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Norfolk & Wrentham

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Wrentham honors Food Pantry volunteers and KP student Brendan Lawler

By Joe Stewart

Wrentham named its Volunteers of the Year at Town Meeting on November 9.

Brendan Lawler, a member of King Philip's KP Cares service group, received the Henry Carr Wrentham Youth Volunteer of the Year award. The volunteers of the Wrentham Food Pantry received the Adult Volunteer of the Year award.

Select Board members Roy Lamothe and Michelle Rouse presented the awards. In his remarks, Lamothe said the two weigh each nominee's benefit to the community and the number of residents their work reaches.



King Philip student Brendan Lawler is honored for his community service with the Henry Carr Wrentham Youth Volunteer of the Year award. *(Photo by Joe Stewart)*

Youth award: Brendan Lawler

Lawler was nominated by his KP Cares adviser, Cheryl Rowe. He said he is thrilled to be recognized.

In his introduction, Lamothe noted that Lawler has been a KP Cares member for four years. As a junior, he became the group's Director of Community Services. In that role he supports the three senior centers in the district, coordinating luncheons, holiday celebrations and maintenance projects.

Lamothe also said Lawler has coordinated clothing drives for students in need. He serves as a peer mentor for students with intellectual and physical disabilities. He also helps at KP Student Summits with freshman orienta-

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Vote for Freeman-Kennedy debt exclusion set for Dec. 17

By Grace Allen

Norfolk will hold a special election on Dec. 17 to vote on a debt exclusion to fund a feasibility study and schematic design for the proposed expansion of the Freeman-Kennedy School. The $2.7 million request was approved at November's Special Town Meeting, and the next step is a townwide vote for the project to move forward.

Unlike an override, a debt exclusion raises property taxes for a period of time, usually 10 to 20 years, to fund a particular project.

After voters rejected a similar proposal in February 2025, the current project was accepted into the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) program, which is expected to reimburse the town for approximately 50% of eligible costs for the feasibility study and schematic design, or about $1.35 million.



The Freeman-Kennedy School in Norfolk is being considered for expansion as the district faces rising enrollment and a shortage of classroom space.

The MSBA also provides guidance and technical oversight throughout the project.

FREEMAN-KENNEDY
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Garden Club of Norfolk to host holiday greens and baked goods sale

The Garden Club of Norfolk will hold its first holiday greens and baked goods sale from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5, in the parking lot of the Federated Church, 1 Union St., Norfolk.

The sale will feature kissing balls, swags, wreaths and tabletop arrangements made by club members, along with amaryllis and paperwhite bulbs ready for gift-giving. Holiday baked goods will be sold in gift boxes. Each purchase of $25 or more includes a raffle ticket for a chance to win a decorated sled.



Proceeds will help the club maintain public gardens, offer gardening programs open to the public, and provide an annual camp scholarship to Stony Brook Wildlife Sanctuary in Norfolk.

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NCTV's December Artist of the Month brings portraits to Norfolk



NCTV Media's December Artist of the Month is Kathryn Costello, a local headshot, branding and editorial portrait photographer who also creates fine-art photographs of dancers and ice skaters. Her work will be featured at NCTV's First Friday: Music, Media, and Art Showcase on Friday, Dec. 4, from 6 to 9 p.m. at its Gallery & Meeting Space, 158 Main St., Norfolk.

Costello discovered her passion for photography more than three decades ago during a multistate cycling trip that ended in Alaska. Today, her work focuses on capturing authentic expressions and moments often missed by the naked eye. She also incorporates vintage cameras and classic studio lighting into her photography.

NCTV is Norfolk's nonprofit community media organization, offering local programming, free educational workshops and access to media production equipment. Its monthly First Friday events celebrate local art, live music, media and community creativity.

Celebrate the Christmas season at the Federated Church of Norfolk

The Federated Church of Norfolk invites the community to celebrate the joy, hope and spirit of giving this Christmas season with a variety of special events and opportunities to help others.

The church's monthly **Stone Soup Lunch** will be held Friday, Dec. 11, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. All are welcome to enjoy lunch, fellowship and time with friends and neighbors.

The church will also continue its tradition of giving through its annual **Christmas Giving Tree**, featuring tags representing gifts and needed items for Gilly's House, the Santa Foundation and Christmas in the City. Community members are invited to select a tag and help brighten the holidays for individuals and families in need.

On Sunday, Dec. 20, at 10 a.m., the church's youngest members will share the story of Jesus' birth during the annual **Children's Christmas Pageant**. This special worship service offers an opportunity to experience the wonder of Christmas through the eyes and voices of children.

The celebration continues Thursday, Dec. 24, with two **Christmas Eve worship services**. A 5 p.m. service offers families and friends an opportunity to gather in worship, while an 11 p.m. candlelight service provides a peaceful and reflective way to welcome Christmas.

All are welcome!

FREEMAN-KENNEDY

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To help keep costs down, the school building committee plans to reuse information collected during earlier studies of the proposed expansion.

Enrollment in Norfolk Public Schools has grown significantly over the past decade, creating a shortage of classroom space and affecting educational programs, according to school officials. Demographic studies indicate enrollment will continue to rise, and existing schools will not be able to accommodate the projected growth, even with larger class sizes.

Several community forums were held this past fall, with the goal of engaging and educating residents on the schools' space constraints and possible solutions.

School officials say if the debt exclusion vote fails, the town will lose its current opportunity to participate in the MSBA state grant program because projects cannot be deferred. While the town could reapply, there is no guarantee Norfolk would be selected again as demand is high across the state for school construction and renovation projects.

If voters reject the proposed school expansion after the feasibility study is completed, the MSBA will still reimburse up to 50% of eligible study costs.

Voting will take place on Thursday, Dec. 17, at the Freeman-Kennedy School, 70 Boardman St., from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Early in-person voting will take place at Town Hall, 1 Liberty Lane, in the Town Clerk's office, on the following days and times:

- Monday, Dec. 7 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Tuesday, Dec. 8 from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Wednesday, Dec. 9 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Thursday, Dec. 10 from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Friday, Dec. 11 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Saturday, Dec. 12 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For more information on the feasibility study project, visit norfolk.k12.ma.us.

Guest Column

Gather the carpenters

By G. Gregory Tooker

It is time to rebuild! For over a decade now, those who would weaken democracy for individual profit and power have attacked the framework of our hard-won governmental system with sledge hammer and pry bar. With the midterm election now safely behind us and before the foundational structure so painstakingly designed by its architects deteriorates beyond repair, we must rally those with the tools and energy to rebuild our democracy.

The bolts which secure our democracy are those duly elected and appointed individuals with the skills required to drive its success. The enemies of freedom have targeted and removed dozens of these critical fasteners of the democratic system, replacing them with corroded screws who serve as nothing more than pawns, catering to the interests of the rich and powerful. It will require years to restore the machinery of democracy to full function. We must recruit and motivate qualified managers of governmental operation.

Many chosen for this repair crew should be youthful and dedicated, drawn from the ranks disgruntled by the selfishness and incompetence of those who have taken advantage of our country. This writer has the confidence that we have such potential qualified carpenters among us who will respond willingly if we do the work necessary to search them out and provide the needed tools. Let the work begin!

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

Christmas Market at Norfolk Grange

The Norfolk Grange will host its first annual Christmas Market on Saturday, Dec. 5, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Grange Hall, 28 Rockwood Road (Route 115), Norfolk.

The market will feature local vendors offering handmade Christmas cards, jams and jellies, holiday greens, ornaments, knitted items, chocolates, poinsettias, baked goods and more.

Santa will also be on hand to visit with children.

The event is sponsored by the Norfolk Grange and offers an opportunity to shop for holiday gifts while supporting local vendors.

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Norfolk Lions hold annual Christmas tree sale

The Norfolk Lions Club's annual Christmas tree sale opened Monday, Nov. 16, for early shoppers and will continue until all trees are sold. The monthlong sale is one of the club's most important fundraisers and gives Lions members a chance to connect with the community during the holidays. Shoppers are encouraged to come early for the best selection.

As in past years, the sale is held in the lot next to Dunkin' on Main Street in downtown Norfolk. The Lions thank the local Dunkin' owners and returning customers for their continued support.

The lot is open from 3 to 8 p.m. weekdays and 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekends. Volunteers can trim the base of your tree and secure it to your car. Pickup trucks are appreciated. The sale is cash or check only, with checks payable to the Norfolk Lions.

Christmas trees take 10 to 12 years of growth and professional care before they are ready to harvest. The club's fresh-cut trees come from northern Maine and include balsam and Fraser firs, the most popular varieties. The Lions also hope to offer popular silver fir hybrids this year. Wreaths, tree bags and tree preservative to help keep trees fresh and reduce needle loss are also available.

All proceeds from tree sales benefit the Norfolk community and Lions charities. "Monies that the Lions generate go to seed such research as blindness prevention, diabetes prevention, juvenile cancer and numerous other causes," said Lynn Worley, this year's club president and King Lion.

The Lions will again have a Coats 4 Kids collection bin at the tree lot. Coats in good condition for men, women and children will go to local families in need. Anton's Cleaners will dry-clean all donated coats at no charge.

