Bellingham Bulletin

Vol. 33 No. 1 | Bellingham's Favorite Hometown Newspaper | December 1, 2026

Bellingham honors its veterans



Bellingham Girl Scouts from Troop 84 open the Veterans' Day ceremony with a presentation of the colors.

By David Dunbar

"Service is about commitment and sacrifice and standing up for one another. Service doesn't end when you take off the uniform," commented Mariann Richards Fark at the 13th annual Veteran's Day event at the Bellingham Public Library last month.

Fark, a Bellingham native, was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps and served for more than two decades.

Nearly 150 veterans, plus their families and friends, attended the 90-minute event that began with local Girl Scouts and a "presentation of the colors," opening remarks from Jim Hastings, chairman of the town's Memorial and Veterans Day Committee, thoughts about their experiences in the military by three retirees, a keynote speech, results of an essay-writing contest by 34 sixth graders, and ended with a laying of a wreath at an outdoor flagpole.

State Representative Mike Soter spoke about "those who have given us the freedom to enjoy. Never forget the service men and women who've given so much. I'll always be there for our vets. God bless you!"

Kelcey Kelly, an officer in the Bellingham Police Department, talked about "the feeling of brotherhood in the military." She wondered how she could keep that feeling after leaving the Marine Corps in 2018. She settled on joining the police department. "Find that thing that's a little bigger than yourself. Give back," she encouraged attendees.

The keynote speaker was

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Bellingham Fire Department Deputy Chief awarded Medal of Valor

Deputy Chief Robert Provost recognized at 37th Annual Firefighter of the Year Awards



Bellingham Fire's Deputy Chief Robert Provost, 6th from left, was awarded a Medal of Valor on November 23 for his efforts on June 15, 2026.

On November 23, Bellingham Fire Department's Deputy Chief Robert Provost was awarded the Medal of Valor for his actions on June 15, 2026. Firefighters from Franklin and Medway were also recognized for the meritorious acts that night. Provost was one of 179 firefighters commended and awarded for outstanding acts of heroism and service by Governor Maura Healey, Public Safety & Security Secretary Gina K. Kwon, and State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine in the Worcester event at Mechanics Hall.

Shortly after midnight on June 15, 2026, the Bell-

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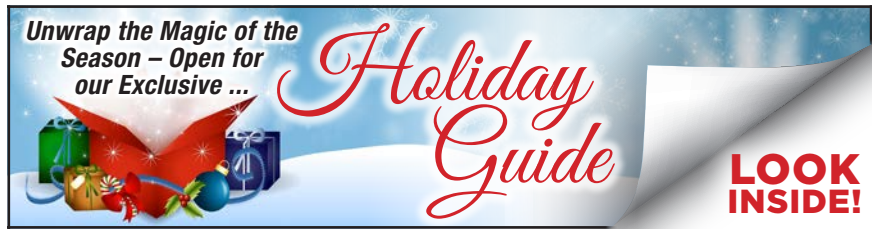

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Command Sergeant Major Jeremy Bunkley. He talked about the event being "a celebration of human spirit… an enduring fellowship… veterans' endurance, strength, and grace." He also identified Bellingham as "a community where vets can thrive."

Following the event at the library, guests were invited to the Bellingham VFW Post for a roast beef dinner (vets ate for free). Ten days later, the Post held its Second Annual Veterans Appreciation Ball, which featured a formal dinner, dancing, and entertainment.



Laying a wreath at the flagpole outside the Bellingham Library were, from left, Jim Hastings, Kelcey Kelly, Command Sergeant Major Jeremy Bunkley, Richard Gaffney, and Mariann Fark.



Jim Hastings, U.S. Marine Corps veteran and chairman of the Memorial and Veterans Day committee in Bellingham, addresses the 150 vets, families, and friends who showed up at the town library for a special event in honor of veterans. *Photos by David Dunbar.*

Get a start on the holidays at BHS Dec. 5 for Operation Graduation's biggest fundraiser

Operation Graduation 2027 will be holding its annual fair on Saturday, December 5, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Bellingham High School, 60 Blackstone Street, Bellingham. Proceeds support Bellingham High School's Operation Graduation, which has been supporting Bellingham seniors since 1993! All funds raised help to provide a safe and memorable celebration for the Class of 2027, as well as provides scholarships to graduating seniors.

This year's event will feature over 75 vendors filling all 100 spaces, and approximately 40% of our vendors are local to Bellingham!

The Operation Graduation Holiday fair has been a Bellingham holiday tradition for over 10 years now, and this year's lineup includes a great mix of local artisans, small businesses, and returning favorites. Shoppers will find everything from handmade pottery, jewelry, candles, and holiday décor to personalized gifts, specialty foods, books, pet accessories, and more.

Beyond the shopping, it's a fun community event with free admission, concessions, raffles, and visits with Santa! Santa will be there from 9–11 a.m. and 12–2:30 p.m., so families can plan their visits.

Bellingham Operation Graduation has held a number of fundraisers this year, last month holding Karaoke Night at Bellingham VFW Post 7272. Another fundraiser is its $27 for 2027 campaign, where supporters are encouraged to donate $27 to help fund the safe senior graduation night party by scanning a QR code (included here!) or Venmo "@BHSOpGradMA".

The Class of 2027 Bellingham Operation Graduation Executive Board includes Christine Davis, Gale Doran, Jenn Alger, Kim Hughes, Rachel Azzinaro, and Jodi Romano.

You can find Bellingham Operation Graduation on Facebook under "Bellingham High School Operation Graduation." For questions, reach out to bhsmaopgrad@gmail.com.

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Santa Foundation grateful for community that answers the call

By Judith Dorato O'Gara

Help your neighbors have a happy holiday! The Santa Foundation, which serves families across 34 communities in Massachusetts and Rhode Island providing personalized holiday gifts, essential items, and assistance to families experiencing financial hardship, had already gotten requests for help from 650 finally struggling families by mid-November, expecting close to 1,000 this year. You can help!

The organization has placed giving trees in many locations in and around Franklin thanks to generous community partners, adding more since last month. Each tag hung on the tree represents a holiday wish. By taking a tag and purchasing that gift for the Santa Foundation, you can brighten this Christmas for a local family!

"We already have 650 families on our list this year," said Joe Formosa, in mid-November, of the Santa Foundation, who, with his wife Pam and longtime Santa Foundation leaders Dick and Cindy Timmons lead the organization with Carla Beaudreau and Scott Musser. He added, "As much as the need can seem overwhelming, we continue to be surprised by the generosity of our community. What keeps us motivated is other people keep showing up, and that is great!"

At Santa Foundation events this year, he notes:

150 people joined in for Family Bowling Day at North Bowl in March

25 people from Liberty Mutual's Torchbearer program volunteered in May

90 people joined our first Bingo Night (thanks Raydio) in June

170 people joined the Santa Foundation Holiday Party to celebrate and kick off the work season

Over 500 people participated in November for the calendar fund raising program

More than 100 volunteers come together from September through December to call recipients, pack bags and provide Joy and Hope to an expected 1,000 families this season

More than 100 families, companies and school groups have come together to sponsor more than 200 families in our community.

Formosa says, "I would like to thank everyone for all the time, donations and support for our Mission."

There's still time to take a tag!

Santa Foundation Giving Trees can be found at the following locations. In addition to this listing, Franklin and Medway Police Department holiday collections also support the Santa Foundation.

Find Santa Foundation Giving Trees at the following local locations:



Advance Auto Parts	45 Pulaski Blvd., Bellingham
Bank of America	288 Hartford Ave., Bellingham
Berry Insurance	31 Hayward St., Suite J, Franklin
Franklin Tile	168 Grove St., Franklin
Grove Street Auto	79 Grove St., Franklin
James Breakfast & More	850 Franklin St., Wrentham
King Street Café	390 King St., Franklin
Mak's Roast Beef & Breakfast	451 W. Central St., Franklin
Middlesex Bank	1000 Franklin Village Dr., Franklin
Norfolk Credit Union	18 Union St., Ste. 104, Norfolk
Postal Center Franklin	279 E Central St., Franklin
Postal Center Milford	9 Medway Rd., Ste. C, Milford
Postal Center Millis	14 Milliston Rd., Millis
Red Bird Brands	23 West Bacon St., Ste. 9, Plainville
Remax Real Estate	309 West Central St., Franklin
Birchwood Bakery & Kitchen	7 Central St., Franklin
Dean Bank	21 Main St., Franklin
Big Apple Farms	155 Arnold St., Wrentham
Wrentham Village Premium Outlets Welcome Center	1 Premium Outlet Blvd., Wrentham
Shoveltown Auto Service	95 Eastman St., South Easton
Patriot Auto Service	2000 Main St., Walpole
Emma's Quilt Cupboard	319 E. Central St., Franklin
Learning Express	80 Franklin Village Dr., Franklin
Wrentham Fiske Library (Local Girl Scout Troup)	110 Randall Rd., Wrentham
Red Bird Brands	23 W. Bacon St., Plainville
Franklin Kitchens	22 E. Central St., Franklin
RP Marzilla Landscaping	21 Trotter Dr., Medway
The Beef Barn	160 Pulaski Blvd., Bellingham
Byrne Financial Freedom	11 East St., Franklin

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After 25 years, Emily Letourneau memorialized at Boston Children's NICU

Annual memorial Breakfast with Santa Sun., Dec. 13 at St. Blaise Church



Help us celebrate Emily's 26th birthday with our annual fundraiser for Boston Children's Hospital in her memory!

