

## Natick's "My Brown Barn School" Marks 75 Years

BY CYNTHIA WHITTY

'My Brown Barn School' in South Natick, also known as the Wellesley Cooperative Nursery School (WCNS), is marking its 75 year anniversary this school year, Sept. 2020 to June 2021.

The pre-school is special for many reasons: its location in an historic barn, which dates to

1824; its emergent curriculum, play-based learning, which helps children develop intellectually, emotionally, and socially, while they learn important life skills; and its strong sense of community.

It is the kind of school where older students and adults often return to visit their teachers and

where parents, who were once students there, now send their own children.

Jean Gooch, WCNS's 5th director, said she gets a response to her social media posts just about every month from adult alumni who say they attended the school.

The pre-school program was founded in a Wellesley home in 1945 as a "baby-sitter group." Parents soon decided to make the program into a full-scale nursery school. The school relocated briefly to Wellesley's Sprague Elementary School before moving in 1947 to its present location.

### Strong Community

Julie Safaii lives in Sherborn with her husband David and their three children, Britta (4), Kitson (2) and Porter (8 months

## Farmers Market Moving Outside

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

The Natick Farmers Market has been taking tentative steps outside as the weather warms. Sequestered in the Common Street Spiritual Center during colder months, vendors have been sprouting around the facility grounds of late like the budding leaves of spring among branches.

Market merchants haven't yet spread to the adjacent Natick Common. That's reserved for May 8, the date that the Natick Farmers Market has been given the green light to return to the green lawn.

Deb Sayre has been coordinating the market for a quarter century, and so took the constraints of the pandemic in relative stride over the past year.

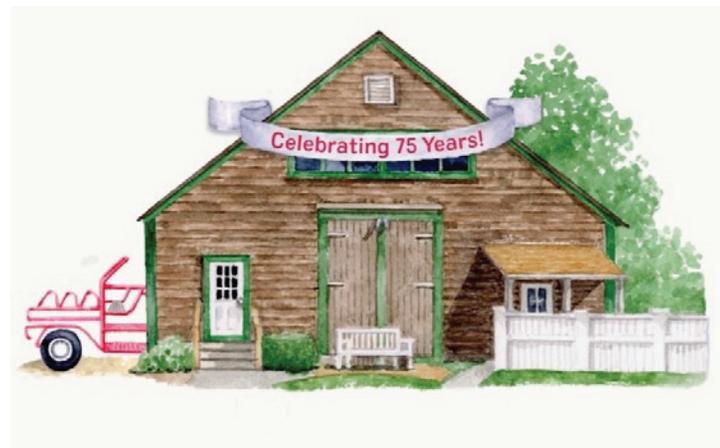
Sayre could be found just inside the Common Street Spiritual Center on a recent Saturday in late March, while skies and sunshine just outside might have made the warming days of May

jealous. The rear parking lot of the center had become a mini farmers market in its own right, with trucks and farm stands doing business under early springtime sun.

Their goods included fresh veggies and meats, and masked customers browsed at wooden tables among scales and produce. In keeping with the spirit and name of the market, a good number of farms are slated to participate in the event over the coming season.

Amazingly, the Natick Farmers Market event continued almost unabated throughout the pandemic last year. The sole interruption was due to a blizzard.

To keep the market going in such trying times, vendors had been limited to about 20 during the winter, and have been situated around the perimeter of the



The school's 75th anniversary logo was created by Sally King McBride, WCNS 1988-89, an artist and illustrator based in New York City. (Photo/supplied)

**BARN**

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**OUTSIDE**

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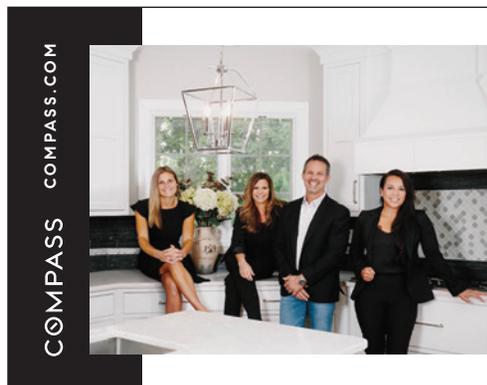
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**OUTSIDE**

*continued from page 1*

center's main hall, given ample space from their fellow sellers. The basement of the facility has also hosted vendors, offering the market more sellers and square footage to work with.

"The density was much less," said Sayre.

The pandemic and colder months conspired to punish small businesses in particular. Stalwarts like the Natick Farmers Market were exceptions during the last year, when many such venues suspended their operations in response to the health crisis. Outlets for small, often home-based businesses depend heavily on markets like these to get their name out and sell directly to customers.

"It's been tough with the whole Covid thing," said Karen Fintonis. She owns and operates Brookfield Candle Company, and was situated in front of the stage of the center's hall that Saturday. Fintonis said she's attended and sold at seven markets like Natick's in all of 2020, compared to 53 the year prior.

The classic mason jars that add a rustic touch to businesses



like hers have seen their value much vaunted during the pandemic. The jars have sometimes doubled in price over the past year, as people sequestered at home have turned to hobbies like candle making, cooking and crafts to fill their hours.

The price of soy wax has also shot up over the last year, the substance that Fintonis uses to fashion her candles. Factors like these that may once have been taken for granted can take a considerable bite out of small business budgets.

"The jar shortage has been worst," she said. "It's been tough for the small crafter business."

The impending move to the

much more spacious and picturesque Natick Common will alleviate at least some of the constraints the pandemic had placed on small businesses like Fintonis'. The larger area will allow the event to accommodate more vendors, a return to some semblance of normal.

The increased space that the common affords will also allow for a greater number of food vendors at the market, though merchants who sell prepared, take-away food will be discouraged from attending. This, said Sayre, is an effort to avoid encroaching on the turf of brick and mortar food establishments that do business near the common.



It's also, in part, to discourage shoppers lingering at the market. While vendors will be spaced further apart during these Saturday

**OUTSIDE**  
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**Who's Who... Meet The Team**

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**OUTSIDE**

*continued from page 2*

events due to Covid, Sayre and the other participants are mindful of how in-person, outdoor events like these can be magnets for people wanting to socialize in welcoming, warm weather spaces.

Attendees and vendors will recall the character of the market in years past, when sellers were sequestered in the shade of the common's southwest corner. Shoppers and sellers often jostled shoulder to shoulder in those beforetimes, when thoughts of paper masks and a pandemic were mere fodder for films.

Now, vendors are likely to be spread sparsely throughout the common, offering ample space for shoppers to amble about. The new spacing strategy and strictures will also let vendors stand out from the crowd, so to speak, allow each shop to stand a little more in the sun.

"Elbow room" seems an outdated expression these days, nudged aside by circumstances for the more cold and clinical practice of social distancing. We've all become a Kevin Bacon



of sorts, held to six degrees (feet) of separation from our fellow actors in this drama. At least for the time being.

That being the case, look for plenty of breathing space this spring and summer at the Natick Farmers Market. Sayre has decades of experience coordinating and running the event, and is familiar with its topography and traffic.

"I've reconfigured several times over the years," said Sayre. "It will be spread out and safe."

It also helps to have a team of dedicated volunteers on hand to help, which Sayre does. That, and a steady stream of nearly 300

vendors is proof of the market's sustained success and popularity over the years.

"We are, by other people's standards, the best market around," said Sayre.

Of all those vendors on her roster, said Sayre, she's seen in years of late that more young artists and artisans are joining the creative economy, and offering what they make via the Natick Farmers Market. That, and the coming warmer weather, a light at the end of the pandemic tunnel, all seem to bode well for the future.

"I love when that happens. You can't do it alone," she said.

# Natick Historical Society Wins Mass Humanities Grant

Mass Humanities announced the awarding of \$250,000 to 59 nonprofit organizations across Massachusetts, including Central MA, through funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

## Natick Historical Society was awarded \$2500.

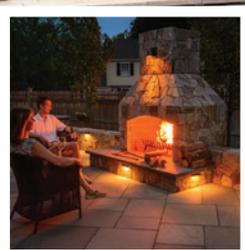
A new round of grants from Mass Humanities will give museums, historical societies and other cultural organizations the opportunity to reach their audiences digitally as the COVID-19 pandemic persists. From laptops to website upgrades, mobile walking tours to virtual exhibits, the Digital Capacity Grants announced today provide residents with access to their heritage despite social distancing.

"These grants are part of our ongoing response to the pandemic, but they also provide a preview of the future of public humanities programming," said



Mass Humanities Executive Director Brian Boyles. "As we begin to rebuild from the impacts of this crisis, our communities deserve the chance to engage with each other and our cultural heritage. It's also clear that the digital space offers organizations the chance to build their audiences."

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**BARN**

*continued from page 1*

old). Her daughter Britta is the first to attend WCNS. “Kitson will attend in the fall, and Porter will follow when he is three,” Safaai said. “My brother, now 37 years old, attended WCNS, as did several of my cousins and my two nieces.”

“WCNS’ play-based model of learning embraces what our children love to do the most,” Safaai said. “Britta comes home from school so happy—reporting back stories of her day that reflect a wonderful balance between playing and interacting with friends and learning new concepts, subjects, and skills. She is learning life skills that are shaping her into this wonderful little person, and I am grateful that this place and these teachers are the ones who will make her transition to kindergarten a smooth one.”

A parent from Natick with 20 years’ experience in education, Francesca Adelman, a former

student, has been a teacher at WCNS for the past year. Her son, Jax, is now enrolled.

