

## A memorable 100th birthday for the 'Queen of Our Hearts'

BY ROD LEE

Not everyone who lives to be one hundred years old is treated to the kind of birthday celebration Anne Vajcovec experienced at the Killdeer Island Club in Webster on June 25th.

weeks of preparation that went into organizing the event. More than one hundred people showed up to offer well wishes to Ms. Vajcovec—an extremely likeable and active centenarian who still cooks for herself (real mashed potatoes and steak with onions are two

thought it was going to be come and go, relatives we don't see that often. But people stayed. We talked mom into singing 'I'm tired, and I want to go home.' We went through seventy-two bottles of wine. Before we sang each of mom's four children had something to say about her. There was a special cake, mom looking at the sunset. She rose to the occasion, she was sitting there from one o'clock to four, she talked to every single person."

Much of Anne Louise (Kleya) Vajcovec's story is recounted in the book "Only the Lucky Grow Old: Reflections on Life from Those Over Ninety," written by Kristine Fontaine, who calls Ms. Vajcovec "Auntie Anne."

Ms. Vajcovec was born to immigrant parents in East Douglas.

As Ms. Fontaine writes, "both of her parents came over from Czechoslovakia and married in the U.S. At present, she is the only surviving sibling. Her brother passed away at age sixty-eight of cancer, but her sister, who was hoping to live a long life, was granted her request. She lived to be one hundred years old.

"When Anne was a child, she remembers having to use an outhouse until the hurricane of 1938 came and blew it down. After that happened, her parents decided to make a bathroom inside the house, which required much renovation. Before having the bathroom, they did not shower, but more or less took sponge baths."

Ms. Vajcovec also told Ms. Fontaine of the time a storm struck. Anne's mother was pumping water when lightning hit the



Anne Vajcovec, 100, relaxes in one of her favorite spots, at home, on Webster Lake.

Then again, in the opinion of Ms. Vajcovec's daughter Susan Hofeller and the rest of the family including Ms. Hofeller's siblings and Anne's grandchildren and great grandchildren, the "Queen of Our Hearts" was worth the

of her favorites), who also still belongs to the Tuesday Club, and who still attends meetings of the Killdeer Island Club, and listens to audiobooks).

"It was amazing," Ms. Hofeller said. "Everyone hung around. I

## Charlton's Hunter Lavigne saluted as new member of U.S. Space Force

BY ROD LEE

You might say that Hunter Lavigne is literally rocketing toward a meteoric career in the newly formed U.S. Space

Force, on the wings of a celebratory sendoff event held for him at the Grange Hall in Charlton on June 25th.



Hunter Lavigne, right, newly commissioned in the U.S. Space Force, is joined by USAF Brig. Gen. Sean Collins prior to a ceremony at the Grange Hall in Charlton. Brig. Gen.'s Collins congratulatory remarks were a highlight of the event.

A graduate of Shepherd Hill and more recently Norwich University, where he was commissioned as an officer, Hunter, who

Looking on, and standing to shout "attention!" and offer a salute at one point, was Hunter's great grandfather Howard Seifert

**QUEEN**

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**SPACE FORCE**

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**QUEEN**

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transformer in the yard. She was electrocuted “and fell to the ground.” Anne and her sister were in the kitchen with forks in their hands and because of the electricity in the air could not let go of them until they ran to a neighbor’s house to call the doctor.

At the time, Ms. Vajcovec told Ms. Fontaine, there was no paper money, only gold, which Anne’s mother kept in her bra. When the bolt hit, the gold in her bra caused burns on her chest and she was hospitalized. Fortunately, she survived.

Still in reasonably good health, Ms. Vajcovec told her niece she is not afraid of dying. “You don’t know when it’s going to happen, but I am ready whenever my time comes,” she said. “I can’t wait to go to heaven where I will have nothing to worry about!”

Interviewed for this article on June 8th, Anne expressed gratitude for her daughter Sue, who has provided her with a spacious basement apartment in Sue and Chuck Hofeller’s home overlooking North Pond on Webster Lake. “She has the full downstairs,” Ms. Hofeller said.

Everyone who knows Anne Vajcovec is aware too that she had “a wonderful career as a surgical nurse,” as Ms. Hofeller puts it. “She was requested by many doctors. They nixed her orders to go overseas during World War II because they wanted her here.”

Anne met and married Marty Vajcovec, who saved her from a stormy relationship in California with her former fiancé.

“One day we were out at Watch Hill in Rhode Island sunbathing. That’s when Marty asked me to marry him,” Anne told Ms. Fontaine. “I thought to myself he will make a good hus-



Above, Anne on her throne at her birthday party, joined by her children Tom, Susan, John and Mark.



Anne with her daughter (and head cheerleader) Susan Hofeller.

band, and a good father. So I said okay, and that’s how it happened.” They were married for fifty-three years before Marty passed away. “It wasn’t long enough,” she said. “It should have been more.”

Sue Hofeller delights in her mom’s longevity, and the affection in which she is held by loved ones.

“Every day at 4:30 the cocktail bell on the porch rings,” Ms. Hofeller said. “When the grandchildren are here they say ‘grandma, is it time to ring the cocktail bell?’”

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# Xpressly Yours ... a letter from the editor

## Mark Scamman takes on those supermarket thieves...



BY ROD LEE

**H**ello, friends, a word about Mark Scamman, who some of you might remember as store manager of the Market Basket in the town of Oxford, until his recent retirement to Cape Cod, where he and his wife Amy are running a B&B.

As he was preparing to bring to a close his forty five-year career in the supermarket business, Mr. Scamman mentioned to me that he was planning to publish a book. I had no idea at the time what the subject matter would be; the assumption being that he would merely be reflecting on the vocation that helped him pay his way through college (the University of Lowell, where he earned a Bachelor's degree in Industrial Management) and that he then embraced as his chosen method of employment.

Turns out he wanted to write about shoplifting, a crime he was thoroughly familiar with.

With the release of Larceny in the Aisles/Stories from a Supermarket Manager, Mr. Scamman has not only shed new light on an age-old scourge of retailers everywhere, he has done so with the touch of someone who sees the humor in many of the incidents he encountered along the way.

Maybe this was not so true when they occurred; but, as is the case with police departments across the Commonwealth, they can be now, in looking at them in the rear-view mirror.

His book does in fact pay homage to members of the law enforcement community who are dealing with the same kind of misbehavior he saw from customers, day after day, month after month.

The cover of Larceny, designed by Destinee Almeida, and her illustrations inside, capture the hilarity

that so often accompanies attempts to pilfer product. Ms. Almeida's cover artwork depicts a man preparing to stuff a Jack Daniels whiskey bottle into his coat.

I have to admit, I am a sucker for the kind of stories Mr. Scamman shares in Larceny. A typical example comes not from him, but one of his store-manager colleagues.

Entitled "Bloody mess," it reads as follows:

*In the late 1970s, this future manager was bagging groceries while his store manager chatted with some regular customers seated on benches in front of the store.*

*While talking to one, the manager noticed blood was trickling down the side of the man's face. The customer was wearing a fedora hat, and the blood was slowly trickling down.*



Mark Scamman, retired from the Market Basket store in Oxford, and now an author.

"Are you okay?"

*The customer said yes and wiped the blood from his face. But it continued to trickle.*

*Concerned for the customer's health, the manager took the hat off the man's head to see where the blood was coming from. A package of steak was concealed under there. Its seal had broken, and the liquid inside (called purge) was the extent of his injury.*

Mark Scamman presents fifty largely comedic moments like the aforementioned over the course of approximately one

hundred eighty pages. In Chapter 25, entitled "Pecans for Pie," he describes an encounter with an elderly woman during the holidays—"a tough time of year for many families." A manager, he relates, noticed the woman put a bag of pecans in her purse in the baking aisle. "I was absolutely not going to have her arrested, but I also wanted to speak to her about stealing, even though she was older than me," Mr. Scamman writes. "We did not go to the office, but I pulled her aside to talk. I quietly asked if she forgot to pay for the pecans she had in her purse. [She] started to cry, and said she needed them for her pecan pie she was making for Thanksgiving. She couldn't afford to pay for them. The front-end manager and I were moved nearly to tears.

explains in the epilogue, "Thou Shalt Not Steal," is to point out that shoplifters should not get off unpunished—as, unfortunately, they so frequently do.

"Community restitution" or "community service" should be mandatory penalties, in his opinion.

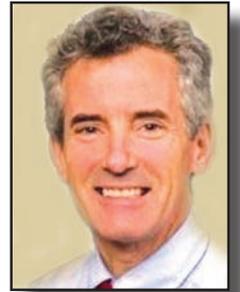
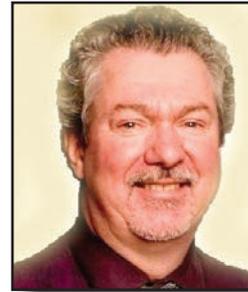
In the Introduction to Larceny, he says "during my career, I caught nearly one thousand shoplifters."

He knows, however, that there are more where they came from.

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**SPACE FORCE**

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Sr., an Army veteran of World War II who, at 104, is still spry and, as Hunter put it, “full of lots of cool stories.”

