

Pakachoag: Where the river bends

BY MARTHA AKSTIN

The half-acre of land that the Greater Worcester Land Trust and the Quinsigamond band of the Nipmuc worked for many years to preserve straddles the Auburn-Worcester line. Accessed by a 70-foot-wide strip in a small cul de sac development on Ellie Way, who could imagine that this green, brush-filled entrance would lead to a spring sacred to these indigenous people?

According to research conducted by WPI, the Nipmuc, whose name in Algonquin means “people of the water,” occupied an enormous portion of land: all of central Massachusetts from the New Hampshire/Vermont borders south to Tolland and Windham counties in Connecticut and the northwest portion of Rhode Island; east to the Natick/Sudbury area and west to the Connecticut River Valley.

“Their economic and subsistence cycles consisted of hunting, gathering, planting, and harvesting in their seasons,” continues the research. “Their scattered villages were linked together by kinship ties, trade alliances, and common enemies. Often thought of as wanderers, they were instead careful planners and good stewards of the land upon which they lived.”

In Central Mass., three major villages existed for thousands



Colin Novick (left) and Thomas Doughton.

of years before the appearance of Europeans: Quinsigamond, Asnebumskit, and Pakachoag. The Pakachoag village, the largest of the three, roughly ran along the Worcester/Auburn line and included land where the College of the Holy Cross now sits.

The Holy Cross connection is how this half-acre preservation effort started. Professor Thomas Doughton, himself a Nipmuc, and Kathy Robertson both worked at Holy Cross. When Doughton talked to her about the Pakachoag village and the Nipmuc history, they brainstormed on how best to preserve what could still be protected.

Colin Novick, executive director

of the Greater Worcester Land Trust, worked with Doughton and others on a documentary film, Pakachoag: Where the River Bends (viewable on YouTube). An aerial map of Worcester clearly shows where the river, now called the Blackstone, bends around Pakachoag Hill.

“Doughton identified this location,” said Novick about Lot 9 on Ellie Way. Research of historic documents identified a footprint of a spring that was important to the Nipmuc family. It was the spring the Pakachoag Nipmuc went to for

PAKACHOAG
continued on page 2



Oxford Senior Little League, the Massachusetts State Champions. (Notice the 2026 in the scoreboard behind the team.)

Oxford's boys of summer

Senior Little League captures title again

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

For the second consecutive year, the Oxford Senior Little League team took home the Massachusetts State Championship title at Holy Cross' Fitton Field on Sunday, July 12 and will once again head to Bangor, Maine to compete in the East Regional Tournament. Last year in Maine, Oxford fell in the championship game, losing to Maryland.

“Last year we were one win away from going to the Little League World Series,” Oxford Manager Jay Reyes said. “Following our loss the regional director came up to me and told me that these [Oxford and Maryland] were the best two teams to come through the tournament in 20 years.”

Under the guidance of Reyes and assistant coaches Andy Gambacini and Terence Fahey, Oxford earned the number one seed in the state tournament. The team then pretty much rolled through its eight tournament games, outscoring their opponents 67-13. In the first game, Oxford took out the number four seed Worcester West in convincing fashion, 10-0. Andy Collins and Owen Leavey both homered in the first inning to get things going and Oxford never looked back.

The championship game was more of the same as Oxford dispatched Melrose, the number three seed, 10-0. Chase Reyes went 4-4 in the

BASEBALL
continued on page 3

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PAKACHOAG

continued from page 1

celebrations or sacred meetings, where they could go to when they felt threatened, a site that could be fortified and provide them with fresh water.

"The land looks underwhelming from the street," acknowledged Novick of Lot 9. "You're in a

subdivision. But when you enter the wetland, you feel like you're somewhere wilder. You're on a waterway that will take you to the Blackstone River, which will take you down to Providence and then into Narragansett Bay."

That waterway route was instrumental to the Nipmuc, whether for fishing or moving goods for trading.

"We spent a long time talk-

ing about what site we wanted to protect," explained Novick. "We descended the slope to the wetlands and walked down to a source spring for where a brook begins that runs into a drainage canal near Route 20. Lot number 9 is one of the last lots to access where that brook starts."

As it happens with land that is purchased for preservation, Lot 9 could be the start to access back

parcels that could be protected. "This could become something greater," said Novick, "as over the next couple of decades more land is added to it."