“Some of my fondest first memories come from the ‘Big Brown Barn.’ Two of my older siblings attended WCNS. So, by the time I went, I knew it well. After preschool, a group of us went on to elementary school together. We would all take the school bus from there, our second home, and back, like a big family.”

“I wanted to teach at WCNS because it sets the stage for children to grow into who they want to be. We use an emergent curriculum, self-directed, experiential learning in a relationship-driven environment along with play-based learning.”

“It is a place where I love to go each day and teach. I’m well-sup-



**WCNS teachers (l to r): Ann Mann, Diane Sulser, Jean Gooch (Director), Riley Tourtellotte, and Francesca Adelman. Not pictured: Kathy Walker and Jess Holmes. (Photo/supplied)**

ported and appreciated by the director, the other teachers, and parents. It is wonderful to know I am enriching the lives of so many children.”

**Pandemic Changes the Celebration**

WCNS Director Gooch describes the effect the pandemic has had on the school and on its anniversary plans. “We are licensed by the state and follow all EEC [Mass. Department of Early Education and Care] guidelines. Our teachers were trained in safety protocols,” She said. “It was a big adjustment at first. But our dedicated and committed teachers have done a great job. We had no closures, and cooperation from the parents and students.”

The school, before the pandemic, hoped to hold a celebration with current families and alumni, but it is now planning a birthday party for just the students and staff. “The children created a tile mural as a gift for their beloved ‘Big Brown Barn School.’ We look forward to celebrating with more of our community in the future,” Gooch said.

Children from Natick and surrounding towns, including Wellesley, Dover, Sherborn, Needham, Medfield and Framingham, attend the school. For more information, visit [www.thewellesleycoop.com](http://www.thewellesleycoop.com), or contact [info@thewellesleycoop.com](mailto:info@thewellesleycoop.com) or 508-653-0958.



**Natick mom and teacher, Francesca Adelman, and her son Jax in front of Natick’s historic barn. (Photo/supplied)**

**Natick’s Big Brown Barn Has a History**

The barn at 5 Merrill Road is nearly 200 years old. It is listed in the Massachusetts Historical Commission database as the Bacon, Oliver and John - Shaw Gym. It was built in 1824. Its previous uses are listed as “stable for coal bus., 1854 Livery Stable[,] 1865 Vinegar Factory” and “altered from farm to Gymnasium [sic] in 1908.”

In 1908, electric lights were installed and the barn was remodeled into a gymnasium by Isaac Pratt Shaw. Soon after, Shaw’s Gym was left to the town of Natick, and became a community center, hosting a summer theater program, square dancers, Boy Scout meetings, basketball games, and even a shooting gallery for the South Natick Rifle Club. The barn houses the Wellesley Cooperative Nursery School (WCNS), where it has been since 1947. (Information courtesy/Natick Historical Society)

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# May 2021 (Virtual) Events At The Natick Historical Society

## Ten Thousand Digital Absurdities: The Power of the Needlework in 19th Century America

Mariah Gruner

**May 4, 2021**  
7 pm  
On Zoom

The Natick Historical Society welcomes Mariah Gruner for a virtual presentation about needlework in 19th century America and the ways that 19th century women used the stitch to change women's history.

Suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton may have dismissed



**Event graphic; and Mary B. Whitney Sampler, 1823, NHS Collections**

Mariah Gruner is a PhD candidate in American Studies at Boston University, where she is a dissertation fellow with the BU Center for the Humanities. She writes on the political uses of American women's decorative needlework from 1820-1920 and the ways that craft is gendered and gender is crafted.

The evening will include examples of needlework from the collections, including recent acquisitions.

This event is FREE and open to the public, but advance registration is required. Register at [www.natickhistoricalsociety.org/events](http://www.natickhistoricalsociety.org/events)

## Meet Our Neighbors: Natick Center Cultural District

Hosted by the Natick Historical Society

**May 26, 2021**  
7 pm  
On Zoom

The Natick Historical Society's Meet Our Neighbors series shines a light on the many cultural, educational, service, and other organizations that have shaped Natick over time.

In May, we'll hear from Athena Pandolf, Executive Director of the Natick Center Cultural District (NCCD). In 2012, Natick Center became one of 14 communities designated as the state's first Cultural Districts by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Home to working artists, locally owned businesses, and arts and culture organizations, the Cultural District works with com-

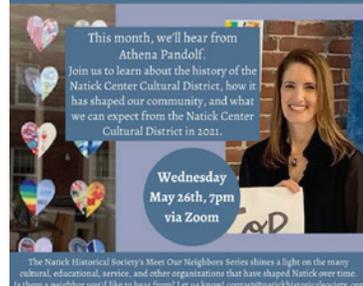
munity partners to offer a year-round calendar of events and activities.

This event is free and open to the public, but advance registration is required. Register at [www.natickhistoricalsociety.org/events](http://www.natickhistoricalsociety.org/events)



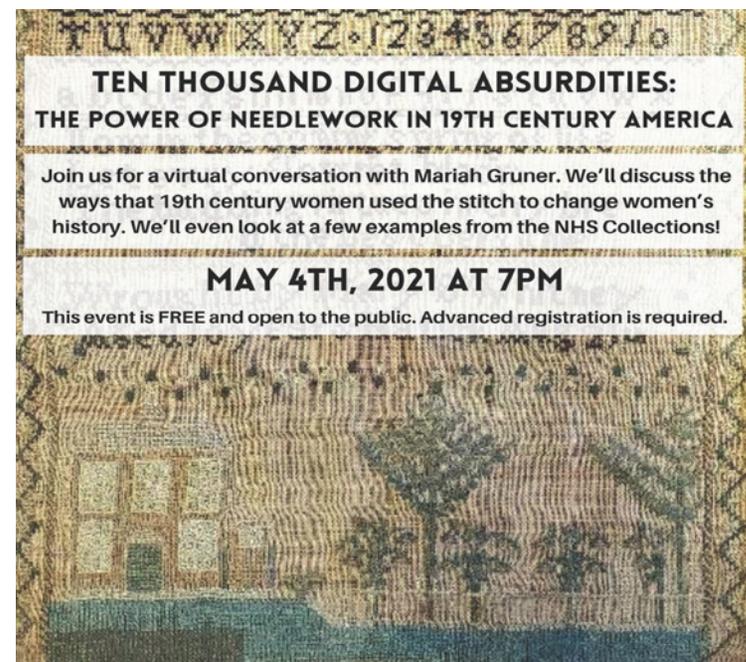
## Meet Our Neighbors

Natick Center Cultural District, Athena Pandolf



**Event graphic; photo of Athena Pandolf**

women's needlework, declaring the frustration she felt "whenever I have seen any daughters of our grand Republic knitting, tatting, embroidering, or occupied with any of the ten thousand digital absurdities that fill so large a place in the lives of Eve's daughters." But many American women found power and meaning in their needlework and even used it to challenge typical assumptions about women's social place.



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

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

Jay Schadler started his business in 2003. Back then, it was

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

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

Jay and his team have handled it all. They've dismantled above-ground pools, hauled away ancient hot tubs, taken down old fencing, and stripped away worn carpeting. They'll come for a sin-

## Business spotlight



gle item, or they'll clean out an entire house. And they can take almost anything. They can't accept hazardous materials, brush, dirt, or concrete, but everything else is fair game for them to take away.

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

Working with Affordable Junk Removal is simple. First, you can load stuff yourself if you want by renting a 15-cubic-yard dumpster for a week and chucking up to a ton of your unwanted stuff. If you need to get rid of more weight, then Jay prorates that tonnage—you never pay for what you don't use.

If you don't want to be bothered with the dumpster, they've also got a driveway special where they'll take away a truckload of your unwanted things if you pile

it up. Or if you don't want to lift a finger, then you can point at the items, and the team will fill up their truck and haul away your unwanted things. However you do it, you're left with more space and more peace of mind.

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

And speaking of pricing, Jay is upfront about it. His website shows the truck sizes and prices, so you can save time knowing your costs before you call for an appointment. There aren't any hidden costs or surprise fees with Affordable Junk Removal.

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

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

Jay and his family are deeply involved in the community. He and his wife, Christine, run the Corner Market restaurant in Holliston as well as Resellables, a thrift store in Bellingham. It's not uncommon for someone to reach Jay at the restaurant, order a sandwich, and then schedule a junk removal appointment. Yes, the local small business really can handle everything!

For more information, contact Jay Schadler at (774) 287-1133 or visit Affordable Junk Removal online at [affordablejunkremoval.com](http://affordablejunkremoval.com).



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# If your taxes could talk, what would they say?

Get your taxes done?

You have until May 17th to complete and find out what they say about you. Specifically, what are you doing well and can be done better?

If you don't know, ask your accountant. If he/she can't answer, maybe it's time to get help with tax planning from a Certified Financial Planner (CFP).

A CFP's goal with tax planning is to help clients take proactive steps to save money on their taxes now and help reduce liabilities in the future. Aspects include lowering your AGI (adjusted gross income), leveraging tax deductions, taking advantage of tax credits, tax deferrals and timing of large purchases, sales and realization of income.

Once you're exhaled from completing your taxes, see if these apply for 2021:

**Dedicate space to a home office.** If you're self-employed or started a side-gig, dedicate a section of your house as a home of-

ice. Schedule C deductions are many and prorated across several aspects of expenses, maintenance and utilities on your entire home. Additionally, if you build or renovate a home office, there are additional deductions if you're self-employed.