Hunter and his great grandfather enjoy a strong bond. “Making him proud gives me a feeling I can’t even describe,” Hunter, ramrod straight as he watched people come into the Grange Hall, said.

Like Hunter, Mr. Seif-

ert’s loved ones hold him close to their hearts, “first granddaughter” Ginger said, while waiting for the recognition of Hunter to start.

“We drove in from the Vineyard,” she said. “Today is going to be a pretty historic day. Grampa is always our first stop, once a month. Hunter’s sister Jaqualyn and her husband Rob Flynn are in the Air Force too. They are stationed in Montana.

“Grampa,” she said, referring to Mr. Seifert, “was presented with a golden cane” recently. “We have done Sunday dinners at his house here in Charlton forever. Grandma (Dorothy Seifert) died at age eighty-seven, sixteen years ago. They had three children together, Judy, Stanley and Howard Jr.”

Arriving to offer congratulations to Hunter, Brig. Gen. Collins, in meeting him for the first time and shaking his hand, said “you are a tall glass of water I see.”

In bestowing praise on Hunter for his choice of the U.S. Air Force and a military career, Brig. Gen. Collins said “I am so pleased to be in the company of greatness. It



Brig. Gen. Sean Collins, World War II Army veteran Howard Seifert Sr. and Mr. Seifert’s great grandson Hunter Lavigne enjoy a moment together in celebration of Hunter’s recent graduation from Norwich University.

is privilege to stand on the shoulders of those who went before us. Our veterans are precious. It is an honor and a privilege to be here.”

He then gave the freshly minted lieutenant a piece of the “coaching advice” that he in turn received as a young airman; which is, “I found out who gets the

work done is the enlisted corps. As a lieutenant,” he told his audience, “Hunter already has an awesome responsibility as an officer in the U.S. Space Force, which is only two years old. And he has grown up in the shadow of his great grandfather’s story.”

When it was time to exchange salutes, Hunter

returned the brigadier general’s and then said “I messed that up big-time!”

Brig. Gen. Collins laughed the remark off. “We are all family,” he said.

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# Strawberry fields forever, indeed, in the town of Dudley

BY ROD LEE

As signs placed at conspicuous locations around town attest, a Strawberry Festival hosted by Dudley Grange #163 happens “the third Thursday every June.”

o'clock “until all of the berries are gone,” as Dudley Grange #163 representatives put it.

The Strawberry Festival returned this June after a two-year hiatus, first because of Covid and then per order of the governor

cardboard trays filled with containers of strawberry shortcake.

“We hulled sixteen hundred pounds of strawberries on Wednesday,” Ms. Gillon said on Friday, June 17th. “We get the strawberries from Big Bunny in South-

from Big Bunny. We do our own whipped cream, hand-whipped with machines, and we haven't burned the motors of the machines out yet.”

Speaking of contests, Ms. Gillon said her own children took part in the



Part of the throng that gathered for Dudley Grange #163's Strawberry Festival.



Members of the Volpe family, Eugene, Sam, Joe and Hannah, emerge from the Dudley Grange Hall with the prized treat hundreds of people came for during Dudley Grange #163's annual Strawberry Festival on June 16th.

Which means that on the afternoon and evening of June 16, 2022, all roads literally led to Center Road near its intersection with Dudley Hill Road and in the general proximity of Nichols College and the Dudley Hill Golf Club.

A fixture in the town of Dudley for more than sixty years, the Strawberry Festival is not just about the season's most popular fruit. The event traditionally includes such components as a frog-jumping contest, live music, face painting, a Dudley Fire Department smoke house, vintage automobiles, a dunk tank, and the Black Tavern antiques and collectibles sale.

It runs from about four

in 2021. “We did a music series instead, last year, and we are doing that again this year, in July and August,” Karen Gillon, co-chair of the Strawberry Festival with her husband Ken, said, the morning after the event.

“We come every summer,” Joe Volpe of Webster said, speaking of members of his family who had joined hundreds in attendance for this year's version of the Strawberry Festival. Vehicles were parked wherever their operators could find space for blocks in all directions. At six o'clock the line for tickets was still long, while people who had already made an appearance could be seen walking along Center Road with

bridge. The strawberries are from California. This year eighteen Nichols College kids helped with the hulling. They were having a contest to see who could hull berries the fastest. They were wonderful.”

“The biscuits also come

frog-jumping contest “back in the day. “Kids bring their own frogs and all we ask is that they return them to where they got them. Ray Sullivan, a Dudley resident, is our go-to guy. He runs the frog-jumping contest. We give trophies to the win-

ners. My husband started a ‘be kind to the frogs’ initiative several years ago. The kids love the contest.”

Ms. Gillon said support for the Strawberry Festival comes from all quarters of the community. Dudley selectmen waive permits so people can park on the street. The Dudley Fire Department and Dudley Police Department play active roles. Nichols College assists with the parking. Grange members and volunteers shoulder much of the burden in staging a production that takes a lot of preparatory work. National Honor Society students from Shepherd

Hill High School, “without them, I don't know how we would do this,” she said.

Proceeds from the Strawberry Festival support “one, two or three scholarships to graduating seniors from area high schools,” she said.

“I can't believe we pull this off with the crew we have and volunteers,” Ms. Gillon said. The result is strong allegiance from residents of Dudley and nearby towns. “It's generational,” she said. “It's a huge undertaking.”

But well worth the effort.

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# North All-Stars prevail in game at Doyle Field

The Central Mass. North/South All-Star football game was held on Friday, June 17, at Doyle Field in Leominster. The All-Star team included players from South County and the Blackstone Valley.

South players included Tim Visbeek, Briant Johnson, Jon Carlos, John Mimawi, Ryan Boyce, Michael Nadeau, Colin Falconer, Trey Howe, Cam Ayotte, Brian Dillon, Kai Belanger, Matt Wildman, Alexander Siwik, Adam Hillerstrom, Bryce Patterson, Jordan Rivera, Noan Ostrowski, John

Furno, Trout Marnell, Charlie McMahon, Antoine Lacourt, Owen Fitzgerald, Andrew Lavoie, Joe Hennessey, Ricky Leach III, Nolan Legere, Kevin Cunningham, Kevin Paulino and Joe Maxim.

Assistants James Royster, Jimmy Nolan, James Small and Pete Lewis. The final score was North 14, South 3. Congratulations to all.

South All-Star coaches included coaches from Oxford: Head Coach Jeff Clarkson,

Photos by Sally Patterson. See more photos on our Facebook page.



Clockwise from far left: QB Cam Ayotte of Millbury; Bryce Patterson of Bartlett; Antoine Lacourt of Oxford; the captains at mid-field for the coin toss.

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Clockwise from above: Adam Hillerstrom of Grafton; Jim Himawi of Grafton; Bryce Patterson (#35) of Bartlett; Tim Visbeek of Northbridge; Colin Falconer (#15) of Northbridge; Ryan Boyce (#12) of Northbridge; the coaches.



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# Oxford Business Association, Troop 147 team up on gateway park

BY ROD LEE

Curious motorists must have wondered what kind of activity was brewing as they entered Oxford Center along Sutton St. the morning of June 4th. Gathered on a narrow

using a bobcat to grade off the parcel.

Mr. Rheault is vice president of the Oxford Business Association and an assistant scoutmaster with Troop 147. Together, the OBA and Troop 147 are turning the long-vacant parcel into a

crabapple trees, which will provide the site with “year-round color.” Plans also call for a walkway, benches, a gazebo and “maybe a share garden,” he said.

“This was kind of a void space since Valley Green left,” Matthew’s mother, Debi Lomuscio-Rosebrooks, said. “They distributed fertilizer. Ron Rheault asked us to help. This park is going to serve as a welcome to Oxford.”

Often operating without much fanfare, the Oxford Business Association with longtime businesspersons like Larry Crowley, Dan Prouty and Ron Rheault at the helm, has periodically stepped forward to take on community-betterment initiatives. “A good place to do business” signage around town, previous upkeep of the bandstand on the Town Common and a World War II commemorative book are indicative of the way the OBA has gotten involved, over the years.

A rail-trail project the OBA will be tackling in collaboration with the Oxford Conservation Commission is on the docket, Mr. Prouty and Mr. Rheault said.

Another book, dedicated to Korea and Vietnam-era veterans, was “60% done, then Covid hit,” Mr. Prouty said.

Many people are unaware of just how involved in civic life the OBA is, Mr. Prouty, who grew up in Oxford, said. “We have our meetings, we do a lot of stuff. Guys bring food to our office and we take it to the



Ron Rheault is a fixture with both the Oxford Business Association and Troop 147. Donations to the OBA in support of its work improving the town as a place to live and work are welcome; send these to Oxford Business Association, Box 65, Oxford MA 01540.



Troop 147’s Matthew Rosebrooks is helping spearhead creation of a gateway park in Oxford as his Eagle Scout project.

but deep lot on the north side of the street just east of the traffic light at the main intersection in town was a small contingent of worker bees, one of whom—Ron Rheault, retired from Rheault Construction—was

“gateway park” for the town of Oxford.

