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Vol. 8 No. 5

Free to Every Home and Business Every Month

December 2020

The Voice of Your Community



Illuminate Ashland
will be livestreamed
this year. Register in
advance to attend.
(Photo/Annemarie's
Dance Centre)

Enjoying the Holidays in Ashland

BY CYNTHIA WHITTY

The holidays in Ashland this year are all about light. From Light Up Ashland to the Winter Wonderland Stroll and Illuminate Ashland, the town will shine bright.

Chrissy Reynolds, owner of Annemarie's Dance Centre and founder of Illuminate Ashland, is organizing live, virtual performances this year. "I'm thrilled we are able to pull a communal performance together," she said. "I know the event will not be the same as in previous years, but I think this year, more than any other, the message that art has the ability to heal, to create, to express, to understand, to unite, is more important than ever. And, with any luck, we will have audience members back in our public spaces next year."

Here are some activities and dates to remember. Events are free, except where indicated.

HOLIDAYS
continued on page 2

Ashland Business Beat: Laugh Away 2020 on December 11

BY CYNTHIA WHITTY

The Ashland Business Association (ABA) invites the entire Ashland community to a live holiday comedy night on Dec. 11 at 6:45 p.m. Laugh 2020 away with Corey Rodrigues & Friends. Rodrigues is a comedian, actor, radio personality, and an Ashland resident.

The cost to attend is \$10 per household; \$40 per household, includes one surprise gift basket; \$70 per household, includes two surprise gift baskets. Gift baskets will be delivered to your door. All proceeds from this event will support the ABA Scholarship Program and the Ashland Emergency Fund. Register online by Dec. 8: ashlandbusinessassociation.com/event-3708260.

Corey Rodrigues was the winner of The Catch a New Rising Star, The Funniest Comic

in New England and the Big Sky Comedy Festivals. He has been featured on Gotham Live, Laughs on Fox, and Laff Tracks television shows. In 2018 he released his Dry-Bar comedy special that has amassed over 40 million views worldwide. He made his national debut on the The Conan O'Brien Show in 2019, and in 2020, Rodrigues released his first half-hour Comedy Special on EPIX. Rodrigues can currently be heard daily on Sirius XM.

Shop Ashland This Holiday Season

The ABA wants residents to know that many of the 400+ businesses in town are ABA

LAUGH AWAY
continued on page 2

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HOLIDAYS

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December 5: Light Up Ashland!

Light Up Ashland will fill the town with beautiful luminaries and brighten spirits, as well as support the Ashland Emergency Fund (AEF). Here's how Light Up Ashland works: Purchase your luminary kit from Blush Bouquets, 20 Front St., from Friday, Nov. 27 through Dec. 5. Purchase two kits for \$6; six kits for \$12; or 12 kits for \$24. All proceeds will support AEF. Each kit contains a luminary bag with either a star or snowflake cut out, a sand bag, and a tea light candle. Set up luminaries on your front walk, drive way, or front steps beginning Dec. 5, and keep them up as long as you like to share light and joy!

December 5 through January 1: Winter Wonderland Stroll

2020 has been a year most of us will never forget. To help ease the stress and usher in the

New Year, the town is sponsoring a Winter Wonderland Stroll with five stops along the way. Town staff hope that you enjoy the small pleasures this season brings and that you find comfort and peace in even the smallest twinkly light. Here is what you can plan to do, Dec. 5 through Jan. 1:

1. Take a winter stroll and enjoy the greenery and candy cane path at **Mill Pond Park**.
2. Capture a festive moment on the front steps of **Town Hall**, which will be decorated for that special photo.
3. Stop by **Stone Park** for a sparkly and fun light display in the gazebo.
4. Swing by **The Corner Spot** for a walk through the tunnel of love and see how community comes together through art.
5. Revel in the lights of the huge tree at **125 Front St.** (across the street from the library) and enjoy inspirational messages and a labyrinth/meditation walk. In **Montenegro Square**, the menorah will be lit beginning Dec. 10 and the trees will be lit brighter than ever to welcome 2021.

December 5, 5:30 PM: Illuminate Ashland (livestreamed)

Illuminate Ashland marks its fourth season honoring the important role art plays within a community. This year Illuminate will be livestreamed for audience members to watch from the

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LAUGH AWAY

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members and can help make holiday shopping easy. Members include restaurants, fitness and dance centers, and flower and gifts shops. For a list of products and services, visit the online directory, ashlandbusinessassociation.com/directory.

New Business in Town

Leiby's Flower Shop is now open at 300 Eliot St, Suite 13 (behind Los Cabos, to the left). Leiby's flower shop was previously located in Weston since 1965. The Machnik's, who are Ashland residents, moved the shop to Ashland on Oct. 10. Leiby's is a full-service florist, a member of Teleflora that supplies weddings and events, and plans to offer flower art and design classes once the pandemic ceases to be a threat. They offer no-contact delivery. leibysflorist.com, 781-893-9121.



Ashland residents can enjoy a live performance of comedian Corey Rodrigues on Dec. 11. (Photo/supplied)

comfort of home. This event is sponsored by Chrissy Reynolds and Annemarie's Dance Centre, Arts! Ashland Alliance, and the Town of Ashland.

Performing in town spaces transformed by the beauty of candlelight will be The Move-

ment Project Performance Company, NATyA Dance Collective, Ashland resident and guitarist Joe Stillitano (The Cardinal), and Felice Pomeranz from the Gilded Harps.

This virtual event is free and open to the public on Sat-

urday, Dec. 5 starting at 5:30 p.m. Those interested in attending must register in advance through Annemarie's Dance Centre. Call 508-881-5109 or send an email to annemaries-dancecentre@verizon.net. A link will then be shared.



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"Drive-Buy" Library Book Sale, December 13

Friends of the Ashland Public Library will hold a contact-free book sale in the Montenegro Square parking lot across from the library on Sunday, Dec. 13, from 1 to 3p.m., or until books are sold out. Hard or soft cover books will be packaged in sealed paper bags. All books are gently used and in good condition. Check the Friends' Facebook page, www.facebook.com/FriendsoftheAshlandPublicLibrary, for any change in the date due to inclement weather.

Bags will be pre-packaged according to genre, including fiction, biography/memoir, history and politics, health and family living, sports, travel, and holiday. In addition, there will be a large variety of children's selections packaged according to age. DVDs, CDs, and audio books will also be included.

Adult bags of books and audio books will contain at least six titles; children's bags will have at least 10 titles; and CD and DVD bags will contain 10 items per bag. All bags will be sold for \$5

each, cash only. Due to the nature of this sale, no exchanges or refunds are possible. Customers will be limited to two bags per genre and a maximum purchase of 10 bags.

Following the Ashland Library practice of quarantining returned books for three days, bags will be packed and sealed at least three days prior to the sale. Customers will drive through the parking lot and select their genres. A volunteer will load the bags directly in the trunk of the car. A cashier will collect the cash payment through the driver's window on the way out of the parking lot.

Once bags arrive home, customers can empty the contents, discard the bags, wash hands, and feel assured they have safely brought home a selection of unique and entertaining titles without ever leaving the safety of their car.

Proceeds from the Drive-Buy Book Sale will support Ashland Library programming, such as craft kits for children and adults, online family support programs,



The Friends of the Ashland Library will hold a contact-free, drive-through book sale, Dec. 11. (Photo/Cynthia Whitty)

and acquisition of materials to meet the needs of the community during the pandemic.

Opinion: Is This the Right Time to Ask Residents to Fund Building Projects?

