

AREA's First Year: Making Ashland a Safe, Inclusive Community for All

BY CYNTHIA WHITTY

In the spring of 2020 Ashland resident Margaret Kironde Musoke (aka Maggie) said she was in pain seeing the murder of George Floyd. This tragic event was the catalyst for her to team up with other Ashland residents and found AREA (Ashland Residents for Equity and Action) to raise awareness about social injustices and make a difference within the community.

An Ashland resident for over 10 years, Musoke is a registered nurse and Human Resources Management Certified and holds a bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in management. She has four children, ranging from a 4th grader to a recent college graduate and has already contributed much to the community in terms of volunteering for the Africa Exchange



AREA board members and Ashland high school volunteers (left to right): Cara Tirrell, co-founder and secretary; Raymond Kitayimbwa, board member; Primah T. Muwanga, AREA youth volunteer; Paola K. Muwanga, AREA youth volunteer; Barbara Sekesogundu, vice president; Margaret Musoke, co-founder and president; and Senteza Kironde, board member. **Not pictured:** Moala Kitayimbwa, treasurer; and Alan Galiwango, board member. (Photo/supplied)

Project and Racial Justice Team through Plymouth Church, the American Red Cross, the Ashland Girl Scouts Troop 82051, and the Ashland Sustainability committee.

Serving as AREA's president, Musoke believes "each and every one of us can spare

AREA

continued on page 3

Valentine Estate Descendent Advocates for Preservation

BY CYNTHIA WHITTY

One of several prominent figures in Ashland history is Frances Valentine, who lived on land owned by past Valentine generations. Frances lived on the property at 133 W. Union St. (Rt. 135), until her death in 1959. Today the property consists of a large house with a 250-year-old barn on almost 8 acres.

Frances Valentine, Ashland's Daughter

In a recent issue of *Local Town Pages* (bit.ly/2XcWdXQ), Ashland Historical Society President Cliff Wilson's piece, *Frances (Fanny) Wadsworth Valentine*, described an extraordinary woman, making significant contributions both nationally and globally.

Wilson wrote, Frances took a job in 1914 at the age of 33 traveling the country, "gathering information on minimum wages, wages paid to women, health issues, and

workmen's comp." In March 1918, she drove "supply trucks for ravaged villages" and "ambulances for the French army."

The French government honored her with a citation for helping with evacuation "of the sick, aged, and children under shell fire" and for "actual charge of the reconstruction and relief of 30 villages."

After the war, Frances continued her work in this country, including studying the living conditions in coal mining towns and the use of hydro-electric power in providing electricity to rural communities.

Family Descendent, Kate Valentine

Kate Valentine, a performing artist and theatre director living in New York, is a family descendent of "her great, great aunt Frances Valentine, a beloved figure of my father and his sisters, who spent

ESTATE

continued on page 2

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ESTATE

continued from page 1

their summers with her [in Ashland].”

In 2020 Kate was speaking to cousins when someone mentioned the RFPs (request for proposals) on an Ashland website. “My ears really perked up. I didn’t realize the circumstances of the property. I was quickly in touch with Jen Ball [assistant town manager], Cliff Wilson, and others who were excited about the possibilities,” she said.

Kate visited the property last winter and spring, and hopes to come again this fall. She attended a number of virtual Valentine committee meetings and said she is especially interested in learning more about the CPA (Community Preservation Act) funds that are available to fix the barn and clear the land.

“I know I’m an outsider,” she said, “but I’m excited about what I read on the town website about possible performance space and



Valentine Estate’s Green Meadow Farm, acrylic on canvas by Cliff Wilson. (Photo/supplied)

other public space for the town and beyond. It could be a destination point. Something forward thinking could happen there.”

“I have nothing to gain [by saving the property]. It’s a symbolic attraction to me, seeing the space and its potential, what the space has meant to my family over many years.”

“There could be a partnership between the town and a nonprofit, where the nonprofit leased the space. An ongoing fundraising effort will be needed. The project could be a financial boom to the town. The property—as a farm, a theater, farm and garden space—could be a way to gain an income stream to help finance the project.”

Kate’s husband has experience as an architect creating public spaces with Attilio Stocci in Italy and working with the firm that reconfigured the South Street Seaport in Manhattan.

Her work has been as a performing artist, director, and producer of artistic events in theatre and film for over 20 years. “I would like to oversee the barn space becoming a live event space for theatre and arts festivals,” she said.

“As a performing artist I could do an outdoor fundraising event to energize the town, to help create this as a public space for the town of Ashland. I will continue to be helpful where I can.”

Ashland Community Invited to Free Haitian Folkloric Dance Class, Oct. 17

Annemarie’s Dance Centre is sponsoring a free Haitian folkloric dance class for the Ashland community on Sunday, Oct. 17, 1:30 to 3 p.m. at Stone Park. The lead teacher is Jean Appolon (pictured), assisted by Mcebisi Xotyeni of Jean Appolon Expressions. Appolon is a successful choreographer and teacher based in Boston and Port-au-Prince, Haiti. He received his earliest training and performance opportunities in Port-au-Prince with the Viviane Gauthier Dance Company and the Folkloric Ballet of Haiti. Appolon continued his dance education in the U.S. with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

and the Joffrey American Ballet School. He teaches regularly at the Boston Ballet, The Dance Complex (Cambridge, Mass.), and the University of Massachusetts Boston, among other locations.

This all-levels class begins with a complete warm-up that blends modern technique with Afro-Haitian styles of dance. Accompanied by live drummers, the dancers will learn movements and rhythms of Haiti. The movements are intricate and technical—yet loose and expressive at the same time. For more information, call the Dance Centre at 508-881-5109.



