

# The Yankee *Xpress*

SOUTH EDITION: Charlton, Dudley & Webster

June 12, 2026



Emily Hultgren swings for the fences. Photo submitted

## Shepherd Hill softball is moving up

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

At the time of this writing, the Shepherd Hill softball team was sitting at 16-3 after ending Tantasqua's three-game winning streak with a 6-4 victory. Last spring the Rams finished with

a similar record, but with a lower power ranking, finding themselves with a 31 seed in the Division 2 Softball Tournament. Shepherd Hill dispatched their first-round foe, Longmeadow 7-0, but then fell to Hopkinton, the number two seed, in the second round, something the Rams have been

accustomed to over the last few years.

"This team always seems to be able to win our first-round game but then loses in the second

**SOFTBALL**  
continued on page 2

## Community Cat Connection receives \$1,500 grant

BY JANET STOICA  
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

If you have a Massachusetts "I'm Animal Friendly" license plate, the Community Cat Connection (CCC) appreciates you.

The nonprofit, no-kill cat shelter located at 289 Thompson Road in Webster, received a \$1,500 grant thanks to vehicle owners who have purchased these specialty plates. Fees paid for the "I'm Animal Friendly" license plates support spay and neuter services for cats, dogs, and rabbits across the Commonwealth.

"This funding will help to expand our capacity to save additional cats," said Barbara Hasset, a long-time CCC volunteer. "The Community Cat Connection continues to effectively serve the needs of local communities by providing this vital feline rescue and shelter service with a dedicated group of volunteers, passionate in the belief that all cats deserve a loving, lifelong home and who are also committed to doing everything in their power to alleviate feline suffering by providing medical care, love, and shelter until adoption.

"Preventing one litter today saves countless lives tomorrow," continued Hasset. "Our goal isn't



just to rescue cats - it's to prevent homelessness in the first place."

The Pet Plate Program is administered by the Massachusetts Animal Coalition (MAC), a statewide nonprofit organization comprised of animal welfare professionals and dedicated volunteers. MAC works to strengthen the animal welfare community by providing informational and financial resources as well as opportunities for professional growth, collaboration, and networking - all with the goal of improving the lives of companion animals throughout Massachusetts.

MAC distributes funds raised through sales of these specialty plates, which in turn provide critical funding each year to organizations that demonstrate the ability to deliver accessible spay and neuter services in the state. To

**GRANT**  
continued on page 5



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## The Yankee *Xpress*



**SOFTBALL**  
continued from page 2

round,” said Rams Head Coach John Snyder. “We just haven’t been able to get past it. This year we’ve moved up from Mid Wach B to A, so our power rankings should be better.”

Currently the Rams are ranked number three in Division 2, but after losing two of their last three contests, prior to the Tantasqua win, it looked like Shepherd Hill could fall out of that three spot and possibly as low as five when the new rankings are released. If they do happen to drop, the Tantasqua win and a good showing in their season finale against Doherty will surely help them to move back up in the rankings.

Sitting at 16-3 at this time is somewhat of a surprise for Snyder. The Shepherd Hill coach really did not expect to be here despite having a veteran team take to the field. The Rams had five seniors, 10 juniors and only one freshman don the uniform this spring.

“Moving up I figured that it would be a little tougher, but we’ve been able to win a couple of extra inning games,” the coach said. “At one point we won 12 straight, which was a surprise but also gave the girls confidence. Having lost two out of three I was hoping that we were not heading in the wrong

directions as the State Tournament was getting closer.”

Shepherd Hill opened the season with a 9-8 loss to Auburn, while also falling to Wachusett and Hopedale near the end of the season. But the team has been able to stay close to their opponents so it should help them when the final power rankings are revealed before the tournament.

Leading the Rams this season has been junior ace Madi Carpenter. The Shepherd Hill hurler has been able to rack up 125 strikeouts prior to the Tantasqua game. According to Snyder, the junior has decent speed in the circle and has been effective with her pitches. Although Carpenter had a tough stretch for about a week when she was sick, she can still possibly top the 200-strikeout mark. She needs to put together good games in the team’s final two regular season games as well as in the tournament. Prior to the Tantasqua game, Carpenter had a career 255 strikeouts.

While Carpenter was delivering in the circle, Shepherd Hill had not one but two 100-hit seniors at the plate: shortstop Emily Hultgren and first-baseman Annie Hast. Hultgren bats third in the lineup and with decent power has delivered 132 hits during her Shepherd Hill career while Hast reached 110 hits. Both athletes have been with the team since the eighth grade and saw some playing time their first

year with the team.

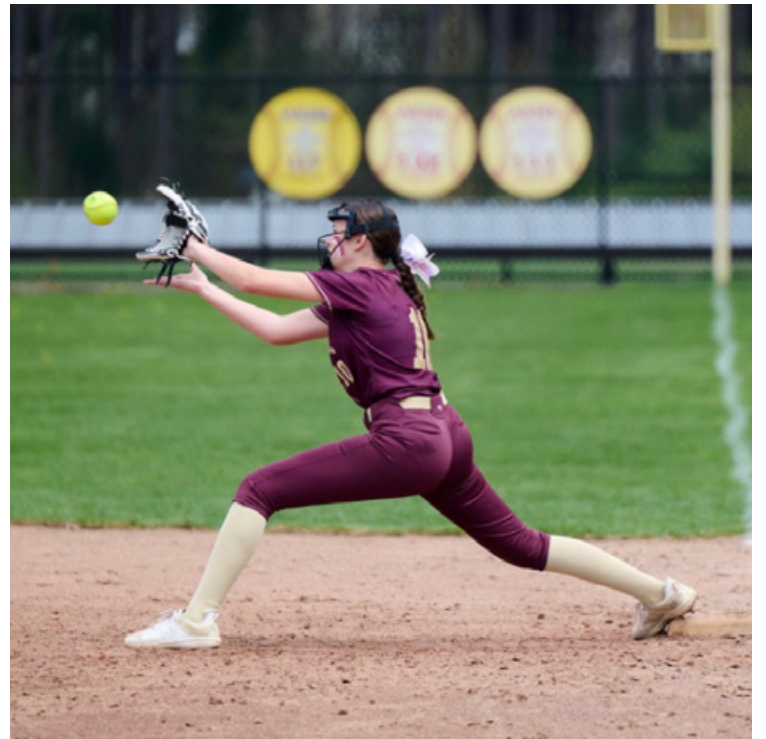
“Emily and Annie are also both captains and the team follows their lead,” Snyder said. “Thus far they are holding up their end of the bargain.”