**Working From Home (WFH) becoming permanent.** Is your company changing your role to WFH indefinitely, providing flexibility to move to another state? Understand workers are required to have taxes withheld in accordance with their state's tax rules, regardless of where their employer is located. Also, some states make employers withhold taxes from nonresident employees' wages.

**Adjust your W-4.** If you got a large refund, lower your withholding and do more with your money than letting the government sit on it. Additionally, if both spouses work and one is self-employed, consider raising your W-4 withholding to avoid

potential penalties for underpaying estimated taxes on a growing small business.

**Exercising Restricted Stock Units (RSUs).** Did you sell some RSUs and get a large tax bill? Connect with HR to discuss withholding options before your next exercise. Also, learn of the benefits and drawbacks of converting to stock to qualify for long-term, instead of short-term, capital gains.

**Revisit Work Benefits.** You can impact your adjusted gross income (AGI) through 401k contributions as well as funding a HSA funding, FSA for dental/vision or FSA dependent care. Additionally, you may want to choose Roth instead of Traditional to eliminate future tax liabilities. If you can't make some changes until open enrollment, don't forget if you have a life event (new child, spouse loses or changes job) you have 30 days to revisit and reset your work benefits.

Tax planning is complex, but it doesn't need to be complicated. Work with someone to help you save money, stay organized and reduce liabilities in the future.

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

Glenn Brown is a Holliston resident and owner of PlanDynamic, LLC, [www.PlanDynamic.com](http://www.PlanDynamic.com). Glenn is a fee-only Certified Financial Planner™ helping motivated people take control of their planning and investing, so they can balance kids, aging parents and financial independence.



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# Natick's Lisa MacDonald Elected to the MetroWest Commission on the Status of Women

BY CYNTHIA WHITTY

Lisa MacDonald brings her experience and passion for promoting social justice to all aspects of her work and personal life.

A resident of Natick, MacDonald was recently elected a commissioner of the MetroWest Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW), a state-established body, "charged with reviewing the status of women in Massachusetts and offering recommendations regarding policy that would improve access to opportunities and equality," according to the website.

MacDonald works at MassBay Community College (MBCC) as the Director of Equity Compliance and Title IX Coordinator/Affirmative Action Officer. In addition, she provides professional training and development for organizations through her independent business, Elleminc.

She grew up in Staten Island, New York, attended the University of Hartford, and then spent a year working at Colby-Sawyer

College where she met her husband, Trevor. The couple moved to Blacksburg, Virginia, where she completed her Master's degree in Educational Leadership.

"We moved to Natick in the summer of 2019 with our daughter Jovie, age 7, who is currently a student at Lilja Elementary School, keeping busy in the town's soccer program and Girl Scout troop, and as a piano student at the Allegro Music School," MacDonald said. "We love Natick, its local businesses, especially the cannoli from Lola's, and so thankful for the wonderful families we've met and new friends we've made."

"My day-to-day interests are reading, staying active, and baking while always having a cup of coffee in my hand. I am also an avid sports fan—Patriots, college basketball, and the New York Yankees—I know that will make me lose some points around here, but it's the truth."

Natick Local Town Pages asked MacDonald about her



**Lisa MacDonald of Natick was recently elected a commissioner for the MetroWest Commission on the Status of Women.** (Photo/supplied)

work at MBCC and her new role on MCSW.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Whitty: What does being a commissioner for MCSW entail?**

The MetroWest Commission on the Status of Women

are a group of commissioners that seek to advocate on behalf of women in towns and cities, including Natick, that make up the MetroWest region. Commissions work together to highlight the issues impacting women and girls—we do this through listening, hosting events to promote awareness of such issues, and through supporting/advocating for pending legislation that impacts women and girls in the state.

**Whitty: How did you become a commissioner?**

During my time as a member of the 2019-2020 cohort for the MetroWest Leadership Academy, a fellow cohort member, Patricia Hohl, who is on the State Commission for the Status of Women and the director of Voices Against Violence, asked me to be a panelist for two events the Commission hosted in partnership with state legislators on Reproductive Justice. As a panelist, I had the opportunity to speak about current state legislation that addresses sexual violence in higher education. Following these events in November 2019 and February 2020, respectively, I was inspired to apply to become a member [of MCSW] and found out on my birthday in February 2021 that I was elected.

**Whitty: What do you hope to accomplish?**

Honestly, while I am so new and only attended one official meeting so far, my goal is that I hope to be half as good as the other eight women serving in this group! Talk about an amazing group of women, I am in awe of their dedication, intelligence, and passion for their individual and collective call to action in addressing the needs impacting women and girls, giving women and girls a voice, and striving for gender equality.

**Whitty: Why is your work at MBCC important?**

I began working at MassBay in the summer of 2018. My title is Director for Equity Compliance where I serve students, faculty, and staff as the College's Title IX Coordinator, Affirmative Action Officer, and ADA/504 Coordinator. I facilitate trainings and

prevention workshops around harassment, discrimination, and sex-based misconduct and conduct investigations alleging any type of harassment or discrimination on the basis of protected class(es).

I also serve on a number of different committees working on the College's Equity Agenda, including having the opportunity to co-chair a review of the College's policies and procedures for systemic racism. Equity is a top priority at MassBay. Lead by President David Podell, we are committed to serving our diverse student population with an experience in both the classroom and within the community that yields successful outcomes for every enrolled student.

In thinking about why this work matters, I'm continuously reminded of something shared during a professional development keynote speech by Dr. Kermit Crawford, who pointedly stated that, "Until a system works for everyone, it doesn't work. Period."

**Whitty: What has motivated you to do this work?**

I consider myself a mission-driven person, and for me, the lines of work and personal life naturally become interconnected. I tend to bring my whole self to my work, and what I gain through my work tends to foster the conversations at home. It's just who I am. From early on, I have had a passion for taking action towards gender equality and then, through the various life experiences I have been afforded and benefitted from, I want to do whatever I am able as an honest ally to advance racial equity and promote social justice.

With all of that, I believe in the power of community and that community development begins with creating and maintaining positive, authentic one-on-one relationships. I wished more people recognized that every single interaction you have likely influences and makes a difference—positive or negative—in the overall community in which you are taking part. All of this is what motivates me to get out of bed everyday—to show up, to speak up, and to continue learning to do better.

# Opening Summer 2021

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# Family Promise Metrowest is changing the future for families facing homelessness

Family Promise Metrowest (FPM), a Natick-based nonprofit, is hosting its annual walkathon to raise awareness and funds to support families facing homelessness across the Metrowest region.

This year's "Walk for Change" will take place the weekend of May 1-2 in several Metrowest cities and towns. Families, friends, and other small groups will choose their own walk route and time over the course of this weekend-long event. Family-friendly activities will be offered leading up to the weekend, including a

Kindness Rocks Project™ hosted in partnership with nonprofit SPARK Kindness and a Houses for Change® activity. Multiple contests, games, and other self-guided activities will also take place during the event.

Registration is now open at [www.familypromisemetrowest.org](http://www.familypromisemetrowest.org), and t-shirts and fundraising prizes from Athleta, Ben & Jerry's, Dunkin', Kona Ice and more are available while supplies last. The registration site also features age-appropriate information and videos about homelessness for individuals and families eager to learn more before the event, in addition to suggested walking routes.

FPM's mission is to transform the lives of families with children that are facing homelessness by mo-



bilizing local communities to provide shelter, education, and comprehensive support. This annual walkathon raises funds for programs that support families on their path back to stability, including a shelter program and a homelessness prevention program. Local congregations, businesses, schools, and thousands of volunteers partner with FPM to address this issue by providing resources, guidance, and support to families as they bring themselves out of poverty and into a future filled with possibility.

"Amid all the fun and games, this event really matters," says Sue Crossley, Executive Director. "It's one of our biggest fundraisers of the year, bringing in over 25% of our annual program budget and

significantly impacting the lives of the families we serve."

This event is made possible by many generous local sponsors including R.W. Holmes Commercial Real Estate, The Village Bank,



Herb Connolly Auto Group, Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital Needham, Needham Bank, TJX, The Chandler Group, Eastern Bank, Tracy Boehme Realty, and Rubicon Builders.

**SPORT MANAGEMENT**

**FORENSICS**

**DEAN COLLEGE**  
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# Help Keep Natick Beautiful

Keep Natick Beautiful is looking for your help. The group, which specializes in organizing local litter clean ups and keeping our community trash free, needs new leaders to support its mission.

No one person has to do it all! Keep Natick Beautiful is looking for people who live or work in Natick that can help: coordinate volunteer clean ups, collaborate with Public Works, draw attention to litter hot spots and more. There are small and large opportunities to get involved.

If you are someone who loves being outside and helping the earth - or know someone who does, please email [jwmartin@natickma.org](mailto:jwmartin@natickma.org) to get connected with the KNB team. In the meantime, consider joining an upcoming litter clean up to see what it's all about.

Sat, May 22, 2-4pm: Timothy Coolidge Woods – Pig Pond Clean Up (meet in NHS junior lot)

# Rainbow Flag Project

Rainbow Peace Flag painted by Rebecca McGee Tuck on Washington Street.



## *We stand with PEACE*

We, at the **Natick Center Cultural District** believe that racism, in any form, has no place in our community, culture, or organization. We grieve the violence witnessed in Atlanta against the Asian-American community and strive to continue building an inclusive community, here in Natick, where each member is valued, seen, and heard. We are grateful for our dynamic and diverse community that makes Natick a vibrant town to live and work in.

