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November 2022



Promises Kept

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

For many families struggling under the threat or reality of homelessness, Covid arrived as a pandemic within a pandemic. The housing crisis had

been spreading for years across America and beyond, a pathogen spawned in part by an inadequate quantity of homes and their commodification.

Family Promise Metrowest is a nonprofit whose mission is

to prevent and end homelessness - an organization that has been buffeted too these past few years by the pandemic within a

PROMISES
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Coffee and Conversation With Community Members

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

Let's meet up for coffee.

The invitation implies informality. A date, but not a date. One needn't arise early for a shared breakfast, or commit to an hour for lunch. And there's certainly no need to dress in more-dignified attire as if for a dinner.

It's "just" coffee.

Enter "Coffee With a Purpose." CWAP began as a regular gathering of Natick residents, a short time and venue set aside to talk about local issues, stories and other topics of interest. And of course, to sip. Like so many others, those in-person meetings evolved into live video conferencing early in 2020.

Many devotees of the drink would likely quibble with the notion that coffee in and of itself is without purpose. Coffee, they might counter, is a means to many ends. Others might go further in claiming that consuming a cup of joe is the goal - that the

product and process are as one.

Yet the concept of coffee as a centerpiece around which to gather has been around for centuries. Coffee with conversation has likely been a natural pairing since the drink was first discovered.

The first coffee houses are said to have originated in the Middle East, and really began to pick up steam in the Ottoman empire toward the end of the 16th century. There, they were among the scarce venues where people of disparate classes and social strata would mingle. Though dominated by men, this early coffee culture fostered the exchange of ideas and information.

Religious peoples of more-recent centuries promoted the drink as a salve of salvation. Preaching temperance and the faith's work ethic, Protestants found in coffee an antidote to some of what they believed ailed society.

COMMUNITY
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PROMISES

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pandemic. The Massachusetts chapter was founded in 2008, just one of many across the country.

Formerly, Family Promise Metrowest worked closely with religious congregations to house families struggling with homelessness. The group had established relationships with these various congregations throughout the region, and the latter would lend out their schools as havens to house families in need.

One shortcoming to that system was that a given family could only remain housed at a congregation for a week at a time. A family would store their belongings at the Family Promise Day Center in Natick, where they could shower and bathe, prepare for work and school.

Evenings, that family would then go to congregations where they would have a home-cooked dinner, time to connect, and place to sleep. Come morning, the routine would repeat at the Day Center. They were then moved to a new congregation, where the process would begin again.

Imagine all the trials and travel



of the work and school week, and then add atop that the stresses and uncertainties of living under a new roof - every seven days. Though use of the congregation space was a free and most welcome resource, this rotating model was less than ideal for families treading water, struggling to reach a stable shore.

Then came Covid, and the congregation model was jettisoned virtually on a dime. As was commonplace in those heady and uncertain days of 2020, congregations were reluctant to welcome more people near their pandemic

“pod,” for risk of exposing their flock to the virus.

Family Promise turned instead to housing families in local hotels - a costly alternative, but one made more viable via pandemic-assistance programs provided then by government.

Then more recently, the Natick chapter of Family Promise lost its executive director. She stepped away near the start of summer to pursue other goals, and the organization was left to deal with a much more localized challenge amid the global crisis brought on by Covid.



“We had a whole lot of things hit us all at once,” said Amanda Elkin. “So it was a lot of fresh starts for us in June.”

She had been serving as Communications Director for Family Promise Metrowest’s Natick chapter, and took on the job as interim Executive Director while the organization seeks a full-time staff member to fill the spot.

Yet among the many silver linings large and small to be found among the lingering dark cloud that is Covid, there was this. The

pandemic gave Family Promise a perch to glean a new perspective.

For many workers broadly, that new perspective proved they could do their jobs from home. It meant the daily sentence of round-trip commutes were commuted, and they could repurpose that time toward far more fruitful and fulfilling pursuits. They could be more closely connected to family and community.

PROMISES

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COMMUNITY

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The beverage was also a useful elixir in emerging modern economies. For capitalism, coffee became the flipside of a coin, one that could counterbalance the adverse effects of alcohol on productivity. How many constructive and creative hours are lost to intoxication no one can say, but here was a beverage that seemed to be a boon to the workday.

In "This Is Your Mind on Plants," author and journalist Michael Pollan writes about coffee's pivotal place in human history. If a species' success is judged by how far and wide it gains and maintains a foothold in the world, Pollan argues, then the coffee plant deserves special recognition.

The author writes about the plant as if it were a master strategist in the evolutionary arena, charming homo sapiens and other animals with its stimulative wiles, seducing the animal kingdom into cultivating and conveying coffee across the globe.

The book largely tells of the travails of a tourist (Pollan himself) within the world of wild and homegrown consciousness-alter-

ing substances, and java is the first stop. A longtime consumer of coffee himself, this episode documents Pollan's abrupt abstention from the drink and the results of this experiment. Among the effects, he writes, is feeling like an "unsharpened pencil" throughout the day.

The character of Natick's Coffee With a Purpose seems to summon the spirit of those Ottoman cafés of old. Many of CWAP's regular attendees are town meeting members.

Speakers are sometimes invited on the Zoom calls, visitors who have causes they're seeking to promote, or human-interest stories that CWAP members would like to learn more about. Other guests have included candidates running for local office, visiting via video to set out their policy agendas.

Recent conversation centered around the impending November elections, and the ballot measures that would accompany them.

But as anyone with recent Zoom call experience can attest, keeping such meetings organized and on point doesn't happen on its own. Generally, CWAP meetings are held Mondays and consist of about ten regular at-

tendees. "I tend to kind of moderate the sessions," said Doug Hanna, a Natick resident and longtime CWAP attendee. "Sometimes we get off track a bunch," he laughed.

Natick resident Martin Kessel organizes and runs the meetings with Hanna, the two scheduling speakers and seeking to keep discussions focused. They assumed those roles when Pat Conaway stepped away from the group. Conaway, a Natick resident still very active in the community, founded CWAP.

