

June 11-July 9, 2021

Jobs! Riverdale Mills 'actively hiring' as demand for steel soars

By Rod Lee

Like other manufacturers across the country, Riverdale Mills Corp. was dealt a blow by the COVID-19 pandemic. But if "Riverdale," or "RMC," is known for anything besides the innovation that put the Northbridge-based company on the map in the first place, it is resiliency.

Riverdale Mills' staying power through all sorts of challenges is a well-known fact. The company has operated for forty years in a renovated 1840s mill on Riverdale St. next to the Blackstone River. The building was first known for manufacturing scythes and then bayonets for the Union Army during

the Civil War. Today, 80 percent of all lobster traps used in North America are made with Riverdale Mills' marine wire mesh.

Now, with the pandemic easing and the demand for steel surging, Riverdale is ready to fortify its traditionally strong position in the marketplace, President and CEO James Knott Jr. and Jane Meehan Lanzillo, who is director of corporate communications for RMC, said.

As CNN Business reported recently, "the reopening of the economy is driving a steel boom."

This is good news for Riverdale Mills because, Ms. Lanzillo points



Men working wire at Riverdale Mills' factory in Northbridge.

out, "steel is at the core of Riverdale Mills' marine mesh product. Sales are up and Riverdale Mills is actively hiring again."

Mr. Knott confirmed as much during a telephone conversation. Riverdale is eager to rebuild its workforce and looking to return

from "a 24/5" operation to "24/7," he said.

"Everyone is busy right now," he noted, of manufacturers and

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WTF BIG!
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GIVE-A-WAYS!
Check out page 7 for details!

Victory Supply is on the move, ready for summer projects

By Magda Dakin

Keeping it in the family, Victory Supply owner Dan Esposito is busy moving his landscape and masonry business into "new digs" at 2677 Bronco Highway in Harrisville, Rhode Island.

He is moving into the former Roots & Shoots Garden Center location, which his mother owned and operated for 19 years, and is now permanently closed. There are some items left from the old store but more of Dan's inventory is arriving every day.

Dan's business was established in 2017 and was a natural extension of the Esposito family business-

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Water fall at Victory Supply/Roots & Shoots vintage

Douglas Orchard announces 12-concert series



One local concert venue that is not missing a beat this summer is Douglas Orchard & Farm, which has lined up 12 concerts at its outdoor pavilion for Saturday evenings, which began June 5, from 6 to 8 p.m. This will be the fourth year that the farm has offered the live concerts, which have become popular with local communities.

Among the featured bands are The Silverbacks with late 60s classic rock, the Hip Swayers with classic country, and 4EverFab with a Beatles tribute, the latter two sponsored by the Mass Cultural Council and Douglas Cultural Council.

Concert-goers can also visit the farm animals and try some barbecue. Bring a chair or blanket.

Concert admission is \$10 per person, under 16 free. Cultural council concerts are free. Complete schedule with rain dates is on page 3 of this edition and their website douglasorchardandfarm.com.

Douglas Orchard & Farm is located at 36 Locust Street in Douglas.

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RIVERDALE MILLS

Continued from page 1

the trades. "Lobster, oyster, crab, security mesh, lawn and garden fencing."

"Riverdale is one of many manufacturers who have felt the post-pandemic jolt of activity and demand for products," Ms. Lanzillo noted.

The economy is picking up "quite quickly and we have a tremendous back-

log" of orders, "the biggest in several years," Mr. Knott said. "Our biggest problem is the supply chain. PVC from Texas; pipes in Texas froze in February, a lot of plants shut down and had to retool. Manufacturers were begging and borrowing to get the material."

The availability of steel "is very tight right now but that will change," he said, noting that Riverdale Mills buys all its steel from the U.S. or Canada and is therefore de-

pendent on those suppliers for raw material.

Like gasoline, lumber, computer chips and chlorine, steel has gotten costly.

The price of steel as of mid-May was \$960.00 a ton, Mr. Knott said. "If you go back several months it was probably \$640.00 a ton. It's a problem worldwide. China is at the same rate or close to it and shipping costs have skyrocketed, \$13,000 for a container, in early 2020 it was \$3800."

The threat caused by this predicament "is on all the people using steel," he said.

To get back to full production, Riverdale Mills needs workers.

"We're short 30 percent," Mr. Knott said. "We'd like to be 24/7. We are 24/5. We have vacant equipment on the second and third shifts. We are working with the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Ed Hub, designing training programs for people. We have adjusted our hourly wages but you are competing with

the government on this one. Everyone is having trouble recruiting. We are also working closely with Lew Evangelidis and the sheriff's department with their re-entry program. That's been helpful."

While steel is expensive, "I think prices of raw materials, if they spike up, they will spike down, but right now they are still climbing. Hopefully within the next four to five months they will come down."

Besides revolutionizing the lobster fishing industry with its introduction of Aquamesh, Riverdale Mills is at the forefront in other respects too. Riverdale's high-security WireWall fencing wire mesh is installed in more than one thousand locations around the world, and protects U.S. military bases, fishing ports, borders, transit systems, farms and embassies, Ms. Lanzillo said.

"Our GeoMesh is widely used in the construction of highway bridges and earth retention walls," she said.

The fly in the ointment is the price of steel.

"Stock prices of steel giant Nucor (NUE) alone have spiked 76% this year," Ms. Lanzillo said. "Lead times and availability of domestic steel are a serious issue for U.S. manufacturers, and the Biden Administration appears in no hurry to remove the three-year-old Section 232 steel taxes imposed by then-President Trump."

"Foreign competitors continue to buy steel at half the price we are paying, and some [of them] are shipping goods into the U.S. without tariffs and with an enormous steel price advantage."

"According to U.S. Customs' transactional trade



Spools on the floor at Riverdale Mills. Wire mesh is central to products the company makes for a varied customer base.

data, during 2020, one hundred fifteen shipping containers carrying over 4.5 million pounds of steel intensive wire mesh arrived tariff-free from the European Union; 90 percent of the steel was shipped into the port of Boston, directly competing with Riverdale Mills and taking jobs and business away from our local economy.

"And Chinese-owned factories outside of China usually face lower tariffs than those imposed on factories inside the country—or escape them altogether. This makes it difficult to compete no matter how efficient and technically advanced one's company is."

Over the past several years, Ms. Lanzillo said, Riverdale Mills has worked with colleges, technical institutes and the BV Chamber to recruit untapped workers, help set up curriculum for and raise the profile of the manufacturing industry. These efforts have increased the pool of candidates from which new recruits are sourced, while supporting the local community.

"About 10.4 million people are employed in steel," Mr. Knott said.

Small and medium-sized manufacturers like Riverdale Mills are the backbone of America's supply chain and the reason for optimism, Ms. Lanzillo said. "There is no playbook for what we are navigating but Riverdale is proving resilient once again. Sales are up, our delivery times are improving, and we are returning to full capacity. Our customers worldwide have acknowledged our efforts and expressed their gratitude."

Mr. Knott said "the timeline is unknown" in terms of when the workforce including Riverdale's can regain its full strength.

"We have never experienced anything to the level of this pandemic," he said.

But Riverdale Mills is aggressively pursuing new workers for its plant.

"My sister told me 'you have [we are hiring] signs all over town,' he said.

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



A wire technician; Riverdale Mills is actively hiring in an effort to get back to 24/7 production.

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Published on 2nd and 4th Fridays of the month.
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2nd Friday BLACKSTONE VALLEY South: Douglas, Northbridge and Uxbridge.
4th Friday: Auburn, Charlton, Dudley, Oxford and Webster, other 1/2.
4th Friday BLACKSTONE VALLEY North: Grafton, Millbury and Sutton.

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Southwick's Zoo to light up New England with all new Festival of Illumination beginning in September

Southwick's Zoo in Mendon is excited to announce its all new "Festival of Illumination" beginning this September. This four-month-long premier Chinese Lantern Festival, presented in partnership with the award-winning Zigong Lantern Group, will be the largest of its kind to be hosted

in New England.

From September to January 3, 2022, Southwick's Zoo will be illuminated by breathtaking custom-built exhibits consisting of hundreds of Chinese lanterns meticulously handcrafted from silk, steel, and environmentally friendly LED lights. The theme of this year's

event will be "World of Lights;" in addition to highlighting traditional Chinese culture, this spectacular nighttime display will shine a light on a variety of continents and their traditions. Visitors will travel the globe through the incredible artistry of handcrafted Chinese

Lanterns and be immersed in the magical world of imagination and illumination. The Festival of Illumination will take guests on a trip through the African savannahs, the Amazon rainforest, the Great Barrier Reef, as well as many beautiful and fascinating regions in between. Visitors will also enjoy live entertainment, a typical Asian Night Marketplace and specialty foods. Beginning on November 26, the Southwick's Zoo's traditional Winter Wonderland holiday lights as well as additional holiday themed

Chinese Lanterns will be added. Santa will be visiting at his enchanted Village.

The Zigong Lantern Group is the largest Chinese lantern festival group in the world with over 20 years of experience in creating these breathtaking events.

Zigong has partnered with locations worldwide including the Dublin Zoo, RZSS Edinburgh Zoo, the Nashville Zoo, UK's Longleat House, and Magnolia Plantation, South Carolina. The group's artisans will handcraft the lantern displays on-site at Southwick's Zoo.

The Festival of Illumination - World of Lights is an evening event, 5:30 -10:00 pm. September to January 3. Advance ticket purchase is required for this must-see experience. More information please visit www.festivalofillumination.com.

The Mane Place grill drawing could be your ticket to summer barbecues



The Mane Place owner Linda Chita stands by her giveaway grill.

By Magda Dakin

Planning a summer event or a Fourth of July party and need a new grill to make it happen?

Then it is time to head out to The Mane Place in Uxbridge to enter their free drawing for a brand-new Weber Grill with cover and propane tank. Cosponsored by Poulin Grain, you can enter the drawing, retail value over \$500, any time during the month of June until the 30th.

The drawing will be made in time for your Fourth of July event.

