Northbridge Softball

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY, STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Having finished with a .500 record last spring, the Northbridge softball team found themselves in the Division 4 Softball Tournament squaring off against number 9 South Hadley in the Round of 32. Unfortunately, the Rams, who were awarded a 24th seed based on their record and rankings, fell 2-0 in the first round of the tournament. This year, after being realigned into the CMAC (Central Mass Athletic Conference), the Rams once again finished around .500, posting a 10-9 final regular-season record.

“With the season finished, we are now awaiting the rankings to come out,” Northbridge Coach Dave Mills said. “We’ve been hovering around 20-23 pretty much since the beginning of the season and should end up in that area. We are probably not going to

get a home game with that type of ranking.”

Getting a ranking in the low 20s after a 10-9 record will be due to

in providing the leadership to the rest of the squad. Natalie Fasold, who plays second base, and Kallie Tevepaugh patrol centerfield for Northbridge. Tevepaugh is not only a top-notch defensive player in the outfield, but she is also the team’s leadoff hitter.

“All four players have improved greatly over the last five years for us,” the Rams Coach said. “That’s what you’re hoping for when players join the team, especially as eighth graders – you want them to improve.”

A newcomer to the team has totally surprised the coaching staff. Eighth grader Alliana Jimenze has been a solid asset to the team at third base, while also contributing to the batting. The youngster leads the team in batting with a .520 average through Northbridge’s 19 games.

“I brought her up near the end of the season last year as a seventh grader to fill in for us,” Mills said. “We knew that she was a talented player and would be a solid fielder for us this year, but her bat has been explosive, and that was something we were not aware of.”

Sophomore Isabelle Stanley has also contributed to the team’s success playing a defensive first base for Northbridge. The second-year starter has not only shown she can flash the leather to the position; she has also provided the team with some power at the plate, where she has hit three home runs this spring.

As the Rams await their seeding fate in the Division 4 Softball Tournament, Mills has been getting his team ready for the post-season when it finally arrives for Northbridge.

“Once you get into the tournament, the sky is the limit. You need to continue to work hard, stay focused and motivated, and you’ll be fine,” the Rams’ coach said. “What basically happens at this time of the season is the team that makes the fewer mistakes wins. We can field and hit just as good as any team in the tournament, and if we can execute when we have runners on the bases, then we’ll do well.”

Once they get their seeding, Mills and his team are hoping that their skill will take them past the first round and hopefully deep into the Division 2 Tournament.



Congratulations to the Uxbridge Public Schools' graduating class of 2026!



Hats off to the Uxbridge Public School's graduating class of 2026. On May 29, seniors completed the annual tradition of visiting the schools, teachers, and mentors of their early years at Whittin Intermediate School and Taft. You may have heard them

being escorted through town by the Uxbridge Police Department; these seniors got the send-off they deserve. Well done, Class of 2026; best of luck in your futures!

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TALES FROM BEYOND

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Rachel Burton of Manchester, Vermont

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

The New England vampire scare that took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is widely known in some parts of the region. Public aware-

ness of this strange time in New England history has grown with books, documentaries, movies on the subject. Some historians claim the panic and its related attempts to curtail the creatures of the night took place even into the twentieth

century.

The first known recorded vampire case occurred in Willington, Connecticut in 1784. The case of Rachel Burton of Manchester, Vermont, took place nine years later and is one of the earliest recorded cases in the region.

In 1789, Captain Isaac Burton married Rachel Harris. She was a strikingly beautiful woman with a charming personality. About a year into their marriage, her health began to rapidly decline, and she grew more ill with each passing day. She was soon diagnosed with consumption (tuberculosis), which took her to her grave.

Within a short time following Rachel's death, the captain married his second wife, Hulda Powell. She, too, was a good-looking woman with an affable nature. Soon, however, Hulda began to show symptoms of the same dreaded affliction that took Isaac's first wife. Hulda's strength and vigor were waning fast, and something had to be done without delay.