From Oscar-nominated film screenings, Art in Bloom, and virtual painting & cooking workshops, the spring season brings many events and activities - some virtual, some in-person to Natick Center. Many of the holiday-themed window art on Washington St. is getting a spring makeover too. Thank you to **Rebecca McGee Tuck, found object & fiber sculptor** for painting the new **Rainbow Peace Flag** in the former Kentucky Spirits window, next to **Agostino's Italian Restaurant**.




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One entry per day/per person.  
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May 1 - 20, 2021

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

Congratulations to our April Winner:  
Theresa Kacoyanis

# Parents, caregivers community programs by SPARK

SPARK Kindness is excited to present new programs in our FREE Resilient Community Spring series. The month of May means new opportunities for parents, caregivers, community members, and students to connect and learn about how

we can build a more kind and inclusive community together. We invite you to join us at one of our free upcoming events below, or explore our resources at SPARKKindness.org. Further, if you would like to get involved in this work of promoting kindness,

please email us at info@spark-kindness.org. Hope to see you at a program soon!

## How to Take CONTROL of your Life, and Let Go of the Rest

Tuesday, May 11 at 7pm via Zoom — For the entire community

Award-winning bilingual journalist and author of *Perfectly You: Embracing the Power of Being Real*, Mariana Atencio will tell you how to achieve what you want in your life through inner strength, innovation, self-control, and a proven formula to increase productivity, well-being, and success on your own terms. This program will be offered in Spanish with simultaneous ASL and English translation.

## All the Way to the Top: How One Girl's Fight for Americans with Disabilities Changed the World

Tuesday, May 25 at 7pm via Zoom — For elementary and middle school students and their parents/caregivers, educators



**SPARK Kindness presents a FREE virtual program on May 11th at 7pm ET**



**How to take control of your life and let go of the rest**  
with Mariana Atencio

Register and learn more about this FREE online program and more by visiting **SPARKKindness.org**

Spotlight Community Partner  
**NATICK ELPAC**  
(English Learners Parent Advisory Council)




**SPARK Kindness presents a FREE virtual program on May 25th at 7pm ET**



**ALL THE WAY TO THE TOP:**  
How One Girl's Fight for Americans with Disabilities Changed the World

with author + activist **Jennifer Keelan-Chaffins**

Register and learn more about this FREE online program and more by visiting **SPARKKindness.org**

Special Appreciation to our Spotlight Community Partners







and community members of all ages

Celebrated disability rights activist and author Jennifer Keelan-Chaffins will share her award winning book, *All the Way to the Top* which addresses the struggle for inclusion and the fight for equality in our country. Ms. Keelan-Chaffins will also encourage young people to use their voices to make a positive difference. ASL interpretation will be provided at this event.



**Yes We're OPEN**

**BACK to BUSINESS**

Coming July 2021  
Space reservation: June 1

The landscape of business as we know it has dramatically changed, but now we are starting to shift gears and open back up. Local Town Pages offers an outlet for business owners with *Back to Business* - a cost effective and strategic way to place your business back in the mind of consumers.  
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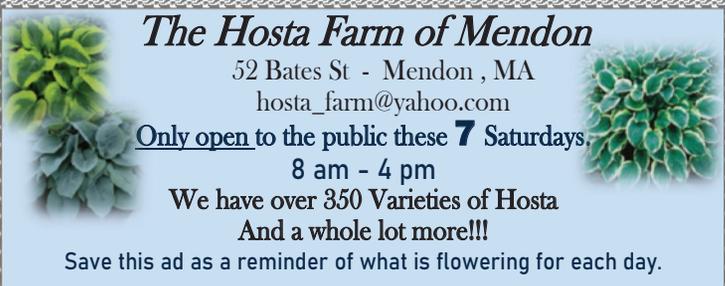
<p>Send us an e-mail, And we will add you to our email list Or follow us on Facebook</p> <p>Additions to our schedule and special events go out via email first And then on to Facebook</p>	<p>May 15<sup>th</sup> Fertilizer &amp; Critter Control</p> <p><b>Hosta Hosta</b></p> 
<p>May 29<sup>th</sup> Waterlilies, Hyacinths, &amp; Aquatic Iris</p> <p><b>Hosta Hosta</b></p> 	<p>June 12<sup>th</sup> Tropical Waterlilies</p> <p><b>Hosta Hosta</b></p> 
<p>June 26<sup>th</sup> Lotus</p> <p><b>Hosta Hosta</b></p> 	<p>July 24<sup>th</sup> Daylilies</p> <p><b>Hosta Hosta</b></p> 
<p>August 21<sup>st</sup> Fragrant Hosta</p> <p><b>Hosta Hosta</b></p> 	<p>September 11<sup>th</sup> Ornamental Grasses &amp; Fall Fertilizer</p> <p><b>Hosta Hosta</b></p> 

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# Managing Your Loved One Legal Needs: A Checklist for Caregivers

Serving as a caregiver may require you to oversee your loved one's legal affairs. A recent article on AARP's website addressed this issue and included a legal checklist for Caregivers. Here are the highlights.

## Obtain Essential Legal Documents

Your loved one should have the following key legal documents: a Will, a Power of Attorney, Health Care Proxy, HIPAA, and Living Will. It is important to note that these documents should be created, signed, and witnessed while your loved one is still capable of making legal decisions on his or her own. Sadly, we've seen many times when someone waits too long, and because of this, they no longer have capacity to get these crucial documents in place. When a person waits too long, it can leave a mess for those taking care of things and often times results in court proceedings and extra costs that could have been avoided if planning was done earlier when the person was capable of doing it.

## Get the Whole Family Involved

It is important to have everyone in the family participate in caregiving decisions whenever possible. If you can't have everyone participate, make sure you include those you can. You may even want to put into writ-

ing "who is responsible for what." While this is not a legal document, it can help avoid disagreements in the future. Also, getting the family involved while the 'waters are calm' not only helps you, but also helps the rest of the family so that they are not scrambling to figure out what's needed, what's involved, and what they need to do.

## Organize Your Loved One's Important Papers

In addition to the essential legal documents mentioned above, you'll want to find and organize a number of other documents, including:

- Birth and Marriage Certificates
- Divorce Decree
- Citizenship Papers
- Death Certificate of a Spouse or Parent
- Deeds to Cemetery Plots
- Military Discharge Papers
- Insurance Policies
- Pension Benefits

## Investigate Opportunities for Financial Assistance

There are a number of programs and services available to elders and/or individuals with disabilities. These include Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), veterans benefits,

## Business Spotlight

the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Medicare, and Medicaid. You can use online tools like the AARP Foundation's Local Assistance Directory and the National Council on Aging's Benefits Checkup to determine local, state, and federal programs for which your loved one might be eligible.

You should also examine your loved one's retirement and insurance plans to see if any of them cover in-home care, skilled nursing care, mental health services, physical therapy, and other forms of short-term assistance. Your loved one's life insurance policy might even provide accelerated death payments to help pay for long-term care.

Also, if you must take a leave of absence from your job to care for a loved one, you may be eligible for up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act. In addition, some employers offer paid family leave, and five states (New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Washington, and California) plus the District of Columbia have laws mandating paid leave for caregiving. Several other states are set to implement such laws by 2023.



## Explore Tax Breaks and Life Insurance Deals

Your loved one may be able to receive federal tax deductions for health care expenses such as a wheelchair or hospital bed, remodeling the home to make it more accessible, and hiring a short-term or part-time home health aide to provide respite for the primary caregiver. Be sure to save receipts for all medical expenses.

## Get Help

Professionals are there for a reason. Reach out and get the advice and help of professionals, whether they be tax professionals (e.g. CPAs), financial advisors, or estate planning and elder law attorneys.

You can find the full AARP article at: <https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/financial-legal/info-2020/caregivers-legal-checklist.html>. You can find your local estate planning and elder law attorney contact information in the ad on this page.

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# We're Not In Bedrock and You're Not with The Flintstones

By DENNIS SULLIVAN & ASSOCIATES, COUNSELORS AT LAW

You may recall the popular television show of the 1960's "The Flintstones" who lived in the town of Bedrock. It happened to be the first-ever prime-time cartoon show. Here, Fred's biggest concerns were staying on the good side of his wife Wilma and avoiding getting tackled by his pet dinosaur Dino when he came through the door. Today, however, life in this COVID-19 World isn't as simple.

The word "Bedrock" also means strength. Being strong is something we all want to achieve. One way of getting there is to

view your life in three facets such as depicted on a pyramid. The pyramid, as we view it, represents our **health, finances, and legacy**. Beneath this pyramid is the **bedrock of our core values**: the fundamental beliefs we hold dear. These guiding principles dictate our behavior and help us know the difference between right and wrong. Ideally, we share our core values with our loved ones. However, during this past year, core values have sometimes taken a back seat to the topsy-turvy COVID-19 landscape. Principles and beliefs, while still important, can get lost in the mere challenge of navigating through COVID-19 restrictions, sickness, and tur-



moil. Likewise, career, finances, relationships, and yes, our mental and physical well-being in general have been jumbled. Worry and fear have become the norm for many. **Are you one of the many who have suffered through sleepless nights?**

Nevertheless, beneath all of this, you still have your bedrock of core values. This is where we can help in making sure you stay on a straight path in your health, financial and legacy pyramid, despite all you have been through.

