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February 2021

The Voice of Your Community

Project Just Because Serves Ashland Residents in Need

By CYNTHIA WHITTY

The effects of the global pandemic are being felt every-

where, including Metrowest. According to Frontiers in Public Health, "the pandemic has

direct impacts on income due to premature deaths, workplace absenteeism, and reduction in productivity and has created a negative supply shock, with manufacturing productive activity slowing down due to global supply chain disruptions and closures of factories."

Social services organizations are working hard to keep up with the increasing need of many families. One Ashland resident, Barbara Christensen, works as a volunteer part of every week with a local organization, Project Just Because in Hopkinton.

"In early 2016, I was no longer working and wanted to find an organization where I could volunteer," Christensen said. "I had purchased items for the PJB holiday wish list in



Barbara Christensen sells masks she makes at the Hopkinton Farmers' Market with proceeds going to Project Just Because. (Photo/supplied)

PROJECT JUST BECAUSE
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Family Legacy of Service, Desire to Meet Needs of All Students Motivates Ashland's Assistant Superintendent

By CYNTHIA WHITTY

In the midst of the Coronavirus, on July 1, 2020, Michael Caira took on his new role as Ashland's Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. Caira has worked in Ashland as a principal for the Warren and Mindess schools for the past nine years, and before that, as a teacher, dean of students and special education coordinator, and assistant principal at public schools in other Mass. towns and in Conn. Ashland Local Town Pages asked Caira what prepared him for his current role, especially at this challenging time, and what motivates him and keeps him up at night.

Whitty: Why did you choose your career path in education?

I come from a family of educators and public servants. My father, Michael, was a long-time Town Manager in Wilmington, Mass., where I grew up. My mother was an educational assistant. I have two sisters and a brother. My sister Jennifer is a former elementary school teacher, my sister Angela is a high school counselor, and my brother Brian is an assistant principal at a middle school. My wife is also an educator, who works as a school counselor for Westborough High School.

When I was a high school student exploring future career

FAMILY LEGACY
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PROJECT JUST BECAUSE

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the past, and began to go to PJB one day a week. I enjoyed it very much, and now spend 2-4 days a week. There is always so much to do, and I enjoy working with the other volunteers. I have been able to procure Bomba's socks, Operation Warm Coat, and a Trader Joe's food share. I also enjoy helping with the fundraisers. With Covid, I have been making masks to generate funds for PJB. I am close to \$10,000 donated!"

Food for Residents

PJB is run out of Hopkinton and serves the surrounding area. The Massachusetts Pantry (a statewide food pantry) is open to residents from any town. Ashland residents can go to PJB for food Monday through Thursday, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. "The available food varies quite a bit as it is donation-based, but there's boxed and canned goods, bakery goods, protein, and produce," Christensen said. "In the summer, there's donations from the farmers' market as well. Ashland residents can



Volunteer Barbara Perry, age 90, with a Basket of Love. (Photo/supplied)

also get clothing, toiletries, coats, household items, and shoes. This [pantry] is donation-based, and not all items are always available, but whatever is there is for anyone in need."

A gluten-free market open to any Massachusetts resident and The Hopkinton Food Pantry are also located inside PJB.

Other Services Available

PJB is also a referral center for domestic abuse through the MA 211 Program. In addition, PJB provides clothing, shoes, small household items, and toiletries year round. Christensen said, "There are seasonal programs, including back-to-school filled backpacks, holiday gifts,



Children donate toys for the holidays. (Photo/supplied)



Project Just Because volunteers. (Photo/supplied)

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Volunteer Barbara Christensen: "Project Just Because was started by Cherylann Lambert Walsh 20 years ago. She began by collecting items people no longer wanted and making them available to those in need. The project grew from her basement to an 11,000-square foot warehouse in Hopkinton. PJB received 501(c)(3) status in 2004, and provides approximately \$8 million dollars in goods to families each year."

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'Keep a Family Warm' (coats, boots, mittens and hats), Valentine's Day, Easter, and more. Baskets of Love are available for cancer patients or other people in need. PJB also helps other organizations when possible with donations of Bomba's Socks, food, toiletries, and gifts, including local shelters, pantries, and churches that help those in need."

PJB has seen an increase in need due to Covid. "So many families are in need right now," Christensen said. "PJB was able to add the Mass Pantry to its offerings. The goal of this pantry is that anyone in need in Massachusetts can walk in, make their food list, and get food right away. Food is distributed without contact, so it is safe for everyone to pick up. The increase in orders for clothing, household items, and warm coats has increased as well."

Supporting PJB

Christensen said PJB is always looking for donations. With Covid restrictions, PJB is limiting donations to food and clothing, especially warm coats, toiletries, warm bedding, and diapers. Money is also needed to buy the items that are not donated and pay for PJB's operating expenses.

Donations can be made through PayPal on the website, projectjustbecause.org, or by mailing a check to PJB, 109 South Street, Hopkinton, MA 01748. Volunteers are always needed to help fill orders, pick up items, inventory, and sort and put away donations.

"Any family in need should feel comfortable reaching out to PJB for help, whether it's for food, clothing or other basic necessities," Christensen added. "Requests are confidential, and everyone is treated with respect and dignity."

FAMILY LEGACY

continued from page 1

options that included detective, college football coach, and Disney animator, my father shared the following quote, “No man is so tall, as when he stoops to help a child.” The quote resonated with me, as a young man and has become a major part of my educational philosophy. I come from a family of public servants and educators. It is a privilege to serve as an educator, knowing that each day we have the opportunity to make a difference in the life of a child.

Whitty: What prepared you for your current job?

Throughout my career, I served in a variety of different capacities. Each position has played a part in preparing me for my current role. Certainly, my time as a teacher allowed me to familiarize myself with curriculum and



Assistant Superintendent Michael Caira with his wife Kristen and daughters +Anna, a third grader at Ashland's Mindess School, and Caroline, a sixth grader at Ashland Middle School. (Photo/supplied)

curriculum development, as well as understanding pedagogy. In

my time as a building administrator I was able to learn about the importance of communication and building based management. Working as a special education coordinator afforded me the opportunity to understand the intricacies of the special education process.

My doctoral work at Boston College also played a large role in preparing me for this position. During my time at BC, I collaborated with educators from across New England and had the good fortune of learning from experts in the field of education.

Most significantly, I have learned from my colleagues and the individuals who I have worked alongside over the course of my career. I consider myself very fortunate to work with the administrative team in Ashland, and I have learned a great deal from each member of the team.

Whitty: What motivates you in your job?

In my opinion, there is no greater responsibility than educating young people and keeping them safe while doing so. Knowing that our future is dependent upon the manner in which we educate our children motivates me each day. As a resident of Ashland, I am even more motivated, as I know that the decisions we make as administrators have a profound impact on our community as a whole. Having served as a principal for students who are currently in grades 3-10 also motivates me, as I have had the wonderful opportunity to watch these young men and women grow from a young age. I am motivated to always do what is in their best interest.

Whitty: What keeps you up at night?

Staff and student safety keeps me up at night. As a teacher, I lost sleep thinking about keeping

the students in our class safe. As a principal, I lost sleep thinking about keeping the students and staff in our school safe. Now, as assistant superintendent, I lose sleep thinking about keeping the students and staff in our entire district safe. Parents entrust their children to educators every day and it is our responsibility to educate them, but also to ensure they feel safe, physically, and social-emotionally. The safety of our students and staff is paramount and I think about it constantly.

Whitty: What gives you the greatest satisfaction and the greatest challenges?

