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M & M Auto Body highly wreck-amended

By Janet Stoica

Picture this, years ago, two first graders meet while attending Chaffee School in Oxford. They forge a friendship that lasts decades, hang out together, and promise to go into business as partners one day.

It really does happen, as Scott Milner and Ron Moscoffian of M & M Auto Body of Oxford can attest. With Lee Collins on their staff, Scott

and Ron have partnered longer than most businesses. Through thick and thin, family milestones, and their own children, the partners' longevity and business acumen have turned their humble beginnings into a successful and customer-appreciated enterprise.

"Nothing leaves this shop until we're 100% satisfied that we've done the best job possible for our customers," said Ron Moscoffian, "it has to be done right and done well before we are satisfied. We're a small shop but we do what's best for our customers. We do it hands-on ourselves. If we're satisfied and happy with the results, then our client will see that and be satisfied too."

M & M works on every model and make of vehicle out there. Their services include auto body
Continued on page 2



L-R, Scott Milner and Ron Moscoffian in 1997 (below) and in 2021 (above).



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Dresser Hill Ice Cream goes for \$450,000 at foreclosure auction

By Rod Lee

As expected, the foreclosure sale of Dresser Hill Ice Cream and Seafood in Charlton took only a matter of minutes, after Auctioneer Paul Zekos disposed of the preliminaries on the chilly and breezy morning of April 12.

In the half hour or so before the eleven o'clock transaction began, people with bid paperwork in their hands stood around speculating on what the sale price would end up being. Only Tim Dugas, whose family owns and operates The Clambox in Brookfield (also on the auction block, later that day) and Teneille Chaisson of Dresser Hill Ice Cream and Seafood seemed not to share in the excitement that prevailed.

"I wish it wasn't going to happen," Ms. Chaisson said, as she paced back and forth in front of one of South County's most popular venues. Her equipment as lease holder of the property sat inside the building, which was closed. Her restaurant was known not only for ice cream but also sandwiches—the Sailor's Special, the Bacon Buccaneer, the Philly Shipyard—and more.

The sale actually included all of the following: a two-story barn-style building with an arcade area, an automotive garage, a warehouse, overhead doors and upstairs office space; and the smaller structure, which functions as the ice cream and seafood en-

terprise at the top of Dresser Hill—with panoramic views looking west.

"I have interest in this property," Mr. Dugas said (he eventually wasn't a factor in the bidding, however). "I own and operate The Clambox and I have a lease there for the next three years. My whole family works for me in Brookfield. I own the lot next to [The Clambox, on South Maple St.] and will build a new place on that lot if it doesn't work out for me today.

"It's nerve wracking, waiting," Mr. Dugas said. "I feel bad for Teneille."

Shortly after 11:00, Mr. Zekos welcomed those in attendance—about twenty or twenty-five people—and launched into a reading of "The Memorandum of Sale" and then "The Legal Notice of Sale." He explained that a \$10,000 deposit would be required on the spot with another \$10,000 due "within forty-eight hours." A closing would occur within forty-five days, he said. There are taxes and "muni liens" to deal with too.

"This is a nice income property and a landmark here in

the town of Charlton," Mr. Zekos said, as an enticement to get his audience primed for a quick sale. The asking price started just below \$200,000 but quickly escalated. At one point early on Mr. Zekos reminded the crowd that "this property will not be here tomorrow." That immediately pushed bids to \$325,000, \$385,000 and \$400,000. When interest seemed to be waning as the price tag crept higher, Mr. Zekos said to one bidder "what the hell is another \$10,000;" and to another "an ice cream cone costs more than that here!"

His strategy worked. Michael Madulka, who owns an ice cream shop on Lake Quinsigamond in Worcester, wound up registering the winning bid—at \$450,000. Madulka's, on Lake Ave., offers "ice cream, yogurt, soft serve, sundaes" and everything in between.

M&M AUTO BODY

Continued from page 1

repairs, painting, and collision services, including buffing, scratch, and dent removal as well as custom paint mixing to a customer's request and specifications. Vehicle frame straightening is one of their specialties. Have you ever driven behind a car or truck with a front end drifting off to its right side and its back end floating to the left? Those vehicles definitely need the services of M & M's frame-straightening expertise! "I've seen those drivers on the road. Looks like they're taking up two lanes, doesn't it?" Ron laughed.

Many of today's vehicles are lighter in weight than those manufactured even five years ago. "You'd be amazed at the amount of plastic in today's vehicles," said Ron. "The amount of synthetic materials in our cars and trucks is mind-boggling."

M & M works closely with



Paul Zekos of Zekos Group Auctioneers reads "The Memorandum of Sale" before bidding began for the Dresser Hill Ice Cream and Seafood property in Charlton on April 12.

"He got a good deal," Mr. Zekos said, as he put his clipboard away. He had described the auction in advance as "the opportunity of a lifetime for someone."

As he finished placing his deposit, Mr. Madulka was approached by a man from Gibson's Dairy Farm, who said to him, "I wanted you to know we supply the ice cream for Dresser Hill. I hope you'll think about keeping Dresser Hill going. The ice cream part of it is a lucrative business."

"Yes, what are your immediate plans?" Mr. Madulka was asked, as he considered a response to the inquiry from Gibson's.

"To come up with the rest of the money!" he said, laughing.

Then, hardly pausing, he said "I will keep it as ice cream. I think I'm going to call it 'Madulka's Ice Cream on Dresser Hill.'"

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

many insurance companies. They're a licensed, registered, and insured body shop and are also licensed vehicle appraisers. "We'll attend vehicle auctions, carefully check the repairable ones, fix them up, and then sell them. We're Dodge and Plymouth guys. We've been to many raceways watching Richard Petty and his Dodge and Plymouth vehicles of choice."

The men like Mopar products. Mopar was founded in 1937 and is the parts, service, and customer care division of the former Chrysler Corporation now owned by Netherlands-based automobile manufacturer, Stellantis.

Ron and Scott will be celebrating their 24th year as business partners this month. They began their business venture on April 1, 1997, fulfilling their first-grade pledge to each other. "There was a blizzard that day that we'll never forget," said Ron. "The snow, wind, and cold forged our partnership."

The two have always been car enthusiasts and went to Bay Path Vocational High School to learn their trade in the auto body shop. Scott furthered his education in the service, along with truck driving. Ron worked and managed auto body shops at Worcester dealerships. Cadillacs were his favorites. They were very spacious and made well, he said. Every year Anthony Borgatti (owner of the well-known and famous Spag's Retail Store in Shrewsbury) would visit the dealership to trade-in and buy another Cadillac. "He was a great customer."

The crew has many projects and has also built many cars for auto shows. One of their steady customers is Harbro Auto Sales of Webster and Whitinsville. "We're very honored to be part of Harbro's success," said Ron.

M & M Auto Body is at 7 Industrial Park Road, West, Oxford. Phone: (508) 987-7070. Hours: Mon-Fri 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Sat. 8 a.m. - 12 noon. www.mmautooxford.com

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 BSBA '83 in Accountancy and MBA '96
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- Member of the Webster Board of Selectmen (since May, 2015), Chairman since May, 2019
- Secretary and Member of the Police/Fire Station Building Committee (2008-2018)
- Director of the Southern Worcester County Communication Center
- Chairman of the Board of Directors of MAPFRE Insurance
- Trustee and Finance Committee Chair of Nichols College
- Director and Treasurer of the Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts
- Director and Vice Chair of Harrington Hospital
- President of the St. Louis School Endowment Fund which funds All Saints Academy
- Couple to Couple Pre-Marital Ministry with wife Donna for over 25 years

Dear Webster Citizens:

My wife Donna and I have been blessed to grow up, live and work in Webster for practically all our lives. Giving back to our community, of time, talent and treasure, is always something we and our families have tried our best to do. I have been honored to serve as one of your Selectmen. Reflecting on all the good that has taken place in Webster these past six years, I truly believe we are in a far better place today. Working together we will continue our upward trajectory of improving our Town for the betterment of its citizens. This past year, COVID-19 dominated our lives, resulting in untold hardships, including the loss of some of our loved ones. In addition to the truly outstanding effort to fight COVID-19 put forth by our Town Administrator, Board of Health Agent and many others, some of the top positive outcomes in Webster these past six years, include: (1) the hiring of Town Administrator (TA) Doug Willardson; (2) completion of the new water treatment plant, coupled with a prioritization of pipe re-lining/replacement in the most acute areas of town; (3) under both the TA's and Town Accountant's leadership, the Town's financial condition is far better than it has been in decades; (4) the Head Start program, sponsored by the Worcester Community Action Council, has taken over the old Senior Center providing needed care for Webster's little ones; (5) the Town has a truly dedicated Opioid Task Force and we also have the CDU and AIC at Harrington's Webster Campus to help combat and treat the terrible disease of opioid/pain killer addiction; (6) significant improvements made to Memorial Beach, many thanks to our Recreation Director and the folks she works with; (7) increased attention to Main Street, including new businesses and the River Walk; and, (8) a higher level of

volunteerism and enthusiasm towards our Town. These accomplishments and many others are a testament to a very dedicated group of Town employees, my fellow Selectmen and our citizens. Being a Selectman is a role I've been entrusted with and take most seriously. I believe we have an exceptionally dedicated Board of Selectmen that work extremely well with our TA.

My number one concern, in fact the ONLY reason I am seeking a third term, is the potential break down of our Town's positive direction over the past few years through a disruptive change in the Board of Selectmen. I'm a firm believer in the saying attributed to Bert Lance: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it".

We still have much to accomplish, including: (1) continuing our work with the Water/Sewer Commission on replacement/re-lining of the highest priority water pipes in town; (2) continuing the Board of Selectmen's responsibilities of oversight and providing guidance, while rejecting any desire for interference or involvement in the day to day operations of the Town - after all, that's why we hired TA Willardson to run the Town; (3) reviewing what additional Town services can be streamlined and improved; (4) continuing prioritization of capital plans; (5) continuing the focus on Economic Development, including Main Street, North & South Main Streets and the Shaws/Kmart Plaza; and, (6) listening to the concerns of our citizens.