The way the collaboration evolved is precedent-setting in land preservation in Massachusetts: The GWLT owns the property, but the Nipmuc decide how the land will be utilized. The Trust bought the land with a state grant in 2022. A conservation restriction is on the land that both the Auburn Select Board and Worcester City Council have signed off on. It is now before Rebecca Tepper, Secretary of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, whose office is scrutinizing the arrangement as it is so unique.

"So right now we're stuck in limbo trying to land the plane," said Novick. "We're all trying to figure out what are some different tools we can use to work with indigenous partners. The indigenous group is running the day-to-day affairs of the property – access, signage, interpretation. And the Land Trust is making sure the land never goes away. That's a different model – this is a pilot which sets precedent, so everyone wants to think long and hard before you do something novel."

Sadly, Thomas Doughton died on February 3, 2024. As it said in his obituary, "the world suddenly became less interesting" when he died. "Thomas was a Native American Indian of African and Irish heritage. He was Grandson of Carl

"Chief Sun Cloud" Oscar Bates and Gladys (Hennessey) Bates. His roots in the Worcester area ran deep. During his lifetime he traced his ancestry back to the 1700's. His great-great-grandfather Thomas Hazard was a soldier in the American Revolutionary War."

In the documentary, Cheryll Toney Holley, the female leader of the Hassanamisco Band of the Nipmuc Indians in the Nipmuc Nation, said, "Preservation just means something different to us. It doesn't mean a place that's untouched, that no one else can use. There's a use associated with the relationship. So, if you have a relationship with your mom, your mom gives love to you, you give love back. It's the same thing with the relationship to the land."

"So part of the reason why my community, the Nipmuc community, is struggling right now I suppose with their identity is that we have lost that relationship to the land. Because of that, we have lost our relationship with each other. And that is important because we are all part of the same world, the plants, the animals, the people, the water, the stones. We all have a relationship to each other. We all have a responsibility to each other, to take care of each other. So that's why land preservation is important to us. It's not just something to look at, but something to live with."

Pakachoag: Where the River Bends – is a documentary produced by the College of Holy Cross and the Greater Worcester Land Trust.



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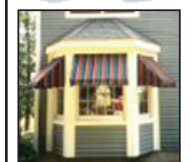


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Oxford's own Miss Massachusetts



Westborough Police Department Patrol Officer Ashlyn Mercier is Miss Massachusetts 2026.
Miss Massachusetts photo by Steve Smith Photography

When Oxford native Ashlyn Mercier was crowned Miss Massachusetts on June 20 at the Hanover Theatre in Worcester, she made pageant history as the first police officer to ever wear the crown.

Mercier's next round of competition will be in September for the title of Miss America 2027. Held in West Palm Beach, Florida, at the Palm Beach County Convention Center, delegates from all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia will compete to succeed the current titleholder, Cassie Donegan who represented New York when she was crowned.

Mercier is the daughter of Oxford Police Corporal Kevin Mercier and followed her father's career path into law enforcement when she joined the Westborough Police Department in 2025.

BASEBALL

continued from page 1

game, including a two-run double in the third inning to give Oxford its first runs. Oxford would add two more runs in the fifth and would secure the win by pushing across six runs in the sixth inning. (As if it was a foretelling, look at the 2026 on the scoreboard in the photo.)

The Massachusetts team out hit Melrose 16-3 in the win, while Leavey and Reyes each knocked in three runs. On the mound Reyes would pitch 5 2/3 innings allowing three hits, three walks and no runs in addition to striking out seven batters. Mason Foskett closed out the game in relief for Oxford. At the plate Collins, Xavier Higgins, Colton Toedt and Jackson Stuart all accounted for multiple hits, clinching the state victory.

Throughout their journey to the state tournament, Oxford only had one game in question, a 12-10 come-from-behind win over the same Melrose team they defeated for the title. With five starters missing the game due to a travel team tournament, and Oxford already having wrapped up the number one seed, Melrose was on the verge of handing Oxford its one and only loss for the season, but the team battled back to keep their record unblemished.

Sixteen players make up the

roster, all of whom are 15 or 16 years old and freshmen or sophomores in high school. Schools represented on the team include Oxford High, Auburn High, Marianapolis Prep, Millbury High, St. John's, Tantasqua High, Shepherd Hill Regional, and Worcester Academy. Most of the athletes reside in Oxford and a few players live in Charlton.

