

The Voice of Your Community



The Providence Drum Troupe on the Michael S. Van Leesten Memorial Bridge.

Providence Drum Troupe: Activating Spaces Through Performance Art

BY GRACE ALLEN

It was during the coldest, darkest days of the pandemic that David Lee Black started something quite magical. Back in January, the Wrentham resident invited a friend to head down to Providence and bring his drum. Outdoors, near the Fox Point hurricane barrier spanning the

Providence River, the two men played some organized beats while staying socially distanced.

“We were a couple of professional musicians who hadn’t been out in a while,” Black ex-

DRUM

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Norfolk to Celebrate 150th Anniversary on September 18

Parade and Fireworks Planned for Delayed Sesquicentennial

BY GRACE ALLEN

In February of 2020, the town of Norfolk turned 150 years old. Several events were planned throughout the year to mark the milestone, but then the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Now, more than one year later, the town will recognize the important anniversary with a parade, activities on Town Hill, and fireworks, all set to take place on Saturday, September 18.

“I felt the town needed to do something to celebrate this anniversary,” said Norfolk resident Paul Terrio, who is spearheading the endeavor with the support of the town’s Recreation Department. “We’re also acknowledging the first responders who have

helped us through this past year, as well as the end of restrictions due to the pandemic.”

The parade will kick off at 3 p.m. from the Freeman-Kennedy School, travel down Boardman Street, and take a left onto Main Street before ending at Dunkin.’

Along with local youth sports teams, Scouts, and other town organizations, the parade will include several professional marching bands, including the Boston Windjammers, the Worcester Brass Band, the Firehouse Dixie Band, and the Great American Marching Band. The USS Constitution Color Guard is slated to perform, and police and fire

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DRUM

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plained. “We didn’t know what would happen next with the creative venues. They were all closed down and no one could get together, let alone rehearse.”

And so began the Providence Drum Troupe, an eclectic mix of percussion, stilt-walkers, jugglers, healing arts practitioners, and more. It’s a visual spectacle and live theater rolled into one, and during those deep winter days just nine months ago, the troupe was a welcome sight for a pandemic-weary public.

“People would be walking by, totally masked up, very hungry for any kind of entertainment,” said Black. “We started organically gathering this community, a tribal community of creative people and people that appreciate creativity. And it was all born of a play date with friends, essentially.”

The performers would meet on Thursday nights at 6:30 at the hurricane barrier, a natural amphitheater with views of the Providence skyline, to “activate

the space,” according to Black. The audiences kept growing, the free performances attracting families via word of mouth.

Black tapped into his creative contacts and the troupe grew along with the audiences. In addition to the drummers, the performers include a man from Troy, NY, who brings his gongs, returning home the same night. Another member leads the group howl, especially popular with children. Throw in a few fire-breathers, hula-hoopers, life-size puppets, and the Bubble Fairy—she makes life-size bubbles and leads children around like the Pied Piper—and you have the interactive experience that is the Providence Drum Troupe.

“You never know what you may see when you show up,” Black said. “It’s a visual feast.”

The Wrentham resident is a retired juvenile parole officer with a musical and artistic side. He has a degree in music education and has performed in all kinds of musical groups, including an award-winning jazz band. He is also a fine arts photographer, doing work for Newport’s contemporary ballet company,

the Island Moving Company, and is a member of several galleries. While a parole officer, Black had a side practice doing expressive arts therapy with autistic children.

“I always felt it was important to keep a hand in creativity while I worked for the Commonwealth,” he said. “I would see my colleagues retire and kind of deflate because they had no interests. But I was fortunate enough to have the arts as an anchor in a very stressful job. All the irons in the fire right now are creative which is stressful too but it’s stress on my own terms.”

These days, the Providence Drum Troupe meets on Thursday nights at the Michael S. Van Leesten Memorial Bridge, a pedestrian bridge just a short walk from the hurricane barrier. Van Leesten, a Providence native who died in 2019 at the age of 80, worked to improve the lives of Rhode Islanders through public service and civil rights activism.

The symbolism of the location is not lost on Black.

“We’ve all been activists before and even though the drum troupe is not an activist band, just by looking at us—there’s all genders, there’s left, there’s right—we’re demonstrating that living in harmony is not an antiquated notion,” said Black. “We’re very much in the business of reminding people of that without screaming or holding signs or banners.”

Depending on the night, there are anywhere from six to twenty performers—whoever shows up. As the troupe has grown, Black



Wrentham resident David Lee Black started the Providence Drum Troupe in January.

has one rule: don’t be annoying. The group is very carefully curated to have the right chemistry.

“It’s just a wonderfully warm group of people and that’s something I am definitely protecting and nurturing,” said Black.

Black has lived in Wrentham for close to 40 years and raised a daughter in town. Much of his gallery work is in Boston, but he says Providence is a better fit for the drum troupe and its vision: connecting creative forces for the greatest good.

“Providence has always been like Gotham City, a creative capital with an edgy vibe,” said Black. “It’s still very gritty. There are certain areas that really need what we do, to pop up and activate the space.”

The Providence Drum Troupe has started landing some gigs. The group has performed at the WaterFire Arts Center a few times and opened up for the Providence Fringe Festival. They’ve also participated in a benefit festival for LGBTQ youth. On occasion, they’ll move

their ensemble through the streets, attracting yet more fans.

Black, who served on Wrentham’s Cultural Council, says creativity and the arts can thrive anywhere, not just in a large city with many venues. He points out the King Philip district’s highly-respected music program, particularly its marching band and color guard, as examples of performance art out of a small town.

In times of stress or uncertainty, creative expression can provide an outlet both for the artist and the audience. In this space, something very special can emerge. The Providence Drum Troupe and its organic growth and engagement with the public is an example of that.

“We’re a positive story and sometimes we all need to see and hear more of that instead of what the news media throws at us,” mused Black. “Some things are actually okay in the world and we’re here to remind people of that.”

Weather permitting, the Providence Drum Troupe meets most Thursday nights at 6:30 at the Michael S. Van Leesten Memorial Bridge, but it’s best to check the group’s Instagram page for updates.

The Providence Drum Troupe is actively recruiting new members, especially drummers, as well as support staff to handle social media and other behind-the-scenes logistics. Black welcomes KP music and color guard students (past or present) who might want to join, noting that the troupe’s low-stress philosophy is “play when you can.”

Visit the group’s website at www.providencedrumtroupe.com to contact Black or for more information. The group is also available for gigs outside of Providence.

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Your Money, Your Independence

September is the Best Tax Planning Month. Yes, really.

September, not December or April, is the opportune time as it provides roughly 3 months to execute tax planning strategies for the current year while positioning for the year ahead.

Some usual activities:

Increase 401(k) - If your social security tax stopped after earning \$142,800 this year, consider allocating that amount (or more) to 401(k) contributions. This will help lower your Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) or if a Roth 401(k), increase your tax-free savings for retirement.

Tax Loss Harvesting - No need to wait for the last days of December. In fact, many managers do selling in the fall to comply with wash sale rules and be fully-vested for the new year.

Work Benefits - Often, fall is open enrollment, the once-a-year chance to enroll in tax-savings programs like Health Savings Account (HSA) and Flex Spending Accounts (FSAs).

HSAs enjoy triple-tax benefits, as contributions lower your AGI (reducing taxes owed), funds grow tax-free and are not taxed when used for medical expenses, premiums for long-term care and medicare.

FSA contributions lower your AGI and the 3 programs available are Medical, Dependent Care and Transit (commuter or parking).

Unique for 2021 due to government legislation:

Child Tax Credit 2021 - Started getting money from the government in July? Those are “advance payments” up to \$3,000 per qualifying dependent child or \$3,600 if under age 6 on Dec. 31, 2021. This tax credit reduces your tax bill on a dollar-for-dollar basis, so if you typically owe taxes, might be best to visit IRS.com to opt-out and receive a potential rebate later.

Dependent Care FSA (DC-FSA) 2021 - As referenced in June, new DC-FSA annual limits for pretax contributions increase for most from \$5,000 to \$10,500. Funding DC-FSA not only reduces taxable income but also avoids Social Security and Medicare tax. Thus, MA family in 24% federal tax bracket may have tax savings up to \$3,848 (32% tax bracket is \$4,688). But... your employer may opt-in to new limits within their plan, and have to elect funds to increase.

Roth Conversion - The spring “Biden Tax Plan” is still a proposal in late August. Congress would be challenged (to say the least) if new tax laws passed this late in the year were retroactive for 2021. So for some, this may be a 2nd last chance to convert some assets to Roth IRA at current federal tax rates. Roth Conversion analysis takes time given the variables unique to each individual. Most importantly,

conversions should be done near year-end with visibility of projected AGI as these are irreversible.

By focusing on tax planning now, you can relax over the holidays with more savings and less taxes. That calls for another slice of the pie.

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

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



Glenn Brown

Blessing of the Pets

Love your pet? Come to St. John's Church for a special Blessing of the Pets on Sunday, September 26 during the 10 a.m. worship service on the front lawn of the church.

The Rev. Kathy McAdams will lead the Sunday service that includes a special blessing for all pets in honor of St. Francis of Assisi, who is associated with the patronage of animals and the natural environment. Bring your dog, cat, bird, goat or any beloved pet (on a leash or in carriers, please). Favorite stuffed animals and photos of pets are welcome too!

For more information, contact St. John's Episcopal Church at 508-528-2387. The church is located at 237 Pleasant St. in Franklin.



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trucks will also be featured. The State Police Marching Bagpipe Band may make an appearance, too.

At 8 p.m., fireworks will be set off from the Freeman-Kennedy School fields, although residents will also be able to view them from most places in downtown Norfolk, noted Terrio.

In addition, activities and events will take place on Town Hill throughout the day, including the Cactus and Succulent Society's annual plant sale, a farmers' market, face painting and balloon animals for children, and more. Food trucks are being planned.