If re-elected, I will continue to take seriously my oversight and guidance role. I will steadfastly do my very best to continue moving Webster forward in the most positive way possible.

Thank you for your consideration,
 Randy Becker

PLEASE VOTE: We'll need to have a really good voter turnout on May 3rd so please remind your friends and family to get out and vote.

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Nichols College names Bryant University provost as its eighth president

DUDLEY – Glenn M. Sulmasy, JD, LL.M., acclaimed international law and national security expert with experience in academics, law, and government service, has been named the eighth president of Nichols College. He succeeds Susan West Engelkemeyer,

Ph.D., who will retire at the end of this academic year following a decade at the helm of Nichols.

Sulmasy comes to Nichols with 24 years in higher education, most recently as provost and chief academic officer of Bryant University. He will

begin his tenure as Nichols president on July 1.

“President-elect Sulmasy brings a distinguished record of administrative leadership and academic achievement to Nichols. He is uniquely qualified to build on the success Nichols has experienced

under President Engelkemeyer’s leadership and drive us further toward a position of greater regional and national prominence,” said John H. Davis ’72, chair of the Nichols College Board of Trustees.

“I am honored to join the Nichols College community as its eighth president,” said Sulmasy. “The Nichols reputation of offering a dynamic and results-oriented business and leadership education has grown measurably stronger under the leadership of President Engelkemeyer and is perfectly positioned to continue its trajectory. I look forward

to working with the Board of Trustees, faculty, and staff to expand opportunities for Nichols students to learn, lead, and succeed...Discere, Duces, Stabit!”

The appointment follows a six-month national search. Davis thanked the Presidential Search Committee, led by Trustee Randy Becker ’83 MBA ’96, for its thorough and collaborative work. “The search for a new president of Nichols College drew an impressive pool of accomplished candidates, and the Committee worked tirelessly and efficiently to narrow the



Glenn M. Sulmasy, JD, LL.M. field, conduct interviews, and recommend the best candidate to the Board of Trustees,” he said.

Sulmasy has served as the number two official of Bryant University since 2015, with primary responsibility for managing undergraduate and graduate academic programs, curriculum, and chairing the Academic Review Board. He oversees more than 1,100 faculty and staff members and an operating budget of \$144 million. During his tenure, he initiated and implemented several academic programs, including a Bachelor of Science in Data Science, a Digital Marketing Program, a fully accredited Physician Assistant Program, a Graduate Certificate in Innovative Health Care Leadership and an online MBA.

He also successfully directed Bryant’s recent reaccreditation by the New England Commission of Higher Education, and 2019 reaccreditation by AACSB International, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. Sulmasy has been a law professor at the U.S. Naval War College and the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, where he led the Department of Humanities, and additionally was a lecturer at the UConn School of Law, Roger Williams Law School, UC Berkeley School of Law, and Harvard University. He is a visiting fellow at George Mason University School of Law.

In addition to lecturing extensively on the law of armed conflict, international law, and national security matters, he is widely published on national security matters, and serves as a subject matter expert/commentator. He has been featured in the Los Angeles Times, on CBS News Radio, National Public Radio, CNN International, US News & World Report, the New York Times, the San Francisco Chronicle, Al-Jazeera America, MSNBC, Fox News, and numerous other national media outlets. He is the author of “The National Security Court System – A Natural Evolution of Justice in an Age of Terror” (2009) and co-editor of “International Law Challenges – Homeland Security and Combating Terrorism” (2005). Sulmasy was educated at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, the University of Baltimore School of Law, UC Berkeley School of Law, and the Harvard Kennedy School.

He and his wife, Marla, have seven children and reside in Old Lyme, Conn.

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First day of spring, first shots hit at Dudley Hill Golf Club

By Rod Lee

As is so typical of New England, one moment winter seems to have a firm grip on the situation and the next players are at the first tee at Dudley Hill Golf Club, which is exactly what transpired the morning of March 20—the first day of spring.

“My wife thinks I’m raking the leaves!” Tim King, who had joined Ed Ohlmeyer and Pedro DeJesus in a threesome, said, to spontaneous laughter all around, with temperatures in the 50s and the sun shining. They were in a jovial mood, with clubs in hand and green acreage stretching before them. The reason for their upbeat attitude was obvious. They were back on the links possibly earlier than they would have thought possible.

Mr. Ohlmeyer had just struck the first shot, a low bullet that carried more than two hundred yards down the left side of the fairway. He seemed pleasantly surprised.

It was Opening Day at Dudley Hill Golf Club, a nine-hole course nestled next to Nichols College, and golfers like Mr. Ohlmeyer and his pals were eager to get back into action.

Clubhouse Manager Jim Siekierski, who was accepting the payment of greens fees through a window of the building, was also upbeat. A friendly man, he has worked at Dudley Hill for sixteen years.

“For this time of year, it’s

drying out quick,” he said. “We just cut the greens. After a week or so they will turn brown but they will come back.

“We’re part of the Tri State Golf Company, with Raceway (in Thompson), which opened last week, and we have a course in Rhode Island, Melody Hill in Chepachet, which also opened last week. We just bought another course, a nine-hole course, in Harrisville, Rhode Island.”

The satisfaction of seeing Dudley Hill being able to begin welcoming golfers two weeks before Easter was apparent in Mr. Siekierski’s comments.

“Last year, we didn’t get going until May 8, because of COVID-19,” he said.

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Again in 2021, precautions are in place. Mr. Siekierski was masked. The clubhouse is closed to foot traffic, as it was in 2020. Whether the kitchen and restaurant will resume operations “is yet to be determined,” he said. “We are selling beer out of the window. You have to have beer on the golf course.” Golf carts are not being used right now, in that the course is still soft and wet. As to ball washers becoming operational soon, that’s a “maybe,” he said.

“With four courses” in its stable, the Tri State Golf Company has “in the neighborhood of five hundred members and with a season pass they can play any one or all of

the four of our courses at any given time,” he said.

Mr. Siekierski said Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont gave golf courses an all-clear to open earlier than those in Massachusetts last year “and half the vehicles were from Massachusetts.”

He is optimistic that 2021 will be better for golfers than 2020 was.

He’s ready. “I’ve had my second (vaccination),” he said.

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



Ed Ohlmeyer, Pedro DeJesus and Tim King on the first tee at Dudley Hill Golf Club on March 20. They are co-workers at IPG in Oxford.

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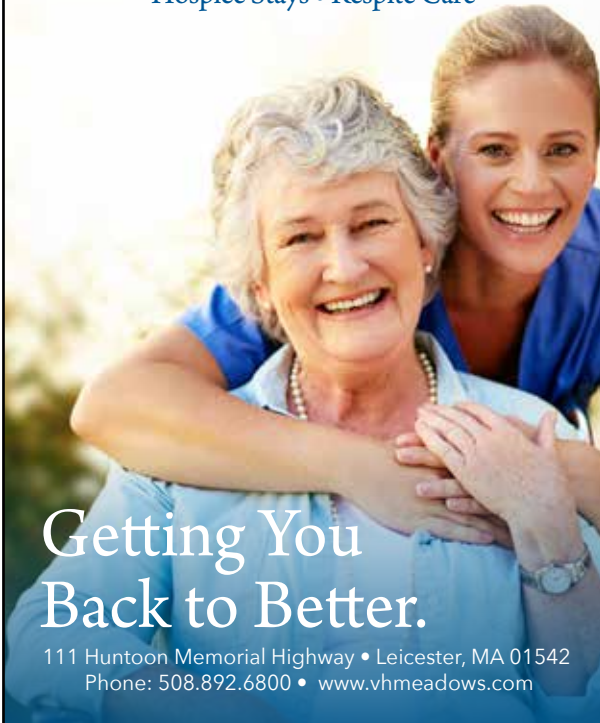
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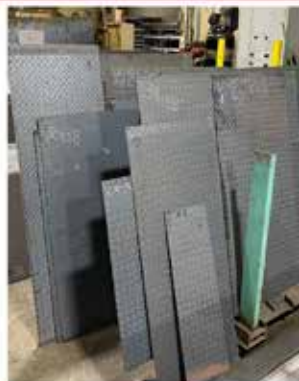


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Rockdale Rug / Curtain Factory Outlet thrive on good old-fashioned customer service

By Janet Stoica

When's the last time you were greeted by name upon entering a retail store? That happens with customers of the Rockdale Rug & Braid Outlet and The Curtain Factory Outlet in the Rockdale section of Northbridge.

You'll be greeted by the most customer-friendly and service-oriented staffs in the area. These two complementary outlets are a true throwback to the days when a smile and great customer service ruled the retail trade.

Ten years ago, sisters Cindy Johnson and Patty Cloutier learned that The Curtain Factory Outlet was about to close its doors.

Patty already ran a successful business in the same building, Bay State Floor Company. She and Cindy had been in retail for most of their working lives and they felt that the well-known curtain outlet would be a natural progression and extension of the soft goods business. The sisters realized that local jobs could be saved as well.

In 1974, when the curtain factory first opened on the ground floor, all its curtains were handmade in the factory above the retail store. Times changed, the factory closed, and the product line was sourced elsewhere.

In 2011, with the impending demise of the well-known New England fixture, Patty Cloutier and Cindy Johnson saw the future and ran with it. Cindy also bought half of Patty's flooring business and opened Rockdale Rug & Braid Outlet.

Cindy knows her inventory and her customers. "Our customers have been indoors for a long time," she said. "They've spent many hours checking out their current furnishings and have decided it's time for some serious refreshing."

Braided rugs are the best

sellers here. "We purchase the majority of our rugs from a family-run company in Rhode Island. Our jute rugs are made in India in the style our customers want. They are low pile and thin which makes them less of a tripping hazard and their weave is tight so pets cannot pull up threads very easily," said Cindy. She also noted that some of their newer indoor/outdoor rectangular rugs are made from recycled water bottles, making them easy to clean by hosing them down outdoors. Very eco-friendly!

