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Local artists to help craft rosier 2021 for The Framers Gallery

By Rod Lee

It looked like business as usual at The Framers Gallery in Auburn on the afternoon of December 22. Henry Montville, the shop's owner, was standing next to a large, beautifully framed print of "Normandy 1944" sitting on a counter in front of him. His purpose: to make sure with a trained eye that the job met expectations. His, and the customer's.

"That is an impressive piece of art," a visitor said.

This kind of attention to detail has been a forte of Mr. Montville's approach to his craft for all the years he has been in business as one of Worcester County's premier suppliers of custom framing for the home, office, as a gift, or for commercial installation.

Going hand-in-hand with his work as a framer are the thirty-nine years he has spent as a professional photographer, initially in the employ of someone else and "on my own" since 1990. Here too, demand for his services, especially from brides-to-be, ebbed substantially in 2020 because of COVID-19.

"My weddings are gone," Henry stated.

Between having to close temporarily, not being able to get the materials he needed for his framing work, and the erasure from his calendar of weddings, 2020 was a trying twelve months.

Like so many retailers in South County, he is waiting to see what 2021 brings.

"I don't know, with the vaccine," he said. "I got the first round (of government assistance), a percentage of it for employees and a per-

centage for rent. The second round, I don't know if I'll be eligible."

Ever attentive to what ingredients will heighten The Framers Gallery's appeal to prospective patrons, Mr. Montville has been touting the creations of "local artists" that he has on display. "Bob's Bowls;" "Primarily Pottery" by Linda Early of Natures Gallery; and "Wood Carving" by Edward Desrosiers all occupy prominent spots in the store.

Mr. Desrosiers appreciates that Mr. Montville brings the same dedication to framing as he does to wood carving.

"He is framing some pictures for me," Mr. Desrosiers said, of Mr. Montville. "He's fussy, I've seen what he can do."

Having a perch at The Framers Gallery is a good location for some of the many birds he has carved as "Wood Carvings," Mr. Desrosiers said.

His wood carvings of birds, seated on a shelving unit in the store, mesh nicely with the atmosphere Mr. Montville is trying to project.

A resident of Colonial Road in Auburn, Mr. Desrosiers has been doing wood carving for nearly four decades. He attends carving shows and has customers from far and wide.

"My wife and I were sports fishermen," Mr. Desrosiers said, on the telephone during a day-after-Christmas conversation. "I was a taxidermist. Jimmy White, a friend, said to me 'you need to take up wood carving. I do birds...raptors, owls, eagles, falcons, shore birds,

Continued on page 2



Birds on display at The Framers Gallery are carved from wood by Edward Desrosiers of Auburn.

Illume Hair Co. shines on – as color is it!

By Janet Stoica

Like mother like daughter? Vicky Durant, co-owner of Illume Hair Co. along with her daughter, Amelia Durant, handed off her salon to Amelia, as of January 1. The hair styling business has changed by leaps since the days of yore.

Does anyone get perms or have weekly styles anymore? "Yes, we do have a few wonderful ladies who enjoy a nice perm or a weekly hair style," said Vicky, "but I think I'm the only stylist here who does have clients choosing these types of services. Our salon's specialty is definitely color."

After 15 years of shop ownership, beginning as Shagged Hair Salon in North Oxford, Vicky decided it was time to pass the baton to her daughter. Vicky began as a stylist at the North Oxford venue working for the original owner and when that owner decided to enter teaching, Vicky bought the location, naming it Shagged Hair. In 2017 a terrible fire hit the shop, destroying everything. A defective refrigerator was the cause. As fate would have it, they were fortu-

Continued on page 2



Amelia and Vicky Durant

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ILLUME HAIR CO.

Continued from page 1

nate to find a new location almost immediately at their current site of 2 Millbury Boulevard (next door to The Oxford Restaurant).

"I'll be stepping out of ownership," said Vicky, "and now this will be Amelia's vision. I will still be behind a chair. My salon and our customers helped me raise a family and for that I'm grateful. Forty years ago I knew this profession was for me as at age 12 my friends were allowing me to work my styling skills on their hair. I remember loving my Barbie doll and designing her hair and makeup.

My daughter, Amelia, literally grew up in my salon. She swept floors, answered phones, and made appointments. Now she's become highly skilled at her profession and is doing very well."

The salon employs seven stylists, all proficient in their styling and coloring expertise from Babylights (delicate white-blond highlights) to teasy lights (a combination of traditional foil highlights and Balayage) to Balayage (a gradual natural-looking highlight). Recently, Vicky completed a Mermaid Hair coloring for a customer who was preparing for a photo shoot. The main colors were purple and aquamarine with a touch of pink—very fashion-

able and trendy. Illume's stylists and colorists enjoy serving customers from 20 to 90 years young.

"We really are all about color," Vicky explained. "Platinum and silver blonde are huge right now. Some of our clients want just a few strands and some want every hair colored. Subtle or not-so-

subtle, it's up to our customers. We use brushes of various sizes to get the look our clients ask for."

Illume is COVID-safe and sanitary with each stylist's chair separated much more than the suggested six-foot distance. Hand sanitizers are provided at each booth as well as at door entry, every seat is sanitized between

clients, and every cape used is worn only once.

They are open six days weekly from Monday through Saturday with some stylists choosing a Sunday to accommodate their clients. A salon renovation was recently completed when they were closed per Massachusetts' directives from March through June.

Their new hair-washing stations are mint with raised lounge chairs that are very comfortable for their clients as well as ergonomically-correct for their stylists. Illume Hair Co., 2 Millbury Boulevard, Oxford. Phone: (508) 987-0064.

Janet can be reached at jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

ARTISTS

Continued from page 1

songbirds. I was second in the world for 'best bird,' a long-tailed duck, a sea bird, at a contest in Ocean City, Maryland, in 2012. People come from all over for the event; there are a bunch of categories from novice on up."

After a hiatus of ten years, Linda Early is "finally back, joyfully playing with clay" (and mixed mediums, like copper and wood), from

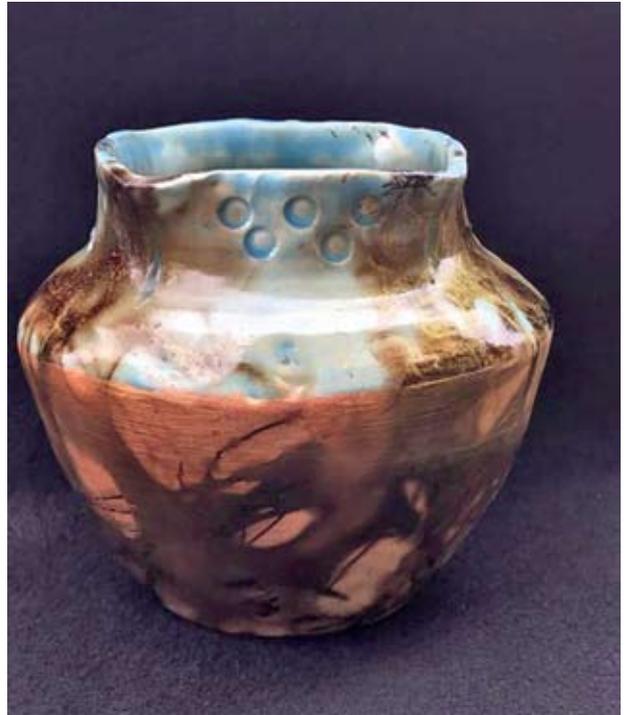
Happy New Year from everyone at The Yankee Xpress

her own home in Brimfield. Some of her Natures Gallery pieces, which she describes as "from the earth, hands and heart," have also found a place at The Framers' Gallery.

On her website, Ms. Early says "I have always been attracted to art and my search for the most enjoyable medium took many years. I began my love affair with clay when I took my first pottery class in 1996. I found it challenged my creativity.

"Feeling, molding and shaping clay soothes my mind. Everything I make comes from my head, hands and heart. Creating is my passion, sharing it is my joy."

Contact Rod Lee at rodlee.1963@gmail.com or 774-232-2999.



Linda Early's clay pottery has become a fixture at The Framers' Gallery.

Lake Chargooggagoggmanchauggagoggheaubunagungamaugg

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Samuel Slater EXPERIENCE

Do you remember when phones were party lines?

Can you build one?

I am the founder of Webster Museums, a 501 c (3) non-profit that is developing a teaching museum called the Samuel Slater Experience. The museum presents the story of Samuel Slater, the "Father of The American Industrial Revolution," and the boomtown of Webster, Massachusetts, which resulted from Slater's mill operations. The time period covered is 1780 through 1910.



I and museum curator Olivia Spratt want to include in the educational process a working early 1900's telephone demonstration. While we have collected some very old phones, they are not functional. We need to find someone to help us build a working model as described below.

The model system would include two phones and a plug-in switchboard. Each phone would be on separate eight-party-line lines. Three students would be selected: student A makes a call, student B runs the switchboard, and student C receives the call.

There will be 30 to 40 students in a class watching the demonstration so we would have to have a modern

amplifier so they could all hear, but the sound would be the realistic old crackling phone sound.

Can you help us or know someone who could? We need to hire someone to help us build it.

Contact Olivia at ospratt@samuel-slaterexperience.org or call the museum at 508-461-2955.

— Chris Robert

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COVID-19 grants for Massachusetts small businesses

Gov. Charlie Baker announced a \$668 million stimulus package aimed at providing support to small businesses in Massachusetts, especially those hardest hit by the financial fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.

According to state officials, the cash will support additional grants under a program launched earlier

this year and will help establish another initiative to supply businesses up to \$75,000 or three months of operating expenses.

The funds will allow business owners to pay debts, cover their rent, compensate employees, and pay utility bills and other operational costs.

Who is eligible

State officials will continue

to award grants to eligible businesses who applied to the COVID-19 Small Business Program this fall but did not receive funding.

Certain sectors where businesses were hardest hit by the pandemic will be eligible under a new grant program. Industries include

- Restaurants
- Bars
- Caterers

- Indoor Recreation and Entertainment Establishments
- Gyms and Fitness Centers
- Personal services
- Retail Businesses
- Event-Support Professionals (such as photographers and videographers)

According to Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito, those businesses must be "able to document a loss of income as much as or higher than their

grant request due to the pandemic" and have a physical establishment in Massachusetts.

How to apply

Businesses that applied to receive relief through the Small Business Program in the fall and did not receive funds "will be prioritized for funding first and do not need to reapply," officials said.

Businesses seeking to ap-

ply to the new program can do so through an online portal that became available on Dec. 31. Business owners can find more information at www.empoweringsmallbusiness.org.

When to apply

Applications for the new program will be accepted from Dec. 31 until Jan. 15. Officials anticipate awarding grants in early February.

Charlton Lions help spread Christmas cheer

The Charlton Lions Club holds fundraisers throughout the year so it can support worthy causes and help those in need in Charlton.

This year with the coronavirus having such a devastating effect on everyone, the need at Christmas was even greater. For over ten years the Charlton Lions have been supporting families in Charlton with gift cards they can use at Christmas to help with presents, or to put a special Christmas dinner on the table.

Don Fortin, President of the Lions Club said, "this year the club recognized the even greater need to help out the town. Making donations at Christmas time is one of the Club's top priorities, and this year we stepped up to give even more. All our club members agree, helping families at Christmas is one of the most rewarding things we do."

