



Grafton's Amanda Conyers captured first place in the People's Choice Photography category at the fifth annual SSFA.

Grafton artists are among award winners at 5th annual Festival

BY ROD LEE

This year's fifth annual Small Stones Festival of the Arts attracted entrants from far and wide, but there was also no shortage of strong local talent.

The People's Choice awards for the 2022 version of the Festival were captured by Bonnie Frederico in the Fine Art category for her oil painting "Peonies" and Amanda Conyers in the Photography category for her "Eye to Eye."

Both live in the town of Grafton.

Also, Ria Hill of Uxbridge placed first in the Juror's Choice for Fine Art with her "Crow on Top."

Opening Night of the Festival in the Great Hall saw artists mingling with those checking out the painting and photography on display and marking their choices for first, second and third in each category. Excitement carried throughout

the week as the Festival's other events took place. A highlight for many were remarks made by Grafton's own Nicholas Gage on "A Writer's Life," with special attention given to his mother Eleni, who was executed during the Greek Civil War while trying to help her children escape to safety.

Reading from notes, Mr. Gage struggled to control his emotions as he talked about his mother.

Ms. Frederico has been a decorative painter since 1973 and says she was interested in painting from early childhood, "even if it just meant helping to paint my family home. As the years passed, my enthusiasm didn't change."

The first place awards in the juried Fine Art painting and photography exhibition held at the Great Hall, One Grafton Common, were Pam Short of Lancaster for her pastel "Beauty in My Own Back Yard" and Kenneth Salmone of Attlebor-

ough for his photograph "On the Rocks."

An accomplished artist, Ms. Short entered her painting on a whim and was surprised and delighted to learn she had taken first place, according to SSFA Publicist Dana Wilson. Ms. Short enjoys painting landscapes, seascapes, animals and wildlife and buildings. Pastels are her preferred medium. She believes "beauty is everywhere if you choose to see it." Her work has been featured in the Fruitland Museum Shop, Petersham Craft Center and at the NOA Gallery at the Groton Inn.

Mr. Salmone quoted Henry David Thoreau in asserting that "It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see" to explain his approach to photography. He has traveled extensively to find beautiful places but says "I still manage to discover over-

SMALL STONES

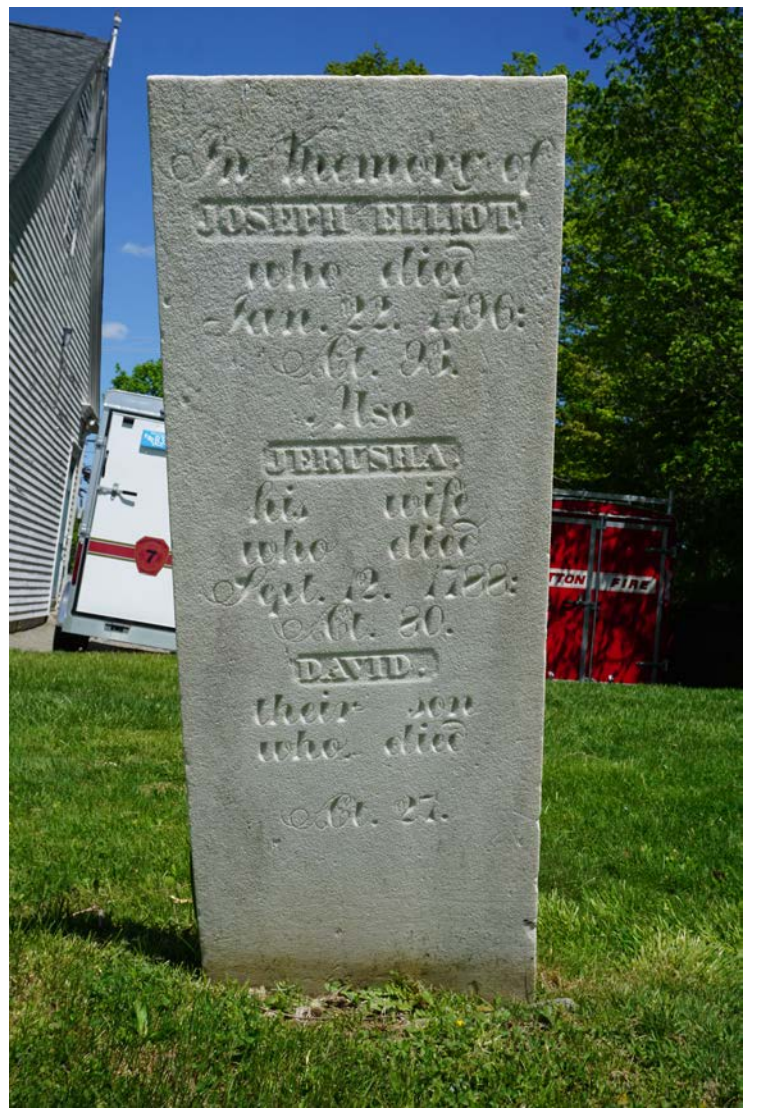
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Ross Weaver leads intrepid band of Sutton cemetery ambassadors

BY ROD LEE

Two nights before Halloween, Ross Weaver, Brian Stevenson, John Belculfine, Dave Pizzi and others involved with

They had every reason to be proud of what has been accomplished in stabilizing gravestones that were leaning or otherwise falling into disrepair at the Sutton Center Cemetery and several



restoration work done in the Sutton Center Cemetery behind the Gen. Rufus Putnam Hall on Uxbridge St. could be found at the site, eager to show off the results of their labors as part of a tour by flashlight open to the public from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

of the other approximately thirty cemeteries located in town.

Mr. Weaver said the project was initiated with a Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor-sponsored presentation

CEMETERY

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HARBRO

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looked and often unseen snippets of beauty within the small, natural worlds” close to home.

Ms. Short and Mr. Sal-mone both received \$500 first-place winnings for their work.

The exhibition featured contributions by ninety artists with one hundred forty-three pieces on display at the Great Hall. Five regional art organizations—Apple Tree Arts, the Blackstone Valley Art Association, the Claflin Hill Symphony Orchestra, the Shakespeare Club of Grafton and the Worcester County Camera Club—collaborated to develop a multi-genre festival with a variety of programs illuminating different art forms.



Above, the pastel “Peonies” by Grafton’s Bonnie Frederico was a People’s Choice first place winner in the Fine Art category of the Small Stones Festival of the Arts.

Left, the nifty “Crow on Top” by Ria Hill of Uxbridge was deemed the winner in the Juror’s Choice Fine Art category at the Small Stones Festival of the Arts.

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Lectures by prominent authors and educators, a dramatic reenactment of a literary figure, a musical lecture on abstract form and structure and talks of interest to artists and art supporters were offered.

The Festival’s hardback printed exhibition catalog

is available online at <https://smallstonesfestival.org>. Participating artists reside in communities in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maine, Vermont—and elsewhere.

Planning for the 2023 Small Stones Festival of the Arts will start early

next year. The Organizing Committee is considering a midsummer date for the Art Call. Contact Ken Cramer at ken@graftonarts.org if you are interested.

Contact Rod Lee at rodlee.1963@gmail.com or 774-232-2999.

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CEMETERY

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by Carlo and Betty Men-cucci of Burrillville, Rhode Island, which was followed by a workday at the Sutton Center Cemetery with hands-on instruction from

ans buried in Sutton Center Cemetery, were given long-overdue attention by a group that included Boy Scouts, over a period of three years.

No one has been buried in the Sutton Center Cemetery since 1937; also, Mr. Weaver points out, “there

indistinguishable.”

A walk-through of Sutton Center Cemetery just before the tour began revealed interesting information about some of the people buried there. Abigail Moore, for example, “was married three times, all pastors.” Eight mem-

Corridor’s 2021 John H. Chaffee Heritage Award. In joining those saluting Mr. Weaver, James Smith, Sutton’s town manager, said “Ross has become Sutton’s unsung hero in our rural world of cemetery conservation...collectively [Mr. Weaver and his fellow volunteers] have made amazing progress in local historical cemetery conservation. He has worked tirelessly to preserve our cemeteries while promoting (our) cultural heritage.”