It is satisfying to hear teachers and students talk about their enjoyment of the process of teaching and learning. When I walk into a classroom and feel

FAMILY LEGACY
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Sweeping Economic Development Bill Authorizing \$627 Million for COVID-19 Recovery Signed into Law

Prioritizes small business relief, support for workers, and housing development

On Wednesday, January 20, 2021, the Massachusetts Legislature passed \$627 million in funding for a sweeping economic recovery and development bill which will provide much-needed support to businesses, investments in infrastructure, and creation of new jobs in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill was signed into law on January 14, 2021.

An Act Enabling Partnerships for Growth provides the residents of Massachusetts a COVID-19 relief and recovery package that will provide support to the restaurant and tourism sectors, small businesses, and those who have been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic, while also creating a Future of Work Commission, establishing protections for student loan borrowers, and ushering in zoning reforms that will encourage housing development in our communities.

“This new law will help stabilize our economy and lead us to a strong economic recovery from this pandemic,” said House Speaker Ronald J. Mariano (D-Quincy). “This legislation provides immediate relief to those sectors of the economy hit hardest by the pandemic, while making key policy changes, par-

ticularly in housing, that will fuel future economic growth. I want to thank Chairman Michlewitz for his stewardship of this bill and for Chairwoman Ferrante and Representative Wong for their work on the conference committee.”

“I am thrilled this legislation is now law so that we can begin to provide a necessary boost to our economy as it recovers from the dire effects of COVID-19,” stated Senate President Karen E. Spilka (D-Ashland). “The Legislature recognizes the need to be bold when addressing the challenges facing restaurant and small business owners, cultural attractions and other key sectors that will keep our economy strong. I am particularly pleased this bill includes the long sought-after housing production reforms that the Senate has supported for years. I want to thank Senators Lesser, Rodrigues and my colleagues for their attention to this critical bill and for acting with urgency to move it forward in the legislative process.”

“The economic development bill will help the Commonwealth rebuild from the devastating effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought” said Representative Aaron Michlewitz,

Chair of the House Committee on Ways & Means (D-Boston). “This legislation supports our travel and tourism industry in a number of different ways, especially for our struggling restaurants. It will also encourage the Commonwealth’s housing production needs by simplifying zoning laws, encourage job creation in rural areas, and authorizes over \$626 million in targeted capital investments that will reach every corner of Massachusetts. I want to thank my colleagues in the Legislature for their input and hard work on making this bill a reality.”

“Tonight, our economic relief package was signed into law by Governor Baker. In a time of crisis for our Commonwealth, the Legislature completed one of the most important economic recovery and investment packages in recent history. With the inclusion of urgently needed small business and restaurant relief, new protections for over 1 million student loan borrowers, and the most progressive and far-reaching housing reform in decades, this legislation will bring needed relief to families, small businesses, and communities hit hardest by COVID-19,” stated Senator Eric P. Lesser, Chair of the Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies (D-Longmeadow). I want

to thank my fellow Conference Committee members, Senator Michael Rodrigues of Westport and Patrick O’Connor of Weymouth, along with our partners in the House, Conference Co-Chair Rep. Aaron Michlewitz of Boston, Rep. Ann Margaret Ferrante of Gloucester, and Rep. Donald Wong of Saugus. A special thank you as well to Senate President Karen Spilka and House Speaker Ron Mariano for your commitment to this legislation. This new set of laws will help millions of people in our Commonwealth and will chart a course toward a faster, more equitable recovery.”

The bill includes the following bonding authorizations and policy changes.

COVID-19 pandemic relief and recovery

Bonding Authorizations

- \$30 million for the state’s COVID-19 Payroll Protection Program
- \$20 million for restaurant COVID-19 recovery grants

Policy Changes

Limits fees charged by third-party delivery services for restaurants to 15% during the

ECONOMIC
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From Formal Dining Room to...a Home Office?

BY JOHN SZOLOMAYER, RE/
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A formal dining room can feel like a step back into a bygone era. Many homes have this formal space but not every modern family hosts large sit-down dinners or holiday gatherings. There is no rule that your dining room has to be used for that singular pur-

pose. If you're considering turning your dining room space into a useful space for you and your family, following are some ideas to get you started.

Playroom

If you have small children, this could be the perfect room to convert into a playroom. Creating an

indoor play area that keeps the toys and childhood clutter away from other rooms in the house is a smart move for many families. You can let your imagination run wild to design a fun space where children can play and create.

Media Room

Perhaps your dining room is the perfect place to set up a media center. This could be a room where you can watch movies, play video games, or listen to music. You can even use it as a studio space to play live music, if that's what you love to do.

Game Room

Games are a popular activity for family and friends. Whether you host a regular game night for role-playing games or poker or just play board games with your family, a dining room is a great space to set up a gaming table.

Home Office

If you need a home office, your dining room could fill that role perfectly. You can convert the space to include a desk as well as your organizational furniture. Depending on the dining room's position within the home, it can provide a distraction-free environment without cutting you off from other home activities.

Schoolwork Station

Just like you work better with a dedicated home office, many children work better with a dedicated space for schoolwork. Although they could sit at the kitchen table or a desk in their bedroom, having a space that is solely used for schoolwork can get them in the right mind-set for learning and help them be more productive. Contact me today to discuss other creative ways to re-purpose the dining room.

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



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FAMILY LEGACY

continued from page 3

the energy of a lesson and see and hear teacher/student discourse taking place, it is incredibly satisfying. I also always enjoy when a former student or parent provides me with a positive update regarding their own success or the success of their child. I would imagine my greatest challenge is similar to most educators. It is frustrating and disheartening when you cannot find a way to meet the needs of each child in your classroom or your school. Our goal is to ensure every child's needs are met, and there is no greater challenge than providing exactly what everyone needs all the time.

Whitty: How are you handling the situation with Covid, personally and professionally?

When I played football in college, my coach always told us to not let the highs get too high and not let the lows get too low. I have tried to take that approach both professionally and personally during the past nine-plus months. Certainly, Covid has presented us with tremendous challenges as educators, but I am continually impressed by the resiliency of our teaching staff, our students, and our families. I am in awe of what our nurses and principals are doing on a daily basis, and I have been so very fortunate to learn from Mr. Adams during this unprecedented time. Personally, I have enjoyed

the extra time with my wife and daughters, and while I have certainly missed my friends, we have created very special memories and experiences that would have never happened if our normal lives didn't come to a screeching halt in March.

Whitty: Is there anything else you would like readers to know?

I consider myself very lucky to have found a home both professionally and personally in the community of Ashland. Nine years ago, when I was hired, I immediately fell in love with this community and I hope to work here, serving the students, staff, and families of Ashland for the entirety of my career.

First Responders get Vaccinated

Ashland Fire Department Captain Moraghan and Ashland Police Department Chief Alfano received the Covid-19 Vaccination today as well as other members from the departments.

Ashland partnered with the towns of Sherborn, Hopkinton, Southborough, Northborough and Westborough to get the vaccine for First Responders.



Community Ties and a Commitment to Customer Service: Affordable Junk Removal

There are plenty of reasons to call a junk removal service. Maybe you're planning to move and need to clear out the basement and attic before your open house. Maybe you've spent way too much time at home lately and are feeling the need to declutter.

But figuring out who to call can be a pain. If you contact one of the big haulers, they route you to a phone center where they've never even heard of your town, plus their pricing seems vague and full of extra fees. No wonder you've let the stuff pile up—it's too much of a hassle to get rid of it!

Or you can call Affordable Junk Removal and let a local small business with deep community roots take care of everything.

