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*Local Town Pages Welcomes Bellingham Bulletin!*

## Warm Coats, Warm Hearts for Local Vets

By JUDITH DORATO O'GARA

On one of the coldest days so far of this winter, local veterans were given a little help staying warm.

On Saturday, January 15th, at the Bellingham VFW, Massachusetts State legislators gathered with Bellingham veterans and the Massachusetts Military Support Foundation ([www.mmsf.org](http://www.mmsf.org)) to distribute warm winter coats for veterans. Coats were provided by consumers participating in a generous sponsorship by the Ocean State Job Lot Charitable Foundation. (<https://www.oceanstatejoblot.com/foundation>). Consumers who purchased coats were provided with a Job Lot gift card worth the amount of the donation's value.



On January 15th, legislators from neighboring districts worked with the Massachusetts Military Support Foundation to distribute coats to veterans provided by consumers incentivized by a grant from the Ocean State Job Lot Charitable Foundation. The event took place at the Bellingham VFW. From left, Jim Hastings, Rep. Brian Murray (D-Milford), Bellingham VFW Commander Tom Lane, Rep. Jeff Roy (D-Franklin), Nick Paganella, Joe Ebert, Rep. Shawn Dooley (R-Norfolk), Rep. Mike Soter (R-Bellingham), Joe McKenna and Brian Scanlon. John Clancy, center.

**COATS**

*continued on page 2*

## Bellingham Community Garden Seeks Support



Garden Manager Micky DeFosses (left) stands at the front gate to the Garden as plot holders depart. Garden looks a bit different now that winter has set in.

By DAVID DUNBAR

'Tis the season to be jolly... and generous. So wishes the manager of Bellingham's Community Garden, Micky DeFosses.

The Garden's annual fundraising effort began a month ago and is shifting into high gear. It's offering a variety of ways people

can participate and contribute. "We are fundraising," explains DeFosses, "to enhance food access for local residents, STEM development through greenhouse

**GARDEN**

*continued on page 7*

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**COATS**

*continued from page 1*

“We have a huge veteran population in this area,” said Rep. Mike Soter (R-Bellingham). “This is the second year we’ve done it, and I reached out to my colleagues. We had a very short window, but it’s for all veterans. We wanted to make sure every veteran who needs (a coat) gets one.”

Bellingham VFW Commander Tom Lane remarked that this was the first year the event was held at this location, but when Rep. Soter asked, the answer was an immediate yes, noting the organization was happy to “donate the hall and host it. It’s great when you can help another veteran. You come in cold, you go home warm.”

Jeffrey Roy (D-Franklin) added that the legislators themselves didn’t hesitate to join the

cause. “This was a bipartisan effort,” said Roy, in order to support veterans in the area.

“It was great to make it so widespread,” added Rep. Shawn Dooley (R-Norfolk). Dooley noted that some of his constituents went out of their way to get to Ocean State Job Lot just to participate and donate to the program.

“It made a lot of sense to regionalize this district so we could provide as many coats (to vets) as we could,” said Rep. Brian Murray, (D-Milford). “I think it was a great event.”

About 46 veterans signed up in advance to receive coats. Due to the extremely cold weather, a number were unable to make it to the Bellingham VFW, and so legislators from their communities planned to deliver the coats to the veterans in their districts.

The legislators also noted that the event often leaves them with some extra coats, and that any



Members of the Bellingham VFW are shown here with coats to be distributed to local veterans via MMSF. From left, Mike Porazinski, Jim Hastings, Joe Ebert and Tom Lane.

veterans who are constituents in their districts and who need a

warm coat can reach out to their offices, and they will do their best to get a coat out to them.

Soter explained that the collaboration between his peers at the State House was so successful, they’ll look to partner up again with MMSF’s Food4Vets program and other initiatives.

Barbara Foley, of MMSF, attended the event and pointed out that Worcester County has 43,000 veterans. Her organization, serving 383,000 veterans, active-duty military personnel

and their families who live in Massachusetts, aims to provide programs, services and goods that help satisfy critical needs and enhance their well-being and quality of life. Its website states:

“Each of our programs are designed to have maximum impact on the many issues Veterans and active-duty Military face. We provide solutions that make a long-lasting, life-changing difference for these brave men and women.”

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# Johnson Hands Off Bulletin, Looks Forward to Next Chapter

## As Told to Marjorie Turner Hollman, for Stories with Seniors Grant

*"This program is supported in part by a grant from the Bellingham cultural council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency."*

*TechPro Publications and the Bellingham Bulletin*

I started out doing tech writing as well as design and pre-press work for local printers. TechPro Publications was my original business. I had picked up a couple tech writing jobs, but they were really difficult to find. And sometimes I didn't get paid for a long time.

By the same token, the printers had started using desktop computers by then, so they were doing a lot of their own pre-press work in house. With that part of my business dropping off, I needed to do something else, so I took a job with the local daily newspaper as a correspondent.

As I was running around Bellingham covering events for the *Milford Daily News*, I kept hearing the same thing over and over again from residents. They were dissatisfied because they felt that only the bad news about Bellingham ever got into the paper. It

was all negative headlines, rarely anything good.

At the time, other than the Milford paper or the Woonsocket Call, Bellingham residents received the *Country Gazette*. I thought it was a cute paper, but like the Milford newspaper, it was not focused strictly on Bellingham. It covered something like nine towns. I knew who the owner of the Blackstone newspaper was (a friend of a friend) so my friend connected us and I talked with her about my idea of starting a paper in Bellingham. She thought it was a good idea, and said, "What do you have to lose? If you do it for a couple months and it doesn't work out, oh well, you just don't do it anymore." She also pointed out that I had a lot more to work with than she did. "Bellingham has a lot more businesses than Blackstone does, so give it time." And that's what I did.

I didn't know what to call the newspaper. I wanted something that wasn't close to another publication's name. My husband Michael came up with the name *Bellingham Bulletin*. I liked the alliteration; it worked.

That first issue was twelve pages. This was 1994, the year the town celebrated its 275th anniversary. The very same weekend they had the anniversary ball and a reception at the town hall, the first edition of the *Bellingham Bulletin* came out, just in time for these events. I was off and running, no looking back.

That was the beginning, and for quite a while I was doing everything. I'd begun learning graphic design, so I wasn't a complete novice when I started TechPro and then the *Bulletin*. I had set up a few accounts, and as far as managing a newspaper, it was learn as you go. Over the course of the years, we went up as high as forty pages.

Today, the whole newspaper industry is changing. Technology has evolved so much! When I first started the *Bulletin*, I had to use a waxer to paste each individual component on the large page. Then I got a printer that would print 11 x 17 size, eliminating the time-consuming paste-up. Then I had to drive the pages to the printer's. One time I grabbed the box that had all the sheets in it, drove all the way to Seekonk, and when I got there the box was empty. One side of the box was ripped and the pages had slid right out when

I picked it up. They were laying all over the stairs when I came back home, so I had to drive all the way back again to Seekonk with the pages! Now, PDF files are uploaded electronically to the printer's site, then printed and delivered to the post office. This was a game-changer.

One of my writers, Marjorie Turner Hollman, knew I was looking for an editor and introduced me to Florence Ames. I remember questioning if it would be worth hiring her then because she was already 72; how long would I have her? It was the best decision I ever made. When I sold the paper twenty years later, she was turning 92, and had edited and proofread right up to the very last issue I produced.

At one point, someone said to my editor, Florence: "I like that paper, but there are so many ads," to which she responded, "Do you pay for that paper?" His answer was "no."

"That's because of those ads. That's what pays for the newspaper." He just hadn't thought about it that way. Part of my goal was to provide low-cost advertising for businesses, and also to help families manage their lives here in the town.

Because I had a small window of time to put the entire paper together, I could never make any plans for between the 15th and the 23rd of every month. Selling the *Bulletin* has closed one chapter of my life and opened another. I feel a sense of freedom that I haven't felt in a very long time. I'm looking forward to this next chapter.

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# Bellingham School Committee:

## School Staffing Challenges, Stall Brook's Successes, & a Generous Tech Grant

By JENNIFER RUSSO

At its recent January 11th meeting, the Bellingham School Committee shared that most schools have been experiencing heightened staffing challenges after the holiday break but are still striving to have students remain for in-person education. Schools are covering staffing gaps with substitutes and other teachers willing to cover classes during their own breaks.

Bellingham High School Principal Lafayette shared that with teacher attendance low after the break, substitutes are asked to cover classes, and Google classroom assignments allow most students to work independently. Teachers, he said, have been great about adjusting accordingly upon return once they see what classes have accomplished.

"Everyone is pitching in, so we haven't had to cancel classes, but we have had to combine some classes in the auditorium in

order to have coverage," she said.

The National Junior Honor Society has also been moved out to February, as a precaution.

Bellingham Athletic Director Michael Connor shared that several coaches ended up with COVID, which has also been a challenge for coverage. Although other coaches have been pulling double-duty to attempt to maintain the schedule, many games have had to be cancelled due to coverage and lack of players. The return to play protocols are rigid, including heart monitoring as some athletes are finding it difficult to lower their heart rates after exercise if they have had COVID. An EKG must be signed off by a cardiologist before they can return to the sport.

Committee Chairman Michael Reed expressed enormous appreciation for teachers' flexibility and patience and thanked teachers, support staff, extracurricular staff, nurses, coaches,

counselors, and building workers for stepping up at this time of challenge.

Superintendent Peter Marano shared updates to the state's mask mandate for schools, which is expected to now last until at least February 28th. Our town's Board of Health offered a booster clinic in January for school staff and 60+ people attended. The vaccine clinic held for students had over 160 students vaccinated although, in the state, many schools still have not met the 80% vaccination requirement that would enable local authorities to lift the mandate. In Bellingham schools, the vaccination rate for high school students is around 60%, and lower for middle school and elementary school students.

Superintendent Marano noted that several districts have been moving away from contact tracing for close contacts, and he has met with nurses who will be providing more data on our own district. So far, data reveals that COVID is not spreading within the schools. The full data will



be reviewed before a decision is made to move forward.

Stall Brook Elementary School was spotlighted in this month's meeting, with Dr. Luuri sharing her excitement that *US News and World Report* had ranked the school in the top 30% of Massachusetts Elementary Schools.

Dr. Luuri went over, in detail, Stall Brook's approach to enrichment classes. In addition to supporting students who may need additional help with their classes, the school wanted to also reach out to students performing above level so that they can continue to learn and grow. These enrichment classes in Physical Education, Art, and Music each had five selected students enrolled for a special weekly, project-

based enrichment session. Dr. Luuri shared examples of the work they completed.

