

BLACKSTONE VALLEY *Xpress*

CROSSTOWN ADS AND BUSINESS NEWS

December 3, 2021- January 6, 2022

INSIDE

Chamber's Gerry Gaudette Extra Mile award goes to 'Mr. Whitinsville'



Charlie Thompson, center, former executive director of the Whitin Community Center, is joined by Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Jeannie Hebert and Lee Gaudette of Gaudette Insurance after receiving the Chamber's "Gerry Gaudette Extra Mile Award."

By Rod Lee

Residents of Northbridge and surrounding towns in the Blackstone Valley have pet nicknames for two of the region's most revered institutions.

The Whitin Machine Works, a manufacturing powerhouse for many years until closing its doors in 1967, is still reverently referred to by locals as "the Shop."

Similarly, the Whitin Community Center, which opened across the street from the Shop in the early 1920s and which today boasts more than five thousand members, is often simply called "The Gym." This in homage to G.W. Whitin, treasurer and CEO of the

Whitin Machine Works from 1886 to 1920, whose vision for a community recreational complex was carried forth after his death by his daughters Elsa, Katharine, Lois and Elizabeth.

In presenting Charlie Thompson with the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's "Gerry Gaudette Extra Mile Award" at the organization's 43rd annual meeting at Pleasant Valley Country Club in Sutton on November 17, Lee Gaudette added another.

Mr. Thompson could very well be thought of as "Mr. Whitinsville" for his near-lifelong devotion not
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Sutton Chain of Lights - Back for a Merry 2021

By Amy LeClaire

The Sutton Chain of Lights - 2021- may be in a "transition" year, but the spark for bringing families together continues to shine as bright as the lights about to adorn the town's rooftops. This year, perhaps more than ever, the need for personal interaction, socialization, and a break from technology, lies at a peak.

"We need to get back to doing what we love doing in person," admitted Chain of Lights Committee President,
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BV CHAMBER

Continued from page 1

only to the Whitin Community Center as its former executive director, but also to the town where he was born and raised, Mr. Gaudette, president of Gaudette Insurance Agency, said.

To those who know the Gaudette family, bequeathing of the honorary title Mr. Whitinsville is an especially significant gesture, given that Lee Gaudette's father Gerry Gaudette is frequently thought of as having earned that designation himself.

Gerry Gaudette, who died in 2003, was a founder of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce and an enthusiastic champion of all things Northbridge and Whitinsville, including the Whitin Community Center. The "Gerry Gaudette Pavilion" in Whitin Park is named for him.

Gerry Gaudette's wife, Barbara Gaudette, who died in 2020, was, like her husband, committed to the community and civic life.

Barbara Gaudette served on various town committees and dedicated many hours to the Northbridge Planning Board, beautification efforts, the Mumford River Walk and a host of other betterment initiatives.

Lee Gaudette is carrying on his parents' work.

Mr. Thompson is a logical choice as the latest recipient of the Gaudette award for being the face and heart and soul of the Whitin Community Center, Lee Gaudette said. A 1969 graduate of Northbridge High School who went on to Westfield State where he earned a degree in U.S. History and obtained certification as a secondary education teacher, Mr. Thompson took a part-time job at The Gym and within a year was named executive director. He retained this post from 1974 until his retirement in 2007.

"Charlie oversaw my splash party when I was in the second grade," Mr. Gaudette said. "Charlie was always there." This included

his role as scoutmaster of Troop 155 and for always finding the best Christmas trees to sell during the holidays.

Mr. Thompson was largely responsible for The Gym's remarkable growth during the 1990s. Under his watch, a facility that had survived serious financial challenges and a devastating fire in 1959 suddenly realized its full potential with the addition of a state-of-the-art fitness center, classrooms, child care, a new lobby, an elevator, racquetball courts, restoration of the Main St. facade, improvements to Whitin Park, expanded parking and upgraded tennis courts.

In 1996, under Mr. Thompson's watch, ground was broken for a new competition-sized swimming pool, prompting references from old-timers to Alice Bridges of Uxbridge who placed second in the 100-meter backstroke in the 1936 Olympics after training at The Gym.

Mr. Thompson remains firmly connected to the Whi-

tin Community Center as a volunteer with the its Board of Directors. He also serves on the Development Committee and is active with plans to renovate the original pool and gymnasium as the WCC's centennial year approaches.

He also serves on the boards of the Whitinsville Water Company, the Whitinsville Social Library and UniBank, and chairs UniBank's Blackstone River Valley Greenway Challenge. The Challenge celebrated its twentieth year in 2021.

In addition to a parting chairman's report from Joshua Lee Smith, Year in Review remarks from Chamber President and CEO Jeannie Hebert, and recognition of Indian Ranch's Suzette Raun Coppola on the popular attraction's seventy-fifth anniversary, the Chamber's Cornerstone Award went to Christopher Robert for his development of the Samuel Slater Experience.

Another highlight of the meeting came when Robin LeClaire, retired president of the Lampin Corp., was presented with the Chamber's Women's Success Network Exceptional Woman of Business Award for her work raising the profile of the employee-owned manufacturing company during her four years at the helm.

The Blackstone Valley's



Chamber President and CEO Jeannie Hebert stands with Gov. Charlie Baker during a Q-and-A that followed the governor's remarks at the Chamber's 43rd annual meeting.

entire legislative delegation was saluted with the Chamber's Economic Development Award. "They were invaluable to us," Ms. Hebert said of Sen. Michael O. Moore, Sen. Ryan C. Fattman, Rep. Paul K. Frost, Rep. David LeBoeuf, Rep. Joseph D. McKenna, Rep. David K. Muradian Jr., Rep. Brian W. Murray and Rep. Michael J. Soter.

In his keynote address as guest speaker, Gov. Charlie Baker praised the Legislature and all involved for guiding the Commonwealth through the COVID-19 pan-

demic—"a three-act play," he said. There was the initial "scramble" in March of 2020 when the supply chain froze, followed by the manufacturing sector's transition to the production of gowns and gloves and masks along with the introduction of comprehensive contact testing, and finally "creation of a plan to reopen," the governor said.

The sixty days it took for the reboot to occur "felt like sixty years," he said.

"By fall we were so much better prepared, and then came the vaccine rollout and we quickly established the highest vaccination rate," Gov. Baker said. First "4.9 million and now 5.4 million have had at least one shot."

In a surprise twist, the audience sang "Happy Birthday" to Gov. Baker, who just turned sixty-five.

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



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4th Friday: Auburn, Charlton, Dudley, Oxford and Webster, other 1/2.
4th Friday BLACKSTONE VALLEY North: Grafton, Millbury and Sutton.

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Commerce on the Common - Networking and shopping

GRAFTON - On November 3, from 5:30-7:30 p.m., the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's Women's Success Network held a "Commerce on the Common" event, sponsored by Millbury Credit Union. Members of the community gathered together at the Grafton Common to treat themselves to some appetizers and beverages, while they simultaneously support-

ed women-owned businesses and got some holiday shopping accomplished.

The night started at the Townhouse Tavern. Everyone in attendance was given raffle tickets for giveaways from three different local shops, as well as the Tavern. Appetizers and desserts were provided by Whittier Farms and the bar was open for refreshments. Attendees mingled and shopped

at The Grafton Country Store, Quite Fetching and Off the Common Antiques; all women-owned businesses with something for everyone - even our furry friends.

All in all, there was a sense of joyfulness and holiday spirit as everyone was able to come together for a fun evening of networking, shopping and women supporting women.

Visit the Blackstone Valley

Chamber of Commerce website at www.blackstonevalley.org to learn more about the Women's Success Network and to view the Chamber's list of upcoming scheduled events. The mission of BVCC Women's Success Network is to unite women to achieve their vision of success by creating a community of support and inspiration in their personal and professional lives.



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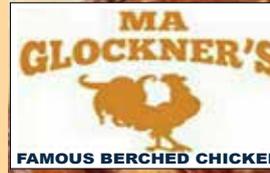


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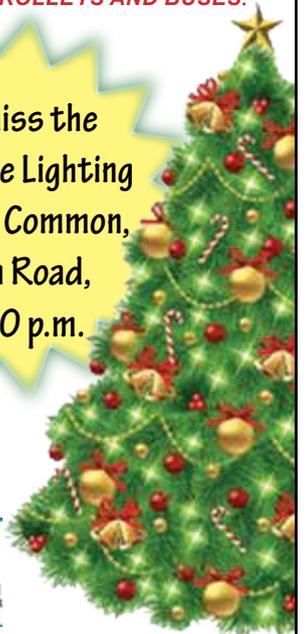
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SUTTON CHAIN OF LIGHTS

Continued from page 1

Janet Gerard. "Everyone is excited and has such interesting events planned, though we are still looking for volunteers in certain areas."

The Sutton Chain of Lights Committee is currently seeking volunteers to assist on Trolley rides in the following ways: to offer drivers directions pertaining to routes; to offer trolley riders a scripted lesson pertaining to the town's rich history; to sing

Christmas carols! This year, the number of trolleys on the road has been reduced, along with the number of routes (there will only be two). Furthermore, due to state regulations, masking will be mandated on the trolleys. "I understand that this has been an emotive issue for the town, but we are airing on the side of caution and following the state's guidelines. We will have sanitizing stations and extra masks handy for those in need," said Gerard.

Incidentally, for safety reasons pertaining to COVID, the Sutton Senior Center will not participate in the Chain of Lights this year, and

the churches and businesses involved will utilize food trucks for the public in lieu of traditional meals served in large groups.

Along with trolley volunteers, The Chain of Lights committee is seeking vendors (holiday crafts and small-business related products) to set up and sell items at Posies and Presents, the tasteful florist located in the barn section of the Blackstone National Golf Course.

Interested volunteers for either of the above may contact the committee at suttonlights@gmail.com or marnie1980@gmail.com

The Chain of Lights has a few festive activities planned for the joyful shopper and competitor at heart.

