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February 10 - March 10, 2023



"Women of Worth" is typical of the richly varied programming offered to viewers by NCTV.

## NCTV, Charter locked in a stalemate over cable contract?

BY ROD LEE

Viewers of programming on Northbridge Community Television (NCTV) are well aware of the station's longstanding issue with cable service provided to the town by Charter Communications, also now known as Charter Spectrum.

Bill Tartaglia, who has been director of the local-access channel for almost twenty-two years,

certainly is.

Mr. Tartaglia was front and center on the evening of January 24th at a public hearing held in the selectmen's chambers at Northbridge Town Hall to run down by way of a video presentation how NCTV contributes to townspeople's way of life—and to reiterate his concerns about Charter's failings as a cable provider.

His comments, and those of former by Harry Berkowitz who

chairs the town's Cable Advisory Committee, and others in attendance, were timely; NCTV's contract with Charter is set to expire in May, and there is uncertainty as to whether a new ten-year deal is in the offing—and whether Charter will accede to NCTV's "wish list" going forward.

**CONTRACT**  
*continued on page 2*

## Urgent Care facility coming to Pleasant Valley Crossing?

BY ROD LEE

The breaking news coming out of the town of Sutton during the week of January 9th was the sale of Pleasant Valley Country Club from the Magill family to partners Michael O'Brien and Jay Kunkel for \$4.1 million.

This overshadowed a revelation by Mr. O'Brien at around the same time of the latest steps he is taking as principal of Galaxy Development LLC to expand Pleasant Valley Crossing, just a few miles away on the eastbound side of Rt. 146.

Asked what's new with the complex, which has witnessed steady growth since its inception with a Market 32 and UniBank as major components, Mr. O'Brien said "there is an urgent care in planning right now for the parcel between Starbucks and the car wash. We don't own that. We continue to speak with large retail tenants. We need an 'anchor' to kick [the next phase] off but nothing yet unfortunately."

The addition of an Urgent Care



Signage at the entrance to Pleasant Valley Crossing at Rt. 146 northbound points to some of the businesses that have taken up occupancy in the complex.

would add another important piece to the mix of businesses now operating at Pleasant Valley Crossing. It would come as no

**PLEASANT VALLEY**  
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**CONTRACT**

*continued from page 1*

The rub comes in Charter's seeming unwillingness to engage in any sort of dialogue with the town. That is worrisome as NCTV looks for an increase in both the amount of money Charter forks over for programming and for equipment.

"We are at 3.5% of what Charter grosses in Northbridge, and that's in the millions," Mr. Berkowitz said. "For us to stay in business we have to see that increased to 5 percent. For equipment, we are asking for \$130,000. The only money NCTV gets is from cable. Charter owns the fiber and we have no control over it; and Verizon is

not interested in coming in (as a replacement cable provider)." Over the years, NCTV has consistently upgraded both its equipment and the content it offers viewers—with a staff of just a few employed individuals, and "active volunteers." As Mr. Tartaglia noted, everything from Tai Chi to Days of Vinyl, Board of Selectmen and School Committee meetings and Memorial Day exercises are available—along with an App store, Google play, ROKU, live stream, video on demand and archives, for example.

Mr. Berkowitz, fighting a cold but fully engaged, said "the last contract allowed us to upgrade to where we are today."

Charter is an often unresponsive partner, Mr. Tartaglia, Mr. Berkowitz and Town Manager Adam Gaudette said.

There is not much the town can do, Mr. Tartaglia said, echoing the thoughts of a woman in attendance who said "they have us over a barrel."

Charter was invited by certified mail to the public hearing, but was



The political-discourse show featuring Harry Berkowitz as host has been a fixture on NCTV for years.

a no show. Charter's community rep doesn't return telephone calls, Mr. Gaudette added.

Compounding the situation is that Charter is losing subscribers, which means the cost for the rest of its customers goes up; and with more and more people switching to streaming, Northbridge faces the dilemma of how to recoup those funds for regular cable.

One of NCTV's biggest complaints about Charter is that the company "changed our channels" from low on the dial to the 190s "without our input," Mr. Tartaglia

said.

That happened a while ago despite strong protest from local access.

Charter is a huge company with 32 million customers in 41 states and more than 93,000 employees.

Charter has an iron grip on its relationship with the town of Northbridge.

"It's a monopoly," Mr. Gaudette said, just before the public hearing—the first of two—ended.

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**2nd Friday:** Auburn, Charlton, Dudley, Oxford & Webster - 1/2 of all addresses  
**2nd Friday:** Blackstone Valley South: Douglas, Northbridge & Uxbridge  
**4th Friday:** Auburn, Charlton, Dudley, Oxford & Webster - other 1/2 of all addresses  
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# Xpressly Yours ... a letter from the editor

## Women's Success Network, BV Chamber spread a little love

February may be a short month, but it is also one of substance thanks to the Women's Success Network and its parent organization: the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce.



BY ROD LEE

The first day of February marked the start of the Women's Success Network's "New Mother Collective Drive," with donations of such items as baby formula, diapers, wipes, baby toiletries, new clothes (size newborn-4T), new baby equipment (car seats, bouncy seats, pack and plays, etc.), gift cards, handmade items (blankets, hats, toys, etc.) and items to pamper mom being accepted at a number of convenient drop-off locations.

Homefield Credit Union is one of those and pleased to be a participating, according to President and CEO Karl Moisan and his managers and staff.

"This is our first time," Mr. Moisan said, of the second annual event, which runs right through the 28th. But giving back is nothing new for Homefield Credit Union, whose employees engage with community through such activities as the Frosty stop with the Grafton Fire Department, the Grafton PD's annual toy drive and night out initiatives, the UMass Cancer Walk and Family Night at the Bandstand in Milford.

This past fall, Homefield worked with the Grafton PD to collect seventy-five toys for the "fill-a-cruiser" campaign, and with the Post Office Pub to arrange for sixty meals for local senior citizens—complete with a slice of apple pie.

Homefield has been involved with the Chamber's Women Success Network for just under a year. The New Mother Collective Drive coincides with the start of

the credit union's "twelve months of giving," Mr. Moisan said.

Day One of the New Mother Collective Drive was also a "Rewards Day" for Homefield employees, in which they are allowed to dress down in recognition of efforts they have made in the credit union's ongoing "quest for the best" push.

UniBank, Millbury Federal Credit Union, the Chamber and the Whittin Community Center are also all drop-off sites for the drive. Donations will be distributed to local food pantries and nonprofit community agencies serving new mothers in the Blackstone Valley.

In the case of the banks and credit unions, donations are being accepted at all branches. All of the banks and credit unions participating are active on the giving-back-to-community front.

Individuals and families that want to donate an item not listed among those that are being accepted for the New Mother Collection Drive are asked to email administrator@blackstonevalley.org or to call 508-234-9090.

Pat Hurton notes that the Women's Success Network is always looking for new members as a way for women to expand their business opportunities through access to prominent speakers, educational workshops and networking social events.

February and March are busy months for the Blackstone Valley Chamber.

On Friday, February 10th at 10:30 a.m. there will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Spicy Water Distillery at 108 Elm St. in Millbury. The new distillery specializes in creating unique handcrafted flavor experiences with such offerings as Caribbean-inspired rum, gluten-free vodka, a variety of gins and an American agave spirit.

A "Love Your Legislator" breakfast at Galliford's Restaurant & Tavern at Southwick's Zoo in Mendon will occur, appropriately enough, on Valentine's Day—Tuesday, February



14th—as a salute to the region's legislative delegation. The event will give attendees a chance to ask questions about pending bills in the Massachusetts House and Senate and other action taking place on Beacon Hill.

Then on Saturday, March 25th, the Chamber's annual Home and Community Expo returns for the twenty-third time at the Northbridge High School Field House.