Jay Schadler started his business in 2003. Back then, it was just him and a beat-up pickup truck taking small jobs and working nights and weekends when he could. As the years rolled on, his business grew, but his commitment to customer service never wavered. Now he's got a staff of ten, along with ten trucks, servicing eastern and central Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island.

Affordable Junk Removal specializes in house and estate cleanouts. If your garage, attic, or office is overflowing with stuff, take back your space and let the pros do the heavy lifting.

Jay and his team have handled it all. They've dismantled above-ground pools, hauled away ancient hot tubs, taken down old fencing, and stripped away worn carpeting. They'll come for a single item, or they'll clean out an entire house. And they can take almost anything. They can't accept hazardous materials, brush, dirt, or concrete, but everything else is fair game for them to take away.

Not everything ends up in a landfill—not if Jay can help it. He first tries to either recycle or donate items. Only after he tries to repurpose items do they end up at the transfer station.

Working with Affordable Junk Removal is simple. First, you can load stuff yourself if you want by renting a 15-cubic-yard dumpster for a week and chucking up to a ton of your unwanted stuff. If you need to get rid of more

**Business
spotlight**



weight, then Jay prorates that tonnage—you never pay for what you don't use.

If you don't want to be bothered with the dumpster, they've also got a driveway special where they'll take away a truckload of your unwanted things if you pile it up. Or if you don't want to lift a finger, then you can point at the items, and the team will fill up their truck and haul away your unwanted things. However you do it, you're left with more space and more peace of mind.

Jay and his team beat the big waste haulers on both price and customer service. When you call Affordable Junk Removal, you aren't connected to an anonymous call center. Your phone call goes right to Jay.

And speaking of pricing, Jay is upfront about it. His website shows the truck sizes and prices, so you can save time knowing your costs before you call for an

appointment. There aren't any hidden costs or surprise fees with Affordable Junk Removal.

Affordable Junk Removal is fully licensed and fully insured, and they'll treat your property with care and respect.

They also have a thriving commercial business, working with contractors and roofers to clear away debris and keep the job site clean. They can even handle commercial and residential emergencies with same-day service.

Jay and his family are deeply involved in the community. He and his wife, Christine, run the Corner Market restaurant in Holliston as well as Resellables, a thrift store in Bellingham. It's not uncommon for someone to reach Jay at the restaurant, order a sandwich, and then schedule a

junk removal appointment. Yes, the local small business really can handle everything!

For more information, contact Jay Schadler at (774) 287-1133 or visit Affordable Junk Removal online at www.takeawayjunk.com.

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Around Ashland Town News

BY CYNTHIA WHITTY

Special Town Meeting and Election for Building Projects

At the time of this writing, a special town meeting and special town election, delayed from December, are scheduled for late January. The meeting, Jan. 23, and election, Jan. 27, will ask residents to fund the Public Safety Building and Mindess School Building projects. To read the warrant and for updates and results, visit the town website, www.ashlandmass.com.

Covid-19 Vaccine Rollout

The town began distributing the FDA- and CDC-approved Pfizer and Moderna vaccines in three phases, a town spokesperson reported. Phase one began in December when the vaccine was distributed to health care workers and first responders and in long-term care facilities and congregate care settings.

The second phase, February to April, includes distributing the vaccine first to individuals with a high-risk for Covid-19 complications, including those with two or more comorbidities and/or who are 75 years of age or older. The second phase also includes professionals, such as teachers, transit workers, grocery employees, utility workers, food and agriculture employees, sanitation and public works employees, and public health workers. Adults 65 years and older, as well as individuals

with one comorbidity, are also included in this second phase.

Phase three runs from April to June when the vaccine is administered to the general public.

For more information, call the town's Covid hotline, 508-532-7900, email covid19@ashlandmass.com, or visit ashlandmass.com/765/Coronavirus-2020, which is updated as new guidance is mandated by the state and on Thursdays with local case data.



State-funded Energy Efficiency Enhancements

The Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) awarded the Town of Ashland last September \$71,021 in Green Communities grant funding. The grant funded an electric vehicle charging station at the Ashland Community Center, installed in December 2020, and energy efficiency upgrades at Town Hall, completed in January 2021. The town says the charging station is publicly accessible for electric vehicle drivers visiting the community center, Ashland State Park, or businesses along West

Union Street. These Green Community projects will help meet both the Commonwealth's Clean Energy and Climate Plan targets and the town's goal of being a net-zero community by 2040.



Adopt a Fire Hydrant

The Ashland Fire Department is asking residents for their assistance in maintaining accessibility to the town's fire hydrants. During the winter, hydrants can become buried by snow. If you have a fire hydrant near your home or business, consider helping make it visible and accessible for use in an emergency. Precious seconds can be lost searching for the hydrant or removing snow to gain access to it. To adopt a fire hydrant, take a picture of yourself and your adopted fire hydrant shoveled out and email it to mtorosian@ashlandfire.com, post it to Facebook.com/AshlandFire, or tweet it @AshlandMAFire.

Library Director Retiring

Ashland Library director, Paula Bonetti, recently announced her retirement after a 32-year career, serving 19 years



in Ashland as the director and 13 years in her hometown of Milford as the circulation librarian

expansion, completed in 2005; the 2008 recession and job losses; new hires and strategic planning;

Ashland Senior Center Announces a NEW Program!

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and circulation supervisor. Her last day will be Feb. 23. Library trustee and a member of the selection committee Carolyn Bell said, "We guessed and hoped she would be the right director for us: competent, open to all kinds of roles a small library required, and seeing the library as a community. She brought more than we even knew we wanted—kindness and respect for everyone."

Bonetti guided the library through a major renovation and

and today's pandemic. Trustee Carol Ambacher recalled: "From the get-go I watched Paula cope with the daily running of a library-in-waiting and the overwhelming decisions that had to be made about the new building. Amazingly in control of all the pieces, she led the many players—staff, board, Friends, and Building Committee—through the transition to a library for the future."

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Revisiting - Dividends: Evolve Beyond Yield

Two years ago, February 2019, I wrote about income investors becoming too attracted to high-yielding dividend stocks.

They'd ignore a company's business model, free cash flows, payout ratios, dividend growth and other key factors. Their mantra of "I don't care about the stock price, as long as I get my dividend" dramatically changed last year.

At first, all stocks fell. High-yielding companies were leveraged, faced earnings issues, industry headwinds and needed to preserve cash, so dividends were suspended or cut and stock prices stayed low. Meanwhile, efficient companies with growing business models recovered quickly, increased market share, stock prices accelerated and later dividends raised.

Bringing us to today and a conundrum for income investors.

Low Interest Rates Meet Inflation - Two year ago, certificates of deposits at 2.5% are renewing at 1% or less. Add the Fed indicating short-term rates will be held, even if inflation ex-

ceeds its 2% target rate. Thus those buying treasuries or investment-grade corporate bonds risk earning less than inflation.

Outdated Criteria Brings Concentration Risks - The philosophy of every investment must achieve a certain level of dividend yield is a fallacy. Meaning, you can't build a portfolio only of stocks with greater than 4%, 3% or even 2% yield.

For example, if 2% dividend yield is required to own a stock, a/o 1/20/21 you'd disqualify 76 of 120 (64%) largest companies in S&P 500 Index. Require a 4% dividend yield? Only 12 companies remain, limited to oil & gas, tobacco, drugs or telcom. That's not being selective, that's concentration risk and avoiding growing companies.

Income investors need a new perspective.

