

Natick, Sherborn and Holliston Historical Societies collaborate to retrace George Washington's 1789 route through town

Program free and open to the public

BY THERESA KNAPP

The Natick, Sherborn and Holliston Historical Societies,

together with the Sherborn Library, will host a virtual presentation "Along the 'Indifferent Road' with George Washington, 1789" on Feb. 13 at 2 p.m. via Zoom.

The program focuses on November 1789 and George Washington's return to New York at the end of his post-inaugural visit to New England as the country's first president.

Holliston Town Historian Joanne Hulbert says this program is a way of connecting people and places to history.

"The story of George Washington and his travel along the road, is part of our history, and stories of his 'visit' have remained in our history. Preserving local history is not only the task of all the writers, historians of the United States - or of Massachusetts, but history at the local level is of the utmost

WASHINGTON
continued on page 2

Coming Back Amid Covid

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

As winter months start to set in, they bring a sense of hibernation that seems to hover over the horizon. Then suddenly, it's here. Cold and snow slow down the flow of life somewhat, like sap growing sluggish inside the tree.

Yet that sentiment likely doesn't sync or sit especially well with parents this season. Again they are increasingly wandering a wilderness, an ever-shifting landscape of Covid policies and data points as children return to school amid this latest surge.

And while this time around we are all equipped with better gear with which to weather the wily and surging storm - vaccines, treatments and hard-won experience - the best way forward is far from clear. That uncertainty has been the source of an undiagnosed, but widely agreed-upon, psychological symptom of the times:

"I am feeling decision fatigue," said Sophanny McArdle.

In their version of the now-familiar story, the McArdle family had been planning a trip to Grenada before Covid's widespread emergence in early 2020. The va-

cation was tabled, in limbo until some elusive time when strictures and schedules allowed.

Quite recently, that time had arrived. Amid ever-rising vaccination rates and many months of pandemic-life experience, the McArdles decided to make good on their vacation plans. Christmas would have their two children out of school for a few weeks, and Covid forecasting over autumn months didn't seem daunting.

Sophanny and her husband Rod had weighed the potential risks of travel against staying at home, and decided to make the trip. Airlines had mask mandates in place for months, and they and their children would be assiduously wearing theirs during the flights. Their hotel would be at fifty-percent capacity, and balmy weather would allow for ample time outdoors and little interaction with others.

That secluded hotel stay and safe distance from strangers seemed preferable to holiday weeks at home during school

COVID
continued on page 3



History tells the story of President George Washington stopping at the rock, after a drink at the Littlefield Tavern, to try to topple the rock. Pictured here is Nathaniel Philbrick, author of *Travels with George*, trying to do just that. Source: Holliston Historical Society.

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WASHINGTON

continued from page 1

value to local residents as it places us as part of American history. We have a place there, and it is important for local historians to



Littlefield Tavern at 1919 Washington Street. Source: Holliston Historical Society.

tell the stories and pass history on to the next generation.”

Hulbert recalls one such connection.

“Several years ago, during the ‘Eighteenth Century Days’ program for Holliston students, I told the story of George Washington

and the balancing rock. After I finished, a young boy, perhaps 8 or 10 years old, came up to me and said that he had tried to push the stone over, too. I said to him, ‘Well, you have done something just like George Washington.’ He wandered away with a look of impressive wonder — and pride — and I do wonder if that moment might have turned him into a future historian. I certainly hope so!”

The “indifferent road” in the program title refers to an entry Washington made in his diary in which he wrote:

“From Watertown, till you get near Needham, the road is very level — about Needham it is hilly — then level again, and the whole pleasant and well cultivated, till you pass Sherburne [sic]; between this and Holliston is some hilly and rocky ground, as there is in places onwards to Uxbridge; some of wch. are very bad. Upon the whole it may be called an **indifferent road** [emphasis added] — diversified by good and bad land — cultivated and in woods — some high and barren, and others low, wet and piney.”

“People should attend this program to learn about life in

Holliston, Sherborn, and Natick when this country was in its infancy,” says Mary Curran of the Holliston Historical Society. “We will peel back the layers to look at some of the buildings, trees, and other features that newly-elected President George Washington would have seen along this stretch of road on his inaugural tour of Massachusetts.”

Holliston sites will include the Littlefield Tavern where Washington stopped, the tankard (tall beer mug) he is believed to have used, and Balancing Rock which he and his travel companions tried to upend.

Hulbert says the historical societies were inspired to delve deeper into local history by Nathaniel Philbrick’s book *Travels With George: In Search of Washington and His Legacy* which was published in September 2021.

Along the "Indifferent Road": with George Washington, 1789

It was November 1789, and George Washington was returning to New York at the end of his post-inaugural visit to New England as the country’s first president.

Join us as we trace President George Washington’s route through Natick, Sherborn, and Holliston and learn about where he travelled, what he did, and what buildings and landmarks stand today as silent witnesses to his journey.



February 13th at 2pm via Zoom



This event is free and open to the public. Advanced registration is required.



“We do hope that people will be inspired to read the book and find out even more about Washington’s visit to the colonies — now states — after the Revolutionary War, and when he became the country’s first president,” Hulbert says.

The event is free and open to the public but advanced registration is required. Visit www.hollistonhistoricalsociety.org to register. The session will be recorded and available for viewing at a future date.



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COVID*continued from page 1*

vacation. The latter would likely involve play-dates with friends of their 8- and 10-year-old children, visits during which it's nigh impossible to prevent mask slip-ups and close-quarter interactions.

Travelling abroad meant the family needed to show negative Covid tests from a professional testing facility within 24 hours of boarding their plane. That required timing the results of their four tests (at \$150. each) with their departure time. All part of the new logistics of living and parenting during the age of Covid.

"We really did feel safe taking the trip," said Sophanny, a vacation that the two parents agreed was a much-needed means of mental health maintenance. The nuances and details that went into making that decision seemed unconsidered by certain friends and acquaintances, said Sophanny. Some still questioned the wisdom of going abroad during the pandemic.

The onslaught of professional guidance, opinion and anecdotes can cloud confidence and render one's judgment jaded. Guidance from the CDC recently halved its recommended duration of isola-

tion for people testing positive for Covid. The agency also updated its advice about masks, deeming cloth versions of the face coverings inferior.

"You try to keep up with all the information that's out there," said Sophanny. "Am I making the right decision for my kids?"

During the Omicron surge, the "right" decision appears more a game of chance than prudence. The McArdules' vacation seemed to go off without a hitch (or infection), only to have the two youngest family members catch Covid upon their return to school early in January.

They'd been informed via email that someone in close contact with one of their children had tested positive. It was the first week back in school since their holiday vacation, and tests soon confirmed the two siblings had contracted Covid.

Per the new guidelines, the students returned a week later to Brown School after being symptom-free and testing negative.

For all the turmoil associated with students going back to school this year, it seems the consensus has landed on that being the lesser of two challenges. The alternative is a return to full or partial remote

learning, which for many parents, teachers and students has been less than ideal.