Various accomplishments in the school's Positive Behavior Intervention & Support (PBIS) Program were also discussed, including the Check In-Check Out (CICO) initiative, which is a 9-week intervention program allowing identified students to set goals and check in with assigned mentors throughout the day, receive points for good behavioral practices in their classes, and receive increasing awards for their progress. The program has been well received by the students.

### SCHOOL

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# 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



Glenn Brown

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.

## 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.*

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## A Musical Honor Looks Different this Year

### Six BHS Students Performed in Central Districts Last Month

By JUDITH DORATO O'GARA

This school year, 12 Bellingham High School musicians auditioned and six were accepted into the 2022 Massachusetts Central District Honor Ensembles. Rather than assemble for a concert, the ensembles took place last month, on January 15th, via Zoom, due to COVID-19, like last year.

"They're actually participating from their homes," said BHS music teacher Kaitlyn Braman, in an interview with *Bellingham Bulletin* just before the event. "It's kind of a big thing, something students audition to be part of, and they go against anyone who chooses to participate from the Central District." Braman explains that Central District, for musical purposes, encompasses a lot of schools from Worcester County, a few from Hampton and Middlesex, and a few from Norfolk County, including Bellingham, Franklin and Medway.

"Normally, (students) go and

perform a solo piece as well as a couple other little technical things for a judge who scores them," said Braman. This year, however, students sent in pre-recorded auditions.

The event, too, is not exactly a live concert this year.

"Being virtual, what they do is prepare musical compositions on their own, and there will be kind of a conductor. People leading this direct them as best as they can over Zoom. Unfortunately, on Zoom, you have to be muted when you play together because of lag time. The director will conduct them, and they will play just following, and they have to record themselves playing their music," said Braman. Later, all the student musicians send their recordings to the Central District organizers, who will piece together video and sound to form a group video that will later be posted. Normally, students would go and perform together at Mechanics Hall in Worcester.

"It's not the ideal way to run Central Districts; everything is kind of learning as they go," said Braman.

Students who were accepted into Central Districts this year include:

- Carson Saponaro, bassoon\*
  - Landen Davong, vocalist, tenor\*
  - Aidan Silva, also vocalist, tenor\*
  - Elsa Robinson, trombone\*
  - Colin Thibeault, euphonium
  - Hannah Silva, euphonium\*
- \*(These students also scored high enough to receive an all-state recommendation, or invitation to audition for the all-state festival, which normally takes place at Boston's Symphony Hall sometime in March.)

According to Braman, the pandemic has made music learning "very tricky over the past two years. For music, we could only play virtually and sing virtually together for the whole beginning of last year. We'd just be doing it



These Bellingham High School musicians participated virtually in Central Districts last month. From left to right (Back Row) - Elsa Robinson, Colin Thibeault, Hannah Silva, Carson Saponara. Front Row - Aidan Silva, Landen Davong. Photo used courtesy of Kaitlyn Braman

over Zoom – kids would be singing and playing instruments at home while we would lead and direct them. Slowly, they opened up that instruments could play in school again. Based on research, we could play instruments in school as long as students were 10 feet apart. (in November, 2020) Kids used special instrument masks and special bell covers to catch particles, so they were kind of able to start playing together being super spread apart.

Then, in early spring 2021 we finally got the go-ahead that students could sing together, 10 feet apart, with well-fitting masks, and now we are, kind of, back to normal, with 3-foot spacing that's much more manageable. Kids still have to have special masks to play, and well-fitting masks as well, but we did take off the first week back from December vacations just to be on the safe side, just to see how the (COVID) numbers were. We wanted to be very certain we are not causing any threat of the virus."

Braman said the COVID protocols have "definitely had an

impact on students. Our numbers are much lower than usual, and they're seeing it across the country. Some students who are in (music) for socializing and being part of a group, last year was difficult for them, which is unfortunate, but we still have a very good core group of students putting a lot of extra time and energy recording by themselves and playing, and now that we're back to fairly normal, they're getting back into that love of playing music together.

It's been tough. Some kids chose not to participate or audition (for Central Districts), because they knew it was going to be virtual. It's just not the same."

There is a silver lining, however.

Students, out of necessity, are learning recording software.

"It's a blessing and a curse," says Braman. "They're sick of recording themselves, but it's very cool that they've learned so many other pieces of music education that they probably would not have learned about."

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**SCHOOL**

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Stall Brook also partners with therapy dog programs such as Peaceful Paws and PV Dogs, which proven to decrease anxiety and promote better concentration and connection in the students. Reading confidence, increased gross motor skills and relaxation have also been noted as a result of the visits with the dogs.

Kristen Morgan, Stall Brook math specialist and interventionist, shared a robust math intervention case study with the committee, using data to illustrate a typical 5-week intervention cycle and its results. The program aims to identify students who may be falling below math levels, using data such as unit assessments, MCAS, i-Ready testing, and daily observation and to get those students up to speed.

The next committee topic was more good news. Bellingham schools received a grant that had been submitted by Director of Technology Michael Garofano. The technology grant of \$377,000 and additional e-rate funds of \$140,000, will be used to upgrade school network infrastructure and build on Wi-Fi, use the fiber connection between the high school and middle schools and create additional Internet connections with more redundancies for a faster and bigger network. It may be possible to get more reimbursable funds, as these are used to continue efforts to make additional improvements.

This month's School Committee meeting will be held on February 8th.

**GARDEN**

*continued from page 1*

growth and educational agricultural training, safety improvements to farm stand/market with utility and construction improvements and continuing to support charitable donations of produce to other non-profits."

The Garden is located on Center Street at the crossing of the Southern New England Trunkline Trail (SNETT) and Fox Run. DeFosses is heading into her second year as general manager and says, "the Town is supportive of our objectives."

This past season was "amazing," she said, with many people supporting the development of the Garden and Farmstand where vegetables grown on the property are available for purchase.

"Our garden improvements included clearing/cleaning of vacant plots to make room for more beautiful greenspace, the addition of a new flower patch in the front of the garden, four newly donated blueberry bushes and one apple tree from the garden manager at Bellingham Home Depot," reports DeFos-

ses. "Our monthly Farmstand produce donations exceeded 100 pounds of healthy organic produce to support local food charities serving underprivileged communities in five towns."

How can you help? DeFosses offers four ways:

- 1) You can help by getting the word out to family, friends and neighbors about our fundraising efforts and goals and encouraging their support if able.
- 2) Participate in and support one of our events (i.e., May Plant Sale where you can purchase plants, herbs, or flowers for sale to help support our Garden community).
- 3) Voluntary monetary donations or material donations (no amount is too small).
- 4) Individuals or companies can sponsor a bush or fruit tree planting. Suggested donations start at \$35 per bush and/or \$250 per tree.

There are 14 plots available for purchase in the season ahead. You can contact Micky DeFosses about plots, donations, or any other Garden-related questions by emailing her at [bellinghamfarmmarket.ed@gmail.com](mailto:bellinghamfarmmarket.ed@gmail.com) You can also visit the Bellingham (MA) Community Garden and Farmstand Facebook page for more information.



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**The Trial Court**  
**Probate and Family Court**

**Citation on petition for formal adjudication**  
**Docket No. NO16P0359EA**

**Norfolk Probate and Family Court**  
**35 Shawmut Road**  
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**Estate Of: Diana C Crooks**  
**Also known as: Diana Catherine Crooks**  
**Date of Death: 09/16/2015**

To all interested persons: A Petition for **S/A - Late and Limited Formal Testacy and/or Appointment** has been filed by **Janet R Hendrickson of West Dennis, MA** requesting that the court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that: **Janet R Hendrickson of West Dennis, MA** be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration**.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have the right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this court before: **10:00 a.m. on the return day of 2/16/2022**. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

**UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)**

A personal Representative appointed under the MUCP in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.

WITNESS, Hon. Patricia Gorman, First Justice of this Court.  
Date: January 13, 2022  
Colleen M. Brierley, Register of Probate

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# Municipal Spotlight

## Milot, Coakley: First Responders Who Deal With COVID Daily

By KEN HAMWEY,  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Chris Milot, Bellingham's Deputy Fire Chief who also serves as the town's Emergency Management Director, knows what a first-responder's role is all about after 30-plus years with the fire department. And, so does Neil Coakley, a captain who's been a firefighter in Bellingham for 25 years.

COVID-19 has changed the way first responders deal with 911 calls. Milot and Coakley are not only monitoring the community's needs, but also ensuring that the fire department's emergency teams follow the necessary procedures to deal with 911 calls that are COVID-related.

"When a call comes in to the dispatcher and the person says he or she is having trouble breathing, the dispatcher will ask if they're COVID positive or experiencing symptoms," Milot said. "No matter what information the

dispatcher relays, we respond. If it's COVID-positive or suspected, one ambulance and one fire engine will be on the way. Callers reporting a condition, whether serious or not, may not realize it, but every Bellingham firefighter on the force is a paramedic."

If the individual who called can walk, a paramedic will assess that person outside their front door.

"Assessing someone outside is a preferred COVID protocol, because that reduces exposure," Milot said. "Paramedics can conduct a good assessment of the patient face-to-face, but if the patient can't get to the front door, then we send one paramedic in to check the patient. If more help is needed, they'll get it. We try to reduce the number of firefighters exposed to the person. A decision to go to a hospital will be made by the paramedic and the patient."

Since the coronavirus pandemic has spread because of



variants, hospitals are overburdened and emergency rooms overcrowded. Long wait times are not unusual. That sometimes changes a patient's desire to be transported.

"If a patient is stable, showing only minimal signs of COVID, then we'll give them information on what the situations are at hospitals," Coakley said. "Then, they'll make an informed decision and we'll either transport them or leave them at their home. But, we encourage them to call back if their condition worsens."

If a caller is dealing with COVID but well enough to drive, not experiencing any distress and not in need of an ambulance, then that individual may be advised to check with their primary



Chris Milot, left, and Neil Coakley have lots of experience as first responders.

care doctor or go to an urgent care facility. "We sometimes get calls from an urgent care facility that a patient needs to get to a hospital," Coakley said. "We'll respond via ambulance."

Paramedics arrive at a home masked and vaccinated. Social distancing, however, cannot be practiced when assessing an individual. "Prior to our arrival, we suggest that the patient wear a mask and that family members or any other inhabitants either be masked or isolated in a separate room," Milot said.

At times, mutual aid has to be relied on because delays occur, some due to the lack of an available ambulance and some because of an abundance of calls. "Bellingham's number of COVID-related transports has increased significantly, creating a strain on the system," Milot said. Ambulances are sanitized after each run.