Seek Total Return Approach - Instead of yield alone for income, think a combination of yield, dividend growth and stock price appreciation. If you require 4% income distribution and your portfolio yields 2%, the other 2%

comes from selling investments. Relatively small and can occur naturally when rebalancing to manage risk.

Growth of Dividends - Growing companies reinvest earnings into projects to increase future cash flows. Dividends come from cash flows, and many growth companies yield 1.5% or less. Given this, these are ignored by income investors. Huge mistake, let me explain.

Yield-On-Cost (YOC) - Measures the compounding of dividend increases. Divide current dividend paid by what you paid for the share, multiply by 100. Real world example, large software company averages ~1.5% yield last 5 years. Dividend increases results in shares bought 5 years ago having 4.2% YOC, meaning your initial investment now pays 4.2% annually. Bonds can't do this, they're fixed. Now add over the 320% stock appreciation and you see the mistake of only selecting high dividend yields.

Evolve beyond yield and seek help when needed.



Glenn Brown

The opinions voiced in this material are for general information only and are not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual.

Glenn Brown is a Holliston resident and owner of PlanDynamic, LLC,

www.PlanDynamic.com. Glenn is a fee-only Certified Financial Planner™ helping motivated people take control of their planning and investing, so they can balance kids, aging parents and financial independence.

Ashland Business Beat

BY CYNTHIA WHITTY

The member-based Ashland Business Association (ABA) will hold an online networking event with the Metrowest Chamber of Commerce on Thursday, Feb. 11 at 5 to 6:30 p.m. The event will open with a brief presentation: "Reopening Your Business in the Time of Covid." Participants will enjoy watching a local restaurateur create a signature dish and learn how they adapted to Covid safety precautions. Open networking will follow. The cost is \$10 for ABA and MWCOC members/\$20 not-yet-members. Register online at www.metrowest.org/events.

New Business Opening

The town's economic development office reports the opening of a new businesses, Madras Market, an ethnic Indian grocery selling rice, lentils, spices, fresh and frozen produce, ethnic snacks, sweets, ready to eat to go meals, and more. Located at 59 Pond St. (Rt. 126), 508-309-3020, madrasmarketma@gmail.com.

com, Facebook: @madrasmarketma.

A New Round of PPP Available

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), in consultation with the Treasury Department, announced on Jan. 8 that the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) is available for new borrowers and certain existing PPP borrowers. (bit.ly/3qcOdyJ)

This round of the PPP continues to prioritize millions of Americans employed by small businesses by authorizing up to

\$284 billion toward job retention and certain other expenses through March 31, 2021, and by allowing certain existing PPP borrowers to apply for a Second Draw PPP Loan. For key PPP updates, guidelines, and resources, visit sba.gov/ppp or treasury.gov/cares.



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A webinar for parents of youth K-12. Clinician Linda Price returns for a webinar focused on supporting yourself and your family. Linda will help participants understand ambiguous loss [what does that even mean?], anticipatory anxiety, and how mindfulness strategies go beyond just surviving this difficult year.

Mon, Feb 8
9:30-10:30am
6:30-7:30pm
*Presented twice

Questions? Contact
Kristin French
(e) kristin.french@ashlanddecisions.org

There isn't one strategy that works for everyone or in every situation. Linda will cover a variety of options, lead participants through easy and accessible mindfulness techniques, and provide resources to bring into your home to support challenges with stress, anxiety, sleep, frustration, and focus. Live Q&A.

TO REGISTER

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6:30 PM <https://event.webinarjam.com/register/231/m28mqcg5>



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Volunteer Spotlight:

Ashland Couple Takes Pride in Their New Hometown



By CYNTHIA WHITTY

If you are driving along Main Street, from Mill Pond to Chestnut Street, you may see husband and wife team, Jan Poppendieck and Mike Jones, picking up trash. Give them a honk, wave, or "high five" to show your ap-

preciation for their hard work keeping that area, their adopted street, looking clean year-round. Poppendieck and Jones relocated to Ashland in May 2017 to be closer to family, and a month later, joined the GreenUp Ashland 'Adopt A Street.'

The couple finds that being part of a team of volunteers from throughout the town is both good exercise and rewarding. For information and to join the program, visit www.greenupashland.org/adopt-a-street or www.facebook.com/GreenUpAshland.

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Ashland Receives "AAA" Credit Rating from Standard & Poor's

The Town of Ashland announced on Jan. 11 that Standard & Poor's (S&P) Rating Agency affirmed the town's "AAA-stable" bond rating, the highest credit rating given to municipalities nationally. This rating is related to future borrowings that are being issued for previously authorized and potential future projects and land acquisitions.

Acknowledging the financial uncertainty during the global Covid-19 pandemic, the report states, "Ashland is operating with very strong budgetary reserves and flexibility, and well-embedded financial management policies, particularly in the areas of

budgeting and planning, which should mitigate any significant credit deterioration throughout the pandemic."

The town recovered from the financial uncertainty presented by the Coronavirus Pandemic, using \$1.4 million in stabilization funds, executing \$1 million in non-payroll cuts, closing the gap in the anticipated \$2.4 million dollar shortfall.

S&P analyzes communities in advance of borrowings to assess the creditworthiness and financial condition of a city or town. They do this by looking at all aspects of the town's finances, including economy, management, budgetary performance, budget-

ary flexibility and liquidity, and debt and liability profile.

S&P praised the "very strong economy," commenting, Ashland's "market value grew by 5.4 percent over the past year to \$3.0 billion in 2020." Additionally, S&P highlighted, "Very strong management," "Very strong budgetary flexibility," "Very strong liquidity," and a "Strong debt and contingent liability profile."

The rating includes, "Adequate budgetary performance," stating, "Budgetary performance metrics include adjustments for recurring transfers and one-time capital expenditures paid for with bond proceeds. In gen-

eral, over the past several years, operating performance has been robust. Revenues have generally outperformed the budget and management has done well managing costs and building reserves."

Town Manager Michael Herbert stated, "Bond ratings are critical independent and objective verification of the town's financial management practices and financial planning. Our 'AAA' rating is a testament to the collaborative work environment that we have fostered among the town's key stakeholders to both set and achieve our financial goals."

As an "AAA" community,

Ashland continues to lead municipalities with a strong institutional framework. Ashland will secure favorable ratings when entering capital markets and leads to taxpayer savings when financing large projects in the future.

Herbert said that the town's financial success is based on the community's resilience during the pandemic, the ingenuity of local business owners, the support of local nonprofit organizations, like the Ashland Emergency Fund, as well as the creativity of the town's financial management team, led by Finance Director Brittany Iacaponi.

Ashland Lions

Congrats to our Youth Speech Contest winners!

The Ashland Lions and Greater Ashland Lions held their annual combined club-level Youth Speech Competition via Zoom videoconferencing on Monday, December 20th, 2020. The contest was open to all students grades 9-12 provided they are sponsored by a Mass Lions Club or Leos Club. Judges not familiar with the contestants were selected to score each contestant on delivery, effectiveness and the content of their speech. This year's topic was "Is Winning Everything?", and each contestant had to prepare and present a speech 5-8 minutes long on the topic. All the contestants did an excellent job. Our first-place winner this year was Ms. Helen Varughese, and first runner up was Ms. Ashley Sachs. Since the contest is sponsored by both Lions Clubs in Ashland, the top two contestants both move on the Zone competition to compete at the next level, with each representing one of the clubs. Ms. Varughese and Ms. Sachs should be very proud of their accomplishments this year. Special thanks to our judges, timekeeper, scorekeepers, text reader and other volunteers who made this event possible.