The Lions will also collect nonperishable food for the Norfolk Food Pantry. "Your contributions to the Norfolk Food Pantry are much appreciated at this time of year," said Robert Laight, co-chair of the Christmas tree sale.



Christmas tree pickup and recycling

The Norfolk Boy Scouts will again offer Christmas tree pickup after the holidays. Collection begins at 8 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 9, 2027. The Scouts will pick up trees at any Norfolk home and take them to the transfer station for recycling. The cost is $5 for adults 65 and older and $20 for everyone else.

To register, visit www.troop80norfolk.com and select "Christmas Tree Pick-up Fundraiser." Scouts will also be at the tree lot to answer questions and hand out flyers with pickup details.

For more information or to get involved with the Norfolk Lions Club, speak with any club member, visit www.NorfolkMALions.org or email norfolklionsmembership@gmail.com.

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Norfolk artist wins national Hometown Media Award

Norfolk artist Kim Weineck has won a national Hometown Media Award for "Kim's Art Show," produced in partnership with NCTV Media. The award, in the Instructional/Training Independent Producer category, was announced at the 2026 Alliance for Community Media Annual Conference in Madison, Wisconsin.

NCTV Media presented Weineck with the award at its Annual Meeting and 40th Anniversary Gala on Oct. 24.

Weineck, a professional artist, designer and art teacher, launched "Kim's Art Show" in August 2025. The program teaches viewers how to create landscapes using various mediums, offering step-by-step instruction on supplies, techniques and color. Episodes also introduce viewers to artists such as Winslow Homer and Vincent van Gogh.



Norfolk artist Kim Weineck (center) receives a national Hometown Media Award for "Kim's Art Show" from NCTV Media Co-Presidents Daniel "Beef" Mazzola (left) and Reynolds Lee at NCTV's Annual Meeting and 40th Anniversary Gala on Oct. 24.

The annual Hometown Media Awards recognize outstanding community radio and local cable programming. This year, judges received more than 1,000 entries across 46 categories. The award marks NCTV Media's fourth Hometown Media Award.

"Kim's Art Show" airs on Comcast Channel 8 and Verizon Channel 41. Episodes are also available on NCTV's YouTube channel at youtube.com/@NorfolkCable/videos.





Norfolk marks veteran's 100th birthday

By Maureen Sullivan

It was a very special Saturday for the town and Korean War veteran Raymond V. "Bucky" Calleaux. And it was all a surprise.

The celebration of his 100th birthday on Nov. 7 featured a drive-by tribute with more than two dozen vehicles rolling by his house on Rockwood Road. Calleaux also received more than 120 cards from well-wishers and a proclamation from the state Legislature.

"It was tremendous," said Calleaux, a Marine Corps veteran who has been a member of Norfolk American Legion Post 335 for more than 75 years.

"This is what the Legion wanted to do for you," said Teresa Fernald, a member of the post who delivered the cards and proclamation to Calleaux.

According to Fernald, the drive-by and cards were months in the making. She said the Legion started with the cards in June, giving local children and Farmers Market customers a chance to create cards in Calleaux's honor. The one place they couldn't use was the Senior Center – that's where Calleaux takes part in a weekday exercise class. Still, Fernald said the center managed to "sneak out" a few cards.

"This was truly a community event," she said.

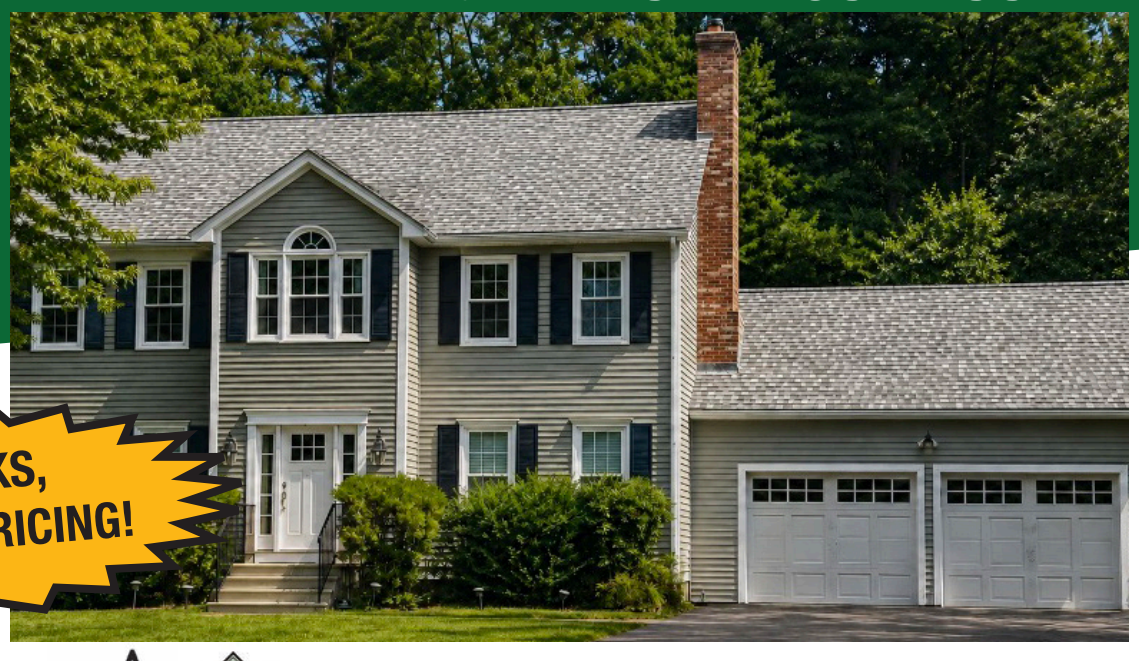






Raymond V. "Bucky" Calleaux, left, celebrated his 100th birthday on Nov. 7 with friends, family, more than 120 cards and two dozen vehicles driving by his house on Rockwood Road. *(Photos by Maureen Sullivan)*

It's been a big year for Calleaux – in June, he received the Boston Post Cane, given to the town's oldest resident, and he was also one of the guests of honor at the Post 335's third annual Veterans Dinner on Nov. 8.

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Norfolk Legion post hosts annual Veterans Dinner

By Maureen Sullivan

Two veterans of the Korean War were honored at the third annual Veterans Dinner sponsored by Norfolk American Legion Post 335 on Nov. 8 at the Lake Pearl Ballroom.

Raymond V. "Bucky" Calleaux, who served with the Marine Corps, has been a member of Post 335 for 75 years. He is the current holder of the Boston Post Cane, which honors the town's oldest resident. During the dinner, his fellow veterans regaled him with a rendition of "Happy Birthday," in honor of him turning 100 on Nov. 7.

Victor Pisini's a bit younger — he's 98 — who still owns and operates a shoe store on Main Street in Franklin. The dinner's honored guest told of his military experiences, and how much he appreciates his fellow veterans.

When Pisini was a boy, he was inspired by the veterans of World War I marching in parades. He also took part in the military training that was mandatory for all the boys in his high school.

He just missed miss World War II, but that didn't stop him and two friends from going to the local recruiting office. Pisini wanted to join the Navy, but the recruiter told him to work on his



Members of the Wrentham American Legion post gather for the third annual Veterans Dinner sponsored by Norfolk American Legion Post 335 on Nov. 8 at the Lake Pearl Ballroom. *(Photo by Maureen Sullivan)*

math. He did just that, by going to Dean College. However, his interest in the military waned, and he decided to go into business for himself.

Nine months after purchasing a shoe store, war broke out in Korea, and he was drafted into the Army. Sent to Fort Devens for basic training, Pisini remembered the pointers delivered by his uncle, and former Army sergeant, and kept everything neat and clean. At the end of basic, his group was sent to Trieste, Italy. However, Pisini was left behind. When he asked about his orders, he discovered he was being sent to officer candidates' school. Pisini completed the course, earned a commission as second lieutenant, and was sent to Korea.

The war ended soon after, and Pisini resumed running his shoe store. Seven decades later, Pisini noticed his hearing was "going a bit," so he went to the VA Hospital in West Roxbury. There, he saw veterans physically disabled by their military service. "I saw a group of true veterans" there, he said — not the veterans who marched in parades, but those who "truly sacrificed."

The dinner — which drew more than 100 veterans and included members of Legion posts from Wrentham, Plainville and Millis — also featured Phil Salamone, who performed several military songs, along with the national anthem. There was also a display of wartime memorabilia from World War I to the present day.

"This event is about those who served their country," said Al Bozza, the post's junior vice commander.