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

*Pictured from left: Karl Moisan, Jen Marble, Stephanie Antaya, Maureen Wojnar, Julie Tripp and Kelly Benoit prepare to accept donations at Homefield Credit Union in Grafton on February 1st as the Women's Success Network's month-long New Mother Collective Drive kicks off.*

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**PLEASANT VALLEY**

*continued from page 1*

surprise to people who have followed Mr. O'Brien's work as a commercial property owner and

development, which has been extensive throughout the region. Galaxy has completed projects totaling \$300 million and 500,000 square feet in the last ten years.

Such national name enterprises

as Price Chopper, Walgreens, Chili's, Kohl's, Advance Auto, Tractor Supply, Panera Bread, Bank of America, Domino's, Five Guys, Great Clips, Planet Fitness and Verizon "have been the

beneficiaries of projects built by Galaxy from the ground up," Mr. O'Brien has pointed out.

The 57,000-square-foot Market 32 at Pleasant Valley Crossing opened in October of 2015 and was quickly followed by the arrival of Five Guys, Verizon, Starbucks, UniBank and Q-Nails.

Other stores have since set up shop at Pleasant Valley Crossing, making the complex second only to The Shoppes at Blackstone Valley in Millbury as a prime retail destination on the highway connecting Worcester and Providence.

With the acquisition of Pleasant Valley Country Club, Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Kunkel are investing in an eighteen-hole golf course and banquet facility that has a storied history in the Blackstone Valley. "PV" has hosted thirty-two PGA Tour events and thirteen LPGA Tour events, the most recent being an LPGA Tour stop in 1999. Such illustrious golfing personalities as Ben Hogan, Sam Snead, Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Phil Mickelson and Kathy Whitworth have played there.

Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Kunkel have expressed a determination to restore PV to its former glory, but they have made no commitment to trying to attract another professional tournament to the club. Their immediate focus is

to improve the course and the clubhouse.

Mr. Kunkel has been described as an accomplished golfer and he was a member of Pleasant Valley for fifteen years before joining Quinnatisset CC in Thompson, Connecticut.

In that sense he would appear to be a perfect successor as an owner of the club to John Magill Sr., who also belonged to PV for many years before building Highfields Golf and Country Club in Grafton in 2002. Mr. Magill bought PV from Bank of New England at a foreclosure auction at the club in November of 2010 for \$5 million. Mr. Magill died in 2012. His son Jay Magill and Jay Magill's daughter Beth Shropshire managed PV and Highfields.

Pleasant Valley Country Club has long been a go-to facility for the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, particularly for the Chamber's annual meeting; it has also been a popular choice for weddings with its manicured, scenic grounds and spacious ballroom.

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# I've been DECA-fied, and proud of it

BY JANET STOICA

Last year, a teacher I know in my local school system asked me to be a judge at a competition for high school students at the DCU Center in Worcester. I

also freshmen and sophomores. I must give a large amount of credit to the freshmen and sophomores for their ability to qualify for this district event.

Once formal introductions are made by the students to the judges,



enjoyed that competition so much that I enrolled as a judge again this year for the January 12th activity.

The event, entitled DECA ("Distributive Education Clubs of America") District 7 Competition, involves students who prepare business presentations while in groups of two. They are given their assignment after they have arrived at the competition venue and must use their prep time wisely team-collaborating to not only prepare their marketing techniques but also to practice their public-speaking skills. The students are bussed in from high schools as far as Palmer to Grafton and all towns in-between. Judges are teachers, sales reps, managers, lawyers, and every profession in-between.

The judges are seated in various large conference rooms awaiting pairs of student presenters who must use presentation standards established by DECA. Each presentation involves a scenario for marketing a product or service. These young women and men in attendance are dressed in business attire such as suits, business dresses, or jackets and ties. Do teenagers really dress like this? Is this for real? Yes, it most definitely is...seeing is believing, and immediately gives us judges a refreshingly excellent first impression of our future leaders of tomorrow. Most of these high schoolers are in their junior or senior years but a few are

much like that in real life if one were presenting an idea/product to a business, the students have up to 15 minutes to make their pitch. They review what they are about to present for their marketing goals and then dive into the salient points of their presentation. One student will begin the presentation and hand off the next section to their partner. After their address, judges ask the team prepared questions and listen intently to their responses. Students are then thanked for their time while judges, using an e-tablet or laptop, must then score the students on a scale of 1-8 (with 8 being the high score) on various aspects of their presentation skills. Judges' comments are also encouraged and appreciated for the benefit of student review.

I was blown away, once again, by the professionalism and imaginations of these future leaders of our country. Not only were they exact and extremely proficient in their presentations but their courtesy to one another as they finished each piece of their report was truly exceptional. Their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s) are to be commended for their teenager's manners and mindset. Their instructors are to be praised for their coaching skills assisting our future leaders to stay on course and to the point. I mean, these students were extraordinary, they were stupendous, they were rock stars! Of course I'm im-

pressed and you would be too after seeing, reading, and hearing too much negative behavior that seems to permeate our society these days.

Listening to the words and watching the behavior of all the young men and women at the DECA competition will remain with me for months to come. I was astounded by their competence, their mannerisms, and their style. I have truly been DECA-fied and hope to continue judging at this most important event which will always serve to rejuvenate my faith in our best and brightest younger generation. "Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family." Kofi Annan

Contact Janet at [jstoica@TheYankeerXpress.com](mailto:jstoica@TheYankeerXpress.com)

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# National Heritage Area Act extends life of the Corridor

With the full support of the Congressional delegations from Massachusetts and Rhode Island, Senate Bill 1942, known as the National Heritage Area Act, was approved by Congress and sent to President Biden for his signature. The bill passed the House on December 22 by a bipartisan vote of 326 yes and 95 no.

Thanks to the leadership of Congressman Jim McGovern, who chairs the House Rules Committee, no Democrat voted against the measure, and a majority of Republican House members supported the bill.

A day earlier, the bill was approved unanimously in the U.S. Senate, with Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island leading the four senators who represent the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (BHC).

The bill requires a standard for the designation of National Heritage Areas. It also establishes a National Heritage Area System through which the Department of the Interior may furnish technical and financial assistance to local coordinating entities, such as Blackstone Heritage Corridor



Matt Villamaino and Tansy Remiszewski of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) registered about two hundred people for a First Day Hike from the River Bend Farm Visitor Center on Oak St. in Uxbridge to Stanley Woolen Mill, on January 1. First Day Hikes were taking place across the Commonwealth, Ms. Remiszewski said, "from the Blue Hills to the Berkshires."

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Inc., to support the establishment, development and continuity of National Heritage Areas.

The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, which spans twenty-five communities from Worcester to Providence, was established in 1986 and recently observed its thirty-sixth birthday. While the passage of S.1942 continues to make BHC eligible for federal funding, appropriations for the Corridor have declined in recent years.

There are currently fifty-five National Heritage Areas across the U.S. and four others in Massachusetts—Essex, Freedom's

Way, The Last Green Valley and the Upper Housatonic. With the passage of S.1942, forty-five NHAs have been extended for fifteen years, through September 30, 2037, seven new NHAs were designated, and robust protection for private property rights was included.

The Blackstone River, the spine of the Corridor, is so much cleaner today than it has been in many years, with dramatic reductions in pollution. Paddlers now have seventeen put-ins to access the scenic beauty of the river. The well-used Blackstone River Bikeway/Greenway between Worcester and Providence is nearly half complete. BHC Inc. is coordinating efforts in both states to finish the project. These natural byways are tremendous assets to the quality of life in the communities of the Blackstone Valley. BHC's many programs provide paddling and biking experiences for people of all ages and abilities.

BHC tells an unmatched story of cultural evolution in partnership with dozens of local organizations and communities. Through wayfinding signs, interpretive panels, brochures, exhibits and five heritage centers, BHC

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# Can You Plan for an Unplanned Retirement?



Mark Freeman

## FINANCIAL FOCUS

Many people plan to take an early retirement, so when that day arrives, they're ready for it. But what if you were to face an unplanned retirement? Would you be prepared to deal with the financial issues?

It's something worth thinking about, because any number of factors — illness, a spouse's illness, downsizing, other issues

— could lead to an abrupt departure from the workforce. But taking action while you're still working may help you make the transition easier on yourself.