Braided rugs have always been popular in New England. They are fashionable and versatile and come in a variety of shapes and sizes. The rectangle shapes must be seen to be truly appreciated. Sizes for the braided rugs run from 2' x 3' up to 10' x 13'. Shapes include ovals, rounds, runners, and rectangles. The jute fiber rugs' sizes include 20" x 30" to 8' x 10'. Braided rug fiber choices vary from wool to nylon to polypropylene with looks that include traditional, transitional, and modern. Stair runners are available in any length and can be matched to area rugs for complete re-decorating harmony.

Oriental rugs are also part of their inventory. Many other products to complete a stylish makeover can be seen here, as well such as fascinating plug-in canvas wall art depicting cozy homes with their evening windows lit and even antique trucks with their headlights aglow sitting quietly in a barn's front yard.

"There's a little bit of everything for everybody's taste," says Cindy. "We have little rugs and mats for pet owners with the cutest of sayings on them, table rugs, braided trivets, night lights, and braided baskets. Faux animal-hide printed rugs are

popular right now; we have some very unusual designs. With Mother's Day coming up we've brought in some special towels and candles with beautiful designs and expressions.

"In these times where lots of companies have gone out of business, I'm so very thankful that we are doing as well as we are," she says. "We have a nice group of employees here who enjoy helping all our customers. And my husband, Alan, has just been great. He's done a lot of work here to make the store look as good as it does. I've driven out to elderly customer's homes, who can't get out, to make deliveries to them. It's just old-fashioned customer service. We want people to feel comfortable and happy that they're being helped."

Patty manages The Curtain Factory Outlet. "It's groups of ladies that I see here most often," she says. "It's like a family outing and we love to see them. They give each other decorating ideas and advice as they shop the aisles. With our on-line ordering we do sell all over New England and ship throughout the country." And, like her sister states, Patty is strongly focused on customer service. "We also emphasize that the majority of our products are made in the USA," says Patty, "and we proudly feature this in our advertising."

A large part of the store's business during COVID has been online. The Outlet specializes in custom window treatments: shades, vertical blinds, and wooden shutters. Their custom blinds are the Graber brand, and they will custom-fit to order. Patty recently measured for over 100 units of custom blinds for a newly-constructed building in Worcester. Estimates are always no-charge. In addition to curtain valanc-

es, tiers, and panels, the Outlet has shower curtains and draperies on display, along with a full range of hardware and custom accessories. There are over 450 displays of curtains in the store along with a craft department that includes country crafts, home décor, and floral arrangements.

They accept all major credit cards and have a generous return policy.

"Customer service is our Number One priority," says Patty.

With a large product selection, the shop draws customers from all of Worcester County and Rhode Island as well as from the Natick/Framingham area.

Rockdale Rug & Braid Outlet, The Curtain Factory Outlet are at 8-10 Sutton Street, Northbridge, Rockdale Rug phone: (508) 234-2882; Curtain Factory phone: (508) 234-2944. Hours: Wed-Sat 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. or by appointment.

www.rockdalerugandbraid.com FB: www.facebook.com/rockdalerug
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Patty Cloutier and Cindy Johnson.



Rockdale owner, Cindy Johnson, with staff: Kristi Secor and Sue Boudreau.



Curtain Factory Outlet owner, Patty Cloutier, with staff: Joan Nydam, Heather Dejordy, Kathy Oosterman, Penny Francisco, and Lynn Patton.

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Programs and events at the Pearle

The Pearle L. Crawford (Dudley) Library, 40 Schofield Avenue, Dudley, invites all to join them at their virtual programs at the Pearle. To register go to www.crawfordlibrary.org or call 508-949-8021.

Storytime on Facebook Live, Wednesdays at noon. Join Miss Lida for a live storytime on Facebook, every Wednesday at noon, and then stop by the library for a free take-and-make craft kit. No Facebook account is needed for this free program. Just point your browser to <https://www.facebook.com/crawfordlibrary> to access the video. Can't tune in at noon? Recordings of each week's storytime are available on the Facebook page beginning Wednesday afternoon.

Music and movement, first Friday of every month at 11 a.m. Join Deb Hudgins on Facebook for Music and Movement, one of our most popular programs. Nothing gets kids on their feet and having fun quite like songs, dance and silly stories, and Miss Deb has been. No Facebook account is needed for this free program. Just point your browser to <https://www.facebook.com/crawfordlibrary> to access the video.

Seed exchange throughout the month of April. Have

leftover tomato seeds you don't know what to do with? Want to try growing flowers? Changed your mind about that kind of squash? The Pearle is hosting a seed exchange during the month of April – take some seeds to try, leave the seeds you don't need, and get gardening, just in time for Earth Day. Exchange boxes will be placed in the library and all are welcome to contribute flower or vegetable seeds or take some seeds for growing in your own garden.

Make a mini garden, Friday, April 23 (multiple sessions for tweens, teens, and adults). A terrarium is like an aquarium, but for plants instead of fish. It is made in just about any glass container. It is planted to look like a miniature garden or forest enclosed in its own little world. You can easily make a beautiful terrarium yourself. Please bring your own glass container. We will have some to choose from as well.

This activity will take place outside in the side parking lot. We will be roping off a safe area. We will have tables set up 6 ft. apart and only five children per session. We will be disinfecting between sessions. Free; registration is required. Sponsored by the Hugh W. and Harriet K. Crawford Endowment.

A celebration of women composers, Thursday, May 6 6-7:30 p.m. Historian Jeffrey Engel will highlight the lives and the music of several distinguished female composers/concert pianists who attained recognition and success during the nineteenth century in this Zoom program. There have always been women composers. As far back as the seventh century BC, Sappho, the Greek lyric poetess, played her own accompaniments on the barbiton and the pettis. Throughout the twelfth century there were female troubadours and during the sixteenth, madrigal composers. Francesca Caccini (1587-1638) is thought to be the first woman to write an opera and Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre (1663-1729), the author of an early ballet. It is not until the end of the nineteenth century, however, that significantly more women begin to enjoy public performances of their music and become professional composers. Perhaps you've heard of Teresa Carreno, Sophie Menter and Clara Schumann? Free; registration is required. Participants will receive a link to the Zoom meeting 24 hours before the event. Sponsored by the Hugh W. and Harriet K. Crawford Endowment.

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218 Worcester St., Grafton

or



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Winners will be chosen at random and posted on facebook.com on May 21.*



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WLL thanks to sponsors

Webster Little League would like to thank **Webster First Federal Credit Union** for their recent donation of an unprecedented \$4000, the largest single donation in our league's 50+ year history. For many of those years Webster First has been one of our annual "team sponsors," which consists of a \$250 donation. Due to the lost income from a shortened and modified 2020 season, some off-season damages that occurred at our fields and some much needed updates, we have begun to offer additional sponsorship opportunities.

We are offering outfield banners for \$350, dugout sponsorships for \$700 and special project sponsorships such as clubhouse improvements starting at \$1000.

Several businesses have "stepped to the plate" and helped out but Webster First clearly went above and beyond. Information about our league and additional sponsorship opportunities can be found at WebsterLittleLeague.com as well as a complete list of our sponsors whom we rely on to keep the kids of Webster playing baseball in a fun, competitive and low cost program.

Along with our biggest sponsor this year, Webster First Federal Credit Union, we would also like to take this opportunity to thank additional project sponsors **Donovan Logistics, Barry Equipment and Rampco**; and field sponsors **TD Bank, Nipmuc/Ted's Package, Lakeside Masonry & Remodeling and East Coast Metal Roofing**. Thank you for your time.

WLL Board of Directors

WCAC Head Start now enrolling; openings available for early education and care for birth to age five

SOUTHBRIDGE/WEBSTER - Worcester Community Action Council's Head Start program is actively recruiting with enrollment now available for fall 2021 for children birth to age five. The center based preschool program for ages 3-5 is available in Southbridge and Webster, while a home based program serves expectant mothers and children from birth to age three.

Head Start offers a dynamic program to get young children ready for kindergarten, with a strong focus on language, literacy, social and emotional development. Breakfast, lunch and a healthy snack are served daily, with both full-

day and half-day, year-round and school-year classrooms available. WCAC operates a total of ten classrooms - six located at 25 Cole Avenue in Southbridge and four at 116 School Street in Webster. All classrooms are nationally accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), with services provided at no charge to families meeting income-eligible guidelines.

The Early Head Start program provides comprehensive services within a family's home with developmentally appropriate activities, weekly home visits and group socializations to ensure a baby is achieving milestones. With a focus on involving the parent or the primary care giver in the education of their child, weekly home visits provide the opportunity for parenting support, education as well as community referrals. Early Intervention services are provided when needed.

WCAC Executive Director Marybeth Campbell noted that the agency has been operating Head Start programs in southern Worcester County for more than a quarter of a century. "WCAC has a long history of providing high quality education and care for children and families. While many aspects of life remain uncertain due to the ongoing

pandemic, we want the community - particularly families with age-eligible children - to know that we stand ready to continue to provide a dynamic curriculum wrapped in supportive and caring services, in a safe and nurturing environment," Campbell said.

WCAC Head Start Co-Director Kathleen Dow said, "WCAC Head Start and Early Head Start is a unique comprehensive, all-inclusive early education and care program, which offers meals, health and developmental screenings, referrals for special education services and family support from prenatal to Kindergarten. We support families to reach for their own individual goals and achieve success."

WCAC's early education and care programs are presently operating at a reduced capacity for social distancing purposes and in adherence to all public health and safety guidelines. Forced to close in March 2020 when the COVID19 pandemic first struck, WCAC's classrooms reopened in June and have



been serving approximately 100 children ever since. Dependent upon the state's ever changing Early Education and Care guidelines, WCAC hopes to return closer to its licensed capacity of 203 come fall.