"For their mental health," said Paul Power, "it's way better to have the kids in classes."

Power is a science teacher at Kennedy, and has three sons in the Natick school system. He was convalescing at home during the second week of school last month, recovering from the shoulder surgery he'd undergone a few days prior. Power was feeling down about his absence from classes during that pivotal time in the school year, amid the further complications imposed by the pandemic.

"Right back into crazy Covid week," he said. "I do hate being out. When you're out, it's just kind of a mess."

Understanding and coping with Covid has been like aiming at a moving and morphing target. And all the more so for parents trying to raise and wrangle children. The virus' shape-shifting strains render policy-making exceptionally challenging. Variant "X" is more or less manageable by this or that vaccine. Variant "Y" spreads more easily but poses less risk to health.

As adjustments of public pol-

icy seek to keep pace with the ever-evolving nature of the virus and its spread, that changing playbook can exacerbate a sense of doubt in the public mood. That "decision fatigue" starts to spread.

"I mean, it's exhausting," said Power. "It's exhausting for everyone. It's all those things that adults deal with, too."

Yet for all the continued challenges, Power said that teachers and students are growing accustomed to the new mode of school life, and perhaps even the ever-changing dynamics of the past few years. The Plexiglas shields erected to separate people during early pandemic days have largely been removed from schools. Students have become more accepting and adept at wearing masks. Traditional class loads are again becoming the norm.

Natick's school system, said Power, has been a good partner during the pandemic. Classes have been fitted with portable air filtration units. A five-pack of high-quality masks was provided to teachers returning from holiday break, though they were asked to make those last for a five-week period.

"I think Natick's done more than a lot of communities," he said.

Despite all the complications, Anna Nolin counts 2021 as a comeback from Covid. She is the town's Superintendent of Schools.

"We had an amazing year last year," she said, pointing to a return to some sense of normalcy, and the suppression of Covid spread within Natick schools.

The current surge in cases seems a temporary setback, said Nolin - one born of unfortunate timing. The pervasiveness of the new virus variant dovetailed with December vacation, a time when family and friends gathered to celebrate the holidays. Family spread seemed to be higher, said Nolin, and a substantial number of teachers were out sick when school resumed.

"During this surge it's been sort of a different game," she said. "Christmas break was really an incubator for this surge."

But Nolin added that Natick is well-positioned to weather this latest wave of the pandemic, and emerge in good shape when it eventually subsides.

"We're a very fortunate district," she said. "They're very well-maintained schools. We have a lot going for us in the fight against Covid."

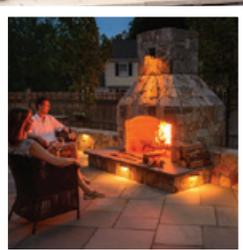
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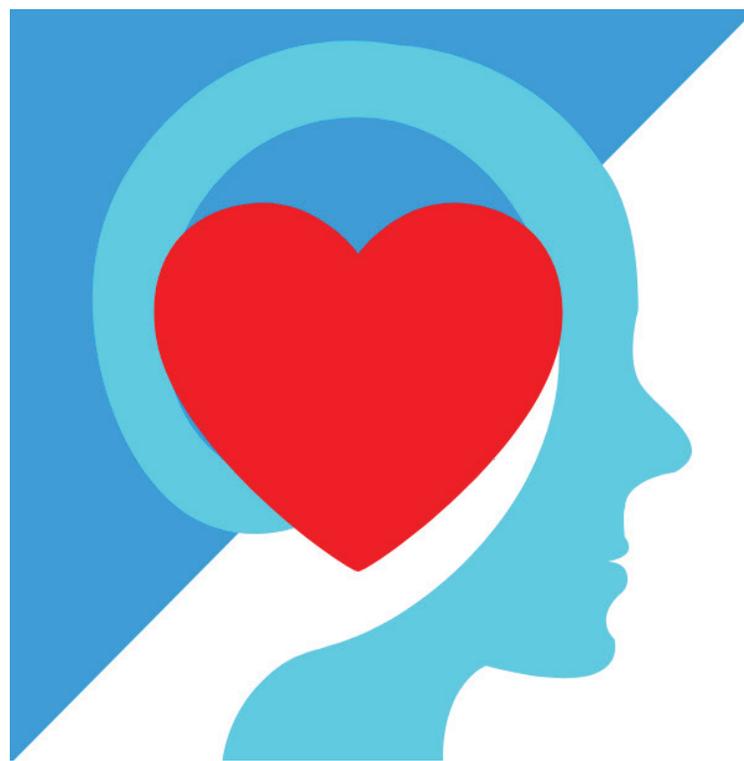
- For Natick, Westborough, Walpole, and many other MA residents in participating communities, the William James INTERFACE Referral Service is a mental health and wellness referral Helpline available Monday through Friday, 9 am-5 pm, at 888-244-6843 (toll free). The William James Resource Hub also has a collection of helpful links across a range of important topics that is available to everyone.
- The Metrowest Referral Line from Behavioral Health Partners has care coordinators who are available by phone at 1-844-528-6800 Monday through Friday to speak about mental health and social service concerns that you may have for yourself, a loved one,

or a person in your care and help make referrals to health care and other service providers.

- Call2Talk is a mental health, emotional support, and suicide prevention program run by Mass211. It operates 24/7 and provides confidential, compassionate listening to assist people – including those who may be despondent or considering suicide – during stressful times. Call2Talk can be reached 24/7 at (508) 532-2255 or by texting C2T to 741741. The new Massachusetts Statewide number for suicide prevention is now the Lifeline number, 1-800-273-TALK.
- Newton-Wellesley Hospital's The Resilience Project is an innovative school- and community-based initiative designed to promote the mental health and well-being of children and adoles-

cents and improve access to mental health treatment resources. To learn more about their free services for schools, parents/caregivers, and community organizations, please email: NWHResilienceProject@partners.org.

- NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) offers a HelpLine that is available Monday through Friday, 10 a.m.–8 p.m. E.T. at 1-800-950-NAMI (6264) or info@nami.org. The NAMI HelpLine is a free, nationwide peer-support service providing information, resource referrals and support to people living with a mental health condition, their family members and caregivers, mental health providers and the public.
- McLean's Hospital offers great free resources and webinars on a range of mental health issues (on Helping



Adolescents with Anxiety on 1/27) and many more!

- The Trevor Project offers the TrevorLifeLine 24/7 with trained counselors available for

young people who are in crisis, feeling suicidal, or need a safe and judgement-free place to talk at 866-488-7386.

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Chuck Tashjian

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

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

Business Development Specialist
Susanne Odell Farber
508-954-8148
sue@sodellconsult.com

Creative Design & Layout
Michelle McSherry
Kim Vasseur

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So, Why Do I Need To Get An Estate Plan Done?

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Estate planning is needed by everyone – regardless of your economic status or marital status. It is the level and complexity of estate planning that will differ based on your circumstances and goals.