This year is especially meaningful as we celebrate 25 years of fundraising for Boston Children's Hospital and the recent naming of a special space in the hospital's NICU, where Emily's name will now be permanently displayed in her honor. We are so grateful for everyone who has been part of this journey and helped us keep Emily's memory alive over the years.

Our family will forever be grateful for the compassionate care Emily received at Boston Children's Hospital during her short life, where she was always treated as a chld and not a case study," share Caitlyn Letourneau, Emily's older sister, adding, "Knowing that families navigating the NICU will see Emily's name as they walk those halls is an honor that is difficult to put into words. For nearly 25 years, our family, alongside countless friends, has worked to keep Emily's memory alive by supporting the life-changing research and care at Boston Children's. We are incredibly grateful that her name, memory, and legacy will continue to touch the lives of so many families."

As always, there will be opportunities to celebrate with us both in person and virtually!

Join us on Sunday, December 13 as we kick off the day with our "Breakfast with Santa" at Saint Blaise Church in Bellingham MA from 9-11 a.m. with a special visit from everyone's favorite jolly old elf! Admission is $10 per adult, $5 per child, and children under 6 are free!

At 11 a.m. join us LIVE on Team Emily- Emily Letourneau Facebook's page as we draw the winner of our awesome wreath covered in gift cards from your favorite places. For a $20 donation, you have 12 chances or for a $10 donation you get 5 chances to win! You can donate to participate in our fundraiser on the webpage below:

Your generosity makes a difference. Proceeds from this year's fundraiser will help ensure the holidays are celebrated to the fullest at Boston Children's Hospital, providing gifts for every patient and creating special moments throughout the season. Donations also help meet urgent needs for patient families and the hospital, both during the holidays and throughout the year.

We can't wait to celebrate Emily, continue this special tradition, and make another meaningful difference together. Thank you for being part of Emily's story and for 25 incredible years of support!

You can also donate to Team Emily online at http://secure.childrenshospital.org/goto/TeamEmily26



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Light up Bellingham!

Lions Club announces Annual Holiday House Decorating Contest

The Bellingham Lions Club is excited to bring back its annual Holiday House Decorating Contest, a festive tradition celebrating creativity, community spirit, and holiday cheer.

Starting December 1, all Bellingham residents are invited to participate and displays representing all holidays are welcome.

Homes will be judged on presentation, theme, creativity, and overall wow factor. Participating displays must be lit and visible from 6-9 p.m. on December 18, 19, and 20. A list of participating addresses will be shared so families can tour and enjoy the decorations.

Registration closes Monday December 14, and winners will be announced on December 24. To register, visit the Bellingham Lions Facebook page beginning December 1 for the registration link.

Join us in lighting up Bellingham and spreading holiday cheer throughout the community.

For additional information or questions, please contact:

Brian Salisbury
Email: bellinghamlights@gmail.com

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From the Town Clerk's office…

Happy holidays from the Town Clerk's office! We had record turnout for the November State election, with 7,726 of our residents voting. We had over 3,000 voters (40%) take advantage of our early in-person and vote by mail options. That means our poll workers saw over 4,600 voters on election day! I'd like to thank the residents, the poll workers, and everyone who worked together to make it happen. Thank you for your participation.

As soon as we turn the calendar, and before you even get used to writing 2027, expect to see your census in the mail! Maintaining accurate information for the state is one reason it's so important to fill out and return that form as soon as possible. If the census is not returned in a timely manner, you will be marked as an "inactive voter." Eventually, this will result in a removal from the voter rolls, so please make sure to keep that up to date and accurate.

Along with the census, you'll find a dog license form. If you have a new dog, please return that form to our office along with rabies vaccine information and spay/neuter certificate. We'll process and return your tag by mail. For renewals, if your dog is up to date on their rabies vaccine in our database, you'll be able to renew that license online in January.

Our next scheduled election will be the Local Election in June. More information about positions available and how to run for office will be in next month's article. Wishing you safe and happy holidays and a happy new year!

Amy Bartelloni
Town Clerk

State Champs!



Congratulations to Bellingham High School volleyball for their MIAA Division 3 Championship win, beating Lynnfield at Newton South High School on November 21, 2026! *Source: Bellingham High, Home of the Hawks Facebook page*



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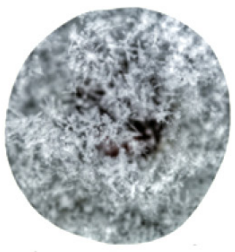

2) Use safe and effective alternatives to salt. Remember that salt is not effective below 15 degrees Fahrenheit. Sand or kitty litter will give you traction when it's too cold for salt.



3) Plant native species, that are salt tolerant, near paved areas. Not only will these species be able to survive despite the road salt, they will also act as a protective buffer for local waterways.



4) Make sure the storm drains closest to your property are clear of snow and other debris. Do not shovel snow into storm drains since they empty directly into local creeks.

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Bellingham Women of Today congratulates award-winning members

We would like to extend congratulations to our member, Dawn Calderwood, who was awarded the MA Women of Today Presidential Pin from Denise Bert, who is the president of the Massachusetts Women of Today. Dawn was chosen for her unwavering dedication as treasurer and her participation in numerous projects.

We would also like to congratulate another member, Jen Alger, who was awarded the US Women of Today Presidential Pin, which is only awarded to 75 members each year, across the United States. She was recognized as one the incredible members who make our organization stronger through her dedication, leadership, and service. Jen has been recruiting new members for our organization, as well as designing shirts for our organization, among other various volunteering.

In October, Bellingham Women of Today held their annual Quarter Auction and it was a successful fundraiser for the Scholarships that will be awarded this spring at the Bellingham High School for the Class of 2027. There were 14 vendors and crafters, and it was a fun night for all with the auction items, raffles, and door prizes.

In November, members of the BWOT put together treat bags of Chex Mix for the Thanksgiving Meals on Wheels. They also purchased and donated gift cards to assist the Sharing Tree at the Bellingham Senior Center, which puts together a holiday gifts for seniors who may not have families nearby or who may be alone during the holidays. The members have also been collecting food donations for the Fishes and Loaves Food Pantry at St Blaise Church in Bellingham. And one of the other charities that they have been working to help is called Reel of Hope, an organization that creates videos featuring children in foster care who are waiting to be adopted.



BWOT President Donna Post with award recipient Jen Alger. Alger was awarded the US Women of Today Presidential Pin, awarded to only 75 members each year across the United States.



Shown, BWOT President Donna Post with award recipient Dawn Calderwood. Calderwood received the MA Women of Today Presidential Pin from Denise Bert, president of the Massachusetts Women of Today

The Bellingham Women of Today is always open to welcoming in new members, men or women as long as you are 18 years or older. Please reach out to us for more information or join us at our next meeting to see what we are all about. We meet on the 2nd Monday of the month, in the Bellingham Police Department conference room at 7:30 p.m., our next meeting will be on January 11, 2027. Our email is bellinghamwomenoftoday@gmail.com

Or on Facebook at Bellingham Women of Today.



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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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Ladies of St. Anne celebrate Yankee Swap, announce Christmas Gala Dec. 10



Members of the Ladies of St. Anne gather for a group photo following a festive evening of holiday cheer and gift exchanges at their annual Yankee Swap on November 13th. *Contributed photo and writeup from Ladies of St. Anne.*

The Ladies of St. Anne kicked off the holiday season in joyful fashion during their annual Yankee Swap meeting on November 13th in the St. Blaise Parish Hall. It was a wonderful, laughter-filled evening where all the ladies brought wrapped gifts to exchange, and a few lucky members even went "shopping" as the swaps got underway. Among the wide variety of festive items, the most coveted gift of the night was a stunning crystal cross paired with a prayer book. Adorable stuffed animals that danced to Christmas music also brought plenty of smiles and holiday cheer to the room.

Looking ahead to next month, the Ladies are excited to gather for their annual Christmas Gala on Thursday, December 10th at 6 p.m. This year's celebration will be held in a private dining room at Sky Buffet, located at 340 East Main St. in Milford. Guests will enjoy a wide variety of buffet selections along with complimentary soda.

