

# localtownpages Norfolk & Wrentham

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Free to Every Home and Business Every Month

August 1, 2026

## Wrentham fund seeks donations to help seniors, disabled residents with tax bills

By JOE STEWART

Wrentham officials are asking residents to donate to a fund that helps elderly and disabled homeowners cover their property tax bills. Kathy Nelson, the town's treasurer/collector, said the town is currently seeking donations to the fund.

Nelson serves as an ex-officio member of the Wrentham Elderly and Disabled Tax Aid Committee, which oversees the fund. The program is known as the Wrentham Neighbors Fund.

### How the fund works

Eligible elderly and disabled Wrentham residents can apply to the fund to offset their Wrentham real estate tax bill. The fund does not apply to taxes in Norfolk or other neighboring towns.

The committee was created after Wrentham's Annual Town Meeting voted in June 2014 to accept a state law, Massachusetts General Law Chapter 60, Section 3D. That law lets cities and towns set up local funds to collect donations for tax relief for qualifying seniors and dis-

abled taxpayers.

The fund is built entirely from donations. It does not draw on tax revenue. Because the fund depends on how much residents give, the amount available to distribute changes from year to year.

Awards are based on need, as determined by the committee.

### Who can apply

Applicants must be at least 65 years old or disabled and must own and live in the home as their primary residence.

Annual gross household income must fall below set limits that rise with household size: \$44,000 for one person, \$60,000 for two people, \$75,000 for three people, and \$91,000 for four people.

Applications will be available starting September 1, 2026, at the Assessor's Office and the Senior Center.

### Raising money

To build up the fund, the

### DONATIONS

continued on page 2

## Community baby showers aim to connect growing families with resources

**Showers planned for August 18 and 25 in Wrentham and Norfolk**

By GRACE ALLEN

They say it takes a village to raise a child. For new and expectant families, finding that village, and knowing where to turn for help, can be just as important as support itself. Recognizing that need, the Metacomet Public Health Alliance is bringing together local organizations and resources through two community baby showers designed to connect families with the services available to them.

Last year, the organization



Families received free car seat fittings from local police and fire personnel during last year's community baby shower, while the SAFE Coalition donated car seats to families. The service will return this year, with car seat availability dependent on grant funding. (Photo courtesy of Metacomet Public Health Alliance/Facebook)

launched its first community baby shower. This year the event is expanding to two locations with more vendors,

offering parents and caregivers essential baby supplies

### SHOWERS

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# SAFE Coalition to host Overdose Awareness Day events in August

SAFE Coalition will hold flag placing events in five Massachusetts towns to remember community members lost to overdose and mark International Overdose Awareness Day.

The public events will take place Saturday, August 29 from 9 to 11 a.m. on town commons and town hall lawns in Franklin, Medway, Norfolk, Wrentham and Millis. Anyone can attend and plant flags, a powerful gesture that helps show support and dismantle the stigma and isolation of overdose loss. Those interested can sign up at [safecoalitionma.org/ioad](http://safecoalitionma.org/ioad).

The annual event arrives amid news that the state experienced a 27 percent drop in opioid-related deaths in 2025 from the previous year. It is also the first time the annual total has fallen below 1,000 since 2013, with an estimated total of 978 deaths, according to the state Department of Public Health. Fatal opioid overdoses have declined nearly 60 percent since a record high of 2,364 deaths in 2022.

“The news of the fatal overdose decrease in Massachusetts signifies real progress,” said Jen Levine, SAFE’s chief executive officer and co-founder. “It gives us hope, but it doesn’t mean our work is finished. Every flag placed is a reminder that we are far from done.”



Levine said the flag placings also give families, neighbors and anyone affected by addiction a place to gather.

“Right now, we have the privilege of joining our community in remembering those we’ve lost to the disease of addiction,” she said. “We are grateful for the opportunity to stand with those impacted and honor their experience.”

International Overdose Awareness Day, established in 2001, is a worldwide event held each year to remember those who have died or suffered because of overdose and to reduce the stigma associated with drug-related deaths. Thousands of communities are expected to participate this year. The 2025 theme, “25 years on.

Still needed,” reflects the idea that overdose continues to affect every community, but that speaking openly and treating each other with care can help reduce the number of lives lost.

Massachusetts’ declining fatal overdose number reflects the value of SAFE’s work in the community. Founded in 2015 as a community response to the opioid crisis, SAFE provides free, judgment-free support for substance use and mental health concerns through support groups, educational courses, community and school events, family services, counseling, Narcan training and more.

For more information or to volunteer, visit [safecoalitionma.org/ioad](http://safecoalitionma.org/ioad).

## DONATIONS

*continued from page 1*

town added a donation slip to this year’s real estate tax bills, which were mailed to residents, Nelson said.

Residents can give by check, made payable to the Town of Wrentham with “Wrentham Neighbors Fund” written in the memo line, or online at [wrentham.gov](http://wrentham.gov), under Online Payments. Questions about the fund can be sent to [NeighborsFund@wrentham.gov](mailto:NeighborsFund@wrentham.gov).

Nelson also shared that the committee plans to set up a table at Wrentham Day on Saturday, September 12, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the town common.

## Other property tax relief options

The Neighbors Fund is separate from a set of property tax exemptions and deferrals available to seniors, veterans, the blind, and surviving spouses. Those programs are authorized under Section 5 of Chapter 59 of the Massachusetts General Laws and are not dependent on donations.

According to the Board of Assessors, these are the relevant tax exemption and deferral categories:

- Clause 41C: a \$1,000 exemption for residents 70 or older, with income limits of \$21,855 for a single person and \$32,782 for a married couple, and asset limits of \$43,709 and \$60,100 respectively.
- Clause 17D: a \$185 exemption for residents 70 or older, surviving spouses, or minors with a deceased parent, with a total net worth limit of \$42,560. Income is not considered for this exemption.
- Clause 37: a \$437.50 exemption for residents who are legally blind and registered with the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind.
- Clause 22: a range of exemptions, from \$800 to full exemption, for certain veterans, their spouses, or surviving spouses, depending on the nature of a service-connected disability.
- Clause 41A: a deferral, rather than exemption, for residents 65 or older with income under \$40,000 per year. The town charges 5% simple interest on deferred taxes and places a lien on the property until the deferral is repaid.

The application deadline for these exemptions and deferrals is April 1, 2027. Residents with questions can call the Board of Assessors at 508-384-5408.

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# Troop 80 donates \$500 to Food Pantry

BY MAUREEN SULLIVAN

On July 14, four members of Boy Scout Troop 80 – all Senior Patrol Leaders about to begin their first steps toward Eagle Scout – donated \$500 to the Norfolk Food Pantry, which is in the back of Emmanuel Baptist Church on Rockwood Road.

The troop raised money through a car wash and the annual Christmas tree pickup, the troop’s biggest fundraiser of the year. After doing some research, the Senior Patrol Leaders decided to donate a part of the proceeds to the Food Pantry.

“Food’s expensive right now,” said Scout Sebastian Rizzo.

Kelley Brown, the pantry’s director, took the Scouts on a tour of the facility, which comprises a storage unit and the pantry itself. She told the Scouts the money will be used to purchase milk and fresh produce, as well as pay for utilities and maintenance.



From left, Pastor Kyle Degagne of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Rylan Kozik, Landon Kozik, Jesse Poynot, Sebastian Rizzo and Kelley Brown of the Norfolk Food Pantry. (Photo by Maureen Sullivan)

“Every little bit gets well utilized,” she said, adding that current pantry needs include instant coffee, hygiene products, detergent, cleaning supplies and gift cards.

The pantry is overseen by the church as a community effort, said Pastor Kyle

Degagne. “It’s a way to love your neighbor,” he said.

The Norfolk Food Pantry started in 1992, and is a partner with the Greater Boston Food Bank. The food pantry is open to Norfolk residents (proof of residency required); hours are Saturdays from

9:30 to 11:30 a.m. For information, go to <https://www.ebcnorfolk.org/foodpantry>.

Troop 80 meets on Sundays from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Federated Church of Norfolk, in the lower hall. For information, visit <https://www.troop80norfolk.com/>.



Kelley Brown, director of the Norfolk Food Pantry, shows members of Norfolk Boy Scout Troop 80 some of the items available for those using the pantry. (Photo by Maureen Sullivan)



Brown shows Rylan Kozik and Landon Kozik of Norfolk Boy Scout Troop 80 what’s inside. (Photo by Maureen Sullivan)

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# Hospital bill could bring relief to Norfolk, Wrentham first responders

By MAUREEN SULLIVAN

Six years ago, during a series of thunderstorms, a wall of water broke through the doors and flooded the lower floors of Norwood Hospital. The flood destroyed the facility's electrical systems and forced an evacuation and closure.

The hospital remains closed, with a building that's incomplete, as local and state officials tussle with the site's current owners, Medical Properties Trust, over plans to reopen.

A bill making its way through the state Legislature would have the Commonwealth take the property by eminent domain. The bill passed the House on July 7 and is now in the Senate for consideration.

In a social media post, state Rep. Marcus Vaughn, R-Wrentham, said the bill would be a means to "move the process forward and create a path

toward reopening a hospital on the site." He added that for many families in his district, the hospital's closure has meant "longer drives, overcrowded emergency rooms, and reduced access to timely healthcare."

"I would say that reopening Norwood Hospital would be very helpful to Norfolk in terms of time, distance, and wear and tear on our vehicles," said Rob Garrity, Norfolk's town administrator. "The alternatives to Norwood we are currently using are farther away, take a longer time to get to, meaning our residents aren't at the hospital as quickly as they had been before, which can add to negative outcomes."