Another solid hitter at the plate for the Rams is Olivia Jankowski. The junior can provide the power with her bat. Last spring she was named to the Mid Wach All-Star team and Snyder believes she should make the team once again this year. Playing third-base and left field, the junior has four home runs, two triples and a bunch of doubles while batting over .500 through 18 games.

Usually, Snyder likes to have a few freshmen on his roster to begin getting them ready for the future. This season he had so many talented upperclassmen returning that he was only able to allow one freshman to grace his roster. Needing a back-up catcher, it was Ava Cincotta who made the team. The first-year varsity player not only plays catcher but can suit up at any position on the field. She also possesses speed and is a good base runner, which allows the Rams coach to insert her as a courtesy runner.

With their final game still left to be played, Shepherd Hill will be awaiting their final rankings into the Division 2 State Tournament.

“We may not be a legitimate top-seeded team, but once you get into



Annie Hast stretches to get the out. Photo submitted

the tournament anyone can win at any time, Snyder said. “We’re keeping our fingers crossed. The top teams in our division are really strong, but our girls are all in, looking to get better while learning.”

Snyder firmly believes that his team has been learning from playing those top-notch teams throughout the regular season. If the Rams go out and play defense while delivering the pitching, Shep-

herd Hill should be fine.

“Playing those tougher teams, we are going to need to generate runs if we want to win and cannot make errors against them,” he said. “We strive to work on these things to get better – we know that we can succeed if we play to our capability.”

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# Memorial Day, May 25, 2026

BY RICHARD CAZEAULT

*Richard Cazeault was meant to deliver his speech at the Webster Memorial Day observance. However, that did not occur due to inclement weather. His abridged speech is printed here. His complete speech can be read on theyankeeexpress.com.*

**"O**nly when we face the impossible, and experience the unbearable, do we find out who we truly are," wrote Ukrainian-born poet Vironika Tugaleva.

Those words describe who we are.

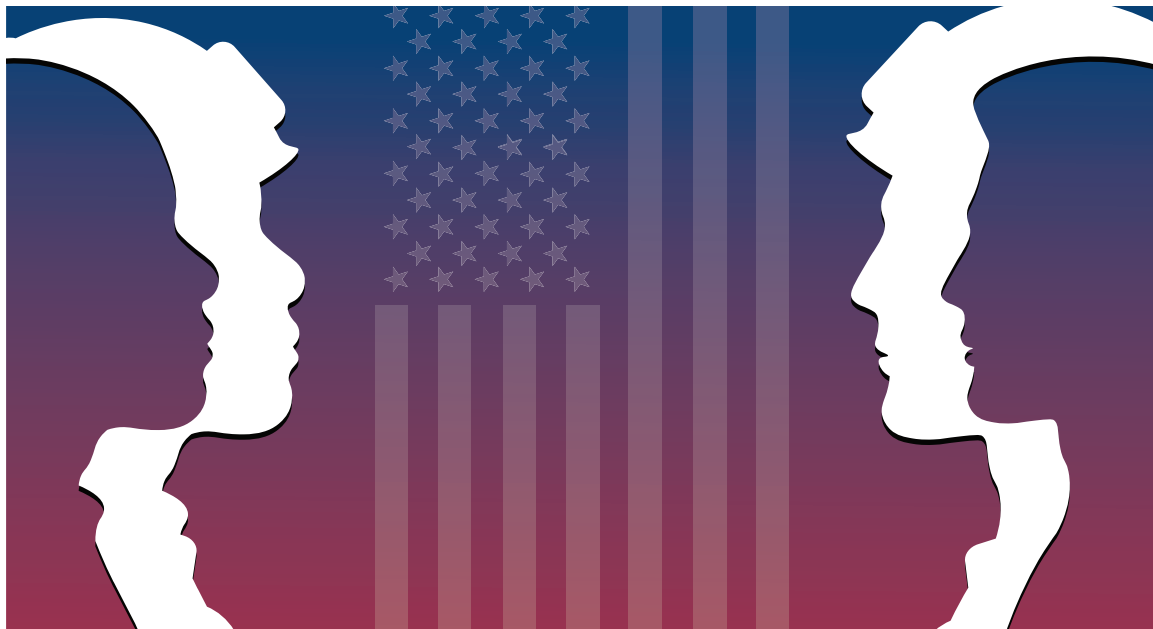
But today, Memorial Day, they describe who they were.

Our dear Citizen Soldiers who gave everything for the United States—for all of US.

This year we celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the founding of the United States of America, due to their sacrifices.

It cost blood and treasure. Ordinary people served as soldiers. Some came home. Some did not.

About fifty years ago, after returning from Vietnam, I settled in East Killingly, a small village in Connecticut. There, I joined the Memorial Day Committee.



Its purpose was simple: To remember those who did not return.

I helped place flags in 17 cemeteries—hidden and remote, some deep in the woods. The first cemetery was a long walk in. There was one veteran's grave. A Revolutionary War soldier.

Two hundred years earlier, he helped create this nation. As I placed the flag, I said, "Thank you. You are not alone. You will never be forgotten."

I have never forgotten that grave.

When I was a boy, my father's youngest brother went to Korea. That was when I learned my father had served in World War II with his brothers. I was too young to understand war, but war was already part of my family.

As the years passed, loss came closer. My father's friend's son in a far-off valley in Vietnam died in battle near the Cambodian border. Then a neighbor. Then classmates.