It was then that a strange belief took hold of the family and friends of Captain Burton. Based on other stories they had heard, they concluded that the first wife was

coming back from the grave and feeding on the lifeblood of Hulda. Perhaps it was revenge for the captain remarrying so quickly, or it was, more likely, the work of a vampire. The word vampire was not used at the time. The dead were not thought to rise from the grave in the dark bowers of the night. It was their spirit or ghost that would leave the tomb and prey upon the living, then return to nourish the body that lay in repose. As long as the body remained in whole within its grave, the spirit would continue to make its nightly rounds.

The townsfolk feared that it was Rachel's spirit that was leaving the tomb and feeding upon Hulda before returning to the grave each morning. Family and friends pleaded that Rachel's corpse must be disinterred and her vitals removed, then burned. This ritual, already practiced in a few other places in New England, would surely exorcise the demon that wreaked havoc upon the Burton family.

In February 1793, residents gathered at Rachel's grave and began the task of ridding the family of its vampire. Rachel had been buried for three years when she

was disinterred. It is reported that almost 1,000 people showed up for the gruesome event. Her vitals were cut out and taken to the forge of blacksmith Jacob Mead, where they were reduced to ash. Timothy Mead, Jacob's minister brother, blessed the remains in an attempt to purge the demon that was sucking the life from Hulda. This form of medicine did not work, unfortunately, as Hulda succumbed to the dreaded consumption on September 6, 1793.

In many similar cases around New England, the sick were given a concoction of medicine mixed with the ashes of the cremated organs. It is not recorded whether Hulda was administered such a potion to imbibe. Folklore and superstition played a vital part in the fear that gripped New England during this period. There was no cure for consumption, so when medicine failed, superstition took over, and several practices of exorcising suspected vampires became common.

The ways of the New England vampire were strange, but not nearly as strange as the cures carried out in hopes of eradicating their deadly "bite."



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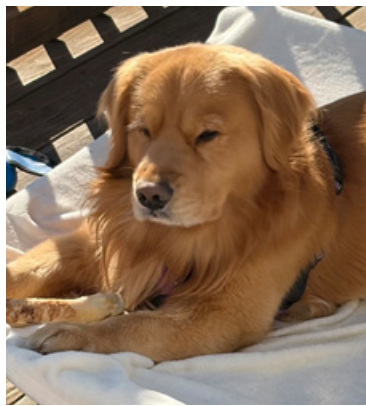


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LIVING WITH LUKE

amyleclaire@hotmail.com

The moments we choose to keep

BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

Spring has officially arrived, and Luke is feeling it.

He announces the season with bold grandeur—shedding the cocoon of his blankets and bursting into the yard as if he’s been personally invited by the sun. Within seconds, he’s airborne in spirit if not in fact, tearing across the grass with the unmistakable swagger of James Brown.

“I feel good,” I imagine him singing. “You knew that I would.”

He tests the edges of the yard like a seasoned explorer, sprinting just shy of the boundary line, flirting with freedom but never quite crossing it. And just when I think he’s finished, he doubles back for more.

“Excuse me while I christen



the grass with my extraordinary scent.”

He lowers his head to the grass and smears the grass with the side of his face. The result is equal parts impressive and foolish. Then he shakes the earth from his head and stares up at me. “Need something?”

“Luke,” I answer with a jangle

of his leash. “Let’s go for a walk.”

He stops instantly. For a brief, hopeful second, I think I’ve won. Then his eyes narrow with the defiance of a confident Golden. “Freedom!”

Aretha Franklin channels in.

He darts toward the far edge of the yard and reappears with a Frisbee clamped triumphantly in



his mouth.

“You’d rather play?” I try. “Okay. Drop it for mummy to throw.”

Somewhere in the background of my mind, my to-do list flickers to life—emails unanswered, errands undone, the quiet pressure of a day already spoken for. Time, suddenly, feels accounted for.

“I dare you,” Luke seems to reply, leaning just out of reach.

My lower back offers another perspective. Enough of this. You’re too darn old.

“Mummy’s not going to play if you can’t drop it,” I tell him, extending an arm for a final scoop. “Give me the Frisbee, please.”

