

It Takes a (North Pole) Village



BY SEAN SULLIVAN

In setting up the holiday lawn display, some go above and beyond the call of duty.

You can see these coming from a proverbial mile away. Familiar cartoon Christmas characters rendered in statue form, strewn and situated in complex scenarios within the confines of a neighbor's yard. They take the form too of oversized, inflatable versions of holiday staples such as Frosty the Snowman, Rudolph, and Santa Claus himself.

Natick resident Brooke Ferrelli caught that Christmas spirit years ago, and has been upping her holiday game ever since. Growing up in a large family of modest means, she often didn't experience extravagant holidays, but the spirit loomed large during Decembers and the weeks prior. The family would revel in Christmas music, and take car trips to tour the holiday lights brightening up homes during the darker days of winter.

VILLAGE

continued on page 2

The Influencer Next Door

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

"Mom, my friends know you're online," her daughter reported recently.

Sheena Melwani's cover had been blown. Sort of.

The Natick mother of two had been building a massive online following for more than a year, largely unbeknownst to residents local and regional.

Staying sotto voce locally while ascending to social media stardom wasn't so much a conscious effort, but rather a symptom of the strange ways an online presence can morph and manifest. That one can garner millions of fans and followers via the internet, while only a handful of hometown people know about it, may also somewhat signify our lack of lines of local connectedness.

But Melwani sees the secret of her online success as a symptom of what's scarce in the social-mediaverse. Her videos fill a void in that sphere, wholesome and honest humor as antidote to the doom-scrolling so many of us were doing in those early weeks



of the pandemic and months leading up to the 2020 presidential election.

"What is happening to the world, and what can we do?" Melwani remembers thinking of those tumultuous months of 2020.

She is an accomplished singer and began performing live on her Facebook page, hoping to lighten listener's spirits during those darker days. She would take requests during those ses-

INFLUENCER

continued on page 3

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VILLAGE

continued from page 1

“Just remembering how that made me smile,” said Ferrelli.

So at age 20 she began collecting the ornaments that have come to inspire awe and holiday

festooned with the inhabitants and decorations that populate Ferrelli’s “North Pole Village.”

The display is an interactive experience that has earned fans and devotees, some of whom have connected with Ferrelli over the years of her ev-

Santa’s sack of toys is situated out back, from which holiday visitors can help themselves. The village has become a topic of excitement and fandom within school buses that pass and drop off students nearby. The complimentary

savor the sentiments of the scene and season.

“It’s nothing but pure joy,” said Ferrelli. “It’s amazing to see.”

There’s a long note of instructions affixed to her front

characters. The only stipulation for admission to Ferrelli’s party seems to be some form of yuletide attire and a happy holiday spirit.

The village certainly inspires



cheer around this time of year. Her fastidiousness at amassing those festive figures is in full evidence when one passes her Pond Street home. There, the front, side and rear of the residence are

er-evolving creation, locals who look forward to its return when the warmth of autumn begins to wane.

Interactive it is. Visitors can partake of sweets such as candy canes hung about the place, and

candy canes are a main attraction there.

Young fans of the village can leave notes to Santa, and people have stopped by to spend time with Ferrelli - the creative spirit behind the display. On one occasion, she said, visitors gathered around her fire pit to chat and

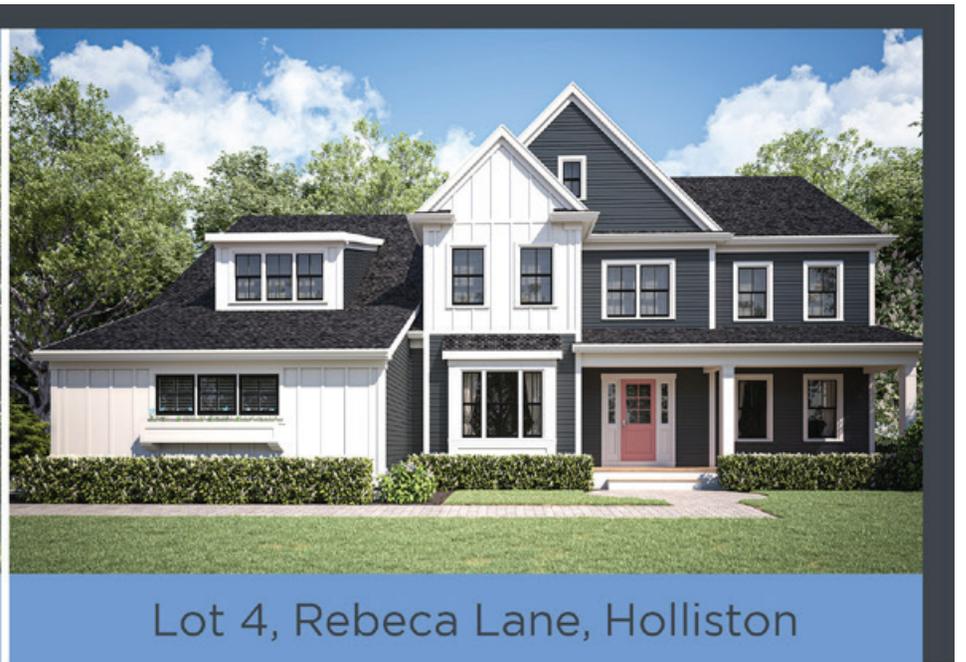
door, pointers on how spectators can make the most of their stay. Visitors can wander the village, mingle among its residents. The characters comprise a melting pot of species, drawn from all corners of the Christmas-verse. Misfit Toys and the Bumble share space with Sesame Street and classic Disney

the latter in human visitors that come from near and far to see the village and its denizens. It will be on display until January 6th.

“I feel like it brings out the best in people, which this world needs,” said Ferrelli. “To make it come out in people once a year is really great.”



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continued from page 1

sions she performed at her home, garnering a modest following. But it was experimentation and improvisation that led to the legions of Melwani's online followers.

In the process of recording a video she intended to post to Instagram, an off-screen heckler began to chime in. The interloper interrupted Melwani's vocals at various intervals, taking humorous swipes at the lyrics of the track she was covering. The disembodied voice was determined to derail her recording session, and succeeded - in more ways than one.

That mystery voice from the "audience" belonged to Mel-

wani's husband, who it seemed had had enough of overly-saccharine songwriting. The unplanned commentary provoked bouts of laughter from Melwani, and prompted the prankster to ratchet up his rhetoric. It was all caught on film, authentic and funny enough that the couple decided to post the sabotaged singing session online.

