

## (Not) having a blast: Neighborhood concerns hit town, Rawson Materials

BY WALTER BIRD

Town officials say neighborhood complaints in the immediate aftermath of blasting in April at Rawson Materials in Charlton will yield tighter controls at the aggregate-producing site, but some residents are skeptical that anything will change for the positive.

Eric Borgeson of 18 Larnerd Hill Road, Charlton, said his complaints about a nearby mining operation now owned by Rawson Materials go back about a decade, when Hylka Construction ran the property. His most recent protestations were made at a Charlton Board of Health meeting earlier this year on the heels of blasting on the site on April 18. That, Borgeson told town officials, resulted in his neighborhood being cloaked in dust.

“Blasting is part of it,” Borgeson said by phone recently. “But it’s the constant environmental impact, the noise ... We’ve lived here for 30 years. It was a small family-owned mining operation surrounded by forest and buffer. Over the years, they’ve clear cut and expanded.”

For their part, the town, and Rawson Materials, which acquired the property and ag-



Dust covers the Larnerd Hill neighborhood after an April blasting at Rawson Materials

gregate mining operations in late 2025, acknowledge the dust caused by the April 18 blasting. Multiple town officials told *The YankeeXpress* they took Borgeson’s complaints and the concerns of the neighborhood

seriously.

The matter was to be discussed at a June 2 Board of Health

**BLASTING**  
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## Webster Select Board holds special meeting for Dockside

BY JANET STOICA

janet.rambler22@gmail.com

On June 22, the Webster Select Board held a special meeting to review a weekday and Sunday entertainment license for the former Waterfront Mary’s now doing business as Dockside at 103 Birch Island Road in Webster.

Chad Gosselin, one of the managers/owners of Dockside, was present at the board meeting to respond to members’ questions. Gosselin indicated that he was there to discuss an entertainment license to have bands inside and outside the establishment. He said that the bands would probably play their music until 11 p.m. and Dockside will consider the neighbors’ concerns.

“It’s not like we’re going to have a rock band or karaoke speakers crazy at night,” said Gosselin. “We’ll be trying to get out of there every day with a last call by 10:30 and closing by 11 p.m. We just put those times out there because those times were what was in effect previously and we kept those times similar. Bands would be wrapped up by 9 p.m., 10 the latest and that would be an inside band so the noise wouldn’t travel.”

When Chair Tom Klebart asked how late the outside bands would

play, Gosselin responded that the latest time would be 10 p.m. The board members then questioned the outdoor entertainment hours and reviewed past issues with Waterfront Mary’s Wednesday night “Rock the Dock” entertainment which was usually held from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. They compared those hours to the current owners now requesting a daily entertainment license with music until 10 or 11 p.m. Gosselin explained that their outside entertainment might include one guitar player with an amplifier during dinner hours.

Select Board member Mark Rogers then stated that there were several concerns to be discussed. The board wanted to support a new business, but consideration had to be given to neighbors and entertainment noise levels. In addition, there is a history of patrons walking through neighborhoods, disturbing residents, and illegal parking.

“I’ve been there every day,” said Gosselin, “and we have not had people there past 10 p.m. Like I said, outside music would be acoustic, not banging drums until 11 p.m.”

During the public comment part of the meeting, several resi-

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## BLASTING

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meeting that was ultimately canceled. The agenda item was then included on the agenda for a June 23 meeting, listed under "New Business" as "Rawson Materials blasting and health concerns." It was not discussed, however, with Health Director Jim Philbrook saying he had received a call from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (Mass-DEP) about another issue involving Rawson Materials. There was no formal vote to hold the item, but responding to a query from Vice Chair Jon Sanborn, Chair Matt Gagne said the item would be added to a future agenda.

Before the start of the June 23 meeting, Gagne declined an offer to be interviewed.

According to Fire Chief Rob Barton, whose department is responsible for monitoring the blasting, a meeting involving town officials and representatives of Rawson Materials and Maine Drilling and Blasting (MDB), a company whose Milford-based

office oversees blasting operations in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, was held on May 11 at the Rawson Materials' site at which time MDB agreed to a plan to mitigate the results of blasting at the Rawson facility in the future.

That meeting did not include abutters.

More blasting was conducted on Tuesday, June 16.

Reached by phone on Thursday, June 18, Barton said that activity went off without issue.

Borgeson, speaking by phone after the June 16 blasting to determine whether he concurred with Barton's assessment, said he and his wife were not home at that time. "Generally, they'll do a tiny 'blast' after there's a complaint," Borgeson said. "They say they're making improvements. What they're not talking about is this is happening every week for years and years, and the impact it has."

Referring to the plan agreed upon at the meeting, Barton said: "The plan was put in place, they followed it, and there were no issues." He said he person-

ally observed the blast from the Larnerd Hill Road neighborhood. "There was no dust in the air, no concern. We didn't receive any calls from anyone."

Immediately following the April 18 blast, Barton had said in an earlier phone interview, multiple calls were logged by the department.

Asked for a copy of the mediation plan, Barton referred this reporter to MDB. However, multiple voice messages left with their Milford office were not returned.

In a phone conversation, Madilyn Smith, chief legal and administrative officer for Rawson Materials, said the plan involved efforts to closely monitor wind direction at the time of blasting.

Smith also said the company maintains a "blasting call list" and tries to notify abutters multiple times ahead of a blast.

Another Larnerd Hill Road resident, whose property is just a couple minutes' drive away from the pit, said that used to be the case when the operation was run by Hylka, but that he only finds out about blasting now if he goes on social media.

Still, the resident, who asked not to be identified but said he has lived on Larnerd Hill Road for 30 years, said he is not aware of any damage caused by the blasting. Unlike Borgeson, he said he has not experienced any dust coating on his properties.

"It's the noise," he said. "If you're not expecting it, it can be quite unsettling."

"I mean, it's a business," he



Sign in front of Rawson Materials in Charlton. Photo by Walter Bird.

continued. "It's a mining operation. I used to get my stone dust from [Hylka]."

That, the resident continued as he stood in the driveway of another property he owns on Larnerd Hill Road, doesn't mean he isn't put off by the work being done.

"Would I like them to stop? Absolutely," he said.

While he is not worried about dust, he said he is concerned about continued blasting and encroachment.

"There's been a lot of clear cutting," he said, adding there is a spot on Larnerd Hill where once the view was thick with trees.

That is not the case anymore, he said.

"There have been complaints

over the years from various individuals in the neighborhood regarding the blasting," Town Administrator Andrew Golas said. "We definitely take this seriously and want to ensure [Rawson Materials] remain good neighbors. Due to the nature of the activity happening here, there is a sensitivity we need to balance."

One of the complaints was from A F Putnam Road property owner Robert Doyle, who actually sued the town and Francis J. Hylka, Jr., of Hylka Construction in 2016, in part claiming injury from the noise generated by Hylka's blasting on the property.

## BLASTING

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### Correction:

The Oxford Farmers' Market is held from 2-6 p.m. on the third Friday of the month from June through October. We apologize for the error in this year's Summer Guide.

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**WEBSTER**

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dents said that the loud music, haphazard vehicle parking, and pedestrian safety were their biggest concerns. Select Board member Elaine Davies said that the establishment's license would be part of the customary annual review in tandem with all other town establishment licenses and, if necessary, refinements or restrictions to licenses can be made at the annual review.