The team accounted for some impressive statistics. As a team Oxford batted .359, with an on-base percentage of .483 and a slugging percentage of .664. They had 74 hits: 42 singles, 17 doubles, three triples and 12 homeruns. On the mound they recorded a 1.896 ERA with 58 of the 191 batters they faced striking out and held the opposition to a mere .173 batting average.

Individually the team was led by Reyes, who batted .714 with four home runs; Leavey (.524) and Collins (.467 and three home runs) also were key contributors to the team's success. Reye also dominated pitching as he posted a 3.96 ERA allowing only a single run in his 17.2 innings pitched. Torin Stone went 13 innings with a 3.76 ERA while Stuart pitched 12 innings allowing two runs and posted a 1.16 ERA.

With eight players returning from last year's runner-up status in the regional tournament, Reyes knew that his team had a good chance of getting back to Bangor this year.

"These kids have been playing

together since they were seven and eight years old. I knew that they could make some noise," Reyes said. "Having come so close last year, being that one game away for moving on, I had high hopes for these guys. I felt that we had a better team. And to get to move onto the World Series would mean the world to these kids, especially the ones that were with us last year."

Completing the Oxford Championship team includes Liam Fahey, Mayson Gambaccini, Thomas Griffin, Henry Watson, Logan Labay, Finn Moynagh, Adam Sliwoski and Sam Yagaratnam.

Seven other teams will participate in the East Regional Tournament in Maine next week. Oxford will play on Tuesday, July 21, against Maryland.

As the League President noted online, the Oxford Little League has created an official GoFundMe page to raise money for these players and families to help relieve some of the financial stresses associated with a trip to Maine and the need to stay overnight for several days.

Please consider donating what you can to help these families. They and the Oxford Little League appreciate your support: www.gofundme.com/f/support-oxford-allstars-journey-to-regionals

YankeeXpress sends congratulations to these talented athletes and wishes them the best in Bangor.

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Tasty cool down places in Auburn

BY HELEN POIRIER

Summer is here and with the hot days, one's thoughts turn to cooling down with ice cream and the many flavors that can make deciding which kind difficult to choose.

There was a time when where to get your ice cream could be a tough decision as there were many places to visit throughout Auburn's history. This article will be the start of a multi-part series highlighting different ice cream stores that were in Auburn from past to present.

To help gather information, a survey was posted on the Auburn Historical Society & Museum's Facebook page, asking for the best place, past and present, to get ice cream in town and why, as well as favorite flavors. There were stand-alone ice cream shops, ice cream at convenience-style stores, restaurants, and unexpected places of business such as gas stations. The consensus so far? Three to one for hard

ice cream over soft serve with novelty treats coming in third.

A long-time West Auburn resident remembers a Sunoco gas station at 887 Southbridge St., run by Ralph R. and Grace E. Ross, who were originally from Vermont. Besides selling gas, there was a small room attached to the main house on the Route 20 side where they sold candy and ice cream. That was his favorite place to get his ice cream cone.

Where the 99 Restaurant is now located, originally started as Dutchland Farms, which was a chain of ice cream and lunch shops that started in Brockton on a dairy farm established by Fred F. Field in 1897. A picture of the Dutchland Farm Store, which was built by L.O. Irish Co. of Auburn in 1933, can be found in our *Images of Auburn* book, which is available for sale at the museum. Eventually, the company expanded to 50 roadside stores that sold milk, butter, eggs, served toasted sandwiches, hot dogs, and fountain treats including ice cream. However, the Dutchland chain did not do well during the Depression and was sold to their rival, Howard Johnson's by 1940. Howard Johnson's was located where J. Anthony's is now on the Auburn/Oxford line. On the



Auburn side of the restaurant, 28 flavors of ice cream were served. The former Dutchland store became a short-lived furniture store, then the China Terrace motel and restaurant, Hawaii 12/20, and is now Pub 99.

The Mt. Auburn Dairy was located on Route 20 in front of what was the Auburn Airport and is now a furniture store. The dairy was opened in the 1930s by Frederic O'Shea who built and ran it, and who also worked for the town as the sealer of weights and measures. He sold it in the

late 1940s or early 1950s. The O'Shea family lived upstairs over the dairy. A picture of the dairy can also be found in the *Images of Auburn* book.