This year the Lions again donated Walmart gift cards to the principals at the Elementary School, Heritage and the Middle Schools. The Lions exceeded their past donations by providing each school with ten \$50 Walmart gifts cards.

Steve Doucette of the Lions delivered the cards to the principals. "We all knew that we had to add a little extra this year, and when I gave the principals the gift cards, they were delighted. These gift cards would allow them to help thirty families in town. They already had a list of families that needed help, and the principals were so thankful that these cards gave them a little something extra to share."

The Lions also continue its tradition of visiting residents at the Charlton Manor, but this year because of the pandemic, they sang Christmas carols from the driveway. For over 20 years the Lions have visited the Manor with Santa and Frosty the Snowman. This year, because the COVID restrictions made it difficult to give gifts to the residents, the Lions

donated money to the Manor for activities and special events for the residents.

The money for these great Christmas traditions comes from all of our Charlton friends who support our fundraisers, year in and year out. Don Fortin said, "it is because of the great people of Charlton that the Lions are able to help our fellow Charltonians at Christmas. Every year you support us, so we in turn can support some of our citizens in need during the holiday season. So, the Charlton Lions would like to thank all of you."

This year, as we think about all of our good fortunes, please take a minute to pat yourselves on the back, for your kind and generous donations to the Lions Club which has meant a better holiday season for so many members of our Charlton family.

If you're interested in learning more about what the Charlton Lions Club does for our town, or perhaps if the Lions Club could help you, please visit our Facebook page at facebook.com/CharltonLions/, or email us at charltonlions.org, or call Steve Doucette at (508) 248-4411. Be Part of Something Great - Become a LION.

Lion Carole Duquette

Pamala Holt joins Goodrich Insurance Agency

We are excited to welcome Pamala Holt from Dudley, MA to our team of insurance professionals at Goodrich Insurance Agency in Milton, MA. Pamala has over 20 years of insurance expertise and will be our Personal lines Account Manager. Pam joined our office family on November 23, 2020 and will be working remotely from Dudley and in our main office in Milton. Help us give Pam a warm welcome! We look forward to providing our current clients and new clients with professional, personal, knowledgeable valued client services you expect from Goodrich Insurance Agency!



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Drury Square project in Auburn will boost civic pride

By the Auburn Chamber of Commerce
 Reprinted with permission from the Telegram & Gazette. Drury Square in Auburn has long been a center of commerce, civic and cultural significance.

Auburn, lacking a traditional New England downtown, has been working diligently to develop Drury Square as a pedestrian friendly and mixed-use center.

Based on numerous planning documents, including the Auburn 2019 master plan, residents articulated a vision for a downtown that includes a walkable, pedestrian-friendly center with a variety of retail and restaurant establishments.

The vision for Drury Square is to develop a sense of place and to enhance the economic value of the area

as a place to shop, live and visit. One of the most recent initiatives for Drury Square is the Transportation Improvement Program for the reconstruction of Auburn Street. This project is primarily funded through Massachusetts Department of Transportation funds.

The reconstruction of Auburn Street was expected to begin last fall or spring 2021.

This is a project that has been years in the making and will bring many improvements to the Drury Square area of Auburn. These improvements include better traffic flow, pocket parks, bicycle accommodations, new sidewalks, new street lighting and landscaping, walking paths, a gazebo and a new tree that will be used for the town's annual holiday tree-



Businesses at Drury Square in Auburn.

Dudley PD and Park 'n Shop make Christmas merry for local families



Pictured left to right: Dudley Sergeant Marek Karłowicz, Park 'n Shop Store Manager Joseph Doherty, Officer Keith Remillard.

The Dudley Police Department worked with Dudley Park 'n Shop to put together Christmas dinners for local families. On Wednesday, December 23, Sergeant Marek Karłowicz, Officer Keith Remillard, and Officer Phil Megas delivered a dozen dinners to families throughout town.

Dudley Park 'n Shop has always been a tremendous sup-

porter of the Police Department and its fundraising and community efforts. They certainly, once again, went above and beyond to help spread some Christmas cheer.

Merry Christmas and happy, healthy, and safe holidays to one and all.

lighting event.

For many, many years the town of Auburn has held an annual tree-lighting ceremony on the grounds of Goddard Park at Drury Square. The Colorado Blue Spruce that has had the honor of being the highlight of Drury Square during the holiday season has succumbed to disease and age and is no longer safe and able to hold the distinct honor.

Since so much attention has been dedicated to creating a sense of community and an identifiable "town center" in Drury Square, it seemed fitting to find a new tree to continue the tradition that Auburn has enjoyed all these years.

The Auburn Chamber of Commerce discussed this issue when it was brought to its attention and decided that a donation of a new tree along with new decorations

would be a great way to give back to the town that has supported the chamber and its member throughout the years.

The new tree will be a Fraser fir tree, which is more conducive to the Northeast climate and less prone to disease. The Board of Selectmen extended their sincere gratitude to the Auburn chamber for the generous donation at a meeting on Oct. 13. The town administration and residents have said they are grateful that the annual tree-lighting event can continue to take place for many years to come.

The Auburn Street Reconstruction Project is a combination of hard work from many departments on the state and local level. For further information of the project, go to auburnguide.com and search for Auburn Street reconstruction.



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Thanks to many for Christmas donations from Dudley PD



Pictured with the donations - left to right: Officer Chandler Boyd, Officer David Carpenter, Chief Steve Wojnar.



The Dudley Police Department collected donations for needy families during the holiday season. Many people and area businesses made generous contributions to this

worthwhile cause. Needs were increased during the pandemic. A large volume of toys, clothing, and other gifts were provided to Dudley residents who needed assistance during these

difficult times. These were distributed on Monday, December 21.

Thanks to the generosity of those who donated, approximately 21 local families, including some 62 children, enjoyed the holiday season when they would have otherwise gone without.

This year, donations were robust. This was really an incredible effort by our residents and businesses, especially during these trying times. More than 500 gifts and several thousand dollars were donated toward this effort.

A special thank you goes out to the Fels Family Foun-

dation, Dudley Little League, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jimmy's Pizza, and the Bowlin, Rottman, and Brosnihan families for their generosity. Several other families and individuals made significant contributions toward this campaign. Large toy donations were also made by Walmart of Oxford. Tremendous thanks and appreciation go out to everyone who contributed.

Any leftover toys will be distributed to local families in conjunction with organizations such as Webster Dudley Food Share.

Credit and thanks go out to Sergeant Marek Karłowicz and Officer Chandler Boyd for another outstanding job coordinating and organizing this year's drive. Their hard work and dedication have made this event successful year after year.

The Dudley Police Department would like to thank the many residents and others who answered the call for assistance with extreme generosity toward this worthwhile cause. This was a tremendous success once again. The Department wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy, and safe holiday season and New Year.

Appreciative this holiday season

To the editor:

This is written in appreciation of the many local residents who supported our Webster-Dudley Salvation Army Red Kettle Campaign this holiday season. I am happy to share we raised a record breaking \$11,650.

A special thanks to our local Webster Price Chopper for allowing us to use their location to ring the bell for the entire holiday season. We would like to thank Park 'n Shop, Thompson Liquor stores, Tobacco Shop, Flynn's Fine Wines & Spirits and Marty's Liquor Store for allowing our table top kettles to sit on their counters. A very special thanks to the extremely dedicated volunteers who often logged many hours in some cold, windy, rainy conditions.

The Webster-Dudley Salvation Army Unit collected enough gifts, toys and gift cards to take care of eight families and approximately 132 children. The remaining donations were dropped off at local shelters. Thank you for the overwhelming support from the members of the Sturbridge BNI group who provides a level of thoughtful giving that truly embraces the holiday season.

Our local bankHometown branch on Gore Road counted the kettles daily. This takes up a significant amount of their time and we truly appreciate the kindness and support throughout.

Last year, The Salvation Army in Massachusetts provided over 2.2 million meals to the hungry, over 195,000 nights of shelter, 100,000 warm coats and articles of clothing for those in need.

It was a windy, cold season that was endured because of the kindness of the community through generous kettle contributions and the occasional hot coffee or hot chocolate provided to the volunteer bell ringers.

On behalf of those most in need locally, thank you so much for your continued support.

Tony Yeulenski,

Salvation Army Unit Coordinator Webster-Dudley

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Living well and looking good

Proper technique is key to Accurate BP reading

By Keith Roach, M.D.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I have always read that when you are having your blood pressure taken, your arm should be elevated above your heart. When mine is taken this way, it is normal, around 120/70. When I go to the doctor, my blood pressure is taken with my arm hanging at my side. I often get a much higher reading taken this way, say, 140/90. Is there a correct way to take it, and does it affect the reading? My doctor said the position doesn't matter and wants to prescribe medication. – U.P.
ANSWER: When taking the

blood pressure, the goal is to approximate the blood pressure in the heart. That means that the blood pressure cuff should be at the level of the heart. If the blood pressure cuff is above the heart, then the blood pressure reading will be artificially low. If the blood pressure cuff is dangling below the level of the heart, the reading will be high.

For every 10 cm (about 4 inches) above the heart, the blood pressure will be about

7 mm of mercury too low. If I stretch out my arm as high as I can above my heart, I can get it about 30 cm higher than my heart, which would be enough to explain the difference between the 140/90 and 120/70 you have observed. However, for most people when sitting up straight, a properly placed cuff on the arm will approximate the same level as the heart. Although you are right the position matters, it sounds

To your good health

like the doctor's office is taking the reading correctly.

I should also note that the feet should be resting on the floor, not dangling, which can artificially raise the blood pressure. The arm should be supported while taking the blood pressure. I recommend taking the blood pressure three times and using the average.

Given how important blood pressure is, correct technique is essential in order to properly recommend who should get blood pressure treatment. Evidence is increasing that a 24-hour home blood pressure device is more accurate at determining who might need medication, especially in suspected white coat hypertension, where the readings are artificially high just because a person is in the office (even if they don't feel nervous).

Antibiotic use

DEAR DR. ROACH: I recently had a cancer growth removed from my upper arm by a dermatologist. I was instructed to use Vaseline on the wound. I told them I use an antibiotic with pain reliever. I was told that because this is an antibiotic, I will become immune to the usage. Does the topical antibiotic have the same effect as a pill or shot? Because it is on the outside of my body, will I become immune as described, or is it safe to use as I have done for 40 years? – W.B.

ANSWER: I agree with your dermatologist. Petrolatum, such as Vaseline, is effective at keeping a wound moist,

which promotes healing, and acts as a barrier to keep out dirt and bacteria.

Topical antibiotics may have additional usefulness in areas of skin infection or to reduce carriage of a dangerous bacteria like MRSA, but is no better than petrolatum for a clean surgical wound. Potential downsides to topical antibiotics include not only resistance, but also skin reactions. Accordingly,

they should be used sparingly and only for clear indications.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu (c) 2020 North America Synd., Inc. All Rights Reserved

2020 Riley Outstanding Citizenship Award



Sari Bitticks accepted the John E. and Ethel E. Riley Outstanding Citizen Award from Select Board chairperson Doreen Goodrich and Town Clerk Deborah Gremo.

AUBURN - On December 8, the 2020 John E. & Ethel E. Riley Outstanding Citizenship Award was presented to Sari Bitticks of the Auburn Historical Society & Museum. Sari also serves on the town's Historical Commission and Cemetery Commission. It was noted that Sari is very dedicated to Auburn's history and gives historical talks to many organizations including senior centers, historical societies, and other

civic organizations.

