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CROSSTOWN ADS AND BUSINESS NEWS

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## Grafton businesses bringing seasonal warmth into homes

By Christine Galeone

The season that's most filled with hope has finally arrived. And Easter – a holiday overflowing with peace, hope and joy – is coming soon. The warmth and light of both are things many people are looking forward to.

Despite the difficult circumstances that most Grafton businesses have had to endure during the COVID-19 pandemic, it's clear that there are many that also appreciate the season. Several have been helping people bring that seasonal warmth and light into their homes.

One business that has been helping people bring the joy of Easter

into their lives and the lives of their loved ones in different ways is the **Grafton Country Store**. The gift shop and café located on the Grafton Common has a vast array of beautiful Easter and spring décor and gifts. It also sells non-toxic Easter egg coloring kits. Additionally, it sells custom filled Easter gift baskets which can be picked up, delivered in the area or shipped to anywhere in the United States.

Nearby, **Off the Common Antiques** also has a lot to offer. At the multi-artisan, multi-vendor shop, shoppers can find antiques, hand-

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One of the Easter displays at the Grafton Country Store. Courtesy of Grafton Country Store

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## Hey neighbor, our website is your website

The Blackstone Valley Xpress is excited to announce the re-launch of its website [www.theyankeeexpress.com](http://www.theyankeeexpress.com). It has a bright and streamlined new look. Our goal is to create a site that's about you, your neighborhood, your businesses, your community resources, your town's news, one stop – the voice of your community.

Online, you will be able to access the entire newspaper and features to empower you to become an active member of the community. Post events and what's happening around town directly to our community announcement page. Easily share to your social media. Don't forget to "like" us on Facebook. We have built an online directory, with maps, where you can effortlessly explore local busi-

nesses serving our community. Get updates on what's going on in your area on our event and calendar page.

Remember, these have been difficult times, and it is so important to support the businesses that support our community. You can check out business profiles, leave a review, connect to their Facebook page and website.

Businesses – a corporate profile on our new directory can feature your company on our opening page and drive visitors to your website with links, a map, and graphics. You can take advantage of becoming a community sponsor, that will allow you a more prominent presence on [theyankeeexpress.com](http://theyankeeexpress.com). You can sponsor

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# Award-winning Whittier Farms fights back against pandemic

By Rod Lee

Although four months have passed since Whittier Farms was recognized by the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce for its seventy-five years in business, the glow associated with the honor still has not worn off for Samantha “Sam” Staebner and the Whittier family.

“Diana and I were able to go to the Chamber for the virtual presentation (of the Chamber’s annual meeting, in November),” Ms. Staebner said, of herself and her sister. “That was cool, to see the creativity” that went into putting the production together for remote viewing.

“It’s been a heck of a year. The pandemic hasn’t excluded anyone from its wrath.” Ms. Staebner credits Whittier Farms’ loyal customers—and an emphasis on innovation—for helping the now fifth-generation family-owned business survive the past year.

Whittier Farms enjoys a distinct presence atop several hundred acres on Douglas Road in West Sutton.

“We went to an online platform,” Sam Staebner said. “We latched onto a new dynamic as a family and a business.” A stronger reliance on the Internet was actually happening even before COVID-19 hit, she noted.

“We know we are not in the clear yet as we move into planting season. Last year, there were so many uncertainties. Last March and April, I was

saying ‘are we going to be in business?’ COVID-19 changed our business but we chose not to give up as a family and as a staff. Our pattern got broken. We had to keep being flexible. Changes are more predictable now. Last May and June, every day there were new guidelines coming out. Without curbside (pickup) we weren’t sure” what would happen, Ms. Staebner said.

The daughter of Wayne and Mary Whittier, Ms. Staebner and her siblings—Diana and John—are instrumental in the day-to-day operation of Whittier Farms, as is an uncle, Todd Whittier.

“Family is everything,” Ms. Staebner said. “At our company it is the essence of who we are. It’s what makes us tick. It’s not just our family, it’s your family too.”

While beef and milk are staple products at Whittier Farms (beef since 2012, featuring individual cuts, ground beef, kabobs, steaks, roasts, briskets, burger patties and more), the business is multi-faceted.

Besides seasonal fruits and vegetables available for purchase at the farm stand, there are farm tours (back for 2021, with safety protocols in place), cookies of the month, farm apparel, the recently introduced “Raelyn Calf and Herd Sponsorship Program,” landscape materials and firewood.

The Raelyn Calf and Herd Sponsorship Program is the creation of long-time Sutton resident Linda Turgeon. Ms. Turgeon wanted to start the program as a special gift to her daughter, who loved Whittier Farms’ animals, especially the cows.



Sam (Whittier) Staebner appears with Patriots Star Devin McCourty at a Sutton schools event.



Samantha Staebner and her sister Diana Whittier accepting an award from the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce in recognition of Whittier Farms’ seventy-five years in business.

The Whittier family is proud of its membership in FARM (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management), its dedication to agriculture and its commitment to stewardship and sustainability. Since 2015, more than 80 percent of Whittier Farms’ electrical usage has been generated by a 150kw solar array installed in the farm store.

“Agriculture has had a huge light shined on it during the pandemic,” Ms. Staebner said.

“When Jeanne Hebert called and said the Chamber would be honoring us, it was special,” Ms. Staebner said.

“To be recognized alongside Tim Hare (of Harbro Auto Sales, who received the Chamber’s Gerry Gaudette Cornerstone Award) was great too. They also have been in business a long time.”

The Whittiers understand how important their one hundred cows, heifers and calves are to the success of the farm.

“If we don’t take care of our young calves today, we don’t have a herd tomorrow,” Ms. Staebner said.

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

## WEBSITE

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content that will keep you in mind with readers.

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2nd Friday: Auburn, Charlton, Dudley, Oxford and Webster, 1/2 all addresses.  
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4th Friday: Auburn, Charlton, Dudley, Oxford and Webster, other 1/2.  
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Kathy Benoit, Advertising Director [kathybenoit@theyankeeexpress.com](mailto:kathybenoit@theyankeeexpress.com)  
Billing and advertising information Laura Gleim [lgleim@TheYankeeXpress.com](mailto:lgleim@TheYankeeXpress.com)  
Tony Discepolo, Sales (Auburn, Charlton, Dudley, Oxford, Webster) [tdiscepolo@TheYankeeXpress.com](mailto:tdiscepolo@TheYankeeXpress.com)  
Bill Cronan, Sales (Blackstone Valley) [bcronan@TheYankeeXpress.com](mailto:bcronan@TheYankeeXpress.com)

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Sally Patterson, Production Manager Carol Koth, Graphic Artist  
Contributing writers and columnists: Peter Coyle, Tom D'Agostino,  
Magda Dakin, Christine Galeone, Rod Lee, Amy Palumbo-Leclaire, Janet Stoica

**168 Gore Road, Webster, MA 01570 PHONE: 508-943-8784 FAX: 508-943-8129**

## OPTIMISM

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made items and reclaimed furniture to brighten their homes. Among the items that the shop currently sells are handmade quilts and jewelry that reflect the beauty of the season and whimsical antique Easter décor.