He considers my tone. Then, with perfect comedic timing, turns his head away.

Negotiations have ended.

I know this game—tug-of-war, keep-away, a test of endurance I didn’t sign up for today. I do the practical thing. I go inside.

From the bay window, I watch

him. At first, he pauses, as if registering my absence. But it doesn’t take long. He lowers the Frisbee, paws at it, flips it, digs around it—transforming a nine-dollar toy into an entire universe of possibility. A new game blooms like a June rose. The writer in me considers potential titles: Bury-and-rescue? The improvisation of Joy?

Clearly, he doesn’t need me for this game.

And yet.

Standing there, separated by glass and intention, I feel the small, unmistakable weight of the choice I’ve made. Independence is a good thing—his and mine. The list matters. The day moves forward whether I join him or not.

But watching him—fully absorbed, wholly present, asking nothing more of the moment than to live inside it—I begin to question my math.

Of all the tasks waiting for me, none feel quite as immediate as the one I declined.

The list will still be there when I return.

But this version of Luke—the one who believes spring is something to celebrate at full speed—won’t wait forever.

I step back outside, take the frisbee from his eager mouth, and send it sailing—watching it rise and arc through the open air like a small, bright permission slip, reminding me that sometimes the highest things we throw are the moments we choose to keep.

Write to Amy – amyleclaire@hotmail.com

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Proficient

Ayden Bressen, Holden Godfrin, Logan Kaminski, Camryn Forbes, Sean Vitale, Alex Robertson, Michael Reade, Jason Hernandez

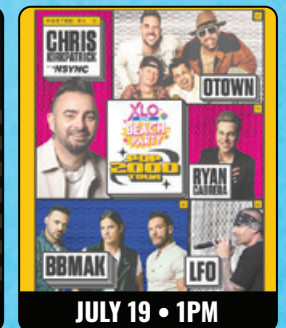
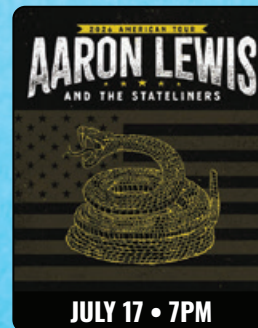


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Engine Knocks, Dead Clocks and Dirty Odors

Q. When I wear my eyeglasses that tint in the sun and then get into my car, the tint disappears due to something related to the windshield. Why can't manufacturers address this issue instead of drivers having to buy sunglasses?

A. Glasses that darken in sunlight (photochromic lenses) react to ultraviolet (UV) light. Most modern vehicle windshields, due to their laminated construction, filter out a significant amount of UV light. This prevents the lenses from activating. Windshields are de-

signed this way not only for UV protection but also because the laminated glass and bonding adhesive contribute to the vehicle's structural rigidity, roof-crush protection, and airbag support. As far as I am aware, there are no modern vehicles that do not filter UV light through the windshield.

Q. I have a 2009 Jeep Grand Cherokee Laredo with a 3.7-liter V6 engine that is making a strange noise. It starts fine and drives normally, but after about a 15-minute drive, if I shut it off and let it sit for around 10 minutes, it makes a hammer-

ing noise when restarted. The noise changes with engine speed. Any thoughts?

A. A technician would need to listen to the engine using a mechanic's stethoscope to pinpoint the source of the noise. Based on common issues with the 3.7-liter V6, a likely cause is a worn rocker arm or lash adjuster. If the noise has been present for an extended period and left unaddressed, the camshaft may also be damaged and require replacement.

Q. My wife has a 2003 Toyota Corolla with only 70,000 miles. The clock has stopped working. Do you have any suggestions?

A. The clock is a standalone component and is not connected to other vehicle computers. After verifying that all relevant fuses are intact and there are no wiring issues, the most likely cause is clock failure. A common issue is a cold solder joint on the circuit board. You could attempt to have the

circuit board resoldered, or you can replace the clock with a new or used unit.

