

## Arborist-turned-woodworker finds his true calling

By Rod Lee

Charles Cowan IV, better known as “Chad,” can be found most of the time, these days, in his 1600-square-foot woodworking shop behind The UxLocale, a restaurant his mom owns on Hartford Ave. West in Uxbridge.

At the age of twenty-eight, Chad Cowan is living a dream. Who could blame him; he was heard to say “don’t wake me, I’m having too much fun.”

About four years ago, “I left my day job as an arborist for the David True Co.,” Mr. Cowan said on the floor of his shop, Failte Woodworks, on December 16 (“failte” is an Irish word for “welcome,” he points out). He had also worked with Sam Foppema of the Foppema’s Farm family, “on a trees project—that was a blast.”

Lest we forget, he has helped out too in Chef Elaine Cowan’s supper establishment.

On this particular morning, Mr. Cowan was standing next to an eight-foot-by-four foot, “solid two inches” piece of black walnut that would become the top to a dining-room table that he was crafting for a family in Sutton. The chairs feature bent laminated backrests. Around him was evidence of the trade he has adopted, including a plethora of equipment suited to various tasks—and material he has stockpiled for future use.

“I have to have it done by December 23rd!” he said, of the table.

Mr. Cowan became a woodworker almost by accident. But, looking back, he had been heading toward that vocation for a while.

The spark was lit, he said, “when a buddy and I found a tree down in

Princeton. We took ‘the cookies’ (sliced parts) from it, hand sanded them. It was cool, white oak.” Nothing came of them, he said, but they whet his appetite.

His new profession really began in earnest with the bar he made for The UxLocale.

There is also a table in the restaurant that was manufactured from a slab of “alligator juniper,” he said.

“My girlfriend and I were on a trip and we stopped at a saw mill. ‘This will be the bar for the restaurant,’ I told her. That was the first piece.” The bar wound up being made instead from white pine “from across the street, Jerry Visser’s farm,” on West Hartford Ave.

Once he decided to pursue woodworking not as an indulgence but as a career, Mr. Cowan realized he had a lot to learn. “I just kept experimenting and making mistakes. Eventually I got my first commitment, from Mark Vanderbaan’s family, a desk made of black walnut. That gave me the confidence to continue.

“I picked up every popular woodworking manual printed from the late 1970s!” One of these, featuring designs by “Sam Maloof” (who, Mr. Cowan says, had no classic training) was lying nearby as we spoke. Sam Maloof has become renowned for the fluid sculptural style he brings to his pieces.

Mr. Cowan will be using Mr. Maloof’s manual as inspiration for his most ambitious project yet: ten rocking chairs made from cherry wood. The first time he looked at pictures of them, with their lavish leg finishes, he said, “I asked my-

Continued on page 2



Chad Cowan of Failte Woodworks in his workshop. A week before Christmas, he was finishing a black walnut dining room table with six chairs for a family in Sutton.

## Santa Visits Douglas Orchard & Farm

Douglas Orchard & Farm hosted a COVID-safe visit with Santa for 30 families in the local community on the weekned of December 12 and 13. Children were able to tell Santa their Christmas wishes this year at the farm despite the pandemic. Parents were required to make a reservation. Each family got private time with Santa in the farm’s high tunnel, surrounded by Farmer Nick’s plants. Santa sat six feet away from the bench that the children could walk up to but not pass to see Santa. Shield on Santa, masks on families and more than six feet away, Santa assured that children who kept their rooms clean and were good all year long would get what they asked him for for Christmas.

When it was time to take the coveted “Santa photo” the children sat on the bench, facing away from Santa, then could take off their masks for the smile or pout with Santa behind them.

The families were very grateful to have a COVID-safe environment and not miss a year of cherished memories. Having the time and the private space made for a relaxed atmosphere where the children

could take their time to warm up to the jolly old elf. Parents were taking many photos and video of their children’s interactions with Santa. Santa’s helper was there to

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Santa gives a wave as the Hall family stays safe visiting their favorite Christmas person.

**BV NONPROFIT**  
Warmth, comfort and hope  
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Dr. Sean T. Lordan  
PT. DT. OCS. CSCS

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## DOUGLAS ORCHARD & FARM

Continued from page 1

take photos for the families that wished to have a family photo taken. Families left happy, with candy canes in hand, waving goodbye to Santa and wishing him a Merry Christmas!

The Hall family said it best: "This was by far THE BEST Santa experience we have ever had. It was wonderful. The kids loved talking to Santa and for my kids, as little distraction as possible is good. We weren't rushed by people waiting in a line, like stores and malls. Such a personal and wonderful experience!"

The farm's Country Store was open for holiday shopping. Avoiding crowded malls and other big stores, people were glad to have somewhere COVID-safe and local where they could buy unique gifts, hand-crafted good, plus farm products like meat and local honey. After shopping in the store many groups visited the

chickens and ducks, feeding them and enjoying watching them as the Guinea hens ran around making their crazy call.

Douglas Orchard & Farm is a family-run, diverse, no-spray farm that supplies the community with access to the freshest, naturally grown produce and local products.

The farm's Country Store is open every weekend over the winter from 10 a.m.- 4 p.m. Farm-raised meats include organic whole chickens, pork and beef. Other products include organic chicken and duck eggs, honey, maple syrup, jams, sauces, fudge, dairy free cookies and pies, including Nana's spinach pie. A selection of many unique, handmade gift items are mostly made by crafters in the local community. Support not only the farm but your local community by shopping at the Country Store year round.

Also check the web site at douglasorchardandfarm.com or Facebook @douglasorchardandfarm36 for store hours.



Ho Ho Ho, Santa sends greetings from Douglas Orchard and Farm



Santa listens to Christmas wishes.



Santa delighted all his visitors.

## FAILTE WOODWORKS

Continued from page 1

self "how the hell do you do that?"