For people on a tight budget, there are other options as well. **The Grafton Thrift Shop**, which is located in the **Congregational Church of Grafton** and is currently open on Thursdays and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., has been selling festive items such as Easter baskets, Easter and spring gifts, dinnerware and tablecloths. The shop’s proceeds benefit the church’s charitable ministries.

**Treasures** is another option for people who are looking for a bargain. The North Grafton upscale thrift shop that sells clothing, furniture, gifts and housewares has been having a spring dinnerware sale, and it also has

vases, art and other lovely springtime décor. Its proceeds benefit the Whitinsville Christian School.

**Quite Fetching**, the barkery and boutique located on the Grafton Common, is offering its customers a fun way to celebrate Easter. For \$20, people can make private reservations to photograph their dogs with the Easter Bunny. Reservations can be made on the barkery’s website, [www.quitefetching.com](http://www.quitefetching.com). A portion of the proceeds will be donated to Vintage Pet Rescue.

A Grafton business that will be returning soon is the **Grafton Flea Market**. The indoor and outdoor flea market, which features hundreds of vendors and a casual restaurant, serves as a hallmark of springtime for many area residents. Its return will happen Sunday, April 11, and it will remain open every Sunday – through December – from 6 a.m. until 4 p.m.

In North Grafton, another popular seasonal business will re-open its windows on April 1. The return of the long but socially-distanced lines at **Swirls & Scoops**, an ice cream and frozen yogurt shop, is another welcome sign of the season.

With the days getting longer and new life springing up throughout the area in the coming weeks, many people are looking forward to brighter days ahead. And with their breezy, cheerful offerings, Grafton businesses can make those days even brighter.

Please note that this information was correct at the time the column was written. However, because the pandemic is rapidly changing things, it’s best to check the websites and social media pages of any business to see if new changes have been implemented.

Contact Christine with your business news items at [cmgaleone15@gmail.com](mailto:cmgaleone15@gmail.com).



# Women's Success Network, Part 2

By Barbara Van Reed

This month we continue our conversations with members of the Women's Success Network executive committee. WSN was established under the auspices of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce two years ago to "help women in the workplace to achieve their vision of success by creating a community of support and inspiration."

Alise Breton began her work life when a teenager at Whittier Farms in Sutton. Today she is Assistant Vice President and Branch Manager/Social Media Manager at Millbury Federal Credit Union, in its main office in Millbury.

She offered her insights as a WSN committee member.

**Why did you agree to join the WSN committee?**

To have an opportunity to be part of a group of professional women was a no brainer for me! These women are smart, innovative, accepting and inspiring. Although we come from different backgrounds, we are like-minded and have experienced the same challenges. To be able to share your thoughts with other women whom you know are going to be supportive is so encouraging. Then, to reciprocate that, and provide support to other women, that's making a difference!

**How do you think WSN can best support women?**

The fact that this group exists is of value to women. The network was designed as a means to offer support and inspiration to women in their personal and professional lives. You can use us for education, networking, maybe you just need a little encouragement. Regardless of the reason, we're a resource that's available to help.

**How do you think you can personally contribute to that?**

There's so much value in what this network has to offer. I don't think there's a better way to contribute than by spreading the word and sharing the network with other women.

**WSN seeks to connect with women in a great variety of careers and life stages. What's the best way to do that?**

Our network has women from all different industries. We are all different ages with all different life experiences. The diversity is what makes us unique and relatable. When we host an event or offer a service, we always consider our audience. We want to be able to offer a little something for everyone.

**What experiences in your life would make a good illustration of having received support from another woman? Or, how have you been helped by other women?**

I started working when I was 14 years old for Whittier Farms in Sutton. Being a teenager, I was so unsure of myself. I had very little confidence and absolutely no clue what I was doing. As I tried to navigate through my first job, Mary Whittier became my mentor. She literally taught me everything during the nine years I worked for her! While I could go on and on about those skills and principles, the important part of my story is that she offered me a level of support that set me up for the rest of my life. She spent time and energy on my success – that's an amazing mentor! To this day, I still fall back on those lessons, and remember her guidance and encouragement when offering my own support to others.

**What is your advice for young women, middle-aged women, older (maybe retiring) women?**

**This can be life advice, financial advice, career advice or other.**

Don't say that you can't! Maybe you won't or you don't want to, but you can do anything!

\*\*\*

Much of the energy, inspiration, and implementation for the Women's Success Network has come from Jeannie Hebert, President and CEO Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce and President Blackstone Valley Education Hub.

She talked about the beginning.

**Why did you create WSN?**

As a resource for women to turn to for support and assistance when navigating their

way through professional, business and life situations. A place where they can openly discuss questions and concerns among peers and feel comfortable to receive real answers without judgement.

**How do you think WSN can best support women?**

By providing a forum and peer group to work out concerns unique to women. Women are considered the caregivers, and that does not stop because they may also have a demanding full time career. They traditionally put others first and create feelings of guilt when devoting time to pursue an occupation. Having a setting with others who face the same challenges is valuable in creating a life balance.

**How do you think you can personally contribute to that?**

Honestly, by listening to the needs of the members and creating a community of support. By developing resources with live and virtual sessions, networking events, access to keynote speakers who have firsthand knowledge to inspire strength to cope with and conquer challenges amplified by the demands made on women to do more, be better and handle it all, both in their professional and private lives.

**WSN seeks to connect with women in a great variety of careers and life stages. What's the best way to do that?**

Again providing a forum to share. When that happens you find you have a lot more in common with each other than you first thought.

**What experiences in your life would make a good illustration of having received support from another woman? Or, how have you been helped by other women?**

I have to say a number of people have helped me along the way, but the one who stands out comes from the Blackstone Valley. Louise Redding. She was treasurer on my Board of Directors when I first came to the BVCC. She was the first woman to achieve a CPA degree in her college

class, had an accounting career, is strong, and definitely stood her ground to break through the glass ceiling at a time when women were treated as second class. She was a good counsel, inspiring me to have the courage to follow my gut and pursue projects that I knew were worthwhile, even when others told me I was a "dreamer." I credit Louise with my strength and success with many achievements. I still stay in touch with her.

**What is your advice for young women, middle-aged women, older (maybe retiring)?**

Work together to overcome the cultural demands of women and support one another are probably the most important things we as women can do. One of the most mind-boggling practices I find is that some have a hard time working together for the good of all.

Being unsupportive of initiatives to especially address gender inequality creates more barriers. Heightened awareness of inequality should lead women to foster alliances and actively support one another. If women don't help each other, this is an even worse form of betrayal than those committed by men.