The cost to attend the Gala is $27 per person, and the deadline to register and pay is December 6. Payments can be made by cash or by check payable to St. Blaise Parish, with "LSA Christmas Gala" written on the memo line. Please place payments in an envelope marked "LSA Christmas Gala – Attention Monique or Ann-Marie" and either drop it in the church collection basket or hand it directly to Ann-Marie or Monique.

For questions, to sign up, or to inquire confidentially about financial assistance to attend, please contact Ann-Marie Lavallee-Kell at amlk1204@gmail.com, or Monique Boucher tigg788776@aol.com.



Municipal Spotlight

Bellingham Conservation Commission:

Protecting our Natural Resources Today for Generations to Come

By Jennifer Russo

From wetlands and waterways to wooded trails and open fields, Bellingham has a wealth of natural resources that contribute to the town's character and quality of life. Making sure those resources remain protected, accessible, and healthy for future generations is at the heart of the work of the Bellingham Conservation Commission.

Led by Conservation Agent Hannah Chace, the commission has two primary areas of responsibility: protecting and managing the town's open spaces and natural resources and overseeing wetlands permitting for proposals of development and land-altering projects.

"There's a lot that goes into making sure we're protecting what makes Bellingham such a beautiful place to live," Chace said. "It's about looking at the bigger picture and making sure we're planning for the future while being mindful of the natural resources we have today."

One important part of the commission's work is wetlands protection. Under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and Bellingham's local wetlands bylaw, the commission serves as the primary permitting authority for projects proposed in or near wetlands, floodplains, and protected water buffer zones. Applications are reviewed, site visits are conducted, and permits may be approved with specific conditions or denied when necessary.

"When we are looking at wetlands applications, we have one major goal: how do we avoid, minimize, and mitigate impact to the environment and the communities around it," Chace said.

And there's good reason that responsibility matters. Approximately 14% of Massachusetts is covered by wetlands, which provide essential services that often go unnoticed. They help filter pollutants from water, replenish groundwater, reduce flooding by absorbing excess rainfall and provide habitat for countless species. Nearly one-third of the state's wetlands have been lost since colonial times, making the protection of those that remain increasingly important.

Bellingham's 2025 Open Space and Recreation Plan highlights the town's ecological diversity, including habitats supporting foxes, beavers, deer, coyotes, hawks, owls, turtles, and numerous fish species. The town also has 21 state-certified vernal pools. These seasonal habitats provide important breeding grounds for amphibians and other wildlife.

The commission's other major focus is open space protection and long-term planning. This includes overseeing conservation properties, maintaining forests and trails, understanding agricultural restrictions, and working toward the goals outlined in the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Bellingham residents may already be familiar with some of these natural treasures.

"We have some really beautiful open spaces here in Bellingham, including Silver Lake, Arcand Park, land and trails near Beaver Pond, areas off of Maple Street and High Street. We hope to bring awareness to these spaces and see them used for enjoyment and recreation. We are also moving to take inventory of additional spaces across Bellingham," Chace said.

To help move those goals forward, the town also established a separate Open Space and Recreation Committee to coordinate the drafting, approval, and implementation of the plan's action items.

The Conservation Commission is currently made up of six dedicated members: Arianne Barton, Steven Kohler, James Clancy, Don Coelho, Pamela Francis, and Nicole Gosselin. There is also one vacant seat, and the commission welcomes interest from Bellingham residents who are enthusiastic about conservation, the environment, and the community's future.

Residents can also get involved by joining the town's volunteer mailing list to hear about organized cleanups and other opportunities to help keep local open spaces beautiful and functional.

"People don't always realize how many opportunities there are to get involved," Chace said. "We want residents to know these spaces are here, enjoy them, and take an interest in helping us care for them."

The commission welcomes questions and community involvement. Its office is located at 10 Mechanic St. and can be reached at 508-657-2858. Learn more at https://www.bellinghamma.org/440/Conservation-Commission. To join the volunteer mailing list, visit https://www.bellinghamma.org/862/Volunteer-Opportunities.

Protecting open space and natural resources isn't just about preserving what Bellingham has today. It's about making sure the next generation has those same opportunities to explore, enjoy, and appreciate the natural beauty of the community they call home.

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RMDs: More than a retirement rule



Todd Miller, CFP®

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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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Franklin, Bellingham team up on Joint Hazard Mitigation Plan

Franklin and Bellingham are working together to update their Hazard Mitigation Plan, with staff from multiple Town departments participating in the kickoff meeting at Bellingham Town Hall. The plan identifies strategies to reduce risks from natural hazards, strengthen emergency preparedness, and maintain eligibility for certain FEMA hazard mitigation grants.

The Town of Franklin in July received a $30,000 Hazard Mitigation Grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Federal Funds & Infrastructure Office (FFIO) within the Executive Office for Administration & Finance (ANF). The grant was a joint award with the Town of Bellingham and will support updates to both communities' Hazard Mitigation Plans.

Hazard mitigation planning is a proactive process that helps communities identify strategies to reduce risks from natural hazards before disasters occur. Updating the plan will help ensure the towns remain prepared for future emergencies while maintaining eligibility for certain Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Assistance grant programs.

The updated plan will assess the towns' vulnerability to flooding, high winds, winter storms, brush fires, geologic hazards, extreme temperatures and drought. It will also examine the impacts of climate change and identify actions to strengthen community resilience.

The project will be completed in coordination with the two towns as part of a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) project. Federal law requires municipalities to update their Hazard Mitigation Plans every five years to remain eligible for FEMA hazard mitigation funding.



Sharing their stories: Bellingham vets visit Memorial School

By Judith Dorato O'Gara

Sixth graders at Bellingham Memorial School got the chance to interact with local veterans on November 6, 2026, the second year the school held the program.

The event began in the school auditorium, where veterans gathered, many amused by the boisterous and students. After all settled down, Principal Josh Hanna welcomed them, Mary Fafard, former teacher, who organizes an annual middle school essay contest, announced this year's winners, who included Samantha Benson, Audrey Williams and Brenna Tardif, and the middle school chorus sang a rendition of "This Land is Your Land."

Following the gathering in the auditorium, students led veterans through the hallways of the school, where children were lined up to honor their visitors with posters, cheers, high fives and salutes. Veterans later broke out into a few groups, visiting with specific classes for Q&A sessions.

Matt Guarino, who served in the Army during Operation Desert Storm, said enjoyed being able to share and pass on some of his stories with the middle schoolers.

"I love coming out and talking to the kids, because I think back to before I served, and I didn't know anything about this stuff," said Guarino, who remembered veterans talking to him when he was younger. "I never really thought of myself as one of those veterans," he said, "but then I think about some of the things I did, and I'm able to share it, and pass on some of the stories."

Laura Stanikmas, Army veteran, said she came out to share a female perspective, as well as to let the students "know the importance of celebrating the veterans, because a lot of them didn't have the welcome home they deserved."

Vietnam veteran Dennis Conners was one of those who experienced a negative reception when he came home, something he sees as changing in this day in age.

"I was in Vietnam, and when you came home from Vietnam, nobody liked you, we had no respect or anything. It took years, and then, finally we're getting recognition, and now they've had other wars since," he said, noting the importance of bestowing honor on those who served. "We're all veterans, and we've served our country," said Conners.



On November 6, 2026, Bellingham Memorial Middle School, for the second year, welcomed local veterans in an educational event in which students interacted with fellow community members who served our country in the military.



The middle school students lined the hallways to honor Bellingham veterans for their service with clapping, high fives, posters and salutes.



Samantha Benson, Audrey Williams and Brenna Tardif were the 2026 Veterans Day essay contest winners. They are shown here with retired teacher Mary Fafard, who organizes the contest each year.

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It's the most wonderful time of the year to use *Affordable Junk Removal*

Business spotlight



With so much to do around the holidays, give yourself the gift of space by using Affordable Junk Removal to help prepare your home for the season. "Life is hectic, we are all so busy in our daily lives that we don't notice how quickly we are being overrun with junk" said Jason Schadler, who founded the business in this area 21 years ago. "It's nice to park your car in the garage during the cold months, but maybe you need to make room there first, and we can help with that."

With Affordable Junk Removal, you can rent a dumpster or have their Junk Removal Professionals come to haul away items that have been gathering dust and taking up precious space. Setting an end-of-year or New Year's resolution to clean up a neglected basement or attic is a great start. You can even put a dumpster rental on your gift list. Sometimes the biggest challenge is not knowing where to begin, and that is where Affordable comes in.

"You can load your own dumpster or have our truck guys do all of the work for you," Schadler explained. "And rest assured, we don't just take everything to the landfill. We try and recycle as much as possible. Clothing and household items are donated to local organizations that help our friends and neighbors. That keeps them out of landfills, gives them a new life, and helps us keep our prices down. We're always looking for ways to be more cost effective because customers appreciate our reasonable prices."