Each year, another name. Another family changed forever.

In 1970, I stood on a hill in Vietnam waiting for choppers to take us into Cambodia. From that hill, I could see the valley where my father's friend's son had died fighting five years earlier. Suddenly, memory became reality.

Over the next year, we fought as a unit, but more than that, we became family. We lived together. Twenty-four hours a day. Seven

days a week. Always in the shadow of death.

When you lose someone, you do not just lose a soldier. You lose family. You lose part of your heart. When they are placed on a chopper for their final ride home, your heart goes with them.

They are not alone.

They will never be forgotten.

Since 1776, more than 1 million Americans have died in service to this country. Behind the name of each fallen is a family, and loved ones.

This sacrifice is a debt we cannot repay. But we can try by being better citizens in their memory.

As a veteran, it is impossible not to remember them every day. My heart remains with them.

We are who we are because of who we have lost.

They faced the impossible. They endured the unbearable. They gave everything so that we could stand here free.

May their sacrifice guide us – today and always.

*A Vietnam veteran, Richard Cazeault served with the 4th Infantry Division and the 101st Airborne Division (1970-1971) as an airborne infantryman. He has regarded his role as a family man and citizen soldier as his highest calling.*

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# Dudley Annual Town Election set for June 15

The Dudley Annual Town Election will be held on Monday, June 15 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Dudley Municipal Complex, 71 West Main Street. Early voting was held in the main lobby of the complex on Monday, June 8 from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. and from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. on June 9 and 10.

The town finance team, comprised of the town administrator, treasurer, principal assessor, accountant and assistant town administrator, created a webpage dedicated to the Proposition 2½ override question posed on the ballot at [dudleyma.gov/522/FY27-](http://dudleyma.gov/522/FY27-)

## Override-Information

The town is asking for a \$1,985,187 override, which would increase the average residential tax bill from approximately \$4,526 a year to \$5,012. Residents can find a feature to determine the estimated tax impact for their particular property on the website.

The webpage explains the FY2027 budget in detail. Although the town passed a balanced FY2027 budget at its Annual Town Meeting on May 18, that budget was balanced by reducing operating accounts and using all available reserve/stabilization funds. While

this approach avoided immediate staff cuts and layoffs, it did not solve the town's recurring revenue issue, and it would leave Dudley without a meaningful reserve to respond to emergencies, repairs, fuel, utilities, health insurance, retirement, and other cost increases during the upcoming fiscal year.

As explained on the website, the override is not intended to grow town government. It is intended to stabilize existing services after the FY2027 budget was balanced through deep operational reductions and depletion of reserves. The goal is to maintain what the town

already provides, not expand it.

On the election side, the ballot holds one contested race: incumbent Kerry Cyganiewicz Sr. is challenged by Cynthia M. Iwanski for Select Board. Running unopposed on the ballot are Conrad M. Allen for Assessor, Maureen Chicker for Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee, Richard P. Clark for Bay Path Regional School Committee, Pamela M. Humphrey for Planning Board, Spenser Lee Bell for Planning Board, Kathleen E. Horne for Library Trustee, Heather B. Bowes for Library Trustee. The ballot holds no

candidates for Moderator, Board of Health or Water-Sewer Commission.

Residents may see a change to the traffic flow and parking at the Municipal Complex on election day due to storm water management construction. Those requiring the use of an elevator are asked to park in the upper lot, use the second-floor entrance (opposite side of building from main entrance) and use the elevator to the first floor. The handicapped parking near the main entrance will be accessible.

# Layers of Imagination

Booklovers' Gourmet in Webster is hosting "Layers of Imagination" from June 5 to 30 in the café gallery. This art show and sale feature the mixed media drawings by Tim Oliver.

The public is invited to a meet and greet with the artist on Saturday, June 13 from 2 to 4 p.m. Tim lives in Woodstock, CT



Barbed Wire (above); Gears (left).

and has displayed his work in the local area for many years, most recently at the Pearle L. Crawford Library in Dudley.

Artist's statement: "Art brings me satisfaction and joy and

makes me whole. I love it when my work can do a little of this for anyone else. This can be ego-filling and humbling, all at the same time. I am very grateful and have been blessed with these talents and skills, and, at age 70, I am ready for the world. I was born an artist, and I shall die an artist!"

For more information, call the bookstore at 508-949-6232. Booklovers' Gourmet is located at 72 East Main Street, Webster.

## The Yankee Xpress

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**2nd Friday:** The YankeeXpress South: Charlton, Dudley, Webster

**2nd Friday:** Blackstone Valley South: Douglas, Northbridge & Uxbridge

**4th Friday:** The YankeeXpress North: Auburn, Oxford

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

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## SOUR GRAPES

by Tim Jones



# June Events @ Charlton Public Library

For further details and to register for programs, visit the library website [charltonlibrary.org](http://charltonlibrary.org).

Additional parking is available across the street at Town Hall and at the elementary school.

The library will open at 1 pm on Wednesday, June 17.

The library will be closed Friday, June 19. The library is closed Saturdays.

## Movies @ the Library

All showings are on Tuesdays at 1:00 pm ONLY unless noted - Dexter Hall - no registration required.

June 9: THE EYES OF TAMMY FAYE. Husband and wife duo Tammy Faye and Jim Bakker

develop a religious broadcasting network, ushering bright and vivid televangelism into the 1980s. 2021. Rated PG-13. 126 minutes.

June 16: THE PATRIOT. Peaceful farmer Benjamin Martin is driven to lead the Colonial Militia during the American Revolution when a sadistic British officer murders his son. 2000. Rated R. 165 minutes.

June 23: HAMILTON. Presenting the tale of American founding father Alexander Hamilton, this filmed version of the original Broadway smash hit is the story of America then, told by America now. 2020. Rated PG-13. 160 minutes.

June 30: NATIONAL TREASURE. A modern-day fortune hunt-

er races to find an ancient treasure hidden by the Founding Fathers. 2004. Rated PG. 131 minutes.