The successful woman should use her power to help other women advance, not undermine her colleagues. Especially for the woman reaching



Alise Breton



Jeannie Hebert

retirement age. Don't be afraid that the woman just starting out has your job in her sights. Be a mentor, as Louise was to me. You will gain respect, and perhaps a good friend. Communication is the key. The WSN fosters this and more.

\*\*\*

The other members of the executive committee are Pat Hurton (chair), Pat Baker, Carol Dauphinais, Ashley Daviau, Heather Elster, Jessica Muradian, Kathy Tonry, and the BVCC staff.

As chair of the committee, Pat Hurton elaborated on the Women's Success Network mission. The WSN has an executive committee consisting of seven women from various professions. We work collaboratively to create opportunities within the network where partnerships are forged, friendships made, mentors found, resources offered, and skills are shared. Our mission is to support, unite, and inspire women in the workplace in

Blackstone Valley to achieve their self-defined personal and professional success.

Because of COVID-19, the BVCC Women's Success Network had to cancel several programs and events in the last year. However, the WSN committee members and BVCC staff are looking at various possibilities that will continue to be resources in the near future. We anticipate we will have breakfast programs with outstanding speakers and early evening cocktail events with "networking" as a theme. Our WSN newsletter is published quarterly, and a new edition will be out in March. We are also creating subcommittees so that can get more women involved and focus on areas that need attention (i.e. marketing, entrepreneurs, programs, etc.)

If you would like to be on our mailing list and get more information about the WSN, please contact Pat Hurton (WSN committee chair) at pjhurton@yahoo.com

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## Focus on non profits

# Blackstone Valley Education Hub prepares area students and businesses for success

By Christine Galeone

Abraham Lincoln once said, "I will prepare, and someday my chance will come." Considered by many people to be the greatest American President to date, he was true to his word. It's also clear that the wisdom within his famous quote is just as applicable today as it was in the 19th Century. Being prepared will always be a key to success.

The Blackstone Valley Education Hub is well aware

of that fact. The Northbridge-based nonprofit was founded in 2018 as the "non-profit and business development arm" of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce. Since then, it has been providing training and educational courses and workshops to local public school students and others. But it goes one step farther. It also connects students to employment opportunities available from lo-

cal businesses. And despite the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has created, the nonprofit continues to grow.

Through its training courses and workshops, the Blackstone Valley Education Hub enables its students to gain skills, credentials and certifications in the growing field of Advanced Manufacturing. Its lab contains the latest generation of industry equipment, including 3D printers, augmented

reality welders, universal collaborative robots and high-end Roland and FARO machines. It also has computers with the most recent versions of AutoCAD, MasterCAM and Solidworks, in addition to Microsoft and Adobe applications. The lab equipment gives students the hands-on experience needed to be prepared to enter a career in Advanced Manufacturing.

The hub's goal is to "meet the workforce needs of our region by enhancing educational opportunities for all

ages." Since it began, the nonprofit has trained students from Blackstone Valley public high schools, Grafton Job Corps participants and people being released from the Worcester County House of Corrections. It also provided fun and educational hand-on design STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) workshops to middle school students from Northbridge, Uxbridge and Blackstone during Massachusetts STEM Week.

And it has continued to



Karen Ares, Executive Director of the Blackstone Valley Education Hub

thrive despite challenges. Karen Ares, Executive Director of the nonprofit, said that in addition to having to delay programs because of grant funding on hold due to a delay in the state budget process, it has been frustrating to re-

Continued on next page

# Grafton

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### Continued

ceive calls from businesses that want to hire students who have completed training at the hub. "Although we were able to successfully pivot to remote learning with our students, there have been delays getting them back to hands-on instruction due to COVID restrictions this winter," she said. "We are so happy to have two, small in-person classes running now. They started two weeks ago, and it's great to see students back to learning in our facility."

Ares, who said that people who want to help the non-profit during the pandemic can do so by mailing a donation to her at the hub's

Whitinsville address, is also happy about the hub's new partnership with ed2go, in order to offer several online classes. "These range from short, fundamental courses to learn or enhance skills to in-depth, year-long advanced career training with credentials," Ares said. "Anyone can take these classes!"

That partnership is an important step towards her hopes for the future of the education hub. She said that she wants it to become a resource for the entire community. "I was talking with someone the other day who said, 'what a great resource you are for our community,' she hit the nail on the head!"

Ares said, noting that the non-profit is willing to collaborate on learning opportunities. "Word has started to spread about who we are and what we do. We look forward to being a go-to resource for students, adult learners, businesses and their employees."

More information about the nonprofit is available on the Blackstone Valley Education Hub website, [www.bv-edhub.org](http://www.bv-edhub.org). Its address is 670 Linwood Ave., Suite 5, Whitinsville, MA 01588.

*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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# BVCC ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

**Monday, May 10** **Pleasant Valley Country Club**

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[administrator@blackstonevalley.org](mailto:administrator@blackstonevalley.org)

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## Drive-by donations for Food Bank at Senior Center held at Millbury First Congregational Church



The Millbury First Congregational Church, 148 West Main St. is inviting people to bring donations of food, personal hygiene items, Gorette's or CVS gift certificates to the church parking lot on Saturday, April 17, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. All donations will be taken to the Millbury Senior Center.

Suggested items include canned tomato, macaroni meals, fruit juices, canned hash, spam, hot dogs, jelly or jam, ketchup, mayo, mustard, relish, salad dressing, pop tarts, cracker snack packs, and paper towels.

A long row of tables will be set up so you can drive along side, and you can put your donation on the table, or stay in your car, pop your trunk or hatch back and volunteers will remove your donation. Please enter from West Main Street and exit to Beach Street.

Please join in celebrating the blessing of being able to help those in need.

## Twice Blessed shop reopening

Sacred Heart Church "Twice Blessed" Thrift Shop, 187 Hopedale Street, Hopedale, will hold its grand reopening on Saturday, May 1. New store hours as of May 1 are 8:30 a.m. to 12 noon on the first Saturday of the month.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic our thoughts and prayers are with all who are directly impacted as well as the first responders and essential workers.

Contact the shop at 508.473.1900, sacredheartshop-dale.org. Like us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/twiceblessedthriftshopdendale/

## Scholarship deadline

The deadline for the Thimble Pleasures Quilt Guild annual \$1,000 scholarship which is awarded to a student who is planning to study in the field of visual arts, design, or textile arts is May 1. Applications are available from your school's Guidance Counselor or online at www.thimblepleasures.org.

## Samuel Slater EXPERIENCE

### Collection Curiosities by Curator Olivia Spratt

This map, graciously donated by the LaPlante family, is the oldest map of the town we have in our collection. Published by F. W. Beers & Co., it dates back to 1870, 38 years after Webster was founded. The map is composed of paper mounted onto a linen backing. It is extremely fragile, but came to us in good condition. Objects like these are very useful because they provide a glimpse into life when Samuel Slater's sons took over the family business. We can see which plots of land were owned by whom, many of which belonged to the Slaters. Also by looking at this map, we can see the evolution of the name of Webster Lake. There is a map of Massachusetts from 1795 currently held at the Boston Public Library that shows the lake being referred to as Chagoggagogg-manchoggagogg Pond. It stayed



that way until the 1830s, when it was changed to Chaubunagungamaug Pond, as seen here on the map in our collection. Look out for this map on display in our orientation exhibit!