Although you can enter the free giveaway without an actual purchase, you might find it hard to leave without finding something that catches your eye. In addition to providing anything you need to take care of your large four-legged

friends, they also cater to the smaller two-and-four-legged variety like dogs, cats, birds, goats, poultry, and alpaca.

Passing their 32nd year marker, The Mane Place owner Linda Chita, her family, and her long-time staff, are an integral part of the local community and decided to do something nice for her customers and area friends. "The grill was purchased from a local store because I want to support local small business and encourage people to shop near their homes," said Ms. Chita.

The store is located in the Bangma farm complex at 510 West Hartford Ave in Uxbridge. Open Tuesday through Fri-9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., 508-278-7563.

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Sutton Historical Society town-wide yard sale

After a long year of no events, the Sutton Historical Society is once again sponsoring the annual Town-Wide Yard Sale on Saturday, June 26, with a rain date of Sunday, June 27. There are minimal spaces available at the M.M. Sherman Blacksmith Shop, 6 Singletary Avenue, Sutton, or participants are encouraged to set up at their own location. A map detailing all locations will be created, shared on social media, and available to all attendees. A \$10 registration fee for all participants covers the cost of advertising and printing of location maps. All registration fees must be received by Friday, June 11. All excess funds are donated to the Sutton Historical Society. Registration forms can be found on our website at suttonhistoricalsocietyinc.org.

The Society is also seeking item donations for its own table. Please no TVs, computers, monitors, upholstered furniture or clothes. Contact us through our website or reach out to our president, Brian Stevenson (508-865-2122) to coordinate drop off or pick up of donations.

The Society, a 501(c)3, is dedicated to preserving the history of Sutton and sharing their knowledge with the public. Please help us with this important fundraiser.

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2021 Summer Concert Series

COVID-19 Precautions: Masks a must and groups must social distance. Bring your own chair.

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Saturday, June 26th BrumbleTones Classic Rock Hosted by Stephen Phillips 6pm-8pm, \$10 per person 16 and older, Kids Free No rain date	Saturday, July 10th Santitas ABRAXAS Tribute Band Opening act: Special Guest Michelle Boulay singing Joni Mitchell, etc. 5:30pm-8pm, \$10 per person 16 and older, Kids Free, Rain date July 11	Saturday, July 17th 19th NERVOUS BREAKDOWN # ROLLING STONES TRIBUTE Opening act: Female fronted tribute to Creedence Clearwater Revival 5:30pm-8pm, \$10 per person 16 and older, Kids Free, Rain date July 18
Saturday, July 24th FREE Concert sponsored by the Mass Cultural Council and the Douglas Cultural Council. Hip Swayers Classic Country and Rockin' Americana \$5 donation per car for parking, Rain date July 25	Saturday, July 31st Fate's Landing Covers from the 50s-80s, soul-stirring original music. 6pm-8pm, \$10 per person 16 and older, Kids Free, Rain date August 1.	Saturday, August 7th FREE Concert sponsored by the Mass Cultural Council and the Douglas Cultural Council. BEATLES TRIBUTE 4EVERFAB BAND \$5 donation per car for parking. No rain date.
Saturday, August 14th Holdin' Back Band Rock n' Roll, Oldies and Classics 6pm-8pm, \$10 per person 16 and older, Kids Free. Rain date August 15	Saturday, August 21st TONY/SOUL PROJECT From the Delta Blues to Soul to Rock & Roll Hosted by Stephen Phillips. 6pm-8pm, \$10 per person 16 and older, Kids Free. Rain date August 22	Saturday, August 28th EXIT17 ROCK N' ROLL 6pm-8pm, \$10 per person 16 and older, Kids Free. Rain date August 29th

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VICTORY SUPPLY

Continued from page 1

es, all dealing with landscaping and hardscaping. Victory Supply serves masons, landscapers and homeowners in the Blackstone Valley and Northern Rhode Island area with all the materials needed for their various projects.

Available items range from traditional and organic

fertilizer, grass seed, landscape fabric, edging, and stone to tools, including wheel barrels, pruners, and rakes.

Then there are the cement blocks, bricks, pavers, flashing, mason sand, adhesives, tools, and stones of all kinds, ready to finish any kind of project, be it a waterfall, koi pond, fire pit, walkway, or patio.

"I'm keeping all the pond

supplies and fish because there aren't any other places to find them around here," said Dan. "If we have something the customers can't find anywhere else, we will try to keep those things available."

Four kinds of bark mulch, stones by the yard, pellets for your stove, and pavers can be delivered to a wide zone at reasonable prices.

Want to build yourself

a real New England stone wall? You can find the stones here. Looking for creative solutions to erosion, you can find them at Victory Supply. Want to build your own waterfall or koi pond, you can get all the supplies at Victory Supply and recommendations for people to help you build them.

"We're doing our best to get in the bricks and other supplies that our customers are demanding. Business is growing as so many people have chosen yard improvement as a way to keep busy during the last year. Ordering ahead and staying on top of it has been a large part of the effort during the CO-



Goldfish and Koi for the ponds

VID-19 crisis," remarks Dan. Victory Supply Landscape & Masonry Materials is at 2677 Bronco's Highway, Har-

risville, Rhode Island, 401 766-7333 Open Monday to Friday 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday 7 a.m. to noon.

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Northbridge High School Class of 2021 graduates

Northbridge High School has listed the names of the graduating class of 2021. Congratulations to the graduates.

Liam Markley Amsden, Derek Peter Angell, Afia Sakyiwa Berko Aning, Brandon Kofi Asante, Emily Rose Banks, Emma Elizabeth Barnatt, Lane Thomas Boothby, Ally Grace Boucher, Brian Adam Boulris, Kristina Deiana Brenn, Colin Michael Brody, Kristina Marie Brown, Matthew Dante Ceruti, Autumn Beach Champagne, John William Charbonneau, Jennifer Marie Chauvin, Gloribel

Marie Concepcion Cruz, Mason Robert Consigli, Alyssa Guadalupe Corral, Kevin Charles Costigan, Jonathan Barry Cray, Jase Lillian Daoust, Cameron James Deraeau, Fabiano Vitor Gomes Dias, Abigail Rose Dion, Kevin Junior Doherty, Vincent James Duca, Samantha Elizabeth Dutton, Callie Marie Ellis, Asa Michael Flannery, Hunter James Frates, Charlotte Evelyn French, Patrick Maxwell Gahan, Mikayla Alwyn Gallerani, Emma Catherine Ganley, Thomas Patrick Gogolinski, Nathan Peter Gonyea

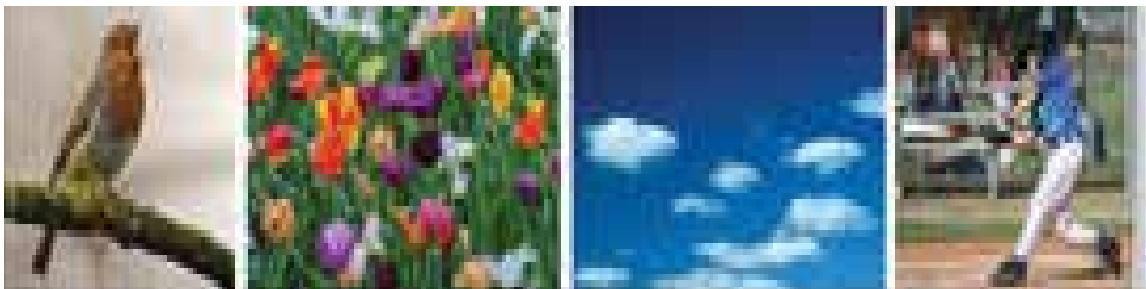
II, Wendy Selorm Adzo Gordor, Trinity Rose Grondin, Courtney Lynn Guckel, Brennan Andrew Hayes, Amber Rose Hebert, Joseph Stephen Hewitt, Justin Corrigan Hodson, Destiny Nicole Ingersoll, Brooke Rachel Jackson, Carly Elizabeth Jacobs, Theodore James Jet Jee, Fabian Alberto Joubert Gonzalez, Erika Sky Kwasek, Jill Jennifer Labrie, Emma Cecelia LaChapelle, Emily Theresa Lafreniere, Alexandra Yve Lambert, Chloe Danelle Lamont, Abby Marie Larochelle, Olivia Marie Lavallee, Abbie

Lauren Lax, Austin Michael Leach, Jase Aden Leavitt, Olivia Alice LeBrasseur, Nicholas Guedes Leite, Donavan James Lemieux, Jack Ryan Lermond, Owen James Lisak, Katelyn Rose Lombardo, Hannah Marie Lomonaco, Angela Ann Lovering, Rocco Joseph MacNeil, Brennan Michael Mahoney, Domenic Michael Malone, Kaylee Rose Marchant, Ariel Marina Marko, Morgan Janet Mawn, Devin Michael McLaughlin, Kiera Niamh McMahon, Julia Marie Mezynski, Justine Nicole Michaud, John Richard Mignault, Aydan Navarre

Millette, Trevor John Moorey, Matthew Douglas Morganelli, Rhian Daniel Murray, Kyle Nasr, Yira Isabel Navarro Rodriguez, William Nieves, Victoria Grace Nowlan, Jacob Timothy Orell, Alexandra Kate Padula, Anthony William Patrinelli, Emma Rose Paulhus, Alina Yesenia Perez-Fairbanks, Luke Christopher Lee Picotte, John Eugene Plante, Kyle Jay Plantinga, Nicholas Albert Riccardelli, Allison Carrie Ronan, Nicholas Rosario Jr, Patrick Lance Rosenlund,

Nicolas Ryan Salamack, J'Lynn Lilliana Schiappucci, Avery Rose Senosk, Michael Andrew Shorey, Kayla Elizabeth Snow, Samantha Pontip Souvanna, Tyler Michael Strom, Kayley Elizabeth Tivnan, Domenic Michael Trombino, Katharine Grace Tubbs, Erin Elizabeth Vierck, Emma Jean Wallis, Melanie Anne Warner, Christian Isaac Paul Wermuth, Jared Anthony Wielsma, Michael Joseph Wilkes, Mario Michael Silva Zizza

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Nurse of St. Vincent Hospital speaks out

Hello—

My name is Melissa MacDonald. I am a nurse on strike at St. Vincent Hospital, Worcester, and I am starting my 37th year in nursing serving the public of Worcester County.