Gosselin stated that he felt that they, the new owners, are now being held responsible for decades of past entertainment/noise violations by the previous owners. Town Administrator Richard LaFond stated that this was not an unusual procedure when license transfers occur. LaFond said that town/city governments will seek to comply with the legalities of local law not only for a business but also for those neighbors who have concerns about a business located near them.

The Board ultimately approved an inside entertainment license for Monday through Saturday until 11 p.m. and they will consider outside entertainment in the near future.

# Dudley officials mull budget challenges following override defeat

**D**udley officials are preparing for difficult financial decisions after voters rejected a Proposition 2½ override in May, leaving the town to address significant budget shortfalls while maintaining essential municipal services.

During the June 29 Select Board meeting, Town Administrator Jonathan Ruda provided an update on the town's financial outlook as staff work to close out Fiscal Year 2026 and prepare for a supplemental budget expected to be presented at a Special Town Meeting this October.

Town officials anticipate ending FY2026 close to budget, but Ruda said the town does not expect a significant amount of free cash to be certified that could be used to offset budget challenges later this year.

"The defeat of the override has fundamentally changed our financial outlook," Ruda said. "The town must now focus on balancing essential services with the revenues available, while planning for a supplemental budget later this year."

The Fiscal Year 2027 budget,

approved at the May Annual Town Meeting, was balanced without eliminating any full-time public safety positions. Instead, the town relied on reserve funds to achieve a balanced budget.

However, Ruda cautioned that the approved budget includes the elimination of three part-time positions beginning in July, along with significant reductions throughout town services.

Among the reductions are cuts to fire department overtime, fill-in and per-diem staffing, fuel, ambulance-related expenses, police department overtime, fuel, animal control services, training, computer expenses and other operational accounts.

Additional reductions include eliminating some administrative support, removing a vacant truck driver/laborer position, reducing overtime, eliminating the IT cybersecurity consultant line item, reducing software maintenance and licensing costs, cutting the legal budget, and reducing funding for compliance and regulatory services, stormwater management, dams and energy programs.

Throughout the discussion, the select board emphasized that the impacts of the budget reductions are already being felt across multiple departments.

Police Chief Marek Karlowicz outlined how reductions to overtime, fuel and vacation buyback funding will limit the department's ability to conduct proactive policing initiatives.

Fire and EMS officials reported that staffing levels are already at minimum operational requirements and that mandatory state training, certification and compliance standards leave little flexibility for additional budget reductions without affecting service.

Ruda recommended that the select board begin developing a strategy now for the October Special Town Meeting, where a supplemental budget is expected to be considered. He encouraged the board to provide directions in the coming weeks so that decisions can be made before the effects of the current budget reductions become more significant.

The select board will continue budget discussions at its July 13 meeting.

*– Submitted by Debbie LaPlaca, Town of Dudley*

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**BLASTING**

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The multi-year court case yielded an appellate court decision in Doyle's favor, but Hylka, and now Rawson Materials, has been allowed to operate as a "grandfathered" operation even after the Town of Charlton adopted its first-ever comprehensive zoning bylaws in 1987.

Still, according to the Superior Court decision in 2022, the operator of the mining operation, then Hylka Construction, "does not ... have the unfettered right to extend or modify its mining activity on the property."

"... it is entirely possible that further expansion in scope, location, or degree of the blasting or other mining activity in the future could exceed levels that are permissible ...," the decision stated.

In a recent interview, Doyle, who now resides in Holliston but still owns his Charlton property, said, "As a neighbor, I believe they've absolutely exceeded the footprint because of the impact on our neighborhoods."

For its part, Mass DEP has had dealings with the mining operation.

In information provided to Yankee Express South by MassDEP Public Affairs Assistant Director Fabienne Alexis, the agency received a complaint in early May about "improper blasting" at Rawson Materials. MassDEP, according to Alexis, contacted the Charlton Fire Department and Board of Health, and were informed of the town's intent to meet with Rawson "to discuss protocols needed to approve future blasting."

According to MassDEP, Rawson Materials is currently in compliance with the agency's Air Quality Approval, or AQ Plan.

The information from MassDEP also noted the agency issued a Notice of Noncompliance to previous owner Hylka Construction Co, in 2017 for failing to obtain a limited plan approval.

*Walter Bird is a freelance writer for The YankeeXpress. He is the former executive editor of Stonebridge Press Newspapers, former editor of Worcester Magazine, and was a two-time recipient of the New England Newspaper & Press Association's Weekly Reporter of the Year for New England.*

# Dudley Community Choice Power Program delivers big first-quarter savings

**D**udley residents and businesses that enrolled in the town's Community Choice Power Program (CCPP) saved nearly \$150,000 on electricity during the first quarter of 2026, according to the latest report from Colonial Power Group.

The quarterly report shows participants saved a combined \$149,101 between January and March compared to National Grid's Basic Service rates.

Monthly savings were:

- January: \$63,937
- February: \$45,934
- March: \$39,230

The aggregation program currently provides competitive electricity supply to approximately 2,800 consumers throughout Dudley.

"Nearly \$150,000 in savings in just three months demonstrates the

value of our Community Choice Power Program," Town Administrator Jonathan Ruda said, adding, "By leveraging the town's collective buying power, we're helping residents and businesses better manage their electricity costs while providing stable, competitive rates."

The CCPP was developed to give residents and businesses an alternative to National Grid's Basic Service by securing competitive electricity supply rates through a municipal aggregation. The program was established in partnership with Colonial Power Group and the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources.

The current 18-month supply contract with First Point Power, which began in April 2025, offers three electricity supply options with varying levels of renewable energy benefits. The standard pro-

gram rate remains 12.826 cents per kilowatt-hour through September 2026.

While National Grid's Basic Service rates change periodically, the goal of the municipal aggregation program is to provide competitive pricing and long-term savings over the life of the contract. Although savings cannot be guaranteed every billing period, the program has continued to deliver substantial savings for participating consumers.

Residents may learn more about the Dudley Community Choice Power Program, including enrollment information, at [www.colonialpowergroup.com/dudley](http://www.colonialpowergroup.com/dudley). For answers to Frequently Asked Questions and more, visit the town's website at [dudleyma.gov](http://dudleyma.gov)

- Submitted by Debbie LaPlaca, Town of Dudley

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# 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten

**N**evin Umansky of Dudley has successfully completed the 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten Challenge at the Pearle L. Crawford Memorial Library. Nevin

discovered that reading his favorite books made reaching the 1,000-book milestone a breeze.

Among his favorites are Cars and Trucks and Things That Go by Richard Scarry and the beloved Llama Llama series.

Congratulations, Nevin, on this wonderful accomplishment. We are incredibly proud of your dedication to reading and learning.

The 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program encourages families to read together every day, helping children develop early literacy skills while strengthening the bond between parent and child. The mission of the 1,000 Books

Foundation is to promote reading to newborns, infants, and toddlers, laying the foundation for a lifetime love of books and learning.

The Pearle L. Crawford Memorial Library's 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program is generously funded by the Friends of the Pearle L. Crawford Memorial Library.