He was working his day job, 7:00 to 4:00, putting in another five to six hours at night at the restaurant, and catching what hours he could in his shop, when the orders he received for furniture started coming

not just from family and friends but from other prospective customers he did not know. Many of these involved the need for hardwood. "I have a hard time finding that around here," he said. The black walnut for the table he was working on came out of Pennsylvania, he said. "I have a commercial account with Holte & Bugbee."

Holte & Bugbee is a lead-

## 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:

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



Michael Shain

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.

Bay Equity is a family-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.bayequity-homeloans.com](http://www.bayequity-homeloans.com).

Of the satisfaction he has gotten from knowing how far he has come, he says "it's been amazing."

He says, "I don't want to know how much I have invested on equipment!"

But, he adds, "at the end of the day someone has to sit on it and it can't break."

Contact Rod Lee at [rodlee.1963@gmail.com](mailto:rodlee.1963@gmail.com) or 774-232-2999.

# BLACKSTONE VALLEY Xpress

Published on 2nd and 4th Fridays of the month.  
Direct mailed to 63,000 unique homes and businesses each month and available on news stands throughout the region.

2nd Friday: Auburn, Charlton, Dudley, Oxford and Webster, 1/2 all addresses.  
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# It's Peloton season - 4 tips for the avid "spin" enthusiast

By Dr. Sean T Lordan

The holiday season has passed and it is the time of year when we are all cooped up and need some form of exercise to expel pent-up energy.

Enter: the Spin Bike! Sales of Peloton have reached the moon since the inception of COVID and many of my patients are now presenting with knee, hip and low back pain subsequent to overuse injury from training.

Let me walk you through a few key tips to help you get the most out of your home

fitness routine, especially if you are a Peloton enthusiast. **1. Stretch, Stretch, Stretch.** I can not stress enough the importance of stretching four main muscle groups when it comes to Spinning. The hamstrings, calves, quads and hip flexors are the four that I am referring to. All stretches should be held for 1 minute and done PRIOR to and POST workout. The reason for this is two-fold. When you get on the spin bike, often your quads are tight and the warmup is sim-

ply not sufficient enough to loosen your muscles. If your quads are tight you risk adding pressure through the patella-femoral joint (Kneecap) and will experience popping and clicking as a result. The reason to stretch afterwards is to prevent damage to your spine. Your hamstrings and calves will be very tight after the ride. When those muscles are tight, your low back is predisposed to injury. **2. Smart Strengthening.** In order to get the most out of your workouts you must train

your lateral musculature just as you do the "glamour" muscles in the front of your body. Most people forget the glutes when training. Their role in prevention of knee and low back pain is critical. You simply cannot ignore working the lateral chain (as we call it). A way to incorporate gluteus work into your day is to perform bridges and clamshells with a loop theraband. Loop bands can be found on Amazon. Just order a value pack with all different colors and then choose the band that gives you moderate resistance so you feel a burn after 10-12 reps.

**3. Pace Yourself.** It is very easy to get carried away with trying to beat the others on the leaderboard. Peloton utilizes the lea-

derboard in order to get the most performance out of its clients specifically due to its peer pressure psychology. This can be a wonderful thing, but if you are NEW to spinning you will injure yourself if you try to beat those at the top of the pack. My advice is to close the leaderboard tab until at least a month has gone by and you are comfortable with your skills and conditioning. Then go for it!

**4. Frequency Matters.** Balance is everything. I know that some folks LOVE their aerobic activity, but to be well balanced it is important to include 2-3 strength days into your weekly routine as well. Everybody's workout routine will vary depending on their goals



Dr. Sean T Lordan

and what they are trying to accomplish, but to provide a simple framework let me give you a prescription for total body health and wellness. The prescription is: 3 days of aerobic activity (spinning) for 30+ minutes, and 2-3 days of resistance exercise work. I personally use the "Stronger" YouTube videos from Frank Nash in Worcester, for my at-home resistance workouts. They are 25-30 minutes in length and perfect for my busy schedule.

There you have it, 4 tips to "Win" your at home workout routine and avoid my office!

As always if you have any comments or questions, please feel free to reach out to me personally at [drlordan@conciiergephysicaltherapy.com](mailto:drlordan@conciiergephysicaltherapy.com).