WCAC's program openings are available for income eligible families residing in Brookfield, Charlton, Douglas, Dudley, E. Brookfield, Leicester Millbury, Oxford, Spencer, Southbridge, Sturbridge, Warren, and Webster. WCAC's early education and care programs are licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care and accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

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www.WCAC.net/Head-Start

WCAC Head Start and Early Head Start do not discriminate in their hiring and personnel procedures against any applicant, employee or potential/participating client based on religion, race, reed, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.

AHM brings story of armor, tanks, war and history to life

By Rod Lee

Proud as members of the Collings Foundation family are about the impressive array of tanks, armor and military apparatus that has been assembled at the American Heritage Museum in Stow, the real satisfaction for them comes in knowing the people and the history behind the exhibits and the stories of battles from the Revolutionary War to the present day.

Jacques M. Littlefield is one of those individuals whose name will be permanently associated with the American Heritage Museum.

As Hunter Chaney, who is director of marketing for the AHM, explained on March 24, while giving a visitor a guided tour of the more than 65,000-square-foot building, the Museum came into being only after the Collings Foundation was selected to receive "The Jacques M. Littlefield Collection" in 2013.

Mr. Littlefield, from the San Jose area of California, had "amassed the largest privately held collection of tanks and military equipment" in existence, Mr. Chaney said. He died of pancreatic cancer in 2009. "In 2013, his foundation and family chose us to get the collection, which consisted of two hundred forty tanks and armored vehicles. Duplicates and extras were auctioned off. We received the rest. The proceeds from the sale went toward funding this museum."

The American Heritage Museum sits at the terminus of a long and winding road off Main St. (MA 62) on the Hudson/Stow town line, in a pastoral setting that seems incongruous with such displays as the "WWI Trench Experience," "Clash of Steel" and "War on Terror." Mr. Chaney said the museum began as "living history events, ice skating festivals, sleigh rides and

classic car rallies" but is now "actually three museums" with a hangar and a classic car barn—and there is "a 2200-foot airstrip in back."

The Collings Foundation was started in 1979 by Bob and Caroline Collings, who still live "on the other end of the property," Mr. Chaney said. Their son, Rob, is now executive director of the Foundation.

As the Collings family notes in a brochure, the AHM was designed "to fully engage people in understanding our turbulent past. In this remarkable place, American history will be explored, studied and, most of all, remembered. Through educational interpretation and a chronologically arranged series of dioramas and exhibits, the AHM brings the history of our veterans to life."

Unfortunately, Nathan Hall, driver of the M1A1 Abrams "White 2" tank in Iraq, is, like Mr. Littlefield, no longer with us. Mr. Hall died from a blood clot during his battle with leukemia on March 2. But before his passing Mr. Hall was able to see the restored M1A1 again, on the floor of the AHM—and to lend a poignant element to that moment.

The tank was on patrol near Falluja on August 3, 2006, when an IED blew up. Shrapnel damaged the tank and killed its highly respected

commander, Sgt. George Ulloa Jr. The American Heritage Museum received the Abrams tank on a long-term loan from the Marine Corps Museum, tracked down the surviving crew and invited the crew and Sgt. Ulloa's widow Maria Ulloa to Stow, where a heart-wrenching video of their ordeal was recorded in front of the Abrams.

It was during this visit that Nathan Hall mentioned to Bob Collings that "something was missing." When he and his crew were assigned to the tank, he pointed out, he christened it with the name "SPAWN" on the barrel with colored pens. In a Facebook post announcing Nathan Hall's death, the AHM said Mr. Collings responded "you put it on the first time, there is no one more qualified to put it on again!"

Returning two weeks later with his wife and young daughter, Nathan stayed late into the night and with Rob Collings looking on, he recreated the artwork with Sharpies.

Both Nathan and Nick Johns ("White 2" loader) came to the grand opening of the museum in May of 2019. "Nathan was so excited that he could not sleep," the AHM said on Facebook. "He told us the flight was delayed and he was crawling out of his skin just to get here... such a change from the tough Marine who was full of pain



The display that greets visitors when they arrive at the American Heritage Museum in Stow.

and tears on his first visit. Other veterans have told us of the therapeutic nature of the AHM, but it has never been so apparent to us as with Nathan. Unfortunately, that was the last visit Nathan had to the AHM as [his] health struggles started shortly after that."

Mr. Chaney said a memorial for Nathan Hall will be held in August "with family and crew" present.

Its activities curtailed by the pandemic, the American Heritage Museum is "chafing at the bit" to return to its regular programming, which involves a host of events for adults and children alike. Recently, for in-

stance, the museum sponsored "the Ultimate WWII Tank Driving Experience," a sweepstakes fundraiser with the winner and a guest drawn on March 31. The prize: a chance to drive "the M24 Chaffee, M4 Sherman and ultra-rare M26 Pershing." The goal of the campaign was to raise \$100,000. "We're at \$97,000 and hoping to break \$100,000," Mr. Chaney said.

"Like all museums, the revenue faucet has shut off so this is a great way to raise money," he said.

A walkthrough of the museum is truly mesmerizing with film and sound effects provided by Boston Productions Inc.

Theater 2, the WWI Trench Experience, for example, features sleeping quarters, bombs, vibrations, flashes, barbed wire, pickaxes and helmets. It is an interactive experience.

"This museum as a whole is unique on a global scale," Mr. Chaney said. "Some of the artifacts are all that are left in the world."

The American Heritage Museum is open Wednesday-Sunday. For more information, go to AmericanHeritageMuseum.org or call 978-562-9182.

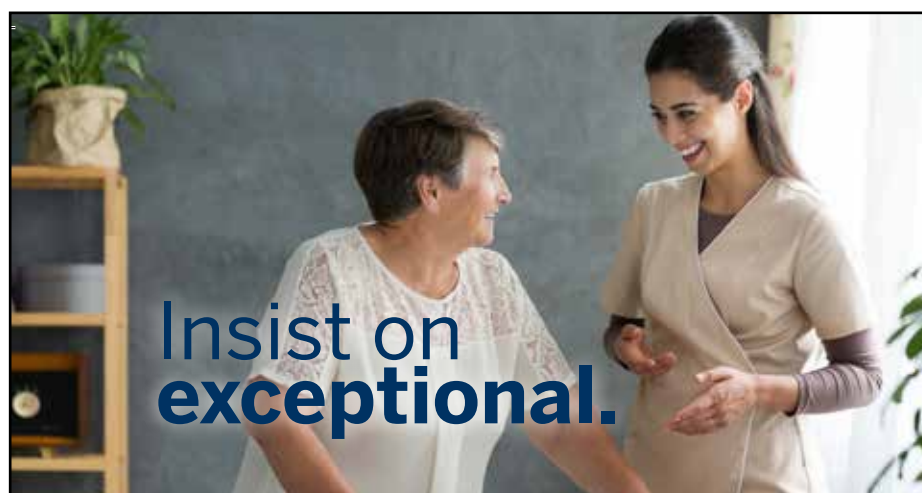
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Classes available through Auburn Recreation and Culture

AUBURN - The Recreation and Culture program has put together three classes that are available this spring.

Pop Pilates

Pop Pilates is a 55 minute Pilates inspired class that goes along to the beat of the music also known as a dance on the mat. Using only your body weight you will work your core, upper body, lower body, cardio and stretching

for flexibility. All movements have modifications, which makes this class inclusive to all fitness levels. The class is ongoing now on Mondays and Thursdays outside at Dr. Arthur and Dr. Martha Pappas Recreation Complex at Riley performance pavilion at 5:30 p.m. The cost is \$8 drop in, checks, payable to Town of Auburn. Please bring a mat and water. Pre-registration

is required and payment info contact kpappas@town.auburn.ma.us, 508-832-7736 or 508-755-3291.

Yoga

Yoga weekday mornings starting April 27, Tuesdays and Fridays 9:30- 10:30 a.m. at the Dr. Arthur and Dr. Martha Pappas Recreation Complex, 203.5 Pakachoag Street. Five weeks, two classes a week \$50 or drop in \$8, pre registra-

tion required. Please email or call Kpappas@town.auburn.ma.us, 508-755-3291.

Lesley Davis has been a certified yoga instructor for over six years and has been practicing for the past 15. She most recently taught at Auburn Yoga and Pilates and currently teaches at Whitinsville Community Center. Class will be suitable for all levels, whether you are new to yoga or have been practicing for a while. Bring a mat and some water, and a desire to move.

Zumba

Auburn Recreation and Culture is excited to offer Zumba which started on April 7, held on Wednesdays, 5:30- 6:30 p.m. at

the Dr. Arthur and Dr. Martha Pappas Recreation Complex, 203.5 Pakachoag Street.

Drop in \$8, pre registration required. Please email or call Kpappas@town.auburn.ma.us /508-755-3291.

Instructor is Amy LeClaire. Amy has been teaching Zumba for the town of Auburn (Impact Fitness and Auburn Recreation Department) since 2018. Her classes boast a range of ages and fitness levels, and are marked by numerous years of dance experience (Sally McDermott Dance Studios of Auburn), innovative fitness routines, and extensive education. She holds a Masters of Education

in Creative Arts from Lesley University, where she specialized in choreography and Creative Movement. Whether trying Amy's Zumba class as a first-timer or working out as a veteran student; members typically leave class feeling energized, fit, and successful. Amy also works as a professional writer for the Yankee Xpress / Blackstone Valley Xpress publications, where she authors the widely read dog column, *Living with Lincoln*, along with promotional and human-interest stories. Amy has her BS in Ed -Elementary Education MS in Ed - Curriculum and Instruction: Creative Arts in Learning.

Accord Adult Day Center provides welcome relief to family caregivers

By Janet Stoica

Taking care of our families is paramount to so many of us. Taking care of our children is the first priority, but when our parents require care and socialization there is no better place to choose than a facility like Accord Adult Day Center in Webster.