Q. Do fuel additives break down over time if they are stored in a sealed, unopened bottle? I found an old bottle of Volkswagen Multipurpose Gas Additive (G 001 780 M3) that's about 7-8 years old. It was recommended for my 2012 VW Turbo Beetle. Should I still use it?

A. I spoke with an engineer from Sta-Bil who indicated their additives have roughly a five-year shelf life. It's reasonable to assume the Volkswagen additive is similar. While it likely won't cause harm if it has remained sealed and appears normal, its effectiveness may be significantly reduced—much like expired medication. Using a fresh bottle would be the smarter and safer choice.

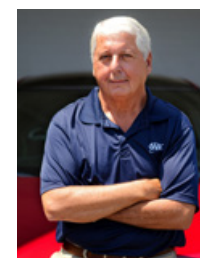
Q. I was just given a car, which I'm grateful for, but it smells terrible—a mix of an ashtray and a litter box. What can I do?

A. I've had good results using an ozone generator to remove stubborn odors. These devices are commonly used in hotels, but they can irritate the throat and lungs of chemically sensitive individuals and may degrade rubber seals if overused. As an alternative, I recently tried an aerosol odor-eliminating fogger from Mothers Car Care Products,

which claims to eliminate up to 99 percent of odors and has worked well in my experience.

Q. I'm looking to buy a new SUV. How does the Ford Explorer compare to the Toyota Highlander and Kia Telluride?

A. The Toyota Highlander has an excellent reputation for long-term reliability and strong resale value. The Kia Telluride stands out for its upscale, spacious interior and its impressive 10-year/100,000-mile powertrain warranty. Historically, Ford has trailed Toyota and Kia in reliability, but the Explorer has improved as of late and offers stronger performance, more engine choices, and advanced technology features. If you plan to keep a vehicle for three years or less, the Ford Explorer is a solid choice. If long-term ownership and peace of mind are priorities, the Toyota Highlander or Kia Telluride may be better options. Ultimately, test-drive all three, explore the technology, and choose the one that best fits your needs and preferences.



BY JOHN PAUL

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REAL ESTATE

Did you try to buy a home last year but end up pressing pause?

Maybe you couldn't find a home that really fit your needs. Or maybe the ones you liked just weren't affordable.



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

Those were the top two reasons buyers gave up on their search in 2025. But this Spring, there's one trend that could help fix both of those frustration points: more homes are hitting the market. The number of fresh listings. Data shows there are nearly 2x as many new listings hitting the market today as there were just 3 months ago. Those are homes the seller just put up for sale.

This is a significant rise, and while we usually see an uptick as we head into the busiest time of the year, this increase was bigger than normal. New listings jumped

21.2% from February to 439,000, a larger-than-typical seasonal surge. March typically sees the biggest month-over-month jump in new listings of the entire buying season, averaging an 18% increase since 2017; this year it exceeded 20%. That means more sellers are jumping back into the market, and that's giving buyers more fresh options to choose from. So, if you feel like you have seen everything out there and still nothing was quite right, this may be your moment. With that many "just listed" homes, one of them could be exactly what you've been searching for. This trend is happening across most of the country, so you should have more options pretty much wherever you are.

Earlier this year, the Northeast had fewer new listings because winter storms delayed sellers from putting their homes on the market. But now, that region is catching up fast. In March, new listings jumped across nearly every state, especially in the Northeast, helping drive a strong national rebound.

What rising inventory means for you. Right now, there are almost a million homes for sale nationwide. That's up over 8% compared to last year. With that many homes on the market, there's a much better chance something will fit what you're looking for, especially with so many new options being added right now. One of the most encouraging signals heading into the spring home-buying season is the improvement in for-sale inventory levels compared with last year... More homes on the market give buyers greater choice and, combined with improved buying power, expand the range of homes they can realistically consider.

More fresh listings are hitting the market right now, and that's creating real opportunity. If you put your search on hold last year, this Spring may be the time to jump back in. Connect with a member of The Marzeotti Group or a trusted local real estate agent to see what's newly available in your area.