BY RANDY KRAUSS,
ASHLAND RESIDENT

With the exception of the need for more water in Ashland, I cannot think of more important projects than the Public Safety Building and the new Mindess school. Those who protect us need a place to carry out their duties and store equipment in the proper environment. Our teachers and students need a place that supports a safe and proper learning environment. Clearly, they do not have that now. My parents raised me to support community projects such as these even though this school project is practically in my backyard. That said, it does not mean there are no thought provoking questions to consider when funding these projects.

Timing is everything. We are living in unprecedented times. The town of Concord recently voted down a similar proposal to build a school, presumably because the timing was not right. At the end of September, the Commonwealth had an unemployment rate of approximately 9.5 percent. To the average homeowner, the impact from these projects will be approximately \$550. Some will be able to afford this; others may not.

How far behind are renovation plans for the Pit-taway, Warren, and Middle schools? Can we do a better job in planning, forecasting, and budgeting for these impending projects? If memory serves me right, the first high school budget was voted down by the town only to be approved after modifications were made to lower costs. Years later, we can say that our high school is a source of pride.

I don't believe I have ever seen our taxes decrease. There is no transparency in our tax bill with respect to the percentage of the total going to property taxes vs. these special assessments. As an example, is a percentage of my tax bill still going to pay for the high school and/or other projects that may be in this bucket? If so, can I ever expect this to go away?

Soon, we will be asked to vote at Town Meeting to fund these projects. Our town is working on safe ways for the community to participate in this meeting during the pandemic. For me, the Public Safety Building is a must have. For the school, I still have more questions. With the holidays approaching, please find time to ask questions and when the time comes, come out and vote. For or against, your voice matters.



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Is This Your Situation: Ready to Purchase Your Next Home?

BY JOHN SZOLOMAYER,
RE/MAX EXECUTIVE REALTY

If you've decided it's time to move up to a bigger home or a home in a more coveted area, your next challenge will be getting there financially. It's likely you'll need more cash, a larger income and, perhaps, better credit than you had when you purchased your current home. Putting all the pieces in place for the move up could take some time and detailed planning.

1. Credit Clean-Up

Although your credit rating may have been sterling as a first-time home buyer, years of credit card and utility accounts, car payments and consumer loans may have scuffed up that financial image a bit. Late or missed payments have a negative effect on your credit profile, as do large, long-term balances on your accounts. Your credit score, a rating system many lenders use to eval-

uate your financial situation, may prevent you from borrowing as much as you'd like for your next home or getting the lowest interest rate currently available.

The wise buyer will take stock of his or her credit standing and debt status well before attempting the next home purchase. You may need some time to reduce your debt, catch up on any delinquent accounts, remove inaccuracies and blemishes from credit reports and make other adjustments to increase your credit score.

2. Loan Shopping

A quick way to sift through these issues is to contact a lender who can pull a credit report to see if there are any glaring spots on your record. If nothing needs immediate attention, you can continue with a complete application, providing the financial information needed for loan pre-approval. The loan officer will determine the maximum

loan amount you qualify for based on your income and debt profile.

You may want to shop around at this point, comparing loan programs and interest rates. Consider how well your current loan has worked for you and remember that rates aren't everything. The lowest rate may be accompanied by high points. If so, you'll have to keep the mortgage long enough to justify paying the steep up-front cost of the loan.

Consider whether a non-traditional mortgage program could meet your needs. An adjustable-rate mortgage may be a good choice if it looks as though interest rates will be falling.

3. Collecting Cash

An important factor in the equation that determines your buying power will be how much cash you have for a down payment and closing costs. The best mortgage interest rates are

available to buyers with down payments of 20 percent or more. If you make a smaller down payment, you may have to take a higher interest rate or pay for private mortgage insurance, both of which will reduce your buying power.

Unless you're a prodigious saver, chances are the equity you have in your current home will provide the largest source of cash for your next home purchase. Equity, of course, is the difference between the market value of the home and the balance on any mortgages secured by the home.

We would be happy to conduct a comparative analysis of your home to determine the right sales price—at no obligation to you. By determining the value of your home and subtracting out selling costs (paying off the old mortgage, marketing fees and settlement expenses), you'll have the basis for a down payment on your move-up property.

4. Fine Tuning

After taking stock of your financial situation, you may find it necessary to delay your move in order to get the type of home you've targeted. Perhaps you need to save more cash for a down payment and settlement costs. You may need to pay down outstanding debts to improve your credit score and qualify for a larger mortgage or a lower interest rate. Remember, it's likely your home's value and your equity in it will continue to grow as you get yourself in a position to move up successfully.

Information provided by John Szolomayer, RE/MAX Executive Realty. Each office is independently owned and operated. For more information, John can be reached at (508) 259-4788 or JohnSzolomayer.com

Curbside Composting Comes to Ashland

BY CYNTHIA WHITTY

The town of Ashland, in cooperation with the town of Holliston, kicked off a curbside

composting program this fall. According to Ashland's sustainability coordinator, Frank Nakashian, 44 households immediately signed up.

Nakashian and Matt Zettek, the sustainability consultant for Holliston, started the pilot program. "We brainstormed ways to bolster composting activity at a multi-town scale," Nakashian said. "We looked at ways to incentivize composting because it is an environmentally friendly waste management best practice. Food waste is the largest source of landfill material in Massachusetts and 25 percent of trash that municipalities pay for in waste combustion fees is just for food waste. In addition, the more food waste diverted from the waste stream, the less a municipality has to pay for in disposal fees."

The pilot program is an initiative to promote private composting activity by partnering with a curbside composting vendor, Black Earth Compost. Once 500 subscriptions for weekly service are reached or pre-registered combined in the two towns, the prices for six months of service will drop from \$99.99 to \$59.99, a 40 percent price reduction. If 900 subscriptions are met in the two towns, prices will drop even more to \$49.99 for 6 months of service.




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been done in a host of other communities, including Natick, Marlboro, Newton, Salem, and more. These programs have been successful in promoting composting for residents and offering volume discounts for service."

Households that subscribe for service will receive a voucher for a bag of finished compost. The finished compost product is made without pesticides, herbicide, or fertilizers, has nutrients for soil, and is made locally in Mass. Residents interested in joining the program can contact blackearthcompost.com or Nakashian at fnakashian@ashlandmass.com.

Your Money, Your Independence

Closing Time for 2020

Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end. Yeah, 2020 was challenging but plenty of opportunities were available and some still to consider before year end.

Reverse required minimum distributions (RMDs). Congress suspended RMD rules this year. Per IRS, individuals who took RMDs in 2020, including those who turned 70 ½ during 2019, have the option of returning the distribution to their account or other qualified plan. RMDs taken in 2020 are considered eligible for rollover.

For 2021, RMDs return and recall the SECURE Act changed the age requirement to 72. That said, be aware of bipartisan supported SECURE Act 2.0 which has proposals increasing the age

requirement (age 75), limiting distributions based on account balance and other nuances.

Lastly, if you inherited an IRA from a non-spouse (i.e. parent, grandparent, sibling) you need to be proactive in taking your RMD and impact your tax planning.

Roth Conversion. Have sizable Traditional IRAs? Think taxes are going up? With a strong handle on your sources of income and capital gains for 2020, consider modeling tax liability of different amounts converted to a Roth IRA. Remember, unlike a few years ago, you can no longer undo a conversion via "recharacterization", so what's done is done.

Rebalance portfolios and lower taxable income. Sell investments at a loss earlier in the

year? Realized gains? Sitting on sizable unrealized gains? Portfolios need review and rebalancing. Depending on activity in taxable accounts, you may be able to offset taxes owed, reduce unrealized gains as well as write off up to \$3,000 against ordinary income.