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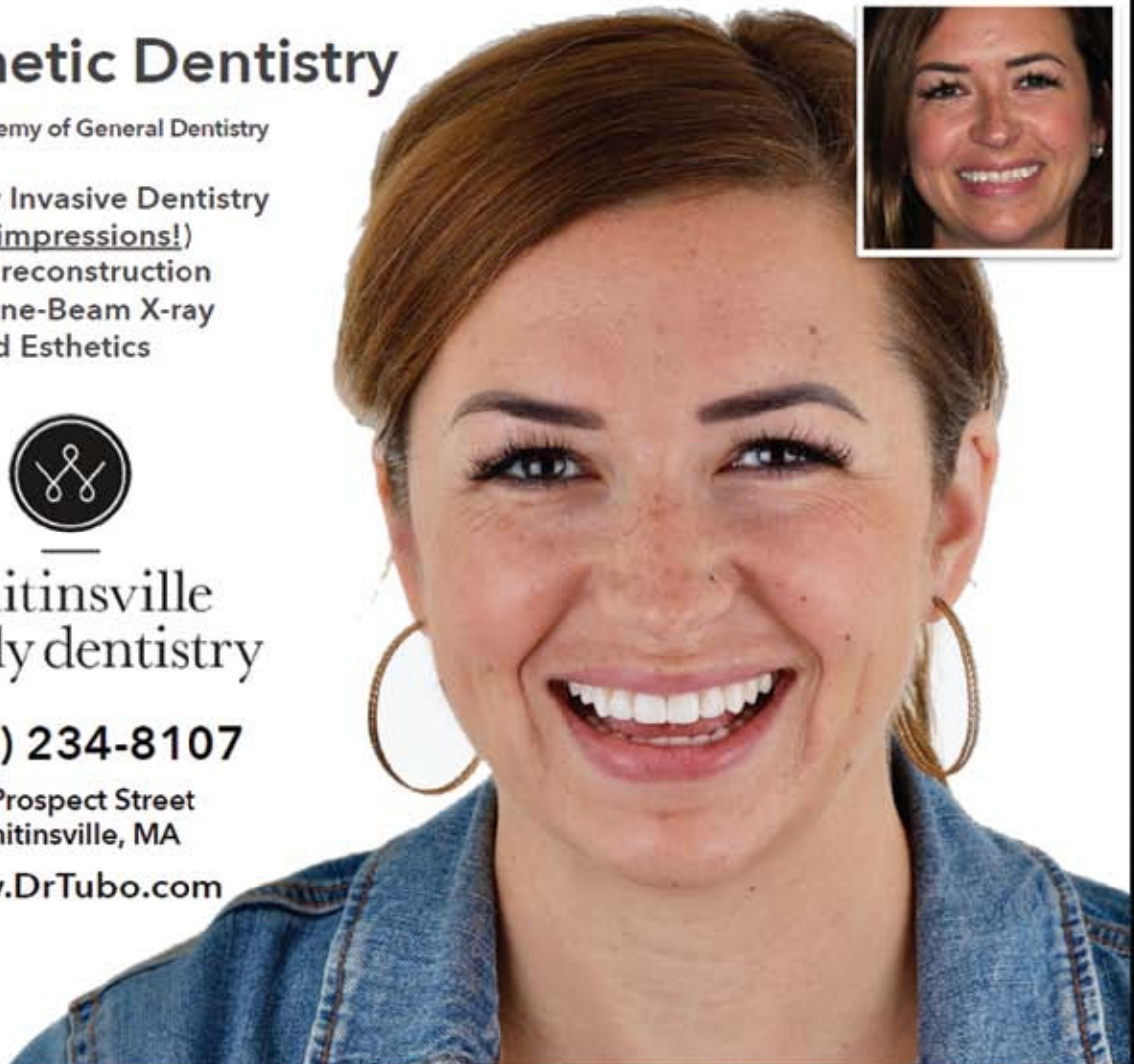
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Focus on non-profits

# Blackstone Valley nonprofit continues to bring warmth, comfort and hope to area's homeless this holiday season

By Christine Galeone

During the Advent and Christmas seasons, most people seek the warmth and comfort of home. It's where they live, love, work and dream. It's where they rest. And for many, it's where they find hope in the Christmas spirit.

But far too many people – even in the Blackstone Valley – have no place that they can call home. Living constantly in survival mode, they have to struggle to find warmth, comfort and, undoubtedly, the spirit of the season. They don't have the basic necessities that others take for granted.

Thankfully, during this season of giving, there's a local nonprofit that's been working to help the homeless in the Blackstone Valley. The Blackstone Valley Emergency Shelter has been busy connecting homeless families and individuals with the resources they need. The Whitinsville-based nonprofit has also been providing them with personal supplies, and it's been fundraising to continue the important work that it does.

Founded in 2016 by green cleaning coach, expert and author Leslie Reichert, the

Blackstone Valley Emergency Shelter is based out of the United Presbyterian Church of Whitinsville, the church that Reichert belongs to. The founder – who feels she was called by God to open the shelter after she heard about a homeless mom and her children sleeping in nearby Salvation Army bins and after encountering other homeless people – opened the first emergency shelter location in the church that she attends. Not long after it opened, St. Patrick's Church, Pleasant Street Christian Reformed Church and Fairlawn Christian Reformed Church joined the BVES by becoming additional host sites for the shelter and by providing help to shelter guests. In addition to offering emergency shelter on frigid nights, the BVES has connected area homeless people with vital resources such as transportation, addiction rehabilitation and mental health support.

Although, this winter – due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting need to refrain from opening the Northbridge shelter sites – the nonprofit has been funding transportation for

the homeless to be brought to Net of Compassion's Hotel Grace emergency shelter in Worcester, the Blackstone Valley Emergency Shelter has continued to help the people it serves in other ways. It has been putting together survival bags (containing items such as socks, underwear, toiletries and space blankets), providing gas cards, providing shower cards, and connecting people to the valuable resources they need to overcome their circumstances. It has also been running a virtual talent show fundraiser and a GoFundMe campaign to support its efforts.

Throughout everything, the hope and love that shine bright during this time of the year haven't diminished because of the pandemic. And Reichert is grateful. "My Christmas wish is to thank all the volunteers and those who have supported the Shelter financially over the past five years," Reichert shared. "I'd also like to pray for our guests – both those that have pulled themselves out of homelessness and no longer need our support and those that are still trapped due to addiction."

Reichert hopes that the community will continue to support the life-changing work being done by the Blackstone Valley Emergency Shelter. In this season of giving, she invites everyone to vote (through donations) for one or more of the talented people competing in the nonprofit's Blackstone Valley Talent Show at [www.blackstonevalleytalent.com](http://www.blackstonevalleytalent.com). Alternatively, donations can

be made to the BVES GoFundMe campaign, which can be accessed through the same website. The funds should further enable the nonprofit to help more people to find warmth, comfort and hope this holiday season.

More information about the nonprofit is available on the Blackstone Valley Emergency Shelter website, [www.whitinpres.org/shelter](http://www.whitinpres.org/shelter), on its



Facebook page or by calling 508-266-5122.

If you would like to suggest a Blackstone Valley nonprofit or initiative for this series, please contact Christine at [cmgaleone15@gmail.com](mailto:cmgaleone15@gmail.com).