Its meetings then were held at Natick's Common Street Spiritual Center, but have been online since Covid.

"We would like to see each other in person," said Kessel, but added that there's no urgency to do away with the Zoom format. Meeting virtually, however, has brought some unexpected benefits. CWAP sessions are now archived online in a dedicated Youtube channel, and can be accessed by anyone. And guest speakers, of course, can now take part in the process from anywhere.

The focus of CWAP's core group, however, remains advo-

cacy and issues near and dear to home.

"Each of us is involved in some local project," said Kessel, who also is the chair of the town's

Open Space Committee. "The people tend to be advocates."

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PROMISES

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For Family Promise, that pandemic pause offered a step off the treadmill also, a view of the big picture and a vision of ways the program might be changed for the better. The organization had known the rotating congregation model entailed added burdens for families already struggling under the weight of circumstances; Family Promise had been debating ways to change that model for some time.

Yet Covid offered the organization some breathing space, the opportunity to develop a 5-year strategic plan to map the Family Promise vision and future. A more stable, static model was agreed upon, one where families would be housed exclusively at the Day Center, while all stakeholders worked toward the attainment of more permanent housing solutions.

In addition, the Day center was renovated this year, a physical upgrade to aptly complement the organization's new philosophy



and programs. The Day Center can now temporarily house up to three families while staff work with them to transition into homes of their own.

And within that new model and renovated Day Center, families also were afforded more breathing room. Stability begets stability, and the inverse also holds true. Faced with all the up and downs, the uncertainties that come with homelessness - trying to get a leg up in such situations is daunting at best. Like trying to build a birdhouse while riding a rollercoaster.

"It's been awesome," said

Elkin. "They can spend time and energy focused on their goals."

That's also where another recent Family Promise innovation has proved invaluable. By focusing on keeping families in their homes, The Life program seeks to short circuit the downward trends that can lead to homelessness, stop the crisis before it happens. That, says the organization, is far less disruptive to families, easier and cheaper than getting them back into housing once they've lost it.

A major component of Family Promise programs has always been coaching. Staff and vol-



unteers act as an advocate and source of accountability, working closely with them to budget, search for jobs, attain educational credentials, and much more.

And that coaching dynamic has been a major part of the Life program's success. Family Promise works with families at risk of losing a home or apartment, sometimes acting as liaison between tenant and landlord to prevent that end.

The far greater portion of

Family Promise funding comes from donations, said Carole Brodrick. She is Director of Development of Family Promise's Natick chapter. The organization relies on grants and community fundraising events, such as the Walk to End Homelessness.

"We really have to do a lot of fundraising on our own," she said. "Families are struggling. We're really educating the community to see how we can come together and help."

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Kindness Week In November

Social Justice Parenting: Raising Compassionate, Anti-Racist, and Socially Conscious Children

Wednesday, Nov. 9, at 7pm via Zoom — For parents, caregivers, and community members of all ages



Please join us for this important program in advance of Kindness Week and as part of our ongoing commitment as a community to practice kindness, respect, and justice for all! All are welcome! This program will address how to raise children who work to promote justice, compassion, and belonging for themselves and others. Dr. Traci Baxley will discuss the principles of Social Justice Parenting and offer strategies for implementing these values into your daily life. Simultaneous ASL and Portu-

guese Language Interpretation will be provided at this event.

Big Leaf Rake

Saturday, Nov. 12, from 9am to noon — For community members of all ages

Please join neighbors and friends from Keep Natick Beautiful, The Rotary Club of Natick, Natick Housing Authority, and SPARK Kindness for an intergenerational Big Leaf Rake



service project in honor of Veterans Day and to kick off SPARK Kindness Week! Bring your family, bring your friends, bring a rake (if you have one!), and bring a smile!

5th Annual Kindness Week

SPARK Kindness Week in Natick, Nov. 12-18

KINDNESS WEEK is a time to shine the spotlight on the good

that happens every day and inspire people to spread kindness through their own actions and connect with others. In partnership with organizations and community members, we seek to promote small events and initiatives throughout the week that will inspire community bonding around kindness and have a lasting impact all year long. Everyone is welcome to join us in the celebration of kindness! Share your pictures, stories, and messages with us at info@SPARKKindness.org or tag us on Facebook @SPARKKind and on Twitter and Instagram@sparkkindness

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'Bleeding' Hearts

Artist Jo LaFalce completed "The 'Beading' Hearts of Adams Street" with funding provided by the Natick Cultural Council. The top heart consists of glued-on crystals (too many to count!). The middle heart contains 957 multi-colored beads of different shapes/sizes. And the bottom rainbow heart contains 3,714 tightly-strung pony beads. The "Beading" Hearts took almost one year to create, and Jo says it was a labor of love for her and hopes that it makes people smile!

The second heart is entirely covered with sparkling crystals (too many to count!) of different colors, sizes and shapes.

The third "rainbow" heart is made up of 3,714 tightly-strung pony beads in the color of a rainbow.