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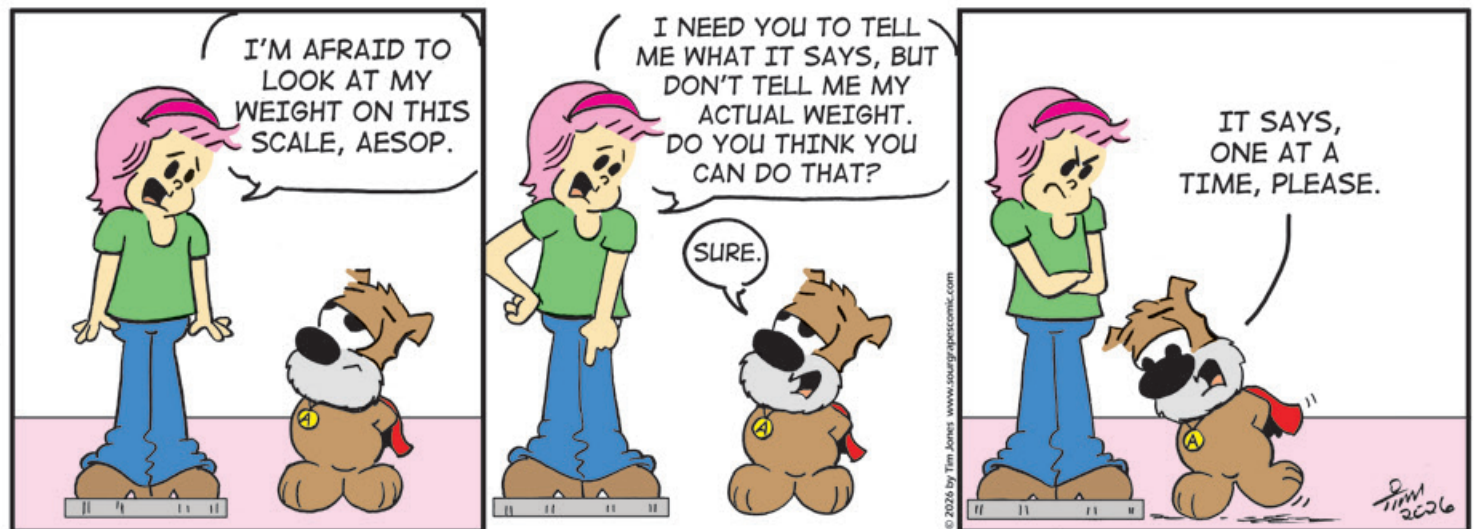
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## SOUR GRAPES

by Tim Jones



# Bay Path students clinch prestigious accolades – and Congressional recognition

BY GRETHELINE BOLANDRINA

The Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School STEM Club's Lemelson-MIT InvenTeam project reached a series of historic milestones that capped months of rigorous engineering with a functional prototype, a pending patent application, and major accolades from Capitol Hill.

The student-led team is tackling a pervasive mobility barrier: the inefficiency and safety hazards of standard wheelchairs on difficult beach terrain. Driven by a mission to restore user independence, comfort, and safety, these dedicated young inventors successfully designed, built, and tested a fully operational track-extension prototype tailored specifically to the needs of a local beneficiary.

The project's momentum was fueled by a powerful community bond. Before the team's national presentations began, the students met with their local beneficiaries to demonstrate the current iteration of the wheelchair.

"They told us they didn't

expect us to make it this far," the team recalled. "To be able to exceed their expectations was a truly special moment for us. Hearing how proud they were boosted every team member's spirits and gave us the drive to finish the wheelchair this coming fall. We can't wait to see their joy when we deliver the final working model."

To solve the complex engineering challenges of beach terrain, the team's sustainability subgroup researched and selected eco-friendly, durable plastics for the prototype extensions and a specialized driving belt for the actual track. By engineering track extensions that attach seamlessly to the front and back wheels, the students minimized bulk—ensuring the chair can easily fit into a standard car trunk—while drastically improving shock absorption and stability on uneven sand. The low-profile attachment height ensures that users with severe mobility difficulties can transition on and off the chair safely and with ease.

The journey began in the classroom, sparked by the vision of

Bay Path Science & Engineering Teacher and STEM Club Advisor, Kristine Wade, who guided the students through the intensive Lemelson-MIT application process. With financial backing from the "Bay Path Family"—including faculty, peers, and local community donors—the team raised the funds necessary to travel and present at the prestigious MIT Open House in June.

During the event, the InvenTeam demonstrated their engineering approach and showcased components of their prototype. Beyond the technical presentations, the weekend served as a masterclass in collaboration.

"This experience made me realize how similar everyone really is. We all have the same purpose: to make a difference," a team member reflected. The community aspect was felt immediately during a nerve-wracking practice run: "A student from a California InvenTeam started clapping and shouting, 'You've got this!' It put everyone at ease. Making the invention was a great experience, but so were the friends we met along the way."



David Adams - Southbridge Town Councilor, Matilda Paradis, Alivia Gauvin, Paul Skarzenski, Zachary Sirard, Christopher Feliciano, Perry Lima, Nicholas Meneguzzo, Ryan Lima, Logan Mondino, Ava Reed, Jady Goodwin, Shafick Vasquez-Grande, Jazelle Wolverson, State Representative John Marsi, Emily Corey, Olivia Torres, and Timothy Tripp.

The team's commitment to humanitarian engineering caught the attention of federal lawmakers. In a surprise morning meeting, Wade presented the team with a major honor: A Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition from Massachusetts Senator Edward Markey.

In addition to the congressional certificate, the group received an official plaque from the national Lemelson-MIT program.

Standout team members Jazelle Wolverson (Webster) and Matilda Paradis (Southbridge) were individually honored with the program's prestigious Communications Award for pioneering a new era of project outreach.

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## BAY PATH

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# Etiquette Express: Making everyday interactions better

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BY LEE-ANN BARKHOUSE

Customer Service Begins with Connection.

In today's digital world, we can order almost anything online, check ourselves out at the grocery store, and communicate with the tap of a screen. While technology has made life more convenient, it has also made genuine human connection more valuable than ever.

Whether you're greeting a customer, answering a phone, serving a meal, or helping someone find what they need, every interaction leaves an impression. People may forget exactly what was said, but they'll remember exactly how you made them feel.

Customer service isn't just about

completing a transaction. It's about building relationships, earning trust, and creating an experience that makes someone want to return. You never know when today's customer may become tomorrow's client, business partner, employer, or friend. Our paths have a way of crossing again.

Being mindful of your words, your body language, your tone, and even your facial expressions can make all the difference. A smile, a warm greeting, or simply acknowledging someone when they walk through the door costs nothing yet can completely change someone's day.

Here are a few etiquette questions I have recently received about customer service and everyday

interactions.

**Q.** I work in customer service. What are the biggest etiquette mistakes employees make without realizing it?

**A.** Often it's not what we say, but what we communicate without words. Failing to acknowledge someone who walks in, avoiding eye contact, appearing distracted, or looking inconvenienced can leave a lasting impression. Great customer service begins with self-awareness. Be present. Smile. Make eye contact. Remember that every customer deserves to feel seen, welcomed, and valued.

**Q.** I often see children roughhousing in stores while their parents are shopping. Is it my place to say something?

**A.** Unless someone is in immediate danger or you're responsible for the store, it's usually best not to intervene. If safety is a concern, quietly notify an employee. Parents, however, have a wonderful opportunity to teach children how to behave respectfully in public. Those lessons build confidence, consideration, and respect for others.