### Do you have any old things?

Many area residents have donated their antique items to the Samuel Slater Experience, but a few more are still needed to complete all the exhibits. Here is a list. If you have any these and are willing to part with them, please contact Olivia Spratt at [ospratt@samuel Slater Experience.org](mailto:ospratt@samuel Slater Experience.org) or call the museum at 508-461-2955. Please include a photo with your email.

100-year-old bikes

Travel trunks and suitcases

Old wood barrels, boxes, crates, old rope

Crockery, glassware, lamps, silverware, tinware, nickel-plated ware from early 1900s-1925

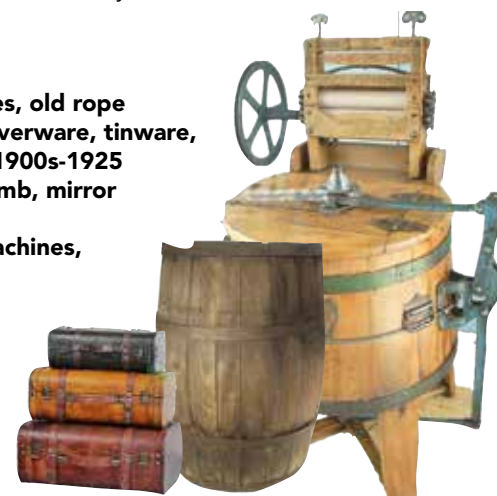
Sets of matching hairbrush, comb, mirror from early 1900s

Appliances such as washing machines, wringers, stoves, refrigerator, all from 1910-1925

Horse-drawn open bed wagon

Skeleton keys

To find out more about the Samuel Slater Experience, visit the website at [www.samuel Slater Experience.org](http://www.samuel Slater Experience.org).



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# Living well and looking good

## CT scan unlikely to miss advanced lung cancer

By Keith Roach, M.D.

**DEAR DR. ROACH:** Is it possible for X-rays and a CT scan to miss advanced lung cancer? My brother worked two days before he died. He went to the hospital, was admitted to hospice and died the next day. I wonder if he knew at least a year ago, but didn't tell anyone. He said his scans showed pneumonia. His son was called to the hospital and spent the day with him until he died. During his last day, my brother told him that he had lung cancer and that it was not diagnosed earlier. – N.W.

**ANSWER:** I am very sorry about your brother. Lung

cancer, especially early lung cancer, is often missed on a regular chest X-ray. Pneumonia can accompany early lung cancer, and the pneumonia can hide the cancerous mass, but experienced radiologists should be able to see something. Also, experienced clinicians should check an X-ray weeks after a pneumonia to be sure there is no cancer in a person at risk, such as a current or former smoker. Advanced lung cancer is only very rarely missed on X-ray, and should essentially never be missed on a CT scan.

While I can't say it's impossible, it's much more likely that a year ago he was told that he had lung cancer and did not say anything, perhaps to spare his family's feelings, or perhaps he didn't want the sympathy and attention that accompany a diagnosis such as advanced lung cancer.

### Vague symptoms

**DEAR DR. ROACH:** What does a person do when symptoms are vague and hard to explain? I am an 82-year-old woman. I started feeling discomfort in one breast about three weeks ago. It felt like irritation from a bra. I did all the things I thought I should, and three weeks later the symptoms are the same or slightly worse. Nothing looks or feels different when I touch it. Do I see my primary doctor (he's never seen me naked), or find a gynecologist? How do I present this issue? I feel like a fool. – V.B.

**ANSWER:** Both clinicians should be able to appropri-

ately evaluate this concern. You should go to whoever you are more comfortable seeing. What you should not do is ignore it.

In your particular case, it's unlikely that your symptoms are because of something serious. Breast discomfort is common and only rarely due to breast cancer, which is what you must surely be concerned about. You should NEVER stop yourself from seeing your doctor for fear of not being taken seriously.

Primary doctors like me and gynecologists are very familiar with women coming in with breast symptoms, and we take them seriously. Clinicians know how justifiably concerned women are about breast cancer. Most often, a woman can be reassured with a careful history and physical exam; other times, a mammogram or ultrasound may be ordered. You don't want to regret missing that visit to the doctor.

It is often said that the only foolish question is the one that is not asked. This situation is analogous: It would be foolish for you not to go. While the overwhelming likelihood is that you will be reassured, in the unlikely event there is something wrong it's far better to know about it earlier than later.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to [ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu).

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## Four facts every young competitive dancer and gymnast should know

By Dr. Sean T. Lordan DPT

If you or a loved one is a competitive dancer or gymnast, then this article is a must read. If you can follow these few tips you will be well on your way to reducing your risk for injuries and performing at an optimal level when it matters most: Competition and Meet season. All too often poor medical advice is doled out in generality, but I'm here to parse through the poor advice to give you dance and gymnastics specific advice. Continue to read below to learn more.

### 1. Improve your arch height with this simple exercise

We often see dancers and gymnasts, as well as other performing artist athletes, complaining about foot and ankle pain in Physical Therapy. Implementing an injury prevention routine prior to the start of the season is key in avoiding many of the impairments we treat. "Short Foot Exercises" should be a fixture in all performing arts exercise programs.

Short foot exercises strengthen the muscles on the bottom of your foot and help to reinforce the "arch" of the foot. These muscles act in symphony with other foot and ankle muscles to provide strong balance and arch formation throughout your performance. In order to include Short Foot Exercises into your routine do this: Scrunch a

towel using your toes underneath one foot at a time for 30 seconds. Repeat this 3 times with each foot and perform 5 days a week. You will notice a difference in foot strength within weeks and your arch will be stronger than ever—and more resilient to injury!

### 2. Challenge your balance

Lack of balance and in younger dancers, lack of coordination to perform highly technical movements, will lead to dance and gymnastic injuries as well. Coordination requires blocked practice as well as strength of the specific muscles required to perform that technique.

Many dancers and gymnasts understand how important balance is to programming, however few know how to challenge the body's 3 systems that contribute to balance. Balance is a product of your visual, somatosensory and vestibular systems. By challenging any aspect of the 3 of these systems either alone or in concert—you can improve your balance. I'll include examples below.

**Visual:** Close your eyes and balance for 1 minute on one leg

**Visual and Somatosensory:** Close your eyes and balance on a pillow for 1 minute on one leg

**Visual and Somatosensory and Vestibular:** Close your eyes and balance on a pil-

low while moving your head up and down for 1 minute on one leg.

You'll notice that the exercises above reflect a pattern of difficult, more difficult, most difficult. Try this at home daily and reap the benefits of improved balance. Start with whichever level you feel most comfortable. If you have a balance disc, foam pad or Bosu ball to balance on at home, even better.