So, here's some reasons why you should get an estate plan done:

1. You don't want your loved ones to have difficulty, or heaven forbid, go through the court system, to handle your financial matters if you become incapacitated. You'd want your affairs to be handled easily.

- This means that it is critical to have a Power of Attorney in place should you ever become incapacitated. Without a Power of Attorney, if someone needs to take care of financial obligations for you, they will need to get appointed by the Probate Court as a Conservator – usually an expensive, time-consuming and stressful process.

2. You don't want your loved ones to have to go through the court system to be able to make medical decisions for you if you can't.

- This means that you should have a Health Care Proxy in place if you ever reach the point where you can't make your own medical decisions. Without a Health Care Proxy, if someone needs to

make medical decisions for you, they may need to get appointed by the Probate Court as a Guardian – usually an expensive, time-consuming and stressful process.

3. You want things to go smoothly and quickly for your loved ones upon your death.

- If you haven't paid attention to how your assets are owned and there are assets just in your name without a beneficiary, your loved ones will need to go through the court process called Probate.

4. You can't figure out who should take care of the kids if something should happen. If you don't decide, a court who doesn't know your values and wishes will.

- If you have minor children, it is essential to have a Will which nominates who you would want to take care of your child(ren) should something happen. This person is called a Guardian.



5. You think you understand how your assets will flow upon your death – but you really don't and need guidance on how assets should be titled.

- It can be difficult to know whether an asset should be jointly owned, have a beneficiary, or be owned by a trust. An estate planning attorney can guide you on the best option based on your circumstances.

6. You'd like to minimize taxes so that your loved ones and/or favorite charities will benefit more.

- There is a tax that hits upon your death called the estate tax. Depending on your level of assets, an estate tax may be owed on the federal level and/or on a Massachu-

setts level. Estate planning can help minimize this tax exposure.

7. You think it's just fine to gift something to the kids – But have you thought about the tax ramifications and asset protection issues in doing so?

- There can be significant capital gain tax issues depending on the asset given. Further, if the person you gave the asset to ends up losing the asset because of some liability (e.g. divorce or lawsuit), your asset is gone.

If you want to learn more about estate planning, buy Tiff O'Connell's book, "Do You Have A Plan? How To Avoid Leaving A Mess" at <https://focustanow.com/>. If you're ready to make a plan, give O'Connell Law a call at 508-893-4935.

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SPARK Kindness Introduces (Free) Spring 2022 Resilient Community Series

SPARK Kindness is very excited to announce the Spring 2022 Resilient Community Program Series! This series continues to be FREE for all and will bring us together (virtually) to connect and learn about topics including: pandemic stress and resilience, healthy communication, tools for LGBTQ+ allyship, diverse books, and more. At SPARK, our mission is to build a more kind and welcoming community where everyone belongs. Please join us to learn, grow, and connect with others

who believe in the power of kindness.

To support our community in the wake of this pandemic period, SPARK is also offering increased programming for parents and caregivers on addressing child/adolescent mental health and emotional wellness. Topics featured this spring will include how to talk to your child/teen, healthy eating, and positive relationships. To learn more about our programs, go to SPARKKindness.org/programs and register!

Whether we connect in person or virtually, we want to welcome you to this series and thank you for being part of our growing SPARK community. We hope to see you at a program and welcome you to our growing (virtual) neighborhood where you belong and you MATTER. We care about you! To learn more about this local grassroots kindness movement (or how you can get involved!) go to SPARK-Kindness.org or email us at info@sparkkindness.org.

Join Us this Spring for the SPARK Kindness Resilient Community Series



This Spring series will feature more great resources on mental health, resilience, community well-being, and more! All are welcome!



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SVT will lead a Full Moon Owl Prowl in February.
Photo by Dick McWalter.

are open to the general public at no charge.

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Your Money, Your Independence

Yes, Backdoor Roth and Roth conversions are still open to all

Recall the news about Congress limiting retirement savings strategies including eligibility for Roth IRA conversions and eliminating Backdoor Roth?

Never mind. Those were “proposals” in failed Build Back Better (BBB) legislation by the House of Representatives.

Does a revised BBB include the same proposals? Could the Senate remove during negotiations? Possible.

If passed, would it be retroactive for 2022? Very unlikely as a logistical nightmare for HR depts, administrators, IRS, and accountants.

In short, proceed as you were.

Why Roth IRAs?

Roth accounts are comprised of after-tax money and contributions offer no tax deductions.

A Roth offers tax-free growth potential, tax-free income distributions, and has no Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs). Recall the government requires Traditional IRAs to have a percentage withdrawn each year after age 72 and made taxable,

regardless of need for funds.

A Roth should be the last account withdrawn in retirement. Therefore it has the longest investment time horizon and should hold more growth-oriented investments than Traditional IRAs or taxable accounts.

What is a Backdoor Roth IRA?

A legal way around the income limits (\$144K Single or Head of Household, \$214K Married, Filing Jointly for 2022) preventing contributions to Roth accounts. One contributes to a Traditional IRA, then converts to a Roth with tax implications.

What is a Roth conversion?

In moving savings from a traditional IRA into a Roth IRA, the conversion amount is taxed as ordinary income in the year of conversion.

Initially, only incomes (AGI) under \$100K were allowed to do Roth conversions, but in 2010 Congress removed income limits, allowing anyone to do Roth conversions. Ironically, Build Back Better proposed income levels to be put back in place.

Should you do a Roth conversion?

It depends. Beyond your current tax situation, age, goals, and cash to pay taxes, there are several future considerations for analysis:

- Will there be future years of lower taxable earnings to more favorably convert?
- Have you projected your RMDs at age 72 and the resulting new tax bracket?
- Will your state of residence change, if so what changes in taxation?
- Your philosophy of future taxation by governments?
- What are your estate planning wishes?

Other considerations:

The pro-rata rule and taxes.

When converting, IRS combines all traditional IRA balances and asks which was nondeductible contributions, to determine what portion will not be taxable. The IRS doesn't allow for choosing to convert only after-tax money.



Glenn Brown

Best to convert at year-end.

Reduces range of Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) variables and improves converting to the top of the current tax bracket.

Not all-or-nothing. You can develop a plan to spread conversions over several years, even skip a year or two as needed pending MAGI levels and ability to pay taxes with non-IRA assets.

Before moving forward, work with your Certified Financial Planner to build your analysis. Once a Roth Conversion is done, it's done, as IRS no longer lets you unwind (recharacterize).

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.

NATURE

continued from page 6

to explore the region's beautiful natural areas and gain an appreciation for the plants and wildlife that live among us.

During the winter, SVT will lead group walks at properties in Berlin, Wayland, and Northborough. Wildlife-themed outings include a Full Moon Owl Prowl and a Winter Wildlife Tracking, both planned for February.

For those who prefer to enjoy nature from home, SVT will broadcast webinars on “Sri Lanka: A Unique Journey Through Nature” and “Wildlife in Winter.”