Your first move, of course, should be to at least consider the possibility of having to retire earlier than you planned. You can then move on to some concrete steps, possibly including the following.

**Build an emergency fund.** Under any circumstances, it's a good idea to build an emergency fund — but it's especially important if you want to prepare for an unforeseen retirement. Generally speaking, your emergency fund should contain three to six months' worth of living expenses, with the money kept in a liquid, low-risk account. But if you suspect an earlier-than-anticipated retirement may be in your future, and you have some time to prepare for it, you

should consider an emergency fund that contains a full year's worth of expenses.

**Consider your portfolio's asset allocation.** If you're concerned about an unexpected retirement, you may want to consider the equities allocation in your portfolio. If you think you may need to tap into your portfolio sooner than you expected, you may not want to be over-exposed to investments most vulnerable to market volatility. However, these are the same investments that offer you the most growth potential — which you'll need to help stay ahead of inflation. So, look for an investment balance that's appropriate for your needs. As part of this positioning, you may want to shift some assets into income-producing vehicles, while also adding to the "cash" portion of your portfolio to boost your liquidity.

**Evaluate your Social Security op-**

**tions.** An unplanned retirement may cause you to consider taking Social Security earlier than you had planned. You can start taking Social Security when you're 62, but your monthly benefits will be up to 30% lower than if you had waited until your full retirement age, which is likely between 66 and 67. If you have sufficient income through other sources, you may be able to delay taking Social Security until your checks will be bigger — but of course, if you need the money, waiting may not be an option.

**Address your health care needs.** If you take an unplanned retirement, and you have employer-sponsored health insurance, you'll have to look for alternatives. You might be able to get extended coverage from your employer, but this could be quite expensive. Of course, if you're already 65, you can get on Medicare, but if you're

younger, you might be able to get coverage under your spouse's plan. If that's not an option, you may want to explore one of the health care exchanges created by the Affordable Care Act. To learn more about these exchanges, visit [healthcare.gov](http://healthcare.gov).

Taking an unexpected retirement can certainly be challenging — but the more prepared you are, the better your outcomes are likely to be.

If you would like to discuss your personal situation with a financial advisor contact:

Mark Freeman  
Edward Jones Financial Advisor  
77 West Main Street,  
Hopkinton, MA  
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**CORRIDOR**

*continued from page 6*

recognized the past and points the region to the future.

BHC was a driving force behind the creation of the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park, one of the country's newest national parks. This unique park celebrates the story of innovation that literally changed how people worked and lived from the earliest days of the nation to the present. BHC manages the Park's award-winning Volunteers-in-Parks program and is the only federally-designated partner to the new Park, which is based at the Old Slater Mill National Historic Landmark in Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

To learn more about BHC, visit [blackstoneheritagecorridor.org](http://blackstoneheritagecorridor.org).

**BLACKSTONE SECTION OF TRUNKLINE TRAIL UP NEXT**

The Baker-Polito Administration announced just before departing office that the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) will break ground on the Blackstone section of the Southern New England Trunkline Trail (SNETT) this spring.

The project is estimated to take approximately three years to complete. The \$11.3 million project runs from the Saint Paul Street

Bridge in the town of Blackstone to the Massachusetts/Rhode Island state border and is the final half mile of an a roughly 4.2-mile section of DCR's Blackstone River Greenway.

Additionally, this section of the Greenway is critical to the connection with Rhode Island's Blackstone River Bikeway and also provides a regional link to Douglas and the state of Connecticut through the SNETT.

**GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT SET**

Get your binoculars ready! The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor and Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park invite all interested residents to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count. This event starts Friday, February 17 and ends on Monday, February 20.

There are multiple ways to share your bird sightings:

- Tag your photos on social media with the hashtag #BRVBirds.
- Email your photos to [birding@blackstoneheritagecorridor.org](mailto:birding@blackstoneheritagecorridor.org).
- Share your eBird checklist with [BirdingtheBlackstone.org](http://BirdingtheBlackstone.org).

Learn more about this worldwide initiative and how to participate at [BirdCount.org](http://BirdCount.org).

**NATURE EXPLORATION WALKS AND MORE**

Save the dates of Saturday, February 18 and Wednesday,

February 22 for Nature Exploration Walks with Ranger Allison of the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park and Molly Cardoza. Watch for info on social media, the Park's events calendar and in the Park's next newsletter.

Also, Maple Sugar Days returns on Saturday, February 25 and Sunday, February 26 at River Bend Farm, 287 Oak St., Uxbridge

A Bark, Branches and Buds Winter Tree and Shrub ID Walk will be held on Saturday, March 25 from 10:00 .m. to noon at the Blackstone River State Park, 1075 Lower River Road, Lincoln, Rhode Island.

On Sunday, February 5, Slater Mill will be featured on "Treasures Inside the Museum," a production of Rhode Island PBS. Tune in at 7:00 p.m. EST.

From Rhode Island PBS: "Slater Mill in Pawtucket, RI is recognized as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution. In this episode, learn more about the people who made the area what it was and how the machines changed the face of manufacturing everywhere. Plus, discover what makes some of the machines on exhibit so rare, and examine some of the artifacts from the 1890 Cotton Centennial. Learn more at [www.ripbs.org](http://www.ripbs.org).



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## 'Cupid Cabins' bring Valentine's Day to senior citizens

BY CHRISTINE GUANIPA

Join local businesses as they seek to bless our seniors this February with their give-back event, called "Project Be My Valentine."

Little Man Handbags, 110 Church St., Whitinsville, invites the general public to stop in the shop and fill out some Valentine's cards, which will then be distributed to local senior centers. This free event is being sponsored by the Women of Massachusetts Engagement Network.

We are calling participating local businesses that will have Valentine's on hand in their shops "Cupid Cabins." These businesses in addition to Little Man Handbags include all of the following in the Blackstone Valley and beyond: Herbs Make Scents (Mendon); Ashland Reiki Center (Ashland); Purely You Aesthetics, Janine's Jewlery, Grapevine, Bird & Bear Collective and The Candy Cottage (all from Holliston); Gracefully Restored (Hopkinton); White Belle Home (Upton); Rustic Fair & Co. (Hopedale); Ocean Dreams Market (Sherborn) and Fiori & Fern (Franklin).

The Women of Massachusetts Engagement Network W.O.M.E.N.)

was founded on the premises that we ignite inspiration in our community when we showcase people doing amazing things. When this was started in 2019, the group was committed to hosting NO COST



events for women to gather and network. W.O.M.E.N. has hosted many events in Hopkinton and Milford as well as over Zoom during COVID. The three co-founders are executives for Massachusetts-based technology companies and started this organization as a way to give back to the community. They are passionate about helping women at all places in their lives to thrive and be seen.

Valentines are available through February 13.

Little Man Handbags is open Wednesday-Friday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.



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# Puzzle Pals is an intergenerational hit at Plummer Place

Plummer Place, home of the Northbridge Senior Center, recently hosted an intergenerational program called

Puzzle Pals for older adults in the community and members of local Daisy Troop #65224. The event was spearheaded

by Amy Cowen, program and volunteer coordinator at Plummer Place, and Krista Kugler, Dasly Troop leader. Each Puzzle Pal participant was asked to decorate a puzzle piece with items they enjoyed most or liked doing in and around town.

Puzzle Pal participants then came together for a reception at Plummer Place to meet one another and talk about how they are all individual people like the puzzle pieces but that together they make one wonderful community.

“This was a fabulous program,” Ms. Cowen said. “We were thrilled to be able to host this noteworthy program that connected different generations.”

Common themes across the generations and their puzzle pieces included a love of reading, math, friends, playgrounds and family.

Lori Gannon, local author and a participant, said “I loved our Puzzle Pal event! It was a joy to see the young Daisies and the older women come together to discuss our shared experiences about what makes our community special. Each individual testimony and decorated puzzle piece blended together, forming a beautiful whole picture of Northbridge as a beloved community.”



Daisy Troop #65224 members and senior citizens took part in “a fabulous” Puzzle Pal program at Plummer Place, recently.