Bellingham's Fire Department is 99% vaccinated, according to Milot, and 75% of the staff have had a booster shot. "Some of the staff have tested positive," Milot said. "They isolate for the necessary time, and all but one has returned to work."

Testing occurs at the department only if someone has symptoms or if they tested positive outside the department. "Then, we'll have the entire staff tested at a clinic," Milot said, "but we hope to soon have the rapid test in-house so we can test more often and have the tests available quickly."

The 57-year-old Milot, a lifelong Bellingham resident, has been the go-to guy for acquiring COVID equipment and scheduling COVID-related activities.

**SPOTLIGHT**  
continued on page 10

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Winter brings two things to Massachusetts: snow, and tax preparation.

“Everyone can benefit from a tax professional’s help,” says Dawn Porthouse of Liberty Tax in Franklin. “This is true of individuals, but it’s even more true of small businesses.”

Tax professional and local small business owner, Dawn Porthouse opened the Franklin office of Liberty Tax in 2018 and has been helping Metrowest area families and businesses with their taxes ever since.

“It starts with a free consultation to determine a client’s needs,” says Porthouse. “Many individuals and small business owners come to me thinking we just fill out their forms, but then they realize all the other ways a tax professional can help them grow their business.”

For example, Liberty Tax can manage a business’s bookkeeping year-round, or handle payroll.

Porthouse says, “The tax code is not only complex but in the past few years it has undergone significant changes. Because of that, it’s not always apparent what a person or a business should do. Two clients can be similar in income and family size but have very different tax situations, which is why it’s so important to involve an expert.”

Liberty Tax in Franklin offers services that extend well beyond tax season such as IRS transcript monitoring, tax planning, and assistance with federal and state tax issues.

Porthouse says, “When a small business reaches a certain point, the owner wants to focus on growing the business rather than ‘working in’ the business.” Most owners begin by handling the back end work themselves, acting as the bookkeeper and payroll manager. After the first couple of years, bringing in an expert frees up the owner to do what they do best, and follow their passion. That way, their time is spent on their area of expertise, which in turn brings in more income and allows the business to flourish.

Moreover, once a business had grown to the point of hir-

ing employees, the owner needs a plan for handling payroll and dealing with the many regulations from both Massachusetts and the federal government. “Massachusetts makes it complicated,” says Porthouse. “We’ll keep you in compliance.”

Dawn Porthouse has an MBA and MPA, and is in the process of obtaining her Enrolled Agent (EA) license from the IRS. “I worked in the research industry for a long time preparing and managing federally-funded projects but was looking for something more. While I completed my MBA at Babson College, I started to work for a tax office and found that I enjoyed preparing tax returns and learning about taxes. The main thing I realized is that it’s not just about taxes, it’s about giving individuals and small business owners peace of mind when they fully understand their tax situation.”

When a taxpayer receives a letter from the IRS, before even opening the envelope, panic sets in. Porthouse says, “One of the first things I tell them when they call is to take a deep breath: we’re on their side. I will research the problem, discuss so-



lutions, and then educate them on how to avoid similar issues in the future.”

Staying on the right side of the IRS is in every business’s best interests.

Keeping on top of changing regulations is a challenge in and of itself. “Last year, Congress altered the tax laws right in the middle of tax season. Moreover, those changes were retroactive, meaning anyone who’d already filed may have to go back and amend their returns. We handled all of that for our clients so they could rest easy. We may be looking at a similar situation this year if Congress passes legislation which includes retroactive provisions such as the Build Back Better bill.”

Since taxes are inevitable, it makes sense to have an ally who can provide a roadmap to help families and businesses navigate them. Porthouse says, “I educate



my clients. I make sure they understand this year’s return and help them plan for next year’s. I’m passionate about helping clients achieve their financial goals.”

For more information, visit Liberty Tax at <https://www.libertytax.com/income-tax-preparation-locations/11369> or call the office at (508) 528-6000.

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**SPOTLIGHT**

*continued from page 8*

In his role as Emergency Management Director, getting PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and setting up flu clinics have been high-priority tasks. He has played a behind-the-scenes role since the pandemic hit in March 2020, assisting the Board of Health with vaccine clinics to ensure they're organized and function smoothly. A booster-shot clinic was held on Jan. 11 at the Senior Center, and two vaccine clinics were conducted recently at the Middle School.

"In December 2020, the Board of Health and Emergency

Management got first responders (police and fire) vaccinated," Milot noted. "In January 2021, the second dose was given to first responders. Last February, municipal employees and essential workers were vaccinated, and in March 2021, we provided staffing at the regional clinic in Uxbridge while we scheduled more clinics in Bellingham."

Milot also made sure that sufficient PPE was distributed to the police and fire departments, schools, the Board of Health, to Town Hall, the Senior Center, the Library and other municipal agencies.

"Dealing with COVID is more than just responding to

calls," Milot said. "There's a lot that goes on behind the scenes. Bellingham residents should understand that all PPE is provided by local and state funding, which means taxpayer dollars. All of this (pandemic preparedness) creates a burden on government and its taxpayers."

Coakley adds, "Bellingham, day after day, has been fortunate that it's never had a shortage of PPE." PPE includes masks, gowns, gloves, eye protection and sanitizer.

"We've had calls from other towns who've run out of PPE," Coakley noted. "We help and assist them with supplies, and they return what we provided when their PPE is sufficient."

Since the pandemic began, Bellingham has experienced 17 COVID-related deaths (as of Jan. 11, 2022).

Chris Milot and Neil Coakley have dealt with the pandemic every day since it arrived and their thoughts as first-line responders are basic and clear-cut. "This is not just a U.S. issue, it's a worldwide problem," they emphasized.

# Bellingham Schools Look Forward to All-Town Concerts in March

By JUDITH DORATO O'GARA

March won't just bring the advent of spring to Bellingham, but it marks two annual all-town concerts performed by Bellingham Public Schools students. Students in both chorus and band will get to combine their talents and share a love of music at Bellingham High School auditorium.

On March 3rd, at 7 p.m., student singers from grades 4-12 will gather to perform a chorus concert.

"What we do is we get all of the chorus groups together from grades 4-12 in the town and each group gets to perform one or two songs by themselves, and then we get all of the choral students together. About 200 students sing together," says Bellingham High music teacher Kaitlyn Braman.

On March 14th, young musicians from Bellingham Schools

will perform their all-town band concert. In a similar fashion to the choruses, bands from 5th through 12th grades will each perform a few pieces, with all uniting for a group finale.

"It's a really fun. I love the all-town concert, because you really get to see the progress of (students') skills from when they first start playing or singing to when they're in high school and they're doing these crazy things. You really get to see the progress, and it's also a bonding between high schoolers and middle schoolers."

The concert is open to the public, as long as the audience is masked, but due to COVID, Braman says, "We're asking families right now to limit down to close family and trying to keep as much space between people as possible. We do generally get a big crowd, which is great, because there's so much support coming from the community."

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# Bringing Mobility to Those Who Need It

## Local Company Partners with Wheels for the World™ Program

By J.D. O'GARA

Recently, the Franklin-based branch of National Seating and Mobility took steps to improve the lives of strangers around the world. The company, which provides complex rehabilitation equipment, partnered with Wheels for the World, a subset of the Joni & Friends ministry, to donate specialized wheelchairs to those who need them.

Wheels for the World™ Program provides life-changing mobility for people in developing countries who are excluded from their communities. Through the ministry, used wheelchairs are collected across the United States, refurbished and delivered to people with disabilities in developing nations where wheelchairs are scarce or financially out of reach.

“Our relationship with National Seating and Mobility is

very special, because when we distribute overseas, the need for specialty chairs is great,” says Maria DeGenova, Program Manager for Joni & Friends. “We’ll take any manual chair, but it’s really unique to have a partner where everything that’s coming in is specialty chairs.”

Joni and Friends was founded by Joni Earackson Tada, who herself became quadriplegic after a diving accident in 1967. The California-based organization is dedicated to meeting the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of people impacted by disability around the globe.

“Joni traveled overseas and saw a need for those who don’t have mobility,” says DeGenova. “Wheels for the World is one of the branches of the ministry. We collect used wheelchairs all over the country. Nothing goes to waste, and we partner with prisons around the U.S.” Volunteers



**National Seating and Mobility, through its Franklin branch, recently donated specialty wheelchairs to Joni & Friends' Wheels for the World™ Program, which collects and refurbishes wheelchairs for those who need them in developing countries.**

in a volunteer work programs at the prisons take apart, clean and restore the wheelchairs, making them like new. “It’s a second chance for the prisoners as well. They’re learning a trade and getting a chance at redemption with opportunity to do good work.”

“It’s a meaningful partnership,” says Jennifer Gibbons, LicSW, General Manager of

the Franklin, Mass. branch of National Seating and Mobility, which provides complex rehabilitation equipment. “It will provide another journey for these chairs to help others who are less fortunate.”

National Seating and Mobility provides specialized, fit and measured chairs customized by assistive technology professionals

to work with a client’s mobility needs, living arrangements, family support and other day-to-day needs. On occasion, however, client conditions change before they are delivered, that render the chair unusable for the client.

“When this happens, we need to get them a chair that works for them but need to find a place for the old chair,” says Gibbons. November’s donation was the second the Franklin branch has made.

“I love the whole idea of the chairs being rehabilitated at local prisons,” says Amy O’Brien

Marketing Development manager at of National Seating and Mobility. “It’s an opportunity to turn something around in their personal life and learn a trade. I think it’s a nice way to give back.”

Refurbished wheelchairs are loaded onto ocean containers by volunteers.

**MOBILITY**  
*continued on page 14*



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# Providing Support for Adoptive and Foster Families

BY GRACE ALLEN

It takes a great leap of faith to decide to adopt or foster a child. And while each family's situation is different, they all share one thing in common: a need for support. That's where a local group comes in.

The Friends of Adoption and Foster Care (FAFC) was started in 2018 by two Wrentham residents. Jane Williams, one of the group's founding members, said adoptive and foster families face many challenges, and support groups can provide ways to share information and resources, as well as opportunities for socialization and learning from other parents who have experienced the same issues.

"This group is so helpful for adoptive and foster parents because you often feel you're all

alone in the struggle," said Williams, who is an adoptive parent herself. "These children can have difficult behaviors because of past traumas and don't always adjust well."

In addition to providing peer and family support, the FAFC group has also held backpack drives to help children in the foster care system. Backpacks filled with essentials—such as pajamas, toiletries, school supplies, and stuffed animals—are collected and donated to the Arlington office of the Department of Children and Families (DCF). From there, the backpacks are distributed by social workers to children who are being removed from their homes to be taken to a safe place.