“It’s my Eagle Scout project,” Matthew Rosebrooks, 17, said. A high school student, Matthew was excited about plantings, including shrubs and dogwood and

food bank.”

The Oxford Business Association is always looking for new members to bolster its ranks, which have aged.

“A few years ago I was the young guy in the group,” Mr. Prouty said. “Fifteen years ago we had one hundred forty or more members. Now it’s fifty to sixty.”

The Oxford Business Association relies on relationships it develops with local enterprises to take on and

complete projects like the gateway park, the design for which was drawn up by Scott Baker of Charlton. “Wilson’s (Wilson Language Training Corp.)” is one of these partners. Robbins Garden Center is another, and IPG. Pine Sand & Grave and Lapierre Fence too.

“Robbins is often wonderful with us,” Ms. Lomuscio-Rosebrooks said, on site on June 4th.

Talking about what had been accomplished two days later, Mr. Rheault said “everything is planted, it looks good.”

All for the betterment of Oxford, Mr. Prouty said.

“For so many years this town thought it was Rodney Dangerfield,” he said.

Contact Rod Lee at [rodlee.1963@gmail.com](mailto:rodlee.1963@gmail.com) or 774-232-2999.

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## Food Truck Festival in Millbury back with a bang

BY ROD LEE

To say that the Millbury Redevelopment Authority's Food Truck Festival & Craft Fair came back with a bang after a brief hiatus because of Covid-19 would be an understatement.

"Absolutely fantastic, the best festival we've had,"

Leonard Mort of the MRA said. "The weather was incredible, it was almost like being set up on a frying pan! We had the most trucks ever, twenty, and thirty-two craft vendors. Our volunteers were twelve hours in the hot sun."

The event, the fifth annual, was held in the rear parking area of Millbury

High School on Martin St. on May 22nd and it had something for everyone including a variety of American and ethnic fare, entertainment and raffles.

Proceeds from the festival benefit projects the Millbury Redevelopment Authority takes on, like the handsome clock it recently placed in the center of town.

"We have several projects that have been suggested, four or so," Mr. Mort said. These will be discussed at the MRA's next meeting, in August.

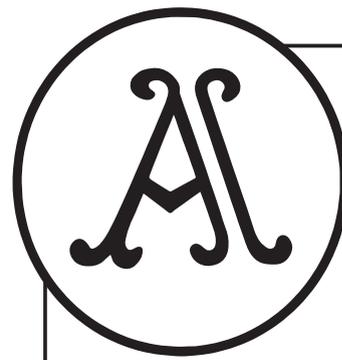
Mr. Mort was especially pleased that "a relative newcomer," Say Cheese, a Shrewsbury-based food truck, emerged as the People's Choice Best Food Truck for 2022.

Consisting of unpaid municipal employees, five members in all, the Millbury Redevelopment Authority was established in 1963 and raises money through donations from businesses and residents for community-betterment initiatives it tackles.

Submit your restaurant news for The Feisty Fork column to [rodlee.1963@gmail.com](mailto:rodlee.1963@gmail.com).



Len Mort of the Millbury Redevelopment Authority congratulates operators of the Say Cheese food truck, winner of the People's Choice award at the MRA's fifth annual Food Truck Festival & Craft Fair.



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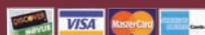
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# Happenings!

**NOTE:** Community bulletin board-type items are welcome for inclusion in the Happenings! section of the Xpress newspapers. Please allow enough lead time for publication. Email your calendar or event notice to [rodlee.1963@gmail.com](mailto:rodlee.1963@gmail.com).

## THROUGHOUT JULY

• “Beyond Blooms, Textures in Our Garden,” photography by Don McCallister, will be on display and available for sale all month at Booklovers’ Gourmet, 72 E. Main St., Webster. A meet-the-artist reception will be held on Saturday, July 23, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Viewing hours for the public are Tuesday-Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Wednesdays 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Call 508-949-6232 or email [deb@booklovers-gourmet.com](mailto:deb@booklovers-gourmet.com) for further info. A statement from the artist: “Look beyond the blooms and you’ll discover a never-ending variety of shoots and textures. And having a talented gardener, such as my wife, to design the garden helps. I hope this collection will inspire its viewers to look for unexpected scenery in our yards and in the natural world.”

## UPCOMING AT INDIAN RANCH IN WEBSTER:

July 8, Get The Led Out; July 9, Scott McCreery; July 17, Little River Band; July 23, Ann Wilson of Heart; July 24, Three Dog Night; July 30, The Pike Hairfest; July 31, TESLA; August 5, “Weird” Al Yankovic; August 6, Collective Soul and Switchfoot; August 7, Lost 80s Live; August 12, ABBA The Concert; August 13, Badfish; August 20, Home Free; September 2, Extreme. Tickets are available at [www.indianranch.com](http://www.indianranch.com), by calling 1-800-514-3849 or at the Indian Ranch Box Office.

## FRIDAY, JULY 8

• Static performs at Andy’s Neighborhood Center, 9 Frederick St., Webster, 7:00-10:00 p.m.

## SATURDAY, JULY 9

• A Night of Zeppelin: A Led Zeppelin Tribute Band, comes to Douglas Orchard and Farm, 36 Locust St., Douglas, as part of the facility’s Summer Concert Series, 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. Admission is \$10 cash per person 16-and-older, kids get in free, no rain date. Go to [douglasorchardandfarm.com](http://douglasorchardandfarm.com) for more info.  
• The Dudley Grange presents “The

Great American Band Reunion,” a fourteen-piece show band offering Rock & Roll, Blues and R&B from the 60s and 70s, as part of its Summer Music Series, at 6:00 p.m. on the lawn at the Grange, 139 Center Road, Dudley. Rain date is July 16. This is a free concert. Bring a lawn chair. Water and soda will be available along with homemade goodies from the Grange’s bake table. This event is sponsored by the Dudley Cultural Council and the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

## SUNDAY, JULY 10

• The New England Country Music Club will host a dance featuring the Rachel Landry Band at the Progressive Club, 18 Whitin St., Uxbridge. Doors open at 12:30 p.m., live music 1:00-5:00 p.m. [www.facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub](http://www.facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub).

## WEDNESDAY, JULY 13

• A Blue Shades luncheon concert will take place at the Asa Waters Mansion, 123 Elm St., Millbury, from noon to 1:00 p.m. Free admission.

## THURSDAY, JULY 14

• ValleyCast presents Blackstone Valley Bluegrass as part of its summer concert series, 6:00 p.m., at the Whitin Mill complex, 50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville. In the event of rain the show will move indoors to the Singh Performance Center.

## THURSDAY, JULY 14

• 4Ever Fab, a Beatles tribute band, will perform at the Millbury Senior Center, One River St., from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Call 508-865-9154 for more info.

## FRIDAY, JULY 15

• Joe Cicero performs at Andy’s Neighborhood Center, 9 Frederick

St., Webster, 7:00-10:00 p.m.

## SATURDAY, JULY 16

• The town of Northbridge’s 250th anniversary festivities will kick off with a parade from the elementary school on Crescent St. at 10:00 a.m. and conclude with fireworks at the middle school on Linwood Ave. Gates will open at 6:00 p.m. for the pyrotechnics show, which will be preceded by activities for the whole family: food trucks,

First Congregational Church, 148 W. Main St., Millbury. Sue Dion will provide instruction in the art of acrylic painting in Fellowship Hall at 6:30 p.m. Paint “A Moose in Moonlight.” Cold beverages will be available. Bring a snack. Register for this event at [suedionart.com](http://suedionart.com).

## THURSDAY, JULY 21

• Icons & Legends Concert, including a Maine Lobster Bake in York, is being presented by the North-

sive Club, 18 Whitin St., Uxbridge. Doors open at 12:30 p.m., live music 1:00-5:00 p.m. [www.facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub](http://www.facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub).

## THURSDAY, JULY 28

• ValleyCast presents Michelle Canning as part of its summer concert series, 6:00 p.m., Whitin Mill complex, 50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville. In the event of rain the show will move indoors to the Singh Performance Center.



“Texture,” by Don McCallister, whose photographic artwork is being exhibited throughout the month of July at Booklovers’ Gourmet in Webster.

music, face painting, potato-sack races and more.

• Douglas Orchard and Farm, 36 Locust St., Douglas, welcomes Araxas—a Santana Tribute Band, for a show at 36 Locust St., Douglas, 5:30-8:00 p.m. Part of the Douglas Orchard and Farm’s Summer Concert Series. Admission is \$10 per person 16-and-older, kids get in free, no rain date. Visit [douglasorchardandfarm.com](http://douglasorchardandfarm.com) for more info.

## TUESDAY, JULY 19

• Paint Night is back at Millbury’s

bridge Senior Center. Cost is \$110 per person. Sign up with Amy at the front desk. Call 508-234-2002 for more info.

• Enjoy a Far from Eden summer concert at the Asa Waters Mansion, 123 Elm St., Millbury, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Free admission.

• ValleyCast presents the Country Wild Heart Band as part of its summer concert series, 6:00 p.m., Whitin Mill complex, 50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville. In the event of rain the show will move indoors to the Singh Performance Center.