The award ceremony was held at the Historical Museum on South St., with Select Board chairperson Doreen Goodrich and Town Clerk Deborah Gremo doing the presentation. Citations from the town Select Board, Massachusetts State Senate, House of Representatives, and Governor Baker were also given to Sari.

The Riley award is given in honor of John and Ethel

Riley. John and Ethel lived in Auburn for 66 years with John serving the town for 53 of those years. In those years John was town clerk, town accountant, clerk to the Board of Selectmen, registrar of voters and town civilian defense chairman. Ethel served for 45 years as John's assistant. The John E. and Ethel E. Riley Outstanding Award was established in their honor after his retirement as town clerk in 1975.

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CAREONE
At Millbury

Oxford receives hand-crafted flag mast for town common

By Janet Stoica

What began as a trout fishing day this past spring on Carbuncle Pond resulted in a masterful work of craftsmanship being donated to the town with the support of the Oxford Historical Commission's Jean O'Reilly. "When I was driving by the town common, I noticed the missing flagpole that had always been there," said Bob Grzyb. "Previously, I'd seen that the pole was in need of repair.

Since woodworking and making flagpoles are my hobbies, I contacted the Historical Commission to offer them a new mast."

After meeting with Ms. O'Reilly and receiving the commission's blessing to accept his generous offer, it was game on for Mr. Grzyb. Incidentally, Mr. Grzyb is only one of two known wooden flagpole creators in the USA. The detailed project was

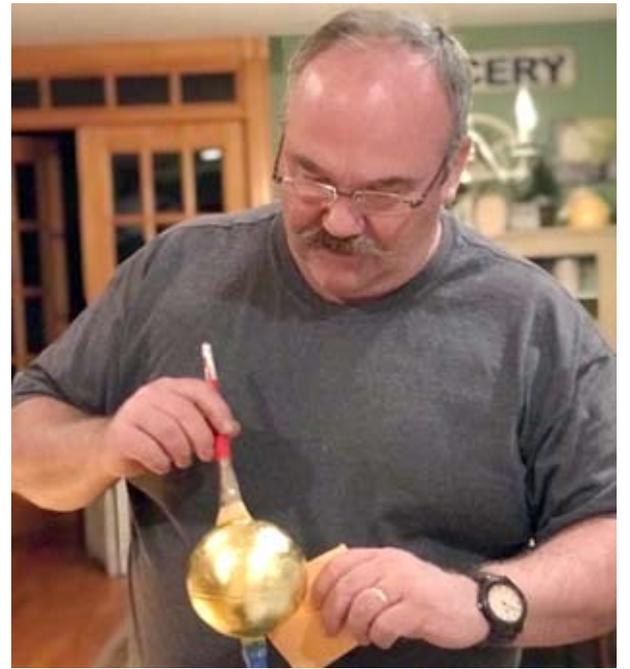
now on the priority list for him. After obtaining the base wood of hem fir which is valued for its strength and versatility, Bob set up his woodworking shop to complete his project by September. "Building wooden flagpoles is like making ship spars," he said. "The pole is made in a box style with rounded over-edges, giving the appearance of a rounded mast from top to bottom. The Oxford finial is 24-karat-gold leaf so it will stay shiny for many years to come and the rope cleat is solid bronze."

Quite some time ago, Bob began researching flag pole construction after coming across a video made by Norm Abrams, Master Carpenter extraordinaire of PBS TV's This Old House. He decided to try his hand at it and succeeded nicely. Each pole is different owing to its hand-made qualities and according to Bob, he does refine each successive mast. Is it better than a metal version? "Well, I've had my own wooden flagpole for 20 years now and it's been through blizzards and hurricanes," says Bob. "It still looks great." Construction entails making a tube-steel custom base with stainless steel threaded rods

which allows for future unbolting and mast take-downs for maintenance touchups.

The mast is made with 2 x 6 hem fir beams that are connected end-to-end for suitable pole length. Each beam has been ripped down to a rough profile using biscuit joints as needed and then laid in a 50-foot jig with numerous clamps to ensure straightness. A three-inch hole has also been drilled through the center of each beam to ensure proper ventilation and to prevent rotting. A powder coat paint is baked on the base and after the mast's box is routed and sanded, two coats of marine-grade wood sealer are applied and then two coats of epoxy primer with sanding in-between. Following these steps, five thin coats of marine-grade epoxy paint are brushed on. Of course, once each coat of sealer, primer, and paint is applied, proper drying time is essential. After 40+ hours of attention to detail, Bob was ready to phone Ms. O'Reilly to advise her of the mast's completion.

With the assistance of the Oxford DPW, who poured the flagpole's concrete footing, the mast was installed on October 17 near the Oxford bandstand. On November 17, at their regular meeting,



Bob Grzyb working on the flagpole.

Oxford selectmen presented Mr. Grzyb with a Certificate of Appreciation. Formal dedication of the newly-crafted mast is expected to be held on Memorial Day 2021. Stay tuned for more details to come.

Bob Grzyb's full-time job is project manager for a New England construction company. He obtained his Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering from Worcester Polytechnic Institute. "I thoroughly enjoy working in my wood shop," said Bob, "the challenge of flagpole building adds to my enjoyment." As the owner of several types of antique tools, Bob claims

there's nothing like using a vintage planer and the scent of newly planed wood is like no other. "Working with vintage tools is a pleasure, it slows you down and gives you a sense of calmness," says Bob. He's made six new masts so far and would look forward to being hired to make others for those in the area. Recent requests he's received are for garden flagpoles that are 6-8 feet in height but he would be happy to quote for most any height. He can be contacted at (508) 949-0041 or via email at robertwgrzyb@charter.net

Janet can be reached at jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com





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Webster's old Engine 4 finds new life in hands of Dudley firefighter

By Rod Lee

George S. Patrinos of Dudley is fifty-nine years old but in early December he was feeling like a little boy looking forward to Christmas morning.

Mr. Patrinos, who is as merry a soul as Santa Claus himself, had good reason to be in high spirits on the precipice of the big day. Just before the summer of 2019, he purchased an out-of-service Webster Fire Department fire truck.

Because he wears many hats, Mr. Patrinos is well known around town. He has been a call firefighter for more than forty years, initially in Boston and now in Central Massachusetts and northeastern Connecticut. He is a lieutenant with fleet-maintenance responsibilities with the Dudley Fire Department and serves at the same rank with "the community department in North Grosvenordale." He is the town of Dudley's water and sewer superintendent. He is a part-time security officer for Nichols College. He has been an over-the-road truck driver. He has done landscape and construction, part-time.

He is a busy man and the father of three children; and a grandfather.

In a conversation that took place during a family vacation at Hampton Beach in August of 2019, Mr. Patrinos revealed the aspirational side of himself by confiding to an acquaintance he was meeting for the first time that "I would like to own some lakefront property when I retire. I am looking."

The next best thing for him, for now at least, might be "Webster's old Engine 4, a 1974 Maxim pumper," which he bought for a mere \$5000.

Mr. Patrinos has been talking the fire truck up ever since consummating the deal. He can't wait for the COVID-19 crisis to end so that he can show the vehicle off at parades,

at antique fire apparatus shows—wherever it might draw oohs from a crowd. Meanwhile he looks for any opportunity to bring the truck out for a spin.

He couldn't help but mention how excited he is about old Engine 4 when he and his wife, Wendy, joined loved ones for a small Thanksgiving Day gathering on James St. in Dudley, last month.

No boy who ever received an erector set or a baseball glove from Saint Nick would be happier than Mr. Patrinos is as owner of a vintage fire truck.

The fire truck is in great shape, he said, a week after Thanksgiving, while standing next to the vehicle in front of a garage where it is kept. He considers himself fortunate to have acquired it. "When the town of Webster sent the truck out to bid, it was bought by a private owner, who stored it in North Andover. He couldn't keep it. A Webster firefighter bought it for \$5000. Neither one of them could hold onto it. It was sold to me for the same price."

Mr. Patrinos put about another \$3000 into it. "I got some hose from Southbridge and Dudley too," he said.

"The truck was taken to Connecticut about a month ago to test it and the pumps worked well.

"This truck is an absolute gem. I could actually fight a fire with this truck right now. It was a frontline truck."

The truck "was totally refurbished in Middleborough (home of the Middleborough Fire Department and also Maxim Motor Company, which specialized in the manufacture of firefighting apparatus) in 1997," he said. Except for the engine, which is original, the vehicle underwent an almost complete overhaul. The cab was extended. The aluminum body was sanded down, primed and repainted. All of the tires have been replaced. The lights, sirens and air horns

were all upgraded.

In Middleborough, when it became apparent that "the rear bumper was loose and rattling" an old guy "took a sledgehammer and said 'watch this.'" Off the bumper came, Mr. Patrinos said.

Anyone who doubts the fire truck's worthiness need only listen to Mr. Patrinos for a few minutes to know otherwise. "This fire truck was custom-made for Webster, Detroit too," he says of the two-cycle diesel-engine beauty. "This is a custom fire truck built from the ground up."

Long after the Webster FD purchased its first piece of equipment, a Pope-Hartford engine, in 1908, old Engine 4 remains one of the department's best buys.



George S. Patrinos' more than four-decade career in fire service has been capped by his acquisition of the town of Webster's old Engine 4, which he is anxious to put on display when the pandemic ends.

Old Engine 4 "was Webster's pride and joy," Mr. Patrinos said. "They buried a firefighter from this truck, so it has a lot of sentimental value."

In a town that lays claim

to more than three hundred hydrants and eighty alarm boxes (along with a signal system of "phantom" boxes to designate areas outside of the sphere covered by box alarms), the WFD can rest

assured that old Engine 4 is nearby—and still dutifully cared for.

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Samuel Slater Museum gets a new name to reflect a high-tech historical experience

Samuel Slater EXPERIENCE



This antique rocking chair was donated by Regina Fish. Curator Olivia Spratt welcomed Regina into the museum recently for a tour and Regina offered the rocking chair to be used in the Experience. It will fit right in with the donated items already received and is greatly appreciated.

The Samuel Slater Museum, currently under construction in Webster, will be known as the **Samuel Slater Experience**. The name change reflects the museum's mission to create an educational, immersive *experience* that brings to life the American Industrial Revolution with multi-dimensional sight, sound, and movement.

It traces the life of 21-year-old Samuel Slater in 1789 as he travels from England to America, secretly carrying advanced spinning manufacturing techniques in his head, earning him a reputation as Father of the American Industrial Revolution as well as Slater the Traitor. His story continues in Webster, where he established six textile mills along the French River and Webster Lake, bring-

ing decades of prosperity to this mill town. The Samuel Slater Experience also features a virtual trolley ride through downtown Webster circa 1900, using 21st century video technology to make an experience that is both educational and fun. Samuel Slater is buried in Webster's Mt. Zion Cemetery.

The Samuel Slater Experience has been in development and construction for three years and will open in 2021.

During this time, many local people have contributed to the project with their donations of historical artifacts, ranging from furniture to hats.

Three recent contributions came from Regina Fish, the Webster Dudley Historical Society and Arthur Marois.



The Samuel Slater Experience received a permanent loan from the Webster Dudley Historical Society recently - a trolley register from the original Webster & Dudley Street Railway.