## Play Games!

Mondays, June 15 (Cribbage), 22 (party games), 29 (Cribbage)

## CHARLTON LIBRARY

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## GRANT

continued from page 1

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in need. Learn more at [www.petplate.org](http://www.petplate.org).

If you would like to support the CCC in other ways, the shelter is in need of Purina One Kitten and Cat dry food, Temptation Treats, Friskies pate canned cat food (no fish), dryer sheets, HE laundry detergent, bleach, paper towels, Dawn dish soap, mini dust pans and brushes, liquid hand soap, hand sanitizer, 13-gallon trash bags, and cat toys. Cash donations and gift cards are always welcomed. CCC can be reached at 508-949-0779.

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<b>THE PIKE HAIRFEST</b>	<b>SEPTEMBER 6 • 12PM</b>
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A legacy of leadership and resilience

While many pause to catch their breath after earning a nursing degree, Aja Johnson St. Val is already looking toward the next horizon. On Saturday, May 9, Johnson St. Val graduated from the University of Mary Washington (UMW) in Fredericksburg, VA with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, maintaining a perfect 4.0 GPA throughout the RN to BSN program. Her academic record earned her the Excellence Award for Highest GPA, graduating with the university's Highest Distinction.

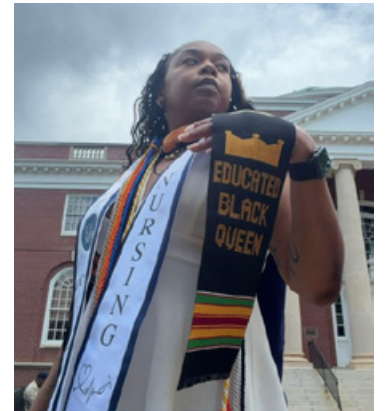
Her journey to this milestone is a testament to what she calls "being destined for leadership." A former student representative and the recipient of the 2020 Clinical Excellence Award at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy, Johnson St. Val has spent years balancing the rigors of frontline healthcare with a tireless pursuit of education.

The seeds of this success were sown during the global pandemic. As a member of the Practical Nursing Class of 2020, Johnson St. Val navigated the challenges of remote learning and virtual simulations with a resilience that faculty noted was "proactive, not reactive." During her time at Bay Path, she was inducted into the National Technical Honor Society, while also serving as a mentor to the incoming Class of 2021.

"Pandemic—how could we forget it?" she reflected. "It built my resilience. We did it until the wheels fell off. No giving up, no matter how defeated we may have felt."

After graduating from Bay Path, Johnson St. Val earned her Associate of Science in Nursing from Fairmont State University in Fairmont WVA in late 2024. She then transitioned to her bachelor's program at UMW only a month later.

At UMW, Johnson St. Val's involvement extended far beyond the classroom. She was a member of Mortar Board, a national honor society for scholarship and leadership, and a presidential member of The National Society of Leadership and Success (NSLS). Her gradu-



Aja Johnson St. Val. Photo submitted.

ation regalia featured a vibrant array of cords representing her commitment to the Black Student Association, the African American Student Union, and the Association of Student Veterans.

Perhaps most impressive is that these accolades were achieved while Johnson St. Val served full-time as the director of clinical operations, a role she has held since 2021. She also balances her career and studies with her roles as a wife and mother to two children.

The Bay Path graduate is now a seasoned professional preparing for the next level of care. True to her "no rest for the weary" mantra, Johnson St. Val has already been accepted into the Master of Science in Nursing program at UMW. She is set to begin her graduate studies in August 2026, with the goal of becoming a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMH-NP).

"Everyone says I've done so much," Johnson St. Val said. "I feel like it's just the tip of the iceberg. There is so much more to accomplish."

As she moves "onward and upward," she carries with her the mentorship and "jewels" of wisdom dropped by her professors at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy—lessons in clinical sharpness and professional grace that continue to impact the lives of her patients and peers alike.

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# Nichols College and Anna Maria College announce partnership to support students' degree completion

Nichols College and Anna Maria College have announced a partnership to transition Anna Maria's respected public safety and administration programs to Nichols, including its signature fire science program. The two institutions have finalized a proposal outlining the terms of the partnership, which will be submitted to the necessary higher education regulatory agencies. A formal approval of the plan is expected soon.

"Nichols College is committed to enabling Anna Maria College students enrolled in its fire science and other vital programs to continue on a clear and seamless pathway toward graduation," said Nichols President Bill Pieczynski. "Our proposal is intended to preserve an important regional pipeline for fire and emergency management professionals across New England.

"We will also fully support Anna Maria students in other majors we already offer such as business administration, criminal justice, psychology and sport management as they transition from their cherished institution to a new home at Nichols. We share a commitment to active, hands-on learning within a small,

close-knit community and look forward to welcoming these students to Nichols."

Anna Maria announced on April 23 of this year that it would cease academic operations at the

To facilitate quick onboarding, any Anna Maria student in good standing is guaranteed acceptance to Nichols.

end of its spring semester after 80 years of operation.

Under the terms of the proposal and subject to securing the necessary regulatory approvals, Anna Maria's in-person Bachelor of Science (B.S.) programs in fire science and emergency management; online B.S. degree completion programs in fire science and criminal justice; and online Master of Public Administration and Master of Science in criminal justice would transition to Nichols.

The Anna Maria B.S. in fire science program was the larg-

est in New England and boasted outstanding certification exam pass rates. Nichols will adopt their existing Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education Initiative (FESHE)-aligned curriculum to ensure that current Anna Maria students remain on track to graduate and that the popular and well-regarded program continues to thrive. Additionally, Nichols intends to bring on several of Anna Maria's dedicated faculty to support the transition and provide continuity for the students.

To facilitate quick onboarding, any Anna Maria student in good standing is guaranteed acceptance to Nichols.