If you have ever been in a position where an adult family member requires your full-time attention, you quickly realize that you alone cannot provide all that is needed for their physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

I write from personal experience. My dear mother entered her older life's circumstances requiring more care than I could possibly provide for her. The energy required from a caregiver to provide that extra level of support is so very draining, mentally and physically. But with the guidance and assistance of an adult day health service provider, she received a full day's worth of socialization and activity. It was as if a huge weight had been lifted from my shoulders.

Accord Adult Day Center is open Monday - Saturday from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. to provide the most essential services for a loved one's care. It's a true respite for both the adult who requires care and the caregiver. Transportation for Accord's adults is provided

roundtrip if necessary. Activities and sustenance are part of their daily schedule.

According to Joe Rizzo, owner and executive director of Accord, "We're here to assist our families and our participants, striving to provide a good quality of life to the communities we serve. Our participants come from Auburn, Charlton, Douglas, Dudley, Northbridge, Oxford, Southbridge, Sturbridge, Spencer, Sutton, Uxbridge, and Webster, well as Thompson and Putnam in Connecticut. Typical costs at Accord average about \$10/hour versus the \$30/hour charged by home care organizations."

"Families know that we keep their members safe and the socialization component is a huge part of what we offer. Sitting at home watching TV is not socialization," said Mr. Rizzo. "We provide group interaction, utilizing gross motor and cognitive activities. Our clients have told us this is a club-like atmosphere where they feel a sense of belonging and camaraderie. They come here to make friends and to have their needs addressed with dignity and privacy."

Accord's staff consists of nurses, certified nursing assistants, social workers, and activity personnel. They follow all COVID guidelines, such as 6-foot distancing, mask re-

quirements, and adherence to strict cleaning and sanitation standards. Accord also recently installed a total building UV air purification system to improve air quality.

Transportation vans are equipped with HEPA air filtration systems and passengers are safely separated during their trips from home to Webster and back. One hundred percent of the staff have received their COVID vaccinations and 90% of their clients have received at least one of their COVID vaccinations.

"We work to address everyone's needs," stated Mr. Rizzo. "Our goal is to expand our services to meet the needs of the communities we serve. We've provided remote services during the COVID pandemic which were designed to check in on participants ensuring that food, care, and support systems were available in the home along with remote activities, but we realized that our clients preferred group settings. Our clients are looking forward to outdoor garden activities as well as sitting out in the pavilion. It'll be great to re-engage people and get back to our previous routines."

Accord is a locked and secure facility, adding to a family's peace-of-mind once their relative becomes an Accord client. Participants are provided light breakfasts consisting of cereal, toast, fruit, juices, and tea or coffee; snacks of parfaits, yogurts, cheeses, and crackers; and lunches that include an entrée, vegetables, dessert, and beverages. The menus adhere to USDA Food Program Guidelines, are nutritious, and cater to specific nutritional needs.

"We have to be flexible and adjust to our community's needs," said Mr. Rizzo. "There were about 25 facilities like ours across Massachu-



Daily exercise and a variety of activities to provide a good quality of life for participants.

setts that closed during COVID and won't be re-opening. We accept most third-party insurances like MassHealth, Fallon Navicare, Commonwealth Care Alliance, Tri-Valley, Tufts, United Health, as well as Connecticut Community and Senior Resources Care. Our nurses and social workers will assess and develop an individualized care plan to address their needs. Everyone has different situations and health care needs. We will assist and provide direction and information.

"Having a family member remain in their home and in their community is very important. We advise many families not to wait until it's too

late to have their parent, aunt, uncle, or other elderly family member join our program. We're here to help guide you in the right direction. We have so many participants who truly look forward to coming here. They seek out their new friends and look forward to the activities. It's very heartwarming to see the friendships that have developed. This certainly wouldn't happen if they were home by themselves."

Joe Rizzo is also president of the Massachusetts Adult Day Health Services Association ("MADSA"), which represents 120 adult day programs, their participants, and caregivers. He holds an MBA

as well as a Bachelor's Degree in Health Care Administration and is a licensed nursing home administrator.

"Accord means agreement," said Mr. Rizzo, "a partnership between our families and our organization. Our objective is to provide a comfortable and safe place for your loved one. We give the caregiver time to recharge their batteries. Caring for a family member is draining, physically and mentally. We want to make life easier."

Accord Adult Day Center is at 10 Cudworth Road in Webster. Phone: (508) 949-3598. Hours: 8-4 p.m., Mon-Sat. www.accorddaycenter.com Find them on Facebook.



Participants cheer on their friends in bowling.

Community yard sale - spaces available

AUBURN— Spring cleaning? Don't throw that good "stuff" away. Recycle it by selling it to someone who needs it. Do you have an accumulation of things that are too good to throw away but you no longer need? Don't have enough to hold your own yard sale? Join us on the lawn of the First Congregational Church, Saturday, June 12, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., for our annual Community Yard Sale/Plant Sale. This is a rain or shine event.

After having to cancel the 2020 yard sale we are excited to say we are back for this year. Because we have all been so restricted in what we could do this past year we anticipate even more people setting up to sell their "treasures" as well as a larger turnout of people looking for that special bargain or those out to get a feel for a return of normalcy. Masks will be required and all COVID guidelines will be enforced.

We also will be having our Plant Sale. There will be a large selection of annuals and perennials. Those who have been buying plants from us return year after year and see how each year we have more and more to offer. This year should be no different.

Spaces are available for a \$25.00 fee; a limited number of tables may be rented for \$5.00 each. We'll do all the advertising, both print and digital, and will post plenty of signs the day of the event at key locations in town. Depending on the COVID restrictions in place at the time we hope to have coffee and pastries, and hot dogs and soda available for sale.

Due to our central location and previous yard sales (26), we expect a large turnout. Don't delay, reserve your space now by calling Cindy Dube at 508-832-6646, please leave message, or the church office at 508-832-2845. You may also text 774-238-0260.

- Cindy Dube



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<h2 style="color: blue; font-size: 2em;">MATTRESS SALE!</h2> <p>TWIN: Reg. \$299 NOW \$179.99 FULL: Reg. \$499 NOW \$259.99 QUEEN: Reg. \$599 NOW \$289.99</p>	<h2 style="font-size: 2em;">1000s OF APPLIANCES</h2> <p style="font-size: 1.5em;">IN STOCK FOR PICKUP OR DELIVERY</p>		<h2 style="font-size: 2em;">GRILL SALE</h2>																									
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Ages: 6-12 \$19.95
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St. Andrew Bobola Parish Yard Sale

On Saturday, April 24, St. Andrew Bobola Parish, 54 West Main St., Dudley, will resume its annual spring yard sale from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the church's rear parking lot. Household items, yard accessories, seasonal decorations and much more, good 'useable' items: all available at bargain prices. As you drive in the normal entry driveway to the church, please park in the designated area at the rear of the lot. Then walk thru the

tables following the marked arrows on the pavement as indicated, keeping in a single file as you proceed. Masks must be worn and social distancing protocol must be followed. Once you have left the cash-out table, please proceed to exit in your car thru the normal exit driveway. (Rain date: Saturday, May 1). Thank you in advance for helping our little parish rebound. May many blessings be bestowed upon you.

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Land o Lakes pre-sliced Am. cheese.....	\$5.99/lb
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Mother's Day

SUNDAY MAY 9, 2021



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*Cedar Street Grille,
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Cedar Street Grille will open at 10am and will feature their unique brunch menu all day plus some great Mother's Day specials. The Duck will open at 11am and will be offering a fantastic holiday prix-fixe menu for \$39.95. Make your reservations now by calling The Duck at 508-347-2321 or Cedar Street Grille at 508-347-5800.

*Take-Home
Mother's Day Meals*

If you prefer to enjoy a Mother's Day meal at home, we are offering an online pre-ordering menu where you can select your favorite items and a pick-up time for Mother's Day. Visit the restaurants' websites to view Mother's Day menus and pre-order, or call the restaurant directly to place your order.

*Visit the restaurants' websites to view menus and see some great options to treat Mom on her special day.
Vegetarian entrées and gluten-free options*



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Sunday 9:00-10:00 am	Gambler's Anonymous
Tuesday 5:00-6:30 pm	Sober Hikes (locations vary weekly—check FB page for details)
Tuesday 7:00-8:00 pm	Recovery Bible Study
Tuesday 8:15-9:15 pm	All Recovery Meeting
Wednesday 6:30-8:00 pm	Recovery Yoga
Thursday 6:00 pm-6:45 pm	Workout with Rachel Adams at Fitforyou Studio
Thursday 7:00-8:00 pm	Loved Ones Support Group
Friday 6:00-7:00 pm	Recovery Art class
Friday 8:00-9:00 pm	"Vision of Hope"—NA mtg.
Saturday 7:00-8:30 pm	Music in Recovery

All of our activities are free of charge. Just need to talk with someone about your recovery or that of a loved one? Call Pastor Janice (PJ) at 508-330-8073. She can meet with you in person or by phone or arrange for you to speak with a peer recovery coach. Never hesitate to reach out!

Like us on Facebook at Opening the Word Webster, and check out our website www.openingthewordwebster.com Email us at pj@openingthewordwebster@gmail.com

Prescription drug take-back event

On Saturday, April 24th from 9 am to 1:00 pm, the Dudley Police Department and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) will conduct another prescription drug "Take Back" event. The public can safely dispose of expired, unused, and unwanted prescription drugs. The service is free and anonymous. During our previous events, large quantities of prescription medications were taken in. Several communities in our area will also be participating in this event. If you are not from Dudley, check with your local police for a participating location near you. I encourage everyone to mark their calendars and take advantage of this opportunity.

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Webster Republican Town Committee reorganizing

The Webster Republican Town Committee is re-organizing after 2 years of "inactive status."

If you are interested in being a part of the Republican Town Committee or would like more information, contact Linda at 508-949-1218 or email linpaqu@hotmail.com

"We are social distant compliant" for the health of everyone.

Dinner or Lunch 50% off

Buy any lunch or dinner, get 50% off the 2nd lunch or dinner of equal or lesser value with beverages purchased. Dine in only, 1 per table/party. Not combinable with other offers or specials. Not valid on Cinco De Mayo, May 5. Offer expires 5-31-21.