**Q.** Someone introduced themselves by saying, "Hi, I'm Ellen," but never asked my name. Should I introduce myself anyway?

**A.** Absolutely. A simple, "Nice to meet you, Ellen. I'm Lee-Ann," keeps the

conversation comfortable and helps build rapport. Never hesitate to introduce yourself. It's a small gesture that often opens the door to a meaningful connection.

**Q.** I walked into a small business and felt like I was interrupting the owner. They weren't very welcoming and were actually very rude. Should I take it personally?

**A.** Probably not. We all have difficult days, and you never know what someone may be dealing with. Extend a little grace. At the same time, remember that first impressions matter. If a business consistently makes customers feel unwelcome, it's perfectly reasonable to choose to shop elsewhere.

**Q.** I was verbally invited to a casual cookout. Do I need to RSVP?

**A.** Yes. Casual doesn't mean inconsiderate. Your host still needs to plan for food, seating, and supplies. A quick text or phone call to let them know whether you'll attend is always appreciated.

**Q.** I interviewed for a position that would require me to relocate across the country. I haven't heard anything. Should I follow up?

**A.** Yes. If a hiring timeline was provided, wait until after that date. If not, a follow-up about a week after your interview is appropriate. Thank

them again for the opportunity, express your continued interest, and politely ask if they have an update. If you don't hear back, one additional follow-up a week or two later is perfectly acceptable. After that, let the process unfold.

## ETIQUETTE TIP OF THE MONTH

People may not remember every conversation they have with you, but they'll remember how you made them feel. Whether you're the customer or the person providing the service, choose to leave others feeling welcomed, respected, and appreciated. Courtesy is contagious, and it often comes back to us when we least expect it.

*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 the founder of Invest in U, where she helps individuals and organizations build confidence, professionalism, and meaningful connections. She is a certified etiquette trainer, board-certified health & wellness coach, and workshop facilitator who inspires people to communicate with confidence, strengthen relationships, and show up as their best selves. Learn more at www.investinuma.com*

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## BAY PATH

*continued from page 5*

video logs, Wolverson and Paradis used Adobe Premiere Pro to translate complex engineering data into engaging Instagram VLOGs (@bpinventeam). The innovative storytelling format was so successful it was officially featured on the MIT News website.

"Since I am in the Programming and Web Development shop, this was the best way I could contribute," explained Wolverson. "I would stop recording during meetings to ask the technical team questions about their processes. It became a beautiful way to connect with my teammates, and through it, I discovered a genuine lifelong passion for video editing."

Taking their project into the professional arena, the STEM Club has officially secured intellectual property protection for their design. Moving past their

initial goal of a provisional filing, the team finalized their rigorous legal documentation and submitted a formal patent application on June 14, 2026. The invention officially holds a "patent pending" status—a rare, monumental achievement for high school-aged inventors.

The group's technical prowess also translated to the competitive stage this spring. Showcasing elite technical skills at the State SkillsUSA Competition, Bay Path students secured an impressive fourth-place finish in Web Design and commercial technical fields, cementing their reputation as rising leaders in the regional engineering pipeline.

The profound experience of balancing rigorous engineering, legal patent applications, and public speaking has permanently shaped the students' career trajectories.

"Everything we've gone through has made me realize that hard work and determination

bring you closer to your goals," Wolverson noted. "I have always wanted a computer science degree, and these experiences have made my communication skills concrete. When I go to college, I want to join a STEM or robotics club, so I can keep creating inventions that make a real difference outside of high school."

An undertaking of this scale requires a massive village. The STEM Club extends its deepest gratitude to the Lemelson-MIT program, Advisor Kris Wade, master educator Mr. Doug Scott, their dedicated project beneficiaries, and the entire local donor community for providing the guidance, funding, and belief that turned a classroom concept into a transformative, patented reality.

This is a follow-up to the Bay Path article that appeared in the December 2025 issue of *The Yankee Xpress*.

# Cynthia Iwanski joins the Dudley Select Board

**W**ith 827 votes at the June 15 Annual Town Election, Cynthia Iwanski became the newest member of the Dudley Select Board.

Iwanski unseated long-time Selectman Kerry Cyganiewicz Sr., who garnered 337 in his bid for reelection.

“This is a town where people look out for one another, where families put down roots, and where local decisions truly matter. I want to help ensure those decisions reflect the values that we all share,” Iwanski said.

Iwanski was born in Webster and graduated from Shepherd Hill Regional High School in 1975 and from Curry University with a master’s degree in law enforcement in 2004.

“My father built the house that we moved into in Dudley. My roots have always been in Dudley,” she said.



Cynthia Iwanski

Iwanski is a retired police officer, having served the Town of Southbridge for more than 31 years. She was the first woman hired on the force, the first woman to obtain a master’s degree,

and the first woman to retire.

“Through that experience, I’ve learned that good governance comes down to three things: listening carefully, making informed decisions, and being accountable to the people we serve,” she said.

Over the years, Iwanski has been involved in community service through the Toys for Tots program, planning and chairing church festivals, planning trips for youth, and volunteering with local organizations.

In her new role on the Board, Iwanski said her priorities are to maintain fiscal responsibility, support smart, sustainable growth, and ensure transparency in how decisions are made.

“I believe in open communication, respectful dialogue, and working collaboratively—even when we do not all agree,” she said

# Free archery lessons and free archery ranges open this summer

**M**assWildlife has free opportunities to help you sharpen your archery skills this summer. Join them at one of their Archery 101 events to learn the basics in a relaxed, supportive setting—perfect for beginners, with equipment available to borrow. Plus, public archery ranges are now open across the state for individual practice—just bring your gear and sign up for a free pass.

Archery 101

Join MassWildlife for a free event to learn all about archery. Experienced MassWildlife staff will introduce you to archery basics and help you practice on the range. You can bring your own equipment or borrow theirs. These events are geared towards new archers. Go to [mass.gov/news/archery-classes](http://mass.gov/news/archery-classes) to register.

Wednesday, July 15, 5–7 p.m. in Westborough.

Tuesday, July 21, 5–7 p.m. in Milton.

Wednesday, July 22, 5–7 p.m. in Westborough.

Thursday, July 23, 5–7 p.m. in Dartmouth.

Wednesday, July 29, 5–7 p.m. in Taunton.

Thursday, July 30, 5–7 p.m. in Milton.

Thursday, August 6, 5–7 p.m. in Southampton.

Public ranges now open if you have your own archery

equipment but don’t have a great place to practice, try one of MassWildlife’s free ranges this summer. To use these ranges, you must obtain a range pass for 2026. Complete an application to receive a confirmation email that serves as your range pass. If you had a range pass previously, please complete the application again for 2026. For the link to apply for a pass, for directions to each range, or to learn more, go to [mass.gov/info-details/archery-ranges-opening-for-2026](http://mass.gov/info-details/archery-ranges-opening-for-2026). Eight ranges are set up at different dates on Wildlife Management Areas:

Ayer Game Farm, Ayer (June 2 – October 5)

Erwin Wilder WMA, Norton/Taunton (June 2 – October 12)

George L. Darey Housatonic Valley WMA, Lenox (June 2 – October 12)

Governor Hutchinson’s Field, Milton ((June 27 – October 31)

Martin H. Burns WMA, Newbury (June 1 – October 1)

Noquochoke WMA, Dartmouth (June 12 – October 12)

Southampton WMA, Southampton (June 2 – October 5)

Wayne F. MacCallum WMA, Westborough (June 1 – October 12)

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# Farewell Yankee Readers!