## SATURDAY, JULY 23

• Exit 17th Band, a Rock & Roll Band, will perform at part of Douglas Orchard and Farm’s Summer Concert Series, 36 Locust St., Douglas, 5:30-8:00 p.m. Admission is \$10 per person 16-and-older. Kids get in free, no rain date.

## SUNDAY, JULY 24

• The New England Country Music Club will host a dance featuring The Farm Hands at the Progress-

## FRIDAY, JULY 29

• Rockwell Valentine Jazz Trio performs at Andy’s Neighborhood Center, 9 Frederick St., Webster, 7:00-10:00 p.m.

## SATURDAY, JULY 30

• Douglas Orchard and Farm’s Summer Concert Series continues with a performance by Petty Larceny, a Tom Petty Tribute Band, 5:30-8:00 p.m., 36 Locust St., Douglas. \$10 cash per person, kids are admitted free, no rain date. Visit [douglasorchardandfarm.com](http://douglasorchardandfarm.com) for more details.

## THURSDAY, AUGUST 4

• The Hip Swayers will perform a summer concert at the Asa Waters Mansion, 123 Elm St., Millbury, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Free admission.

• ValleyCast presents Ash & Eric (formerly The Promise is Hope), 6:00 p.m., Whitin Mill complex, 50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville. In the event of rain the show will move indoors to the Singh

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The Hip Swayers will deliver a dose of Americana at the Asa Waters Mansion in downtown Millbury on Saturday, July 30.

Performance Center.

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 6**

• 4 Ever Fab, a Beatles Tribute Band, will perform as part of Douglas Orchard and Farm's Summer Concert series, 36 Locust St., Douglas, 5:30-8:00 p.m. Admission is \$10

per person for those 16-and-older. Kids get in free, no rain date. Go to douglasorchardandfarm.com for more info.

• "Donny and the Coyotes," a seven-piece Rock & Roll band, will perform on the lawn at the Dudley Grange, 139 Center Road,

Dudley, at 7:00 p.m. Rain date is August 13th. This event is part of the Grange's Summer Music Series and is free to the public. Bring a lawn chair. Water and soda will be available along with homemade

**HAPPENINGS!**  
continued on page 12

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July 17 • 1PM: **IRB LITTLE RIVER BAND** with special guest **WHITNEY DOUCET & MOONSHINE BAND**

July 23 • 1PM: **AN AFTERNOON WITH Ann Wilson Hearts** of The Amazing Race

July 24 • 1PM: **THREE DOG NIGHT**

July 27 • 6PM: **MUSIC WORCESTER presents PHOENIX RISING: SILKROAD ENSEMBLE WITH RHIANNON GIDDENS**

July 30 • 12PM: **100% THE PIKE Hairfest 2022**

July 31 • 1PM: **THE PIKE LET'S GET REAL! TESLA** with special guests **Faded Leaf Festival** and **SPIN MACHINE**

August 5 • 7:30PM: **WEIRD AL YANKOVIC THE UNFORTUNATE RETURN OF THE RADICAL GUSLY SELF-INDULGENT ILL-ADVISED VANITY TOUR** with special guests **ROCK** and **EMO PHILIPS**

August 6 • 1PM: **COLLECTIVE S • U • L SWITCHFOOT**

August 12 • 7PM: **THIS IS THE CLOSEST TO ABBA YOU'LL EVER GET! ABBA THE CONCERT A TRIBUTE TO ABBA**

August 13 • 1PM: **BAD FISH SUMMER TOUR 2022**

August 20 • 1PM: **ACAPELLA COUNTRY SENSATIONS Home Free**

August 26 • 7PM: **GET THE LEAD OUT A CELEBRATION OF "THE MIGHTY ZEP"**

September 2 • 7PM: **EXTREME**

September 3 • 1PM: **AARON LEWIS AND THE STATELINERS**

September 10 • 12PM: **THE PIKE ROK FEST 2022**

September 11 • 12PM: **LOCAL COUNTRY FEST**

October 8 • 1PM: **JAMEY JOHNSON LIVE IN CONCERT**

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SUNSET CRUISE	JULY 22 - 7:15PM
LAKE TOUR	JULY 23 - 10AM
LAKE TOUR	JULY 24 - 10AM
SUNSET CRUISE	JULY 29 - 7:15PM
LAKE TOUR	JULY 31 - 10AM
MARGARITAVILLE CRUISE	AUGUST 4 - 6:30PM
LAKE TOUR	AUGUST 6 - 10AM
LAKE TOUR	AUGUST 7 - 10AM
LAKE TOUR	AUGUST 12 - 4PM
LAKE TOUR	AUGUST 13 - 10AM
THE PIKE "BOOT SCOOTIN BOOGIE CRUISE"	AUGUST 13 - 6:30PM
LAKE TOUR	AUGUST 20 - 10AM

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [WWW.INDIANRANCH.COM](http://WWW.INDIANRANCH.COM)**

The Indian Ranch Box Office is open Thursday through Monday, 10AM - 4PM. Tickets are also available by phone: 1-800-514-ETIX (3849). All events are rain or shine. No refunds. For ticketing and group sales, contact [tickets@indianranch.com](mailto:tickets@indianranch.com) or call 508.943.3871. For event booking, contact [banquets@samuelslaters.com](mailto:banquets@samuelslaters.com). Indian Ranch is less than an hour's drive from Boston, Providence, Hartford and Springfield. Indian Ranch is located at 200 Gore Road in Webster, MA.

# Nichols conducts first-ever public safety academy

Nichols College recently hosted its first-ever Public Safety Command Academy, designed to connect New England public safety leaders and students for in-depth, first-responder

training and experiential learning. Throughout the week-long, in-residency program, students were given the opportunity to engage with and be mentored by local law enforcement of-

icers from Chelsea, New Bedford, Fall River, Maynard, Haverhill, Montana Highway Patrol and the Rhode Island Department of Corrections.

Experiential learning was embedded in the curriculum whereby students conducted case study analysis, student discussion, practical exercises, in-class mindfulness meditation practices as well as other team-building practical exercises that took place outside.

Each participant learned theoretical and operational applications of motivation, teamwork, problem solving, decision making, transformational leadership, culture, leadership analytics, ethic decision making, emotional intelligence, mindfulness and resiliency, implicit bias, diversity, DISC Personality and the Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team framework.

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## An Invitation

The Town of Webster exists because Samuel Slater settled here, brought technology, built factories, created villages of families who came for a better way of life and helped the community grow and prosper.

In honor of Slater's contribution to the creation and growth of Webster, the Samuel Slater Experience, 31 Ray St., invites residents by street address to experience the birth of Webster with free admission on scheduled Sundays from noon to 4 p.m.\*

**Sunday, July 17 - Free admission for residents of:**

Arkwright Rd	Dragon Rd	Harry's Way	Pond Ct
Bigelow Rd	East Main St	Hartley St	Pontiac Ave
Bonnette Pl	Emil St	James St	Racicot Ave
Brodeur Ave	Genevieve Ln	Normandy Ave	Riverside Dr
Crystal St	Girard St	Oak Tree Ln	Vecchia St
Didonato Ave	Golden Hts	Old Worcester Rd	Victory Dr
			Worcester Rd

**Sunday, July 24 - Free admission for residents of:**

Aldrich St	Main St	Plasse Ct	Tracy Ct
Church Ct	Market St	Railroad Ave	Upland Ave
Davis St	Mill St	Slater St	Village Way
Day St	North Main St	South Main St	Wakefield St
Frederick St	Pearl Ave	Starzec Dr	Wall St
Hall St	Pearl St	Stoughton Ave	

**Sunday, July 31 - Free admission for residents of:**

Barnes St	Chase Ave	George St Ext	Linwood St	River Ct
Boyden St	Elm St	High St	Maple St	School St
Boyden St Ext	Foster St	Hill St	Mt Pleasant St	Snow St
Brook St	George St	Joyce St	Park St	Summer St
				Valley St

**MORE STREETS/DATES TO BE ANNOUNCED**

\*Two free admissions per household. Cannot be combined with any other coupon or offer. Address ID required. Samuel Slater Experience closes at 4 p.m. Therefore latest admission time is 3 p.m.

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 31 Ray Street, Webster • Phone 508-461-2955  
[www.samuel Slater Experience.org](http://www.samuel Slater Experience.org)

## HAPPENINGS!

continued from page 11

goodies from the Grange's bake table. This concert is sponsored by the Dudley Cultural Council and the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 8**  
 • The New England Country Music Club will host a dance featuring the Rustic Country Band at the Progressive Club, 18 Whitin St., Uxbridge. Doors open at 12:30 p.m., live music 1:00-5:00 p.m. [www.facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub](http://www.facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub).

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 9**  
 • Judy Saves the Day, a puppet show, will take place at the Asa Waters Mansion, 123 Elm St., Millbury, from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. Free admission.

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 11**  
 • ValleyCast presents the Claffin Hill Symphony Orchestras Summer Wind, 6:00 p.m., Whitin Mill complex, 50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville. In the event of rain the show will move indoors to the Singh Performance Center.