Whodunnit? Murder In Sin City

The Ashland Lions Club is teaming up with Lions Clubs in

Sherborn and Bellingham mystery dinner. The event has been moved to Saturday, April 17th, 2021, 6:30pm-11:00pm. Participants will be assigned a role to play in solving a murder mystery! The event will be held at the VFW, 311 Pleasant St, Ashland. Tickets are available for \$35 on Eventbrite.com under "Murder

in Sin City", or call Lion Eileen at 508-861-3226. Ticket price includes admission and an appetizer buffet. There will also be a cash bar, raffles and prizes. Currently only 150 tickets will be sold (this number subject to reduction as guidelines change for social distancing). All proceeds will benefit local hosting Lions Club charities.

New year, new members

Why not make 2021 your year of service to the community? If you're interested in becoming a member of the Ashland Lions, please reach out to us via email at membership@ashlandlions.org for details.

Stay up-to-date on Lions happenings

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

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Steps to Obtain Permission to Burn

1. You can apply for a permit online or come to Ashland Fire Station 2 at 70 Cedar Street, after January 8th, during normal business hours, to obtain a permit. You will provide your address, contact information and then sign your permit stating you understand the rules and regulations about burning. There is no fee.
2. You will be emailed a permit, with the instructions on how to activate your burning permit.
3. On the day you would like to burn, click here after 9 a.m. to see if we are allowing burning.
4. If burning is being allowed, activate your permit and you may start burning at 10 a.m.

Burning Rules & Regulations

1. Permits do not carry over yearly, each permit issued for the burning season expires on May 1st of the year issued.
2. Burning must be at least 75 feet from all dwellings.
3. Burning can not start before 10 a.m.
4. Burning must start before 1 p.m.
5. Fires must be out by 4 p.m.
6. Burning must take place on land closest to the source of material to be burned.
7. Fires must be supervised by an adult at all times.
8. A water source (hose) must be close by at all time.
9. There is no burning allowed on the day of the Boston Marathon (the 3rd Monday in April).
10. May 1st is the last day you are permitted to burn, there are no extensions for poor weather/air quality.

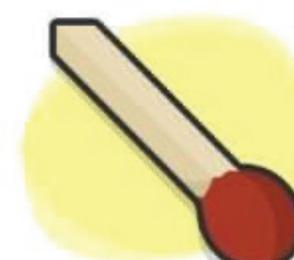
What Can Be Burned

- Brush, cane, driftwood, and forestry debris not from commercial or industrial land clearing
- Materials normally associated with the pursuit of agriculture, such as fruit tree pruning, dead raspberry stalks, blueberry patches for pruning purposes, infected beehives for disease control
- Trees and brush resulting from agricultural land clearing

- Fungus invested Elmwood if no other acceptable means of disposal is available (disease-free brush is not an acceptable starting aid)

What Cannot Be Burned

- Leaves, grass, hay, and stumps
- Material over 4 inches in diameter
- Brush, trees, cane, and driftwood from commercial and/or institutional land clearing operations
- Tires and trash



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Sports

Ashland Hockey Adjusts to Pandemic

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Over the past three seasons the Ashland boys' hockey team has ventured into the Division 3 South Sectionals on two occasions, both times losing to the eventual Champion. In 2018 the Clockers fell to Hanover in the Semi-Finals and the following year they were ousted by Hopkinton in the Finals.

Last winter Ashland had a subpar season going 6-10-4 with no visit to the tournament, but this year the Clocker Captains believe the team has what it takes to get to the tournament. That is, if there were a tournament.

The Covid-19 pandemic has derailed all sports throughout the country in some form. According to Ashland coach, it looks as though the Clockers will be competing in 10 games this winter against the likes of Westwood, Norwood, Holliston, Hopkinton, and Medfield. The teams will play home/away games on Wednesdays and Saturdays against the same team.

"At this time, we know that we are participating in a 10-game Tri-Valley League season with the possibility of a TVL tournament at the end," Ashland Coach Mike Roman said. "It certainly will be a disappointing season for the seniors as they're always looking at playing in the tournament, but they'd rather have some sort of season than nothing."

Guiding the Clockers into the abbreviated season will be the team's tri of senior captains; wingers Nick Fish and Matt Milko, along with center Nick Cibotti. At the moment it is a possibility that the three seniors will all be playing on Ashland's top line, but according to Roman you never know how things are going to shape out.

Prior to the abbreviated season being approved Fish, a Tri-Valley league All-Star who scored 31 points for the Clockers last year, along with his teammates were unsure that they would even have a senior campaign on the ice.

"It was definitely scary as it got closer to the season not knowing if we were even going



to be playing hockey this year," Fish said. "For most of us not to have hockey in our final year would have been rough."

Cibotti's mindset was on the lines of his teammates, but deep down inside he really believed that his senior season was going to be cancelled all together.

"Honestly at the start I had no hope at all for a season, especially when they moved the football season," he said. I knew that if we were able to have a season it was going to be a short one, so we are fortunate enough to have a 10-game season instead of nothing."

Not knowing if there was going to be a season or not, the Ashland trio got the players together and had five captains practice to get to know the players as well as be prepared in case the season was eventually slated to take place.

Now that there will be a season of some sort, the captains are going to have to work hard at making sure the team is focused on the task at hand, although a short one.

"Now having a season, I am

going to need these three to lead the younger kids and we have a lot of them this year," Roman said. "I want them to push them in the right direction so that we can continue to be successful in the years to come."

Milko and Fish are very similar in terms of production on the ice. Last winter Fish netted 31 points, while his counterpart accounted for 26 points.

"Nick has a great stride and a nose for the net, and I would love to see him have another 30-point season, but with the shortened season that probably won't be likely," the Clocker Coach said. "Matt is a mirror image of Nick just on the other side. He's a great skater who will play on the power play as well as the penalty kill. As a second-year captain he knows what needs to be done in terms of leading this team."

Although at the time of this writing the season had yet to get underway Milko was very optimistic about his team's chances.

"I think that we have one of the best offenses in the league," he said. "Our defense is growing but it's very solid and they should

be able to keep the puck away from our goalie."

Much like the other two captains, Cibotti is also a good skater and works extremely hard and according to his coach is a solid two-way player. Last year Cibotti centered the second line and although moving onto the top line this year, he has yet to play on a regular basis with the two wingers.

While the season is going to play out unlike any other the trio has ever encountered (wearing masks underneath their helmets and getting ready in their cars in the parking lot before and after the game) the Clockers will figure out ways to keep this positive.

"It's going to be a lot harder than any season we've ever played in, but we will get through it," Milko said. "Not being able to be in the locker rooms at any times will not take away from our camaraderie, it'll only make us stronger."

Cibotti also believes that this year's team, despite all the losses from last year's squad, will still have a strong season.

"Things are shaping up and we're making do with what they've handed us, we're just

hoping that the younger players will step up," the Ashland center said. "Coach Roman usually separates our season into four 5 game seasons throughout the year where we are looking to go at least 3-2 to be successful; it keeps us focused on the task at hand. This year it'll only be two 5 game seasons."

Having no Sectional and State Tournaments to look forward to will take away from the seniors' season in some aspect, but they are not going to allow it to define their season.

"Not being able to play in the tournament definitely stinks, especially being a senior," Fish said. "In years prior we've had fun and took the team deep into the tournament. I would have liked to see what this team could have accomplished under the captains."

The team's other winger echoed Fish's sentiments.

"This is definitely not the way that I wanted my senior season to end," Milko said. "We're going to take to the ice and give it 110% and hope that they (the TVL) find some way so that we have a tournament of some sort."