- Scavenger Hunt - "Do You See What I See?" Stamp your "grid" card at the sites in which you visit (all sites will have cards available). Five stamps will earn a shopper a chance to enter a drawing for special gift items from area businesses.

- Post a Selfie - Post a picture at #suttonlights2021 to enter a drawing for small prizes and be one of FIVE winners chosen!

- Annual Light Up Sutton contest - Decorate your home! Register it for a \$5.00 fee, the proceeds of which



will fund the Sutton Food Pantry. Register to enter between Dec. 1 - 7 by emailing your home address to suttonlights@gmail.com. Public voting will take place Dec. 10 - 18. Winners will be announced on Dec. 20 and will earn one of several prizes! For more information, go to suttonchainoflights.weebly.com.

"It's all about family and highlighting our area businesses," said Chain of Lights Committee Vice President Marnie Havalotti, who still manages to smile despite rolling her sleeves up for the fourth year on the job. "Serving is rewarding and great for the community. The Chain of Lights keeps with the small town feel and helps to support local businesses, which are especially impor-

tant this year since so many people had to close last year. The excitement and fun that the kids bring just adds to an overall great event."

The Sutton High School band, equally as joyous, will offer a holiday concert per usual on the Sutton Common at the day's end to welcome Santa's 5 PM entrance. Whether visiting the quaint and historical Manchaug Mills (home of the original Fruit of the Loom) to browse the work of talented artists, creating an ornament (and taking a picture with a "surprise guest") at the Sutton Police Department, or joining the Disney crew at Al's Rubbish and Container Service, the Sutton Chain of Lights has something merry for you!

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Healthier baking in the Blackstone Valley

Nutritious Oatmeal Chocolate Chip cookies

By Christine Galeone

At Thanksgiving, we give thanks for all of the blessings in our lives. For most people, including me, faith, family and friends tops that list. But what about good health?

Good health is certainly a blessing to be grateful for. On Thanksgiving, however, it's not always something we think about. Most of us tend to overindulge during the holidays, especially on Thanksgiving.

But amidst the pecan pie, the cheesecake and the cannoli – and after the mashed potatoes and gravy – can be a healthier dessert to either provide an alternative to the sugary sweets or to create some sense of balance. This recipe for oatmeal chocolate chip cookies is one that will produce that type of dessert.

If you bake cookies regularly, you know how many recipes call for an obscene amount of sugar. And many of them produce a relatively small amount of cookies. It's just not necessary.

These cookies are packed with nutritious ingredients. The oats are healthy for your heart. The dark chocolate chips provide antioxidants. And the pumpkin spice, which generally consists of cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger and allspice, provides antioxidants, antimicrobial properties, fiber and minerals along with a warm holiday flavor.

Oatmeal Chocolate Chip Cookies

Ingredients:

3 cups of old-fashioned or quick oats

1 cup of dark chocolate chips

1 ½ cups of flour

½ cup of brown sugar

½ cup of granulated sugar

2 large eggs

1 tsp. of baking soda

½ tsp. of salt (omit if using salted butter)

1 tsp. of pumpkin spice

1 tsp. of vanilla extract

1 cup (2 sticks) of unsalted butter (slightly softened)*



Directions:

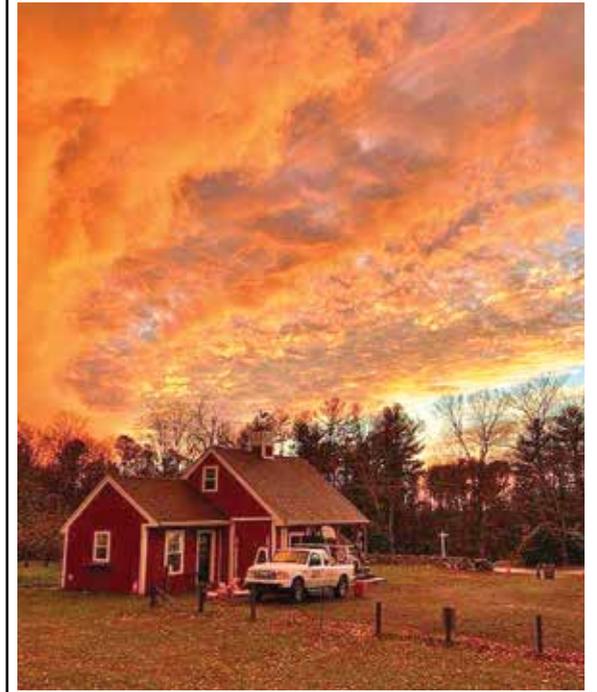
- In a large mixing bowl, mix together the dry ingredients (except the oats and chocolate chips).
- In a separate large mixing bowl, cream the butter, brown sugar and sugar together.
- Add the eggs and vanilla to the butter mixture, and mix well.
- Gradually combine the mixed dry ingredients with the mixed wet ingredients.
- Fold in the oats and chocolate chips.
- Use a cookie scoop to scoop the cookie dough onto a baking sheet.
- Bake at 350 degrees for 11-12 minutes.
- Remove from oven and let cool for a couple of minutes before transferring to cooling racks or plates.

Makes about 60 cookies.

*If cholesterol is an issue, you can use a plant-based butter like olive oil butter.

These cookies are even more delicious than they are healthy. And they're easy to make. Happy (healthier) holiday baking!

Images from Douglas Orchard & Farm after last month's storm.



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Unibank kicks off annual holiday giving tree program

WHITINSVILLE – UniBank recently announced that the bank will kick off its annual Holiday Giving Tree Program on November 26th to make the season brighter for individuals and families throughout the community. The program is part of the bank's dedication to improving life for the communities it serves.

Each UniBank branch has chosen an organization that fills a need in their community and supports the program by making and purchasing items, and accepting donations from customers and the general public. Many local residents face difficult times around the holiday season and UniBank is pleased to work with local charitable organizations in support of this effort to help its neighbors. Branch collections are as follows:

Blackstone: Requesting items to be distributed by the Blackstone Senior Center for individuals in Blackstone.

Douglas: Collecting non-perishable food items for the Douglas Food Pantry located at St. Denis Church.

Hopkinton: Requesting items that will be distributed to families in need by Project Just Because.

Milford: Requesting items that will be given to individuals and families in need in the Milford Community. Donations

will be distributed by the St. Vincent de Paul Society at St. Mary of the Assumption Church.

North Grafton: Requesting items needed by senior citizens that will be distributed by the Grafton Senior Center.

Shrewsbury: Requesting items for children in need to be distributed by St. Anne's Human Services.

Sutton: Items for senior citizens to be distributed by the Sutton Senior Center.

Upton: Items needed by senior citizens to be handed out by the Upton Senior Center.

Uxbridge: Requesting specific items for individuals in Uxbridge to be distributed by the People First Food Pantry.

Whitinsville Main: Requesting items that will be distributed by the Friends of Northbridge Elders to individuals in Northbridge.

Whitinsville Plaza: Requesting items to be distributed by the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families to benefit local children.

Worcester: Tags requesting specific items needed by women and children to be distributed by the YWCA.

Donated items may be dropped off during regular banking hours through mid-December. Check with your local branch for specific details and deadlines. Visit www.unibank.com for a listing of branch locations and hours.

Money off fee for donation

Get \$1 off your Whitinsville Social Library late fine for every qualifying item you bring to the library in December. Does not apply to lost/damaged books or fines accrued from items at other libraries.

Highly requested Items:

- Non-perishable microwavable rice mixes and pasta
- Baking mixes, cooking oils, flour, frosting, peanut butter
- Snacks like chips, granola bars, Pop-tarts, crackers
- Baby squeeze fruit pouches, apple sauce
- Juice and water
- Toothbrushes, toothpaste, Q-tips, dish soap

All items will be donated to local Northbridge food pantries. WSL items for children (items located in the Juvenile and Tween sections of the library) are always late fine free.

Rebecca Sasseville, Library Director
Whitinsville Social Library
The public library for Northbridge
17 Church St., Whitinsville

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Living well and looking good

Are big dogs dangerous pets for seniors?

By Keith Roach, M.D.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I recently read that a large percentage of orthopedic injury to the elderly is directly related to their falling while walking large animals, specifically dogs over 20 pounds. Can you shed light on this please? – M.F.

ANSWER: A March 2019 study in JAMA Surgery did identify dog walking as an increasing cause of fracture. Over 4,000 fractures were identified among dog walkers over 65 in 2017, about triple the number 10 years earlier. However, this wasn't a large proportion of fractures (only about 2% of total fractures), and the authors did not identify the size of the

dog as a risk factor, although they did suggest that clinicians recommend a smaller (and well-trained) dog as a wiser choice.

Dogs not only provide some social support, they also encourage exercise. I have had many patients (and a few family members) who have very meaningful connections with their dogs and other animals. In fact, I have seen many people who describe their animal companions as the most important relationship in their lives.

Hip surgery

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am scheduled for a hip replacement op-

eration because X-rays show joint failure. I am 81 years old and in excellent health.

At the moment I do not feel any pain in my hip and am walking very easily. I go swimming three times a week. My question is whether I should agree to this operation as a preventive method to avoid later painful and possibly riskier circumstances because of my age. – P.H.

ANSWER: Hip replacement is indicated in people with severe, debilitating symptoms (such as pain or loss of func-

tion) despite conservative management. That doesn't sound remotely like what you are describing. The findings on the X-ray are less important than your symptoms and function, so I could not recommend a hip replacement for you at this time. Age by itself is not a contraindication for hip replacement should you need one later on.

I do understand what you are saying: You are less likely to have a surgical problem being operated on earlier.

Some surgeons will operate on people with milder symptoms for this reason. However, you aren't describing even mild symptoms, hence my recommendation against surgery at this time.

Cooking oil

DEAR DR. ROACH: Just wondering about good versus bad cooking oils. At one time, coconut oil was said to be a bad oil, but now I'm reading that it's really a good oil. Some even say you should eat a spoonful each day to boost your health! So, which is it? Is coconut oil good or bad? – J.Z.