I am one of so many who have spent our entire careers at St. Vincent Hospital. We are asking the public for your continued support and to keep us in your thoughts and prayers.

We are fighting a for-profit-owner, Tenet Healthcare Corporation, which is based in Dallas, Texas. They have put profits over patients since they bought St. Vincent Hospital.

The striking nurses have been waiting for about two years for a fair contract.

We want Tenet to do the right thing for the nurses and for this community. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Melissa MacDonald
and the striking nurses
of St. Vincent Hospital

Uxbridge and Sutton vote to authorize officials to negotiate easements for Blackstone River Bikeway Expansion

WHITINSVILLE – Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor's mission to continue expanding the Blackstone River Greenway/Bikeway has gained momentum. At town meetings on May 15, Uxbridge and Sutton residents voted in favor of authorizing local officials in both towns to negotiate easements that help pave the way for extending the Blackstone River Greenway/Bikeway in their communities.

In Uxbridge, residents voted in favor of granting authority to the Select Board to negotiate mutually agreeable access easements on public parcels. Additionally, the passage of the article will allow a Greenway/Bikeway over or along the existing water/sewer infrastructure where the proposed extension of the existing Blackstone River Greenway will run. The vision for the 3.5-mile expansion would bring it from Adams Street in south Uxbridge to Depot Street in the center of town.

In Sutton, residents voted to authorize the Select Board to convey a parcel of Town-owned land in exchange for trail and bicycle path easements that will allow passage of the Blackstone River

Bikeway on Blackstone Street, near the Singing Dam.

"The Blackstone Heritage Corridor Board is very appreciative of the work and leadership of Town officials and the support of Town Meeting voters in both Uxbridge and Sutton for their commitment to extending the Blackstone River Bikeway. These strong expressions of public support from Valley residents move this long-planned project closer to reality," Blackstone Heritage Corridor Board Chair Richard T. Moore stated after the Town Meetings. "We look forward to continued partnership with local officials and voters in our efforts to improve recreational opportunities in the Valley as we work to complete what will one day be a 48-mile bikeway from Worcester to Providence," he added.

The Blackstone Heritage Corridor will continue to work with state and federal partners to secure funding for the design and, later, construction of these segments of the path through the Valley.

"Most communities where bikeways have been constructed consider them to be genuine assets

for their residents as well as visitors to the region," Moore noted. "They provide opportunities for outdoor recreation through historic downtowns and beautiful views of our natu-

ral surroundings."

To learn more about the Blackstone River Greenway/Bikeway and the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, visit BlackstoneHeritageCorridor.org.



The Singing Dam on Blackstone Street in Sutton.



A view of the Blackstone River Greenway in Uxbridge, where it currently ends on Adams Street.

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Living well and looking good

Meniscal tear in knee might not need surgery

By Keith Roach, M.D.

DEAR DR. ROACH: While chasing my cat, I dove to the ground and both my knees took a beating. They were bruised but felt fine. A few days after this, my left knee started to bother me. I put on a brace to see if that would help (as it usually does), but it didn't. I went to my chiropractor a few days later and had an adjustment and deep tissue massage. The next day, I was walking my dog and had to stop, as I couldn't move my knee. About 13 years ago, I had a torn meniscus in the same knee, and it healed without surgery with the assistance of my chiropractor, massage therapist and acupuncture.

I called my doctor's office, and he was out of town. His nurse suggested that I go to an urgent care facility to have an X-ray of my knee, which I did. The doctor said that nothing was broken but that I should follow up with an MRI. I saw my doctor a few days later and brought my X-ray, etc. He said

I don't need an MRI. I am not looking for knee surgery, but wouldn't an MRI indicate if it is a torn meniscus, pulled ligament, osteoarthritis, etc., so I could get the proper treatment? What would that be? - R.Z.

ANSWER: The menisci are ring-shaped cartilage structures that sit on top of the tibia and provide stability and shock absorption to the knee. Given the mechanism of injury and your prior history, a meniscal tear is a very likely possibility. Symptoms that support a tear in the meniscus would include a locking of the knee or a giving sensation while walking, often associated with pain.

A careful physical exam can usually make the diagnosis of a meniscal tear. A suspected meniscal tear does not usually require an MRI, as most will heal with conservative management. (I refer nearly all to physical therapy

rather than the treatments you used, but I won't argue with your success.) I reserve the MRI for people in whom surgery would be contemplated. Since surgery is no better than placebo for many people with a torn meniscus (based on a fascinating 2017 study from Finland), I am particularly careful to refer only people who have not gotten better with a good trial of conservative management.

Nerve pain

DEAR DR. ROACH:

I have an affected nerve in my back causing long-term, persistent pain. Years ago, I damaged a sacroiliac nerve in a fall. This was treated by steroid injection. Could this nerve also be injected with a steroid? - J.D.

ANSWER: Injection of local anesthetics and steroids are done for several different types of back pain syndromes. However, the nerves themselves are not injected with

steroids. It's the area around a nerve that is injected. That area may be inflamed, and the shot is given with the hope of reducing inflammation and thus reducing compression on the nerve and therefore pain. It does not always work, and when it does, the pain relief usually lasts a matter of months. The injections can be repeated if helpful; however, injecting steroids has its own risk of complications. Serious complications are rare, but infection and bleeding are possible. All injected steroids can predispose to osteoporosis.

Injection for back pain is done most often by pain management specialists when appropriate.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu. (c) 2021 North America Synd., Inc. All Rights Reserved

Major milestones for Pat DeVries at Chevere in Uxbridge

This month marks the 10th anniversary of Pat DeVries's annual mission to collect new and slightly used handbags for Dress for Success Worcester.

This is also the month Pat celebrates her 60th birthday, on the 25th.

Pat is the owner of Chevere, the Place to Bead, on North Main Street in Uxbridge. In 2011, to celebrate her birthday, she asked customers and friends to donate their purses to the Dress for Success program, which helps local women look their best for job interviews.

"Don't bring me a gift, bring me a handbag," she suggested.

That first year she collected 50 purses. The number increased each year, to 300 in 2019.

Last June, the Chevere shop was closed, like so many other stores. But the annual giving, now a ritual, continued. "People brought handbags to my house," she said. She collected 100 and stored them for later delivery.

This June, it is back to normal, and Pat hopes to equal the number donated in 2019.

She will accept purses at the store until June 30.

Chevere is best known for its collections of beads and jewelry supplies, but it is also a boutique with one-of-a-kind apparel, and CBD products.

It is located at 336 North Main Street in Uxbridge. Hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Thursdays noon to 6 p.m. Closed Sunday and Monday. Phone 508-278-5566; email theplacetobead@gmail.com. Also on facebook.

....Barbara Van Reed



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Wedding season is back. 5 tips to get your body in shape for killer dance moves

By Dr. Sean T. Lordan

With COVID restrictions beginning to ease and Wedding Season finally back in full swing, I'd like to take a moment to talk about ways to shed the "COVID-19 pounds" and get back in shape. There are many factors to consider when transitioning back into a regular exercise routine. If you implement these next five tips, you will be well on your way to tearing up the dance floor this season.

1. *Drink plenty of water* - The benefits of water are myriad and will help your body (and mind) perform at tip-top shape. Beyond the benefits to your skin and other vital organs, hydration is key to proper muscular regeneration and health. It is essential to get at least eight 8oz. servings of water in per day. You may require more than that on a hot day, or during or after exercise. A good rule of thumb is to drink when you are thirsty. Thirst is a lagging sign of dehydration- meaning you are already slightly dehydrated when your body triggers the thirst mechanism. It is also important to keep track of your urine. When your urine is yellow you are dehydrated. If you want to get into shape, you must be conditioned to have great workouts! In order to have a great workout, you must be well hydrated.

2. *Avoid Alcohol* - Not only

does alcohol add extra calories into your diet without any nutritional advantage, it also slows down other metabolic processes and is used as a primary source of energy. When alcohol is burned first, other carbohydrates and fats that you may be consuming at the same time are converted to fat to be used later. Alcohol can also lead to worse decision making when intoxicated. For example, you will choose nachos and chicken wings instead of the grilled chicken garden salad if given the opportunity during a night out drinking. Especially for the 6 weeks leading up to the event, it is important to keep alcohol consumption minimal if you are looking to make real improvements to your body composition.

3. *Create a routine* - I cannot stress the importance of creating a "healthy habits" routine enough. I consider Sleep, Meditation, Exercise and Nutrition the 4 pillars of healthy habits. If you can systematically implement regular habits around these pillars, you will be well on your way to tearing up the dance floor at your next big event. A typical weekday of mine begins at 6 a.m. Therefore, I try to get to sleep for 9:30 p.m. This allows me over 8 hours of sleep a night, the absolute minimum I (personally) require to have a produc-

tive day. I make a smoothie for breakfast (same thing everyday, boring I know), then I head to the clinic. I block time everyday at lunch to exercise at the gym next door for at least 30 minutes. After my daughter goes to sleep at 7:30 p.m., I use the Calm app to meditate and reflect on my day for 10 minutes. I perform these habits without fail everyday and they no longer require much willpower to do. Your routine doesn't have to be like mine, in fact it shouldn't be! Everyone is different. My point is that you should have your OWN routine incorporating each of these facets. You will be more likely to hit your goals if you put them on your calendar and stick to them in a regimented fashion each week.

4. *Work the legs* - When people ask me the best way to lose fat and build muscle, I refer them to the gym. Whether it is interval training, strength training, cardio or a combination of all three, you are sure to lose some weight if you workout 5 days a week. Working the legs specifically is important, because the legs are an often forgotten about muscle group that contributes a large hormonal response to weight loss. Due to the sheer size of your glutes, hamstrings and quads, they require a lot of

energy to rebuild and to exercise. A few of my favorite leg exercises are squats, deadlifts and leg press. You can also incorporate total body moves, but I would recommend getting the form down from a trainer prior to performing them. If your form is off, chances are you will be seeing a physical therapist pretty quickly with pain.