The day's activities are entirely self-funded, and several town businesses and organizations have stepped up to the plate with very generous donations, said Terrio, including Dunkin', Island Lighting, the

Norfolk Lions, and Daley's Service Center. Hilary Cohen, the town's animal control officer, launched the fundraising efforts in 2020 with a donation of \$1,000.

Norfolk, previously known as North Wrentham, was incorporated as a town in 1870. There were 1,124 residents at the time. But the community really had its start in the late 1700s, when the Rev. David Avery, a dismissed pastor from Wrentham, moved to the area and established his own church, the North Parish Association, now known as the Federated Church. Many members of his former congregation followed him and the community was born.

Norfolk has celebrated past anniversaries in various ways. According to Historical Commission member Donna Jones, in 1995 the town celebrated its 125th anniversary with an air show held at the former Norfolk airport. In addition, there was an assembly in the H. Olive Day cafeteria with then-current Select Board members portraying

town founders and reenacting the signing of the document to separate from Wrentham. There was a slide show at the assembly, commemorative merchandise for sale, and a birthday cake. The town also held a parade and fireworks.

To mark the town's centennial in 1970, there was a year-long celebration that included dances, contests for "Centennial Queen" and "Mayor," an antique car show, a horse show, a musical review and concert, fireworks, a parade, and more. Many men in town grew beards. Long-time residents recall this special year with its myriad anniversary events, but Norfolk's population numbered around 2,000 at the time, so it was much easier to plan and host a series of activities.

While a celebration of that caliber won't be happening for this anniversary—the town is much bigger and the pandemic has disrupted some of the planned observances--Terrio still hopes for a great turnout on September 18.

"There's a lot to celebrate," he said. "It will be a very busy day for the town of Norfolk."

The 150th anniversary committee, which includes Norfolk Historical Commission members Jones and Betsey Whitney in addition to Terrio, is still accepting donations. There are several ways to donate, including dropping off a check made out to "Town of Norfolk—Parade Fund" to the Senior Center or Recreation Department office during normal business hours.

To contribute online, go to Norfolk.activityreg.com. Click on Register and then Programs or Activities. Click on 150th Celebration. Commemorative T-shirts are also available for purchase through the same link. Cost is \$15-\$17 for adults and \$12 for children.

Donors of \$250 or more will be offered a prime viewing spot for the parade, and donors of \$500 or more will be offered a prime viewing spot for the fireworks.

For more information, email Terrio at phterio@gmail.com or NorfolkMA2020@gmail.com.

Help with the FAFC Backpack Drive

The Friends of Adoption and Foster Care fill backpacks with school supplies, new stuffed animals, PJs, and personal care items for foster children. DCF social workers have them on hand so when a child is placed into foster care, he/she will get a new backpack. Backpacks are a great comfort to children who have left home with nothing!

Donated items can be dropped off in the bins located inside St. Martha's Church in Plainville and St. Mary's Church in Wrentham, or in the parking lot of St. Mary's. Please go to PWC.church for a complete list of requested items.

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Advertising Director
Kathy Benoit

Advertising Sales Manager
Jen Schofield
508-570-6544
jenschofield@localtownpages.com

Multi Media Sales Consultant
Jeremy Wardwell
413-204-5296
jeremywardwell@localtownpages.com

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Local Girl Scout Volunteers Earn Recognition Awards

Girl Scouts Leaders from Wrentham & Plainville Honored for Achievements and Service

Girl Scouts of Southeastern New England recognized volunteers Diane Pelrine of Wrentham, Sara Hill of Plainville, Katelyn Clough of Wrentham, and Tricia Barry of Wrentham with Volunteer Appreciation Awards for their exceptional achievements and service to local and regional girl scouting.

Diane Pelrine was honored with the GSUSA Thanks Badge, which is the 2nd highest award volunteers can receive in Girl Scouting. This award is reserved for Girl Scout volunteers whose on-going commitment, leadership, and service has had an exceptional, measurable impact on meeting the mission delivery goals and priorities of the entire council and girl scout movement.

Celebrating 40 years of Girl Scout Membership, Diane is a tireless champion of the Girl Scout Leadership & Outdoor Experience. Affectionally known as Mrs. P, her personal mission is for the girls to grow and achieve great things in Girl Scouts and for each of them to have lifelong, fond memories of their time as a Girl Scout. Under her leadership as Service Unit Manager and Program Coordinator, Wrentham & Plainville Girl Scouts thrive in our communities. Diane



Diane Pelrine, Wrentham & Plainville Service Unit Manager & Program Coordinator. 2021 Recipient of the GSUSA Thanks Badge.
(Photo courtesy of Karen Becker.)

also shares her passion and expertise as a mentor to new leaders and as a council trainer.

Sara Hill was recognized with the Rising Star award celebrating outstanding leadership amongst new leaders. Sara's Brownie troop in Plainville has participated in a number of outdoor and virtual Girl Scout programs throughout this unusual year thanks to Sara's perseverance. Her troop has volunteered alongside older Plainville troops to plant flowers at the Plainville Historic Commission's Humphrey House. Sara also serves as volunteer delegate for Wrentham

& Plainville Girl Scouts at the GSSNE Annual Meeting.

Katelyn Clough and Tricia Barry were both honored with Volunteer of Excellence Awards. Katelyn leads both a Daisy and Junior troop in Wrentham. Her troops actively participate in community service projects for local first responders and teachers along with veterans serving overseas. Tricia leads an active Senior troop of high school girls. Her troop competes and has earned numerous awards in summer and winter outdoor camping competitions. They also partner with the Wrentham Landscaping Committee providing service to beautify Wrentham center throughout the year.

Nominated by their peers and council staff, these volunteers have been recognized for giving service that is above and beyond the expectations of their position. All awards require multiple nominations and endorsements along with the approval of Girl Scouts of Southeastern New England Adult Recognition Committee. These outstanding volunteers were recognized at the GSSNE's Annual Volunteer Recognition Ceremony.

To join our fun and supportive group of local Girl Scout Leaders or to register a Girl Member in Wrentham and Plainville, email us at wrenthamplainville-girlscouts@gmail.com.

About Girl Scouts of Southeastern New England

Girl Scouts is the world's pre-eminent girl leadership organization where, in an accepting and nurturing environment, girls build character and skills for success in the real world. Girl Scouts of Southeastern New England, in partnership with 2,700 adult volunteers, serves 6,500 girls from Rhode Island, thirteen communities in southeastern Massachusetts, and Pawcatuck, CT.

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KPHS Awarded KyleCares Grant to Establish Active Minds Chapter

King Philip Regional High School has received a grant from the KyleCares Foundation to establish a student-led Active Minds chapter.

On Monday, Aug. 2, KyleCares President/Co-Founder Jim Johnson and Co-Founder Sue Johnson visited King Philip Regional High School to present a grant to King Philip student leads — junior Matt Kelley, senior Arielle Feuer, and Class of 2020 graduate Madison Kelley — to be used to help establish a KP Active Minds chapter. Active Minds, a national non-profit organization supporting mental health awareness and education for young adults, has over 700 chapters at colleges and high schools to help change the conversation around mental health.

The KyleCares grant award will support King Philip students in their efforts to establish an Active Minds chapter to engage other students and staff in learn-

ing about mental health, supporting one another and seeking help.

“We have a group of dedicated students who are eager to open up and grow communication efforts regarding mental health and establish wellness resources for students returning to school this fall,” KP Director of Wellness Dot Pearl said. “With this generous grant from the KyleCares Foundation, these students will be able to further enhance their efforts by formally establishing an Active Minds chapter.”

With the support of Principal Dr. Lisa Mobley, Director of Wellness Pearl and Special Educator Marylyn Callanan, both of whom will serve as co-advisers, surveyed high school students to gauge interest in an Active Minds chapter at King Philip Regional High School. Approximately 40 students expressed interest in learning more about the organi-

zation at the time of the survey.

During springtime meetings



with those who showed interest, students expressed their commitment to raising awareness, reducing stigma and increasing help-seeking among their peers. Following informational meetings with KyleCares President/Co-Founder Johnson and an Active Minds chapter coordinator, King Philip students applied and were approved to become a King Philip Regional High School Active Minds Chapter.

“Active Minds Chapters help elevate students’ voices, making them part of the solution to improving a school’s culture around mental health,” KyleCares President/Co-Founder Jim Johnson said. “Through this grant, King Philip is now the sixth high school



From left: KyleCares President/Co-Founder Jim Johnson, KyleCares Co-Founder Sue Johnson, KP Junior Matt Kelley, KP Senior Arielle Feuer, KP Class of 2020 graduate Madison Kelley, KP Active Minds Adviser Marylyn Callanan and Director of Wellness/Active Minds Adviser Dot Pearl. (Photo courtesy King Philip Regional High School.)

or college in Massachusetts that KyleCares has assisted to start a new student-led chapter in the past two years, and we look forward to seeing the chapter grow and positively impact the student body when school resumes this fall.”

The KyleCares Foundation assists high schools and colleges in implementing mental health awareness and suicide preven-

tion programs through financial support and facilitation of partnerships with leading organizations. The King Philip Regional School District has partnered with the foundation since 2019 to host parent/caregiver wellness education programs, provide staff training and connect the King Philip community with other wellness programs.

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Norfolk Lions Luck of the Draw

Are you feeling lucky? Norfolk Lions have started a new online weekly raffle called the **Norfolk Lions Luck of the Draw**.

Every week for the rest of 2021, a winning number will be drawn. The cost of the raffle tickets is \$25 for one, \$45 for two and \$60 for three tickets.

The winning number holder receives a check for \$25 AND the number is placed back into the pot for subsequent weekly drawings!

The final Lions Luck of the Draw BIG winners of \$500, \$200, \$100 and \$100 will be drawn on December 26th, 2021.

Start purchasing your tickets now at

<https://www.norfolkmalions.org/lions-luck-of-the-draw>.