As we enter the second year of

Covid-19, we're here to help you explore and share your core values with loved ones. We offer **unique discovery counseling opportunities** with proven health, life, disability, estate, and asset protection planning processes to help guide you successfully through the COVID-19 landscape and other challenges you and your family may face. This is achieved through our new proprietary, peace of mind, **Legacy Planning System**. It protects you for life, and most importantly passes on your core values and legacy

for generations that follow. As you document your core values, you will **uncover what's most important to pass on** to those who follow in your footsteps for generations to come. Your legacy can be a fantastic legacy to pass along! It is prudent, today more than ever, to protect your health, home, spouse, family, life savings, and legacy. In these continued times of COVID-19, you owe it to yourself and those year hold dear. Don't let this Bedrock opportunity pass you by!

**Book a FREE online discovery session today.** You'll discover why 90% of all trust and estate plans fail as well as what you can do to protect your health, home, spouse, family, legacy, and life savings. **Call 800-964-4295 NOW** or visit [www.DSullivan.com](http://www.DSullivan.com) to register for a Free Discovery Session! You will even qualify to **receive up to \$2,475 in valuable benefits** to update your trust and estate plans for the new Covid-19 world and build your own value-based legacy to guide future generations.

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**Learn more:** [ashlandmass.com/831/Grant-Opportunities](http://ashlandmass.com/831/Grant-Opportunities)

**PLEASE RECYCLE THIS NEWSPAPER**

# Senior Center Events

## May/June Mindfulness Meditation- Zoom program

Free, register thru Community Pass or call the center 508-647-6540.

Every Thursday with Sharon 1:00-1:40 pm. This meditation is audio only and participants are muted during the meditation portion. Everyone is welcome to join for some guided meditation, some quiet sitting and some reflection with Q & A and sharing.

## Mother's Day Breakfast Goody Bag - Special Give-Away to pick up at Natick CSC

Wednesday, May 5 between 9:30am-11:30am, register thru Community Pass or call the center 508-647-6540.

RSVP required, free, call Natick Community Senior Center to register 508-647-6540.

Our traditional Mother's Day breakfast will be a bit different this year, it's Drive-Through! You are invited to enjoy a free bagged Panera continental breakfast including pastry, fruit cup and orange juice, plus a special surprise, provided by Mary Ann Morse Healthcare Center here in Natick. We'll have 100 breakfasts ready to go for community seniors, in honor of Mother's Day. Preregistration is required. Sponsored by Mary Ann Morse Healthcare Center, Natick

## Art Matters- Mother and Child- zoom program

Wednesday, May 5, 1:30 pm, free, register thru Community Pass or call the center 508-647-6540.

The bond between mothers and their children is very special, very personal, and yet universal. This relationship transcends language, different cultures, great distances and time itself. We'll look at a range of art and artists from ancient times to modern including Cassatt, Picasso, Raphael, Kahlo and many more. Come and celebrate Mother's Day with this art appreciation! All are welcome. Sponsored by Mary Ann Morse Healthcare Center, Natick.

## Garden Tour at Elm Bank/ Mass Hort - in person

Tuesday, May 25, 10:00am, rsvp required, free, register thru

Community Pass or call the center 508-647-6540.

Garden Tour- limited to 15 participants. Meet at the main parking lot of Elm Bank, 900 Washington St, Wellesley. Join this lovely garden tour to admire shrubs, trees, flowers and learn about the history of this fascinating estate as well as horticultural plant identification and background stories. Highlights include the Bressingham Garden, Weezies garden for children (including pollinator plants), seed to table vegetable garden and the show stopping Italianate Garden by the Manor House. Some seats available throughout the gardens, but be prepared to stand and walk, wear comfortable shoes, hat etc. Bathrooms are available on-site. Allow 2 hours, but feel free to stop whenever. Rain Date will be Wednesday, May 26, 10:00am. Sponsored by Whitney Place Assisted Living Residences, Natick.

## NOTES:

### Home Fit Tips (12' video)

<https://states.aarp.org/massachusetts/watch-a-homefit-video-from-home>

Did you know that 89% of people 50 and older have told AARP that they want to remain in their homes for as long as possible?

The AARP HomeFit program was developed to educate older adults how to navigate all living spaces independently to allow them to remain in their own homes as they age. Participants receive information on how to easily evaluate their own home for "livability" should they themselves or one of their family members become unable to use stairs, or must rely on assistive devices. It is designed help individuals plan for independence, choice and dignity as they age.

AARP Massachusetts Executive Council member Ellie Meyer is an occupational therapist with 30 years experience covering a wide range of populations and settings.

Ellie has put together this useful video to help you stay safe at home during COVID-19. You'll get tips to help you understand how homes can be designed and modified to help you get around independently in all of your liv-



ing areas and how to make your home as safe as possible.

LINK for Social Security program 1 hour long: a little over an hour long- <https://states.aarp.org/massachusetts/want-to-know-more-about-social-security-join-our-webinar-october-21>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dfm6mfU5uko>

We'll stream this 1/2 hour talk given by environmental activist and founder of 350.org in 2019 about climate change, what we need to do and where we go from here. Greta Thunberg's TED talk 11' from 2019

CDC 4' you tube on How Climate Affects Communities

# Outpatient Rehab Press Release

MARY ANN MORSE HEALTHCARE CENTER ANNOUNCES NEW OUTPATIENT REHABILITATION

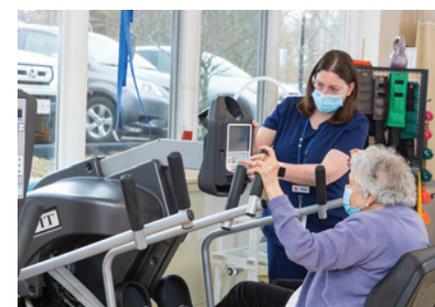
Mary Ann Morse Healthcare Center, a non-profit provider of quality short-term rehabilitation, long-term skilled nursing care, and memory care in Metro West for over 25 years, has announced the opening of its new Outpatient Rehabilitation center at 45 Union Street in Natick.

The new Outpatient Rehab offers a broad range of state of the art, high quality rehabilitation services to help patients achieve the highest levels of health, strength, functioning and independence possible after surgery, joint replacement, neurological disorder, illness, or injury. Customized physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and treatments are all available on-site for patients on the road to recovery.

"Mary Ann Morse is extremely pleased to add Outpatient Rehabilitation to its growing continuum of exceptional senior living and healthcare services in Metro West," said Lisa Kubiak, President & CEO of non-profit Mary Ann Morse Healthcare Corp. "Our inpatient short-term rehab program has been very successful for years and we are well-known for our cutting-edge rehabilitation suite and programs. We're very excited to be offering these services on an Outpatient basis, so that the community at large can benefit."

Mary Ann Morse Healthcare Center has a 5-Star Overall rating from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and is accredited by The Joint Commission. Visit [www.maryannmorse.org/ntn](http://www.maryannmorse.org/ntn) for more information on the new Outpatient Rehab and the entire continuum of senior living, healthcare, and home care services provided by Mary Ann Morse Healthcare Corp.

## Get Back to Living Your Best Life



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[www.maryannmorse.org/ntn](http://www.maryannmorse.org/ntn)

# Library News

Due to rising cases of COVID-19 within our Community and the surrounding areas, the Library and Board of Health have decided to scale back service and close for in-person browsing. We are very excited to announce a new point of service that will allow you to get your holds without an appointment, with our brand new, Walk-up Window!

## Walk-Up Window for Holds Pickup

### What is the Walk-up Window?

The Walk-up Window allows you to pick up your holds with no appointment necessary! Come to the library and line up outside along the ramp, where you will be protected from the elements with our exciting new Holiday Window Display. This exciting initiative will give you the flexibility to pick up your items on your time, with expanded hours during the week and on weekends.

If you have holds to pickup, please use the Walk-up Window! This window is located in our interior entryway.

- One person may enter at a time
- Please enter at the bottom of the ramp, and wait on the marked spots to keep physically distant
- An exterior light indicator will go from red to green when it is your turn to enter the Walk-up Window.
- Scan your library card once inside, and we will grab your items for you!
- Don't have anything on hold? Give us a call at 508-647-6520 and we will assist you! Or head to "my account" and browse our catalog!

### Walk-Up Window Hours

**Monday – Thursday : 9am-8pm**  
**Friday & Saturday : 9am-4:30pm**  
**Sunday : 1pm-4:30pm**

### Can I still do Contactless Holds Pick Up?

Yes! We encourage everyone who cannot stand outside or may not want to wait because of children or pets in their car to still



# MORSE INSTITUTE LIBRARY

Natick's Community Library

book an appointment online or via the Minuteman Library App.

### Contactless Pickup

We will still have contactless pickup appointments available for your convenience and safety.

- Pickup appointments are available from 9am-10am daily from Monday through Friday, and 9am-10am on Saturday. We also have appointments from 7pm-8pm Monday through Thursday.
- You may only book a pickup appointment AFTER receiving a request pickup notice from the Library that your items are ready.
- If you miss your appointment, please call us to schedule another. Because we only have so many slots per appointment, we are unable to reschedule pickup for the same day.

- Puzzles and items from the "Library of Things" are not available during contactless pickup.

### How does it work?

- Step 1: Put items on hold using your Minuteman account
- Step 2: Wait for an email, text, or phone call that your items are ready to be picked up.
- Step 3: Book a pickup appointment window using our online pickup calendar OR give us a call at 508-647-6520
- Step 4: Come to the Contactless Pickup area outside the library during your appointment window and grab your items off the contactless pickup shelf. Items will be checked out and bagged with your name on it.