The impromptu act caught on. The growing popularity and response to that video led the two to start their "Interrupted" series, a volume of videos where Melwani's soulful and serious singing is punctuated by the critical-comical commentary of her off-screen



INFLUENCER
continued on page 4

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INFLUENCER

continued from page 3

spouse. “It’s a little glimpse of what you get in our house,” she said.

Since the videos began to go viral, Melwani has distributed them among her social-media platforms, sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Youtube. Her TikTok channel in particular has been a boon for attracting fans. A platform that specializes in short videos, that site has traditionally been a favorite of the younger crowd. There, Melwani has amassed a following more than 8-million strong and counting.

She began posting her short videos on TikTok during the first few months of the pandemic, her way of reaching out and socializing with a world sequestered in uncertain times.

The interrupted vocals videos soon morphed into Melwani being amiably ambushed by her

spouse while she went about the everyday minutiae of life. Working at her laptop or piano, applying makeup, doing laundry or simply sitting and relaxing, sipping a beverage - all these moments and more were fair game for a covert campaign of comic spousal criticism.

It’s these videos that have lured legions of fans to Melwani’s social-media channels. A subset of these skits is her husband’s “Dad Jokes,” a gag in which he descends upon Melwani, minding her own business, to deliver a short, pun-punctuated sentence. Or two. Or three. He seems equipped with an endless supply of these - one-liners corny and clever enough that you have to laugh in spite of yourself, against your better judgment.

What, for instance, do you call a pile of cats? A “meowtain,” of course. Melwani replied to that one with modest and patronizing laughter, rating the joke a 4 out of 10. Not to be outdone, she has taken to retaliating, sending her spouse into the kitchen to answer his phone, only to discover the caller was Melwani herself, summoning him to retrieve for her a bag of chips.

When Melwani’s husband does appear on camera, he is disguised, his face obscured by a computer-generated, cartoonish bobble head. Sensing his expressions, the software animates the avatar in sync with his speech and facial movements. This has generated much online gossip, many questions and theories about his identity, but the couple has re-

purposed that phenomenon into a challenge. The “Real Indian Dad,” as he’s come to be known online, will be “unmasked” only when the couple’s Youtube channel reaches 1 million subscribers.

As the act of interrupting each other for a joke or prank became their main claim to fame online, the videos were lent authenticity due to the fact they aren’t scripted. The jokes are fresh, the interactions unrehearsed, which in a sense lets viewers participate, offering them a window into the Melwani household and family life.

“It just became like our thing,” she said. “If it feels forced, then we don’t put it up.”

Speaking of windows, closing them is one of The Real Indian Dad’s favorite and most famous expressions. He can often be heard demanding that they “close the windows,” on a particular topic or situation. The metaphor is close cousin to “shutting the door” on an idea, theme, discussion, etc, and closing the windows has been adopted as a favorite phrase of the Melwani fanbase.

So while the world works and hopes to close the windows on the pandemic and this decade’s turbulent beginning, more and more fans will undoubtedly continue to open their laptops and social-media feeds to the content the Melwanis produce.

“I think that people really enjoy disconnecting from the chaos,” she said. “That’s what I feel is drawing people in. They’re all on this journey with me.”

Natick’s 17th Annual MLK Day Celebration

Celebrate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his legacy that inspires and empowers us all. All are welcome to gather for the community welcoming event and service project following the celebration! Co-sponsored by the Greater Natick Interfaith Clergy Association, Natick Is United, the Natick Board of Health, Natick 180, Town of Natick, Natick Public Schools, METCO, and SPARK Kindness.

The 17th Annual MLK Day Celebration will feature a keynote address from Deacon Art Miller.

Deacon Miller is a certified trainer in Dr. King’s nonviolence philosophy and to this day addresses 21st-century examples of the societal tendency to embrace violence. Echoing the thoughts of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., he believes that as part of the great human experience, no one can sit idly tolerant of the great injustices that happen anywhere in the world.

Deacon is an author, radio, and former television host, Vietnam-era veteran and veteran civil rights worker. Miller was ordained for the Archdiocese of Hartford in 2004. He graduated from the University of Illinois in 1966 and received his MBA from DePaul University in 1972. Currently he is the

director of the Office for Black Catholic Ministries. Besides his assigned parish, he is the Chaplain at Hartford’s Capital Community College and Adjunct faculty for Holy Family Retreat Center in West Hartford and Our Lady of Calvary Retreat Center in Farmington, CT.

At public forums, houses of worship, schools and universities across the country, Deacon Miller addresses issues of social injustice. With firsthand knowledge he speaks to his audiences from the perspective of an African American who grew up on the South Side of Chicago in the 1940s and 1950s. Deacon Miller was 10 years old in 1955 when his schoolmate Emmett Till, age 14, was brutally murdered in Mississippi for allegedly whistling at a white woman—an incident that energized the nascent Civil Rights Movement. His recently released book “The Journey to Chatham”, details the historic events seen through the eyes of Emmett’s friends.

Co-sponsored by Greater Natick Interfaith Clergy Association, Natick Is United, the Natick Board of Health, Natick 180, Town of Natick, Natick Public Schools, METCO, and SPARK Kindness. Additional thanks to Walnut Hill School for the Arts for supporting this program.

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Chuck Tashjian

Editorial
Susan Manning

Send Editorial to:
editor@naticktownnews.com

Advertising Director
Kathy Benoit
508-868-9293
kathybenoit@localtownpages.com

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

Multi Media Sales Consultant
Jeremy Wardwell
413-204-5296
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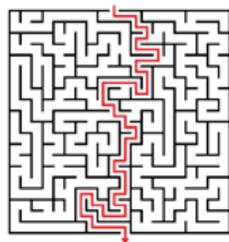
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MassBay's Equity Compliance Director Joins New Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force

MassBay Community College's Director of Equity Compliance, Lisa MacDonald of Natick, has joined the Town of Wellesley's new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force.

The Town of Wellesley announced that the new task force will help chart a path for the deliberate work needed to establish Wellesley as a more welcoming town for all individuals. The working group is comprised of 18 volunteers who represent wide-ranging identities, perspectives, and life experiences. The DEI Task Force will begin meeting in December 2021 and will focus on creating a vision statement for racial equity, developing a mission statement for this

work, designing and identifying a plan to support the goals of racial equity, and establishing community guiding principles and practices to support anti-bias, nondiscriminatory, and anti-racist behaviors and attitudes.

"MassBay is deeply woven into the Wellesley community. I am honored to represent the College and our students, faculty, and staff on these important issues," said Lisa MacDonald. "I applaud the Town of Wellesley for taking steps to build a more welcoming



and inclusive town, and I look forward to helping the group develop a sustainable blueprint for future generations."