ANSWER: Coconut oil is "bad," at least compared with healthier

oils like olive oil and canola oil. It has a high saturated fat content, and people who consume coconut oil have an increase in their total cholesterol and unhealthy LDL cholesterol. If you love the taste of coconut oil, it's reasonable in moderation, but don't consume it thinking it is good for your health or your heart. The available evidence does not support that.

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

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Public design hearing for SNETT

To the editor,

A public design hearing is slated for the Southern New England Trunkline Trail (SNETT) in Douglas on December 7 at 6 p.m. At this remotely held public meeting, the DCR team for this project will present the near final design of a fully accessible, shared use 10-foot-wide paved pathway, with a side path to accommodate equestrians. This project's total length is approximately 6 miles, from the Connecticut State line and the 55-mile Airline Trail through Douglas State Forest to Depot Street Trailhead near the Uxbridge line.

The issue with this plan is the fact that DCR wants to pave the SNETT in Douglas. The sections in Franklin and Bellingham have been finished off with a soil stabilizer mixed with stone dust, (could be some type of crushed granite). In other words, a natural surface. This made the surface ADA compliant and suitable for horseback riders.

The SNETT turns into the Airline Trail when you hit Connecticut. CT is stone dust in the areas that have been improved and the existing natural surface for the rest of it.

It makes no sense to not continue the continuity of the surface of the trail. Douglas is a rural community; we all enjoy the

outdoors and want to keep it natural. We don't want a paved path.

I am asking everyone who wants to see the SNETT kept as a natural surface trail to please join the meeting and give your testimony. If you can't make the meeting, please submit your comments which are due by Dec. 28.

If you do a search online for DCR Public Meetings Information you can find the information about this hearing and the link to join the meeting.

If you need assistance when registering, please contact Daniel.Cushing@mass.gov. After the presentation, the public will be invited to ask questions and provide feedback on the proposed design, using the raise hand and chat functionality that will be available through the virtual participation platform.

After the meeting, the presentation will be available for viewing at <https://www.mass.gov/dcr/past-public-meetings>. DCR encourages the public to share additional feedback, with a deadline for receipt of comments by DCR of Wednesday, December 28. Comments may be submitted online at www.mass.gov/dcr/public-comment. Please note that the content of comments you submit to DCR, along with your name, town, and zip code, will

be posted on DCR's website. Additional contact information required when commenting, notably email address, will only be used for outreach on future updates on the subject project or property.

Sincerely yours, Becky Kalagher



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DAR presented Quilts of Valor



Captain Job Knapp Chapter of the DAR recently held its annual Veterans Day reception for three veterans who served during the Vietnam War. Each Veteran was given a handmade quilt designed and made by Louise Zygmuntowicz. They also received a certificate of appreciation for their service to the United

States. Quilts were given to Ronald J. Fournier, US Air Force, Nicola J. Trifone, Air Force, and John Croall, Marines.

The Captain Job Knapp Chapter meets in Douglas at the First Congregational Church. Women belong from Douglas, Webster, Dudley, Northbridge, and Uxbridge as

well as from Rhode Island and Connecticut. The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution was founded in 1890 to preserve the memory and spirit of those who contributed to securing American independence. Any woman 18 years or older, regardless of race, religion, or ethnic background, who can prove lineal descent from a patriot of the American Revolution is eligible for membership. DAR is one of the world's largest and most active service organizations with nearly 180,000 members in approximately 3,000 chapters worldwide. These members passionately carry out the timeless mission of promoting historic preservation, education and patriotism. To learn more about the work of today's DAR, visit www.dar.org.

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Three BVT students commended for National Merit scholarship

UPTON - Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School Seniors Riley Holt of Uxbridge (Engineering & Robotics), Thomas J. O'Leary of Millbury (Electronics), and Noelle (Ellie) McDonald of Grafton (Construction Technology) have been named Commended Students in the 2022 National Merit Scholarship Program. A letter of Commendation from the school and National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC®), which conducts the program, was recently presented to these scholastically talented seniors.

About 34,000 Commended Students throughout

the nation are being recognized for their exceptional academic promise. Although they will not continue in the 2022 competition for National Merit Scholarship awards, Commended Students placed among the top 50,000 students who entered the 2022 competition by taking the 2020 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test.

"Those being named Commended Students have demonstrated outstanding potential for academic success," commented a spokesperson for NMSC. "These students represent a valuable national resource; recognizing their accomplishments, as well as the

key role their school play in their academic development, is vital to the advancement of educational excellence in our nation. We hope that this recognition will help broaden their educational opportunities and encourage them as they continue their pursuit of academic success."



Riley Holt



Noelle McDonald



Thomas J. O'Leary

Chorus' holiday show scheduled

The Westborough Community Chorus will perform its Christmas show, "Sound of Joy," on December 4, at 8:00 p.m. and December 5, at 2:00 p.m. in the auditorium of the Mill Pond School, 6 Olde Hickory Path, Westborough.

Tickets are \$12.00 each for adults and \$10 for children and seniors.

Sound of Joy will mark the debut of the Chorus' new director, Andrew Milne, and will be the Chorus' first performance in months. Three shows that were to be held were cancelled because of Covid-19.

Per Mill Pond School policy, masks are required for members of the Chorus and members of the audience.

Santa is expected to make an appearance.

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Christmas Messages from Blackstone Valley Pastors

By Christina Galeone

For the past several years, in this annual column, we've featured responses by Blackstone Valley pastors to a variety of questions. Their collective responses to sometimes complex questions have been clever, poignant and heart-warming.

But these times have been more complex and challenging than most of us could have ever imagined. So, this year, we asked the pastors to simply provide their Christmas messages to the Blackstone Valley. And, as in past years, their words carry the holiday's hope, peace and joy to the area.

1. **Reverend Dr. Richard J. Robison**, Baptist Church of

Grafton, BCG (bcg1800.org), located at 1 South Street in Grafton:

The old familiar carol asks, "Do You Hear What I Hear?"

Someone said: I heard the news tonight. It wasn't very good. Then, I switched to another site, and the ads were popping up. Everything was on sale. Bring your coupon and store cash, and get an additional 30 percent off. All I heard was spend, spend, spend!

I heard some Christmas songs on Christmas radio! "Jolly Old Saint Nicholas," "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "White Christmas."

They asked some children what Christmas means to them. I heard one say, "Santa Claus has a white beard." An-

other quipped, 'My parents get all stressed about Christmas.' Yet another said, "I wrote a letter to Santa. I asked him for a Moon Lamp, a Harry Potter LEGO set and a Nintendo Switch Light, but I don't think I'll get any of them."

Finally, I went to church. The music I heard was quiet and calming, and I heard something more. 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people' (Luke 2:10)

And even more. I heard a song about the bells on Christmas Day, their old familiar carols play "of peace on Earth, good will to all." Finally, I knew I had heard the voice of Christmas!

May you hear the Good News of Christmas, as though

you have never heard it before!

Have a Blessed Holiday Season,

*Pastor Rich Robison
Interim Pastor of the Baptist Church of Grafton*

2. **Reverend Anthony Mpagi**, Saint James Catholic Church, www.stjamesgrafton.com, located at 89 Main Street in South Grafton.:

'The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise.' (Jeremiah 33, 14)

Dear Friends in Christ,

Two years ago, October 2019, I traveled to Uganda accompanying my mother who was to be spending the winter at home. In Uganda, I providentially "run into" two people who made a lasting impression on me when I was

growing up.

First, I randomly decided to pay an unannounced courtesy call to Father Larry Kanyike. Father Larry is Pastor of Saint Joseph's Church Kyengera (Kampala Archdiocese, Uganda), but for a very long time, he was the chaplain of the Saint Augustine Community at Makerere University (one of the oldest and top universities in Uganda and Africa). Concurrently, he was and still is a faculty member at St. Mbaaga Major Seminary, where I was a student. Father Larry is an icon. He speaks with a very strong American accent; he studied at Notre Dame University for many years. He is very confident and personable, an all-around sportsman and an academician. He is also a man of culture and the Letters.

His most lasting impression, however, on many students at the national university and in seminary was a strong Catholic life and Christian work ethic. He rebuilt the university chaplaincy from scratch. He celebrated Masses in student halls, organized faculty and student seminars, retreats, debates and outdoor picnics. He started a national television program called "Focus on Christian Faith," in which he shared values and views with a Gospel perspective. He challenged us students not to be afraid; be a proud Christian and Catholic, most especially, after university. He educated many poor students, paying for their school fees himself.

After retiring from the university and seminary formation, he was given a new rural parish to build, and he has done an excellent job. With his contacts and friends in the U.S., he has built a beautiful modern parish with a school, a convent next to it and much more. He is in his late seventies and suffered a stroke but is still going strong and teaching. He was happy to see me, and we caught up on the seminary days and a lot about America that he still visits every year. After lunch, he told me he was off to count the Sunday collections that will not even amount to two hundred dollars.

I also got a few days to go on a short retreat. I stumbled upon the Daniel Comboni Sisters Retreat Center in Namugongo. Saint Daniel Comboni was an Italian Missionary from Verona Italy. In the early 1900s, he started a missionary congregation to evangelize the African continent. Unlike many founders of congregations, Daniel Comboni's mission was to "Save Africa with Africans." His interest was to stop slave trade, educate the African people in Africa, and build schools, hospitals, and train leaders, who will oversee the holistic transformation of the society - building on African values and the Gospel side by side.

I went to kindergarten in

Happy Advent & a Blessed Christmas!

*In the Lord,
Father Anthony Mpagi*

Our Lady of Africa Parish run by the Comboni missionaries. Our head teacher was Sister Gabriella, an Italian nun. I inquired where she was, if she was even still alive. To my shock and surprise, she was here! At this place I stumbled upon! Many of these missionaries have given themselves to the poorest of the poor. Sister Gabriella is now over 85 years old, but she has chosen to retire in Africa, where she has lived for more than 50 years.