5. *Run* - What isn't there to love about running. Running relieves stress, reduces your risk for heart disease, works the majority of your muscle

groups, burns a ton of calories, and generally makes you feel euphoric when you are finished. Many folks get shin splints or have ankle or knee pain when running, but it is really the best way to burn fat and get into shape quickly. If you are having trouble running because of pain, reach out to your local physical therapist for help. Most of the time it is due to a muscle imbalance or poor footwear, and we can get you back on the road in no time.

There you have it, five tips to



Dr. Sean T Lordan

get you back on the dance floor this wedding season. Enjoy.



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QCC Spring 2021 Semester Dean and Merit Lists

WORCESTER — Quinsigamond Community College has released its Spring 2021 Semester Dean and Merit Lists. A total of 483 students were named to the College's Dean's List and 977 students were named to the Merit List.

QCC's Dean's List Spring 2021

Douglas: Alorian Orcutt, Daphne Sevilla

East Douglas: Adam Gaulin, Joshua Gopin, Garrett Grann,

Sage Hurteau, Rheianna Messier, Nathaniel Paine, Michael Purvis

Grafton: Alison Burough, Ryan Davidson, Christina Duggan, Olivia Lee, Brianna Mishado

Millbury: Brenna Berube, Kyle Boria, Elizabeth Chagnon, Kennedy Day, Ivie Lapointe, Brianna Poske, Sydney Westerlind, Sarah Yates

North Grafton: Jessica Bancewicz, Sarah Bianco, Jenna Boisvert, Jermel Lyons, Maria Nieves, Kali Sage, Kelvin Virak

Northbridge: Giovan Panzanella

Sutton: Aliyssa Courville, Catherine Forde, Lindsay Houlihan, Disha Khanna, Talia Markarian, Avery Morway, Alexandra Richard, Matthew Thurber

Uxbridge: Anthony Abate, Jason Baillargeon, Erika Ethier, Olivia Powell, Emily Taylor

Webster: Tom Bednarz, Abigail Biernacki, Audrey Ducharme, Amber Hallaman, Nikita Igoshin, Anna Israelian, Klarissa Johnson, Antonia Lopez, Makenzie MacGregor, Anne Marie Markiewicz, Nickolas Maxwell, Joe Ramos

Whitinsville: Vivian Adams, Brianna Brothers, Isabel Car-

roll, Jessica Duda, Jennifer Flanagan, Cora Gauthier, Travis Gould, Stephanie Lombardi, Melissa Lozeau, Charlotte Murphy, Khadija Ouagri, Bishoy Soliman Hanna

QCC's Merit List Spring 2021

East Douglas: Katelyn Ballou, Louis Kell, Earl Parfitt, Bessie Trinidad-Jeannot

Grafton: Haley Becotte, Andrea Carenzo, Jack Cosseboom, Charlotte Jordan, Matthew Lazaro, James Lippincott, Rabia Mateen, Christopher Nolan, Debokhawe Pannasiri, Bradley Sylvestre, Lauren Wareham

Millbury: Alicia Berenson, Jacob Brodeur, Shannon Castro, Stefanie Cerrone, Gina Chionchio, Kyliegh Corey, Tara Cudmore, Christian Donaldson, Miles Fiore, Michael Lirange, Grace Malone, Brianna Manzella, Patrick Moriarty, Alyssa Newman, Ronald Polomski, Lusi Sit, Jala Tadors, Marissa Vaillancourt

North Grafton: Fadi Alkoht, Sarah Aziz, Emma Boggess, Luis Dejesus, Thomas Hamilton, Kyoko Ibaraki, Amanda Johnson, Alexa Kallio

Northbridge: Jacquelyn Barber, Kyran Bishop, Krystal Bonafilia,

Sarah Catlin, Randall Cranshaw, Meredith Mendoza, Miranda Monaghan, Andrea Place, Amaya Williams, Derek Zahoruiko


South Grafton: Holly Atchue, Tiffany Maynard, Austin Miller, Mayra Ramsey, Jesalee Roberts

Sutton: Joanna Brown, Kelly Clark, Natasha Colon, Hunter Dansereau, Francesca De Mora Ocana, Sarah Elkin, Scott Gressak, Kayla Kachadoorian, Miranda Lemoine, Ashley Medina Cardenas, Kailey O'Neil, Patricia Rumford, Mackenzie Sobaleski


Uxbridge: Kayla Brooks, Kelley Crosby, Rachel Demrest, Kara Hamm, Benjamin Landry, Ashley Lewinski, Edrick Pereira, Mariangela Pereira, Michaela Randall, Alyssa Sylvia, Alexandria Touhey, Katie Vautrain

Whitinsville: Jocelyn Arriaga, Alexandra Clauss, Jason Doyle, Taylor Fisher, Rachel Freneau, Nikole Kamishlian, Savannah Louischarles, Rebecca Malo, Karissa Nordstrom, Catherine Peak, Joshua Poquette, Rachel Robbins, Anastasia Robinson, Allison Salamack, Susan Searles, Shaylene Silva, Samantha Tackett-Marvill


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DA Early gives funding to local high schools for safe post-prom and graduation celebrations



Douglas High School presentation.



Northbridge High School presentation.



Uxbridge High School presentation.

Worcester County District Attorney Joseph D. Early Jr. presented 16 different schools across Worcester County with grants to support fun and safe post-prom and post-graduation activities for students.

This year, Mr. Early's office awarded nearly \$20,000 in grants, including the high schools in Douglas, Grafton, Northbridge, Oxford, Uxbridge and Blackstone-Millville, to support programming that helps keep students from drinking and driving after celebratory events like prom and graduation.

"Students have been dealing with a lot in the last year with the COVID-19 pandemic causing them to miss out on time in school, playing sports and enjoying social activities with friends and family," Mr. Early said. "I am particularly proud this year to be able to help provide these kids with the fun celebrations they deserve to end the school year safely."

Mr. Early and his Community Outreach Team also offer presentations for teens to promote safety, including the dangers of mixing drugs and alcohol, social host liability awareness for parents, and distracted driving.

"The hardest part of our job is talking to people in pain. Life can change in the blink of an eye. These programs that our community partners have created help to keep kids safe from unnecessary tragedies caused by combining these celebrations with drinking and driving," Mr. Early said.

The funding for these grants Mr. Early is providing to high schools across the county is made possible through the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance Drunk Driving Trust Fund, which is a state grant that provides support services and advocacy to victims, witnesses, and their family members of drunk and drugged driving crashes.

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Marking a Milestone: BVT Celebrates the Class of 2021

300 Graduates Awarded Diplomas and Industry-Recognized Certifications

UPTON – The Blackstone Valley Tech Class of 2021 Commencement Ceremony was held outdoors on its athletic field on May 27th. The evening ceremony was a socially distanced event for immediate family in attendance to celebrate the accomplishments of the Class of 2021 and say farewell before they go off on their next great adventure.

“It is really special that we are gathered here on campus. In fact, it is really special that we are gathered here in person to celebrate the accomplishments of the Class of 2021,” said Assistant Superintendent-Director/Principal Mr. Anthony E. Steele II during his opening remarks. “I’m very grateful for the dedication of our staff and the ongoing support of the Upton Board of Health to make this event possible. We will have an opportunity to honor our graduates with all the pomp and circumstance they deserve.”

The ceremony included a rousing rendition of the National Anthem sung by graduate Kayleigh Labrecque of Northbridge. Yvette Martin, Director of Student Services, delivered the benediction. Graduate, Madison Mathieu of Douglas, gave an inspired and moving musical performance of “Always Remember US this Way” by Lady Gaga, in addition to student speakers.

Overcoming unexpected circumstances during the pandemic and lessons learned by this shared experience were

common themes each student speaker addressed. Madison Gannon of Uxbridge, Valedictorian, spoke of extraordinary perseverance in navigating an uncertain senior year. Aaron Canali of Millville, Senior Class President, pointed out that life may not always go as expected, be prepared to embrace change. Isabella Caccavelli of Uxbridge, Student Council President, recognized that while the hard times shape who we are, what you go through does not define you, remember the incredible parts. Casey Goyette of Uxbridge, Salutatorian, reflected on the past year, embracing opportunity and adapting to change.

Assistant Principal, Mr. Matthew Urquhart, addressed the class and offered words of wisdom before congratulating that class on reaching one of life’s signature milestones. “Take solace in the fact that with all that you have endured, all that you have seen, you are more than ready for what you are facing next.”

“In a year that has been anything but ordinary, we celebrate the extraordinary Class of 2021. Our pioneers, innovators, and trailblazers, who will make a real difference in their chosen fields,” said Superintendent-Director Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick. “You graduate with the grit, perseverance, and skillset to tackle and achieve your future goals as you move purposely to your vision of tomorrow. You are our best ambassadors to



Class Valedictorian, Madison Gannon of Uxbridge, speaking during BVT’s Commencement Ceremony.



Kayleigh Labrecque of Northbridge, singing the National Anthem during BVT’s Commencement Ceremony.

foster public awareness and appreciation for our trade schools.”

Three hundred students concluded their dual high school education. They received their vocational certificates and diplomas, which certify mastery in their career-technical programs, and a rigorous academic course of the study. The evening concluded with cheers and applause for the graduates as they tossed their caps towards the sky.

To view the ceremony visit, www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/classof2021.

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Douglas Library goes fine-free

In 1903, the Simon Fairfield Public Library charged a fine of two cents per day on books, newspapers, or encyclopedias kept past their due-date. This was when a ham sandwich lunch at the Goodness Store down the street cost ten cents. In the intervening 118 years, library fine policies have gone through a number of iterations (never quite keeping up with inflation), all with the goal of trying to get our items back on

time so they're available to the next borrower.