MacDonald has served as MassBay's director of equity compliance and Title IX coordinator since 2018. She serves as a commissioner of the MetroWest Commission on the Status of Women and was recently appointed to the Massachusetts Task Force on Sexual Misconduct Surveys.

MassBay Community College is the most affordable higher education option in MetroWest Boston, offering a robust portfolio of courses and more than 70 associate degree and certificate programs with flexible day, evening, and weekend classes in Ashland, Framingham, Wellesley Hills, and online. MassBay students receive an unmatched educational value by earning stackable credits that transfer to bachelor's degree programs, and workforce-ready skills necessary to advance careers in high-demand fields such as health and life sciences, automotive technology, engineering, business, cybersecurity, and the humanities. MassBay's Associate Degree in Nursing (RN)

and Practical Nursing (LPN) programs were both ranked as the #1 Nursing Program in Massachusetts in 2020-2021 by national nursing advocacy organizations RegisteredNursing.org, and PracticalNursing.org. Since its founding in 1961, MassBay has been accredited by several governing bodies and remains firmly committed to its mission of meeting the needs of the diverse local communities it serves. We value the intrinsic worth of all individuals, collectively in pursuit of inclusiveness and prioritize our work towards achieving equity within our community and beyond.

To learn more about MassBay visit www.massbay.edu.

TEDx Natick Postponing Event



In light of the recent rise in Covid cases and uncertainty regarding public gatherings in the coming months, we have decided to postpone TEDxNatick 2022 to a future date.

While April 10, 2022, seems far away, our planning activities begin many months ahead with

auditions, rehearsals, fundraising, volunteer activities, meetings, and event planning. We are concerned about the on-going spikes in cases which are likely to continue through January and February. Making this decision now will allow us to re-focus our efforts for 2023.

We will update you in the coming months about plans for a future event.

Thank you in advance for understanding the team's decision.

Rosemary Driscoll and Steve Gullans, TEDxNatick Co-Curators and the TEDxNatick Team

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ART MATTERS- MARY CASSATT-ZOOM

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and children, not saccharin or sentimental, but honest, realistic and yet still adorable. Join us for a look at her beautiful images, her interesting life and her celebrated accomplishments.

KAREN'S BOOK GROUP-ZOOM

Friday, January 21, 1:00-2:00 pm, free, Register in Community Pass or call the center 508-647-6540.

Join avid reader, Karen Malozzi to talk about *The Postscript Murders* by Elly Griffiths.

E-RESOURCES FROM THE LIBRARY - ZOOM

Monday, January 24, 1:30-2:30pm, free, sign up thru Community Pass or call 508-647-6540.

Join Casey and Karen from Bacon Free Library to learn about all the E-Resources offered to any library card holder including E-Books for your tablet, kindle or phone, magazines, movies and more!

TIPS FOR A BETTER SLEEP-ZOOM

Tuesday, January 25, 1:30-2:30pm, free, sign up thru Community Pass or call 508-647-6540.

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Resolutions Gone Bad: Reign In Your New Year

Making New Year's resolutions to improve your financial wellness in 2022?

Let's help you start by recognizing questionable resolutions, including three destined for failure plus what should be considered for successful planning outcomes.

Bad Resolution: *Need to start buying some "X" to make more money.*

Please, tell me more. If due to FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) or based on this year's performance, give pause.

Yes, momentum, innovation, social & macro themes, niche' and/or value could be part of your investing strategy, but let's back up - do you have a strategy?

Is a core of low-cost, diversified index funds present to allow for explore ideas like X? How does X correlate with what is already owned? Impact on overall risk? Without mentioning perfor-

mance, can you articulate why you own X and when wouldn't own X?

Better Resolution: *Need to save ___% and take ___ risk with investments to reach ___ goal.*

To truly build assets, you need to save a specific percentage each year, take opportunistic or measured risks AND invest towards your established goal, not an investment benchmark or The Joneses.

Bad Resolution: *Pay down debt.* Sounds important, but is it? It depends. Tax deductions, interest rates, duration, fixed or variable, inflation, deflation, and depreciation ensure all debt is not equal.

Better Resolution: *Execute a debt reduction plan.*

Access all debt, then prioritize on high-interest debt, variable rates, and unsecured. If down to a 3% of lower mortgage, 2% auto loans, and a MassSave at

0%, then maintain required payments, reap benefits of low, fixed rates in an inflationary environment and allocate towards investments outpacing inflation.

An exception, if not at ~40% home equity ownership, can make a case to get there and open a HELOC. Beyond flexibility to access equity built and lower total interest paid, can eliminate the opportunity costs of a large cash position for the "what ifs" in life.

Bad Resolution: *Do more for my retirement.*

Buy a lottery ticket, as greater chance of success than this vague "lose weight" resolution tossed by January 10th.

Better Resolution: *How do I retire at 55 or semi-retire in 5 years.*

Now you're analyzing cash flows, balance sheet, contribution rates, investment allocations, taxation, work benefits, college funding, planning for the unexpected



Glenn Brown

Aggressive timelines creates urgency, leading to actions that bring you closer the ultimate retirement accomplishment - choice.

How to ensure resolutions are not misguided, outdated, or simply unrealistic?

Use common sense, socialize with your spouse, and/or leverage an accountability partner (i.e. Certified Financial Planner) to make your 2022 resolutions happen.

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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Medical Experts, Legislators, And Community Organizations Urge Baker To Curb Covid-19 Transmission Amidst Contagious Variants, Holiday Season

Sign-on letter and public health policy proposal for Governor Baker proposes data-driven solutions to reduce COVID-19 transmission in schools, workplaces, and frontline communities

More than a dozen state legislators delivered a letter to Governor Baker urging the administration to adopt a slate of data-driven public health policies, endorsed by a coalition of over 100 public health and medical professionals and 36 community organizations, to curb the spread of COVID-19 in the Commonwealth. This broad support comes amidst a winter surge of the Delta variant, detection of the Omicron variant in Massachusetts, and increasing virus transmission during the holiday season.

On Monday morning, Governor Baker announced an effort to distribute over 2 million rapid COVID-19 tests to high-risk municipalities, but noted that his administration has no intention to reinstate Massachusetts' statewide mask mandate during a winter surge of the Delta variant, which has caused a doubling of COVID hospitalizations over

the last month. Schools have experienced a notable spike in outbreaks, and stark racial and socioeconomic disparities of vaccination rates continue to persist in Massachusetts, with the proportion of people with 2 doses ranging from 52.1% to over 95% across Massachusetts towns.

"Experts confirm that testing is not enough," the letter said. "Our constituents and communities need a multi-pronged approach to combat COVID-19 and protect public health, especially through these colder months."