We had a great time with the nuns who run the center (four Italians, one Spanish and one from Eritrea). I celebrated Mass for them and the postulants every morning at 7 a.m., and what singing and joy! It was powerful to see how these religious women (and men) have "pitched a tent" in unbearable conditions to give dignity, a voice and education to the poorest, that they too may know that God is not far away. 'He is with us' (Emmanuel)

Both visits touched me deeply to this day!

As we gather this Thanksgiving, the season of Advent will begin. The Church prepares us in this special season, spiritually, for the birth of Christ. Christmas reminds us that God is with us. "The Word was made flesh and is dwelling among us. [John 1:14]" He has pitched a tent in our midst even though we may not realize it. We recall how through history and in our present daily living, through many people and events, God guided us by his grace. The future we will always enter confidently because of His grace.

Let us ponder God who has been present to us and be thankful, but most of all, let us be challenged this Advent season to tell the Good news of the child born in Bethlehem, with the witness of service to our neighbor. Let the grace of God not stop at your door. Share it with others. Look and find Bethlehem today in the poorest, the lost, the isolated, the fearful and the anxious; transform them with your effort, self-sacrifice and good example that they may know that the Savior of the world is here!

Happy Advent & a Blessed Christmas!

*In the Lord,
Father Anthony Mpagi*

3. **Licensed Lay Minister Thomas Houston**, Emanuel Lutheran Church, https://emanuelworc.org/, located at 200 Greenwood Street in Worcester:

As we approached Christmas last year and were faced with the distress caused by the COVID-19 virus, I'm certain everyone was hoping and

Continued on next page



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Continued

praying that things would be back to normal by Christmas 2021. And, while the vaccines have gone a long way in helping to modulate the effects of serious illness, the world remains in the grip of a global pandemic.

God's people have been denied a great many of those things that have been previously taken for granted. Warm hugs and friendly handshakes have been replaced with fist and elbow bumps. Get-togethers among families and friends have taken place online via Zoom. Masks, social-distancing, and never-ending hand washing have become the norm. For most of us, these have amounted to nuisances, but for many others, the effects of the pandemic have been much more impactful.

Frontline workers have been stretched to the limit, businesses are unable to continue to operate, and job losses and income reductions have been an enormous strain on a great many of our neighbors. And most importantly, so many of our friends and family members have been stricken by this insidious disease; severe illness, extended hospital

stays, intubations, and, sadly, far too many deaths have been the result of life in the shadow of COVID, now impacting another Christmas season.

But we are Resurrection People! We have faith in the God who made us, forgiveness through the Savior who redeemed us and hope through the Spirit who sustains us. As we approach another Christmas with the spectre of COVID looming, we must always cling to the faith and belief that we do not face our troubles by ourselves. While it may often seem that we walk alone, we acknowledge that as people of faith, we place our trust in the One who travels the path of our lives with us. The God who cares deeply for all of humanity will prevail, and the scourge we face now will at some point be a distant memory.

So, let us turn our hearts and minds to the celebration of the Incarnation, the walking of God in flesh among us. The newborn babe in the manger is the reminder that the joy of Christmas extends far beyond the tree, the lights, the presents and the department store crowds. The coming of the Christ-child into the world is the reassurance that, in spite

of the chaos around us, we are the recipients of God's promises, promises that will not be broken.

The troubles of these times will be replaced with the glory of the risen Christ, when all will be made new, and God's Resurrection People will share in new life, free from pain, sorrow and the ills of this world. So be of good cheer, enter the Christmas season with joy and hope! Look forward to a new year, one that, by the grace of God, will herald a return to hugs, handshakes, and the warm gatherings of family and friends. Merry Christmas, and God bless!

*Minister Tom Houston
Emanuel Lutheran Church,
Worcester*

4. **Pastor Jamie Walton**, Cornerstone Church, cornerstonebv.org, located at 6 East Hartford Ave. in Uxbridge:

As you read this, I know you feel the burden of the last couple of years. Maybe it is the loss of someone you love, time spent in isolation, a financial burden you did not expect or something else that has made life hard.

It was ironic that not long after my thoughts about the

hope of Advent were printed in this newspaper last year, my family and I had to go into quarantine, because of the virus that has plagued all of us. It was a difficult time of feeling the weight of isolation and the weariness of sickness. It was also a time of deep reflection, because I didn't have much else to do. "Where is God in all this?" I asked myself. It felt dark and hopeless. Yet, it was then I remembered that it is in the darkest places, that the hope of the gospel at Christmas shines the brightest.

I remembered there was another man, a long time ago, feeling alone and depressed. His name was Joseph, and his soon to be wife was pregnant, and it was not his child. He was lying sleepless on his bed

when an angel came and told him the boy was the hope of the world. "Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means God with us) - Matthew 1:23.

I was reminded that Christmas means God with us. In the deepest places of pain, in the darkest hour of regret, and in our worst shame imaginable, God came to be with us. Christ was born, Christ died for us, and Christ rose again. This is the light that shines in the darkness.

Whoever may read this and be feeling lonely, or sad, or sick or desperate, please feel the message of Christmas. It is precisely in the darkest places that Christ shines the brightest. There is hope be-

cause God is with us. Spend this Advent praying, celebrating with whomever you can find and join in worship. Cornerstone Church would gladly welcome you to join us at any of our weekend services and on Christmas Eve as well. Just find a church, and join the chorus of people who know that the hope of the world that was born on Christmas day is still the light we live by. God with us!

*Pastor Jamie Walton,
Cornerstone Church*

Clever, poignant and heart-warming still describe the pastors' responses. We hope that these messages will bring the love of Christmas to the Blackstone Valley.

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Living ON with Lincoln

Who needs Santa?



By Amy LeClaire

Lincoln was a socialite. He loved the old and young, the plump and thin, the dark and light, the tall and small. He loved unconditionally and unabashedly. “You are the coolest person ever! Let’s celebrate you! Allow me to play with your gloves!” He would gallop around our front lawn with a new friend’s gear, thoroughly pleased with his sudden luck. A person had arrived! A typical Golden, Lincoln was social by nature—but there was one exception.

He didn’t care for Santa Claus. The discovery announced itself, rather darkly, at PETCO in Auburn, a public pet store created for all things doggie. December Christmas shopping, I had thought, would be even more fun this year. “Lincoln can come, too!” I spoke his language and he responded with a wiggle and search for the closest ball available, just as he had on the final day of his life. Like a leopard’s spots, joy was a part of who Lincoln was. A tumor, tragedy, or illness would fail to take this quality from him. He found a way to concentrate on all that was good in his life. He wore rose

colored glasses and, in doing so, kept pain at bay. Amongst all that I admire about Lincoln, his ability to choose joy over pain is what I’ll treasure the most.

“You have to be easy.” I put the car in park and reviewed the shopping rules. He stared out the window at the store front then shot a glance back to me, as though needing more detail. “We’re going to see the other doggies.” A dirty towel hung from his mouth like an oversized mustache while he celebrated his good fortune and did the math. A parking lot, a store front, dogs. Life couldn’t get any better than this.

“Santa!” Somehow, it got worse.

“Look, Lincoln – it’s Santa!” Lincoln did not want to look at Santa, let alone take a picture with him. “Let’s just get one picture for Daddy.” Lincoln’s Daddy, my husband, had never cared about dog pictures with Santa. Yet I found myself clinging to empty promises like a frayed mother with a toddler. “You look so handsome.” I pulled him towards a hired Santa whom, I must confess, was not overly gleeful. He sat stiff and angular, coupons resting upon his lap while Lincoln hid his face between my legs. I pulled him forward. His head flattened like a deflated tire while he stiffened in protest and tried to free himself from a loose collar.

“Let’s just get one picture, Lincoln.” He turned his head

away from me. “Dislike.” I can’t recall exactly how I managed to pull my largest male of the litter to Santa’s side, but I’m thinking junk food may



Joyful to be with Daddy

have been involved. “Say – Happy Holidays!” The photographer stayed the course and did his job. By virtue of being a dog (they smile when nervous) Lincoln cooperated and smiled with a tongue hanging out. The camera’s flash captured the odd couple that became us, Anxious Dog and Proud Mom. “One more in portrait mode?”

My mind conjured the image of a confident Lincoln pictured within the perimeter of an 8 x 10 frame, a twinkle in his eye while he looked down on us from the fireplace mantel. I pet his head softly. My pedigree was so handsome. He lifted his chin, looked up at me, and revealed a harsher truth. “I’ll be joyful, but I cannot stand this man.”

I needed to get Lincoln out of there, and fast. An 8 x 10 portrait for only \$7.99 felt suddenly selfish. “Thank you so much but we’re going to pass.” Had Lincoln sensed a phoniness in Santa that kids, drawn to the prospect

of presents alone, had failed to discern? Or was it a beard that sagged a few inches shy of reality that turned him off?

“You’re such a good boy, Lincoln.” In any event, the incident became a distant memory as we found ourselves immersed in his favorite aisle. I laid out a colorful row of balls, all different shapes and sizes. He sniffed. He browsed. He perked.

An extra-large neon-bright tennis ball captured his attention. He nuzzled it with cautious curiosity, as though a bird may have been nestled inside the ball. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen a ball this big.” He pawed it, rolled it forward, then covered it with big paws, as though protecting a baby.

I knew before I knew. The neon ball was cheap and hollow. Given Lincoln’s fierce grip on the ball’s flimsy shell, this one would not stand a chance. He’d crack it open like an egg, just as he had so many others. I picked it up. His gaze followed my hands. “What are you going to do



Joyful about going to sleep

with that ball?” Entranced, his eyes followed my hands. “I promise this time I’ll protect the ball. I’ll just hold it. I won’t break it. I’ll just hold it. I’ll go easy. Can I just play with that ball, please?”

“Do you have a card with us?” The cashier wore a festive Santa’s hat with bells. “That will be eight dollars and seventy-five cents.”

She bagged the ball while Lincoln sat charmingly patient. (He adored cashiers).

“Is that the dog in the paper? Here you go, Lincoln!” His sta-

tus earned him a few extra treats. He gulped and chewed while I ripped the tags off of the ball so that he could play in the car. He trotted by my side and followed the ball’s journey. We settled in. I started the car and handed him an early Christmas gift. He wedged it between his paws, looked up at me and broke into his typical joyful smile, a gift to me.