In all, 340 memorials in

the Sutton Center Cemetery have been uploaded to Find-a-Grave and are accessible to anyone with Internet access. A QR code sign, funded with a grant from the Sutton Cultural Council, is located between the Gen. Rufus Putnam Museum and Town Hall. This QR code directs visitors to a self-guided tour of the cemetery along with other historic sites in town.

There are 482 head and foot stones, and one crypt, in the cemetery.

The volunteers’ efforts

to restore gravestones in the Sutton Center Cemetery were noticed by Suzanne Buchanan, the Corridor’s volunteer coordinator, and Ms. Buchanan included Mr. Weaver on a panel to discuss the Cemetery Conservation Ambassadors program and how volunteers could work together and share resources.

Contact Rod Lee at rodlee.1963@gmail.com or 774-232-2999.



Leaning gravestones, and others that needed cleaning or repair, are among those that Ross Weaver and his fellow ambassadors have restored in the Sutton Center Cemetery, which dates to the early 1700s.

the couple on cleaning, resetting and repairing gravestones.

The Sutton project was launched in the fall of 2019, around the same time the Corridor created the Cemetery Conservation Ambassadors as a component of its Volunteers in Parks program. The Corridor’s VIP program is run in collaboration with the National Park Service and has involved cleaning of the river basin, providing docents at historic sites and facilities, and maintaining walking and bicycle paths.

“Almost 1900 hours of volunteer time has been recorded” on the cemetery work in town so far, Mr. Weaver said.

Gravestones, twenty-one of which belong to Revolutionary War veter-

are certainly more buried here than we know about.”

Mr. Weaver credited the town’s Cemetery Commission, the Sutton Historical Society and the Dudley Gendron American Legion Post for the encouragement and assistance they have provided to the project.

“The King family plot,” and gravestones bearing the names of prominent members of the community who even have roads in town named after them, like Harback—“all of the Harback family except for wife Ruth,” for instance—are among those buried in the Sutton Center Cemetery. Mr. Weaver noted that “33% percent of these gravestones were severely leaning.” In some instances the lettering on the gravestones was “mostly

members of the Harback family died in a thirteen-year period. A crypt contains the remains of the Rev. David Hall, a Harvard grad who served as minister of the Congregational Church for sixty years.

Of the more than four hundred “humanly placed” stones in the Sutton Center Cemetery, 384 were cleaned, 273 were plumed, others required cosmetic work, and 68 needed restoration and resetting.

In a number of cases, ambassadors had “reinforcement pieces” placed behind the original headstone. In other cases, slate replaced marble “because it holds up better,” he said.

For his own leadership role in the project, Mr. Weaver was presented with the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage



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Corridor pays tribute to Margaret Carroll in Millville



Pictured from left to right at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Margaret M. Carroll Greenway Access Area in Millville are Carroll McGahan, Maureen McGahan, former State Sen. Richard T. Moore, Jody Madden, Jeannie Hebert, Helen Kennedy, State Rep. Mike Soter and Jack Carroll. In the back row are Kylie Gibbons, Donna Williams, Devon Kurtz, and Val Stegemoen. Not pictured: State Sen. Ryan Fattman.

The late Margaret M. Carroll was remembered in appropriate fashion on October 27th with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Blackstone River Greenway in Millville.

A town historian, educator, preservationist and charter member of the Blackstone River Valley Volunteers-in-Parks program and the John H. Chaffee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, Ms. Carroll was well known and highly regarded for her contributions to community life. Recent legislation created the Margaret M. Carroll Memorial Greenway Access Area in Millville. The Mas-

sachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation is working on installing a sign and a memorial bench at the site.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM FLOURISHING

A message from Molly Cardoza, director of Volunteer & Community Engagement for the Corridor:

"I continue to be blown away by our Volunteers-in-Parks volunteers and their incredible commitment to the work they do in the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor and Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park. Thank you to everyone who

has led programs, conserved historic cemeteries, cleaned up our watershed, maintained our natural resources and so much more this year!

"A personal thank you for the warm welcome you have given me in my first year at BRVNH. This first year has exceeded my expectations and goals for the volunteer program."

The numbers are in for the Volunteers-in-Parks program for FY 2022. Volunteers logged 30,607 hours at a total value of \$916,679.

MILLBURY SCOUTS RECOGNIZED FOR WORK

Five Millbury scouts

from Troop 109 recently earned their Resource Stewardship Scout Ranger Badge and two earned their Scout Ranger Certificate. These Scouts, led by Eagle Scout Candidate Adam Moroney, worked to create a path and make the spillway of the former Asa Waters Armory—a gun manufacturer in the 1800s—accessible as a recreational space. This spillway historically flowed into the Blackstone River, which is visible from this location behind the present-day Millbury VFW.

UniBank To Hold Annual Holiday Giving Program

Program Begins on Friday, November 25th

UniBank recently announced that the bank will kick off its annual Holiday Giving Tree Program on November 25th to make the season brighter for individuals and families throughout the community. The program is part of the bank's dedication to improving life for the communities it serves.

Each UniBank branch has chosen an organization that fills a need in their community and supports the program by making and purchasing items, and accepting donations from customers and the general public. Many local residents face difficult times around the holiday season and UniBank is pleased to work with local charitable organizations in support of this effort to help its neighbors. Branch collections are as follows:

Blackstone: Requesting items to be distributed by the Divine Mercy Parish for individuals in Blackstone.

Douglas: Collecting non-perishable food items for the Douglas Food Pantry located at St. Denis Church.

Hopkinton: Requesting items that will be distributed to families in need by Project Just Because.

Milford: Requesting items that will be given to individuals and families in need in the Milford

Community. Donations will be distributed by the St. Vincent de Paul Society at St. Mary of the Assumption Church.

North Grafton: Requesting items needed by senior citizens that will be distributed by the Grafton Senior Center.

Shrewsbury: Requesting donations of non-perishable food items that will be donated to a local food pantry.

Sutton: Items for senior citizens to be distrib-

uted by the Sutton Senior Center.

Upton: Items needed by senior citizens to be handed out by the Upton Senior Center.

Uxbridge: Requesting specific items for individuals in Uxbridge to be distributed by the People First

Food Pantry.

Whitinsville Main: Requesting items that will be distributed by the Friends of Northbridge Elders to individuals in Northbridge.

Whitinsville Plaza: Requesting items to be distributed by the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families to benefit local children.

Worcester: Tags requesting specific items needed by women and children to be distributed by the YWCA.

Donated items may be dropped off during regular banking hours through mid-December. Check with your local branch for specific details and deadlines. Visit www.unibank.com for a listing of branch locations and hours.

UniBank is rooted in the Blackstone Valley with assets of \$2.4 billion as of September 30, 2022. A full-service, mutually owned community bank, UniBank has branches in Central Massachusetts and the MetroWest region of Massachusetts. UniBank is dedicated to contributing to the overall quality of life and economic health of the communities it serves, while maintaining a high level of financial soundness and integrity. UniBank is an Equal Housing Lender and Member FDIC and Member DIF. UniBank NMLS #583135. The company website is www.unibank.com.

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Xpressly Yours ... a letter from the editor

Women's Success Network delivers a boatload of fun



An invitation from Pat Hurton to join members of the Women's Success Network (WSN) for an evening "charter cruise" of Webster Lake on the Indian Princess gave me momentary pause. There was an initial hesitation, governed by the feeling that I would be "a duck out of water"—so to speak.

Not to worry. There was not only the warm welcome extended by Ms. Hurton, Jeannie Hebert, Alise Breton and others in attendance, there was the chance to experience Chris Robert's paddleboat for the second time in the past several years.

Doing so, the thought that inevitably came to mind—as I'm sure it did for the WSN'ers—was "what was all the fuss about? Why was there such an uproar and so much consternation, so much opposition, when Mr. Robert first proposed the idea of putting such a craft on "Lake Chaubunagamaug"?

Many of residents of the lake who resisted Mr. Robert's plan "have been on the boat" themselves since the tumult settled down, David Balessandro told me. We were standing on the lower deck just outside an enclosed area that features a bar, the galley, two "heads" and a full-screen TV.

The 59-ton vessel, propelled by two stern wheels, was moving smoothly and quietly through the water.

A mid-October night that had started with temperatures near 70 degrees was still perfectly comfortable and when a breeze with a chill in it kicked up people topside were advised by "Mary," a deck hand, to move to a spot behind the control room "and you'll be nice and warm."