The coalition outlined a comprehensive public health policy proposal for the Commonwealth's schools, workplaces, health care providers, local health boards and frontline communities, drafted by Dr. Julia Koehler, Dr. Julia Raifman, Dr. Regina LaRocque, and Senator Becca Rausch (D-Needham) in partnership with numerous public health leaders and community organizations. To avoid crises of hospital resources, acute and chronic disease, deaths, long-term disability, and orphaning of children, the statewide coalition is encouraging

the Baker Administration to:

- Establish a statewide indoor masking policy in line with CDC recommendations, mandating county-based mask wearing predicated on local COVID-19 transmission risk
- Fund and staff daily mobile vaccination clinics in frontline communities disproportionately represented in COVID-19 cases
- Curb viral spread in workplaces through statewide workplace safety standards as well as paid sick time for employees experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, potential exposures, or temporary adverse effects from vaccination
- Protect against foreclosures, evictions and rent increases to decrease home crowding
- Reduce in-school transmission through universal masking and providing sufficient funding and staffing for contact tracing, opt-out pool testing, and remote learning options for infected children
- Support frontline communities and local boards of public health through culturally relevant outreach, technical and infrastructural assistance to boards of health and com-

munity health centers, and financial support for struggling residents, regardless of immigration status

"Protecting children from COVID-19 and answering parents' concerns about vaccines in a culturally appropriate way is critically important, because it's not true that children don't get very sick from COVID," said Dr. Julia Koehler, Pediatric Infectious Disease specialist and Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at Harvard Medical School. "Children also get long COVID, and there are now concerns that children might have more severe disease from Omicron than from previous variants."

"The omicron variant is projected to take over in Massachusetts by January," said Dr. Regina LaRocque, an infectious disease physician and associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. "It's absolutely essential for everyone in the state to have boosted vaccination, but we can't rely on vaccines alone to control this surge. We must use all of the tools at our disposal to protect people."

"Mask policies are the opposite of lockdowns or school closures," said Dr. Julia Raifman, assistant professor at Boston University School of Public Health. Mask policies help us continue to

come together to reduce spread at work, in schools, and in public spaces more safely during surges. Mask policies are especially important while we continue to do the work to communicate about and deliver vaccines to the 11 Massachusetts Equity Communities with 40% or more of the population not yet vaccinated. I am so glad to see Governor Baker deliver free rapid tests to equity communities and hope he will also expand on the work Project N95 has done to deliver free, high quality masks to essential workers and low-income schools."

"While I am pleased that the Baker Administration committed to free at-home rapid COVID-19 testing in our most vulnerable communities, we must go further," said Senator Becca Rausch. "Our Commonwealth's public health experts and frontline workers know exactly what we must do to safeguard our communities' health and curb COVID-19 transmission. We have the playbook; now we need swift action to keep our kids in schools, our families safe, and our businesses open."

"The nurses and healthcare professionals of the Massachusetts Nurses Association support a multi-pronged approach to com-

COVID
continued on page 9



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COVID

continued from page 8

bating the latest COVID-19 surge that ensures patients are able to safely use essential healthcare services," said Katie Murphy, practicing ICU nurse and Massachusetts Nurses Association president. "The Commonwealth must protect essential services such as behavioral health, hold hospitals accountable for improving conditions and staffing appropriately, and implement policy changes that reduce disparities in healthcare, education, food and housing access."

"COVID-19 devastated Chelsea a year and a half ago, due to lack of preparedness, action, and response to the pandemic as it arrived in Massachusetts," said Cristina Alonso, Health Equity Specialist for La Colaborativa. "We now have the data, information to prevent transmission, and capacity on-the-ground to save lives in our community as Omicron and the winter holidays approach. It is our responsibility to take action now to protect our most vulnerable communities."

In addition to the 130 public health and medical experts who signed onto this letter, the follow-

ing 36 community organizations also endorsed the policy proposal:

- Agencia ALPHA
- Allston Brighton Health Collaborative
- Boston Immigrant Justice Accompaniment Network
- Brazilian Women's Group
- Community Action Agency of Somerville, Inc.
- Center to Support Immigrant Organizing
- City Life/Vida Urbana
- Comité TPS Massachusetts
- Equity Now & Beyond
- Families for COVID Safety (FamCOSa)
- The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts
- GreenRoots
- Groundwork Lawrence
- Haitian Americans United, Inc.
- La Colaborativa
- La Comunidad, Inc., Everett
- Immigrant Service Providers Group/Health
- Immigrants' Assistance Center, Inc. (IAC)
- Jamaica Plain Progressives
- Lundberg Health Advocates
- Massachusetts Climate Action Network
- Massachusetts Coalition for

- Occupational Safety and Health
- Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
- Massachusetts Jobs with Justice
- Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
- Massachusetts Nurses Association
- Massachusetts Public Health Association
- Massachusetts Voter Table
- Metrowest Worker Center - Casa
- New England United 4 Justice
- St. Mark Community Education Program
- Student Clinic for Immigrant Justice
- True Alliance Center, Inc.

- Union of Minority Neighborhoods
- United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1445
- We Got Us Empowerment Project

lis, Natick, Needham, Norfolk, North Attleborough, Plainville, Sherborn, Wayland, Wellesley, and Wrentham. Senator Rausch serves as the Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture and the Senate Vice Chair of the Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight.

Senator Becca Rausch represents the Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex District, comprised of Attleboro, Franklin, Mil-



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Jane Maloney Joins SVT

Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) has welcomed Jane Maloney as its new Land Steward. Ms. Maloney will play an integral role in the organization's efforts to control invasive plants on its properties and to maintain hiking trails for public use.

SVT is a nonprofit land trust that protects natural areas and farmland in the region around the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Rivers. The organization, which

has 2,900 members, has helped to protect more than 8,500 acres of land since its founding in 1953, and it has a goal of protecting 12,000 more by 2050.

A native of New Jersey who now lives in Watertown, Ms. Maloney holds a bachelor's degree in environmental science from Saint Michael's College in Colchester, Vermont. She has previously worked for the Appalachian Mountain Club in Boston, where

her responsibilities included managing volunteers who maintain hiking trails, and for the Umpqua Watersheds in Roseburg, Oregon, where she worked on conservation-themed educational programs for children and families.

"We are delighted to welcome Jane to the SVT staff," said Laura Mattei, SVT Director of Stewardship. "Her extensive experience in trail work and managing volunteers along with her knowledge of biology and natural history make her a valuable addition to our team."

Added Ms. Maloney, "I'm excited to join the dedicated team of staff and volunteers at SVT. I'm very much looking forward to working with everyone to protect all the beautiful and ecologically significant properties that SVT manages."

