

Documentary filmmaker Jen Heck challenges incumbent State Rep. Joe McKenna for 18th Worcester District seat

BY RILEY FRANKIAN

Voters in the 18th Worcester District will have a choice this fall as Democratic challenger Jen Heck seeks to unseat Republican State Representative Joe McKenna, who has represented the district on Beacon Hill since 2015.

The district, which includes Webster, Douglas, Sutton, portions of Oxford and a precinct in Uxbridge, has not seen a contested race for the seat since McKenna was first elected more than a decade ago. While the candidates come from different professional backgrounds and political parties, both say affordability has become the defining issue facing residents and both argue they are best equipped to represent the district's future.

Heck, a Sutton resident and documentary filmmaker, is making her first bid for elected office after a career she says has been built on listening to people, solving problems and telling complex stories.

McKenna, meanwhile, is seeking another term by highlighting his legislative record, local projects and continued opposition to policies he says have made Massachusetts increasingly unaffordable.



Left, Jen Heck; Right, State Rep. Joe McKenna



HECK: "PEOPLE WANT SOMETHING DIFFERENT."

Heck said her decision to run stems from both professional experience and personal conviction.

A filmmaker and producer whose work has taken her across the United States and internationally, including projects in the Middle East, Heck said her career has taught her to approach disagreements by first understanding the people involved.

"People want something different, and that begins with perspective," Heck said. "My entire career has been about learning to listen and knowing what questions to ask."

One documentary that particularly shaped her perspective

followed Palestinian and Israeli women who sought friendship despite decades of conflict. She said the experience reinforced her belief that most people share similar goals despite political divisions.

"Most people want the same thing, which is a safe place for their family, affordable housing, food, gas and the ability to build a good life," she said.

Heck said that now more than ever, political polarization has created what she describes as a "crisis of community."

"People are supposed to disagree. It is natural," she said.

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Lizzy and Greg Gunsalus at the Pan Mass Challenge finish line on Sunday, August 2.

Photo by Chris Norvold

Dudley siblings ride the Pan Mass Challenge

BY CHRISTPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Growing up with her siblings in Dudley, Lizzy Gunsalus knew about the Pan Mass Challenge, but never really paid too much attention to it. But when her cherished Aunt June passed away from breast cancer last November, she and her older brother Greg decided to honor her by taking part in the 46th annual Pan Mass Challenge, the two-day 177-mile ride from Worcester to Provincetown that was held August 1 and 2.

"My aunt helped my mother raise us growing up and we were all very close," Gunsalus said. "Everyone is touched by cancer in some

way, so we wanted to honor her. And being riders we came to the conclusion to ride the PMC this year."

Now living in Indianapolis with her sister, Gunsalus began cycling at a very young age, taking part in BMX events because of her father and brother. Today she is a professional cyclist who participates in cyclocross racing, an intense off-road bicycle sport featuring short, multi-lap circuits packed with mud, sand, steep hills, and artificial barriers that require riders to dismount and carry their bikes. Although she and her brother Greg

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“What isn’t natural is the unwillingness to acknowledge opposing points of view.”

She pointed to conversations she had with McKenna during debates surrounding the MBTA Communities Act as an example of productive bipartisan dialogue. Although the two differed on broader policy

questions, Heck said they found common ground on concerns specific to Sutton and believes elected officials should be willing to challenge their own parties when local interests demand it.

Her campaign focuses on three priorities: affordability, education and rebuilding public trust.

Heck said affordability extends beyond housing to include childcare, utilities, health care and transportation, while education has become increasingly important as artificial intelligence changes how students learn.

“I see education as national security, especially in the age of AI,” Heck said. “Kids need to learn how to use new technology without surrendering the independent thinking they need to understand it, question it and lead it.”

She also said she hopes to encourage greater civic engagement and transparency.

“I plan to work with everyone,” Heck said. “In order to get the best ideas, your own have to be challenged.”

Early in 2025, Heck’s mother died from pancreatic cancer, a loss she said further strengthened her commitment to serving the community where she was raised.

“My mother is buried here, and this is my ground to protect,” she said.

Describing her campaign as grassroots, Heck said she is balancing campaigning with work and raising a family.

“I’m a working parent,” she said. “I’m building this campaign in any little bit of free time I can get because I care.”

of control.”

McKenna attributes many of those rising costs to state energy and climate policies, arguing they have increased utility rates and construction expenses. If re-elected, he said he plans to continue advocating for policies aimed at reducing costs while increasing government transparency and accountability.

“I look forward to continuing to advocate for an affordability agenda to help Massachusetts residents stay Massachusetts residents,” he said.

McKenna also said he wants to increase state investment in local aid, education and infrastructure while continuing to support audits and other oversight measures.

Looking back on his tenure, McKenna highlighted several accomplishments, including helping establish a Head Start facility in Webster, serving on the state’s Rare Disease Advisory Council, and sponsoring legislation creating a Foster Parents Bill of Rights.

He also pointed to ongoing transportation and economic development initiatives throughout the district, including road safety projects in Webster, Oxford and Uxbridge and efforts to support downtown revitalization and business growth along the Route 146 corridor.

When asked what distinguishes his candidacy from Heck’s, McKenna pointed to the partisan makeup of the Massachusetts Legislature.

“The communities of Webster, Douglas, Sutton, Oxford and Uxbridge deserve a representative with a track record of standing up to the one-party supermajority that is the State Legislature,” he said. “This district deserves better than that.”

McKenna said conversations with voters continue to reinforce his priorities.

“The biggest things I hear about while campaigning are frustrations with Beacon Hill,” he said. “One-party government is bad for Massachusetts, and our residents are feeling the impact.”

Although he has represented the district for more than a decade, McKenna said his connection to

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MCKENNA EMPHASIZES EXPERIENCE AND AFFORDABILITY

McKenna is campaigning on his record after more than 10 years in office, arguing that Massachusetts residents are increasingly struggling with the cost of living and need continued representation willing to challenge the Democratic supermajority on Beacon Hill.

“My time serving the 18th Worcester District is incredibly rewarding,” McKenna said. “I’m proud to be a voice for those middle- and low-income workers being priced out of their own homes.”

Asked what issues he hears most often from constituents, McKenna gave a one-word answer: affordability.

“Numbers 1, 2, and 3 are all affordability,” he said. “Whether it is our cost of housing, cost of our utility bills, cost of our education, or cost of our childcare, it is all out

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Like many community newspapers across the country, we have experienced significant increases in postage, newsprint, and production costs, along with the impact of new tariffs. At the same time, we can no longer pass these increases along to our advertisers, which makes it increasingly difficult to sustain direct-mail delivery.

After careful consideration, we have decided to transition to a community-distribution (drop) model beginning with our September edition. While the way our newspapers are delivered is changing, our mission is not.

Our readership isn't ending—it's evolving.

Instead of arriving in your mailbox, our newspapers will be available at convenient community locations, including local businesses, restaurants, libraries, municipal buildings, and other high-traffic

destinations. This makes it easy for readers to pick up a copy while they're out in the community and helps keep our publication highly visible.