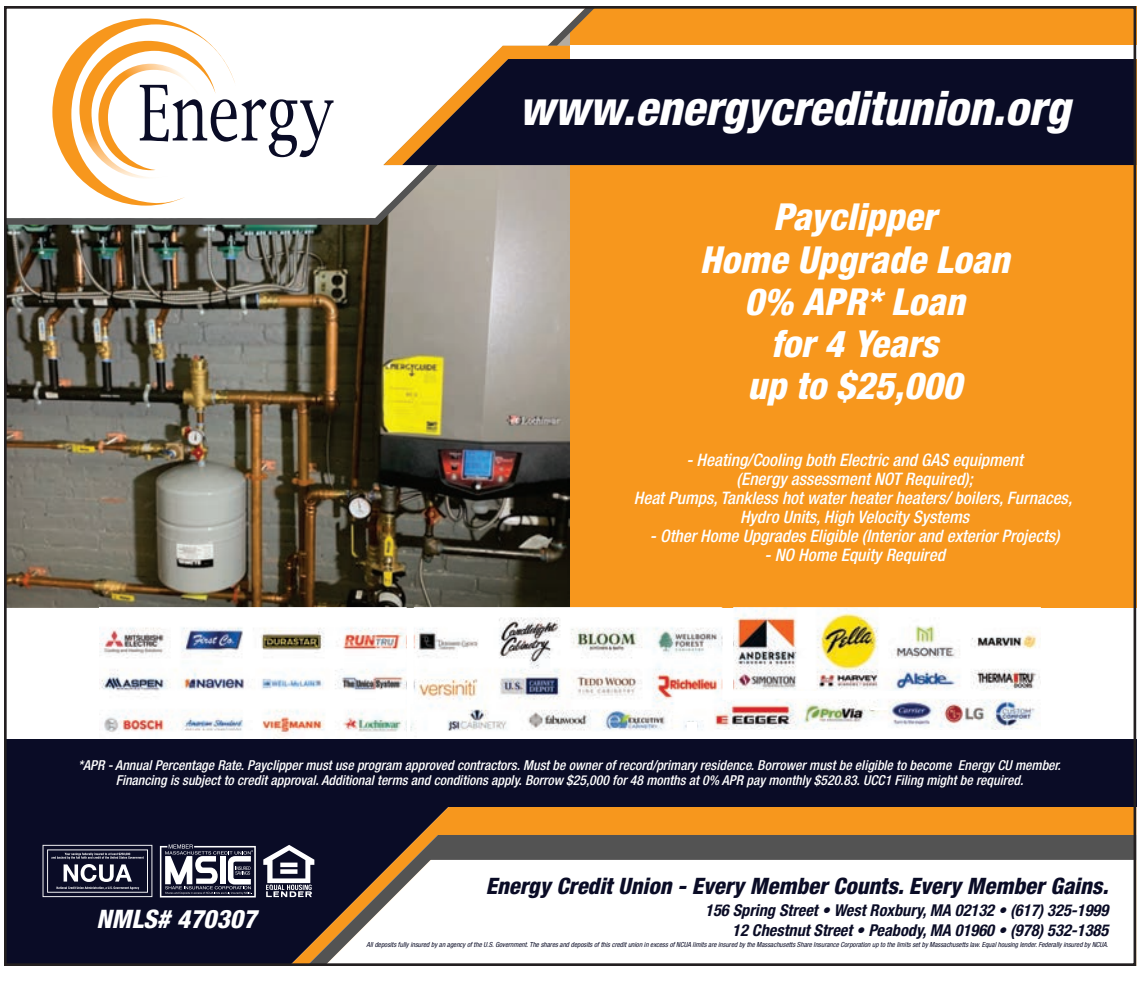
Commander Frank Zolli related a short history of the post, which was established in 1946 with 16 veterans from World War II. Today, the post includes 350 veterans who are "not especially flashy," but competent and knowledgeable when it comes to helping others and achieving success.

"They go about their lives in a thoughtful and professional way, setting the right example," said Zolli of his fellow post members. "These are our fathers, grandfathers, uncles, carpenters, teachers, plumbers and business people who enrich our lives with their confidence, knowledge and reliability. The American Legion brings all of that together by providing a wellspring of energy, support, American values and commitment. Post 335 fosters patriotism, education, veteran care and mutual helpfulness."

The post has hosted several events over the past year, including the Field of Flags (a fundraiser for Fisher House) and the Boys and Girls State leadership and civics training program. They have also sponsored a trip to the USS Intrepid (where Zolli served during his tour in the Navy).

"We are active, we are busy, we invite you to join us," said Zolli.

The post meets at the Community Room of the Norfolk Fire House on the second Thursday of the month. For meeting details and more information, visit norfolkmaamericanlegion.com, or contact Zolli at fczolli@gmail.com, 508-520-2751.



Charles River Chorale to present winter concert

The Charles River Chorale will present its winter concert, "From Stone Walls to Deck the Halls," on Sunday, Dec. 6, at 2 p.m. at the Medway High School Auditorium.

The concert will feature a wide range of music, from Gregorian chant to Ariana Grande. The first half of the program will include traditional choral selections, including works from Handel's "Messiah." The second half will feature holiday favorites accompanied by a rock band.

Under the direction of Ashley Nelson-Oneschuk, the 100-voice Charles River Chorale will offer a festive afternoon of music to celebrate the holiday season.

For more information and tickets, visit https://our.show/s3zzbzkdaq or scan the accompanying QR code.

Your Money, Your Independence

Financial gifts for kids that outlast the wrapping paper



Glenn Brown, CFP

Every December, millions of adults spend hours hunting for the hottest toys, gadgets, and gift cards, only to watch most lose their appeal by day's end. If you are a parent, grandparent, aunt, or uncle looking for a more meaningful gift, consider shifting from items that depreciate in a closet to assets that compound.

Time is the real gift. Financial gifting is not about taking the fun out of the holidays. It is about pairing small, tangible moments today with a head start on financial independence tomorrow. Because young people have decades ahead of them, even modest December contributions can quietly grow into life-changing flexibility.

Here are three practical ways to invest in the next generation this holiday season:

1. Fund a Trump Account—Eyeing an Age-18 Roth Conversion. Launched this year, federally backed Trump Accounts let relatives contribute up to $5,000 a year per child under 18, with no income restrictions, provided combined gifts stay within that $5,000 cap. Funds grow tax-deferred in a low-cost S&P 500 index fund until age 18, when traditional IRA rules take over.

That milestone unlocks a two-stage Roth conversion strategy due to the IRS pro-rata rule. You cannot convert only tax-free contributions first; each conversion is taxed proportionally based on the account's mix of after-tax family gifts (tax-free basis) and taxable investment growth:

- **Convert small slices in school:** Starting at 18, a full-time student can convert small amounts annually, sheltered by their standard deduction, so the taxable share stays under the $2,700 "kiddie tax" threshold and avoids their parents' higher rate.
- **Convert the rest once self-supporting:** Once graduated and paying over half their own support, they can convert the remaining balance in their own low entry-level bracket with their full single standard deduction, locking in decades of tax-free growth.

2. Contribute to a 529 Education Plan. For education-focused goals, a 529 plan remains tough to beat. Contributions grow tax-free, and withdrawals stay tax-free for qualified expenses—including college tuition, trade schools, registered apprenticeships, and K–12 tuition.

Many state plans offer direct gifting links that make it simple for relatives to contribute online:

- **Ask parents for the gift link** rather than guessing which state plan they use.
- **Check for state tax perks,** as several states offer an income tax deduction or credit for contributions.
- **Include a physical token,** like a favorite book or printed certificate, so younger kids still have something to unwrap.

3. Match Earned Income in a Custodial Roth IRA. If a teenager earned income this year from a summer job,babysitting, or part-time work, they qualify for a custodial Roth IRA. You can help ensure they contribute up to their total annual earnings, subject to IRS limits.

A simple "family match" turns hard work into an immediate lesson in ownership:

- **Offer to match every dollar** they save from their paycheck into the Roth IRA.
- **Let investments compound tax-free** for decades, giving them a retirement head start before graduation.
- **Keep contributions flexible,** since original Roth contributions can later be withdrawn penalty-free if truly needed (such as for a first home down payment).

Start a New Holiday Tradition. You do not need to write a massive check to make a lasting difference. Whether you add $50 to a child's Trump Account or match a teen's part-time earnings, you are giving something no store can stock: time in the market and confidence with money. Even better, you are introducing parents to tax-advantaged tools that can build lasting wealth for their children.

Take ten minutes this week to pick one young person in your life, choose the account that fits their stage, and give a gift that grows right alongside them.

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 PlanDynamic, LLC, 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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Santa and live Nativity at St. John's Christmas Fair

St. John's Episcopal Church will hold its annual Christmas Fair from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5, at 237 Pleasant St. in Franklin. Admission is free.

Children can meet Santa and pose for photos from 10 a.m. to noon. A live Nativity with sheep, goats and a donkey will take place on the front lawn from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The fair will feature gift baskets, fresh wreaths and greens, gift cards, a Grandma's Attic sale, a raffle and a silent auction. The Cookie Walk will offer homemade cookies, fudge and other baked goods. Snacks and drinks will be available for purchase.

For more information, call 508-528-2387, email admin@stjohnsfranklinma.org or visit www.stjohnsfranklinma.org.

Exsultet! to present winter choral concerts

Exsultet!, a MetroWest chorus for treble voices, will present its winter concert, "Wandering Through the Forrest," featuring traditional holiday favorites and contemporary choral music.