Changes in legislation have made it increasingly more difficult to dispose of certain items, like mattresses, for example. It is now state law that most textiles and mattresses must be recycled. "Finding places to take mattresses is a challenge and the fees for disposal have gone through the roof," said Schadler. Items like these carry a separate recycling fee that the commercial transfer stations charge because of how labor intensive that recycling is. "People are usually shocked at the cost, and we find ourselves educating the customer as to why these fees exist. Here at Affordable, we view ourselves as an avenue our clients can turn to when they have these items and want them disposed of legally, safely and properly."

Affordable has many repeat customers. "When people call, they reach me, not some automated corporate call center," he said. "They know me and the crew and trust us. We do a good job, are fast, efficient, and reliable. We come when we say we will and if anything unexpected comes up, we communicate. We live here too, we are your friends and neighbors, we sponsor your little league teams and run into you at the grocery store. We are your local guys." A quick look at the many years of positive online reviews attests to this.

For more information, visit AffordableJunkRemoval.com. For an estimate or appointment, call or text 774-287-1133.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

15th Annual Purple Pump Up campaign raises over $122K for Alzheimer's Association

Milford, MA– Volta Oil presented the Alzheimer's Association Massachusetts/New Hampshire Chapter with a check for more than $122,000 in October, marking the successful close of its 15th annual Purple Pump Up campaign. Throughout the summer, Garrett's Family Market, Rapid Refill and Pro Clean locations across Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island – including Garrett's Family in Milford and Rapid Refill in Bellingham – partnered with the Association to raise awareness and generate critical funds for Alzheimer's care, support and research.

During the five-week campaign, which began June 1, customers at participating locations could contribute at the gas pump or inside the stores. The campaign received an additional boost on June 21 and 22, during Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month, when five cents from every gallon of gas sold was donated to the Association.

"For 15 years, Purple Pump Up has shown us the incredible impact that can happen when a business and its community come together for a cause," said Ginny Hanbridge, Executive Director of the Alzheimer's Association Massachusetts/New Hampshire Chapter. "We are so grateful to Volta Oil and its customers for their generosity and continued commitment. Their support helps us bring critical resources to families today while investing in research that can change the future."

Purple Pump Up is one of New England's largest cause-marketing campaigns benefiting the Alzheimer's Association. Since its launch, the campaign has raised $1.7 million.

"I would like to thank our store associates for all the effort they put in to make this year's Purple Pump Up a success" said Jim Garrett, Chairman of Volta Oil Company. "We are also grateful for our loyal customers who, year after year, demonstrate their generosity and help us in our fight for a world without Alzheimer's."

Finally, Garrett acknowledged Volta Oil's Trade partner sponsors, "without the sponsors, our campaign would not be such a great success," said Garrett. Platinum sponsors who supported the 2026 Purple Pump Up campaign include Coca-Cola, J. Polep Distribution, Kelliher Corbett Group at Morgan Stanley, Pepsi, and Polar.

Volta Oil matched customer donations up to $40,000, amplifying the impact of contributions made. For more information, visit purplepumpup.org.

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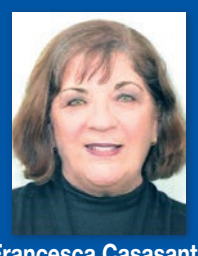
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DEPUTY CHIEF

continued from page 1

ingham Fire Department and mutual aid responded to a structure fire with flames showing through the roof and neighbors reporting that two elderly sisters were still inside.

The crew of Bellingham's Ladder 1 initiated an aggressive interior fire attack from the rear of the structure. Deputy Chief Provost and the crew of Engine 3 advanced a second attack line through the front. Deputy Provost began a search of the second floor, located one of the victims, and single-handedly removed her to the first-floor landing, where he was met by Medway firefighters. They assisted in removing the victim from the building and transferring care to awaiting ALS personnel.

At about the same time, Franklin firefighters made entry and continued the primary search, locating a second victim on the first floor. They extricated her from the burning home and transferred her care to ALS.

Both sisters were transported from the scene, but tragically succumbed to their injuries.

Norfolk County Senior Volunteer Program hosts 7th annual holiday drive for veterans

Dedham, MA – The Norfolk County Senior Volunteer Program is hosting its 7th Annual Holiday Drive to Benefit Veterans, running through New Year's Eve, December 31, 2026. Donations go to veterans receiving care at local Veterans Administration hospitals in West Roxbury, Jamaica Plain and Brockton.

VA hospitals can accept only new, unused items. Requested items include:

- Personal care and hygiene: toothbrushes and toothpaste, denture cleaning tablets and adhesive, soap, body wash and shampoo (3-in-1 preferred), bath towels, deodorant (alcohol-free), shaving cream, handheld mirrors and nail clippers

- Apparel and comfort: sweatsuits (all genders, larger sizes), undergarments, hats and gloves, reading glasses, personal clip-on fans, backscratchers and adult puzzle books/games

Donation bins are located at the following locations:

DEDHAM: Norfolk County Administrative Offices, 614 High Street, 2nd Floor; Dedham Council on Aging, 450 Washington St.; American Legion, 155 Eastern Ave; Dedham Public Library, 43 Church Street

CANTON: Town Hall, 801 Washington St.

FRANKLIN: Senior Center, 10 Daniel McCahill St.

MEDFIELD: Council on Aging, 1 Icehouse Rd.

NORFOLK: Senior Center, 28 Medway Branch.

NORWOOD: Senior Center, 275 Prospect St.

WALPOLE: Senior Center, 60 South St.

SHARON: Council on Aging, 219 Massapoag Ave.

For more information on the Norfolk County Senior Volunteer Program, visit norfolkcountyrsvp.galaxydigital.com or call 781-329-5728. Follow on facebook.com/NorfolkCountyRSVP and linkedin.com/showcase/norfolkcountyrsvp.

Applications being accepted through Feb. 11 for Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School (BFCCPS)

The Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School (BFCCPS), located in Franklin, Massachusetts, is currently accepting applications for the 2027-2028 school year. BFCCPS is a regional public charter school for students in Kindergarten through Grade Eight. The school was founded in 1995 and is one of the oldest and most successful charter schools in the state of Massachusetts.

Siblings of currently enrolled students will have priority enrollment status; thereafter applicants from communities in the school's district will have a chance at securing a spot for their child through the annual enrollment lottery to be held on February 23, 2027. Applicants from outside of the region (who reside within the state of Massachusetts) will be eligible for enrollment should additional spaces remain after all sibling and regional applicants have been placed.

For the 2027-2028 school year, 100 spaces will be offered for Kindergarten and students at all other grade levels will receive a waiting list number. Offers for Grades 1-8 would be contingent upon currently enrolled students electing not to return next year.

The school provides a well-rounded, rigorous academic program designed to educate the whole child providing courses in art, music, languages, technology, and physical education. In addition to our core academic and co-curricular classes, students in Grade 6-8 participate in weekly Classical Enrichment Courses and start Latin studies in Grade Six. Middle schoolers are also eligible to participate in our Spring Musical. Students in Grades 5-8 also have the opportunity to participate in overnight field trips each spring.

Round trip bus transportation is available with bus stops currently in Bellingham, Blackstone, Franklin, Norfolk, Mendon, Medway, Milford, Millis, Norfolk, and Wrentham.

BFCCPS alumni continue to excel during their attendance at local public high schools as well as independent and vocational-technical high schools.

Please visit www.bfccps.org for enrollment details, including applications. Enrollment information sessions and building tours will be held on January 9 and February 6 from 9:30-11:30 a.m. Please note that enrollment applications will close on February 11, 2027 at 4pm.

If you'd like to learn more about the educational mission of the school or have enrollment related questions please contact the school's Communication Coordinator, Joanne Basile at jbasile@bfccps.org or 508-541-3434 x104.



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State Police & State Fire Marshal's Office welcome new Accelerant Detection K9



K9 "River" is the newest addition to the State Police Fire & Explosion Investigation Unit assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office.

Stow, MA -At just 18 months old, the newest member of the State Police Fire & Explosion Investigation Unit assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office is younger than the average trooper – but she's already got a nose for solving crimes.

That new addition is River, a yellow labrador retriever trained as an accelerant-detection canine through the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF). With her handler, Trooper James Colella, she's part of the team that works with local, state, and federal partners to investigate fires when the cause is unknown or suspicious. River is one of more than a dozen dogs on the "fire side," with an equal number working as explosive-detection K9s with the State Police Statewide Bomb Squad.

"Fire investigation has been a core mission of the State Fire Marshal's office for more than 130 years," said State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine. "But for all the advances in technology we've seen in that time, nothing beats a dedicated trooper and a well-trained K9."

Following an "imprinting" period in which River was familiarized with gasoline, kerosene, and other ignitable liquids, Trooper Colella and River trained together for 45 days at the ATF's National Canine Training Center in Front Royal, Virginia. That training enabled River to use her powerful nose to ignore distraction scents, focus on detecting accelerants even in trace amounts, and alert Trooper Colella to what she's found. River and her canine colleagues' noses are so powerful that they can sniff out odors at a fire scene even after firefighters pump thousands of gallons of water through it to extinguish the flames.