Tickets purchased by 3 p.m. each Sunday will be included in the weekly drawing. The Lions Luck of the Draw winner will be pulled each Sunday night.

Proceeds from the raffle will go to the Norfolk Lions Charitable Fund, which helps local and national causes.



Fiske Welcomes New Children's Librarian

BY GRACE ALLEN

Sara DelPriore has been named the new children's librarian at Wrentham's Fiske Public Library. DelPriore's first day on the job was July 21.

A former educator and staff member at North Attleboro's Richards Memorial Library, DelPriore brings a passion for working with children to her role at the Fiske. Her number one goal, she said, is to make the children's area at the library a welcoming place.

"I think it should be a place for all children to feel free to visit and have fun," she said. "We have so many amazing resources for children at the Fiske—games, building materials, toys, and of course books. I want children to feel comfortable and safe here. Unlike school and extracurricular activities, there are no grades and no pressure to perform here. Come as you are and find what you like to do."

DelPriore has a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Salem State College (now

Salem State University) and a master's degree in children's literacy from Lesley University. She worked as a teacher before having her own children, and then worked at the North Attleboro library, which sparked her interest in library science.

Instilling in children a love of reading is the mission of a children's librarian, of course, and DelPriore believes in letting children themselves lead the way.

"I never want to be the person to tell someone what they should be reading or make reading a stressful or tedious task for children," she said. "I think children should be able to feel a sense of autonomy when choosing what books to read and how to read them. There's plenty of time for reading instruction and assigned reading in school. Letting them choose what they want to read in their free time can help set up a lifelong love of books."

Some of DelPriore's favorite children's authors are Robert McCloskey, Robert Munsch, Mo Willems, and Amy Krouse Rosenthal. She is also a fan of



Sara DelPriore is the new children's librarian at the Fiske Public Library.

middle reader graphic novels of all different genres and recommends them for reluctant readers.

"They're great because they're a bit less intimidating than chapter books," she explained. "They

have fewer words per page but more illustrations and still tell a great story. I like to recommend them for children who might not want to read a whole chapter book but feel they're too old for picture books."

DelPriore replaces Elizabeth Nadow ("Miss Liz"), who retired this past spring after many years as the children's librarian at the Fiske. While noting she has big shoes to fill, DelPriore has plans to expand programming for older children and teens, in addition to restarting the toddler and young children's programs, most of which have been on hiatus since March of 2020.

"My challenge right now, of course, is balancing the public health advice with what people want to see here at the Fiske, what kind of programming people are comfortable with," she said.

DelPriore lives in North Attleboro with her husband Lance and their two daughters, ages 8 and 5. In her free time, she likes being outdoors with her family, hiking, traveling, and enjoying the beach. She also likes to bake, and of course, read.

"I am looking forward to getting to know the community," said DelPriore. "We're open now for in-person browsing, so come on in. I'd love to meet everyone."

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Wrentham Fire Department Receives Federal Grant for Training, Equipment

The Wrentham Fire Department has been awarded a federal grant through the FY2020 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program.

The grant, in the amount of \$234,780.86, will be used for firefighter training and wellness for the Wrentham Fire Department. Specifically, funds will defray costs associated with training and certification in Emergency Vehicle Operations, Motor Pump Operations, and Scene Management/Safety Officer. Firefighter wellness initiatives are also part of the grant in the way of cancer prevention and specialized exercise equipment.

“We are extremely grateful to receive these funds to provide vital training and equipment for members of the Wrentham Fire Department,”

Fire Chief Antonio Marino said. “Because of the extraordinary collaborative efforts led by Capt. Kenneth Jefferson and the subject matter expertise of FF Devan Cornetta, Capt. Michael Wainwright, and Deputy Robert Maduskuie, we will continue to chisel a firm foundation through increased training and procurement through this federal funding opportunity. Additionally, I would like to thank the community, Town Administrator Kevin Sweet, and the various Boards for their unwavering support of our efforts.”

Chief Marino added, “These trainings will help bring our department into compliance with recommended National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and other national standards, will improve

the effectiveness of firefighters performing their duties, reduce mistakes that may place firefighters in harm’s way, and generally increase our ability to respond to the needs of the community.”

The FY2020 AFG program is one of three grant programs that constitute the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) and Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) focus on enhancing the safety of the public and firefighters with respect to fire and fire-related hazards. The AFG Program accomplishes this by providing financial assistance directly to eligible fire departments, non-affiliated emergency medical service organizations, and State Fire Training Academies for critical training and equipment.

Guest Column

The Climate Change Equation

By G. GREGORY TOOKER

Most acknowledged experts will agree that we have gone beyond the tipping point when it comes to managing climate change. Steps taken to moderate the amount of carbon spewed into the environment by mankind may lessen the inevitable consequences of earth’s warming cycle but the effect will fall short of what is needed to prevent worldwide suffering. This means that in addition to much needed government-driven carbon reduction measures now underway, individuals need to consider actions they should be taking to make an impact and lessen their personal vulnerability.

Extreme weather events are already occurring with increased regularity. Flood, drought and significantly higher temperatures are impacting virtually every family across the globe. Public resources are being stretched to the limit to counter the mounting costs of control, cleanup and reconstruction. In the future, individuals will be forced to rely more on their own ingenuity to defend against the challenges of climate change. This necessitates a balanced personal family risk management strategy, not only designed to reduce your negative impact on the environment but also to increase the survival rate of your loved ones.

Sacrifice of convenience is not something that comes easily to the average American. We take for granted our labor-saving and comfort devices, such as dishwashers, clothes dryers, lawn mowers, snow and leaf blowers, etc., many of which generate carbon emissions. Are we willing to donate

couch time to completing these tasks manually as we used to? A collective, nationwide effort to do so would have a very significant positive impact, not only on carbon emission reduction but on the overall wellness of our health-challenged population. Could we convince our health insurers to reduce premiums for those who get their BMIs into the acceptable zone? It’s time to think more creatively.

Think about how you can better assure your family’s access to food, clean water and safe shelter during a period of significant challenge. If water and power disappear overnight, do you have an emergency supply easily accessible until they are restored? Is there a non-perishable food supply to get you through until access to resupply is available? Can you respond to a family member’s emergency medical need if community resources are not immediately available? The pandemic is certainly testing that item. If the internet is interrupted, do you have a ready reserve supply of cash for essential purchases? The list is far too long to exhaust here and you can undoubtedly add many more items with little difficulty.

The point is, we all need to think about the major challenge of climate change now and in significant detail. Government will not solve the problem for us; we need to fully engage on a personal level. The tide is rising and procrastination is no longer an option.

Editor’s Note: Mr. Tooker, a Wrentham resident, served for over 20 years as a risk management consultant to the National League of Cities in Washington, DC.



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Dedication of the Veterans Memorial Plaza Lower Gardens Set for Sept. 12

The Garden Club of Norfolk and the Norfolk Historical Commission will hold a dedication of the Veterans Memorial Lower Gardens and special tribute to Lowell Robinson, the architect who designed the Memorial Cemetery Plaza. The date of the event is Sunday, September 12 at 1 p.m. at the Norfolk Town Cemetery located at the corner of Main and Seekonk Streets in Norfolk. A rain date is scheduled for Saturday, September 25 at 1 p.m.

Several speakers from the Garden Club and Historical Commission will talk about the events leading up to this rededication. The hill sloping down from the top of the granite steps has been the focus of the plantings. Boulders were placed, thanks to the help of Norfolk DPW, to provide accent and texture for the various plants that will provide three seasons of color and greenery. The Garden

Club of Norfolk has planted a thriving native plant garden in memory of those who served our country. The garden is low-maintenance and includes native shrubs, grasses, and perennials.

The Garden Club received grant funding from the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts with additional funding provided by generous donors including the Norfolk American Legion Post 335, the Norfolk Historical Commission, Norfolk Lions Club, Cactus and Succulent Society of Mass. and individual donations to help secure the purchase and maintenance of the plants.

A bench in honor of Lowell Robinson has been placed under a tree facing the hill and speaking platform. Lowell, a veteran himself, is buried at the cemetery along with his wife Marion. Besides being the Town Hill landscape architect, Lowell provided the Garden Club with numerous



Lower Veterans Memorial Gardens are the two areas to the left and right of the granite steps.

ideas on establishing the rose garden at Town Hill. The Norfolk Historical Commission would like to thank the Robinson family, the Norfolk Cultural Council, and the Massachusetts Cultural Council for their financial support in paying for the bench.

The Garden Club of Norfolk, Inc. is a non-profit charitable organization that instructs its members and the public on all areas of horticulture and stimulates interest in the beautification of our community. Its active and honorary members are inter-

ested gardeners with all levels of experience and proficiency. New members are always welcomed. Residents interested in learning more about gardening or the club's activities are invited to visit the club's website at www.gardenclubofnorfolkma.com.

Local Students Named to Honor Roll at BC High

The following students have been named to the Third and/or Fourth Quarter Honor Roll at Boston College High School:

Wrentham

William Pyne '21 – Quarter 3 High Honors

Norfolk

Noah Falvey '23 – Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 Honors

Jack Dooley '23 – Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 Honors

Seniors graduated in May and were not named to the Quarter 4 Honor Roll.

For High Honors a sophomore, junior, and senior must have at least a 3.80 quality point average and all grades C+ or higher. Freshmen need a 3.6 quality point average and all grades C+ or higher.

For Honors a sophomore, junior, and senior must have at least a 3.20 quality point average and all grades C- or higher. Freshmen need a 3.165 quality point average and all grades C- or higher.

About Boston College High School: Boston College High School is a Jesuit, Catholic, college-preparatory school for young men in grades 7 to 12. Founded in 1863, the school enrolls approximately 1,500 students from more than 140 communities in eastern Massachusetts. For more information, visit bchigh.edu.