The program will highlight five works by composer Dan Forrest, including "Arise, My Soul, Arise" and "O Little Town of Bethlehem." Other selections include "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," "Sleigh Ride" and "Hodie Alleluia."

Performances will take place Saturday, Dec. 12, at 2:30 p.m. at Allin Congregational Church, 683 High St., Dedham, and Sunday, Dec. 13, at 2:30 p.m. at First Congregational Church, 725 Washington St., Holliston.

Tickets are available online or at the door. Performances are not recommended for children under 6.

Founded in 2013, Exsultet! performs a diverse repertoire of choral music, often incorporating written and spoken word into its concerts.



AWARDS

continued from page 1

tion, leadership and mentoring.

In an interview, Lawler described many ways for students to get involved. The giving tree supports more than 30 families. The high school also runs a Clothing Closet.

He has served in the Leo Club. He is also co-president of a business honor society at the school. That group ran a clothing drive for students competing in DECA, who need suits as well as money for travel.

Lamothe said Lawler started his own Etsy business through DECA and took first place at the state conference in Sport Entertainment Research. Lamothe described him as someone with an entrepreneurial approach and a desire to help others.

For Lawler, service means more than logging community service hours. He said giving back is rewarding, and getting involved opens up the world to students.

The Youth award's namesake

The youth award honors Henry Carr, a 2015 King Philip graduate.

Carr died in June 2017 at age 20 after a battle with cancer. He had received the youth award himself for his work with KP Cares, the Leo Club and student council. He was a student at the College of the Holy Cross when he died.

Town Moderator Ed Goddard was on the Select Board when it voted to rename the award for Carr.

Goddard described Carr as a young man of faith and an exemplary student leader. Carr kept a positive outlook throughout his life, Goddard said, including during his illness. People were drawn to his energy and his smile.

The first Henry Carr award went to KP senior Krista Cepkauskas, also a KP Cares member. That same night, the adult award went to Michelle Rouse - who presented this year's adult award.

Goddard said the award is perfectly named. He noted that its recipients have all shared a key trait: trying to help others in our community.

"The very best of our town"

Rouse introduced the Adult Volunteer of the Year award, this year recognizing Wrentham Food Pantry volunteers. "The Wrentham Food Pantry represents everything community service should be: compassion, generosity, dedication, and a willingness to step forward when others need help most," she said.

She pointed to a recent stretch when SNAP benefits were affected. "When SNAP benefits were impacted and many of our neighbors faced uncertainty about putting food on the table, the Food Pantry stepped up without hesitation," Rouse said.

She credited volunteers with organizing donations, preparing weekly distributions and assisting residents, often behind the scenes.

"They remind us that helping our neighbors is about more than meeting a basic need; it's about letting people know they are not alone and that their community cares," she said.



Members of the Wrentham Food Pantry accept the Adult Volunteer of the Year award in recognition of their service to the community. *(Photo by Joe Stewart)*

More families each Saturday

Jim Sullivan serves on the Food Pantry's board of directors. He began volunteering about 10 years ago.

Back then, he recalled, the pantry served 15 to 25 families on most Saturdays. More recently, he said, the number has been 25 to 40 families.

Sullivan attributes the increase to several factors. He cited population growth, substantial reductions in federal food support, and an economy that is "not so great," in his view.

He noted that many people don't realize every community has families who need help with food. For many households, one breadwinner losing a job can be enough to create that need.

How the pantry works

According to Sullivan, registered clients fill out a grocery list. Volunteers fill those orders on Saturday mornings from 10 a.m. to noon.

Much of the food is donated. Sullivan said beef and chicken are purchased from local grocery stores. A local company donates the pantry's Thanksgiving turkeys every year.

Community groups help regularly. Sullivan pointed to the Wrentham Youth Baseball Softball Association, which delivers a trailer of food each year.

Getting help and giving help

The Food Pantry is on the first floor of the Whiston House, behind the Original Congregational Church at the corner of Routes 140 and 1A. It is open Saturdays from 10 a.m. to noon.

The pantry asks new clients for proof of Wrentham residency. A piece of dated mail with your name and address, such as a utility bill or lease, works. A photo ID is also needed for each family member. A school-age child without a photo ID can use a report card or something similar.

Food donations can be left in the donation shed next to the pantry. Money can be donated online. Volunteers can sign up for a Saturday morning shift at wrenthamfoodpantry.org.

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RMDs: More than a retirement rule



Todd Miller, CFP®

FINANCIAL FOCUS®
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You may spend many decades contributing to your IRA and 401(k), but eventually you'll likely need to take the money out. In fact, with some accounts, you must take withdrawals or face penalties. These "required minimum distributions" (RMDs) are often viewed as an IRS requirement, but they can also affect your taxes, retirement income, charitable giving and legacy goals. Understanding how RMDs fit into your overall financial strategy can help you make more informed decisions.

Here are some basics about these mandatory withdrawals.

What is an RMD? An RMD is the minimum amount the IRS requires you to withdraw each year from most tax-deferred retirement accounts, including traditional IRAs and many employer-sponsored retirement plans. Your annual RMD is based on your account balance and IRS life-expectancy tables.

When are RMDs due? Your first RMD is generally due by April 1 of the year after you reach age 73. After that, RMDs must be taken annually by Dec. 31. If you delay your first RMD until the following year, you'll also need to take that year's RMD by Dec. 31, resulting in two taxable distributions in the same year.

Before delaying your first RMD, consider the tax consequences. Taking two RMDs in the same year increases your taxable income, making the timing decision more important than it may first appear.

How can RMDs affect your taxes? Because RMDs are generally taxable as ordinary income, they can increase your overall tax liability. This additional income also may affect the amount of your Social Security benefits that are subject to taxes and could increase Medicare premiums for some retirees. For many retirees, the biggest impact of an RMD may be that additional income does to their overall tax picture.

What planning opportunities do RMDs create? Some retirees don't need their RMDs for living expenses. In that case, there may be several ways to put the distribution to work. You can reinvest the proceeds in a taxable account, use the funds to support family members or direct the money toward charitable goals.

If you're age 70½ or older and charitably inclined, a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) may be particularly attractive. A QCD allows you to transfer funds directly from an IRA to a qualified charity, satisfying part or all of your RMD while excluding up to $111,000 (for 2026) of the distributed amount from taxable income.

Planning ahead may also help manage future RMDs and their tax impact. Depending on your circumstances, strategies such as Roth IRA conversions or taking distributions during lower-income years may reduce future required distributions and taxable income. These strategies should be evaluated in the context of your overall financial and tax picture.

The bottom line: RMDs can influence far more than your annual tax return. The decisions you make around withdrawals may affect your retirement income, taxes, charitable giving and the assets you ultimately leave to others. Taking a thoughtful approach can help ensure your RMD strategy supports your broader financial goals.

For more information contact:
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Stony Brook Camera Club announces December schedule

The Stony Brook Camera Club has announced its December meeting schedule. Meetings are held Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., in person and/or via Zoom.

The December schedule includes:

- Dec. 3: Member competition (Zoom)
- Dec. 10: Image Study (hybrid)
- Dec. 17: "Creative Smartphone Imagery" with Mary Ellen Stone (Zoom)

The club meets from September through June, offering guest speakers, competitions, image studies, workshops and other photography activities. In-person meetings are held at the Anglican Church of the Redeemer, 195 Main St., Franklin.

Photographers of all skill levels are welcome. For a complete calendar of events and membership information, visit stonybrookcc.com.





KP Marching Band wins 2026 USBands Division II Open

Named National Champions for Third Straight Year



For the third year in a row, members of the King Philip Regional High School Marching Band have been named the USBands Division II Open National Champions.

"Three times at the top is an amazing achievement," said King Philip Regional School District Superintendent Rich Drolet. "We are very proud of our KPHS Marching Band student performers and we also want to thank Marching Band Director Michael Keough, Marching Band Assistant Director/Fine and Performing Arts Department Chair Josh Wolloff, our other Marching Band instructors, and the King Philip Music Association (KPMA), which is our outstanding parent and community organization that supports the music programs in our King Philip Regional School District."

On Saturday, Nov. 7, the KPRHS Marching Band again traveled to MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J., to compete in the 2026 USBands National Championships.

The defending champions had yet another stellar showing, their finals performance earning First Place in Division II Open. The band also captured three caption awards for Best Music, Best Percussion and Best Overall Effect.

"This competition capped off an exceptional and undefeated season for the Marching Band," said KPHS Principal Nicole Bottomley. "Congratulations to all the student performers on their inspired performance and a huge thank you to Michael Keough and Josh Wolloff for their steadfast leadership!"

In Saturday's final performance, the KPRHS Marching Band scored 92.125, winning the top spot.

"My favorite part of the weekend is seeing the joy and rush of emotions the students share right after the performance," said Mr. Wolloff. "I'm very proud of our students and staff who are expertly lead by Mr. Keough. His tireless efforts are truly an inspiration to us all."

The KPRHS Marching Band is made up of about 50 members from grades 8 -12. The winning performance was the result of more than 140 hours of practice between May and November.

Following the competition, as the Marching Band's buses returned home from New Jersey, they received a police escort and were greeted by cheering supporters.