Community-distributed newspapers are intentionally picked up by readers who want to stay informed about local news, events, and businesses, creating an engaged audience and continued value for our advertisers.

Most importantly, this change allows us to continue to support local businesses, promote community events, and provide the trusted hometown publication you've come to expect.

This decision was made with one goal in mind: to ensure the long-term future of our newspaper and our commitment to the communities we proudly serve.

Thank you for your continued confidence in Our Town Publishing, publisher of the YankeeXpress Publications. We appreciate your support as we begin this next chapter and look forward to serving our communities for many years to come.

With sincere appreciation,
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Polly Currier joins the Pearle as Youth Services Librarian

Storytime just got even more exciting at the Pearle L. Crawford Public Library. The Town of Dudley is pleased to welcome Polly Currier as its new Youth Services Librarian. Polly brings more than a decade of experience inspiring young readers and creating engaging learning environments for children and families. With more than 12 years of experience working with students in grades K–8, she brings a passion for literacy, creativity, and community engagement. She began her library career at Tantasqua Regional Junior High School. Prior to joining the Pearle, she served as the librarian at Leicester Elementary School. “Her experience in youth ser-

vices, education, and library programming will be a tremendous asset to our community,” Library Director Nicole Messier said. Polly holds a Master of Science in Library and Information Science from Simmons University, is a member of the prestigious Beta Phi Mu International Honor Society and has earned both a Massachusetts Certificate of Librarianship and a Massachusetts Academic Provisional Teaching License. She is eager to build on the library’s tradition of engaging Dudley’s youngest residents. “As I spend more time in the Children’s Library, I hope to increase accessibility and foster a sense of community and discovery in even the youngest patrons,”

she said. Polly’s diverse background includes experience serving patrons of all ages in a variety of library settings, from K–8 schools to the Worcester Art Museum Library. “Polly’s experience, enthusiasm, and genuine love of helping young people discover the joy of reading make her a wonderful addition to the Pearle,” Town Administrator Jonathan Ruda said. “Our library is a special gathering place for Dudley families, and I know Polly will make story time, learning, and every visit to the Children’s Library even more welcoming and memorable.” Whether it’s introducing toddlers to their first storybook, helping students discover a favorite series, or creating programs



Polly Currier

that bring families together, Polly says she looks forward to making the Children’s Library a welcoming place where curiosity grows and imaginations flourish.

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- 2nd Friday: The YankeeXpress South: Charlton, Dudley, Webster
- 2nd Friday: Blackstone Valley South: Douglas, Northbridge & Uxbridge
- 4th Friday: The YankeeXpress North: Auburn, Oxford
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the area remains one of the most important aspects of his campaign. “I would like voters to know how deeply I love the communities of this district,” he said. “I have never left south-central Massachusetts and know the people and communities that I have lived in my whole life.”

CAMPAIGN TAKING SHAPE

While Heck and McKenna

disagree on many policy questions and offer different visions for state government, their campaigns have centered on several of the same themes, particularly affordability and the future of the district.

Heck argues new leadership, bipartisan collaboration and greater civic engagement are necessary to address rising costs and rebuild public trust.

McKenna maintains that his leg-

islative experience and willingness to oppose Beacon Hill’s Democratic majority make him best suited to continue standing for the district while focusing on affordability, local aid, and government accountability.

As Election Day approaches on November 3, voters across the 18th Worcester District will have an opportunity to weigh two distinct backgrounds, governing philoso-

phies, and approaches to addressing the challenges facing their communities.

To stay informed on each candidate’s schedule and positions, visit their websites: McKenna’s campaign website is www.repjoemckenna.com and Heck’s website is www.heckyeah2026.org

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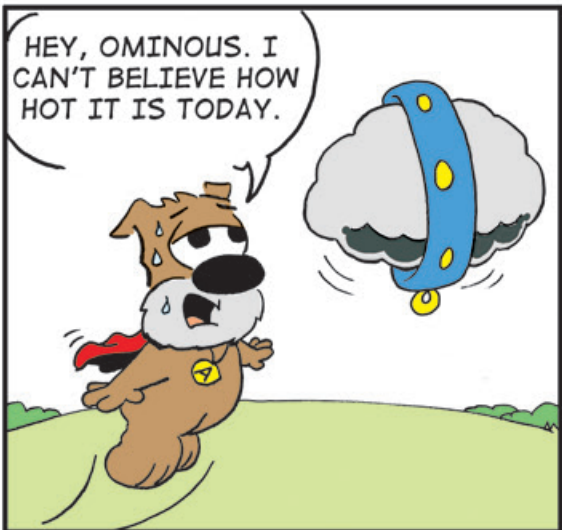
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by Tim Jones



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Webster Dudley Business Alliance celebrates its 20th anniversary

On Friday, August 7, as this issue of YankeeXpress South went to press, Deb Horan, owner of Booklovers Gourmet in Webster, was scheduled to throw out the first pitch at the WooSox game against the Lehigh Valley



Deb Horan

IronPigs. Horan's pitching debut on the Polar Park mound was on behalf of the Webster Dudley Business Alliance (WDBA), which held its 20th anniversary celebration at the ballfield.

"We wanted to do a special event in recognition of the WDBA's 20th Anniversary this year and wanted it to be memorable and fun for

all of our members," according to Horan. More than 80 people RSVP'd to attend the anniversary celebration.

Horan was one of the original organizers of the WDBA, which was founded in 2006 to give small business owners a chance to network and learn from each other. Held at Point Breeze Restaurant, the event attracted about 15 people. Today, the organization's events attract 50 to more than 100 participants.

"Our mission is to build and sustain a vibrant and dynamic community by contributing to the success of local businesses and in turn the health of the local economy," said Horan.

Southbridge was featured at Town Takeover Day at Polar Park on the 7th, with the town's fire department providing the color guard before the game began. Proceeds from the sale of Southbridge Town Takeover game tickets will support the nonprofit Our Bright Future. As described on that organization's website: "Primarily a youth development organization, we focus on providing proper resources to empower upcoming generations. We believe that in order to best fulfill our mission, it takes a village. For these reasons, we also provide fresh

food redistribution and delivery for those in need."

To learn more about the Webster Dudley Business Alliance, its mem-

bership and upcoming events, visit its website at thewdba.org.

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have been riding for some time, they never took part in the PMC.

Since its inception by Billy Starr in 1980, the PMC has contributed \$1.25 billion to the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, the single largest contributor to Dana Farber and the Jimmy Fund. The PMC is responsible for 67 percent of the Jimmy Fund's annual revenue.

"Being a professional cyclist I am always asked one of two questions: have you done the Tour de France or the PMC," she said. "As a first-time rider I don't think that I'll have any issue; I haven't done a lot of 100-mile rides in one day but I'm not that concerned."