### 3. Do I need to stretch more?

Stretching is always a controversial topic among dancers, gymnasts and performing artist athletes alike. Dancers typically have increased joint mobility, however lack the muscle length to keep up with their hyper-mobile joints. For instance, a dancer may be able to wrap her knee behind her head, but may still demonstrate a relatively "tight" hamstring with regard to their inherent range of motion. If this sounds complicated, that is because it is! As an experienced PT I like to talk about the difference between muscle length and muscle quality. An athlete may have the appropriate muscle length to accomplish a skill, but still presents with pain because the muscle quality is compromised with trigger points.

The key is to properly assess muscle quality. Are there a lot of "trigger points"

in the muscles? Do they need to be worked out with massage or professional tools like the Graston Technique, Dry Needling or Cupping?

An experienced performing arts physical therapist uniquely understands these challenges and should be sought out to solve muscle aches and pains before they turn into fractures at the growth plate from overuse.

### 4. Get a functional movement screen

How often do children visit the pediatrician for a check-up? Typically every year right?

They do a quick "physical" where they make sure that your lymph nodes aren't swollen, your lungs and heart are clear, and that you are able to participate in school and sport with no restrictions. What pediatricians often miss are potential observable variances that may predispose a child to injury. A proper Functional Movement Screen will quickly and easily pick up risk factors for a dance or gymnastics injury, and should always be done in concert with a thorough physical exam of the young athlete.

In an ideal world the "physical" part of the yearly medical check-up for the competitive dancer or gymnast should happen at a PT's office.

A doctor of PT's version of a "physical exam" stems from the functional movement exam. During the functional movement exam the PT will begin by testing the strength of all the key muscle groups related to dance and gymnastics on a 0-5 scale. Then the PT will examine dynamic motions and prescribe manual therapy and specific exercises to prevent a problem before it starts.

Wouldn't you like to have the peace of mind that you are doing everything you can to compete during the season when it matters most? What if there were exercises, stretches or therapy you could be doing today to increase your likelihood of success when it comes to competition or meet season. Wouldn't you be asking yourself, why didn't I do that?

I propose that every competitive dancer and gymnast who is serious in their sport should establish a relationship with their local PT. Preferably find a Doctor of PT who



Dr. Sean T. Lordan

specializes in the performing arts athlete category – think dance, gymnastics, and ice skating. A PT specialized in the performing arts will have a unique understanding of the bodily demands you (or your young athlete) requires for a successful outcome.

Looking back on my career I could have prevented thousands of dance and gymnastics injuries had I screened the patient six months sooner. Don't become a statistic, get a screen from a local qualified Doctor of PT today.



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Look for the open flag on the side door by the parking lot. They are currently featuring half-price winter clothing and winter related gifts and items sale.

The shop is also featuring Easter baskets and Easter/spring gift items and serving items. The Easter Bunny has definitely sprinkled the Thrift Shop with seasonal magic. Do you need special china for a family dinner? Come see the Noritake sets and glassware and tablecloths.

If you are looking for something specific, please speak with volunteers as the shop may have just what you are looking for in the storeroom. The shop rotates stock to keep things fresh.

If you are practicing the Marie Kondo method of downsizing, and are looking for a place to donate your extra items, please think of the Grafton Thrift Shop. They are happy to accept spring and summer clothing in good (gently used) or new condition and small household items and keepsakes. All of the money brought into the shop goes to the mission of the church with an emphasis on local charities. All donated items find a home. If they can't keep it for the shop, they have other charities that will take them. Tax receipts are available upon request.

Please contact Diane at [diane@meadowlarks-farm.net](mailto:diane@meadowlarks-farm.net) with any questions. And please join in for worship services on Sundays at 10:00 a.m. via Facebook Live, <http://facebook.com/uccgrafton>.

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## Living with Lincoln

*I got you, ball*

By Amy Palumbo-LeClaire

Lincoln chose our family at a fluffy seven weeks old. His "pick-up day" had been scheduled for February 12 – on Abraham Lincoln's birthday.

Lincoln.

The name sprung off of the calendar and into our hearts and home. Little did we know that our largest male of the litter, a puppy named after a president, would not only choose us, but also his way in the world.

"Mom, we have to take this one." My son, Ben, at an intuitive ten years old, had known what we know now. Lincoln was meant to be with us, and us with him. Confirming such, he grabbed the miniature leash from my hand and paraded around his blonde siblings, as though to claim his new family.

"These are my People."

We cradled him onto our laps, then lifted him to face us. His morsel nose twitched while he found our eyes. "Are you ready to play?"



The joys of snow.



Winter for Lincoln.



Lincoln relishes in a game of Bury and Find.

We were ready to play. Yet little did we know just how much.

"Lincoln!!"

I'll never forget the day he had been trotting along a Cliff Walk ledge at Newport, RI. A precocious puppy, he had tottered about clusters of rock to explore, then struggled to negotiate a sudden narrow path. Whoa! Not enough room. He lost his footing and fell off of a twelve-foot incline. Somehow, he managed to wrestle his body back to a soft landing. Then, exhausted, he had collapsed.

"I think he may have broken a bone."

"Does he need some water?"

"That puppy needs to rest."

A crowd of onlookers shuffled to our side while, smothered in guilt, I teared up and knelt by my puppy's side. His chunky belly rose and fell beneath my palm. What had I done? How could I ever forgive myself?

"Let's finish the Cliff Walk!"

Lincoln sprang to his feet. His miniature tongue shook while he smiled, panted, and colored the world pink again. I sighed, massaged his ears. "You're okay." It was only a case of Lincoln being Lincoln.

Fast forward ten years. Lincoln fell off of a ledge of a different sort. His health took a dip during the Fall of 2020. His breathing was abnormal. An ultrasound indicated large masses on both thyroid glands. We were told his life was about to end. Little did we know—

"Want to play?"

Lincoln was just being Lincoln. A clean, protein-based nutritional plan (and a whole lot of love) turned a fat, ugly report into something slender.

\*\*\*

Lincoln scratches at the deck door. I open it and there he stands, propped up on the step, appearing larger than life. His black, senior nose quivers with desire. He's wearing the expression I've come to know and love. "Few throws?" I read his mind.

Frozen with hope, he stares at me and awaits a verdict. His tail wags slowly, gearing up for action.

"Can you wait, Lincoln? Mummy has to work."

More charming than his thirst for life has been his sensitivity to his owner's role in it. My dog understands nuance. "Can you wait?" I accent the word wait.

"But can you just come out? I was thinking we could play in the snow today."

His cuteness tempts me. He's a dog, fully immersed in the present, yet intelligent enough to discern my needs as a human. "Bring the ball here, Lincoln." I gesture with grand enthusiasm. "Go get it and put it here for Mummy!"