### Can I Browse Books?

Not at this time. However, staff are hard at work making solutions to give you browse-ability while we are closed. If you would like a recommendation give us a call 508-647-6520 or join Morse Book Match!

### Delivery Service

Delivery Service is available for our patrons who cannot safely come to the library, to see if you qualify for delivery click here.

### What Stays Virtual

- All programming and events will continue to be hosted online.
- Reference assistance by email, chat, text message, appointment, or phone through our Digital Branch

**LIBRARY**

*continued on page 17*

# Celebrate your Graduate!

The Class of 2021 has experienced the most unusual senior year of our lifetimes!

- ▽ Hybrid Learning
- ▽ Spring Football
- ▽ Face Coverings

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For more information or group pricing, contact Andrew Carini at [andrew@ourtownpublishing.com](mailto:andrew@ourtownpublishing.com).

**LIBRARY**

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- Virtual Reference hours: Monday-Friday 9am-6pm, Saturday 10am-2pm
- Access to all the great digital content like e-Books, e-Audiobooks, movies, magazines, and music from MorseInstitute.org website and our Virtual Reading Room
- Remote access to research resources like databases

**Express bundles**

The new Express Bundles for adults, DVD, teens, and children have launched! Also, we have a new Book-Fix program, that is similar to Stitch-Fix (book bundles curated to fit your taste).

You can use the Walk up window to pick up an Express Bundle on demand.

OR, you can fill out an online form to request:

1. Express Bundle(s) to pick up later at the walk up window (within 1 day!)
2. Express Bundle(s) to pick up via contactless holds

3. Book-Fix curated collection based on your preferences within the categories of adult, teen, or children.

**Mobile Self-Checkout & Contactless Pickup now LIVE on the Minuteman App!**

In order to make getting your materials as fast and safe as possible, we are excited to announce that you can now book a contactless pickup appointment directly from the Minuteman App available for both Apple IOS & Android devices!

Coming into the building to pickup materials? You now have a contactless option to check out your materials from within the library! Open the Minuteman Library App, select "Mobile Checkout" and scan the item barcodes to checkout. It is simple, fast, and safe!

**Special Sunday Holds Pickups!**

In order to help those who cannot safely come into the Library, we are opening three hours of Contactless Holds Pickup on Sundays. Times will be available at 1:30, 2:30, & 3:30. Visit the Contactless Holds Pickup web-

page for all the information on picking up your holds without coming into the library!

**MIL Virtual Programming**

**Childrens:**

**Program Videos**

Premiering on our Facebook and website, no registration needed!

**Rhyme Time**

Posted Wednesdays 10:00am

short stories, songs and play-time extension activities geared for infants and toddlers and their grownups.

**Preschool Play**

Posted Fridays 10:00am

weekly program of stories, songs and games designed especially for the preschool set.

**BedTime Buddies**

Posted Wednesday nights 7pm



A fun pre-bedtime program full of songs, skits, reading and more! A family program for younger listeners and the young at heart



**Teen and tween**

**Dungeons & Dragons Online Gaming**

Friday evenings, 6:00-8:00pm

Play a Dungeons & Dragons adventure online over 5 weeks! It will be a fifth edition standard fantasy D&D campaign set in Faerun. Players will be able to choose from a variety of pre-generated first level characters. Beginners welcome!

Open to Teens ages 13-18.



**Relaxing Coloring**

Join us for a coloring session with exclusive coloring sheets - and chat with other Teens & Tweens on Zoom! Hosted by Teen Librarian Robin. If you want to take the coloring sheets and color on your own time, that's OK, too!

Open to Teens ages 11-18 + 5th graders.

Monthly, from 3:00-4:00pm

**LIBRARY**

*continued on page 18*

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**LIBRARY**

*continued from page 17*

**Adult Programs:**

**Bark: Identifying Trees of the Northeast**

Monday, May 3rd at 7pm

Join Naturalist Michael Wojtech on a virtual walk to look at the trees around us. Michael is the author of "Bark: A Field Guide to Trees of the North-



east." He will share his innovative techniques for identifying trees by their bark, and share other facts and characteristics about our arboreal neighbors! During this

program, you will become better informed about the types of trees in our local forests and landscapes. Registration is required. Please be sure to include your email address to receive both a confirmation and Zoom link to the program. So find your virtual walking shoes and come along!

**Meditation with Vivek and Lipi**

Wednesdays at 6:30pm

Good news for our Wednesday Night Meditation folks! Vivek and Lipi will be hosting

Meditation live using Zoom every Wednesday night at 6:30pm! Join us for relaxation and mindfulness! You must register for each session separately using the online calendar above. The Zoom link will be included in your registration confirmation.

**Self Care Series: Virtual Qi Gong ("chi" gong)**

Every Tuesday at 10am

Join us weekly on Tuesday mornings for some relaxing and



low-key Qi Gong. Qi Gong is a centuries-old system of coordinated body-posture and movement, breathing, and meditation used for the purposes of health, spirituality, and martial-arts training. With roots in Chinese medicine, philosophy, and martial arts, Qi Gong is traditionally viewed by the Chinese and throughout Asia as a practice to cultivate and balance qi (pronounced approximately as "chi"), translated as "life energy". The best part about Qi Gong, anyone can do it! Please register for each session you will be attending using our online calendar.

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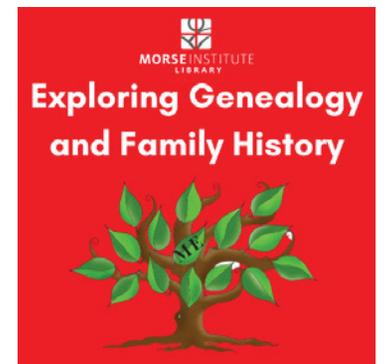
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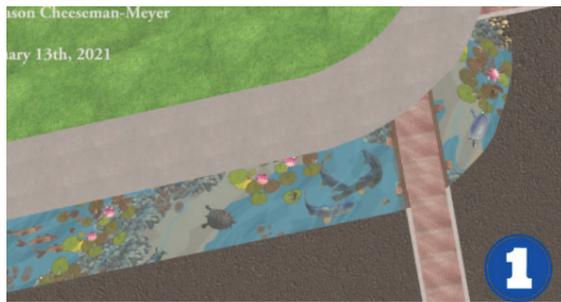
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[www.rehabassociates.com/riverbend](http://www.rehabassociates.com/riverbend)



# Traffic Calming Winners Announced



Congratulations to the winners of the Call to Artists for the Traffic Calming Public Art Project in Natick.

The finalists and the selected proposals are:

- Jason Cheeseman** - Meyer - Sparkling Stream
- Denise Girardin** - LOVE 01760
- Swati Dave** - Traditional Indian Kolam Designs
- Kevin Baldwin** - Composition No.4
- Polly B. Wright** - Natick Abstract

The artworks will be displayed near sidewalks at the intersection of Rte. 135 and Rte. 27 in Natick Center. Thank you to all the artists who applied for this introductory public art project. At Natick Center Cultural District, we hope to keep bringing unique art engagement opportunities to our community!



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# Sports

## Crook Eager To Play Lacrosse Again At Natick High

### Captain Competes To Honor Memory Of Mom

By KEN HAMWEY  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Alex Crook will be extremely pleased to play lacrosse this spring for a variety of reasons.

Last year, when the covid-19 pandemic struck, all spring sports were canceled, forcing the 5-foot-11, 195-pound Natick High defender to miss his junior year after two promising seasons as an underclassman.

Crook, a captain and honorable mention all-star in hockey last winter, is eager to get his senior year of lacrosse underway because he wants Natick High to dominate the Carey Division standings, qualify for the tournament and advance past the second round. The Redhawks were eliminated from the playoffs in each of his first two years in the second round. His individual goals include being a top-notch captain,

a quality leader on defense and a Bay State Conference all-star.

"We've got a good mix of talent on our team but could use some added experience," Crook said. "We weren't able to get a look at our younger players last year but I think they'll adjust and make the jump to the varsity. Wellesley will be a challenge for us, a traditionally strong team and one of our top rivals. On defense, I'd like our midfielders and defenders to be viewed as a tough-as-nails group that's difficult to penetrate, like trying to go through a brick wall."

The 18-year-old Crook, who's a National Honor Society student with a 4.27 GPA, says "it would be cool to be a league all-star."

Being a captain in lacrosse and being a potential all-star choice sure would have made his mother (Marnie) proud. She succumbed to cancer at the age of 42, when



Alex was in the fifth grade and only 11 years old.

"I compete hard to honor her memory," Crook said. "Her death was difficult to comprehend early on but it's motivated me to play for her. She competed in an adult women's ice hockey league and she was upset when she was unable to play. A psychologist, she often emphasized that everyone has tough times. She taught me to think about other people's situations and to understand their emotions no matter what they're dealing with. That's why I try to lead in a way that's sensitive and respectful."

Nate Kittler, who's been coaching Natick's varsity for 21 years, has a plethora of superlatives when assessing his star defender.

"Alex has a high athletic IQ, he's physically and mentally tough, and he's a leader whose decision-making is instinctive," Kittler said. "What makes him one of the conference's top defenders are his footwork, stick skills, and lateral movement. If he gets beat, he never loses focus and he never lets emotions overcome him. A defender rarely gets much notice even when they shut down an offensive star. Alex isn't worried about a lack of publicity."

Crook thoroughly enjoys lacrosse and strives to meet every challenge he faces on defense.