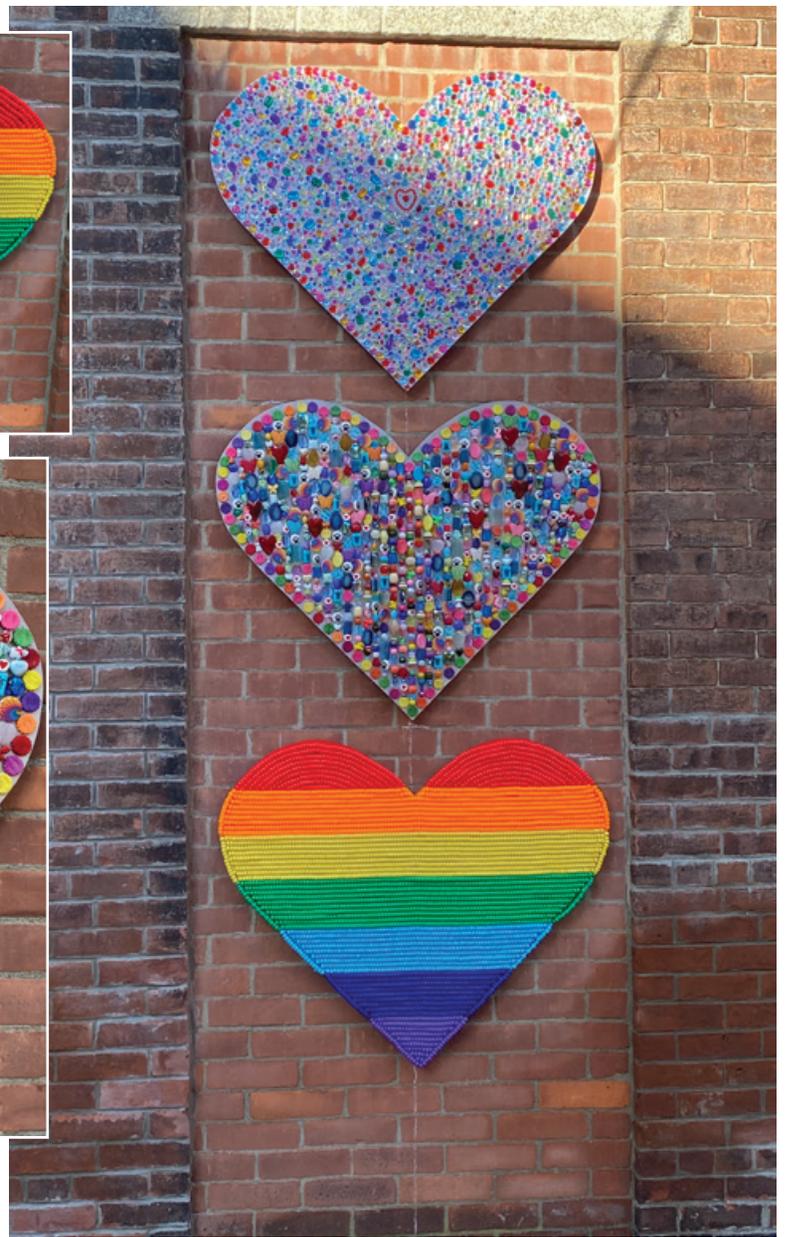
All three hearts make for a delightful and eye-catching display of spectacular colors!

The "Beading" Hearts of Adams Street

The "Beading" Hearts of Adams Street is the newest public art installation on Adams Street in Natick Center, and is the creation of Jo LaFalce who received a grant from the Natick Cultural Council.

The project consists of three large 30"x32" hearts installed in a 9-foot-high brick archway on the back of the Fair and Yeager building

One heart is decorated with vertical rows of 957 multi-colored beads of different shapes and sizes.



PROPOSED TERMINATION OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

**229 Main Street Limited Partnership
31 Rutledge Road and 229 – 231 North Main Street, Natick, MA
MassDEP Release Tracking Number 3-3672**

A release of oil and/or hazardous materials had occurred at this location, which is a disposal site as defined by M.G.L. c. 21E, § 2 and the Massachusetts Contingency Plan, 310 CMR 40.0000. On February 24, 2003, 229 Main Street Limited Partnership (229 MSLP) received a petition from residents in Natick requesting that this disposal site be designated a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) site, in accordance with M.G.L. c. 21E §14(a) and 310 CMR 40.1404. As a result, the property addressed as 31 Rutledge Road and 229 – 231 North Main Street, Natick (hereinafter the Site) was so designated as a PIP Site.

As required, we are requesting your input in the Termination of the PIP Process. Because the project has moved past the Phase report process, through the Temporary Solution process (RAO Class C-1 submitted in 2010) and is in steady state of Maintenance, Monitoring and Remediation, and all past and future report will be available for viewing on the MassDEP website, we are proposing Terminating the PIP for this Site. Contaminant concentrations have decreased by orders of magnitude resulting in significant improvement in soil and groundwater. Additionally, bi-annual reports are submitted (uploaded) to the MassDEP on-line portal. A copy of all submittals for the Site can be viewed at MassDEP website at <http://public.dep.state.ma.us/SearchableSites2/Search.aspx>, using Release Tracking Number (RTN) 3-0003672.

Any questions regarding the Termination of the Public Involvement Plan should be directed to:

Edward Giordano of TERRA Environmental, LLC,
159 Haven Street, 2nd Floor, Reading MA.
Telephone 781-944-6851.

The disposal site file can be viewed at MassDEP at <http://public.dep.state.ma.us/SearchableSites2/Search.aspx>, using Release Tracking Number (RTN) 3-0003672.



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When Markets Give You Lemons, Make Roth Conversion



Glenn Brown

US equities markets are down considerably in 2022 with S&P 500 Index -23.9% and tech-laden Nasdaq -34.0% year-to-date through October 16 (YTD 10/16).

At least there's the US bond market to help protect. Oh wait... given rampant inflation, the Fed's blunt instrument of raising rates is making bond values fall. Thus, the US Aggregate Bond Index is down -15.8% YTD 10/16.

Put it all together, a basic 60/40 stock/bond index portfolio is -20.5% YTD 10/16.

What's one to do?

Go to cash until you die?

Well, inflation would be an issue. Consider the tales of lore from parents sharing how much they paid for their first house.

As painful as it has been, step back and view annualized returns of last 3-year period (10/17/19 to 10/16/22), S&P 500 Index is +8.25% and Nasdaq is +8.62%... in line with their 15-year and 25-year averages.

There are many aspects to successful financial planning, including being proactive to change, vetting all options for opportunity and giving yourself time to reflect prior to execution.

A year-end strategy to consider for turning lemons into lemonade is Roth Conversion.