BY JANET STOICA  
[janet.rambler22@gmail.com](mailto:janet.rambler22@gmail.com)

If it weren't for Barbara Van Reed, I wouldn't have had my 16-year opportunity of writing YankeeXpress columns.

Barbara Van Reed was the editor of the YankeeXpress and its predecessor *The Patriot News* in the U.S.

in the U.S.

But, back to my Yankee time. I was assigned to cover local select board meetings, planning board meetings, you-name-it meetings, and also was assigned to writing articles for potential advertisers and people of interest. It seemed like I became the requested writer for new business profiles. I loved it. Then, the *Telegram* &



per of Webster. Sixteen long years ago, she placed an ad in *The Patriot* looking for writers, experience not required. I clipped that ad and taped it to my (then) clunky desk-top computer.

I wasn't sure if I should apply as I'd never written for a newspaper before but way-back-when attending school in Boston, I used to write embellished and amusing letters to my friends who had chosen other schools to attend after high school graduation. I remember one friend telling me that when my letter would arrive (yes, written in long-hand), they'd share my writings with a group of their college dorm chums, reading them aloud while enjoying my comedic stories about life in Boston.

Never thought too much of it until I became a sales administrator and began to write monthly newsletters for our sales team. Years later when I was with another company and was promoted to regional sales manager with many sales representatives reporting to me, I began writing newsletters again for my sales team. My reps enjoyed my entertaining comments, cartoons, and how-to-increase your sales suggestions. I'd like to think it helped us to establish great camaraderie becoming a strong team and the leading sales region

*Gazette* came calling to ask if I'd like to write news capsules for them. I took the position. Tight deadlines, hazing by copy writers, and interesting subject matter. For a part-time job, it became a little too crazy for me as I also had a full-time job elsewhere. I opted to return to *The Yankee* and am glad I did.

I've written stories about all five towns covered by the *Yankee* North and South editions. I've made and established great contacts with town managers in Auburn, Charlton, Dudley, Oxford, and Webster as well as with directors and agents of many town boards. The businesses that I wrote articles about still greet me with a smile after all these years. It's been heart-warming.

My articles included joys, sorrows, and everything in between and I appreciated every single blessed minute of it. Talking with hundreds of people about events and milestones has humbled me and elated me. Everyone really does have a story or a hardship or a success that's been worth writing about. Every town in America has something good and great to write about. There is no more local town news in the

**FAREWELL**  
*continued on page 11*

SPORTS

# Field of dreams: Shepherd Hill softball wrap-up

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Prior to the beginning of the season, Shepherd Hill Softball Coach John Synder and his coaching staff — as well as the

around and when the smoke of the final season had cleared, the Rams found themselves with a 16-4 regular season record, including 14 straight wins at one point. Under the guidance of Snyder and his coaching staff, the team captured

with 38. Three players batted over .400 as the team overall hit .351. Four players scored over 20 runs, and the team had 49 extra-base hits, including seven homeruns. Holtgren, Dono, Olivia Jankowski and Madi Carpenter were all

eight short of 300 for her career, and was named the team's MVP. Holtgren received the Coaches Award, was the silver slugger, hit leader and had the highest average. She also added 13 extra base hits, scored 24 runs and knocked in 32 RBIs.

Dono was recognized as the team's most improved player, although Snyder noted that the team had numerous players improve this season. Cadence Duval was the team's defensive player of the year and with her speed on the base paths, she could have been the team's unsung hero. She continuously flashed the leather, making phenomenal catches during the team's playoff run.

Having one of their better years in the field, Synder noted that he couldn't have done it without his seniors. During their time with Shepherd Hill the seniors were part

of 70 wins and five straight tournament appearances where they won at least one game a year. This year was their best as they went to the Final 4.

The seniors who will be moving on are Sarah Miller, who has held the right field position since the eighth grade. Alyssa Forbes has been the team's catcher for four years and had had 78 hits, 55 RBIs, and was named to the Mid Wach B All Star Team. Annie Hast was also a Mid Wach B All Star and has accumulated 112 hits during her career. Holtgren has been a four-time Mid Wach All Star and Mid Wach MVP, with 38 career hits, 100-plus runs score, and close to 100 RBIs. She has certainly been one of the best players in the game in Central Mass.



players — were all wondering if they could eclipse the .500 mark. They had moved up into the Central Massachusetts Athletic Conference (CMAC) A and had scheduled to play against a lot tougher teams, so things didn't necessarily seem to be in the Rams' favor. Losing the season opener didn't get the team off in the right direction either. But things would change. Shepherd Hill would turn things

the CMAC A Championship and earned themselves a four seed in the Division 2 State Tournament. Once there, the Rams dispatched Oliver Ames, Middleboro and Walpole before losing to the eventual state champion King Philip in the Final 4. Shepherd Hill concluded its season 19-5. Six Rams had more than 20 hits in the season with Emily Holtgren and Addie Dono leading the team

named to the Mid Wach A All-Star Team. Carpenter, who went 15-5, fanned 152 batters leaving her

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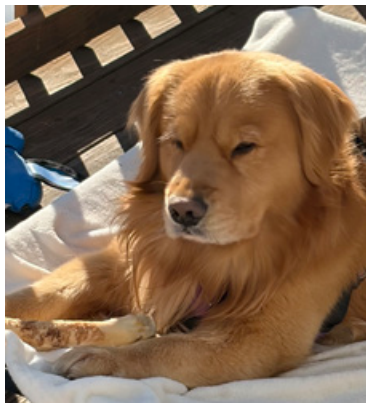
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LIVING WITH LUKE

amyleclaire@hotmail.com

# Tales of the river, circa 2026

BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

The annual New Hampshire trip wouldn't be the same without a good old-fashioned adventure— or two. Our beloved river, a tried-and-true source of refreshment, proved no exception.

As though he'd sniffed out the aroma of sizzling bacon, Luke lifted his nose and bulldozed forward. If he were getting ready for a date, I swear he'd be a hairy bachelor wearing a robust cologne called River.

*The bitches are wild for my River vibe.*

I tugged him back, nearly losing my footing.

"Luke!"

A dog's instinct to run free is powerful— especially when it involves a body of water.

"Go easy."

For a firm two seconds, he went easy.

Then the scent of a different cologne wafted through the air: Childhood Flower. The fragrance left me nostalgic. Less enchanting, a black fly circled my sweaty brow. I swatted at it, flicked the tiny corpse from my hand, and sighed. A creature the size of a freckle should not be allowed to cause massive distress. But it could be worse, I told myself.

I was about to eat my words.

We reached the shoreline.

Luke froze. I could see he was overwhelmed by a breathtaking realization: the picture he'd carried in his mind while we hiked matched this one. Deep creases formed across his boxy head. The river shimmered beneath the sunlight, reflections dancing across its surface like a flock of birds.

Luke sat surprisingly still, overcome by a sense of peace. I

followed his meditative stare. The two of us seemed entranced by the river's aura. We inhaled mountain-fresh air that tasted of freedom and goodness. My hand rested on the clip of his harness.

Dog's territory.

Quietly, and under the river's spell, I set him free.

What could go wrong?