The compromise sells him. He's willing to negotiate. I can play ball in my slippers, from the comfort of my now-drafty kitchen. I gaze out the window and watch him nose the snow as though searching for a diamond in a corn maze. He zigs. He zags. Then a stiff wagging tail produces the truth. He's found the ball! But before he brings it back, he performs a clever trick, one he created on his own. I watch him through the window and giggle to myself. Work can wait.

"I'm in charge of you, Ball."

He digs a hole with manic concentration then pushes the ball down in the snow to bury it. He pounces on the burial ground over and over again,

as though to set a final nail in the ball's coffin. Then he digs it back up and sashes it about his frothing mouth with crazy joy. His process is deliberate, even calculated. Dig. Bury. Pounce. Find. Sash. Over and over again. Every now and then, he tosses a glance up to the window, sensing that I'm watching.

"Good boy, Lincoln!" I hoist the window open and holler the compliment. He's patented Bury & Find, a game which offers rationale for the need to allow a dog to be a dog. Work with them. Allow them opportunities to do what dogs do. They need to run, dig, play, and be reckless. Let them be dogs and they'll let you be human. I settle back to my work and welcome a sip of coffee. The door rattles again.

"I found the ball!"

I open the door. Cold air accosts me, fueling my laziness. "Lincoln, put it right here." I don't want to reach any further than I need to for the ball on the snowy deck. He grumbles yet complies, still managing to toss the ball as close to the threshold as possible. I don't have to set a single toe outside. "Thank you, Lincoln."

I hold the ball up like a trophy. He races down the stairs, not wanting to miss out on the throw. "Which way?" I refuse to endorse the bullying "fake throw" which forces a dog to track the ball tirelessly

through the yard. I'm confident that he'll find it either way. A dog's senses truly are remarkable. Like a professional outfielder, he watches the ball sail through the air. He backs up to gauge position. I underhand a solid throw, and he freezes to capture its soft whooshing sound through the air, then its notable drop into the snow.

"I hear you, Ball! I'm coming!"

I watch him romp through the snow after a ball that he protects like an abducted baby. His tail stiffens and wags while he appreciates a scent made for a dog. "I knew I'd find you." He sashes the ball, then indulges in another game of Bury & Find.

Dig. Bury. Pounce. Dig. Bury. Pounce. "I got you, Ball."

I watch him from the window. Work can wait.



I was thinking we could play in the snow.

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## Whitin Community Center events

WHITINSVILLE - The Whitin Community Center, 60 Main St., will hold a *Sprint Into Spring Open House* one day only on April 19, (in person or online) When you pay for a new membership by monthly automatic withdrawal, receive 25% off the 2021 rates in addition to no joining fee.

Upcoming events include Camp Whitin and BVCP Summer EDventure; Cars In The Park on August 21; and the Fabulous 50s Homecoming Gala on November 13. Watch for updates in this paper and go to www.WhitinCommunityCenter.com.

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## Tales from beyond

## Ghost of the Sun Tavern

By Thomas D'Agostino

The Sun Tavern in Duxbury, Massachusetts, is famous for its fare and hospitality. It is also well known for its permanent resident, Lysander Walker.

The front part of The Sun Tavern was built in 1741. At the end of the nineteenth century, Lysander Walker, who gained dubious fame when his story was published in the Boston Herald in an article titled "Last Duxbury Hermit," owned the building. For some time Duxbury folk knew that all was not well with Lysander. After the death of his wife, Lysander, getting on with age, refused to venture forth from the home, which had sheltered him for so long.

The children of the neighborhood always watched for the American flag hung at the corner of the house. Its presence was the signal that Lysander needed provisions from the local store. On October 3, 1928, 11-year-old Gladys Belknap saw the flag hung union down at the corner of the house. The locals entered the home and found Lysander seated on a sofa. Beside him, still tightly gripped, was a loaded revolver from which one shot had been fired. Lysander had signaled one last time in a way which would never be forgotten. The Tavern recently received a post

card from Gladys Belknap confirming this story.

After Walker's death, Father Francis Keegan purchased the property for a summer residence. He befriended Mary Hackett and financed her education at Salem State Normal School. In the early 1930s he suggested she take over the house to run as a restaurant. This small place of food and refreshment became very successful. Situated in the heart of cranberry plantations it was famous for its quaintness, beautiful flowers and delightful meals.

David Wells bought Mary Hackett's in 1964 and changed the name to Fiddler's Green Restaurant to convey the feeling of an English Pub. Somewhere along the way, it was renamed Buck's Tavern. In 1987 the restaurant would be named The Sun Tavern, a moniker that remains to this day.

Larry and Carol Friedman owned the Tavern from 1996 to 2001. When it became available again, the couple could not resist the lure and charm of this enchanting property. The Sun Tavern in all of its incarnations is woven into the lives of countless people who have walked through its doors.

Wells put the house on the map after experiencing the ghost of Lysander Walker.

Each night when the restaurant was being locked up, and every candle extinguished on the tables, just one would be relit, as he was about to walk out the back door. Of course David was teased about his "ghost." Late one night the alarm went off and the police arrived to investigate. After checking the entire building and finding nothing, they closed the door and started up the path. Suddenly each officer heard footsteps in the restaurant. With guns drawn they entered the building but found no one. That would be the last time David was ridiculed about his ghost.

Larry and Carol have many stories to tell.

One evening the police were summoned to the restaurant because of a 911 call. Larry swore that the place

was empty and no one could have called. It must have been a wrong number. The police told him the call came from his pay phone.

Patrons and staff have heard heavy footsteps in the building, yet no visible person was present to create the occurrence.

The towel dispenser in the ladies room began dispensing towels by itself one day in front of Larry.

A man was choking one night and suddenly unseen hands assisted him. He leaned over to thank the person next to him but they swore they were not close enough to help him. Before they could assist him, someone hit him on the back to dislodge the obstruction in his throat.

While Larry was telling Arlene and me this story, we



The Sun Tavern in Duxbury is the home of resident ghost Lysander Walker.

heard a voice like a choking sound that we were able to record.

While we were visiting, there were three loud bangs that emanated from the dining room. We were the only ones in the building at the time. We have this recorded as well.

The phone seems to be one of Lysander's favorite items in the tavern, as staff and patrons have witnessed his ghost

standing in front of it.

To this day many have experienced Lysander's presence. His constant visitations are only part of the magic and charm of The Sun Tavern.

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).

## Prayer



Jesus

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil (intention), Amen.

If you pray three times a day, three consecutive days, you will receive your intention, no matter how impossible it may seem. Praise and Thanksgiving please the Heart of God. **Believer**

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## BVT senior Natalie Bolduc's career plan takes a 'wild' ride

UPTON – To get where you want to be, sometimes you have to stay motivated and keep trying. As the saying goes, if at first you don't succeed, try, try again. That is how Natalie Bolduc of Bellingham, a senior in the Painting & Design Technology (P&D) program at Blackstone Valley Tech, chose to pursue her vocational-technical education with perseverance, determination, and a sense of adventure.