Last minute 401(k), 403(b) and 457 plan contributions. Ideally, you'd be at \$19,500 maximum contributions limits (\$25,000 if 50 or older). If not, many plans allow online changes up to 50% of wages. Have a year-end bonus? Can forgo a paycheck or two? Act quickly as plans require a pay cycle for updates to take effect.

Use your Flex Spending Accounts (FSA). Unlike Health Savings Accounts (HSA) that rollover each year to accumulate, FSA is a "use it or lose it" benefit program.

Most allow just \$500 carried the following year; others \$0. If you have qualified medical expenses or bills, pay with your FSA funds before year end. If not, your New Year's Eve may be spent panic shopping in Walgreens.

Financial resolutions look the same? No one wants to see 2020 repeated, same with financial resolutions. If they look familiar, maybe it is time for a change with professional support and an accountability partner.

May you and those closest to you enjoy a happy and safe holiday season.

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

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.

Diwali (Festival of Lights) Celebrated in Ashland

BY CYNTHIA WHITTY

Ashland Indians held a public Diwali celebration, sometimes called the Indian festival of lights, on Nov. 8 at The Corner Spot. Instead of the usual entertainment and food, organizers held a socially distanced Rangoli exhibit.



Some samples of Rangoli at The Corner Spot for Ashland's Diwali celebration. (Photos/Vijay Subramanian)



Diwali, or Dipawali, India's most important holiday of the year, is observed by Hindus, Sikhs, and Janis and lasts five days. The diverse stories from Diwali share the same argument--that good will triumph over evil. The festival gets its name from the row (avali) of clay lamps (deepa) that Indians light outside their homes to symbolize the inner light that protects from spiritual darkness. This festival is as important to Hindus as the Christmas holiday is to Chris-

tians. (kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/diwali/)

"Rangoli, or Kolam, is an art form placed in the front yard of a house and is usually created with white or color powders made of either rice or stone dust," K G Narayana, an event organizer, explained. "This art form sometimes uses dots, straight lines, and curves to draw geometrical symmetric designs. The art form can also depict things that are found in nature, including living and nonliving

objects. It symbolizes a welcome sign in front of the house and also gives a notion of happiness and wellbeing of the members in the household."

Over the centuries, Diwali has become a national festival that is also enjoyed by non-Hindu communities. For in-

stance, in Jainism, Diwali marks the nirvana, or spiritual awakening, of Lord Mahavira on October 15, 527 B.C. and in Sikhism, it honors the day that Guru Hargobind Ji, the Sixth Sikh Guru, was freed from imprisonment. Buddhists in India celebrate Diwali as well.

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Officer Foster Retires After 34 Years

Officer Bill Foster retired last month after 34 years of dedicated service to the Ashland Police Department and to the Ashland community. Foster was one of the firearms instructors, firearms licensing officer, and the department's go-to guy for all things mechanical. On its Facebook page, the department wished Officer Foster well. "Congratulations on your well deserved retirement Bill! You will be greatly missed around the station! We wish you well in your next endeavor."



Firefighter Service Awards

Chief Robie has presented the following members with the Massachusetts Fire Service Commission, Firefighter Service Awards. These awards are presented to members for their time in the fire service (not just in Ashland), both on call and career.

Some of these awards are back dated a few years, note the year they received the award.



- Firefighter/Paramedic Peter Stone - 45 Years (As of March 2016)
- Lieutenant/EMT David Iarussi - 40 Years (As of March 2020)
- Call Firefighter/FAO Michael Duca - 40 Years (As of March 2020)
- Fire Chief/Paramedic Keith Robie - 35 Years (As of March 2020)
- Fire Captain/Paramedic Lyn Moraghan - 25 Years (As of March 2018)
- Fire Lieutenant/Paramedic Anthony Duca - 25 Years (As of March 2020)
- Fire Lieutenant/Paramedic Mark Cafarelli - 25 Years (As of March 2018)
- Fire Lieutenant/Paramedic Matthew Boland - 25 Years (As of March 2019)
- Firefighter/EMT Michael Brogan - 25 Years (As of March 2020)
- Firefighter/Paramedic Erich Bouthillette - 25 Years (As of March 2019)
- Call Firefighter/EMT Robert Gemma (Retired 2019) - 25 Years (As of March 2018)
- Firefighter/Paramedic David Blake - 20 Years (As of March 2020)
- Firefighter/Paramedic Mark Byron - 20 Years (As of March 2019)
- Firefighter/Paramedic Shawn Payton - 20 Years (As of March 2019)

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Overnight Parking Ban

A reminder that the overnight parking ban began Nov. 1 and ends March 31. "It shall be unlawful for the driver of any vehicle, other than one acting in an emergency, to park said vehicle on any street for the period of time longer than one hour between the hours of 2 am - 6 am any day of the week." Vehicles found in violation of the winter parking ban will be issued citations and/or be towed at the owners expense.



Ashland Library News

Everyone entering the library will be required to properly wear a mask and

sanitize their hands upon entering. Masks will be available if you need one. Staff will gladly pull items to be picked up curbside for anyone who cannot wear a mask for medical reasons.

Hours for limited browsing and curbside pickup:

Monday - Thursday 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Friday - Saturday 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

When you arrive in the parking lot, please call 508-881-0134 ext. 2 to speak with a librarian in the adult/teen area or ext. 5 to speak with Children's Room staff. You may be asked to wait if the library has reached capacity. Only one family will be allowed in the Children's Room at a time.

While in the library:

You will be allowed 30 minutes for browsing or 45 minutes for computer use per day. Printing fees/per page are .15 cents for black and white and .25 cents for color, payable by cash or check.

- Masks/face coverings must be worn.
- Please use hand sanitizer - dispensers are throughout the building.
- Practice social distancing by remaining 6 feet apart from others.
- Please do not consume any food or drink.



- **Please continue to return your items outside in the available bookdrop.**
- **Curbside pickup is still available.**

Curbside pickup...

Find the items that you want in the catalog (find.minlib.net) and place a hold listing Ashland as your pickup location. If you don't have internet access at home, please call the library at 508-881-0134 for staff assistance to place a hold. Your reserved items will be held for one week. Inter-library loan and statewide delivery have resumed. This service is available to anyone with a valid Minuteman library card.

Pickup hours:

Monday - Thursday 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Friday and Saturday 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

You will be notified when your item(s) are available for pickup. When you arrive at the library, please call 508-881-0134 to let staff know you are here. Your

items will be delivered to the table on the library patio (Main/Concord Street entrance) for you to take. If you need assistance, please let library staff know when you are contacted about pickup.

Returning Items:

Please use the library book returns located in the library parking lot and near the main entrance on Concord Street. Please note that only one bookdrop will be available for returns per day to allow for suggested quarantining. All items (including media) may be returned in the same bookdrop. If a bookdrop is locked, please do not attempt to force the slot open to return items. No items will be accepted in person by library staff. Based on CDC guidance given to the Institute for Museums and Library Services, any items that get returned will be quarantined. Overdue fines will not be charged while returned items are in quarantine.

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Photocopiers

Color photocopying is available on the main level and black and white photocopying is available in the exhibit area on the lower level.

Computers

Several computers are available for public use. There will be a 45-minute limit on computer use until further notice. Printing in color, black and white and scanning are available.

Inter Library Loan

The library staff would be happy to help you obtain materials from other libraries that are not found in our collection. Delivery is slower than usual because of library closures so please be patient.

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Ashland Author Series

Julie Nardone Uses Her Experience to Inspire Others

BY CYNTHIA WHITTY

Ashland author and artist Julie Nardone released her first book this fall where she uses her experience in overcoming a rare neurological voice condition to inspire others to live creatively and fully. “Nardone’s journey to regain her voice might inspire you to find new, creative ways to use yours,” wrote Leigh Ann Henion, New York Times bestselling author of *Phenomenal: A Hesitant Adventurer’s Search for Wonder in the Natural World*.