Recall Roth Conversion is the taxable act of converting Traditional IRA assets into a Roth IRA. It increases your taxable income (MAGI) the year you convert and you should pay taxes with non-IRA funds. After age 59

½ and owned for at least 5 years, withdrawals are completely tax free.

An added bonus is Roth IRAs are not subject to Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) nor are balances in Roth accounts a factor in determining RMDs for your tax deferred accounts. In short, you'll decrease your tax liability for years in retirement.

Anyone, regardless of income levels, can convert to a Roth IRA. With portfolios down -20% (or more), market corrections provide an opportunity to convert IRA investments over to Roth, pay less in taxes (as values are depressed) and let the asset rebound inside the Roth over time.

There are complexities and variables, which many CFPs can help with projections, scenarios and provide recommendations beyond "should" or "should not". Proper planning allows you to estimate an appropriate amount to convert this year (and future years), project tax liability and compare scenarios of portfolio and net worth impact with assumptions.

Some considerations:

The pro-rata rule and taxes.

When converting, the IRS considers all traditional IRA account balances combined and you must figure out the proportion of which is nondeductible contributions, then use this percentage to determine how much of your conversion will not be taxable. You can't choose to convert only after-tax money; the IRS won't allow it.

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.

What's done is done. Given that tax law changes now prohibit conversion reversals ("recharacterization"), it is important to be measured, give yourself time to

reflect and re-run the latest data before execution.

More to consider beyond this limited space, talk with your tax professional or Certified Financial Planner.

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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Set the (Movie) Scene

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

Still acclimating to our east coast time zone, Marta Pérez-Coca responded to a text message around 5 a.m. last month.

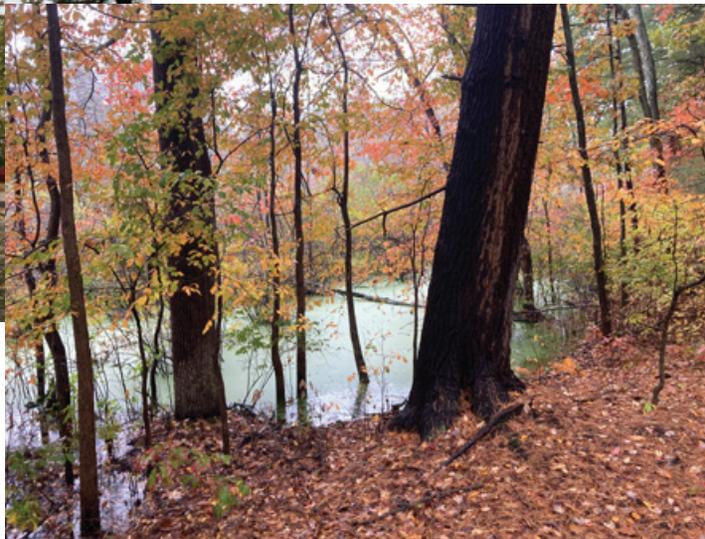
The filmmaker had just ar-

will be scouting for film locations in Natick, having chosen it as the setting for their latest film project, a feature-length production.

It won't be the first time the town has been featured on film. Local residents will do a double-take when watching "Knives

in addition to the canon of recent Bay State cinema, a small-screen crime drama series that follows the travails of fictional Boston police detectives. Further south, "Hightown" is a serial drama that focuses on a fictional Cape Cod underworld.

Hightown is based out of Hyannis, the town from which the series borrows its moniker. Otherwise-picturesque Cape Cod settings serve as backdrop for the seedy and bleak storylines that unfold. The Starz streaming



rived from California, where her usual sleep cycle would've assumed it was still just a few hours past midnight. She and Michelle Montemayor will be in Natick until the end of this month, just in time to have acclimated to the differential, when they'll return to their homes in Los Angeles.

During their stay here, the two

Out," a recent whodunit feature film boasting an A-list cast. A final scene of that movie takes the viewer south on Main Street, driving over the bridge to enter Natick Center. "City on a Hill" is also another

platform hosts the show, which has been green-lighted for a third season.

Due north, the recent film "CODA" follows the lives of a hearing-impaired family eking out a living in Gloucester's fishing community and industry. CODA won several Oscars including Best Picture, and has garnered many other accolades. Like its southern counterparts, the setting serves as a main character as the story develops.

Massachusetts has tax incentives in place that seek to spur film production in the Bay State. That incentive program was adopted in 2006 and was set to ex-

pire at the end of this year. If they meet certain criteria under the program, filmmakers can save on payroll and sales taxes, and other production costs. The program was designed to sunset in January of 2023, but lawmakers voted last year to make the package of incentives more permanent.

Those perks aren't without their critics. A state panel that evaluated the program cited its cost to Bay State residents in uncollected taxes, and said that the exemptions weren't the "best use of the state's money." Yet its proponents counter that the benefits of attracting and retaining local film production are not so easily quantified and assessed.

But tax breaks weren't the primary incentive that brought the two filmmakers to Massachusetts, and Natick in particular. In her college years, Pérez-Coca studied at Boston University for a time, and developed a friendship with a local resident, whom she visited here over several summers as well. That friend happened to live in Natick.

Pérez-Coca maintained the friendship from Spain and Los Angeles, where she now lives, as does Montemayor. While that friend now resides in New Orleans, her mother still resides in Natick, and welcomed the two filmmakers to stay at her home while Pérez-Coca and Montemayor scout about the town for their movie.

"It's like a second home," said Pérez-Coca.

That film is "Here She Comes," a dark dramedy involving a mother and daughter. Its plot will follow the strained relationship of the two, as they work together to commit and cover up a crime.

"You can laugh and gasp at the same time," said Montemayor.

Pérez-Coca is a native of

MOVIE

continued on page 29



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MOVIE

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Spain and Montemayor was born in Mexico. The two filmmakers met in Spain, where they began working together in the movie-making trade. In their films, the duo tends to feature a fusion of American, Mexican and Spanish culture, and "Here She Comes" will continue that tradition, they said.