In recent years, the Fire & Explosion Investigation Unit has expanded its K9 program, training dogs to work alongside State Police assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office – and for local police and fire departments. The most recent graduating class included K9 teams from Falmouth Police, Hudson Police, Springfield Fire & Emergency Services, and UMass Amherst Police in addition to the State Police Bomb Squad and Fire Investigation Unit. ATF-trained dogs have long been part of the team, however, and Trooper Colella is excited to work with his new partner.

"All of these dogs are world-class," he said. "They're highly motivated, always ready to work, and extremely capable when it comes to identifying accelerants or explosives."

As talented as these K9s are in locating evidence, however, their noses aren't the last word in a criminal investigation. When their dogs alert to a presence of ignitable liquids, Trooper Colella and other fire investigators will identify specific sections of flooring, clothing, debris, and other items for documentation and collection. The Troopers then carefully take samples and transport them to the State Police Crime Laboratory for testing and analysis, which can confirm or exclude the presence of accelerants or explosives for use in court.

River comes on the job as Trooper Colella's K-9 partner, Fulton, prepares to retire. At nearly 9 years old, Fulton can look forward to a simpler life as a family pet, eating out of a bowl and sleeping through the night without driving to fire scenes at all hours. As for River, she has a long and rewarding career ahead of her – all she has to do is follow her nose.





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

EYES
continued on page 17



LIVING HEALTHY

A village collection for vets

Last month, a Veterans Day drive for deployed soldiers through the nonprofit organization Thanks to Yanks was held at all four branches of Dean Bank as well as Costello Realty.

Hundreds of pounds of personal care items, clothing, gift cards and cash were delivered by Costello Realty employees Christine Molla and Caroline Molla, as well as Dean Bank's Scott Reilly. Thanks to Yanks founder Michael Shain expressed his gratitude to these community partners in a social media post.

Submitted photos





Pathway to a Better Life volunteers needed

Volunteer training sessions Dec. 3 & 31

Pathway to a Better Life is a temporary warming center for the greater Milford area that runs from November 1 to March 31. We open our doors when temperatures drop to 30 degrees and below.

Volunteer training sessions will be held on Thursdays, December 3 at 7 p.m. and December 31 at 9 a.m. at St. Mary's Church, 17 Winter St., Milford.

To sign up, call or text Lisa Trusas at 508-922-9032.

EYES

continued from page 16

Center of Milford provides a specialized, accredited surgical environment designed specifically for ophthalmic procedures. Patients benefit from established surgical protocols, dedicated equipment, and a team focused on the highest standards of patient care. We also believe in transparent financial expectations, so patients understand their responsibilities before undergoing treatment.

From routine comprehensive eye examinations and diabetic eye care to complex glaucoma management, retinal treatments, and advanced cataract surgery, MFEC offers a comprehensive range of services under one established regional practice.

Looking Ahead: Your Vision Is Our Priority

As ophthalmology continues to advance, our commitment remains unchanged: to provide our patients with the most appropriate, scientifically supported, and technologically advanced care available.

For more than two decades, Milford-Franklin Eye Center has been dedicated to serving our communities and protecting the vision of generations of families. We are proud of the trust our patients place in us and remain committed to bringing the future of eye care to the communities we serve.

Advanced Technology. Experienced Physicians. Exceptional Eye Care.

From all of us at Milford-Franklin Eye Center, we wish you and your loved ones a joyful, healthy, and peaceful holiday season. Thank you for allowing us to be part of your care.

For more details, see our ad on page 14.

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CALENDAR

December 1

A Novel Idea Book Club, 6 p.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, "Paris: The Memoir" by Paris Hilton

December 2

Holiday Business After Hours through Tri-County Chamber, 5-7 p.m., Pour Richards, 835 W. Central St., Franklin, visit www.tricountychamberma.org to register.

Veterans Monthly Coffee Social, 10 a.m., Franklin Senior Center, 10 Daniel McCahill St., Franklin, ALL veterans, nearby towns included, invited for holiday cheer

Franklin Art Association meeting, 6:30 p.m., Franklin Senior Center, 10 Daniel McCahill St., Franklin, featured artist Alona Popova on Pysanky, Ukrainian art of decorating eggs

December 3

Online Author Talks, Sparks, Shadows, and Epic Romantasy with Helen Scheuerer, 7 p.m., through Bellingham Public Library. To register for these talks, go to: https://libraryc.org/bellinghamma.

OUT MetroWest Bellingham Satellite Night, 5 p.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, for LGBTQ+ youth and allies

Stony Brook Camera Club meeting, 7:30 p.m., Anglican Church of the Redeemer, 195 Main St., Franklin, member competition, www.stonybrookcc.com

Franklin LGBTQ Alliance Bowling at Pinz, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Pinz, 110 S. Main St., Milford, $10. RSVP franklinlgbtqalliance@gmail.com.

December 5

St. Blaise Parish Island of Misfit Toys Fair, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., 1158 S. Main St., Bellingham

BHS Operation Graduation '27 Winter Vendor Fair, 9 a.m.- 3 p.m., Bellingham High School, 60 Blackstone St., Bellingham, free admission, Santa visits 9-11 a.m. and 12-2:30 p.m., 75 vendors

St. John's Church Christmas Fair, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., 237 Pleasant Street, Franklin

Franklin Garden Club Annual Holiday Greens Sale, 9:30 a.m.- 12 p.m., Daddario's Hardware Store, 528 W. Central St., Franklin, prices $25-$40

Fairmount Winter Farmers Market, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Fairmount Fruit Farm, 887 Lincoln St., Franklin

Franklin LGBTQ Alliance Brunch at Mak's, 10 a.m.-12 p.m., Mak's Roast Beef, 451 W. Central St., Franklin

St. Gabriel's Church Annual Christmas Fair, 9 a.m.- 2 p.m.,151 Mendon St., Upton

An evening with folk songstress, Antie Duvekot, with special guest Sean Noonan, 7 p.m., Niagara Coffee Haus, 8 Exchange St., Millis, https://www.eventbrite.com/e/antje-duvekot-wsean-noonan-tickets-1982119962164

December 6

Charles River Chorale Winter Concert "From Stone Walls to Deck the Halls," 2 p.m., Medway High School Auditorium, 88 Summer St., Medway

For more information, visit: https://tinyurl.com/Stone-WallsDeckHallsCRC

Temple Beth Torah Chanukah celebration featuring Hanukkats by Talking Hands Theatre, 2162 Washington St., Holliston, includes latkes and other treats, games, bring your menorah for lighting, free

December 7

Book Discussion Group, 6:30 p.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, "Oona Out of Order," by Margarita Montimore.

Franklin Winter Coat Drive LAST DAY, collection bins at Franklin Fire, Franklin PD, Franklin United Methodist Church, New England Chapel & Hockomock YMCA

Friends of the Library Monthly Meeting, 7 p.m., To attend, email library@bellinghamlibrary.org for the Zoom link!

December 8

Online Author Talks, Exile, Memory, and the Meaning of Home with Ana Hebra Flaster, 2 p.m., through Bellingham Public Library, to register for these talks, go to: https://libraryc.org/bellinghamma.

December 10

Online Author Talks, Comic Strips and Kimchi: Cooking Korean Food Made Easy with Robin Ha, 2 p.m., through Bellingham Public Library, to register for these talks, go to: https://libraryc.org/bellinghamma.

Chat & Craft for Adults: Kinusaiga Winter Ornament – 6:30 p.m. Ages 18+.

Bellingham Ladies of St. Anne gala, Sky Buffet, 340 East Main St., Milford, $27, cash or check payable to St. Blaise Parish, with "LSA Christmas Gala" in memo. Please place payments in an envelope marked "LSA Christmas Gala – Attention Monique or Ann-Marie" and either drop it in the church collection basket or hand to Ann-Marie or Monique. Questions to -Marie Lavallee-Kell at amlk1204@gmail.com, or Monique Boucher tigg788776@aol.com.

Winter Wonderland: A Community Holiday Event, 4:30-7 p.m., Franklin Senior Center, 10 Daniel McCahill St., Franklin, includes holiday décor, live entertainment, FFD touch-a-truck, refreshments, hot cocoa, caricature artist, face painting, kids' crafts, local artist gallery, photobooth, raffle baskets, and Santa Claus!

Stony Brook Camera Club hybrid meeting, 7:30 p.m., Anglican Church of the Redeemer, 195 Main St., Franklin and Zoom, Image Study, www.stonybrookcc.com

December 12

Community Free Shop Pop-up, 11 a.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, hosted by the Wildflower Misfit Collective!