At SVT, Ms. Maloney will work with the dozens of volun-

teers who help the organization care for its lands. To improve the ecological conditions of local conservation lands, she will recruit and train groups of volunteers to remove non-native invasive plants such as glossy buckthorn from SVT properties. In addition, she will work with volunteer preserve

stewards to maintain the 65 miles of hiking trails that SVT manages for public enjoyment.

Lisa Vernegaard, SVT Executive Director, explained, "In the past five years alone, SVT has conserved more than 1,100 acres on 27 properties, bringing the number of properties under our care to 187. We are thrilled with this success, but it has greatly increased the workload for our Stewardship staff, who are responsible for the care of these important lands. Thanks to

the generous financial support of our members, we were able to hire Jane so we can continue to take first-class care of our properties."

Ms. Maloney will be based out of SVT's headquarters in Sudbury.



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2022

CAMP

GUIDE

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Learn About Youth Mental Health: Free Virtual Workshops, January 12

By CYNTHIA WHITTY

Youth mental health has been on everyone's mind lately. As a community, Ashland has prioritized youth well-being and provided opportunities both in and out of school to promote student mental health and wellness. However, the past two years have challenged all of us to enhance our understanding of mental health, particularly as it pertains to young people. We know that when young people experience positive mental health it can help support academic learning, social connections, and healthy decision-making.

We can begin our understanding of mental health and how to achieve and support mental health through mental health literacy. But what does that mean?

To help us answer this question, Ashland's Decisions at Every Turn (DAET) and the Ashland Public Schools (APS) are partnering with Mental Health Collaborative (MHC), a non-profit mental health education and awareness organization based in Hopkinton.

"We teach all types of literacy in schools, but we don't tend to teach mental health literacy," Abbie Rosenberg, Mental Health Collaborative Executive Director,

Let's Talk About Mental Health

A Virtual Program for Parents and Caregivers

Become more mental health literate. Learn how to talk about mental health with your children, when and how to get help, and much more. "A must for parents!"

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Choose one session:
Wednesday, January 12

9:00-10:45 AM EST
OR
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Register with this Link:
www.mentalhealthcollaborative.org/ashlandparents

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said. "Everyone needs and deserves to be mental health literate, and that is what we hope to achieve with these trainings and our school curriculum."

The public is invited to learn when, where, and how to get mental health help and support for our kids and teens at one of two virtual workshops on Wednesday, Jan. 12: 9 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. or 6:30 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. Register online at www.mentalhealthcollaborative.org/ashlandparents.

Participants will explore mental health literacy through an educational presentation on the importance of self-care; reducing stigma; recognizing the difference between mental health and mental illness; distinguishing between stress, anxiety and depression; coping strategies; and accessing local resources.

"We are grateful for the opportunity to partner with Mental Health Collaborative and their amazing clinical team to share their expertise and strategies for supporting kids of all ages," Kristin French, DAET Director, said. "I encourage every adult to join us."

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Morse Institute Library

The Morse Institute Library is located at 14 East Central Street in downtown Natick, MA.

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Monday-Thursday: 9am - 9pm
Friday: 9am - 6pm
Saturday: 9am - 5 pm
Sunday: 1pm - 5pm



Wellness and Self-Care:



Meditation with Vivek and Lipi

[Wednesdays at 6:30pm](#)

Good news for our Wednesday Night Meditation folks! Vivek and Lipi will be hosting Meditation live using Zoom every Wednesday night at 6:30pm! Join us for relaxation and mindfulness! You must register for each session separately using the online calendar above. The Zoom link

will be included in your registration confirmation.



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

[Tuesdays at 10am](#)

Join us weekly on Tuesday mornings for some relaxing and low-key Qi Gong. Qi Gong is a centuries-old system of coordinated body-posture and movement, breathing, and meditation used for the purposes of health, spirituality, and martial-arts training. With roots in Chinese

medicine, philosophy, and martial arts, Qi Gong is traditionally viewed by the Chinese and throughout Asia as a practice to cultivate and balance qi (pronounced approximately as "chi"), translated as "life energy". The best part about Qi Gong, anyone can do it! Please register for each session you will be attending using our [online calendar](#).

Upcoming Programs:



Virtual Patriots Hall of Fame Tour

[Friday, January 7th @ 3pm](#)

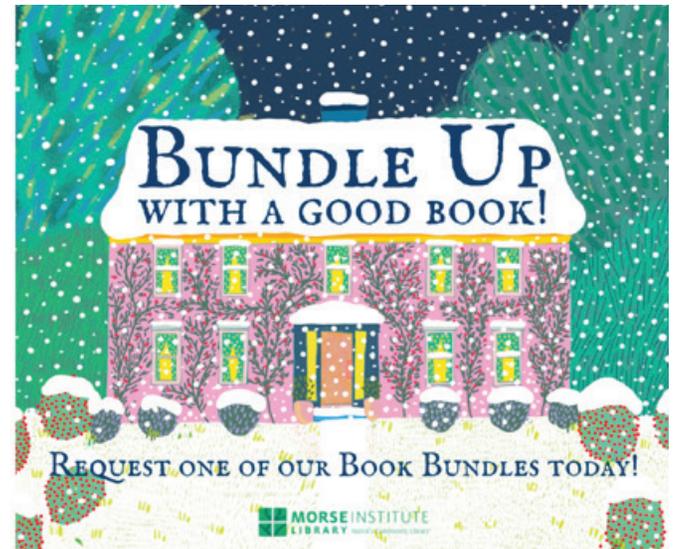
Attention all Patriots fans! Join us for a virtual tour of The Patriots Hall of Fame, an artifact presentation, and an interactive Q&A! Please register to receive the Zoom link.

Natick Historical Newspaper Archive



Browse our [Natick Historical Newspaper Archive](#)! Made possible by the MutualOne Charitable Foundation, the digital Natick Historical Newspapers archive is your place to search for all things local to Natick and the surrounding area. The archive offers you the ability to search twelve different Natick newspapers with various dates that go back to 1869 and up to 2004. The online archive is keyword searchable and you can

share your findings online with friends! So whether its the results of the Natick and Framingham football game in 1954, or an article about the 4th of July parade in the 1960s,- you will find these treasures and more! Check out our guide on [Historical Online Newspapers here!](#)



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now has hotspots available for borrowing!



For more information on hotspot lending, visit our Digital Branch:

morseinstitute.libguides.com/rooms-technology/hotspots



We are very pleased to announce that the Morse Institute Library now has mobile wireless hotspots for patrons to borrow! The new Hotspot program fulfills the Library's mission to advance equitable access to resources and information, and is funded for one year through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to support the IMLS' national goals for digital equity. Patrons must be 17 years or older and can borrow a Hotspot for 2 weeks with no renewals.