Natalie started as a sophomore, not having a traditional exploratory experience. She was given a choice between Electrical and P&D. She said, "I decided

that P&D would suit my interests better, given that I've always been creative and love painting and art, so I went with that. It was a decision that has led me to have some incredibly memorable experiences."

Several local car enthusiasts entrust BVT's P&D shop to produce and apply graphics and wraps to their luxury vehicles, which is an incredible learning opportunity. It is something that Natalie never thought she'd be doing, but she has become rather skilled at it.

"I'm so grateful to my P&D instructor, Tom Lamont, for in-

volving me to apply Mission 22 vinyl graphics to a McLaren at the Dream Ride car show," said Natalie. "If you told me a year ago that I would be doing that, I would've said you were crazy. I was a little nervous being around such expensive cars, let alone applying decals to them, but it was an amazing experience."

Natalie is maximizing her trade experience through BVT's cooperative education program (co-op). She applied, interviewed, and secured a co-op with Cadwell Sign in Holliston. "I'm enjoying it. Honestly, it feels a lot like being in our

shop," said Natalie. "Our instructors taught us to treat our shop like a real workplace, but it's hard to realize what that means until you're in one. Cadwell has similar machines to those in our shop. I've used their Suma cutter and a laminate machine since I already know how to use them. I'm happy that I've traveled down this path. I'm confident in my trade knowledge and comfortable in the workforce."

"My post BVT plans are quite different from what I am doing now," said Natalie. "I have another adventure in mind, exploring Zoology or Wildlife Ecology

at a four-year college, and I'll see where it goes from there. Wherever I go, I go prepared. BVT has provided me with skills and experiences that will serve me well in any career."

"What amazes me most about our students is their growth and transformation. On their journey together as a class, each one of them is uniquely different. Even though I've been in the industry for so long, they still surprise me with their choices," said Lamont. "That's what's cool. We train them, give them knowledge and tools to succeed, and then we let them go.



Natalie Bolduc of Bellingham, a senior in the Painting & Design Technology program at BVT, is pictured applying a Mission 22 vinyl graphic to a McLaren.



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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@aanortheast.com](mailto:jpaul@aanortheast.com). Follow John on Twitter @johnfpaul and friend him on facebook mrjohnfpaul



**Q.** I have a 2015 VW Jetta with an L4 1.8L engine. My battery is over five years old and needs to be replaced. Can you please tell me about the type of replacement batteries AAA uses? Are they made by Clarios that took over Johnson Controls? After I tell the service my car battery info, will the technician bring an OEM equivalent battery? I usually bring my car to the VW dealer since they emphasize only genuine VW replacement parts be used. However, I would rather take advantage of my membership and have the battery installed in my driveway. I just don't know why dealers say it's a risk to use a AAA battery. I'm thinking they just want the business.

**A.** Although there are many battery brands, there are only a few battery manufacturers in the United States. Most batteries made for AAA are made by East Penn Battery. East Penn is a private, family-owned company operating the largest single-site, lead battery manufacturing facility in the world. So, it is entirely possible depending on the vehicle manufacturer that their battery is made by East Penn. All AAA batteries meet or exceed the original equipment specification and will work well in your Volkswagen.

**Q.** I loaned my car jack to someone who was stuck and it got mangled and is not workable. I have a 2014 Toyota FJ Cruiser and I was looking at a small garage style jack instead of the standard jack. The person who borrowed the jack said he would replace it with whatever I want - within reason. Any recommendations for a jack for a SUV like mine?

**A.** The standard jack that came with your car is the best choice for occasional use to change a flat tire. It fits better under the vehicle if you get a flat and takes up

less room and won't rattle. Certainly, a proper garage-jack is faster, better and safer (when used properly) but even the compact jacks are heavy and take up a fair amount of room. If this were my car, I would get another factory jack (salvage yard or eBay) and get a good quality two-ton garage jack for weekend servicing or off-road adventures. Even with a quality jack, always use jack-stands when working under a vehicle.

**Q.** I own a 1995 Buick Roadmaster with only 85,000 miles on it. Previously I had my granddad's 1992 Buick and both cars have had the same problem with the anti-lock brakes. On the 1992 model, the warning light would come on after about five miles of travel. When that happened, I generally would stop the car and restart it and it would be fine for a while. I replaced the 1992 Buick with a 1995 model and the ABS light comes on but restarting the car didn't cure the problem. I am a younger guy who just loves these old Buicks and can never see myself driving a Honda Civic or Toyota Corolla - no matter how good they are. They ride so smooth and have ridiculous space compared to most cars today. Two garages have looked at the car and both told me they are only guessing what they think is wrong. Do you know the cause of this problem and how much it would cost to repair?

**A.** A very common problem is the wiring to the front wheel sensors over time will deteriorate and break. When the ABS light turns on the anti-lock brake system will not actuate, but rather the brakes will function as conventional brakes. The brakes will stop and are safe, but like cars before ABS the wheels can lock up and skid. Generally, the repair is to replace the wheel sensor which can

take about an hour and the part is \$120-\$150. Before any of this work is performed a full diagnostic check should be performed to verify the exact problem.

**Q.** My car has a coolant leak somewhere but it's not a noticeable leak. I don't see coolant on the ground and there is no maple syrup smell in the car. What does that mean and what should I do?

**A.** A repair shop will look for obvious leaks. If none are found they would pressurize the cooling system and look for a drop in pressure. If no coolant leaks are noted, then the next possibility is a faulty cylinder head-gasket. A faulty head-gasket can be checked with an old exhaust gas analyzer, looking for hydrocarbon reading in the radiator or a chemical test kit that looks for exhaust gas in the cooling system. These "block-check" kits can be purchased for less than \$40 in auto parts stores and online.



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## Decade of Dollars scratch tickets raffle by BSTRA

If you are someone who enjoys scratch tickets, you will want to take part in the latest raffle offered by local non-profit organization, Bay State Trail Riders Association, Inc. (BSTRA). BSTRA's newest raffle offers a book of 300 Decade of Dollars Scratch Tickets as the prize.

Tickets can be purchased online or through the mail by going to [www.bstra.org/support/raffle](http://www.bstra.org/support/raffle) prior to the April 23 deadline. Go to [www.bstra.org/support/raffle](http://www.bstra.org/support/raffle) for

more information, including a ticket order form. The drawing will take place on April 24, at BSTRA's Nancy Maenzo Memorial Benefit Ride being held out of Wallum Lake, Douglas, and the lucky winner will be notified if not present at the drawing.

Douglas resident David Maenzo donated the book of 300 Decade of Dollars Scratch Tickets to BSTRA in memory of his late wife, Nancy Maenzo, with the stipulation that the raffle drawing take place at the BSTRA ride held in her memory.

"This isn't the first time David stepped up to do something extremely generous like this. For the last two years he made similar donations which were successful fundraisers for us," said Lynn Paresky, BSTRA's fundraising director. "If you purchased 100 of these scratch tickets yourself, you would be paying \$300 for them. The real appeal is the amount you might win after scratching all 300 scratch tickets. The top prize in this game is a payout of \$500 per month for ten years!"