While the younger sister had no concerns about riding the PMC over the two days, she wasn't that sure about her older brother Greg. Although three years older, he had not ridden in some six years, so Gunsalus believed that he was going to struggle more than her. However, Gunsalus was shocked that Greg felt great through those 90 miles on the first day

Having seen first-hand the care that her aunt received through Dana-Farber, Gunsalus has a personal connection and a deeper understanding of what the PMC is

all about. And she and Greg were very proud to be able to participate.

Going into the weekend ride, the duo didn't have any real expectations; they were just looking to meet people and hear some of the stories of the other 6,000 riders.

"Oh my God, it was so amazing," exclaimed Gunsalus. "I expected a lot of people, but hearing 6,000 riders in my mind was totally different that seeing it in person."

"There were so many people lining the streets cheering you on," she continued. "We met so many great people along the way and although it wasn't the fastest 100-mile ride, it went by faster than any I had ever ridden."

Both brother and sister were amazed by everyone they met along the route, whether riders, supporters, staff or volunteers.

"They did such an incredible job from start to end," Gunsalus said. "Being our first year, we saw people who had been riding 7, 10, 30, 40 years – it was easy to see why. We're going to be Pan Massers for life now. It's a community that is always building."

In addition to meeting a lot of people along the way and hearing so many inspiring stories about why people were riding, Gunsalus was glad that she was able to do the ride with her brother Greg.



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BY LEE-ANN BARKHOUSE

Self-Awareness: The Foundation of Respect

The best etiquette isn't about knowing which fork to use or when to send a thank-you note. It's about self-awareness. Self-awareness is the ability to recognize how our words, actions, and behaviors affect the people around us. Whether we're responding to a coworker, posting on social media, supervising our children, or navigating family relationships,

etiquette begins with three timeless principles: Respect. Consideration. Honesty.

Before speaking, posting, or reacting, ask yourself: Is it respectful? Is it considerate? Is it honest?

Those three simple questions can prevent misunderstandings, strengthen relationships, and create more positive workplaces, families, and communities. This month's questions all remind us that etiquette isn't about rules. It's about the choices we make every day.

Q. I have a family member and his wife who have two lovely young children who have not received any vaccinations. The parents are firmly against vaccines. How do we respectfully handle family gatherings when there are elderly relatives and others with health concerns?

A. This is one of today's most sensitive etiquette challenges because it involves both personal beliefs and health concerns. The goal isn't to debate vaccination choices but to communicate with kindness and respect.

If certain family members have health concerns or feel uncomfortable, it's perfectly appropriate to acknowledge those feelings and look for alternatives. You might say: "We'd love to spend time together. Because we have older family members and others with health concerns, we're trying to be extra cautious. Perhaps we could meet outdoors or plan another visit that works for everyone."

Respect doesn't always mean agreement. It means recognizing that people may have different perspectives while honoring one another's boundaries with kindness. Relationships are far more valuable than winning an argument.

Q. While working in an office cubicle area, is it best practice to keep your personal cell phone on silent and take personal calls outside of the office? In my office, one person has been asked multiple times to silence their phone, yet they become annoyed and dismiss the request. Human Resources won't do anything about it.

A. Absolutely. One of the foundations of workplace etiquette is respecting the shared environment. A cubicle may feel like your personal workspace, but it is still a communal setting where everyone deserves

the opportunity to work without unnecessary distractions.

Keeping your phone on silent and stepping away for personal calls demonstrates professionalism and consideration for your coworkers. Just as we silence our phones during meetings, presentations, or performances, the same courtesy belongs in an open office.

This situation also highlights the importance of leadership. Organizations benefit from establishing clear expectations for shared workspaces through employee handbooks, posted office etiquette guidelines, or discussions during staff meetings. When expectations are communicated consistently and applied fairly to everyone, they become part of the workplace culture rather than a personal criticism directed at one individual.

A respectful workplace isn't created by policies alone. It's built one thoughtful action at a time.

Q. I keep seeing passive-aggressive posts on social media. Recently, a friend's daughter publicly criticized people for being unkind to her mother. I don't know the full story, but it seems like posting online only makes things worse. What is the best approach?

A. Social media has made it easy to express our emotions instantly, but it is rarely the right place to resolve personal or family conflict. Once emotions become public, misunderstandings often multiply and people feel pressured to choose sides.

Before posting, ask yourself, "Am I trying to solve a problem, or simply express my frustration?"

If the goal is healing, a private conversation is almost always more effective than a public post. If you're simply observing the situation, resist the temptation to comment or become involved

unless someone has asked for your support.

Before you hit "Post," remember that words written in anger often last much longer than the emotions that inspired them.

Q. My brother recently posted something on social media. Instead of responding to his post, a relative commented by asking whether he was still speaking to me. How should this be handled?

A. Family relationships deserve privacy and respect. Public comment sections are not the appropriate place to discuss personal family matters or invite others into them.

The best response is often no public response at all. If you feel the need to address it, do so privately. A simple message such as, "I'd appreciate keeping our family matters offline. If you ever have a question, please ask me directly." is respectful, honest, and protects everyone's dignity.

Sometimes the most gracious response is choosing not to continue a conversation that never belonged in public.

Q. I recently attended a sporting event where there were many empty seats around us. Several young children sat in seats that didn't belong to their family while their parents sat elsewhere. The parents brought them food but left them unsupervised. The children climbed on the seats, were disruptive, and one even slipped and got hurt. Later, when the actual ticket holders arrived, the children moved. What is the proper etiquette in this situation?

A. Purchasing a ticket gives you the right to the seat you've selected, not to any unoccupied seat you happen to find. While some venues permit guests to move to open seats later in an event, children should never be left unattended in seats that don't belong to their family.

Good etiquette begins with respect—for other guests, for the venue's policies, and for safety. Parents have a responsibility to supervise their children and teach them that public spaces are shared with others. Climbing on seats, disturbing nearby spectators, or occupying seats that may belong to someone else affects everyone's experience.

If the children's behavior becomes disruptive or presents a

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HOMEOWNERS WELCOME!

Rodney Justo still finds joy in reliving the soundtrack of a generation with Atlanta Rhythm Section

BY RILEY FRANKIAN

More than five decades after helping found the Atlanta Rhythm Section, Rodney Justo still watches audiences light up when songs like “So Into You,” “Imaginary Lover” or “Spooky” fill the room.

For the 81-year-old singer, that reaction never gets old.

“It’s still so gratifying after all these years,” Justo said. “I love the way music brings people together.”

Formed in 1970, Atlanta Rhythm Section has earned its place among Southern rock’s most enduring acts. While many bands of the era leaned heavily into hard-driving guitar riffs, Atlanta Rhythm Section carved out its own identity with a polished blend of Southern rock, soul, blues, jazz and pop. Their smooth harmonies, memorable melodies and understated musicianship helped produce a string of radio staples throughout the 1970s, including “So Into You,” “Imaginary Lover,” “I’m Not Gonna Let It Bother Me Tonight” and the band’s signature rendition of “Spooky” by Classics IV.