Who needs Santa?

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Q & A with The Car Doctor

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



ed headlights can limit up to 90 percent of the light output of the headlight bulb. If the headlights are too badly damaged, then you may need to replace the entire assemblies.

Q. I have a Ford Escape and I disconnected the battery to clean the connections and now the radio is "locked". I purchased the car used and have no idea about a lock code. Can you help?

A. I have seen some online resources but have never used them. Typically, you will need to remove the radio and get the serial number. Once you have the number, you can call a Ford dealer to get the unlock code. This is also a good reminder of using "keep-alive" memory when cleaning battery terminals or replacing a battery. Typically, at AAA we attach a portable jump-pack to the battery cables to maintain power to the cars electrical system when testing or changing a battery to preserve the car's memory.

Q. I recently had my 2018 Ford Escape back to the dealer and asked about a whirling noise coming from the rear driver's side door when driver's door is opened. This does not occur every time, so it is hard to pin point. Naturally, it never happens at the dealer's shop. I was, however, told that it is a common problem on some Escapes and F150 pickups. They told me it was the fuel pump priming the engine for easier starts. Have you heard of this problem at all? My question to the dealer is what is the fuel

pump doing in the door because that is where the noise is coming from. I have also felt the vibration with my hand on the outside of the door once while this was happening. I would appreciate any info you might have on this.

A. Your Ford Escape uses two fuel pumps, a fuel pump mounted in the gas tank and high-pressure pump that mounts on the engine. When you open the driver's door, the fuel pump is energized to prime the fuel system for quicker starts. The vibration is traveling through the car. My only concern would be if the noise or vibration becomes more apparent/louder. If that happens, I would have the dealer take a second look at the issue.

Q. My husband has a new VW Jetta. The oil needs to be compatible with VW 508 00. He wants to change the oil himself and we have no idea what to get. Help!

A. Volkswagen uses a specific oil but there are equivalent-non-Volkswagen oil. The oil is a 0W-20 weight fully synthetic oil and according to Volkswagen; Castrol Edge and Valvoline European Full Synthetic as two popular oil brands that would be suitable.

Q. I have a Toyota Camry and I was just wondering with winter on its way if stuck in snow, is it better when trying to get unstuck with the additional weight of a full tank of gas?

A. Depends on the car and where the gas tank is located. On a front wheel drive like your Camry that extra 50 pounds of fuel might take a little weight off the drive wheels and reduce traction. With an all-wheel-drive or four-wheel-drive vehicle the extra weight could be an advantage and add traction. For me I would rather have a full or close to full tank of gas to avoid running out of fuel in bad weather and becoming stranded.

*Happy holidays
from
The Car Doctor*

Q. What is the best way to get rid of the haze that takes place over time on my headlight covers? To me the haze is affecting how the lights are working.

A. The plastic headlight lenses turn cloudy due to ultraviolet light. You can bring the car to a repair shop where they can buff out the lenses to get them back to a clear look. You can also try to do it yourself. You can buy a kit that has a special buffing compound, very fine sandpaper and in some cases a buffing wheel that you attach to a drill. To get a good results it will take a little time and effort. Once the lenses are clear, then it is important to apply a UV protective coating to help prevent the haze from reappearing. You are correct that in some cases badly cloud-



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DAR celebrated anniversary with a Day of Service



Pictured left to right: Anne Marie Safaee of Dudley, Carolyn Lavallee of Uxbridge, Noveline Beltraim of Pascoag RI, Betsy Ryder of Whitinsville, and Sylvia Gamache of Dudley. Not pictured Susan Perkins of Douglas.

The Captain Job Knapp Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution celebrated the anniversary of the founding of the DAR, with a Day of Service to the American Red Cross Blood Drive at Milford Hospital on October 21.

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GRAFTON - Grafton Recreation will hold its annual Craft and Vendor Fair on December 5 as part of the Grafton Celebrates the Holidays.

The fair will be held in the Grafton Municipal Center gymnasium, 30 Providence Road, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Items for sale from local artisans will include jewelry, charcuterie boards, wreaths, ornaments, soaps, self care products, clothing, knits, coasters and more.

Christmas Festival

WORCESTER - St. Christopher Church, 950 West Boylston St., Worcester will hold its annual Christmas Festival on Saturday, December 4, from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. The festival will feature food, raffles, flea market, crafts, jewelry, baked goods and much more. No admission fee. Come start your Christmas shopping while enjoying the festivities. For more information, call the parish office at 508-853-1492.

Holiday Bazaar

DUDLEY - St. Andrew Bobola Holiday Bazaar will be held in the church hall at 54 West Main St., Dudley on December 4, from 10 a.m. til 5:30 p.m. The Rosary Sodality and Parish Council are joining forces to host an Indoor Yard Sale, a Bake Sale, a Basket Raffle and a Lottery Tree Raffle. Frozen Polish Food will also be available for take out: cabbage and cheese pierogi, golabki (stuffed cabbage), kapusta and kielbasa all ready to defrost, heat and eat for your holiday festivities. Come and join in the fun, find a unique treasure you just can't live without, take a chance or two on the raffles, take home some home-baked goodies and frozen Polish food for your traditional Christmas dinner.

Christmas Fair

CHARLTON - The Charlton Helping Hand Society, Inc. presents its annual Christmas Fair at the Dodge Chapel, 81 Hammond Hill Road, Charlton. Catch the holiday spirit (and bargains) on Saturday, December 4, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Enjoy the huge assorted cookie table, Santa's Village shopping room, raffle table and raffles for gift cards, cash, services, etc. Winners for the raffles will begin to be drawn at 1 p.m. Come to shop, come for the fellowship and spirit of the holiday and come to "help us to help others."

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Christmas bazaar

AUBURN - St. Joseph's Parish Annual Christmas Bazaar will be held Saturday, December 4, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. at the St. Joseph's Parish Center, 68 Central Street, Auburn.

Come and enjoy an old fashioned Christmas Bazaar and check out the collectibles, attic treasures, plants, jewelry, knit goods, holiday decor, toys, candy and baked items, and so much more. Take a chance on one of the many raffles. There is something for everyone. Free admission. Free parking. Handicap accessible.

Holiday Craft Fair

AUBURN - The Auburn Recreation and Culture Department will present its 8th annual Holiday Craft Fair on Saturday, December 11 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Auburn High School. Snow date is December 12.

More than one hundred fifty craft vendors will help get you into the spirit of the holiday season. Santa will be making an appearance from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. so bring the kids. There will be activities, food, drawing, face painting and much more. The schedule of events is listed on www.auburnguide.com. For information kpappas@town.auburn.ma.us.

Holiday dinner

WHITINSVILLE - Parishioners and volunteers from the Blackstone Valley United Methodist Church would like to cordially invite the community to a traditional turkey dinner with all the usual holiday meal favorites: potatoes, vegetables, squash, stuffing, and cranberry sauce. This year's meal will be served on Saturday, Dec. 25, from 12 noon to 2 p.m. at the church, 61 Linwood Avenue, Whitinsville. The dinner is open to everyone free of charge. We ask that you wear masks while you are not eating and maintain social distance where possible. Please come join us for a joyous Christmas celebration that will include holiday fun, food, and fellowship with many from the community. For more information, call the church office at 508-234-2275.

Twice Blessed shop

HOPEDALE - Sacred Heart Church Twice Blessed Thrift Shop December Sale is 50% off everything in the store. Store Hours: Saturday December 4, 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (first Saturday each month, except when there is a holiday). Catholic Community of Sacred Heart Church, 187 Hopedale Street, Hopedale, (508) 473-1900 or visit our website; sacredheartopedale.org. Like us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/twiceblessedthriftshopopedale/

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Prayer



Jesus

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

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

Virtual concert



The Grass Roots Coffeeshouse and the Rockdale Congregational Church will host its annual Christmas Cookie Walk bake sale on Saturday, December 11, 1-2 p.m. The cookie walk is usually held in conjunction with the Christmas in New England concert. Due to lingering COVID concerns the concert will again be held online by the musicians of the group.

The annual concert has been held for over 15 years at the Rockdale Congregational Church. To view the concert, a link to the video can be purchased. The video will be available for viewing December 18 - 31, so you can watch when it's convenient for you. For info visit www.chirstmasinnewengland.net. A portion of the proceeds from the concert will benefit the church as will the proceeds from the cookie walk.

The Rockdale Congregational Church is located at 42 Fowler Road, Northbridge. Any questions on the cookie walk can be sent to aplandbob@aol.com or call 617-429-0347.

Open house

OXFORD - An Open House will be held at the Oxford Community Center, 4 Maple Rd., on December 23, from 1 to 4 p.m. sponsored by the Smolenski/Millette Charitable trust. Stop by for hot chocolate, make some reindeer feed, color a picture to leave for Santa, and make an ornament to hang on the tree or window. All ages welcome.

Grafton celebrates the holidays

GRAFTON - Celebrate the holidays in Grafton on December 5 and enjoy family fun while supporting participating businesses, churches, and non-profit organizations. You'll find more than 20 Frosty Stops, plus a Craft & Vendor Fair with local goods, a map of decorated homes and businesses for viewing and voting, Santa's arrival on the common and more holiday fun. Enjoy, stay safe, and happy holidays from Grafton Recreation.

Event highlights

Craft & Vendor Fair: 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Frosty Stops: 12 - 4 p.m.

Santa's Arrival on the Common: 4:30 p.m.

Special Events on the Common 11:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.: Performance by the Beatz Dance Studio Performance Team; 12 - 4 p.m. Grafton Boy Scout Troop 107 will be selling hand decorated wreaths as a fundraiser; 2 - 4 p.m. Holiday jazz by Grafton Unitarian Church's Three Kings of Swing; 2 - 5 p.m. The Mooving Cow food truck will be on-site selling cocoa, peppermint stick ice cream, and more, grab a treat; 4:15 - 4:45 p.m. holiday music by the Apple Tree Arts Community Singers; 4:30 p.m. Santa's arrival on the common by fire truck.