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## Rep. Soter announces Uxbridge will receive \$146,907 for safety upgrades

UXBRIDGE - On December 28, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation released the latest round of funding from the Shared Winter Streets and Spaces Grant Program. In this round, 17 communities and organizations throughout the Commonwealth were awarded grant funding. The town of Uxbridge received \$146,907.25.

Uxbridge town officials will use the funds to replace and upgrade an unsafe crosswalk through Wesgan Square. Improvements will include new signage and a new flashing

pedestrian safety beacon. This new safer crossing will serve a retirement community, recreation fields, and an elementary school.

"The Town of Uxbridge is honored to have our project selected for this grant award. The project will make it safe for kids to walk to school and the park, as well as for our Seniors to be able to enjoy a safe and manageable walk in Town as well," said Steve Sette, Uxbridge town administrator.

The Chair of the Uxbridge Select Board, Brian Butler, commented, "The Uxbridge

Board of Selectmen is proud of the announced Grant of almost \$147k from the MassDOT. This grant will be used to upgrade the crosswalk and install much-needed safety lighting at Wesgan Square. Our children and elderly will be the direct beneficiaries of this long-overdue project."

Building on the success of the Shared Streets and Spaces initiative first launched during the summer of 2020, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation extended the program to help municipalities address the particular challenges of winter amid

the ongoing public health crisis. Shared Winter Streets and Spaces will provide cities and towns with grants as small as \$5,000 and as large as \$500,000 to improve plazas, sidewalks, curbs, streets, parking areas, and other public spaces in support of pub-

lic health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce.

Representative Soter commented, "Public safety is ever so important to our communities. This funding will be used to implement necessary upgrades to a busy area that serves the community in so

many different ways. I would like to recognize town leaders for their efforts in obtaining this grant."

Representative Soter will continue to work with town officials across his district to secure funding opportunities like this one.

## Rep. Soter applauds Uxbridge Police and Fire for local toy drive



Members of the Uxbridge Police and Fire departments collecting toys.

UXBRIDGE - Representative Soter [R-Bellingham] applauds the work of the Uxbridge Police and Fire Departments for holding their annual toy drive to support the Blackstone Valley Toys for Kids and Teens program.

On November 28, members from both departments were held a collection in front of the Hannaford Market in Ux-

bridge. Representative Soter was proud to contribute to the cause by donating a cart of toys to help fill the cruiser and truck parked out front.

"It is important to help others during the holiday season, but this year amidst all that is going on, it is especially important. For this reason, I was proud to fulfill my duty as a Representative of Uxbridge

and give back to my neighbors who are struggling this Christmas season. I want to recognize both Police and Fire for the time that they dedicate to making sure every child in the community has a special holiday season. The community involvement that both these departments show throughout the year is tremendous," Representative Soter said.

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# Samuel Slater EXPERIENCE

**Do you remember when phones were party lines?**

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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 will 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](mailto:ospratt@samuel-slaterexperience.org) or call the museum at 508-461-2955.

— Chris Robert



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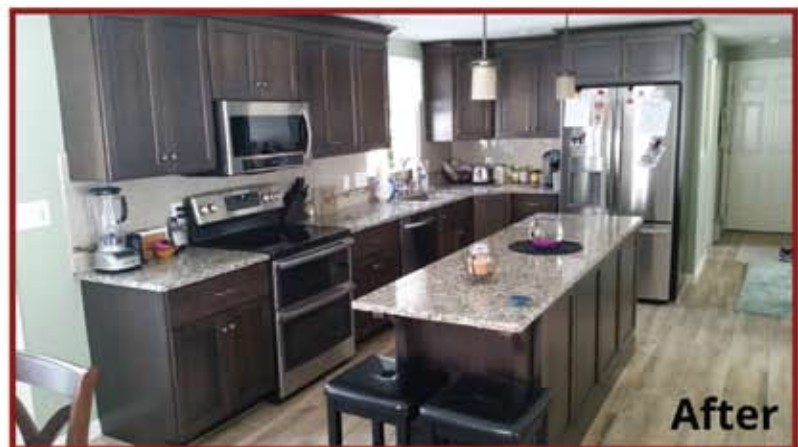
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## Blackstone Valley Education Hub awarded Capital Skills Grant

WHITINSVILLE - The Central MA Center for Business & Enterprise, also known as The Blackstone Valley Education Hub in Whitinsville, has been awarded a Skills Capital grant

from the Commonwealth of MA for \$253,500. The Skills Capital Grants are competitive grants to education institutions across the Commonwealth to update equipment and ex-

pand student enrollment in programs that provide career education.

The Blackstone Valley Education Hub will use their award toward advancing their

robotic and advanced manufacturing equipment. Such equipment includes Universal Robots, which are collaborative robots used in industry and manufacturing, educational DoBots to work specifically with middle and high school students, and a new TRAK 20P 3-Axis milling machine.

"We are very excited to bring our students the next level of learning," remarked Jeannie Hebert, President of the Blackstone Valley Education Hub. "We have a great team assembled here at the EdHub and are looking forward to continued collaboration with our education and business partners in the region."

The Blackstone Valley Education Hub's core mission is to support students, young adults and career changers with training to meet the industry demands of advanced manufacturers in the area.

## Divorce Support Group begins new session in January, in-person and via Zoom

WHITINSVILLE - A new weekly divorce support program began on Tuesday, January 5.

Called "Fresh Start - There is Life after Divorce," this program is for men and women who are separated or divorced and living single again. Led by knowledgeable leaders, the group offers encouragement, friendship, and hope.

Each meeting includes a topical video followed by small group discussion, refreshments, and social time. The program continues to April.

The meetings will be done in a hybrid fashion. Participants can come to the in-person meeting or participate online via Zoom if that is more comfortable.

The FreshStart program is free, non-denominational, and open to all.