**BACKPACKS**  
*continued on page 13*



Local group, Friends of Adoption and Foster Care, of Wrentham, aims to soften the emotional blows dealt children taken out of a tough situation. Even the gift of a backpack filled with essential items can make the worst day of their lives a little less difficult.

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**BACKPACKS**

*continued from page 12*

“These children are living through the worst day of their life and feel like no one cares about them,” said Williams. “The social workers tell us that even the teens, when you give them a backpack, their faces light up. It makes the day a little bit easier for them. It really is a huge comfort for these kids.”

KP Cares, a community service group at King Philip Regional High School, recently donated 27 filled backpacks to the latest FAFC backpack drive. The high school group also collected and donated extra boxes of school supplies, toiletries, and stuffed animals to FAFC for later distribution.

Williams says FAFC has worked with social workers from DCF to help support families struggling to keep their own children at home. The group has collected gift cards, diapers, baby formula, and other necessary items for these families, as well as for families who suffer a financial burden when they open their homes to foster children.

While foster care is intended to be a short-term solution, with the ultimate goal of reuniting a child with his or her birth par-

ents, the need for foster parents is acute. And yet nearly half of foster parents quit in their first year of fostering due to lack of support or feeling ill-equipped to deal with the challenges.

Adoption too can be fraught with issues, even with infants, who can suffer from reactive attachment disorder as much as older children. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that between 1 and 5 percent of adoptions end up being legally dissolved. Children put up for re-adoption will have their lives deeply disrupted, and the effects can last a lifetime.

Williams says it takes more than a big heart to open your home to an adoptive or foster child. It’s important to be flexible and understand that children and teens express complex emotions and experiences through behaviors that might not make sense in the moment.

“I think you must be very open to learn, and you must be able to bounce back and not take things personally,” she said. “These kids can have a lot of problems, and they know how to push your buttons. They’ve been through a lot. They were pulled out of their homes for a reason, whether it’s neglect or abuse. Every adoption or foster care situation begins with a tragedy.”

She added, “A foster or adoptive parent can read 1,000 books, but you won’t really learn until you go through it. And you have to be willing to accept help and support from others who will listen to you without judgement.”

The Friends of Adoption and Foster Care group meets twice a month. New families and volunteers meet on the first Wednesday of the month from 6:30 to 8 p.m. in the Teen Room of the rectory at St. Mary Catholic Church, 130 South Street in Wrentham.

Current families meet on the third Wednesday of the month at 5:30 p.m., either at a member’s home or in the Teen Room for a pizza or potluck supper. There are games available for the children.

While the church provides the meeting space, the group itself is not-faith based, and a Zoom option is available for the meetings.

People can still support the foster care community, even if they are unable to foster a child, noted Williams. Volunteers are

needed to help with outreach, backpack and diaper drives, and activities for families. Donations for the drives can be dropped off at the bin in the rear of St. Mary’s parking lot. Gift cards can be dropped off at the rectory.

For more information about FAFC or to come to a meeting, contact Williams at jsvel@yahoo.com. FAFC is open to adoptive and foster parents from any community.



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**MOBILITY**

*continued from page 11*

“We have partnerships all over the world,” says DeGenova. “Each office partners with a different country.” The destination for the wheelchairs donated by National Seating and Mobility will go to Thailand. Once overseas, Wheels for the World™ volunteers work alongside local physical therapists and churches to provide outreach in the community.

“My first outreach was a 14-year-old boy, ‘Pan,’ who was being carried by his grandmother. The mechanic and therapist worked for six hours on his pediatric chair, made some adjustments and showed the grandmother how she could adjust the chair,” says DeGenova. “When we put him in that chair, that was the first time he was able to look eye-to-eye with someone. All his life he’d been looking up. We were not only able to meet his physical needs, but also emotional and spiritual needs.”



**A chair corps volunteer loads donated wheelchairs, headed to be refurbished by inmates in a volunteer work program then distributed to those who need them.**

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Every wheelchair, says DeGenova, opens the door to give hope and independence for the entire family.

“In some of the countries we go, there is shame associated, (a belief that) someone with a disability did something wrong to deserve that disability, and so it’s hidden,” says DeGenova, “But we believe God has a plan for that person, and he makes no mistakes. We’re able to share with people that they have an incredible purpose, and they have value.”

This year, Wheels for the World™ has collected over 1,000 wheelchairs, “a record for us,”

says DeGenova.

In addition to Wheels for the World™, Joni & Friends also provides practical care and hope through life-affirming programs and resources for special needs families, churches and communities.

In fact, Daniel Rivera, a chair corps volunteer who helped receive the Franklin donation, says his family has personally benefited from the camp. He and his wife have three sons, aged 20, 10 and 7, the older two with significant disabilities and special needs.

“The church I belong to here in Cranston, Hope Church, sur-


prised us the year the pandemic hit, asking us if we wanted to be sponsored by them to go to a Joni & Friends retreat in New England. We had never taken a family vacation.” After participating in the program, Rivera says, “We absolutely fell in love with Joni & Friends, and we became a part of it.”

March is wheelchair collection month. Wheels for the world accepts donations of the following mobility devices, with tax-deductible receipts available:

- Manual wheelchairs, all types and sizes
- Aluminum walkers, crutches, and canes
- Wheelchair footrests
- Other wheelchair parts and trays
- Wheelchair seat cushions
- New crutch and armpit pads, hand grips, and foot tips

If you have an unused wheelchair you would like to donate, visit <https://www.joniandfriends.org/support-us/donate-a-wheelchair/#drop-off> to find a local drop-off.

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# “Coffee with the Sheriff” Series a Hit Last Month

Norfolk County Sheriff Patrick McDermott’s “Coffee with the Sheriff” initiative kicked off at local diners last month. It’s aim, to give Norfolk County residents a chance to meet with him one-on-one and discuss issues important to them.

“The Sheriff’s Office serves the residents of Norfolk County. I am committed to ensuring that everyone feels safe and supported, which is why I wanted to meet people in their communities to talk about their priorities

for public safety,” said Sheriff McDermott. “This is also a great opportunity to showcase some of the amazing restaurants across the county.”

The Coffee with the Sheriff events will be an ongoing series that will take place at local diners and restaurants across Norfolk County.

Look for updates to the schedule of locations, dates, and times on the Norfolk County Sheriff’s Office website at [www.Norfolk-Sheriff.com/coffee](http://www.Norfolk-Sheriff.com/coffee).



Coffee with the Sheriff kicked off at Pam’s Diner in January. The initiative will be on-going in Norfolk County. Left to right: Bellingham Police Chief Gerard Daigle, Town Clerk Larry Sposato, Sheriff Patrick McDermott, Amy Bartelloni, Selectman Don Martinis, and Pam’s Diner owner Rich Hofhaug  
Photo by Amy Bartelloni

## Town of Bellingham Winter Parking Ban

### Bellingham Police Department Winter Parking Ban

#### Through April 1

Cars will not be permitted to park on Town roads between the hours of 2 a.m. and 7 a.m. while the ban is in effect.

Vehicles parked on the street in violation of this ban may be towed at the owner’s expense.

The removal of snow from your property onto the public way is also prohibited.

In the event the Town declares a “Snow Emergency,” parking will be prohibited on the public way until the emergency is lifted.

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LTC ZOOM meetings are FREE and confidential. Please

visit the Contact page on our website, [www.learn2cope.org](http://www.learn2cope.org) and click on the Stay Connected button. A member of our team will follow up with you. For additional questions, call (508) 738-5148.

Follow us on Facebook, "LTCHope" or Instagram, "l2c\_hope"

ZOOM Meetings Monday – Thursday Weekly, 7-8:30 p.m., (Spanish-Speaking Wednesday) and 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month (National Meeting)

## District Changes Coming to Bellingham

### Note from the Town Clerk's Office

At the beginning of each new decade a census is taken throughout the United States to determine population shifts, growth, loss of population, etc. for each state. Those population changes determine, at the federal level, the number of Congressional Districts in each state, and the Congressional District (CD) lines based on population distribution (each Congressional District should have approximately the same number of residents). At the state level, State Senate and State Representative Districts are reviewed to determine whether population shifts have necessitated adjustments to district lines. Continuing on to the municipal level, precinct lines are reviewed to ensure that all precincts have approximately the same number of people (within a 5% margin). If not, precinct lines need to be adjusted. As a result of the 2020 US Census, Bellingham experienced varying degrees of changes in each area.

#### US Congressional District

For the past decade, Bellingham has been a "split" community, as it contained two Congressional Districts: CD4 in the north end of town, and CD2 in the far south. Beginning in 2022, Bellingham will be "unified" into CD4. The reason for the change will be explained

below in the Redistricting/Re-Precincting section of this announcement. The important thing to remember is that all Bellingham precincts will be in CD4. The incumbent Congressman for all of Bellingham will be Jake Auchincloss.

#### State Legislative District – State Representative

Bellingham has been a part of the 8th Worcester District for more than a decade, and will continue to be part of said district. However, there is a change to the district in that a precinct in Uxbridge has been removed, and a precinct in Medway has been added. Therefore, as of 2022, the entire towns of Bellingham, Blackstone, Millville, along with most of Uxbridge and a portion of Medway will comprise the 8th Worcester District. Our incumbent State Representative is Michael Soter.

#### State Senate District

For more than a decade, Bellingham has been the only Norfolk County town in the Worcester and Norfolk Senate District. As of the 2022 elections, Bellingham will be in a new district, together with towns from Norfolk, Worcester and Middlesex. Our incumbent State Senator will no longer be Ryan Fattman. The incumbent for the new district is Rebecca Rausch.

#### Bellingham Redistricting/Re-Precincting

As a result of the 2010 US Census, it was determined that CD2 required additional residents to be consistent population-wise with all other Congressional Districts in the State. Precinct 5 in Bellingham joined CD2, and a new, small district "4A" was carved out to be added to CD2. Since most of Precinct 4A's residents had previously been part of Precinct 4, the result was that Precinct 4 was left as a relatively underpopulated precinct. With the recent redistricting/re-precincting, Precinct 4A has been dissolved back into Precinct 4. Some other changes have also been made to keep streets/neighborhoods more cohesive and hopefully lessen confusion. Any residents whose precinct has changed will receive a letter before the May Local Elections, apprising them of a change in their precinct. We will continue to have registrars at the polls to help direct people to their respective precincts.

(NOTE: You cannot necessarily rely on trash pick-up day to determine voting precinct.)