Within a minute, Luke was still paddling happily, but something had changed. He wasn't swimming in place anymore. The current had quietly claimed him. Every stroke carried him farther downstream and, judging by the blissful look on his face, he hadn't noticed a thing.

Pardon the cliché, but Luke was flowing like a river—with the



Luke bathed in the drink of a cold-water river refreshment. He drenched himself in a sea of bubbles. Unrestricted, he reminded me of a toddler licking a dripping ice cream cone. He paddled. He whimpered. He resumed the bizarre habit of biting at the bubbles he created.

All was well.

But would it end well?

My son's hand floated to his forehead.

"Mum. I knew this would happen."

What had happened?

oblivion of a dog paddler. A victim of a dog's mantra to live in the moment, he adapted easily to the invisible current. Ironically enough, he was going with the flow—my favorite lesson.

"Don't panic."

I faced my son and his fiancée with the feeble confidence of a bug-bitten Dog Mom propped against a stick lest she slip down the eighty-degree riverbank incline.

"I'll go in."

My future daughter-in-law, an athlete and caregiver at heart, stepped up as well.

"I'll grab him. I don't mind."

She removed her sandals, a posh pair of Birkenstocks that had no place here.

My son, Ben, twice our size in both bulk and attitude, commanded the two of us like Moses.

"Stay here. I'm going in."

I faced Allison and grimaced.

"What about the bloodsuckers?"

Ben took off his T-shirt, handed me his phone and wallet, and issued a firm warning.

"Do NOT drop this in the river."

The pain of hearing a Verizon employee state the obvious—your phone's brain is wet and it's going to cost eight hundred dollars—was legitimate. I wrapped the phone in his T-shirt and stumbled forward. The threat of losing our dog downstream was one thing. Now we also had to fight physics to stay upright and save our phones.

Allison, a natural problem solver, came up with an ingenious plan.

"Pappas!"

Standing ten feet behind us, she shouted in Luke's favorite language and hurled giant stones into the water near him like oversized dog toys.

Luke perked up, pitching his ears like little tents so that his head and neck rose above the water.

*What's that sound? A giant toy?*

He began swimming back toward us.

"He's coming back! Keep up the great work, Ally!"

My heart lifted.

"Come on, Pappas!"

He swam against the current, taking two paddles forward and one paddle back. Would he be able to keep chasing the rocks toward shore?

Perhaps.

But not with a brotherly line-backer charging after him.

Elbows lifted, Ben shuffled through the water, gaining ground until he was about twenty yards behind Luke. Spooked, Luke resumed his downstream swim, paddling even faster.

A game of Keep Away had emerged.

*You're not holding me down, Brosie.*

Luke charged ahead, but Ben stayed the course. He had to move twice as fast against the current to reach him. Finally, Luke was within grabbing distance. Ben bear-hugged the paddling dog, who squirmed and resisted like a seal caught in a net, then power-lifted



Above: Allison cares for Luke after a cold-water swim.

Below: Ben and Ally share a peaceful moment in the wake of adventure.



his soaking-wet eighty-five-pound body above the water.

The feat was admittedly Herculean, even from a distance.

Finally, Ben carried Luke to the stony bank on the opposite side of the river, restrained him for a few seconds, and then guided him back to us. He shook wildly, looked up at me and smiled. The river wouldn't be the same without another adventure.

*Stay tuned for more Living with Luke stories.*

Write to Amy. amyleclaire@hotmail.com

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REAL ESTATE

# That house that's been sitting could be your best shot at a deal

Open up a home search and you'll see them. Listings that have been on the market for two months. Three. Some longer.



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

Most buyers scroll right past them, assuming something's wrong with the house. But that instinct could be costing you, since the longer a home sits, the more motivated the seller usually gets.

Here's where some buyers are finding better deals. If affordability has been your #1 hurdle to buying, here's a surprisingly simple strategy that could help you finally get your foot in the door. Start with the homes that have been sitting the longest. That's often where the best deals are. Here's why. Statistics show that there's a connection between longer time on the market and lower sales prices. Basically, the longer a house sits, the more

likely it is that the seller will reduce the price. If you focus on these homes that are just sitting and waiting, the opportunity for you is bigger than you may think right now.

Data shows there's \$347 billion worth of stale listings on the market right now – more than ever before for this time of year. So, ask a member of The Marzeotti Group or your trusted agent to filter listings for you from oldest to newest. The home that fits your budget might already be there. Just further down the list than you thought.

Lingering doesn't always mean something's wrong. Let's say you do that and something catches your eye. Still, you might be questioning why the home has been sitting in the first place. Just remember, sometimes it has nothing to do with the home itself. Common causes are: The asking price was set too high to start or the home didn't show well online or there are a lot of homes for sale in the area, so it just got buried. So, nothing that's necessarily a deal breaker, or even anything that's wrong with the home itself. If there's a real issue, a thorough inspection will

surface it and that's information you can use to negotiate. Not a reason to assume it's a house worth skipping over.

How to turn a lingering listing into a win. So how do you capitalize on a lingering listing? Essentially you have two big cards to play. The first is price. Work with your agent to study what comparable homes recently sold for, then build an offer around that. Coming in below asking price is fair game when a home has been sitting. The second is concessions. If a seller won't budge much on price, they may still help in other ways, like covering some closing costs, repair credits, or even a mortgage rate buy down that lowers your monthly payment.

A member of The Marzeotti Group or your local trusted agent has the experience to tell which homes are the real opportunities and which are ones you should skip. A house sitting on the market isn't always a red flag. In today's market, it may be your best opportunity yet. For help deciding which lingering listings are actually worth a second look, connect with a member of The Marzeotti Group.

## FAREWELL

*continued from page 8*

regional papers and that's why the *Yankee Xpress* fits the bill. Yankee still writes about your town's board meetings and community events and you won't find that anywhere else. You can read Yankee online as well as receive it free in your mailbox. There is no match.

I'm proud of the fact that I've never had to print a retraction for any article I've ever written. I pride myself on being a fact-driven detective for each and every article.


The original staff at the *Yankee*

offices in Webster were magnificent and remarkable: Kudos to them. Thank you, Sally Patterson, Carol Kosth, Laura Gleim, Tony Discepolo, and Bill Cronin. And a Big Thank You to Barbara Van Reed for believing in me and giving me the greatest opportunity of my life. How can I forget to thank Chris Robert for realizing that a local newspaper is the lifeblood of a community! Big thanks to you too, Mr. Robert! I certainly can't forget to thank the paper's former editor, Rod Lee. Great advice and coaching, Rod. When you asked me to write articles for your e-magazine, it was my honor and privilege to do so.

But now, it is time for me to

move on and I must thank our readers and advertisers for being there, for caring, and for emailing me with your positive and deeply sincere observations. Whatever comes next, I will always remember my readers and how I strived to keep you informed about your local news. You might find me on Substack or another digital platform. I wish you well, dear readers. Thank you. *YankeeXpress* territory is the best!


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THE CAR DOCTOR

jpaul@aanortheast.com

# Replacing batteries, new engines, deactivated keys, and more

**Q.** I just read the write-in about keeping the car running while replacing a battery. Although I had this done on my car a few years ago without any issues, I sort of agree with you on this being a bad idea. What do you think about this:

instead of the engine running, attach a trickle charger or some other sort of 12-volt device to the car to keep the computer settings. Still a bad idea?