Ashland Local Town Pages recently interviewed Nardone to learn more about her life journey and why she seeks to inspire and motivate others.

Can you tell me about your new book?

The title is “Feel More Alive! 30 Brilliant Ways To Reignite Your Inner Spark.” The book is part memoir, part art gallery, and part feel-better guide. It is divided into five A.L.I.V.E. sections, each illustrated with one of my magical paintings. The book is primarily

for women and men, 40+, wishing to feel more enthused about life.

What motivated you to write the book?

In the late 90s, I developed a rare neurological voice condition called Spasmodic Dysphonia (SD) that made it difficult to speak without sounding like a broken PA system. It dashed my dreams of becoming a singer in a band. At that “Dark Night of the Soul” point, I had two choices for myself: further descend into sadness or open some new doors. I chose the latter and took up writing and then painting. Miraculously, I even stumbled on a singing teacher right here in Ashland, Julie Hausmann, who developed a novel way for me to sing “up and over the cracks in my voice.” Within eight months, she not only had me back singing but also, ironically, singing better than before.

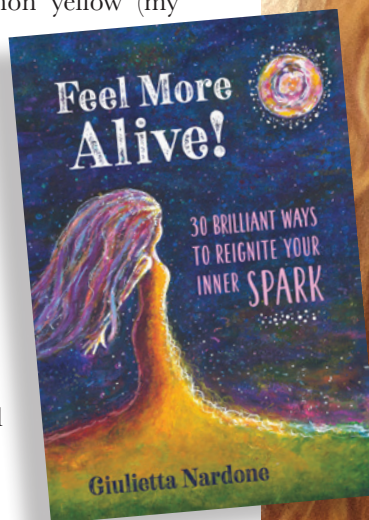
I called my experience “self-hope” and decided to share the inspired process that led me to a more dynamic life. Once you

learn how to fill yourself up with hope, you can do just about anything.

Equally important, the book is short to encourage people to finish! After piling up way too many half-read books, I wanted mine to end on a still engaged high note.

Have you written a book before?

“Feel More Alive!” is my first finished book. I scribbled the first draft in a series of notebooks with vibrant lemon yellow (my favorite color) covers. I may write another book, but right now I’m into creating magical artwork that makes people feel more alive!



What has your writing experience to this point been?

My personal essays have been published in major magazines and newspapers, such as *Psychology Today*, *Spirituality & Health*, *Boston Globe Magazine*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and anthologies like *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, as well as broadcast on public radio.

Where can residents find your book?

The book can be purchased online at Amazon (<https://amzn.to/3lhpebN>) and Barnes & Noble, and locally at Ashland Reiki and Wellness Center, 54 Front St., Ashland. Autographed copies can be purchased from Nardone by contacting her at 508 380 8799.

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Holiday Gift Guide 2020

Make the Holidays a Little Sweeter

What would the holidays be without platters full of homemade cookies? It's that time of year for pulling out favorite recipes and filling the house with delicious aromas and delectable treats.

This recipe for "Stareos" from "Classic Stars Desserts" (Chronicle Books) by Emily Luchetti adds a gourmet spin to a popular chocolate sandwich cookie.

Stareos

Chocolate Sandwich Cookies

Makes 18 cookies

CHOCOLATE SHORTBREAD

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

Pinch of kosher salt

1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder, sifted

8 ounces (16 tablespoons)

unsalted butter, chilled, cut into 1/2-inch pieces

1/2 cup granulated sugar

FILLING

1 cup mascarpone cheese

1 tablespoon granulated sugar

1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract

To make the chocolate shortbread: In a bowl, stir together the flour, salt, and cocoa powder and set aside. Combine the butter and sugar in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment and beat on low speed until the butter and sugar begin to incorporate, about 15 seconds. Add the dry ingredients and continue to mix until the dough comes together, about 3 minutes. It will look dry just before it comes together.

Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. On a lightly floured work surface, roll out the dough 1/4 inch thick. Using a 2-inch star cutter, cut out as many cookies as possible. Gather together the scraps, reroll, and continuing cutting out cookies until you have 36 cookies. Place the cookies on the prepared baking sheets, spacing them 1 inch apart. Refrigerate until firm, at least 1 hour.

Preheat the oven to 300 F: Bake the shortbread until firm, about 35 minutes. At the midway point, switch the pans between the racks and rotate them 180 degrees to ensure even baking. Let cool on the pans to room temperature.

To make the filling: In a small bowl, stir together the mascarpone, sugar and vanilla until smooth.

To assemble the cookies: Turn 18 of the cookies bottom-side up on a work surface. Using a table knife or a small icing spatula, spread about 1 tablespoon of the filling on the bottom of each cookie. Top with the remaining cookies, bottom-side down.

Planning ahead: The shortbread dough may be made and cut out a week in advance. Wrap tightly and refrigerate or freeze. The cookies may be baked 2 days in advance. Store in an airtight container at room temperature. The mascarpone cream may also be made 2 days ahead. Cover and refrigerate, but bring to room temperature before assembling the sandwiches. The cookies should be assembled the day you are going to serve them and covered and refrigerated until serving.



Holiday Gift Guide

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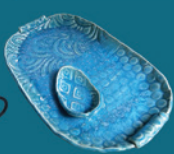
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Holiday Gift Guide



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Holiday Gifts for Four-Legged Family Members

Holiday shoppers who are busy making lists and checking them twice should make sure they don't overlook the family pet. Christmas has gone to the cats and dogs, as a greater number of people include their companion animals when selecting gifts each year.

A study by OnePoll conducted by Rover.com, the nation's largest network of dog sitters and walkers, found that 95 percent of pet owners have bought holiday gifts for their pets. Gifts can range from everyday needs, like food and treats, to more lavish extravagances like spa treatments.

Pet owners who plan to get their pets gifts this year may want to consider some of the emerging pet trends as they browse wares and services. The Balance, a business, career and industry information site, says pet industry trends point toward these segments seeing growth.

Natural pet products

Just as people are interested in protecting the health of the planet and their own personal health, so, too, are they extending this concern to companion

animals. Natural pet products, which can include natural flea and tick remedies, holistic foods, organic items, and all-natural grooming products, can make great gifts.

Specialty pet services

The American Pet Products Association says the demand for high-end pet grooming and other services is substantial. In addition, personalized training, behavioral consulting, portrait photography, dog sitting, and up-scale spa treatments like pet Reiki and massage are booming.

Mobile pet grooming

Mobile pet grooming has become the norm in many areas. Mobile pet grooming can reduce the potential stress on animals, and tends to be very convenient for customers, particularly seniors and others who have mobility issues.

Beyond these growing trends, pet owners have a bevy of other ideas from which to choose. Here are just a few different suggestions:

- tests to detect pets' DNA and trace breed and ancestry,

- interactive puzzles to keep pets engaged and banish boredom,
- stylish storage baskets for pet toys,
- hidden cat litter or dog crate items that camouflage commonly used pet items,
- heated pet bed for cozy nights and mornings, and
- signature vests, coats and sweaters to look good and remain comfortable.

Pet gifts are popular this time of year, ensuring all members of the family have a treat to open.



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Federated Church Pumpkin Patch

Several years ago, the Federated Church of Ashland entered into a fundraising event to sell pumpkins and gourds during the month of October and ending on Halloween. The event has been successful and over the years has become a “look forward to” by many families in Ashland and surrounding communities.