Further, Nichols' tuition is within 1 percent of Anna Maria's, and Nichols will match each student's institutional grant up to \$32,000. Housing is available for those students who plan to reside on the college's 200-acre campus in Dudley. In addition, Anna Maria alumni will be eligible for the same 10 percent discount that Nichols alumni receive for graduate coursework

at Nichols.

"Our responsibility is to ensure that our students are able to move forward and complete their education," said Anna Maria President Sean Ryan. "Nichols has an excellent criminal justice program and is a business school widely respected for its career preparedness, leadership outcomes and commitment to students. We are confident that this

proposal with Nichols College provides a strong and stable path forward for our students."

Anna Maria students seeking information about transferring to Nichols are encouraged to visit: [www.nichols.edu/anna-maria](http://www.nichols.edu/anna-maria). The two institutions will share additional information with students, their families and the public as it is available.

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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 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.

## Local student earns Dean's List recognition at Norwich University

NORTHFIELD, Vt. (Grassroots Newswire) June 2, 2026 - Norwich University is pleased to announce that *Maria Piekarczyk*, of *Dudley, MA*, has earned Dean's List honors

for the Spring 2026 semester. Founded in 1819, Norwich University is recognized for its emphasis on experiential education and leadership development.

Dean's List recognition is awarded to full-time undergraduate students who achieve a semester grade point average of 3.4 or higher, acknowledging sustained academic achievement and dedication to scholarly success.

*About Norwich University*  
Norwich University is a diversified academic institution that educates traditional-age students and adults in a Corps of Cadets and as civilians. Norwich offers a broad selection of traditional and distance-learning programs culminating in baccalaureate and graduate degrees. Norwich University was founded in 1819 by Captain Alden Partridge of the U.S. Army and is the oldest private military college in the United States of America. Norwich is one of our nation's six senior military colleges and the birthplace of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC).  
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## CHARLTON LIBRARY

continued from page 5

12:30-2 pm - Community Meeting Room - no registration required. Beginners and experienced players are welcome. Join us to play an old favorite or learn a new game!

### Drop-in Tech Help\* - Local History Room - no registration required

Tuesdays, June 2, 9, 16 from 4:30-5:30 pm; Tuesday, June 30 from 3:30-6 pm

Do you have a few quick questions about technology? Would you like to learn how to use apps like Libby or Kanopy? Drop in and speak with Charlton Library's Digital Skills Instructor and get the dedicated support you need. If you will need more than 15 minutes of tech help, please make a one-on-one appointment.

### Threaded Together Fiber Arts Group (formerly Silver Needles Knit & Crochet Group)

Thursdays from 1-3 pm - Local History Room - no registration required

Bring your current project and relax with friends. All are welcome regardless of skill level.

### One-on-One Tech Help\*

Thursdays, June 4, 11, 25 at 4:00 or 5:00 pm - Local History Room - registration required

Do you have a more complicated question than we can cover during Drop-in Tech Help? Would you like to learn some basic email or internet skills? Make a one-on-one appointment with the Charlton Library's Digital Skills Instructor and get up to 60 minutes of dedicated support.

### The Charlton Library Genealogy Group

This friendly group of people share an interest in genealogy. We meet monthly on the first Thursday of the month from 6-7:30 in the Community Meeting Room. Meetings will alternate between general discussion topics and guest presenters. The meetings are free and open to the public.

### Getting started with Amazon\*

Tuesday, June 9, OR Thursday,

June 11, 6-7 pm - Local History Room - registration required

Curious about shopping online but not sure where to begin? This beginner-friendly workshop will introduce you to the basics of using Amazon to browse, compare, and purchase items with confidence.

### Taking & Organizing Photos\*

Thursday, June 11, 12:30-1:30 pm - Dexter Hall - registration required

In this class, we dive into the Camera app on the iPhone, exploring different features of the camera and adjustments that can be made for taking pictures in different settings. We also go into Photos and discuss organizing photos into albums. Registration is required.

### Kids Yoga with Lindsey

Fridays, June 12 & 26, 4-4:30 pm - Community Meeting Room - registration required

In these classes, we will practice breathing techniques (pranayama), yoga postures (asana), and more to help participants connect with their bodies, minds, and spirits. This focus invites kids to recognize the ability to act and behave mindfully with compassion, to be brave, to know happiness, and to find inner peace and calm. Dress comfortably, and bring water and a mat if you have one. For ages 5-11. Registration is required for each child. Caregivers may attend with children, but do not need to register. Classes are provided by Lindsey Haantrella at Haantrella Healing.

### CPL Book Discussion - Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead by Olga Tokarczuk

Thursday, June 11, 6-7 pm - Community Meeting Room - no registration required

Books are available for checkout at the adult circulation desk one month prior to discussion.

### EcoTarium Traveling Program: Animal Adaptations

Friday, June 12, 10-10:45 am - Dexter Hall - registration required

The EcoTarium's Animal Adaptations program is an interactive, educator-led session in which participants explore how animals survive through specialized structures and behaviors. The program features live ambassador animals, such as

snakes, hedgehogs, or turtles, along with natural history specimens, including pelts and skulls. Best for ages 3 and older.

### Outdoor Adventure Apps

Monday, June 15, 12:30-1:30 pm - Dexter Hall - registration required

Join us for a lecture presentation that will discuss a brief overview of a few popular mobile apps for outdoor enthusiasts. Please note, this will not cover step by step instructions for how to use any of the apps. This is for people ages 60 and up. This Senior Planet from AARP class is being offered through the Senior Planet licensing program.

### Learn Adobe Acrobat Basics\*

Monday, June 15, 1-2:30 pm - Local History Room - registration required

Today we'll be walking you through the basics of using Adobe Acrobat. We'll cover: creating a PDF from a Word file or image; creating one PDF from multiple files; adding, reordering, and removing pages; editing, adding and removing comments; exporting a PDF to a different file type.

### Save it Smart!\*

Tuesday, June 16, 6-7 pm, OR Wednesday, June 24, 10:30-11:30 am - Local History Room - registration required. Confused about saving files, photos, or important information on your device? This beginner-friendly workshop will teach you simple and practical ways to save, organize, and access your digital content.