Learn all about the program on our digital branch: morseinstitute.libguides.com/rooms-technology/hotspots

Sports

Forman Key Component For Natick Girls Quintet

By KEN HAMWEY
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Madi Forman became a starter for the girls basketball team at Natick High when she was a freshman. Now, as a junior, she's become an integral component for the Redhawks, excelling as a center-forward and serving as a co-captain.

Forman's ascension to a starting role, however, wasn't the way she would have preferred it to occur. Unfortunately, in a game against Newton-North two years ago, forward Maya Stopka suffered a serious injury — a torn ACL — ending her season.

Forman stepped into the front-court role with almost no varsity experience. "Knowing I had some big shoes to fill, I was nervous at first but eventually settled down," Forman said. "We consoled Maya throughout her injury and she encouraged the team to succeed."

Forman adjusted and progressed and her presence paid dividends, especially in the Redhawks' second-round playoff encounter against Wachusett.

"That was an intense tourney game," Forman recalled. "We trailed by 15 early, rallied to get back into the game and eventually won it. I had 15 points, 12 rebounds and 2 blocks. It was a breakthrough game for me and I felt comfortable in spite of the playoff pressure."

The 6-foot-2 Forman didn't suffer any sophomore jinx when coach Dan Hinnenkamp re-installed her as a starter last year. She finished her second season averaging 12 points, 13 rebounds, 2 steals and a block.

"Madi is an excellent post player," Hinnenkamp emphasized. "She's a great rebounder, a power dribbler and a phenomenal shooter. Chosen as a captain this year by the players, she's a terrific leader. Her athleticism, court vision and high basketball IQ make her an all-around player."



Above, Forman sharpens her shooting at practice. Left, Forman pauses at the free-throw line.

Relying on a pro-active, aggressive style on offense and defense, the 16-year-old Forman is adept at battling for rebound position in the paint and using her body to avoid defenders trying to limit her ability to drive to the hoop or fire up a medium-range jumper.

"I like to think I'm mentally tough and resilient and that I've got good court sense," she said.

When it comes to setting individual and team goals, the Natick native not only makes a lot of sense, but she's also fearless.

"My individual goals are to contribute on and off the court," she said. "On the court, I'll strive to rebound and find the open shooter. I also want to improve my statistics from last year. Team objectives include qualifying for

the tourney, advancing deep and battling for the State championship. Competing for the Carey Division title is another goal."

Forman likes Natick's chances of fulfilling her goals. "We've got a solid nucleus, good depth and experience, and terrific team chemistry," she said. "We can make those goals happen."

Honored to be a captain, Forman intends to lead by example and by being supportive and communicative. "It's humbling when your teammates select you," she said. "I appreciate their respect."

Two teammates Forman respects for their ability to contribute in a positive way are senior co-captain Alana Ciccarella, who plays off-guard, and junior guard-forward Ally Burke.

"Alana is understanding, a

good communicator and she can drive for an easy hoop," Forman said. "She can also shoot effectively. Ally has great energy, is quick off the drive and a very good shooter from the wing or her forward position."

Selected to the Bay State Conference all-star team as a sophomore, Forman wouldn't mind achieving that status again. "Being selected as a captain is a great thrill and to be chosen as an all-star by the league again would be rewarding," she said. Forman also was named to the Metrowest Daily News all-star squad.

As proficient in the classroom as she is on a basketball court, Forman has a GPA of 3.50. She's leaning on majoring in mathematics in college and possibly teaching for a career. A collegiate venue at this point has not been decided.

One area where there's no indecision is Forman's view of her coach, who believes she could be a Division 1 college prospect.

"Coach Hinnenkamp is a genuine person who puts the team first," Forman noted. "He's a terrific motivator and a solid role model. He prepares us well and his words are positive."

Besides varsity basketball, Forman also participates in unified track and basketball, and she's also involved in the mentorship program at Natick High, often

helping freshmen adjust to high school experiences. She also competes in AAU basketball with the Bay State Jaguars.

Calling her parents (Warren and Deb) role models for their support and encouragement, Forman relies on an athletic philosophy that focuses on winning, reaching one's potential and having fun. "Winning is important but if we lose, I strive to make it a learning experience," she offered. "That's where mental toughness and resilience should take over."

The personable Forman also values athletics for the important life lessons that can be learned. "Athletics help us to be good teammates, to sharpen our leadership skills, to overcome adversity, to work hard and to set goals," she said.

Forman no doubt will learn more life lessons before her career ends at Natick. And, on the court at power forward or center, she'll continue to give opposing teams fits. That means getting blocks, rebounds and deflections or scoring on a hook shot, a drop-step drive, a medium-range jumper or a three-pointer.

Madison Forman has all the ingredients to be one of the Redhawks' best players. Her excellence won't be one-way or limited to athletics. Because academics matter, too.

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kinton High School to offer the free classes. This marks the seventh year MassBay has offered free dual enrollment courses for qualified high school students through the CDEP grant.

These fully-remote college courses will be taught by MassBay Community College faculty and will be available to eligible high school juniors and seniors. The courses will allow the students to earn both high school

and college credits, which are transferrable to other college and university degree programs.

Students can take one of the following general education courses:

- Contemporary Nutrition
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“I’m delighted MassBay has once again been awarded the CDEP grant,” said MassBay Assistant Vice President of Enrollment Management Lisa Slavin. “CDEP enables high school students to participate in a college-level class while still in high school, exposing them to new topics, professors, and rigor. Once they successfully complete the course, these students are one step closer to completing a

degree or certificate, saving time and money for them and their families.”

Virtual Information Sessions will be held this week for the Partner High School CDEP program on Tuesday and Wednesday, December 14 and 15 at 4 P.M., and Thursday, December 16 at 7 P.M. For more information about MassBay’s free college courses being offered to eligible high school students this spring, please contact Elaine Rosenberg at erosenburg@massbay.edu, or visit <https://www.massbay.edu/cdep-dual-enrollment>.

Registration is now open for the spring 2022 semester at MassBay. Classes are online and on campus, starting January 18, 2022.