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2021 Myra Kraft Community MVP Award Winners Announced

Angela Cote of Walpole, Mass. receives \$10,000 for the Prison Yoga Project

Every year since 1998, the Kraft family and the New England Patriots have been celebrating those who give their time to help others. The program was originally known as the Community Quarterback Awards and were presented to those who exemplify leadership, dedication and a commitment to improving their communities through volunteerism.

In 2011, the awards were renamed in honor of the late Myra Kraft who committed her life to volunteering. As part of the New England Patriots Foundation's ongoing Celebrate Volunteerism initiative, the Kraft family hosts a special luncheon each year to show their appreciation for local volunteers.

On Wednesday, Aug. 11, twenty-six volunteers were recognized for their contributions at an awards ceremony at Gillette Stadium. Twenty-five organizations received grants of \$10,000 in honor of their outstanding volunteers and one grand prize winner received a surprise \$25,000 donation.

On hand to congratulate the award winners were Patriots Chairman and CEO Robert Kraft, New England Patriots Foundation President Joshua Kraft and Patriots and Pro Football Hall of Famer and Patriots Executive Director of Community Affairs Andre Tippett.

"This marks the tenth year that this program has been named in memory of my sweetheart, Myra," said Robert Kraft. "The past 18 months have been unlike anything we've experienced in our lifetime. During these challenging times, these 26 honorees stepped up to serve more children and families than ever before. We admire their selfless dedication and we know that Myra is smiling down on all of them."

Angela Cote of Walpole, Mass. was recognized for her volunteer efforts and a \$10,000 donation was presented to the Prison Yoga Project.

Since 2018, Angela has been volunteering her time to teach yoga at the Massachusetts Correctional Institution in Norfolk,

the largest prison in the state. Her goal is to provide trauma-informed yoga and mindfulness practices that reduce aggression, despair and impulsivity.

"I believe that every individual has the capacity to make a positive change in our world one action at a time," said Angela. "It takes courage, commitment and dedication, three words that I practice as a yoga instructor for incarcerated men. When I volunteer, I see myself in each person that I serve. Those are the moments when I realize we are the same. Together, we have the capacity to learn from our mistakes and challenges, grow into our true essence and be free to live a life of peace and contentment."

The program started with a few participants and has steadily grown, with pre-recorded meditations and yoga books being distributed to 14 facilities across Massachusetts. The Prison Yoga Project helps to improve relationships within their facilities while also promoting rehabilitation and reducing rates of recidivism.

Angela is also preparing to launch a 200-hour yoga teacher training certification program at the correctional institution, which would be the first of its kind in the state.



Patriots Chairman and CEO Robert Kraft and Patriots and Pro Football Hall of Famer Andre Tippett congratulate Angela Cote from the Prison Yoga Project for being selected as a 2021 Myra Kraft Community MVP Award winner. During the August 11 luncheon, the Kraft family and the New England Patriots Foundation awarded \$275,000 in grants to 26 New England nonprofits. The Norwood Food Pantry received a \$10,000 grant in honor of Angela's volunteer efforts.

(Photo courtesy of Eric J. Adler/New England Patriots.)

"It is an honor to have Angela recognized for her work facilitating yoga for incarcerated people," said Nicole Hellthaler, assistant director of the Prison Yoga Project. "We greatly admire her devotion and persistence in delivering an impactful program to a group of people who have experienced high levels of trauma and are seeking tools for betterment and healing. The men she works with have enjoyed yoga so much that Angela is working to bring yoga teacher training to them while incarcer-

ated. The direct and indirect impact of her work is remarkable. Prison Yoga Project is both grateful and excited that this critical work is valued and recognized by the Kraft Family and New England Patriots Foundation."

"Being a recipient of the Myra Kraft Community MVP Award sparks my heart and soul," said Angela. "It is through this generous support that fuels the fire to have an even greater impact on the incarcerated population I serve. These funds will have a profound effect that goes beyond the four walls of the prison. I am very grateful and thankful for this award."

The 2021 Myra Kraft Community MVP winners range from 21 to 92 years old and represent every New England state. The selected nonprofits provide support for many causes, including education, domestic violence prevention, healthcare, homelessness, mentoring and military support.

The Kraft family and the New England Patriots Foundation received more than 250 applications this year from nonprofit organizations looking to recognize their outstanding volunteers. Nominations open each spring and the awards are open to all nonprofit organizations in the New England region. For more information on the Myra Kraft Community MVP Awards, visit www.patriots.com/community.

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Norfolk Firefighter Recruit Graduates from Massachusetts Firefighting Academy

On July 23, Norfolk firefighter recruit Tyler Connolly was one of 40 firefighters who graduated from the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy after completing the 50-day Career Recruit Firefighting Training Program at the Bridgewater and Stow campuses.

“This rigorous professional training provides our newest firefighters with the basic skills to perform their jobs effectively and safely,” said State Fire Marshal Ostroskey. The Massachusetts Firefighting Academy (MFA), a division of the Department of Fire Services, offers this program tuition-free.

The 40 firefighters represent the fire departments of Auburn, Bellingham, Braintree, of Centerville-Osterville-Marstons Mills, Charlton, Clinton, Devens, Duxbury, Gloucester, Hopkinton, Mansfield, Middleton, Nantucket, Newton, Norfolk, Norton, North Andover, Northborough, Norwell, Plymouth, Reading, Sandwich, Scituate, Tewksbury, Wellesley, and Weston.

“First responders are on the frontlines protecting their communities, and these newest firefighters are needed now more than ever,” said Deputy State Fire Marshal Maribel Fournier who is serving as the MFA director. “We have taken advantage of technology, reduced class size for social distancing, implemented daily screening, and required mask-wearing to keep our instructors and students as safe as possible.”

Training Safely During Pandemic

In response to the pandemic, the MFA reorganized its 10-week curriculum to take advantage of online learning technology while ensuring plenty of practical skill experience on-campus with instructors. Students alternated between a virtual classroom and practical training on campus, using special safeguards and social distancing, to maximize learning opportunities while also reducing group sizes.

Basic Firefighter Skills

Students receive classroom training in all basic firefighter skills. They practice first under non-fire conditions and then during controlled fire conditions. To graduate, students must demonstrate proficiency in life safety, search and rescue, ladder operations, water supply, pump operation, and fire attack. Fire attack operations range from mailbox fires to multiple-floor or multiple-room structural fires. Upon successful completion of the Recruit Program all students have met the national standards of National Fire Protection Association 1001 and are certified to the level of Firefighter I and II, and Hazardous Materials First Responder Operational Level by the Massachusetts Fire Training Council, which is accredited by the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications.

Today's Firefighters Do Far More than Fight Fires

Today's firefighters do far more than fight fires. They train to respond to all types of hazards and emergencies. They are the first ones called to respond to chemical and environmental emergencies, ranging from the suspected presence of carbon monoxide, to Fentanyl overdoses or a gas leak. They may be called to rescue a child who has fallen through the ice or who has locked himself in a bathroom. They rescue people from stalled elevators and those who are trapped in vehicle crashes. They test and maintain their equipment including self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), hydrants, hoses, power tools, and apparatus.

At the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy, they learn all these skills and more, including the latest science of fire behavior and suppression tactics, from certified fire instructors who are also experienced firefighters. They also receive training in public fire education, hazardous material incident mitigation, flammable liquids, stress management, and self-rescue techniques. The intensive, 10-week program for municipal firefighters involves classroom instruction, physical fitness training, firefighter skills training, and live firefighting practice.



Massachusetts Firefighting Academy
Career Recruit Class #293 Graduation • July 23, 2021

Norfolk firefighter Tyler Connolly.

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Why Now is The Best Time to Buy Life Insurance

Local Insurance Expert Recommends Putting a Financial Safety Net in Place

The current economy continues to put financial strain on many of us. So it just makes sense to examine our budgets and look for ways to trim the fat from our monthly expenses and put more into savings, if possible.

“That’s a great way to help stabilize your finances, but it’s also important that you have a financial safety net in place in case something were to happen to you,” says Jeffrey N. Schweitzer, EPA, CEP, ATP, RTRP, a Tax, Insurance & Financial Services Professional with Northeast Financial Strategies Inc in Wrentham, MA. “Life insurance is one

of the few guarantees your family could rely on to maintain their quality of life if you were no longer there to provide for them.”

There are 95 million adult Americans without life insurance, according to LIMRA, an insurance industry research group. “The fact is, the vast majority of Americans need life insurance and, sadly, most people either have none or not enough,” says Schweitzer. “If someone depends on you financially, you need life insurance. It’s that simple.”

September is Life Insurance Awareness Month, making it the perfect time to take stock of your



LIFE INSURANCE AWARENESS MONTH

life insurance needs. Schweitzer offers three additional reasons why now is the best time to look into getting life insurance.

You’ll never be younger than you are now. While that may sound obvious, youth is on your side when it comes to life insurance. It makes good financial sense to get coverage when you’re young and healthy, as premiums are based on your age and health. For most policies, your premiums will be locked in at that rate over the life of the policy, and can’t be raised due to a change in your health status.

It’s affordable, with rates near historic lows. People overestimate the cost of life insurance by nearly three times, according to a recent study conducted by LIMRA and the LIFE Foundation, a nonprofit insurance education organization. In fact, life insurance rates remain near historic lows; the cost of basic term life insurance has fallen by nearly 50 percent over the past decade. For example, a healthy 30-year-old can buy a 20-year, \$250,000 level-term policy for about \$13 per month.

Life happens. One day life is going along smoothly, and the next, you’re thrown a curve

ball. No one knows what the future holds. None of us expect to die prematurely, but the truth is roughly 600,000 people die each year in the prime of their lives. That’s why today is always the best day to take care of your life insurance needs.

“Life Insurance Awareness Month is the ideal time for a life insurance review,” says Schweitzer. “I urge everyone to take a few minutes out of their busy schedules this month to make sure they have adequate life insurance protection.”