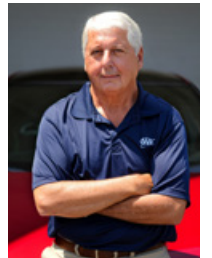
**A.** Some of the trickle chargers use the battery to regulate voltage, so

that may not work to maintain the vehicle's electronics memory. Some advanced battery chargers have a "supply" mode that maintains a constant voltage to the vehicle's electrical system while the battery is disconnected. Some portable jump starters include

a specific 12-volt output mode designed for this purpose. At AAA, when we replace a battery, we typically use a full-size jump pack to maintain memory. We attach it to a ground terminal and the positive cable, insulate the connection, and then disconnect the battery. In a pinch, could you use a 12-volt cordless tool battery and jumper wires to maintain the computer memory? Yes. And just to reiterate, it is never a good idea to change/disconnect a car's battery with the engine running.

**Q.** My son's Land Rover Defender key deactivated. My husband took him the other key so he could drive his car. How do we get his key reactivated?

**A.** Keys rarely become deactivated on their own. They are electronically



BY JOHN PAUL

programmed, so unless someone was trying to reprogram the key or the vehicle, it is unlikely, but still possible. This can sometimes happen if the fob is left in the car for an extended time. To reactivate a smart key, the vehicle must be started using another activated smart key, or the vehicle must be unlocked and locked using the InControl Remote App. At the same time, it would be wise to check or replace the fob battery if it is more than a couple of years old.

**Q.** My wife just purchased a 2026 Subaru Forester. The engine starts at 1500 RPM and after a few minutes goes down to 650 RPM or so. I explained to her to let the idle drop before driving away, which she does not. My question to you is: is she causing harm to the engine by driving off at the higher RPMs?

**A.** Is she causing harm to the engine? Probably not. The elevated idle speed during startup is normal and part of the engine's cold-start strategy. The car should be good to drive once all the warning lights on the dashboard turn off, regardless of the idle speed. What I recommend with any car (new or old) is to avoid hard acceleration for the first few minutes to allow all the vital fluids to circulate.

**Q.** I have a 2011 Ram 1500 that is in need of front and rear brakes. Can you recommend a good brand of replacement pads and rotors, and what type of pads? Would you recommend ceramic or

CAR DOCTOR  
continued on page 13



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# Turn your savings into paychecks in retirement

**M**argaret had saved diligently for decades. Every paycheck, a portion went toward her retirement account. Then, the day finally came: she retired.



BY DENNIS ANTONOPOULOS

Suddenly, the hardest part wasn't the saving. It was learning to spend.

If that sounds familiar, you're not alone. Many retirees find the shift from building savings to living off them emotionally difficult, even when they've planned carefully. Here are five smart strategies that can help you feel more confident about what's ahead.

**Give yourself permission to spend conservatively.** Your retirement plan likely assumes a certain annual spending amount, with increases each year to ac-

count for inflation. All else being equal, the lower those initial withdrawals, the longer your money will last. A financial advisor can help you set up portfolio withdrawals personalized to your goals and situation. Feel free to give yourself permission to spend those amounts, knowing there's intention behind them.

For many retirees, the challenge isn't math — it's mindset. After years of being rewarded for saving, spending can feel like doing something wrong. It can help to reframe withdrawals as a paycheck you've already earned. For example, using your monthly distribution to cover travel, hobbies or time with family isn't indulgent; it's the purpose of the plan you built. Connecting spending to your values can make it feel more natural and sustainable.

Do be sure to review your spending regularly and don't forget to set aside funds for annual ex-

penses like taxes and insurance.

**Keep some cash on hand.** A general rule of thumb for retirees is to keep about 12 months' worth of withdrawals in a separate account for spending and another three to five years' worth in short-term, fixed-income investments. This cushion can allow your stock investments time to recover from a market downturn, reducing the need to sell investments when markets are down. That said, holding too much cash carries its own risk, as your portfolio may not grow fast enough to keep pace with inflation. So, while some cash is good, you'll also want to remain invested in assets with more growth potential to help your portfolio last through retirement.

**Review regularly.** Retirement can last 25 years or more, and even the best-laid plans need updating along the way. Review

your financial strategy at least once a year or after any major life change.

**Stay flexible.** Even small adjustments to your spending can have a big impact on how long your money lasts. Retirees who hold off on spending increases in years when their portfolio declines are often able to stretch their savings further than those who increase withdrawals each year for inflation regardless of market performance.

Making the switch from saving to spending takes both careful planning and a genuine shift in

mindset. A financial advisor can help you build out an effective approach to switch from saving to spending, and work with you so you can fully enjoy the retirement you worked so hard to reach.

*This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Please contact Dennis Antonopoulos, your local Edward Jones Advisor at 5 Albert Street, Auburn, MA 01501 Tel: 508-832-5385 or dennis.antonopoulos@edwardjones.com. Edward Jones, Member SIPC*

## CAR DOCTOR

continued from page 12

semi-metallic brake pads for my truck? Should I stay with factory parts or aftermarket? Aftermarket seems to be less expensive, but I want quality parts.

**A.** Factory parts are always a good way to go, but, as you pointed out, they are expensive. The original equipment brake pads have a list price of \$182. A quality aftermarket brake pad is less than half that cost. As for brands, many shops are using Akebono brake parts. I have used PowerStop pads and rotors on my own vehicles and had good luck. Traditional names

such as Wagner, Bosch, and Raybestos still make a good-quality brake part. As for semi-metallic or ceramic fiber, both are good. Ceramic pads are generally quieter and produce less dust, while semi-metallic pads tend to provide better heat dissipation and braking performance under heavy loads or towing.

**Q.** We want to fix up a 1998 Buick LeSabre that was inherited. There is an issue with the horn. It sometimes (unpredictably) remains on after I remove my hand. On occasion, it has activated without pressing it. What could be the issue, and if parts are needed, are they difficult to obtain?

**A.** There are three parts to the horn. The horn switch is integrated into the driver airbag module (part of the airbag cover), horn relay/wiring, and horn. A first "guess" is to replace the horn relay, which is located in the fuse box in the engine compartment. The horn relay is a standard part and easily sourced. The more difficult part will be the horn switch/pad. Looking online, the GM part has been discontinued. A used part from a salvage yard may be your only option. These horn pads have been known to distort over time and cause phantom horn activation.

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**TUESDAY, JULY 14**

• Booklovers' Gourmet, located at 72 East Main Street in Webster, MA is hosting a

summer meet & greet with author Jenn Bouchard for her newest release Palms on the Cape, on Tuesday, July 14th, from 12-2 p.m. The event is free and open to the public. Signed copies of several of her books will be available for purchase. For more information or to RSVP, please call 508-949-6232 or email deb@booklovers-gourmet.com.

About the Book: After a tumultuous childhood, Rachel Sinclair has made a life for herself. On the verge of turning forty, her upscale beach bar—Palms on the Cape—is packed throughout the Cape Cod summer season. She has surrounded herself with a devoted staff and great friends, including her best friend, Carlos...who she might be in love with. When Rachel learns of a plan to take over her business, she must decide if it's worth the gamble to join forces with an unlikely ally, or risk losing everything she

has worked for.

