

Joan Costa's 100th a time for reflection on bowling, dancing

BY ROD LEE

Sitting in the kitchen of her home on Granite Street in Webster the afternoon of February 25th, Joan Costa could not help but wonder what all the fuss was about.

Having almost attained the age of one hundred years old is not that big a deal, in Joan's mind. Her son Richard "Dick" Skrocki and the rest of the family feel the milestone is significant, however, which is why they are throwing her a birthday party on Saloon No. 6 on Worcester Road on March 12th.

Forty or so people are expected to attend.

Joan Costa is the daughter of Polish immigrants. Her dad, Zygmunt, was a weaver. Her mom, Rose, was a homemaker and mother to nine children. Joan's sister, Sylvia Kozlowski, lives downstairs and "comes up every day to read the paper," Ms. Costa said.

Ms. Costa has white hair that was done up in a perm. She is an unpretentious woman and seemingly reluctant to share much about her life even though it has been one of hard work with time set aside for candlepin bowling and dancing.

"Guess who Stasia Czernicki feared most" on the lanes? Mr. Skrocki said. Then he turned a look in Ms. Costa's direction with a smile on his face.

Statsia Miles Czernick was an American professional candlepin bowler from Webster who set the



Ms. Costa with her first husband, Henry Skrocki.

all-time candlepin record in her hometown for ten strings with 1388 pins. She had a series of personal highs, including a 194 single, a 466 triple, and 707 for five strings. She also shares the world record for women's doubles (2382), mixed doubles (2676) and women's five strings (707). She was world champion eight times, singles queen six times, a member of the women's doubles title team three times, mixed doubles team twice and a member of the world's women's title team in 1965.

Ms. Czernick was inducted into the Candlepin Bowling Association Hall of Fame in 1987.

She died in 1993.

"Joan was her No. 1 competitor," Dick Skrocki said.

"When I was growing up, that was the thing," Joan said. "Bowling and dancing."

Except for a pacemaker put in about five years ago, and the walker she uses to get around, Joan Costa has no complaints about her health.

She did have a scare a while back.

"I would say my rosary and go get the newspaper when I had a sharp pain and screamed and my sister came up," she said.

Her life now is much quieter than it once was. Reading one to two books a week, including nov-

100TH BIRTHDAY

continued on page 2

Tiny house a big deal for lifelong adventurer

BY JANET STOICA

When Kurt Kauppinen of Charlton decided to build a tiny home, he was thinking how cool it would be not to pay rent but after the completion of his small but mighty housing, it has turned out to be yet another adventure in his amazing history of accomplishments and worldly expeditions.

He is not quite thirty years old but has already forged a personal tale of exciting journeys to remote parts of Mother Earth. Call it wanderlust, the love of travel, the need to roam, hike, and experience more than what most of us will ever see or do but average is not what Mr. Kauppinen is all about. He's a seeker of experiences that many of us will never know and his quest for those experiences is what sets him apart from most of us.

"When I was living in Peru with the native population, I got the idea about building a tiny home," he said, "and the local people's living quarters were compact and practical. A tiny house seemed just about right. I felt that building a house this size also meant I could build it with wheels so that if I wanted to move, then I could. It was the freedom that attracted me and how I could also learn to build a structure of this size."

Mr. Kauppinen began his project by reading a book about tiny homes. He researched extensively and continued to review information about these modest living quarters. "I sat down and designed the home while educating myself on house framing, specifically on the



Kurt Kauppinen (second from left) with his two brothers, mother and grandmother in front of the tiny house he built.

2 x 4 framing in the construction process. YouTube was very instrumental in my learning process. You know, we're looking at a new age of learning and if you're willing to research, you can find what you need." He borrowed tools from friends and was able to procure framing wood from a Winchendon lumberyard at a great price. He also wanted to buy local and not build from a kit.

He began by buying a properly-sized trailer that would be able to carry the weight of his new home. He then cut and welded the metal pieces to the specifications of his own blueprint plans. The wooden structure began to take shape. By

TINY HOME

continued on page 2

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100TH BIRTHDAY

continued from page 1

els by Nora Roberts and Danielle Steele, is a favorite pastime. As is enjoying the company of members of the family. Her grandson Brian and his daughters Olivia and Vivi-



Joan Costa of Webster, who turns 100 this month, with her grandson Brian, two of her great granddaughters, and her son Dick Skrocki.

enne arrived as we spoke. She is grandmother to Brian and Andrew and a great grandmother to Olivia, Vivienne and Lena.

Standing by during the conversation, Dick Skrocki was eager to share details about his mom, who he describes as “a very hardworking lady. She would go above and beyond.”