When COVID-19 entered the Commonwealth in March of last year, we made it our goal to get as much of our collection off our shelves and out into the community as possible. We didn't care when our books would come back as much as we cared about getting them where they would do the most good before our families had to hunker down. One of first procedures

we altered was overdue fee collection. In March 2020, we set our computers to forgive all fines when we check in items—and just like that, overdue fees went away. In April 2021, the trustees voted to keep it that way.

Our library is not the only one to take this step. As of June 1, 2021, a little more than half of the 150 libraries in the CW-MARS consortium have "gone fine-free" as we're calling it in the profession. Why the sudden sea change? To answer that, I think it is important to ask why libraries charge overdue fines in the first place, and how that fits into our overall mission of getting people to read. Ultimately, overdue fines have one purpose and one purpose only: they are a way of trying to get our items back on time so that other people can borrow them.

"But aren't overdue fines a source of revenue for the library?"

In Douglas, the amount taken in from overdue fees in the past years has hovered between

\$800 and \$1,000 depending on how aggressively we pursued collecting them that year. But therein lies the conundrum. Having these conversations with patrons, collecting the money, making change, and updating the electronic record takes staff time. Turning over the money to the town treasurer and reconciling the revolving account where it goes with the finance director takes my time. It doesn't take much math to determine that we actually spend more money paying librarians to manage late fees than they bring in.

"But aren't overdue fines important to teach patrons personal responsibility?"

I'd like to see where any public library's bylaws, strategic plan, or mission statement contains "teaching members of the community personal responsibility" as a goal. Making kids give us money because their parents don't adhere to a strict library visiting schedule that coincides with our loan periods isn't going to foster a love of reading. And people who haven't figured out how to be responsible by the time they are adults are certainly not going to learn that discipline courtesy of the public library. This is a completely fabricated, utterly absurd justification to charge overdue fees.

"So do fines incentivize pa-

trons to bring back their items on time?"

Consider that our fine collection rates in Douglas mean that between 8,000 and 10,000 overdue days (or put another way, between 22 and 27 overdue years) are paid for each year. Modern economists, behavioral psychologists, and anyone who has actually worked at a library circulation desk can attest to the fact that overdue fines don't bring back our books any faster. Once you slap a fine on a behavior, you have given it a price. That price will inevitably be worth it to some people, and in the case of 10 cents per day, it'll be worth it to a lot of people. At a threshold that low, a significant number of patrons don't care if their items are late and will happily part with a few cents or bucks when they visit the library.

On the flip side of that coin, for the patrons to whom 10 cents a day matters, it really matters. Patrons who accumulate fines because of chronic disorganization, lack of reliable transportation, or other reasons which are likely to coincide with lower socioeconomic status are the ones who are not going to be able and/or so inclined as to pay their overdue fees. When a patron tries to check out items and finds that their account is blocked because they owe over \$10 in late fees (which means

they weren't paying attention to late fees to begin with), the patron is usually not happy. We will bend over backward to get their account back in good standing because our goal is to keep people reading. If it turns into a confrontation, though, we are unlikely to see that patron again. And that patron may be the one that needs the library the most.

I work here and late fees don't dissuade me from keeping items overdue. I have 3 kids, all of whom are voracious readers. Between board books, picture books, chapter books, and a maybe even a couple new sci-fi reads for myself, it isn't uncommon for me to have upwards of 40 items out at a time. That's more than I can carry in one arm-load, and it already takes at least 2 trips to the car just to load up my family. I let items slip past their due date all the time, and I'd like to consider myself at least a little bit of a personally responsible adult.

Every Library is different, but I'd argue that it is time for all libraries to shed themselves of this antiquated ritual of shame. "Thanks for bringing these books back. Now you owe us \$3.50" doesn't exactly put out a welcome mat that encourages further library use.

*Thanks for reading,
Justin Ray Snook, Director
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Focus on non-profits

Tasks for Transit fuels possibilities for people in need

By Christine Galeone

Although the economy has improved since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, many families and individuals are still struggling financially. Those struggles are apparent in the increase of food insecurity throughout the state. But regularly being able to access healthy food isn't the only challenge facing those who are unemployed or have low incomes.

Steve McClure, the co-founder of Tasks for Transit, said that the need for transportation assistance is greater than ever. "We serve the economically disadvantaged in Greater Worcester," he said. "The size of that group has increased during the pandemic."

Fortunately, Tasks for Transit will resume its operations on January 1. That's the same day that the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) will once again collect bus fares from its passengers. The Millbury-based nonprofit generally provides thousands of WRTA bus passes to people in need each year.

Established in 2015, Tasks for Transit is a volunteer-run nonprofit with donated office space to keep its operating costs down. McClure said that the nonprofit's mission is "to provide transportation to the economically disadvantaged in Greater Worcester, so that they can access the services

offered for them at the various charities and government departments in the Greater Worcester area, get to and from medical appointments, job interviews or other similar needs." It accomplishes that mission by partnering with Central Massachusetts charities that serve people who could benefit from free WRTA bus passes.

The nonprofit serves people through its Free WRTA Bus Day Pass Program and its Job Fare program. The first provides ten WRTA bus passes to each of its 31 partner charities every month. The second provides – upon request – a kit to a partner charity serving someone who just got a job. The kit includes a 31-day WRTA bus pass, a free haircut voucher and a list of resources. It enables the new employee to be able to get to

work until that person is able to earn enough money to pay for transportation.

The effectiveness of its partner charities, which include highly-regarded nonprofits such as Veterans, Inc., Interfaith Hospitality Network of Worcester and Hotel Grace, is bolstered by the transportation assistance for its clients. One partner nonprofit reported to Tasks for Transit that a woman was able to attend a GED program because of the bus passes. Another reported that a single mother and recovering addict was able to get to a treatment center.

"A poor woman was given a free day pass by the Worcester South Neighborhood Center – another TFT partner charity – to go to a job interview," McClure recalled. "She went, had the interview and got the job."

Soon after, she bought herself a one-year pass."

Aware that most nonprofits that assist people with low or no incomes view lack of transportation as an important issue, McClure said that Tasks for Transit has increased the number of charities it partners with from six in 2016 to 31 in 2021. And although the WRTA Board decided, this month, to extend the free fares that it instituted at the beginning of the pandemic to January 1, it had intended to resume charging fares on July 1. And Tasks for Transit

had been ready to restart operations as well.

Tasks for Transit hopes to expand its reach. McClure said, "We will continue to operate both of our programs, and we will expand our network of charity partners, adding four additional ones each year."

"Tasks for Transit has determined that between two thirds and three quarters of the local area charities are not able to provide transportation with their programs," McClure shared. "In other words, this is a pervasive problem and, given



the impact of the pandemic, the need is great. Tasks for Transit is working to fill this need."

More information about the nonprofit is available on the Tasks for Transit website, www.tasksfortransit.org.

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

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Whitinsville Social Library news

Whitinsville Social Library, 17 Church St., Whitinsville, www.northbridgemass.org/WSL; phone (508) 234-2151. Follow WSL on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Register for crafts and events www.tinyurl.com/EventsAtWSL. Library hours: Monday - Thursday: 10-7; Friday 10 - 4; Saturday 10 - 2; Closed Saturday 6/19 for Juneteenth.

The library has reopened to the public. All returns are fine-free through Labor Day 2021. Masks are encouraged but not required. Computers are available by appointment only.

Tails and Tales - Summer Reading June 21 - August 14. Whitinsville Social Library presents this year's Summer Reading Program, "Tails and Tales." Celebrate with all types of animals...including their fun tails. This year's Summer Reading Kickoff is on Saturday, June 26, from 10:00 - 1:30; come by to register for summer reading and receive your summer reading kit with all the program information. Each week will be a different animal theme, make sure to join us throughout the summer for a mix of virtual and in-person programs, and track your reading using the Beanstack

Summer yard sales

The Helping Hand summer yard sales schedule has been announced. The time of each sale is 8 am to noon. The dates include June 19, July 10 and July 24, August 7 and August

App or online version. Additional programs will be added throughout the summer, including weekly Tween and Teen Crafternoons, Storytime, and Baby Bounce. Registration is required for each event and events will take place either virtually or outside of the library. Registrations will open one week before the event date. Register at: www.tinyurl.com/EventsAtWSL

World Wide Knit in Public Day - Saturday, June 12, from 11-1. Join fellow knitters on the Library's front lawn for World Wide Knit in Public Day. Bring your project and something to sit on. Mask wearing and sunscreen are encouraged. Drop in any time between 11 and 1. This event is for fiber artists of all ages. If the weather is poor this event will not take place.

Memoir Book Club: Boy Erased - Wednesday, June 23, at 6. Join us for a discussion of Garrard Conley's best-selling memoir "Boy Erased." Copies are available at the Library's front desk. The meeting is taking place outside on the library's front lawn. If you have one, please bring a chair. Sign up to be notified if the meeting needs to be rescheduled due to poor weather.

Cookbook Club: Zahtar - Thursday, June 24, at 12. Join us for June's meeting as we discuss the Middle Eastern spice blend called zahtar. Stop by the library to pick up a free sample of the spice. Bring the spice home, cook with it, and come to the meeting to discuss your thoughts. June's meeting will take place on the library's front lawn so please bring a chair and some sunscreen. Cookbook Club is the last Thursday of every month.

Adult Craft: Patriotic Lanterns - Tuesday, June 29, at 6. Sign up to reserve your kit to create a patriotic lantern, just in time for your Independence Day celebration. You can either pick up your kit anytime between 10-7 on June 29 or you can come craft in the library's front yard with hands-on instruction at 6. If you bring the craft home scissors and glue are required. Registration required.

Friends of the Library Meeting, Tuesday, June 29 at 6:30. All are welcome to join. The June Friends of WSL meeting is taking place on the library's front lawn. Please bring a chair. If the weather is poor this meeting will take place virtually. Please contact friendsWSL2019@gmail.com for more info.

Rebecca Sasseeville
Library Director
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Uxbridge Senior Center news

UXBRIDGE - The Uxbridge Senior Center, 36 South Main St., has listed its calendar for June.