All programs require registration. More details are available at www.svtweb.org/calendar.



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Holiday Window Contest Winners



Congratulations to Clip and Dip Dog Grooming, the winner of our 2021 Holiday Window Contest! The shop's windows were festively adorned with holiday pups and cheer.

Calliope Paperie was the runner-up in the contest with the always super-hip, fun and creative windows of Kristina's creations which have made the downtown sparkle over the years.

Above and right, Clip and Dip Dog Grooming. Below, Calliope Paperie



Thank you to all who participated in the contest and to all the businesses that decorated their holiday windows bringing light and a festive atmosphere to Natick Center!

Perspectives Photography Show

The first Natick Art Association (NAA) event — the same group who hosts Natick Art Open Studios (NAOS) — is hosting the photography show "Perspectives - This is How I see it!" which will be featured at the Morse Institute Library through February 28, 2022.



Photo by Nancy Rich

Holiday Stroll

The weather didn't dampen the excitement of meeting Santa or the Grinch for the young at heart during the festive Holiday Stroll in December.

Sound & Spirit's concert provided a merry start to the event and the addition of free coffee, hot chocolate and soup along with local crafters and artisans and a few food trucks made our second Holiday Stroll one to remember.

The shops were also bustling as our community made it their gift to the local businesses to shop local and shop small again this holiday season.

Thank you to Stucchi Jewelers for hosting St. Nick, to Sound &

Spirit, and Natick Nutrition for all those who braved the weather and came out to support the small business community!



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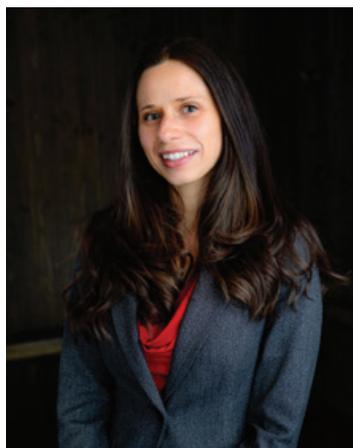
If you answered yes to any of these questions, you’ll want to tune in to “Let’s Talk Real Estate,” a new radio show airing live Sunday mornings at 9 a.m. on MyFM 101.3. Host and realty professional Faina Shapiro will feature a wide variety of experts in all fields connected to real estate.

“Anyone interested in renovating, selling, refinancing, lender information, if you own a property, are a renter, or are considering become a landlord or buying an investment property, I think you will find some value in this content,” says Shapiro. “It will save you money and help you be your own advocate when it comes to real estate decisions.”

Educating her clients and her students is what Faina Shapiro does best. Nationally recognized for record-breaking transactions in buying and selling, the winner of the 2021 Chairman Circle Award (2% of all Berkshire Hathaway Home Services Network), 2020 Leading Edge Society Award, and Best of Zillow Agent, Shapiro is also a real estate investor, home stager, landlord and property manager who serves on the Board of Assessors and Master Plan Committee in her town. A VA-certified, Luxury-Certified, and Certified Buyer Representative, Faina has also created a training series on Home Inspections for other Realtors in the industry with a world-renowned real estate trainer. She teaches classes all over Massachusetts in home selling, buying, real estate investing, and property maintenance, with a focus on helping homeowners save money while making the most out of their number one investment.

With her new show, she’ll bring that aim and expertise to a broader audience.

Shapiro sees it as her mis-



sion to educate with a passion to help people in an industry that is money focused sometimes instead of doing the best for their clients. Featured guests will include lenders, attorneys, contractors, financial advisors, realtors and other professionals, such as home inspectors.

“I teach real estate workshops throughout Massachusetts, and that’s how the radio show came to be,” says Shapiro. She’ll incorporate substantive guidance from classes she has taught, fueled by her own desire to continuously learn as much as she can about the industry. “We’ll produce fun content on buying, selling, investing in real estate, how to be a landlord, tenant laws, just really good information for whatever you want to accomplish in real estate,” she says.

Listeners are also invited to submit questions and seek an-

swers to problems they encounter regarding home ownership or the real estate market. Shapiro hopes “to help everyone understand how to be proactive rather than reactive” in the industry.

Shapiro loves a challenge, and this radio show reflects that spark.

“I’m always happy to work with any budget and take that unusual house and figure out how I can go above and beyond for my clients. It’s very strategic. I work as a team with my buyers and make whatever we are trying to accomplish for them effortless and enjoyable for them.

Every single transaction is different, and I take every single one as a privilege and learn-

Every Sunday at 9AM on 101.3 FM

Let's Talk Real Estate

Hosted by:

Faina Shapiro

617-820-0600 | Faina@BHSpagerealty.com



ing experience. They are all of great value to me,” says Shapiro. “I think that there’s a need for what I’m going to be doing, and I’m really excited and honored to be on MyFM 101.3.”

“Let’s Talk Real Estate” will be available on SoundCloud and on demand in addition to live at 9 a.m. Sunday mornings. Visit <https://myfm1013.com>

for more information. If you are thinking of selling, buying, or have a show inquiry, topic suggestions, or are a local expert in the Real Estate industry and would like to be featured on the show, please email Faina Shapiro at Faina@BhhsPagerealty.com.

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Stomping On Eggshells, LLC

Your secret weapon to surviving a high conflict divorce and custody battle

Divorce can be emotional, even under amicable circumstances. For Claudia Lopez, a certified high conflict divorce coach, who founded Stomping On Eggshells LLC in March 2021, the emotion she sees in her cases is at a level most people would not comprehend.

A “high conflict divorce” is generally characterized by a high conflict litigant who uses the legal system and finances to exert control, which can often draw out the divorce process for many years and create instability for families. This is known as post-separation abuse, a set of coercive control tactics that have been shown to take a psychological toll on targeted parents and children.

A certified high conflict divorce coach can help parents navigate family court proceedings and co-parenting challenges that arise when divorcing a win-at-all-costs partner.

Founded in Natick, Stomping On Eggshells is a team of coaches and custody advocates who are driven to reduce the emotional and financial devastation involved in high conflict divorce and ongoing custody disputes.

The company motto is “survive your divorce, protect your family.” Coaches offer personalized divorce coaching anywhere in the United States.

Each coach knows what clients are going through because they have been there themselves.

STOMPING ON EGGSHELLS

High Conflict Divorce Coaching

Business spotlight

Lopez went through a high conflict divorce starting in 2013 when she spent three years in family court, followed by many more years of conflict resolution procedures out of court. She has spent over \$65,000 in the process.

“That was, by far, the most excruciating time of my life and I felt I had reached my breaking point on multiple occasions,” she says. “When I couldn’t find a local support group related to emotional abuse and post-separation abuse, I started one and called it Stomping on Eggshells. The name stuck.”

High conflict divorces are often mistaken as the product of two parents with a grudge. In reality, most are driven by one personality type motivated by power and control.