Ms. Hebert of the host Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce was one of the first to climb the stairs to the upper

deck from the lower floor, where drinks and hors d'oeuvres were served. "Come on up," she said over the loudspeaker. "It's a great view!"

Mr. Balessandro is known as "Diver Dave" for his scuba-diving expertise. "I also hold a captain's license," he said. He was enjoying filling members of the Women's Success Network in on the nuances of the lake, which is dotted with homes all around. Passing these, he returned waves and whistles from people hailing the Indian Princess from their front porch, some of them tending steaks on the grill. "That's Waterfront Mary's," he noted, pointing to a popular restaurant and its bright lights. "We're in Vodka Cove right now, also known as The Dugout."

Carol Archambault of Green Compass, a USDA organic leader in the hemp wellness industry, was impressed by the boat and the reception she got from WSN leadership. Ms. Archambault sees membership in the Women's Success Network as an exciting new thread in her life.

"Membership in WSN will help me step out of my comfort zone, personally as well as professionally," Ms. Archambault said. "Connecting with other women, making new friendships and sharing ideas on how we can help one another is what I am most looking forward to.

"I believe that Green Compass can impact people's lives for the better and I love sharing the message of how women can start their own business to help contribute financially to the family. Whether they are a stay-at-home mom, work full-time or part-time, or are recently retired, this business is for everyone, at any age.

"I started with Green Compass because I saw how its products really make a difference in someone's quality of life. I love helping people feel better!"

Green Compass's operation is "vertically integrated," she said. In other words, the company controls the entire process, from when the seeds are put in the ground on the farm it owns "to the prod-

uct that arrives at your doorstep."

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"We're moving!" Carol Dauphinais of the Grafton Country Store said, as the Indian Princess left port.

"What a fun evening!" Heather McGuire of Sundance Newbridge Publishing wrote Ms. Hurton in an email after the event. "Thank you for being so kind to me, and taking time to introduce me to some new people. I am really enjoying being part of this network."

Ms. McGuire told me on the boat that Sundance, which is based in Marlborough, publishes educational and children's books. She is a sales consultant. "It's a good industry," she said. "Teachers are a caring group of people."

For more information about the Women's Success Network and upcoming WSN events like "Commerce on the Common" in Grafton, go to blackstonevalley.org.

Contact Rod Lee at rodlee.1963@gmail.com or 774-232-2999.



Representing Karl Storz Endovision Inc. at the Women's Success Network tour of Webster Lake on the Indian Princess were Michelle Cristo, Bobbie Gavin, Natalia Martinez, Janet Simpkins and Miranda Grendell.

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A Medusa gained, a beloved leopard lost, at Southwick's

The good news from Southwick's Zoo is that "Medusa" from Greek mythology is being offered as a featured attraction during this year's Festival of Illumination, which is well underway with a "Once Upon a Time" theme involving forgotten stories, myths, legends and fairytales from around the globe—presented by the Zigong Lantern Group.

Also, a Harvest Festival on October 23rd added to the highlights of the fall season at the zoo.

Beginning November 12th, the zoo's annual Winter Wonderland holiday lights' display and the Festival of Illumination will come together for a show-stopping experience for visitors to the zoo—through December 31st.

Galliford's Restaurant & Tavern will be open as will the Purple Peacock gift shop.

Unfortunately, Southwick's has also been hit with some sad news. Mowgli, the zoo's

beloved nineteen-year-old African leopard, passed away peacefully on October 18th.

"Mowgli was a favorite among visitors at Southwick's Zoo and holds a special place in the hearts of all, including our zookeepers and staff," Southwick's announced.

While Mowgli was not born at Southwick's, he spent almost his entire life in Mendon. At birth, he was weak and needed intensive care and so was brought to Southwick's to be hand-raised by Betsey Brewer Bethel and the facility's zookeepers. "He grew into one of the mellowest, yet regal cats [we] have had the pleasure of caring for," Ms. Brewer Bethel said. "Right until the end of his life he had a close bond with his keepers, who used a specially designed tool regularly to provide the ear, back and belly scratches that he so enjoyed."

With the arrival of Mowgli, a new suitable habitat needed to be built. The zoo

and EARTH Ltd., its non-profit affiliate, used this opportunity to design a STEM education initiative for women. They partnered with middle school girls, female college science students and a number of women architects, engineers and exhibit designers in a kind of "designer's challenge" competition to craft an exhibit for the zoo's new African leopard.

Students from all over the area participated by helping to raise money. Ms. Brewer Bethel remembers a time when Medway elementary students were stopping cars at traffic lights to collect coins to build Mowgli's home. "It was one of the most heartwarming gestures I have ever seen," she said. "However, I did tell the students that I would help them in other ways because that wasn't the safest way to raise money."

In addition to being a fun project for all involved, the girls who took part scored



Mowgli, the African leopard, was a favorite of visitors to Southwick's Zoo.

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better on a standardized test of science and engineering concepts than did a control group of their peers. These girls also showed improved attitudes towards math and science. When the project was presented at the International Zoo Educators 2010 conference, several attendees asked if the zoo knew where the students were now.

"We found our participants through social media platforms. Of the girls who had originally participated we were able to connect with half of them. Of those who responded, a little over half were now studying in a

math, science, technology or engineering field. All of them stated that the project had a long-term impact on their confidence and on their ability to work both as members of a team and as team leaders. Still others explained that their participation in the project led them to their career goals in science."

African leopards like Mowgli are the most widespread cat species, living throughout most of the continent. "In the wild, leopards can live eleven to twelve years, but as few as 35% of the cubs survive the first year," Ms. Brewer Bethel said.

"They have adapted to a wide variety of habitats and can be found from the desert to the rainforest. They use stealth to capture their prey and then climb up a tree to hide from other predators, such as lions and hyenas."

Southwick's Festival of Illumination, in full swing, exhibits such luminous characters as Medusa, one of three monstrous Gorgons—winged human females with venomous snakes for hair—who could turn those who looked into their eyes into stone.

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Waters Farm Days ties in with Manchaug Pond cleanup

BY ROD LEE

Rae Johnson and his wife Janet were no less a part of Waters Farm Days than all of the rest of the principals involved in the 47th annual event in the town of Sutton on October 15th—even if it didn't look that way.

Mr. and Mrs. Johnson could be found sitting in chairs a short walk from the main field, next to informational kiosks situated near Dorothea Waters' historic farmhouse and in a spot overlooking picturesque Manchaug Pond.

They were there rep-



Above, Rae Johnson and his wife Janet work an informational table for the Manchaug Pond Foundation at Waters Farm Days.

Left, Guy Powell, "call me dad," works the Ye Olde Kettle Cooker at Waters Farm Days.



resenting the Manchaug Pond Foundation, and Mr. Johnson was eager to talk

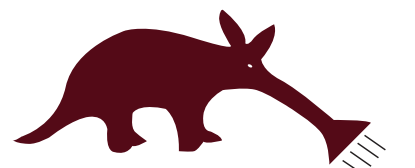
about an ambitious project that has been undertaken in collaboration with the

Massachusetts DEP to improve the water quality of the pond.

Extensive work has been done, he said, to stem the flow of phosphates, nitrates and other contaminants into the pond. This includes "two large catch basins, which act as a filter." Other measures have been taken too, all with the purpose of keeping Manchaug Pond pristine for boating, fishing, swimming, and similar recreational activities.

The Manchaug Pond Foundation has made good use of \$300,000 targeted for this particular initiative, and several more.

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It's almost time for 27th Grafton Celebrates the Holidays

BY CHRISTINE GALEONE

It's hard to believe that Thanksgiving is next week. But with the unseasonably warm weather we've had this month, it's easy to see how the holiday season could sneak up on people.

Thankfully, the town of Grafton, many of its businesses and many of its organizations are prepared. They're ready to lend a hand in bringing people together in all kinds of ways.

On Sunday Dec. 4, the **Grafton Recreation Department** will hold its 27th annual **Grafton Celebrates the Holidays** event. The event will include a craft and vendor fair from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the **Grafton Municipal Center gym**, festivities at "Frosty Stops" throughout Grafton from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m., winter and festive songs by the **Grafton Girl Scouts** and the **RISE (Racial Inclusion and Social Equity)**-initiated symbolic lighting of Grafton's first community Menorah on the Common around 4 p.m. and Santa's arrival and the lighting of

the Common around 4:30.