Items still needed for the Samuel Slater Experience

- Crockery, glassware, lamps, silverware, tinware, nickle plated ware from early 1900s-1925
- Sets of matching hair brush, comb, mirror, etc. from early 1900s-1925
- Appliances, including washing machines, wringers, stoves, refrigerator, all from 1910-1925
- Horse drawn open bed wagon
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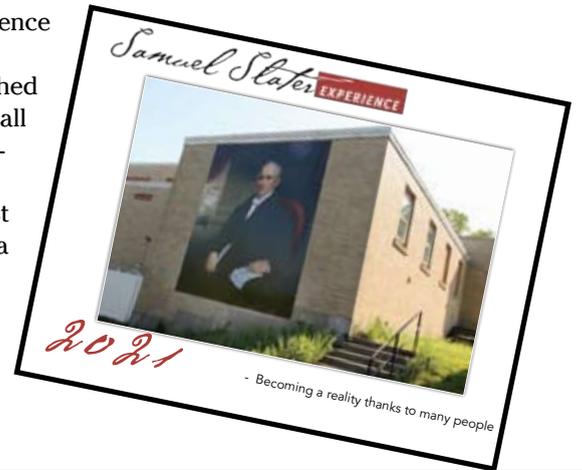
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Samuel Slater Experience 2021 Calendar

The Samuel Slater Experience will open to the public in 2021. The staff has published a calendar as a tribute to all the people who have supported the construction of the museum for the last three years. If you'd like a copy of the calendar, you may pick one up at Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 East Main Street, Webster.



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Oxford Needlework Group - great work for worthy causes

By Janet Stoica

Yes, the Oxford Needlework Group's room is quiet at first glance but once a good subject comes up, the members are more than happy to express themselves. The seven ladies have been sharing conversation, knitting, and crocheting for a good number of years and they look forward to having new participants join them.

"We'll make room for men or women," said Rita Domian, who's been a group member for more than 20 years, "We'd enjoy having some new members. If you want to learn how to knit or crochet, we're here for you. It'd be a pleasure to show someone a new skill."

If you are not into knitting or crocheting and enjoy other forms of needlework, the group certainly doesn't discriminate. All are welcome.

As their hands nimbly glide over their rows of various stitchery their eyes check out the pattern they are making. They are brilliant at what they do. All members are retired from their full-time or part-time earning years and most are widowed. These proud and ambitious women held various positions during their younger years ranging from management and clerking to social work, secretarial, cos-

metology, and nursing. The patterns they concentrate on are as diverse and unique as their employment history.

Every Tuesday from 11 a.m. to about 2 p.m. the group meets up at the Oxford Social Center for socializing and stitchery for a good cause. They have knitted and crocheted scarves, hats, neck pillows, and blankets for the Harrington Hospital Cancer Center, hats and blankets for the St. Vincent Medical Center's nursery, and donated hats and scarves to the Worcester Fellowship for the homeless. Their generosity is limitless it seems.

Patricia Merson, who formerly lived in the area but now lives in Putnam, Conn., has been a part of the group for about 15 years. She still makes the trip from Putnam weekly. "I used to quilt," she said. "I learned that when I was younger, and I enjoy coming here for the socialization. It's knitting for a worthy cause." Joyce Nilson, a five-year member, related that "it's always nice to learn a new pattern. If I drop stitches, I ask other members for help in fixing it. All our patterns are different." Diane Swanson, who just joined the group in January 2020, has many skills in unique crafts, including

crocheting small ornaments and table art. Her attention to detail is admirable. Rose Fournier, a 20-year member, said "we receive many yarn donations and we're glad to have them. This group really enjoys each other's company."

"If someone doesn't care to donate their creation, they can still join our group," said Ms. Domian. "Sometimes people just want to knit for their own families using their own yarn. We even have remote volunteers. One of our remote knitters uses Fun Fur eyelash yarn that gives a delicate but interesting look to the hats that we donate to the cancer center. For those who have had chemotherapy and have lost their hair, these hats really give them something to smile about."

Fran Smolenski said she enjoys everything about the group. "The company here is very respectful of each other," she said. Carolyn Merson, who is Patricia Merson's sister-in-law, is a five-year member. "I'm the mitten maker," she stated, "and when they need hat tops, I'm the one who knits the pom poms." Pom poms are the bright and fluffy round attachments you see on the tops of knitted hats.

The group is getting ready to begin gift wrapping their creations and if there is someone out there reading this article who wants to learn to knit or crochet, who would enjoy the socialization and great company, and who might want to create for a worthy cause, "just show up on a Tuesday at 11 a.m. at the Oxford Social Center," said Rita Domian. "We'd enjoy your company!" Lunch is also served for a nominal cost and the menu varies weekly. The Oxford Social



Rita Domian and Carolyn Merson knitting up a storm.

Center is located behind the Oxford Town Hall, 323 Main Street, Oxford. Phone: (508) 987-6000.

Janet can be reached at jstoica@TheYankeeXpress.com

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Bose 500 soundbar offered as BSTRA raffle prize

Thanks to an anonymous donation, Bay State Trail Riders Association, Inc. (BSTRA) is offering a Bose 500 Soundbar valued at \$549 as the prize for its latest raffle. Tickets for this raffle are reasonably priced – five tickets for \$10, 15 tickets for \$20, 35 tickets for \$40, 55 tickets for \$60, 75 tickets for \$80 or 100 tickets for \$100 – and they are conveniently available for purchase online through 5 p.m. on February 28, or through the mail as long as they are received by February 28. For more information, mail in order form, or to make an online ticket purchase, visit www.bstra.org/support/raffle

“Soundbars are very popular items these days since more people are spending time in their homes. They want to enhance their home television and music experiences, and soundbars are designed to deliver sound from a small package. With its sleek design it fits easily into everyone’s TV setup,” said Lynn Paresky, BSTRA’s fundraising director. “Our anonymous donor thought such a popular and useful item would be a very desirable raffle prize, and we agree.”

The Bose 500 Soundbar offers built-in voice control with Amazon Alexa, voice control of compatible music streaming services and

smart home devices, superior voice pick up from a custom-designed eight microphone array, light bar that visually indicates when Alexa is listening, thinking or speaking, and specially designed drivers that deliver full, spacious sound.

The drawing takes place on the evening of February 28 and the winner will be notified. A video of the drawing will be published on BSTRA’s Facebook Page.

Since 100% of the proceeds from ticket sales goes towards funding local trail projects, this fundraiser offers everyone an opportunity to make a difference to trails in state forests in their community. BSTRA has in the pipeline a large \$55,000 trail and parking lot expansion project located in the Douglas State Forest, as well as a connector trail creation and bridge improvement project in the Upton State Forest, and other important projects in Douglas, that are in the planning stage. “We hope the community will

support us by participating in this raffle. They will be getting chances to win something really special for themselves or a gift for someone else, while helping community trails,” said Paresky.

BSTRA believes that trails are important assets to the community, and it has been their mission to help create, maintain and preserve trails for community use since 1973. With an extensive track record of dependability, credibility and accomplishment, BSTRA is a good choice to receive local support. Since 1989, BSTRA has put more than \$630,000 into trails within state forests and parks within 34 towns in Massachusetts. A wide variety of user groups who enjoy the trails for outdoor recreation and fitness will benefit from BSTRA’s trail improvement projects, including hikers, dog walkers, equestrians, mountain bikers, runners, cross country skiers, and families out enjoying nature. “Now that a lot more people are using



trails of our State Forests for recreation and fitness due to COVID-19, they can see the significance of trails as a local resource and the importance of our trail im-

provements,” said Paresky. “Participating in this fundraiser is their chance to make a positive difference to the trails right in their own community.”

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Kitchen diva

Resolve to shake up your breakfast routine

By Angela Shelf Medearis

Every year, the most popular resolutions are: “Exercise to get in shape,” “Diet to lose weight,” “Save money” and “Eat healthier in general.” If you’ve resolved to take charge of your health in the new year, a nutritious breakfast is one of the best ways to start your day.

When you eat a healthy breakfast, you consume less fat and cholesterol, eat more vitamins and minerals, have higher productivity throughout the morning and are more focused on the tasks at hand. A healthy breakfast also helps with weight loss and appetite control, and can

lower cholesterol, which will reduce your risks for heart disease.

According to the American Dietetic Association, breakfast is especially important for children and adolescents. Kids who eat a healthy breakfast have better concentration and problem-solving skills, improved hand-eye coordination, are more alert and creative, miss fewer days of school and are more physically active.

If you’ve been skipping breakfast because you’re pressed for time, a vitamin- and nutrient-rich, power-packed smoothie is the answer. Smoothies are easy to make, can be adapted to suit individual tastes and best of all, they’re portable if you need a “breakfast to go.” These healthy smoothie recipes contain fruits, vegetables, wheat germ, soy milk and soft silken soy tofu, which is easier to incorporate in most drink or sauce recipes.

When selecting soybean-based products like soy milk or tofu, look for a Certified Non-GMO label. This means the product was produced without genetic engineering and its ingredients are not derived from genetically modified organisms. The label also means that a product has undergone stringent provisions for testing, traceability and segregation. Only Non-GMO Project Verified products can use the verification mark. The label also includes the project’s URL, where consumers can look up the product standard to better understand what it means.

Non-GMO soy milk and tofu add many health benefits to smoothie recipes. Tofu contains considerable amounts of protein, omega-3 fats, calcium, selenium and other minerals and

antioxidants that all play a role in good health. Tofu is bland in taste, but easily absorbs and enhances the flavors of whatever you combine it with, and adds creaminess to your smoothie.

Wheat germ offers another way to add a punch of protein to your breakfast smoothie. Wheat germ is the embryo or kernel of the wheat. It’s a rich source of protein, fiber, unsaturated fat, vitamins E, B1, B2, B5 and B6, phosphorus, zinc, thiamine and magnesium. Wheat germ has natural antioxidants and helps prevent heart disease, cancer and aging. It also protects the muscles, blood, lungs and eyes, and helps to prevent blood clots.

Wheat germ helps to strengthen your body’s immune system and increases your ability to cope with stress. It’s also a reliable source of natural fiber, which is essential to maintaining regular bowel functions and preventing constipation.

Try these nutritious, vitamin-packed smoothie recipes to ensure you start your new year and a new day the healthy way!

Breakfast in a blender

1/2 cups apple juice
1 cup soft tofu
1 banana, sliced
1/2 orange, peeled and seeded, or 1/2 cup orange juice
1/2 small, raw sweet potato, peeled and diced into cubes
OR 1 small carrot, sliced into rounds
1/4 cup chopped kale or spinach, fresh or frozen
1/4 cup wheat germ
1 tablespoon honey or agave nectar

Puree all the ingredients together in small batches until smooth. Serve immediately or store in the refrigerator in a



Depositphotos

covered container overnight and shake well to mix contents. Makes 4 (8 ounce) glasses.

Fruity tofu smoothie

1 cup soft tofu
1 banana, divided
1/2 cup soy milk or orange juice
1/2 cup plain or vanilla soy yogurt
1/2 cup strawberries or blueberries, fresh or frozen, divided
1/4 cup wheat germ
1 tablespoon honey or agave nectar

1. Blend the tofu, half the banana, soy milk or orange juice, yogurt, half the strawberries or blueberries and the wheat germ until fairly smooth. Add the remaining banana and strawberries, and blend until smooth.

2. Serve immediately or store in the refrigerator in a covered container overnight and shake well to mix contents. Makes 3 to 4 (8 ounce) glasses.