"Communication is a big key on defense," he noted. "It's important for the midfielders, defenders and goalie to work together to prevent goals. Lacrosse is exciting because it's fast-paced and strategic. It also allows you to be creative."

Crook, whose family moved to Natick from Framingham when he was four, rates Natick's first-round playoff game against Silver Lake as his most memorable



game. That contest came during his sophomore season in 2019.

"The two squads were evenly matched," he recalled. "Our teamwork was excellent. I was pleased with my consistency on defense and I broke up a lot of scoring opportunities. We won, but unfortunately we were later eliminated by Franklin. My top thrill in lacrosse came when the coaches chose me as one of the team's captains. I was really honored."

Natick's other captains, like Crook, are all seniors — midfielders T.J. Dalicandro, Will Genaske, and Nick Polymeros.

"They're all quality leaders," Crook said. "T.J. is a vocal captain and a great lockdown defender. Will is sneaky fast, moves elusively and is a scoring threat. Nick is strong and physical and very capable on faceoffs."

Crook also admires his coach, calling Kittler "a great motivator who's dedicated to the team." His passion for lacrosse also impresses Crook. "Coach Kittler really loves the sport," he said. "And, when we're facing a tough opponent, he often delivers a poignant speech."

Crook is delighted the spring season has the green light to play matches. Last spring, he was very disappointed sports were canceled.

"I tried to be positive but it was sad we lost the entire season," he said. "I'm really thankful we're set to compete soon. I'm excited and eager in spite of any modifications that are imposed. We'd prefer no changes but it's a reality and we have to adjust. New rules will be helpful because we can compete and co-exist with the virus without sacrificing health

and safety."

Crook and his teammates in ice hockey adjusted well to all the modifications imposed during the winter. He played center on the first line and had 2 goals and 8 assists. "We finished with a 6-4-2 record and it was a cool feeling to be named an all-star," he said. "My strength was passing. I usually get more assists than goals."

Relying on an athletic philosophy that stresses winning, reaching one's potential and having fun, Crook's favorite professional athlete is Patrice Bergeron of the Boston Bruins. "He plays a lot of defense as a front-liner and he's also a passing center," Crook noted.

A college selection is just around the corner for Crook who's interested in attending Brown, the University of Buffalo or UMass-Amherst. He plans on majoring in bio-chemistry and likely will compete in sports at the club level.

Calling his late mother a role model because of her strength and the inspiring way she handled her illness, Crook also admires his father. "Both my parents were always supportive and encouraging," he emphasized.

Athletics teach valuable life lessons, like developing a strong work ethic and how to be a leader. Another life lesson that athletes often learn is how to overcome adversity. Crook gets high marks in that area.

A top-notch, two-sport athlete and an incredible student, Alex Crook is a role model in many ways. Dealing with the loss of his mom in such a dignified and classy way also makes him special.

Very special.

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# Sports

## 7 questions with Lyman Phillips on Natick Youth Lacrosse

BY SUSAN MANNING  
STAFF WRITER

Natick parent Pam Ahern's daughter plays lacrosse and learns more than just the rules of the sport.

Under the tutelage of Natick Youth Lacrosse coach Lyman Phillips Jr., Ahern said her daughter has learned the ins and outs of the popular sport, as well as life skills.

"Lyman ... collects vintage lacrosse sticks. After each game, Coach Lyman awards a stick to one of the players to keep for a week. The stick goes to the girl who has put in the most effort that week at practices and games.

"His focus is not the player who has scored the most goals or exhibited the flashiest playing. Instead, it is on the girl who has tried harder and pushed herself to be better.

"My daughter was the recipient of one of these sticks, and she displayed it (in her room for a week) proudly! In addition to the stick "award," Coach Lyman's continuous enthusiasm and encouragement motivates his players—including my daughter who was new to the sport—to keep at it," she said.

The Natick parent said Phillips was critical to the kids getting through the pandemic, as well.

"Coach Lyman also kept players motivated and moving in 2020 when lacrosse season was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic," Ahern said.

Let's hear a little more from Coach Phillips about the program and his dedication to it.

### 1. What is Natick Youth Lacrosse?

Natick Youth lacrosse (NYL) is a non-profit organization that provides boys and girls in Natick the opportunity to learn about and play lacrosse. Like other youth sports, we use town facilities and we're in contact with the NHS coaches, but we are independent from the town.

NYL offers children in Natick the opportunity to play lacrosse in a supportive atmosphere. Our general travel teams are not ranked - they are set up to be as even as possible. We try to

provide even playing time for all players. For the players that want a more competitive experience, we also have select teams that place a higher emphasis on skills and competitiveness, but players on select also have to practice/play on their age level rec teams.

All our teams play against other towns.

### 2. What age children can participate?

For the travel teams, both the boys and girls are essentially grouped by grade:

1st/2nd; 3rd/4th; 5th/6th and 7th/8th grades. Lacrosse is a spring sport. These teams usually have two practices a week and a game on the weekend. Select teams add another practice during the week and have another game during the week.

We also have a non-traveling practice for pre-K and kindergartners called Little Laxers. They meet Sunday mornings for 5 or 6 Sunday at the Cole Center. In fact, we're still taking registrations for that on the Natick Lacrosse website - <https://natick-lacrosse.com>

Unfortunately, registration for the travel leagues is already closed and we've already got a few games under our belts.

### 3. Why do you think kids like playing lacrosse?

Growing up in Texas, I had never seen lacrosse, much less played lacrosse, so I don't have experience playing, but my son and daughter both played NYL. For the boys, the appeal is pretty obvious - you run around a field with a stick hitting each other while wearing cool equipment that makes you look like a knight! Seriously, there's the physical aspect of the game. It's challenging to play with that little ball in a net on the end of a stick. You sprint around and the ball goes really fast and you get to shoot on a goal. Plus you get to get all dirty and smelly with your buddies - what's not to like?

Same for the girls - minus the padding and knight helmet. You get cool goggles, you have a fancy stick - many of them in very appealing colors and you get to hang out and get messy with your



friends - and meet new friends. And the girls' sticks are even harder to play with because the pocket is not as deep.

Seriously, the joy from catching a pass on the run, making a cool shot, defending or dodging and enjoying a day roughhousing with your friends in the beautiful New England Spring just can't be beat. Especially after the year we've had so inwardly focused, the kids get a real pleasure in getting outside and seeing other kids.

The fun that the players have and the impact that playing lacrosse has on their life is reflected in the wonderful high school players who have come back - on their own time - to help coach the younger kids. And we have some girls who have taken additional training to allow them to become junior referees - which is an incalculably valuable contribution - without refs you can't play games and that impacts the sport's growth. Plus all these returning players are very inspiring and our players really look up to them. Plus nothing beats learning from "a real lacrosse player."

### 4. Anything else?

You know, I think that some of the kids get a real kick out of doing something that mom and dad can't / didn't do and might not even know about. Although we do see parents who've played lacrosse - and we're seeing more and more of that recently, the majority of parents whose kids are playing have never played be-



fore - the kids are teaching their parents about lacrosse; that has to be a treat for the kids.

The downside is that mom and dad might not know how to practice with them, but then again kids and their parents and siblings can all learn together.

Additionally, NYL is a relatively small program. So it's easy to get to know entire teams, and the players will probably get to know everyone in their levels. You're not going to get lost here. And we have great rapport with the high school programs.

### 5. So what do you do for NYL?

This season, I'm the Girls' Director; I'm filling an unexpected vacancy. I guess I was too slow putting my finger beside my nose when they asked for a volunteer! I'm also on the Board of Directors, I'm the Registrar and I usually coordinate the 3rd/4th grade teams, although this year I'm letting someone else do that since I'm a little busy with other NYL responsibilities.

Oh yeah, I've also been coaching 3rd/4th grade girls for 14 years. So there's that. In case you're doing the math, the girls I'm coaching now weren't born until I was already coaching at

least 4 years, and the first girls I coached graduate college this year - and I'm proud to say that a few of them continued playing lacrosse all the way through high school.

You know, I think the next questions should be "What does lacrosse do for you?"

### 6. OK, I'll bite. To put it another way, "what do you get from volunteering with NYL?"

That's easy. I get to be outside participating in a sport I love. I get away from the office. I've met some great people - both other coaches and parents - that have become friends.