BBA Presents Bellingham's Holiday Celebration, 4:30 p.m. parade steps off from Bellingham Middle School, ends in tree-lighting at 300th Park

3rd Annual "A-Wreath-of-Franklin," 11 a.m.-4 p.m., downtown Franklin, pop-up arts market at THE BLACK BOX and Franklin Historical Museum, handcrafted goods from local artists, makers, and small businesses, community wreath display created by artists, families, schools, and organizations themed "The Magic We Make." Updates at https://www.franklinma.gov/1174/A-Wreath-of-Franklin

FUSF Cookie Walk, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., First Universalist Society of Franklin, 262 Chestnut St., Franklin, Shop for your holiday confections from over 30 bakers for homemade treats in our festive Meetinghouse. Cookies sold by the pound and attractively boxed.

Exsultet! A Celebration of Voices presents "Wandering Through the Forrest," 2:30 p.m., Allin Congregational Church, 693 High St., Dedham, www.exsultet.us for tickets.

Runaway Day, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m., Massachusetts State Police Museum & Learning Center, 1 Memorial Sq., Whitinsville,, features Ed Locke, real-life boy in Norman Rockwell's iconic 1958 painting The Runaway, meet him and pose in life-sized diner counter recreation of famous painting. www.MSPMLC.org

December 13

Annual Emily Letourneau Breakfast with Santa fundraiser, 9-11 a.m., St. Blaise Church, 1158 S. Main St., Bellingham

Face to Face with Whitey Bulger, 1:15 p.m., Franklin Historical Museum, 80 W. Central St., Franklin, Bob Ward, crime reporter on Boston 25, will discuss his new book, co-written with FBI Agent, Rich Teahan, who led the FBI's Bulger Fugitive Task Force and played a key role in developing the PSA that ultimately led to Bulger's arrest.

Spiritual Practices Sampler Series with Rev. Chris Scheller: Introduction to Meditation, 3:30-4:45 p.m. via Zoom. Register via the website: Fusf.org.

Exsultet! A Celebration of Voices presents "Wandering Through the Forrest," 2:30 p.m., First Congregational Church, 725 Washington St., Holliston, www.exsultet.us for tickets.

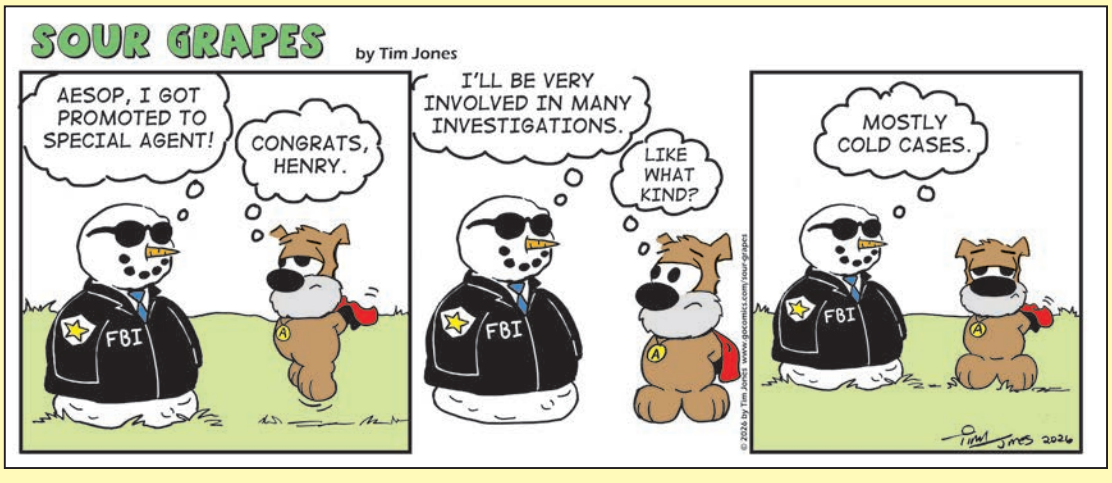
December 14

Eco-Friendly Wrapping Paper Workshop, 5:30 p.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham

December 15

Online Author Talks, A History of the Moon with Smithsonian Curator Matthew Shindell, 2 p.m., to register for these talks, go to: https://libraryc.org/bellinghamma.

Writing Group for Adults, 6:30 p.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, contact Marjorie Turner Hollman at marjorie@marjorieturner.com.



CALENDAR
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CALENDAR

December 16

Franklin LGBTQ Alliance Book Club, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Franklin TV & Radio, 23 Hutchinson St., Franklin, "Days of Awe," by Achy Obejas.

December 17

Craft with the Clauses, 10:30 a.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham

Stony Brook Camera Club hybrid meeting, 7:30 p.m., Anglican Church of the Redeemer, 195 Main St., Franklin

www.stonybrookcc.com

December 19

Winter Celebration, 6 p.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham

Breakfast with Santa, 10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., Coachmen's Lodge, 273 Wrentham Rd., Bellingham, seating limited, tickets https://order.toasttab.com/online/the-coachmens-lodge

Fairmount Winter Farmers Market, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Fairmount Fruit Farm, 887 Lincoln St., Franklin, Winterfest with Santa

December 21

Southeastern MA Community Concert Band, 7 p.m., Franklin Senior Center, 10 Daniel McCahill St., Franklin. Join us for an evening of live holiday music. Free, all ages.

Virtual Program: Holiday Songs & Dances from Broadway, TV & Movie Musicals – Monday, Zoom, 2 p.m., through Bellingham Public Library, please register

December 24

Cocoa and Coloring, 12 p.m., Franklin Public Library, 118 Main St., Franklin, Slow down and enjoy hot cocoa, coloring, and a holiday movie classic.

December 31

New Year's Eve Party (for families), 11:30 a.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham, please register so library can plan

FUSF New Year's Eve Labyrinth Walk, 5-7 p.m., First Universalist Society of Franklin, 262 Chestnut St., Franklin, meditative walk on a candlelit labyrinth in our sanctuary. Socks or provided booties required. All ages

Metrowest Women's Fund holds holiday gift drive through December 11

Drive supports girls 12-18 in Framingham emergency residential program

The Metrowest Women's Fund is holding a holiday gift drive to support girls aged 12-18 living in an emergency residential shelter program in Framingham through December 11, 2026.

Wish List

- Art Supplies
- Beauty Products
- Books for Teens
- Socks
- Weighted Stuffed Animals

Support the Drive

- Donate via Amazon Wish List at https://tinyurl.com/MWFHolidayGirlsDrive
- Alternatively, gifts can be delivered directly to: 11 Byron Rd, Weston, MA 02493

Support Women and Girls through the Metrowest Women's Fund

- Send a Check to: Metrowest Women's Fund, PO Box 192, Weston, MA 02493
- Visit www.metrowestwomensfund.com/donate

Did you know? The Library has Bellingham High School yearbooks!

Bellingham High School yearbooks have been made available on the library's website through the Digital Commonwealth, Boston Public Library's statewide digitization program. The oldest yearbook online is the 1939 edition. Years 1940 and 1941 were not available to be digitized, but every edition from 1942 through 2024 is available online. Yearbooks can be searched by year, and once you have selected a yearbook you can search inside it for a specific person. Print copies of the yearbooks are also available for viewing in the library's Local History Room!

Visit the Library's website (https://www.bellinghamma.org/315/Research-History) and scroll down to Bellingham Yearbooks to access this resource!


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SPORTS

Bellingham Cross Country shows strong season

By Christopher Tremblay, Staff Sports Writer

Both the Bellingham boys' and girls' cross-country teams had somewhat successful seasons. The boys went 4-1 and took home second place in the Tri-Valley League small division, while the girls went 2-3 to capture fourth place.

Under the guidance of Coach TJ Chiappone, who is only in his third year coaching the sport, the girls continued to improve throughout the season, while the boys found themselves ahead of expectations.

The girls are looking to develop depth, so that they can move up in the ranks of the courses. Currently, the female Blackhawks have two stellar runners in senior captain Jenna Dormady and freshman Morgan Henshaw, a three-year varsity runner for Bellingham. According to the coach the two girls are 1A and 1B in terms of running.

Dormady has been recruited to run in college next year and has not finished lower than third place all season long. The senior usually finds herself in the upper echelon of races, finishing first or second. She has been a TVL All-Star twice and has also run in the State Meet or Meet of Champions twice where she has finished 33 and 41 respectively over the last two seasons.

Henshaw began running for Bellingham as a seventh grader and almost immediately made a name for herself. As an eight grader last year, she was named to the TVL All-Star team with Dormady, finishing in the top three of every one of her races.

"The two usually run together and eventually finish one-two," Chiappone said. "During Invitationals, we'll run Morgan in the freshman races, where she has continually done well and finished in the top five. During the Cape Cod Twilight Race she finished 4th out of 117 runners."

Running in the States last fall as an eighth grader Henshaw finished 42nd.