"Also, traveling longer distances - both there and back - means our crews are out of town longer, increasing the chances we are going to have to call back other staff or rely on mutual aid in case there is another emergency in town," he added. "[Reopening Norwood Hospital] would definitely be a positive factor in terms of response time, cost and patient outcomes."

According to the 2025 Town Report, Norfolk's Fire Department responded to 3,088 calls for service in that calendar year. There were 2,045 emergency incidents and 1,043 non-emergency incidents.

Wrentham's Fire Department responded to 1,991 incidents involving rescue and medical emergencies, according to the 2024 Town Report (the most recent year available).



The replacement Norwood Hospital is shown under construction in February 2025. Construction was later halted, and the future of the site remains the subject of legislative action. (Photo courtesy of Finish Norwood Hospital/Facebook.)

**Task force issues report**

An interim report released by the Norwood Hospital Task Force in late June also urged for support of the bill, as well as detailing the role corporate ownership and financial interests have played in the hospital's continued closure.

"What happened to Norwood Hospital should concern every resident of Massachusetts," said Task Force Chair and Town General Manager Tony Mazzucco. "This hospital did not fail. It was profitable. It served generations of families. It was lost to a natural disaster, and then became trapped in a system that increasingly treats health care infrastructure as a financial asset rather than a public necessity."

The report documented the real consequences of allowing critical health care assets to remain tied up in financial and

real estate disputes while communities continue to lose access to care.

The Norwood Hospital property is owned by Medical Properties Trust, an Alabama-based real estate investment trust, which recently raised its asking price by 50% during negotiations with Mass. General Brigham.

"Across Massachusetts and around the country, private equity firms, real estate investment trusts and other financial interests have extracted enormous value from hospitals while communities are left to deal with the consequences," said Steve Costello, a member of the Norwood Hospital Task Force, president and chief executive officer of the Bank of Canton. "Norwood Hospital is one of the clearest examples of what happens when financial engineering takes priority over patient care

and community health."

"Today, a partially completed hospital sits vacant while hundreds of thousands of residents continue to live with the consequences," Mazzucco said. "The need for emergency care, inpatient services, cardiac care and behavioral health services never disappeared. What disappeared was the political will to force a resolution."

The full report is available at <https://finishthejobnorwood.com/>.

**Timeline**

2020 – Flooding from a series of thunderstorms forces closure of Norwood Hospital. Due to the extensive damage, Steward Health Care announced the hospital would be rebuilt.

2022 – Hospital demolished, reconstruction begins.

2024 – Reconstruction suspended due to Steward's financial problems. Steward filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy; the hospital's licensed satellite centers closed in October.

2025 – Town of Norwood forms a health-care working group, with the goal of reopening the hospital.

2026 – Mass. General Brigham withdraws from plan to buy the hospital when the property's landlord, MPT, increased the asking price; Norwood's state legislators, state Rep. John Rogers and state Sen. Michael Rush, filed bills to take the hospital property by eminent domain. The bill has passed the House and is currently in the Senate.

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# Local musicians attend summer music academy

Lyra Steidel (Wrentham), Adelyn Reilly (Wrentham), and Julia Brideau (Norfolk) recently spent two weeks in Door County, WI studying at Birch Creek Music Performance Center. These King Philip Regional High School students were among 61 musicians from throughout the country to attend the Symphony session at the prestigious academy whose unique mission is to provide intensive, performance-based instruction to promising student musicians by immersing them in a professional, mentoring environment.

Birch Creek celebrates its 51<sup>st</sup> concert season in 2026 and continues to support a student-to-faculty ratio of approximately 2:1. This provides students with an abundance of personal attention from their faculty mentors, who represent top music educators and performers from around the country. Students are given the opportunity to hone their technical skills and learn all the aspects of life as a professional musician firsthand. Dur-

ing their two-week residency this summer, students attending the Symphony session performed

seven concerts alongside their teachers in front of paying concertgoers.

Ricardo Castañeda is the Program Director of the Symphony program. 2026 marks

his 29th year on faculty at Birch Creek, and 26th year as Program Director. He holds his bachelor's and master's degrees in music performance from Northwestern University. In addition to his active freelance career, Castañeda is currently Principal Oboist with the Chicago Sinfonietta, and solo English Horn with the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra. He is also on faculty at University of Illinois – Chicago and Northeastern Illinois University.

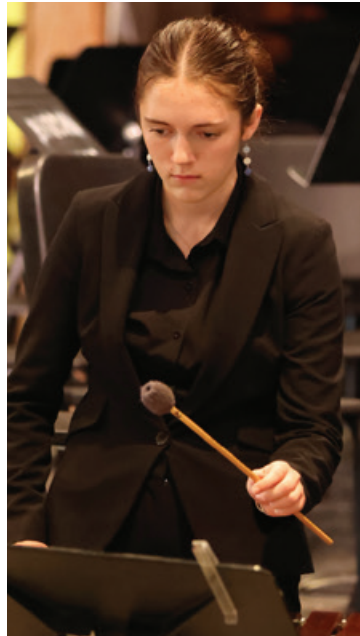
Birch Creek Music Performance Center in Egg Harbor, WI is a residential summer music academy for advanced student musicians. With a performance emphasis, students are taught by nationally known performers and educators during the day, and perform in concerts alongside them at night. Four sessions focus on Percussion, Steel Pan & World Music, Symphony, and Big Band Jazz. 2026 concert information and session dates are posted at [BirchCreek.org/Tickets](http://BirchCreek.org/Tickets).



Lyra Steidel of Wrentham performs on vibraphone during a concert at Birch Creek Music Performance Center in Door County, Wis. The residential summer academy pairs promising student musicians with professional mentors in an intensive performance-based program.



Adelyn Reilly of Wrentham studies her music before performing during the Symphony session at Birch Creek Music Performance Center in Wisconsin. Students spent two weeks training with nationally recognized performers and educators while presenting seven public concerts.



Julia Brideau of Norfolk performs on marimba during the Symphony session at Birch Creek Music Performance Center in Door County, Wis. The King Philip Regional High School student was among 61 musicians from across the country selected for the academy's intensive summer program.

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Student Voice

# Norfolk Farmers Market back for another season

By ALISA KIREYEV

As Wednesday rolls around, the Norfolk town common fills with shoppers carrying produce bags, children weaving between tents, and neighbors chatting as local vendors set up for the Norfolk Farmers Market.

Now celebrating its tenth season, the market has become a familiar part of summer in town. Since opening in 2016, it has grown from a small collection of two local farms in the parking lot of the Grange Hall to a weekly event, now hosting a variety of food trucks, local vendors, live music, and more. The market moved to the town common in 2017 and began operating on Wednesdays in 2021.

For market organizer and local farm owner Zach Ziegler, one of the biggest differences between a farmers market and a grocery store is the opportunity to connect directly with the people behind the products.

“Being able to talk with the



folks who grow, make, and bake your food is definitely a unique experience you will not get at a store,” Ziegler said. He also added that the market is an opportunity for people to discover seasonal produce and products they may not otherwise find in a traditional grocery store.

Beyond shopping, Ziegler

sees the market as a place that brings the community together. “The market is a great place to meet people in your community,” he said. “We have developed a lot of great relationships with customers, vendors, musicians, and community members throughout the years.”

Because the Norfolk Farmers

Market is smaller than many others in the area, Ziegler believes it has maintained a welcoming, hometown atmosphere where regular visitors and vendors get to know each other. The market also provides an opportunity for new local businesses to introduce their products and begin building a

customer base.

Over the past decade, the market has expanded well beyond its original group of vendors. Today, visitors can find everything from fresh produce to honey, baked goods, prepared foods, crafters, and live entertainment.

Looking ahead, Ziegler hopes customers will leave with more than just groceries. “I hope people find a new favorite fruit or vegetable in season at the market and come home with a new recipe idea each week,” he said.

As the market continues its tenth season, it remains an opportunity not only to shop locally but connect with neighbors and celebrate the small businesses that help make up the Norfolk community. Visit the market on Wednesdays from 3 to 7 p.m. through September 30 and follow them on Facebook and Instagram for updates.



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Root vegetables and greens were among the bounty at a recent market.

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Your Money, Your Independence

# When ‘I think they’re all set’ becomes ‘it’s complicated’



Glenn Brown, CFP

When meeting with new clients, we usually start with family. Conversations about kids bring great enthusiasm, but shifting to aging parents changes the mood instantly.

The responses almost always match the client’s age:

- **30s:** “I think they’re all set.”
- **40s:** “Well... it’s complicated.”
- **50s:** A heavy sigh and, “Yeah, it’s been a struggle.”

Discussing money, health, and estate planning with your parents is daunting. But delaying leaves families unprepared dur-

ing a crisis, resulting in quick, sometimes irreversible decisions under emotional stress.

This isn’t about inheritance or taking away control. It’s about protecting their independence so hard-earned assets serve *their* wishes, not a medical crisis, an unwanted lifestyle or excessive taxation (looking at you, Massachusetts estate tax \*cough\* money grab).

Here is how to approach it in steps.

**Rally your siblings first**

Get on the same page with your siblings before talking to your parents. Aligning early avoids the too common, “*Your sister knows our plan,*” while telling your sister you do!

Focus on hearing and supporting their wishes, not taking control. Finally, pick a quiet time outside of major holidays with just the adult kids and parents (no spouses) to keep the conversation open and relaxed.

**Open the dialogue on wellness**

Start the conversation from a place of curiosity and respect. Use “I” statements to share your own thoughts rather than

pressing for immediate answers. Focus first on wellness and long-term care preferences.

Would they prefer to stay in their home with professional support?