Mt. Auburn Dairy was a staunch supporter of the Auburn High School yearbook, taking ads out from 1937-1952. There were many different meetings held at Mt. Auburn during the

years including Democratic Town meetings, the Golden Rule Committee of the district nurses, and the Tuesday Luncheon Club to name a few. There was even a meeting hosted by Dr. Manford R. Spalding where A.A. Robertson, special agent for the Auburn Board of Health, spoke on the work he was doing in town. It was also interesting that the Mt. Auburn Dairy was used as a geographic reference in many types of articles about accidents, selling pets and getting dressed or fresh turkeys and so on.

What favorite Auburn ice cream place would you like to see in future articles? The ice cream survey is still on the Auburn Historical Society and Museum Facebook page for people to add their choices. Please email, leave a phone message, or come visit the Auburn Historical Society & Museum at 41 South Street. The museum is open Tuesday and Saturday mornings, 9:30 am-12:30 pm. Email: auburnmuseum@verizon.net or 508-832-6856, or www.auburnhistoricalmuseum.org. Follow us on Facebook at Auburn Historical.

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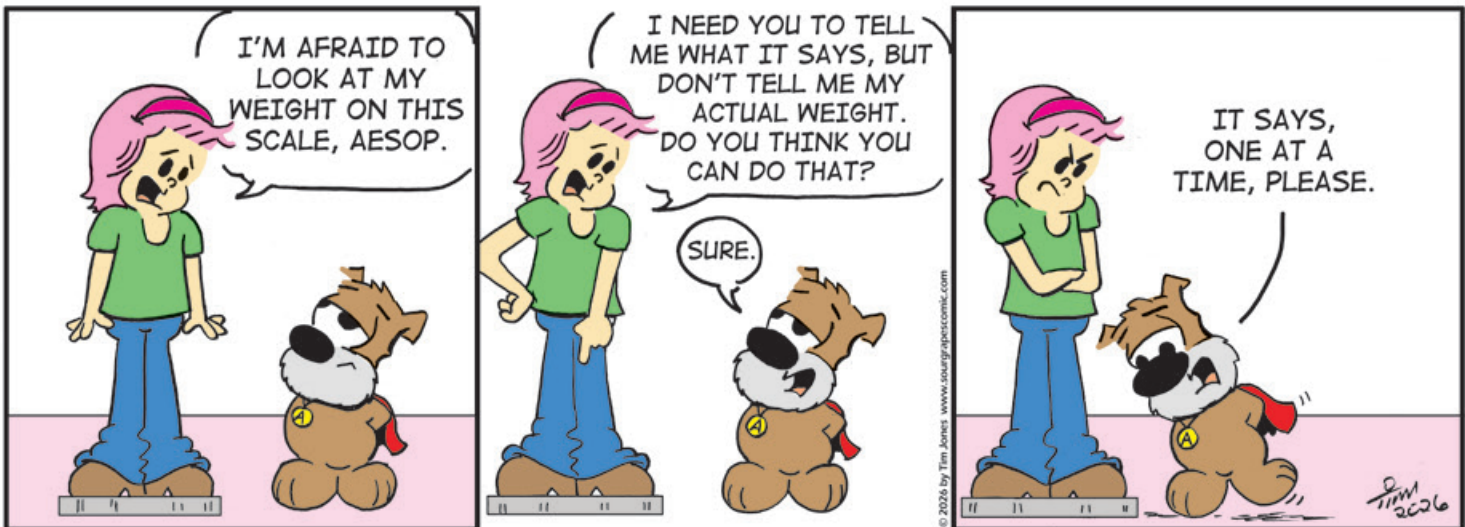
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SOUR GRAPES

by Tim Jones



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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Debunking five common Social Security myths



Catherine Harrington
Financial Advisor

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Social Security is often one of the most important income sources in retirement. Yet widespread myths about how it works can lead to confusion, unnecessary worry and poor planning decisions. Here's the truth behind five of the most common misconceptions.

Myth 1: Social Security is going broke. You've probably heard this one, but the full picture is more nuanced. According to the 2026 Social Security Board of Trustees Report, if Congress does nothing, the program would need to reduce benefits starting in 2032, paying roughly 78 cents for every dollar owed.

But that's just one scenario. Congress could raise the combined payroll tax from 12.4% to 16.65%, which the trustees estimate would secure full benefits through 2100. Other options include eliminating the earnings cap subject to payroll tax or adjusting retirement ages. Lawmakers have tools to address this.