If you have any questions, please email the Town Clerk at [lsposato@bellinghamma.org](mailto:lsposato@bellinghamma.org).

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# February at Bellingham Public Library

The Bellingham Public Library is located at 100 Blackstone Street in Bellingham. For updates to library programs and services, please see the library website, [www.bellinghamlibrary.org](http://www.bellinghamlibrary.org). Click on the red alert banner on the top of the page for details.

## Hours – Temporary earlier closing through at least February

Monday & Wednesday 9:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Tuesday & Thursday 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Friday & Saturday 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Please note:

- The library is closed on Monday, February 21st for Presidents' Day.
- We will not be accepting group room reservations during the month of February.
- Film Fridays is suspended at least through February school vacation, resuming on February 28th at the earliest.
- In-person preschool programs were suspended in January and the suspension continued to the deadline of this press release. Please check the library calendar to see if preschool programs have resumed.

## Special Programs

### Red Cross Blood Drive, Saturday, February 5th from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Go to <https://www.redcrossblood.org/> to register

### Take Your Child to the Library Day, Saturday, February 5th 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

For families. Today is Take Your Child to the Library Day! Stop by the Children's Room any time between 10 a.m.-2 p.m. to play some games.

### Valentine's Day Crafts, Wednesday, February 9th at 4 p.m.

For all ages. Stop by any time between 4 p.m.-5 p.m. to make a Valentine's Day craft. Please sign up so we can make sure we have enough supplies

### Chess Club for Grades 4-9

Our Chess Club start date was postponed from January. Check the library calendar for details on the new start date.

### Virtual Author Talk: Kathleen Teahan, Monday February 28th at 6:30 p.m.

Kathleen Teahan, a Massachusetts Democratic State Legislator from 1997-2007, will read excerpts from her memoir *For the People, Against the Tide: A Democratic Woman's Ten Years in the Massachusetts Legislature*. She will talk about her experiences in politics and answer questions. About

her experience, Teahan says, "Each day I served in the Massachusetts House of Representatives was an exciting adventure, although some days I was swimming against the tide." She hopes her book will educate and motivate others to do their part, big or small, to heal our broken democracy so that all people can enjoy the longest life possible with loved ones. This is a virtual event through the Zoom platform. Please register and you will receive the Zoom link close to the event date.

## Other Children's Programs

Details on the programs below are available on the library website (<https://www.bellinghamma.org/library/kids/>) and calendar (<https://bit.ly/3xMECct>)

*Please note: Following the lead of the Bellingham Public Schools, masks are required at all indoor children's events for everyone ages 3 & up, regardless of vaccination status.*

After School Kids (ASK), Alphabits, Baby Time, Chess Club for Kids Grades 4-9, Fact or Fiction?, Film Fridays\*, Graphic Novel Book Club, Homeschool Programs, Mother-Daughter Book Club, Magic School Bus, Ring a Ding, STEAM Time and Teen Room Activities. Masks required.

\*Please note that Film Fridays will not resume until February 28th at the earliest

## Other Adult Programs

Additional details of these programs are available on the library calendar (<https://bit.ly/3xMECct>)

- Bellingham Skein Artists Adult Knitting Group, drop-in group, meets weekly on Wednesdays at 6 p.m.
- Book Club generally meets on the first Monday of the month, email Reference Librarian Cecily Christensen at [cchriste@cwmar.org](mailto:cchriste@cwmar.org) for details.
- Friends of the Library generally meet on the second Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. Email [library@bellinghamlibrary.org](mailto:library@bellinghamlibrary.org) for details.
- Library Board of Trustees generally meets on the second Thursday of the month at 7p.m. Email [library@bellinghamlibrary.org](mailto:library@bellinghamlibrary.org) for details.
- Adult Writing Group generally meets on the second Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. Email [marjorieturner.com](mailto:marjorieturner.com) for details.



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# Library Resource of the Month - Freegal

Freegal is a music service that allows you to download and stream music free with your Bellingham Library card. Freegal offers access to millions of songs, including Sony Music's catalog of legendary artists, and thousands of music videos. In total the collection is comprised of music from over 40,000 labels with music that originates in over 100 countries. There are hundreds of genres of music. The content is based upon agreements with over 28,000 music labels, including the labels of Sony Music Entertainment. There is no software to download, and

there are no digital rights management (DRM) restrictions. Bellingham Library patrons can download 3 songs per week and stream 3 hours of music per day.

You can download and stream music on a desktop computer or mobile device. The Freegal Music Service has launched free mobile apps, and they are currently available in the Apple App Store, the Google Play Store, and on Amazon.

Finding music is easy! There is an updated browse section, which allows you to search for music by what's trending, what's new, genres, playlists, artists,

music videos and even audiobooks. Music is organized in several categories for easy browsing, such as Top Songs, Featured Albums, New Music Videos, and Top Rock Playlists. An Advanced Search feature gives you a number of search options, such as searching by song title, artist, or composer. There is a built-in media player for web and mobile, and you can scroll between songs you're listening to while in the media player. A Wishlist function helps if you are low on available downloads or streaming time. You can add music to your Wishlist to play later.

There is a rich and growing collection of music videos, which often have supplemental content that is not in the underlying song. There are approximately 15,000 videos for you to choose from. Because a video is considered premium content, a video download will count as 2 of your weekly music selections. They are in MP4 format, and are yours to keep.

You can sign up for notifications, which will let you know how many downloads you have left. Also, on a desktop computer, your download limit and streaming timer are posted at the top of

the screen to the left of the search bar. On a mobile device they are under Settings (top right corner, three dots).

To access Freegal, go to the Bellingham Library's website at [www.bellinghamlibrary.org](http://www.bellinghamlibrary.org). Click on the Online Resources tab, then click Digital Music, Movies and TV. All you need is your Bellingham Public Library card number to start enjoying whatever type of music you prefer!

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## 2022 CAMP GUIDE

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# Bellingham Lions Club Big Game Squares Fundraiser

Your favorite team may not be in the big game, but you can still win \$\$ and donate to charity.

For \$20.00 pick a square or squares, from 100 squares, and you can win \$150 after the first quarter, \$200 at half time, \$150 after the third quarter and \$500 at end of the game.

For further information and to pick squares contact:  
Bellingham Lion Andy Porter at [totf@aol.com](mailto:totf@aol.com)



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**All the proceeds to be donated to the Lions Clubs International Foundation**

Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF) is the charitable arm of Lions Clubs International and since 1968, LCIF has provided grant funding for local and global humanitarian efforts, and funded entirely by charitable donations from Lions, and our friends and partners. We have awarded a staggering US \$1 billion funding through 15,000 grants focused on four core areas:

Vision – Youth – Disaster Relief – Humanitarian Programs



# Bellingham Schools Receive \$76K Social Emotional Learning, Behavioral & Mental Health Support Grant

On January 18th, 2022, State Representative Michael Soter and Bellingham Public School Superintendent Peter Marano announced that the Bellingham School District was awarded \$76,000 under the FY22 Supporting Students' Social Emotional Learning, Behavioral & Mental Health and Wellness Grant program (SEL & Mental Health Grant).

The purpose of this competitive, state and federally funded grant program is to adapt, ex-

pand, or strengthen multi-tiered systems of support to respond to the social-emotional and behavioral health needs of students, families, and educators and to build strong partnerships with community-based mental health agencies and/or providers. The program has three main priorities: racial equity and cultural responsiveness, evidence-based interventions and supports, and sustainable Systems & Partnerships.

The Bellingham Public School

District will specifically use its funding to focus on sustainability through community-based coordination and promote access to services. School officials will work on crafting community-wide solutions to promote collaboration and ensure continuity of care for children, youth, and families. In addition, funds may also be used to update technology relating to this work as well as educate staff members through professional development opportunities.

"This grant funding has come in a time of need," commented

State Representative Michael Soter. "This pandemic has taken a toll on all of us. We've seen so many individuals and families struggle with mental health over the past two years. The funding from this program will make an impactful difference in the community and most importantly, work to benefit the students."

"We are so excited to receive the FY22 Supporting Students' Social Emotional Learning, Behavioral & Mental Health and Wellness Through Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports Grant.

This grant allows us to expand and strengthen our support and response to the social-emotional and behavioral health needs of students, families, and educators," commented Bellingham Public School Superintendent Peter Marano.

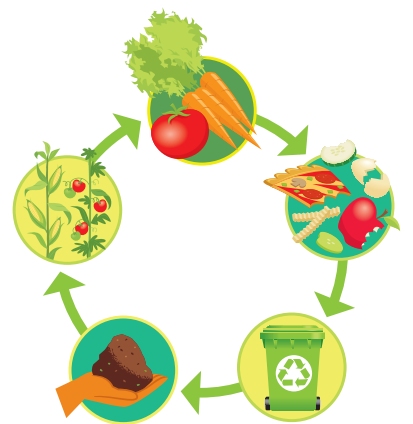
Soter and Marano stated that they would continue to seek out funding opportunities like this one. They explained that taking advantage of these programs works to benefit everyone in the community of Bellingham.

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# Dean Bank Announces Changes to Board of Directors

Kevin R. Goffe, President and CEO of Dean Bank, in Franklin, announced a number of changes to the bank's Board of Directors following its Annual Meeting on January 12, 2022.

Christine Molla of Wrentham, Mass. was elected to the bank's Board of Directors; becoming the first female Director in the bank's 132-year history. Goffe stated, "Christine's contributions to the greater Franklin community are well-documented. She's been a leader in the local small business community as Broker/Owner of Costello Realty for years. Her commitment, her passion for service and her enthusiasm made for an ideal candidate to serve on the bank's Board. Becoming the first female director makes it all the more impactful. Our customers will be well-served with the addition of Christine to the Board."

Daniel J. Ranieri of Bellingham, Mass. was elected as the bank's Chair of the Board of Directors. A former member of the Bellingham School Committee and former State Representative, Ranieri has served as a Dean Bank Director since 1994. Goffe stated, "Dan's has been a valued member of the bank's Board for the past 28 years. I congratulate

Dan and look forward to working with him in his new role."

Goffe also announced the retirement of Wayne Cottle of Franklin, Mass. from his role as Chair of the Board/Director; ending a tenure of service to the bank and its customers that began when hired as its president in 1976. Wayne retired from the bank in 2014 but remained as a Director; a span of over 45 years of service.

During his tenure, he has focused his energies on advancing the role and responsibility of community banking at the local, state and national levels. A passionate advocate for community banks, Wayne was an active member of the Community Bank League of New England / Mass Bankers Association. He was an active participant in industry affairs and testified on behalf of community banks before both the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Banks and Banking and the US Senate Banking Committee in Washington.