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2 LBS. HAMBURG OR
2 LBS. STEW BEEF
1 LB. HOT DOGS OR 1 LB. BACON
2 LBS. NEW YORK SIRLOIN STEAK OR
3 LBS. HAM STEAKS
2 WHOLE OR CUT UP CHICKENS
(AVG. WEIGHT 3 LB. EACH) OR
3 LBS. PORK CHOPS

B - \$50.00

3 LBS. BONELESS CHICKEN BREAST OR
1 PKG. (1½ LBS.) MARINATED
CHICKEN BREAST
2 LBS. HAMBURG OR
3 LB. GROUND TURKEY
3 LBS. PORK CHOPS OR
2 LBS. HAM STEAKS
1 WHOLE OR CUT-UP CHICKEN (3 LBS.)
OR 1 PKG. SAUSAGE OF YOUR CHOICE
1 LB. BACON OR STEW BEEF

\$75.00

5 LBS. CHICKEN LEG QUARTERS OR
1 LB. BACON
3 LBS. HAMBURG OR
3 LBS. STEW BEEF
2 LBS. LONDON BROIL STEAKS OR
2 LBS. NEW YORK SIRLOIN STEAKS
3 LBS. BEEF POT ROAST OR
3 LBS. BONELESS PORK ROAST
3 LBS. BONELESS CHICKEN BREAST OR
1 PKG. (1½ LBS.) MARINATED
CHICKEN BREAST OF YOUR CHOICE
OR 1 LB. SAUSAGE OF YOUR CHOICE

\$100.00

5 LBS. BONELESS CHICKEN BREAST OR
3 LBS. BEEF POT ROAST
4 LBS. CHICKEN LEG QTRS. OR 1 LB. BACON
3 LBS. BONELESS PORK ROAST OR
2 LB. NEW YORK SIRLOIN STEAK
1½ LBS. SIRLOIN TIPS OR 3 LBS. PORK CHOPS
3 LBS. HAMBURG OR 1 PKG. (1½ LBS.)
MARINATED SIRLOIN TIPS OF YOUR CHOICE
2 WHOLE OR CUT-UP CHICKENS
(6 LBS. TOTAL) OR 1 PKG. (1½ LBS.)
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OF YOUR CHOICE
1 LB. SAUSAGE OF YOUR CHOICE OR
1 LB. HOT DOGS
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2 LBS. STEW BEEF

Happy Mother's Day



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Sat. 9am-4pm





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Mexican Cantina

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Sunday, May 9



Full Dinner
Menu for
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Serving Noon to 7 p.m.

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May 5



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Mother's Day Favorites

- *Prime Rib Au Jus
- *Baked Stuffed Shrimp (four crab stuffed jumbo shrimp)
- Choice New York Sirloin Strip
- Baked Stuffed Haddock (Fins crabmeat stuffing)
- and more....

*Can be served as a children's portion for half the price. Must be 12 years or younger.

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Living with Lincoln

Day Old Cheese

By Amy Palumbo-LeClaire

The cat is out of the bag. I'd do almost anything for my dog. Even if that means hustling a slice of cheese for him. Here's the story.

Lincoln has been on a strict diet due to a few senior issues, along with a firm desire to offer him the very best nutrition amid his golden years. He's made it to the final stretch. A bad habit needed to go.

Dunkin's Munchkins.

I cannot possibly put a price tag on the joy accrued from countless Dunkin' Donuts Drive Thru runs over the last ten years. In Pavlovian fashion, Lincoln came to associate the entire Dunkin' Donuts experience with pure joy. He learned the physics of my Honda Pilot while it rounded the drive-through, the peculiar way in which a square box speaks, and the sweetened scent of the air while, head-out-window, he sniffed and salivated. Every moment became one step closer to the blessed window, where kind people wearing brown and pink passed out small, edible balls. He studied these people over and over again, fixing his eyes on their hands from the vantage point of the opened back seat window. His chunky smile puffed to the very sight of them until—suddenly—the

people appeared before his very eyes.

"Oh my gosh that is the cutest dog I've ever seen!! Can he have a munchkin?"

"The driver in the car behind you wants to pay for your coffee."

"Do you mind if I post your dog on my Snapchat?"

Lincoln became a Dunkin' celebrity, the doggie in the window who cost nothing to flirt with. Shamelessly, he lapped up every handout

"There's jelly in this ball!" He could barely hold back his joy for the donut holes and held me accountable for extras given. "Not to be a nudge, but I saw the Person place a tire-shaped ball in the bag."

He stood formidable, propped like a Security Guard on the console, a spot of jelly at his nostril while he held me hostage at the wheel. "Lincoln. Go sit down, please."

I had created a monster. "Is this what heaven feels like?" Yet it was a happy monster. He inhaled crumbs from cracks between the leather seats and stalked wedges of donut beneath them. Like a drunken toddler, Lincoln was high on Dunkin's munchkins. I needed to act fast, and help him attach "an experience" to a Dunkin' run, not a donut hole. A clean diet had already made a significant impact on his health. His golden years were becoming brighter. He needed to stay the course. But how?

"Can my dog have a slice of day-old cheese, please?" I spat a tried solution from the passenger side of my husband's

Infiniti one day. "Day old cheese?" A rash climbed his neck. "You can't just ask them to give you a slice of cheese!" He chided me with authority.

"Don't be ridiculous." I puffed. "They're a billion-dollar conglomerate. Our dog may not be alive tomorrow and you're worried about them losing a few pennies." Lincoln narrowed his eyes to the conversation. "I bet they throw away day old cheese anyway." His blonde lashes still, he transcribed the braille of our conversation with intellect. "Wah, wah, wah, wah, wah. Cheese. Wah, wah, wah-wahanna. Cheese. Wah-nanna. Cheese."

Shhh. Lincoln shuffled back to the window. The kind person was on her way back. He sat politely and broke into smile, a twinkle in his eye. We shut up.

"You're such a good dog! Here you go!"

He took.

The people dressed in brown and pink had so many reasons to say no:

"We don't give away cheese."

"The practice is not sanitary."

"Giving away cheese is against policy."

"You need to pay for what you take home here."

Instead, the kind hearts of Dunkin' Donuts enabled a troubling sense of entitlement.

"Oh my gosh – look at him! Can he have two slices?"

"He is the cutest."

"I've read his column! One more slice for Lincoln!"

They passed the cheese.

Lincoln licked his choppers.

We drove away in silence. I couldn't help but reflect on my behavior. Had I committed a small crime? A spot of guilt poked at my conscience while I fastened my seatbelt and thought harder. How inappropriate was my request? Like the warm scent of buttercrunch, the truth came to me. I was able to trace my behavior back to my ancestry.

Nana!

My late grandmother, Madeleine Stelluti-Palumbo, an Italian immigrant, was a phenomenal cook. She was also fanatical about ensuring that not a morsel would go to waste. She would find a snip of arugula and turn it into a stew. Or whip up a frittata using overripe peppers and a few eggs. She would even napkin-wrap slices of bread taken from restaurant tables, and stow them away in her purse. "Me save," she'd say.

Deep down, was saving cheese in my DNA?



Happy with how the moment has unfolded.



Lincoln gobbles up a slice of Day Old cheese

My gaze settled on Lincoln. He laid comfortably in the back seat and licked his leonine paws, thoroughly satisfied with how the day had unfolded. Then, at random, he lifted his big head, stared at me, and broke into an easy smile.

"Good boy, Lincoln."

If loving my dog too much is a crime, I'll have to plead guilty.

Tell me your dog story. Write to Amy at amyclair@hotmai.com

National poetry month celebration at Booklovers' Gourmet

April 1-30, "Nate's Great Adventures," photography by David Niles will be on display and for sale at Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 East Main Street, Webster. Gallery open Tuesday-Saturday 10-5. For more information call 508-949-6232 or email deb@booklovers-gourmet.com

David Niles is a photographer, graphic designer and videographer living in Paxton, Mass. with his artist wife Jen (www.JenNilesArt.com) and his son Nathaniel. A graduate of Rhode Island School of Design, he has exhibited his photographs throughout New England and worked as a freelance photographer for news outlets, magazines and commercial clients.

Several years ago, David began photographing his son, creating playful environments that portray a child's creative and limitless inner world. "Nathaniel walks around in a bubble of imagination," a close friend once observed. This imagination has always been present for Nathaniel, helping him navigate the fictional and real landscapes of his life,

discovering and creating new ones every day.

Celebrate National Poetry Month and Independent Bookstore Day with Poetry hors d'oeuvres at Booklovers' Gourmet, April 24, 2:00 p.m. Free, reservations are requested. RSVP to deb@booklovers-gourmet.com or 508-949-6232.

Three Worcester poets join Booklovers' Gourmet in celebrating Independent Bookstore Day and the last weekend of National Poetry Month. Curt Curtin, Judith Ferrara and John Gaumond will each share a few small bites of poetry from their respective works and will join other patrons in festivities to honor Independent Bookstore Day.

Independent Bookstore Day is a one-day national party that takes place at indie bookstores across the country on the last Saturday in April. Every store is unique and independent, and every party is different. But in addition to events and other fun stuff, there are exclusive books and literary items that you can only get on that day. Not before. Not after. Nowhere else.

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Chief's corner

Common sense tips to avoid distracted driving

**By Chief Steven J. Wojnar
Dudley Police Department**
AAA has asked us to share the following information and remind everyone that April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month. Distracted driving continues to be a significant problem. AAA recently produced a Public Service Announcement and asked us to share it on our social media channels and other public venues. It can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0NH4p0hSvyU>. As I mentioned a few weeks ago, handheld cell phone use while driving is prohibited in Mass.
According to the National

Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in 2019 distracted driving crashes killed 3,142 people in the U.S., an average of 9 deaths per day. That number was up 10 percent from the year before (2,839 deaths in 2018). In southern New England (RI/MA/CT), 35 people died in 2019 because of distracted driving.
According to a study conducted by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety in 2019, most drivers (96 percent) believe typing or reading on a hand-held cellphone while driving to be very or extremely dangerous. However, 39 per-

cent admit to reading and 29 percent admit to typing on a smartphone at least once in a while behind the wheel within the last month. The survey also found drivers can experience a "hangover effect" where the mind stays distracted for up to 27 seconds after using smartphones for voice-to-text, making phone calls, or updating social media. AAA is encouraging all motorists to eliminate distracted driving by following these tips:
• Put it away. Place your mobile device out of sight to prevent temptation.
• Know where you're going.