Eight Great Years for BVT Student Council Consecutively Earning National Gold Council of Excellence Award

For its exemplary record of leadership, service, and activities supporting both the school and community, the Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT) Student Council has been recognized as a 2026 National Gold Council of Excellence by the National Association of Student Councils. This marks the eighth consecutive year BVT's Student Council has earned this top award.

To qualify for the National Council of Excellence Award, a student council must meet various criteria, such as crafting a written constitution, conducting regular meetings, and adopting a democratic election process. Additionally, it demonstrates successful sponsorship and participation in leadership development and activities that serve its school and the broader community.

"Our students are our best ambassadors, and they continue to impress us through their col-

laborative efforts," said Superintendent-Director Mr. Anthony E. Steele II. "The Student Council's dedication and consistent, award-winning efforts to improve both their school and local communities through leadership and service have earned distinction."

"We are also proud of our advisors, Danielle Cann and Megan Wilk, who guide and empower our council members through annual service projects and fundraising efforts that truly make a difference in the lives of our

families and community," added Mr. Steele.

This national recognition honors student councils that demonstrate exemplary leadership, service, and commitment to their schools and communities. Earning this prestigious award for eight consecutive years is a significant achievement for BVT and its Student Council members.

To learn more about the BVT Student Council, visit www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/studentcouncil.

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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@theyankeexpress.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 informa-

tional 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 shop-

ping 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. The Church Street Sidewalk Sale continues to be a reminder of what makes small-town communities so special, neighbors supporting neighbors and local businesses working together to create something meaningful for the community.

SATURDAY, JULY 18

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

• Come and celebrate America's 250th with St. Patrick's Parish, 7 East Street, Whitinsville on Saturday, July 18th from 5pm - 9pm. They will be serving dynamites and ice-cold beer prior to the Northbridge fireworks! The menu will also include hot dogs, chips, soft drinks, and treats. Take-out options will also be available. FMI 508-234-5656. Payment by cash or VENMO. The rain date for this event is July 19th.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15

• The Whittin Community Center (WCC) is excited to invite all automotive en-

HAPPENINGS!
continued on page 19

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Run to Remember

On Sunday, members of the Uxbridge Police and Uxbridge Fire Department participated in Boston's Run To Remember. This annual 5-mile or half-marathon run through Boston honors first responders, bringing together participants from all over the country.

This year, the Uxbridge Police Department and Fire Department ran in memory of Stephen LaPorta.

The members of the Police and Fire Departments love and miss Steve dearly.

Cheers and high-fives, along with camaraderie and friendship, motivated everyone to push through to the finish! Congrats, guys and gals!

Post and photos taken from the Uxbridge Police Facebook Page.



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HAPPENINGS!

continued from page 18

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 Whitin Park, 60 Main St., Whitinsville. This year's Cars In The Park promises an unforgettable showcase of classic and contemporary cars, trucks, and motorcycles. Participants can vie for the prestigious Best In Show title and 25 other trophy categories, People's Choice Award, with the first 100 registered vehicles again this year receiving exclusive Show Dash Plaques and Goodie Bags. The event will also feature a selection of food trucks, exhibit vendors, a 50/50 raffle, and live entertainment, ensuring a fun-filled day for the entire family. Entry is complimentary for all spectators, making it the perfect summer outing. Last year's event had a turnout of over 300 cars! Vehicle owners are encouraged to register early and take advantage of a special \$10 donation fee before July 15th, after which the registration donation will increase to \$20. Pre-registration closes on August 12, 2026. Registration for vehicles is available online at www.WhitinCommunityCenter.com, in-person at our Member Services Desk, or on the day of the event. Additionally, we are now welcoming applications from exhibit and food vendors looking to be part of this exciting event. Funds raised during Cars In The Park will directly support the Whitin Community Center's mission as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to enhancing the health, well-being, and community spirit of the Blackstone Valley. For more information on vehicle and vendor registration, volunteering, or any other inquiries, please visit our website or contact Tammy Bodwell, Director of Operations, at Tammy.Bodwell@OurGym.org or call 508-234-8184 ext 118.

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