(Photo/supplied)

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AREA

continued from page 1

five minutes to make a positive change in our world.”

Ashland Local Town Pages asked Musoke about what the group has accomplished and what they hope to achieve in the year to come.

Whitty: What motivates you to do this social justice work?

My hope for systemic change motivates me. It fuels my drive to get involved, I don't see it as a choice. Just like others, I hope for improving the lives of POC and highlighting the barriers and roadblocks that exist in our paths of trying to have an equal playing field across all institutions.

Personally, as a mother of black children, I carry an extra burden of worry about their safety: are they going to be shot at during a jog, in a traffic stop, will they make it home? I try to teach them how to interact with authority and any other encounters, but I feel it's not enough, it's just a band aid. In the school systems, I worry about schools: whether they are offered the appropriate level classes, and I have to continuously advocate for them beyond what I find that my white friends have to do. I would love that my children live in an environment where they don't live in fear for their lives and are not judged by the color of their skin. By continuing to highlight or identify these issues, institutions can seriously tackle them. I hope to try and contribute to moving the needle of racial equity forward and as fast and as smoothly as possible; it's overdue and I feel and notice that a lot of people want to see this happen.

We and future generations want to live in the world where

race is not going to be a factor for them in terms of whether they get that next big contract, job promotion, whether their children are given equal opportunity and considered for advanced classes, whether they still have a job after speaking up at work or using their platform to advocate for themselves and those who can't do so, whether where their life is safe.

Whitty: Why was AREA formed?

AREA was formed in June 2020 after George Floyd was murdered on May 25, 2020. We all remember, as he lay dying he called out for his 'mama.' For me this translated to a call for action.

As a mother, and person of color I felt helpless and was in pain, the event was painful to watch. A friend of mine, Cara Tirrell called me to check in on how I was doing, I told her I'm in pain and I want to do something, because stemming from that situation and others lay much bigger issues. She said she felt the same way. We decided that our work would start with the schools, businesses, and getting involved civically. Without wasting time, we made a decision to each invite mothers we knew, we had our first meeting. We didn't even think of a name or mission. Next thing, we wondered, how about non mothers and fathers who are interested in embarking on this journey with us, we invited everyone. Some dads had also started doing some work, like calling their kids' schools and starting conversations with the principals.

Whitty: What do you hope to accomplish?

AREA is trying to form collaboration with the school heads, those in charge of businesses, town officials and management to ensure that POC population in

Ashland have an equal voice and opportunity, to access resources that will enable them to thrive in our town and to gain feeling of belonging. POC cannot do this alone, and we are happy to say that AREA is composed of POC and their allies working to achieve our initiatives. AREA is and continues to assist in ways possible for POC-owned businesses to get equal visibility and access for things like grants, we want to ensure that their voices being heard. Last but not least, our community is eager to gain the experience, knowledge and perspective from the POC point of view, energy, and ideas on boards and other venues.

Whitty: Have the town and residents been supportive? What are your greatest challenges?

Town administration, school system, boards, and committees have been open and eager to work with us on ways to increase inclusivity and diversity. Some residents have seen AREA as a comfortable place they can come to ask questions and voice concerns about different issuers. Collaboration with the Ashland public schools (APS), for example, has been valuable in terms of directing parents back to the school staff to have their issues resolved and strengthening trust and bridging gaps. I won't speak for Ashland public schools, but I believe efforts are being made to have more effective communication with all parents, especially parents of color.

The issue of lack of diverse educators in APS is definitely a challenge, and we have voiced/had conversations with the school administration and our school committee liaison. We are pleased to see the school system open to improving in this area.

Whitty: What are your top accomplishments from this year?

Education. We have formed a collaboration with APS, and together AREA contributed to the Ashland High School sophomore career speaker series. Many hours were put into research and inviting speakers from diverse backgrounds. Some work is also going on at the high school level concerning curriculum.

Civic Involvement. AREA has encouraged and supported many Ashland residents of color in getting involved in town affairs, in elected or non-elected office positions. Our members are also engaging with other local groups in town. For sure, it's been a learning curve, and it's been wonderful to be involved.

Business. There has been an increased visibility, traffic, and support for POC-owned businesses. AREA has helped POC-owned businesses, opening up conversation and ensuring they are aware of the initiatives and support systems that the town has to offer for businesses. We also post these POC businesses on our website, ashlandequity.org, as another way to increase visibility.

Whitty: How often do you meet and who are the AREA members?

We meet every 3rd Thursday of the month at 6:30 p.m. Currently, we have over 120 members. Our board consists of myself, Cara Tirrell, Barbara Sekesogundu, Moala Kitayimbwa, Alan Galiwango, Senteza Kironde and Raymond Kitayimbwa.

Whitty: How can residents get involved and support you?

Residents and those in office can give us their time, whether it's listening to our concerns or using resources that are already available to help support and promote racial equity projects and initiatives. A good thing about getting involved with AREA is that we are an action group. With each meeting we ensure something that was proposed previously is in fact being done; if not, what are the obstacles? We follow through, and we value people's time and efforts.

Our website is run by volunteers. Alan Galiwango helped get it off the ground; we could use some help in regularly updating it. We also need help with fundraising efforts and events. We have the youth helping manage social media. High school students can earn volunteer hours by working with us.

It is almost an understatement when I say that it takes a community-centered approach to tackle racial discrimination and biases against POC across all systems. However, this benefits all in the end.

I would like to thank our members and volunteers for their support, kindness, and guidance. I would like to thank the Ashland community for being open, supportive, and engaging with our group and efforts.