The KPRHS Marching Band secured their place at the top of New England rankings earlier this year, winning the 2026 USBands New England State Championship in the Open – Group II division with a score of 94.8, on Saturday, Oct. 31, at Stoughton High School.

"Our musicians continue to be the heart and soul of the King Philip Regional School District," said Superintendent Drolet. "Winning three years in a row is an unprecedented testament to our band's dedication, hard work and talent."

December programs at Fiske Public Library

Fiske Public Library in Wrentham will offer a variety of special programs for children, teens and adults in December.

Children's & teen programs

Polar Express Storytime: Saturday, Dec. 12, at 11:30 a.m. A reading of the holiday classic, followed by a family-friendly movie at noon.

Winter Painting for Tweens and Teens: Monday, Dec. 28, from 3 to 4:30 p.m. Participants ages 10 and older will create a winter scene painting.

Science Heroes: Digging It!: Tuesday, Dec. 29, from 1 to 2 p.m. An interactive science show recommended for children in grades K-5.

Minute to Win It: Wednesday, Dec. 30, from 6 to 7 p.m. Fast-paced games and challenges for ages 5-12.

Noon Year's Eve Party: Thursday, Dec. 31, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Stories, games, crafts and a countdown to noon for ages 3 and older.

Adult programs

I Didn't Ask for This AI!: Tuesday, Dec. 1, at 7 p.m. A virtual program explaining how to disable AI features on personal devices.

Santa Gnome Workshop: Wednesday, Dec. 2, at 6:30 p.m. A no-sew holiday craft workshop.

Learn to Sew II: Wednesdays, Dec. 9 and 23, from 6 to 8 p.m. Sewing sessions for participants with basic sewing skills.

Mah Jong Class: Thursday, Dec. 17, from 6 to 8 p.m. An introductory class for beginners.

Additional information

December's take-home offerings include spice kits featuring cloves and snowman ornament craft kits, available while supplies last.

For a complete calendar of programs, including regular storytimes, reading clubs, registration dates and requirements, visit fiskelib.org.

Holiday hours and library updates

The library will close at 1 p.m. Dec. 24 and remain closed Dec. 25. It will close at 5 p.m. Dec. 31 and remain closed Jan. 1.

Interior painting is scheduled for the week of Dec. 7. Some sections of the library may be temporarily inaccessible during that time.

For more information, visit fiskelib.org or call 508-384-5440.

Original Congregational Church to hold Post-Fair Yard Sale

The Original Congregational Church of Wrentham will hold a Post-Fair Yard Sale on Saturday, Dec. 5, from 8 to 11 a.m. The sale will feature a variety of gently used items.

The church is located at 1 East St., Wrentham. For more information, call 508-384-3110.

College Prep: A To-Do List for High School Juniors

Junior year has a way of sneaking up on families. Suddenly, students are halfway through high school, and in less than two years, many will be heading off on their next adventure - college!

Junior year is an important time to develop a college preparation plan. Getting organized now, rather than waiting until senior year, can alleviate stress and make the college application process much more manageable.

Juniors, here are nine steps to help you get started!

1. Make academics your top priority. Your GPA and the rigor of your courses are generally the two most important factors in college admission. But strong academics are about more than getting accepted. You're building the foundation for college success: stronger writing and vocabulary, critical thinking, problem-solving, time management, and organizational skills. And if your grades begin to slip, seek help early. Asking for help is a strength, not a weakness!

2. Choose your courses thoughtfully. Colleges like to see students challenge themselves academically and continue growing. If you've earned A's in college-prep math, perhaps it's time to consider honors math. Ask yourself, "How much can I push myself without being shoved?"

Equally important, take courses that genuinely interest you. Don't choose AP Economics over AP Art simply because you think it looks better to colleges. Exploring subjects you enjoy helps develop your strengths and may even lead you toward a future major or career.

3. Start exploring majors and careers. This will help relieve anxiety, build confidence, and provide purpose when selecting colleges. Explore interests through career assessments, informational interviews, job shadowing, conversations with family and friends, and/or community internships. Remember, you are not planning the rest of your life. You are simply taking the first step toward discovering new possibilities. A great resource: www.onetonline.org.

4. Meet with your school counselor. Your counselor is an important resource throughout the college process. Discuss your academic progress, senior-year courses, and college interests. Ask which college planning platform your school uses, such as Naviance or Scoir. These tools can help you research colleges and organize your list.

5. Develop a standardized testing plan. Don't approach the SAT or ACT as an aptitude test that requires no preparation. You wouldn't walk into a chemistry exam without studying! Consider taking a practice SAT and ACT to determine which test better fits your strengths. Then schedule your test around academics, sports, and other commitments, allowing approximately eight weeks for preparation. A strong score can strengthen your application, even at some test-optional colleges.

6. Start building your activity resume. List your extracurricular activities, leadership roles, volunteer work, employment, and accomplishments. Update it throughout the year.

My advice? Do what you love and create an impact! Colleges aren't looking for students who join every available club. They're interested in students who demonstrate commitment, initiative, and meaningful involvement. These experiences also provide authentic stories for college essays and interviews. It's not too late to explore a new interest!

7. Visit a variety of colleges. Start locally, even if you're considering schools farther away. Visit a small college, a large university, and campuses in different settings. What feels right? Rural, suburban, or urban? A contained campus or one integrated into a city? Learning your preferences early can save considerable time and money when planning longer trips.



Maryline Michel Kulewicz and Tracy Sullivan of College 101 Admissions Consultants

8. Have the financial conversation early. Before falling in love with a college, understand what your family can realistically afford. Include affordable options, such as in-state public universities, but remember that many private colleges offer generous need-based financial aid and academic scholarships (merit). However, many highly selective schools meet full financial need but do not offer merit. Visit StudentAid.gov for additional resources.

9. Decide what additional support you may need. Some families navigate the process independently, while others seek assistance from an Independent Educational Consultant (IEC). IEC's have broad experience in navigating the many aspects of the college admissions process.

Junior year doesn't need to be overwhelming. Taking small, intentional steps now will help you make informed decisions, discover new interests, and enter senior year with greater confidence.

Good luck and enjoy the journey!

College 101 Admissions Consultants LLC. Website: www.mycollege101.com. Email: tracy@mycollege101.com. Phone: 508-380-3845.

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King Philip recognized as Unified Champion School District

Special Olympics Massachusetts has recognized the King Philip Regional School District as a Unified Champion School District for its commitment to inclusion and acceptance of students of all abilities.

The district received the award during the Unified Champion Schools Conference in Danvers on Oct. 27. King Philip Regional Middle School special education teacher Leigh-Ann Foley and Team Chair Traci Vaughan accepted the award on behalf of the district.

The recognition honors schools that bring together students with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities through Unified Sports, inclusive youth leadership and schoolwide engagement.

At King Philip Regional Middle School, students participate in Unified Bocce and fitness activities, while the high school offers Unified Track and Field and Unified Basketball.

Both schools also promote inclusion through student leadership programs and activities. The middle school's Unified Green and Gold Club brings students together for social activities and collaborative projects. At the high school, the Peer Mentor program and Student Council foster friendships and connections through inclusive events, competitions and field trips.

Both schools hold Unified Field Days and schoolwide celebrations. The high school's annual Unified Field Day also welcomes students from neighboring communities, including Franklin, Mansfield and Taunton.

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Three Hanukkah menorah lightings planned in Norfolk and Wrentham

Celebrations of light, kindness, and religious freedom

By Grace Allen

Three outdoor menorah lightings will mark the fourth night of Hanukkah on Monday, December 7, in Norfolk and Wrentham. The ceremonies will begin at 5 p.m. on Wrentham's town common, followed by 6 p.m. on Norfolk's town common and 7 p.m. at Gilly's House in Wrentham.

Rabbi Mendy Kivman of Chabad House Jewish Center in Milford will lead all three lightings. The gatherings are open to families and community members of all ages and faiths and will feature music, dancing, traditional Hanukkah treats, and warm apple cider.

Hanukkah, the eight-day Jewish Festival of Lights, commemorates the rededication of the temple in Jerusalem after the Maccabees defeated the Syrian Greeks. According to Jewish tradition, the Maccabees found only enough oil to light the temple menorah for one day, yet it burned for eight.

Kivman says the religious holiday teaches that light will overcome darkness, and freedom will overcome oppression. Publicizing the miracle of Hanukkah is part of the laws of Judaism, hence the lighting of the menorah in a place that's visible to others, during the darkest time of the year.

"You don't chase away darkness with a broomstick, sweeping it under the rug," said Kivman. "You use a light, you light a candle. And if everyone lights a light where there is darkness, we bring redemption and goodness to the world."



Community members gather for a menorah lighting on Wrentham Town Common during last year's Hanukkah celebration. *(Contributed photo)*



Rabbi Mendy Kivman (2nd from right) joins attendees at last year's Hanukkah menorah lighting on Norfolk Town Common. *(Contributed photo)*

Lighting menorahs in public places shares that message with neighbors and people passing by, he said, noting the ceremonies will be held rain or shine. "Life's not about ease, it's about challenges we have to overcome," he said. "We don't believe in defeatism, and that's the message of Hanukkah. Light over darkness, overcoming challenges."