According to Schweitzer, consumers can get a general sense of their life insurance needs by going to www.lifehappens.org/lifecalculator and using the online calculator offered by the LIFE Foundation. The next step, suggests Schweitzer, should be to contact a local insurance professional, who can conduct a more comprehensive needs analysis and help you find the right products to fit your specific needs and budget.

About Life Insurance Awareness Month

Held each September, Life Insurance Awareness Month is an industry-wide effort that is co-



ordinated by the nonprofit LIFE Foundation. The campaign was created in response to growing concern about the large number of Americans who lack adequate life insurance protection. Roughly 95 million adult Americans have no life insurance, and most with coverage have less than most insurance experts recommend. For more information on life insurance, visit LIFE’s website at www.lifehappens.org.

Jeffrey Schweitzer can be found at Northeast Financial Strategies Inc (NFS) at Wampum Corner in Wrentham. NFS works with individuals and small businesses providing financial and estate planning, insurance, investments and also offers full service accounting, bookkeeping, payroll, income tax preparation, and notary public services. For more information, stop by the office, call Jeffrey at 800-560-4NFS or visit online - www.nfsnet.com



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Wrentham Thanks League School of Greater Boston Students for Landscaping Efforts

The town of Wrentham presented certificates of appreciation to the Walpole-based League School of Greater Boston recently.

The certificates were presented to the League School, including several students in the Vocational Program, for their ongoing landscaping efforts around Wrentham town center.

“Wrentham is very fortunate to be working with the school and these exceptional vocational students,” said Wrentham selectman Joe Botaish, who presented each student with a certificate of appreciation during a ceremony held in Walpole. “Their efforts are having a big impact, and residents are taking notice.”

Through their Vocational Program, led by Job Coach Selena Zubrowski, League School students have been working to beautify the town common, Sweatt Park and other prominent areas in Wrentham. Efforts have included watering new trees, weeding, spreading mulch and fertilizing.

“We were able to plant many new trees and flowers this year in the downtown area, and the kids have helped every step of the way,” said Rebecca Zitomer, Chairperson of the Wrentham Landscape Committee. “We are lucky to have Ms. Zubrowski and her students as part of our collaborative community efforts.”

The Vocational Department at the League School focuses on a variety of activities for students as young as 12 years old.

“We are always looking for ways to improve our community and make life better for our residents, and the work that was done by these talented students certainly did that,” Town Administrator Kevin Sweet said. “On behalf of the entire town, I thank the League School and everyone involved in the landscaping project for their hard work.”

For more information on the League School’s Vocational Program, visit <https://league-school.org>.



Wrentham selectman Joe Botaish presented League School students with certificates of appreciation during a ceremony in Walpole. (Photo courtesy Town of Wrentham.)



Students and staff from the League School of Greater Boston were presented with certificates of appreciation from the Town of Wrentham recently for their efforts beautifying the town through a variety of landscaping efforts. (Photo courtesy Town of Wrentham.)

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The b.LUXE *beauty beat*

With the unofficial end of summer just a few days away, and our uncomplicated schedules coming to a close, we'll soon say goodbye to our warm weather wardrobes, beach hair and sandals.

This final week of summer has most likely been a bit crazy for you. There's the endless shopping list of back to school supplies, new clothes, sports equipment and of course, hair-cuts.

But we're pretty sure more than a few parents are doing their happy dance with the return of some "kid free" time.

Sure, you'll feel that tug at your heart as your little climbs the steps of the big yellow bus. You might even shed a tear or two, but hear that? Exactly. Seven hours of peace and quiet.

Let's face it, it's been two and half months of picking up wet bathing suits, sweating on the ballfield, driving your kids EVERYWHERE, and packing for all those "relaxing" vacations. Summer has its amazing moments, but for families with kids at home, the return to school is a much-needed time for parents to regroup and exhale.

So, with seven hours, sans children, what should you do? Hmmm?

We think it's time to book yourself some "me" time.

First, let's start with a round of applause for all you parents out there!! You survived another chaotic summer and got those kids back on their academic schedules. Now...what do YOU need?

It's easy to fall into the trap of feeling guilty for taking quality time for yourself, but there's a reason there's an article touting the benefits of "self-care" in every blog, magazine and post. Because it's true! We're our best selves when we feel good. We need time to revive and rejuvenate and that comes with what again? That's right, self care!

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Living Healthy

Computer Vision Syndrome

BY: ROGER M. KALDAWY, M.D.
MILFORD FRANKLIN EYE CENTER

As our scholars go back to schools and colleges, let it be in person or remotely, more and more time is spent every day using computer screens and our eyes are paying the price. Research shows that 25 to 93 percent of computer users experience a problem so common there's a name for it: Computer Vision Syndrome. Symptoms include decreased or blurred vision, burning or stinging eyes, sensitivity to light, headaches and back and neck pain.

Computer Vision Syndrome is more common if we exceed 2 hours of continuous computer screen time a day. The most common causes of this syndrome include improper viewing angle or distance from the screen, glare on the computer screen, extended computer use, staring without blinking and uncorrected vision problems.

The good news is that these problems are easy to fix, and identifying and treating the underlying cause usually eliminates this syndrome. Here what you can do:

1. Adjust your viewing angle

Studies have found the angle of gaze plays a key role in this syndrome. The angle

used for computer work is different from that used for reading or writing. As a result, the requirements for focusing and moving the eyes place additional demands on the visual system when using a computer. To achieve the best angle, the center of the monitor should be placed 20 to 28 inches from your eyes and 4 to 5 inches below eye level. Reference materials should be positioned so they can be seen without moving your head to look from the document to the screen.

2. Reduce glare

Letters on a computer screen are not as clear as letters on a printed page. Your eyes will work harder if there is too little contrast between letters and background or glare on the screen. This can result in sensitivity to light that can worsen under high-wattage fluorescent or flickering lights. Position your screen to avoid glare from overhead lights or windows. Close the blinds on your windows or switch to lower-watt bulbs in your desk lamp. If you cannot change the lighting to mini-

mize glare, buy a glare filter for your monitor.

3. Rest your eyes

When using a computer for an extended period of time, rest your eyes periodically to prevent eyestrain. Every 20 minutes, look away from your computer to a distant object for 20 seconds. This will give your eyes a chance to refocus. After two hours of continual computer use, rest your eyes for 15 minutes.

4. Blink often

Our eyes need lubrication to see well. This is accomplished by a blinking reflex and leads to production of moisture (tears) on the surface of the eyes. People normally blink about 18 times a minute, but computer users tend to blink only one-fourth



as often. This increases the chance of developing dry eye. To lessen this risk, blink more often, and refresh your eyes periodically with lubricating eye drops.

5. Get your eyes checked

Uncorrected vision problems—farsightedness or astigmatism, problems focusing or coordinating the eyes and eye changes associated with aging—can contribute to eye strain and musculoskeletal pain. Even if you don't need glasses for daily activities, you may

need them for computer use. If you wear glasses or contacts and need to tilt your head or lean toward the screen to see it clearly, your lens prescription may not be right for computer use. Having the correct prescription can help prevent pain in the neck, shoulders or back resulting from contorting the body to see the screen.

EYES

continued on page 16

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Living Healthy

EYES

continued from page 15

If the above measures don't work, don't put off seeing an ophthalmologist. If the underlying cause of Computer Vision Syndrome is not addressed, symptoms will continue and may worsen in the future. Your ophthalmologist can do a visual acuity measurement to determine how your vision is affected, test your eyes to find a prescription that will compensate for any refractive errors, and check how well your eyes focus, move and work together.

Computer vision syndrome is very common... As more screen

work is needed, more eye strain can be expected. Our center and ophthalmologists have state of the art equipment to diagnose and treat many eye problems, including this syndrome. 7 dedicated eye care providers here to help you in 2 state-of-the-art facilities in Franklin and Milford. We are available and have Saturday and after-hours appointments. From the basic eye exam to the high-tech surgeries performed locally in Milford, our center is now able to better recognize and manage this problem and continue to provide world class eye care for the entire family.

For more details, see our ad on page 12.

Two Approaches Are Better Than One

UTI's (urinary tract infections) typically occur when bacteria enter the urinary tract through the urethra and begin to multiply in the bladder. Although the urinary system is designed to keep out such microscopic invaders, these defenses sometimes fail. When that happens, bacteria may take hold and grow into a full-blown infection in the urinary tract. The symptoms include increased pressure, pain, frequent urination and blood in the urine. They can be very debilitating. The most common bacteria involved in UTI's is E. Coli and is typically treated with antibiotics. When these infections become chronic, long term antibiotic use may ensue causing a disruption in the GI tract which can lead to other GI

disorders. When this takes place, an unhealthy cycle begins.

Heather G presented to the office frustrated with the frequent episodes she has with urinary tract infections. She was tired of the multiple episodes of antibiotics and dealing with the GI symptoms she often experienced including multiple yeast infections as a result of the long term antibiotic use.

Heather was put on a regimen of supplements to support immune function and improve her bladder health. She was also prescribed a probiotic to help restore a balanced microbiome (good bacteria) in her GI tract. After several weeks she felt less pressure in her bladder and noticed the frequency of urination had diminished. A short time



Dr. Rochelle Bien & Dr. Michael Goldstein

after that Heather stated that she hadn't felt this good in more than 2 years when all of this began.

If you are dealing with a similar situation call The Holistic Center at Bristol Square (508) 660-2722 located at 1426 Main Street in Walpole, MA and make an appointment with Dr Rochelle Bien or Dr Michael Goldstein today.

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Living Healthy

Pandemic Pets: Local Surrender Rates High but Buck National Trend

Local Shelters say Dog Surrender Rates Doubled in Last 12 Months

BY AIDAN POOLE

National news sources have been reporting that “people are abandoning their pandemic pets nationwide as returns to work [and school] loom” (www.fortune.com) and, while local animal shelters say they too have seen an uptick in surrenders due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not the newly-adopted pets who need to be re-homed.