In high school at Bartlett, his mother had “the best shorthand around,” he says. During World War II she wrote letters to a friend’s husband.

“He wrote my friend letters and I wrote back for her,” she said.

A resident of Webster since moving to town when she was in the third grade, Ms. Costa has been married twice. She identified her first husband, Henry Skrocki as “the love of my life.” Henry worked for the Worcester Soda Co. and then the Webster Times.

Her second husband, Constantin Costa, operated an auto body shop in Southbridge.

Joan worked at Bates Shoe Co. in Webster in a stitching job and after that at Ameri-

can Optical in Southbridge as an inspector.

Asked if the town of Webster or any organization had recognized her longevity, she said “no, no.”

She wouldn’t have wanted all the fanfare anyway.

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TINY HOME

continued from page 1

the way, Mr. Kauppinen has no experience in carpentry. His tutor was strictly YouTube and the confidence he had in himself to learn and to finish his project. He enjoys working with his hands and feels that “if someone else can do it, so can I.” He said he never thought about quitting but it helped if he thought about the project in small chunks so as not to be overwhelmed by the entire job. He focused on framing first, then roofing, and after the wiring was done, it was smooth sailing.

He spent six months on his workmanship. “I began in June 2022 and finished in January 2023,” he said. “I learned so much. I had to fix my mistakes. I learned how to make Shaker-style interior cabinets with live edge slabs. The interior colors were the hardest. I’d walk through Home Depot and check out appliances, furnaces, water pumps, hot water heaters, and electrical plugs. No microwave oven for me though. Everything will run on solar power with a whisper generator for backup in case my solar power runs out on a cloudy week. I have three 100-watt solar panels.

As an experiential education major, Mr. Kauppinen has attained a Bachelor of Science degree in Adventure Education. I would imagine that a bit of his college days were spent mountain backpacking and some in a classroom-learning environment with a few things certain—continuing to learn, to educate, and to experience life’s offerings. He is an educator at an agency that assists young single moms from the street life. The agency’s and his goals are to lend a hand to benefit those in need to get back into productive society.



Mr. Kauppinen consulted YouTube and worked with local materials suppliers to build his tiny house.

Mr. Kauppinen appears to be in the right place at the right time. Life is a challenge for most of us and for some, more arduous.

“When I was in college I decided that I wanted to stop paying rent,” Mr. Kauppinen said, “I actually lived in a tent for a month by a river but one day the river overflowed its banks. One of my friends joked that I should just get a van and live in it. I just wanted my own spot. Since then, I’ve lived outdoors in Utah, Mexico, Nepal, and Peru. I didn’t visit the major tourist areas but chose to experience and live with the local indigenous people. In the Amazon the husband would build the home and the family would live in it. I spent one month in the jungle harvesting Brazilian nuts. We hunted, fished, and ate local foods.” Did he eat insects? “Yes, I did taste/eat some of their insect diet. The taste was metallic,” he said. He has also enjoyed the fruits of the protected Costanias



tree. The nut pods are as big as a coconut and once broken open will yield about 25 individual nuts. The Costanias tree is a member of the chestnut tree family.

Mr. Kauppinen has learned that patience and taking smaller steps to attain a larger goal is the key to finishing anything in life he enjoys. “I learned from my own running and jogging routines to keep things in perspective by taking each part of a long run and breaking it into smaller pieces. Instead of thinking about running fifty miles, I would tell myself to concentrate on running 20 miles and then keep going.” Would he ever build another tiny house? “Yes, but not alone,” he says. “I’d do it again with a friend or family member.”

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.”

– Lao Tzu

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The YankeeXpress

Published on the 2nd and 4th Fridays of the month. Direct mailed to nearly 65,000 homes and businesses each month and available on news stands through the region.

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
4th Friday: Blackstone Valley North: Grafton, Millbury & Sutton.

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Xpressly Yours ... a letter from the editor

Old Navy 'clothed' in excitement for opening of Sturbridge store

Inside the new Old Navy store in the Center at Hobbs Brook on Charlton Road in Sturbridge on the first Saturday in February all of the merchandise was arranged



BY ROD LEE

just so and there were tote bags with coupons inside for customers to use at the sales counter.

Jen Laramée who is the store's manager was in an ebullient mood after taking part in a morning ribbon-cutting ceremony.

"You look like a walking ad-

Communications explained to me in an email prior to February 4th, the Sturbridge store is part of a company strategy focusing on "new stores in smaller markets. Last year the brand opened twenty-five new company-owned stores with approximately twenty-three stores planned in 2023."