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Due to Covid-19, Almost Everyone Needs a New or Improved Health, Life, Disability, & Estate Plan!

By DENNIS SULLIVAN & ASSOCIATES, COUNSELORS AT LAW

Even before March of 2020, when the coronavirus hit our country with a vengeance, approximately 86% of estate, health and disability plans didn't work when they were most needed because they were already out of date!

The pandemic dealt our citizens a 1-2 punch: 1.) Many people who thought they "didn't need" an estate plan desperately need a plan that works now.

2.) People who thought they had a good estate plan are now just realizing they MUST update that plan due to the pandemic and recent and pending changes in state and federal taxes and laws.

Who Will Make Your Healthcare and Financial Decisions if Something Happens to You?

With the pandemic still raging, absolutely nothing is guaranteed. Unless you have a solid health,

life and estate plan in place, all of this is at risk.

The time to take action to protect yourself, your loved ones and your estate is NOW.

The estate and elder law firm of Dennis Sullivan and Associates specializes in helping people and families just like yours. We have the team and the expertise to protect you, your family and your loved ones.

If you or a family member is stricken with Covid-19, who would care for your children? Who will make decisions for your grandchildren and parents? Who will make sure the rent, the mortgage and all the other bills are paid?

You need a trusted, caring, compassionate, and experienced team of professionals to help you design and establish your plan.

The founder of the Dennis Sullivan & Associates was educated at some of the finest universities in America, including master's degrees from the Boston

University School of Law as well as from MIT, and he has more than 30 years of service.

All team members including our attorneys and CPAs, make it easy and enjoyable to put together your up-to-date estate plan! In compliance with Massachusetts Covid-19 orders and leveraging current technology included with our services, you can review and complete your estate and elder law plan with your attorney virtually—from the safety and comfort of your own home!

As a result, you will be both well informed and in control of your planning process as you benefit from our unique personalized counselling process. No family should be unprepared, especially now with all the medical and, legal, and tax changes!

Dennis Sullivan & Associates is dedicated to protecting everything you have worked so hard to achieve, including your good health, home, spouse, family, legacy and lifesavings!

Covid-19 is Not Going Away Anytime Soon!

People all over the world of all ages are susceptible to Covid-19, but we in the U. S. are especially susceptible because we have the most cases and the highest number of deaths in the world.

While it is exciting news that vaccines are being rolled out, the roll-out is going much slower than expected and a large percentage of our population have said they will not take the vaccine.

Therefore, we are all still at risk. **THE TIME TO TAKE ACTION AND PROTECT YOUR FAMILY IS NOW!**

Don't let your family be a statistic because you failed to take action and are stuck with no plan or an outdated estate plan. Research statistics adjusted for Covid-19 show that 90% plus of health, life and estate plans are out of date.

Once You are 18 Years Old, a HUGE Change Happens!

Most families are shocked to learn that once a child or grandchild turns 18, no one automatically has the ability to make health or financial decisions for them—not even a parent, grandparent or spouse! (See our blog at Dsullivan.com for more information.)

Almost half of Americans 55+ don't have a Will and You Cannot Trust Wills You Get On-Line!

Americans age 55 + are at the greatest risk for serious complications and death from Covid-19. The mistake of using cheap or free on-line legal forms can cost your family thousands to hundreds of thousands of dollars and much more in terms of aggravation due to complete loss of control and sleepless nights. (See our blog at Dsullivan.com for more information.)

Estate and life planning is always essential but in the midst of a pandemic, it is Mandatory!

We hope you now understand that you and your family will tremendously benefit from having much more than just a will. Wouldn't you and your family prefer the peace of mind understanding how your family is protected now and for generations to follow?

The reason you need much more than just a will is because a will is only effective when you die. You need to be protected while you are alive, not only from Covid-19, but as you need to be protected in the event of disability.

Disability is six times more likely than death in any given year, but 2021 is a more precarious year than most.

The documents an estate and elder law firm will create for you and your family members will provide each person you care about with peace of mind. Yes, there is a light shining at the end of the long, arduous Covid-19 tunnel. Let's all be safe and well protected together on our journeys. You and your loved ones will be able to control your estate, your finances, your investments and, most importantly, your health care decisions without the expense or interference of the courts, medical, or the legal system.

Those benefits alone could save you thousands to hundreds of thousands of dollars AND save you a huge amount of time, heartache, sleepless nights, and aggravation as well!

Dennis Sullivan & Associates is a caring, compassionate team of professionals who have been protecting families for generations by providing a unique estate

planning and asset protection service for families in Massachusetts and surrounding states for more than 27 years. We currently provide virtual (on-line) discovery sessions, as well as personal counseling, and limited in-person consultations so you can get the high-quality life and estate plan you deserve at a reasonable investment for the lifetime protection for your family for generations.

Through our unique process you can complete all of your important protection virtually (on-line), staying warm, safe and healthy in the comfort of your home while a team of experienced, caring, compassionate and professionals creates a comprehensive estate plan that will provide you and your family members total peace of mind now and for generations that follow.

The most important phone call you can make today is to call our discovery line 800-964-4295 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) or 781-237-2815 weekdays to register for discovery sessions and see how to qualify for your personalized review and counselling session. You can also register online at DSullivan.com. Due to the emergency we are doing our best as essential service providers to help those who qualify by understanding how much they can and should do for their family now.

Dennis Sullivan & Associates is a team of caring, compassionate highly-trained professionals who Protect Families for Generations.

Book a free online discovery session with us today. You'll see how easy and feasible it is now to protect your family's health and home, to protect your spouse, family, legacy, and life savings. You and your family will benefit from the peace of mind of knowing you have done everything you can to protect yourself and your loved ones for generations. Call now 800-964-4295 or register for a free meeting at www.DSullivan.com



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Dialogue that Crosses Faith Lines

BY SUSAN MANNING
STAFF WRITER

Twelve members of faith organizations in MetroWest, including Our Lady of Fatima Shrine in Holliston, work on a regular basis to make their communities more inclusive. They called it the MetroWest Interfaith Dialogue Project (MIDP).

According to Fr. Carl Chudy, Interfaith Outreach Coordinator for Our Lady of Fatima Shrine, recognizing the diversity in communities is important.

“Our hope is to the honor the religious and nonreligious diversity of our communities and neighborhoods by creating an interfaith community within communities of different faiths. We focus on three goals: Foster opportunities to come together in order to come to know one another and the faiths that inspire us; Gain insight on how much we share in common through our faiths and values; Discover how interfaith dialogue and action can make a difference in our communities and neighborhoods and helps us all flourish together,” he said.

So how did this group come together? Chudy said some of it had already been happening when the more formal project came together in 2017.

“The MIDP began in 2017, building on interfaith and ecumenical activity already begun by Rev. Bonnie Steinroeder (First Congregational Church), Rev. Mark Peterson (Christ the King Lutheran Church), Rev. Sarah Robbins-Cole (St. Michael’s Episcopal Church), Rabbis Jennifer Rudin (Simcha-Services) and Moshe Givental (former Rabbi of Temple Beth Torah) and me, in various town activities.

“My full-time work is Interfaith Outreach Coordinator for Our Lady of Fatima Shrine in Holliston and I began enlisting others to join us in a wider interfaith approach, including My-nuddin Syed from the Islamic Community in Framingham, and Shaheen Akhtar from the Islamic Center of Boston in Wayland, in specific activities that attempts to invite Jewish, Christian, and Muslim neighbors to see how we can all flourish together,” he said.