Meetings began Tuesday, January 5, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Pleasant Street Church, 25 Cross Street, Whitinsville. The program continues for 12 weeks, and participants can begin attending at any time.

Contact the church office at 508-234-5268, e-mail info@psrc.org, or visit www.psrc.org for more information and to register.

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## Nearly \$2M awarded by foundation in annual community grants

WORCESTER – When the pandemic hit and adult learners were forced to leave the classroom and seek nurturing study space elsewhere, Lisa Brennan knew there was a challenge in store for some of her members.

As executive director of the Genesis Club in Worcester, Brennan oversees the nonprofit's Supported Education Program which assists members with severe mental illness in navigating the hurdles of attending classes – be they in a college curriculum, certificate

program, or vocational training – while balancing doctor and therapy appointments, medications, and recovery.

“Social connections are key to recovery” said Brennan. “COVID-19 struck right at the heart of what we are – a community of people trying to achieve a common goal of recovery.”

She estimates, each year, 80 members are reliant on the organization's educational services and focus on greater workforce development.

The Greater Worcester Community Foundation is

proud to offer Genesis Club an award to sustain its Supported Education Program and return members to their studies.

“It's increasingly important for young people to have a solid educational foundation in order to succeed in their careers, personal lives, and feel accomplished,” said Barbara G. Fields, president and CEO of the Foundation.

Genesis Club's grant is one of 123 awarded to 114 organizations – totaling \$1.935 million – by the Foundation in its 2020 Community Grant Program cycle. The Com-

munity Grant Program is the largest GWCF competitive grantmaking program and is made possible by the generosity of donors.

“We knew the needs of local nonprofits would be different in light of the pandemic,” added Fields. “It is essential for these organizations to receive the funding and support they need to sustain themselves.

In this time of uncertainty, the Foundation stepped up to strengthen this sector and meet the needs of our most vulnerable populations.”

In this year's Community Grant Program, a wide range of projects – everything from food insecurity and cultural engagement to entrepreneurship training, health care delivery, basic needs, and youth opportunities – were awarded funding.

“We are excited and inspired by this year's grant recipients,” said Jonathan Cohen, GWCF vice president for programs and strategy. “Each of the funded projects speaks to the uniqueness, creativity, and community spirit that is alive and well in

Central Massachusetts.”

Amounts awarded to towns in Blackstone include:

- Blackstone Valley Boys and Girls Club (\$5,000; Blackstone)
- Whitin Community Center (\$20,000; Whitinsville)
- Rise Above Foundation (\$10,000; Northbridge)

A list of the 2020 GWCF Community Grant Program recipients – including a short description of the funded projects and the amounts awarded – is available on the Foundation's website.

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Luke Morrison, a senior from Douglas in Electronics & Engineering Technology and BVT Robotics Club member, stands in front of the club's competition robot holding up the winning aluminum plexiglass model.



Luke Morrison, a senior from Douglas in Electronics & Engineering Technology and BVT Robotics Club member with the final tabletop barrier for use in the school cafeteria.

# BVT students build COVID barriers for school cafeteria

*Design challenge delivers creative solutions to a common issue*

UPTON – A design challenge at Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT) inspired students and staff to work collaboratively to develop a creative solution to a common COVID-related issue, limited cafeteria seating.

With only two students seated per 12-foot table, facing the same direction during a lunch block, Vocational Director Tom Belland had the thought if one of our shops could engineer a solution to maximize our allowable seating per lunch period safely. Overcoming that hurdle would be one less 'barrier' to bringing more students back to BVT.

Belland discussed the concept of challenging several departments to design and build a user-friendly tabletop barrier with Construction Technology instructor Mark Fitzpatrick, Electronics and Engineering Technology instructor Mike Norton, and Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration instructors Daniel Morin and Joshua Dunton. Ulti-

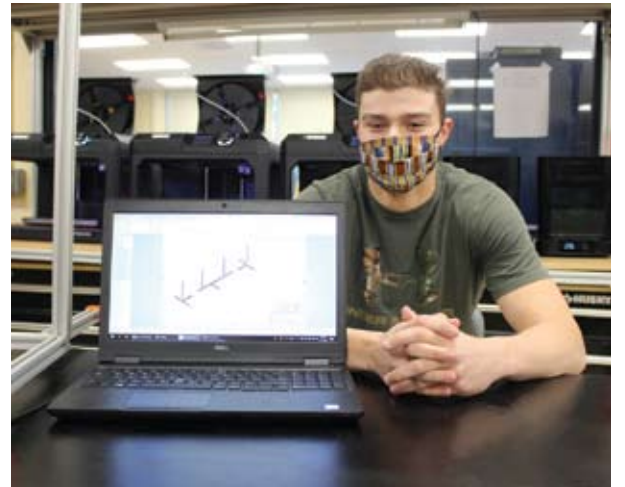
mately those conversations inspired the idea for a cafeteria tabletop design challenge within the three shops.

"The prototype had to be secure and stable on a table without drilling or clamping, quickly removable, and easily cleaned, disinfected, and reusable to meet the requirements. Each shop came up with an initial design idea and a prototype for a barrier build," explained Belland. "All three designs were well thought out and had many positive attributes."

The winning design was the aluminum plexiglass model submitted by Electronics & Engineering. They chose to use 80/20 aluminum because it is lightweight but strong, plexiglass for its visibly transparent, shatter-resistant, and durable attributes, and manufacturing 3D printed the endcaps to reduce costs further. But recycling and reusability were the deciding factors that led to the win, with nearly all the materials used for the build being 100 percent reusable and repurposed for use in BVT's Robotics Club.

"I didn't have to look far for inspiration," said Luke Morrison, a senior from Douglas in Electronics and Engineering Technology and a member of the Robotics Club. "In the corner of our shop rests our competition robot, its aluminum and lightweight, but designed and built to compete against opponents in a series of specific challenges, and we always want more materials to improve it. It was fun and rewarding to take skills I've learned and the materials used in shop and apply them in this design challenge."