At the end of the event, Ms. Gannon offered autographed copies of her book *Leona’s Gift* to each member of the Daisy Troop.

Plummer Place thanks the Friends of Northbridge Elders (FINE) for sponsoring this event.

For more information about Plummer Place and its special programs and activities, call Amy

at 508-234-2002.

For more information about Daisy Troop #65224, call Krista at 508-654-5041.

For more information about *Leona’s Gift*, contact Lori at Gannon@charter.net.

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# WCC announces first-ever Community Photo Contest

The Whitin Community Center is excited to announce its first-ever "Community Photo Contest" in honor of the facility's 100th anniversary!

Using the prompt "What does community look like to you?" participants are urged to share their best photos that celebrate community in the Blackstone Valley. The WCC's Community Photo Contest is accepting submissions through February 24th. There will be winners in the Kids, Amateur, and Professional categories, as well as a "Community Choice" winner and recipients of several special judges awards. There is no entry fee, although donations to fund a display for the winning photographs are accepted; click the "Donate" button at the top of the WCC homepage and select the photo contest from the campaign drop-down menu. Get creative, and remember that community comes in all different forms!

Submissions will be accepted online and in person. Email the submission form and one photograph in digital JPG format to [Submissions@OurGym.org](mailto:Submissions@OurGym.org) by February 24th; send a separate email for each different entry, including the photograph and a new submission form. In person submissions can be turned in at the WCC Member Services Desk along with a printed submission form. Photographs submitted

without submission forms will not be considered in judging. Submission forms and a detailed contest description can be found online at <https://www.whitincommunitycenter.com/programs/events/>.

Winners in the Kids, Amateur, and Professional categories will each win four discounted tickets to the Boston Museum of Fine Art, a gift card to a Boston restaurant, and WCC 100th anniversary merchandise. The Community Choice winner and special award recipients will receive WCC 100th anniversary merchandise. All entrants will have the opportunity to be featured in WCC promotional materials, social media, and in the WCC 100th Anniversary Gala photo display!

The WCC's Community Photo Contest is being launched to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Whitin Community Center, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, that is committed to the health and well-being of individuals and families and to building a strong community in the Blackstone Valley. The Whitin Community Center has been serving the Blackstone Valley for 100 years offering social, recreational, educational, and outreach programs that bring community members of all ages and backgrounds together.

The Whitin Community Center is committed to enhancing the health and well-being of individuals and

families and building a strong community in the Blackstone Valley. The Whitin Community Center is the Blackstone Valley's most complete

family and recreation center with two swimming pools, a gym, fitness center, early learning programs, summer camps and a seven and a

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The Webster folk duo Raianne Richards and Mark Mandeville.

Saturday, February 11 when the Webster-based married duo Mark Mandeville and Raianne Richards perform a variety of folk songs from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. in "an intimate listening-room setting."

Booklovers' Gourmet is located at 72 E. Main St. in Webster.

Doors open at 6:30 p.m. for the show and general-admission tickets are limited. Call 508-949-6232 or email [deb@booklovers-gourmet.com](mailto:deb@booklovers-gourmet.com) to reserve a spot.

Beverages and snacks will be available.

Mark and Raianne have produced more than seventeen albums and toured regularly in the U.S. and Canada.

Attendees of the concert will get to know the couple through their vocal harmonies,

teachers, community organizers and natives of post-industrial mill towns in Massachusetts. Evident in their work are memories of days gone by and the toils of history, in such songs as "The Old Machine" and "Winds of Change."

They will utilize the guitar, harmonica, ukele, penny whistle, electric bass and possibly clarinet in delivering songs that are musically uplifting and spiritually captivating.

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# LuLu's moves to new home, with the same flair for unique

BY ROD LEE

After four years as an anchor tenant in the Baker Building at 68 Church in downtown Whitinsville, Heather Glode of LuLu's Jewelry & Gifts has a new



Heather Glode, owner of LuLu's Gifts & Jewelry, is settling into the store's new home, on Providence Road.

address, and she could not be happier.

LuLu's took up residence in a storefront in the strip mall on the north side of the Whitinsville Plaza a few weeks ago. There, her shop joins such established operations as King Jade and Postal Center USA, with the Reunion Tap & Table restaurant about to join the mix around Valentine's Day.

Reunion Tap & Table will be an extension of a popular family-run restaurant in Grafton (see The Feisty Fork column in this issue of the Blackstone Valley Xpress for more about Reunion).

The smile on Ms. Glode's face the morning of February 1st had as much to do with the prospects of success at the location on Providence Road

as it did with the sunshine showing the windows of her store.

"Visibility and parking," she said, of her main motivations for moving from what has long been considered the heart of the Whitinsville business district.

"It's a pretty happening little strip mall," she said. "The space is smaller than what I had but I was able to cram everything in."

Ms. Glode had actually looked at the main part of the Whitinsville Plaza as a future home for LuLu's, "pre-pandemic."

She will be missed on Church

Street, not only as one of the quirkiest retailers around, but also as a strong promoter and supporter of Shop Small 01588.

The good news is that she remains in the same zip code, and with the same dedication to offering unusual giftware and jewelry, and for standing with community—as evidenced, for instance, by a recent donation to the Northbridge Middle School's International Club event.

A quirky approach coupled with a sense of humor have been key ingredients for LuLu's from

the outset.

Current hours are Monday-Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Her inventory including crystal gems and jewelry is better than ever.

"I'm all grown up," she says.

Visit [lulusgiftsco.com](http://lulusgiftsco.com) for more information.

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

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## Reunion Tap & Table ready for opening in Whitinsville

BY ROD LEE

Shawn Briggs was literally putting the finishing touches on a shelf behind the bar of the new Reunion Tap & Table restaurant in a section of the Whitinsville Plaza on the morning of February 1st: a coat of black paint.

Taking up a spot formerly occupied by Jube's that had been

Shawn Briggs, Josh Briggs, Sargon Hanna and Paul Apkarian are all principals in the operation.

### GALLIFORD'S SUNDAY BRUNCH IS A LAVISH SMORGASBORD

It may be wintertime and Southwick's Zoo in Mendon is closed at the moment but Galliford's Restaurant is going strong with lunch and dinner and most recently with



Shawn Briggs, with Paul Apkarian, left, is anxious to open the doors of the new Reunion Tap & Table restaurant in the Whitinsville Plaza.

vacant for a while, Reunion Tap & Table has been months in the making, with a complete rebuild of the premises undertaken and now finished.

"We'll be opening next week," Mr. Briggs, one of the partners, said. "The day we get our occupancy permit, we'll be open the next day."

Reunion Tap & Table is well known for its signature restaurant in Grafton; this one, though slightly smaller, is cut along the same lines. It will offer lunch Friday, Saturday and Sunday and dinner every day for starters. Plans are for takeout pizza too.

"We're just waiting for a delivery from Sunshine Sign," Mr. Briggs said. A banner has been strung across the front of the restaurant in the meantime.

a reintroduction of its popular "Sunday Brunch in Style at Galliford's"—through April 9th.

"Oh my gosh, great," Chelsea Daniels, restaurant manager at Galliford's, said on January 29th, in assessing response so far, just before the start of the brunch, which runs from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

The buffet features "something for everyone" including savory breakfast dishes, creative twists on traditional favorites, "our popular Omelet Station, Carving Station, Waffle Station, Millionaire Cinnamon Rolls, Lox, Crème Brulee French Toast, Braised Chicken Marsala, Parmesan Pesto Salmon, Eggs Benedict and so much more.

Reservations are recommended. Call 508-928-0928 or go to [www.gallifords.com](http://www.gallifords.com).

Submit your restaurant news to Rod Lee at [rodlee.1963@gmail.com](mailto:rodlee.1963@gmail.com).



*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.*

**THROUGH FEBRUARY 24**

• ValleyCAST, the arts and culture arm of Open Sky Community Services, is partnering with the New England Sculptors Association for the second annual Inside and Out Exhibition. Seventeen sculptors from around New England have created over thirty works that will be on display in the Spaulding R. Aldrich Heritage Gallery, 50 Douglas Road, Whitinsville, and outside on the grounds of the Whitin Mill complex at the same address. The inside exhibit

2156 or email parishoffice@stpeterrockdale.org to purchase tickets or for more information.