**FRIDAY, AUGUST 12**  
 • Evan Wood Trio performs at Andy's Neighborhood Center, 9 Frederick St., Webster, 7:00-10:00 p.m.



Michelle Canning will perform at the Whitin Mill complex in Whitinsville on Thursday, July 28 as part of ValleyCast's summer concert series.

offered by the Northbridge Senior Center. Show and a buffet lunch are included at a cost of \$110 per person. Sign up with Amy at the front desk. Call 508-234-2002 for more info.

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 18**  
 • ValleyCast presents Le'Mixx Band, 6:00 p.m., Whitin Mill complex, 50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville. In the event of rain the show will move indoors to the Singh Performance Center.

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 25**  
 • ValleyCast presents Grayson Ty, 6:00 p.m., Whitin Mill complex, 50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville. In the

Poirier at auburnmuseum@verizon.net, or stop by the museum Tuesdays or Saturdays between 9:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1**  
 • ValleyCast presents The Eagles Experience, 6:00 p.m., Whitin Mill complex, 50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville. In the event of rain the show will move indoors to the Singh Performance Center.

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7**  
 • The Northbridge Senior Center is offering a "Lake Winnepesaukee Cruise & Castle in the Clouds Estate Tour," including lunch at Harts Turkey Farm, for \$151 per



The music of Tom Petty will be showcased when the band Petty Larceny performs at Douglas Orchard & Farm on Saturday, July 30.

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 13**  
 • Counterfeit Cash, a Johnny Cash Tribute Band, will perform at Douglas Orchard and Farm, 36 Locust St., Douglas, 5:30-8:00 p.m. Admission is \$10 per person 16-and-older, kids get in free, no rain date. Go to [douglasorchardandfarm.com](http://douglasorchardandfarm.com) for further details.

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 17**  
 • Taking it to the Streets: The Ultimate Doobie Brothers Tribute Show, will be performed in Plymouth, New Hampshire at the Flying Monkey Theatre—a trip

event of rain the show will move indoors to the Singh Performance Center.

**FRIDAY, AUGUST 26**  
 • Joe Cicero performs at Andy's Neighborhood Center, 9 Frederick St., Webster, 7:00-10:00 p.m.

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 27**  
 • The Auburn Historical Society & Museum presents the first annual Parking Lot Craft Fair, 41 South St., Auburn, 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., rain or shine. For more information or to reserve a spot contact Helen

person. Sign up with Amy at the front desk. Call 508-234-2002 for more info.

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9**  
 • Infinite Groove performs at Andy's Neighborhood Center, 9 Frederick St., Webster, 7:00-10:00 p.m.

# Town of Auburn rules at Takeover Game at Polar Park

Auburn residents turned out in force on June 14 for a special Auburn Town Takeover Game at Polar Park, giving the community the lead in the Town Takeover competition with seven towns left to make an appearance, according to Alexis Dill, public relations coordinator for the Worcester Red Sox.

The town producing the largest attendance receives a trophy and other forms of recognition later in the season, Ms. Dill said.

It was also Rich Gedman Bobblehead Night, and 2008 Boston Celtics NBA champion Glen “Big Baby” Davis made an appearance and threw out a ceremonial first pitch.

Fallen Auburn and Leicester Police Officer Ronald Tarentino, whose selflessness and compassion inspired his family to start a charity in his honor in 2018, was remembered. Officer Tarentino’s son Spencer threw out a ceremonial first pitch. Five dollars of every

ticket purchased using the Town Takeovers link went directly to this fund, for a total of \$855.

More than three hundred seventy five students and staff from the Auburn Public Schools were present.

Four of Auburn’s Home-town Heroes, who helped guide the town through the pandemic were honored: Auburn Fire Chief Stephen Coleman, Auburn Assistant Health Director Eileen Alexander, Auburn Public Schools Nurse Leah

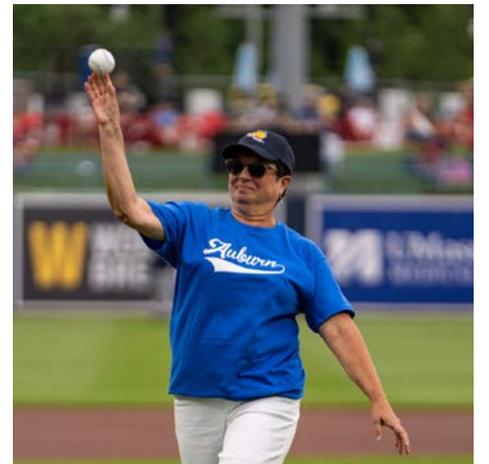
Gauthier and Auburn Police Officer Jon O’Brien.

Auburn High School sophomore Kweku Akese performed the National Anthem.

Auburn resident Amalia Zorena presented the game ball to the mound.

The night of June 14 belonged to town of Auburn residents, at Polar Park.

*Photos courtesy of the WooSox*



## CHIEF'S CORNER

[swojnar@dudleypolice.com](mailto:swojnar@dudleypolice.com)

# Counterfeit Currency

BY CHIEF  
STEVEN J. WOJNAR  
DUDLEY POLICE  
DEPARTMENT

Modern computer technology has been used to falsify several documents including money, driver’s licenses, and vehicle inspection stickers. We have encountered several instances in recent years where counterfeit currency was passed

off as real. I was asked to provide some information on the penalties for this type of offense.

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 267 Section 12 is the law regarding counterfeit currency. It states in part, “Whoever brings into this commonwealth or has in his possession a false, forged or counterfeit bill or note... with intent to utter or pass the same or to render

the same current as true, knowing the same to be false, forged or counterfeit, shall be punished...” When these documents are passed off as true, it is larceny of the goods and / or services. A violation of this law is a felony charge, regardless of the value of the bills or documents used. Even a false \$1 bill amounts to a felony. The penalties for violation include imprisonment in

the state prison for not more than five years, or by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars and imprisonment in jail for not more than one year.

Anyone engaging in this activity is assuming a huge risk. The potential penalties should discourage people from engaging in this action. This is another example as to why it is better do things the right way than risk the serious

consequences.

For those still seeking vaccination or COVID related information, it can be found at [www.dudleyma.gov](http://www.dudleyma.gov) or by calling 508-949-8036. During these challenging times, we, at the Dudley Police Department, greatly appreciate the support we receive from our community.

Thanks again for your questions and comments. Please send them to me at

the Dudley Police Department 71 West Main St. Dudley, Ma. 01571 or email at [swojnar@dudleypolice.com](mailto:swojnar@dudleypolice.com). Opinions expressed in this weekly column are those of Chief Wojnar only and unless clearly noted, do not reflect the ideas or opinions of any other organization or citizen.



## LIVING WITH LUKE

amyleclaire@hotmail.com

# Luke's personality emerges; tales from the fox den

BY AMY LECLAIRE

Luke Valentino, at just over four months, is growing up before our eyes. I could write about how nicely he's acclimated to our family's routine or how he's already learned to swim, and walk on a leash. I could write about how he sits and lowers his head to the girls at the bus stop, adopting a child-like gentleness while he identifies with them (you're small, playful and present just like me – let's be friends!) I could write about his accomplishments over the past four months, but there's something more noteworthy about Luke, something worthy of a mention.

His dog personality is simply irresistible! "Who Luke is" is so much more than "what Luke does." Every dog I've owned has had unique traits; quirks and special tendencies that have left a tattoo on my heart. Max was my carefree mongrel who followed me to school every morning. "Go home, Max!" I can still hear the chants of my neighborhood friends. Max did not go home. Max, a dog of the 70's, chose his own path. Duke was my massive German shepherd. He was macho and reserved, a 90's man who carried a log around in the yard. Lincoln was The King, the inspiration for this very column, the robust athlete of a dog with paws as big as his heart. After he passed, I couldn't imagine loving another dog again.

I held off for some time, until my heart began to swell with longing. I missed the happy wiggle. I missed walking up the basement stairs to be greeted with the elation of a sibling parted at birth with her twin—to finally reunite at the airport

of our home. A dog's love is unconditional and constant. They know you. They see you. They love and forgive you. I missed all that a dog brings. Never would I have imagined that a puppy named Luke Valentino was about to bring even more with his new brand of love.

"What's that, Luke?"

I follow the path of his gaze while we sit together on the front steps. Luke's latest study happens to be an ant, one foolishly tiny yet surprisingly quick.

The ant seems to sense my puppy's overbearing glare yet—caught in an ironic defense—the creature is too small to be caught. Luke stretches a slow paw across his moving body, but fails to grip the bug. Even more promising; he is more interested in watching the ant fumble along a groove than he is in killing it. Luke, otherwise known as Professor Luke, is the most curious and intelligent puppy I've ever owned.

"How is it possible, Mom, for a living thing to be so small?" He looks up at me for a split second to acknowledge the discovery, the mystery that is the ant.

"That's an ant, Luke."

The teacher in me points out the obvious while my puppy continues to watch and learn. His curiosity and "chill" temperament are qualities I've come to adore. He seems to study the way the world works and, alternately, lets me know when it's not working.