Myth 2: Social Security will cover all your retirement needs. Think of Social Security as a financial foundation, not the full building. According to the Social Security Administration, benefits replace only about 40% of pre-retirement income for a median earner. That means you'll likely need

to account for most of your retirement income yourself. Building a strong personal savings strategy now can help close that gap.

Myth 3: You lose benefits permanently if you keep working. Not true. Social Security does have an "earnings test" that can temporarily reduce benefits for people who claim early and keep working. If your earnings exceed a set annual cap – which changes each year – Social Security will withhold a portion of your benefits. But once you reach full retirement age, the Social Security Administration adjusts your monthly check higher to repay those withheld amounts over time.

Myth 4: An ex-spouse's benefits come out of your own. If you were married for at least 10 years and are currently unmarried, your former spouse may be eligible to collect on your earnings record, or you may be able to collect on theirs. Divorced spouse benefits can

be up to 50% of the other person's full retirement benefit. But those payments don't affect yours. Your monthly benefit is not reduced by anything paid to an ex-spouse or even a current spouse.

Myth 5: Social Security benefits are no longer taxed. Recent legislation caused some confusion here. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act did not eliminate taxes on Social Security benefits. If your combined income exceeds certain thresholds, you'll still owe taxes on a portion of your benefits.

The law also created a temporary deduction (available through 2028) for people 65 and older. Eligible taxpayers can deduct \$6,000 per qualifying filer if their modified adjusted gross income is \$75,000 or less for singles or \$150,000 for couples. The deduction phases out at \$175,000 for singles and \$250,000 for joint filers.

The more you understand Social Security, the more control you have over your retire-

ment outcome. Grounding your decisions in facts rather than assumptions can make a meaningful difference in your long-term financial security.

Contact Catherine today to discuss this topic or any of your financial goals.

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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 sub-group 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



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

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."

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

As the first InvenTeam to replace traditional written monthly news-

letters with high-energy 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

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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 6

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 YankeeXpress.

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Farewell Yankee Readers!

BY JANET STOICA
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*—

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 & Gazette* came calling to ask if I'd like to write news capsules for



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 in the U.S. But, back to my *Yankee* time. I

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 regional papers and that's why the *Yankee Xpress* fits the bill. *Yankee* still writes about your town's board meetings and com-

FAREWELL

continued on page 11

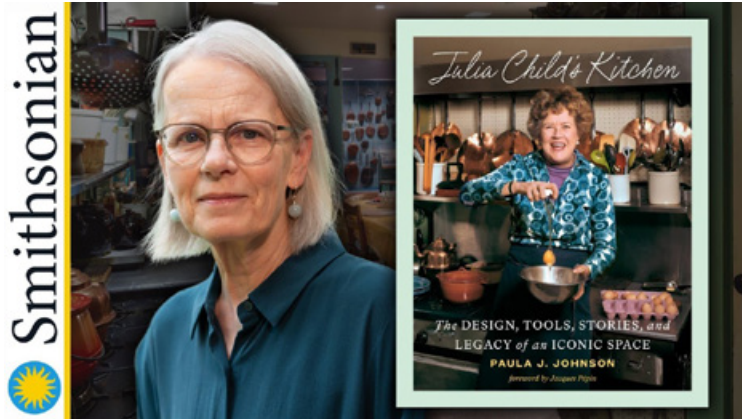
August events at the Auburn Public Library

The library is located at 369 Southbridge St. Call 508-832-7790 or email them at library@town.auburn.ma.us

The Legacy of Julia Child's Kitchen: a virtual author talk with Smithsonian Curator Paula L. Johnson on Tuesday, August 4 from 2-3 pm. This program is funded by the Friends of the Auburn Public Library.

Join this conversation that's sure to warm your heart (and make your stomach rumble), as they delve into the legacy of cooking icon Julia Child with Smithsonian curator and public historian Paula J. Johnson, author of *Julia Child's Kitchen: The Design, Tools, Stories, and Legacy of an Iconic Space*. The book includes interviews with chefs who knew Julia well, commentaries on her favorite culinary tools and kitchen gadgets, and a stunning array of photos.

Call the Auburn Public Library to register or follow the link to



register and submit questions to the author: <https://libraryc.org/auburnlibrary/102516/register>

Gorgeous Gardens of New England (Part II) (ages 18+). Wednesday, August 12, 6-7:15 pm in the Merriam Room.