Justo was there at the beginning, singing lead on the band’s debut album before stepping away in 1971. Ronnie Hammond took over beginning with the group’s second album and fronted the band’s most commercially successful years. Justo returned briefly in the 1980s before leaving again, spending more than a decade away from the group while building an entirely different career in wholesale alcoholic beverage distribution, where he worked for 21 years.

Despite the departures, there was never bad blood.

“We’ve always been pals,” Justo said. “I left on the best of terms.”

The original lineup featured several accomplished musicians. Guitarist Barry Bailey, bassist Paul Goddard, keyboardist Dean Daughtry and drummer Robert Nix all had ties to The Candymen, the band that famously backed Roy Orbison during the 1960s. Guitarist J.R. Cobb played with Classics IV, further cementing the band’s deep musical roots.

Today, Justo is the lone surviving original member, performing alongside a new generation of musicians committed to faithfully

recreating the band’s signature sound.

His new bandmates include Steve Stone on the guitar, David Anderson on guitar and vocals, Justin Sneaker on the bass, Lee Shealy on the keyboards and Rodger Stephan on the drums.

Some longtime fans question whether a band can continue after losing so many original members. Justo understands the sentiment but offers a perspective that usually resonates.

“I went to see the Yankees a while back,” he said. “It’s still entertaining even though Joe DiMaggio and Mickey Mantle aren’t playing anymore... The show must go on.”

That philosophy has kept Atlanta Rhythm Section on the road. While the band typically performs between 35 and 50 concerts each year, 2026 has become one of its busiest schedules in recent memory, with approximately 70 performances booked. Many of those dates pair the band with fellow classic rock legends Jefferson Starship, Firefall, Orleans and Pure Prairie League on multi-band tours across the country, including several stops through-



Rodney Justo.

Facing the possibility of being dropped by its record label, Atlanta Rhythm Section released “So Into You.” The gamble paid off. The single climbed to No. 7 on the Billboard Hot 100 in 1977, launching the band into mainstream success and helping establish Rock and Roll Alternative as one of its landmark albums.

For Justo, however, the greatest reward has never been chart positions.

Following most shows, someone approaches him with a similar thankfulness.

“Thank you so much,” they tell him. “I just re-lived my high school or college experience at this show.”

“These songs connect people to their past, for better or worse,” Justo said.

The only downside to touring after all these years, he joked, isn’t performing, but traveling.

“No matter where I’m going,” he laughed, “I always get set up with the furthest possible gate, and the furthest possible hotel room.”

ATLANTA RHYTHM
continued on page 8

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 second from the right.

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ATLANTA RHYTHM
continued from page 7

When asked what advice he would give aspiring musicians, Justo's answer came without hesitation.

"Go to school," he said. "It is extremely hard to make a career in music. There are no shortcuts. You need to practice. When your fingers hurt from the guitar strings, keep practicing. When you are tired and feel like you want to give up, keep practicing."

His final piece of advice reflects the mindset that has sustained a career spanning more than half a

century.

"Never pass up the opportunity to play with someone better than you," Justo said. "Then you work your way up to their level and then find someone else who's better than that."

Justo looks forward to continuing his tour and encourages people to both listen to their music and make their own.

"That's what it's all about!" Justo said.

Pure Prairie League, Atlanta Rhythm Section, Orleans, and Firefall will play at Indian Ranch on Sunday, August 23. Gates open at 11:30 a.m., show at 1 p.m.

ETIQUETTE
continued from page 6

safety concern, it's appropriate to notify an usher or event staff member. They can address the situation professionally without placing other spectators in an uncomfortable position.

Public events offer wonderful opportunities to teach children consideration, responsibility, and respect for others. Those lessons often leave a far greater impression than the final score of the game.

ETIQUETTE REFLECTION

Etiquette is not about perfection or memorizing rules. It is about making choices that strengthen relationships and demonstrate respect for others.

The next time you find yourself in a difficult situation, pause and ask yourself:

- Is it respectful?
- Is it considerate?
- Is it honest?

When those three principles

guide our decisions, good etiquette becomes more than good manners—it becomes a way of living.

Until next month, be kind, be thoughtful, and remember that the smallest acts of consideration often leave the greatest impression.

Warm regards,
Lee-Ann

Have a situation you'd like help with? Write in or email (info@investinuma.com) and your question may be featured in a future column. Let's build a kinder, more respectful world, one interaction at a time.

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

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Deborah Johnson honored with 2026 Commonwealth Heroine Award

Deborah Johnson, director of the Dudley Senior Center and a community volunteer, has been recognized with the prestigious 2026 Commonwealth Heroine Award, an honor presented annually by the Massachusetts Legislature to women whose selfless contributions make a lasting impact in their communities.

Johnson was presented with an official citation from the Massachusetts House of Representatives on June 24 at the State House in Boston, recognizing her exceptional dedication to the Town of Dudley and its residents.

"I'm so happy Deb was recognized for all the work she does for Dudley seniors," State Rep. John Marsi said. "She also does a lot for the community behind the scenes, which is the

intent behind this award. She is very deserving of this honor."

The Commonwealth Heroine Award honors women across Massachusetts whose volunteerism and leadership create meaningful, lasting change within their communities. Johnson's recognition reflects decades of service and an enduring commitment to making Dudley a better place for residents of all ages.

For more than two years, Johnson has served as director of the Dudley Senior Center, dedicating countless hours beyond her paid responsibilities to expand programming, organizing meals and events, coordinating dementia education initiatives, and enhancing services for local seniors.

Her commitment extends well beyond the daily activities of the



Deborah Johnson with State Rep. John Marsi at the State House awards ceremony.

Senior Center. Johnson successfully secured private funding from the Dudley Woman's Club for much-needed renovations to the facility.

"Mrs. Johnson has a way of making people feel cared for, welcomed, and valued," Dudley Town Administrator Jonathan Ruda said. "That is exactly what she has brought to the Dudley Senior Center and to so many parts of this community over the years. This recognition is truly well deserved, and we are very fortunate to have her in Dudley."

A Dudley resident since 1978, Johnson and her husband of 56 years Jon raised two sons while she pursued a college education part-time at Nichols College, becoming the first member of her family to earn a college degree. Throughout

the years, she has devoted herself to numerous organizations, including Abby's House, St. Anthony of Padua Parish, the Dudley Woman's Club, and initiatives supporting local veterans.

The Massachusetts House of Representatives recognized Johnson for embodying the spirit of the Commonwealth Heroine Award through her unwavering service, leadership, and commitment to improving the lives of others.