Transition to a retirement community?

What about when one passes, what should occur?

**Outsource sooner than later**

Waiting for a crisis to get outside help is a major mistake. This is true for home maintenance, caregiving, or financial management. Too often, older clients stubbornly insist, “*I’m not paying \$100 for a plow guy and his shovel!*” But shoveling snow, cleaning gutters and pushing a lawn mower in your 70s are widow-makers. Is saving a few dollars worth a life-altering event?

This same mindset traps their savings. Without a distribution plan, retirees often freeze and refuse to spend on safety, convenience, or life goals out of fear. A CFP gives them permission to enjoy and spend their money with confidence, while keeping you in the role of a loving child rather than an exhausted caregiver.

**Secure essential legal tools**

Once preferences are clear, make sure the right legal structures are updated and funded.

A **Healthcare Proxy** names a trusted person to handle medical decisions if your parents can’t speak for themselves. Paired with a **Financial Power of Attorney**, daily bills and care choices are managed seamlessly without costly court intervention.

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- **Control over privacy & contesting:** Wills go through public, lengthy probate court and can be contested. Trusts remain completely private

and transfer assets smoothly without court delays.

*(Did I mention a revocable trust is about control?)*

**Protecting their independence**

Preparing for evolving health needs, or the loss of a parent, spares your family from navigating an emotional crisis in the dark. By leading with empathy, collaborating with siblings, and setting up the right legal tools, you protect your parents’ autonomy and preserve peace of mind for everyone.

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

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

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## Norfolk Public Library offers full slate of August programs

The Norfolk Public Library has a busy lineup of programs for all ages this month.

Children can kick off the month on Aug. 3 by meeting some “Not Really So Scary Animals” with naturalist Joy Marzolf, followed by a Magical Plants Workshop exploring “Sometimes Hazardous Herbs.” Bubble Parties on Aug. 4 and Aug. 11, weekly Baby Time and Toddler Storytime sessions, Lego Builders, Paws to Read, Family Movies, and Multiage Storytimes round out the month’s youth programming.

Families can also enjoy the weeklong JAWsome Shark Scavenger Hunt beginning Aug. 17.

Teens and tweens can create succulent crafts on Aug. 3, while adults have opportunities to connect through the library’s Watercolor Meet Ups, Fiber Art Group, Crokinole Club, Moms

Off Duty Book Club, and No Fail Crafts for Adults, scheduled throughout the month.

Several virtual author and educational presentations are also scheduled, including *The Legacy of Julia Child’s Kitchen* with Smithsonian curator Paula

J. Johnson on Aug. 4, *When Trees Testify: Science, Wisdom, History, and America’s Black Botanical Legacy* on Aug. 25, and a mystery-themed presentation with author Lucy Foley on Aug. 27.

Other highlights include a Craft Supply Swap on Aug. 6,

a Meditation Session on Aug. 12, Paint Your Home Night for adults on Aug. 13, Artist Hour: Learn to Create Japanese Watercolor on Aug. 27, and Tech 911 assistance on Aug. 28.

The library will also host Town Administrator Time on

Aug. 14 and the Norfolk Memory Café on Aug. 26.

Many programs require advance registration. For a complete calendar of events and registration information, visit [norfolkpl.org](http://norfolkpl.org).



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# Norfolk Historical Commission Awards Scholarship

The Norfolk Historical Commission is pleased to announce that the first Barbara Bartholomew History Scholarship has been awarded to Helena Bekele. She is a Norfolk resident who attended Norfolk Schools and graduated from King Philip Regional High School. She will enter her senior year at Vassar College majoring in history. The award was presented to Helena on June 22, 2026, at a ceremony held in Norfolk's historic building, the Tramp House. As part of the scholarship application process, Helena expressed her reasons for studying history in the following narrative:

*Ever since I was a young child, I have always harbored a deep love of history. I recall one summer when I was eleven years old, I stumbled across a 1946 Girl Scout Handbook sitting on a thrift store shelf. It quickly became one of my most treasured items. I was a Girl Scout too, and looking through those pages, I imagined what it must have been like to be a scout in the 1940s. I'd gaze at the collection of names scribbled on the back page, which must have been from the girl's troop. I felt a connection to them span-*

*ning across the eighty years separating us. Although those girls only existed to me as a handful of names, I felt like I knew them. By studying history, you can form an intimate connection with people who have long since died, who lived in corners of the world you will never see. You can read about their lives and appreciate their unique experiences. With my degree, I hope to assist others in communing with people from the past. I am pursuing a career in libraries and archives, as I'd like to assist in making historical information accessible to the general public, allowing the souls and stories of the deceased to live on.*

Our benefactor, Barbara Bartholomew, grew up in Norfolk and attended the Center School through eighth grade. She graduated from Walpole High School as King Philip Regional High School was not yet built. Barbara studied history at UMass Amherst and was one of the first women to earn a master's degree from Harvard University. She spent her career as a history teacher in Ashland where she became head of the History Department. Upon retire-

ment, Barbara joined the Historical Commission and devoted her time researching and unlocking Norfolk history; she was a passionate researcher. When Barbara passed away, she left the major part of her estate to the Town of Norfolk for the purposes of education, namely this history scholarship as well as funds to the elementary school for teaching local history. Members of the Historical Commission and friends who knew Barbara agree that Helena is exactly the college student she had in mind to receive this award.

Scholarship information and the application are available on the Town of Norfolk website: <https://www.norfolkmass.gov>. The Historical Commission encourages eligible college/university students majoring in history or a related subject to apply for the next scholarship to be awarded in the spring of 2027.

Norfolk residents interested in history are welcomed to join the Historical Commission. Please contact NHC via email at [nhc@norfolkmass.gov](mailto:nhc@norfolkmass.gov).



From left, Geri Tasker, Norfolk Historical Commission Chair, with Helena Bekele, the first recipient of the Barbara Bartholomew History Scholarship. (Contributed photo)

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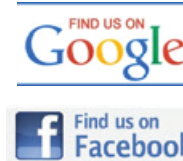
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# Debunking five common Social Security myths



Todd Miller, CFP®

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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 Admin-

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

For more information contact: Todd Miller, CFP®  
O: 781-652-9573 call or text  
Todd.Miller@edwardjones.com

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## Gilly's House Summerfest returns to Wrentham Aug. 16



Residents of all ages are invited to attend Gilly's House Summerfest on Sunday, Aug. 16, from noon to 4 p.m. at the Wrentham Developmental Center, 131 Emerald St., Wrentham.

The event is free and open to the public, with admission, food and activities provided at no cost.

Summerfest will offer a wide range of family-friendly entertainment and activities throughout the afternoon, including a circus workshop, water slide, bouncy house,



petting zoo, dunk tank, Dragon Foam, arts and crafts, and music by DJ Jeff Hall.

Food will be available for attendees, including hamburgers, hot dogs, chips and drinks sponsored by the Norfolk Lions Club. The event will also feature a restaurant cook-off showcasing a number of local restaurants.

In addition, organizers have announced that Pat the Patriot will make a special guest appearance during the event.



Gilly's House Summerfest is designed as a community celebration that brings people together for an afternoon of recreation, entertainment and food while supporting the organization's mission.

For more information about the event, visit [www.gillyshouse.com](http://www.gillyshouse.com) or email Maureen at [maureen@gillyshouse.com](mailto:maureen@gillyshouse.com).



# Pickle for Paws tournament to benefit local wildlife rehabilitation efforts

By GRACE ALLEN

Animal lovers and pickleball enthusiasts will have a chance to rally for a cause this fall when Return2Wild hosts its inaugural Pickle for Paws Charity Pickleball Tournament on Sunday, Sept. 13, at Eleveno at Patriot Place in Foxboro.

The fundraiser will support Return2Wild, the Norfolk-based nonprofit founded by licensed wildlife rehabilitator and former critical care nurse Susan Siegel. The organization provides care for injured, sick, and orphaned wildlife before returning healthy animals to their natural habitats, while also educating the public about wildlife conservation and coexistence.

While the event is a fundraiser, organizers emphasize that it is designed to be a fun, social tournament rather than a highly competitive sanctioned event. Teams will play five to six games, and registration is limited to 40 teams, with advance registration required. The \$75 per-player entry fee includes tournament play, while non-players can purchase a \$15 activity pass to enjoy family-friendly games, interactive activities, a meet-and-greet with wildlife ambassadors, and a silent auction. Organizers will also hold a “Pickleball Drop,” where participants can purchase a numbered pickleball

**PICKLE FOR PAWS**  
*continued on page 12*



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## Point32Health volunteers give back at Gilly’s House



Point32Health colleagues recently volunteered at Gilly’s House as part of Point32Health’s annual Volunteer Week. The group planted flowers, spread mulch and helped prepare garden beds at the Wrentham sober home. Point32Health is the parent company of Harvard Pilgrim Health Care and Tufts Health Plan.

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# Choosing your college major

"What do I want to major in?" is one of the most common and lingering questions for college-bound students. For some, the answer comes easily. But for many, it doesn't - and that's okay. In fact, nearly 20% of first-year students enter college as "undeclared," making it one of the most popular choices on many campuses. On average, students change their major *three times* over the course of their college career.

The good news? With a little reflection and planning, students can make more informed decisions that align with both their interests and the ever-changing demands of the job market

## Start by assessing interests

Exploring your interests is a productive and worthwhile investment. Tools like free personality and career assessments, such as BigFuture, YouScience, Focus2Career, or 16Personalities, can help you begin to connect your preferences to potential majors.