A hanging set of "door knob" bells designed to teach a pup how to "tap and ring" to go pee outside are no exception. I hung them during early training stages. Luke barked with the fury of a Chihuahua. I went on to explain my reasoning to a pup, perhaps, too intelligent for his own good. "Look, Luke. If you tap the bells (I demonstrated) you can tell Mommy you have to go pee-pee." My aim to teach a lesson was not lost on Luke.

His bark faded to a grumble. He loves to learn. He aims to please. He simply didn't want to do either with the aid of bells. He dug in his puppy heels, and barked some more. "Those clinkers don't belong on a door! You can achieve the same result supervising me more closely!" I took the set off and let them fall to the ground. I

eclectic mix of dogs: There is Oscar, a bashful Dachshund-Chihuahua mix; Lexi, a dainty Rescue who loves to play chase; Maui, a bossy Frenchie who makes her role in the group clear; and Okemo, a regal Husky with ice blue eyes and a territorial stride.

"My name is Luke Valentino!" Luke fit right in. He



Keeping up with the big guys.

took the jingle out of their jangle, hoping to appease my skeptical pup. He inspected them with a peculiar nose; poking the bells, backing off, and grumbling with irritation. "Let's put them away, Luke." The bells have long since become a play toy.

Luke has become a star student in our family, seated comfortably "at his spot" with an inquisitive bear cub face. "What's today's lesson going to be about?" One lesson happened to be about how other dogs walk on a leash. Luke had been sitting outside on the front steps one morning doing what he loves—watching. There were fluttering birds, skittering squirrels and, more pertinently, dogs of all shapes and size strolling by. He narrowed his gaze and glanced up at me. "The doggies are going for a walk, Luke." I capitalized on another teachable moment. "See how they don't bite their leashes." He broke into a miniature puppy smile. "I think I can manage that." My dog training wheels began to turn.

"Hey! Do you mind if we catch up with you?" Shamelessly, I invited myself to join the 8:00 a.m. dog walking group. My puppy needed friends. He needed to interact with dogs that don't think like him.

The Dog Moms welcomed us to walk with their

as wild animals are. Still, they were wild, and caused a stir. "Did anyone notice the chicken feathers? I think the fox are back. Whose house are they at now?"

My concern lied on the safety of my pup. What if little Luke (under twenty pounds back then) had simply wanted to play with pups unmistakably his own size? He had been more and more drawn to the fox den; wandering closer and closer to the forbidden area. His curiosity, I feared, could kill him. What if the parents had come home to find a zooming pup in the mix of their family dynamic? Worse, what if Daddy Fox, clever and wise, tried to lure my pup to his crib for a tenderloin feast?

I hauled the pitchfork out of the shed and set it down with the force of a character from a Steven King novel. I even made eye contact with Daddy Fox. He stood pensive and thin, standing twenty feet away from me to protect his young while I gave him a piece of my mind. "Go Away."

My measure, even in its grand audacity, proved no comparison to Luke's confrontation with Daddy Fox. The incident, captured through the eyes and care of my son, Ben, has brought life to a family folktale, a story told and retold about the adventures of a protective pup and a sly fox.

Luke had been loose in the yard when Daddy Fox dashed across our driveway. All training bets were off for a three-month-old puppy who had grown protective of his yard. "You don't belong!" He barked and shot across the street after the fox. Ben followed and supervised an interaction that took place atop the hill of my good neighbor's lawn. Both animals, in ruthless opposition, stopped and stared at each other, a mere fifteen feet between them. Daddy Fox hissed. Little Luke barked and barked some more. He refused to back down. He lowered his puppy voice to that of a huskier, older dog. He stood his ground, unaware of his miniature size yet innately conditioned to protect his family. He puffed out his puppy mane, and did his job. Had the fox discerned the puppy in the puff? Perhaps, but he still ran off, his fluff of a tail tucked between his legs. Ben was able to catch

Luke in a follow-up race, and relieve himself of a plausible alternate scenario: a horrifying Choke Out between Fox and Puppy.

The incident had me spooked. A few days later, I opened the front door to haul in groceries. I placed them on the counter then went back outside to chase after Luke, who had dashed outside when I came in. "Luke!" I called his name, but he didn't come back (such was out of character for my rule-abiding pup). I ran to the back yard. My heart pounded. I scanned the fox den area. An eerie quiet surrounded my yard. I moved to the other side of the house. Still, no Luke.

Visions of a slinking fox returning to his den caved in on me. "He just wanted to play with your pups. He won't hurt them." Crazy enough, I found myself persuading the fox to let go of my pup. I began to sweat. I cried out his name some more. "Luke, come!" I jogged around my entire house a few more times. Finally, I decided to go back inside and come up with a plan, a Call Out to the community.

"Luke!!!" There he stood wiggling and smiling up at me. He had never left the house! "Momma, I heard you calling and calling my name! I'm right here! Is everything okay?" I kneeled down, picked him up and flattened him to my belly like a frog (our signature hug). He licked my entire face as he always does and I felt his little heart pump with pride. "Oh, Luke—I thought you..."

He smiled innocently, as puppies do. "I've been here the whole time, Momma. I heard you calling my name. I tried to find you, but I was door-blocked."

"I thought you—" I closed my eyes, truly grateful for my own mistake. "Never mind, Luke."

The fox story, like all things involving Luke, came with a happy ending, and, thankfully, the family seems to have moved on.

\*Please note – my own family has since taken several training and safety measures to keep Luke safe and protected in our yard!

Stay tuned for more on Living with Luke.

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THE CAR DOCTOR

jpaul@aanortheast.com

# Jeep Wrangler a good summer and winter vehicle ... but ...



BY JOHN PAUL

**Q.** I was wondering if people hire you to find vehicles for them. If so, how does that process work? I am looking for a relatively inexpensive Jeep Wrangler for the beach. If you do not, do you have any leads? Favorite websites? Any help will help.

**A.** There are car brokers who search for vehicles (not me, perhaps a second career). Today new and used cars are still in short supply and people are holding onto their current vehicle longer than any time in history. The Jeep Wrangler is a fun summer and winter vehicle and also holds its value longer than many SUVs. If I was looking, I would check Jeep forums, Facebook

pages, and websites such as iSeeCars, CarGurus and AutoTrader. Jeeps can also be prone to rust issues, transmission and transfer case failure and any used Jeep should be checked by a good repair shop prior to purchase.

**Q.** I have a problem that I hope you can help me with. I have a 2019 Toyota Highlander. About a year ago, it started having a problem with the rear hatchback door. Sometimes when I press the button to open it, it begins to open about one foot or so but then stops. Sometimes I am unable to get it opened or closed but after a few tries it does. I brought it to the dealer who said they ran a diagnostic test but tells me everything looks okay.

**A.** I would start by erasing the vehicle computer memory (the equivalent of a computer reboot). Start with disconnecting the battery and connect the cable ends together for 15 seconds. This will clear any memory functions (including radio presets and seat memory). Now you will need to re-program the lift gate. With the lift gate fully open push and hold the close button

until it beeps four times, and the lift gate closes. This will reset the system. You will also need to reset the auto up and down feature of the windows. This is also simple, open the driver's window fully, now close the window and hold the up button for a few seconds this should reset the automatic controls.

**Q.** I have owned a 2010 VW EOS since 2012. It had about 57,000 miles on it and is great running condition. In the years that I've owned it, I have had the convertible top repaired a number of times due to failure to open or close and/or water leakage. The dealership I had covered the cost of these repairs because the EOS was still under warranty. We moved to a location that was very far away and began using another VW dealership for repairs and general servicing. The top had to be repaired about three or four times because it would stop going up and down or leaked repeatedly and had to be brought in to be fixed. These repairs were very expensive, but I was able to deal with it. Finally, I brought the EOS in due to leakage and of the opening and closing of the top

again. The dealership kept my car for about a week and finally called me and asked that I come in and discuss what needed to be done. When I got there, he told me that the entire top had to be replaced to the tune of \$15,000 and would not be covered. The top does not work, and it still leaks.

**A.** There have been many technical service bulletins about that roof, which when it works correctly is a mechanical marvel. I have seen many seal leaks to the roof so it won't go up or down in hot weather. It is very complicated with servos motors and computers, but for the life of me I don't know why you would replace the steel roof when there are so many other parts to check. I would ask the VW dealer if they could contact a VW field engineer and see if they can offer a better solution than spending more on the roof than the value of the car.

**Q.** My 2009 Chevy Silverado needs the passenger side upper control arm replaced according to the local garage mechanic. I have been out of the shade-tree mechanic practice for years and so am

confused. Should I replace both the left and right upper control arms and ball joints? The mechanic says in order to save me money, only the one side upper needs replacement. Also, I thought that the lower control arms and ball joints bear most of the weight of the vehicle so that is most likely to go bad. Any thoughts?

**A.** You are correct in the suspension style used in your truck, the lower control arms and ball joints carry the majority of the load. It is also typical the right will wear more rapidly since the right-side tire is in the gutter of the road. Considering the cost of parts and labor these days I see no reason only to repair what is wrong now. I would also thank your mechanic for looking out for both your safety and wallet.