If using a navigation system, program the destination before driving.
• Pull over. If you must call or text while on the road, pull off the road safely and stop first.
• Ask passengers for help. If riding with someone, seek their help to navigate, make a call or send a message.
• Be a good passenger. Speak out if the driver of your vehicle is distracted.
• Don't be a distraction. Avoid calling or texting others when you know they are driving.
• Activate Do Not Disturb. Setting up this feature on iPhone or Android device will

prevent calls from coming in while you're driving.
• Everyone should prevent being "intoxicated." Just as drivers need to pay attention, so do pedestrians and bicyclists. Never call, text, or play games while walking or cycling.
Everyone should do their part to limit distractions to prevent crashes and injuries.
As the pandemic continues, we ask everyone to stay safe and continue to take the necessary precautions to protect yourselves. Vaccination information can be found at www.dudleyma.gov or by

calling 508-949-8036. Hopefully, the end of this pandemic is in sight. We, at the Dudley Police Department, greatly appreciate the support we receive from our community.

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



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Bay Path nursing student completes University of Zurich's Myocardial Infarction training

CHARLTON – Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy student Stefanie Lauretano of Webster has successfully completed the Myocardial Infarction educational course offered by University of Zurich through Coursera.

The 25-hour course is a primer on Myocardial Infarction. Coursera described Cardiovascular diseases as – according to the (World Health Organization (WHO) – the number one cause of death globally. Myocardial infarction (heart attack) is the most prominent under the Cardiovascular diseases. In Switzer-

land alone, the risk to develop a coronary heart disease during life time is around 25% for men and 18% for women.

Most cardiovascular diseases can be prevented by addressing behavioral risk factors, the understanding of these risk factors, their mechanisms and impact on the cardiovascular system. In this context our course aims to approach the complex field of myocardial infarction in two respects: medical education and awareness of a broader audience. The course instructor was Thomas F. Lüscher MD,

FRCP, FESC, FACC.

Lauretano is set to graduate with the Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy Class of 2021. She is certified in Dementia Care, Mental Health First Aid, and BLS/HCP CPR. She also completed COVID-19 Contact Tracing from Johns Hopkins University. Lauretano is a member of the UNICEF Club and the 2021 Mock Code Team. Her educational background includes General Studies at Becker College (2018) and Health Services at Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (2005).



Stefanie Lauretano

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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 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,

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Skeleton keys



To find out more about the Samuel Slater Experience, visit the website at <https://samuel Slater Experience.org>.

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Tales from beyond

The Devil's Hole, Woonsocket, Rhode Island

By Thomas D'Agostino

Many years ago, French Canadian immigrants began settling in Woonsocket, Rhode Island. Life was hard for these

poor folk and they toiled from sun up to sun down building a life for their families. Even today, the visual history of their

legacy is prominent in the local cemeteries, street names, and architecture of the area. A certain Catholic priest

desired to erect a beautiful stone church for his parishioners but found it difficult, as they were all committed to their day long jobs at the local mills. The priest looked to the heavens for guidance and his prayers were quickly answered when, one night, the Virgin Mary appeared to him with a gift.

"Outside in your yard, you will find a fine horse that will easily cart all the stone you need to build a church. He has the strength of many horses and will easily carry any load you set upon him. But, under no circumstances must you ever remove his bridle, for it is sanctified. If you remove the bridle, the horse will vanish in an instant."

The next morning, the priest found the horse as stated, with a glistening bridle around its face. He was an enormous beast, black as the deepest night with glowing red eyes.

It did not take long before the priest surmised that it was an incarnation of the devil himself. He named it "Old Nick" and presented it to the foreman to assist in carting the stones for the project. The foreman was also warned to never remove the bridle and duly obeyed the priest's request. Old Nick tirelessly moved all the stone needed to build a fine church.

One day the foreman could not make it to work and a new foreman was called in to oversee the completion of the church. The new foreman was forewarned of the bridle and set about his tasks with his new workmate, Old Nick. He and Old Nick got along real fine and soon became friends. The young foreman was not very smart, but always performed a hard day's labor with no complaint.

On a very hot summer day, the foreman took the horse to the Blackstone River to cool down. As the foreman splashed around in the cool water, he looked over at Old Nick, who appeared to be hot and thirsty. The man decided to remove the bridle so the horse could get a cool drink. As soon as the bridle was let loose, the horse gave an earth shattering neigh, then kicked the young man into the river. Old Nick leaped across the Blackstone in one bound, landing on a ledge. His impact split the ledge and the horse quickly vanished into the crevice.



When the priest discovered what had transpired, he rushed to the scene but he was too late, the horse had returned to hell. For many years after, the area of the chasm was prone to unholy happenings. Horses would buck and shy as they neared the hole, wagons would lose their wheels and unearthly wailing was often heard emanating from the rock. Witnesses also reported wolf-like creatures entering and emerging from the evil hole. It was clear to all that the devil had created a portal to his realm to punish the parishioners for keeping him captive.

A new priest came to lead the parish and decided enough was enough. He placed a wooden cross over the hole, sprinkled it with holy water and said several prayers. The hellish doings ceased as far as anyone knew and the devil never returned. The Devil's Hole is located in the Fairmont section of Woonsocket but no one is really sure where it is.

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.

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Dinner with the dead

Thomas D'Agostino and Arlene Nicholson will be hosting another interactive paranormal investigation dinner at the Publick House in Sturbridge on Tuesday, April 27, at 6:30 p.m.

They will also host another special interactive paranormal investigation dinner at the Colonial Inn in Concord on Tuesday, May 11, at 6 p.m.

For info and tickets on both events, go to www.dining-withthedead1031.com. Seating is limited.

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Q. I am thinking about buying a new full-sized pickup truck to replace my 10-year-old Ford F-150. Of the popular trucks: RAM, Ford and Chevrolet/GMC, which should I consider and why?

A. This is one of those questions, that doesn't have a wrong answer. Any one of these three vehicles is a good choice. My suggestion is to buy the one you like best. All three trucks can tow more than 10,000 pounds. All three trucks can easily carry 2,000 pounds. All three trucks have the latest technology: Wi-Fi hotspots, big displays and depending on cab, configuration that has limousine-like rear seating. My suggestion is to look at how the options are configured, find out which truck offers the features you need and some you want and buy the truck that makes you happy.

Q. I have a 2016 Honda Pilot with around 43,000 miles. When I drive my car, I have noticed and hear a clicking or shifting noise when the transmission is in first going to second gear. This happens from 20 to 30 miles-per-hour and the noise seems to be coming from under the car. When the engine is cold, noise is low/quiet. As the engine heats up, noise becomes a little louder. On the highway or generally above 40 miles-per-hour I do not hear it. Do you have any idea what is happening here?

A. There are many things that could be causing this type of noise, from a transmission issue to a wheel bearing, even a big nail in a tire. The transmission in this Pilot has been subject to a few issues, everything from reprogramming to fluid leaks to complete replacement. The best thing to do at this

point is to road test the vehicle with a technician to identify the noise and get an idea where the sound is originating.

Q. I have a Toyota that the trunk lock actuator failed. No big deal, I open the trunk with the key. Now a new problem: when we go to unlock the trunk, the panic alarm that came with the car goes off. We have no other alarm on the car. If I unlock the doors first with the remote, then all is fine and no alarm. Is this related to the trunk actuator part?

A. Yes, I would certainly think so. If you lock the car with the remote and try to open the trunk with the key the alarm is still set. The car does not know if you are opening the trunk with a key or a crowbar. At this point, until you decide if you want to get the car fixed and so you do not disturb the neighbors, you just need to unlock the car before opening the trunk.

Q. How do I turn off the emergency brake dash light on a 1995 Cadillac Sedan Deville?

A. The red brake warning light illuminates for a few reasons: the parking brake is applied, or partially applied; the second reason is the brake fluid is low or there is a leak in the brake hydraulic system. The third issue is when the electronic brake control module responds to certain diagnostic fault codes. The issue could be a sticking parking brake cable, faulty parking brake switch, or low brake fluid. If the read

brake warning light is on, I would suggest having the car towed to a repair shop. If the problem is related to the brake hydraulic system, you could lose full braking and be unable to stop in an emergency.

Q. I was listening to a podcast of your radio program where you were interviewing someone from Sylvania and were talking about LED replacement headlights and how they are illegal. I went online and saw LED replacement bulbs and YouTube videos of people updating their headlights. Are you sure this upgrade is illegal, I want to upgrade to better lighting.

A. Just because you can buy the parts online doesn't mean they are Department of Transportation (DOT) compliant for on-road use. The reflector inside the headlight assembly is calibrated for a certain size bulb. The LED replacement bulbs are typically larger, causing aiming issues. The light output will be greater, but the amount of glare and "dazzle" can be offensive and dangerous to oncoming traffic. If you want more light, there are performance replacement bulbs that can deliver more light, although at a shorter lifespan than the stock bulb.

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W-D Veterans Council installs officers

On Wednesday, April 7, the Veterans Council of Webster and Dudley held installation of officers for the upcoming year. The Veterans Council is an organization which coordinates with other military service organizations such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars,

the American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans and the Polish American Veterans in Webster and Dudley. The Veterans Council synchronizes the events which all organizations take part in as one unit such as the Honor Guard for military veterans,

the parades, and the maintenance and upkeep of the military monuments, and various other activities.