Personality assessments are a great starting point, but they should only be the beginning. Talk to professionals, shadow someone for a day, attend a summer program, volunteer, or work a part-time job related to

an area you're considering. You don't need to figure it all out immediately - but you do need to be curious and proactive.

## Meet with your college academic advisor (first month at college!)

Academic advisors are often one of the most underutilized resources on campus. They are there to help students explore majors and minors, choose the right courses, stay on track to graduate in four years, and even discover opportunities outside the classroom. Students should plan to meet with their advisor within their first few weeks on campus - and return regularly as interests evolve.

## Focus on transferable skills

In today's rapidly shifting workforce, especially with the growing influence of AI and automation, having a major is helpful, but not everything. What's becoming essential is the development of transferable skills that technology struggles to replicate - the abilities that apply across careers and industries, regardless of your major. Skills such as, critical thinking and problem-solving; communication and collaboration; creativity and adaptability;

emotional intelligence and ethical decision-making; and digital literacy and data fluency.

Whether you study computer science, English, psychology, or engineering, your focus should be on how your major helps you build these essential skills. Even liberal arts graduates are finding success in tech, marketing, and user experience design - not because of the specific content of their major, but because of how they learned to think, communicate, and solve problems. One of my former students majored in English but is now excelling as a manager at a high-tech AI company.

## Research career demand

While passion matters, it's also wise to consider job outlook and salary trends. For example, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a 40% growth rate for nurse practitioners over the next eight years - while jobs in journalism are expected to decline by 9%. Students can explore detailed job outlooks at [www.bls.gov/ooh](http://www.bls.gov/ooh).

That said, remember: the jobs of tomorrow may not exist today. Many careers emerging over the next decade will be shaped by technology we're only beginning to understand.



**Maryline Michel Kulewicz and Tracy Sullivan of College 101 Admissions Consultants**

That's why developing adaptable, human-centered skills is so important.

## Try internships - and learn from all of them

Once you have a potential major in mind, internships are an excellent way to test the waters. They provide real-world experience, build your résumé, and offer networking opportunities. Most colleges offer support through their career services office to help students find internships during the academic year or summer.

And if an internship *doesn't* go well? That's still useful information. Ruling out a career path can be just as helpful as discovering one you love. Every experience adds clarity.

Preparing to leave for college without a declared major can feel overwhelming - but it doesn't have to be. Use your time wisely. Start exploring interests. Talk to people. Be open to the process. The key is not just choosing the "right" major - but choosing experiences that help you grow into a thoughtful, adaptable, and skilled individual.

Good luck and enjoy the journey!

College 101 Admissions Consultants LLC. Website: [www.mycollege101.com](http://www.mycollege101.com). Email: [tracy@mycollege101.com](mailto:tracy@mycollege101.com). Phone: 508-380-3845.

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PICKLE FOR PAWS

continued from page 10

for \$10 for a chance to win a \$1,000 prize. The pickleballs will be dropped onto a court, with the ball landing closest to the target taking home the cash prize.



Return2Wild currently relies on donations and volunteers to carry out its mission of giving injured and orphaned wild animals a second chance. Wildlife rehabilitation is largely volunteer-driven, with rehabilitators

often covering many expenses out of their own pockets.

The fundraiser comes at a time when the need for wildlife rehabilitation is growing rapidly. According to Siegel, Return2Wild has already seen a 71 percent increase in animal admissions this year and, in just the first six months of 2026,



has cared for more animals than it did during all of last year combined. The organization has treated hundreds of animals ranging from baby minks and weasels to porcu-

pine, ducklings, groundhogs, skunks, opossums, rabbits, squirrels and other native wildlife, while also providing triage for injured birds of prey. Proceeds from the tournament will help cover the rising costs of food, formula, medical treatment, housing, and other supplies needed to care for the



growing number of patients.

Registration for the Pickle for Paws Charity Pickleball Tournament is now open, with additional information available at return2wild.org.

August services at the First Universalist Society

The First Universalist Society in Franklin (FUSF) has announced August services as part of the Summer Sunday Worship Series on *Choosing Hope*. All services start at 10 a.m., followed by cookies and conversation.

August 2: The Power of Hope

Emily Steltzer, youth advisor at FUSF and high school history teacher, explores the power and complexity of hope through the life story of Sally Hemings and the Hemings family of Monticello.

August 9: Optimism Spotlight!

Are you ready to smile and kick negativity to the curb? FUSF member, and longtime educator, Deb Prudhomme, shares an uplifting and refreshing view of the positivity thriving in our world.

August 16: Which Did She Choose First: The Community or the Faith?

Join lay leader and long-time

member Vicki Coates as she re-examines her path to the FUSF community, how she came to choose the UU faith as her spiritual home, and discover which came first for her.

August 23: Cannabis for the Soul

New FUSF member Marlo Pohl will look at why cannabis has been regarded as a sacred plant, giving many of its users hope to discover an expanded pathway to enlightenment.

August 30: Hope--The High-Octane Fuel That Makes the Difference

Peter Dennis, a member of the FUSF Worship Committee, will share his perspective on the power of hope to drive change.

*The First Universalist Society in Franklin (FUSF) is a Unitarian Universalist Welcoming Congregation located at 262 Chestnut Street, Franklin. For more information about FUSF, visit Fusf.org, email info@fusf.org, or call 508-528-5348.*

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Grand Prize Winner enjoys a day at Southwick's Zoo



Grand Prize winner Chelsea T. recently redeemed her four-pack of tickets to Southwick's Zoo, enjoying a memorable day with her extended family. Pictured above, Chelsea is the third from left.



SHOWERS

continued from page 1

and educational resources in a celebratory, supportive environment.

“We have concentrated primarily on the elder population,” said public health nurse Jeanine Murphy of her organization. “But it has become apparent that in the communities we serve, younger residents are in need of services and resources too.”

Two community baby showers are planned for this month. On Tuesday, August 18, a shower will be held at the Wrentham Senior Center from 4 to 6 p.m., and on Tuesday, August 25, a second shower will be held at the Norfolk Public Library, also from 4 to 6 p.m.

The Metacomet Public Health Alliance serves residents in Franklin, Norfolk, Wrentham, but the community baby showers are open to everyone, not just residents of those three towns.

Murphy described the events as welcoming “new and expectant moms, dads, young families, grandparents, aunts, uncles — really anybody.”

The showers combine educational resources with practical assistance. At least eleven organizations are expected to participate in person, while additional organizations that cannot attend will provide information for a resource table. There will also be raffle prizes for attendees.

Among the participating organizations are the SAFE Coalition, WIC (Women, Infants and Children), local police and fire departments, pediatric specialists, a postpartum doula, a birth doula, a lactation consultant, a family medicine physician, representatives from Abbott, a Montessori school and the Newborn Hearing Screening Program.

Police and fire personnel will also provide car seat fittings for families.

Last year, SAFE Coalition donated 30 car seats to the shower and provided every attendee with a bag containing diapers and wipes. Whether car seats will be available this year depends on grant funding, Murphy said.

The two events also rely on community donations to

provide some of the essential items for families. Through mid-month, residents can drop off donations at the libraries, pediatricians’ offices, and the senior centers, as well as Franklin, Norfolk, and Wrentham town halls. Supplies needed include diapers, wipes, formula, baby food, bottles, feeding supplies, pacifiers, baby toiletry items, new and gently used infant clothing and bedding, baby toys, and personal care items for new mothers. New car seats are also welcome but used car seats cannot be accepted because their safety history cannot be verified.

Murphy said formula, particularly specialty formula, remains one of the greatest needs because of its cost.

The baby showers also bring together multiple generations of the community. Last year, local senior citizens created baby shower favors by arranging infant socks into flowers. Others crocheted and knitted blankets and hats for families.

“The seniors’ contributions were a huge hit,” Murphy said.

The inaugural community baby shower attracted public health nurses from other communities looking for ideas to bring back to their own municipalities, noted Murphy.

Community baby showers became a modern public health and social initiative starting in the 2010s. Hosted by health-care networks or local governments, they are viewed as a valuable way to reach new and expectant families to let them know about resources available to them, as well as providing education, contacts, and baby supplies.

Murphy emphasized that one of the primary goals of a community baby shower is making families aware of services they may not know exist. “It’s really just educating the public on what’s out there to help,” she said. “Depending on a family’s circumstances and where they receive care, they may not always learn about services such as birth doulas or lactation consultants, for example. We want families to know those resources exist.”

She hopes that increasing families’ awareness of available programs and services will encourage them to seek help early, improving outcomes for children.

“By connecting people and services, we hope to close developmental gaps and reduce the need for special education,” Murphy said. “It’s about empowering families by helping them understand what resources are available so they can get the support they need.”

For more information about the baby showers or the Metacomet Public Health Alliance, visit [metacometpha.org](http://metacometpha.org).



Last year’s community baby shower connected new and expectant families with local organizations offering education, support, and essential baby supplies. (Photo courtesy of Metacomet Public Health Alliance/Facebook)

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# Norfolk Community Unites to Support American Legion Post 335

SUBMITTED BY NICOLE SIEDEL  
FEDERATED CHURCH OF NORFOLK  
They're at it again!

After the tremendous success of their November fundraiser benefiting the Norfolk Food Pantry, Brian Robbins, Moe Naggar, and Afranio "Junior" De Oliveira from The Horse Restaurant, Pastor Dan Woodman, and the Federated Church of Norfolk congregants teamed up once again—this time to honor and support Norfolk's American Legion Post 335 through the *Salute to Service Fundraiser* this past May.