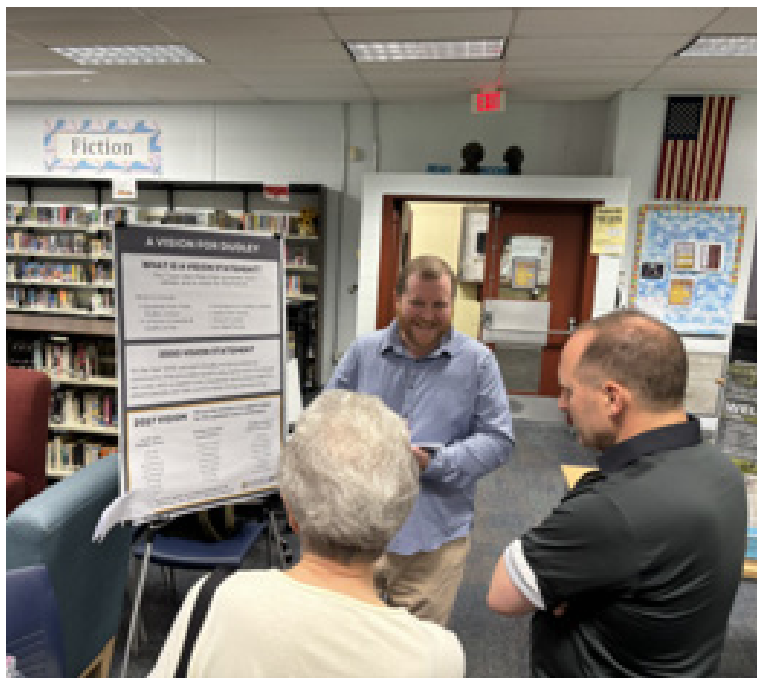
"Deborah Johnson exemplifies the compassion, dedication, and community spirit that define a Commonwealth Heroine," the award nomination states. "Her efforts have strengthened the Town of Dudley in countless ways, and this recognition is a fitting tribute to her years of selfless service."

Dudley Master Plan needs residents' input

The Central Mass Regional Planning Commission partnered with the Town of Dudley Master Plan Steering Committee to host a community workshop on Saturday, June 27 at Shepherd Hill Regional High School.

A master plan is a long-range, strategic roadmap that outlines the town's priorities and vision. It provides a framework for future decisions regarding such issues as housing, transportation, open space, historic preservation, recreation, economic development, land use, public facilities, and climate resilience. But it only works if community members participate in its creation.

People at the workshop participated in various interactive activities, including identifying the town's strengths, assets, and opportunities for preservation; mapping recreation amenities and trans-



Participants at the June Master Plan workshop. Photo submitted

portation issues; ranking housing needs; and allocating "Dudley Dollars" to public services. Residents reflected on their experiences in town and shared ideas for the town's future in a visioning activity.

Dudley residents and community members are encouraged to take the Master Plan Survey. Paper copies are available at the town hall, the Pearle L. Crawford Library, and the senior center for

picking up and dropping off. The survey can also be found online at surveymonkey.com/r/DudleyMasterPlan

Insights from community workshops and the survey will be instrumental in developing the Dudley Master Plan, which is currently underway. The more input organizers have, the better able they will be to realize citizens' priorities.



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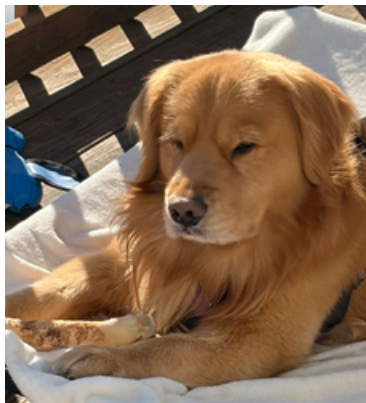
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LIVING WITH LUKE

amyleclaire@hotmail.com

Paws for thought

BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

Just when I thought I couldn't get any closer to Luke... It's happening before my eyes. Our bond has deepened. Our love has grown wide and strong—right alongside his big, chunky paws.

The Morning Wail
Nothing compares to the greeting that awaits me every morning after our daily rituals.

Bathroom duty, check.
Bowl of kibble, check.
Speed-eating gobble, check.
Finally, the best part of our morning surrounds me like the sound of an orchestra playing at dawn.

"Arrrahh-oooh!"
Luke wiggles around the kitchen carrying his red-hot chili pepper—his favorite stuffed toy. His morning greeting falls somewhere between the sound of a singing cow and a very happy dog. Whatever it is, his joyous serenade makes a profound statement about the best way to begin the day.

"Guess what? A new day has begun! I'm so happy to see you! Thank you for loving me! Thank you for be-

ing the best Dog Mom! I love you so much! Let's play! Let's wiggle! Let's just get the most out of life!"

The more I reinforce his gratitude, the more dramatic he becomes.

"Is that your chili pepper, Luke? I like that toy. Do you want to playyyyyy?"

He rubs his whole body against my lap in enthusiastic agreement while also reminding me of something important: I am part of Luke's territory. I'm his person, and his dog hair says so. A pattern of loose fur scattered across my clothing has become my eccentric tattoo.

But how can I complain?

Luke's morning attitude is contagious—in all the right ways. He reminds me that a good attitude leads to a good day. He reminds me that happiness is a choice. Circumstances are irrelevant. What happens to you or around you doesn't define you. When life gets hairy, shake it off onto your person and remember that GOD—dog spelled backwards—doesn't make mistakes.

"Today is going to be soooo fabulous!"

Luke dances happily around me while I squeeze his chili pepper at the middle, making it squeak.

Beedoo.

Beedoo.

Beedoo.

The playful rhythm mirrors our joy, and before long we're both moving foolishly to the beat. Sharing mornings together has certainly brought me closer to Luke. Thankfully, there are many more examples of our deepening bond.

Maturity

The bark-back-harder spats of Luke's younger years have been replaced by a quiet confidence.

Often, while we stroll through the neighborhood and encounter more aggressive dogs, he'll simply gaze up at me and smile, as though to say, "He doesn't know any bet-

little piece of that egg."

He stares at me with the stillness and authority of a presidential profile carved into New Hampshire's White Mountains until I finally surrender.

"Do you want some egg yolk, Luke?"



ter." Or "She's still learning."

Likewise, he's become much more subtle when begging for table scraps.

"I was thinking, since you're probably full by now, you could toss me a

As though a genie has suddenly brought Luke's statue to life, he softens and breaks into a warm smile.

"I would be honored to try some." Snuggle Time

Luke is, by far, the most affectionate dog I've ever owned—and the first to earn on-the-couch privileges.

"Do you want to snuggle, Luke?" He'll wait patiently at the edge of the couch before sauntering away, as though he'd rather have his own space. I play along.

"Okay, Luke. I'll be right here if you change your mind."

Before long, he returns to the nook by my feet and looks up at me.

"I'm ready to join you now."

I pat the cushion, inviting him up. He prepares for snuggle time with the careful precision of an airline passenger rearranging luggage in an overhead bin. He shifts. He maneuvers. He turns one completely unnecessary circle. Finally, he settles, resting his head in my lap.

Together, we share an unspeakable moment of quiet understanding.

Every season with Luke reminds me that God's greatest lessons don't always come wrapped in words. Sometimes they arrive with four paws, a squeaky chili pepper, and a heart that loves without condition. And every month, our bond grows just a little deeper.