Events, activities and times are subject to change. Please visit GraftonRec.com for updated information.

Grafton Recreation welcomes the participation of individuals of all ages and abilities in our events.

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22nd annual Millbury Chain of Lights on December 5

MILLBURY— It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas! Join in a festive, day-long celebration of holiday entertainment, unique gifts, and mouth-watering food, as the businesses and organizations of Millbury welcome you to the 22nd annual Millbury Chain of Lights on Sunday, December 5, from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The Millbury Chain of Lights is back this year and better than ever, with 30 stops offering a wide variety of holiday shopping, music and entertainment, activities, crafts, raffles, food and refreshments, and giveaways. Old-fashioned trolleys will provide free transportation around town. The day will be capped off with a tree-lighting with Santa Claus at the picturesque Millbury bandstand at Asa Waters Mansion at dusk.

Returning this year is the Chain of Lights Gingerbread House Contest. Make a gingerbread house display and drop it off at the Cake Shop Café in the Felter's Mill, 22 West St., on Saturday, December 4, between 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. During Sunday's event, visitors will vote by secret ballot for the best gingerbread house in each category, with winners receiving a Cake Shop Café gift certificate.

Also back by popular demand are "The Harmony Jewels," an a cappella group of Christmas carolers who will stroll throughout town from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., as well

as "Vinny the Bubble Guy," with his giant and spectacular bubbles floating on the town common from 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

While making your rounds, don't forget to enter the Chain of Lights visitor contest. Get stamps at each stop and be entered in a raffle with a chance to win as much as \$100.

The Millbury Chain of Lights is possible due in large part to the generosity of corporate sponsors bankHometown, Drenzo Towing & Recovery, Dunkin' Donuts/Marino Organization, Goretti's Supermarket, Law Office of Keenan & Trudell, Millbury Family Dentistry, Solar Wolf Energy, Inc., Ray's True Value Hardware and WIN Waste Innovations as well as event sponsor Mulhane Home for Funerals.

Pick up your official Millbury Chain of Lights Guide at any of the participating locations, many sponsor locations, and other venues around town, or download it from Facebook.com/MillburyChainofLights.

Stops are held from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted and include all the following. (Subject to change without notice.)

9Round, 110 Elm St.; Asa Waters Mansion, 123 Elm St.; bankHometown, 109 Elm St.; Cake Shop Café, 22A West St.; Careone at Millbury, 312 Millbury Ave.; The Children's Consignment Boutique, Felter's Mill, 22 West St.; Cub Scout Pack 109, Felter's Mill, 22 West

St.; Elm Draught House, 35 Elm St.; Elmhurst Dairy Farms, 4 Fjellman Rd.; Felter's Mill, 22 West St.; The Floral Boutique, 242 Millbury Ave.; Friends of the Millbury Seniors, 5 River St.; Krave Fitness & Nutrition, Felter's Mill, 22 West St.; Mike Graves Studio, 10 Hayward Ln.; The Mill Church, 45 River St.; Millbury Baptist Church, 17 Main St.; Millbury Federal Credit Union, 50 Main St.; Millbury Federated Church, 20 Main St.; Millbury Historical Society, Asa Waters Mansion,

123 Elm St., 2nd fl.; Millbury National Bank, 18 Main St.; Millbury Parents Club, Felter's Mill, 22 West St.; Millbury Public Library, 128 Elm St.; Mykonos Bakery & Cafe, 49 Elm St.; National Gallery Framing & Crafts, Felter's Mill, 22 West St.; Penny Pinchers Brewing, 75 Elm St.; Puffin's Restaurant, 95 Main St.; Sewing Elements, Felter's Mill, 22 West St., Ste. 8; St. Brigid Church, 59 Main St.; Timothy Jay Sweets, 97 Elm St.; Two Girls Reclaimed, Felter's Mill, 22 West St., Ste. 6.



Photo by Edd Cote, used by permission of Millbury Sutton Chronicle

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Call for artists: 9th annual ValleyCAST Art Palette contest

ValleyCAST has issued a call for community members to participate in their Annual Art Palette Contest this spring. The contest invites

participants to transform a plain wooden art palette into a unique work of art. This popular event is a chance for people of all ages and abili-

ties to share their artwork and celebrate the local creative community.

The show will open on Friday, March 11 from 5:00 –

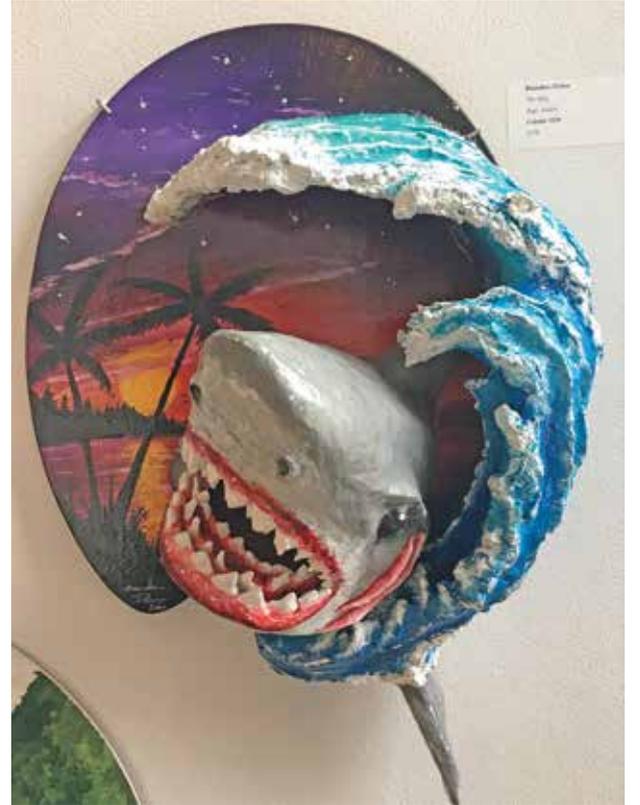
7:00 p.m. in the Spaulding R. Aldrich Heritage Gallery at Alternatives' Whitin Mill, 50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville. From the opening through April 8, gallery guests will be invited to cast a vote for their favorite palettes. Winners will receive cash awards in three different categories and age groups.

There are a limited number of slots to participate in the exhibit, with 100 palettes available for purchase. These will be distributed on a first come, first served basis. Palettes can be purchased for \$15 at the Gallery in Whitinsville, now through February 11, or while supplies last. Interested artists should contact Cristi Collari at cristi.collari@openskycs.org to arrange a pick-up. Decorated palettes can be dropped off at the Gallery between February 21 and 25 for inclusion in the show. The exhibit closes on Saturday, April 23, coinciding with ValleyCAST's annual Hope Day celebration.

For more information about participating in ValleyCAST's 9th Annual Art Palette Contest, or to download a registration form, visit: openskycs.org/news-events/events. This event is sponsored by Jerry's Artarama, ValleyCAST and Open Sky Community Services.

To schedule an appointment to pick up a palette, call (508) 234-6232 or email: Cristi.Collari@openskycs.org. Palettes can also be purchased this fall during our regular Gallery Hours for the Artful Home exhibit. Visit openskycs.org/news-events/events for details.

ValleyCAST's mission is to foster a creative community in the Blackstone Valley that is inclusive and supportive of people with and without disabilities. ValleyCAST is



Art Palette Contest 2020 – 1st place winner, adult category – Brandon Drake, Whitinsville.

the arts and culture arm of Open Sky Community Services.

Open Sky Community Services, Inc. offers a wide range of services for adults, adolescents, and children with mental health challenges, developmental and intellectual disabilities, substance use disorders, brain injury, homelessness and other complex challenges

throughout Central Massachusetts. Open Sky, which was formed through the affiliation of Alternatives Unlimited, Inc. and The Bridge of Central Massachusetts, has over 1,200 dedicated employees and an annual budget of \$89M with more than 100 programs throughout the region. For more information, please visit www.openskycs.org.

SENIOR NEWS LINE

Budget to stay busy, not bored this winter

By Matilda Charles

This winter is not going to be a repeat of last year, at least not at my house. COVID will no doubt keep raging around the world, limiting our options for activities, canceling plans that were made with fingers crossed. But here at home I'm going to be busy, not bored.

I've decided to spend a little mental health money that in a normal world I would have used for meals out, a few new outfits and maybe a couple of weekends away at a very nice hotel in the next state.

To make up for the disappointments, I've renewed my Amazon Prime, not only for the free shipping but for the movies and videos I can watch for free. There are hundreds of documentaries, including ones on travel, giving me great views of places I can't currently go. There are thousands of movies and television series I can watch with my Roku device. And then there are the books, sent instantly to my Kindle, with font sizes I can change in a moment.

If I'm in the mood for British television and movies, Adobe.tv has a big selection (even Australian!), only costing a few dollars per month. BritBox is nearly as good as Adobe, at almost the same price.

I'm looking at an inexpensive exercise bike, possibly a recumbent one. These allow all the movements of riding a bicycle, but there is a seat back to lean against and two handles to hold. (If there is no space for a bike, there are pedal machines that can be used while seated in a chair.)

And then there are the arts and crafts to fill the long days. I searched online for crafts for adults and found thousands of kits, including several types I'd never tried before. Some of them, if they turn out well, might end up being holiday gifts I won't have to shop for.

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Tales from beyond

The unfortunate Hannah Robinson

By Thomas D'Agostino

The story of Hannah Robinson is one of love, tragedy and a haunting. It is one of New England's most famous and endearing legends. To this day a small park, tower, ledge and rock bear the name of the young unfortunate Hannah Robinson.

Rowland Robinson, born in 1719, was the oldest son of Governor William Robinson. A wealthy farmer and member of the local government. Robinson, though portly, stood tall and erect, with a clear blonde complexion and light hair. He was known to be fair in temper and manners, having the disposition of an old country gentleman.