Throughout May, The Horse Restaurant again generously donated 10% of all Monday food sales to benefit American Legion Post 335. Diners enjoyed a meal while knowing they were helping support the veterans who have faithfully served our country. The month-long fundraiser once again brought the community together. Church members, veterans, families, and friends filled the restaurant

each Monday evening, creating an atmosphere of gratitude, fellowship, and community. Building on the momentum of last November's successful Food Pantry fundraiser, the partnership demonstrated once again what can happen when neighbors unite around a common cause.

By the end of the fundraiser, the partnership had raised \$2,000 for American Legion Post 335. The funds will help the post continue its mission of serving veterans, supporting military families, sponsoring youth programs, and preserving the traditions of service and patriotism that are so important to the Norfolk community.

In a fitting tribute to the next generation of servicemen and women, Frank Zolli of Post 335 said that the American Legion will use a portion of the funds raised to establish a new scholarship for a graduating King Phillip student who plans to

serve in the United States Armed Forces. The scholarship will recognize a student who embodies the values of service, sacrifice, and commitment while encouraging young people who have chosen to answer the call to serve. Zolli expressed his appreciation for the community's generous support, noting that the fundraiser not only strengthens the work of American Legion Post 335 today but also creates an opportunity to invest in future service members through the new scholarship.

The Horse's generosity in opening their restaurant once again demonstrated how a local restaurant can bring a community together for something bigger than itself. Pastor Dan reflected, "This fundraiser reminds us of what can happen when a local restaurant, a church, and a veterans organization work together for a common purpose and that it's not just about raising money—it's about honoring those who



From left, Brian Robbins, The Horse; Frank Zolli, American Legion Post 335; Afranio "Junior" De Oliveira, The Horse; and Reverend Dan Woodman, Federated Church of Norfolk. (Contributed photo)

have served, investing in those who will serve in the future, and strengthening the bonds that make Norfolk such a caring community."

The Federated Church of Norfolk extends its heartfelt thanks to Brian Robbins, Moe Naggar, and Afranio "Junior" De Oliveira and the staff of The Horse Restaurant for their extraordinary generosity, Frank Zolli and the members of American Legion Post 335 for their unwavering dedication to veterans and the community, and to everyone who gathered on Monday evenings to make this fundraiser such a

meaningful success. With two successful community fundraisers in just six months, this growing partnership proves that when Norfolk comes together, lives are changed. From helping stock the shelves of the Norfolk Food Pantry to supporting local veterans and launching a scholarship for a future member of our Armed Forces, the impact reaches far beyond a single meal. Together, this collaboration continues to demonstrate the generosity, compassion, and community spirit that make the town of Norfolk such a special place.

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# The b.LUXE *beauty beat*

## 15 years later...

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They come because something in life is changing.

Maybe it's a first date. A wedding. A new job. Senior pictures. A vacation they've been counting down to for months. Sometimes it's after having a baby. Sometimes it's after losing someone they love. Sometimes it's because they've spent months taking care of everyone else and finally decide it's time to do something for themselves.

And sometimes, they simply want to feel like themselves again.

For fifteen years, we've had the privilege of being part of those moments.

People often ask owner Heather Cohen what she's most proud of after fifteen years. Her answer is always the same.

*"It isn't the renovations or the awards. It's hearing someone walk out the door saying, 'I feel like myself again.' The smile on their face is the best compliment of all."*

Of course, the salon has changed too. Quite a bit, actually.

We've renovated multiple times over the years. First we doubled our space, and after the pandemic we took the biggest leap yet, expanding into the 4,000 square foot studio we call home today. Every time we grew, it wasn't because we wanted a bigger salon. It was because we wanted to create a better experience for the people who trusted us.

Looking back, we never sat down with a master plan that said, "One day we'll be a full-service beauty studio."

Most of what we've become happened because our guests kept asking for more, and we kept listening.

Someone wanted expert

skincare in the same place they already trusted for their hair. Someone else was looking for a makeup artist for a wedding. Curly-haired guests wanted specialists who truly understood their hair texture. Others were looking for extensions, lashes, waxing, smoothing treatments, or a little more time to relax and take care of themselves.

Instead of sending people somewhere else, we kept asking ourselves one simple question. "Why not offer it here?"

Somewhere along the way, skincare became a big part of our story too. We realized pretty quickly that caring for someone's skin isn't all that different from caring for their hair. It's personal. It's confidence. Sometimes it's simply giving someone permission to slow down for an hour.

One of the most meaningful chapters has been creating our private wig and topper studio.

For women experiencing hair loss from medical treatment, alopecia, hormonal changes, or thinning hair, this work is about so much more than finding the right piece. It's about restoring confidence during a season when confidence can feel hard to find. Every consultation is private. Every solution is customized. Every guest is welcomed with kindness because we know these conversations matter.

Looking back, it's funny. We spent fifteen years growing, but not always in the ways we expected.

Yes, the salon got bigger.

But the best kind of growth has been watching people grow alongside us.

Our apprenticeship program has become one of the things we're proudest of. Every experienced stylist once stood at the beginning of their career, and helping new artists build confidence, learn their craft, and eventually welcome guests of their own has become one of the most rewarding parts of what we do.

There were moments over the years when we had to stop and pinch ourselves.

Editorial photo shoots. National advertising campaigns.



Television appearances. Creative projects that challenged us and reminded us there's always something new to learn.

The best part?

Every bit of that experience came right back into the salon, making us better for the guests sitting in our chairs every day.

Some of our favorite memories haven't happened inside the salon at all.

They've happened throughout our community.

Over the years we've been lucky enough to support local charities, schools, sports teams, community organizations, and businesses that make this area such a special place to live.

We're also honored to continue funding two annual scholarships for students at our sister school, the Martello Beauty Institute in Cancun, Mexico. Helping future beauty professionals begin careers of their own feels like one of the best ways we can give back to an industry that has given us so much.

When we think about the last fifteen years, we don't think first about growing larger or even the milestones.

We think about the bride who trusted us on her wedding day and still comes in for her color every six weeks.

The teenager who nervously sat in one of our chairs before her first school dance and now brings in her own children.

The guest who looked in the mirror after experiencing hair loss and smiled because she finally saw herself again.

The friendships.

The conversations.

The laughs.

The trust you've placed in us.

Those are the things that built b.LUXE.

As Heather likes to say,

*"People think we've spent fifteen years building a salon. Honestly, we've spent fifteen years building relationships. The salon just kept getting bigger along the way."*

The walls have changed.

The mirrors have changed.

The heart behind them never has.

To every guest who has trusted us, celebrated life's milestones with us, laughed with us, cried with us, recommended us to a friend, or simply walked through our doors, thank you.

You are the reason we've never stood still.

*Here's to the next chapter...and to the countless stories still waiting to walk through our doors.*

If you're not sure where to start, our team is always happy to help. Visit us at b.LUXE Hair & Makeup Studio in Medway or learn more at bluxe.com.

Because summer should be spent making memories, not standing in front of the mirror. b.LUXE Hair and Makeup Studio, Medway. Visit us at bLUXE.com or call 508-321-1624

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LIVING HEALTHY

Give your child the gift of clear vision this school year

By Roger M. Kaldawy, M.D. |  
MILFORD FRANKLIN EYE CENTER

As summer winds down, parents are busy checking off back-to-school lists—backpacks, notebooks, pencils, clothes. But one critical factor for classroom success can't be bought in a store: healthy, clear vision.

August is Children's Eye Health and Safety Month, a timely reminder to prioritize kids' visual well-being. Experts estimate up to 80% of classroom learning is presented visually. Whether reading, writing, using computers, or watching the whiteboard, children's eyes work constantly. When they can't see clearly, learning becomes difficult, frustrating, and exhausting.

The hidden struggle: screenings vs. real exams

A common misconception is that children will complain if their vision is poor. In reality, kids rarely realize they have a problem—with no point of

comparison, they assume everyone sees the way they do, and simply adapt to blurry vision or eye strain.

Surprisingly, a child can pass a school vision screening and still have significant issues. Screening typically tests only distance acuity and aren't a substitute for a comprehensive eye exam. Studies show 1 in 17 preschoolers and nearly 1 in 4 school-aged children have undetected vision problems affecting their academic performance. Early diagnosis allows these conditions to be treated before they disrupt learning.

Warning signs to watch for

- Parents should watch for:
- Squinting, eye rubbing, or head tilting
  - Frequent headaches or eye strain after school
  - Sitting too close to the TV
  - Holding books or devices very close to the face

- Losing their place or skipping lines while reading
  - Covering or closing one eye to focus
  - Excessive tearing, redness, or light sensitivity
  - Sudden avoidance of reading or homework
- Trust your instincts—if something seems off, schedule an exam.

Digital eye strain

Modern classrooms rely heavily on computers, smartboards, and tablets, which has driven a rise in Computer Vision Syndrome (Digital Eye Strain). Symptoms include blurred vision, tired or dry eyes, headaches, light sensitivity, and neck or shoulder discomfort. Screen concentration reduces our blink rate, drying out the tear film and fatiguing the eyes.

Simple habits help: the 20-20-20 rule (every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds) relaxes focusing



muscles. Kids should also blink deliberately, maintain a comfortable viewing distance, reduce glare, and take regular breaks from devices.

Notably, despite marketing claims, evidence doesn't show blue-light-blocking glasses meaningfully reduce digital eye strain. Proper viewing habits, breaks, and correcting refractive errors remain the most effective strategies.

home, keep hazardous chemicals and sharp tools out of children's reach, and teach basic safety habits like not running with pencils or scissors.

Nutrition also supports growing eyes. A diet rich in colorful fruits and vegetables, leafy greens, omega-3-rich fish, eggs, and whole grains provides the vitamins and antioxidants needed for healthy retina development, tear production, and overall eye health.