The main character will be a native-Spanish speaker, who must summon her mother from the home country to help her tie up some seriously fraying loose ends. The filmmakers plan to have the dialogue toggle between Spanish and English, and will seek local actors to fill some roles.

The movie, said Pérez-Coca, will be filmed mostly in a Natick house, though the town's setting will play a leading role as well.

"One of the main characters in the film is the place," said Montemayor.

The two filmmakers started their scouting on a Friday in the middle of last month, having arrived on a rainy stretch of weather that was just starting to quench an arid summer.

Filming is slated to take place in the summer of next year, as is the movie's narrative, so the duo wanted to scout the town before winter and the white stuff moved in. Foliage was turning overhead as they drove, vivid trees that flamed up here and there among a yet-mostly green canvas.

The leaves made Montemayor muse aloud that they might consider filming in the fall instead. But Pérez-Coca shot down the idea, seeming wary of what might befall the shoot if they strayed from the script.

Integral to the story, said the two, is a body of water - a feature that would facilitate the deed that mother and daughter would be drawn into. In the short time Pérez-Coca and Montemayor emerged from the shelter of their rental car, they were drenched in the downpour while checking out the potential of the marsh bordering Pickerel Pond. Later surveying the expanse of Lake Cochituate, the two stayed inside their car.

"If I had to choose one town," said Pérez-Coca, "I decided, let's go to Natick. I think it's perfect for the movie, for the story."

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Annual Keeping the Promise Event to Benefit Families Facing Homelessness

Natick-based nonprofit Family Promise Metrowest (FPM) will be holding its 10th annual Keeping the Promise event on Nov. 18.

This event, which will be broadcast in front of a live audience at Walnut Hill School for the Arts in Natick and live-streamed on YouTube, will feature performances by two local musicians and heartwarming stories of

lining performer Rhett Price, a hip-hop violinist and internet sensation who has been featured on the front pages of Huffington Post and BuzzFeed, and has performed on stage with Aaron Carter, Machine Gun Kelly, the Dropkick Murphy's, and many more.

Dover resident and Boston Fox 25 meteorologist, Jason Brewer will be the emcee for the evening.

"We are so excited for this year's event, which will give you a view into the lives of families who seek our services. We are also delighted to have this opportunity to celebrate the many successes our families achieved in 2022," said Carole Brodrick, FPM's Development Director.

To register or preview the concert's must-have auction items, visit familypromisemetrowest.org.

The evening will also include the presentation of the Cindy Lombardo Volunteer Award, given annually to an exceptional FPM volunteer nominated by families served by the organization, and the FPM Legacy Award, granted to an individual whose advocacy, generosity, and dedication to FPM's mission will have a lasting impact on the or-



three families being served in the organization's shelter, transitional, and homelessness prevention programs.

Alli Haber, an up-and-coming pop musician from Newton who has performed widely including at Boston First Night, will open the musical portion of the evening.

She'll be followed by head-



gанизation.

Keeping the Promise is FPM's largest annual fundraiser. The proceeds from donations, auction bids, raffle tickets, sponsorships, and ads provide funding for Family Promise Metrowest's programs. These programs address a spectrum of housing and stabilization needs including safe shelter, transitional support, homelessness prevention, shelter diversion, and education and employment services. The organization also uniquely provides long-term family coaching in all programs to help families set and work toward goals to achieve stability and move out of poverty permanently. FPM's broad network of community partners includes businesses,

BENEFIT
continued on page 31

DAET Hosting Forum Around Talking To Your Teens About Alcohol And Marijuana

BY SUSAN MANNING
STAFF WRITER

Discussing alcohol and marijuana with your children has always been important, but after the pandemic, the need is heightened.

Local organization Decisions At Every Turn—DAET— can

efforts laser-focused on youth vaping, it is easy to forget that alcohol use by young people remains at concerning levels, and that marijuana products, through legalization, normalization, and evolution, pose a greater risk to youth today than decades ago.

Medina will discuss current trends, provide facts about harm-



help guide this conversation.

The group is hosting a forum on Monday, Nov. 7, from 5:30 to 6:30 PM, called Alcohol & Marijuana: What Parents and Teens Need to Know

Presented by Dr. Safdar Medina.

According to DAET member Kristin French, Medina's program is focused on youth alcohol and marijuana use. For the past few years, with prevention

ful effects, and offer tips and resources to help parents approach these conversations. As a pediatrician and a father, he will dually provide the perspective of a healthcare provider and a parent.

Ashland's Decisions at Every Turn (DAET) Coalition is a community-based group dedicated to

DAET
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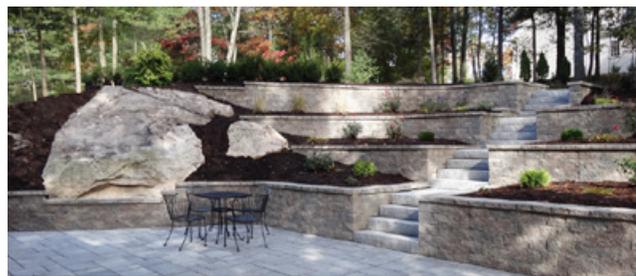


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DAET

continued from page 30

creating a safe and healthy Ashland.

“We work together as a community, using evidence-based education and prevention strategies to help prevent, reduce, and address the problems that can lead to youth substance use. We are dedicated to raising public awareness, contributing to effective policy, creating a sustainable resource network, and promoting community-level change,” said French.

Why is it so important to hold this event before the holidays? According to French, preventing youth substance use is always important, and something we work at every day, but is particularly significant this time of year. The holiday season can be a high-risk time of year for alcohol use, and other substances, by teens.

Holiday celebrations, social

gatherings, and school vacations all contribute to increased access and availability. Homes may be stocked with alcohol for holiday celebrations, alcohol is often present at parties; and teens, now back to in-person social settings, may feel additional pressure by peers to drink or use marijuana at parties or informal get-togethers.