Angela Shelf Medearis is an award-winning children’s author, culinary historian and the author of seven cookbooks. Her new cookbook is “The Kitchen Diva’s Diabetic Cookbook.” Her website is www.divapro.com. To see how-to videos, recipes and much, much more, Like Angela Shelf Medearis, The Kitchen Diva! on Facebook. Recipes may not be reprinted without permission from Angela Shelf Medearis. (c) 2020 King Features Synd., Inc., and Angela Shelf Medearis

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Harrington Healthcare scores an A grade

SOUTHBRIDGE - The Leapfrog Group, a Washington D.C. - based organization aiming to improve health care quality and safety for consumers and purchasers, recently released new Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grades, which assign A, B, C, D and F letter grades to hospitals nationwide. Harrington HealthCare System received its 15th grade "A."

"Patient safety has always and will always be a top priority for us. Our hospital is a trusted part of this community," said Ed Moore, President and CEO of Harrington HealthCare System. "We are proud to receive our 15th grade "A" and will continue to strive for greater excellence in patient safety. Most importantly, we pledge to honor the trust of our patients by being transparent about our progress and working toward the highest possible standard of safety."

"Our goal is to inform patients about local hospitals

with the best safety measures in place and the strongest records," said Leah Binder, president and CEO of The Leapfrog Group. "Every hospital can earn an 'A' grade, and we're proud of the hospitals that are committed to making an effort to

protect patients from harm." Developed under the guidance of an expert panel, the Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade uses 28 measures of publicly available hospital safety data to assign A, B, C, D and F grades to approximately 2,600 U.S. hospitals

twice per year. It is calculated by top patient safety experts, peer-reviewed, fully transparent and free to the public.

To see Harrington HealthCare's full grade, and to access consumer-friendly tips for patients, visit www.hospitalsafetygrade.org and follow the Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade on Twitter and Facebook.

Christmas tree drop-off

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Chief's corner

Snow removal refresher

By Chief Steven J. Wojnar
Dudley Police Department

The snow season often brings questions about snow removal. Clearing of sidewalks is always a lively topic of discussion. Fortunately, our Christmas rainstorm assisted everyone in this department, although we know more snow and ice is on the way. I was asked to remind people about this important topic.

Our Town By-Laws, Article Eight Section Four, is the rule covering this situation. This law requires every owner, tenant, or occupant of a building abutting a finished sidewalk, to keep the area free from many substances, including snow and ice. These areas should be cleared during the period when the snowplows have completed the major removal of snow during a storm and before the slush/snow can freeze and become ice.

Generally, sometime within twenty-four hours after a storm's end is the prime opportunity to perform this task. Penalties for a failure to clear sidewalks can be twenty dollars per day.

To assist with pedestrian safety, we are reminding people to keep the sidewalks in front of your property clear of snow and ice this winter season. This is extremely important to limit the number of pedestrians on the travel portion of the roads. We wish to avoid fines and penalties for property owners and thank everyone in advance for their cooperation and assistance. There are many people who are physically unable to perform the task of shoveling their sidewalk. As a community service, students from the Shepherd Hill High National Honor Society have volunteered to clear

the sidewalks of the elderly or disabled individuals free of charge within 48 hours of a storm. I thank them once again for this service which not only assists the property owner but also the public who uses the sidewalks every day. If you are in this category, need assistance, and wish to take advantage of this service, please contact Henry at 774-239-0464, or School Resource Officer Phil Megas at 508-943-6700.

It is always important to remember the challenges of driving and walking on the streets during this time of the year. Drivers may not see pedestrians as easily due to darkness, extreme sun, or severe weather. Pedestrians must be aware of the difficulties and dangers when on the road. This does not mean to ignore the basic safety rules of looking both ways and always

paying attention to the possibility of cars. Many side streets, dead ends, or other lightly traveled locations allow for a more relaxed approach by some people. Do not let this happen. Vehicles may come from anywhere, so it is always important to treat these locations with the proper amount of caution. Sharing the road and respecting each other's use of it will limit accidents and injuries.

Thanks again for your questions and comments. Please send them to me at the Dudley Police Department 71 West Main St., Dudley, Ma. 01571 or email at wojnar@dudleypolice.com. Opinions expressed in this weekly column are those of Chief Wojnar only and unless clearly noted, do not reflect the ideas or opinions of any other organization or citizen.

Webster Five donates \$25,000 to Worcester County Food Bank

WEBSTER - Webster Five announced that it has donated \$25,000 to Worcester County Food Bank to support their efforts in meeting the increased demand for food resources in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding will help support the distribution of donated food to its network of food pantries throughout Worcester County that assist individuals and families struggling with food insecurity.

Worcester County Food Bank (WCFB) and its network of food pantries, mostly run by volunteers, are helping

an average of 38,830 people every month; a 27% increase compared to a year ago. According to Feeding America, the national network of food banks, 1 in 12 people and 1 in 10 children in Worcester County were food insecure prior to the pandemic. They project that food insecurity now affects 1 in 7 people and 1 in 5 children. WCFB is currently distributing enough food for 115,000 meals every week which is an 18 percent increase over last year. In addition, the food bank is purchasing food for the first time to supplement their donated food resources in

order to remain a reliable supplier of food during this uncertain time.

Donald F. Doyle, President and Chief Executive Officer of Webster Five, stated, "We're pleased to have the opportunity to provide this funding to the Worcester County Food Bank, as we're deeply aware of how food insecurity has been greatly intensified in our area by the pandemic. Webster Five is committed to helping those in need in our community and we are proud to have the Food Bank as our partner and thank them for their efforts in meeting the needs

of our community."

"The pandemic has disproportionately affected our neighbors and communities of color and exacerbated a food insecurity problem that already affected far too many of our neighbors," said Jean McMurray, Executive Director of the Worcester County Food Bank. "Thanks to contributions like this one from Webster Five, we can respond to this huge demand in a meaningful way. Together with our loyal supporters, WCFB will continue to be a source of help and hope to our neighbors struggling with food insecurity."

Local mortgage expert offers Free Virtual Homebuyer Seminar

MILFORD - Michael Shain of Bay Equity Home Loans will host a free virtual homebuyer seminar on January 28, in conjunction with Uxbridge Free Public Library from 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Are you considering homeownership? At this

seminar, you'll learn crucial information for homebuying success and leave with all the tools you need to get started on your search:

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- Finding the right mortgage loan program

- The difference between buyer agents and listing agents

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Pre-Registration is required. Contact Michael Shain at mshain@bayeq.com or call 508-330-8487

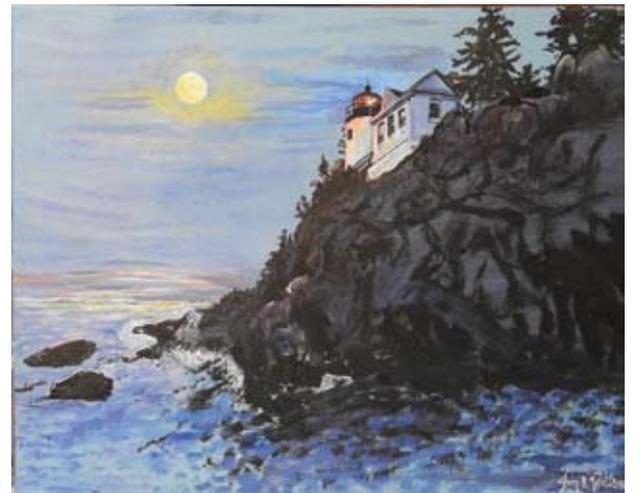
Michael Shain has more than 30 years of banking and mortgage lending experience and hosts "Real Estate and Beyond," a local TV show about home buying and selling trends.

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owned, full-service retail mortgage lending institution that prioritizes personal relationships. Founded in 2007 and licensed in 42 states. For more about Bay Equity Home Loans, visit: www.bayequityhomeloans.com.



January art show and sale

January Art Show & Sale - "Sentinals and Sirens," acrylic paintings of lighthouses by Jim R. Wilton are on display and for sale at Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 East Main Street, Webster, through January 30, during regular business hours: Tuesday-Saturday 10-5. Call 508-949-6232 for more information.

Artist's statement: I do acrylic painting of people as well as seascapes and lighthouses. Originally educated and raised in the Webster area, I've been in Southbridge area since 1979 where I married, then brought up my sons. I started taking

photographs and had a few in shows in New London CT in 2008, even having some published and sold. About 4 years ago, after becoming a fan of lighthouses, I met Polly Seip, artist from Uncasville, who painted from one of my photos which in turn inspired me to try to paint lighthouses. Having been a portrait artist, I needed to learn. I've since sold several around the country, being inspired from rides and boat trips and visits to some mostly in New England. I even donated a few to lighthouses to help them raise money for supporting them and had one put in a museum.

Senior news line

The best you can do

By Matilda Charles

A show of hands, please. Is anybody else getting worn out by the current state of our lives? Is there anything we can do about it?

All I wanted was a package of socks. That shouldn't be hard. In the past, once a year or so, I'd stroll into the local big-box store, grab a package off the shelf (especially happy when I found a bonus pack with 2 extra pairs in it), pay for it and walk out.

And now? Now I can't find them anywhere. I don't dare walk into stores just to wander around, so I'm left to do my hunt on the internet. These particular socks are nowhere to be found ... except for the ones at three times the price on Amazon.

Then there was the phone call from a neighbor, in the middle of my hunt, describing a new family panic. A family member is undergoing serious medical treatment. They just learned that his nurse tested positive for COVID.

Is anyone else tired of the need for constant vigilance because of COVID? The inability to acquire basic goods and sometimes food? The constant sad stories of seniors who are in rehab centers who haven't had visitors in months?

That's probably what breaks my heart the most, all those lonely seniors in nursing homes or retirement centers.

I can't do anything about the state of the world, but I can do this: Over the next week I'm going to send individual notes and cards to the residents of a local nursing home. I got all their first names and last initials from the facility director, and I've ordered a big box of miscellaneous greeting cards. Each one will get a note and a cheery card from me. Maybe it will help brighten their day for a few minutes.

It's the best I can do.

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Living with Lincoln

Humans need dogs

By Amy Palumbo-LeClaire

2020 hasn't been kind. A global pandemic wasn't the only scare this year. Lincoln's health, even his life expectancy, gave us a worry bigger than his paws.

For those of you catching up now, a late Fall ultra sound indicated two large masses on each of Lincoln's thyroid glands, which appeared malignant (to a ninety percent degree of probability). He was expected to live only one to three months—even with treatment (though without biopsy or a full diagnostic exam, the conclusion was not full proof). His best treatment plan, according to a man I still long to meet in person (COVID restrictions made this impossible) was said to be Radiation Therapy with the intent to shrink inoperable tumors. Fast forward two months. He's shown no signs of decline. As a matter of fact, with the exception of deep-sleep snores and a few prominent "exhales" Lincoln is doing better than ever!

I'm not a doctor. But the decision to needle and disturb a potentially cancerous area at my dog's throat (to perform full diagnostic testing) seemed counterintuitive to a ten-year-old dog's wellness. Home cooked protein enriched meals, goat's milk, chicken broths, and turkey tail mushroom powder seemed like a better plan—that and the decision to surround ourselves with good old-fashioned Dog People.

Rebecca Sioui White, a puppyhood friend and owner of Rising Sun Pet Sitting, came to mind. Rebecca

works full time caring for household and farm pets. Her demeanor is professional, gentle, and family-focused. Lincoln first met her as a puppy. A reunion was in order. I scheduled a side-by-side Dog Walk with her and one of her loyal clients, a laid-back and adorable rescue named Tyson, a dog said to be a perfect match for Lincoln, given age, temperament and personality.