Cottle tirelessly represented community banks nationally as well. He served as National Secretary and Executive Committee member of the Independent Community Bankers of America in Washington. He served as Chairman, Mutual Bank Coun-

cil and worked with mutual institution executives nationally on issues of concern.

Goffe stated, "Wayne has been the face of community banking in our area for a half a century. He grew Dean Bank from an institution with about \$5 million in assets and cared for

his customers and his community with passion and with integrity. Wayne's positive impact will be felt for many years to come and the bank is better for his presence here. Wayne's oversight and guidance will be deeply missed."

Dean Bank, founded in 1889, is a Massachusetts state-char-

tered, mutually owned institution with assets approaching \$450 million. The bank has offices located in Franklin, Blackstone, Bellingham, and Mendon. As a member of both the FDIC and the DIF, the bank's deposits are insured in full.

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## Thanks to Yanks to Distribute Donated Handmade Gloves, Scarves & Hats

Recently, Thanks To Yanks a local charity dedicated to serving our military families, was presented a generous supply of handmade, gloves, hats and scarves to be distributed to military families in need. In this picture from left to right

facing is Barbara Shain, Michael Shain the founder and president of Thanks To Yanks and Elaine Kraimer. for more information on Thanks To Yanks, please like them on Facebook.



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## Environmental and Public Safety Officials Urge Public to Stay Safe On and Near Ice

The Massachusetts State Police (MSP), the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and the Massachusetts Environmental Police (MEP) are cautioning the public about the potential dangers of thin ice on the state's many lakes, ponds, streams and rivers, and ask the public to be responsible and mindful of local conditions, aware of the possible dangers while on the ice and to remain diligent in following prudent ice safety practices.

"Many factors including temperature fluctuations and water flow can affect how and when ice freezes and thaws, making it unpredictable and extremely dangerous for anyone trying to walk on or cross it," said DCR Acting Commissioner Stephanie Cooper. "The Department of Conservation and Recreation suggests residents exercise extreme caution when partaking in outdoor recreational activities, such as ice fishing, ice skating and snowmobiling, as the late onset of winter means no waterbody is frozen enough yet to safely support such activities."

"Many people safely enjoy ice fishing and other outdoor activities on Massachusetts lakes and ponds in winter, but it is always important to take common-sense precautions to keep yourself and your family safe," said DFG Commissioner Ron Amidon. "Remember to plan ahead, bring proper safety equipment and know the thickness and quality of ice before venturing out, preferably with someone experienced with ice safety."

"Cold weather activities are a source of enjoyment for many people, but participation carries the responsibility of recognizing dangers posed by thin ice and taking steps to keep yourself and your loved ones safe," said Colonel Christopher Mason, Superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police. "Our Troopers, like all first responders in New England, have seen first-hand the tragic consequences that can result when someone fails to use caution on frozen bodies of water. Have fun outdoors this

winter, but be smart and stay safe doing so, for your sake and the sake of those who love you."

If you witness a person or animal fall through the ice, call for help before attempting a rescue on your own to prevent becoming a victim yourself. Always use something long or throw something to help the victim while you are awaiting assistance from first responders. In all circumstances, individuals are urged to put safety first. Below and on DFG's MassWildlife's webpage, (<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/ice-strength-and-safety>) are ice safety tips to adhere to when near bodies of water during the winter months:

- Parents should always closely watch and supervise their children.
- Never go onto ice alone.
- Always keep pets on a leash (if a pet falls through the ice, do not attempt a rescue yourself - instead, call for help).
- Beware of ice covered with snow. Snow can insulate ice and keep it from freezing. It also hides cracks as well as other weak spots.
- Ice formed on flowing water (including springs under the surface) is generally weaker than ice over still water.
- Ice seldom freezes or thaws at a uniform rate. It can be a foot thick in one spot and an inch thick in another.
- If a companion falls through the ice and you are unable to reach that person from

shore, throw something to them (a rope, tree branch, jumper cables from a car, etc.). If this does not work, go or phone for help. Get medical assistance for the victim immediately.

- If you fall in, try not to panic. Turn toward the direction you came from and place your hands and arms on the unbroken surface, working forward by kicking your feet. Once the ice is solid enough to hold you, and you can pull yourself out, remain laid out on the ice (do not stand; lying down spreads your weight across a wider area, lessening your weight on any one spot) and roll away from the hole. Crawl back the way you came, keeping your weight distributed until you return to solid ice or ground.
- As the season progresses, plan accordingly and use caution, as older ice conditions greatly vary and are subject to rapid changes.

Furthermore, the Massachusetts State Police reminds the public to call 911 in an emergency, such as a person or a pet falling through the ice. Additionally, several state parks and facilities provide outdoor recreational opportunities throughout the winter season, some with DCR rangers and/or staff facilitating programs. Please visit the DCR's website for details and MassWildlife's Get Started Ice Fishing website for a video and information on ice safety and ice fishing.

## Save the Date!

**Franklin Bellingham Rail Trail  
Committee 5K**

**May 7, 2022**

The 11th Annual FBRTC 5K Road Race is scheduled for May 7, 2022. Registration is open! Follow this link for more information: Road Race or <https://www.franklinbellingham-railtrail.org/event/11th-annual-fbrtc-5k-road-race/>.

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# Bellingham Public Schools Receive \$65K through DESE Math Acceleration Academies Grant Program

On January 13th, 2022, State Representative Michael J. Soter and Bellingham School Superintendent Peter Marano announced that the Bellingham School District will receive \$65,000 through the FY22 Math Acceleration Academies Grant Program. Through the use of federal funding, this one-time competitive grant will provide funding to school districts like Bellingham to implement math-focused Acceleration Academies for students in grades 3 through 10.

An Acceleration Academy is a week-long academic program designed to accelerate student learning through engaging, standards-aligned lessons. The Math Acceleration Academy will take place in Bellingham during the week of April school vacation of the current school year.

According to the program outline, a Math Acceleration Academy should involve engaging, collaborative, and hands-on learning experiences where students apply their mathematical knowledge and skills to real-world problems and focus on mastery (conceptual under-

standing and fluency) of a limited number of grade level or above grade level standards.

“We are so excited to receive this grant award,” commented Superintendent Marano. “This grant will provide us the opportunity to implement math-focused Acceleration Academies for students in grades 3 through 10. As always, we are so grateful for the support of our State Representative, Michael Soter, for helping us secure these funds that will provide students with an extensive academic experience.”

“This is a great learning opportunity for the students of Bellingham,” said State Representative Michael Soter. “These are the opportunities that our school districts need to consistently pursue. By expanding offerings and learning experiences, we can deliver a well-rounded education to the students of the 8th Worcester District.”

Representative Soter explained that he will continue to seek out opportunities like this one and work with the school districts to secure funding.

## Bellingham Department of Public Works Note

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# Bellingham Senior Center February Highlights

**EXPANSION:** We are looking forward to the discussion/planning of the kitchen and hopefully have it on the agenda for the May Town Meeting. It would give us the option to have lunches or breakfasts or special dinners.

**BOOK CLUB:** The book club will meet Tuesday, February 22 at 1 p.m. at the Senior Center to discuss the *Year of Wanderers* -- a novel of the Plague by GERALD

dine Brooks. Enjoy the book and come for the discussion!

**TECH CORNER:** Tech Corner is back. Having problems with your phone, iPad, tablet, or computer -- need help with some of the features? Come to Tech Corner and let the group help you! Tech Corner will take place Tuesday, February 8, at 2:30 p.m. Please sign up.

**BRIDGE:** If you are interested in playing bridge, come to the Senior Center Thursdays from 9-11:30 a.m.

**SENIOR LUNCH PROGRAM:** Hoping to see the lunch program return in March, weather permitting!

**The COA BOARD Meeting** will be February 8 at 11 a.m. at the Senior Center.

**WALKING CLUB:** Walking Club moves indoors to the YMCA in Franklin because of inclement weather. Rain, wind, snow, cold... all good reasons to move inside! Walkers pay \$2 each to the Y. Call the Center for updates.

**HEARING HELP:** Home Hearing Healthcare provides these FREE services at the Senior Center: hearing screening, hearing aid cleaning, and video ear exam. Meet Lauren Warburton from 10-11 a.m. by appointment at the Center on February 24.

**ANYONE CAN PAINT:** Join Darrell Crow on Wednesdays this month — Feb. 2 and Feb. 9, from 1-3 p.m. to paint "Winter Bridge." Class \$25, supplies included. Learn more about the artist at [www.darrellcrow.com](http://www.darrellcrow.com). Reserve a space in class at (508) 966-0398.

**LUNCH & CONCERT MARCH 4:** Join us for lunch by Heart to

Home Meals and a concert honoring the Irish by Ruth Harcovitz, Ms. Massachusetts USA singer. This FREE event will include a raffle and prizes. Lunch will be served beginning at 11:30 a.m. Sign-ups in advance are requested. Please call the Center at (508) 966-0398 to reserve your seat.

The COA is the eyes, ears and advocates for the senior community. If you have any suggestions, comments or concerns please call the Senior Center at (508) 966-0398.

The Bellingham Senior Center is located at 40 Blackstone St. in Bellingham.

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Access Bellingham Mendon Inc. (ABMI) is always looking for sports announcers for local sports coverage. Anyone who would like to try announcing a game for ABMI can call the station at (508) 966-3234 for details. We cover various sporting events, like football, hockey, soccer etc. Experienced announcers are preferred but not required.

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# Berry Insurance Donates \$1500 to Franklin & Bellingham Rail Trail Committee

Big THANK YOU to Berry Insurance for \$1,500 donation to our committee!

Did you know that for every referral their clients give them, they donate \$10 for charity? This year they collected \$1,500 and we are the lucky recipients. Thank you.

For more information about the Franklin Bellingham Rail Trail, visit [www.franklinbellinghamrailtrail.org](http://www.franklinbellinghamrailtrail.org) or find the group on Facebook.



Co-owner of Berry Insurance Chris Pintarich and FBRTC Assistant Secretary Renata Gilarova.