Kathy Lundgren, the volunteer outreach coordinator of the Baypath Humane Society in Hopkinton, said that between July 2020 to July 2021, “Our dog surrender rates have doubled but the surrenders haven’t necessarily been the pups adopted through the pandemic.”

Instead, Lundgren said, “The surrenders that we have been seeing have been from people who have had their dogs for years,” and are giving them up due to pet behavior problems, personal health issues, or life changes, such as losing a home or job. “It’s a delicate situation so we don’t pry as to the reason for the surrender unless it is a behavioral surrender.”

Barbara Farrington, the director of the Milford Humane Society, connected the dots between certain surrenders and pandemic-related hardships. “Some of the surrenders have been directly related to COVID and job loss leading to home loss,” she said, recalling one family who had to surrender their

cat because the main breadwinner was an event planner, one of the types of jobs that could not survive the pandemic.

Although COVID-19 has contributed to the Milford Humane Society’s workload, Farrington said that many of their surrenders are for other reasons such as pet owners changing their residence or elderly people becoming unable to care for their animals.

Lundgren says that at Baypath Humane Society, adoptions are also up by about eight percent overall which helps offset the above-average surrender rates and is “most likely due to the pandemic and families looking for companion animals.”

“It is an unfortunate number of surrenders and most of the time we understand that it is a tough decision for people to surrender their pets for various

reasons,” said Lundgren, adding that Baypath Humane Society is “thankful that people do surrender them appropriately to a shelter rather than just letting them out some place to fend for themselves.”

Did you adopt a pet during the pandemic? Share a photo on our Facebook page @Norfolk-WrenthamTownNews.



Lulu (aka “Dolly”) was adopted from Baypath Humane Society before the pandemic. (Photo courtesy of Kati Enos.)



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After one bad experience too many with an unreliable contractor who used shoddy materials, Stephen Goulston founded Mario's Roofing.

"I didn't like the way things were going in this industry," he says. "I wanted to make a change. I started Mario's with the philosophy that I wouldn't do to your house what I wouldn't do to mine."

Thus began a fifteen-year quest for the perfect balance of craftsmanship, quality, and affordability. Mario's Roofing has grown beyond Stoughton to over a dozen local offices servicing Eastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Mario's has also garnered several awards, including the Diamond Approval Award from Customer TrackRecord, the CertainTeed Tenured Member and Governor's Awards, and the Triple Crown Champion Award.



"In all of North America, only eleven roofing companies have achieved Triple Crown status and we are one," Goulston says. "We're really proud of that."

A phone call or a website request for a quote brings a Mario's Roofing specialist right to your home. They'll make targeted recommendations, then spend time with the homeowner explaining what they've found.

"With roofing, we have a video for the customer to demonstrate every step in the process," Goulston says. "The key to a good roof is the preparation of the roof and the underlayment beneath the shingles. For the homeowner, it's the way it looks. For us, it's the way it performs."

Business spotlight

Goulston stresses continuing education for his teams, regularly inviting experts to teach his staff about the latest developments in techniques and materials. "Our guys are quality experts. Delivering the best to our customers requires we know what the best is. Then to make optimal use of it, we've got to know how and when to apply it. That's where my team comes in. We invest in experts so we can make the right recommendation for a client's situation." They'll even offer help with financing.

That commitment to cutting-edge materials is at the forefront with their siding. While Mario's offers basic vinyl siding, they also showcase a full selection of the newest and most versatile options, such as Everlast, a triple-composite formula that combines inorganic minerals, polymer reins, and acrylic colo-



rant to create the most durable siding on the market.

"September and October are the best times to work on your house," Goulston says. "Massachusetts winters can be hard on a home. Your roof needs reliable drainage to protect against ice dams. You need the gutters clear and ready to do the hard work. The siding needs to insulate against the snow and wind. Every part of a well-maintained exterior works together for the entire house's protection."

Take windows, for example, which directly impact heating and insulation. Older windows may vent heat in winter or trap too much warmth in the summer. Replacing old windows with energy-efficient ones is an easy way to enhance a home's beauty and efficiency.

Mario's offers a variety of windows, including custom design. Goulston says, "With windows, the installation is the most important part. All our window installers are highly-trained, and our policy is that the person who measures the windows is the person who installs them."

Window installation involves work on both the inside and outside, and Mario's will move the furniture and the curtains rather than expecting the homeowner to do it, then set it back in place.

Goulston says, "It's part of doing the job one hundred percent. Our workmanship separates us from everybody else, but over the years, it's also become a huge part of our reputation that we care."

Early on, Mario's adopted the tag line, "We won't soak you to keep you warm and dry." They've held to that commitment with quality materials, expert craftsmanship, and competitive pricing.

Mario's website showcases a photo gallery of their best work, as well as before and after pictures with a slider bar so homeowners can visualize their own home's transformation.

Jobs range from new front doors to re-roofed apartment complexes, or even a single basement window. Goulston says, "A small touch like that is important—not only because it looks good, but for increased security and insulation. Our customers see those details every day, and when it's all working right, they feel proud of their home."

To get a quote for your home repairs and upgrades, visit <https://mariosroofing.com> or call (781) 344-2420.

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St. John's Church to Host Virtual Silent Auction

St. John's Episcopal Church in Franklin is getting creative and initiating their first Virtual Silent Auction for the public, which runs through September 10. People will have a chance to bid on merchandise from local and regional businesses. Select from a variety of goods and services: food, retail merchandise, electronics, kid and adult activities, sports, museums and outings.

Access the auction three ways: 1) the auction link at <https://www.32auctions.com/StJohns-Franklin> in your browser; 2) St. John's Church website at www.stjohnsfranklinma.org; 3) on Facebook at St. John's Episcopal Church.

Just register your name and contact details and the list of items will be displayed. It's easy to scroll through and make your bid. Check back often to update your bid! Bidding ends Friday, September 10 at noon. The highest bidder on each item will be contacted.

"Last year was tough on everyone," said Rev. Kathy McAdams. "We have continued to gather for worship in whatever way possible. We have continued to serve the community by growing

food for the Franklin Food Pantry, providing lunch for Common Cathedral and its unhoused congregation twice, and installing a handicap-accessible restroom."

Funds earned from the silent auction will help continue outreach to the area, Rev. McAdams added. "Please participate in our on-line auction, as well as the Pumpkin Patch in October, so that we can continue to have a positive impact in the Franklin community and beyond."

The Virtual Silent Auction and Pumpkin Patch replace the church's holiday fair this winter. The annual Christmas Fair has been a staple in Franklin and a source of income for St. John's Church.

Want more details? Contact Blanca DiGiacomo at 617-429-4676 or blancadigiaco@verizon.net.

Follow St. John's Episcopal Church on Facebook. Visit www.stjohnsfranklinma.org or call 508-528-2387 for more information about the church.



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FSPA Offers Pre-Professional Ballet Program

The Franklin School for the Performing Arts (FSPA) continues its successful Ballet Conservatory program under the direction of Cheryl Madeux. With pre-professional training, FSPA's Ballet Conservatory offers classical ballet education of the highest quality. An extensive range of training and performance experiences provides exceptional opportunities for students of all ages and levels interested in the study of classical ballet. The FSPA Ballet curriculum is based on the foundations of the ABT National Training Curriculum. As of 2015, all teachers on FSPA's Conservatory Track have been certified in the NTC program. Additionally, FSPA Academy, partnered with the virtual Massachusetts Public School TECCA, combines the flexibility of a virtual education with the practicality of a schoolroom, and can accommodate professional opportunities, rehearsal, and performance schedules for pre-professional students who wish to study at FSPA full-time.

The first levels of the ballet program begin an earnest study of classical ballet. Barre work is introduced with a strong focus on individual turnout, foot development, and port de bras. As dancers progress into the intermediate levels, the faculty carefully evaluates each student's progress and potential for pointe work while continuing to nurture the desire to dance. The Pre-Professional Program begins advanced ballet technique and pointe. Admission is by teacher evaluation and audition only. This program consists of FSPA's most challenging and demanding schedule and provides additional performance opportunities for dancers, along with private coaching and extra classes if desired.

FSPA's Ballet program is under the direction of Cheryl Madeux, a former dancer with American Ballet Theatre, Joffery Ballet, and Hartford Ballet. She received her training at the Nut-

meg Conservatory for the Arts. Ms. Madeux has performed extensively throughout the United States and Europe, worked with



leading choreographers including Gerald Arpino, Kirk Peterson, and Twyla Tharp, and been coached by such ballet luminaries as Igor Youskevitch and Eleanor D'Antuono. Her extensive classical repertoire includes all the full-length classical productions as well as principal roles in *The Nutcracker*, *Giselle*, *Coppelia*, *The Firebird*, *Balanchine's Serenade*, *Spectra de La Rose*, and much more. Many of Ms. Madeux's FSPA Ballet Conservatory students have been accepted to some of the most prestigious

summer programs available and a select few recently participated and advanced to the finals of the Youth America Grand Prix in NY. Ms. Madeux is also a summer faculty member for the ABT Young Dancers Program in NY and an examiner for the ABT National Training Curriculum.

In previous years, FSPA has presented its students for Examinations in the American Ballet Theatre National Training Curriculum at ABT's studios in New York, NY. The Examination class was taught by Ms. Madeux. FSPA is proud to incorporate the American Ballet Theatre National Training Curriculum, a nine-level program that combines high quality artistic training with the basics of dancer health and child development for students of all ages and skill levels. Upon successful exam completion, Cheryl Madeux earned the distinction of ABT Affiliate Teacher.

FSPA offers two additional tracks of Ballet study for stu-

dents not on the pre-professional path and advanced dancers with limited time in their schedules. The Standard Track is designed to train and educate students in classical ballet so they may use this knowledge to enhance other disciplines and prepare to enter competitive college dance programs, if desired. Pointe is not offered on this track, allowing for fewer requirements and greater flexibility of schedules. Students are evaluated for placement in the level to assure continued development and success. The Recreational Ballet Program consists of once-a-week classes to meet the needs of older students with no prior experience who wish to explore the discipline of classical ballet and dancers with some experience who want to continue study for enjoyment.