Until next time. Stay tuned for more wagging tales.

Write to Amy. amyleclaire@hotmail.com

Visit Luke on IG@livingwithluke-valentino

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Starter home inventory is still relatively low. If you've been wondering whether now is the right time to move up, here's what you need to know. Starter homes remain one of the hardest types of homes to find, and that's good news if you're thinking about selling your first place.

Historically, we haven't been building enough homes for first-

time buyers, and even though homebuilders have shifted more attention toward smaller, entry-level homes lately, the Census shows there's a long way to go to rebuild. That means your current house is in demand – and that's a dream scenario for sellers. But that's only half the story. You also need somewhere to go, and there are more move-up homes on the market; this is where this gets interesting. While the supply of starter homes remains tight, data from Redfin shows that the number of homes for sale has been climbing overall.

Too much of the inventory available today remains concentrated at higher price points, leaving a shortage of options for entry-level and middle-income buyers. That means you may have more choices for your move up than you'd expect. Whether you're hoping for another bedroom, a home office, a bigger backyard, or simply more room for this next stage of life, today's market may finally be giving you the chance to find it. At the same time, your current house may be exactly what someone else has been looking for because homes like yours are still in short supply. That's a unique advantage for move-up buyers, and it could help you sell for a stronger price. Starter home value appreciation has outpaced other types of homes

nationally, mostly because they're so in demand.

Your biggest advantage may be your equity. There's one more thing your first home has been doing behind the scenes, and that's building equity. Every mortgage payment you've made and every year your home's value has grown has quietly increased your ownership stake in your house. The average homeowner with a mortgage has \$295k in equity built up. While your number may be different, once you sell, it could become the down payment on your next home or help reduce the amount you need to borrow at today's rates. Put it all together, and your move up becomes a lot more realistic than you think:

1. The house you're selling is in demand.
2. The house you're buying may be easier to find, and the equity you've built can help bridge the gap between the two.
3. Your first home did exactly what it was supposed to do. It gave you a place to start. Now, it may be the thing that helps you take the next step.

So, your first home was never meant to be your forever home. It was meant to help you build a life and build the financial foundation for whatever came next. If your current home no longer fits the life

you're living today, connect with a member of The Marzeotti Group or a trusted Real Estate Profes-

sional. You may be closer to your next chapter than you realize.



BY MARK MARZEOTTI



Maribeth Marzeotti
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Charlton Old Home Days, 2026

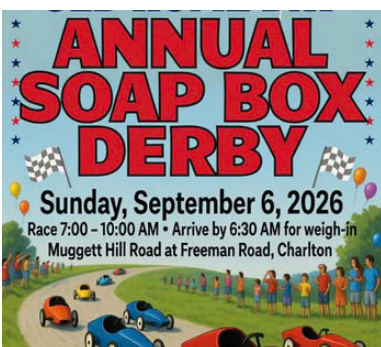
Keep your calendar open for Labor Day weekend this year for Charlton's Old Home Days festivities. This long-standing tradition started in 1897 when the citizens of Charlton gathered at the end of the summer before the beginning of the fall harvest and the onset of the isolating winter.

This year, the celebrations kick off at 6:30 pm on Saturday, September 5 at Bay Path RVTHS, 57 Old Muggett Hill Rd., with a concert provided by Dock 10, followed by the fireworks. Spread a blanket on the Bay Path fields, bring your own picnic basket, or enjoy food from local vendors. and listen to the concert. The fireworks will begin around 9 p.m.

Sunday begins early with the Soap Box Derby at 7 a.m. (weigh-ins even earlier). And these are the old-fashioned, full-sized, race-down-the-hill soap boxes that had to be built to exacting specs.

Festivities continue on and around the Charlton Town Common (37 Main St) with local food vendors, family-friendly activities,

live music, and citizen-recognition awards. Don't forget to visit the Charlton Garden Club tent from 10 am-3 pm. Stop by to admire



beautiful and unique floral designs created by members. Chat with club members and get a list of their fall meetings and speakers. For more info, email Glendaly Stockley or Tricia Gay at charltongardenclub@gmail.com

The parade steps off at 3:30 and organizers invite everyone to participate: Decorated Power Wheels / Doll Carriages / Bikes / Wagons for the little ones; floats from organi-

zations or individuals; marching units from local organizations; equestrian units; automobiles – antique, classic, or new – and of course costumed characters. If you have a suggestion or question, call Patsy Rydlak, parade organizer, at 774-922-7022,

Event Schedule Highlights
7:00 AM: Soap Box Derby on Muggett Hill Road. Confirm times for weigh-ins!

9:00 AM: Annual 5-Mile Road Race starts at the Town Common
10:00 AM – 3:00 PM: Booths, displays, and the Charlton Garden Club Flower Show on the Common

11:30 AM – 1:00 PM: Live music performance by Holdin' Back; the '60s at the Town Common

1:00 PM: Awards Ceremony at the Bandstand. Past categories include Community Service Awards, Youth Community Service Award, Business Award, Parade Marshall, and Citizen of the Year

3:30 PM: Parade steps off from Overlook (88 Masonic Home Rd).

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Q. I am getting older and starting to question everyone's honesty. Recently, I was at a quick lube, and they told me I needed both cabin and engine air filters. I said no—just an oil change. When I got home, I remembered the filters were changed nine months ago. Why is it that

seemingly everyone is dishonest?

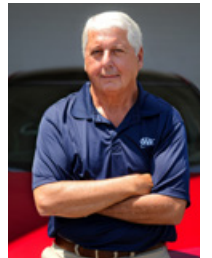
A. I don't think everyone is dishonest. At a quick lube—and in fact at some other shops—recommendations are often based on the service history in their system. Chances are the advisor looked in the computer, didn't see any record of filter changes, and made the recommendation based on that rather than an actual inspection of the filters. As an example, a neighbor of mine went to a dentist in Florida, and while there, they recommended two crowns. When he got back up north, his local dentist said everything looked fine. The bottom line: whenever you're in doubt, it's always a good idea to get a second opinion.

Q. I have a 2023 Mercedes C300 convertible with 26,500 miles. I am getting the Service B alert on the instrument cluster. When I look it up, it calls for an oil change and a brake fluid change. I'm OK with the oil change, but why a brake fluid change on a three-year-old car with 26,000 miles? It seems a bit excessive.

A. Many car manufacturers—especially European brands like Mercedes—now recommend brake fluid changes about every three years, regardless of mileage. Brake fluid is hygroscopic, which means it absorbs moisture over time. That moisture can lead to internal corrosion and affect

braking performance. It's not just moisture, though. As brake fluid ages, its protective additives break down, which can lead to copper contamination inside the brake lines. That contamination can accelerate wear and affect the performance of the anti-lock braking system (ABS). **BY JOHN PAUL**

For that reason, regular brake fluid replacement is considered preventive maintenance—even if the mileage is low.