The natural remedy: sunshine and outdoor play

One encouraging development is growing evidence that natural daylight helps reduce the risk of myopia (nearsightedness). Outdoor light exposure supports healthy eye growth, and outdoor activities encourage distance focusing rather than the near-focus demands of books and screens.

Experts recommend at least one to two hours outdoors daily—biking, playing soccer, swimming, or walking. This supports visual development while boosting physical fitness and emotional well-being. Digital devices are valuable educational tools, but shouldn't replace active outdoor play. Encouraging kids to disconnect and spend time in natural light is one of the simplest ways to promote lifelong eye health.

Safety and nutrition

This month is also a good time to focus on injury prevention. Many sports-related eye injuries can be avoided with protective polycarbonate eyewear during practices and games. At

A clear path to success

As the new school year begins, remember that clear vision is a cornerstone of your child's success, both academically and beyond. Early detection and treatment of vision problems can improve learning, confidence, athletic performance, and quality of life. Making a comprehensive eye exam part of your back-to-school routine is one of the most valuable investments you can make in your child's future.

At Milford Franklin Eye Center, our ophthalmologists and optometrists provide comprehensive eye care for children and adults using state-of-the-art technology. Our Children's Optical Boutique offers eyewear designed for infants, children, and teens, with an in-house lab for quick, precise service.

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LIVING HEALTHY

“I thought only faucets had leaks”

Leaky Gut Syndrome is a condition that affects the integrity of the gut lining which normally serves as a barrier of the intestines. It can also be called “intestinal permeability,” Which occurs when the gut wall becomes damaged allowing compounds to enter the bloodstream that normally shouldn’t. For example, partially digested proteins and fats may seep through the intestinal lining making their way into the bloodstream which causes an allergic response.

One of the biggest warning signs of a leaky gut is that you are experiencing multiple food sensitivities. Other symptoms include: bloating, thyroid condi-

tions, fatigue, joint pain, headaches, skin issues and weight gain. If left untreated for a long time, leaky gut can lead to IBS, arthritis, eczema, psoriasis, depression, anxiety and muscle pain. This can lead to malabsorption of vital minerals and nutrients including magnesium, zinc, iron and vitamins D, B12 and others.

Leaky Gut can be caused by a diet high in sugar and low in fiber. Other causes include dairy, lectins found in wheat, rice spelt and soy, and glycoposphates which are found in our food from pesticides.

Dana B. came into our office complaining of gas, bloating after meals, fatigue and brain

fog. She had been battling eczema for years and had joint pain. She never felt well which over time led to depression.

We put her on an anti-inflammatory diet as well as adding those foods that help to restore the natural biome of the gut. We added supplementation to remove the stressors in the gut as well as repair and rebuild the gut. Those changes along with the neurological integrative work has helped Dana to resolve her digestive issues.

If you are experiencing these symptoms and are ready to start on your journey to health, call THE HOLISTIC CENTER AT BRISTOL SQUARE (508)660-2722 and make your



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King Philip students receive MassCPAs scholarships



Mya McCormick



Lauren Obara

Two King Philip Regional High School students have been awarded scholarships through the Massachusetts Society of Certified Public Accountants (MassCPAs) Educational Foundation’s 2026 Scholarship Program.

Mya McCormick of Wrentham and Lauren Obara of Norfolk each received the Emerging Scholar Award and were among 50 students state-

wide selected for scholarships this year. Recipients were recognized at MassCPAs’ annual Connect 2026 networking event on May 13.

“It’s truly inspiring to see the talent and drive of this year’s scholarship winners,” said Zach Donah, president and CEO of MassCPAs. “Their commitment to excellence gives us great confidence that the accounting profession in Massachusetts will

continue to thrive under their leadership.”

The scholarship program is funded entirely through donations to the MassCPAs Educational Foundation, whose mission is to support and inspire the next generation of certified public accountants in Massachusetts. Since its inception in 2006, the foundation has awarded more than 500 scholarships totaling over \$2.25 million.

“Empowering students through these scholarships is at the heart of our mission to build a robust and resilient accounting workforce,” said Allie Orlando, MassCPAs’ director of academic and career development. “We are thrilled to celebrate this year’s recipients and look

forward to seeing the significant contributions they will make to the profession.”

MassCPAs represents more than 11,500 certified public accountants working in public accounting, business, government and education across Massachusetts.



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SCAN ME



## SPORTS

# King Phillip welcomes new football coach to continue team's legacy

BY MATT HYLEN

Brian Lee spent 21 seasons building King Philip football into one of the most feared programs in the state, with eight Super Bowl appearances and four state titles in the last decade alone.

Replacing that isn't a job most coaches would want. However, Anthony Vizakis spent three years preparing for it without even realizing that's what he was doing.

Vizakis, a Bellingham native, has been named King Philip's next head football coach, taking over a program he already knows from the inside out. His path here started long before his first day on the Warriors' staff.

A three-year starter and senior captain at Bishop Feehan, Vizakis helped the Shamrocks win three Super Bowl titles before moving on to Bridgewater State, where he again started and served as senior captain in his final season. Coaching, he says, was never really a question. "Coaching was kind of in my blood," Vizakis said. "I became a teacher so I could coach."

That path led him first to a head coaching position at Milford High School from 2017 to 2019, before he stepped away until after the COVID year.

"I texted Brian Lee and asked if he needed any help, because I live in Plainville and would love to coach where I live," Vizakis said. He joined the staff as the wide receivers and outside linebackers coach, and the following year was promoted to offensive coordinator. This was a role he held for the past three seasons, years in which King Philip went a combined 38-1.

Now the program is his to lead, and Vizakis is clear about what won't change.

"We're going to uphold the standard that's been set here by Coach Lee. That's number one," he said. "You're not going to see a lot of changes. We're going to uphold the standard of excellence, and we're going to continue to be competitive and play tough, hard-nosed football. When the parents and people come to see King Philip on Friday nights, they're going to see a tough, disciplined team that gives the max amount of effort."

It's a standard Vizakis says he wanted to be part of long before this promotion ever came up. "Honestly, that's kind of why I wanted this position," he explained. "Being with Brian for the last three years and the other coaches, learning the King Philip way and the culture, I truly wanted to be a part of it, and I'm very excited to

lead it."

The job does come with a shift in scope. Vizakis has built his coaching identity on the offensive side of the ball in recent years, but his background is actually on defense, for he was a linebacker at Bridgewater State University.

"I'm actually a defensive guy," he said. "I knew I wanted to be a well-rounded coach, so after I was done playing, I really studied more on the offensive side of the ball to make myself more well-rounded."

As head coach, that balance now extends across the entire roster. "It's going to evolve into me having more hands-on time with the offense, the defense, and special teams," Vizakis said. "But I trust my staff."

He pointed to his special teams and defensive coordinators, one with previous head coaching experience, the other with 21 years at King Philip, as coaches he'll lean on heavily, even as his own involvement on that side of the ball grows.

"I really trust my staff, but I'll definitely have more of a hands-on role with the defense and special teams this year than I have the last couple of years," he said.

That same trust shapes how Vizakis talks about his players. Even in a role focused on offense, he made it a priority to know the whole roster, not just the guys in his own room. "I really feel that coaches need to put players first, all players," he said. "While I was interacting more on the offensive side of the ball, I made it a point to connect with the defensive guys, and the guys who maybe weren't as involved with the offense."

As head coach, that philosophy only expands. "This is about them, and I do everything in my power to teach first, coach, and be a positive male role model for them every single day," Vizakis stated.

Schematically, Vizakis isn't interested in forcing a system onto personnel that doesn't fit it. "Our system is kind of based on the strengths of our offense," he said. "I think it varies year to year, and as any good coach will do, you put your team in the best position possible."

Those expectations extend to the scoreboard, too. "Ultimately, our goal is to make the playoffs and make a push for a possible championship. Yet, we want to take it one game at a time, one week at a time. We just want to be competitive and play hard-nosed, disciplined King Philip football."

Wins and championships aside, Vizakis is just as fo-



**King Phillip football's new head coach, Anthony Vizakis.**  
(Photo courtesy King Phillip Warrior Football/Facebook)

cused on what his players carry with them once they're done playing. "I really want them to develop a hard work ethic, because that's going to help them, not just in the classroom, but after high school," he said. "Developing a passion for hard work, getting up early, doing the little things right... those things go hand in hand with football, but they also go hand in hand with life."

For Vizakis, none of this exists in a vacuum. He's stepping into a program with a history, and he knows it. "It's super important to me to take pride in the program, and know that these kids are following in the footsteps of young men who built, played, and sacrificed to build culture and legacy," he explained. "I think the kids recognize that, and to build that legacy is to continue this tradition. It really starts with hard work, because that's the foundation that's been set and that's the foundation that's going to continue."

Brian Lee built something at King Philip that took 21 years to complete. Thus, Anthony Vizakis isn't trying to build something new; he's just trying to make sure it doesn't stop.

## Park Street bridge design work continues, funding timeline still unknown

BY GRACE ALLEN

The replacement project for Norfolk's Park Street bridge remains in the preliminary design phase, with no estimated timeline for completion or construction funding, according to an update from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT).

MassDOT spokesperson John Goggin said the

agency has completed field survey work and is now conducting preliminary engineering for the bridge replacement project.

The Park Street bridge, which crosses the MBTA commuter rail tracks at the northern end of Park Street, was closed to traffic in December 2024 after inspections identified structural concerns. The bridge later

reopened in a limited one-way configuration following a load-rating analysis, but restrictions on heavier vehicles remain in place.

MassDOT has previously said the bridge replacement project must compete with other bridge projects statewide for funding before it can move forward to construction.