Several Frosty Stop businesses will offer free food, treats and kids' activities and giveaways, including chicken noodle soup for adults and a cookie for each child at **Bushel N' Peck**, kids' crafts at **Savers Bank**, **Beatz Dance Studio** and **Houlden Farm** – which will be selling Christmas trees and greenery on the farm – and coloring books, badges and the **Masons'** child identification program access for kids and gun locks for adults at the **Grafton Police Department**. Kids can also participate in many other fun activities like sending a letter to Santa at the **Grafton Fire Department** and riding the Polar Express trackless train at **UniBank**.

A few of the local churches will also offer fun and inspirational activities at the event. The **Congregational Church of Grafton** will offer a Gaga game starting at 2 p.m. and fireside stories from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. The **Unitarian Universalist Society** will hold a winter faire, have live jazz music and a performance by the UUSGU bell

choir. The **Baptist Church of Grafton** will have soft, soothing Christmas music playing for its visitors, who can tour the church's large display of global Manger Scenes depicting the Nativity.

At the Frosty Stop for **Gaudette Insurance Agency**, kids can get free custom-made cookies by the **Crafted Cookie**. People can also help others by dropping off new toys for **Toys for Tots** at the agency. They can then enter a raffle.

The **Grafton Food Bank** is also offering people a way to help others. Its "Sponsor a Family" program provides holiday gifts to children in families that are struggling financially. Individuals, families or community groups that would like to sponsor a family by donating gifts/food baskets to one or more of the families served by the food bank can get more information by emailing the nonprofit at foodbankholidays@gmail.com or by calling the food bank at 508-277-4535.

People looking for holiday ornaments, décor or gifts can find them in

several Grafton shops, including **Perreault Nurseries'** gift shop, the **Grafton Country Store**, **Off the Common Antiques** and **The Saddle Shed**. In addition to selling festive soy candles and holiday greenery, **Perreault Nurseries**, the North Grafton nursery and landscape supply shop sells holiday items featuring angels, birds, gnomes and more. And it's now offering wreath and boxwood tree decorating workshops. Class price and availability can be found on the nursery's Facebook page. The **Grafton Country Store**,



A crowd gathers to sing at a past Grafton Celebrates the Holidays event. (Photo submitted by the Grafton Recreation Department)

the **Grafton Common** gift shop that sells gifts, jewelry, décor and accessories, among other things, boasts a wide selection of holiday gifts (including many featuring snowmen, reindeer and wildlife), ornaments and décor, and it has already extended its hours for the holiday shopping season. Nearby, **Off the Common Antiques**, the multi-artisan, multi-vendor shop has also updated its inventory to include many holiday hand-crafted and antique ornaments and décor. Over in South Grafton, **The Saddle Shed**, which offers a selection of horse equipment, accessories, gifts and tack and has win-

ter wear for horses and their riders, has also been selling new items from the Breyer 2022 Holiday Collection.

On Saturday Nov. 26 – which is Small Business Saturday – in North Grafton, **Angel Hair Alpacos** will hold its annual open house from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. In addition to fun, educational farm tours and free cookies and cider, there will be pop-up vendors selling things such as fudge, gift items and baked goods. Its own farm shop will be selling knitted garments and yarn.

Elsewhere in North Grafton, **Tufts University's Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine** also

offered a fun, educational event. It held the **13th Annual Blackstone Valley STEM Conference** on Nov. 5. Held with the **Blackstone Valley Education Foundation**, the conference included a day of educational STEM-based activities for students from area middle schools.

Although the holiday season will be here soon, Grafton and many of its businesses and organizations are ready to help people prepare for it in fun and inspiring ways. Have a happy, healthy Thanksgiving!

Contact Christine with your business news items at cmgaleone15@gmail.com.



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The Green Plate's growth saluted on eve of Shop Small 01588

BY ROD LEE

Danielle Desrosiers of The Green Plate has more reason than ever to look forward to this year's Shop Small 01588 event, which begins on

treats marked five years in business and expansion into an adjoining storefront on November 7th with a festive and well-attended ribbon-cutting ceremony.

"You have built quite a following," Jeannie Hebert,

expressed what many in attendance were feeling, too, when he said "I look forward to ten years" for The Green Plate as well.

Not only is The Green Plate acquiring the storefront previously occupied

"We will have Green Plates all over!"

Watching this, Ms. Desrosiers' father said "she has done extraordi-



The Crafty Nest; The Flower Shop; UniBank; Whittin Community Center; and Woodshop@933.

Shoppers can pick up a Shop Small 01588 Passport at any of these businesses and get it stamped to enjoy in-store specials, giveaways and holiday promotions.

American Express launched Shop Small Saturday in the midst of a recession in 2010. The inaugural event was a hit and has grown since. In 2020 alone, American

Express notes, the company spent approximately \$200 million on initiatives to support small business around the globe.

Contact Rod Lee at rodlee.1963@gmail.com or 774-232-2999.

Harbro Auto Sales; Katalina's Boutique; Koopman Lumber; Little Man Handbags; LuLuRoe Kathy Bartlett; LuLu's Jewelry & Gifts; Neighborhood Kitchen; Schotanus Design Center;



Danielle Desrosiers of The Green Plate, center, is joined by Sen. Ryan Fattman, Rep. David Muradian, Jeannie Hebert of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce and Sen. Michael Moore after receiving legislature recognition on the business's fifth anniversary and continuing growth.

Saturday, November 26 in downtown Whitinsville and continues in and around Church St. all of the following week, through Saturday, December 3rd.

Other participating businesses are equally excited, as Shop Small 01588 organizers celebrate the start of another holiday gift-buying season. Among the new venues are the Neighborhood Kitchen, Koopman's with a pop-up tent in the Crafty Nest, and Blue Zone Integrated Fitness. Also, Carr Funeral Home is hosting a drive-through drop off on the 26th.

Christine Guanipa of Little Man Handbags, Heather Glode of LuLu's Jewelry & Gifts and Jessie Scotanus of Schotanus Design Center encourage residents to check out their Facebook page ShopSmall01588 and Instagram@shopsmall01588 for updates.

The Green Plate with its health-oriented Signature Bowls, Signature Pizzas, frozen heat-and-eat meals, wraps, bunless burgers, salads and wraps and sweet

president and CEO of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, told Ms. Desrosiers, in congratulating her on the success of The Green Plate.

"To have thrived in a pandemic is quite an achievement," Sen. Michael Moore of Millbury told her.

Sen. Ryan Fattman of Sutton added "most businesses, 90% of them don't make it to five years."

Rep. David Muradian Jr. of Grafton echoed these sentiments, telling Ms. Desrosiers "your commitment to make the community better is greatly appreciated."

Northbridge Town Manager Adam Gaudette

by The Welcoming Lantern, next door, Ms. Desrosiers is now aiming to franchise.

"Own a Green Plate franchise!" are the words written on a postcard-like message she distributed. Ms. Desrosiers said franchisees will tap into a support system "with training, business operations and resources for success."

Choking up as she addressed the gathering, Ms. Desrosiers said "five years comes so quick. Everything fell in place the way it needed to. The town, my customers, my team, so much around me, that's why I'm growing" the business.

"Now you are franchising," Ms. Hebert told her.

narly well. I'm very proud of her."

Businesses planning to be a part of Shop Small 01588 this year are:

Barbara Connors Art Glass Studio; Blue Zone Integrated Fitness; Carr Funeral Home; Daily Grind Barbershop; Driven Self Defense; Family Karate Center; Furiends Gourmet Pet Treats; The Green Plate;

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BY ROD LEE

The buzz in the neighborhood began soon after the banner was strung across the front of what was Jube's, announcing the arrival before long of a new restaurant—Reunion Tap & Table.

Residents of the town of Northbridge and surrounding communities are hungry for just such an establishment, Sargon Hanna, an owner of Reunion Tap & Table, said on October 19th.

They may have to wait a little while longer, however. But hiring is underway.