How do we get our pumpkins? The church contracts with a fundraiser organization to receive an order of pumpkins and gourds of a variety of sizes and types. The fundraisers contract with Native Americans “Navajo” in New Mexico who grow the crops in immense fields. At harvest time, the pumpkins are loaded into semi-trailer trucks for the long haul to Ashland and other communities. With many people helping to offload the pumpkins and arrange them on the front lawn, the sale begins.

Upon completion of the sales period, the total dollars are divided into two buckets. Most of

the money is returned to the Native Americans and the fundraising organization. The remaining money is retained by the church and is used to support our activities in the Ashland community and surrounding areas. Activities include supporting and sponsoring Family Promise, Local Women’s Shelter, AA and the Ashland Food Pantry.

Our story is a win win for our church, community and Native Americans. Our success is truly based on the active participation of many local families purchasing pumpkins and getting ready for the fun of Halloween.

Thank you and we hope to see you again next October.

*Bill Wallace, Project Coordinator
Federated Church of Ashland*

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Christmas Boutique & Bake Sale

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Our Christmas Boutique has been canceled due to the pandemic. We hope to see you next year. Please stay safe and be well!

Christmas Eve Service

Federated Church of Ashland
118 Main Street, Ashland MA
Thursday, December 24th

6:15 PM – Music in the Sanctuary and Feeding of the Manger Animals followed by a Candle Light Service with Communion to Celebrate Christmas at **7:00 PM**. Everyone is Welcome to Join us!



How to Discuss Estate Planning with Your Family during the Holidays

The holidays are going to look different this year due to COVID, but even though families may not have large in-person gatherings, they are still a time for family togetherness. The holidays are a time for celebration, spending quality time with loved ones, and exchanging meaningful gifts. We know that when it comes to your children, one of the greatest gifts you can give them is a legacy to continue when you are no longer around. In our practice, we work with families each day on matters just like this.

Despite the many benefits of creating a legacy for your family, it can be a challenging discussion, especially during the holiday season. Here are some tips on discussing estate planning with your family.

1. Plan ahead. Preparation is important. Set time before talking with your loved ones over the holidays to seek the advice of an estate planning attorney. Schedule time for all parties to have the conversation, keeping in mind that the holidays can be a busy time. Think about what you are going to say, what your wishes

are, and what you hope to achieve through the discussion. You may consider how you would like to structure the conversation, for example, whether you will bring any planning documents with you to show your children or supplement the discussion.

2. Be prepared to answer questions. Your family will likely have many questions, some of which you may not be prepared to answer. Try to think of questions your children may have. If questions arise that you are not equipped to answer, let them know that you hear their questions and concerns and will address them as soon as you have answers for them. This conversation may be overwhelming for your family if you have not brought up the topic before. Be prepared for a variety of emotions from your family. It is important that you validate their feelings, but stick to your wishes, and do not let those emotions sway you from your plan.

3. Do not hesitate to follow up.

Whether your time with family is virtual or in person this holiday season, do not wait too long to check-in with your family after your conversation and follow up with questions you left unanswered. It is important to allow your family some breathing room to enjoy the remainder of the holiday season, process the information you gave them, and take time to think of additional questions they may have for you.

We know this can be a difficult conversation to have with your family. If you have questions or need some more advice about how to get started, do not hesitate to contact our office to set up a meeting or attend a webinar. At Dennis Sullivan and Associates, we help clients meet their goals and objectives through a unique process that combines both education and counseling.

We hope you and your family have a happy and healthy holiday season.

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Visit the Lions Christmas Tree Lot!

The Lions were hard at work in November preparing to open the Ashland Lions Christmas Tree lot the day after Thanksgiving! The lot is located on Pond St, directly across the street from DQ. We have lots of fresh Christmas trees and wreaths to choose from. This year we will be accepting electronic payments (Venmo) in addition to cash. Please consider buying your fresh Christmas tree from the Ashland Lions this year and donate to a great cause. Remember, Lions give back 100% of proceeds to our local community and Lions Eye Research. While the Lions have had to cancel every other fundraiser this year, we are still bringing Christmas spirit and raising money for our community. We follow all health and cleaning guidelines for COVID to ensure the safety of our volunteers and customers. Hope to see you this holiday season!

Cleanups for Seniors

Ashland Lions Club has been out helping Seniors clean up their yards when they have been either unable to do it themselves, or get assistance completing this task. The members nominated and voted on a handful of seniors in need, and organized events to complete the cleanups. Well done Lions!

Coats for Kids

Lions Club District 33K clubs are partnering with Anton's Cleaners again this year for their annual Coats for Kids drive! Please search your closets for unused and ask your friends and neighbors to do the same. The weather is getting colder and this is a good opportunity to help those in need. The coats can be for children or adults and must in good condition- that means gently worn, no rips, tears, broken zippers or permanent stains. Coats may be dropped off at any Anton's Cleaners or at Cleaner's Choice, 193 Main St. Ashland, MA. We will also be accepting coats at our Christmas tree lot during normal open hours, and at the Ashland Fire Station on Cedar St for the rest of the season.

Lion Barbara Thoresen receives Melvin Jones Award

Congratulations to our own Lion Barbara Thoresen! She recently retired from nearly 49 years of service to the Ashland community as a crossing guard and member of the the Ashland Auxiliary Police. On school days Barbara could be found helping middle school students cross the busy intersection at Front and Cross Streets. Barbara enjoyed her time watching the kids grow up and then return later with their own children. From 1975-1978 she coached the girl's middle school softball team.

Barbara has lived in Ashland since she moved from Medway in 1958. She worked at Telechron from 1954-1960 where she met Jens, her husband of 61 years. Sadly, Jens passed away this past December. Barbara and Jens raised 4 children. There are 8 grandchildren and a recently born great grandchild.

In addition to caring for her family and working in town, Barbara has been involved in the Lions organization since 1979 at the local, district and state levels. First, she

was a member of the Ashland Lioness Club, then a member of the Greater Ashland Lions Club and is currently a member of the Ashland Lions Club where she served as King Lion 1998-1999. Barbara has been a very active Lion over the years, involved in community service and fundraising including Pizza with Santa, Egg Hunts at Stone Park, Father-Daughter Dance, Special Olympics, High School Speech Contest, Toll Road, Eyeglass Collection for recycling, maintaining cemetery markers for veterans at Wildwood cemetery, Senior Breakfasts, Drug Take-Back event, yard sales and Christmas tree sales. As a result of her service, Barbara was awarded the prestigious Melvin Jones Award.

Thank you, Barbara, for all of your work, dedication and commitment to serving the community of Ashland. You have the heart of a Lion.

Whodunnit? Murder In Sin City

The Ashland Lions Club is teaming up with Lions Clubs in Sherborn and Bellingham mystery dinner. The event has been moved

to Saturday, April 17th, 2021, 6:30pm-11:00pm. Participants will be assigned a role to play in solving a murder mystery! The event will be held at the VFW, 311 Pleasant St, Ashland. Tickets are available for \$35 on Eventbrite.com under "Murder in Sin City", or call Lion Eileen at 508-861-3226. Ticket price includes admission and an appetizer buffet. There will also be a cash bar, raffles and prizes. Currently only 150 tickets will be sold (this number subject to reduction as guidelines change for social distancing). All proceeds will benefit local hosting Lions Club charities.

Stay up-to-date on Lions happenings

To see the latest status of our events, please visit our Ashland Lions Facebook page. Click the Like button and you will be automatically notified of changes or cancellations.