The Drafting department assisted with detailed drawings for the barriers, which will help a great deal with



Isaac Curley, a senior from Uxbridge in Drafting & Design Technology, uses Inventor CAD software that provides him with the ability to produce professional-grade 3D mechanical part drawings.

mastery preparation and assembly. Isaac Curley, a senior from Uxbridge in Drafting and Design Technology, uses Inventor CAD software that provides him with the ability to produce professional-grade 3D mechanical part drawings. He said, "It is rewarding to use my computer-aided drafting (CAD) skills to good use in this barrier project. The drawings that took me a school day to produce will aid students in Advanced Manufacturing and Fabrication, who will read them and know how long to cut the aluminum pieces."

Belland said, "Our students and graduates continue to rise to meet any challenge with enthusiasm and work hard to deliver impressive results. The Class of 2020 chose to give back to their school community with a generous donation that covered the cost of all of the materials needed to produce thirty-two tabletop barriers."

The following students participated in the design challenge and contributed to building the final tabletop barrier for use in the cafeteria and other departments. Students are arranged alpha-

betically by their shop. *Construction Technology (instructor, Mark Fitzpatrick)* Aiden Chase, a junior from Northbridge  
Cody Carchio, a junior from Mendon  
Steven Cote, a junior from Mendon  
Daniel Paine, a junior from Milford  
Benjamin Powell, a junior from Bellingham  
Zachariah Osterman, a junior from Northbridge  
Jeffrey Powers, a junior from Upton  
Richard Randall, a senior from Upton  
Mathew Richardson, a senior from Uxbridge  
*Electronics and Engineering Technology (instructor Mike Norton)* Luke Morrison, a senior from Douglas  
Trout Marnell, a junior from Millbury  
*Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration (instructors Dan Morin and Josh Dunton)* Nickolas Montani, a senior from Milford  
Cooper O'Neil, a sophomore from Millbury  
Caitlin Walsh, a sophomore from Upton  
Ashley McIsaac, a sophomore from Milford.



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## Grafton BSA Troop 107 offers Christmas tree pickup

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ing and community service, we will pick up your tree and dispose of it for you for a donation to Troop 107. Monies raised go to fund Troop

activities such as summer camp, outdoor equipment, books and community service projects.

Pickup dates are Saturday, January 9, and Saturday, January 16, weather permitting. Please place your tree outside by 8:00 a.m. on that day. Donations are appreciated and can be attached to the tree in a baggie to help us social distance.

To schedule a pickup, please click on the google form link: <https://forms.gle/ykGYBJQDAEVs5SID8> or email us at [graffontroop107@gmail.com](mailto:graffontroop107@gmail.com).

Please provide us with your name, street address, zip code, which date, and your email address (in case we need to postpone for the weather).

Troop 107 thanks the community of Grafton for its ongoing support.

Susan Thomas, Grafton BSA Troop 107

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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 Massachu-

setts, especially those hardest hit by the financial fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.

According to state offi-

cial, 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 apply 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](http://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.

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## Making New Dog Owner Kits earns Junior Girl Scout her Bronze Award

HOPEDALE— Rory Goyette from Historic Hopedale Troop 11582 earned her Girl Scout Bronze Award, the highest recognition for achievement in Girl Scouting at the Junior level. Her project focused on helping families adopting dogs.

Rory made 25 new owner kits for the Dog Orphans, Inc.,

a private, nonprofit, no-kill, shelter in Douglas that has been helping dogs since 1971. The bags included the shelter logo on it and contained dog toys made from recycled tee shirts, handmade dog bandanas, homemade dog treats, dog cologne and tennis balls donated by PetSmart in Millbury.

By completing the Girl Scout Bronze Award girls develop more confidence by meeting new people, building courage to stand up for an issue they are passionate about and make their community a better place by putting their plan into action.

Historic Hopedale Girl Scout Service Unit serves over 150 girls in grades K-12 in Hopedale, and is part of Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts. For more information, please visit [www.gscwm.org](http://www.gscwm.org).

Dog Orphans, Inc., was founded 50 years ago by a small group of animal lovers dedicated to saving dogs from pain and suffering. Located in Douglas, they house stray, homeless and unwanted dogs until suitable permanent homes are found.



Rory Goyette filling and delivering her new owner dog kits.

### Scholarship applications

MENDON - Thimble Pleasures Quilt Guild has announced that applications for their yearly \$1000 scholarship to a student who is planning to study a field of visual arts, design or textiles is available at the guidance office of local high school or available to download at [www.thimblepleasures.org](http://www.thimblepleasures.org). Deadline for receipt of applications is May 1.



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# OLV Food drive

The Our Lady of the Valley Regional School community held a food drive for two weeks in November. They collected 314 pounds of food that was donated to the People's First Food Pantry in Uxbridge. Pictured are helpers Julia (5th grade) and Peter (3rd grade) Colonero.



*Thank you to all of our Chamber members and supporters in the Blackstone Valley. We are blessed to work with you! Wishing everyone a safe, healthy and prosperous year ahead.*



**Jeannie Hebert**  
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## WE HAVE BIKES IN STOCK



# State-of-the-art car wash will add to resurgent Rt. 146

By Rod Lee

Shed no tears for the Worcester-Providence Turnpike, aka Rt. 146.

In the old days, back in the early 1990s, individuals connected to the tourism industry in the Blackstone Valley—Gary Vaillancourt, Jack and Judy Ober, Barbara O'Connor, Artie Keown, Jack Cnossen, Marlene Bosma, Val Stegemoen, Margaret Carroll, Chuck Arning and others—would gather monthly and dream about hotels and restaurants and a burgeoning commercial environment along the corridor between Worcester and Providence.