**Q.** While waiting for various traffic lights I hear people in cars next to mine also waiting for the light, turning on and off their cars. Is the purpose of turning on and off the car to save gas and do you recommend I do this to save gas?

**A.** Many cars made in the past few years use an idle stop feature that when certain conditions are met, will stop the engine to save fuel. These cars will typically have more robust battery and starter. In your car to save fuel, keep tires properly inflated, accelerate gradually and apply the brakes gently. Easy on the gas and brake saves fuel, stay at the speed limit and if you frequent coffee and other fast food drive throughs park the car and walk in. These small changes in driving habits have proven to save gas and improve overall miles per gallon.

*John Paul is AAA Northeast's Car Doctor. He has over 40 years' experience in the automotive business and is an ASE-certified master technician. He will answer readers' questions each week. You can find the Car Doctor podcast at www.johnfpaul.podbean.com or on other popular podcast sites. Email your car questions to jpaul@aanortheast.com. Follow John on Twitter @johnfpaul and friend him on Facebook at mrjohnfpaul.*

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REAL ESTATE

# A closer look at what realtors/real estate agents make



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

Buying or selling a home is one of the biggest financial transactions that many people make in their entire lives. Realtors/real estate agents work with buyers and sellers during this process by getting their clients the best deal possible. A lot goes into the job, and there are many things to consider when determining how much real estate agents make.

How do realtors/real estate agents make their money? Most real estate agents work on commission and receive a set percentage of a home's total sale price upon completing the sale. Therefore, an agent's annual income can vary based on how many homes they sell. Market fluctuations and full-time vs. part-time hours affect income range, but there are additional factors that impact how real estate agents make their money.

Shrewd negotiation skills maximize the value of a sale for clients and set the real estate agent apart from their competitors. Furthermore, real estate negotiation skills take on a whole new meaning in understanding the emotional components of both sides during any deal. Effective communication and responsiveness is a realtors/real estate agent's craft

when assessing their clients' motivations and those of the other side.

Experience may be one of the best indicators of how much a realtor/real estate agent makes. Anyone can search home listings online, but an experienced realtor/real estate agent will likely know more about local neighborhoods and building codes, making them more marketable to clients.

An experienced real estate agent shouldn't have any issues checking off all the small details and marks on a sale contract, which also maximizes the deal value and, therefore, their commission.

How much do realtors/real estate agents make? This question covers a considerable range and therefore has a few different answers. As of May 2021, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates the average annual income for real estate agents is \$61,480. That's \$29.56 per hour, given a standard 2080-hour work year. However, most realtor/real estate agents have considerable control over their hours, and their dependence on commission leads to real estate agents having a wide spread of income.

Commissions generally vary from 5% to 6%, and

the amount may be split among different parties including the buyer and seller's agent. The median price for home sales in the U.S. for 2021 was \$346,900. That leaves real estate agents with \$17,345 to \$20,814 per home sale. According to that same report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 10% of real estate agents made less than \$28,270. The bottom 25% brought in \$35,880 or less. The median income was \$48,340.

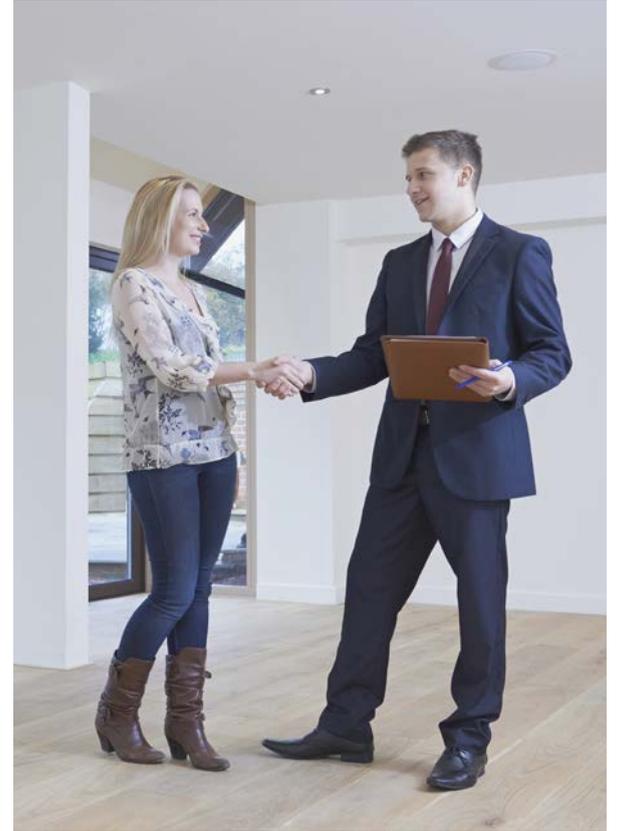
Most people probably agree that location is critical in how much real estate agents make. The top states for real estate agents are:

State, annual mean wage, Massachusetts \$90,390, New York \$81,020, Wyoming \$80,580.

Is being a realtor/real estate agent worth it? Numbers don't lie, and these financial statistics certainly make the profession seem worthwhile. However, there are additional aspects to look at a little more closely.

Realtors/real estate agents may have a large earning potential, but market fluctuations can directly impact those earnings.

Agents only make money when they sell houses, so any housing market crisis could see them out of a job. A prime example of



this happened during the 2008 housing market crash, with over 10% of real estate agents losing their positions permanently.

Additionally, upfront costs come with being a real estate agent, such as license and franchise fees, business and home office equipment, marketing material and travel.

A realtor/real estate agent's career can be lucra-

tive, but much depends on how much effort an agent is willing to put in. Successful agents usually match certain skills and personality traits, leading to their success. Agents who do not communicate well, don't display a positive work ethic and fail to relate to their clients and those on the opposite side of the deal probably won't realize all of the financial potential.

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SPORTS

# Oxford track and field posts top season

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY, STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Coaching in his sixth season for Oxford, Chris Pietro believes this past season has been the best in terms of numbers for the Pirates boys track and field squad. In the past Oxford has averaged 13 or 14 athletes per season, but this year the team had 26 participate.

“A lot of kids don’t want to attend a three- or four-hour practice when they can be working earning money for college. When they found out that you don’t have to be at the entire practice, I think a lot decided to try it out,” Pietro said. “In track and field, you really just need to take part in your event, work hard and then go what you need to do. It’s a modern type of coaching style.”

The Oxford coach also noted that the spring season is usually a tough one with it being a lot busier than the other seasons. Kids are unsure if they have the time to commit so Pietro believes as



a coach, he is working with those would-be athletes.

“This year all came to believe in the true concept of team. Track and field is basically an individual sport, but this year we went at it with a team mentality,” the coach said. “We went about it in the best interest of the team while trying to improve upon our numbers

individually.”

When the season got underway some three months earlier Pietro knew that he had some good athletes who would compete. In the past Millbury had owned the SWCL C, but this spring Oxford was able to top the Woolies and grab the League going 4-1. In the past Oxford has usually



Left, Oxford High track and field standout Will Owusu with Nicholas Pietro. Above, Oxford High's track and field team gathers for the District E Meet. Photos courtesy of Coach Pietro.

finished around fifth place in the SWCL, but this year they came in second behind Auburn.

Senior Darius Richardson went undefeated in both the 100- and 200-meter dash during the season. He continued his success at the SWCL Meet, winning both his events and he won the 200 at the Districts. Running in the states he finished sixth in the 200.

According to his coach, Richardson is a speedster and an all-around leader who is a hard worker individually.

Another key component to the Pirates attack on the field was senior Will Owusu who participated in the long and triple jumps and also did the hurdles on the track. Triple jump is his best event with his best leap of the year being 41' 11 1/2".

Taking part in the Meet of Champions he finished twelfth.

Senior thrower Sam Zostant also had himself a great season in which he threw consistently during each meet. His best throws were 120' in the discus and 37 1/2" in the shot put.

**OXFORD**

continued on page 19

## TIPS ON FINANCIAL PLANNING

dennis.antonopoulos@edwardjones.com

# How can you cope with market volatility?



BY DENNIS ANTONOPOULOS

These are unsettling times for investors. Even before the geopolitical crisis involving Russia and Ukraine, the financial markets were facing headwinds due to higher inflation, the anticipation of higher interest rates, and the continuing effects of the pandemic.

As an individual investor, should you take some type of action?

It's helpful to put today's headlines in perspective. While the Federal Reserve probably will raise interest rates, they are doing so from a point where these rates were at or near historic lows, so the new,

higher rates may not drastically deter businesses from borrowing to expand their operations.

Also, higher interest rates can be good news for savers, who can earn more on their savings. As for inflation, many experts expect it to cool down in the second half of 2022 as supply chain bottlenecks start to clear. And the pandemic's effects, both on our health and on our daily lives, may be fading, though, of course, we all should be cautious when it comes to make predictions about Covid-19.

The Ukraine situation is one more unpredictable event — and one thing that financial markets dislike is uncertainty. Russia is one of the world's largest oil producers, so a conflict that could affect oil prices can have a ripple effect on many market sectors. Until the state of affairs in Ukraine calms down, market volatility may continue.