I had always thought that pet sitting was a "side gig" for Rebecca. Little did I know that she takes her business, which serves the Southern Worcester County and Blackstone Valley region, quite seriously. As a result, the families entrusting her with their house keys, leashes and pets, keep calling back. "This is not just a job to me," she explains while we stroll along Beacon Road (at the border of Webster Lake). "It's a professional full time career. I'm passionate about what I do and the families I work for."

Lincoln, gripped by the sight of a sudden lake, interrupts her. "Can you believe there's a lake down there?" He tosses a glance down to the cold, misty water, then back to Rebecca. "Pretty nice isn't it? I'm an avid swimmer, you know." I tighten my grip on his leash while Rebecca, who is fully insured, bonded and certified in pet CPR and First Aid, pauses to listen to Lincoln. "Look at you. You're such a happy boy." She is genuinely interested in what he is interested in. Her empathic energy (and thankfully that alone) is enough to satisfy

his temporary obsession. He relaxes to her voice and we stroll on. Tyson, a Rising Sun regular, goes with the flow.

Rebecca's full time profession, I think to myself, allows her to spend hours of her day with animals. Her sunny attitude, then, comes as no surprise. "Rising Sun is heart centered," she tells me. "It's about partnering with each family to care for their pets and home. Each pet is surrounded by many human hearts that love and care for them. I feel this. I live this with my own pets, fosters and all customers. We partner closely with pet parents for consistency in training, following fine details to make their pet family feel at home and happy."

We make our way back to Tyson's home. Lincoln, who has developed a recent aversion to having his picture taken, suddenly poses like a celebrity. He sits proudly next to Rebecca, leans close, and lifts his chin up high as though to say, "Isn't she amazing?" Normally days like this wouldn't move me so much. But, lately, life's unexpected moments spark renewed appreciation for life. Lincoln has always been a people-person. He still is. He has always loved lakes. He still does. An ultra sound reading cannot take away Lincoln's essence.



Tyson and Lincoln share a moment with Rebecca, of Rising Sun.

Darwin's Origin of Species theory deems that the species most likely to survive is not necessarily the strongest or the most intellectual, but the one best able to adapt

to change. Lincoln, like so many people, needed to change the way he was nourished. Since he is a dog, he can't do that on his own. He can't grab a few eggs to crack, scramble, and use the shells to create a nutritious paste. Dogs need humans.

I watch the way Tyson lifts his neck to lick Rebecca's chin and the quiet way she receives his love with a giggle. On her other side, Lincoln

leans in close and smiles affectionately, as though to claim her as a trusted friend. The moment is indescribably joyful. I can't help but think to myself: Humans need dogs, too.

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Happy New Year!
2021 is here!

Here's wishing and hoping that everybody stays safe from the pandemic as relief by way of vaccine is coming soon for all of us.

There is hope but an extra dose of intellectual patience is required. Common sense please because COVID is invisible and all you young people are not bullet proof.

So let's reflect back on the year 2020 and the rollercoaster ride it gave us with so many changes and unknowns in our lives and learn from the experiences COVID gave us.

Not being a Grinch, but high school normalcy should be here by springtime if we

Happy New Year to all local athletes

let time takes its course with the COVID.

The MIAA has different plans as the executives and committees keep giving high school student athletes false hope on getting back on the courts and playing fields. They want to modify every sport to a watered down version of what the sport really is.

Man-to-man defense in basketball is prohibited and if you dribble the basketball more than five seconds, you lose possession and forfeit the ball to the other team. Why would anybody want to play, coach, officiate, or spectate a modified watered down version of a sport they were so passionate about?

The MIAA always tries to reinvent the wheel at the high school athletes' expense. It's like saying flag football is exactly the same as tackle football. There are just too many rule changes by the MIAA to make playing winter sports work.

The MIAA and their committees want to call COVID high school sports Halloween and put a mask on every sport by changing the rules to attempt to make everyone think that ridiculous rule changes to every individual sport will prevent the pandemic.

The bottom line is to let COVID run its course. I know the MIAA always plays God with their attitude and eastern Mass. mentality, but COVID is something the MIAA should not risk lives by modifying the rules of each sport that affects not only the athletes but parents, coaches, fans, officials, ticket collectors at games, EMTs, bus drivers, etc.

Can't we wait until the vaccine is given to the people who want it and start the high school athletic schedule in the spring of 2021 or the fall of 2021 when the COVID is under control per the experts who know more than the MIAA? Even then,

COVID is a risk if the vaccine works for the ones who take the vaccine.

The middle of March 2021 could be the right time to start spring sports and if not, then mid-August 2021 is the next window of opportunity.

This space cannot imagine these current high school students and athletes not having their high school years as they used to be. For sure, they are the best years of anybody's life. To get short-changed out of these times is heartbreaking. But please don't modify sports and put the mask on these sports and attempt to make all of us believe it's ok for now, because there is still a risk of catching the COVID and spreading it to your loved ones.

Go to a basketball game as a spectator and go home and spread the virus to your family is the reality of the proposed modifications by the MIAA. Watering down the

rules of the sport to make this winter sports work is insanity. A basketball game of HORSE is perfect social distancing. Nobody can compete in a modified sport and feel good about it.

Being the best defensive player on your basketball team that is forced to play a zone defense is the MIAA taking away a skill one has worked on his or her entire life. Dribbling a basketball is a skill that one begins to develop at an early age, but the MIAA is modifying how long a player can dribble in a game.

Here are just a few modifications by the MIAA that puts the burden on others.

1. Practice. Coaches are responsible for ensuring social distancing as much as possible. No congregating of athletes while running drills. Pods of athletes in groups of five is required.

2. Locker rooms will remain closed at all times. Facility operators will en-

sure that the locker rooms are closed. Students should come dressed with the proper gear for practice and return home immediately after practice to shower.

3. No benches will be used for practice.

4. No huddles of players are permitted.

5. No handshakes are permitted, including high fives.

6. Face coverings must be worn in practice and games.

7. Spitting, nose cleaning, and licking fingers are not allowed.

8. Ball retrievers are not allowed.

9. Each player should bring their own basketball and water bottle.

10. Halftime is eliminated

11. A player can only dribble the ball for 5 seconds.

There are 10 pages of rule modifications on the MIAA's website; these are only 11 of the modifications that might interest you. Doesn't look like any fun to this madness.

The "French River Rivalry" - short lived but with everlasting memories

Rivalry Part 7

By Rusty Oleszewski

The French River Rivalry which saw its zenith at the end of the 20th century still exists today but seemingly on a smaller level of intensity. The basketball teams still play each other once a year which is a great treat for the area fans and students. Over the first decade of the 21st century the population of both Dudley and Charlton continued to grow. Charlton added a new middle school and soon Shepherd Hill moved their seventh and eighth grade students to a new building on the Shepherd Hill campus. The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association had a desire to be like many other states and be able to anoint state champions in football as they were doing in just about every other sport. Leagues and divisions were re-aligned and the local Border Conference became a name of the past. The yearly contests between neighboring towns were no longer a certainty. Shepherd Hill's student population size pushed them into a higher division with schedules including big schools like Leominster, Fitchburg, St. John's and Shrewsbury. Webster's population remained rather steady but they would now be playing against schools

not readily seen before in Webster. Many teams on the Indians schedule, other than Southbridge, are not even in southern Worcester County. The football series between the neighboring schools ended in 2012 after a few years of lopsided wins by Shepherd Hill. The numbers game became a big issue for the Indians as they went through a period of small turnouts for the program.

But through the tough times the tradition-strong green and white have climbed back to become a competitive program again.

Shepherd Hill has had some strong teams competing against the big boys. As an outsider I must admit that I have seen less than five Shepherd Hill games during the last twenty-five years. It looks like they take great pride in promoting how many players they have gotten to the Division 1 level in college football. I hope that they are just as concerned with the 95% of the team that does not get to that level of post-graduate play. It also seems that there is something lacking by not seeing the Bartletts, Southbridges or Auburns on the opposite sideline. Those schools now replaced by the aforementioned big city schools do not create the excitement

that was once prevalent when competing against neighboring towns.

I find it surprising to know that as big as Dudley and Charlton have grown in population, the majority of the residents still have to go out of town to do much of their shopping.

Webster, meanwhile, with their small school population, still has the grocery stores, hardware stores and restaurants that Dudley and Charlton do not. In many ways Dudley still relies on what Webster has to offer. It is that small town feel that Webster still maintains which brings back fond memories for those of us who were around during the beginning of the French River Rivalry.

During its heyday, the rivalry often pitted different branches of families against each other. I know I will be leaving out many more examples but these, in particular, come to mind.

I start off with the founder of the Shepherd Hill football program, **Leo Biron**. As I mentioned in a previous segment, Coach Biron is a member of the Bartlett Hall of Fame. His children all attended Shepherd Hill with son **Lee** following in his dad's footsteps as a quarterback for the Rams. During

Lee's days on the Hill he competed against his cousins, the **Cournoyer boys (Keith, Ken and Jeff)** across the line of scrimmage. Following the script Lee's son **Donovan** became a quarterback for Bartlett High.

Don Cushing, the recognized leader of Bartlett basketball during this rivalry resides in Dudley and sent his daughters to Shepherd Hill. In fact, daughter **Maura** is now the head basketball coach for the Lady Rams at Shepherd Hill. I can imagine those dinner conversations might have been interesting.

Ron Springer Sr. was the Bartlett football coach in the first ever game against Shepherd Hill and his son **Ron Jr.** became a captain for the Rams football team.

John Mrazik, inducted as both a coach and player to the Bartlett Hall of Fame, also lives in Dudley and actually took a few years off as a coach on the Bartlett football staff, to be able to watch his two sons play football for Shepherd Hill. Yet another Bartlett Hall of Famer, **Ed Kunkel** watched all three of his children become captains of their respective sports at Shepherd Hill and then his grandsons become captains for the football team at Bartlett.

Keeping with Bartlett Hall of Famers, **George Hetherman**, one of the schools all-time standout baseball players, watched his sons play football at Shepherd Hill.

Tony Kazcynski, a superb baseball player at Shepherd Hill, crossed the river to become baseball coach for Bartlett. Another Bartlett Hall of Famer, **Gino Manzi**, manned the sidelines as head basketball coach for a few seasons I believe at Shepherd Hill. It seems that Dudley fared quite well in drawing many of Bartlett's finest to cross over to the Dudley side of the river. There are probably many more examples of families with loyalties to both schools. This is what helped make the rivalry so popular. It was the familiarity with "those" people across the bridges. It was the bragging rights that you car-



Rusty Oleszewski

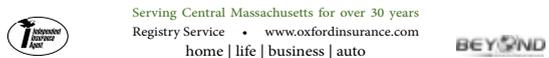
ried from one season to the next, no matter what sport it was. The lettermen jackets were seen all around the towns. I am not always quick to say that "life was much simpler and better in those days" but especially during this epic year of 2020, the nostalgia and uniqueness of the late 20th century rivalry certainly stirs up some fond memories of my time amidst the French River towns of Webster and Dudley.



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Tales from beyond

Helen Dow Peck's amazing will

By Thomas D'Agostino

The Ouija Board was marketed to a great success in 1891. Four investors saw it as not necessarily a doorway into the unknown as much as a doorway into the American people's wallets. By the turn of the twentieth century, countless boards were in use in American homes.