These meetings gave way to a period of relative inactivity on the development front. Indeed, there was disillusionment among the participants: a growing conviction that their vision of locals and out-of-towners alike flocking to such attractions as Vaillancourt Folk Art, Purgatory Chasm, the Douglas Flea

Market, the Mendon Country Gift Barn, the Riverbend Farm Visitors Center, West End Creamery, the Asa Waters Mansion and the Willard Clock Museum might never be realized.

Enter The Shoppes at Blackstone Valley in Millbury and with its arrival a burst of new hope.

Enter the Red Roof Inn, which recently acquired the Econo Lodge on the southbound side of the highway.

Enter too Michael C. O'Brien of Galaxy Development LLC, who has been stitching together Pleasant Valley Crossing in Sutton in promising "phases."

Suddenly, Route 146 is starting to show some life.

Tammy Bourakis is one of the latest businesspersons to see the potential in the artery and in Pleasant Valley Crossing, which is already home to a Market 32, a Starbucks, a Five Guys, and other tenants.

Possibly as soon as January, Ms. Bourakis and her son Kyle Nigosian, who is partnering with her, will launch "Mickey's Car Wash & Detail Shop" on an approximately 4500-square-foot parcel directly abutting a building that already contains Luv 2 Play and Presenius Kidney Care. Part of Galaxy Development's Phase 3, Mickey's will be easily accessible from the northbound side of Rt. 146 and from the Boston Road entrance to Pleasant Valley Crossing.

A car wash might seem an unlikely fit at Pleasant Valley Crossing. But Ms. Bourakis, who has a background in finance and real estate (she flipped houses for a while), thinks her venture is a perfect complement to enterprises that will have preceded the arrival of Mickey's. "There is a lack of any kind of car-wash facility in the area," she says, noting that the nearest com-

petitor would be over five miles away.

Nor will Mickey's Car Wash & Detail Shop be a run-of-the-mill operation like so many of those in the area that are sadly not kept up and that come and go. Mickey's will feature a 100-foot exterior express car wash with a flat-belt conveyor system that Ms. Bourakis describes as "a first in New England. We had to go to New Jersey to see one," she said. The flat belt has been referred to as a magic carpet ride. Vehicles drive onto the belt without wheels engaging in a track. This is great for preventing damage, especially for low-positioned cars like sports cars. Add a "futuristic light show" furnished by Sonny's The Car Wash Factory (introducer of "the Rainbow Maxx 6' LED light bar"), two detail bays, vacuums, a pet wash and a retail shop that will offer car-care products and you have a Mickey's that will provide "all kinds" of neat ingredients for the consumer, she said.

Ms. Bourakis stayed local by working with bankHometown on financing for the purchase of equipment for Mickey's.

Mickey's will bring Pleasant Valley Crossing one step closer to completion. "We have a letter of intent on the last unit" in the strip of storefronts next to Mickey's "and that puts us over to the big field," Mr. O'Brien said.

Mickey's, he said, "is another reason to bring people into our shopping center."

With over \$250 million in projects completed in the past ten years, by working with difficult sites, challenging environmental issues, permitting hurdles and de-



Tammy Bourakis with her son Kyle Nigosian at Pleasant Valley Crossing in Sutton, soon to be the site of their "Mickey's Car Wash & Detail Shop." Mickey's will open in early 2021.

velopment costs, Galaxy keeps adding to its portfolio. Water Street Plaza in Fitchburg, Fallon Health Summit Elder Care in Webster, East Village Square in Webster, The Trolley Yard in Worcester and Keystone Shoppes in Colchester, Connecticut are some of its assets.

Ms. Bourakis and her son, who has a plumbing back-

ground, chose Mickey's as the name in honor of the family dog, "who we love very much," she said.

She believes that customers of Mickey's will love the car wash just as much.

Contact Rod Lee at [rodlee.1963@gmail.com](mailto:rodlee.1963@gmail.com) or 774-232-2999.

## Paws corner

### New Year's resolutions for happy, healthy pets

By Sam Mazzotta

DEAR READERS: As we close out one of the most tumultuous and stressful years of our lives, let's look back and remember how much peace and joy our pets gave to us. When nothing else in the world seemed certain, we could count on our pets to offer unconditional love.

That's why, as we look forward to a new year and new hopes, we must honor and protect our best friends. Let's resolve to:

1. Spend more time with our pets. Dogs and cats need regular attention and love. While we're spending more time at home, it's a perfect time to play with our pets, to add an extra

training session and more walks into the routine.

2. Get pets the best care possible. Schedule that routine veterinary visit, and get your pets caught up on their vaccinations. A physical can head off serious illnesses.

3. Include your pets in your will. We don't like to think about it, but end-of-life planning is important, and our pets need to be part of that planning.

4. Build lasting memories. Take as many photos with your pets as you can. Make scrapbooks that you can look through years from now to remember when your puppy was young, or to memorialize

a beloved turtle, hamster, cat or dog.

5. Help other pet owners. So many people are silently struggling right now: either from job loss, ill health, grief or depression. They may not be able to take care of their pets as well as they can. Look out for your neighbors and offer to help if they ask for it. Donate money or supplies to local pet charities that offer assistance to pets and their owners.

I wish you and your pets a happy, healthy 2021.

Send your tips, comments and questions to [ask@pawscorner.com](mailto:ask@pawscorner.com). (c) 2020 King Features Synd., Inc.

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Names of businesses keep being added to signage in front of Pleasant Valley Crossing, as the shopping center grows its tenant list.

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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 ultrasound 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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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 connect 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](http://www.tomdagostino.com).