Lopez says “toxic” patterns of coercive control that were present during a marriage continue throughout the divorce and beyond, such as maintaining control of finances, harassment, intimidation, undermining the targeted parent’s authority and demeaning them to the children, and making false accusations about bad parenting.

Once separated, and the home is no longer an accessible battleground, the courtroom takes the place of the home.

Lopez made a promise to herself that, “If I survived my divorce I would find a way to help other protective parents experiencing the same mind-numbing gamesmanship.”

Lopez says a “protective parent” seeks to shield children from the conflict and unhealthy behaviors, and is motivated by the children’s wellbeing.

In addition to helping parents prepare for their divorce and custody cases, Stomping On Eggshells guides parents on how to engage in productive co-parenting communication while disengaging emotionally.

“I have doctors, teachers, mental health experts, engineers and attorneys as clients; all have expressed feeling anxious, even fear, when having to email or text with their antagonistic co-parent about routine matters. This isn’t conflict, it’s trauma.”

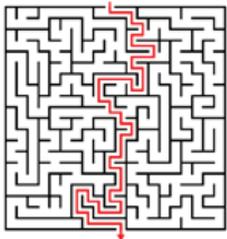
To receive a free consultation or to learn more about their services, visit www.stomping-on-eggshells.com or @StompingOnEggshells on Facebook.

Stomping On Eggshells is a spin on “walking on eggshells,” which people in unhealthy relationships often describe as doing to avoid triggering their partner’s explosive behavior.

“When I was married, I used to police my words and actions out of fear that one unintentional move would set off a ‘bomb;’ these events would start with a sudden verbal attack and end after days of silent treatment and dirty looks. While childish, the behavior became disorienting over time to the point I began questioning my own reality. I was walking on eggshells around a volatile person with an unpredictable temper. When I started on my journey of education and healing, I imagined myself ‘stomping’ on those eggshells as an act of reclaiming my voice, identity and independence.”

- Claudia Lopez, founder

Divorcing a high conflict partner?



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Community Garden Announced



The Town of Natick is pleased to announce the Spring 2022 opening of the Erica Ball Community Garden, located behind the Housing Authority offices at 72 South Main Street. Natick residents can sign up through Community Pass or at the Community Senior Center. Regular priced beds are \$75;

low-cost beds are \$50. More beds are available at our other community gardens on Speen Street and Hartford Street. For more information, visit our website (www.natickma.gov) or contact the Community Gardens Coordinator at communitygardens@natickma.org.

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Sports

NHS Hockey Captains Make Leadership A High Priority

Redhawks' Quartet Sets Positive Tone

By KEN HAMWEY
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Leadership in athletics comes in a variety of ways.

Some captains lead by example on the field while others command respect at practice. Some are leaders off the field and some lead in the classroom. Leadership also is evident when student-athletes are vocal or communicative. Displaying support or encouragement is another approach to leadership.

Some attributes that are keys to quality leadership include accepting responsibility, patience, understanding, fairness and accountability. Captains may choose to be vocal or they can be quiet, letting their athleticism do their talking.

At Natick High, hockey coach Bill Lacouture has four captains who lead in different ways. Whatever avenues they've chosen, the

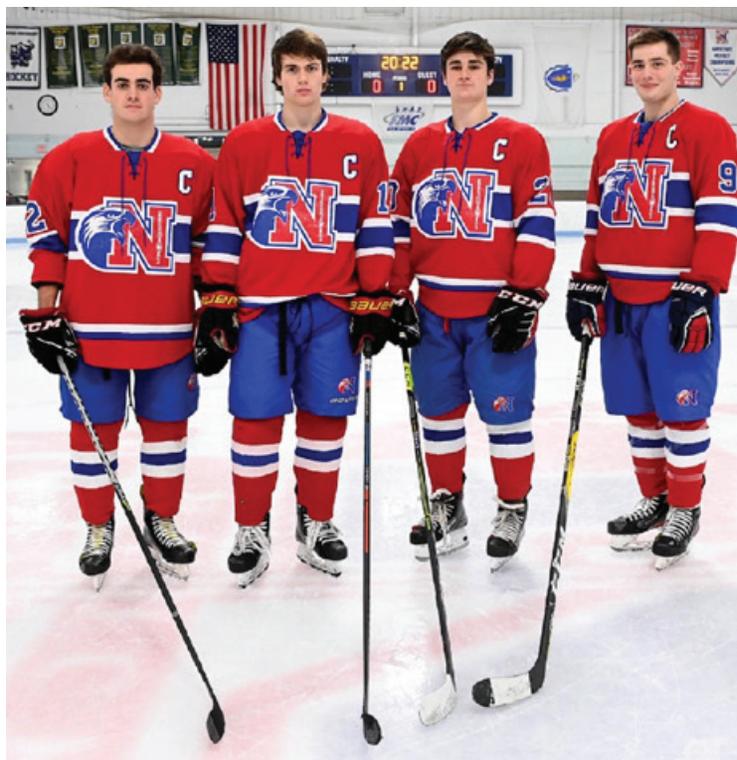
mix is a plus because the Redhawks are getting results — positive results. Natick was 3-1 at Local Town Pages deadline and once again in the running to win the Carey Division title and earn a berth in the State Tournament. The team's momentum, however, has been slowed by the outbreak of Covid-19, which has forced postponement of several games.

The Redhawks' leadership team consists of seniors Nick Haswell, Ryan Comeau, James Carr and Matt Haskell.

Here's how Lacouture regards his captains followed by a profile of the players commenting on their leadership styles:

Lacouture On His Captains

HASWELL — "A leader who complements the other captains, Nick has a desire to work to improve. If he could be on the ice 12 hours a day, he would. He



Natick's hockey captains, from left, are Nick Haswell, Matthew Haskell, James Carr, and Ryan Comeau.

loves the game and that makes others eager to improve based on Nick's results. As a junior, he was our best defenseman and now he's one of the league's best. Actions speak louder than words and Nick has the characteristics to lead no matter what he does. And, that's a special quality — when others follow your lead based on integrity, character, and honor."

COMEAU — "A leader whose work ethic shows on and off the ice, Ryan puts the team first. His teammates look to him as a big brother who makes every player in the program feel part of the family. Ryan's improvement makes him a force as a defenseman and as a power forward. A shutdown defenseman, we count on him in man-down situations, and as a power forward, he intimidates opponents with toughness and physical play that creates opportunities for his teammates."



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Sports

CARR — “A leader who can play defense or forward at an excellent level, James can be counted on to make a big play and to shut down our opponents’ best players. It’s a rare quality to be able to do both. He makes other players better on the ice, but he’s also modest, humble and tough as nails.”

HASKELL — “A leader by his actions on the ice, Matt has speed, grit and a drive for perfection. He’s a captain of a few words but when he speaks, players respond on high alert. A center, Matt has college speed and deserves every opportunity to reach his goals. He’s also a leader on the academic front.”