People from all walks of life used the board to con-

nect with the deceased or to just add to their merriment in times of strife. World Wars I and II, and the Great Depression saw millions turning to the Ouija Board in hopes of contacting lost ones or gaining insight of the future.

One woman, Helen Dow Peck of Danbury, Connecticut, not only communicated with the spirit of her board,

she went so far as to make sure the formless friend was well taken care of.

Upon Mrs. Peck's death in 1955 at the age of 83, she left a will with a most curious request. Upon her death, widow Peck's two servants were to receive one thousand dollars each for their services and a man named John Gale Forbes was to receive one

hundred and seventy eight thousand, the rest of her estate; a very strange situation considering Mr. Forbes did not exist, at least in the flesh.

Mrs. Peck related that the name had appeared to her and her husband Frank during a 1919 Ouija Board session. For the next thirty four years, Peck would search in vain for the physical being of John Gale Forbes without success. Forbes, according to Mrs. Peck, did appear to her once during a session. Mrs. Peck had told her friends that Forbes "had resolved out of space" about 1940 while she was using the Ouija board, one that she had owned since 1919. He had also provided her with advice, she said.

Peck was truly convinced that Forbes not only existed but was living in a mental institution somewhere. Although she never located his whereabouts, in her will Peck, requested that if Forbes or his heirs could



not be found, an estate was to be established with her funds as a memorial fund for the study of telepathy among the insane.

Nine nieces and nephews contested the will claiming their aunt lacked testamentary capacity and the will was void because of its uncertainty. The City National Bank of Danbury disagreed stating that Forbes may have been a real person. Working on this assumption, a private investigator was hired but no sign of a John Gale Forbes was ever found.

After three years of strange testimony and a lot

of searching for Mr. Forbes or any relatives, the state supreme court decided to reject the will and in 1958, widow Peck's heirs received the remainder of her estate.

What would a spirit have done with the money anyway? Perhaps store it in the cloud?

Thomas D'Agostino and his wife Arlene Nicholson are seasoned paranormal investigators, authors, and co-organizers of Paranormal United Research Society. You can find out more about them by visiting www.tomdagostino.com.

Strange BUT TRUE

• Doc Martens come in all different colors and sizes now, but the first pair was created using old tires.

• There actually aren't "57 varieties" of Heinz ketchup, and never were. Company founder H.J. Heinz thought his product should have a number, and he just happened to like 57.

• Cataract surgery was possible as early as the 6th century B.C.

• Barbie's physical appearance was inspired by a German doll named Bild Lilli, created in 1952 and based on a high-end call girl named Lilli who was featured in the comic strip "Bild-Zeitung." She was sold as an adult novelty in bars and tobacco shops – definitely not as a children's toy. Barbie inventor Ruth Handler saw the doll while vacationing in Europe and brought it home.

• Sunsets on Mars are blue.

• The Gate Tower Building in Osaka, Japan, has a highway that passes through the building, between the fifth and seventh floors.

• A Paris morgue needed help identifying bodies in the 1860s, so decided to open its doors to the public. They probably underestimated people's morbid curiosity, though, as soon 40,000 people a day were coming to look at corpses.

• Mob boss Vincent Gigante would wander around New York in his bathrobe to convince the police he was insane, and thus avoid capture.

• Pine cones have genders. Male pine cones shed pollen and female pine cones make seeds. When the wind blows pollen into the female cones, the seeds become pollinated.

• Cats are believed to be the only mammals that don't taste sweetness.

• In 1978, DC put out a "Superman vs. Muhammad Ali" comic book. While the plot deals with hostile aliens, the book's main highlight is the whooping Superman gets in a sparring match with "The Greatest"!

* The first-ever fashion magazine was sold in Germany in 1586.

* Early cosmetic surgeons used a procedure known as paraffin wax rhinoplasty, in which they would inject hot liquid wax into a patient's nose and mold it into the desired shape. Not only was this dangerous, but, no surprise, it really didn't work.

* Canada eats more macaroni and cheese than any other nation in the world.

* A French general, the Marquis de Lafayette, gave John Quincy Adams a pet alliga-

tor. Our sixth president not only kept it in a White House bathtub, but enjoyed showing it off to visitors.

• Cellophane, invented in 1908, was originally intended to protect tablecloths from wine spills.

• Those old witch potions aren't quite as gross as you think: Eye of newt, toe of frog and wool of bat are actually archaic terms for mustard seed, buttercup and holly leaves.

• Selfies now cause more deaths than shark attacks.

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KOVELS® Antiques & Collecting

By Terry and Kim Kovel

Galoshes ad

Ever wonder when rubber boots replaced shoes on rainy days? Hessian soldiers wore leather boots, and Arthur Wellesley, the first Duke of Wellington, decided boots made of rubber would be more useful and keep feet drier. Charles Goodyear had vulcanized natural rubber in the 1850s to make tires, and he sold the use of the patent to Hiram Hutchinson in 1853

to use for boots. They became a fashion statement for a few years, but then farmers began to wear them, and then soldiers in both World Wars – the trenches often held rainwater and the boots kept feet dry. The boots continue to be used by many and they have changed from a semi-pointed toe to a rounded toe, to even a metal toe to avoid accidents.

Boots were first made of leather and went to the knees in the 1840s, then to the calf in the 1850s and to the ankle by the 1860s. Today, the terms “wellies,” “gummies” or “gumboots” are used to describe rain boots. The original high Wellington boot is still popular for people in places or jobs where there are puddles and floods.



• On Jan. 12, 1838, after his Mormon bank fails in the Panic of 1837, Joseph Smith flees Kirtland, Ohio, to avoid potential criminal prosecution by angry and disillusioned former believers. Smith claimed the angel Moroni had visited him in 1823 and told him he was destined to become a modern prophet of God.

• On Jan. 13, 1968, in the midst of a plummeting music career, legendary country

singer Johnny Cash arrives to play for inmates at California's Folsom Prison. The concert and the subsequent live album launched him back onto the charts.

• On Jan. 15, 1870, the first recorded use of a donkey to represent the Democratic Party appears in Harper's Weekly, drawn by political illustrator Thomas Nast. Four years later, Nash originated the use of an elephant to symbolize the Republican Party in a Harper's Weekly cartoon.

• On Jan. 16, 1938, Benny Goodman brings jazz to Carnegie Hall, a notion so outlandish at the time that Good-

man himself initially laughed off the idea. The concert at the citadel of American high culture sold out weeks in advance.

• On Jan. 14, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt issues Presidential Proclamation No. 2537, requiring aliens from World War II-enemy countries – Italy, Germany and Japan – to register with the Department of Justice.

• On Jan. 17, 1950, 11 men steal more than \$2 million (\$22 million today) from the Brink's Armored Car depot in Boston. It was the perfect crime – almost – as the culprits weren't caught until January 1956, just days before

This picture is part of an 1898 calendar advertising Hood Rubber Boots for children. They are high enough to be considered Wellington boots. The sign, in a gold leaf frame, 14 by 24 inches, sold at a Kimbell Sterling auction in Johnson City, Tennessee, for a bargain at \$81.40. The company called the boots “galoshes.”

so, what temperature would be safe. It reads “Oven-Proof Hull USA No. 28-8” on the bottom.

A: Hull pottery was made in Crooksville, Ohio, from 1905 to 1986. Hull began making “oven-proof” pottery in the 1930s. This 8-inch baking dish, with its handle and lid marked “No. 28-8,” usually is described as a Dutch oven. It should be safe to use in the oven at normal baking temperatures, usually not higher than 400 degrees, if there are no cracks. It sells online for \$19 to \$24.

Hull baking dish

Q: My mother-in-law gave us a beautiful green Hull baking dish, and I'm trying to get some information about it. It looks like something I'd love to bake with, but I'm not sure if I can still use it and if

Lepi woodcarvings

Q: I have a set of nativity figures that came with a Certificate of Authenticity that reads “Original Lepi Woodcarvings.” It says they are made of maplewood, and carved and painted at Ortisei in Val Gardena, Italy “following an original design of Rupert Reindl, our famous master sculptor.” I have the box they came in. I'd like to know something about the maker.

A: Ortisei is an Italian town



Some advertising collectibles are bargains. This picture was the top of an 1898 calendar probably given to customers who bought the Hood company rubber boots. The framed picture cost only \$74 plus a 10% buyer's premium.

in Val Gardena (Garden Valley). Woodcarvers have worked in this area since the 1600s. At first, they made practical items for the home and farm. Eventually, the town became a center of decorative woodcarving, especially nativity sets and other figures. Lepi is a woodcarving workshop founded by Leo Prinoth in 1920. The company still is in business, and it makes wooden figures based on designs by Rupert Reindl (1908-1990) and other well-known woodcarvers. Christmas woodcarvings sell for half or less than the original price.

CURRENT PRICES
Minton portrait plate, woman, jewelry, veil, “behold all my treasures,” pink, 9 inches, \$160.
Jade urn, lid, double dragon handles, reticulated, puzzle ball, rings, 14 x 13 1/2 inches, \$320.
Cookie jar, cockatiel, ruby art glass, silvered brass head, Murano, Italy, 12 x 7 1/4 inches, \$540.

“Kovels' Antiques & Collectibles Price Guide” – the all new 2021 edition – is now available in bookstores and online, or visit www.Kovels.com for a special offer. For more collecting news, tips and resources, visit www.Kovels.com. (c) 2020 King Features Synd., Inc.

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the statute of limitations for the theft expired.

• On Jan. 11, 1973, the owners of America's 24 major league baseball teams vote to allow teams in the American League to use a “designated pinch-hitter” that could bat for the pitcher, while still allowing the pitcher to stay in the game.

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HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

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Differences: 1. Sign on shovel is different. 2. Window on door is missing. 3. Door knob is added. 4. Man's hat is different. 5. Tree trunk is wider. 6. Man's nose is shorter.

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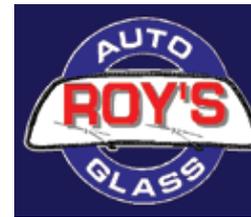
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INSATION TECHNOLOGIES

Dudley company GermBusters rids homes and offices of coronavirus

By Janet Stoica

Al Lessard's noble mission of ensuring the coronavirus and others like it are banished from homes and businesses began when COVID-19 touched his family members.

He turned his sights to assisting those of us who wanted to protect ourselves and our families from the risks of these types of microorganisms. Al and his son, Joe Renaud, made it their priority to research the best materials and applications

to help local businesses and homeowners find peace of mind knowing their establishments and homes are as germ-free and customer- and family-safe as possible.

"Our applications will kill 99.9% of most viruses and germs out there," said Al. "Our material works on killing COVID-19, MRSA, HIV, and Norovirus, to name a few." MRSA's medical name is Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus and is an infection caused by a type

of Staphylococcus resistant to many antibiotics. HIV is human immune-deficiency virus that attacks the body's immune system. Norovirus is commonly referred to as the winter bug.

"We kill what people can't see and what people can't see, will kill them," says Al. "We are certified to use these products in businesses and homes and have been doing so for a number of months. Our products are not harmful to pets or people, however. During the application process we are alone in the area being sanitized and disinfected. Our fog application dries quickly and never leaves a film, unlike some applications being used by other companies. Not having a film residue is extremely important, especially when you are sanitizing vehicles. No one likes having to clean and wipe their interior windshields. This defeats the entire process."