SPORTS

# King Philip welcomes new athletic director

Derek Phinney has been hired as King Philip High School’s new athletic director.

Phinney, a Medway resident, has served as Director of Athletics for Millis Public Schools for the past four years. He started in his new position at King Philip on July 1 and brings more than 20 years of interscholastic athletics and education experience to the job.

Following a thorough selection process, Phinney was selected due to his keen eye for fiscal stewardship, knowledge of MIAA/NCAA compliance, his ability to balance multi-season logistics and strategic capital programming.

Phinney earned a Master of Education in Special Education from Framingham State University, a Bachelor of Science in Sport Management from UMass Amherst, and certification as a Registered Athletic Administrator (RAA) for the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA).

He started work for Millis Public Schools in 2009 as a special education paraprofessional, later serving as a health and wellness teacher and eventually the district’s director of athletics. Before shifting to education, he acquired extensive sports management experience in professional and junior hockey, which included serving as a junior hockey General Manager and collaborating with NHLPA-certified agents to scout talent and negotiate professional contracts across the NHL, AHL, and ECHL.

“At the core of every decision I will make as Athletic Director is a commitment



King Philip Regional School District has hired Derek Phinney as its next athletic director, effective July 1. (Photo courtesy of King Philip Regional School District)

to fostering intellectual curiosity, integrity, and a strong sense of community,” Phinney wrote during the interview process. “My decisions are guided by what is best for students, what is safest, and what most reflects my primary core values: Respect, Honesty, Responsibility, Accountability and Excellence.”

Phinney replaces outgoing Athletic Director Gary Brown, whose last day

was June 30. Brown served as King Philip’s athletic director for the past nine years and helped to cultivate the King Philip Regional School District’s rich athletic culture.

“Mr. Brown served our King Philip Regional School District well for nine years,” said Superintendent Dr. Rich Drolet. “He helped add Unified Sports, support our teams toward numerous

championships, and we wish him the best in his future endeavors.”

As Phinney assumes his new role, during the initial phase of his King Philip athletic department leadership, he said his goal will be to “listen, learn and lead with intentionality.”

“The King Philip Regional School District’s athletic programs have taken great strides over the past decade,” said Dr. Drolet. “We’re confident that Derek Phinney will help to continue and foster the District’s previous efforts to bolster our programs and also lead our Athletics Department with vision, collaboration, resiliency, and excellence into the future.”

Leading up to July 1, his official start date, he will be working to connect with the community and ensure a seamless transition.

“Intentional listening will be the cornerstone of my transition,” Phinney said.

Phinney plans to develop strong, meaningful relationships with key members of the King Philip community, including school leadership, coaching staff and faculty, student-athletes, the athletic department team and community leaders.

“We look forward to welcoming Derek Phinney into our school community,” said King Philip Regional High School Principal Nicole Bottomley. “Athletics play a vital role in the King Philip Regional School District, and Athletic Director Phinney’s vast experience will help to ensure our athletic programs continue their upward trajectory.”



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Guest Column

# Dragonflies

By LtCol A. FAITHFUL  
RETIRED U.S. MARINE  
*Published under a pen name at the author's request.*

Some afternoons, after a hard day, I sit on the back porch and look up the hill behind our home.

The hillside looks different now than it did a few years ago. Clover spreads between the grasses. Rows of raspberries and blueberries fill out a little more each season. Wild strawberries creep along the edges of beds. Wildflowers bloom in places I do not remember planting them. Up the hill, two hummingbird feeders hang from a black iron pole where hummingbirds race through the summer air.

Above it all, the dragonflies patrol.

By summer they seem to be everywhere. They skim low over the clover, dart through the gardens, and weave between the berry bushes with a kind of effortless precision. Only the hummingbirds seem capable of keeping pace.

Sometimes they look less like insects and more like tiny aircraft conducting aerial maneuvers over the hillside. They stop, hover, reverse direction, and disappear, only to reappear somewhere else a heartbeat later.

But the dragonflies are not why I look forward to summer. My children are.

A few years ago, I taught my daughters something I had learned from watching the dragonflies.

Hold out your finger. Stay still. Be patient.

The first time it happened, they stood perfectly still. Then one landed. Then another.

Before long, they were standing in the yard with their hands stretched out, trying not to move, trying not to laugh, while dragonflies rested on their fingers.

Looking back through those photographs now, I see more than dragonflies.

I see wonder.

Bare feet in the grass. Summer sunlight.

A little girl proudly pointing toward the tiny visitors gathered on her hand.

Moments that lasted only minutes, but memories I hope will last a lifetime.

I tell the children that the dragonflies know we are friendly. If we are kind to them, I say, perhaps they'll tell the others this is a safe place.

I have no idea whether that's true.

But I like believing it. The children do too.

Only later did I learn that dragonflies spend most of their lives underwater.

Not days. Not weeks. Years.

Hidden from view before they ever take flight.

For much of my adult life, I felt underwater.

Not unhappy. Not defeated. Just always striving. Always pushing toward what-

ever came next.

Looking back now, I wonder if those years were accomplishing more than I understood at the time.

Perhaps some of the most important growth in life happens where no one can see it. Including ourselves.

Sometimes I find a dragonfly resting on a tomato cage, clinging to a leaf, or sitting quietly on the deck railing beside me.

That is when I notice the details.

The soft blues. The bright greens.

The wings, delicate as glass, their tiny arches and braces reminding me of cathedral architecture viewed in miniature.

Occasionally I'll find one resting in the morning sun. I'll wait.

Without warning, the wings begin to move.

The dragonfly lifts into the air and is gone.

There is a little sadness in knowing that every dragonfly I see is living through the final season of its life.

Its years underwater are be-

hind it.

Its season of flight is brief. Yet that isn't what captivates me.

What captivates me is how completely it seems to inhabit that season.

This summer, my son will be old enough to learn what his sisters already know.

Hold out your finger. Stay still. Be patient.

If he waits long enough, perhaps a dragonfly will land. I hope it happens.

I hope years from now all three of my children remember summer evenings filled with dragonflies, hummingbirds, wildflowers, warm grass beneath their feet, and a father who taught them to slow down long enough to notice.

Some living things spend years preparing for a brief season of flight.

The older I get, the more I understand the dragonflies.

*Opinions expressed in the Guest Column do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.*



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## Barry Zimmerman named Leaders Club qualifier for 26<sup>th</sup> year

Norfolk resident Barry Zimmerman, of Sunstone Wealth Strategies, an affiliate of The Bulfinch Group, has been named a Leaders Club qualifier by The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America for the 26th consecutive year. Leaders Club is an annual recognition presented to financial professionals for their service and dedication to clients. Zimmerman works with clients on financial protection, wealth accumulation and comprehensive financial planning strategies. He lives in Norfolk with his wife, Kathy, and their three adult sons.





# Wrentham names new Director of Planning & Economic Development

Shane O'Brien, AICP, has been appointed as the Town of Wrentham's new Director of Planning & Economic Development. He began serving in the role on Monday, July 6.

O'Brien has spent more than 10 years in municipal planning across Massachusetts.

Since 2022, he's served as Town Planner in Bridgewater, where he managed long-range planning initiatives, facilitated zoning amendments, supported the Planning Board, and secured several competitive state grants for municipal projects.

Before that, he served as Senior Planner for the City of Framingham, Land Use Planner for the City of Everett, and Staff Planner for the City of Brockton, working on a broad range of planning initiatives, including housing, land use, and regional planning coordination.

He holds a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Design,

with a concentration in Planning and Urban Studies, from UMass Amherst, and is a certified member of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP).

"The Department of Planning & Economic Development plays a vital role in shaping Wrentham's future while preserving the character and qualities that make the community unique," said Town Manager Michael J. King. "Shane's extensive experience in municipal government and long-range planning makes him exceptionally well-qualified to lead this department. I am confident he will be a tremendous asset to residents, businesses, boards, and committees, and I look forward to the leadership and vision he will bring as the Town continues to thoughtfully plan for Wrentham's future."

As Director of Planning & Economic Development, O'Brien will oversee the Town's

planning and land use activities, provide staff support to the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission, and Economic Development Commission, and work with Town departments, boards, committees, and community organizations to advance planning initiatives, zoning updates, and economic development opportunities consistent with the Town's Master Plan.

"I am honored to join the Town of Wrentham and look forward to working with Town officials, residents, businesses, and community partners," O'Brien said. "Wrentham has a strong sense of community and a clear vision for its future. I'm excited to help build upon that foundation by supporting thoughtful planning, strengthening economic opportunities, and preserving the qualities that make the town a great place to live and work."



Shane O'Brien, AICP, has been appointed as the Town of Wrentham's new Director of Planning & Economic Development. (Photo courtesy Town of Wrentham)

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## Fiske Library announces August programs

The Fiske Public Library continues its summer hours in August, with the library open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays and Fridays and 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesdays through Thursdays. The library is closed Saturdays in July and August.

Discount tickets remain available through the Friends of the Fiske. Southwick's Zoo admission tickets are available for \$20 by cash or check or \$22 through Venmo and are valid for daytime general admission during the 2026 operating season. Discount Showcase Cinema tickets are also available for \$10 each and have no expiration date.

It's not too late to join the library's Summer Reading Program, *Plant a Seed, Read!* Children who sign up receive a free book, courtesy of the Friends of the Fiske, while supplies last, and those who complete their reading logs by Aug. 14 are eligible to earn prizes. The library is also participating in the Massachusetts Student Reading Challenge, which encourages students to read one book each month, collect stickers, earn library prizes, and enter monthly raffles through the Massachusetts Center for the Book.