Nancy was an active BSTRA member for years, and she always supported the organization's annual projects to improve community trails. Her husband continues supporting BSTRA and its trail advocacy mission each year when he sponsors his wife's memorial ride and donates a generous prize for BSTRA to raffle off. "She had an appreciation not only for the trails, but for all the work BSTRA put into maintaining those trails. I know Nancy would like that I'm doing this to help raise money for projects in the state forest she enjoyed so much," said Maenzo.

BSTRA's trail improvement projects benefit a wide variety of user groups who enjoy the trails for outdoor recreation and fitness. The

trails are used by not only equestrians, but by hikers, mountain bikers, dog walkers, cross country skiers, and families out enjoying nature. With so many people out on the trails since the pandemic struck, BSTRA hopes the community has found a new appreciation for local trails and will support the non-profit organization by purchasing tickets for this raffle. "We

make raffle ticket pricing very reasonable," said Paresky. "Participants can choose to purchase 5 tickets for \$10 for; 15 tickets for \$20; 35 tickets for \$40; 55 tickets for \$60, 75 tickets for \$80; or 100 tickets for \$100. We'd like to turn David's generous donation into something much larger to help fund our 2021 trail projects scheduled for here in our community."

## Library hosts Talewise for a virtual presentation of Earth Day: Revenge of the Toxic Robot

Please join the Grafton Public Library on Thursday, April 22, at 3:00 p.m. for a virtual presentation of Earth Day: Revenge of the Toxic Robot presented by Talewise (formerly ScienceTellers). This program is for families with school-age children. No pre-registration is required. For more information and the direct link on the day of the event please visit the Library's event calendar online at [www.graftonlibrary.org/events](http://www.graftonlibrary.org/events).

In Earth Day: Revenge of the Toxic Robot, when the town's park is suddenly gated and locked, a group of friends decides to investigate. Their adventure leads them deep into the woods, where they are chased away by a strange robot powered by toxic sludge. Can the robot's toxic power be repurposed for good? Join the gang on their quest to clean up the act of a despicable polluter and save their park from being destroyed. Along the way, you will learn all about reducing waste and recycling, reusing everyday products around you, and how pollution affects the environment. You can make a difference in protecting our planet.

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## RE: Real Estate



Mark Marzeotti

If you watch a steady stream of TV shows that focus on buying and selling homes, you've probably learned a lot about the process. As a result, you may think you have a solid enough handle on things to forego using a real estate agent when selling your house.

This is understandable, especially when you think about how much you could save on the realtor's commission. Plus, if you were captain of the ship, you'd be in charge of every decision during the process. But a few homebuyer education courses can't give you the years of experience realtors have. Here's the first thing you need to know before you take the reins and decide to sell your home without a real estate agent.

You may not be saving as much money as you think.

Hiring a real estate agent will typically cost you about six percent of a home's sale price. For a \$350,000 home, that's \$21,000. It'd be pretty

### *The first thing you need to know about selling your home without a realtor*

nice to shave that number off your expenses, right?

The idea of saving thousands of dollars on commission by selling your own home can be tempting, and for a few it may even make sense, but for the vast majority of homeowners the desire to pocket more money by selling their own home will likely cost them.

Maybe you are thinking that a realtor writing a column, of course will say that." According to the National Association of Realtors, homes that are for sale by owner, or FSBOs, typically sell for less money than homes sold by realtors. In 2020, homes sold by owners closed at a median of \$217,900, while those sold by real estate agents closed for \$242,300. That's a \$24,400 difference.

The upside of selling your place on your own, per the report, is saving time. FSBO sold more quickly than homes sold by agents in 2020 — 77 percent of FSBO homes sold in less than two weeks. But NAR points out that's because the homes were often sold to someone the seller knew.

Some agents say they don't believe that selling your home without an agent is a bad idea for all sellers — but it's probably a bad idea for

most sellers. There are three reasons why.

First, there's pricing. One of the reasons you may not make as much is related to your potential pricing strategy. How will you determine the right price to sell? While multiple real estate websites offer quick estimates of your home's value, this is simply an algorithm — not a researched comparison of other similar homes in your neighborhood. In fact, she says those quickly generated estimates are often exaggerated, which can cause you to upcharge your home. You might already know what happens to overpriced homes: nothing. They languish on the market as buyers select more reasonably priced options. It's almost worth hiring an agent just to be sure that your home is priced right.

Even if you don't hire an agent, you might need to hire a lawyer to go over all your contracts. This will cost you money, too. Still, this isn't the only reason you might not get as much money as you think. You have to be prepared to put in the work necessary to attract the right buyers. Just sticking a sign in your front

yard will likely not generate the traffic and interest that you hope for. The owner is responsible for all the marketing, photos, property descriptions, inquiries, open houses, showings, and vetting the potential buyers.

Then there's the business of appealing to buyers. Sellers need to understand the pros and cons of their property, and know what will distract buyers and turn them off. However, since homeowners tend to gloss over their home's flaws, this can be a challenge. Having an unbiased person to help out can be a plus. Many times, sellers eventually realize they'd rather just spend five to six percent of the sale price and hire an agent to do all of this for them.

If you're selling to someone you know, marketing and appealing to potential buyers might not be necessary. But you will have to negotiate with the buyer no matter who it is. So let me ask you this important question: Can you negotiate as well as an agent can on your behalf? The answer may be yes, but be realistic — not everyone is a born negotiator. Leave the job to a professional!

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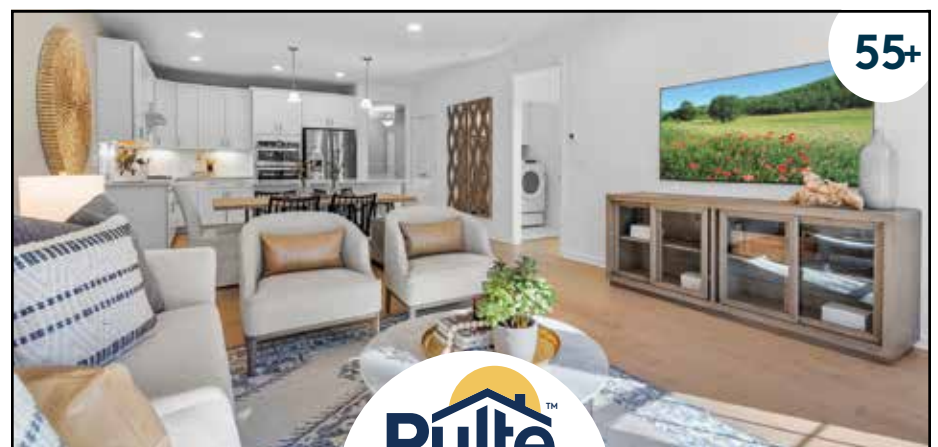
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