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Ashland Business Beat

BY CYNTHIA WHITTY

Secrets to Thriving: Business Coaches Panel, Oct. 5

The Ashland Business Association (ABA) will host a virtual panel with three local business coaches on Tuesday, Oct. 5, 8 to 9:15 a.m. Moderated by ABA member Ken Erdelt of AdvCoach - Business Coach and Advisor, the panel will explore emotional, organizational, and cultural resilience in our new business landscape.

The panel will consist of Thomas Bruckauer of The Growth Coach (Organizational Resilience); Suzan Czakowski of The Introverts Marketing Academy (Emotional Resilience); and Lisa MacDonald of Ellemine Training, Development and Coaching (Cultural Resilience).

Each coach will present for 7-10 minutes and then the panel

will open for Q&A. Register in advance online to attend: ashlandbusinessassociation.com/events. A zoom link will be sent upon registration. Free to ABA members; \$10 for not-yet members.

Upcoming events will include a virtual comedy night open to the entire Ashland community in November and an in-person member holiday party in December. For more information, visit ashlandbusinessassociation.com.

Fall Fest at The Corner Spot

Fall Fest organizers are going all out this year—with food from Cousins Maine Lobster, beverages by Wine Empire, entertainment, and games that include bowling with pumpkins and hay. Save the date for this fun-filled fall event at the #bestspotintown! Saturday, Oct. 2, 2 to 7 p.m., 6 Cherry St. Also in October, Zelus



Beer Company will be back for another beer garden and there may be a Halloween-themed event, too! For up-to-date information, visit thecornerpot.com and www.facebook.com/thecornerpotashland.

Pumpkin Painting at Ashland Farmers Market



Ashland Farmers Market's (AFM) regular season winds down Oct. 2 and 9. The market is trying something different for its annual—and very popular—Pumpkin Painting event for kids, usually held on the last day of the season. Since COVID safety for unvaccinated youngsters has been a top priority this season, and so that kids are not crowded at the same painting table this year, AFM is inviting parents to take home a free pumpkin on Oct. 2, have their child paint it at home during the week, and return the decorated pumpkin for display on the market's last day, Oct. 9. The children can then take their pumpkins home to enjoy around closing time (1 p.m.). For more information, visit www.ashland-farmersmarket.org.



Ashland's Plastic Bag Bylaw

Ashland has joined more than 60 communities in Massachusetts that have passed laws to regulate plastic bags. All retail establishments that provide a checkout bag to customers, such as grocery stores, convenience stores, pharmacies, liquor stores, household goods stores and restaurants, must comply with this bylaw.

The bylaw encourages retailers to make reusable washable tote bags available as an alternate means of handling merchandise at checkout. Replacing single-use bags with reusable bags has several benefits, including reduced costs for retailers, a cleaner community, and reduced solid waste impacts on the environment. The bylaw does allow for the use of paper bags that contain a minimum of 40 percent post-consumer recycled paper content. Read "Best Practices for Businesses" here: bit.ly/2Vu1nxP. For more information, contact the Ashland Sustainability Committee, sustainability@ashlandmass.com, or the town's sustainability coordinator, fnakashian@ashlandmass.com.

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Community Ties and a Commitment to Customer Service: Affordable Junk Removal

There are plenty of reasons to call a junk removal service. Maybe you're planning to move and need to clear out the basement and attic before your open house. Maybe you've spent way too much time at home lately and are feeling the need to declutter.

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

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

Jay Schadler started his business in 2003. Back then, it was just him and a beat-up pickup truck taking small jobs and working nights and weekends when he could. As the years rolled on, his business grew, but his commitment to customer service never wavered. Now he's got a staff of ten, along with ten trucks, servicing eastern and central Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island.

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

let the pros do the heavy lifting.

Jay and his team have handled it all. They've dismantled above-ground pools, hauled away ancient hot tubs, taken down old fencing, and stripped away worn carpeting. They'll come for a single item, or they'll clean out an entire house. And they can take almost anything. They can't accept hazardous materials, brush, dirt, or concrete, but everything else is fair game for them to take away.

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

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

If you don't want to be bothered with the dumpster, they've also got a driveway special where they'll take away a truckload of your unwanted things if you pile it up. Or if you don't want to lift a finger, then you can point at the items, and the team will fill up their truck and haul away your unwanted things. However you do it, you're left with more space and more peace of mind.

Business spotlight



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

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

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

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



Jay and his family are deeply involved in the community. He and his wife, Christine, run the Corner Market restaurant in Holliston as well as Resellables, a thrift store in Bellingham. It's not uncommon for someone to reach Jay at the restaurant, order a sandwich, and then schedule a

junk removal appointment. Yes, the local small business really can handle everything!

For more information, contact Jay Schadler at (774) 287-1133 or visit Affordable Junk Removal online at www.take-awayjunk.com.

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Meet Ashland's Health Director, Rajit Gupta

BY CYNTHIA WHITTY

Ashland's new health director, Rajit Gupta, was hired in May after longtime director Mark Oram retired. Ashland Local Town Pages asked Gupta about his background, what prepared him for this job, and what he wants to accomplish.

Whitty: Some readers may not know what a health director does. Could you describe your job?

I am a public health professional. Public health is a very vast subject, anything that can affect more than an individual comes under the purview of public health.

Whitty: What prepared you for this job and what attracted you to Ashland?

I have a Master's in Public Health along with other required credentials to practice public health. My experience from my previous work in other health departments, and being in the field for more than 12 years, has prepared me for this position. I worked for the Framingham

Health Department early in my public sector experience. I love the community; having many peers in the surrounding communities made Ashland a great choice.

Whitty: What attracts you to this field in general? What or who influenced you the most?

I am a graduate in dentistry and, while on a volunteer assignment during the devastation of the 2004 Tsunami, I was pulled towards public health. I saw many people suffering and saw a great need for public health professionals. I realized the impact one can have as a public health professional and the tremendous benefit to entire communities.