Joanne Pearson returns to Auburn Public Library for *Gorgeous Gardens of New England Part II*. In this presentation, she will visit Edith Wharton's home, The Mount, and a second Massachusetts nearby

estate, Naumkeag. At both properties, the designs for the magnificent grounds and gardens were created in part by their female owners. Then it is off to four gardens in Connecticut, including the English inspired Hollister House garden and the equally inspirational White Flower Farm. Among the remaining five properties that will be visited, three are probably unknown to most and well worth a visit.

Registration Required, ages 18+. About the Presenter: Before Joanne

Pearson was a photographer, she was a landscape architect. She left that career to pursue one in photography but carried her design training and knowledge along with a great appreciation for beautiful gardens, landscapes and travel. She enjoys sharing her knowledge and experience through a series of lively, informative lectures illustrated with her professional photography.

When Trees Testify: Reclaiming America's Black Botanical Legacy a virtual author talk with Beronda L. Montgomery, on Tuesday, August 25, from 2-3 pm. This program is funded by the Friends of the Auburn Public Library.

The histories of trees in America are also the histories of Black Americans. An enslaved African named Antoine domesticated pecan trees; sycamore trees were both havens and signposts for people trying to escape enslavement; poplar trees are historically associated with lynching; and willow bark has offered the gift of medicine. In *When Trees Testify*, award-winning plant biologist Beronda L. Montgomery explores the ways seven trees—as well as the cotton

shrub—are intertwined with Black history and culture.

Call the Auburn Public Library or follow the link to register and submit questions to the author: <https://libraryc.org/auburnlibrary/186254/register>

High altitudes and high stakes: a Miss Marple Mystery – a virtual author talk with Lucy Foley on Thursday, August 27, 2-3 pm. This program is funded by the Friends of the Auburn Public Library.

Join this thrilling conversation with acclaimed author Lucy Foley as she delves into her brand-new Miss Marple mystery - *Murder at the Grand Alpine Hotel*. High in the Swiss Alps, accessible only by a single, winding railway, stands the luxurious Grand Alpine Hotel. But not everyone is here for a winter holiday. Beneath the champagne and furs, dark histories simmer; old grudges emerge like cracks in the ice. And someone is watching from the shadows. Call the Auburn Public Library to register or follow the link to register and submit questions to the author: <https://libraryc.org/auburnlibrary/186916/register>

Oxford Free Public Library events

Ted Reinstein: Greetings from Breed's Hill and other stories of fact & folklore for the 250th Tuesday, July 28, 6-7 pm, in the

achieved, events took place that would shape how the new nation would look back at its founding. Paul Revere's ride? One of the most



Meeting Room (basement) of the library, 339 Main St. Phone: (508) 987-6003

As America celebrates its 250th Anniversary, Ted Reinstein looks back. Way back. Even years before independence was actually

momentous nights in U.S. history. And, like any big night, there was a bill. And America's first expense report. Who knew? While many New Englanders pride themselves on knowing the difference between Bunker and Breed's Hill, few know that the bad blood over this histori-

cal inaccuracy continues—meet Jed Breed, thirteenth-generation direct descendant of the Boston farmer whose name should be in the history books, not an answer in "Trivial Pursuit." Find out why Concord and Lexington are still doing battle—not with the British, but each other. Visit historic Copp's Hill Burying Ground and find the one headstone the British used for target practice—and why.

All drawn from Ted Reinstein's nearly three decades of reporting around New England, these stories and more are crafted into a just-under-an-hour talk. If you like history, enjoy learning the story behind the story, or just want a good laugh along with your 250th—join "Greetings from Breed's Hill!"

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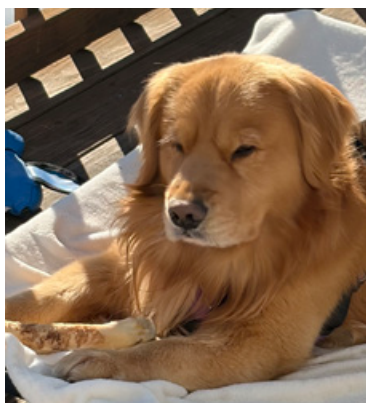
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LIVING WITH LUKE

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

Visit Luke on IG@livingwithluke-valentino

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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.



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The Auburn Farmers' & Cultural Market runs weekly on Thursdays from 4-7 pm through September 3. Browse through locally grown and produced food and products as well as unique creations from talented artisans. The market is located at the Pappas Recreation Complex, 203 Pakachoag St.