Q. I have a 2020 Subaru Forester and have a recurring issue with the rear hatch. It opens intermittently. Twice in the last few months, I've gone into the garage in the morning and found the rear hatch open—and the battery dead. I've had AAA come twice already to jump the battery. A couple of times during the day, when the car is parked outside, I've noticed the rear hatch open as well—but I catch it before the battery dies. Is it the key fob or the rear latch? Is this a known issue with this car?

CAR DOCTOR
continued on page 13

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TIPS ON FINANCIAL PLANNING

dennis.antonopoulos@edwardjones.com

Building your child's education fund, one brick at a time

Every solid house starts with a good blueprint and a strong foundation. Saving for a child's education is very similar.

College costs can seem daunting.



DENNIS ANTONOPOULOS

In addition to tuition, you'll need to account for housing and food, books and supplies, transportation and other expenses.

The average annual budget at an in-state

public university runs around \$30,990 today, and a private school is \$65,470 according to the College Board. While most families won't pay a college's list price, you'll still want to start saving as early as possible to be ready when your child is.

Lay the foundation early. You don't have to wait until you have the perfect set of plans to start building. There are specific accounts designed to save for education and some do not require a minimum opening deposit. Setting up automatic recurring contributions, even modest ones, lets you build steadily over time without requiring constant attention.

As your child ages, look for ways to redirect expenses you no longer have towards the build. For example, daycare costs, which can exceed \$1,000 a month, can be shifted into a college savings account once your child enters school. Tax refunds and annual bonuses make excellent additional contributions. And others can pitch in – instead of birthday or holiday toys, ask grandparents or relatives to contribute directly to a college savings account.

Know the size of the house you're building. Families saving for

community college followed by two years at a public university might target around \$65,000. Those aiming for four years at a public school are looking at roughly \$100,000. Whatever the goal, plan for education inflation of about 4% annually, which can roughly double costs over 18 years.

You don't have to source all the building materials yourself. Scholarships, grants, student loans and income from part-time work are all legitimate ways to help finish the structure.

Don't let one project consume the whole budget. One risk for parents is pouring so much into the college fund that the retirement fund goes neglected. Remember, loans and grants exist for college, but not for retirement. Striking the right balance may mean targeting a more affordable school, planning to cover only a portion of costs or adjusting retirement timelines slightly.

Choose the right building materials. For many families, a 529 plan is the right foundation. Earnings grow tax-free, distributions are federally tax-free when used for qualified education expenses, and many states offer additional income tax deductions for contributions. Even better, anyone – such as grandparents or friends – can contribute.

Additionally, qualified expenses for a 529 plan go beyond tuition and cover books, computers, internet access, room and board, and more. Vocational and trade schools often qualify, too, opening the door to careers in skilled trades, health-care and technology.

No contractor builds alone. A

knowledgeable financial advisor can help you draw up a realistic blueprint and make sure the college project doesn't crowd out the rest of your financial future. The earlier you break ground on that conversation, the stronger the structure will be.

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

CAR DOCTOR

continued from page 12

Since the rear hatch is opening on its own, I'm assuming the vehicle is equipped with a power liftgate. If so, there have been some cases where switches or controls can stick, including the dash or hatch release button. If you have more than one key fob, try using the one that gets the least use. If the problem goes away, the remote may be the cause. If it still happens, the issue could be in the latch or one of the release switches. One other thing to keep in mind: Subaru electrical systems, like many modern vehicles, can behave unpredictably when the battery is getting weak. Given the dead battery incidents, it would be worth having the battery tested as part of the diagnosis.

My neighbor knows I go to car shows and that I'm a fan of classics. She is asking my advice on how to sell her dad's collection, as he has gotten ill. The cars include a 1979 Mustang Pace Car, a 1972 Cutlass convertible, a Mercury Capri convertible, an "old MG," a BMW 3 Series, and a 2000 Indian motorcycle. She wants to find a broker or collector rather than try to sell each one on her own. I remember the Chasing Classic Cars TV show. Is there anyone in real life who does that? Can we offer her some advice?

That sounds like a great collection. There are brokers who specialize in

buying and selling classic cars, and that may be the easiest route for her. Before doing anything, though, it would make sense to have the collection appraised so she has a good understanding of its value. As for Chasing Classic Cars, the host, Wayne Carini, is very much active in the hobby and still buys, sells, and brokers classic cars. His shop is F40 Motorsports (www.f40.com) in Portland, Connecticut, (860) 342-5705.

I purchased a 2019 Genesis G80 with 20,000 miles from a friend. It hasn't been driven much in the last year—about 500 miles—and was kept outside in a driveway. I would start it every couple of weeks and drive it around the block occasionally. The annual inspection showed it to be in great shape. I changed the oil and all filters. Is there anything else I should do to keep it running well and help it last longer? It will be driven about 6,000 miles a year.

At about six to seven years old, the key is to keep an eye on the car's overall condition and stay ahead of age-related wear. If they haven't already been replaced, I would plan on tires and a battery. Batteries typically last around five years, and tires, once they reach about six years old, can begin to deteriorate—even if the tread looks fine. Because the car sat for a while, take a close look at the brakes, as rust can build up on the rotors. Even with low mileage, plan on annual oil changes going forward. At upcoming services, check the cabin and engine air

filters again. And while not urgent, changing the engine coolant and doing a transmission fluid drain-and-refill within the next year or so would be good preventive maintenance.

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

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NOTE: Community bulletin board-type items are welcome for inclusion in the Happenings! section of the Xpress newspapers. Please allow enough lead time for publication. Email your calendar or event notice to news@theyankeeexpress.com.

AUBURN'S SUMMER IN THE PARK CONCERTS

The Summer in the Park Concert Series takes place at the Riley-Pappas Performance Pavilion at the Dr. Arthur and Dr. Martha Pappas Recreation Complex at 203.5 Pakachoag St. in Auburn. Performances during the summer are on Thursday nights from 6-8 p.m. Rain dates are for the following Tuesday from 6-8 p.m.