Lion Dan Mitchell

Greater Ashland Lions Club

Entering our ninth month of uncertainties of what lies before us, the Greater Ashland Lions are Committed to serve the Ashland Community and those in need. THANK YOU for your continued support with all our service projects, donations to the local food pantries, keeping in contact with those that are housebound and our fundraising that has been limited due to COVID 19.

Peace Poster

The Annual International

Lions Peace Poster that the Greater Ashland Lion and the Ashland Lions have jointly participated in for the last 33 years ended on Nov. 1, with 54 Ashland Middle School students that participated under the direction of Art teacher Ms. Rebecca Micucci. (Thank You). The students have been judged on the subject "Peace thru Service" in the medium of drawing with crayon, paint and pencils on their vision of the subject "Peace thru Service". The winning student's posters will continue to the District

level and judged at the District 33K Mid -Winter Conference. Awards and the 1st, 2nd& 3rd place names will be announced at a future date, each participant will be recognized with Certificates of Appreciation. Thank You to the Ashland Middle School Office Staff for selecting the winning posters.

Holiday Wreath and Swags

Thinking ahead (ORDERS HAD TO BE RECEIVED BY October 30th) the Wreath and Swag Sale has been an overwhelming success and they should be delivered by the first week of December. Lion Cheryl will notify you of their delivery.

Coat Drive

The Annual Coat Drive is on going and will continue thru Jan.

10, 2021, this year the request for New or gently used women, men's, children's and infants' coats are in demand. Contact Lion Deb for more information and pick up at 508-881-2117.

Youth Speech Contest

TheMassachusetts Youth Speech Contest is progressing with participants in grade 9-12 for any student living in the town of Ashland and attending a school of their choice are qualified to enter. The theme for the 2020-2021 is "Is Winning everything" this is the opportunity for students to demonstrate their speaking ability in the presence of an audience. For more information contact Lions Margaret 508-881-9861 or Lion Patti 508-881-2034.

Will There Be a Winter Wonderland?

The Greater Ashland Lions are confident that we will have a Winter Wonderland at a date to be announced thru social media and community bulletin boards keeping in compliance with local health boards and Governors requests for safety wearing masks and social distancing.

Would you like to know more about the Greater Ashland Lions? Contact Lion Mary 508-881-5515 or Lion Ellie 508-875-4513. We do recycle used and nonprescription eye glasses, hearing aids, coupons for education and tabs from soda, beer, soup and pet food cans contact Lion Marj 508-653-6267

Happy Holidays to ALL and to ALL a Bright NEW YEAR

Submitted by Lion Ellie Torelli

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Sports

Girls Cross Country Competes Despite Pandemic

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

The Covid-19 pandemic wreaked havoc amongst high school sports, cancelling the spring seasons throughout the state, while forcing the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) to make numerous revisions to fall sports.

Football, volleyball, and cheerleading were moved to February, but all other sports took to their respective fields with new rule changes.

The girls' cross country Tri-Valley League was broken up into two groups with schools having five matches against only those schools in their proximity. On the actual courses, groups of five runners per team are sent out in waves wearing masks whenever near other runners and meets are only to take place on Saturdays.

The Ashland girls' cross country team has only eight runners on its squad, but Coach Chris Avery believes her girls are prepared to compete in this abbreviated season.

"The girls got together in small groups prior to the season and ran just in case we had a season. I believe that they were more prepared this season than they were last year," the clocker Coach said. "I think they were just excited to have a season after the spring got cancelled and were able to run. This is a close-knit group of girls and their attitude has been great."

Thus far in the early goings of the season Ashland currently finds themselves at 1-2 having defeated Bellingham while losing to Medway and Hopkinton. They were scheduled to square off against Norton, but that was moved to the end of the season due to contact with the virus in one of the schools, not necessarily with a runner. In addition to the Norton contest, Ashland will have to square off against Holliston; both teams have strong distance runners, so it's going to be interesting to see how the Clocker girls do.

"In the words of (New England Patriots Coach) Bill Bel-



chick, we are taking things one week at a time," Avery said. "The girls feel good about how they've run so far. I don't think they were expecting this (being 1-0-1) at this point, they are just happy to be running and having a good time."

Leading the Clockers on the course this fall are junior captains Emilia Agostinelli, Ellie McSweeney, and Brooke Boulanger. Agostinelli has been the team's top runner over the past two seasons and runs the course in 22:44, which is usually a minute over the next Ashland runner to cross the finish line.

McSweeney (23:16) and Boulanger (23:27) are usually inseparable whenever they run and will finish third and fourth for the Clockers.

Freshman Nora Quitt has been running an average of 23:04 good enough to be the team's number two runner behind Agostinelli and has really impressed the Coach thus far.

"Nora had a fantastic season last year as a middle school runner," the Coach said. "She'll usually start out real strong and lead the pack before Emilia passes her to take over the lead. Nora's still young and hasn't learned how to pace herself yet."

Meredith Reilly (23:59) and Ella Fong (25:10) make up another group that likes to run together at practice, but during the meets with five girls going out in each wave Reilly finds herself in the first group to go out. Fong, the team's sixth runner, goes out in the second wave and doesn't have anyone to push her the way Reilly does so her time is slower than it would be with competition.

Rounding out the team are sophomores Maggie Long and Sophia Kriegsmann.

According to the Coach, having such a small team always makes it tough to be competitive against some of the bigger schools, but likes the attitudes her



girls have when they take to the course.

"Covid messed with a lot of things this year, one of them being having no middle schoolers running and I'm hoping the lost season doesn't cause them to not come back next year," Avery said. "Coming into the season I really didn't have too much of an expectation, but we are definitely

doing much better than in the past. We have an awesome bunch of girls that all enjoy running and being only 8 of them are rather close to one another."

Just being able to run with their friends is much more than the Ashland cross country team could ask for during the current situation; having won one meet and tying another is a bonus.

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Ashland Girl Scouts Complete Community Service Projects

A community service project Ashland 10th Grade Girl Scout troop 75354 was completed at the Mindess School in Ashland.

The goal of the project, which was supported by the Ashland PTO, was to encourage students at Mindess School (grades 3-5) to play and interact while maintaining safe physical distance. Over two weekends the seven Girl Scouts planned and painted interactive playspaces including a “mirror me” game, and Jumanji-themed walkway. The Scouts also refreshed existing play areas including the School’s hopscotch board.

“This is the first of many initiatives the troop is planning to complete as our girls, now sophomores in high school, continue to grow into their roles as community leaders and role models,” said troop leader, Kristin Sundin Brandt.

According to co-leader, Karen Davidsen, response to the painting from parents and students has been positive, with the Girl Scout troop receive requests for a similar project at another school in town.

Ashland Girl Scouts are part of the Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts which is 47,000 strong, with 32,000 girls and 15,000 volunteers in 178 communities in eastern Massachusetts who believe in the power of every

G.I.R.L. (Go-getter, Innovator, Risk-taker, Leader) to change the world. Girl Scouts is the preeminent leadership development

organization for girls. GSEMA is the 10th largest Girl Scout council in the United States, building girls of courage, confidence, and

character, who make the world a better place. To volunteer, reconnect, donate, join, or learn more, visit gsema.org.



Members of Troop 75354
(left to right)
Annmarie Dolloway,
Sarah Davidsen,
Jordan Sherman,
Sydney Whitkens,
Meredith Reilly, Sophie Brandt.
Not pictured, Kayla Wilen.



December is National Impaired Driving Month

By KRISTIN FRENCH, LCSW,
DECISIONS AT EVERY TURN
COALITION, AND CHIEF
VINCENT ALFANO, ASHLAND
POLICE DEPARTMENT

Ashland’s Decisions at Every Turn (DAET) Coalition and the Ashland Police Department (APD) are affirming our commitment to safety this holiday season.