**FEBRUARY 11-12**

• The Grafton Public Library, 35 Grafton Common, is hosting a Book Sale from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday and from noon to 2:00 p.m. on Sunday.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11**

• Enjoy an evening of live music with the Webster duo Mark Mandeville and Raianna Richards at Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 E. Main St., Webster. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. The show starts at 7:00. Email deb@bookloversgourmet.com or call 508-949-2322 to reserve your seat.

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12**

• "The Hanoi Hilton POW Experience Exhibit" opens at the American Heritage Museum, 568 Main St., Hudson, fifty years after American POWs release from the prison that became synonymous with the Vietnam War. There, hundreds of American aviators shot down over North Vietnam were subjected to torture, isolation and malnutrition while housed in squalid cells during years of captivity. The AHM has built a lasting



*The notorious Hóá Ló Prison—the Hanoi Hilton, where American POWs were held during the Vietnam War—is highlighted with a new immersive exhibit at the American Heritage Museum in Hudson. Visit [www.americanheritagemuseum.org](http://www.americanheritagemuseum.org) for more information.*

opened with a wine and cheese reception on Friday, January 13th. The public is encouraged to attend the closing reception, which will include announcement of three People's Choice Awards, on Friday, February 24th from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Voting ends at the end of the day on Friday, February 17th and the exhibit will end right after the closing ceremony on February 24th. For more information visit opensky.org. To schedule a visit to the gallery, call 508-234-6232 or email Cristi.Collari@opensky.org.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11**

• St. Peter Parish, 39 Church Ave., Northbridge, is hosting a Ham Dinner starting at 5:30 .m. in the Parish Hall. Tickets are \$17 per dinner, with salad and dessert included. To-go meals are available for pickup at 5:00 p.m. and all orders must be purchased in advance. "Pay it forward" and buy an extra dinner and it will be delivered to someone in need in the community. Call 508-234-

tribute to these POWs with a reconstruction of the last two remaining original cells that held Americans, first-hand accounts of their ordeal and interactive displays. [www.americanheritagemuseum.org](http://www.americanheritagemuseum.org)

• The Uxbridge Historical Society will present "Uxbridge: Crossroads of the Underground Railroad" at 2:00 p.m. at the former Uxbridge Unitarian Church, Rt. 122, with narration from notable town historians. Presenters will reveal how Uxbridge residents ran stations along the Underground Railroad, opened schools to teach those seeking freedom to read and write and became leaders in the national anti-slavery movement. Refreshments will be served. All are welcome.

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14**

• The Intrepid Readers of the Simon Fairfield Public Library, 290 Main St., Douglas, will discuss Beryl Markham's "West with the

Night," in which the author describes growing up in an Africa that no longer exists, training and breeding race horses, flying mail to Sudan and being the first woman to fly the Atlantic, east to west. Copies of the

book will be available. All are welcome.

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15**

• Enjoy a BVT buffet breakfast that includes waffles, pancakes, bacon, sausage, home

friends, scrambled eggs and toast, 65 Pleasant St., Upton. Cost is \$7.50 per person plus

**HAPPENINGS!**

*continued on page 16*

**HAPPENINGS!**

*continued from page 15*

gratuity. Doors open at 8:30 p.m. Sign up on the main office no later than February 1st.

This is a self-drive, self-pay program.

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16**

• A "Women's Health Forum with Dr. Maggie Lunch & Learn" program will be held at the Northbridge Senior Center, 20 Highland

St., Whitinsville, from 11:30 to 12:30 p.m. Lifestyle choices impact the aging process. Come and learn about diet, nutrition, exercise, cognitive activity and social engagement for older adults. Space is limited. Priority will be given to those who have

not yet attended one of Dr. Maggie's health forums. Sign up with Amy Wednesday-Friday to attend.

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17**

• Samuel Slater's Restaurant at Indian Ranch, 200 Gore Road, Webster, present a night of comedy featuring Steve Sweeney with Graig Murphy and Chris D, 6:30-9:30 p.m. This is a 21-plus event. Go to www.samuelslaters.com or call 508-943-1639 for more details.

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21**

• "Take a Hike" with the Plummer Place Walking Club, 10:00 a.m., weather permitting. Call the Northbridge Senior Center, 20 Highland St., Whitinsville, at 508-234-2002 for locations.

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22**

• "The Violin Kat," music by Violinist Kathryn Haddad, will be presented at the Northbridge Senior Center, 20 Highland St., Whitinsville, from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. Kat is an eclectic freelance violinist based in the Worcester area. She has performed to many crowds. Light refreshments will be served. Sign up at the main office.

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23**

• A CPR, AED and Epipen Training Class will be held at the Northbridge Senior Center, 20 Highland St., Whitinsville, from 9:00 a.m. to noon. Instructor Scott Celikbas from the Northbridge Fire Department will train participants in these important lifesaving techniques. A heart-saver certification will be awarded at the end of the course. The cost is \$55 per person, check or cash due to the instructor on the day of training. Sign up at the main office.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25**

• Ice cutting expert Ken Ethier will present his popular program describing the methods and tools used to harvest ice from lakes and ponds two centuries ago, when ice was

the only way to keep things cool. His one-hour talk will be held 11 a.m. at the Samuel Slater Experience museum in Webster. Ethier will demonstrate ice harvesting techniques with his own collection of antique tools, the often-dangerous scoring and cutting on the ice field and describe the transport of harvested ice to ice houses for storage and delivery to peoples' homes. This free program is sponsored in part by a grant from the Webster Cultural Council. To register, email admin@samuelslaterexperience.org or call 508-461-2955.

**TUESDAY, APRIL 4**

• The Sutton Historical Society welcomes Joe Iamartino of the Thompson Historical Society for a talk, "The Nipmuc Lithic Trail," at the First Congregational Church, 307 Boston Road, Sutton, at 7 p.m. Visit suttonhistoricalsociety.org for further info.

**TUESDAY, MAY 9**

• The Sutton Historical Society welcomes Carol Crossed curator of the Susan B. Anthony Birthplace Museum, bot a talk, "Vintage Tweets: A Book of Suffrage Era Postcards," at the First Congregational Church, 307 Boston Road, Sutton, at 7 p.m. Visit suttonhistoricalsociety.org for further info.

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5**

• The Sutton Historical Society welcomes Andrew Noone, author of "Bathsheba Spooner: A Revolutionary Murder Conspiracy," at the First Congregational Church, 307 Boston Road, Sutton, at 7 p.m. Visit suttonhistoricalsociety.org for further info.

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7**

• The Sutton Historical Society welcomes Mark Savoio of the Thompson Historical Society for the presentation "The Mass 15th of the Civil war and Wilder Holbrook, Sutton," at the First Congregational Church, 307 Boston Road, at 7 p.m. Visit suttonhistoricalsociety.org for further info.

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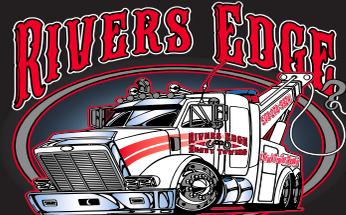
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# S.A.F.E grant funds OK'd for local fire departments

Former Governor Charlie Baker and Secretary of Public Safety and Security Terrence Reidy recently announced that FY23 grant funds for the Student Awareness of Fire Education (S.A.F.E.) and Senior SAFE Programs have been awarded to two hundred sixty-six fire departments across Massachusetts.

These programs promote fire and life safety education for children and older adults who are most vulnerable to burns, injury, and death from fire and related hazards.

"Funding programs that keep the Commonwealth's most vulnerable safe during emergencies is one of the best investments we can make," said Senator Michael Moore (D-Millbury). "I'm pleased to hear that SAFE programs have received funding in every town in my district. I'd like to thank my colleagues for their diligent work in funding important programs like this, as well as the fire departments across the Commonwealth for their work keeping their communities safe."