Even in this context of uncertainty, however, investors should not lose sight of other factors that can

affect the investor climate. The U.S. economy has been growing at a fast clip, and corporate earnings — a key driver of stock prices — have also been strong.

In any case, instead of reacting to external events — negative or positive — you'll help yourself by pursuing an investment strategy based on your goals and risk tolerance. Sticking to that strategy will be easier if you follow these steps:

- Take a break from checking your statements. When the market goes through a rough patch, you may find yourself constantly checking on how your portfolio is doing. But this can cause stress and lead you to make unwise decisions. If you don't necessarily need this money right now, take a break from looking at your investment statements.

- Give yourself time to make investment moves. See if you can wait a certain amount of time — a day, a night, or a weekend — before making a significant investment move. This

delay can give you time for strong emotions to cool and help you consider whether your decision is in your best interest.

- Take steps to protect your long-term investments. If you don't really need the money right now, you shouldn't have to worry excessively over the short-term movements of the financial markets. To avoid tapping into your long-term investments, try to build an emergency fund containing several months' worth of living expenses, with the money kept in a low-risk, easily accessible account.

- Get some help. When you're having to face the ups and downs in the markets, you can benefit from some assistance. A financial advisor can discuss your concerns and illustrate some scenarios that can result if you can make certain moves — thereby helping you make better informed decisions.

We're living in challenging days. But instead of agonizing over things you can't control, concentrate

on those you can—start by making investment choices appropriate for your needs and capable of helping you meet your goals.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones finan-

cial advisor. Please contact Dennis Antonopoulos, your Edward Jones financial advisor, at 5 Albert St., Auburn, 508-832-5385. Email dennis.antonopoulos@edwardjones.com. Edward Jones member SIPC.

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TALES FROM BEYOND

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# Gay City State Park, haunted ghost town - Part 1

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

Here is another two-part account of one of New England's most haunted ghost towns. It is difficult to imagine that Gay City State Park in Hebron, Connecticut was once a fully populated community of twenty-five families, a woolen mill, a satinet mill, two gristmills, charcoal pits, a church, a general store and other such necessary mercantilism found in the small hamlets that dotted the early New England landscape.

Other than stone walls and foundations, there is not much evidence left to show that people once called the place home. There are also the ghosts that occasionally remind

explorers of the old town that not only were they once residents in the flesh, but they are eternally tented there in spirit.

A small burial ground near the entrance of the park contains a few members of founding families. The stones are placed on either side of the burying yard facing each other. This lends credence to what history tells us about the two prominent families of Gay City, The Gays and the Sumners, and the animosity they had toward one another.

The original name for the village was Factory Hollow. A preacher named Elijah Andrus steered his congregation toward the wooded hollow in 1796 only to leave four years

later due to disagreements and quarrels within the congregation. This left Reverend Henry P. Sumner as the new spiritual leader. His grave is among the scant stones in the burying ground near the entrance of the park. Also in 1800 John Gay was chosen to head the town's affairs.

Reverend Sumner held church services twice a week, which to some was a bit too taxing on their time. To augment the attendance, rum was served during the meetings, but the libations would prove to be the downfall of the sermons. Arguments and even fistfights became common during the lectures, so much so that many of the families began migrating away from the

town, including several of the founding families.

Reverend Sumner's son, Charles, founded a mill for the production of rag paper. Residents, along with laborers from nearby towns, began the arduous task of transporting stones for the foundation, dam and beautiful stonework canal. Unfortunately, the powers of the dark did not wait very long to taint the massive undertaking.

During the construction of the dam and canal, one worker studied the angle of the duct and concluded that the water was supernaturally flowing uphill toward the factory. He is reported to have dropped his tools and quit on the spot, calling the phenomenon the work of the devil.

Others would follow in his wake, bringing the construction of the venture to a temporary halt.

When the mill opened, and Factory Hollow saw a slight incline in prosperity. Many of the town's young men later enlisted in the Civil War. Most of them never returned from battle, leaving a number of homes in Factory Hollow unoccupied and crumbling until a time when the elements of nature reclaimed the land. The paper mill burned in 1879, leaving the last vestige of the hamlet to the elements. Before long, trees and brush sprouted from the decaying cellar holes and foundations.

For the most part, Factory Hollow was now a true ghost town. Stories abound

of ghostly encounters and unseen forces that wander among the living who visit the haunted hamlet.

Just before the Civil War, a jewelry peddler came rolling into town on his usual route. Peddlers were common in those days and sold everything from tin to top hats. The salesman suddenly disappeared without a trace. Shortly after his disappearance, a human skeleton was discovered in one of the charcoal pits at the edge of town. Evidently the purveyor of goods had a healthy sum of money on him that attracted the attention of some unsavory kind. No clues as to who was responsible for the crime ever turned up, and to this day, the murder remains unsolved.

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**OXFORD**

*continued from page 17*

“Sam is a very hard worker, and his teammates look up to him,” Pietro said. “They have come to realize that if you put the work in then you can be that much better.”

Richardson, Owusu and Zostant were also the tri-captains for the boys track and field team this past season.

Another senior that had himself a good year was the versatile Myles Craft. The sprinter finished second with an average 100 time of 11.5 seconds just behind Oxford’s top 100 runner Richardson, whose average time was 11.3 seconds. Along with Richardson, Craft gave the Pirates a deadly one-two punch in

the event.

Craft also qualified to take part in the Districts and States but unfortunately was unable to participate due to a season-ending injury; an injury the doctor said may have been there all year long.

In addition to the seniors Pietro had four underclassmen make a statement this past season with their performances. Sophomore Robbie Fisher mainly threw the javelin, but also ran the 4 x 100; freshman Aidan Van Arsdelan was also a javelin thrower, who captured the SWCL with an average throw of 128’. Eighth grader Camden Stone ran the mile and 800 while Sophomore Matt Szela ran the 2-mile and 800.

With the increase in numbers this year the Pirate coach believes his team will be back to compete on

a high level next spring as well.

“I expect that the team will have similar numbers once again next year and we will continue to be competitive,” he said. “A good number of athletes will be returning next year, and I know there are some others already looking to try out for the team.”

Pietro, who has been aid-

ed by the help of his father James Pietro in training the team, is looking to continue to make track and field fun for the athletes who want to participate. In doing so he is hoping to install a work ethic in his athletes that will allow them to improve in their individual events and in turn will breed a winning atmosphere at Oxford.

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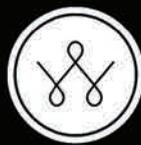
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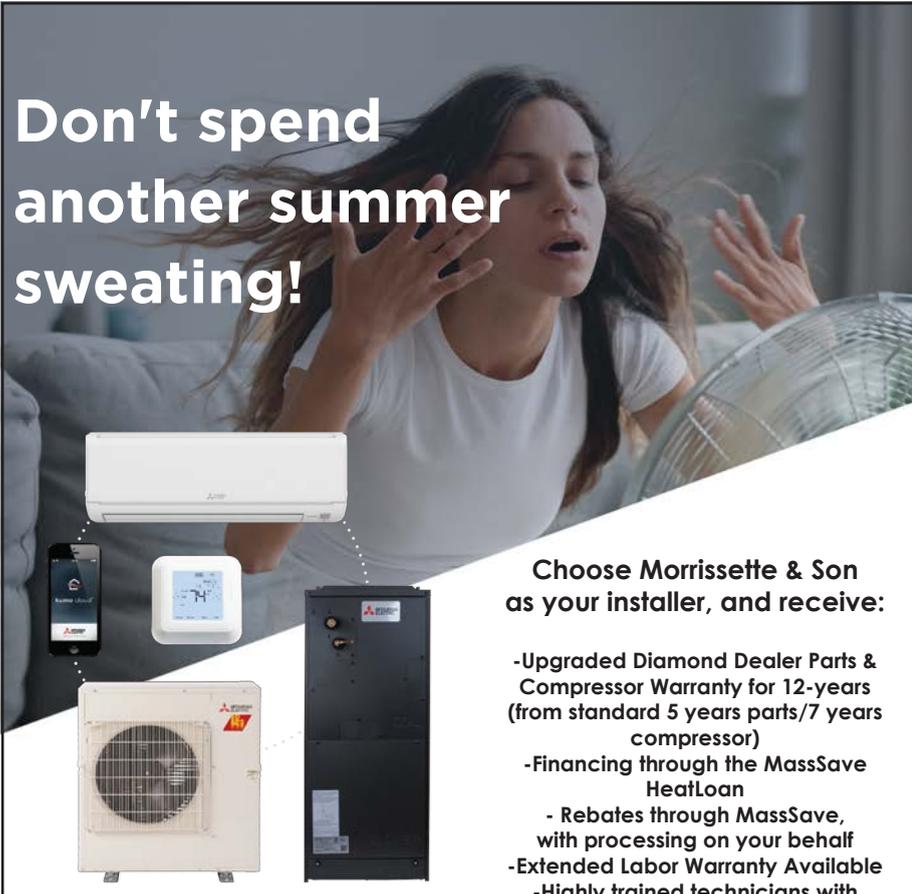
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