“It is critical that we help support parents and caregivers in communicating to their teen that alcohol and marijuana use is illegal for anyone under 21 and poses numerous potential risks to their health and safety,” she said.

French said this conversation is especially important following the pandemic.

“The past few years have been challenging for everyone. We know that parents and caregivers are exhausted from COVID, concerned about youth mental health, and working really hard to maintain family structure and routines.

“Layering on conversations about substance use may feel like too much to take on, but it is actually a good time to have these conversations. Substance use can impact all of these things ... how teens respond to the impact of the pandemic; experience stress, anxiety, or depression; and contribute family functioning.

“We hope parents join us to learn more about the impact of alcohol and marijuana on the physical, social, and mental well-being of kids & teens and then seek opportunities for family conversations about the importance and benefits of remaining substance free,” said French.

The event is Monday, Nov. 7, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., at the Ashland Community Center, 162 West Union St. Registrations welcome, but not required: <https://forms.gle/qj5UoZPQeQg5eyAh6> and Facebook Live facebook.com/ashlanddecisions.

BENEFIT

continued from page 30

congregations, organizations, volunteers, and staff, all committed to the promise of keeping families

together and in safe housing.

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visions a future in which every family has a stable home, a sustainable income, and the chance to build a better future.

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The Greater Boston Food Bank Honors MathWorks with Founder's Award

GBFB's Partner Appreciation Awards honor the most dedicated hunger-relief volunteers, donors, agencies and advocates

The Greater Boston Food Bank (GBFB), the largest hunger-relief organization in New England, has named MathWorks of Natick, as the recipient of its Founder's Award.

For nearly 20 years, GBFB's awards program seeks to celebrate and show appreciation for the individuals and organizations that have collaborated to end hunger across Eastern Massachusetts.

Throughout the month, 12 awards are being given to valued partner agencies, public officials, volunteers, donors and other organizations that have made considerable contributions to GBFB's mission to end hunger over the past two years.

The Founder's Award is given to an individual or organization that demonstrates extraordinary leadership in philanthropic and human services and exemplifies GBFB's mission through out-

standing involvement, dedication, and leadership in working with others to help end hunger in the community. MathWorks was awarded for its continued support of Growing Healthy Futures, a summer hunger fundraising campaign which aims to raise funds to help GBFB distribute healthy meals to youth and their families.

MathWorks matched up to \$1 million in donations in both 2021 and 2022 in support of the campaign, and their gifts alone have yielded more than 4 million meals and are the catalyst for providing more than 10 million meals.

"The Greater Boston Food Bank's ability to provide food security for families in distress is strongly supported by our staff," said MathWorks Senior Vice President and CFO Jeanne O'Keefe. "We are honored to receive this reward and look forward to continuing our support for a renowned leader in hunger relief within our community."

The award was presented at the MathWorks corporate office in Natick on Thursday, Sept. 22.



From left: Jeanne O'Keefe, Chief Financial Officer and Senior Vice President at Mathworks; Catherine D'Amato, President & CEO of The Greater Boston Food Bank; Diane Bevan, Co-Chair of the Innovative Development Council (IDC). Courtesy photo.

"MathWorks came forward during the pandemic seeking to make a bold impact in our community amidst the backdrop of unprecedented levels of food insecurity," said GBFB President and CEO Catherine D'Amato. "Over the past two years, MathWorks has graciously matched \$2 million in donations to support

summer hunger-relief efforts while leveraging its gift to bring further awareness to our mission to end hunger here. MathWorks has proven to be a leader in the community, and we're deeply grateful for their partnership."

The Partner Appreciation Awards are one of many GBFB initiatives throughout Hunger

Action Month in September encouraging Massachusetts residents to get involved in the fight against hunger.

Those in need of food assistance are encouraged to visit GBFB.org/need food, where they can find a list of resources and search for a food program by zip code.



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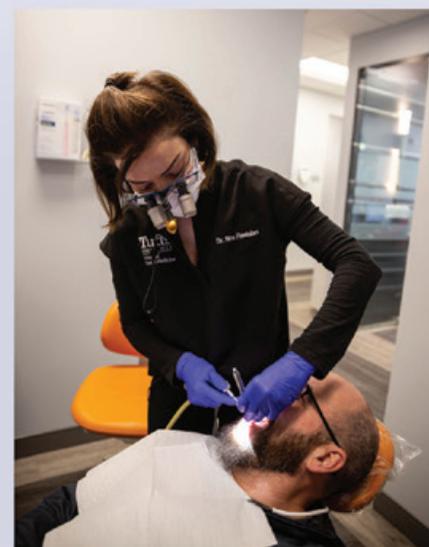
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Dr. Raeisian completed her undergraduate studies in FL and earned her doctorate from Tufts University, School of Dental Medicine . She focuses on general and cosmetic dentistry. She is certified in implant dentistry, Invisalign, and cosmetic dentistry. She joined Milford Dental Group in 2001, where she holds a full-time position as our clinical director. Dr. Raeisian is also an FBI-trained forensic dentist.

Sports

New Coach Takes Reins Of NHS Cheerleading Squad

Rooney Lists Four Specific Goals

By KEN HAMWEY
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Lindsey Rooney is Natick High's new head cheerleading coach but she's no stranger to coaching the sport and she's very familiar with the Redhawks' program.

The 39-year-old Rooney coached cheerleading as a volunteer in Natick's youth league for 14 years and also coached the Redhawks' jayvee team for four seasons before spending a year as the varsity assistant to Samantha Baril.

Before graduating from Natick High in 2001, Rooney was a capable setter in volleyball, pitched in softball and also competed as a cheerleader. Now, after two decades of instructing and teaching the nuances of cheerleading, she's taken the reins of the varsity squad.