Whitty: Could you talk about what it's like for you to take over as director during a pandemic?

Yes, it is very challenging to be shifting positions in the midst of a pandemic, yet there is so much need for public health professionals during this time. Especially as many veterans in the field have recently retired, which may in

part be due to the unprecedented circumstances brought on by the pandemic.

Whitty: What is most challenging in your job right now?

I feel I am settling in well in the community and hope that we will be out of this pandemic soon; getting through this pandemic is the greatest challenge at the moment.

Whitty: What are your plans and goals for the job?

Some of my long-term goals are to improve nursing services through outreach, vaccine clinics, and emergency preparedness; ensuring we are utilizing all state funding and grant opportunities that are available to us, and using this funding to increase, or upgrade, services available to our residents.

Whitty: What is your background and interests?

I was born and raised by my lovely parents in a small town in India. I am a very social and community-oriented person, so I am always doing something when I am not in Ashland. I have a beautiful wife, Poonam, and a very energetic five-year-old son named Ruhan. We live in Newton. I love gardening. It gives me so much peace when I am around nature. You can often find me visiting Ashland Community Gardens during my lunch break.



Ashland's new health director, Rajit Gupta, with his wife Poonam and son Ruhan. (Photo/supplied)

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- No federal taxes on HSA funds spent on qualified health care expenses.
- Excess HSA funds can be invested for tax-free growth to compound for years.

Thus, unlike any other tax-advantaged savings plan, HSA can offer “triple tax benefits”: tax-free contributions, tax-free earnings, and tax-free distributions.

Free money. Really.

Shockingly, over 50% of eligible Americans decline to participate in an HSA. Unbelievable considering most employers put \$500-\$1,500 each year into an HSA. In theory, \$1 per pay period could return \$500-\$1500 per year from your employer - take it!

Furthermore, “health rewards” programs can earn deposits into HSA by doing preventative care activities. For example, seen \$400 deposited into an HSA when each spouse had an annual physical.

Get the tax savings.

Consider a family in 24% tax bracket averaging \$4,000 in out-of-pocket medical expenses. HSA tax-free contributions would provide them tax savings of \$1,466 (\$960 federal 24% + \$200 state MA 5% + \$306 FICA 7.65%). Earners in 32% bracket can max out 2022 contributions and gain tax savings of \$3,259.

Leverage tax-free growth for retirement.

Gaining momentum is a financial planning strategy of avoiding withdrawals from HSAs and pay medical expenses from free cash flow. The allows for investment (funds, ETFs, equities) of HSA contributions to grow tax-free for years before using in retirement for eligible expenses like Medicare premiums, vision,



Glenn Brown

Alert for the Retire Early crowd, while HSAs cannot be used to pay private health insurance premiums, they can pay for health care coverage purchased through an employer-sponsored plan under COBRA, which may be a desired option leaving a company and maintaining until reaching Medicare eligibility.

Learn more by connecting with your benefits coordinator or Certified Financial Planner.

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.



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Halloween Author at the Ashland Library, Oct. 9

The Ashland Library will present “Halloween Nation. Behind the Scenes of America’s Fright Night,” a hybrid event for teens and adults on Saturday, Oct. 9, 1 to 2:15 p.m. A leading authority on Halloween, Lesley Bannatyne traces our onetime children’s holiday-turned-adult- carnival from its origins in northwestern Europe through its recent explosion in popularity in the States. Drawing on research from her latest book, “Halloween Nation. Behind the Scenes of America’s Fright Night,” Bannatyne looks at everything from the holiday’s popularity with Victorian Americans, its incarnation as a children’s holiday, and its transformation into a holiday for everyone—from horror fans to giant pumpkin growers to whole towns—to discover what makes Halloween so fascinating for so many people.

“So much that’s been written about Halloween has been about



Author Lesley Pratt Bannatyne (Photo/supplied)

the holiday’s history or about how to decorate, cook, and costume for it (guilty, all counts), but there’s not been much written about what it is today, who makes Halloween, and why,” writes Bannatyne in the book’s introduction.

Bannatyne’s books will be available for purchase and signing. For more information and to register to attend online, visit bit.ly/3A8ojSp.

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Ashland Wish Tree Community Project



The Ashland Wish Tree, an intergenerational collaboration between Decisions at Every Turn (DAET) and the Ashland Community Center, was an inspiring and creative event on Sept. 10 that connected the community through art. The tree serves as a reminder that we are never alone or isolated but are connected to the world. (Photos/supplied)

GreenUp Ashland: More Than a One-Day, Town-wide Event

By Ashley Place

GreenUp Ashland is a community committee working alongside the town to “promote a litter-free environment and to encourage stewardship of our lands and waterways since 2002.”

Most residents recognize the name GreenUp Ashland from the annual event the committee hosts in early May to encourage residents to pick up an Ashland trash bag, grab a t-shirt, and start collecting litter. The committee is an active group with initiatives to create a greener community.

In addition to the one-day May event, the committee encourages individuals to clean up litter on a regular basis with an Adopt-a-Street program.

GreenUp member Karyn Dann- Barboza said, “The Adopt-a-Street initiative has been around for approximately four years. It has grown exponentially, and the big lift was last year. Folks really wanted to get out and be active since we were sort of locked down. Since then,



(Photo/GreenUp Ashland)

the traction has been increasing. In 2022 we hope to pull in more businesses for the adoption program. We are always looking for adopters, volunteers to help on the committee, and reports of littered area in the community.”

Adopt-a-Street currently has 40 active volunteers, and over the past year the program expanded to include adopt-a-space, allowing individuals to clean up local parks and schools.