### Author Talk: Walter Hersee

Tuesday, June 16, 6-7:30 pm - Dexter Hall - registration required

Walter J. Hersee is a historian, writer, and photographer based in Sturbridge. His book, To Defend All That Is Dear, documents for the first time the full service of every known Sturbridge soldier of the American Revolution.

### Young Artists Collective

Thursday, June 18, 5:30-6:30 pm - Storytime Room - registration required

Join the Young Artists Collective for a relaxed, creative space where young artists can experiment and grow. Each month we'll explore a different art medium—from acrylic

painting to oil pastels and more—while giving kids the freedom to create at their own pace. Participants are encouraged to bring in their own artwork or project to work on, share, or get inspired alongside other young creators. This program is intended for children ages 8-12. Please be mindful of the fact that messes and stains may occur, so please dress appropriately.

### Alzheimer's Caregivers Support Group

Thursday, June 18, 6-7:30 pm - Community Meeting Room - no registration required

The Alzheimer's Support Network Caregiver Support Group is led by Alzheimer's Care Professionals and experienced caregivers. We offer information, resources, and strategies specific to caring for someone with Alzheimer's and other dementias along with support for transitioning to different care settings. Co-sponsored by Tri-Valley and Charlton Public Library.

### Death Cafe

Thursday, June 18, 6-7:30 pm - Dexter Hall - no registration required

A Death Café is a group-directed discussion of death with no agenda, objectives or course of action, no set conclusions and no judgement. Death Cafés provide a safe environment to gather, eat cake, drink tea or coffee, and enjoy open-minded conversation about dying and death.

Questions? Email kwalker4@mac.com. The Death Cafe model was developed by Jon Underwood and Sue Barsky Reid, based on the ideas of Bernard Crettaz.

### How to Video Chat With Zoom

Monday, June 22, 10:30-11:45 am - Community Meeting Room - registration required

This is a hands-on workshop in which participants will explore joining a Zoom meeting and using meeting controls as participants (not hosts) of the meeting. If you've been curious about using Zoom this class is for you! This workshop is for people ages 60 and up. This Senior Planet from AARP class is being offered through the Senior Planet licensing program.

### Basic Adobe Lightroom Classic\*

Monday, June 22, 1:00-2:30 pm - Local History Room - registration required

Lightroom Classic is a software program by Adobe that allows you to view, manage, and edit digital photographs. Sample skills to be covered: understanding the screen elements, managing a photo library, using histograms, basic presets - quick editing, editing photos, all-over edits, cropping and aligning, basic masking (editing part of a photo).

### Calligraphy that inspired a na-

## CHARLTON LIBRARY

continued on page 11

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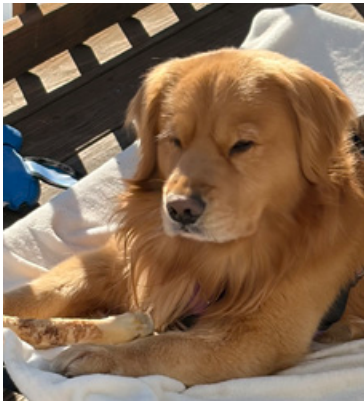
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# The moments we choose to keep

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,



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

Visit Luke on IG livingwithluke-valentino

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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

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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. 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.



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

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.

## CHARLTON LIBRARY

*continued from page 9*

### Learn to write like America's founders

Tuesday, June 23, 6:00-7:30 pm - Dexter Hall - registration required  
Who was the calligrapher who wrote the Declaration of Independence? How did they write during the American Revolution? What tools did they use? What lettering style? Can I write like they did? We will explore these questions and more in this hands-on 90-minute program with calligrapher Debby Reelitz.

### Spencer Art Reception

Tuesday, June 23, 6-7:30 pm - Community Meeting Room - no registration required  
The Community Room Gallery is featuring the artwork of Pete and Linda Spencer this month! Join us this evening for a reception to meet the artists, view the art, and enjoy some fellowship. Everyone is welcome, no registration is required.

### Save it Smart!\*

Wednesday, June 24, 10:30-11:30 am - Local History Room - registration required

Thursday, June 25, 6:00-7:00 pm - Local History Room - registration required

Confused about saving files, photos, or important information on your device? This beginner-friendly workshop will teach you simple and practical ways to save, organize, and access your digital content.

### Taking and Editing Videos\*

Wednesday, June 24, 12:30-1:30 pm - Community Meeting Room - registration required

In this class, we learn to use the Camera app to take videos. We explore settings that can be changed to adjust video quality and discuss how to take different types of videos on the iPhone. We also go into Photos to learn to edit videos.

### Movin' On Up

Wednesday, June 24, 2-3 pm - Dexter Hall - registration required  
YMCA Family & Community Partnership presents "Movin' On Up," a free Musical Puppet Show for children transitioning to preschool, kindergarten, and first grade in Fall 2026. Families with children, ages 3-6, will enjoy songs, movement, and laughs with Tom Knight and his puppet pals. Every registered child will receive a book to take home.

### Kindness Rocks

Thursday, June 25, 2-3 pm - Storytime Room - registration required  
Join us in the Storytime Room to paint a kindness-themed rock! We'll use paint markers and Sharpies to make our designs. This program is best for ages 6 and older, but younger children may attend with an adult caregiver.

### CULE: Charlton Ukulele League & Ensemble

Thursday, June 25, 6:00-8:00 pm - Community Meeting Room - no registration required


This club is a FREE, fun, low stress and entertaining way for adults 18+ to learn music together. You will be guided by experienced musicians who encourage you to

find your own level of achievement. Any questions? Email Rich at Cule5632@gmail.com.

### Gentle Flow Yoga

Tuesday, June 25, 6-7 pm - Dexter Hall - registration required  
Breathe, stretch, and unwind in this relaxing 60-minute yoga class. Perfect for beginners and experienced yogis alike, this class will blend gentle, mindful movement with calming breathwork and end in a deeply restful savasana. Bring a mat, water bottle and any props. (Some blocks and knee pads available). Led by Erin Anderson - RYT-200 yoga instructor and SEL facilitator. This program is for adults and teens ages 13 and older.