For more information on Ballet at the Franklin School for the Performing Arts, visit www.FSPA-online.com, call (508) 528-8668, or stop by the facility at 38 Main Street in Franklin, MA. Follow FSPA on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

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Sports

KP's Grant Eyes Improvement, Kelly-Rex Grid Title

By KEN HAMWEY
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Charlie Grant showed during King Philip's Fall 2 football season that it's probably more important how a quarterback finishes than how he starts. The 6-foot, 165-pounder was at the controls when the Warriors suffered two straight shutout losses — a first for any QB in coach Brian Lee's 16 years at the helm.

But, in the team's final game last spring against Franklin, KP trailed, 10-7, with only two minutes remaining in the contest. Grant, nevertheless, engineered a 70-yard drive that concluded with a 15-yard TD pass to Danny Clancy, giving the Warriors a 14-10 victory. The triumph enabled KP to finish the coronavirus-plagued season at 4-3.

If a QB controversy were to occur at KP on who'll start the 2021 season against BC High on Sept. 10, Grant didn't hurt his chances after his dynamic effort against the Warriors' archrival. The Norfolk native saved his best for last and displayed plenty of grit.

"Charlie rose to the occasion and was calm under pressure," Lee said about his QB's game against Franklin. "A winning or losing season was at stake. That pressure-packed game brought out the best in all our players, and on that day Charlie was our leader."

Grant labels the Franklin clash not only his best game, but also his top thrill.

"We had two-minute drills against Milford and Stoughton that didn't go our way," Grant recalled. "Against Franklin, we changed that. Our offensive line was flawless during the march and running back Ryan Gately got two big chunks of yards. The game-winning pass to Danny with 40 seconds left was pure joy for me and the entire squad. Danny deserves lots of credit along with our line. That win gave us a winning season and built momentum for this year."

Some quarterbacks might question their ability after two shutout losses but Grant didn't wilt. He faced adversity head-on. "The losses created motivation, not doubt," he emphasized.



Charlie Grant unleashing the TD pass against Franklin that enabled King Philip to win, 14-10, at the wire and finish last season above .500.

Sports, especially football, teach competitors how to cope. One valuable life lesson an athlete can learn is how to handle adversity. Grant gets a straight-A in that area by staying calm and composed in the come-from-behind triumph over Franklin.

Lee obviously is hoping his QB can build on the Franklin game. The coach likes what the signal-caller brings to the table and he knows Grant is a dependable safety who can also compete as a wide receiver (five receptions last spring). On defense, Grant has played safety since his sophomore year.

"Charlie is athletic, he's got speed and his football IQ is very high," Lee said. "He's also very versatile, able to play three positions. The son of a coach, he knows what's expected, so as of now, he's in the mix at QB and could be our starter again."

Grant's goals for his senior season are split into team and individual objectives. "My team goals are to win the Kelly-Rex Division title, qualify for the playoffs and compete for a Super Bowl," he noted. "Individually, I just want to do what it takes to win, I want to improve at quarterback, safety and at wide receiver and I'll strive to become a Hockomock all-star."

Grant firmly believes that winning the Kelly-Rex crown "is realistic" and he says that "we have the talent, experience and depth to finish well above .500 and to advance in the playoffs."



Charlie Grant has two top-notch coaches when he's not on a football field — his father Chuck and his mother Joanne.

He also is acutely aware that "a lot of things have to come together to win a Super Bowl."

Grant is a positive thinker and he's very positive about his coach and some senior veterans — Clancy (wide receiver/defensive end), Crawford Cantave (running back, safety, wide receiver) and Nick Viscusi (safety/wide receiver).

"Coach Lee is an excellent motivator who demands that his players be physically and mentally tough," Grant said. "He's guided the program to two Super Bowl wins in three appearances and has been a force for KP football. Danny makes big plays, has fantastic hands and has good pursuit on defense. Crawford is powerful and relies on speed and quickness while Nick is a great tackler who's very instinctive."

Grant, who threw 25 touchdown passes as a freshman playing for the jayvees, is versatile on the gridiron and he's also versatile in other sports. A two-year

varsity basketball player, he can compete as a guard-forward and he'll be trying out for baseball as a pitcher-outfielder.

The soon-to-be 18-year-old definitely is in the running to be a football captain (the voting took place after Local Town Pages deadline). "If I'm selected, I'll try to lead by example and also by being vocal and supportive," he said.

A National Honor Society student, Grant, who has a 3.6 GPA, hopes to play football in college but he's undecided where he'll play or what he'll major in. There's also a possibility he might attend prep school.

Besides his academic credentials, Grant also serves on the MIAA Student Ambassador Committee. "We offer ideas on how athletes can get involved in community service," he said. "I help out at my church by doing clean-up work and assisting at our fair."

Eager to play a football season that's not restricted by a pandemic, Grant admired the way his teammates handled all the COVID-19 rules.

"Our players adhered to all the restrictions, we adapted and whatever was asked, we did it," Grant said. "We not only want the game to get back to normal but we hope all the fans and the parents can attend the games."

Calling his parents (Chuck and Joanne) and his grandfather (Chick) role models for their support and encouragement, Grant realizes how valuable his father's

advice and assistance has been through the years. Chuck Grant currently is in his 20th year as Millis High's athletic director.

Before taking the administrative reins at Millis, he was an assistant ice hockey coach for Harvard's women's team. Before his role at Harvard, Grant played, coached and taught at Walpole High for 11 years. He taught history, law and banking, and he coached football, baseball, ice hockey and track. During his eight years as the Rebels' varsity grid coach, his teams won two of three Super Bowls (Tewksbury and Lincoln-Sudbury).

"My father has coached sports and he's coached me about life," Grant said. "He knows tough love, always being firm and truthful. He doesn't coach me like he's in charge athletically. He knows his boundaries and I rely on his advice, whether my dad knows it or not."

Before Chuck Grant coached Walpole's varsity, he was an assistant for John Lee, the father of KP's current coach. Chuck Grant was an assistant when Brian Lee played at Walpole.

"There's no favoritism," the younger Grant said. "Coach Lee is all about getting the job done, no matter who's on the team. I'm just another football player."

Charlie Grant very likely will be a very capable football player who gets results this season — whether he's competing at quarterback, safety or wide receiver.

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The Top 10 Reasons “Why Giving Back Feels So Good.”

AUTHOR: HEATHER J. CULKEEN

Charitable Foundation: Project Perseverance

What does it mean to give back to society? Giving back or donating to causes close to your heart benefits both the charity and you. Contributing to your worthy causes has far more benefits than you may realize.

Many give their time, talents, and/or money to the support community causes, which they hold dear to their heart. Giving back has also been shown to improve quality of life. So, to answer the question, why is giving to charity so satisfying? Here are the top 10 reasons “why giving back feels so good.”

1. Bring meaning to your Life:

By donating or giving back, you are creating opportunities to meet people who believe in the same causes as you do. The interaction with like-minded people can inspire you to create a real impact on these causes. It can also infuse your life

with a purpose or meaning in case you are stuck in a rut wondering why life is so stagnant. Giving back can reinvigorate your life.

2. Help others in need: There will never be a perfect time to give back as we are not living in a perfect world. But there are always others who need help in tough situations. A simple compliment to anyone, even a stranger, can brighten their day at no cost. It may even change their life.

3. The Time is Now: Regardless of the state of the economy or the pending rise in taxes and interest rates, it is not only kind to donate to those in need. Our financial difficulties hopefully last only a short time, but for those in need may could last a lifetime unless they get on the right path. For others more fortunate, just by providing a hand, donation, smile will go a long way to help those in need survive and thrive.

4. Strengthens personal values: When asked why they want to give back, 96% of people who participated in the research said that they are feel obliged to help others. They said that it's a moral duty which is rooted in their principles and personal values. Acting on these feelings is the responsibility of a human.

5. Teach generosity to children: When children see you giving back, they will adopt the same attitude when they grow up. Many people stated that they learned how to give back from their parents and through personal experiences. You are benefiting humanity by teaching children to give, share, and donate.

6. Inspire friends and family: If you educate your family and friends about your charitable donations after you've given back, they could be inspired to do the same. They may take your lead and donate whatever they can, especially to communal issues like promoting health, providing opportunities to rise above obstacles, and allow-

ing others to achieve their goals. Giving back ignites a fire within you.

7. Realize that small donations help: You don't always have to donate large amounts to make a difference. Even small amounts could result in week's, months, and possible years of meals for starving children or the much-needed medical help for elders.

8. Improve Money Management: You can also drive yourself to be a better personal family financial manager by allocating a specific amount to each donation each month. You can make donations, fund your family's education, retirement, and other financial goals this way.

9. Give, when you can't volunteer: In cases where you think that you should volunteer but are too busy to spend time for a worthy cause, you can donate money. Money is just a work-around for a time as it helps the organizations to acquire more resources that can improve the cause.

10. Spreading the love: You can demonstrate that love exists by giving back to society. While spreading love, charity gives people hope for humanity. If you can't afford to donate, consider how a tiny gesture could help you achieve your desired feelings while also making others feel good about themselves.

Project Perseverance is dedicated to organizing and funding rescue efforts as well as delivering contributions to local and early stage non-profit organizations. We support children, families, elders, and others experiencing challenges that make us stronger.

To donate to Project Perseverance to help support our mission to give back, please email us at ProjectPerseverance888@gmail.com with subject line: PP888. The QR Code and link will be emailed for you to donate. Please feel free to suggest a cause via email that you feel would benefit from our support as well. Thank You.