Running behind Dormady and Henshaw is sophomore Ava Kerkhoff. The sophomore is competing inhere third year with the cross country team and really stepped up her performance this fall. According to the Bellingham coach, she has shown great improvement this year and decreased her 5K time by 2 ½ minutes since the beginning of the year. Chiappone noted that, once she realized that she could accomplish this, she believed in her ability and began to make things happen.

The heart and soul of the program belongs to the girls who have helped change the cross-country culture at Bellingham High School by continually coming back year after year and wanting to run. Those girls are captain Olivia Ginn, Addison Howard, Balkis Mafhoum, Helena Hunt and Angela Romano.

While the girls were continually getting better as the season went along, the boys' squad jumped out to a quick start, never really looked back and found themselves way ahead of their coach's schedule.

"Coming into the season, we were excited about this team, but they definitely arrived earlier than expected," The Blackhawks coach said. "They became a much deeper team."

Junior captain Grady Henshaw, running in his fourth season with Bellingham, found himself as the team's number one runner. The junior is having an outstanding campaign after coming off a sophomore season, where he was limited due to health reasons.

Right behind Henshaw has been sophomore Xavier Dupuis, who as a freshman made it to the Meet of Champions. Unfortunately, Dupuis did not have himself one of his better days but was able to gain some valuable experience taking part in the event. According to Chiappone, Dupuis is a gritty runner who usually finds himself about 35-40 seconds behind Henshaw.

Rounding out the top three runners for Bellingham is Liam Holden. The junior, running in his second season, has been running close to Dupuis and thus far, is having himself a successful year. The former soccer player wanted to give cross country a try, and he has improved considerable over his first year.

Following the top three runners fourth, fifth and sixth place could fall on different runners legs on any given day and race. Sophomore Joe Lussier, senior Gerald Plante and first year senior runner Joevell Murphy have battled it out for those next three spots throughout the year.

"Joevell has made a great difference to this team," the Coach said. "He was a surprise from the start, as I didn't know he was coming out for the team. He has been a tough kid who has found himself in the top five; he has a great heart, runs hard and doesn't give up."

Freshman Spencer Lavalley and sophomore Ryan Gerbrands are battling it out for the seventh position, giving the coach further satisfaction for the future.

"I am really excited about next year and what we have coming back," Chiappone said. "In addition to what we already have, we have some freshman who have been improving throughout the season and should give us even more depth."

Although the regular season has come to an end Bellingham still has the TVL Meet on the horizon, and the coach is unsure of where his team will actually fit in with the large division of the TVL.

"I am hoping that the boys can finish in the top of the 12 teams, while the girls will probably be looking for more individual success," he said. "Cross country is a spot that a lot of people don't know about; the kids work hard every day, and the meets are really fun to watch."

Chiappone will get to watch his teams take part in the TVL Meet and hopefully continue onto the Meet of Champions, where he is hoping for success that will leave Bellingham with something to work toward next fall.



Bellingham girls' cross country has strong runners in senior captain Jenna Dormady and freshman Morgan Henshaw, already a three-year varsity runner for Bellingham.



Xavier Dupuis, Liam Holden and Xavier Dupuis form the backbone of the Bellingham boys' cross -country team.

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SPORTS

Bellingham Football bounces back from injury-riddled 2025 with a strong 2026



Bellingham Football team suffered from injury last season, but came back with an 8-1 record and a stretch into the second round of playoffs. *Credit to Dan Haddad.*

By Matt Hylen

Last season, Bellingham Football closed a 5-6 year with a 3-0 Thanksgiving loss to Norton, a game in which the Blackhawks did not score.

This season, head coach Dan Haddad and the Blackhawks turned things completely around, finishing with an 8-1 record and an appearance in the second round of the playoffs.

"It has been an incredible journey, these players have earned everything they deserve," Haddad said. "I knew they were going to be competitive but not like this!"

It is a candid assessment, Haddad pointed to injuries and timing as to what held them back last season from their full potential. This season proved him right, especially considering the team's success in the regular season.

The biggest thing he singled out was the toughness of his players. In August, Haddad laid out his ideal player in one line: "Talent is good to have, but give me toughness over talent any day. That's my ideal player. Tough mentally and physically."

What the Blackhawks turned out to be, he said, matched what he expected. "We were a dual threat team," Haddad said. "After our loss [during the regular season], they were in attack mode. We played from ahead and kept the lead but have also responded when we were down."

Haddad said the goals were to make the playoffs and go from there. The team accomplished this with flying colors, but Haddad credits his leaders for much of it.

"Culture is driven by our captains," Haddad stated. "Our leadership, especially seniors, has been fantastic and the single biggest reason for our success." The culture was already in place, he said. Getting everyone to live by it fell to the captains and the seniors.

Asked what he is proudest of, regardless of how far the postseason run goes, Haddad pointed to the work the players put in away from game day, the kind he emphasized in August.

"I have asked the players for the world, and they have given me just that," Haddad said. "From the off-season workouts to all the community service we do, to the high standards that must be reached, they have done everything. It hasn't been perfect, but the effort is always there."

The turnaround the Blackhawks made this year, despite the season ending short, was nothing short of incredible. Going through a season full of things you cannot control is extremely difficult, but how this team responded is what sports is all about.

This team overcame all of the adversity last season brought and showed what Blackhawk football is all about. Haddad and this team should be extremely proud of what they have accomplished this season and look forward to building off their proven success next season.



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Bellingham Public Library news & events for December

Closing at 1 p.m. on Thursday, December 24, Friday, December 25, and Saturday, December 26 for the Christmas holiday.

Closing at 1 p.m. on Thursday, December 31 for the New Year's holiday.

Special Programs

Make a Book Paper Garland – Monday, December 1, 5 p.m. All ages.

Join us for a relaxing and sustainable craft night! We'll be upcycling discarded book pages to make paper orbs and creating a festive garland.

OUT MetroWest Bellingham Satellite Night – Thursday, December 3, 5 p.m.

Meets on the first Thursday of every month at 5 pm. No registration. This free monthly program is open to LGBTQ+ teens and allies, in teen room.

Virtual Program: Future Mars Exploration and Settlement – Friday, December 4, 2 p.m.

Registration required. Have you wondered how people might live on Mars? That future is not so far away! National Space Society Ambassador Eric Harkleroad will explore the natural resources available on Mars, and more.

ART-astic Saturday – Saturday, December 5,11 a.m., for families

Tech Tuesday: Using a Chromebook – Tuesday, December 8, 4 p.m.

With Assistant Director Suzanne, this session will cover how to use a Chromebook. Bring your own Chromebook or use one that the library has available to borrow. Registration is appreciated; space is limited.

Chat & Craft for Adults: Kinusaiga Winter Ornament – Thursday, December 10, 6:30 p.m.

Ages 18+. Fiine motor skills required. *This program is made possible through support from the Friends of the Bellingham Library.*

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Bellingham's Holiday Celebration December 12

It's the season of joy, and what better way to kick it off than a parade!

The Bellingham Business Association has taken the lead in planning a second annual Bellingham Holiday Celebration, with a parade kicking off festivities on Saturday, December 12, 2026, 4:30 p.m. from Bellingham Middle School. The light-illuminated procession of decorated vehicles ends in tree-lighting at 300th Park, in front of Municipal Building.

Funding this celebration is Bellingham Business Association's sale of Tees and Hoodies, which you can purchase by going to Brian's Country Greenery, or by emailing contact@bellinghambusinessassociation.org. Follow updates on "Bellingham Holiday Celebration" on Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61563431491862

Any questions please reach out to:

Sue Grady - contact@bellinghambusinessassociation.org

Jenn Altomonte - jenaltomonte@bellinghamma.org

Chief Miller Bellingham Fire - fireadministration@bellinghamma.org

There's still time to sign up!

Find the form at https://tinyurl.com/BellinghamHolidaysignup2026.

"Together for the Holidays," with Allegra Commonwealth Singers

by Beatrice Wood, President, Allegra Commonwealth Singers

The Allegra Commonwealth Singers, a Metrowest chorus of adult sopranos and altos under the direction of Brett Abigaña, DMA, announces its two winter-themed concerts the weekend of December 5 & 6.

"Together for the Holidays" includes a mix of both familiar and lesser known works marking the start of the winter holiday season. French carols, Hanukkah songs, "Cantata on Appalachian Christmas Carols" by Daniel Holden, and Antonio Vivaldi's Gloria are just some of the program's highlights.

As is the chorus' tradition, the concert will conclude with the public invited to sing along to familiar favorites. The performances will take place:

Saturday, December 5, at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 3 Maple Street, Framingham, and

Sunday, December 6, at Pilgrim Church, 25 South Main Street, Sherborn.

Both concerts are at 3 p.m. with general seating starting at 2:30 p.m. Tickets are "Pay What You Wish" and may be reserved in advance by visiting the website www.allegrasingers.org.