"Congratulations to the Shrewsbury and Westborough Fire Departments," said Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury). "These important grant programs enable local fire education for children and older adults and will help to keep our communities safe. I am grateful to our local first responders for their selfless work and know how helpful these education programs are to Shrewsbury and Westborough residents."

"S.A.F.E. is a shining example

of a successful and valuable program that the Commonwealth provides to its citizens," stated Representative David Muradian Jr. (R-Grafton). "Teaching children, and now seniors, two of our more vulnerable populations, how to handle emergency situations with less anxiety will help keep all members of the community safe. I know that these funds will surely go to good use within our community."

The grants awarded to the towns contained within the Second Worcester District are as follows:

**AUBURN FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENT**  
S.A.F.E Grant: \$4,381  
Senior SAFE Grant: \$2,277

**GRAFTON FIRE DEPARTMENT**  
S.A.F.E Grant: \$4,381  
Senior SAFE Grant: \$2,277

**LEICESTER FIRE DEPARTMENT**  
S.A.F.E Grant: \$3,781  
Senior SAFE Grant: \$2,077

**MILLBURY FIRE DEPARTMENT**  
S.A.F.E Grant: \$3,781  
Senior SAFE Grant: \$2,077

**NORTHBRIDGE FIRE DEPARTMENT**  
S.A.F.E Grant: \$4,381  
Senior SAFE Grant: \$2,277

**SHREWSBURY FIRE DEPARTMENT**  
S.A.F.E Grant: \$5,481  
Senior SAFE Grant: \$2,477

**UPTON FIRE DEPARTMENT**  
S.A.F.E Grant: \$3,781  
Senior SAFE Grant: \$2,077

**WORCESTER FIRE DEPARTMENT**  
S.A.F.E Grant: \$10,481  
Senior SAFE Grant: \$2,877

The S.A.F.E. program was first funded in FY1996 and has since correlated with a decline of about 80% in Massachusetts child fire fatalities and the longest period without a child fire death in the history of the Commonwealth. The Senior SAFE program was

launched in FY14 to provide Massachusetts' seniors with the knowledge and tools to live safely.

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## LIVING WITH LUKE

amyleclaire@hotmail.com

# The multiple-personality aura of Luke Valentino

BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

There's something about Luke that has us talking. We can't put our finger on exactly what has us so crazy in love with him. Perhaps my son says it best. "He has an aura." Truth. His personality is full of innocence and curiosity, fragrance, and flaw. I've never met a puppy quite like him. He's about to celebrate his first birthday. I couldn't help but reflect on traits that have earned him a few nicknames.

### PROFESSOR LUKE

Luke is a Watcher and a Thinker. He's the first pup I've owned who adores sitting on the front steps to watch what's happening in the neighborhood. He's a thoughtful observer, seemingly ahead of his time for a puppy.



Amid his research, he's drawn conclusions about who he will and will not accept. Chest puffed out, he sits regally on those steps, a giant teddy bear on the look-out. There he has made dog friends and human friends. His tail senses good and bad vibes. Fortunately, he's experienced more of the former. He wears his love for others in a kind, "bear cub" expression. I've watched his nose twitch while a

serious mouth breaks open to a casual smile every time a guest arrives. "Hi! My name is Luke Valentino." He lowers his head and wiggles, humbled by the goodness of Dog People, who happen to be one of the more understanding breeds, I've found. I trust my dog's instincts.

"Hi Luke!" Known for his columns and charisma, Luke has become popular in the neighborhood. "You wanna' play in my yard?" Dog walkers make their way onto our lawn. Luke can barely believe his luck. His tail wags. He fights to restrain his joy (not wanting to come on too strong) but his love for people and the various dogs that extend from people, explodes on that very step. "I'm so excited that you're here! I want you to know, I'm well trained. I have my moments, but for the most part, I know how to behave." The owner approves of Luke. Professor-style, he lifts his head, and the two dogs exchange sniffs. "Are you a dog? I'm a dog. Are you a boy? I'm a boy. Are you nice? I'm nice." Trust established, the owner unclips the leash and—BAM—two dogs rumble in my front yard.

I used to worry about Luke amid spontaneous play. What if the dog is more experienced? Overly aggressive? "I'll take you down if you keep it up." I've since watched my pup take a cheap shot at a loose collar. Needless to say, I'm over it. Still, watching my pup develop the realization that not every dog likes him, or wants to play with him, is hard for a Dog Mom. He once approached a unique dog couple at the dog park. The dogs entered together, side by side. They were obviously tight and their owners, also best friends, stated the obvious. "These two are boyfriend and girlfriend."

Luke, nevertheless, didn't understand the history or intimate nature of the long-term dog rela-

tionship. He trotted over to their side and used his famous shoulder move to greet them. "Wanna' play?" Boyfriend snarled and shunned my pup. "Get away from my girlfriend!! Just go away!" His growl was aggressive. Luke turned away from the dogs and joined me at the park bench. "Someone's having a bad hair day." I felt bad for my pup. He sees the best in every dog, despite the feeling not always being mutual. "It's okay, Luke. You're a good boy. They're be another dog to play with."

My concern faded upon watching him take a stand for bad behavior on future playdates. "I DON'T LIKE YOU ANYWAY!" I've seen him bark back in the face of a hater.

"Let it go, Luke." My pup's ego was bruised.

"YOU'RE UGLY and SO ISN'T YOUR MOTHER!!"

"Luke!" My pup's temper has warranted another nickname.

### LUKEY V

Lukey V is the side of Luke known to show some sass—the "bark at me and I'll bark back louder" side, the Valentino (Italian) side that was suspicious of our front yard snowman. "You're cold and you're still and you don't belong here!" My son built the snowman with love, but Luke refused to accept him. He barked, backed away, and snapped his head around, as though paranoid of the snowman's next move. "Mess with me and I will destroy you, Frozen Man."

"Luke, be nice. The snowman can be here," I pleaded with my gangster pup. "He's a phony, Momma." He gazed up at me, then back at the Snowman. "He's pretending to be a person, but he's full of cold air. Look at the Stiff. I've seen his type." Days passed. January rain beat down on an innocent



Lukey V lifted his leg and peed on his bottom ball.

### POOPY LUKEY

Puppies poop a lot, exposing a more vulnerable side to their character. Luke is no exception. Our puppy slept in a comfortable crate until the age of six months, when he outgrew a bed designed to look like a piece of furniture. I lined it with a plush mattress and blankets. It was beautiful. Still, my husband



and I heard our growing puppy jostle and struggle to try and get comfortable through the night. We could have purchased an extra-large crate but, instead, came to the same conclusion. "Luke needs to move around and sleep comfortably. Let's give him a chance to sleep outside of the crate."

We were both on eggs that first night. We gated the stairs and shut the bathroom door. Luke had the entire downstairs to himself. We also left the crate door open,

snowman who somehow had caused bad blood on our front lawn. He melted. He slouched. He aged. Worse,

should he want to go back in. Was he ready for his own apartment? What if he chewed on table legs? Tearing apart the shag carpet? There were so many unknowns. Despite our fears, I entered our kitchen in the morning to find him curled up beneath the kitchen table. Of all places he could have slept, he chose the confines of an enclosed area, a cave of sorts. "What a good boy you are, Luke!"

Weeks passed and Luke became more liberated to try out new sleeping spaces. He slept on his plush bed by the bay window. He slept by the front door. He toggled between spots. Then, to our surprise, he pooped on the dining room carpet.

"Ohhhh Luke. What happened?" Suspicious of his own accident, he inspected the mound with a stiff sniff. "How did my poop get in the house?" He couldn't help it. Nevertheless, the odor was horrible. I gagged, cracked a window, and began the unfun process of cleaning poop from an expendable area rug. My mind traced back through his diet. Admittedly, he had some junk food at a friend's house the night before, bones said to be "all natural" but they all claim such. He had also been chewing on rained-on sticks drenched in bacteria. Both ingestions, I knew, were a culprit to his maturing digestive system. Poor Luke. He can't hop onto a toilet when a bad stomachache strikes. I forgave my pup. Then I bagged his poop and threw it outside for him to see. "Poopy goes outside." I treated the stain with a small army of toxins. Digestion issues (and diarrhea) are not uncommon for puppies. He watched me scour the carpet, head over paws, as though to say, "I'm sorry, Momma. I know my poopy is stinky."