Nick Haswell

The 5-foot-10, 185-pound Haswell is a well-rounded captain who strives to lead by example and by being vocal and supportive. He’s also a firm believer that an all-out effort in practice will lead to top-notch performance in games.

“Working hard in practice and playing with lots of energy are important,” he said. “A strong work ethic in practice makes it difficult to play poorly in games. Most everything will come easier on game day. A captain usually sets the tone and showing leadership helps the team stay connected and builds team chemistry.”

The 18-year-old Natick native, who also is a defenseman in lacrosse, lists three keys that are imperative to be a quality leader.

“It’s important to read different situations and react accordingly,” Haswell said. “It’s also a plus to know when to be serious and when to lighten up. A third component is an awareness of when to be quiet and let teammates do what’s needed.”

Crediting Natick’s other captains for improving his leadership skills, Haswell is acutely aware that teammates who respond to a captain’s suggestions not only help team chemistry, but also can produce winning results.

“The key to getting good responses to any suggestions I make involves being friendly, supportive and encouraging,” Haswell emphasized. “Presenting yourself as bossy or trying to be a dictator won’t work. Having Ryan, James, and Matt as captains has helped me. They know how to keep a

locker-room calm and they’re supportive if I’m feeling down.”

Haswell fully understands that a captain must lead and he knows that aspect will be a valuable commodity in college and in the workplace.

“Being a captain will be an asset later,” Haswell noted. “It’s helping me to sharpen my leadership skills now and it’s helping me as a communicator. “Coach Lacouture is a good example of a leader. He says things that keep us going in the right direction and he never loses sight of the importance of hard work and basics.”

Haswell, who has two goals and one assist in four games, is a National Honor Society student who plans on majoring in either engineering or business.

Ryan Comeau

The 6-foot-1, 215-pound Comeau relies on a leadership style of being vocal and supportive, often using his voice to elevate energy.

“What’s crucial is to know what to say and when to say it,” he said. “And, when a teammate comes off the ice, I give him a tap on the shoulder to show support. It’s a way to heighten our energy level. Other keys are to do the right things outside the rink and to be a captain who’s unselfish.”

The 18-year-old native of Natick emphasizes that having a ‘C’ on his jersey “is something younger players look up to.” He’s always striving to set a good example and to be a legitimate role model.

Comeau admits that listening and watching previous captains lead when he was a sophomore and junior have helped him in his leadership role. “They demonstrated the right way to lead and it’s rubbed off on all the captains,” he noted. “I’ve learned that building trust with teammates is the best way to get reaction to any suggestions I make.”

A good student, Comeau, who first played defense before moving to forward, plans on majoring in education in college. He’s sure that being a captain in high school will be a plus not only in college, but also in the workplace.

“Leading people in high school is an asset that should be beneficial later on in life,” said Comeau. “In sport, players often have to deal with adversity and

heartbreak, so it’s a plus if it’s handled well. As sophomores, we lost in the tourney to Franklin in the quarterfinals. That setback helped us sharpen our leadership skills.”

Comeau, who has two assists in four games, says that he admires Lacouture’s leadership style. “He’s intense and he’s passionate about hockey,” Comeau noted. “And, those qualities rub off on his players.”

James Carr

The 5-foot-11, 175-pound Carr emphasizes that “a leader sets the tone for the entire year and as captains we’re being watched — for our intensity, our effort and our preparation.”

A leader by example and by being vocal and supportive, Carr firmly believes the keys to success for a captain are to be responsible and not point fingers. “It’s important for a captain to accept blame if he’s at fault,” he noted. “And, the best way to get teammates to respond to suggestions is to be genuine — show you care by being yourself.”

Crediting past captains for helping him in his current role, Carr is fully aware that being selected a captain will be a plus long after his hockey career ends at Natick. “There’ll be a time when I’ll be in a position to lead,” he said. “Leadership will be necessary in a specific situation and someone will have to step up and make a key decision. As a captain now, I’m getting experience in how to lead. It’s a good place to start the process.”

Carr, who’s the Redhawks’ goalie in lacrosse, will get an opportunity to display his leadership skills in the spring as a lacrosse captain. A National Honor Society student, he’ll major in business at Bryant University after graduation.

A fan of his coach’s style, Carr, who has two goals and two assists in four games, lists three attributes that he says make Lacouture a quality leader. “Our coach is genuine with the players,” Carr said. “He brings energy to every practice and he relies on fundamentals.”

The most significant life lesson that Carr has learned from athletics is one that he believes can take an individual far. It focuses on effort.

“If you give great effort to whatever situations you face, then you’ll be rewarded with success,” he said.

Matt Haskell

The 6-foot, 175-pound Haskell leads by example and by being vocal, but the way he focuses on being encouraging and supportive definitely defines his approach.

“When I was a freshman on the varsity, the older kids made me feel accepted,” he recalled. “I like helping younger players and I strive to make sure they’re comfortable. One of the keys to good leadership is making the locker-room feel like it’s their second home.”

Haskell learned early on as a captain that quality leadership was crucial to his team’s success and that every team needs leaders.

“I’ve learned a lot about leading from previous captains, from coach Lacouture and from our other captains,” he said. “I saw how previous captains treated everyone and I get good advice from our current captains. As for coach Lacouture, he shows intensity, caring, and support for his players. A huge plus for him is his knowledge of hockey. He knows how to react in all kinds of situations.”

Acutely aware that accepting responsibility and building trust also define a top-notch leader, the Natick native relies on being



Natick coach Bill Lacouture puts a high priority on leadership.

friendly when needed and being firm when it’s necessary. Plus, Haskell, who pitches and plays the outfield for the baseball team, is confident that his leadership role in high school will be an asset in college and beyond.

“I’m sure being a captain will help me later on in life,” he noted. “I’ve learned how to be accountable and striving to be a well-rounded leader should help me when dealing with a variety of situations. By sharpening leadership skills, it can help one be understanding and kind to people.”

A member of the National Honor Society, Haskell, who tutors middle school students, has yet to decide on where he’ll attend college. He plans on majoring in science.

Haskell, who has three assists in four games, is aware of the challenges he faces on the ice but he’s also aware that there’s no rocket science involved when it comes to effort. “You get rewarded if you give great effort,” he said.

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Five Crows Gallery & Handcrafted Gift Shop Turns 20!

Who could have imagined that five women artists, who met at a crafts show in the fall of 2001, would open an arts and craft gallery and shop four months later, and that it would still be in business, 20 years later?

That is exactly what five entrepreneurial MetroWest artists - Ginger McEachern, Paula Kochanek, Gianna Bird, Sosie Sagherian and Marina Janus - did. They sublet a storefront on Court Street in Downtown Natick from an artist friend, put down a de-

posit and got to work.

First, they needed a name for the store. They searched for a name that would reflect the characteristics of the group and the serendipitous way they had come together. After researching crows, they found what they were looking for:

- Crows are very social and live in flocks where each bird has its own responsibilities.
- Each crow has a strong sense of community, is very caring,

and not only protects its own family, but dashes to the aid of unrelated crows in distress.