FAREWELL

continued from page 8

munity 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 Koth, 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

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Q. My 2007 Ford F-150 air conditioner switch only works on high; it will not work on low. The air is cold, but I don't always want the fan blowing at full force. What is wrong, and what will it cost to fix?

A. The issue could be a faulty switch, wiring, or, most likely, the blower motor resistor. On many vehicles, when the

fan only works on high speed, the blower motor resistor is the most common failure. If it is the resistor, replacement usually takes about 30 minutes, and the part typically costs between \$20 and \$65. Lately, some inexpensive online replacement parts have not been the best quality, so try to buy from a reputable supplier or manufacturer.

Q. I have a 2011 Infiniti G25x. It was involved in an accident on the driver's side front. It was not a very major hit, but it affected the radiator support arm, headlamp assembly, radiator, and front bumper. I had to take it to a body shop for repairs and replacement of those parts. The car was driving and running fine before I brought it to the body shop, but

after the repairs were completed, I discovered it was running sluggishly, rattling, and hesitating when leaving from a stop. What do you advise?

A. The repairs actually sound fairly extensive. Since the car was operating normally before the accident repairs, something may have been overlooked during reassembly or calibration. Possible causes could include a damaged sensor, loose wiring or ground connection, an air intake issue, or drivetrain damage that was not initially apparent. Normally, I would say to return to the original repair shop, but since they returned the vehicle in this condition, I would first get a second opinion on the repair quality and have a third-party shop perform a complete diagnostic evaluation. Depending on what is found, you can then return to the original body shop and ask them to correct any issues related to their repairs.

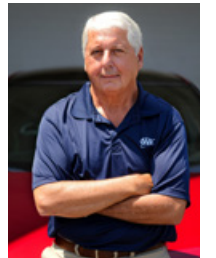
Q. My grandson has a 2017 Jeep Compass Trailhawk with less than 40,000 miles on it. He recently entered the Army and came home, and although we tried to drive it regularly, the battery was always dead and we had to jump-start the car. He had the main battery replaced, and it was fine while he was here. We now have a start/stop message showing on the dashboard. I took it to the dealership and was told it needed the auxiliary start/stop battery replaced, so I replaced the smaller battery. It is back at the dealership now, and I am being told it still needs

to be diagnosed to find out what is wrong. He is stationed in Germany and wants to have his car shipped to him. I am at my wits' end. Any thoughts about what is going on?

A. This Jeep uses two batteries: a main 12-volt battery for starting and an auxiliary battery for the automatic start/stop system and accessories when the engine shuts off at a stop. If either battery becomes weak or if the vehicle sits unused for extended periods, the charging and battery monitoring systems can set warning messages and fault codes. The problem could involve the intelligent battery sensor, poor cable connections, charging system issues, software updates, or another fault within the start/stop system. Unfortunately, there is no simple answer at this point. The Jeep will need to be properly diagnosed with factory-level scan equipment by the dealer or a qualified repair shop.

Q. I have a 2013 Toyota Yaris with about 50,000 miles on it. My check engine light keeps coming on. It's been doing this for almost a year. I borrowed a car code reader diagnostic tool, and it gave me this reading: CODE:

CAR DOCTOR
continued on page 13



BY JOHN PAUL



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TIPS ON FINANCIAL PLANNING

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The Hidden Danger of Investing Too Cautiously

One of the most significant risks investors face isn't losing money in a market dip; it's failing to reach their long-term financial goals.



DENNIS ANTONOPOULOS

Many people focus heavily on short-term losses in the stock market and try to protect their savings by investing conservatively or avoiding stocks altogether. But that runs the risk that their savings won't grow enough to keep up with inflation or support future needs.

Understanding what investment risk really means helps you make smarter financial decisions, considering these three key aspects.

- **Risk tolerance** describes your emotional comfort with risk. If you'd want to pull your money out

of the market during a downturn, that reveals something about your tolerance. Many financial advisors use questionnaires to help clients understand how they might react in different market conditions.

- **Risk capacity** refers to how much risk you can afford to take. Your timeline matters. A 35-year-old saving for retirement has decades to ride out market swings. A retiree drawing income from their portfolio doesn't have that same cushion.