MassBay Community College is the most affordable higher education option in MetroWest Boston, offering a robust portfolio of courses and more than 70 associate degree and certificate programs with flexible day, evening, and weekend classes in Ashland, Framingham, Wellesley Hills, and online. MassBay students receive an unmatched educational value by earning stackable credits that transfer to bachelor’s degree programs, and workforce-ready skills necessary to advance careers in high-demand fields such as health and life sciences, automotive technology, engineering, business, cybersecurity, and the humanities. MassBay’s Associate Degree in Nursing (RN) and Practical Nursing (LPN) programs were both ranked as the #1 Nursing Program in Massachusetts in 2020-2021 by national nursing advocacy organizations RegisteredNursing.org, and PracticalNursing.org. Since its founding in 1961, MassBay has been accredited by several governing bodies and remains firmly committed to its mission of meeting the needs of the diverse local communities it serves. We value the intrinsic worth of all individuals, collectively in pursuit of inclusiveness and prioritize our work towards achieving equity within our community and beyond.



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How to Avoid Leaving a Mess

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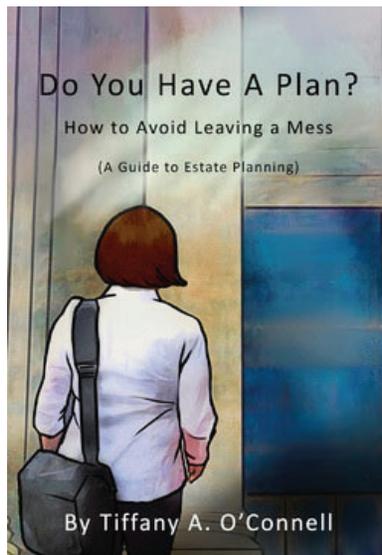
Estate planning is needed by everyone – regardless of economic status or marital status. It's not only for those who are wealthy. Anyone 18 years or older should have critical legal estate planning documents in place. It is just the level and

complexity of estate planning that will differ based on one's circumstances and goals.

As an estate planning and elder law attorney, I've found that many people are not prepared for illness, incapacity (e.g., dementia), or death. I've observed that people fear having the necessary conversations that deal with these issues, delaying or never dealing with them. I've seen it happen too often that because a person did not meet with my firm in time, a mess was left for their loved ones to deal with. I genuinely feel that the person would not have wanted to leave a mess, yet a mess was left because of their inaction. The time, stress, and money spent are so much more than it would have been had the person done their estate planning while the 'waters were calm' and they could do it.

Having been asked for many years by clients whether there was a book out there that they

Business Spotlight



could read to understand estate planning better, I kept coming up dry. I struggled to recom-



mend a book because most of the ones I'd seen were dry, lengthy, in 'legalese,' and confusing. Because of that, I decided to write a book to finally say that this book may help. That book, "Do You Have A Plan? How to Avoid Leaving a Mess (a Guide to Estate Planning)" has been published and is now available.

The book has illustrations throughout and can be read in one sitting. The book is a reference guide for the reader to pick up and use whenever needed and has a story wrap-around to help bring to light issues that everyone needs to know about. The book starts off, in Act I, with Aunt Mabel.

It shows what can happen when someone doesn't do proper estate planning. Act II lays out what one should be thinking about with estate planning and explains the core principles and tools that everyone needs to know. Act III is very brief and shows how proper estate planning can make things much easier when done right.

I wrote the book to galvanize people to do something so that they and their loved ones do not need to deal with a mess when an emergency or catastrophe hits. You can find my book by going to O'Connell Law's website at www.OConnellLawGroup.com. I hope you find it helpful!



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Legislature Passes American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), FY21 Surplus Spending Bill

Investments focus on communities hard hit by COVID-19 and supporting the ongoing economic recovery

The Massachusetts Legislature advanced a \$4 billion bill to the governor's desk that directs federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) surplus funding to assist the Commonwealth's ongoing economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. With a focus on making equitable investments and prioritizing communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, the legislation delivers targeted supports to workers and businesses, and the critical sectors of housing, health care, mental and behavioral health, climate preparedness, education, and workforce development.

"The one-time investments made in this bill address evident needs across all Massachusetts communities and sectors of the economy, particularly those who were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic," said House Speaker Ronald J. Mariano (D-Quincy). "The Legislature engaged in a hearing process before appropriation,

and informed by the public's feedback, this bill will help the Massachusetts economy strongly recover. I thank chairs Michlewitz and Hunt, members of the House, Senate President Spilka and our partners in the Senate, as well as all stakeholders and residents for their input throughout this process."

"While the Commonwealth's history of saving for a rainy day allowed us to hold steady during the immediate shock of the COVID-19 pandemic, the road to full economic recovery will be long," stated Senate President Karen E. Spilka (D-Ashland). "Rather than going 'back to normal,' to an inequitable status quo, the Senate was intentional in using both our American Rescue Plan and Fiscal Year 2021 surplus funds for transformational change to allow us to go 'back to better.' The plan passed today sets forth bold investments in housing production, public health, small business and workforce development, climate change mitigation, and many more areas, all

while ensuring that the benefits are distributed equitably in every community across our state. I am particularly proud of the significant investments we have made in our mental health care system that will begin to address the growing need for access to care across the Commonwealth, with the goal of transforming the delivery of mental health care in our state—a need felt in every corner of our Commonwealth. I am grateful for the many contributions from my colleagues in the Senate, Speaker Mariano and our partners in the House, and the many members of the public who provided input to shape this first phase of implementation of the American Rescue Plan in Massachusetts."

Earlier this year, the Massachusetts Legislature voted to transfer the state's \$4.8 billion allocation from ARPA, which must be allocated by 2024, into a separate fund to ensure stakeholder and resident engagement in a public process. Following six public hearings and more than a thousand pieces of testimony received, the House's and Senate's spending proposals were unanimously approved by each chamber, resulting in the comprise bill which advances to the Governor's desk today. This bill utilizes \$2.55 billion in ARPA funds and \$1.45 billion in FY21 surplus funds.

"This spending package makes significant, targeted investments into areas such as

affordable housing, workforce development, and boosting our health care system that will give a much-needed boost to our residents who were hit the hardest by this pandemic," said Representative Aaron Michlewitz (D-Boston), House Chair of the Committee on Ways and Means. "Throughout this legislation, the needs of communities that were disproportionately affected by the pandemic are prioritized. By doing so, the Legislature has passed a truly equitable spending plan."

"With the passage of this important bill today, we mark another important milestone in our efforts to shape our post-pandemic future, while taking advantage of this historic opportunity that the American Rescue Plan Act funds represent to support an equitable recovery and those hit the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic — our residents, essential frontline workers and small businesses," said State Senator Michael J. Rodrigues (D-Westport), Senate Chair of the Committee on Ways and Means. "Ensuring every voice across Massachusetts had a chance to engage and be heard, this conference committee report makes it very clear - we heard the call for equitable investments in mental health, public health, workforce development, and so many other critically important areas with the goal of improving the lives of our residents and helping those disproportionately im-

pacted during these difficult last two years. I thank Senator President Spilka, my fellow conferees, Senator Friedman and Senator O'Connor, my colleagues in the Senate, the members and staff of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, our partners in the House, Speaker Mariano and Chair Michlewitz, and the many members of the public who provided invaluable input to help us put these funds to work for our communities and support our Commonwealth as we recover from this ongoing pandemic."