- Crows are famously clever creatures, problem solvers and thrive around people.
- Crows never forget a face.
- Crows like to collect bright, shiny and colorful objects.

Since there were five women owners and the traits matched the owners so well, the name became clear:

Five Crows Gallery & Handcrafted Gifts!

Secondly, they needed artwork to sell. Each of the five women made high-quality, handmade work. Ginger created handmade paper boxes, journals and jewelry, Paula made stained glass, Gianna, a metal smith, made sterling silver jewelry, Sosie made bath and body products, and Marina made decoupage, painted home décor, and jewelry.

However, they needed more art to fill the store. With their many connections, they sought out artist friends whose work they loved to sell at the new store. In no time, they had a shop full of



The Five Crows store at 41 Main St., Natick.



The original "Five Crows."

beautiful things.

To get the store off the ground, each owner contributed a monthly fee to pay for operations, rent, utilities, display items, packaging materials and promotion. They also decided to use a consignment business model.

All the pieces were in place. The grand opening of Five Crows Gallery & Handcrafted Gifts at 8 Court Street, Natick took place on February 2, 2002!

Twenty years later, continuing to operate and grow the business has been quite an accomplishment, considering an up and down economy, a recession and a pandemic. However, the store continues to thrive. Now, Five Crows Gallery is one of the most successful and beautiful arts and crafts galleries in the Boston

FIVE CROWS
continued on page 15

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FIVE CROWS

continued from page 14

metropolitan area. The store features a wide variety of handmade jewelry, pottery, fine art, photography, wood, glass, fiber arts, children's items, women's clothing, mixed media and much more. There are more than 100 artists from Massachusetts and throughout New England featured in the store.

Some artists have been with the store since the beginning and are continually evolving and creating new art. New artists come in and mix things up. The result for customers is that each visit is a new experience!

Of the original five owners, four left for other pursuits. Ginger McEachern remains the only founder still at the store. Marie Jeffrey, a jeweler, and Sherry Anderson, a weaver and decoupage artist, joined the ownership in 2013. That same year, the store physically moved to a more visible location at 41 Main Street in Natick Center.

Natick has a vibrant arts community and Five Crows is very involved in it. Owner, Ginger McEachern is on the Executive

Committee and Board of the Natick Center Associates that directs the Natick Center Cultural District. Five Crows participates in all downtown events that support the community and promote culture including ArtWalk in July, Open Studios in October, Halloween Spooktacular in October, Natick Nights and Sidewalk Sales in the summer, and the Holiday Stroll in December. In addition, the shop presents a \$500 scholarship to a graduating Natick High School Senior who is pursuing art in college.

The shutdown of all MA businesses from March-June 2020 was tough for Five Crows, but it hung on. When it re-opened, devoted customers came back. Customers told them, "We are so glad you are still in business," and "We are so happy you made it," and "We are here to support you, local businesses and local artists." Customer support continues today and is quite inspiring.

They often hear customers say, "Your artists are so creative; I want one of everything!" according to Ginger.

With hopes that the pandemic will slow down, there will be a celebration in the spring for the public.



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Bill To Stabilize Supply of Egg and Pork Products Signed into Law

Following action by House and Senate lawmakers earlier this week, a bill to ensure a more secure egg and pork supply chain in the state, was signed into law. The legislation updates Massachusetts' farm animal welfare standards passed by voters in 2016 to align with other states.

"When Massachusetts voters overwhelmingly passed a ballot question guaranteeing animal welfare in 2016, our state had the strongest protections for farm animals in U.S. history," said Senate President Karen E. Spilka (D-Ashland). "Since then, national and industry standards have shifted towards even stronger animal welfare and consumer safety protections. With this law, Massachusetts is taking action to prevent cruelty to farm animals and ensure that our state has continued access to eggs that meet the expectations of the Commonwealth's residents. I want to thank House Speaker Mariano, for his collaboration, Senator Lewis for his steadfast focus on this issue, his fellow conferees and their staffs, and the residents of Massachusetts, including animal welfare advocates and egg-producers, for their support for this legislation."

"This law ensures that Massachusetts consumers and small businesses will have continued access to affordable egg and pork products, while also honoring the intent of the animal welfare ballot question," said House Speaker Ronald J. Mariano (D-Quincy). "I want to thank Senate President Spilka, Chair Dykema and the other members of the conference committee, as well as my colleagues in the House and Senate, for the hard work that ultimately led to this agreement."

"In 2016, the advocacy of animal welfare groups across the Commonwealth and overwhelming support from voters passed Ballot Question 3 to ensure that the factory farming industry provides more humane standards for pigs, calves and egg-laying hens, representing a historic victory for animal welfare," said Senator Jason Lewis (D-Winchester), the lead sponsor of the Senate bill. "Since then, the standard around the country for egg-laying hens has evolved, and Massachusetts is now an outlier, which could

threaten our supply of eggs. Fortunately, the egg producers and animal welfare groups have come together to agree on this legislation, ensuring safe and humane conditions for egg-laying hens and affordable eggs for Massachusetts consumers. I appreciate the leadership of the Senate President and the support and guidance of my fellow conferees, Senator Rausch and Senator Tarr, in getting this bill passed."

"Together with my fellow conferees, I am pleased that we reached a comprehensive agreement that makes necessary updates to the voter-approved ballot initiative while reducing the risk of price shocks and disruptions to our food supply as pandemic impacts continue," said Representative Carolyn Dykema (D-Holliston), House Chair of the Joint Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture. "I want to thank the Speaker and my colleagues for their steadfast commitment to fighting food insecurity, supporting small businesses, and continuing our leadership on animal welfare at every step of the legislative process."

An Act to upgrade hen welfare and establish uniform cage-free standards updates a 2016 law passed by the voters of Massachusetts. It would align Massachusetts' standards to that of other states by:

- Providing detailed cage-free standards that consist of one

square foot of usable floor space per hen in multi-tiered aviaries, partially-slatted cage-free housing systems or any other cage-free housing system that provides hens with unfettered access to vertical space so that hens can engage in vital natural behaviors such as perching, scratching, dust bathing and laying eggs in a nest.

- Ensuring protections for various types of egg products. As passed in 2016, the law applied to shell eggs, but not egg products. This legislation would also cover egg products, mirroring legislation passed in other states.