The present dialogue team covers a wider religious and non-religious approach to interfaith dialogue and collaboration. They



include Bert Cote (First Congregational Church), Rev. Mark Peterson (Christ the King Lutheran Church), Rev. Sarah Robbins-Cole (St. Michael Episcopal Church), Hussam Syed (Islamic Society of Framingham), Siri Karm Singh Khalsa (Sikh Community of Millis), Kristal Corona

(Conflict Resolution Specialist), Chris Brumbach (Temple Beth Torah), Rabbi Jennifer Rudin (Simcha-Services), Rabbi Mimi Micner (Temple Beth Torah), Swami Tyagananda (Vedanta Society of Boston (Hindu)), Warren Chamberlain (Bahai Community) and Chudy.

shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, October 27, 2018, where an anti-Semitic attack killed eleven people and injured six,” said Chudy.

The group has also held book reads in person and online on forgiveness and systemic racism, interfaith scripture studies, and special forums to look at issues of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

“In light of shootings in mosques and synagogues elsewhere, we published declarations of solidarity, (found here: www.hollistoninterfaith.org/building-bridges-blog/in-solidarity-with-our-muslim-neighbors-in-this-time-of-tragedy),” he said.

Chudy said the division in this country is the exact reason the MIDP is needed.

“These divided times impel us to act together based on our common ground as peoples of different faiths and those who are nonreligious. We also strive to explore our differences and the values that hold all of us accountable to each other,” he said.

For more information, visit hollistoninterfaith.org or email admin@hollistoninterfaith.org.

The groups hold various gatherings, although the pandemic put a wrench in the in-person events this past year. Chudy said the first event was a two-day interfaith event that began at Temple Beth Torah and finished at Our Lady of Fatima Shrine. It was themed: Loving and Listening: Honoring our Diversity as Multifaith Neighbors.

“Providentially, our first encounter together at Temple Beth Torah was the very day of the

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Ashland Library News

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

Hours for limited browsing and curbside pickup:

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

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

While in the library:

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

- Masks/face coverings must be worn.
- Please use hand sanitizer - dispensers are throughout the building.
- Practice social distancing by remaining 6 feet apart from others.

- Please do not consume any food or drink.
- Please continue to return your items outside in the available bookdrop.

Curbside pickup is still available.

Curbside pickup...

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

Pickup hours:

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

You will be notified when your item(s) are available for pickup. When you arrive at the library, please call 508-881-0134 to let staff know you are here. Your items will be delivered to the table on the library patio (Main/Concord Street entrance) for you to take. If you need assistance, please let library staff know when you are contacted about pickup.

Returning Items:

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

Hoopla

Hoopla is a groundbreaking digital media service offered by your local public library that allows you to borrow movies, music, audiobooks, ebooks, comics and TV shows to enjoy on your computer, tablet, or phone - and even your TV! With no waiting, titles can be streamed immediately, or downloaded to phones or tablets for offline enjoyment later. We have hundreds of thousands of titles to choose from, with more being added daily. Hoopla is like having your public library at your fingertips. Anytime. Anywhere. Sign up using your Ashland Public Library card and download up to 5 items per month.



Introducing Kanopy

Kanopy is an on-demand streaming video service providing access to more than 30,000 films and documentaries from a variety of independent filmmakers and distributors, including the BBC, PBS, A24, and the Criterion Collection. Ashland residents with Ashland Public Library cards will be able to watch 4 films per month. Set up your account at: ashlandmass.kanopy.com. Then, download the Kanopy app on any of your devices to begin watching.

Minuteman Mobile App

The Minuteman mobile app puts the library in your pocket! Look for the Minuteman Library Network in the App Store and Google Play and download the app to your smartphone or tablet. Search the catalog, renew items, manage your holds and check out items using your camera's phone or use your digital library card to check out items at one of our staff assisted checkout stations.

Photocopiers

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

Computers

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

Inter Library Loan

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

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Framingham Rotary Donates \$4,000 to Local Food Pantries

Continuing its effort help individuals and families desperate for enough to eat during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Framingham Rotary Club in mid-December sent \$1,000 each to Daniels Table (Framingham); the Hopkinton Pantry Shelf; the Ashland Food Pantry; and the Holliston Pantry Shelf.



Real Estate Corner

No Children Died in Fires in Massachusetts in 2020

First Year No One Under 18 Died in Fires

STOW - State Fire Marshal Peter J. Ostroskey announced that for the first time on record, no children died in fires in Massachusetts in 2020. Historically, children and seniors have been most at risk of dying in fires. "To have no children, no one under the age of 18, die in a fire in Massachusetts is an amazing accomplishment. Through the 26 years of the Student Awareness of Fire Education Program (S.A.F.E.), firefighters and classroom teachers have been helping to raise a fire safe generation of children."

Saugus Fire Chief Michael C. Newbury, president of the Fire Chiefs' Association of Massachusetts, said, "This milestone speaks to the hard work of firefighter-educators to teach children what to do to save themselves in a fire. We find fewer children hiding under beds or in closets, because they know how to use their home escape plan."

State Fire Marshal Ostroskey said, "Ultimately, responsibility for home fire safety rests with the adults in the home, but the S.A.F.E Program has brought key safety information on maintaining smoke alarms, practicing home fire drills, cooking, heating, candle and match and lighter safety home to those

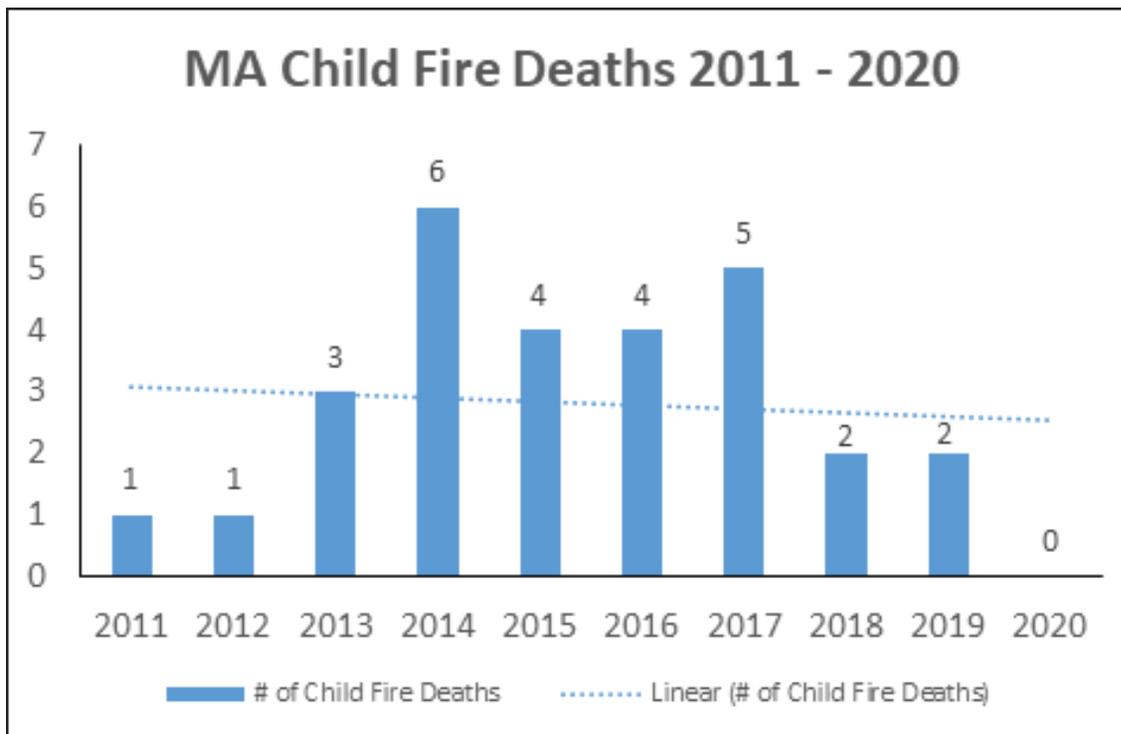
adults. Goodness knows there's nothing like being nagged by a 3rd grader to test your smoke alarm."