For further details and to register for programs, visit the library website [charltonlibrary.org](http://charltonlibrary.org).



**Diane Luong**  
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THE CAR DOCTOR

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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 designed 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 hammering 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?

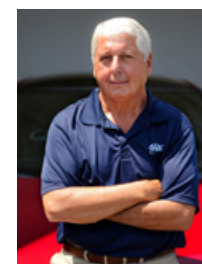
**A.** The clock is a standalone component and is not connected to other vehicle computers. After verifying that all relevant fuses are intact and there are no wiring issues, the most likely cause is clock failure. A common issue is a cold solder joint on the circuit board. You could attempt to have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



BY JOHN PAUL

**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.

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# Five questions that could change how you see retirement

**S**aving for retirement is important, but it's only part of the picture. If you're within five to 10 years of your target retirement date, it's time to start thinking about what you actually want your retirement to look like. After all, getting to retirement isn't the end



BY DENNIS ANTONOPOULOS

goal — it's what you want to do once you're there that matters.

Start by asking yourself these five questions.

### When do you want to retire?

The age at which you retire matters more than you may realize. Retiring early sounds appealing, but it means saving more and having less time to do it. It can also create gaps in health care coverage and income before key benefits kick in. For example, Social Security benefits can begin at 62, but at a reduced amount. Full benefits are available between ages 66 and 67, depending on birth year, and waiting until

70 means the maximum benefit. Medicare doesn't start until age 65, and penalty-free withdrawals from retirement accounts generally aren't allowed until age 59½.

For couples, timing gets even more complicated. Staggering retirement dates can sometimes maximize benefits; in other cases, retiring at the same time works better.

A financial advisor can help you sort through these decisions and find the approach that makes the most sense for your situation.

### How do you want to spend your time in retirement?

Many new retirees are surprised to find that having unlimited free time feels disorienting rather than freeing. Thinking ahead about how to fill the days with meaningful activity — whether that's travel, volunteering, pursuing hobbies or spending more time with family — can make the transition smoother.

It helps to sketch out what a typical week, month or even first year might look like. If there are big gaps, it's worth thinking now about what might fill them in rewarding ways.

### Where do you want to live as a retiree?

Some retirees stay put, while others downsize or relocate entirely. Either way, it's wise to consider whether a chosen location will work well as you get older, taking into account factors like proximity to family, access to health care, cost of living and climate.

What will your retirement lifestyle cost? It's not uncommon for retirees to discover that their travel, entertainment or leisure expenses were higher than expected. The more active and involved you plan to be, the more you will likely need to budget.

### Does your retirement involve giving back?

Retirement often brings both the time and motivation to be more generous. Whether the goal is helping family members, donating to charity or volunteering in the community, it's worth defining those goals and building them into an overall plan.

Now that your vision is taking shape, turn it into a plan. Work with your financial advisor to align your savings with the life you want — and revisit that plan as your priorities evolve so your retirement keeps pace with you.

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

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## The Dudley Woman's Club

**T**he Dudley Woman's Club closed its club year with a celebration of its 77 members who made possible \$86,498 in donations to local charities and \$9,000 in scholarships to local high

school seniors. All this in just nine months and we certainly had some fun along the way!

During the May 21 celebration at Fins & Tales in Southbridge we donated \$5,000 each to Dress for

Success, Josh Thibodeau Helping Hearts Foundation, Marie's Mission, New Hope, Our Bright Future, Second Chance Animal Shelter, Tarentino Foundation

and Together We Blossom.

Members also donated birthday boxes valued at \$760 to the Webster-Dudley Food Share and Charlton-Dudley Chip-In Food Share.

As we break for our summer hiatus, we thank and send our appreciation to all who supported our fundraisers and many endeavors this past club year.



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**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](mailto:dementiafriendlycharlton@gmail.com). Please provide name and number of attendees.

**TUESDAY, JUNE 16**

• Regional musician and Dan Kirouac will bring his successful and singer Dan Kirouac will bring his program The Music of McCartney: The World's Most Successful Songwriter to the Oxford Free Public Library on Tuesday, June 16 at 6 p.m. The program, delivered on piano and vocals, will explore the music of Paul McCartney from the Beatles years through Wings and into the 1980s, highlighted by informational commentary. Dan Kirouac is a 40-year veteran of the New England music scene, and has appeared in two long-term Beatles tribute bands from 2000 to 2022. The program is free and open to the public. For more information, please call the library at (508) 987-6003. This program is sponsored by the Oxford Cultural Council, a local agency, which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

**SATURDAY, JUNE 20**

• Dudley's Town-wide Yard Sale! What better time for a yard sale than the end of spring-cleaning season? Office: 508-949-8030 Mobile: 508-847-2206 The Dudley Recreation Commission has set its annual town-wide yard sale for 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. June 20, with a rain date of June 27. Residents are invited to set up and sell at their home or at the Dudley Town Hall where free 10x10-foot spaces are available in the parking lot on a first-come, first served basis. A site map, prepared by the Recreation Commission, will guide bargain hunters to the sale locations. Participants are encouraged to register for free by June 6 to be included in a map. The maps will be available for a \$3 donation at the Dudley Town Hall

from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. To register, email [recreation@dudleyma.gov](mailto: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 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Church Street Sidewalk Sale 10 a.m.–2 p.m., rain or shine, on Church Street in Whitinsville, hosted by the Milltown Merchants. The event has grown into a community gathering featuring local shops, vendors selling handmade goods, food, family activities, young entrepreneurs, and opportunities for neighbors to come together and spend time in downtown Whitinsville. It's something many families now look forward to each summer. Seven years ago, several local Church Street shop owners came together with the hope of bringing the tradition back to life from its Baker's Dept. Store roots, not only as a shopping event, but as a true community gathering. Since then, the sale has grown into a yearly celebration focused on supporting local businesses, connecting neighbors, and bringing families and the community together. While guests can certainly enjoy shopping from over 30 local vendors, artisans, makers, and small businesses, the day is about much more than shopping. It is about community spirit, seeing familiar faces, meeting new ones, supporting local families, and spending a fun day together in the heart of Whitinsville. This year's event will feature local vendors, handmade goods, food, kids' activities, family-friendly entertainment, and a special Youth Entrepreneur Area showcasing talented young business owners from the community. 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.