On December 3, 1741, Rowland married Anstis Gardiner. They had three children: Hannah, born in 1746; Mary, born in 1752; and William R., born in 1759. Mary and Hannah grew to be exceedingly beautiful, especially Hannah, who stood above medium height possessing a clear complexion, with a delicate tint of rose that only served to complement her dark hazel eyes. Her auburn hair fell in ringlets about her, and her speech, manner and carriage made her all the more irresistible to the gentry both near and far.

In her youth, Hannah found a place where she could sit and contemplate, or just enjoy the scenery of the Narragansett Bay. The area, known as McSparran Hill, was steep and bore forth a rock ledge that admitted a clear view of the bay. Hannah spent many hours looking out over the beautiful scenery the ledge afforded her.

The Robinson family spared no cost in the education of their children. Hannah was placed in the care of her aunt in Newport, where she attended the finishing school of Madame Osborne, a well-respected and widely known instructor of politeness and grace for young ladies. It was during her studies with Madame Osborne that Hannah

met M. Pierre (Peter) Simons, a young tutor under the employ of Osborne. From the moment they met, a certain affection ripened between them and before long, they were in love.

Both were well aware that a person of his station in life would certainly not meet the expectations of her father as a proper suitor. Two books—*Recollections of Olden Times*, by Thomas Robinson Hazard and Willis Pope Hazard from 1879, and *The Robinsons and Their Kin Folk*, by the Robinson Family Genealogical Association, written in 1906—tell the tale with very little variance. The 1906 version reads:

"Fortune seemed to favor the young people. Hannah's uncle, Col. William Gardiner, educated his children at home, and in looking about for a private tutor, engaged Pierre Simons to go with him to his Narragansett home and occupy that position in his family. The lovers enjoyed many opportunities of seeing each other, especially as Col. Gardiner, who was of a kind and easy disposition, on becoming aware of the love which existed between his beautiful niece and her former tutor, sought rather to promote opportunities for interviews between the lovers than otherwise.

The mother's suspicions were aroused, and Hannah confided to her the secret of her love.

After trying for months, in vain, to persuade her child to discourage her affianced lover, and finding that nothing would induce her to dismiss him, Mrs. Robinson forbore further opposition.

Thus encouraged by the mother's tacit consent, if not approval of his suit, it was mutually arranged by the lovers that Pierre should occasionally walk over from Col. Gardiner's of an evening, and upon the appearance of a signal light in Hannah's window approach the house and secrete himself in a large

lilac bush which grew beneath it, where love messages might be easily passed. In fact, so emboldened did the lovers become by the unbroke success that attended their stratagem, that they finally arranged for occasional meetings in Hannah's room; her mother lending her presence and countenance to the dangerous adventure, rendered all the more critical because of its being the undeviating practice of Hannah's father to bid her "good night" before he retired, even if it required his going to her own room or elsewhere. It was necessary to have a convenient place in which Hannah's lover might retreat on untoward occasions such as a place—a cupboard—was in the room."

One evening, Rowland happened to step outside the home and saw Hannah reaching out her window to the young Simons. He recognized the man right away as the music teacher employed by his brother-in-law, William Gardiner. He gave chase to Simons, flailing his cane at him, but was unable to catch the fleet-footed young wooer. From that moment on, Hannah's every move was watched—if she walked, she walked with spying eyes. When she rode, a servant accompanied her. Her father became obsessive in keeping her under his watch at every waking moment. It became the whisper around town that many would like to see the young woman be with her love and began to prepare for an elopement, especially her mother and aunt, Mrs. Ludowick Updike, sister of Rowland.

A great ball was planned at the Updike home, now known as Smith's Castle. It was arranged that the two sisters, Mary and Hannah, would attend the ball and stay overnight with the Updikes. Rowland had no idea it was a plot to bring his daughter into the arms of Simons.

Hannah went about her way in a composed manner until it was time to leave for the ball. The Robinsons and their Kin Folk notes:

"On Ridge Hill, a thickly wooded spot, Hannah and her companions encountered the lover with a closed carriage, into which the affianced bride hastily stepped and was driven rapidly away, on the road to Providence, in spite of the frantic appeals of Prince, the attendant. Miss Simons—Pierre's sister—assisted Hannah with a necessary wardrobe, and with the aid of the pastoral services of a minister of the Episcopal Church, the lovers were married."

When Mr. Robinson learned of his daughter's elopement, he became angry beyond comprehension. He offered a reward to anyone who would come forth with any information on those who assisted in her escapade. Much to his disappointment, no one ever came forth.

Simons and his bride moved to Providence. From that point, the story takes on two separate lives. One version paints Simons as a greedy money grabber. As time passed, Simons began to realize that Hannah would

never see a penny of her family's fortune. This caused him to become passionless to his wife's affections. He began to have affairs, became reckless in his habit and eventually turned a complete cold shoulder to her.

Hannah, already unstable in spirit, took a turn for the worst. She became gaunt, pale and her beauty began to fade.

Her father, upon hearing of her rapid decline in health, rode to Providence in the hopes of bringing her home, but under his terms. If Hannah would tell him who was responsible for her elopement, she could come back to the warmth and care of her family home. Hannah was honorable but also possessed the same stubborn streak as her father. Hannah refused his wishes, causing Mr. Robinson ride away in a huff.

Then came the day that Mr. Robinson finally agreed to let Hannah come home. When he entered her chamber he beheld his daughter, frail, white, and almost lifeless. He began to cry like a baby and completely dismissed the thought of asking Hannah to divulge the accomplices of that fateful evening. Instead, he held her cold,

bony hand and promised to take her home. Mr. Robinson had Hannah placed in a carriage carried by hand, called a litter, for safe travel back to Narragansett.

The carriers, called "chairmen," lifted the litter with Hannah inside and set out for home. When they reached Old Ridge Hill, where Hannah had met with her lover that fateful night, she covered her eyes and cried. As they passed McSparran Hill, Hannah begged for them to stop so she could see the ocean once more. There on the ledge, just past a great square boulder, Hannah rested, staring out at the bay just as she did many times in her youth. The chairmen rotated the litter so that she could get a glimpse of every angle afforded to her from her traveling bed. A servant plucked some flowers growing alongside the great rock and handed them to Hannah, who held them close to her breast.

Thomas D'Agostino and his wife Arlene Nicholson are seasoned paranormal investigators, authors, and co-organizers of Paranormal United Research Society. You can find out more about them by visiting www.tomdagostino.com.

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Uxbridge Senior Center news

UXBRIDGE - The Uxbridge Senior Center, 36 S. Main St. has listed the December calendar of events.

From the director,

I want to personally thank all the contributors, donors, and volunteers who helped make the Thanksgiving meal distribution a success. We were able to distribute over 200 meals to our seniors on Monday, November 22, for lunch. This year we collaborated with PJ's Restaurant in Bellingham to cook the luncheon. We limited our volunteers, for everyone's safety, but we accomplished so much.

The Town of Uxbridge is truly blessed to have so many people who care for each other. What a wonderful way for the community to come together for a great cause. Thank you for allowing the Senior Center to be a part of this endeavor.

Here is a list of our major contributors/donors: PJ's Restaurant, Unibank, Savers Bank, Table Talk Pies, Hannaford's, Taft School Students, Fallon Health.

I also want to acknowledge all of our volunteers. Thank you to those folks who donated canned cranberry sauce, gravy or provided monetary donations. Thank you to Fallon Health for the \$1500 grant monies that helped curb the cost to the senior center. Thank you to the students of the Taft School for making homemade greeting cards to include in the lunch bags. Thank you to the town manager, directors of various departments in town and the BOS who also contributed. Our seniors thank you.

The Krispy Kreme fundraiser is back. The Activities Program brings back Krispy Kreme doughnuts for sale. Please complete the order form. All orders need to be received by December 13. Pickup

date is Monday, December 20, at the Uxbridge Senior Center. Please consider donating a dozen doughnuts to a senior. Top seller will receive a \$20 Hannaford's gift card. Thank you for your support.

The Uxbridge Elderly Connection will be sponsoring our Thanksgiving and Christmas luncheons this year. The Elderly Connection supports the senior center efforts to provide extra activities and expenses that are not in our municipal budget. Please consider supporting the Elderly Connection during this holiday season.

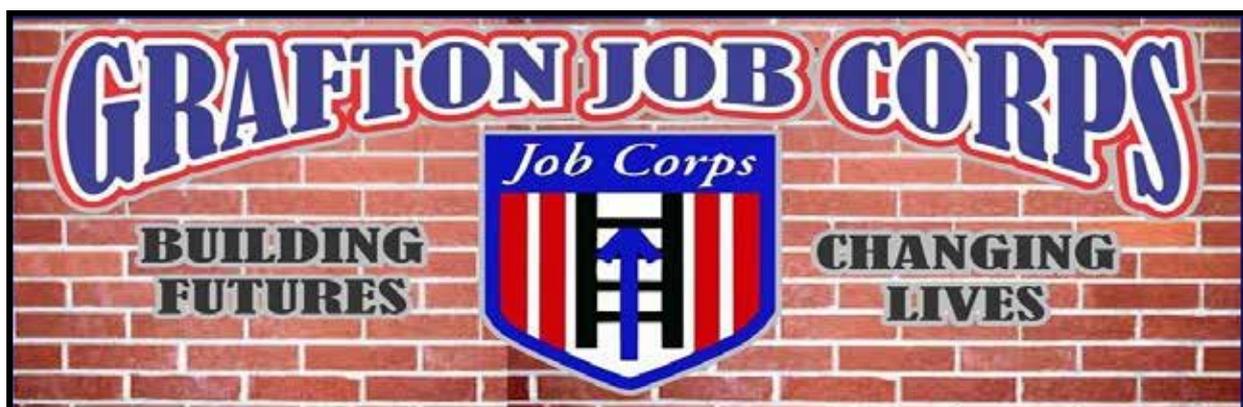
The winter months are now upon us. Please look after your elderly neighbors, relatives and friends. Please consider to call, write or deliver a home cooked meal to your friends and those in need. A little kindness will go a long way! Remember, people will forget what you say or do but they will always remember how you made them feel. Take the time to make someone feel special.