"Just after this new year began, a child did suffer serious burns in an Oxford house fire. That reinforces how vigilant we must be to keep our children safe from fires and burns," said Ostroskey.

39 Deaths in Massachusetts in 2020

Preliminary data from the Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System (MFIRS) indicates that there were 39 fire deaths in 2020, down from 42 in 2019. The deaths were all adults and 15, or nearly 40%, were older adults over the age of 65. The majority, 31, died in the so-called safety of their own homes. Half of these deaths occurred in homes where there were no working smoke alarms. "Working smoke alarms give you the one thing you don't have in a fire - time - time to escape," said Ostroskey. There is only 1-3 minutes to escape the average house fire in a home without fire sprinklers.

Source: Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System



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Greater Ashland Lions Club

The Greater Ashland Lions welcomed the second month of the New Year with continuing to strive for KINDNESS, DIVERSITY WITH UNDERSTANDING FOR all to be able to live their lives peacefully.

Around the world Lions strive to aid in hunger relief with participating in local food drives, delivering meals to those in need. The Greater Ashland Lions continue their effort in supporting our local food pantries, the local emergency fund and frequent phone calls and

letters to those confined to their homes (THIS relieves the loneliness one may encounter). We continue to deliver hope to our local communities thru innovations and continue to keep our hearts open for new opportunities to make a difference every day to help those in need. We will create a better future for our families, community and the world as we are reminded by our International lions President Dr. Jung-Yui Choi. tyouth Speech Contest

On January 17, the zone level of the speech contest was

held via zoom, thank you Ashley sachs for representing the greater Ashland lions with her speech on this year's topic " is winning everything" the next competition will be held again virtually at the

Massachusetts 33k mid-winter CONFERENCE AT the end of February.

Coat drive

Our annual coat drive has been extended to the end of February 2021, again thank you to Anton cleaners for their endless

support in cleaning the articles. Should you have a new or gently used men's, women's or children's coat, call Lion Deb 508.881.2117 for more information.

The Greater Ashland Lions have been waiting to see if the groundhog's predications are accurate (how many more weeks of winter).

Dates to look forward in February:

- 14th Valentine's Day (LOVE)
- February 15th Presidents Day
- February 17th Ash Wednesday

Recycle your old eyeglasses or readers, hearing aids, box tops for education and the metal tabs from soda, beer, soup, pet food cans contact Lion Marj at 508.653.6267.

Looking for something new to do? contact Lion Mary 508.881.5515 and come see what the greater Ashland Lions offer.

*Submitted by
Lion Elie Torelli*

ECONOMICS

continued from page 3

COVID-19 state of emergency; prohibits third-party delivery service companies from reducing rates for delivery drivers or garnishing gratuities as result of the limitation

Creates a commission to examine and make recommendations on addressing the recovery of the cultural and creative sector, including the arts, humanities and sciences, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic

Housing

Bonding Authorizations

- \$40 million for a program to redevelop blighted buildings
- \$50 million for transit-oriented housing developments
- \$10 million for climate-resilient affordable housing developments
- \$5 million for a Gateway Cities housing program

Policy Changes

- Implements zoning reform to help cities and towns approve smart growth zoning and affordable housing by lowering the required vote threshold for a range of housing-related zoning changes and special permits

at the local level from a two-thirds supermajority to a simple majority

- Requires designated MBTA communities to be zoned for at least one district of reasonable size, in which multi-family housing is permitted as of right and requires such housing to be suitable for families with children
- Increases the state low-income housing tax credit program cap from \$20,000,000 to \$40,000,000

Employee protections, business growth, and equity

Bonding Authorizations

- \$35 million for a Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation matching grant program to community development financial institutions for small business loans and grants
- \$27.7 million for a new Employment Social Enterprise Capital Grant Program
- \$20 million for a Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation small business grant program
- \$14M million for travel and tourism grants
- \$10 million for regional and community assistance planning grants

Policy Changes

- Enables, via local option, the creation of tourism destination marketing districts ("TDMDs"), made up of hotels, motels, and bed and breakfasts, for the purpose of generating local revenue dedicated solely for the promotion and marketing of specific regions of the Commonwealth
- Amends the statutory definition of wait staff employee to include a person in a quick service restaurant who prepares or serves food or beverages as part of a team of counter staff
- Provides that the taking of family or medical leave shall not affect an employee's right to accrue vacation time, sick leave, bonuses, advancement, seniority, length-of-service credit or other employment benefits, plans or programs
- Exempts natural hair braiding from the definition of hairdressing, and exempts natural hair braiding from rules and regulations pertaining to aesthetics, barbering, cosmetology, electrolysis, hairdressing and manicuring
- Encourages the PRIM Board to use minority investment managers to manage PRIT Fund assets, where appropriate, and to increase the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of Fund investments
- Establishes a commission of experts, industry members, academics, and elected officials to research and propose policy solutions that ensure the future and sustainability of local journalism in Massachusetts

Student protections

- Establishes a Student Loan Borrower Bill of Rights regulating the licensing and operation of student loan servicers by the Commissioner of Banks
- Creates a Student Loan Ombudsman within the Office of the Attorney General for the purpose of receiving, reviewing and assisting in the resolution of complaints from student loan borrowers; authorizes the Ombudsman to assist with repayment options, applying for federal loan forgiveness programs, ending wage and tax refund garnishments, resolving billing disputes, and obtaining loan details

Agriculture and rural support

Bonding Authorizations

- \$20 million for rural community development and infrastructure grants
- \$2 million for an urban agriculture grant program

Policy Changes

- Expands the Food Policy Council to include an expert in healthy soil practices; codifies the definition of 'healthy soils;' gives the Commission for Conservation of Soil and Water the ability to establish a Massachusetts Healthy Soils Program and Fund

Technology and innovation

Bonding Authorizations

- \$52 million for the Technology Research and Development and Innovation Fund
- \$15 million for lottery IT infrastructure
- \$10 million for the expansion of the Massachusetts

Manufacturing Innovation Initiative (M2I2)

- \$5 million for the Massachusetts Broadband Incentive Fund

Policy Changes

- Creates a special commission on the future of work to conduct a comprehensive study relative to the impact of automation, artificial intelligence, global trade, access to new forms of data and the internet of things on the workforce, businesses and economy.
- Clarifies that carsharing platforms may obtain insurance coverage from non-admitted carrier and that carsharing platforms do not need their own insurance-producer or broker licenses to offer or maintain insurance policies for car-sharing vehicles or drivers.

Other bonding authorizations include

- \$102,304,000 for local economic development projects;
- \$12.5 million for the Commonwealth Zoological Corporation;
- \$15 million for trial court virtual mediation services;
- \$6 million for Massachusetts Cultural Council grants;
- \$5 million for Mass Cultural Council public school grants;
- \$20 million for Mass Cultural Council cultural facilities grants;
- \$15 million for vocational technical school expansion grants; and
- \$15 million for higher education workforce grants.

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