Director's news for June

The Commonwealth continues to take steps to work toward a "new normal" as public health metrics trend in a positive direction and vaccination rates increase. While there is much reason for hope, we are still living in a global pandemic. It remains critically important to continue to practice prevention strategies. We must all continue to do our part to stop the spread and remain vigilant. But working towards a new normal does not have a single on/off switch. This presents an opportunity to think and plan for what a new normal means to each of us. The Uxbridge Senior Center has been incredibly innovative during this time. We developed new services and new programs to service our community members and look forward to the near future to see you all again.

The Executive Office of Elder Affairs has created a planning tool which will be useful as we think about approaches to scale up. Over the next several months, the Uxbridge Senior Center will slowly scale up services and programs. Effective immediately, our Activity Department will begin with increasing our outdoor programs, weather permitting, limited to a number of participants. Program participants will be required to RSVP in advance of the program and socially distance by remaining six-feet apart when in attendance. Cleaning and sanitizing practices will be maintained. (see the Activity Calendar in this newsletter for more info) Also, effective June 1, the Center opened for one-on-one meetings, to help those that may need assistance with applications and counsel. The Center is open Monday, Wednesday and Fridays by appointment only. Please call the Center for more details and information. Planning for a gradual return to safe in-person programming and services for all members of the community, including those who are vaccinated and not yet vaccinated, is our priority. Your patience and understanding is greatly appreciated.

Thank you to all who participated and contributed to our recent Krispy Kreme Fundraising event for the Activity Department. Congrats to Jeanne Metcalf for being the top seller of 15 dozen donuts. We were able to raise over \$500 which will be put towards crafts and other supplies for our programs. Thanks again for your support.

Our congregate meal program continues to be closed at this time due to space restrictions. Our Fish Curbside Luncheons and Home Delivered luncheons will continue for the month of June. Please check out the menu and don't forget to RSVP to reserve your lunch. The Center received a generous donation from Susan & Brian Dicks and the ERA Key Realty Charitable Trust. This donation sponsored our May 21 and all of June's Fish Curbside Lunches. Thanks again for all you do.

Our transportation program continues to be up and running. Please call Donna to book your medical rides in advance. We continue to have shopping trips every month. Please check out the calendar of events for more info and be sure to RSVP ahead of time. Stay safe and enjoy the summer time weather. - Lisa Bernard

Virtual programs will be aired on Local Cable Channel 192 Tuesday - Thursdays, 9:30am & 5:30pm also 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. (times may vary). You can also check out our Facebook page and YouTube channel.

MCOA Walk Massachusetts Challenge Continues - Lace up your sneakers - Walk the Mass Challenge is Back. Program runs through Sept. 30. This year has more prizes and will be incorporated with Sally's Walking Club Every Wednesday, 10 a.m. Meeting at the Blackstone Valley Greenway on Adams St., South Uxbridge. To sign up, go to www.mcoaonline.com/walkma or call 508-278-8622.

Friday, June 11 - 1:00 pm - Outdoor bingo. This will be held in our parking lot (weather permitting) and prizes will be awarded! Must call 508-278-8622 to sign up as space is limited.

Thursday, June 17 - 2:00 p.m. - Outdoor Craft with Sally making Sock Gnomes. Space is limited so please RSVP to reserve your spot. Social distancing, safety precautions in place and masks required.

Donations are always welcome!

Friday, June 18 - The Senior Center will be closed in observance of "Juneteenth" Freedom Day. We will re-open on Monday, June 21.

Thursday, June 24 - 2:00 pm - Outdoor tie-dye craft with Sally. Space is limited so please RSVP to reserve your spot. Social distancing, safety precautions in place and masks required. Donations are always welcome. Rain date July 1.

Friday, June 25 - 12:00 pm - Baked Fish curbside pickup - sponsored by ERA Key Realty Charitable Trust Fund/ RSVP is required. Please Call 508-278-8622 to reserve your meal.

Friday, June 25 - 1:00 pm - Facebook Live Family Feud. Tune in to the Uxbridge Senior Center Facebook page for some fun. Prize given to first place participant!

Zumba classes are on a hiatus for the month of June. Stay tuned for news of future classes resuming soon!

Uxbridge Senior Center On The Move - Videos will be posted every Monday at 10:00 am. Get ready to join Sally and Gail on virtual trips in and around Uxbridge.

West Hill Dam accepting picnic shelter reservations

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District announced that West Hill Dam in Uxbridge is now accepting picnic shelter reservations for the 2021 summer recreation season.

Permits will be offered through Sept. 5, and only those with approved permits can access the picnic shelters due to limited vehicle access. Picnic shelter use permits will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis for activities such as graduation and birthday parties, small reunions, and church or group events. There are two picnic shelters which will be available on Saturdays and Sundays

only and will require a \$75 permit fee per shelter.

Permits can be obtained by calling Park Ranger Viola Bramel at (978) 318-8417. The Day Use Area, which includes the beaches, swimming area, picnic tables and grills, opened for the summer recreation season on June 5. Visitors to the day use area must park at the project office at 518 East Hartford Avenue in Uxbridge and walk to the area. There will be no day use area entrance fee. Visitors to the day use area and people utilizing the picnic shelters must comply with federal, state and local COVID-19 guidelines for outdoor recreation.

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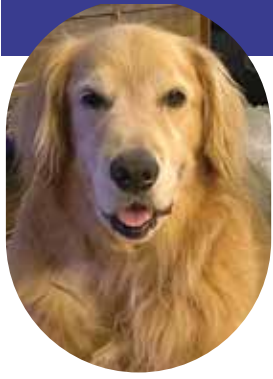
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Living ON with Lincoln

A visit from Lincoln

By Amy Palumbo-LeClaire

A month has passed since the day I lost Lincoln. I've come to realize that there's no "getting over it" so much as there is finding a way to "get on with it." I know it's what Lincoln wants for me. He had the remarkable ability to allow joy to overcome pain and move forward. Life offers so many unexpected thrills. Why be melancholic when you can stick your head out the car window and watch a movie play out at double speed? Dogs naturally pay attention. They study, learn and appreciate simple pleasures. Consequently, they know stuff before we do. Dogs sense the threat of a storm, a burglar, a seizure, or even the sorry scent of a non-dog person. "If my dog doesn't like you, there's going to be a problem" is a saying, perhaps, not far from the truth.

Do dogs sense heaven?

I believe they do. I believe Lincoln has.

He was about six years old, the hair on his face still a dark blonde. He sensed the Tufts University Dog Park before we arrived. The field! The rolling hills! The parking lot! The routine continued per usual: open car door, jump out, nose to ground, and hustle to the



gate. Dogs of all shapes and sizes awaited him with stiff curiosity. "Look at this big guy. He has a ball in his mouth!" Lincoln remained aloof. He preferred humans and there wasn't a thing I could do about it. "Lincoln - look at that dog with the spots!" I built up the Dalmatians. "Look at the dog with the pushed in face! He's ugly-cute!" I complimented the Boxers. But Lincoln, non-compliant, chose to sit at the heels of humans and drop ball after ball by their toes, an unsolicited suggestion to play. "Toss up a quick one and I'll bring it back!"



I let him participate in a few rounds of fetch before we'd take part in a favorite routine, a hike through a woodsy trail located behind the park. The dog-hike, I must confess, is a superior mood elevator, far better than any pill I'm aware of. "Look at this rock! Oh my gosh, do you smell that chipmunk! What's up ahead? Look - a secret cave. Let's explore. You coming?" Dogs are fantastically grateful for simple, unexpected pleasures.

About a half mile into the hike, a rocky incline led us to the border of the woods, where the dark of the wilderness meets the light of the sky. As though passing from one world to the next, we climbed over a stone wall and entered. A breathtaking green meadow stretched for miles below a clear blue sky. The landscape appeared as bright and crisp as the shiny page of a hardcover fairy tale book. "Go ahead, Lincoln! Go take a run. I'll be right here." I wanted Lincoln to experience the breadth of the green meadow, and take a break from human rules. I wanted him to

enjoy some free time.

The problem was, Lincoln knew something.

"Not yet. Not now."

He lifted his chin to the air, absorbed the scene with his nose, then made an abrupt to decision to turn around and come sit by my side. Heaven. "You don't want to go?" I pet his head. He broke into his easy smile. Not yet. Something stirred in my heart while we sat in the quiet of the meadow that day. Small and humble, we both knew. There was something greater awaiting us.

I have faith, but I'm human. Since Lincoln's passing on April 16th, I've prayed for him to show me a sign that he's okay. My husband had already received one, the rare and relentless chirping of a bird (on the night of his death) by the window in our family room where the two used to sit before bed.

"Show me a sign, too, Lin-



coln," I prayed.

My sign(s) came to me in dreams, both of which reflected the same distinct quality. The dreams were not hazy, scattered, and confusing. Instead, they were crystal clear and made complete sense.

They were so—

Lincoln!

So real.

During the first, I was behind the closed door of a crowded beach resort. People with no voice roamed everywhere. A large concession stand sat at the front of the crowd. I sensed Lincoln on the other side of the door. I just knew he was there waiting, so opened the door. "I knew you were

here! I've missed you so much, Lincoln!" I knelt beside him and gave him a hug. He lifted his head as he usually does and smiled. Then I looped a leash (the same style as the one needed on the day he was euthanized) around his neck and, together, we weaved through the crowd. Lincoln was leading me to the ocean. I knew it. That's when I woke up, struck by a revelation. An ocean visit had been on our bucket list. It was the one thing I wanted to accomplish with him this summer.

The next dream, which occurred a few days later, had a completely different tone. Lincoln was sleeping with his head on a pillow. His coat was ungroomed and slightly stinky. I knew viscerally that I wasn't supposed to wake him. He needed to sleep. We needed to be apart. But Lincoln knew something more. He sensed me and jostled. Then he nudged my arm with his



snout in an affirmative, very deliberate way. He wanted to be close. I kept moving back to let him sleep, but he kept moving closer. Finally, I let him rest his head on my lap. I pet his head softly, just as I had the day he died.