GreenUp Ashland needs more volunteers. As the volunteers continue to clean up our community, they are noticing more and more discarded trash. Discarded trash not only is an eyesore; it is a health matter, and it significantly impacts the town’s stormwater infrastructure. Please, collect your trash and dispose of it properly. Let’s work together to keep Ashland clean.

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The b.LUXE *beauty beat*

BY GINA WOELFEL

Happy Fall, Y'all! I've busted out my autumn wardrobe, enjoyed my first PSL (pumpkin spiced latte for you coffee purists) and officially embraced my favorite season - "sweata weatha."

We hope you took some time for yourself last month and enjoyed our September specials. It's a crazy time of year when the kids return to school and you're suddenly juggling a more chaotic schedule. Self-care is super important and that means scheduling it out. Be it yoga, a facial, a massage or your salon visit, these appointments are your "you time." They give you the chance to relax, regroup and feel better. It's hard to believe that the end of this month is the start of the holiday season! Yup, you read that right. In less than 30 days, we'll be knee-deep in witches, turkeys and snowmen. With all the holiday hoopla right around the corner, that brings us to this month's beauty beat topic: Scheduling.

We thought this would be a good time to talk about what it really means to work in the service industry and more specifically, the obstacles and frustration that many face with a commissioned-based career. To work on commission means that your salary

is based on a percentage of the business you generate. For argument's sake, let's talk about the beauty industry.

You know that wonderful feeling you get when you visit your salon, get your nails done, or have a facial? I know, for me, there's nothing like taking that beat from my schedule and doing something exclusively for myself.

Our post-pandemic lives are busier than we could have imagined. With safety precautions in place and tightly booked schedules, appointment-based businesses are working hard to ensure that clients can readily book services, feel safe during their treatments and still provide the highest level of customer care. Employees who work on commission are also still struggling to find a balance with childcare and expenses, with many having to split their time apart as a family to keep their children safe and make ends meet.

This year at b.LUXE, we moved towards a more strict enforcement of our 24 hour cancellation policy and fees, a move that, perhaps, ruffled a few feathers.

Like many businesses, b.LUXE keeps an active cancellation list for our customers who



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were unable to schedule their desired appointment. If a booked appointment is canceled with less than 24 hours notice, re-booking that time can be difficult. Not only is this disappointing for our waitlisted customers, it can be devastating for your stylist who depends on that service for their commissioned-based pay. When you cancel, no show or run so late that you can't be seen, you directly impact the lives of your

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hairdresser. (You know, the one who makes you look so amazing!)

We understand life is busy and things can pop up. This chat wasn't for the client who's had to cancel once or twice. It was for the serial canceler (and you all know who you are!)

Stylists LOVE their clients and every day, go above and beyond to make them look and feel beautiful.

Perhaps, as we head into what's sure to be a very busy season, we can shift our perception of our schedules and the people we've tied to them. With three of the most overscheduled months

ahead of us, book ahead! Set some time aside for yourself to relax and enjoy what makes you happy and prioritize that time. Let's also give a face to each appointment we make and respect and adhere to the time we've asked them to set aside for us. If we can do that, we'll enhance our local business community and support the people who, so often, support us.

We look forward to seeing you soon at the studio!

Be sure to check out our October specials above!

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Ashland Innovation 4-H Club Members Exhibit Their Projects

By CYNTHIA WHITTY

This summer the Ashland Innovation 4-H Club participated in two major events: the Mercer County 4-H Fair in New Jersey and the Middlesex County 4-H Fair in Westford, Mass.. Local residents and local 4-H club members and their parents attended the fairs.

Ashland club members attended the 102nd Mercer County 4-H Fair at the 130-acre Howell Living History Farm in New Jersey on July 31 and Aug. 1. Members who participated in the

4-H Fair and their project names are Anish Meruva (Project: Automatic Self Water Plant) and Hasini Meruva (Project: Water Meter).

Club members who participated in the Middlesex County 4-H Fair in Westford, Mass., on August 28 and 29, and their project names are Anish Meruva (Automatic Self Water Plant); Hasini Meruva (Water Meter); Rupinika Golla (ATM Mask); and Viraj Harish (Gutter Clog Sensor).

In addition to displaying their projects, club members had fun



Mercer County 4-H Fair Group (left to right): Sanjana Gorantala, Diya Peechara, Ananya Joginpalli, Anirudh Joginpalli, Omkar Sabbani, Pranathi Sabbani, Pabbu Neelam, Shaunak Sabbani, Yash Kode, Rithika Bodicherla, Naishada Kotagiri, Sumedha Sabbani, Amudha Senthikumar, Roshini Bodicherla, Sidharth Sandeep, Anish Meruva, Hasini Meruva, Ram Bodicherla, Sukesh Sabbani, Chad Ripberger, Master Kommanaboina, and Jahnvi Kommanaboina. (Photo/supplied)



Middlesex County Fair Group with 4-H Educator Pam Lefave (left to right): Sandya Rani Meruva Thirupaiahgari, Venkata Subbaiah Meruva Thirupaiahgari, Bob, Pam LeFave, Viraj Harish, Hasini Meruva, Anish Meruva, and Rupinika Golla. (Photo/supplied)

with pony and tractor hay rides, archery, a programmable arts workshop, and overnight camping.

Earlier this year, club members participated in community service activities, such as Ashland Community Gardens at Stone Park spring clean-up and the GreenUp Ashland town-wide event. The club adopted Homer Avenue and Park Road as part

of GreenUp Ashland's Adopt-a-Street program.

This fall the Ashland club will prepare and finalize projects to be presented at the Northeast Region Winter Workshop in January 2022. They also plan to conduct an enrollment campaign to encourage more Ashland kids to join.