With the United States marking its 250th anniversary this year, Kivman said the public menorah lightings serve as a reminder of one of the country's founding principles: religious freedom.

"I invite everyone to come to the menorah," he said. "The menorah is a symbol of light and goodness and kindness for everyone. I don't have to be like you, and you don't have to be like me, but the message of light resonates with all of us. All we've got to do is add an act of goodness and kindness. One act, another act, and another, they build up, and we will overcome the darkness."

Hanukkah celebrations, led by Rabbi Kivman, are also planned in Franklin, Bellingham, Millis, Medway, Holliston, and Milford. For more information, visit www.gotchabad.com.

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The b.LUXE *beauty beat*

The Real Housewives of MetroWest: The Holiday Reunion



Winter Has Entered the Chat

Never watched *The Real Housewives*? Here's all you need to know: glamorous women, big personalities, and even bigger drama. Every season ends with a reunion. The cast gathers on a couch, host Andy Cohen pulls out the cue cards, and someone finally has to answer for her behavior.

For our final Beauty Beat of 2026, we're hosting a reunion of our own. This season's cast? The four services that keep b.LUXE running: Hair, Makeup, Skincare, and Wigs. They've had a good season. Summer was easy. Fall was polite. But just as things got cozy, a new personality swept into town with a full wardrobe, strong opinions about the thermostat, and a few friends nobody invited.

Fair warning: she's stunning, she's glamorous, and she's not nearly as sweet as she looks.

Ladies, things are about to get frosty. Winter has entered the chat.

Our host for the evening? Heather Cohen (no relation to Andy, but she does love a dramatic reveal). She owns b.LUXE Hair and Makeup in Medway and is the only woman brave enough to moderate these personalities. The lighting is flattering. The cue cards are ready, and Winter just tossed another log on the fire.

Let's Meet the Cast

Every Real Housewife gets a tagline, the signature one-liner she delivers in the opening credits. Ours are no exception.

Hair: "I've got body, bounce, and zero patience for hat hair."

Makeup: "Natural is not a shortcut. It's a look."

Skincare: "I'm not dramatic. I'm dehydrated."

Wigs: "I know what I want, and I usually get it."

Winter: "I'm not here to make friends. I'm here to make it snow."

Hair Brings Receipts

Heather starts gently. "Winter, how do you think your first season went?"

"Honestly? Iconic." Winter adjusts her faux fur. "A party every weekend. Everyone's invited."

"Lovely," Hair says. "Then why did you send a windstorm to the last one?"

"Here we go," Winter sighs.

Hair holds up her phone. "Exhibit A. Fresh b.LUXE party blowout. Glossy. Full. Gorgeous." She swipes. "Exhibit B. Same blowout, after wind, flurries, and an outdoor firepit."

Winter squints. "It looks exactly the same."

"Exactly."

In her confessional, Hair doesn't hold back. "She handed me a hat. A hat! I'm not covering this gorgeous hair. Play fair, Winter."

Heather smiles. "That's what a good blowout does. Tell your stylist what's on the calendar. Soft waves for the office party. A polished low bun for holiday dinner with the in-laws. Volume that lasts past midnight on New Year's Eve."

Winter tosses her scarf. "Cute. I've got a nor'easter booked for New Year's Eve."

"Bring it," Hair says.

Makeup Sets the Record Straight

Makeup raises one perfectly groomed brow. "Can I say something? Because I've been very patient."

"Ha! Since when?" Hair snorts.

"Every December, everyone wants the 'natural look.' And everyone thinks it takes five minutes."

"Doesn't it?" Hair says. "Mascara, lipstick, out the door."

Makeup turns slowly. "Natural and quick are not the same thing. We can't all throw it up in a messy bun and call it a look."

"Ice cold," Winter purrs.

Makeup ignores her. "This flawless face took an appointment, honey. Not a red light."

Winter fluffs her faux fur. "Please. I do mine at red lights."

"We can tell," Makeup whispers. "Book the appointment. Let a professional work her magic."

Skincare Denies the Drama

Heather turns to the end of the couch. "Skincare, you've been awfully quiet over there."

Skincare slips off her cardigan. "I've been waiting my turn. I'd like to talk about the friends Winter brought to the party."

Winter blinks. "What friends?"

"Cold Air. Indoor Heat. And Snow!"

"Oh, Snow's a diva," Wigs scoffs.

"You're being dramatic," Winter says.

"I'm not dramatic. I'm dehydrated."

Gasps from the couch.

"Bless your heart," Winter coos. "I didn't know. Have you tried dermaplaning?"

"Already on the books for next week," Skincare says with a wink.

"Will you be bringing your phone?" Heather asks.

"Absolutely not."

Wigs Ate and Is Ready for Dinner

Wigs checks her watch for the third time. "Darlings, I love this, but I have a 7 o'clock."

Winter gasps. "You're leaving? We haven't even gotten to my side of the story."

Wigs reaches for her purse. "I've heard your side, Winter. It's called the 10-day forecast. Besides, Heather found me this look. It's perfect. It frames my face. It's comfortable, and it feels like me. Let it snow, diva! This girl has a reservation."

Wigs air-kisses Heather and sweeps out the door.

Winter stares after her. "How rude."

The Ladies Say Cheese

Closing her cue cards, Heather marvels, "Somehow, we're all still speaking."

"Barely," says Skincare.

"Cast photo!" Winter announces. Hair fluffs. Makeup fixes the lighting. Skincare checks her glow.

The door swings open. "Did someone say photo?" Wigs strikes a pose. "You didn't think I'd miss our holiday group shot? We're the whole package, ladies!"

Winter plants herself front and center.

Nobody is surprised.

Before the Credits Roll

After all that drama, the ladies find common ground. Turns out nothing unites a cast like a good deal. Our Buy 3, Get 1 Free Sale on all retail is the talk of MetroWest. Stock up on your beauty essentials, or treat someone on your list. It's RHOMW approved. The sale runs through December 23, our last open day of 2026.

That's a wrap on our first reunion. From our couch to yours, happy holidays, and see you next season!

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LIVING HEALTHY

A year of breakthroughs in eye care: Looking back at 2026

By Roger M. Kaldawy, M.D.
Milford Franklin Eye Center

As we say farewell to 2026, it is worth reflecting on the remarkable advances in ophthalmology that are changing how we diagnose and treat eye disease. From innovative treatments for macular degeneration to advanced laser procedures for glaucoma and next-generation cataract lens implants, modern eye care is moving toward more precise, less invasive, and increasingly personalized treatments.

At Milford-Franklin Eye Center (MFEC), we believe our patients deserve access to these advances close to home. Throughout the year, we have continued to invest in leading-edge technology, advanced surgical capabilities, and experienced physicians to bring the highest level of comprehensive eye care to the communities we proudly serve.

A New Approach to Macular Degeneration

One of the most exciting developments in retinal care is photobiomodulation (PBM), an innovative, non-invasive treatment for patients with intermediate dry age-related macular degeneration (AMD). Traditionally, patients diagnosed with this condition were advised to take nutritional supplements, monitor their vision, and return for periodic examinations. While these measures remain important, photobiomodulation introduces an additional treatment option.

Using specific wavelengths of low-level light, this technology targets the mitochondria, the energy-producing structures within retinal cells, with the goal of supporting cellular function and retinal health. Clinical studies have demonstrated improvements in visual acuity in appropriately selected patients, making PBM an important development in the management of intermediate dry AMD.

Milford-Franklin Eye Center is proud to offer this advanced treatment through our Valeda photobiomodulation platform, bringing an innovative retinal therapy directly to our local communities. Patients no longer need to travel to Boston or other major medical centers to explore this treatment option.

Glaucoma Treatment: Moving Beyond Daily Eye Drops

Glaucoma remains one of the leading causes of irreversible blindness. For many years, treatment primarily depended on daily prescription eye drops to lower eye pressure and prevent further optic nerve damage. Unfortunately, medication costs, irritation, and difficulty remembering daily doses can make long-term treatment challenging.



In 2026, direct selective laser trabeculoplasty (DSLT) continued to attract attention as an innovative approach to glaucoma management. Unlike conventional laser procedures that require a contact lens placed on the eye, DSLT delivers laser energy without direct contact with the eye's surface. It offers another approach to lowering eye pressure by improving the eye's natural drainage system.

Other important advances include minimally invasive glaucoma surgery (MIGS) and sustained-release medication implants such as iDose TR. These technologies allow physicians to reduce patients' dependence on daily eye drops in appropriate cases. The iDose TR implant delivers medication directly inside the eye over an extended period, offering an additional option for long-term glaucoma management.

At MFEC, our physicians offer advanced glaucoma evaluations and treatment options, including modern laser and surgical approaches, tailored to each patient's condition and individual needs.

Cataract Surgery: The Next Generation of Lens Technology

Cataract surgery has evolved dramatically over the past decade. Today's patients have access to sophisticated intraocular lens implants designed to improve vision at multiple distances and reduce dependence on glasses.