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 Whitin Community Center (WCC) is excited to invite all automotive enthusiasts and families alike to celebrate the 12th Anniversary of our highly anticipated "Cars In The Park" event. Join us for a day of automotive excellence and community fun from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the picturesque 7.5 acre Whitin Park, located at 60 Main St., Whitinsville. This year's Cars In The Park promises an unforgettable showcase of classic and contemporary cars, trucks, and motorcycles. Participants can vie for the prestigious Best In Show title and 25 other trophy categories, People's Choice Award, with the first 100 registered vehicles again this year receiving exclusive Show Dash Plaques and Goodie Bags. The event will also feature a selection of food trucks, exhibit vendors, a 50/50 raffle, and live entertainment, ensuring a fun-filled day for the entire family. Entry is complimentary for all spectators, making it the perfect summer outing. Last year's event had a turnout of over 300 cars! Vehicle owners are encouraged to register early and take advantage of a special \$10 donation fee before July 15th, after which the registration donation will increase to \$20. Pre-registration closes on August 12, 2026. Registration for vehicles is available online at [www.WhitinCommunityCenter.com](http://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](mailto:Tammy.Bodwell@OurGym.org) or call 508-234-8184 ext 118.

**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

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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 awareness 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."

## Losing relatives and friends

"Death leaves a heartache no one can heal; love leaves a memory no one can steal." Irish Proverb

BY JANET STOICA  
jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

When you're young you just never think about losing good people around you to death. What a word that is, death. It even sounds depressing. Death be not proud. A matter of life and death. It would be the death of me.

In the past two weeks, I have experienced three deaths of people close to me. All unexpected, all shocking, and all emotionally draining. The first was Barbara, a great friend whom I'd known for 36 years. She'd recently been in the hospital and had some breathing issues. She was in a Worcester healthcare facility rehabbing when I phoned her. We chatted about the usual, How's everything and let's get together for dinner next week when you get home from rehab. "Okay I'll phone you next week," she said.

You can imagine my shock when her daughter contacted me to tell me Barbara had passed away suddenly on Mother's Day. I was - and still am - stunned and cannot grasp the reality of her unexpected passing. Her family's grief must be multiplied so much more than mine. She had six children, many grandkids, and she was close to all of them. She was a great mom. You couldn't meet a more generous lady. I'll miss her jokes, her smile, and her mellow personality. One of a kind and I really mean that. I guess we won't be sharing sushi and beverages at Bar One anymore.

My cousin Elaine phoned me on

Saturday to tell me that her husband Fred had passed away last Tuesday. She had the endings of laryngitis and apologized for not phoning sooner but her voice was not in good condition. They'd been married for over 40 years. After Fred retired, they'd built a beautiful home in Cape Coral, Florida. Fred proudly captained his sea-worthy cabin cruiser and did the outdoor chores before the sun became too hot and crazy.

On one occasion, his riding mower ran over a fire ant nest. Those ravenous biting creatures must have followed him across the lawn in their pursuit of revenge until they attacked him dreadfully. Fred hired a lawn service after that horrific experience. Fred enjoyed entertaining, a good glass of wine, and a spot by their pool. He even made friends with the resident crocodile in their backyard canal. It's a good thing those canal banks were too high for that croc to climb, who knows what could've happened!

He treated Elaine like a queen. Their home was beautiful, well-kept, and very nice to spend time in when I visited. Fred's unique sense of humor was more in the sarcastic range, kind of like mine, so we got along well. His financial advice was always welcome. I will miss his advice and his company.

My sister-in-law's sister, Claire, just passed away this morning. She was a year younger than me and a perfect specimen of good health from all that I knew of her. She and her husband ran several miles daily, ate all the right food groups, never smoked, and barely drank.

The couple had settled in New Orleans after Bill retired from the Air Force and then took a job flying

FedEx cargo jets around the world. After his second retirement, they opted to stay put in New Orleans. Their daughter is a successful attorney there. Claire and Bill had moved frequently in his service days as an Air Force pilot. Florida to Missouri to Washington, Tennessee, Washington, D.C., and lastly New Orleans.

They always managed to come back to this area, however, to visit and be with family for one of the major holidays whether it was the Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, or Christmas. Claire was a very kind, compassionate, and caring person. So easy to talk to. She was a school teacher too. Recently, I was told by my sister-in-law that she was not doing well and had a bronchial illness.

Five days ago, I learned that my sister-in-law and brother were flying to New Orleans as Claire was in the intensive care unit. She was not doing well. I prayed fervently for a miracle for her. When I learned that they had disconnected all her breathing devices, etc. three days ago, and that she was responding a bit, I had high hopes, yes, I did. I also thought how naive I was to think such a thing, but it was a miracle! My brother then contacted me on Memorial Day to tell me that Claire had passed. I think I had become so emotionally drained thinking about a miracle that I have tired myself from all this death business.

I am hating my age right now and, no, I will not tell you what that age

happens to be. How can these people just leave us like this? Why? I am still in my 20s according to my brain. My body cannot run as fast as when I was in my 20s, actually forget it, my body cannot run period. Jars are harder to open, print is harder to see, I cannot push-cart my air conditioning units as easily as I used to before putting them into my windows for the summer. And all the phrases my mother used to say to me when she was my age now come flooding back to me. "Don't get old, Janet," she'd say, "you have to go slow whether you want to or not."

I guess we all slow down after a while, like a melody that just fades away. We are off, into the ethereal wonders of eternity.

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