- August 20 - 4EverFab (Beatle's Tribute)
- August 27 - Aquanett (80's Rock)
- September 3 - Petty Larceny (Tom Petty Tribute)

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15

• The Whitin Community Center (WCC) is excited to invite all automotive enthusiasts and families alike to celebrate the 12th Anniversary of our highly anticipated "Cars In The Park" event. Join us for a day of automotive excellence and community fun from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the picturesque 7.5 acre Whitin Park, located

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

- The beloved 4th Annual Sensory Friendly Community Event by Picnic at the Park Douglas Inc celebration returns on August

15 2026 from 10am to 3pm, bringing expanded activities, new attractions, and a larger venue to accommodate its rapid growth. The 2026 event will take place at Soldiers Field, 2 Manchaug Street, Douglas Ma 01516, a fully fenced location that offers increased space, improved safety, and greater accessibility for families. This year's Picnic at the Park introduces exciting new features, including an inflatable bounce house, an obstacle course, and additional family-friendly entertainment. Fan favorites such as the barrel train ride will return, continuing to delight younger attendees. Guests can also enjoy lawn games, children's activities, local vendors, and open space for picnicking and relaxation. Food trucks will be available throughout the day, serving snacks, drinks, and picnic-style meals. A hallmark of the event is its sensory-friendly design, which includes quiet zones, low-stimulus activity areas, and music played at reduced volume. These accommodations ensure a calm, welcoming environment for neurodivergent individuals and anyone who benefits from sensory-considerate spaces. To support the event's growing attendance, additional parking will be available at the UniBank Douglas Branch after the bank closes for the day, as well as at St. Denis Church in their upper parking lot — just a short walk from Soldiers Field. "Picnic at the Park grows each year in community connection and support," said an organizer with Picnic at the Park Douglas Inc. "Soldiers Field gives us the space to expand our offerings while staying true to our mission of accessibility, inclusion, and family-centered fun." The event is free to the public, and families

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are encouraged to bring blankets, chairs, and their own picnic setups. No alcohol is permitted, ensuring a safe and family-friendly atmosphere.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20

• Join the Charlton Police Department as it hosts its second annual end of summer bash starting at 5 pm at Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School. Come meet their K9 (and his partner) and their drone teams and watch them in action as they put on demonstrations. Dunk an officer (or two), tour Life Flight, and grab a sweet treat from Suzy Q's Ice Cream.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

• Grab a teammate and join Open Sky Community Services for an afternoon of friendly competition, live music, great food, and community spirit at the 12th Annual Valley Bag Toss, Saturday, September 19, 2026, at the historic Alternatives' Whitin Mill in Whitinsville. This inclusive cornhole tournament welcomes players of all abilities, ages 14 and older, and has become a favorite annual tradition in the Blackstone Valley. Whether you're competing for the championship or cheering from the

HAPPENINGS!
continued on page 15

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TALES FROM BEYOND

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The Old Harbor boys

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

Slowly and stealthily, oars silently dipped into the water quietly pushing their vessel toward its destination at the Old Harbor of Block Island. Its nine inhabitants, shrouded in secrecy, dared not make any unnecessary noise that might signal their impending arrival to the island. They had set out in the dark of night in a light boat called a "shaving mill" to exact revenge upon those who were responsible for taking their land and possessions in the name of Liberty. It was the closing years of the American Revolution and anyone in the colonies who did not support the cause for liberty from England was considered a Tory, or sympathizer to the English throne. The small assemblage in the boat had been labeled Tories by their peers and for that, suffered the consequence of being traitors to the cause of freedom from the rule of England. Some reports say they were mere pirates using a small boat as cover, for they knew well of the island's famous signal fire that was often lit on Beacon Hill to warn of approaching vessels, especially during the times of the

revolution and age of piracy.

The nine rogue's mission was to wreak havoc on the islanders by raiding and pillaging what they could. While some Tories denounced the king and were sworn to loyalty to America, other fled the colonies in haste to Canada or the motherland in order to avoid severe punishment. They left everything behind to be ransacked and sold by the Sons of Liberty to help fund the war effort. Some hid, living in secrecy until the struggle ended and some, like the group in the shaving mill, decided to take a stand for themselves and their king. The Old Harbor was now in sight and the men aboard began to finalize their plan. But, alas, it was not to be. A sudden surging rogue wave crashed into the boat.

At the same time, a signal flame was lit on Beacon Hill that gave the islanders who saw it ample warning of the impending intruders. Those who saw the signal convened along the shore to greet the intruders, but what they saw was not a boat docking. The islanders were witness to an event that would echo along Old Harbor for centuries to come. The nine men struggled in vain to land the boat at the harbor as the people

looked on, but could offer no help due to the surging waves. Before the boat was upset, one loud voice could be heard over the crashing waves shouting, "Pull Boys! Pull For Your Lives!" The rough seas instantly capsized the vessel as it neared Old Harbor Point Landing, sending all its inhabitants into the ice cold unforgiving sea. The men tried desperately to right the boat or swim for shore, but their efforts were futile in the freezing surf. All

that were aboard perished within minutes. Their cries to each other and for help from the people on shore went unaided in the pounding of the waves on the beach and docks.

Folks living near the harbor soon heard the same cries night after night, even when there were no boats or boatmen in the area. The supernatural cries came about the same time the tragic event took place and to this day, are still heard.

On chilly Autumn nights, when the surf runs high, pounding the docks and crashing on the beach, the sound of ethereal voices can still be heard off the shore of the neighborhood still known as Old Harbor. Ghostly voices screaming "Pull Boys! Pull For Your Lives!" permeate the night air and then are gone, fading into the night leaving only the sound of seagulls and the ebb and flow of the tide.

HAPPENINGS!

continued from page 14

sidelines, the Valley Bag Toss offers a fun way to connect with friends, family, and neighbors while supporting a meaningful cause. The tournament will take place from 12:00 to 5:00 p.m. at 50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville, MA. Team registration is limited, and advance registration is required. To register a team, become a sponsor, or learn more, visit www.openskycs.org/valleybagtoss.

MONDAY, AUGUST 24 – FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

• Craft Materials Drop-off at the Charlton Public Library, 40 Main St., during regular hours. They will collect arts and crafts materials only (fabrics, yarn, paper, patterns, tools, beads, etc.) so knitters share some of that yarn stash. They will NOT accept office supplies such as binders, file organizers, etc. Items must be able to be reused (new or gently used, not expired). When in doubt, use the best friend rule—would I give this to my best friend? They cannot accept opened liquids such as paints, chemicals and glue. Items should be brought to the adult circulation desk. PLEASE do not put items in the outside return bins or leave them outside the library. Their very popular Craft Supply Swap will be back on Saturday, September 12 from 10 am-2 pm. Everyone is welcome to take materials regardless

of whether they donated any. If needed, more parking is available across the street at town hall and at the elementary school. For more information, visit their website charltonlibrary.org

SEPT. 28-OCT. 3

• The Silver Club of the Uxbridge Senior Center will be taking a trip to Virginia Beach from Sept. 28 to Oct. 3. For \$819, it includes the bus, the hotel, 5 breakfasts, 3 dinners, a guided tour of Williamsburg, a narrated Norfolk Naval Base Harbor Cruise, admission to the Nauticus and Battleship Wisconsin, the boardwalk, Virginia Beach Aquarium, and the Mariner's Museum and Park. Everyone is invited to join the group on this tour. Please call Sue at 508-341-0797 for more information.

FRIDAY OCTOBER 23 - SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25

• The Prindle Pond Conference Center in Charlton will be the site of the 2026 Northeast Wildlife Trackers Conference. This conference is a gathering for everyone enthusiastic or curious about wildlife tracking. Tickets include meals and lodging; there are single- and double-occupancy dormitory-style rooms and tenting options. Student discounts and commuter passes are also available. For more information, go here: northeastwildlifetrackers.org/conference/

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