## Calendar

### Through March 5

2022 10th Annual Anything Goes Photography Show, Blackstone Valley Art Association Open Sky Uxbridge Community Gallery, 5 South Main St., Uxbridge

### February 21

Bellingham Public Schools Mid-Winter Break begins

### February 28

Virtual Author Talk, 6:30 p.m., Courtesy of Bellingham Public Library, Kathleen Teahan, MA Democratic State Legislator, will read from her memoir, *For the People, Against the Tide: A Democratic Woman's Ten Years in the Massachusetts Legislature*. Link upon registration at [www.bellinghamlibrary.org](http://www.bellinghamlibrary.org)

### February 5

Red Cross Blood Drive, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m., Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone Street, Bellingham, <https://www.redcrossblood.org/> to register

Take Your Child to the Library Day, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., Children's Room of Bellingham Public Library, 100 Blackstone St., Bellingham. Crafts

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## BBA Business After Hours with MACC at Lowell's February 9th

The MACC and the Bellingham Business Association (BBA) are getting together for the first event of 2022. Catch up with old friends and meet some new potential customers/leads. Free for members!

When: **Wednesday Feb 9, 2022, 5:30-7:30 p.m.**

Where: **Lowell's Restaurant, 75 Cape Road, Mendon, MA 01756**

RSVP at <https://bit.ly/FebruaryBAH> Business After Hours at Lowell's Restaurant - Feb 9, 2022 - Networking, Business Advising, Milford Area Chamber of Commerce ([milfordchamber.org](http://milfordchamber.org)) If registering online, PROMO CODE is BBA!!

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# Glaucoma Treatment: GONIOTOMY

## Commonly Asked Questions

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

When eye drops or laser treatment are unable to adequately lower eye pressure, goniotomy can be considered. Goniotomy may allow for eye pressure control with or without the use of glaucoma medications. For patients who qualify for the procedure, goniotomy provides an alternative to bleb-forming glaucoma surgeries or tube shunts.

### How does goniotomy work?

Goniotomy cuts the first layer of the natural drain system (trabecular meshwork). This allows the fluid to leave the eye more easily, and lowers the eye pressure.

### What are the steps of surgery?

The surgery is performed in the operating room under anesthesia. The eye is cleaned and numbing medication is applied.

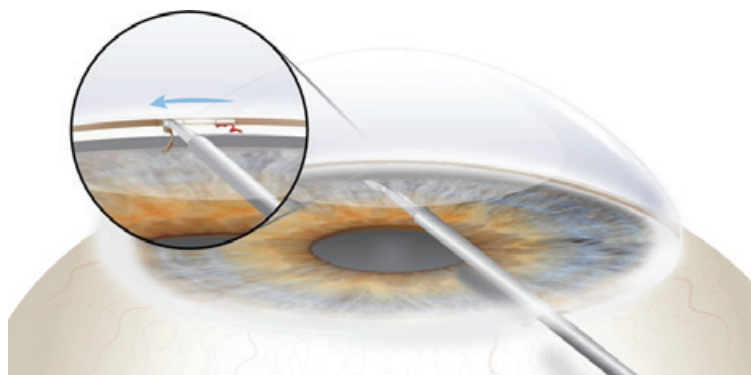
An instrument then opens the eyelids. Tiny incisions are made in the front of the eye, and a special lens is placed on the eye to visualize the eye's natural drain. A portion of the wall blocking the drain is removed. An open channel is created, allowing fluid to leave the eye. The goniotomy procedure takes about 20 minutes, but will take longer if performed along with cataract surgery.

### What will I feel during and after the surgery?

You may see bright lights during the surgery, but should not feel any pain. You will be discharged with a clear plastic shield over the operated eye. An adult will need to drive you home since you received sedative medications.

### What happens to the eye after surgery?

Fluid leaves the eye through the open channel that is created in the eye's natural drain. This



lowers the eye pressure, and one or more glaucoma medications may be stopped after surgery.

### How often will I be seen after surgery?

You will see your doctor the first day after surgery, about a week later, and a few weeks after that. Depending on how your eye heals, additional or fewer visits may be needed.

### What eye drops will I use after surgery?

Most patients will be asked to use a steroid and antibiotic eye drops. The frequency of the taking the steroid eye drops depend on the amount of the eye inflammation.

### Can I stop my glaucoma drops after surgery?

Your doctor will tell you which drops to continue using and how often at each visit depending on how your eye is doing. Sometimes patients are able to reduce the number of eye drops they are taking. Even if you are taking the same glaucoma medications after the procedure, the surgery is a success if your pressure is lower. The need for eye drops long-term after this treatment varies greatly and depends on your type of glaucoma and the rate at which it is progressing.

### Will goniotomy cure my glaucoma?

The simple answer is no. Glaucoma is a chronic disease that requires constant monitoring and treatment. The goniotomy procedure will help to lower your eye pressure. However, it will not reverse any loss of vision that has already occurred.

### What happens if goniotomy does not work?

Whether or not medications or an additional procedure will be needed after GATT depends on what is considered a "safe" pressure for your eye, how much your eye scars, the type of glaucoma you have, and more. After surgery, we will continue to monitor you closely so we can adjust therapy if needed.

At Milford Franklin Eye Center, Dr. Kaldawy was among the first surgeons in the area to offer Goniotomy. We perform the procedure in a state-of-the-art surgery center in Milford and closer to home. With this center available to you here in your backyard there is no reason to travel hours to have eye surgery and laser glaucoma surgery. If your eye provider is still recommending you travel far away to have eye surgery, we are available for a second opinion. We are proud to offer excellence in glaucoma management and surgery with world class outcomes and here is the great news: In Milford, and closer to home than ever before!

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# Local Charter School Music Teacher Selected, Performed in Rose Parade

The Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School is excited to announce that Emily Warren, our Grade Six through Eight music teacher participated in the Rose Parade as a member of Saluting America's Band Directors. Miss Warren applied for the program and was selected to participate in the marching band and will represent Massachusetts and will be playing the baritone.

This was a marching band made up of 275+ band directors from all 50 states, Canada and Mexico. It is the first time in Rose Parade history that a performing group was both a float AND a marching band (all other groups have been either a float or a band) and it was the first marching band of its kind in history.



We were thrilled to see Miss Warren participating in this band, which was a tribute to band directors across the country and paid tribute to the exceptional instruction, character develop-

ment and inspiration provided by music educators everywhere. The show aired on New Year's Day morning on ABC, NBC, Hallmark Channel, and Univision. A huge congratulations to Emily!



You can learn more about enrollment at the Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School which is currently accepting applications for the 2022-2023 school year at [www.bfccps.org/info](http://www.bfccps.org/info).

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# Sports

## BHS Coaches Not Surprised UNH Promoted Santos

### Former 3-sport Athlete a Skilled Leader

By KEN HAMWEY,  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Ricky Santos is now the head football coach at the University of New Hampshire, and that promotion didn't come as any surprise to the coaches he played for at Bellingham High.

Santos played quarterback for Dale Caparaso in high school. His baseball coach was T.J. Chiappone, who also helped Santos sharpen his basketball skills when Chiappone was an assistant for the late Barry Hutchinson. While at BHS, Santos often conferred with Dennis Baker, who was the Blackhawks' athletic director when Santos was helping Bellingham dominate its foes in all three sports in the Tri Valley League.

While at UNH, Santos rewrote the university's record book as UNH's quarterback. He led the Wildcats to four straight playoff berths and after his playing career, he played pro football in Canada. Then, after working as an assistant coach at New Hampshire and Columbia, he became UNH's 20th head coach last December when Sean McDonnell retired.

Santos was a hall of fame inductee at both BHS and UNH and his number (2) was retired at both venues. At UNH, he earned all-America honors and won the Walter Payton Award (the 1-AA equivalent of the Heisman Trophy).

Now 37, Santos finished his UNH career with 123 touchdown passes. He threw for 165 yards and a touchdown in the Hula Bowl and during his 2004 rookie season at UNH, Santos was named the ECAC Rookie of the Year and the Atlantic 10 co-Rookie of the Year. He holds UNH career records in pass attempts (1,498), completions (1,024) and passing yards (12,189).

At the high school level, Santos was a dominant competitor in football. He was a two-time Tri-Valley League MVP, was twice named the Division 5 Player of the Year, a two-time Metrowest Player of the Year, and, as a senior, won all-State honors.

In November 2002, during the annual Thanksgiving Day game against Norton, he threw for seven touchdowns. He played forward in basketball on the 2002-03 Blackhawks squad that won a State championship.

Santos' two high school coaches and his athletic director took time to reflect on his days at BHS and they offer their thoughts on why he'll succeed as a Division 1 college coach.

### DALE CAPARASO

Caparaso coached Santos for 3½ years and they meshed well. While Caparaso guided the Blackhawks to four Super Bowl crowns during his 12-year reign, it was Santos who led BHS to championships in 2000 and 2001.

"Ricky was a captain his senior year and he led by example," Caparaso said. "He wasn't a screamer. He left the yelling to me. His actions on the field did his talking and as a player he held others accountable."

Caparaso, now a Florida resident, is quick to label Santos "a winner" and is sure his former QB will build a winning program at UNH.

"There's no doubt that Ricky will not only be successful at UNH, but he'll also experience success beyond," said Caparaso. "He's got what I call the 'it' factor. He's a winner, and if he goes to a higher level in college or to the pros, he'll succeed. His greatest attributes are his work ethic and his preparation. Ricky's smart enough to know the worst thing he can do is to mimic what another coach does," Caparaso said. "He won't copy another coach's style."

When Santos was handed the reins at quarterback at UNH as a freshman, he went from fifth-stringer to starter. Caparaso recalled a similar situation at Bellingham.

"Our starting quarterback in 1999 was injured before our game against Millis," Caparaso noted. "Ricky started the last four games that year. His first game was against Millis. He ran



**Coach Dale Caparaso and his wife Anne watched Ricky Santos develop into a top-notch quarterback at Bellingham High.**



**Ricky Santos speaks to Bellingham High football fans in 2013 when his number was retired. He is now head football coach at UNH.**

and passed effectively but we lost, 24-21, to a team that finished the year as Super Bowl champs. Ricky was thrown into battle with no preparation or any idea he'd start. He was on the jayvees. It was baptism under fire, but it was obvious he'd be successful."

### DENNIS BAKER

Baker was Bellingham High's athletic director for 15 years and saw Santos excel in all three sports during a four-year stretch. Now, 73, Baker often gave Santos advice, whether it was words of wisdom for on-field situations or advice off the field.

"Early on, Ricky and I talked about a variety of things," said Baker, who's in his 25th year as Bellingham's softball coach.



**Dennis Baker offered Ricky Santos advice during his days as Bellingham High's Athletic Director.**



**T.J. Chiappone, who coached Ricky Santos in baseball, is confident that he'll be a success as head football coach at the University of New Hampshire.**

"Whatever we discussed, we always kept it private. I saw him mature and grow, both as a player and as a student. He accepted responsibility and held himself accountable. He worked hard to become a better-than-average student and turned out to be a dynamic leader."