“We are looking to open in December or January,” Mr. Hanna said. The prem-

Make way for Reunion Tap & Table, in Whitinsville



The storefront in the Whitinsville Plaza formerly occupied by Jube's will be home to Reunion Tap & Table.

ises previously occupied by Jube's, in the Whitinsville Plaza on Providence Road, are undergoing an extensive renovation. The rebuild, which is being done by Paul Apkrian Architects of Westborough, involves ripping out the tables, floors and ceilings that were in place and will include the addition of a bar.

This will be a second location for Reunion Tap & Table, a companion to the storefront the restaurant has occupied on Worcester

St. in North Grafton for about four years and that is doing well.

“We are looking to expand and this is an underserved market,” Mr. Hanna said. “People have been clamoring for a new restaurant, as they were in Grafton and we have killed it here. The space we are moving into in Whitinsville made sense. It's the 2.0 version of Reunion Tap & Table, a smaller footprint.”

Mr. Hanna described the menu as being highlighted by “pizza, burgers

and wings” but if North Grafton is any indication, it will be much more extensive than that—and a welcome addition to the dining scene in the lower Blackstone Valley.

Reunion Table & Tap's mantra is “familiar food favorites and craft beers” and cocktails.

The countdown is on to the day the doors open.

Send your restaurant/food news to Rod Lee at rodlee.1963@gmail.com or call 774-232-2999.

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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.

THROUGHOUT NOVEMBER

• A Mother-Daughter Art Show featuring the mixed media work of Kathleen Kunkel and the pottery



The history of the battle-hardened M1 Abrams tank, named after Creighton Abrams, will be the topic of a presentation by Mike Manougian from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Saturday, November 26th at the American Heritage Museum, 568 Main St., Hudson.

creations of Hanna Kunkel is taking place at Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 E. Main St., Webster, during regular business hours.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 18

• The Douglas Sunshine Club is hosting its annual Beef Stew Dinner along with entertainment at the Adult Social Center, 331 Main St. Tickets are \$10 per person and available by calling 508-476-4474 or 508-476-2283. Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. Dinner is at 6:00 p.m. followed by piano and vocal with Nancy Marshall.

NOVEMBER 18 & 19

• The Uxbridge High School Drama Club will present "The Play That Goes Wrong" by Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer and Henry Shields in the UHS Auditorium at 7:00 p.m. The play is presented with permission from Dramatists Play Service Inc. In 2015 The Play That Goes Wrong won Best Comedy at the 2015 Laurence Olivier Awards. It has been running since 2012 in London. Forty-four UHS students are involved in this production. Tickets will be available at the door; \$5 for adults and \$3 for students and senior citizens.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19

• The Blackstone Valley Wine & Chocolate Tasting with a live

auction, raffles, prizes and vendors will be held at Blissful Meadows Golf Club, 801 Chocolog Road, Uxbridge, at 7:00 p.m. This event is offered in collaboration with Marty's Fine Wines, The Candy Shoppe and The Afterglow Boutique. Tickets are \$40, \$50 at the door and may be purchased at Uni-Bank in Whitinsville or Uxbridge or online at www.facebook.com/BVWinetasting. Proceeds benefit

the Blackstone Valley Emergency Shelter and the Blackstone Valley Rotary Scholarship Fund.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20

• The New England Country Music Club presents live music by Kerrie Evers at the Progressive Club, 18 Whitin St., Uxbridge. Doors open at 12:30 with entertainment from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. www.facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24

• The Uxbridge Quaker Meeting House Association is hosting a traditional nondenominational service at 9:30 a.m. the corner of Aldrich St. and Quaker Highway. A fellowship gathering in the new carriage shed will follow. The Association is a nonprofit founded in 1952. Its primary purpose is the preservation of historic buildings. The Association also urges the use of the meetinghouse for religious, educational and civic engagements. Contact quaker-meetinghouseassoc@gmail.com or go to UxbridgeQuakerMeeting.com at Facebook.com.

NOVEMBER 26-DECEMBER 3

• Shop Small 01588 will be held in downtown Whitinsville, with dozens of businesses taking part in the passport-style event for an entire week, starting on Small

Business Saturday.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26

• Mike Manougian, a volunteer docent at the American Heritage Museum, 568 Main St., Hudson, will discuss the history of the M1 Abrams tank from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. The M1 Abrams is a 68-ton third-generation American main battle tank designed by Chrysler Defense. Mr. Manougian, an Abrams tank commander, will talk about the tank's capabilities, tactical employment, and lessons learned from recent wars.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3

• St. Gabriel's Church, 151 Mendon St., Upton, will host its Christmas Fair from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. with a variety of fresh balsam wreaths, cemetery baskets and table-top arrangements. Raffles for theme baskets, gift certificates and more than \$450 worth of scratch tickets will be available. A new gift boutique featuring new and "like new" items, Oldye Tyme Christmas decorations, gems, jewels seasonal décor will be included along with a Bake Table where cookies, pastries, candy, jams and jellies will be presented. Face masks are encouraged. • The 25th anniversary of the Uxbridge First Holiday Night Celebration and Parade, a family tradition, will be held. Volunteers are welcome for the event. Stop by the Mendon Street Kitchen for more information.

• The Uxbridge PSG 2023 is hosting a Jack-a-doo Holiday Vendor Fair from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Uxbridge High School, 300 Quaker Highway. More than thirty local vendors with unique gifts for the holidays will be on hand and there will be raffle items and a concession stand. This year's event is dedicated to Tricia Trask, who is dearly missed and remembered.

Tricia's son Jack is graduating. Contact PSG for more information at psguxbridge@gmail.com or check Facebook, [UxbridgePSG2023-ParentsforSafeGraduation](https://www.facebook.com/UxbridgePSG2023-ParentsforSafeGraduation). • The Sutton Chain of Lights will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., featuring family fun with free trolleys, boutique shops, local products, handmade gifts, specialty items and services for all

the people on your Christmas list.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4

• The New England Country Music Club presents the Rhode Island Rednecks at the Progressive Club, 18 Whitin St., Uxbridge. Doors open at 12:30 p.m. with live entertainment from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. www.facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6

• The Webster Dudley Business Alliance's Holiday Party will take place from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 E. Main St., Webster.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8

• The Auburn Chamber of Com-

HAPPENINGS!

continued on page 13

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Date nut squares are a healthier and heartier treat

BY CHRISTINE GALEONE

Date nut squares have gone in and out of popularity for decades. Many people, including myself, enjoyed them as children. But they're not a treat that's made or thought of, even, often.

However, nostalgia can make baking more interesting. And date nut squares are among the healthier and heartier treats that people can bake. So, if you haven't made them in years, or you've never made them



before, this is a great time to do so.

These squares are healthier than a lot of baked goods because in addition to having less unhealthy fats and added sugar, they're packed with healthy ingredients. Oats are heart healthy. Cinnamon has antioxidant properties. Cardamom, which is a source of vitamin c, riboflavin, niacin, magnesium and potassium, has anti-inflammatory properties and can protect against oxidative stress that causes various health conditions. And almonds and walnuts are both heart-healthy and brain-healthy nuts.

Dates are brimming with minerals and nutrients. They're good sources of potassium, magnesium, copper, manganese, calcium and vitamin B6. They're also rich in fiber and high in antioxidants, which makes them heart healthy. The tropical fruit may also promote brain and bone health, and it may help to prevent various diseases.

DATE NUT SQUARES

Ingredients:

- 2 Cups of Quick or Old-Fashioned Oats
- 1 ¼ Cups of All-Purpose Flour
- ½ Teaspoon of Baking Soda
- 1 Teaspoon of Cinnamon
- ½ Cup of Brown Sugar
- 1 Very Ripe Mashed Banana
- ½ Cup of Light Olive Oil

Date Nut Filling Ingredients:

- 2 Cups of Pitted Dates
- 1/3 Cup of Almonds/Walnuts
- 2 Tablespoons of Brown Sugar
- ½ Teaspoon of Cinnamon
- ½ Teaspoon of Ground Cardamom
- 1 Teaspoon of Almond Extract

Directions:

Soak the dates in a covered bowl of hot water for about 20 minutes.

Drain the water, and combine the dates with the other filling ingredients until a paste-like filling is formed. Set it aside.

Pre-heat the oven to 375 degrees.

In a separate bowl, combine oats, flour, baking soda, cinnamon and brown sugar.