Club Leaders are Sandya Rani Meruva Thirupaiahgari and

Venkata Subbaiah Meruva Thirupaiahgari. Club Mentors are Ramprasad Bodicherla; Sukesh Sabbani, and Krishna Joginpalli.

To join the Ashland Innovation 4-H Club, email VaShon Wallace-Hiltbold, vwallace@umext.umass.edu, with the following in the subject line: Need enrollment information for Ashland Innovation 4-H Club.

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Business Owner Overcomes Double Whammy Of Pandemic And Cancer To Re-Open

BY SUSAN MANNING
STAFF WRITER

It's hard to find a person or a business who has not been affected by the Covid pandemic. But for Ashland small business owner Don Gordon, life got particularly challenging when he was diagnosed with cancer—just as businesses were opening again.

Thanks to successful cancer treatments, Gordon has been able to re-open the shop on a part-time basis starting this past summer.

Q: Tell me a little bit about yourself

A: We've been here since 1989, my wife Janet and me. We have about five shows a year with the Framingham Artists Guild, the Franklin Artists Association. We have a holiday show and a few in between Intermezzo shows. We've been doing a lot of custom framing. We have a gift shop with Boyds Bears and limited editions and prints. And we kind of just cater to the neighborhood artists and the local guilds.

Q: When did things get off track for you and your store?

A: When COVID-19, it shut us down for six months, which was kind of a devastating time for everybody. And then when we opened up, I think in September of 2020, when things eased up, unfortunately at the end of March 2021, I was diagnosed with cancer. Leukemia.

I was rushed to the hospital and of course, the gallery was closed because I'm the one that does all the work. My wife has a regular job. And you know, I returned to the gallery when I got out of the treatment and everything was in remission. I didn't want to close the gallery because I love doing what I'm doing and I love working with the people and seeing final products, you know, all framed. It's what I want to do. So I came back on a part-time basis, the middle of June.

I'm only here 9 to noon Monday through Friday because I still don't want to stress myself out.

Q: Has business recovered? Are your customers returning?

A: We're hearing from a lot of my customers who have seen the flags out front and stopped in to wish me well—to find out what



happened. Our customer base is great. We've had generations of people use our services. I've had customers come in when they're pregnant and now they're pregnant with their own kids, so they continue to return to me.

Q: How do people in the area know your business so well?

A: We cater to local original artists from the local MetroWest area and have some great artists and we exhibit their work. We



love it.

We've had very good open houses. Of course, we haven't had an open house with COVID-19, and then we haven't had an open house in 2021 because of me being sick. We were closed from the 24th of March through June.

Q: What's going on at the shop currently?

A: Right now we have a great exhibit on display, with work from 11 different artists on display in the upper gallery.

We have about 45 to 50 pieces in the upper gallery. And in the lower gallery, we probably have 100 pieces shrink-wrapped and some framed. And then we have in the gift shop, probably a couple of hundred of posters. And then about 50 limited edition framed



pieces.

The current exhibit will run through the end of February. When we get into March, then we'll probably have like the Framingham Artists Guild. And then Franklin Artists Guild—we work with them too, and they have an exhibit here.

Q: Where do your artists hail from?

A: We have a lot from MetroWest and artists from Hopedale. Lisa Bailey from Franklin has been an exhibitor here for about 20 years. They're they're some of my steadfast exhibitors. I have Pearl McCarthy from Natick. I

also have some artists from Framingham, Ashland, and Holliston.

Q: How did you come to own the shop?

A: I got out of Boston College with a degree in marketing and I went to work for Bradlees. I worked there for 20 years and then I decided I'd rather have my own business.

Q: What keeps you coming back?

A: I love what I'm doing because I meet some great people in my life and I love to see the expressions on their faces when they pick up the work I have done.

I think I make an impact. I have such a repeat customers, that I've been around, it's just fun to watch the generations come through here.

And I can't forget that it's just been such an important time for small businesses, trying to stay open and trying to survive and with COVID. I had the leukemia on top of that, but I'm still here. I'm surviving.

Premier Image is open weekdays, from 9 AM to noon. The shop is located at 290 Eliot St., Ashland. To reach the store, call 508-881-4730.



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Ashland Lions Club

Golf Ball Drop

Support the Ashland Lions and Ashland Firefighters with our Golf Ball Drop on Saturday, October 23 at 3pm (rain date October 24) Enter for a chance to win \$500! Tickets are only \$5 each. Profits will be shared between Ashland Firefighters and Ashland Lions, and Ashland Lions proceeds will go to Lions Eye Research and to support our community. For tickets, contact Lion Julian Doktor at 508-881-4664.

Senior Social

The Ashland Lions will sponsor a "Senior Social" at the Senior Center on West Union St on Wednesday, October 13 4-6 pm. The social will feature "fun with trivia" as well as a free buffet supper complete with a full meal, coffee, tea and dessert. Seniors will need to sign up for the event at the Senior Center by Friday, October 8. This event is open to all Ashland seniors.

Ashland Lions Meat Raffles turn 25

Ashland Lions is kicking off its 25th year of meat raffles! Our first one will be held on Saturday, October 30th, at TJs Food and Spirits in Ashland. We are having a Throwback party to celebrate

our 25th year and first raffle in 18 months. As always there will be great food, fun people and great meat to choose from. Extra tickets to anyone wearing a costume! See you there!



Ashland Lions Toll

Road

Thanks to all who supported our Ashland Lions Toll Road last month. With your support, we were able to raise an all-time record of over \$3000 in donations! As always, proceeds go back into our community and to Lions Eye Research.

Eyeglasses and Cellphone Collection

Eyeglasses and cellphone collection is a year-round project with collection of used prescription and nonprescription eyeglasses, sunglasses, hearing aids and cell phones. Last month alone we collected over 100 pairs of used eyeglasses.