GermBusters will disinfect just about any surface anywhere. They have even been requested to and will disinfect dog and cat beds. Some of their satisfied customers are homeowners, beauty salons, nursing homes, banks,

factories, restaurants, taxi cabs, buses, vans, trailers, campers, RVs, and trucks, really just about any type of business, home, or vehicle one can imagine. Their applications are effective for approximately one month according to Mr. Lessard.

GermBusters will visit your location to determine which equipment and application can be used most effectively. Their equipment utilizes wands, spray guns, backpacks, and ultraviolet lamps. The dry foggers that are used employ an electrostatic positive charge which will cling and wrap around all surfaces. Ultraviolet light application is also considered.

If personnel or family with COVID cases have been present, GermBusters will follow all state guidelines in sanitizing that location. Service contracts are also offered to take the burden away from businesses who are concerned with ongoing sanitary procedures. "When we service our customer locations, they can rest assured that they've done everything to protect their personnel and customers. People are dying in hospitals alone because their



Who ya gonna call?... GermBusters!

relatives are unable to enter their rooms because of COVID. I'm just one person here in Dudley with a sanitization business and I want to do my part for society right now. I just know I'm

doing something good for all of us," stated Al.

GermBusters can be reached at (617) 794-0349. For the special people who know Al, please call him directly. www.GermBusters.live



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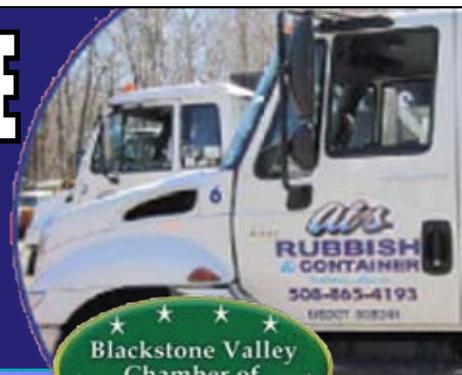
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Q & A with The Car Doctor

John Paul is AAA Northeast's Car Doctor. He has over 40 years' experience in the automotive business and is an ASE certified master technician. He will answer reader's questions each week. You can find the Car Doctor podcast at www.johnfpaul.podbean.com or other popular podcast sites. Email your car questions to jpaul@aaanortheast.com. Follow John on Twitter @johnfpaul and friend him on facebook [mrjohnfpaul](https://www.facebook.com/mrjohnfpaul)



Q. I need an opinion. I'm thinking of buying an electric scooter, maybe for quick trips but also to keep in the back of my SUV for emergencies. What do you know about e-scooters and what do you think of the idea?

A. I have seen e-scooters and rode a "rental" scooter and it was okay. I have seen some that claim speeds of up to 50 miles per hour and fairly long range. The average scooter in the \$500-\$1000 range seems to have a range of about 25 miles and speeds of 15-20 miles per hour. The speed is less of a concern than power/torque and range. The idea of stopping from higher speeds (40-50 MPH) on tiny tires terrifies me. If I was to buy a e-scooter I would be looking at range, motor power, overall weight (under 45 pounds) and carrying capacity. I would also want a scooter with some type of suspension to smooth out the ride and a decent deck size for your feet.

Q. I read an article that was titled "Glass Class" talking about caring for your windshield (you were quoted). The article was pretty thorough about "improper cleaning," where the author talks about what not to do but not what to do. How should you care for auto glass and proper cleaning?

A. Here is the correct method to clean a windshield or any auto glass. Cleaning at extreme temperatures is difficult (below zero over 90 degrees can cause issues with window cleaners). If the windshield is especially dirty or covered with tree sap clean that first. Under normal circumstances start cleaning with a good quality window cleaner (Mrs. Car Doctor likes Sprayway or Stoner Products-Invisible Glass) use plenty of paper towels. Once you are satisfied with the outcome then go over the window inside and out with a good quality microfiber cloth. The microfiber cloth will pick up any missed filmy residue. Recently a listener to my radio show recommended Windex Electronic wipes—he said they did a great job of removing the film that builds up on the inside of the windshield. I have not tried those wipes yet. I have seen some shops buff the windshield with an electric buffer and specialized polishing compound to remove accumulated grime, grit, and even light scratches. To promote the life of the windshield, don't tailgate on the highway, following closely promotes sandblasting of the glass.

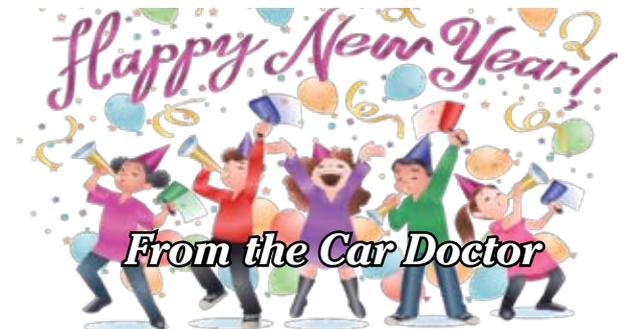
Q. Squirrels are getting into my car and storing their acorns there. I recently had several handfuls of acorns removed from the heater fan at a cost of \$121, which I do not want to repeat often or ever again. But I have since heard a noise that sounds like acorns rolling around, so I guess the squirrels are not done with me for the season. How can I prevent this from continuing? I have read about the use of mothballs, but I don't really know how or where to put them. Also, won't they create an awful smell inside the car? Please tell me what suggestions you might have.

A. Mothballs are not a good idea, since they are poisonous and pretty stinky. You could try fabric softener dryer sheets-tied under the hood. Some people have had good luck with oil of spearmint which

is not poisonous and smells pleasant. Some wildlife experts recommend using bitter apple spray or other spray-on animal repellents. I had an inventor on my radio program who developed a car cover that goes all the way to the ground and will keep out rats and mice so it should work for squirrels. It is a bit bulky but effective, the product is called Cover Seal (www.getcoverseal.com).

Q. My 2008 Toyota Highlander V6 3.5-liter engine has 80,000 miles on it. It runs great except there are two warning lights that used to turn off after starting, but now stay lit. I took it to the dealership's service department for the 80,000-mile maintenance service. I mentioned the ABS light and the VSC light staying on and was told that the sensor for the VSC would cost about \$600. to replace it. And the ABS could be another expense to fix even though I had complete front and rear brakes replaced about 10 months ago. I was told by not having either of those two repaired my state inspection would not fail because of the VSC and the ABS warning lights. What do you think or recommend what should be done?

A. I suspect the problem is related to one of the wheel sensors for the anti-lock brake system. The anti-lock brake system although it works with the conventional braking system is not something that is serviced during a brake pad/shoe replacement. When one of the wheel sensors fails it will disable the anti-lock brake system as well as the vehicle stability control system and, in some cases, the four-wheel-drive system. If this were my car, I would want to get it repaired so all the systems work as they are designed. This is especially the case as winter weather approaches.



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Tips on financial planning



Dennis Antonopoulos

Time for New Year's financial resolutions

Many of us probably felt that 2020 lasted a very long time. But now that 2021 is upon us, we can make a fresh start – and one way to do that is to make some New Year's resolutions. Of course, you can make these resolutions for all parts of your life – physical, emotional, intellectual – but

have you ever considered some financial resolutions? Here are a few such resolutions to consider:

- Don't overreact to events. When the coronavirus pandemic hit in mid-February, the financial markets took a big hit. Many people, convinced that we were in for a prolonged

slump, decided to take a "time out" and headed to the investment sidelines. But it didn't take long for the markets to rally, rewarding those patient investors who stayed the course. Nothing is a certainty in the investment world, but the events of 2020 followed a familiar historical pattern: major crisis followed by market drop followed by strong recovery. The lesson for investors? Don't overreact to today's news – because tomorrow may look quite different.

- Be prepared. At the beginning of 2020, nobody was anticipating a worldwide pandemic and its terrible consequences, both to individuals' health and to their economic well-being. None of us can foretell the future, either, but we can be prepared, and one way to do so is by building an emergency fund. Ideally, such a fund should be kept in liquid, low-risk vehicles and contain at least six months' worth of living expenses.

- Focus on moves you can control. In response to pandemic-related economic pressures, some employers

cut their matching contributions to 401(k) plans in 2020. Will some future event cause another such reduction? No one knows – and even if it happens, there's probably nothing you can do about it. Instead of worrying about things you can't control, focus on those you can. When it comes to your 401(k) or similar employer-sponsored retirement plan, put in as much as you can afford this year, and if your salary goes up, increase your contribution.

- Recognize your ability to build savings. During the pandemic, the personal savings rate shot up, hitting a record of 33% in April, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. It fell over the next several months, but still remained about twice as high as the rate of the past few years. Of course, much of this surge in Americans' proclivity to save money was due to our lack of options for spending it, as the coronavirus caused either complete or partial shutdowns in physical retail establishments, as

well as dining and entertainment venues. But if you did manage to boost your own personal savings when your spending was constrained, is it possible to remain a good saver when restrictions are lifted? Probably. And the greater your savings, the greater your financial freedoms – including the freedom to invest and freedom from excessive debt. When we reach a post-pandemic world, see if you can continue saving more than you did in previous years – and use your savings wisely. These aren't the only financial resolutions you can make – but following them may help you develop habits that could benefit you in 2021 and beyond.

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



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RE: Real Estate



Mark Marzeotti

COVID-19 continues to reshape our lives, changing our daily routines and mandating precautionary measures that involve staying in our homes as often as we can. With people spending more time at home than ever before, home improvement projects are increasingly becoming top of mind for homeowners.

Remodeling home projects take time and patience, and REALTORS® and homeowners alike recognize the feelings of accomplishment, satisfaction and potentially higher home values that come with it. During this pandemic, homeownership is invaluable, and we know that your home means everything to you – from protection, to safety, to comfort – so we’re seeing people across our region dedicating themselves to improving their homes.

Below are some facts about home renovations

Incorporating home renovations into the “new normal” of homeownership

during the pandemic, according to a survey by the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR):

- Despite the financial difficulties brought on by the pandemic, 77% of homeowners say their home renovation budget for 2020 is the same or greater than last year.

- The top three home renovations that homeowners hope to complete within their budgets in 2020 are:

1. A new bathroom (28%);
2. A new kitchen (23%); and
3. Fencing in their yards (21%).

- Homeowners are attuned to how the pandemic may influence prospective buyers’ preferences. A fenced-in yard, for example, the third most popular project for 2020, didn’t even make the top 10 REALTOR®-recommended projects in NAR’s 2019 Remodeling Impact Report, which examined a variety of remodeling projects and their appeal, value and potential return on investment.

- An additional 21% of homeowners expect new investments such as a home office, gym or other space will offer the greatest return – other projects REAL-

TORS® would not have recommended as a top priority based on 2019 data.

- Some renovation priorities remain unchanged: Kitchen and bathroom upgrades and remodels were highly recommended by

REALTORS® in 2019, and continue to top most homeowners’ current lists.

REALTORS® such as The Marzeotti Group can help homeowners understand their local real estate markets while identifying

which home renovations improve quality of life and provide a greater return on investment during this ‘new normal’ of homeownership. If you are interested in selling or buying a home, contact Mark or Maribeth

Marzeotti, 617-519-1871 or visit www.marzeottigroup.com.

This month’s fun fact: Utah has been giving free homes to the homeless since 2005, which has cut chronic homelessness by 74%!

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