"This strong spending package is the result of many months of a robust public process as well as tireless work and collaboration with colleagues, stakeholders and residents across the state," said Representative Daniel J. Hunt (D-Boston), House Chair of the Committee on Federal Stimulus and Census Oversight. «I am grateful to Speaker Mariano and Chair Michlewitz for their diligent work to deliver legislation that will help our Commonwealth recover stronger and equitably.»

Notable investments included in the bill are as follows:

Economic Recovery and Workforce Development

- \$500 million for premium

ARPA

continued on page 17

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ARPA

continued from page 16

pay bonuses for essential workers, up to \$2,000 per worker

- \$500 million for the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund, providing necessary relief to business

- \$100 million for vocational school infrastructure and capacity building needs

- \$37.5 million for the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund to support organizations working with people displaced from jobs during the pandemic, historically underserved populations, and individuals reentering their communities from the corrections system

- \$50 million for equitable and affordable broadband access and infrastructure improvements to close the digital divide

- \$135 million for Mass Cultural Council to support the cultural sector

- \$75 million for small businesses, including \$50 million for direct grants to historically underserved populations and minority-owned, women-owned, and veteran-owned small businesses and \$25 million for nascent businesses

- \$15 million for regional high-demand workforce training at community colleges

- \$25 million for the expansion of Career Technical Institutes

- \$24.5 million for workforce development and capital assistance grants to the Massachusetts Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs and the Alliance of Massachusetts YMCAs, as well \$4.5 million for the YWCAs

- \$20 million for the resettlement of Afghan evacuees and Haitian evacuees

- \$15 million to enhance and diversify the cybersecurity sector with partnerships between public higher education institutions and private businesses

- \$14 million for agricultural economy supports

- \$10 million for regional tourism councils

Affordable Housing and Homeownership

- \$150 million for supportive housing, including \$65 million for the chronically homeless population, and \$20 million to increase geographic equity and accessibility related to the continuum of long-term care services for veterans not primarily served by the Soldiers' Homes in Chelsea or Holyoke

- \$150 million for public housing authorities to maintain and upgrade existing infrastructure

- \$115 million for the Commonwealth Builder Program to support housing production and promote homeownership among residents of disproportionately impacted communities

- \$115 million for affordable rental housing production and preservation for the workforce and low- and moderate-income individuals

- \$65 million for homeownership assistance tools, including down payment assistance, and mortgage interest subsidy supports

Mental and Behavioral Health, Public Health and Health Care

- \$400 million in mental and behavioral health supports, including \$122 million for workforce loan repayment programs for behavioral health and substance use professionals

- \$300 million for the Home and Community-Based Services Federal Investment Fund to address workforce needs for those caring for vulnerable populations

- \$200.1 million to support the state's local and regional public health infrastructure

- \$260 million for acute hospitals impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic

- \$44.8 million for food security infrastructure, including \$17 million for the Greater Boston Food Bank for regional food security network improvements across the Commonwealth, \$5 million for the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, \$2 million for the Massachusetts Food Trust Program to provide loans,

grants and technical assistance in a regionally equitable manner to communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, \$1.92 million for Project Bread to better connect eligible unenrolled residents with federal nutrition programs statewide and \$1 million for the Massachusetts Military Support Foundation, Inc. for the operation of empowerment centers and to support the distribution of food to veterans in need

- \$30 million to support a robust and diverse home health care and human service workforce through recruitment, retention, and loan forgiveness programming

- \$50 million for nursing facilities, including \$25 million for capital support to increase the quality of patient care and \$25 million for workforce initiatives

- \$25 million for youth-at-risk supports and grant programs for community violence prevention and re-entry organizations, focused on communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic

- \$25 million for youth summer and school-year jobs

- \$5 million for Health Care For All to conduct a community-based MassHealth redetermi-

nation and vaccination outreach, education, and access campaign targeted in communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic

- \$5 million for the Disabled Persons Protection Commission to study and review the interrelationship between service-providing agencies for individuals with disabilities within the Commonwealth and to design and implement a system for an interconnected network that will provide a continuum of care for those individuals

- \$2 million for unreimbursed COVID-19 costs for Early Intervention providers

- \$500,000 to establish transportation services for participants in the Massachusetts Veterans' Treatment Courts

Climate Preparedness

- \$100 million for water and sewer infrastructure investments through the Clean Water Trust

- \$100 million for environmental infrastructure grants, including the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program

ARPA

continued on page 18

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(Franklin, MA December 2021)

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ARPA

continued from page 17

\$90 million for marine port infrastructure investments focused on the promotion of offshore wind development

\$25 million for Greening the Gateway Cities program to support tree planting

\$15 million for parks and recreational assets

\$7.5 million for community colleges to help train underserved populations for green jobs

- \$6.5 million for clean energy retrofitting in affordable housing units

- \$5 million for the advancement of geothermal technologies

Education

- \$100 million to improve indoor air-quality in schools and

ARPA

continued on page 19



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Real Estate Corner

ARPA

continued from page 18

support healthy learning environments for grants to public school districts with high concentrations of low-income students, English language learners, and communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19

- \$75 million for capital and maintenance projects for higher education

- \$25 million for the Endowment Incentive Program at the University of Massachusetts, state universities and community colleges

- \$20 million for special education, including \$10 million for workforce development

- \$10 million for programs focused on recruiting and retaining educators of color

Accountability and Oversight

To support communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and prioritize historically underserved populations, the bill establishes an equity and accountability review panel for federal funds to track in near real-time the amount and percentage of ARPA funds spent in these communities and awarded to minority-owned and women-owned business enterprises. The bill also takes steps to ensure minority-owned and women-owned business have fair participation on procurements issued under the act.

Having passed the House and Senate, the compromise legislation now advances to the governor's desk for consideration.



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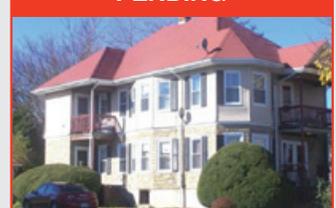
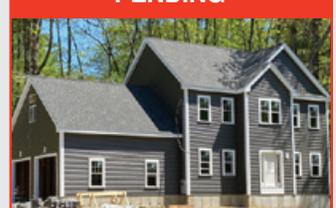


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