"My philosophy of coaching is for the girls to enjoy their experience, reach their potential and be competitive," said Rooney. "If they're having fun and striving to reach their potential, then winning invitationals and tournaments will follow. And, there's valuable life lessons that can be learned from competing — like overcoming adversity, being responsible, learning to be a leader and how to organize and manage their time."

The native of Natick set four goals for her squad when she was appointed in June. "First, I wanted to increase our numbers," she noted. "Covid-19 forced many of our girls to leave the program. Some left to work, others left to focus on their collegiate futures, and some left to deal with other interests. Last year, we had only seven girls on the varsity and seven at the jayvee level. Now, we've got 16 girls on the varsity and 12 on jayvees."

"Another goal is to place at the Bay State Conference meet, move on to the regionals and qualify for the states. At the states, there's always a chance to advance to the nationals."

The Redhawks won the nationals in 2016 and 2017 and the 2019 team finished second.

As the jayvee coach, Rooney played a role on the title team in 2017 and the runner-up squad in 2019.

"Our third and fourth goals are to ensure the girls enjoy their cheerleading experience, in practice and in meets, and to rebuild the program's rich tradition," Rooney emphasized.

So far, two boxes have been checked and Rooney hopes to quickly complete the team's goals of advancing deep into post-season competition and rebuilding the Redhawks' winning tradition. The conference meet is scheduled for Wednesday (Nov. 2) and if Natick's placement is strong, then the regionals and possibly the state meet will be on its itinerary.

On Oct. 16, Natick participated in the Milford Invitational and placed second among the three squads that competed. Grafton High finished first with 83.6 points, the Redhawks compiled 75.2 points, and Brookline finished third at 65.7.

"The Milford competition came early in the season, so we pushed the team to be ready," Rooney said. "They performed very well. Their stunting and overall routines are improving. The BSC competition is next up and we'll be prepared."

Rooney, who's been an account manager with Fair and Yeager Insurance for 21 years, built her team with competitors who have the attributes she believes are crucial. "Tumbling efficiency, sharp motion (precise movement), gymnastic ability, strength, and the ability to project a positive and welcoming appearance are the keys," Rooney said. "The strengths of our team are we're athletic, the girls have a high cheerleading IQ, they're mentally tough, they're resilient, they have experience and they're competitive."

Natick captains — seniors Jessie Pfahler and Gianna Tomassini — are quality leaders and are highly skilled.

"Jessie is a two-time captain and a BSC all-star," Rooney said. "She's great at tumbling and she's a very good flyer (ca-



Natick head coach Lindsey Rooney, left, and her varsity assistant, Casey Domrose.



Right: The 2022-23 Natick High cheerleading team has experience and is competitive.

pable in the air). An all-around competitor, she has a high cheer IQ and is mentally tough. Gianna is an all-around talent who's outstanding at dancing. She's a good back spot (one who catches the flyer) and she makes people want to watch her routine. Her work ethic is excellent."

Seniors Mackenzie Rocheleau and Michaela Goodwine are experienced competitors.

"Mackenzie is a very strong dancer who's stepped up as a senior leader," Rooney said. "She's athletic, has a high cheer IQ, is mentally tough, and always positive. She's a strong base (lifting function). Michaela was in the program as a freshman but left for Shrewsbury. She's back now. She's solid with her motion, very positive and a strong back spot."

Five juniors provide outstanding effort and plenty of other key traits. They include Mark Carney, the only boy on the team, Sierra Domrose, Emily Gaudet, Maeve O'Shaughnessy and Eliza Standwill.

"Mark is new to the program," Rooney said. "He's a good back spot, tumbles well and is eager to learn. Sierra is a great tumbler, a solid base and a good leader. Emily has a high cheer IQ, she's athletic and is a good base. Maeve is positive, a leader, has all-around ability and tumbles well. She's a great back spot. Eliza is very motivated, positive, willing to learn and an

effective flyer."

Five sophomores, who all competed at the jayvee level last year, include: Keira Donaghy, Sarah Doucette, Zahara Martins, Julia Rocheleau, and Auburn Shagoury.

"They've all improved tremendously," Rooney said. "They're very motivated, have good all-around ability and the attributes to succeed. Their techniques also have improved greatly."

Freshmen Izzy Chambers and Hanna Ferguson round out the squad. "They're both great tumblers and their stunting is

very good," Rooney said. "Both girls have great attitudes and they're quick learners."

Rooney's two assistants this year are Casey Damrose (varsity) and Abbe Adams (junior varsity). "Casey is a former youth coach who was jayvee coach last year," Rooney offered. "Abbe was a youth league coach in the past."

If the NHS cheerleading squad performs well in post-season competitions, then it's more than likely that all of Lindsey Rooney's four goals will have reached some degree of fulfillment.

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Taxpayer Energy and Economic Relief Fund to provide one-time rebates to eligible MA residents

The House and Senate announced their intention to create the Taxpayer Energy and Economic Relief Fund, an initiative to bring immediate financial relief to Bay Staters amidst rising gas prices and inflation.

The fund will provide one-time rebates of \$250 for Massachusetts taxpayers who filed an individual return in 2021, and \$500 for taxpayers who filed joint returns. Eligibility will be determined by annual income reported in 2021. Individual filers who reported earning between \$38,000 and \$100,000 will be eligible, and the maximum reported income level increases to \$150,000 for joint filers. Massachusetts taxpayers will receive this rebate before Sept. 30, 2022. Bay Staters earning less than \$38,000 re-

ceived \$500 checks to offset increased costs of living earlier this term.

This type of relief program was first proposed by State Sen. Becca Rausch (D-Needham) as a budget amendment in the FY '23 budget debate last month. Her legislation, the People's Gas Price Relief Program, was modeled after a similar proposal in California and aimed to provide Bay Staters with a \$200 rebate, covering the average value of a gas tax suspension for at least an entire year. The amendment garnered bipartisan support during budget deliberations.