**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 Whitin Community Center (WCC) is excited to invite all automotive enthusiasts and families alike to celebrate the 12th Anniversary of our highly anticipated "Cars In The Park" event. Join us for a day of automotive excellence and community fun from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the picturesque 7.5 acre Whitin Park, located at 60 Main St., Whitinsville. This year's Cars In The Park promises an unforgettable showcase of classic and contemporary cars, trucks, and motorcycles. Participants can vie for the prestigious Best In Show title and 25 other trophy categories, People's Choice Award, with the first 100 registered vehicles again this year receiving exclusive Show Dash Plaques and Goodie Bags. The event will also feature a selection of food trucks, exhibit vendors, a 50/50 raffle, and live entertainment, ensuring a

fun-filled day for the entire family. Entry is complimentary for all spectators, making it the perfect summer outing. Last year's event had a turnout of over 300 cars! Vehicle owners are encouraged to register early and take advantage of a special \$10 donation fee before July 15th, after which the registration donation will increase to \$20. Pre-registration closes on August 12, 2026. Registration for vehicles is available online at www.WhitinCommunityCenter.com, in-person at our Member Services Desk, or on the day of the event. Additionally, we are now welcoming applications from exhibit and food vendors looking to

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

# Auburn's Summer in the Park Concerts

The Summer in the Park Concert Series takes place at the Riley-Pappas Performance Pavilion at the Dr. Arthur and Dr. Martha Pappas Recreation Complex at 203.5 Pakachoag St. in Auburn.

Performances during the summer are on Thursday nights from 6-8 p.m. Rain dates are for the following Tuesday from 6-8 p.m.

2026 Concert Listing, July – September

- July 16 - The Brat Pack (80's Tribute)
- July 23 - XS Band (Motown to Top 40)
- July 30 - She's Busy (Classic Rock)
- August 6 - Dock 10 (70's and 80's)
- August 13 - Below Deck (Yacht Rock)
- August 20 - 4EverFab (Beatle's Tribute)
- August 27 - Aquanett (80's Rock)
- September 3 - Petty Larceny (Tom Petty Tribute)

# Art show and meet and greet

Booklovers' Gourmet, located at 72 East Main Street in Webster, MA is hosting a local art show & sale featuring the paintings of

W.J. Yacino of Oxford MA. "Through the Eyes of an Artist" will be on view July 1st-31st in the cafe gallery and may be viewed during regular business hours: Tuesday-Saturday 10am-5pm, Wednesday 10am-6pm.

The public is invited to a meet and greet with the artist on Saturday, July 25th, 12-2 p.m. For more information call 508-949-6232 or visit bookloversgourmet.com/events



*Artist's biography*

Wayne Joseph Yacino is a native of Oxford, Massachusetts, who is of Metis (French – Abenaki), Italian and Polish descent. He began painting at the age of 5 years. As a self-taught artist, and with over 60 years of experience, he has had the opportunity to live in Europe for 2 years during his military tour with NATO. He has displayed several of his pieces in Vicenza, Italy. He has also displayed his woodwork and paintings throughout the United States.

The artist has done extensive research into Native American imagery and has taught the Ancient American Skills the first weekend in October, at the Annual Water's Farm Days event in Sutton, Massachusetts, from 1996-2022.

The artist's goal is: "To share with the viewer my emotions and Spiritual experiences through my art; to rise above the mundane, and to bring honor and Glory to my God."

Whatever his subject, he finds great joy and blessing in the way the eye moves through a painting and follows the interaction of all the colors.

Vision looks to tomorrow and sees the reality that should exist today. Vision is the ability to dream – to dream better things in a better world. Vision brings power to a life that might otherwise be meaningless.

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TALES FROM BEYOND

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# Reuben Jenckes's Black Horse Tavern Ghost

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

This is an old ghost story dating back a few centuries. It is typical of the romantic tales of haunted places that Rhode Island has become famous for. This account has been told and retold in several antiquated tomes. A tavern called the Black Horse once stood in the middle of Scituate Village in north-western region of Rhode Island. A man named Reuben Jenckes owned the establishment and was cordial to all who entered its door, whether it was food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty or lodging for the weary.

As the story goes, the ghost of a Narragansett Indian haunted the building out of embarrassment for an event that took place many years before while he was alive and visiting the hostelry. Some claim he also haunted the Black Horse Tavern because he preferred the nearby Pine Tree Tavern in life and haunted the Black Horse in hopes their patrons would migrate to his once preferred drinking establishment.

The ghost haunted the family in the form of strange dreams. He would be seen by various family members while they slept, pointing to someplace on the property before slowly walking toward where he was pointing. The vision was often followed by

some sort of horrific nightmare. One of the main recipients of the ghostly dreams was Reuben Jenckes's daughter, Lucy. He often appeared to her in her nightly slumber, pointing toward the carriage house. In her dream, she would be compelled to follow him, but he would either vanish before reaching the destination of his quest, or she would suddenly wake up.

One night, she saw the man in her dreams, but this time, she did not wake up and followed him as he moved toward the carriage house, with each turn, pointing the way. The ghost led Lucy Jenckes to a loft in the carriage house where a coffin lay in the rafters. The next day, Lucy ventured into the loft where she spied the coffin she had been led to in her nightly vigil. She slowly ambled toward the box and opened it. Inside she found a dressmaker's doll with its hair cut off. That is when an old tale came to light.

It was rumored that the Indian scalped the doll in an angry drunken state, thinking it was a rude person who would not return his conversation. When he realized it was a doll, he became thoroughly embarrassed by the act. That was when the Narragansett chose to take his business down the road to the Pine Tree Tavern.

That night, the ghost came to her in her dreams and requested that she remove the doll from the attic where it had been stored for many years. The next morning she followed the ghost's wish and removed the doll. The haunting supposedly ceased, yet guests of the tavern still insisted the Indigenous man was making his presence known. Many who spent the night at the tavern were jolted out of a sound sleep in the dead of night by frightening war cries.

Some claimed to be pulled out of bed by the hair. Still, others claimed that the ghost was appearing to them in their rooms at night, sometimes in their dreams. Soon the tavern saw fewer guests and over time, the inn became obsolete. Perhaps the Indian ghost fulfilled his mission of scaring customers of the tavern to the point where they transferred their business to the Pine Tree Tavern.

Although the structure is no

longer a tavern, various owners have experienced some strange unexplained occurrences. Whether the Indian's ghost still wanders the confines of the building, or perhaps the spirit of another person who was once involved in the history of the edifice, is a matter of conjecture. The story has stood the test of time, almost as long as the old tavern has.

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- Class 1: Business Setup & Digital Foundations (June 30, 2026)
- Class 2: Brand Strategy & Positioning (July 7, 2026)
- Class 3: AI Tools & Digital Productivity (July 21, 2026)

- Class 4: Visual Identity & Accessible Design (August 4, 2026)
- Class 5: Websites and Online Presence (August 11, 2026)
- Class 6: Connecting Your Digital Ecosystem (August 18, 2026)

About the Instructor: Laura Demastrie is a Senior UI/UX Designer, Art Director, and owner of Brickyard Creative Inc, a Massachusetts-based creative studio that helps small businesses build trustworthy and effective digital brands. With more than 10 years of experience in design, branding, websites and digital strategy, Laura has worked with corporations, agencies, and independent businesses across a wide range of industries. Through this workshop series, Laura aims to make digital business tools more approachable and accessible for local entrepreneurs.

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