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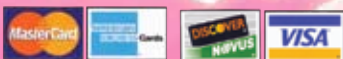
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## Q & A with The Car Doctor

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](http://www.johnfpaul.podbean.com) or other popular podcast sites. Email your car questions to [jpaul@aaanortheast.com](mailto:jpaul@aaanortheast.com). Follow John on Twitter @johnfpaul and friend him on facebook [mrjohnfpaul](https://www.facebook.com/mrjohnfpaul)



**Q.** When I bought my Nissan Altima back in 2010, I added the accessory of a clear mask to protect the front of the hood and fenders. It was put on with an adhesive. These days, the mask is cracking and my hood looks terrible. Picking at it with a finger, it feels like it will chip off. Can I somehow peel or chip the mask off, and if so, what is the best way to do so, without damaging the hood? Also, what would be the best way to remove the adhesive safely?

**A.** Typically, this type of film lasts about five to seven years, so you did really well getting ten years out of the clear mask on your car. I have removed this type of vinyl film with a heat gun and plastic scrapers. Typically, once you can pull up a corner you are in pretty good shape to remove larger pieces. Then while continuing to gently heat the adhesive you can take off the larger sections. Once you have all the film removed then you can clean the adhesive with adhesive remover. Once you have removed the film, cleaned up the paint with polishing compound and then apply a wax to restore the paint.

**Q.** I have a 2008 Jeep Compass. The vehicle is two-wheel-drive and has a five-speed manual transmission. Sporadically the warning lights for the anti-lock brakes, airbag system and traction control turn on. This seems to be affected by temperature, more warnings in hot weather, and in cooler weather less often. I

am able to reset them while underway at highway speed by turning off ignition for a few seconds. This works for a while and then the lights come back on. I've been told several things. First, the problem is with the computer and a new module is needed, which I have been told is quite expensive. A used computer is just about impossible because of the manual transmission and front wheel drive, rather than the more popular four-wheel-drive. I have also been told that it is not the computer but a sensor in one of the wheels. My current mechanic says it is most likely the computer and he offered to remove it and try to get it rebuilt. Lastly, all say given the age and mileage on car which runs fine, leave it alone and just ignore the lights and drive the car. I'm interested in your take on this issue

**A.** The problem could be either or both of those issues causing the warning lights to come on. Although I would be looking for a poor electrical connection, specifically poor ground wire connections. The best thing to do is spend some time with a voltmeter and check for voltage drop across these circuits. Now certainly at 12 years old, one of the wheel sensors for the ABS brakes could have failed which would also disable the traction control system. It is the idea that the ABS and airbag lights come on together that lead me to believe it is a ground problem. This is also a case of where time could be a good diagnostic tool. Over time the issue will get worse and the problem will be easier to find.

**Q.** What car or SUV can I buy without start/stop technology. I have rented a couple of new cars and they have this feature and I hate it.

**A.** I have driven a lot of vehicles over the years and every vehicle that I can think of since 2018/2019 has this gas savings feature. The idle stop feature is well intended and is designed to save fuel. In my road tests, I'm not sure it actually does. When manufacturers add this feature there is an automatically calculated bump in EPA fuel economy numbers. This is no different than years ago, some manual transmission vehicles had "upshift" lights. When the

manufacturer added this light the EPA fuel economy number went up one mile per gallon-on paper. Nearly every vehicle with this system has some ability to shut it off, at least for that one trip. Some manufacturers govern the system by how hard you press the brake pedal. Light pressure on the brake at a stop, the engine keeps running, heavy pressure the engine shuts off.

**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.

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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](http://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 them-



selves 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 cre-

ate, 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 improvements,” 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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## Grief Recovery Support Group Starts in January, in-person and via Zoom

WHITINSVILLE – A new grief recovery support group started on Tuesday, January 5, at the Pleasant Street Church. GriefShare is a program designed to help people in bereavement find encouragement and support during the grieving process. GriefShare meetings are for anyone who is grieving the loss of someone close.

The meetings will be done in a hybrid fashion. Participants can come to the in-person meeting or participate online via Zoom if that is more comfortable.

Each GriefShare session includes a video seminar and group discussion, providing an opportunity to interact with others who have experienced a recent loss. Weekly topics include “Living with Grief,” “The Effects of Grief,” “Your Family and Grief,” “Why,” and “Stuck in Grief.”

The program continues for 13 weeks, and attendees are welcome to join the group at any point.

GriefShare is free, non-denominational, and open to all. Meetings began Tuesday, January 5, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Pleasant Street Church, 25 Cross Street, Whitinsville.

Contact the church office at 508-234-5268, e-mail [howard@pscr.org](mailto:howard@pscr.org) or visit [www.pscrc.org](http://www.pscrc.org) for more information and to register.

## Resource directory

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**Mark Marzeotti**

## Incorporating home renovations into the “new normal” of homeownership

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 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 REALTORS® 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](http://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%!

**Maribeth Marzeotti**  
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## Grant awarded to BV EdHub

The Central MA Center for Business & Enterprise, also known as The Blackstone Valley Education Hub in Whitinsville has been awarded a Skills Capital grant from the Commonwealth of MA for \$253,500. The Skills Capital Grants are competitive grants to education institutions across the Commonwealth to update equipment and expand student enrollment in programs that provide career education.

The Blackstone Valley Education Hub will use their award toward advancing their robotic and advanced manufacturing equipment. Such equipment includes Universal Robots, which are collaborative robots used in industry and manufacturing, educational DoBots to work specifically with middle and high school students, and a new TRAK 20P 3-Axis milling machine. “We are very excited to bring our students the next level of learning,” remarked Jeannie Hebert, President of the Blackstone Valley Education Hub. “We have a great team assembled here at the EdHub and are looking forward to continued collaboration with our education and business partners in the region.” The Blackstone Valley Education Hub’s core mission is to support students, young adults and career changers with training to meet the industry demands of advanced manufacturers in the area.



Pictured are the UR3e collaborative robot and DoBot Robotic Arm.



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