When my kids were part of the program (and that was many years ago - they're 27 and 23 now), it was great for us to have something to share. We'd go out and toss the ball around - all of us - and have a great time together. I got to see them become more skilled and to overcome challenges - because lacrosse requires skills that aren't everyday skills, like carrying around a ball in a little net on the end of a long stick

LYMAN

continued on page 23

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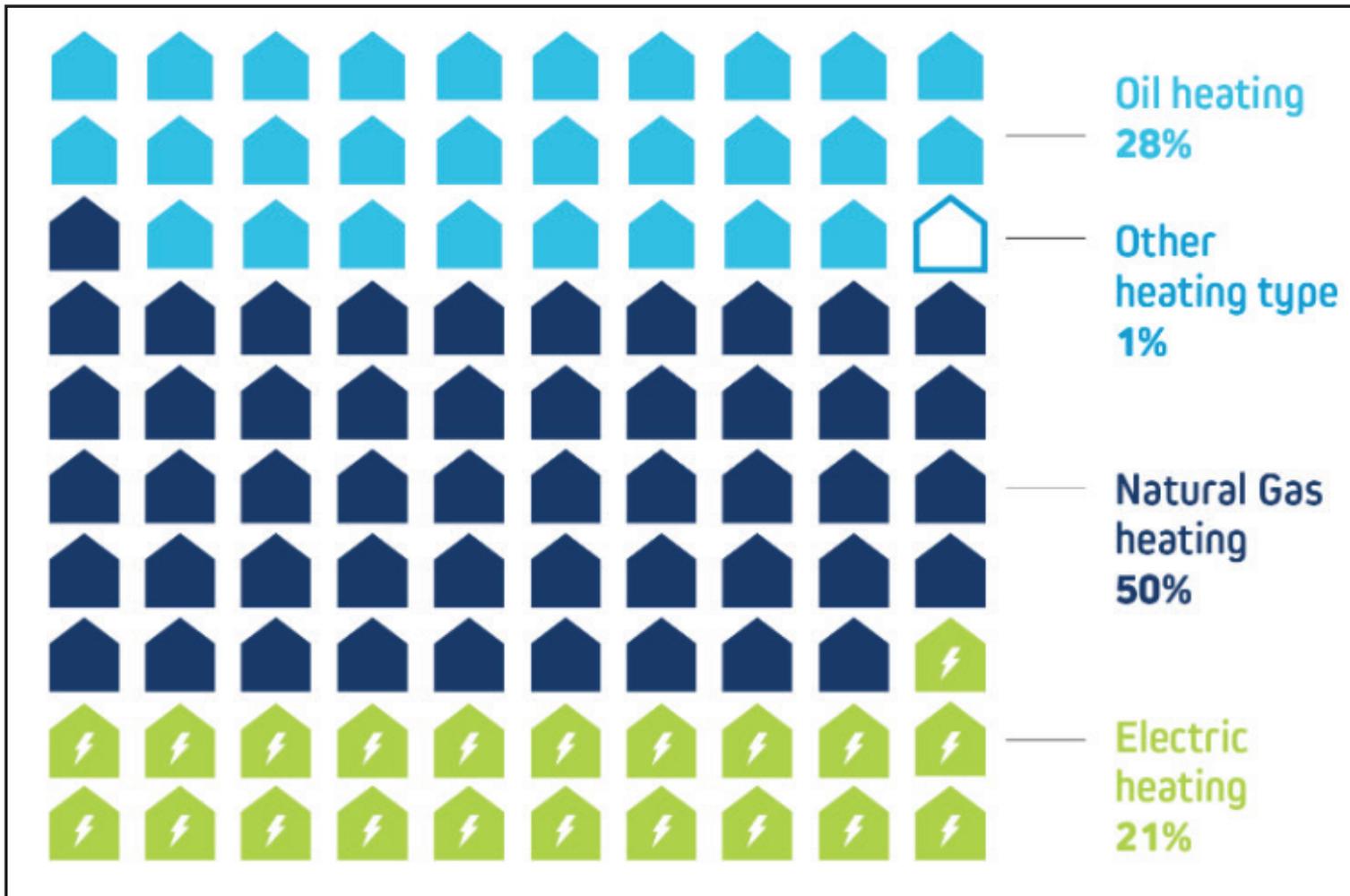
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# Real Estate Corner



How Natick homes are heated: Findings from the Greenhouse Gas Inventory.

## Your Clean Energy Home

Natick is partnering with Ashland, Holliston and Framingham to help residents go solar and convert to clean heat and cooling systems - at crowdsourced prices. The plan is to use our communities' collective buying power to save on the cost of installing solar panels and/or heat pumps.

Heat pumps are an especially rad part of the program. Did you know the Massachusetts Clean Energy and Climate Plan calls for heat pumps in 1 million homes by 2030? If you use oil to heat your home, rely on electric resistance heat, or already have solar, you are an especially great candidate for this technology.

Want to learn more? Sign up (<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfbRCpjX-ikXob3iLuDyz1F-e9RL2iofQzI-JLQnf0YT7K9tYmA/viewform>) and you'll have the opportunity to connect with a clean energy home volunteer coach. We'll also put you at the front of the line for a free site assessment, once installers are selected later this spring. Get excited!

You can also sign up to volunteer to support the program! They are looking for help with marketing and coordinating outreach events. Residents who also have solar or heat pumps are invited to show off their technology via virtual open houses



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# Real Estate Corner

## LYMAN

continued from page 21

- and have fun with their friends and win games and sometimes lose games.

And now, I get to experience a little bit of that still, while coaching. It's pretty heady stuff to see the joy of a child when they make a great catch, score their first goal or do a great play with their friends and know that you had a small part in that achievement.

Also, they inspire me to try to stay in shape. I joke that I have to keep doing those laps around the Cole Center path because each year I'm another year older, and each year, they're still 8 or 9 years old.

### 7. OK... question number 7 and I'm throwing you an easy pass. What's the final thing you want to tell our readers about lacrosse?

First of all, if you have any questions, there's a contact form on our website at <https://natick-lacrosse.com>. I'm pretty sure that goes to me and I'll answer them myself or route your questions to the right person. You can also find games listed there on the scheduler.



Second, if you're a parent whose kid is in lacrosse, don't be afraid to join in. I mean, I'm the last person you'd picture being a girls coach - I mean first, I'm a guy; second, I never played lacrosse; third, I use a wheelchair. If I can do it, you probably can too. It takes commitment, and I checked in with the family before I took on more responsibilities, but the rewards are worth it. The rewards of an activity with your kids and the benefit to the community.

Lastly, seriously give lacrosse consideration when your son or



daughter are thinking about a Spring sport. We have lots of opportunities to give it a try. Like I said, we have little laxers in the Spring, and registrations are still open. We have a free clinic in the fall and if you like that, the boys always have a winter clinic and the girls are trying to get more Winter activities rolling as well.

It's a lot of fun for the kids, and it's pretty fun for moms and dads as well.

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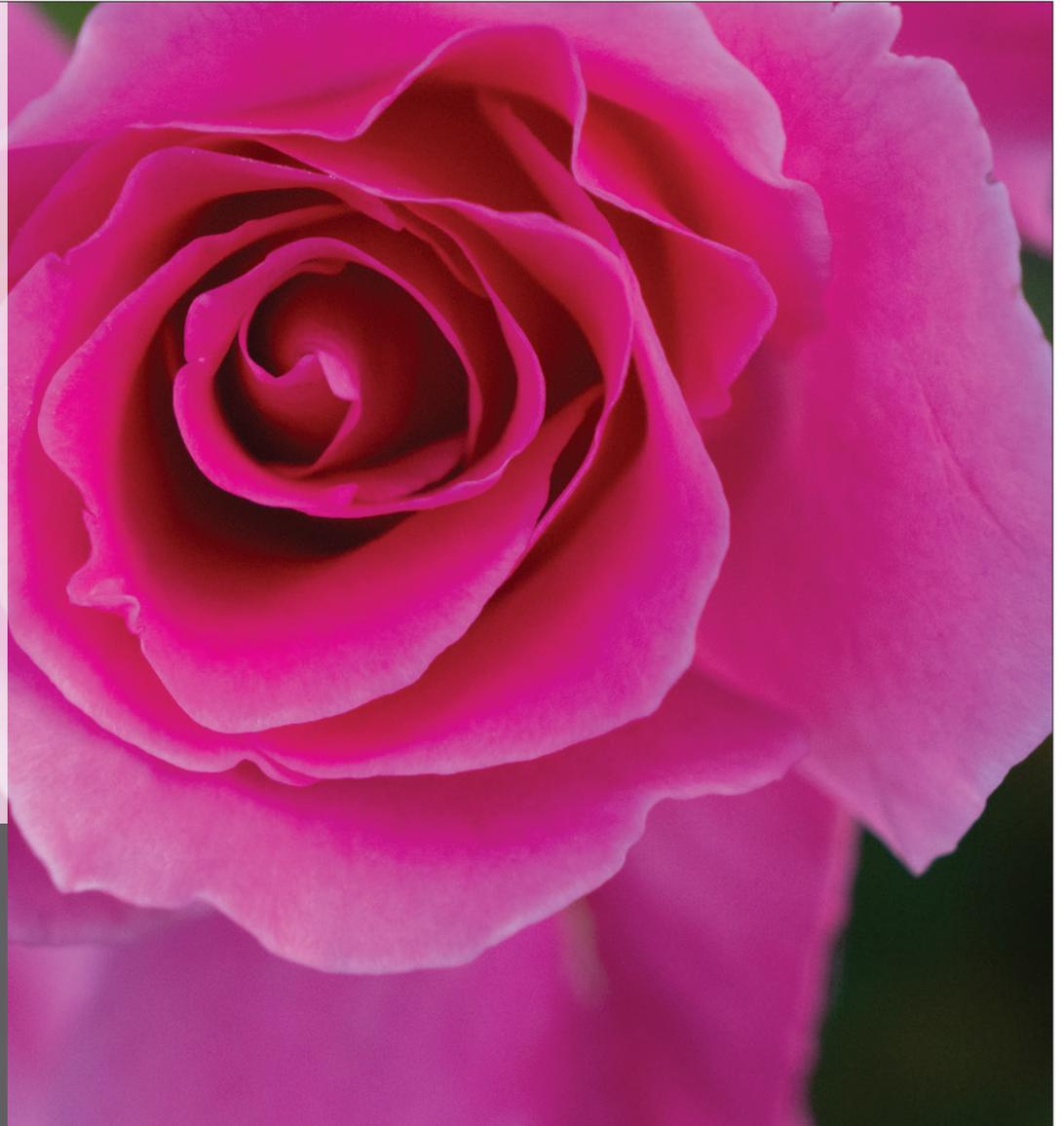
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