In a separate bowl, combine olive oil and the banana, and cut it into the mixture until it's one crumbly, moistened mixture.

Press about 4 Cups of the crumbly mixture into a greased 9X9 pan.

Spread date nut filling evenly over mixture, leaving about ¼ inch border all around.

Sprinkle the remaining crumbly mixture evenly over the filling.

Bake at 375 degrees for about 25 minutes or until golden brown. Then, let it cool completely before cutting it into 16 squares.

Whether or not date nut squares make a comeback this year, they're a good healthy treat to bake any time. Happy (healthier) baking!

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HAPPENINGS!

continued from page 11

merce's annual Holiday Party will be held from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Realtor Association of Central Massachusetts, 492 Washington St., Auburn. Bring an unwrapped toy and a door prize. All donations

will benefit Auburn Youth & Family Services.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16

• The Birch Alley Brass Ensemble will present a free concert of Christmas music from around the world at 7:00 p.m. at Valley Chapel, 14 Hunter Road, Uxbridge. Directed by William Moffett, the

ensemble is made up of thirty-five student and professional musicians from area towns including Uxbridge, Upton, Hopedale, Mendon and Milford. This is the 11th annual version of the concert, which is made possible by the Mendon, Milford and Hopedale Cultural Councils.



Hanna Kunkel's creative ways with pottery are on display throughout the month of November as a part of a Mother Daughter Art Show at Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 E. Main St., Webster. The exhibition also features mixed media work by Hanna's mom Kathleen Kunkel.

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LIVING WITH LUKE

amyleclaire@hotmail.com

Luke visits Butler Farm Bark Park of Millbury

BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

Luke is one of the more social puppies I've had, especially when it comes to playing with other dogs. Luckily, my neighborhood is full of interesting dogs for Luke to bump shoulders with. He's learned to bark back in the face of aggression, romp with rambunctious rescues, and chase after sleek dogs built like greyhounds. When it comes to Dog Play, Luke never gives up. For this reason, we have called him a Scrapper. He's even invented a signature move, ramming his shoulder and one side of his body against a bigger dog, as would a defensive back.

He'll sit on the front steps, ears lifted in curiosity, to watch leashed dogs walk by. Often times, a friend will prance onto my front

lawn to invite spontaneous play. "Hi Luke. Let's play!" Rosie, an exuberant Goldendoodle, flounces onto the front steps. "No more resting. Let's get this party started!" Luke responds as he always does. He sits with a quiet aloofness, as though needing to make an independent choice. He lifts his big puppy head to sniff the air, twitches his nose and thinks over the idea. Then—"Game on!" Just like that, Luke has convinced himself that he's in. The two dogs dash around my house like running fools.

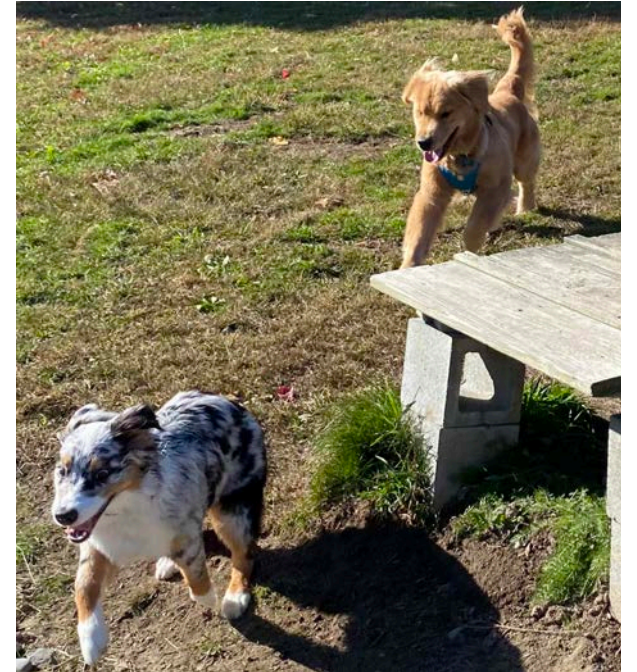
Despite Luke's social nature, I still felt apprehensive about a trip (his first) to Butler Farm Bark Park, a dog park located in Millbury and "funded through the generosity of the Stanton Foundation and donations from local business, non-profit organizations and individual dog lovers." The park boasts charming bridges to climb upon, a water station for dirty paws, a leash hitch, and spacious area for running. The park is everything a Dog Mom could hope



for. Still, I found myself worrying about little Luke. What if a Pit-bull with low self-esteem attacked him?

What if the adult dogs don't like the color of his coat? Questions passed through my mind while I parked.

We arrive and make our way to the gate. A pack of dogs stiffen their necks from high ground in the park ground. "A newcomer!?" They rush towards the gate entrance to greet a pup named Luke Valentino. A few dogs poke their noses through the bars of the gate. One barks and this dog creates a domino effect until we're greeted by a crescendo of yelping. The sunny Friday weather has definitely let the dogs out of the house, I think to myself. There are about five dogs waiting for Luke to enter. I begin to stereotype them. In my mind, they are villains



behind a jail cell. I don't want my puppy to play.

"Hello there! Don't mind these guys. They're fine." A sprightly Dog Mom struts over to the gate entrance, sensing my apprehension. "Don't be afraid." I can tell she's a veteran Dog Parker who knows the ropes. Still, I'm afraid.

"It's just that Luke is still a puppy. I'm a bit nervous," I say back.

"He can wait here until he's ready to join the group."

She guides me to a smaller, gated area at the border of the main park. Grateful for the veteran's compassion, I lead Luke to seclusion. "Am I in a time-out?" He sniffs the ground anxiously.

We are protected. The Dog Park feels suddenly perfect. Then the gate latch jingles. A sleek, muscular dog strolls in. His ears are small and pointy. His coat

LUKE

continued on page 15

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TALES FROM BEYOND

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Otherworldly voices and forms haunt The Dover Mills

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

The Dover Mills still sits at One Washington Center in the heart of downtown Dover, New Hampshire. The mill's history is ripe with tales of prosperity and woe. Perhaps that is why its walls are full of ghosts and ethereal noises passing through the time barrier.

The mills go back to the early days of the Industrial Revolution. John Williams and fellow investors formed the Dover Cotton Factory in 1812 along the Cochecho River. In 1823 the name was changed to Dover Manufacturing Company because they began manufacturing other items along with the cotton.

Factory life was hard. Mr. Williams paid his worker girls forty-seven cents a day. They received room and board and put two cents per day towards medical. The workers toiled for eleven to twelve hours a day. From March thru October, the workday ran from 6:30 AM to 6:30 PM with forty-five minutes for lunch.

John Williams moved to Boston around 1828, leaving James Curtis in charge of the business. He was harsh and insensitive to the

woman employees. He cut their wages from fifty-eight cents a day to fifty-three cents. He even imposed a fine of twelve and one-half cents for anyone who showed up late.

On December 30, 1828, about four hundred of the eight hundred female workers stormed off the job and took up a picket line in front of the factory. This was the first strike by women in the workforce of the United States. Unfortunately, the strike was a failure. The mill owners placed an ad for replacements, and the women were forced to return to their jobs on January 1, 1829, with a reduction in pay.

Expansion created another building to manufacture cloths and other related goods. This branch was named the Cochecho Manufacturing Company. The spelling error in the name was due to an oversight by the state clerk when recording the birth of the business. Even the river now bears the name with the missing "H."

Years passed, and the mill grew into several buildings. One building of particular interest was the new Building #1, built at the bend of the river, known as "The

Beach." This building is the site of the tragic fire that occurred on January 26, 1907. The fire broke out on the fourth floor at about 6:30 PM. Since the sprinkler system was down, the fire spread quickly. Workers had to leap from the windows, and many were injured. The firefighters fought the blaze for one and a half days in temperatures that plummeted as low as twenty-six degrees below zero.

In the end, four people were lost to the fire, and the building was gutted. They rebuilt the structure and by 1908, it was back in business.

In 1909 the factory was sold to Pacific Mills of Lawrence, Massachusetts. At the end of World War I, things took a turn for the worse. Then came the Depression, and in 1937, the great facility finally closed its doors. In 1940 the town of Dover bought the mill at an auction for the sum of fifty-four thousand dollars.