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FSPA Offers Performing Arts Education for Recreational Enjoyment or Serious Study

The Franklin School for the Performing Arts (FSPA) is still enrolling for the 21-22 school year.

Proudly serving more than 500 students annually from 45 communities in Massachusetts' Metro West region, the Franklin School for the Performing Arts is committed to quality education in the arts with exceptional curriculum, outstanding professional faculty, and unwavering dedication to each and every student enrolled. Founded in 1985 by Director Raye Lynn Mercer, FSPA is a unique place where students of all ages and levels of ability participate in an array of music, dance, and drama programs

with professional instruction and extraordinary performing opportunities. With broad-based and varied curricula, FSPA guides students in the development of technique, creativity, and artistic expression to last a lifetime. FSPA's faculty boasts outstanding professional artists, performers, and teachers. Their impressive credentials are indicative of the excellent instruction available in all programs. FSPA instructors strive to meet the individual needs of each student, working to develop each student's abilities to their own potential.

Performance is an integral part of an FSPA education and

the school offers unrivaled performing opportunities for students throughout the year. On the calendar annually are student recitals, concerts by faculty and guest artists, master classes, student showcases, holiday shows, the school's signature Spring Concert, and summer camps and intensives. In addition, for students whose level of interest is more focused, there are special performing ensemble opportunities available by audition.

FSPA Alum Dan Gleason, currently in *Wicked on Broadway*, says of his FSPA beginnings, "I owe a lot of my consistent vocal health and technique to

my years at FSPA. Healthy singing habits were ingrained in my body and now are second nature. FSPA set me up for success in life and I am so thankful for my years of training in my hometown."

Students who wish to attend FSPA for academic classes as well have the option of FSPA Academy. FSPA Academy combines the flexibility of a virtual education with the practicality of a schoolroom, and can accommodate professional opportunities, rehearsal, and performance schedules. FSPA Academy partners with TECCA, a virtual Massachusetts Public School. The curriculum is taught by licensed,

certified teachers through a combination of Live Lessons and individual assignments.

THE BLACK BOX, home of the Franklin Performing Arts Company (FPAC), a 200-seat flexible theater located behind FSPA, provides a professional venue for FSPA student productions, while FPAC offers opportunities by audition for student apprentice performers.

For more information about FSPA and its programs, visit www.FSPAonline.com, call (508) 528-8668, or stop by 38 Main St. in Franklin. Follow FSPA on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube.

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Real Estate Corner

First Half of Year 2021 Real Estate Activity Report

Norfolk County Register of Deeds William P. O'Donnell reported that first half (January-June 2021) real estate stats showed a major increase in residential and commercial sales, while mortgage lending numbers experienced an uptick as well.

Register O'Donnell noted, "The recently concluded first half of the calendar year, the average Norfolk County real estate sales price, both residential and commercial, increased 17% to \$968,018.79. Total real estate volume, again both residential and commercial, was \$5.5 billion, a 53% increase year over year."

The first half of the calendar year figures also showed an overall 32% increase in the number of properties sold countywide from 7,502 to 9,889 for the same quarter of 2020, noted O'Donnell.

For the first half of 2021, the number of land documents recorded, (such as deeds, mortgages, Homesteads, mortgage discharges, etc.) was 103,023, a 37% gain from the previous year, a sign of a healthy real estate market.

REPORT

continued on page 25

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Real Estate Corner

REPORT

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One more piece of good news was the 26,042 mortgages recorded at the Registry during the first half of the calendar year 2021 compared to 19,019 for the same time period in 2020. This is a thirty-seven percent (37%) increase in the first half of 2021 over the same period in 2020. Total mortgage borrowing was \$12.3 billion for the first half of the year compared to \$8.9 billion during the first half of 2020.

“With the reduction in interest rates, consumers seem to be

more comfortable borrowing money,” stated the Register.

Norfolk County homeowners continued to benefit from the Homestead Act. A total of 6,425 Homesteads were recorded during the first half of the calendar

the forced sale of an individual’s primary residence to satisfy unsecured debt up to \$500,000. I urge Norfolk County residents to consider this important consumer protection tool,” noted O’Donnell.

Foreclosure activity in Norfolk County continued to show signs of improvement. A total of 22 foreclosure deeds were recorded versus 69 filed during the first half of 2020. In addition, there was a significant 59% drop in the number of Notice to Foreclose Mortgage recordings, the first step

year, a 29% increase year over year. “The Homestead law provides limited protection against

in the foreclosure process. While the eastern Massachusetts economy remains on



a solid footing, there are still those in Norfolk County experiencing economic hardship, in many cases through no fault of their own, said O’Donnell. The Registry continues to work with Quincy Community Action Programs, (617-479-8181 x376), and NeighborWorks Housing

Solutions, (508-587-0950) to help homeowners who have received a Notice to Foreclose Mortgage document. A third option is to contact the Massachusetts Attorney General’s Consumer Advocacy and Response Division (CARD) at 617-727-8400.

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VOAMASS Selected as Operator of MassHire Metro South/West Career Centers

Volunteers of America of Massachusetts (VOAMASS), a nonprofit that creates opportunities for individuals through residential and outpatient behavioral health treatment, re-entry for justice-involved individuals, veteran services and senior living, announced that it has been selected by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as operator of MassHire Metro South/West Workforce Board's two "One-

Stop Career Centers."

"Our organization has a long history of offering workforce development for at-risk communities, and we're looking forward to leveraging that expertise to help job seekers and employers in all 43 cities and towns in the Metro South/West development area," said President and CEO of VOAMASS Charles Gagnon. "By strengthening partnerships, supporting providers, and bolstering diversity and inclusion efforts, it's our hope that we can help more of our friends and neighbors get back to work, especially after a difficult 16 months dealing with COVID-19 economic disruption."

As operator of the MassHire Framingham and MassHire Norwood career centers, VOAMASS plays a critical role in supporting the local workforce system. This includes facilitating communication and coordinating its diverse federally funded training partners to achieve the shared customer service delivery vision.

The Metro South/West development area stretches from Brookline west to Marlborough and from Littleton south to Pla-

inville. The state-run career centers in Norwood and Framingham serve thousands of people and employers each year. Services provided at career centers include: job search assistance and coaching; career planning and coaching; networking advice and groups; programs for youths, people with disabilities and veterans; and job posting, pre-screening, and employee training services for employers.

About Volunteers of America of Massachusetts

Incorporated in 1934 and headquartered in Jamaica Plain, Volunteers of America of Massachusetts provides an array of outpatient and residential behavioral health services including substance use and behavioral health treatment for individuals, families, and veterans, as well as re-entry programming. Additionally, Volunteers of America of Massachusetts operates three assisted living residences. The organization serves approximately 3,000 individuals across Massachusetts. For more information, visit voamass.org.

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Real Estate Corner

Continued Increases in Real Estate Activity in Norfolk County

Register of Deeds William P. O'Donnell reported that the increases seen in real estate activity in Norfolk County is continuing. The month of July in 2021 from a real estate perspective remained hot as there were increases in a number of real estate indicators over the same time period in 2020.

According to O'Donnell, the Norfolk County real estate market continues to be steady. There were 16,623 documents recorded at the Norfolk County Registry of Deeds which is a 1% increase over last year's July document volume. There were 2,061 deeds recorded out of this document volume, representing a 16% increase over July of last year. Average sale price, again including both residential and commercial sales, increased 21% over 2020 to \$1,013,839.90.

Even though there was a considerable increase to the monies for mortgages the number of mortgages recorded decreased over the previous year's numbers. There were 3,443 mortgages recorded during the month which is an 17% decrease over 2020. Total amount of money borrowed for mortgages county wide was well over 2 billion, a 61% increase compared to July 2020.

"While some of the mortgages are due to purchases and sales of real estate, there are a large number of individuals and families taking advantage of historically low interest rates by refinancing existing mortgages. Individuals have different motivations to refinance. Some refinance to reduce their monthly payments, others to take some years off their debt while still others are using the money to pay for home improvements and other capital expenditures," said Register O'Donnell.

Register O'Donnell went on to state, "There has been a strong demand for housing, single family housing in particular, coupled with a limited supply of available housing stock and historically

low interest rates which could be motivating buyers to do what is necessary to secure housing. The growth in numbers seen in 2020 continues into 2021."

For the past several years, the Norfolk County Registry of Deeds has partnered with Quincy Community Action Programs, 617-479-8181 x376, and NeighborWorks Housing Solutions, 508-587-0950 to help anyone facing challenges paying their mortgage. Another option for homeowners is to contact the Massachusetts Attorney General's Consumer Advocacy and Response Division (CARD) at 617-727-8400.

Homestead recordings by owners of homes and condominiums continue to increase this year at the Norfolk County Registry of Deeds in July. There was a 7% increase in homestead recordings in July 2021 compared to July 2020.

Available real estate inventory continues to be a constant source of concern in Norfolk County. It's especially been a problem for first-time homebuyers attempting to crack the market. However, there is a silver lining in the July real estate statistics and that is based on the optimistic lending numbers that we've seen. These figures are very encouraging and illustrate reduced interest rates and a robust eastern Massachusetts economy are having a positive effect on the Norfolk County region. The Registry of Deeds was operational every workday during the pandemic. The Registry of Deeds continues to be open for business, however that is being evaluated as the COVID-19 developments unfold. The drop-off box located outside the main entrance of the Registry Building for the time being will continue to be available for use by those members of the public who may not be comfortable in entering the Registry of Deeds Building. Land documents are being recorded electronically for many institutional users.

"No matter what the size, the price, or the area, Cathy is able to size up the market. Cathy has helped us buy and sell 4 homes over the past 18 years and she is honest and quite simply the best!"

What My Clients Are Saying

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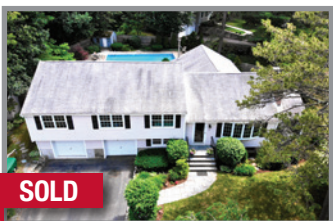


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