"People are hurting – struggling to keep the lights on and put food on the table – and skyrocketing gas prices aren't helping," said Rausch. "Massa-

chusetts residents deserve immediate financial support through these difficult times, and I am proud and honored that my policy proposal to offset high gas-prices will put money back in Bay Staters' pockets without making them wait a year or more to realize the full benefit."

"Whether it is the rising price of gas, groceries, or summer clothes for kids, the Massachusetts Legislature has heard loud and clear that increased costs due to inflation have cut into family budgets," said Speaker of the House Ronald J. Mariano, Senate President Karen E. Spilka, House Ways & Means Chair Aaron Michlewitz and Senate Ways & Means Chair Michael J. Rodrigues in a statement. "These rebates represent the Legislature's commit-

ment to delivering immediate financial relief directly to residents of the Commonwealth, rather than to large oil companies that continue to profit off economic uncertainty and international conflict, and follow our efforts to provide \$500 in premium pay for lower income front-line workers during the pandemic. As we recognize the need for structural change as well, we continue to work on potential changes to the tax code with the goal of providing additional relief to residents."

Senator Becca Rausch represents the Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex District, comprised of Attleboro, Franklin, Millis, Natick, Needham, Norfolk, North Attleborough, Plainville, Sherborn, Wayland, Wellesley, and Wrentham. Senator Rausch serves as the Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture and the Senate Vice Chair of the Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight.

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10/18/2022	7 Joshua Path	\$1.18 mil
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10/14/2022	30 Village Hill Lane	\$345,000
10/14/2022	7-7B Adams Street, #2	\$786,750
10/14/2022	11 Russell Circle	\$730,000
10/14/2022	16 Sheffield Road	\$1.05 mil
10/14/2022	7 Thoreau Court, #9	\$350,000
10/13/2022	9 Fisher Street	\$1.08 mil
10/13/2022	12 Elwin Road	\$1.38 mil
10/13/2022	40 Pond Street	\$710,000
10/11/2022	51 School Street Ext	\$712,500
10/11/2022	3 Village Rock Lane	\$265,000
10/07/2022	11 Maine Avenue	\$600,000
10/06/2022	59 Lakeview Avenue	\$712,500
10/06/2022	59 Lakeview Avenue	\$660,000
10/06/2022	13 Village Way, #18	\$260,000
10/04/2022	13 Walden Drive, #8	\$285,000
09/30/2022	59 Park Avenue	\$660,000
09/30/2022	48 Silver Hill Lane, #20	\$284,000
09/30/2022	8 Mill Street	\$530,000
09/29/2022	48 Washington Street	\$680,800
09/29/2022	10 Lamplight Circle	\$1.16 mil
09/29/2022	9 University Drive	\$663,000
09/29/2022	5 Rockland Terrace	\$950,000
09/29/2022	48 Washington Avenue	\$680,800
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09/27/2022	142 Walnut Street	\$619,000
09/26/2022	18 Algonquian Drive	\$1.40 mil
09/23/2022	4 Home Avenue	\$775,000
09/23/2022	41 Charles Street	\$560,000
09/23/2022	18 Richmond Road	\$1.02 mil
09/22/2022	291 Bacon Street	\$1.52 mil
09/22/2022	36 Burning Tree Road	\$650,000
09/22/2022	3 Moccasin Path	\$1.28 mil
09/20/2022	32 Walden Drive, #14	\$375,000
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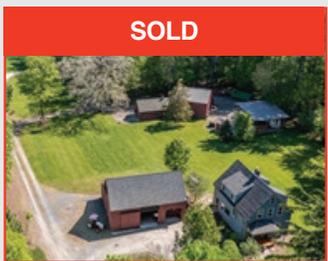
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Real Estate Corner

Senate President Karen Spilka Awarded an Honorary Degree From William James College

Senate President Karen Spilka, a respected leader and champion for diverse social issues including mental healthcare, juvenile justice, educational equity, and services for the elderly, was recently awarded a doctorate of humane letters, the highest honor bestowed by William James College.

Spilka, a former social worker, attorney, and small business owner was honored at commencement exercises celebrating the William James College class of 2022. Located in Newton, William James College is a nonprofit higher educational institution that prepares the next generation of behavioral health professionals.

For the past five years, Spilka, a Democrat who represents the 2nd Middlesex & Norfolk District which includes Ashland, Framingham, Franklin, Holliston, Hopkinton, Medway, and Natick, has

served as Senate President. She was first elected to the Massachusetts State Senate in 2005.

According to William James College President Nicolas Covino, Spilka understands the importance of workforce development within the mental health sector and the critical role that policy making plays in the development and retention of the behavioral health professionals.

"Senate President Spilka gives voice to those who are often overlooked. A staunch advocate for accessible, high-quality care for residents of every age and background, she works tirelessly to eliminate barriers to essential mental health services," said Covino.

Spilka is widely recognized for her leadership during the height of the pandemic. She pursued the passage of Patients First legislation which advanced support

for community hospitals, COVID testing sites, and telehealth services. Despite a crisis that resulted in significant budget cuts across the country, Senate President Spilka helped establish one of the most robust Rainy-Day funds in the country which allowed the Commonwealth to avoid cuts to social safety nets, while expanding support for housing stability, food security, unemployment benefits and much-needed relief for the hospitality and restaurant industries.

A graduate of Northeastern Law School and a longtime resident of Ashland, Senate President Spilka also holds a B.S. in Social Work from Cornell University. She has been married to environmental engineer Joel S. Loitherstein for more than 30 years.

About William James College

Founded in 1974, William

James College is an independent, non-profit institution and a leader in educating the next generation of behavioral health professionals to support the growing and diverse needs of the mental health workforce. Integrating field work with academics, the College prepares students for careers as organizational leaders and behavioral health professionals who are committed to helping the underserved,

multicultural populations, children and families, and veterans. William James College alumni can be found making an impact in a variety of settings, including schools, the courts, clinical care facilities, hospitals, the community, and the workplace. To learn more about the College, please visit william-james.edu.

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