Children's programs this month include Fairy

Gardens on Aug. 4, Teen Craft Night on Aug. 5, the Page Turners Book Club on Aug. 6, Summer Garden Science on Aug. 7, Pumpernickel Puppets on Aug. 10, Mother Goose on the Loose on Aug. 11, Flying High Dogs on Aug. 12, Chicken Storytime on Aug. 13, Reel Fun Fridays: Lunchtime Movie on Aug. 14, and Read to Sophie the Library Dog on Aug. 18. Registration information for individual programs is available at fiskelib.org.

Adult offerings include Free IT Help office hours on Tuesdays by appointment, August spice kits featuring tarragon, Take & Make mason jar suncatcher craft kits beginning Aug. 3, a suncatchers workshop on Aug. 4, the Fiske Library Book Club discussion of *The God of the Woods* by Liz Moore on Aug. 25, and a shell decoupage workshop on Aug. 27.

The library will also offer three free virtual author talks in August featuring Paula J. Johnson on Aug. 4, Beronda Montgomery on Aug. 25 and Lucy Foley on Aug. 27.

For more information or to register for programs, visit fiskelib.org or call the library at 508-384-5440.

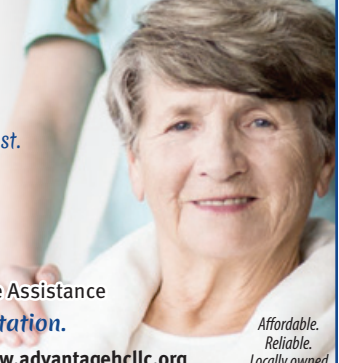


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# Norfolk Aggie awarded \$3.5M state grant for expansion, new training space

Norfolk County Agricultural High School has been awarded a \$3.5 million state capital grant, the largest in the school's history, to expand career technical education opportunities and upgrade facilities.

The funding will support a \$2.45 million renovation and expansion of the Walpole campus, including larger laboratory spaces expected to create capacity for about 100 additional students in Plant Science and Environmental Science programs.

Another \$550,000 will fund new greenhouses equipped with updated agricultural technology, while \$350,000 will go toward multipurpose classrooms and modular computer labs for both daytime students and adult workforce training programs offered evenings and weekends.

School officials said the expanded facilities will also allow Norfolk Aggie to offer after-school and weekend programming to an additional 60 to 80 high school students annually from surrounding communities, along with credentialing opportunities for 30 to 40 adult learners and incumbent workers through Commonwealth Corporation training partnerships.

"This grant allows Norfolk Aggie to grow and help our graduates connect with high-paying, high-demand jobs," Superintendent-Director Jeremy Guay said.

Norfolk Aggie was among 28 schools statewide to receive a share of more than \$70 million in capital grants announced April 30 by the Healey-Driscoll administration.

Norfolk Aggie enrolls more than 600 students from Norfolk County and more than 40 out-of-county communities on its 365-acre campus in Walpole.

## Thinking About Selling This Fall? Start Here.

The smartest September sellers start planning in August.

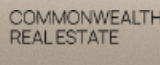
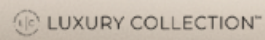
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## Exsultet! announces auditions for the 2026-2027 season

Do you love to sing? Then we would love to meet you! We are Exsultet!—a fun-loving, women's choral group made up of around twenty musicians. We love making music and challenging ourselves to present concerts which enlighten and entertain. Exsultet! sings a repertoire of choral literature spanning musical periods and cultures and incorporates readings and poetry into performances.

Exsultet! has openings for sopranos and altos for the 2026-2027 season. Auditions will take place on Monday, August 31 at 7 p.m. at First Congregational Church, 725 Washington Street, Holliston.



Rehearsals for the 2026-2027 season will be on Monday nights from 7 to 9 p.m., in preparation for our two concert weekends. We typically perform a holiday concert in early December and a spring concert in April/May.

To audition, download the audition piece, *O Little Town of Bethlehem* at [www.exsultet.us](http://www.exsultet.us), and prepare to rehearse and sing it with the group. At the end of rehearsal, you will be asked to sing your part in a trio or quartet. Come prepared to sing, work hard, and have fun!

For more information, contact Carrie Klimeczko at [carrie7975@gmail.com](mailto:carrie7975@gmail.com).



 REAL ESTATE CORNER

# Norfolk Citizens Academy accepting applications

Norfolk residents interested in learning more about local government are invited to apply for the Norfolk Citizens Academy, a free 12-week program that provides an inside look at town operations and decision-making.

The program is open to Norfolk residents age 16 and older and will begin Sept. 10. Sessions will be held Thursday evenings from 6 to 8:30 p.m. at various locations throughout town.

Participants will meet with town staff and take part in interactive sessions designed to explain how town departments operate, discuss issues facing the community, and explore opportunities for civic involvement. Sessions will be recorded and made available on the town website.

Space is limited, and a wait-list will be maintained if the program reaches capacity. Applications must be submitted by August 6 through the town’s website. Residents can visit the “Our Town at Work” section at [www.norfolkmass.gov/](http://www.norfolkmass.gov/) and follow the link to the Norfolk Citizens Academy application.

For more information, contact Norfolk Town Hall at 508-440-2855.

# June real estate activity rose in Norfolk County

Norfolk County real estate activity increased in June compared to a year ago, with gains in document recordings, property sales and mortgage activity, according to Register of Deeds William P. O’Donnell.

The Registry recorded 11,172 documents in June, a 7% increase from June 2025 and a 19% increase from May. Deeds, which include commercial and residential sales and transfers, rose 9% from a year earlier to 1,825, while 1,151 properties were sold, a 14% increase from June 2025.

The average commercial and residential sale price was approximately \$981,000, down 15% from June 2025 and 18% from May, while the total value of sales fell 3% to about \$1.13 billion. Register O’Donnell said the lower average sale price may provide opportunities for some buyers, although prices remain high compared to past years.

Mortgage activity also remained strong, with 1,855 mortgages recorded in June, up 9% from June 2025 and 23% from May. Total mortgage indebtedness reached approximately \$2.91 billion, a 95% increase from a year earlier.

Foreclosure activity remained relatively low. Five foreclosure deeds were recorded in June, up from three a year earlier, while notices to foreclose—the first step in the foreclosure process—fell to 17, down from 28 in both June 2025 and May 2026.

Call Jen Schofield at 508-570-6544 to run in our Real Estate Corner



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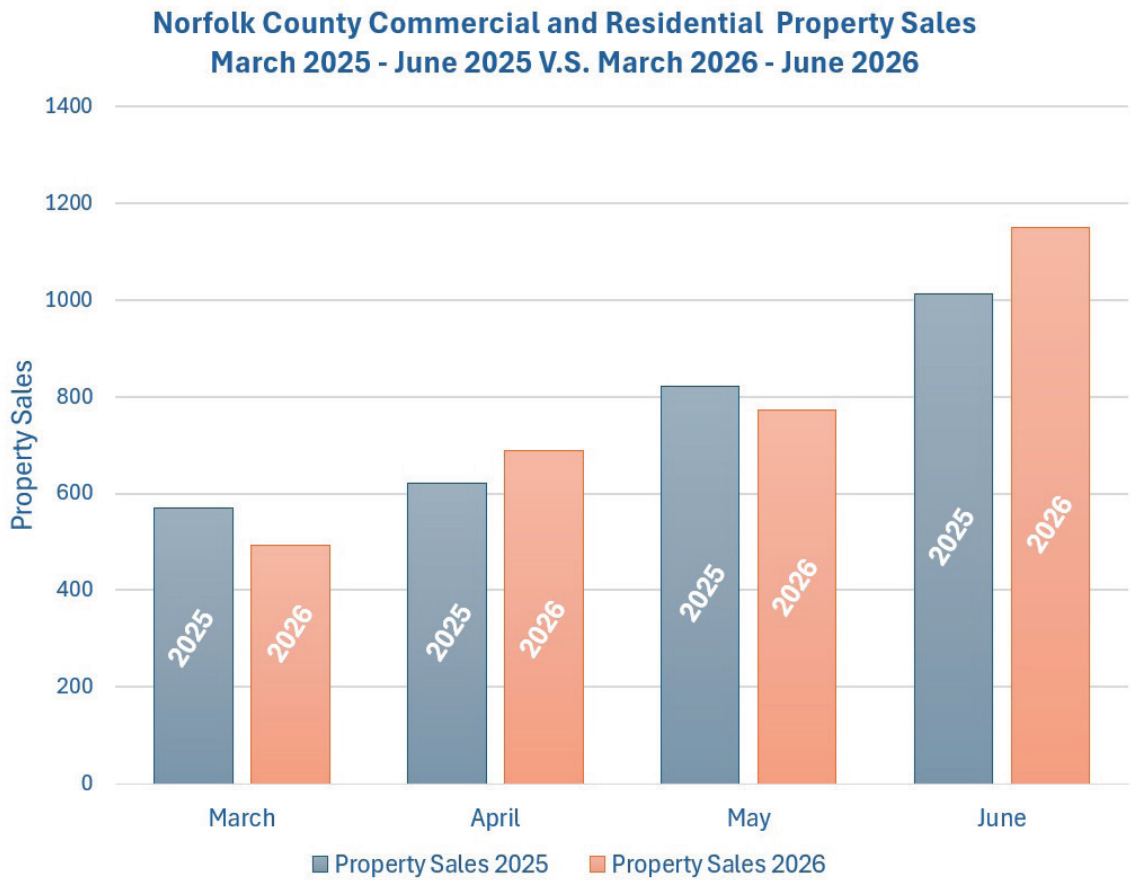
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