Lincoln may have passed, but we are still together. My dog knows.

Dear Reader - Thank you for your heartfelt condolences during the past month, and for sharing your stories with me via amyleclaire@hotmail.com. Losing a dog is never easy, but having each other to lean on sure does make a difference. Stay tuned for more on Living with Lincoln!

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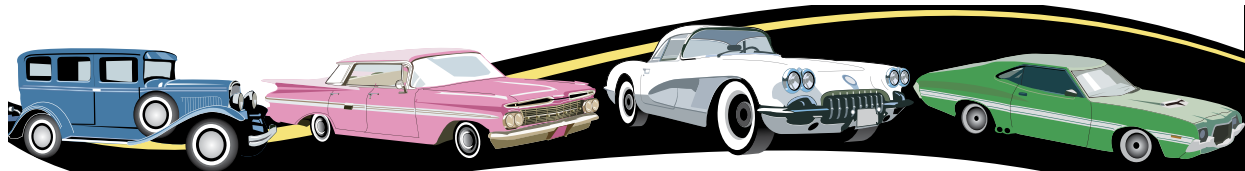


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7th annual Cars In The Park – classic cars, food trucks and family fun

WHITINSVILLE – The Whitin Community Center is excited to announce the return of its popular **Cars In The Park** event. Good-bye 2020, and hello 2021. The 7th annual Cars In The Park (CITP) will be held on Saturday, August 21, (rain date August 22) from 10am-4pm, in the beautiful 7.5 acre Whitin Park, 60 Main Street in Whitinsville. Cars In The Park is a car, truck and motorcycle show with Best In Show, 25 trophies, door prizes, show dash plaques and goodie bags (for the first 50 pre-registered vehicles), food trucks, event vendors, kids activities, 50/50 and raffles, en-

tainment and more. Admission is free for spectators.

Vehicles can register with a discount for a \$10 donation before July 21 and a \$15 donation as of July 21. Vehicles can register online through either secure RaceReach site at <https://app.racereach.com/event/cars-in-the-park/register> or by visiting www.WhitinCommunityCenter.com and clicking on the register button, in person at the member services desk or on the day of the event. The WCC is also now accepting registrations for exhibit and food vendors. Please visit website and click on the register button to sign up as a vendor. For more information, please visit www.WhitinCommunityCenter.com or contact Sarah Lawson, Director of Marketing and Events, at Sarah.Lawson@OurGym.org or 508.234.8184.

This is a family event with activities including: free StoryWalk, free kids scavenger hunt, free WCC balloons, free YearOne coloring books, free playground, free Summit Racing Kids Choice awards, free corn hole and and more.

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Prayer



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

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

Believer

Cruising scene 2021

Gas up... way up

By Jim Weicherding

That's right, all you classic car and truck owners. Gas prices are going up. Just in time for the summer cruisin' scene across the region. We all endured more than a year of living in seclusion due to the pandemic and when we start to see some daylight at the end of that very long tunnel, they start raising gas prices. Not just a little. They are raising the gas prices a lot.

Many of you didn't have a great 2020 and I'm sure many

of you felt your belts tighten because you lost income during the last year. Higher gas prices aren't sitting very well with anyone, especially, with those of us who love to participate in classic car and truck shows and cruise nights.

What happens now is really simple but sad to write about: "Where do I cruise and how often can I afford to get to these automotive events?" You have to pick and choose among classic car and truck



shows and cruise nights because those decisions can now be based on gas prices.

Businesses that host these venues need the customers to show up in order to survive. Charities that benefit from these types of events are raising less funds because people

can't afford gas prices.

If they do attend, they have to donate less because it costs them a small fortune at the pumps to fill up their rides with gas. Have a great and safe summer; hope to see you at a classic car and truck show or cruise night soon.

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Q & A with The Car Doctor

John Paul is AAA Northeast's Car Doctor. He has over 40 years' experience in the automotive business and is an ASE certified master technician. He will answer reader's questions each week. You can find the Car Doctor podcast at www.johnfpaul.podbean.com or other popular podcast sites. Email your car questions to jpaul@aaanortheast.com. Follow John on Twitter @johnfpaul and friend him on facebook mrjohnfpaul.



Q. I drive a 2014 Infiniti Q60S coupe with 90,000 miles, runs great and fully paid for. My 5-year-old grandson climbed over the back of the passenger seat and the back snapped so it is now in a fully reclined position and will not stay up, making it essentially a one-person car. The cost to replace the seat with a new one is about \$5000 according to an Infiniti dealer. If I buy one used on eBay or at a junk yard, it is much less, but the air bag would need to be reset in order for the dash light indicator to stop flashing to pass the state vehicle inspection and I have been told it is illegal to reset the light unless you are the dealer. Where should I look for a person to repair it? It's an interior problem so I don't think an autobody shop would be interested. What type of service shop should I be looking for? I'm at a loss to know how to get it fixed.

A. The airbag light is on because there is a fault in the airbag system. I theory when you replace the seat, the airbag fault should be corrected, and the light will go out. A mechanical or autobody shop should be able to do the repair. In fact, body shops replace broken seats after collisions on a regular basis. Regarding resetting the light after the faulty codes are repaired, there is no law that only the dealer can perform the repair. A repair shop can't disconnect an airbag or any safety system, that is illegal. If you search online, you will find many videos on how to clear an airbag light with Nissan and Infiniti products without any special tools.

Q. I look forward to your weekly column and want to ask you this. My 2018 Toyota Corolla with only 16,000 miles on it was serviced two months ago. Recently on each start up, I get the message on my dash "maintenance required soon." What should I do to clear the message since I know all the fluid were checked during the service?

A. The repair shop, when they performed the service, should have reset the maintenance reminder as part of the service procedure. This reset is easy and also doesn't require any tools. Turn the ignition switch to ON, press the ODO/TRIP switch knob until the TRIP A appears, turn the ignition switch off, turn the ignition switch to ON while pressing and holding the ODO/TRIP switch knob. Hold the ODO/TRIP switch knob until the following conditions are met and five seconds have elapsed. Once completed, TRIP A shows "000000" and the multi-information display shows that the reset is complete.

Q. I would like your opinion on brake pads. This is on a 2016 Toyota Highlander. Would you use Toyota pads or other brands? If the brake rotors look good, would you skip this and replace them while the pads are being replaced? The car has 61,000 miles on it.

A. You can never go wrong using factory parts, but there are quality aftermarket parts as well. If you were going with aftermarket Wagner Ceramic parts are quite as good as are NAPA Ultra/Premium brake pads. Regarding brake rotors, if you are performing the work yourself and plan on keeping the vehicle, save some time and replace the brakes and rotors together, it will only add about 10 minutes additional work per side to replace the brake rotors. Once completed, hopefully you won't need to worry about your vehicle brakes again for another 60,000 miles. If you are using a repair shop, let them make the determination on the condition of the rotors.

Q. I need a truck and like the idea of an electric truck but I'm not ready to buy a Tesla (if they ever make it) or a GMC Hummer. What do you think of the hybrid

Ford F-150. This would be my only vehicle and I'm a semi-retired carpenter and still do some home repairs for former customers.

A. I recently drove the Ford F-150 Power-boost full hybrid and the first thing I noticed was this hybrid truck drove absolutely seamlessly. Without looking at the display it was very hard to tell when the truck was in hybrid or full electric mode. Performance was outstanding as was the fuel range - nearly 700 miles. The four-door CrewCab that I drove was the Platinum edition and had an interior as nice as any luxury vehicle. In addition, our tester had an on-board 7.2-kW generator that offers four 120-volt, 20-amp outlets and one twist-lock 240-volt-30-amp outlet, that should run just about any power tool. The tailgate is designed as a work surface and like many Ford trucks has a pull-out step for easy climbing onto the bed, a feature I have grown to appreciate as I get older.

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Tales from beyond

The Colonial Inn in Concord

By Thomas D'Agostino

Welcome to the Colonial Inn in Concord, Massachusetts. This story details the history and haunts of one of New England's most haunted inns.

The Colonial Inn in Concord, sits in the heart of American history. Concord is where the "shot heard 'round the world" was fired on April 19, 1775, signaling the official start of the American Revolution.

The Colonial Inn also hosts several ghosts who still remain from the time when the first shots of the war rang out, and perhaps before.

The original portion of

the inn was built by Captain James Minot in 1716. He left the building to his son, James Jr., a lieutenant in the French and Indian Wars, Justice of the Peace and a member of the Royal Governor's Council. A descendant, Dr. Timothy Minot owned the home at the time of the famous aforementioned skirmish.

In 1789, the building was owned by Deacon John White, where the central portion was used as a variety store and the rest as private residences. In 1799, John Thoreau purchased a portion of the inn that now houses the

office and sitting room for use as a private residence. It was in these rooms young Henry David Thoreau stayed from 1835 to 1837 while attending Harvard.

In 1839, Daniel Shattuck purchased the building. He had already been running the general store for 18 years previous. At that point he turned the store into a dwelling. By 1885 the structure was a boarding house and finally, in 1889, it became a hotel known as the Thoreau House, named in honor of Henry's aunts who were once dedicated assistants in the daily chores of the place.

In 1900, Mr. and Mrs. Abrams named it Concord's Colonial Inn, the name that has graced its signs ever since. There is much history to the three buildings that occasionally come to life with the spirits of the past.

During the Battle of Lexington, Dr. Timothy Minot used present day Room 24 as an operating room. The Liberty Room was a field hospital and Room 27 was the morgue. Room 27 still reverberates with the horror and sorrow of that infamous day in 1775. Guests have witnessed the ghosts of colonial soldiers in the room or have heard desperate disembodied voices. Sobbing is also heard along



with faint whispers as if someone is consoling a person in mourning.

The Liberty Room is now a dining room but to those of yesteryear, it is still an active field hospital. Guests have witnessed people dressed in colonial attire sitting in the room. Upon commenting to the staff their approval of the people dressed in period garments, they are met with the grim truth that there are no such persons employed at the inn.