They rented the complex to small businesses, but the buildings had fallen into a sad state of disrepair. By the 1960s, only the ghosts inhabited the empty shells that loomed over the center of town. In 1984 the mill was purchased and renovat-



ed into office and business spaces. The building lives once more with the advent of present-day industry and the revenants of the past.

People standing outside of the building after business hours have claimed to see strange glowing lights hovering around the upper floor windows. Voices of the long-dead still echo through the building as if calling out over the clamor of the machinery that once graced its walls. Other

noises frequently heard are the clanging of old machinery. The sounds resemble old looms and other manufacturing machines starting and stopping. A custodian working the night shift often heard the phantom machinery running while he was working.

Otherworldly voices and forms have been witnessed in one of the towers. Eerie lights sometimes emanate from the basement windows. This would not seem

so strange if it was not for the fact that the basement has been securely sealed for many years.

Could the workers of the past still be drawn to their duties long after their mortal time on earth? Is the machinery that maimed or claimed the lives also part of the spirit world; or is it just a byproduct of the ghost's never-ending tenure at the haunted Cochecho Mill?

LUKE

continued from page 14

is the bright grey of a newly minted nickel.

"Is he a Pitbull??"

The accusation is inappropriate, even unfair. The owner responds casually, with indifference. Perhaps he's used to the comment. "He's not a Pitbull. He's only seven months, still a puppy."

"Luke is a puppy as well!" I croon, hoping to redeem myself with a clever dog connection. Luke tugs at me. "I want to play with the non-pit pup!!"

The owner opens the door of the time-out section. Maybe I was distracted. Maybe I let my guard down upon learning that another puppy is here to join us. In any event, I didn't expect Luke to break free but he does just that, and finds the gate opening to the jungle of big dogs. I feel small and helpless. I watch my pup enter the park and pray that everyone will play nice. Four dogs rush towards Luke and sniff his body at all sides, an initial frisk, a rite

of passage it seems. Luke lowers his head. His ears are pinned back like a bunny's while the dogs encircle him like vultures. "What have I done? Will the dogs play nice?" I feel my heart skip a beat.

"Bring it on!" Luke isn't concerned about playing nice. Instead, he chases the tail of a Shetland Sheepdog, then snaps back around to growl at the Black Lab sniffing his butt. "I'm playing with the Shetland!" He stands his ground, even growling to fend off two dogs at once. I can barely believe my eyes. My puppy, whose name contains the letters L, O, V, E, has figured out how to handle multiple personalities at the dog

park.

I perch on a wooden bridge in the center of the park that reminds me of the fairytale, The Three Billy Goat's Gruff. Other dogs, sensing that I'm a Dog Person more than I am a troll, wander over to sit beside me. Beneath a sunny, autumn sky, I hang out with them while my own plays freely below. The dogs lick my face and hand me their paws. They nestle close and love me unconditionally. I realize, then, that I have not given these dogs enough credit. They look into my eyes with acceptance and a gentle understanding, as though to say, "Your puppy is safe with us." Something tells me they're right. Dogs

always know the truth.

Butler Farm Bark Park is located on 44 Singletary Road, Millbury and is available to Millbury and Sutton residents for a \$20 annual fee (which includes a dog tag, special instruction on

rules, and an open invitation to enjoy off-leash social interaction for your dog!

Find them:

www.butlerfarmdogpark.com

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REAL ESTATE



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

Should you still buy a home with the latest news about inflation?

“should I still buy a home right now?” If that question is top of mind for you, here’s what you need to know.

Homeownership is historically a great hedge against inflation as I have stated in previous columns. In an inflationary economy, prices rise across the board. Historically, homeownership is a great hedge against those rising costs because you can lock in what’s likely your largest monthly payment (your mortgage) for the duration of your loan. That helps stabilize some of your monthly expenses.

A fixed-rate mortgage allows you to maintain the biggest portion of housing expenses at the same payment. Sure, property taxes will rise and other

expenses may creep up, but your monthly housing payment remains the same. If you wait and the interest rate continues to climb, (which is likely to happen) you will be further behind by locking in at yet a higher rate later on. And with rents being as high as they are, the ability to stabilize your monthly payments and protect yourself from future rent hikes may be even more important. Inflation refuses to budge. In September, consumer prices rose by 8.2%. Rents rose by 7.2%, the highest pace in 40 years.

When you rent, your monthly payment is determined by your lease, which typically renews on an annual basis. With inflation

high, your landlord may be more likely to increase your payments to offset the impact of inflation. That may be part of the reason why a survey from realtor.com shows 72% of landlords said they plan to raise the rent on one or more of their properties in the next year.

Becoming a homeowner, if you’re ready and able to do so, can provide lasting stability and a reliable shelter in times of economic uncertainty.

The best hedge against inflation is a fixed housing cost. If you’re ready to learn more and start your journey to homeownership, connect with Marzeottigroup.net/617-519-1871 or another real estate professional today.

Legislature passes massive economic development bill

The Massachusetts Legislature has passed a wide-ranging \$3.76 billion relief package to provide targeted energy assistance, support ongoing transportation needs, and invest in the state’s small businesses, caregivers, health care system, affordable housing, and efforts to fight climate change.

“Massachusetts families are facing rising costs and tighter budgets every day,” said Senator Michael Moore (D-Millbury). “Yesterday, the Legislature passed a wide-ranging bill focused

on supporting essential industries and services, easing the burden of soaring energy costs for low-income households, and spurring economic development across the Commonwealth – actions that will make a meaningful difference to Bay Staters. I want to thank Senators Gobi and Chandler for their partnership in securing these funds for our constituents.”

“I would like to express my sincere appreciation for my colleagues in the House of Representatives and the Senate, in passing An Act relating to the economic

growth and relief for the Commonwealth. This bill provides essential funding for organizations and initiatives throughout the state during a time of prolonged economic instability,” said Senator Harriette Chandler (D-Worcester). “The work of my fellow legislators from Central Massachusetts was vital in securing funding for a wide range of programs, including street improvements and downtown revitalization in the City of Worcester, as well

DEVELOPMENT
continued on page 17

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DEVELOPMENT

continued from page 16

as upgrades to municipal buildings in central Massachusetts towns, and critical funding for non-profits throughout the region that are essential to the functions of organizations that benefit the Greater Worcester community.”

“I am grateful for my partnership with Senator Moore and Senator Chandler. Together, we ensured a pathway forward to support our Veterans. It is right that Massachusetts should empower veterans to build sustainable futures after all their sacrifices,” Senator Anne Gobi (D-Spencer) said.

The local earmarks secured in the final Economic Development bill include:

\$450,000 to fund Veterans Inc, a Veterans’ service provider and substance use community support program in the Worcester area.

“We are so incredibly grateful to Senators Moore, Chandler, and Gobi, and the rest of the Central MA Congressional delegation for their help in obtaining these funds,” said Vincent J. Perrone (Lt. Col., USAF, retired), President and CEO of Veterans Inc. “The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) is a crucial part of our employment services, integrating homeless Veterans into the labor force and funding the development of the innovative service delivery systems that are essential for Veterans in need.”

\$750,000, in collaboration with Senator Harriette Chandler, to fund road improvements at the intersection of Ararat Street and C Street in the Greendale neighborhood of Worcester.

“These infrastructure funds are critical to improve and upgrade the roadway system in the Greendale section of

Worcester,” said Craig L Blais, President of the Worcester Business development Corporation. “We are so grateful to Senators Chandler and Moore and Representative O’Day for offering these amendments to the legislation.”

\$100,000 to fund Centro Las Americas’ food pantry program in Worcester

“With winter right around the corner and energy costs expected to skyrocket, community food pantries will be more important than ever,” said Juan Gomez, President of Centro Las Americas. “This \$100,000 grant will ensure Centro’s Food Pantry is prepared to serve as a critical source of food for those who may have gone hungry otherwise. I want to thank Senators Moore, Gobi, and Chandler for securing this funding for the people of Worcester.”

\$100,000 to fund the Blackstone Valley EdHub Collaborative Workforce Pipeline, a non-profit economic and workforce development program run by the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce.