This month, communities across the country are observing National Impaired Driving Month to recognize this time of year during which impaired driving crashes are among the highest. By raising awareness about the importance of each of our actions to prevent impaired driving, we can help keep our roads, our neighborhoods, and our families, safe.

The APD is the bearer of community safety. DAET is a volunteer organization whose mission is to prevent and reduce youth substance use. Together, we are dedicated to the support of all people in the community, with a special focus on the health and safety of our children and teens.



Please remember the use of *any* substance can alter judgement and the ability to drive safely, putting the driver and others at risk. We encourage parents and other adults with influence on the lives of young people to remind them that underage alcohol, marijuana, and other drug use is unhealthy and against the law. We remind parents and teens that the purpose of the Social Host Law is to prevent underage alcohol use and the potential negative consequences for teens, families, and the broader community that can result from providing alcohol to minors.

It is important to acknowledge that our traditions and celebrations may look different this year. The pandemic has touched our nation, communities, and families in different ways. At a time when we need comfort and support most, we may be struggling with how best to cope. At a time where we’ve put our lives on hold, we want to celebrate. At a time when we want to connect more, we are asked to connect less. As each family decides how to recognize this holiday season, we hope that you are generous in community spirit and work with friends and neighbors to prioritize decisions that protect the safety and well-being of Ashland youth.

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Ashland Bark Park Invites Community Support

BY CARA TIRRELL, ASHLAND BARK PARK

Ashland Dog Park Committee volunteers have continued to work tirelessly for the past three years to bring Ashland Bark Park to fruition. In February 2020, the Ashland Select Board voted 5-0 to allocate two acres of land. These two acres are Parcel #13-138, located at Memorial Drive (previously known as the MBTA access road), and in true Massachusetts fashion, down the street from the Dunks on the corner of 135.

Next steps include applying for The Stanton Grant, which provides funding for both the "bid ready documents for a contractor" design and hard construction costs (labor and material). "As part of its mission of encouraging positive dog/human relationships, the Stanton Foundation supports the development of enclosed dog parks in Massachusetts cities and towns. This support takes the form of a series of grants to support park design, park construction, and capital improvements in parks supported by the Foundation." (thestantonfoundation.org) For an example of a Stanton Grant Foundation-funded park, see Fido of Natick/Eddie's Park (fidoofnatick.com).

The Foundation requires the committee to work hand in hand with the town's procurement officer and Assistant Town Manager Jenn Ball, who will be the direct contact with the foundation. In order to obtain the design grant.

Foundation contributions include design, construction and capital improvement grants.

The community, Ashland, is required to contribute the land and infrastructure, all "soft costs" associated with park building, including bond, contingency, overhead, insurance, and other miscellaneous items not fairly categorized as "labor and materials," and ongoing park maintenance.

The Ashland community can support the dog park by making tax-deductible donations to Ashland Bark Park, 3 Hilldale Rd., Ashland 01721, and online. Organizers are participating in a fundraiser with Doragon Ramen and holding an Ashland Dog Park Holiday Fundraiser. When residents contribute \$100 or more, they will be entered into a raffle to win holiday-themed dog bundles for pets. The fundraiser ends on Dec. 20. Visit <https://www.ashlandbarkpark.org>.

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Website <https://www.ashlandbarkpark.org/>

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ASHLAND DOG PARK HOLIDAY BUNDLE includes a basket for dog stuff, oversized cozy blanket, ornament, treats, toys, magnet, sticker, a homemade white birch candle from *Crazed Mom Candle Co.*, and homemade dog snacks donated by *Shugar Bakery*

*** ASHLAND BARK PARK HOLIDAY CAMPAIGN ***

With a donation of only **\$25** or more now until December 20, 2020, you will be entered into a raffle to receive a holiday dog bundle ready to gift to your pet.



ASHLAND BARK PARK HOLIDAY BUNDLE includes a basket for dog stuff, oversized cozy blanket, ornament, treats, toys, magnet, sticker, a homemade white birch candle from *Crazed Mom Candle Co.*, and homemade dog snacks donated by *Shugar Bakery*.



*** WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE ***

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Website <https://www.ashlandbarkpark.org/>



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New Traditions for the Holidays

BY MARGY GASSEL, ASHLAND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

It's the holiday season 2020! For many, a chance to connect and celebrate with friends and relatives. With cautions about health protocols, this may also be an opportunity to take on new traditions for gift giving and entertaining. Here's why:

The trash that goes to landfills and incinerators results in the release of greenhouse gases and air pollutants. According to the Mass Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), food waste comprises the largest share (26 percent) of our trash. Food waste creates such large amounts of greenhouse gases that if it were a country, it would come in third after the United States and China in its impact on global warming.¹

Massachusetts is running out of places to put its trash. And during the holiday season our waste increases significantly. The amount of trash produced increases 25 percent between Thanksgiving and New Year's.

The way we produce, consume, and dispose of goods and food in the U.S. accounts for 42 percent of our nation's greenhouse gas emissions¹. Therefore, we can make a significant impact by consuming less and producing less waste.

While composting helps by eliminating some of the waste that would otherwise need to be disposed, recycling and composting are not the solution for too much waste. To really manage the problem, we need to reduce how much waste we create. Reduce! Reuse!

"Zero Waste" is a goal to minimize the amount of garbage we create by reducing what we need, reusing as much as possible, recycling what we can, and composting what we cannot.

The pandemic has exacerbated the amount of unnecessary waste because of the added amount of single-use, disposable products being used, including not just masks and PPE, but single-use utensils, bottles, and bags.

Let's breakdown the ways our habits at the holidays exacerbate the problem: gifts and gift wrap, cards, entertaining with food and drink, and decorations. How can we practice more sustainable holiday behavior?

WRAPPING GIFTS

Wrapping paper is hard to recycle due to its high clay and low paper content. As alternatives for gift wrap, try newsprint (including comics), colorful magazine pages, old posters or calendars, kids' artwork, paper grocery bags, butcher paper.

Some people use cloth gift bags or fabric (scraps, bandanas, scarves, cloth napkins, burlap); cans, canisters; shoe boxes and other old boxes; store shopping bags (cover their logo with a card, photo, or artwork). Food like nuts, chocolate, and candy are festive in mason jars.

Save and reuse ribbons and bows. Decorate your packages with natural items such as pinecones, acorns, small twigs, pressed leaves, cinnamon sticks, dried oranges (look online for recipes), and twine.

CARDS

If you buy cards, look for cards that can be recycled (with no embellishments, such as ribbon and foil) and that are made with post-consumer recycled content. Ecards are becoming a popular and convenient option.

HOSTING

If you get together in person, consider what you use to serve food and drinks. Your tableware (cutlery, dishes, and glasses) is more sustainable than single-use disposable items. Invest in a few extra wine glasses and store them for future celebrations. Serve drinks in pitchers rather than single-serving bottles and cans. Check thrift shops for extra holiday ware.



Fabric gift wrap



Newspaper gift wrap



Paper star decoration

toothbrush, rechargeable batteries, stainless steel razor, tea strainer, hankies, tea towels, organic seeds, organic socks, non-plastic hair ties (Kooshoo), silk floss (Radius), and biodegradable, non-plastic phone cases (Pela).

But first, carefully consider: how much more "stuff" do we really need? How many of the items you purchase soon end up in the trash? Consider gifting experiences (like museum passes, swimming lessons), or gifting consumable items (homemade treats: chocolates, jams, hot cocoa mix, your favorite family recipe), or making charitable donations.