The Old Navy store, which is a reincarnation of one that occupied the grounds in the past, adds to the already established mix of businesses at The Blackstone Retail Group's Center at Hobbs Brook. These include Walmart, Marshalls, Michaels, Staples, Petco and Stop & Shop, making the plaza one of the largest open-air retail sites in the Mass Pike-Rt. 20-Rt. 84 area.

Ms. Laramée and her staff are

month of January.

The culture is "denim and this is where lot of our fashion comes from," she said.

Ms. Compton points out that "we're also the first value retailer to integrate the shopping experience by offering the broadest assortment of women's sizes in stores and online, with no price difference."

Old Navy thinks of its approach as "democracy of style and service."

"We are creating magical moments and we're happy to execute those moments," Ms. Laramée said.

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



Store Manager Jennifer Laramée didn't mind that the ribbon cutting for the new Old Navy store in Sturbridge had to be held inside on a cold morning in February. A longtime employee of Gap Inc., she proudly wears the company's product line.

vertisement for Old Navy," Ms. Laramée was told, as she took a few minutes to talk about the grand opening.

"Head-to-toe, all the time!" she said.

Ms. Laramée is a veteran with the company, which is part of the Gap Inc. family.

"Twenty years, out of high school," she said. "I worked in Connecticut before. I live in North Brookfield but grew up in Spencer."

She loves being within easy driving distance of work.

As Deb Compton of Old Navy

proud of Old Navy's reputation as a provider of quality casual clothing to consumers.

"You can truly be a customer here your whole life, with the Gap family," she said. "When I tell people I work for Old Navy it's 'wow,' never a 'ew!' To be part of the Sturbridge community" with such attractions as Old Sturbridge Village, shops, restaurants, hotels and tourist destinations in Central Massachusetts "is very exciting."

Construction on the new store began in the late summer of 2022 and personnel moved in during the



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Immigrants: Kayce Martin's American success story

BY JANET STOICA

This is the first in a series of articles about local immigrants and their lives in the United States, why they came, how they lived, and what their outlook is about this country.

She arrived in the United States from Mexico when she was a teenager. The second of four children, all girls. Her father, who was a military man in Mexico, died young from a very sudden and unexpected heart attack. Her mom

was also young, now a widow, and afraid for her four daughters. So she sent her daughter, Kayce, to live with her aunt in California. Kayce's mom wanted the best for her girls. Soon Kayce met her Marine husband while in California and when his tour-of-duty was over, he opted to return to Massachusetts. Kayce went with him to marry and start a new life. The couple had three children who are now young adults. She is no longer married but in a good relationship with an admirable fellow.

"My mom never remarried," said Kayce, "she was all about us, her daughters. She wanted to ensure we would all be okay and make good lives for ourselves and our own families. I was the second oldest and the only daughter to emigrate. It was an interesting beginning for me. My aunt in California ran a children's daycare center so I helped with everything, cooking, cleaning, and minding the children. I met my future husband through a cousin who knew him. When we decided to move to Massachusetts, my mom became very worried for me. She felt that moving 3,000 more miles away from her was way too far but I took the opportunity."

When she arrived in Massachusetts, she accepted a position in a bakery and enjoyed the work there. She baked, she cleaned, and she washed many, many pots, pans, and dishes. After a year or two baking, Kayce took a job at Nypro (since acquired by and now known as Jabil, Inc.) in northern Worcester County. Nypro is a medical device manufacturer. She stayed for fifteen years working her way up the job ladder. "I began as an inspector/packer," stated Kayce, "and since I enjoy learning and wanted more education, I was promoted to Group Leader, then Quality Inspector."

Nypro offered classes to its employees and Kayce enrolled immediately. She took as many classes

as she could and soon became a Quality Technician in the document control area. She then progressed to Quality Supervisor and managed the entire floor in her department. A true Horatio Alger/American dream story. Kayce speaks with great feeling about Nypro. "It's where I got my start," she says, "the company owner really cared for his employees and we gave him back what he gave to us. A real opportunity to better ourselves. It was a great place to work with excellent company benefits."

She worked twelve-hour shifts, had three children, and did a lot of homework for promotion. "It was hard but I knew I was making a better life for my family," she said. "I knew I couldn't support myself on the wages I began with so realized that I had to work my way up to get somewhere and get a better paycheck. I always tell my kids that in this country you can always be what you want to be if you work hard enough for it. There's a big difference between being poor in America and being poor in Mexico. In Mexico, you see poor young kids in the streets and there is no help for them. In America at least the government helps you get on your feet with many wonderful programs. In America



you get the government's assistance until you can better yourself. If you apply yourself, you can be whatever you want."