Baker saw attributes that Santos had as a student-athlete that he firmly believes will lead to Santos becoming a successful head coach.

"Ricky was like a second coach on the field," Baker noted. "He was a leader and he made other players better. He also was encouraging, always helping a teammate overcome difficulties. He also had good instincts, able to change plays at the line of

scrimmage. He had great field vision and he handled pressure well. When he was on summer break from UNH, he often came to the high school and worked with young kids. I thought back then that he'd make a great high school coach. He liked teaching kids about football."

### T.J. CHIAPPONE

Chiappone, who was Bellingham's varsity baseball coach for 25 years and currently is in his 12th year as the boys varsity basketball coach, knew Santos in both those venues.

"In high school, Ricky was a great competitor, he hated to lose, and he was mentally tough," Chiappone said. "Those attributes led to him becoming a strong leader. And, he also had a high IQ in whatever sport he was playing. And, he had good instincts."

The 49-year-old Chiappone firmly believes that the attributes Santos relied on at BHS will translate to success as a head coach. "Time will tell," Chiappone said, "but if I had to bet, I think he'll be a very successful head coach."

Santos was UNH's interim head coach in 2019, and Chiappone believes that experience was great preparation for what lies ahead. "Knowing what the head coaching job involves is important, and Ricky got a taste of that," Chiappone noted. "He knows about long hours and sleepless nights. He'll handle the transition well."

Santos played varsity baseball as a freshman and as a senior. And, Chiappone reeled off his pitching stats for those two years. Freshman year — 23 innings, 4-0 record, 37 strikeouts, 2 walks and an earned-run average of 1.04. Senior year — 39 innings, 4-1 record (one save), 53 strikeouts, 15 walks and an E.R.A. of 0.72.

"Ricky also had good hitting numbers, but his pitching stats reveal how mentally tough he was," Chiappone said. "He played three varsity seasons of basketball, he was effective at forward and very much respected by his head coach, the late Barry Hutchinson."



# Sports

## Laroche Hoping to Go Out on Top with a Full Season

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,  
STAFF SPORT WRITER

Like many in Bellingham, Richie Laroche got involved with sports at young age and basically due to his older siblings. Now, as his senior year is playing out, he is hoping that he can go out on top with the Blackhawks basketball team playing to their capability.

“My older brothers, Ryan and Evan, played basketball, and they got me into it at a young age,” Laroche said. “I just loved the energy around the sport and working off my teammates.”

Last winter, as a junior Laroche got to start for Coach TJ Chiappone’s varsity squad, and although it was a great feeling to be playing for the school’s top team, it was also a discouraging season due to COVID.

“It was definitely a different type of season with COVID. We only got to play 10 games and didn’t do too well going 2-8,” he said. “We also had to wear masks being pulled up over our noses at all times, making it difficult to breathe. It was a tough experience and not the one that I had expected in my first varsity season.”

Laroche, who was more of a rebounder for the team last winter, will be looked upon to do some scoring this season, especially with COVID issues still sidelining athletes as well as the team having its point guard sitting on the bench due to health issues. According to the senior power forward, Ross Priscella, the team’s point guard, is a key component to the team’s success bringing the ball up the court while being one of the main scorers.

“With Ross out a number of games to start the season, the coach has had me run the offense and bring the ball over mid-court,” Laroche said. “I know that the team in general needs to step up their games, but I need to score more. Being the tallest player on the team doesn’t put pressure on me, but I have to rebound as we’re one of the smallest teams in the (Tri-Valley) League.”



Having a limited team throughout the early stages of the season, Chiappone has had to rely on his senior captain to keep things flowing in a positive way on and off the court.

“He’s the leader of the team that does a little of everything for us. At 6’2” he’s a very versatile player, and depending on what we need during a specific game, he’s role with change,” the Bellingham Coach said. “Last year, he was a role player, but he came into the season this year having improved on every facet of his game during the off-season. He not only got stronger, but worked on his shooting, ball handling and rebounding. He’s going to be our go-to guy this season.”

As Laroche had noted early, the Bellingham team is vertically challenged when it comes to other teams in the league, which leads to difficulty scoring as well as rebounding at times, and his coach agrees.

“We are offensively challenged, especially with Ross sidelined, so we’re going to look for some scoring from Richie in

addition to his rebounding and being a presence under the net,” Chiappone said. “I am optimistic that our scoring will go up when we start to get some players back, but for the time being, it’s on him.”

Laroche has taken the difficult task at hand without complainin, and at the time of this writing he has averaged 14.2 points per game, while adding 9.2 rebounds, one block and one steal. The senior even helped Bellingham open this season with a buzzer beating win over Nipmuc.

“As soon as I shot it, I was hoping that it would go in, but I was unsure until I heard the crowd,” Laroche said. “Once the ball went in, I really didn’t know that to think. I knew that it was a big shot, but I had never experienced a varsity game winning shot.”

Laroche’s path to get to that buzzer beating shot was a long time in the making. During the eighth grade, he became one of three eighth graders to make the high school team. The following year he moved up the lad-



Senior Richie Laroche’s versatility will be counted on this year in BHS Boys’ Basketball.

der in the junior varsity squad, but once again was still one of the younger kids on the team. It wasn’t until his sophomore season that he was named captain and began to see substantial floor time. About mid-way through the season, he was called up to the varsity team as a swing player. For the most part it was a watch and learn experience that eventually led to his becoming a varsity starter.

In addition to being a great teammate on the Bellingham

varsity team, Laroche is also involved in the unified basketball program, where he teaches special education athletes the game of basketball.

“My parents that told me about it and that I should get involved and I thought that it was a good idea to help out,” he said. “I love being part of the team where I am also helping. It’s very heartwarming to see that you’re making a difference in their life, teaching them a sport that I truly love.”

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# BVT Holds Ribbon-Cutting for New Biotechnology Program

On December 8, 2021, Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School opened its new Biotechnology program. Held in the bright new shop, the ceremony began with a warm welcome from Principal Anthony Steele.

“It’s a pretty special day to have a ceremony and open a new shop. It doesn’t happen every day,” said Steele. “It’s a complex process to start a Chapter 74-approved vocational-technical education program, and it takes a village to bring this all together. It’s an honor to welcome our first incoming Biotechnology class.”

The renovation was primarily an in-house project recognizing the contributions and hard work of the Facilities team, who helped transform and wire the vocational space at a cost-savings for the district with the help of students.

“This is an incredibly joyous day to see the expansion of new opportunities, said Superintendent Dr. Michael Fitzpatrick. “Frankly, each of our 19 voca-

tional programs upgrades every year and changes the skills sets we call competencies. So, in reality, we’re opening new programs, curriculum, training, and expertise in every program every year, and the same is true for our academic programs. While we are eager to expand new programs, we have to do so in moderation while working with our legislators to compliment available dollars and reasonably pursue grants.”

The ceremony continued with guest speaker, State Senator Michael Moore, who noted “this curriculum opens up so many doors – from the businesses that will hopefully be employing you – to the students taking up these skills – there will be many opportunities to advance yourself in the Biotech sector. This program is a great achievement for the school.”

Principal Steele then introduced Vocational Director Dr. Matthew Connors, who completed the lion’s share of the initial planning and spearheaded the project. Dr. Connors ex-



plained that from thought to finish, the entire process took two years.

“If ever there was a time to build a Biotechnology facility, it was during the height of the

global pandemic where students are interested and have a desire to make a difference,” said Dr. Connors, who thanked those who brought the program to fruition.

More information about the BVT Biotechnology program is available at: [www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/biotechnology](http://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/biotechnology).



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# Raspberry Swirl Cheesecake Bars – A perfectly sweet Valentine’s Day dessert!

## Ingredients:

- 2 packages of softened cream cheese
- 2 dozen chocolate wafer cookies or Oreo® Cookies, smashed to crumbs
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons of all-purpose flour
- ¾ of a stick of butter
- ¼ cup raspberry jam (seedless)
- Fresh raspberries

## Directions:

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees and line a square baking pan with foil.  
 Spray foil with nonstick cooking spray  
 Mix cookie crumbs and butter together and press into the pan. Bake 10 mins and cool.  
 In a bowl, beat cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Add in eggs. Add in flour. Pour over cooled crust.  
 Swirl the jam over the top layer.  
 Bake 30-45 mins or until set. Let cool completely and cut into squares.  
 Recipe contributed by *Bellingham Bulletin* writer, Jennifer Russo

# Bellingham Sports Spotlight

By ELI SYLVIA

## BOYS’ BASKETBALL HOPEFUL TO QUALIFY FOR STATE TOURNAMENT

The boys’ Varsity Basketball Team has gotten off to a 2-7 start. The Hawks are currently shooting 30% and averaging 39 points per game. Coach T.J. Chiappone points to inconsistent shooting as the major culprit of the teams’ record.

“Our players are working very hard in practice and showing improvements in several areas, but to impact the final results, we need to shoot better in games.”

The highlight of the season has been the teams’ performance in their annual Barry Hutchinson Memorial Tournament held in honor of former BHS basketball coach Barry Hutchinson. The Hawks defeated Blackstone Valley Prep in Cumberland, RI, in the first round by a score of 70-53. Senior captain Richard Laroche had 25 points, and 15 rebounds, and fellow senior Cameron McDonald contributed 13 points. Bellingham lost in the finals to Wayland in a low scoring defensive battle. The final score was 29-28, with Richard Laroche leading the way again with 11 points.

Coach Chiappone expressed how proud he was of his players and explained that their effort and intensity embodied what the late Coach Hutchin-

son stood for. Laroche, and Reed Jean-Louis were both named to the tournament all-star team. The team is looking to continue to improve during the second half of the season and remains hopeful on qualifying for the Massachusetts State Tournament. Seniors Patrick Randazzo, Cole Pike, and Sean Edwards will need to be key contributors down the stretch to make the teams’ tournament goal a reality.

## HOCKEY TEAM STRUGGLES AMIDST COVID SPIKE

The start of the season has been a bumpy ride for the boys’ hockey team. They had some tough games, and the games that should have been won, were unfortunately lost. To make things worse, the team is currently dealing with several players testing positive for COVID-19. This alone has wreaked havoc on the line up. The teams’ overall record is 1-6-0, and their TVL record is 0-4. Recently appointed head coach Brad Kwatcher conveys his point of view on the season, “Our team has not played to, what I feel, to be their full potential. We have a busy schedule coming up, and I am hoping that, as we start the second half of the season, we will secure some much-needed wins.” The teams’ goal of making the playoffs looks daunting, but they remain hopeful of reaching that goal.

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