- **Required risk** describes how much risk you may need to take to reach your financial goals. Higher returns generally come with higher risk, though higher risk does not guarantee higher returns. If you need strong growth to retire comfortably, you may need to accept more short-term volatility.

Sometimes these elements don't line up. You might be uncomfortable with risk but need strong growth to meet your goals.

Balance and diversification matter: Finding the right balance matters more than you might think. A small difference in your annual rate of return, from 5% to 7% for instance, doesn't just add up a little. It multiplies. That's the power of compounding — returns earning their own returns, year after year, building on an ever-growing base. Over 30 or 35 years, that can become significant.

You needn't choose between playing it so safe your money barely keeps up with inflation and taking on more risk than you're comfortable with. Instead, a balanced mix can fit your comfort level and still help grow your money over time.

The age factor: You'll want to adjust your approach to risk as you get older. If retirement is years away, your portfolio may lean toward growth investments like stocks and stock mutual funds; you have time to absorb short-term

losses and benefit from long-term gains. Lower risk investments like bonds still play a role because they can help smooth out changes in your portfolio's value.

As you near retirement, your portfolio may shift toward a more even mix of stocks and bonds to limit exposure to large market swings. The goal is to protect what you've built while still generating enough growth to fund a retirement that could last decades.

Investing well isn't about eliminating risk; it's about taking the right amount of it. Too little risk can be just as damaging as too much. A financial advisor can help you find the balance that matches

your comfort level, your financial situation and your long-term goals.

Investors should understand the risks involved with owning investments, including interest rate risk, credit risk and market risk. The value of investments fluctuates and investors can lose some or all of their principal.

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

P0138 oxygen sensor circuit high voltage. It was suggested that I add Techron Complete Fuel System Cleaner to a tank of gas and drive the car on the highway for 30 to 60 miles. This worked for a little while, and I was able to get an inspection sticker, but the check engine light eventually came back on. I tried using the fuel system cleaner again, and it worked, but now the light has come back on. A friend told me not to worry about it unless the car started sounding funny. I'm worried that if I don't have this taken care of, I might do more harm to my car in the long run. Could you give me your opinion on this problem?

A. Driving with the check engine light on for an extended period could reduce fuel economy, increase emissions, and potentially damage the catalytic converter if the engine is running excessively rich. Code P0138 gener-

ally indicates a high-voltage condition in the downstream oxygen sensor circuit, often caused by a faulty oxygen sensor, damaged wiring, or, less commonly, an engine running condition. Fuel system cleaner may temporarily affect the readings, but it is unlikely to permanently solve the problem. At this point, a technician using a professional scan tool should be able to determine whether the sensor, wiring, or another issue is causing the fault.

Q. Eight years ago, I purchased a 2013 Ford Edge with the 2.0L turbo engine. After having 700 miles on it, I took a trip. When I came back and checked the oil, very little showed on the dipstick. It was low by about two to three quarts. The tailpipe extensions were loaded with black soot. However, to this day, the engine still runs fine, although there is still soot on the pipes. What do you think happened?

A. It sounds as though the engine may have experienced higher-than-normal oil con-

sumption during its initial break-in period, possibly because the piston rings had not fully seated yet. Some black soot on the tailpipes is also fairly common on modern direct-injected and turbocharged engines because they tend to run richer under certain operating conditions. Since the vehicle has continued to perform well for many years without apparent engine problems, I would simply continue maintaining it properly and monitor the oil level regularly between oil changes.

John Paul is AAA Northeast's Car Doctor. He has over forty years' experience and is an ASE-certified master technician. He will answer readers' questions each week. Email your questions to jpaul@aaanortheast.com. Follow John on X @johnfpaul and Facebook at mrjohnfpaul.

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A painting of a blacksmith with a long white beard and a straw hat, wearing a white shirt and dark overalls. He is using a hammer and tongs to shape a piece of glowing orange metal on a large anvil. In the background, a fire burns in a furnace. The painting is signed 'J. M. W. Turner 1840' in the bottom left corner.

TALES FROM BEYOND

tomdagostino.com

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 northwestern 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.

The First Congregational Church of Oxford in partnership with the Oxford United Methodist Church invites children ages 5-12 to its Vacation Bible School. This fun-filled week includes music, games, crafts, stories, and activities designed to encourage kindness, compassion, and faith. Space is limited to 20 children, so register early. For more information, call the First Congregational Church of Oxford at 508-987-2211 or email firstchurchoxford@gmail.com

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