Collection boxes are located at:

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Where did it go? We moved our donation bin from Sunnyside to the old Ashland train station

Fayville, MA Post Office
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Christmas trees are coming!

It's hard to believe that Thanksgiving is only a month away. But do you know what opens right after Thanksgiving? The Lions Christmas Tree lot! Please consider buying your fresh Christmas tree from the Ashland Lions this year and donate to a great cause. Remember, Lions give back 100% of fundraising to eye research and the local community. Hope to see you soon!

Stay up-to-date on Lions happenings

To see the latest status of our events, please visit our Ashland Lions Facebook page. Click the Like button and you will be automatically notified of changes or cancellations.

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Sports

Ashland Field Hockey Coach Excited About Season

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Last fall, high schools around the Commonwealth were able to get back onto the fields to participate in their particular sport. While it was great to get back to playing, it was not a season that teams were used to.

The Ashland field hockey team played a modified 9-game season in a pod against a handful of the teams — unlike what they were used to when playing the entire Tri Valley League. The Clockers completed the 9-game season with a 3-5-1 record.

“We have lost a couple of good seniors from last year’s team, but we have a lot of strong forwards coming back,” Ashland Head Coach Molly Foley said. “I am really excited about this year and looking forward to seeing what these girls can do with a full season as well as all playing together again on the field.”

In addition to the shortened season, the teams played 7-on-7, leaving a lot of the girls on the sidelines instead of playing on the field. Coach Foley had to do some quick thinking and figure out how she was going to field her team each game.

“It was a total balancing act. We had a couple of different formations; sometimes we’d go with one forward, other times two,” she said. “Things all depended on what was going on at the time and how the opposition was playing their defense.”

Although Foley lost some talented seniors from last year’s squad, she had her top scorers returning this fall. Leading the charge on the offensive end of the field will once again be juniors Natalia Arjona (4 goals and 5 assists) and Melissa Leone (3 goals). Foley is very optimistic about her goal scorers and is excited to see what they can actually do playing with a full team this year.

Looking to guide the team to a positive season will be senior tri-captains Olivia Gleason, Lily Ryan, and Kate Campion. Gleason is a four-year defender for the Clockers and according to her coach, is one of the best athletes on the field. She is definitely the strongest defender.



Campion, who was playing in her very first season on the varsity team last fall, will patrol the midfield for Ashland this year. The senior is not only a strong and speedy individual, but one that plays the game aggressively in the best way.

“Kate will use her speed to her advantage, but she will also fight to the very end while pushing herself and giving everything that she has,” Foley said. “Playing in her second season on the varsity team, I am excited to see what she is able to do this year.”

Two other individuals who the Ashland coach will be relying on this fall will be junior defenders Jordon Sherman and Sydney Whitkens. Last year as a sophomore, Sherman missed a couple of games down the stretch due to injury but seems to be back at full strength and ready to go. The junior will see the majority of her time as a defender, but will also play the midfield position as well, depending on what the Clockers need at any specific time during the game.

After spending the last three seasons as the Junior Varsity starting goalie, senior Kayleigh Masiello will step in to replace Madigan Flynn, who graduated last year. Masiello has impressed the Clocker coach with her work ethic and is ready to accept the challenge of being a varsity goalie.

“Kayleigh has been working hard so far this season to get ready for her varsity debut. She has really stepped up so far and is definitely motivated to be successful this upcoming year,” Foley said. “She posted a shutout in our first scrimmage against Ursuline Academy, and we are super excited to see her continue to succeed and improve throughout the season.”

Foley is entering her fifth year as the Clockers head Coach and feels the Ashland field hockey team has definitely made strides.

“That first year we finished 2-16 with a rather weak program,” the Clocker Coach said. “We only had a total of 24 girls that year; this year we have 42. Our defense is very strong, and I am excited about the year and what we can do when playing a whole season with our full team.”

As the season progresses, Foley knows that both Westwood and Dover-Sherborn will be the top teams in the Tri-Valley League, with their rival Hopkinton being another team she looks forward to playing.

“Westwood and D-S are always strong and never an easy game,” she said. “Hopkinton has historically become our rival and last year we split the two games with them. Our games with Hopkinton are always fun but also very competitive.”



In the past Ashland has typically found themselves near the bottom of the league, but since Foley has taken over the program, the team has started to ascend the ladder of the TVL, and the Coach firmly believes they are making progress.

“We have the talent and the hustle to win,” Foley said. “We’re moving up and look to be near

the middle of the pack this year while making a name for ourselves in the Tri-Valley League.”

Getting to play a full scheduled season, along with the appropriate number of athletes on the field at the same time, Ashland looks primed to make a move and show the rest of the TVL that they not only belong, but are a team to be reckoned with.



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Nursing Home Negligence or a Vibrant Life Plan Community?

BY HEATHER J. CULKEEN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: PROJECT PERSEVERANCE

Doctors, nurses, patients, and their family members have all types of unpleasant conversations, according to Amy Sarah Marshall of the University of Virginia Medical Center magazine, Healthy Balance. For example: How to prepare for aging and caring for an aging partner or parent is one of those. For Lee Willis and her husband Hal, the conversation started this way: their beloved doctor of 15 years asked Lee, point-blank: “Are you prepared for the possibility that Hal may outlive you?”

At 94, Hal is ten years older than Lee. A plane accident broke multiple bones in his legs, and arthritis had settled in. Walking is hard for him. He does his own laundry and washes the dishes, but he doesn’t drive and often uses a wheelchair.

Lee, on the other hand, just bought herself a new kayak. A nine-year cancer survivor, she relieves pain with exercise, not medicine. She swims three times

a week. When not caring for Hal, she’s active, traveling, and socializing. Still, the doctor had a point: Be prepared.