Luke's stools hardened with each passing day. He became more "regular" with clean eating, a close monitor on snacks (and sticks), and mounds of freshly cooked white rice. My family celebrated progress. "Lukey did poopies outside!" We visited the spot on the rug for gentle reminders. "Noooo." I stretched out the word and kneeled to a spot overly fragrant. "Lukey does poopy outside." He glanced up at me then looked away. "Can we move on, please?"

### BABY LUKE

Baby Luke emerged, suitably, when my pup was about eight weeks old. I'd cradle him in my



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**LUKE**

continued on page 19

REAL ESTATE

# Where will you go if you sell? You have options



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

consider where you'll go next.

In today's market, it makes sense to explore all your options. That includes both homes that have been lived in before as well as newly built ones. To help you decide which is right for you, let's compare the benefits of each. Regardless of which option you choose to explore, working with a trusted Realtor throughout the process is essential.

First, let's look at the benefits of purchasing a newly constructed home. With a brand-new house, you'll be able to:

1. Build your dream home. If you build a home from the ground up, you'll have the option to select the custom features you want, including appliances, finishes, landscaping, layout, and more. Building means customizing, instead of wishing your home had a certain kind of flooring, a sunroom or some other special feature, you'll

There are plenty of good reasons you might be ready to move. No matter your reasons, before you list your current house, you need to

be able to tailor the property to your exact needs. You also won't be limited to a specific location or neighborhood.

2. Take advantage of builder concessions. In today's market, a lot of home builders are working hard to sell their current inventory before they add more to their mix. That means many of them are offering concessions and are more willing to negotiate with buyers. That could work to your advantage in the process.

3. Minimize home repairs. Many builders offer a warranty, so you'll have peace of mind on unlikely repairs. Plus, you won't have as many little improvement projects to tackle. If something goes wrong with your new home, not only are there likely some manufacturer warranties in place, but many builders also include additional home warranties.

4. Take advantage of energy efficiency. When building a home, you can choose brand-new, energy-efficient options to help lower your utility costs, protect the environment, and reduce your carbon footprint.

Now, let's compare those to the perks that come with buying an existing home. With a pre-existing home, you can:

1. Explore a wider variety of home styles and floorplans. With decades of homes to choose from,

you'll have a broader range of floorplans and designs available.

2. Appreciate that lived-in charm. The character of older homes is hard to reproduce. If you value timeless craftsmanship or design elements, you may prefer an existing home.

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4. Move in faster. If you have a short timeframe to move or you just don't want the process to take several months while your home is under construction, buying an existing home might make sense for you. When thinking about where you'll go after you sell your house, remember your options. As you start your search, think about what's most important to you. By working with a trusted Realtor, you can be confident you're making the most educated, informed decision. If you have questions about the options in your area, meet with a team member of marzeottigroup.net, call 617-519-1871 or a local real estate professional to discuss what's available and what's right for you.

## LUKE

continued from page 18

arms like a baby so that he could gaze into my eyes, then chew on a dangling sweatshirt tassel. The habit continued as he grew, and even until he reached a stocky sixty-five pounds. Baby Luke doesn't realize he doesn't qualify for the standard of a lap dog. I return home from teaching Zumba classes to find him ready and waiting for our special routine in the family room. "Let's do Baby Luke!" He hovers about



my gym bags and winter clothes, holding me to it. I collapse to the floor and maneuver Baby Luke

onto my lap. He licks my neck and face. We cuddle like a pair of honeymooners, and I think to myself, "Of all of my puppy's sides, this just might be my favorite."

Write to me at amy@leclair@hotmail.com

Visit Luke on Instagram @living-withlukevalentino



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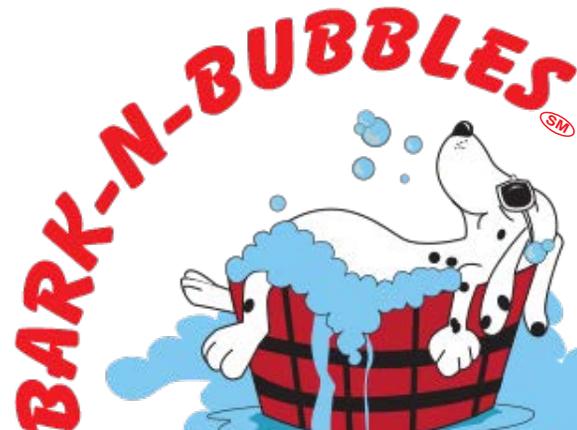
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THE CAR DOCTOR

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# Reloading Sirius; storing a hybrid battery, long-term



BY JOHN PAUL

**Q.** I have a 2012 Toyota Sienna minivan, this past March we drove to Florida in another car leaving the Toyota in the driveway for

three weeks. The day after we returned, I went to start the Toyota but it wouldn't. I then called AAA and a tech came and replaced the battery. Using the car later, I turned on the factory radio which is AM/FM and Sirius, but the Sirius wouldn't load and read out "no signal." Is it possible the radio was damaged from exchanging the battery? Please advise as I have called Toyota, who wants \$2500 to replace it but no one can give me a definitive answer to what is wrong.

**A.** Generally, what happens is the radio loses its memory when the battery fully discharges. I would start by calling SXM and see if they can restart (send a refresh signal) the radio signal from their end. I had a very similar issue (no signal) with a very used vehicle I purchased, after confirming the antenna was okay, I called SXM and after about 45 minutes on the phone and multiple attempts the radio came to life.

**Q.** I am going to buy a new 2023 Toyota RAV4 soon, but I can't get a straight answer to a question from any of the dealers I've talked to. I will be storing the vehicle for about half the year, every year. It can be connected to a battery tender, but it will not be started or driven. I've done this with my gas-powered vehicles without issues. My question is, would this kind of storage degrade a hybrid battery? Should I stick with the gas-powered model?

**A.** Toyota has a bit of a vague answer to this, stating that the traction battery should be left in a 20-80 percent state of charge, but other than that doesn't mention long term storage. Based

on my conversations with hybrid vehicles owners who do something similar, I would say that the battery pack should be okay. Out of curiosity I also checked the recommendations from the all-electric Tesla and was a bit surprised to read, If the weather is extreme, whether it's extremely cold or hot and you cannot park in an isolated area and are going away for more than two weeks, then you may want to consider a different mode of transportation. If the car battery is drained completely, it could lead to battery damage since the car can no longer keep the batteries at an ideal temperature and it'll no longer be able to protect itself from harsh weather.

**Q.** I'm a snowbird and is it best to leave that vehicle in summer heat in Florida or northeast winter cold. Is there any difference between storing a hybrid or any car in heat or cold?

**A.** There are challenges with both. The summer Florida heat, humidity, heavy rain and hurricanes versus winter cold, snow slush and blizzards. The summer heat/humidity can mildew the interior and age the tires and paint as well as shorten the battery life. The bitter winter cold can cause body seals to harden and crack. I have left a car outside (under a cover) in both Florida heat and Massachusetts winter and I found the hot weather to be slightly less detrimental to the car overall.

**Q.** What brand qualifies as a "quality" fuel additive? I have seen you mention this but have never named a brand(s). My second question is how often should it be added? My other question is how long have you been helping people with your column and radio program, and hopefully you are not retiring anytime soon.

**A.** I have had the best results with Techron fuel additive, which came with the very first fuel injected Corvette. The other product which I like, is from Lucas. Both of these are simple pour-in products and

work. For me I use these products more sparingly than the directions, about twice per year. I also when I can use gasoline with more cleaning additives which help keep injectors and combustion chambers clean (www.toptiergas.com). I am in my 38th year at AAA and started a column in our own publication which expanded to live chats and placement in several newspapers and websites. I hosted my first radio program about 30 years ago and have been on the air almost continually since then (now on Sunday morning at 11 on 95.9 WATD). I don't think I'm going anywhere soon.