The chorus was awarded a grant from the Natick Cultural Council in 2026 and is very grateful to the Mass Cultural Council for its support over the years. The chorus is incorporated as The A Cappella Singers, but changed its name this year to more accurately capture the diverse choral works it performs. The chorus is accompanied by pianist Simonida Spasojevic.

Happy Holidays
from our families to yours!
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REAL ESTATE CORNER

Gov. Healey announces $6.6M to train more than 5,200 MA workers

Boston, MA - Governor Maura Healey today announced $6.6 million in Workforce Training Fund Program grants to help 543 Massachusetts businesses train more than 5,200 workers, build new skills and grow their businesses. Grant recipients also expect to add 286 jobs over the next two years. Since Governor Healey took office in January 2023, the administration has awarded nearly $105 million in workforce training grants to help approximately 4,000 Massachusetts employers train more than 86,500 workers.

Iwaki America, in Holliston, was awarded $68,050 to train 80 workers; 5 additional jobs are expected by 2028.

"Massachusetts businesses need skilled workers to grow, and our workers deserve opportunities to build their skills and get ahead," said Gov.Maura Healey. "These grants are helping more than 500 businesses invest in their employees, create new jobs and stay competitive. We're proud to support businesses across Massachusetts that are investing in their workers and strengthening our economy."

The Workforce Training Fund Program helps Massachusetts businesses provide training to current and newly hired employees, strengthen their workforce and respond to changing industry needs. Funded by employers through the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund, the program offers two types of grants: the General Program and the Express Program.

The announcement also includes $2.68 million in General Program grants to train more than 2,000 workers from 45 employers in Massachusetts. These two-year grants are awarded competitively. Employers receiving these grants plan to add 286 additional employees in Massachusetts by 2028. General Program grants can range from $10,000 to $200,000 for individual employers, or up to $220,000 for consortiums of employers working together. Grant recipients contribute a matching investment of at least one dollar for each grant-dollar awarded.

The administration also awarded $3.97 million through the Express Program to help 498 small businesses train 3,200 workers between May 1 and August 31, 2026. The program provides businesses with 100 or fewer employees a streamlined way to access training funds, with more than 4,500 preapproved courses available in areas such as technology, project management, manufacturing and English language skills.

"Workforce training is essential to helping Massachusetts employers remain competitive while creating opportunities for workers to advance in their careers," said Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Lauren Jones. "Through the Workforce Training Fund Program, we are meeting businesses where they are with flexible training resources that address immediate workforce needs and support long-term growth. These grants reflect our commitment to building a skilled, adaptable workforce that can meet the demands of our evolving economy."

Administered by Commonwealth Corporation on behalf of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, the Workforce Training Fund Program helps Massachusetts employers invest in their workers through training that addresses current business needs and prepares teams for future growth.

"Every training grant represents an employer making a commitment to its workers and its future," said Molly Jacobson, President and CEO of Commonwealth Corporation. "We thank these employers for making training a priority and helping their teams build new skills and advance in their careers."

The WTFP offers grants to businesses of all sizes, though it is most used by small and medium-sized businesses. These grants support instruction in a wide range of skills such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), project management, software and IT, and machine set-up and operation. Businesses can apply for two types of grants through the program: 1) The General Program, which offers competitively awarded grants that support customized, strategic training projects over a two-year period and 2) The Express Program for employers with 100 or fewer employees, which provides a faster, more streamlined option. This grant program delivers training from a directory of over 4,500 pre-approved courses, making it easy for even the smallest employers in Massachusetts to access funding and respond quickly to workforce training needs.

The full list of General Program grants, totaling $2,681,014 to train 2,027 workers, is available at https://tinyurl.com/MAworkertraining .

First Universalist Society in Franklin (FUSF) December events

FUSF Cookie Walk, Sat., December 12, 10 a.m.- 1 p.m.: Shop for your holiday confections from over 30 bakers for homemade treats in our festive Meetinghouse. Cookies sold by the pound and attractively boxed. Make this event part of your annual holiday fun!

FUSF Christmas Eve Service: Thursday, December 24th, 5:30 p.m.: Join us for a candlelight service. All are welcome.

FUSF New Year's Eve Labyrinth Walk: Thursday, December 31, 5-7pm. 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, 3:30-4:45 p.m. via Zoom. Mindfulness, put most simply, is being present with whatever experience we are engaged in, and it is grounded through the five senses. Register via 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.





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Community Free Shop Pop-up – Saturday, December 12, 11 a.m.

Free community popup hosted by the Wildflower Misfit Collective! They'll provide clothing, shoes, outdoorwear, and hygiene items at no cost to families. All items are free, no requirements, and open to anyone who could use support.

Eco-Friendly Wrapping Paper Workshop - Monday, December 14, 5:30 p.m.

Join us to explore sustainable wrapping techniques that can reduce our carbon footprint and save money, including fabric wrapping, tape-free folds, and natural decorative accents. We will repurpose kraft paper to create personalized holiday wrapping paper. Craft supplies provided.

Patrons! Please save the brown paper bags and packing paper included as filler in your delivery boxes and drop it off to our bin at the library.

Craft with the Clauses – Thursday, December 17, 10:30 a.m.

Join Mrs. Clause for a craft followed by a special guest visit from Santa himself! The craft will start at 10:30 a.m. with plenty of time left for photos with Mr. and Mrs. Clause! **Winter Celebration – Saturday, December 19, 6 p.m.**

Virtual Program: Holiday Songs & Dances from Broadway, TV & Movie Musicals – Monday, December 21, 2 p.m.

Registration required. Let's get into the holiday spirit with songs and dances from Broadway, television, and movie musicals, from "White Christmas" to "The Grinch" and "The Hanukkah Song." Led by musical and film historians Sam and Candy Caponegro.

New Year's Eve Party – Thursday, December 31, 11:30 a.m.

For families - please register! Join us for a New Year's Eve party as we welcome 2027! The doors will open at 11:30 a.m. for activities. We'll celebrate at noon!

Adult Programs

Book Discussion Group – Generally meets the 1st Monday of the month, 6:30 p.m.

Attend in person or on Zoom. On Monday, December 7, we will discuss "Oona Out of Order" by Margarita Montimore. Contact Suzanne at salpert@cwmars.org .

A Novel Idea: A New Book Club for Adults – Tuesday, December 1, 6:30 p.m.

Includes light refreshments. "Paris: The Memoir" by Paris Hilton. Please contact Diane Nelson at dnelson@cwmars.org.

Tuesday Fiber Arts & Other Crafts – Tuesdays, December 8 and 22, 6 p.m.

Love to knit, crochet or do other arts and crafts? Join others with similar interests for an evening of creativity and companionship. Just drop in! -

Slow Down & Warm Up: Kripalu Yoga for Winter – Tuesdays, 8:30 a.m. *(starts on December 8 and no session 12/29)* **Registration required.**

Classes are 75 minutes long, and beginners are welcome. Please wear comfortable clothing, bring your own yoga mat, 2 blocks, a yoga strap, a bolster and a yoga blanket.

English Conversation Circles – Wednesdays, 4 p.m.

Free program - No registration needed. With Thienne Rissatto, our Library Assistant - Multilingual Learners Coordinator. If you can speak English but want to improve your English conversation skills, this is the group for you!

Needlecraft Night – Wednesdays, 6 p.m.

All skill levels are welcome. Please bring your own materials.

Friends of the Library Monthly Meeting - Tuesday, December 8, 7 p.m.

Join us on Zoom for the monthly Friends of the Library meeting. To attend, email library@bellinghamlibrary.org for the Zoom link!

Library Board of Trustees Meeting –Monday, December 14, 7 p.m., Conference room.

Writing Group for Adults – Tuesday, December 15th at 6:30 p.m.

Hybrid meeting.. To participate, contact Marjorie Turner Hollman at marjorie@marjorieturner.com.

Online Author Talks –

to register for these talks, go to: https://libraryc.org/bellinghamma. Recordings of these talks are also available on the library website in the days following the event.

Sparks, Shadows, and Epic Romantasy with Helen Scheuerer – Tuesday, December 3, 7 p.m.

Exile, Memory, and the Meaning of Home with Ana Hebra Flaster – Tuesday, December 8, 2 p.m.

Comic Strips and Kimchi: Cooking Korean Food Made Easy with Robin Ha – Thursday, December 10, 2 p.m.

A History of the Moon with Smithsonian Curator Matthew Shindell – Tuesday, December 15th at 2 p.m.



Wishing you a happy Holiday Season and a wonderful New Year.

Please note our special holiday hours

Christmas

Thursday, December 24th
8:30 AM to Noon

Friday, December 25th
Closed

Saturday, December 26th
Closed

New Year's

Thursday, December 31st
8:30 AM to 3:00 PM

Friday, January 1st
Closed

Hours may be subject to change due to weather.
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