The bill would also enhance market and regulatory certainty by:

- Delaying the effective date of the new standards for pork products to August 15, 2022, to allow the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) ample time to promulgate, and the industry to comply with, robust regulations. The ballot initiative passed in 2016 required regulations to be promulgated 2 years in advance of the effective date of the act in order to provide adequate time for affected industries to comply. This legislation

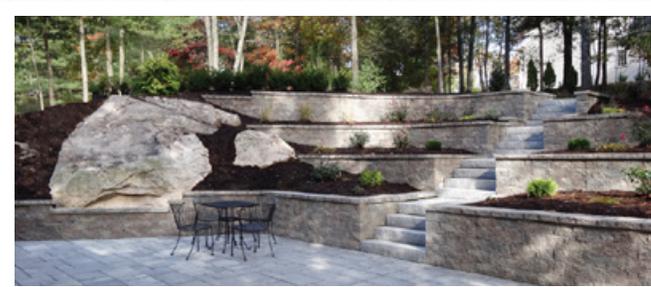
gives producers not only more time to comply with the new standards but also an additional opportunity to participate in the updated regulatory process.

Updating authority for promulgating rules and regulations to include both the Attorney General's Office (AGO) and MDAR. As passed in 2016, the law assigns to the Attorney General exclusive authority to promulgate rules and regulations as well as to enforce the law. This legislation would

EGG PRODUCTS
continued on page 19



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Senator Rausch's Mid-Session Beacon Hill Review

As your voice and advocate in the State Senate, I am very proud to share several 2021 accomplishments, including a robust COVID-19 response, billions of dollars invested into our communities, and the advancement of critically needed reforms through the legis-

lative process on Beacon Hill. Safety for You and Your Family: My top priority has been advocating for measures that keep you and your family safe and stable throughout this public health crisis. Last year alone, my team and I helped more than 500

constituents access government benefits and supports, including unemployment assistance and food security. I also hosted monthly virtual office hours, senior coffees, and two youth legislative forums to remain accessible to constituents through the ups and downs of this pandemic.

In addition to crafting and advocating for school masking legislation and the COVID-19 Vaccine Equity Act, I also worked in partnership with public health experts, community organizations, and my legislative colleagues to pressure the Baker Administration to implement policies to keep our communities safe and local economy afloat through this crisis. Our achievements included universal masking in all K-12 schools, paid time off for families and caregivers taking children to COVID-19 vaccination appointments, implementing a COVID vaccine pre-registration system for mass vaccination sites, and delivering a multi-pronged COVID-19 Action Plan to the Governor.

Safety during these difficult times also means addressing violence and discrimination. Amid the rise of conspiracy theories and disinformation about vaccines and COVID-19, we have also seen an alarming spike in antisemitism, racism, and xenophobia on social media, in our public schools, and from elected officials. It is our collective responsibility to call out hate and injustice whenever we see it. I collaborated with Robert Trestan, Executive Director of ADL New England, to pen a GBH commentary piece explaining the rise in antisemitism within the antivax

movement here in Massachusetts and across our nation. As your State Senator, I have publicly condemned abject acts of hate, offered to engage in constructive dialogue in communities, secured tens of thousands of dollars to fund diversity, equity, and inclusion work in our district, and voted to support the Genocide Education Act, now law, which requires that genocide education be taught in Massachusetts public schools before the end of high school. Unfortunately, COVID-19 is not the only pandemic we're up against.

Funding Our Communities' Recovery: The Legislature passed a \$4 billion bill to allocate federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to equitably invest in our continued recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. This bill delivers broad spectrum supports for our communities' health, including mental and behavioral health, housing security, our environment, and workforce development. I secured numerous amendments to support our district and the Commonwealth at large, including targeted funding to assist women re-entering the workforce, providing post-traumatic stress care for medical personnel, and \$1,000,000 in investments for local housing, transportation, water infrastructure, and other projects in our district.

I secured several victories in the FY 2022 budget as well, including \$500,000 for local projects across our district, a pilot program for a statewide youth mental health support text line, funding for the Department of Public Health to hire personnel with expertise in combatting vaccine hesitancy,

and funding for New Hope's new domestic violence shelter and an updated facility for the Attleboro Center for Children.

Legislative Victories: The gears of the legislative process are turning, and many bills are moving through their respective committees. Committees must take action on every timely filed bill by February 2, 2022, so we can expect an increase in floor votes and legislation headed to the governor's desk in the coming months.

My Senate colleagues and I have already advanced some game-changing bills. In October, we passed comprehensive election reform legislation, strengthened by adoption of several amendments I filed. The bill provides election day voter registration, permanent mail-in voting, improved jail-based voting access, and upgrades to our elections infrastructure. My amendment work also elevated issues still left to address, like ballot drop box ratios and paid time off for voting. We also passed the Mental Health ABC Act to improve access to culturally competent care, support and boost our Commonwealth's mental health care workforce, reduce barriers to emergency treatment, and more. This month, we again passed a bill to make government-issued IDs more accessible to people experiencing homelessness to facilitate access to critically needed services across our Commonwealth. These bills now await action by the House.

As Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Environment,

RAUSCH REVIEW
continued on page 19

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Real Estate Corner

EGG PRODUCTS

continued from page 17

update the regulatory authority so that it's shared between the AGO and MDAR. Enforcement authority would remain exclusively with the AGO. Many states with similar laws include their state department of agriculture in the regulatory process.

An Act to upgrade hen welfare and establish uniform cage-free standards is endorsed by New England Brown Egg Council, The Country Hen (a major egg producer in the Commonwealth), United Egg Producers, and the Massachusetts Food Association, which notes that the language in this legislation offers a "readily available solution" to

ensure retail-endorsed cage-free standards. The bill also has the support of numerous animal protection organizations, including the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Farm Sanctuary, the Humane Society of the United States, Animal Rescue League of Boston, Animal Equality, Animal Outlook, The Humane League, Harvard Law School Animal Law & Policy Program, Mercy for Animals, Compassion in World Farming, and World Animal Protection—all groups that have been working to increase welfare for farm animals for decades.

Text of An Act to upgrade hen welfare and establish uniform cage-free standards can be found at malegislature.gov.

RAUSCH REVIEW

continued from page 18

Natural Resources and Agriculture (ENRA), I also worked to pass the law that improves conditions for egg-laying hens while keeping our egg supply available and affordable.

Moving Forward: There is still so much work to be done. This session I filed more than 40 bills designed to advance election reform, good governance, public health, reproductive justice, climate action, and intersectional justice and equity. This month, my lead climate action legislation cleared the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy, and I anticipate more favorable reports on my bills in the coming weeks. My team and I continue working hard on your behalf to shepherd these bills through the legislative process.

It is my great honor to represent the Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex District in the Massachusetts State Senate, and I'll continue putting my proven leadership to work for you. Please reach out to me if you

need assistance, have thoughts on policy, or want to check in. My office phone number is 617-722-1555, my email is becca.rausch@masenate.gov, and you can sign up for a personal office hours appointment at beccarauschma.com/office-hours. I also invite you to join me for my district-wide virtual town hall conversation on Monday, January 24 at 7 PM (sign up at www.beccarauschma.com/town-hall).

As we begin 2022, I wish you and your loved ones strength, health, resilience, and joy. I look forward to everything we will accomplish together this year.

Senator Becca Rausch represents the Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex District, comprised of Attleboro, Franklin, Millis, 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.

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