Items are known to fall off shelves or vanish for weeks, only to turn up in a most conspicuous place. Guests and staff hear voices directly behind them. When they turn to see who is speaking to them, there is no one there. One patron entered the room and saw a man in colonial dress sitting at the table. He turned quickly to alert his friends of the "actor" but when he turned back, the man was gone.

A newlywed couple stayed in Room 24. During the night, the woman awoke to the sight of a greyish glowing figure standing near the foot of the bed. The figure stood there for a few moments, then turned and vanished into the fireplace. Some believe it is Dr. Minot checking on his patients. Others have seen the ghost of a nurse or have felt someone touch them while in the room. One person felt someone touch his shoulder. He then heard a voice say, "Don't worry, your shoulder will be alright."

It just so happens that he had recently sustained a shoulder injury and was recovering from it. Another guest of Room 24 complained that the light in the closet went on and shadows could be seen pacing to and fro from under the door.

The Sitting Room is another spot where ghosts like to visit. The ghost of an elderly woman and a tall slim gentleman with a top hat are often seen reclining in the chairs. No one is sure who the woman is but many seem to think the man is none other than Henry David Thoreau paying an otherworldly visit to his former home.

The ghosts of the Colonial Inn are not confined strictly to rooms. One cannot pass through the halls without feeling someone, or something is walking with or behind them. The ghost of a young woman in a bonnet is seen near the front desk and gift shop. The ghost of a nurse, called Rosemary by the staff, is also witnessed meandering through the halls. The shuffling of feet is sometimes heard yet there is no visible being causing the phenomena. Several guests strolling through the hallways have been brushed by an invisible being as if they were passing in the opposite direction. Other guests have seen the shadows of feet under their door. When they open it, no one is there.

Of all the areas in the inn, Room 24 seems to get the most attention. This was the room used by Dr. Timothy Minot as an operating room during the April 19, 1775, skirmish. Some of the wounded brought there did not make it through surgery and their spirits still linger. Lights are known to flicker, or turn on suddenly, along with the television. Voices are heard in the room and sometimes from the closet. Guests have seen the shadow of feet moving about in the closet. When opened, it is obviously vacant. Doors in the room open and shut on their own as if someone is moving

through the area. A woman tucks in visitors and the hall nurse ghost, Rosemary, also appears in the room.

In 1966, Mr. M.P. and Judith Fellenz occupied the room for a night Mrs. Fellenz would never forget. She later wrote a letter to the inn stating that she was disturbed from her slumber by something at the foot of the bed. It was a grayish figure standing there looking at her. The figure then slowly moved toward the fireplace and melted away. When she brought the incident up to her husband, he merely commented that the ghost was included with the price of the room.

A paranormal investigative group recently held a vigil in Room 24. When they reviewed the video, the misty form of a person kneeling by the bed could be seen. Was it someone praying for a wounded loved one? Perhaps. The ghosts of the Colonial are harmless, yet very much part of the history of the inn that perennially houses famous moments and people. In fact, the Concord's Colonial Inn is rated by one magazine the sixth most haunted inn in New England while another rates it number three, just behind its sister hotel, The Hawthorne in Salem, Massachusetts. Historic Hotels of America puts it in their top 25 for its ghosts. Stay a night and enjoy an amazing piece of history, both living and otherwise.

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. www.diningwiththedead1031.com



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Unified Track is off to the races

Northbridge High School's Special Olympics Unified Track team has had three meets this year with one more on the way. Northbridge has been doing unified sports since the Spring of 2019. Although it began with track it has expanded to basketball as well. This year's team has 11 athletes who participate in the 100 meter, 400 meter, and 4x100 meter as well as shot put, javelin and long jump.

This is head coach Stevie Bentley's first season, "I can barely run for 60 seconds without getting winded so I never thought in a million years I would be a track coach but it has been incredible to watch all of these kids compete and support each other.

They are a fabulous crew of kids."

Junior Kayla Kimishlian said her favorite thing about unified is "walking in and seeing the smiles on everyone's face!"

Athletic director Jeff Kozik said his favorite part is the, "comradery and mutual respect between the teams during meets. The benefits of the unified programs for both our athletes as well as the entire school community cannot be understated. It helps to foster an inclusive environment where our athletes can showcase their skills while at the same time developing compassion and understanding with our partners. The pure joy exhibited at the meets as

well as the bonds created between our athletes is truly an amazing thing to witness and I am left feeling uplifted every time. In only a few short years, I have seen the positive impact our unified teams have had on our school and I am excited to see how we can expand the reach of these programs in the future."

Post grad athlete Sean Beckman adds, "I like the long jump best of all and also really like running the 400. I like doing track with my friends".

Ninth grader Lilly Brooks stated, "it's cool how you can have a completely different relationship with everyone... my favorite event is long jump because everyone is so excited to do it."

Assistant coach Sheena Sanchez said, "I decided to coach because I truly enjoy being a part of our school community. I wanted to assist in allowing students to participate in extracurricular opportunities and I love watching those smiles as they run, jump and throw! At track my favorite thing is to watch our athletes throw the Javelin, their sense of pride is so amazing to see."

Ninth grader Lizzie Andrews said, "My friends on the bus [is my favorite part]. It's so fun. I love jumping, throwing and racing. My family comes to see me win. I am proud of my team."

Post grad Tom Dowd said, "I like Track because I like to run and I am really fast at run-

ning!! I am good at doing the long jump, and the hundred meter dash. One time I won the hundred meter dash and I felt happy about it. I like hanging out with my friends on the track."

Junior Abby Fraser said, "I knew it would be the happiest sport I ever played and it is and everyone is so supportive. My favorite part is when the athletes finish their event and they have the biggest smiles on their faces."

Classmate Molly Consigli, replied with, "I joined unified basketball and it was a lot of fun so I wanted to keep doing unified."

Mary Boucher, a 2019 NHS graduate and former team mate, has been helping. She says, "my favorite part of unified is seeing the friendships that form between the athletes and their buddies. These friendships last a lifetime and it's amazing watching them start and continue growing. I continue to be a part of unified because I was a part of



Lizzie Andrews does the long jump.

the first team that our school had and it changed my life in more ways than I could ever explain. Unified events make me so happy and seeing those kids smile is an indescribable feeling that makes it so I would never want to leave. Unified taught me one of the most important lessons of

my life, which is that disability does not equal inability. So many people look down on this community and fail to recognize the things they can do because they are too focused on what they can't. I have become a much more accepting and inclusive person since starting unified."



Colin Tognazzi finishes the 400 meter by running to his mom.



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RE: Real Estate



Mark Marzeotti

The housing market is so competitive buyers are doing anything they can to get a home.

A common way to try to stand out is to write a heartfelt "love letter" to a seller – a seemingly harmless note to express appreciation of the home and make a personal connection.

But in this overheated real estate market, what were once simple handwritten or typed letters have lately given way to more polished packages, with photographs of the buyers and even videos. Some prospective homebuyers even purchase letter templates.

These letters can present problems, according to the National Association of Realtors, raising fair housing concerns. While some agents say the tactic is a tried and true way to win a bidding war, other agents, following recent industry guidance, won't deliver or accept love letters anymore.

According to the federal Fair Housing Act, it is illegal to discriminate in the sale of housing because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, and disability. And these letters can be full of those kinds of details.

Typically, a letter like this is telling the seller who is going to live in the home and how they are going to live in it. But writing a love letter is not going to get you the house and you're putting that seller in a position that they could be violating Fair Housing laws.

A buyer may write a letter to the seller that says: "This is my dream home and I'm excited to live there with my husband and our two young children. We love that the home has a first floor bedroom for my mother, who lives with us. I can imagine the kids running down the stairs on Christmas morning."

Right there you have infor-

Buying a home? Skip the 'love letter' to the seller

mation about family status, religion and a possible disability. These are protected classes in the Fair Housing Act. You can talk about that kind of personal information, but you can't do it in a real estate contract.

Realtors surely feel for the buyers who want to snag a seller's attention. It's a boilerplate offer and they don't feel like they have a lot of control in the process, we get why they want to write a letter to find common ground. At The Marzeotti Group Realty, we tell our buyers to spend more time writing an offer, not a letter.

Due to the potential soft discriminatory issues that these letters cause, many listings might state clearly within, that no buyer letters will be accepted.

Sellers should be making a decision only on the best combination of the highest amount of money, type of financing and least amount of risk from a buyer. It's not always the highest offer that is the winning offer, but a mix of factors. A letter could help sway a homeowner, but likely for the wrong reasons.

Letters of love or liability?

Last fall, the National Associ-

ation of Realtors released guidance on love letters, advising agents they can be a liability. It isn't a rule and there are no consequences for agents who do otherwise, but NAR recommends that its member agents should not draft, read, deliver or accept love letters.

There are mixed views and articles about whether this practice is a liability, so the majority opinion is to avoid them all together.

Still, the NAR guidance is a warning for agents and their clients to be conscientious. "If you do rely on a letter, agents and sellers need to document that the decision to accept an offer had nothing to do with race, national origin, religion or other protected classes."

Best for buyers to focus on price and terms

In such a competitive real estate market, many buyer's agents may be reluctant to turn off a buyer by telling them not to write a letter.

Letters that don't include any kind of information about protected classes are fine. Just saying you like the deck and fireplace is okay, but that ultimately shouldn't matter to the seller.

Similarly, a buyer could write a letter that highlights their intentions with the property – to live in it rather than to flip it, which doesn't include any personal descriptions. It is imperative that sellers don't choose someone because of a connection that is made through a letter, but on the criteria in the offer. I've never seen a property sell on the letter on its own – only when a letter is also with an offer that is better than someone else's.

It may be small comfort to buyers frantically trying to appeal to a seller in this market especially, but sellers are less concerned about what may happen to their home after it sells or feeling a "connection" with the buyer than buyers may think.

Letters are not a major part of the transaction. The meat of the transaction is the price and the terms. That's where buyers should focus.

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