DECORATING

Get creative! Make centerpieces and other decorations from things you already have including natural elements—small branches, pine needles, pine cones, acorns, red leaves, cinnamon sticks, fresh herbs, fresh fruits, squash, gourds, nuts ... to name a few.

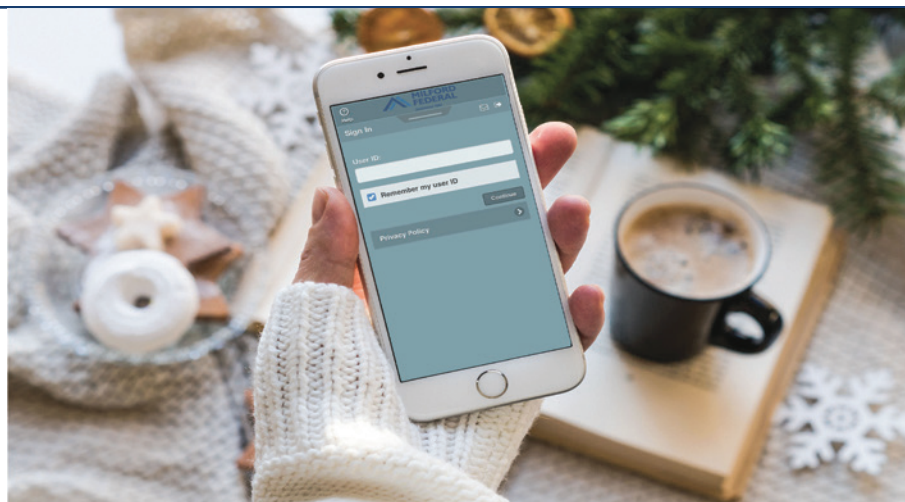
Make your own ornaments (look online for ideas such as origami stars). Make garlands with wine corks, popcorn, or dried oranges ("recipes" online) or borrow extra ornaments from friends and neighbors. Decorate your houseplants with holiday ornaments.

Since our customs are already forced to change because of this peculiar year, take it a step further and know you are helping to save our planet. Be inventive and start new holiday traditions by reducing and reusing.

GIFTS

Focus on quality, look for sustainable clothing brands, give reusable items such as reusable straws, food containers, coffee mugs. Regift something you don't use. Consider giving electronic books. Make your own gifts. You can make your own cloth napkins from thrift store or scrap fabrics; roll them up and tie with a string, tuck in pine needles.

Here are some ideas for sustainable stocking stuffers: bamboo



The Milford Federal Bank mobile app makes banking fast and easy, giving you time to relax and enjoy the cocoa this holiday season!

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Winter Sports Updates

As we are winding down the Fall season, we share in the anticipation of finding out what a potential winter sports season may look like. At this point (as of Nov. 13) we have some timelines, but still many questions; we should have some answers soon.

Last month, the Office of Environmental and Energy Affairs (EEA) released updated guidelines for sports. These guidelines provide a statewide framework for what sports may be offered and with what types of safety modifications.

There are still a number of statewide and local steps to go through before we will know exactly what the season can look like here in Ashland. Those steps are outlined below:

MIAA Individual Sport Committees will present their modifications to the MIAA's Sports Medicine Committee (SMC) by the end of this week

The SMC will send all approved modifications/sports to the MIAA Covid Task Force.

The Task Force will present to the MIAA Board of Directors,

who will vote on MIAA sponsored sports for the Winter.

The Tri-Valley League Athletic Directors will meet to finalize a framework for a winter season within our league (we have already been working in draft form)

We will look for local approval within the district, making sure any proposal aligns with our educational structure/plan here in Ashland.

With all of that said, we are opening winter registration for the high school sports listed below so that we can start to get an idea on numbers. We will not be collecting user fees at this time.

**Please note: offerings are subject to change*

Alpine Ski, Basketball, Track, Swim & Dive, and Boys Ice Hockey; Medfield for Gymnastics Coop; Medway for Girls Ice Hockey Coop.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out, and as always...GO CLOCKS!

Stephen Marks
Athletic Director



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Special Town Meetings: December 8 and January 9

BY JEN BALL,
ASSISTANT TOWN MANAGER

Special Town Meetings are scheduled for Dec. 8 and Jan. 9. The December town meeting will be held in the Ashland High School gym to ensure COVID-19 safety protocols.

Special Town Meeting – Dec. 8, 2021

The December town meeting will consist of warrant articles deferred from May, including: Article 1: Free Cash Transfer; Article 2: Property Tax Exemption; Article 3: Acceptance of Brave Act: Property Tax Exemption; Acceptance of Brave Act: veteran Tax Work off Program; Amend Zoning Bylaw: Valentine Overlay District; Authorization to Sell or Lease 133 West Union Street for Adaptive Reuse; Acceptance land



and change boundaries for 433 Chestnut; Land Tracking: Accept Easement from Independence lane to install Booster pump station; Amend General Bylaw: Stormwater Lien; Community Preservation Committee (CPC): Fund Construction of Trolley Brook Section of Upper Charles

Trail; CPC: Fund Town Forest Improvements; Amend Zoning Bylaw: Design Review process.

Several articles are routine matters that are typically handled at the Special Fall Town Meeting each year. These articles include allocating certified free cash in accordance with our financial policies, presenting any necessary budget transfers and voting on the senior tax exemption. This year eligible seniors will be able to save approximately \$800 on their property taxes.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, there was a decision in May to defer articles that were not time sensitive to the fall. These include two CPC articles. The first article will recommend \$120,000 for the construction of the Trolley

Brook Trail section of the Upper Charles Trail. The second CPC article recommends \$9,700 to help the Town Forest Committee maintain and enhance the Town Forest. This will include installing boundary markers, deer enclosures, and enhancing the model rain garden. Additionally, the Stormwater Advisory Committee has sponsored an article that will allow the Town to lien properties if stormwater fees goes unpaid.

There are several important new business articles for Town Meeting to take up. There are two articles that will ask the town to consider to accept the Brave Act, sections 5 and 5N, which would exempt gold star families from property tax and create a veteran tax work off program. The town will also be asked to conduct a friendly land taking on Independence Lane. This will allow the town to install a needed water booster pump station on common land for the neighborhood. Additionally, the town will be asking for approval to accept the change in lot lines and then subsequently consummate the sale of 433 Chestnut St. This article will be presented to clean-up the lot lines and complete the sale in which a private investor will restore the home to historical pres-

ervation standards.

The town will also be asked to vote on two articles related to the Valentine Property. This will include creating an overlay zoning district, which will allow the property to be restored in a way that achieves the goals of the Town and the Valentine Committee. The second article will be providing the Select Board with the authorization to sell or lease the property.

Over the last year the Valentine Committee has done its due diligence in exploring possible ways to revitalize this property. After considering possible construction, operation and maintenance costs the committee began to explore the possibility of a public private partnership. At this time, partly due to the existing conditions of the barn, the committee has issued a Request for Proposal asking the private sector to submit adaptive reuse proposals that will outline their plan to revitalize this property. Any sale or lease will be required to adhere to several deed restrictions including preserving a portion of the parcel for publicly accessible Open Space, historical preservation of both the home and barn, and limiting any future development on the parcels. The proposals were due Nov. 24. The committee has begun its review process and it is their hope that they can present a viable proposal that brings the Town's vision for this property to fruition.

Special Town Meeting - January 9, 2021

There will be a second Special Town Meeting on Jan. 9, 2021. This Special Town Meeting will present the Public Safety Building project and the Mindess Building project to its Legislative body, and Town Meeting will be asked for authorization to fund these critically important projects.

Note: At the time of this writing, the date for the special town election where residents will vote on funding the Public Safety Building and the Mindess School building project, has not been determined.

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