Lastly, I want to personally wish everyone a blessed Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Sincerely, Lisa Bernard, Director

Krispy Kreme Doughnut Fundraiser -

Help raise dough for our senior activities. Krispy Kreme Original Glazed sell at a price of \$11.00 per dozen. We challenge you to sell and top seller will receive a \$20 Hannaford gift card. These doughnuts freeze well. Pre-order yours now by calling 508-278-8622. Pickup will be on Monday, December 20, from 1:30 - 4:00 p.m. at the Uxbridge Senior Center, 36 S. Main Street, Uxbridge. Consider buying a dozen for a senior. Orders and payment need to be received by Dec. 13. Wednesday, December 1, - 1:30 - 2:30 p.m.



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Careers Begin Here!

Making Snowman Posts with Sally. A suggested donation of \$5.00 per person. Call ahead to sign up.

Thursday, December 9 - 1:30 - 2:30 p.m. - Zumba class for seniors with Amy Smith. Last class is Dec. 9 and new classes will restart in 2022. These are held at the McCloskey School.

Thursday, December 9 - 2:45 - 3:45 p.m. - Chair Yoga class with Dr. Tapscott. Last class is Dec. 9 and new classes will restart in 2022. These are held at the McCloskey School.

Friday, December 3 - Last day to pick up ordered wreaths at the Senior Center.

Friday, December 3 - 12:00 p.m. - Lunch and Learn with Chief Montminy. His guest speaker will be the new School Superintendent Patrick Dillon. Please call ahead to reserve your lunch as space is limited.

Monday, December 6 and 13 - 1:30 p.m. - Making clay Christmas ornaments with Christine Tansen. Dec. 6, we will make the ornaments and Dec. 13 you can decorate them. Class is limited and a cost of \$5 per person is required at sign up.

Tuesday, December 7 - leaving senior center 5:00 p.m. - trip to Shrine of our Lady of La Salette in Attleboro. Space is limited, please call ahead to RSVP. Bring \$10.00 for Wendy's and extra money for incidentals at the gift shop.

Wednesday, December 8 - 1:30 - 2:30 p.m. - making Christmas Gnomes with Sally. A suggested donation of \$5.00 per person. Call ahead to sign up.

Thursday, December 9 - 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. - PopUp Library. Books will be on display to check out, library card sign-ups, book hold pick-ups, etc. Call ahead to reserve your lunch.

Tuesday, December 14 - 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. - Benefit Enrollment Specialist - Tri-Valley, Inc. Call the senior center to book an appointment with Cole Ackerson. Next date will be January 11.

Tuesday, December 14 - 1:00 p.m. - Uxbridge Library Book Club. They will be reading "The Thursday Murder Club" by Richard Osman. You are welcome to join us for lunch on this day. Please remember to RSVP. Time to find a good book to curl up and read during these long winter days/nights.

Tuesday, December 14 - trip to Point Breeze in Webster for lunch. Cost will be \$20 per person. Please call ahead to RSVP and your meal choice: Fish and Chip, Fritters and Chowder, Pasta and Meatballs or Burger and Fries and includes coffee/tea, salad and dessert. Payment is due upon sign up.

Thursday, December 16 - 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. - "A Christmas Musical Journey Through the Years" with Thomas Rull. This is being funded by the Uxbridge Cultural Council. Call ahead to RSVP.

Friday, December 17 - 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. - Christmas Party with Tim Brooks, The Crooner at Large and a visit from Santa. Space is limited so please be sure to call ahead to RSVP. We will also serve a December birthday cake.

Monday, December 20 - 1:30 p.m. - "Ask the Attorney" with Attorney Ralph Tepper by appointment only. Please Call 508-278-8622 to schedule your appointment at the Uxbridge Senior center.

Monday, December 20 - 1:30 - 4:00 p.m. - Pick up your Krispy Kreme order.

Tuesday, December 21 - 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. - Mr. & Mrs. Claus will be here to entertain us during lunch. We are happy to have Linda and Steve Monahan back again. Please call ahead to reserve your lunch.

Thursday, December 23rd the senior center will be open for half day. No lunch will be served.

Friday, December 24 - The center will be close in observance of Christmas. We will re-open on Monday, December 27. "I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year." - Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol

Tuesday, December 28 - 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. - Ask the Nurse Free Blood Pressure Clinic with Celeste Kopech, Salmon Health VNA. RSVP to participate and to join us for lunch.

Wednesday, December 29 - 11:30 a.m. - New Year's Eve at noon celebration with Tim Van Egmond "Singing and Ringing in The New Year." This program is supported by a Musician Fest Program grant from the Music Performance Trust Fund, administered by the American Federation of Musicians Local 1000. Please call to RSVP.

Thursday, December 30 - The center will be open for half day. No lunch will be served.

Friday, December 31 - The senior center will be closed for New Year's Eve. "Here's to a bright New Year and a fond farewell to the old; here's to the things that are yet to come, and to the memories that we hold." We will re-open on Monday, January 3.

Card Game or Family Feud will be played during our Monday congregate lunches and bingo will be on Wednesdays.

Hannaford grocery shopping every Tuesday. Pick up begins at 8:30 a.m. Please sign up in advance by calling us at 508-278-8622 to reserve your seat on the van. Masks are required and seating is limited.

Knitting Club every Tuesday, 1:30 p.m. - Space is limited and must continue to maintain social distancing. Please RSVP 508-278-8622.

1st and 3rd Wednesdays - 10:00 a.m. - bank and pharmacy rides. Please call at least 24 hours in advance if you need a ride. Masks must be worn as well.

New date for December Thursday, Dec. 16, 8:30 a.m. - Shaws/Ocean State Shopping Rides. Please call at least 24 hours in advance if you need a ride. Masks must be worn and limited to 4 people on the van.

Medical Transportation is accepting appointments. Call 508-278-8622 to schedule your rides.

Feel free to contact us at 508-278-8622 or visit us on our web page at Uxbridge-ma.gov/coa or like us on our FB page or by googling Uxbridge Senior Center and our new YouTube Channel or even dropping by.



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RE: Real Estate



Mark Marzeotti

Buying a foreclosed home: Where to search, how to buy and what to watch out for

The deals are real, but there are risks involved.

If you're searching for a house to buy, and you're looking for a deal, a foreclosure may be an enticing option. Foreclosed properties, which have been taken back by a lender after the homeowners defaulted on their loan, usually sell for significantly less than similar homes on the traditional market.

The lower price tag has a few strings attached, though. Buying any house can be complicated and a foreclosed house especially so, with its own unique set of risks and challenges. Learn more about how to buy a foreclosed home to decide if it's a good option for you.

What is a foreclosed home?

Foreclosures have been seized by the lender because the homeowner was no longer able to pay the mortgage. Most lenders will begin the foreclosure process when the owner falls three to six

months behind but has been longer as of late.

Foreclosures vary by lender, state and the homeowner's specific situation, the ultimate outcome is largely the same: The lender seizes control of the property and looks to resell the home as quickly as possible to minimize or recoup any losses. To speed up this process, foreclosed homes usually come at a discount and are often sold "as is," which means that lenders may be reluctant to make repairs.

For a buyer, the primary difference between purchasing a foreclosure and a traditionally listed property is that you're buying from a lender and not the homeowner. This changes the dynamics of finding a home, making an offer and negotiating a contract.

Before you start looking for hot foreclosure deals, it's important to understand the process and what you should expect.

One tricky aspect of buying foreclosures is the number of ways you can buy them. These include:

- Short sales: With a short sale, a lender agrees to accept a sale price that's lower

than what's owed on the loan. When a homeowner owes more on their mortgage than the equity they have in the home, sometimes known as "being underwater," lenders may agree to this type of sale if they believe they'll recoup more from short-selling than a full-blown foreclosure. Short sales are listed openly on multiple listings services and are relatively easy to find with your realtor.

- Auctions: If a foreclosure is inevitable, the bank may let the homeowner take their property to auction. Home auctions are typically administered by a county or municipality-level agency. Buyers at auction should be prepared to make a full-cash offer and be ready to stomach some risk; the property's condition and who holds the title may be uncertain.

- Direct from lender: Properties that have completed the foreclosure process and are released to the lender become bank-owned or real estate-owned homes. Banks tend to take their time with what are called real-estate owned homes in order to find the most profitable offer. As a result, buying an REO (real estate owned) home can take a long time, depending on the number of foreclosures the bank is handling. Sometimes, it can take months for a bank just to respond to your offer.

- From the government: Agencies such as the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Veterans Affairs also sell foreclosures on loans they guaranteed.

You can find listings online at the various agency websites but must work with a real estate agent/Realtor to make an offer.

- Pre-foreclosures: Homeowners in the pre-foreclosure stage have received notice from their bank that foreclosure is looming. They will have a specified period to catch up on payments and late fees but will often look for a buyer who will pay the right price for their home to save them the financial trouble of foreclosure. Pre-foreclosures can be harder to find since they're not officially on the market.

If you're thinking about buying a foreclosed home, choose your real estate agent/Realtor carefully.

An agent who knows how the process of buying a foreclosed property works will be very helpful. Understanding the process allows the agent to manage buyer expectations. An agent with a lack of foreclosure experi-

ence can make the transaction a bit challenging. Marzeotti Group is experienced and can help.

Get Pre-approved: Securing your mortgage preapproval is an essential step for any prospective buyer, but it's critical when targeting foreclosures. The most successful foreclosure buyers make all-cash offers, which immediately gives them a leg up on anyone who still needs to secure financing. A preapproval letter proves that you can back up your

offer and close the deal.

You may also want to investigate alternative loan options that work well for foreclosures. The FHA 203(k) loan, for instance, lets you finance up to \$35,000 in repairs or upgrades into the loan, which is particularly helpful since foreclosure properties often need a lot of work.

An experienced agent should have no trouble helping you find foreclosure listings. Good luck and call if you need help!

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