\$35,000 to fund Dismas House in Worcester

In addition to \$3.76 billion in direct investments, this compromise legislation ensures that the Commonwealth responsibly pays for the historic \$3 billion one-time tax relief that will be returned to an estimated three million taxpayers over the coming weeks. Combined, this \$6.76 billion in tax relief and direct investments will provide much-needed breathing room for families, small businesses and individuals feeling the pinch of inflation. Notably, the bill closes the books on Fiscal Year 2022 and dedicates \$500 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), leaving a balance of \$1.75 billion in federal resources for future use.

THE CAR DOCTOR

jpaul@aanortheast.com



BY JOHN PAUL

Soldering as a repair should be a permanent fix

Q. I purchased a new 2022 Infiniti several months ago and the car has just about 1,600 miles on it. All of a sudden, the car has a low “beep” instead of a loud “honk”. I took it to the dealer and the work order stated: found low horn inoperative due to break in ground circuit, re-soldered to correct concern. My question is, will this repair be permanent, or should the harness have been replaced? I would greatly appreciate it if you can respond in your column.

A. I’m perfectly comfortable with soldering as a repair. A properly repaired circuit should be serviceable for the life of the car. Keep in mind that nearly everything electronic has a soldered joint.

Q. I’m a long time reader and need your help. My Lexus RX 350 is extremely noisy for the first ten minutes after a cold start. It sounds like an old car tappet or valve noise making this “luxury” vehicle sound like an old Singer sewing machine. Lexus says, “That’s the way they all sound”. I find this very hard to believe, as the noise was not there when the car

was new but developed after about 8,000 miles. Am I going to have to live with this irritation for the next 17 months of the lease? Not having a fix for this problem is like going to the dentist and being told I have a broken tooth but can’t be fixed because “...that’s the way teeth are”.

A. Years back Lexus engines were making some odd noises when cold and the issue was addressed with a technical service bulletin, but my experience today is that the engines are quite quiet. I would ask the dealer to explain what the noise is and also compare the car to a similar make and model. Unfortunately, it may be a characteristic of the engine.

Q. I recently took my car to a local auto service for an oil change and the shop made service recommendations that I now fear I did not need. I own a 2015 Acura with about 78,000 miles on it. Their recommendation was to have the power steering fluid and the brake fluid exchanged, as they said the fluids looked dirty. I agreed, but when the invoice came at \$327.00, I started thinking that maybe they just needed to make a sale. What am I trying to confirm is whether or not their recommendation was necessary?

A. There is no specific recommendation from Acura to replace the brake or power steering fluid as routine

service during the life of the car (although interestingly some Honda models do). If the fluid is dirty or contaminated it certainly makes sense to change it but it may not have been necessary. Typically, at AAA we do recommend brake fluid replacement every three to five years.

Q. I was told by a local Toyota dealer that a law prohibits a floor mat to be on top of a mat on the driver’s side. To protect my floor mats, I added some carpet remnants. They removed the carpet and I had to put it back. Do you know of any such law?

A. There is no such law. Now with that said, one of the reasons that some Toyota products years ago may have had unintended acceleration issues was with the floor-mat getting stuck on top of the gas pedal. This is why floor mats in most cars have anchor points. Personally, I would get rid of the carpet remnants. If you are worried about the factory mats getting dirty over winter, change them out for winter mats. Winter mats rubber are bigger and have groves

to hold snow, water and sand.

Q. My Ford Taurus has a problem that if the car sits for three or four days it won’t start. If I get a jump start it fires right up. My battery and starter were fine and everything else tested okay could it be a sensor or fuel pump?

A. If the car starts with a jump and the battery is fully charged, I would look for an electrical problem. On some Ford vehicles the battery ground cable has been known to cause intermittent no-start problems. A technician with a voltmeter will perform a “voltage-drop” test to determine the cause of your car’s intermittent no-start problem.

John Paul is AAA Northeast’s Car Doctor. He has over forty years’ experience and is an ASE-certified master technician. He will answer readers’ questions each week. Email your car questions to jpaul@aanortheast.com. Follow John on Twitter @johnfpaul and friend him on Facebook, [mrjohnfpaul](https://www.facebook.com/mrjohnfpaul).

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SPORTS

First-year coach looks to rebuild young team

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY, STAFF SPORTS WRITER

The Grafton field hockey team was able to qualify for the Division 2 State Tournament last fall and manage to upset Nauset 2-1 in overtime before falling to Holliston in the second round. The Gators graduated ten athletes from last year's tournament team in addition to their coach. Last year's assistant varsity coach and junior varsity

head coach Melissa Aiksnoras took control of the team this year.

"We are a very young team in general this year and will be losing another ten or so girls after the season," the first-year varsity coach said. "We have a solid base of girls, but no youth teams to pull from so we have some work to do."

Aiksnoras took over the team having known a majority of the girls having already been in the Grafton coaching system. She also

is a native of the town and played high school field hockey for the Gators, so taking over as the head coach was a relatively easy decision for her when given the opportunity.

"Having no programs to use as building blocks I don't want field hockey to become a dying sport in Grafton. I am hoping that we can continue to grow and improve," she said. "I believe that the team can get back into the tournament once again this year

while going as far as we can. Obviously I want to win, but getting the team, especially the younger girls, the experience is just as important."

With only three returning starting seniors Aiksnoras will have to rely on the trio for help in her first season as the head coach. Coming to the aide of their coach will be defensive back Taylor Coonan, goalie Ava Martin and midfielder/forward Brie Dwyer.

Each girl brings their

own unique play to the field. Coonan is a strong, but silent, lead by example player who allows nothing to get by her; unfortunately, she has been injured. Martin is the primary goaltender this fall who according to her coach, is all over the place and has been making some crazy saves for the Gators this year. She is a self-motivated individual who has averaged about 20 saves per game.

Dwyer is a versatile athlete and easily the most

skilled player on the field for the Gators and has already committed to play for Bryant University next fall. She sees the field effectively and can control the entire field; she is one who can score or distribute the ball to her teammates allowing them to deposit the ball behind the opposition's goalie. Dwyer can easily transition from offense to defense and vice versa seamlessly.

FIELD HOCKEY

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FIELD HOCKEY

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Aiksnoras will be counting on her senior starters for dependability as well as reliability to promote a team environment.

“We have a whole new line-up this year with a lot of sophomores on the varsity team,” she said. “So, I am going to need them to lead and teach. I am also new in the school, so they also assume the go-to role for the younger girls with questions.”

Grafton has a nice balance of personalities amongst the older and younger athletes on the team, however at the time of this writing the squad was having a difficult time amassing wins.

“We are nowhere where we wanted to be at this part of the season,” Aiksnoras said. “We have made a great turn around and have been playing better as of late and want to finish the season strong so that the girls who return for us next year feel comfortable with one another.”

Having so many younger players Grafton had its issues getting use to one another in the early part of the season while playing a



rather difficult schedule, but as the season is wrapping up they are getting use to one another's tendencies on the field.

One of the incoming sophomores who has made a contribution to the team in her first varsity experience is Olivia Veins, a for-

ward who has stepped into her role and shown she can play on the varsity level.

“Olivia has scored a majority of our goals and if she is not scoring she is assisting,” the Grafton coach said. “Being the JV Coach I definitely knew of her potential. She is also a

hockey player with a natural hand to eye coordination of the stick. I figured that she would transition easily from ice hockey to field hockey (a sport that she only got involved in through the urging of the seniors last fall).”

As the team has been

coming into their own, the coach believes that the incoming sophomores have shown that they can compete, and credit should go to them.

“At times there is a lot of pressure put onto these girls as they are stepping onto the courses with only

one year of experience. The sophomores in general are put into a tough position, but it's not all on them, it's a team effort because they can't do it on their own,” Aiksnoras said. “They have all been working together well and I am proud of what these girls have accomplished. Every year you learn from the past to get better and we've been doing that every match this year.”

As the Grafton runners get better as a whole, they are encouraging the sophomores to be the best that they can while building the Grafton field hockey program. The Coach not only likes what she has seen from the incoming class this year but is also excited about those who will be moving up to the varsity squad from the JV team as well as all the freshman who will be looking to join the program next fall.

For the time being Aiksnoras is hopeful that her girls will continue to improve as the year goes along and although a rebuilding type of year she would like to see the squad once again venture into the Division 2 State Tournament and go further than the second round.

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