**Q.** I have a 2016, Subaru Legacy with about 47,500 miles. I have always kept it in good shape, and it runs well. For the past couple of months, I have sporadically been having problems getting the key out of the ignition switch when I shut the car off. At first, I started the car again, moved it and then tried again. This worked sometimes. Lately, I just turn the key to the on position without starting the car and then try again. Sometimes I have to do this several times. I took the car to a transmission shop and the said there doesn't seem to be any problems with the linkage or neutral switch to (whatever that is).

**A.** Subaru has had some issues with the shifter, I would go to the dealer and have them reference technical service bulletin 16-112-18R.

*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 questions to jpaul@aanortheast.com. Follow John on Twitter @johnfpaul and friend him on Facebook mrjohnfpaul.*

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If you pray three times a day, three consecutive days, you will receive your intention, no matter how impossible it may seem. Praise and Thanksgiving please the Heart of God.

Believer

SPORTS

# Uxbridge boys look for consistency—and wins

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

It wasn't a bad season, but it was one in which the Uxbridge boys basketball team wished could have gone better. The Spartans finished the regular season just above .500 with a 10-9 record, earning themselves a spot in the Division 4 State Tournament. Uxbridge took out Bay Path (58-37) in the opening round but was sent home after a loss to Burke 65-46.

Coach Ryan Hippert and his Spartan squad are looking for better results this winter, especially when it comes to the tournament.

"We have a tougher schedule hoping that it will prepare us for the long run. Playing those type of teams during the regular season gets you ready for the tournament, but you still need the wins," the Uxbridge coach said. "With the new ranking system to get into the tournament you want to play tougher teams, but we also want to qualify for the Clark Tournament; 40 teams can apply but only 16 make the cut."

Uxbridge has a lot of athletes

returning from last year's team and according to the coach, they had a good summer preparing for this year's season. At the time of this writing the Spartans were once again hovering just above .500, having played some strong teams in an up and down season. Hippert was confident that his hard-working team would be back on track for the remainder of the season.

Senior co-captains—shooting guard Drew Gniadek and point guard Troy Spencer—will be the guiding force for a Spartan team that wants to succeed. After averaging about 12 points a game last season, Gniadek, who has been on the team since his sophomore campaign, has raised his scoring to 18 points per contest thus far this year.

"We're still looking for another scorer to step up and compliment Drew," Hippert said. "Scoring, which is our biggest problem. We've had guys step up here and there but are looking for consistency game in and game out."

Another point guard, junior Kellen LaChapelle, is not one who will load up on the offensive stats but



The Uxbridge High boys basketball team; and some recent game action (photos submitted by Coach Hippert).

is one of the team's unsung heroes. The junior is a great defender who does a lot of the dirty work for the Spartans and his hustle and effort are among the tops on the team. Junior Ethan McCusker finds himself in the same unsung hero category as LaChapelle. The 6'3" center, who has been with the

team since his freshman year, is not only a great shooter but he is also a great shot blocker and has a lot of potential.

The fifth starter is of rotating value. Hippert has three athletes that he can start depending on the opposition and the situational game plan. Finding time in that fifth spot have been junior Andrew Blood, sophomore Colin Spencer and senior Jack Trask. Hippert has said he will continue to change the lineup around, looking to see what works.

Blood is a football player who works hard and plays tough like a forward, while Trask is a big kid (6'3" 270 lbs.) and at times is the most dominate payer on the court. Only a sophomore, Spencer had a 21-point performance, where he knocked down 6 3's, earlier in the season. He has shown flashes, but currently finds himself on the bench due to an injury.

Senior Dan Doherty will see some action for Uxbridge on the court as a role player. He is a solid defender who puts in the work

and although he didn't see a lot of minutes last year he may get the opportunity this season.

During the Milford Holiday Tournament the Spartans had a good performance in the first round and with their win went up against the host, a Division 1 team, for the championship. Although the Spartans were able to stay close during the first half, Milford eventually wore them down. Despite the loss, Hippert liked what he saw in his team as it went up against a team from an upper division.

As is the case year after year, Hippert is hoping that his squad can qualify for the State as well as the Clark Tournament in addition to capturing the SWCL B league Title.

"Our schedule has been tough so far, but we knew coming into the season that it was going to be," the coach said. "Right now, we are far from our goals, but we have plenty of games still ahead of us to make things right."



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TALES FROM BEYOND

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# Dudleytown-Part 1: Demons, evil spirits, foreboding horrors

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

A deserted settlement deep in the woods of western Connecticut has been the subject of writings, short stories and even movies. Owlsbury was once the more common name for what we today call Dudleytown. The abandoned settlement is said to harbor demons, evil spirits, negative energy, and a host of other foreboding horrors that have caused people to either shun the area, or at present, risk being arrested while searching for the now forbidden ghost town. There are many narratives regarding the area and the negative energy that abounds within. Many have sworn to the old tales while others brush them off as legends created to scare the meek.

Dudleytown is nestled on a plateau in the middle of three mountains and a hill. The original owner, Thomas Griffis, took deed to the area in 1738. Abiel and Barzillai Dudley, both soldiers in the French and Indian War, took title to a parcel of land in 1747, "on the road from the meeting house to Mr. Griffis." This would soon become known as Dudleytown.

The Dudley family was said to have brought a family curse over from England where several of their ancestors were executed for various plots against the government.

At one point thirty-five families called Dudleytown their home. Names like Carter, Jones, Tanner, Dibble, Rogers and others unknowingly made history by settling in the small town. The chief product was charcoal, for the area was heavily wooded.

It cannot be precisely discerned when the horror stories about Dudleytown began to circulate. The 1938 Federal Writer's Project book on Connecticut gives the abandoned village but a small paragraph within its pages and not much more. It mentions the trail where hikers traverse to "the dead end and mystery of Dark Entry...no other road, other than a pack horse trail ever penetrated this forbidding region."

The writer continues; "Tradition tells of a man, who with his wife, built a cabin in this wilderness. After an absence of two days, in which he tramped to the village for supplies, he returned to find his wife a raving maniac,

driven mad by some terrifying experience which she was never able to relate."

The narrative most likely concerns Dr. William Clarke and his wife. The doctor bought a piece of land in Dudleytown and built a cabin as a summer retreat. He became one of the founders of the Dark Entry Forest Association, a group of people who bought land in and around Dudleytown to preserve the former settlement and woods around it. The entry in the book also states that there are graves deep in the woods of those who have gone in and died of starvation or an accident. The writer refers to the place as Dark Entry or Owlsbury but never once mentions it as Dudleytown. The term Dark Entry referred to a forty foot tunnel that ran from the road to the cellar of a home. Unfortunately, both are long gone but the name has stayed on, creating ominous visions for those who read of the lost town.

One very famous account is that of Richard Brophy, the last inhabitant of Dudleytown. Brophy left his land in 1901 after his house burned to the ground. Before that, his sons

disappeared after they were caught stealing sleigh robes, and his wife died of consumption shortly after. It is alleged that the man showed up at the local tavern half insane and jabbering about half man-half animal cloven hoof beasts chasing him off his property. After that, he was never heard from again.

People suffered strange calamities while living in the cursed village. One of the Dudley brothers was found hacked to death near his home, another mysteriously fell from a ladder, one more died while visiting a neighbor's home. These and many more were attributed to the curse and the demons, both visible and invisible that were said to inhabit the land.

Tales of people going insane ran rampant. Abiel Dudley was one of those who went mad, but he also was about ninety years old when he was considered feeble of mind. William Tanner was another Dudleytown resident who was considered to have become feeble-minded. He lived to be one hundred and four years old. Several other accounts tell of Dudleytown residents going mad after witnessing what they called wild half human beasts. Dr. William Clarke's wife was another as previously stated, but records indicate she died in a New York hospital from a physical illness.

Part II next month.



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