FACING THE FACTS OF AGING

Most people avoid the subject of getting old. Death is as natural as birth, but too many people simply don’t want to think about it until they are too ill to participate in decision making, leaving family members and their physicians to make decisions that may or may not be what they would have wanted at the end of life. We need to prepare better.

FINDING A PLACE TO AGE

Lee’s major purpose in preparing for Hal’s aging and her own was to find a location where this could happen. Lee didn’t simply conduct a Google search. She went to a lot of nursing homes. She compiled a list of in-home care services and went to each one.

But Lee wasn’t satisfied, mainly because of shifting staff.

“You can never guarantee the same people. The bottom-line dictates staffing. This turnover and the resulting lack in continuity of care, is a problem.”

So, she looked at the option of aging in place. She volunteered at programs of all-inclusive care for the Elderly, which offers 24/7 coverage for anyone qualified for a nursing home. It seemed like “this would probably be what we choose to do,” she said.

But then Lee discovered The Green House Project, a new model for long-term care for elders. In 2001, a doctor named Bill Thomas was appalled at the state of elder care. He saw it was a hospital, not a home with people just sitting in wheelchairs. So, he introduced a lot of changes, bringing in birds, dogs, cats, and plants. But it still wasn’t enough. So, he “super-trained” staff to behave like family members, not healthcare providers. He built a new structure, with one central room, the residents living in rooms off in spokes. It became a communal place, with a common kitchen where people cook family

recipes and behave like relatives. Lee found one in her state. “If we both have to go somewhere, this will be it!”

AGING GRACEFULLY: HOW TO GET STARTED NOW

The best advice Lee’s received from her doctor: Exercise. He told her that the biggest factor that differentiates healthy from unhealthy aging is exercise—folks who remain sedentary clearly become frailer more rapidly than those who either remain or become active in their later years. Exercising on a regular basis makes a huge difference in how one ages.

Lee’s primary lessons for younger people: Be proactive. “It’s really hard when you’re 50 to think about being 80, but you should.” She advises younger people to:

- Take your health seriously—eat well and exercise.
- Prepare with a reputable Estate Planning Attorney who cares about your health as well as your assets.

- Be an advocate for yourself.
- Get political and advocate for end-of-life care.

Heather J. Culkeen is Executive Director of Project Perseverance. The public charity is dedicated to supporting rescue efforts, as well as assisting local, early-stage nonprofit organizations. We focus on protecting Families for Generations. We have protected families, children, boomers, seniors, and the elderly for generations. We welcome opportunities for growth and development.

In our experience most people prefer aging on their own as they take steps to improve and protect health, home, spouse, family, and life savings enabling them to stay in control. Take control of your life! You will be glad you did.

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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Ashland Community Education Programs

Ashland Community Education is offering the following programs:

Warren School:

Kitchen Chemistry, Mondays starting 10/4/21
Lego Club, Tuesdays starting 10/5/21
BeBop Hip Hop, Fridays starting 10/8/21

Mindess School:

Step Up Theater, Tuesdays, starting 9/28/21

Middle School:

Art class in November, details coming soon.

High School:

SAT Prep classes, starts Sunday September 19th at Ashland Middle School
College Essay class, Monday September 20th

Adult Education:

Line Dancing, Thursdays, starting October 7th, 7:00-7:50
For more information go to the Ashland Community Education website at:
<https://www.ashland.k12.ma.us/comm-ed>
If you have any questions you can call or email Jeannie Young at jyoung@ashland.k12.ma.us. 508-881-0143

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October 2 - 31

Federated Church of Ashland
118 Main Street, Ashland MA
Our Pumpkin Patch is Open!



Real Estate Corner

Greater Ashland Lions Club

We are now entering FALL, where did Summer go? The Greater Ashland Lions have a number of activities planned for this beautiful time of year,

Toll Road

This will happen on Oct. 2, at the corner of Main Street & route 135, from 9am-1pm.
All donations will be designated for Community projects and Mass Lions Research, please consider donating “Be Thankful You Can See”.

Porchetta

The Annual Greater Ashland Lions Porchetta, Oct. 14, 6 pm Ashland VFW Hall 311 Pleasant St.
Tickets sold in advance NO tickets at door. \$28 per ticket. Proceeds benefit Diabetes and Community, catered by Marconi & Co “Best in Town” reserve now, call Ellie at 508-875-4513 or email elliet43@aol.com

Peace Poster

This is our 34th year sponsoring the Lions Clubs International Peace Poster all students at the Ashland Middle School are in-

volved in this project under the guidance of Rebecca Micucci Art teacher.

Holiday Wreath & Swags

Time is getting close the last day for ordering your Holiday Wreath or Swag is October 30, and will be delivered by the first week of December if not sooner. Contact Lion Cheryl 508-881-7056

Coat Drive

Our Annual Coat Drive will continue thru Jan. 10, 2022, this year as in the past the request for New or gently used women’s, men’s, children’s and infants’ coats are in high demand, contact Lion Deb at 508-881-2117 for information and pick up.

Pumpkin Patch

Create your own pumpkin (decorate and carving contest) more information to come. Watch the Community Bulletin Board for more information.
Would you like to know more about the Greater Ashland Lions Club? Contact Lion Mary 508-881-5515.

We recycle new and used eye-glasses prescription and non-prescription, hearing aids, coupons for education and tabs from soda, beer, soup and pet food cans. Contact Lion Cheryl 508-881-7056 or Lion Ellie 508-875-4513.
Continue wearing your masks, be safe “Service from the Heart” “We Serve”

SUBMITTED: LION ELLIE TORELLI





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