Among the important developments are extended-depth-of-focus lenses, such as Johnson & Johnson's TECNIS PureSee, and advanced trifocal lenses, including Alcon's Clareon PanOptix Pro. These technologies offer different approaches to improving distance, intermediate, and near vision. The best choice depends on each patient's eyes, lifestyle, visual expectations, and medical needs.

At Milford-Franklin Eye Center, we offer advanced cataract evaluations and modern lens implant options, helping patients make informed decisions about their vision. Our goal is not simply to remove a cataract, but to select the most appropriate technology to achieve the best possible visual outcome for each individual.

Bringing Advanced Eye Care to Our Community

What distinguishes Milford-Franklin Eye Center is our commitment to making sophisticated medical and surgical eye care accessible close to home. Our practice combines experienced ophthalmologists, advanced diagnostic equipment, modern laser technology, comprehensive medical eye care, and a dedicated outpatient surgical facility.

Our Cataract Surgery Center of Milford provides a specialized, accredited surgi-

EYES
continued on page 15

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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 conditions, 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 glycophosphates 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 at 508-660-2722 located at 1426 Main Street, Walpole and set up your appointment today.



Dr. Rochelle Bien, Dr. Molly Rappaport & Dr. Michael Goldstein

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EYES

continued from page 14

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SAFE campaign shares personal stories to challenge stigma

SAFE Coalition is currently running Someone's Reason, a fundraising campaign working to erase the stigma of mental health and substance use disorders.

From now until December 31, anyone can donate to SAFE, with the added option to share a story about a person or moment that changed their view on addiction or mental illness.

Donations can be made at https://www.safecoalitionma.org/someones-reason or by following the QR code link. Proceeds go to support clinical staff working with teens and adults, programs serving families, and collaborative care services connecting people with vital resources.

Since the campaign launched in October, community members have shared dozens of stories. Some are moments of personal discovery, while others come from a journey alongside a loved one.

Cindy Kucich shared a story about the judgment she felt following her brother's death and the comforting words of her son. "There's a look people give you when someone dies unexpectedly and too young," Cindy says. "I remember that look at my brother's funeral. I turned around to see everyone and I was overwhelmed with the people looking back at me. I turned to my son and he said 'Don't worry, Mom. I've got you.'"

Stigma has been shown to make recovery difficult by creating psychological, social, and systemic barriers to seeking vital support.

Labels like "junkie" and "crazy person" can make people feel trapped in an identity they can't escape. And clinicians who read about a person described as a "substance abuser" are statistically more likely to judge that person as deserving blame and punishment. Negative community beliefs can even make it difficult for friends and family members to reach out for help for themselves.

"At SAFE, we have the privilege of listening to our client's stories every day," says CEO and co-founder Jennifer Levine. "And people tend to remember the moment when their limiting beliefs changed. Sharing those kinds of stories with the community has the power to generate more compassion, connection, and collective purpose."

Throughout the campaign, SAFE is sharing #SomeonesReason stories, with permission, that break down misconceptions around these struggles.



To read stories, donate, or learn more, sign up for SAFE's newsletter at safecoalitionma.org or follow SAFE on facebook.com/safecoalitionma and instagram.com/safecoalition.

SPORTS

King Philip Athletic Hall of Fame inducts 19 new members

By Grace Allen

The King Philip Athletic Hall of Fame welcomed 19 new members during an induction banquet Nov. 28 at Lake Pearl Luciano's in Wrentham. The Class of 2026 included 18 former student-athletes and one coach, recognizing achievements across a variety of sports. This is the eighth class to be inducted into the Hall of Fame.

Among this year's inductees were Stephanie Nasson, who competed in the 800-meter freestyle at the 2016 U.S. Olympic Trials; Logan David, a three-time Massachusetts Division 2 wrestling state champion; and Meghan "Meg" Rico, who helped lead KP softball to consecutive Division 1 state championships in 2010 and 2011. Also honored was football coach Brian Lee, who led the Warriors to four state championships during his tenure.



Members of the King Philip Athletic Hall of Fame Commission, from left, Peter Boucher, Scott Kramer, Joe DeStefano, Jeff Plympton Sr., Patty Armour, Jeff Plympton Jr., Brian Lee and Paul Carlow. *(Contributed photo)*

The Hall of Fame dates back to 2005, when a committee of coaches, former athletes and community representatives began developing the criteria and selection process for inductees. Among its founding members was Bill Rice, a former King Philip Middle School principal and KP High School athletic director.

The committee spent two years establishing guidelines before inducting its first class in 2007. From the beginning, the Hall of Fame was intended to recognize not only outstanding athletes and coaches but also individuals who contributed to the athletic program behind the scenes. The first class included Lenny Thornhill, a longtime KP bus driver who transported athletes to away games for more than 40 years.

Rice, who played football, basketball and baseball at KP and later coached those sports at the high school, was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2008. The William A. Rice Recreational Complex in Wrentham is named in his honor.

HALL OF FAME
continued on page 17

King Philip Athletic Hall of Fame Class of 2026

Gianna Bender (2015) — Cross country, track and field
Jonathon Berdos (2015) — Cross country, track and field
Logan David (2012) — Wrestling, cross country
Kevin Donahue Jr. (2010) — Football, hockey, lacrosse
Gary French (1973) — Football, basketball, baseball
Mark Glebus (2015) — Football
Matthew Keys (2011) — Soccer
Brett McEvoy (2014) — Football, lacrosse
Leah McLean (1994) — Gymnastics, track and field
Stephanie Nasson (2012) — Swimming and diving
Kelly Pasquantonio Hartnett (2006) — Field hockey, lacrosse
Mary Pasquantonio Kiley (2008) — Field hockey, lacrosse
Ryan Pinsoneault (2001) — Cross country, track and field
Renée Poirier (2015) — Softball, track and field
Meghan Rico (2012) — Softball
Sarah Shipley (2010) — Soccer, tennis, hockey, track
Olivia Weir (2015) — Cross country, track and field
Christopher J. Winbourne Jr. (2015) — Football, track and field
Brian Lee — Football coach



SPORTS

Vizakis leads King Phillip football to glory in first season

By Matt Hylen

Staff Sports Writer

King Philip football finished the regular season at 5-3 and earned the No. 4 seed in the Division 3 playoffs. For first-year head coach Anthony Vizakis, the road to that seed began with two losses. However, what resulted from that has been extraordinary.

In between was a young team that didn't panic and a coach picking up where the legendary Brian Lee, who spent 21 seasons building King Philip into one of the most feared programs in the state, left off.

"We had a tough first two games. Those losses were tough, but I think they were necessary, and I mean that," Vizakis said. "I think we learned a lot about ourselves. We grew. We stayed together as a team. Nobody panicked."

That mindset was what got them through the rough patch. "Everybody's just really understanding that this was a young team," Vizakis said. "We were going to go through some growing pains."

Young is not a figure of speech, either. "We are starting many sophomores and juniors, and we've only got 12 seniors," Vizakis said.

Throughout the year, Vizakis has considered the team's four captains "outstanding," and credits the senior class for setting the tone.

"It's been huge, because those seniors have seen what it takes to be successful," he said. "They've seen the hard work, they've participated in it. They know the foundation that's been built, and it's something they wanted to continue."

It's the same foundation Vizakis spent four years learning from Lee, and the reason he didn't try to reinvent it. In August, he told this reporter the goal was to uphold the standard Lee set.

"My biggest thing was, I don't want to change things up too much," he said.

Changing too much wouldn't have been a great approach, he explained, given what he saw working alongside Lee. "I really watched and studied his [Lee's] approach, his day-to-day operations, the things that people don't see on Friday nights. It's the behind-the-scenes stuff that really matters."

With all that said, it would be remiss not to mention the mark Vizakis has left already in just a single season. Yet, he wanted to make sure he still honored the Warrior way at King Phillip.

"There's always little things that I think a coach wants to instill into their players in the program that make it their own," he said. Taking what Lee did and infusing some of his own passion into it, he added, "has definitely made the mark."

What has really taken shape this year is a team with a clear identity. "Our identity has really become a fast, physical, aggressive style, offense and defense," Vizakis said.

In August, he said he'd take a more hands-on role with the defense while trusting his staff, and the coach who called himself "a defensive guy" credits a defensive coordinator who "has done an outstanding job."

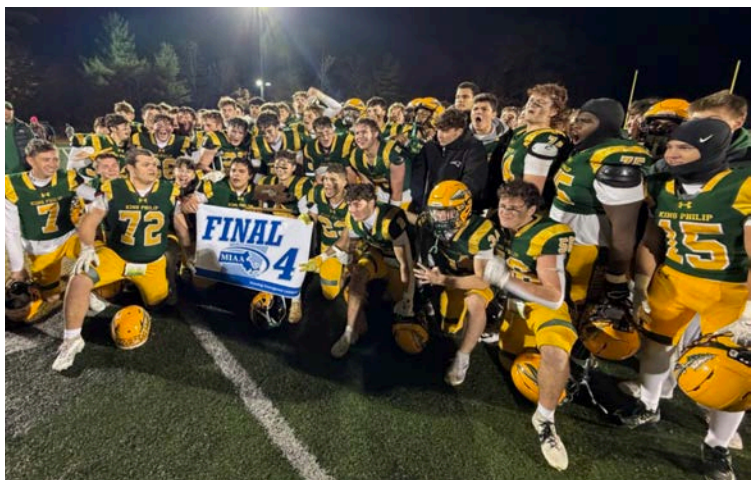
"I love the commitment to being aggressive, fast, physical, like our defense is doing," he said. "All the kids are brought into it."