This organization is instrumental in maintaining communication and order between all the differing organizations in our community.



Pictured l-r: Kenny Kudzal Chaplain, Victor Jankowski Commander, Ron Prest Sr. Vice Commander, Jim Brinker Sergeant-at-Arms, Joe Sendrowski Veterans Council Military Honor Guard Chaplain, Stephen Rogerson Jr. Vice Commander, Bob Guenther Treasurer. Not Shown: George Bibeau, Past Commander of the VFW Post 654 who swore in the new officers.

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Dudley Womans Club 2021 scholarship awards

The DWC has announced its 2021 Scholarship Award recipients, who were introduced at their April club meeting.

Bay Path senior Ivy Ballou has been accepted to several colleges and plans to study pre-med with a goal of becoming an orthopedic surgeon. She has played soccer and lacrosse at Bay Path, was a member of the student council and National Honor Society, while earning honor roll each year.

Bartlett High School senior Gabriela Piwowarczyk has also been accepted to several colleges. Gabriela plans to study business and marketing with a goal of earning a Master's in business and landing a job in a "big company" where she hopes to make "a positive difference in the community and society." She is an MIAA student ambassador at Bartlett, who led food pantry and sock drives.

Bartlett senior Kathryn James, who like her peers, has been accepted to several colleges. She plans to study



Pictured from left are Ivy Ballou of Bay Path Votech, Gabriela Piwowarczyk of Bartlett High School, Kathryn James of Bartlett High School, and DWC President Andrea Kane.



Ivy Ballou



Gabriela Piwowarczyk



Kathryn James

computer science and game programming because it fits her interests in math and technology. Kathryn's goal is to become a game-play programmer. At Bartlett, she serves as class president, team captain of cross-country and track and plays piano in the music department.

All three of our scholars hold community service in their hearts and will no doubt make our communities better through service. We wish them health, happiness and success.

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Tips on financial planning



Dennis Antonopoulos

If you're planning to retire in just a few years, you may be getting excited about this next phase of your life. However, your ability to enjoy retirement fully will depend, at least partially, on the resources you can draw from your investment portfolio. So, while you still have time to act, ask your-

How much risk should you take before retirement?

self if you're comfortable with your portfolio's risk level.

Your relationship with risk can change noticeably over time. When you started saving for retirement, you may have been willing to take on more investment risk, which translated into a relatively high percentage of stocks and stock-based mutual funds in your investment portfolio. As you know, stocks offer the potential for greater returns than other assets – such as bonds and certificates of deposit (CDs) – but they are also typically more volatile and carry more risk. But when you were many decades away from retirement, you had sufficient time to recover from market

fluctuations. (Of course, there are no guarantees – it's possible that some stocks will lose value and never regain it.)

Now, fast forward to where you are now – closing in on retirement. Even at this stage of your life – and, in fact, even during your retirement – you will need some growth-oriented investments to help stay ahead of inflation. Over time, even a low inflation rate, such as we've had the past several years, can erode your purchasing power.

So, the issue isn't this: "Should I get rid of all my risk?" You shouldn't – and, in fact, you couldn't, because all investments, even the ones considered most "conserva-

tive," contain some type of risk, even if it isn't the risk of loss of principal. For instance, some investments run the risk of not keeping up with inflation. Instead, ask yourself these questions: "How much risk should I take within my portfolio?" "How much risk do I actually need to achieve my goals in retirement?"

Of course, there are no one-size-fits-all answers. You'll need to look at your investment portfolio to see if it's positioned to provide you with the income you'll require in your retirement years. You might have initially based your financial strategy on a specific type of retirement lifestyle, but now that you're nearing retirement, perhaps you've

changed your mind. Your anticipated new lifestyle might require either more or less income than you had originally projected – and if that's the case, you may need to adjust the risk level in your portfolio or make other adjustments.

For example, suppose you had initially envisioned a rather quiet retirement, sticking around your home, volunteering and spending time with your grandchildren. But in recent years – and especially since the confinement many of us have felt during the COVID-19 pandemic – you may have thought that you'd now like to travel extensively. To achieve this goal, which will likely cost more than your

original one, you may have to work longer, or invest more each year until you retire, or seek a higher return on your investments – which means accepting more risk.

As you can see, managing risk is a balancing act – and you may need to make some tough choices. But as long as you're aware of how much risk you can take, and how much risk you may need to take to reach your goals, you can develop a strategy that aligns with your objectives.

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

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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**

RE: Real Estate



Mark Marzeotti

Not only does the house you're selling have a fresh coat of paint you changed out the light fixtures in the bathroom and upgraded the stove. But is it enough to impress the home appraiser who's come to assess your house's value? There are quite a few factors that go into a home appraisal.

What does a home appraiser look for?

A home appraiser's role is to determine a home's value by investigating the property's location, square footage, condition, number of rooms and any renovations or additions. They'll also look at recent sales of similar homes in the neighborhood. So, what are some of the key external factors they'll consider? Like many parts of a home appraisal, much of this is beyond your control:

- The location. Everything from the quality of the school district to the proximity to employment opportunities gets factored in here. An appraiser will also consider things like entertainment (is there a movie theater or restaurants nearby?) as well as likelihood of any impact from a natural disaster (say, if it's in a flood zone).
- Land use. If you look at the neighborhood, is it suburban, rural or urban? What percentage of the land is used for homes vs. businesses? Are there a lot of wide open spaces (parks, etc.) or is it very dense?
- The size of your lot. Do you have space to expand? A backyard? Room to grow? This can affect your appraisal amount.
- Access to public utilities. Everything from water to sewage—a home appraiser will want to know if hook-ups are available.
- Parking. This applies to the quality of the driveway (is it paved? dirt? something else?) to the size of your garage (or lack of one, if that's the case).
- The year your property was built. The age of your property is something a home appraiser considers, but his or her assessment can be affected by maintenance.
- The roof and foundation type. Newer homes typically utilize newer materials. Same applies to your home's siding, windows and doors (anything that's more energy-efficient will give your home an automatic uptick in value).

What hurts a home appraisal? 6 common factors to consider

- Square footage. Also, the number of bedrooms and bathrooms.
- Basement and attic features. Do you have a finished basement and attic? Can it be turned into a playroom? Or is it more of a crawl space?
- Recent renovations. They'll particularly look at kitchens and bathrooms.

While the buyer's bank typically chooses the home appraiser, it's worth noting that the person they select is someone who has to be certified in your state, which means they have to adhere to the Appraisal Foundation's Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice. Your REALTOR can guide you on this. A good way to think of a home appraiser is to consider them a neutral party. Their number one goal is to confirm that the price of the home is fair to everyone—the buyer, the seller and the bank.

The appraisal happens after an offer is made, but before that deal has closed. And if the home appraisal comes in and the price is off the mark? If the appraised value is higher than the offer, then there's typically no issue in terms of the loan, but if the appraisal is lower, this can be tricky since the lender will only loan money up to the appraised amount. The impact for the seller is that the buyer could pull their offer. This is where your REALTOR can help you with the additional negotiation to keep this deal on track.

Home appraisal factors you can control There are quite a few factors that you have the power to change ahead of an assessment by a home appraiser. Yes, things like your home's location or recent sales in the neighborhood play a part, but you can control any renovations you've done or will do to your home. For instance, if you've built an addition like another bedroom or turned a dingy basement into a gorgeous rec room, this should raise your home's value.

Make sure you hold onto any records of renovations you've done and keep in mind that what you paid for these renovations may not boost your home's value dollar for dollar. Other factors you can control:

1. A leaky roof. One of the worst things you can do is delay on necessary maintenance. It's that leaky roof or the deck repair you've neglected for years—over time they'll become much more costly or extensive problems.
2. Dated finishes or appliances. Things like worn-out countertops or bathroom tiles that need to be regrouted all have an impact on the final assessment of your home before a sale. So take the time, and put in the money to fix these things before putting your home on the market.

Just be mindful that you don't

over-improve (go too fancy or too niche with your design choices on hardware or bathtubs, etc.) since you want a look that will appeal to the maximum number of buyers. (One man's walk-in wine cellar is another man's giant headache.)

3. Obvious repairs. Let's say you had someone in to assess that roof repair and you're on it—your REALTOR will make it clear to your home appraiser that this will be done by the time of the sale, so that they don't take that amount off the final value of the home.

Make sure to also honestly consider any renovations or changes you've made for the worse—particularly any amenities you've removed. For instance, if you've torn down a wall to prioritize an open floor plan, but eliminated a bedroom in the process or removed a jacuzzi from the backyard, this could detract from your home's appraised value. Think long and hard before you remove any features from your home.

OK, so how about the things you can't control? Most of this comes down to your home's location:

1. The value of nearby listings. Like we said, it's not just the internal factors of your home that make a difference—a lot is tied to how your home measures up against other listings in your area. (In the real estate world, this is referred to an assessment of comparable sales.)

In this sense, an appraiser will consider your house's square footage and number of stories in comparison to similar models. This applies to amenities, too. Let's say your home has a two-car garage. What are other homes with these types of features selling for nearby? A good appraiser will consider multiple properties and be weary of outliers. (Say, that bargain listing right across the street from the highway off-ramp.)

2. Market conditions. This is about supply and demand. If your home is in an area with decreasing prices or vacancies and foreclosures, this could negatively affect your home's value. But if sales are on the rise and the future trajectory of your area looks positive (growing employment ops, for example), this all affects the price.

That said, if you're fielding multiple offers on your property, your REALTOR will let your appraiser know. (That could be a testament to not just value and future value, but also improving market conditions.)

3. A busy street. If your home is off a freeway or near a bustling shopping district with loads of outdoor restaurants, that can lower the final appraisal.

Bottom Line: Consult your agent—and a home inspector—ahead of time

A REALTOR is trained to foresee potential problem areas. Have a conversation with them about any anxieties you have, but also do a walk-through to talk through the obvious changes you can make ahead of a home appraisal—all to ensure you get the top dollar you deserve.

Sandi Grzyb

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