His approach hasn't changed since the summer. Before the season, Vizakis said the team would take it one game at a time, one week at a time, and he says now that it was the right call.

"I think that approach was the right one," he said. Going one week at a time, he noted, keeps the focus on the task at hand. "Things aren't getting too big for our guys. We're not looking ahead. We're not looking behind. We're doing it one day at a time."

Coming into his first playoff run as head coach, he understood that the stakes had changed but the preparation didn't. "It's definitely business as usual," Vizakis said.

The only difference is the pressure of a game where a loss ends the season. "You can't overthink that, because you've got to prepare and do what you've been doing all season." Against a really tough team, King Philip "stuck to the game plan that we prepared for all week, as we had done the weeks previously."



King Phillip football players celebrate the victory that secured their spot in the Final Four. *(Photo courtesy New England Football Journal)*

What Vizakis and this team has accomplished in Vizakis' first season is nothing short of remarkable. Not only has Vizakis won his first ever playoff game as King Phillip's head coach, but he has also led them to a Final Four appearance.

"Everybody contributed to this season," Vizakis said. "I think that's the biggest thing I'm proud of: the contribution of almost every player in our program stepping up into a new role and helping the team find ways to win."

HALL OF FAME

continued from page 16

Preserving KP's athletic history

In addition to recognizing this year's inductees, the Hall of Fame Commission has been working to preserve the history of King Philip athletics and strengthen connections among alumni and the communities of Wrentham, Norfolk and Plainville.

Plans include developing a central online resource and expanding an archive of photographs, stories and other materials documenting former athletes, coaches, championship teams and contributors to the program.

The commission is encouraging community members to share photographs, programs, newspaper clippings and personal recollections to help document the school's athletic history.

The organization also hopes to establish long-term financial support for KP athletics, with future scholarships among its goals. Donations and sponsorships will help fund the induction banquet, recognition of honorees, historical preservation and related outreach efforts.

Amplix, a locally based global technology advisory firm with ties to King Philip, committed to matching donations and sponsorships up to $10,000 in support of the initiative.

Additional information about the Class of 2026 is available through the King Philip Athletic Hall of Fame's Facebook and Instagram pages.

Those interested in contributing historical materials or learning about sponsorship and donation opportunities may email info@kingphilipathletichalloffame.com.

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Norfolk County property sales decline in October

Norfolk County recorded fewer property sales and mortgages in October, while the total dollar value of both increased, according to the Norfolk County Registry of Deeds.

The registry recorded 690 property sales in October 2026, down 12% from October 2025 and 3% from September. Total document recordings fell to 9,267, an 11% decrease from a year earlier but a 1% increase from September.

"The October data indicates that borrowing costs and affordability concerns continue to influence real estate activity in Norfolk County," Register of Deeds William P. O'Donnell said.

Mortgage recordings totaled 1,377, down 25% from October 2025 and 5% from September. Total mortgage borrowing, however, rose 21% from a year earlier to approximately $1.35 billion.

The combined value of commercial and residential property sales reached $862.4 million, up 7% from October 2025 and 8% from September. The average sale value was approximately $1.25 million, up 22% from a year earlier and 12% from September.

Five foreclosure deeds were recorded, unchanged from October 2025. Notices to foreclose increased to 25 from 21 a year earlier.

O'Donnell encouraged homeowners struggling with mortgage payments to seek help early. Assistance is available through Quincy Community Action Programs at 617-479-8181, ext. 376; NeighborWorks Housing Solutions at 508-587-0950; and the Massachusetts attorney general's Consumer Advocacy and Response Division at 617-727-8400.

For registry information, visit norfolkdeeds.org or call 781-461-6101.



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508-570-6544 to run in our
Real Estate Corner

First Universalist Society announces December events

Cookie Walk: Saturday, December 12, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Shop for homemade holiday treats from more than 30 bakers in the festively decorated Meetinghouse. Cookies will be sold by the pound and boxed for gift-giving.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service: Thursday, December 24 at 5:30 p.m. All are welcome.

New Year's Eve Labyrinth Walk: Thursday, December 31, 5 to 7 p.m. Welcome in the new year with a meditative walk on a candlelit labyrinth in our sanctuary. Socks or provided booties are required. Open to all ages.

NEW! Spiritual Practices Sampler Series: Join Rev. Chris Scheller in the first of a series exploring varied spiritual practices to be offered in person and online in alternating months through April. All are welcome to join in one or all sessions.

Introduction to Meditation: Sunday, December 13, 3:30 to 4:45 p.m. via Zoom. Learn how mindfulness encourages awareness of the present moment through the five senses. Register via the website: Fusf.org.

The First Universalist Society in Franklin (FUSF) is a Unitarian Universalist Welcoming Congregation located at 262 Chestnut Street, Franklin. Please visit our website at Fusf.org.

King Philip DECA announces senior officers for 2026-27

King Philip DECA has kicked off the 2026-27 school year with a new slate of senior officers and several chapter activities.

The high school's business, marketing and entrepreneurship organization is building on a successful year in which 12 teams earned international recognition. The chapter, open to students in grades 9-12, is part of a worldwide organization that prepares students for careers in marketing, finance, hospitality and management.

The chapter's senior officers for 2026-27 are:

- Co-presidents: Isla Hollowell and James Dow II
- Vice president: Kellan Sperling
- Director of development: Adeline Townsend
- Director of competitive events: Ty DeCarteret
- Director of operations: Ben Murphy
- Director of communications: Ashley Cleverdon
- Secretary: Courtney Lewis
- Retail director: Laura DaSilva
- Food service director: Donnelle Balunos
- Co-directors of conferences: Rowan Kavanah and Cole Soifer

The chapter held its annual student orientation Sept. 1, providing new members and their families with an overview of the upcoming year. Members also showcased their projects and promoted the DECA Mini-Mall through merchandise sales during the high school's Oct. 7 open house.

The chapter held its annual breakfast and installation ceremony on Oct. 21 to recognize new members and senior officers.

Throughout the year, students develop projects and compete at the district, state and international levels, with competitions scheduled in Mansfield, Boston and Anaheim, California.

REAL ESTATE CORNER

100 condos, two retail buildings proposed in Norfolk's town center

By Maureen Sullivan

A proposed mixed-use project near the center of town could add 100 residential units, along with two retail sites.

Pulte Homes of New England LLC has submitted a site plan application to develop a 4.4-acre parcel at the corner of Liberty Lane and Meeting House Road. Plans for the project, Liberty Green, call for two 20,348 square-foot buildings, with 50 units in each building, and two 2,800-square-foot retail buildings. The site would include parking areas, residential amenities, landscaping, stormwater management components and associated utilities.

The applicant is also requesting a Special Permit to exceed a density of 16 units/acre for a single lot; to exceed a maximum building footprint of 15,000 square feet; to exceed a maximum building height of three stories; and to allow for residential use on the ground floor. The applicant has also requested a Stormwater Management Permit.

According to Town Planner Richard McCarthy Jr., the project is not in the town's MBTA overlay district. He added that he is waiting on the project's fiscal impact report, which would include estimates on the number of school-age children at the project.

Pulte Homes requested that the Planning Board postpone its review of the Liberty Green proposal, originally scheduled for Nov. 17, to Jan. 12, 2027.

About Liberty Green

Developer: Pulte Homes – New England Division, Westborough

Architects: DMS Design LLC, Peabody

Proposal: Two mixed-use residential condominium buildings, 20,348 square feet each, four floors and 50 units each — one- and two-bedroom units, with a ground-floor parking garage that will have 50 spaces each. There will also be two 2,800-square-foot retail buildings in front of the residential units.

The buildings will be at 7 and 9 Liberty Lane and 11 Meeting House Road, on what is currently an undeveloped parcel of 4.46 acres.

Affordable Units: There will be a total of five in each building — in Building 1, there would be three one-bedroom units, and two two-bedroom units. In Building 2, there would be two one-bedroom units, and three two-bedroom units.

Learn more about the proposal at https://www.norfolkmass.gov/government/boards___committees/planning_board/current_projects.php#outer-221sub-1351

Trinity Episcopal Church to host service of healing and hope

Trinity Episcopal Church in Wrentham will hold "The Longest Night: A Service of Healing and Hope" on Thursday, Dec. 17, at 7 p.m.

The service will offer an evening of reflection, gentle music and thoughtful prayer for those who find the holiday season painful or difficult. The gathering will provide an opportunity for comfort, peace and hope during a season that can be challenging for many. All are welcome.

Music will be provided by Renaissance Men. Refreshments will be served following the service.





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