Kayce Martin currently works as the manager of the Quality Assurance Department in a neuro-surgical hardware company. Her position entails ensuring strict adherence to ISO guidelines and processes, personnel training, and FDA compliance. The company sells its products internationally and she is proud to be a part of its success.

"Don't wait for opportunity, create it." George Bernard Shaw

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Local residents make Dean's List at Wentworth Institute of Technology

The following local students have made the Dean's List at Wentworth Institute of Technology for the Fall 2022 semester.

• Nickole Nayfeh of Dudley, Mass. (01571)

• Olivia Valentine of Oxford, Mass. (01540)

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Fabulous and functional mending class is April 27th

BY JANET STOICA

On Thursday, April 27, an interesting and innovative class will be held at Southbridge's Jacob Edwards Library from 6 – 7:30 p.m. The class is Functional & Fabulous Embroidery for Mending with instructor Lynda Shoup from Webster. Using the latest trend of Upcycling or, creative reusing, which transforms unwanted textile items into new and creative materials, participants will embark on an environmental-

these countries purchase or accept our used items that means they don't buy their own country's new manufactured goods. After learning about this, I stopped donating my old clothes and decided to mend them or make them into something useable like cloth bags, cleaning cloths, etc."

"The fashion industry is the second most polluting industry world-wide," says Lynda, "with the oil industry being the first and many fabrics are made from petroleum. I haven't purchased new

explained Ms. Shoup, "that sometimes it really is more economical to just buy a new item. But, many of these new items are made in countries where unsafe working conditions are the norm using child labor. The news brings us stories about the tragic loss of life in these Third World garment factories where, in just one case, an unsafe Bangladesh factory collapsed killing over 1,000 workers and injuring 2,500 others. The cost of all those lost lives is immeasurable. So, really, the only remaining local menders in the U.S. are those individuals who might alter suits and/or wedding gowns."

Through her association with Southbridge's Jacob Edwards Library Director, Margaret Morrissey, Lynda Shoup will be

pleased and happy to demonstrate, teach, and expound upon all types of mending techniques, both simple and elaborate, to her fellow learners. Her goal for this class is to have a good group of people who are looking forward to a fun event. "I hope our participants will learn new skills such as attaching a patch, learning some new stitches, and learning mending/embroidery flairs. I'm looking forward to them leaving the class with reasonable skills and an understanding of the mending trends. If there is a strong interest for additional classes, perhaps additional lessons will be held. There is a growing movement of the mending art. It's people who are becoming much more conscious of our environment."

Ms. Shoup has also taught previous classes at the Jacob Edwards Library, namely Introduction to Art Journaling and Using Historical Images in Mixed Media Art.

If you are interested in attending or if you have any questions, please pre-register with Ms. Shoup by emailing mendingclass@gmail.com. Get ready for a most interesting and educational program! April 27, 2023. 6-7:30 p.m. Jacob Edwards Library, 236 Main Street, Southbridge MA 01550. (508) 764-5426. www.jacobedwardslibrary.org

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Lynda Shoup displays a sample of Embroidery Mending.

ly-friendly cause and are invited to bring along items to mend. Additional mending materials will be provided by Ms. Shoup who will showcase the many ways we can all contribute to our world's sustainable goals.

"I've been sewing since I was about five years old since many of my family members sewed," said Lynda, "but my mother was a 'magic mender' meaning that whatever she mended was invisible to the eye. She really knew how to make an item look new again. This valuable skill has become a lost art as people have gravitated to the world of fast fashion where much of our clothing is discarded and new inexpensive clothing is purchased in its place. In the past few years, however, I've learned and read that many of the Third World countries that our discarded clothing donations were being sent to just don't want our textiles anymore as it ruins their own textile industries. When people in

clothes in a while since learning about the mending trends. When I researched this development, it's what inspired me to pursue Visible Mending, a mending technique that's meant to be shown and admired vs. the invisible method used by our parents or grandparents which wasn't meant to be seen." By the way, as of November 1, 2022, Massachusetts residents must now recycle their old clothing and textiles instead of throwing them into the trash.

Lynda stated that sewing classes are not taught in school anymore and she gave an example of a young lady she met who had no clue about sewing on a button when it fell from her shirt. Not only did the young lady explain that she did not know how to sew the button back into its place, but she further stated her shirt was quickly replaceable by going online to L.L. Bean or Land's End and ordering a new one. Ouch! Is this what this world has come to? "Fast fashion is so cheap,"

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Somber news for UMass Cancer Walk with passing of Dr. Green

This year's 25th-anniversary UMass Cancer Walk will come on a sad note, with the passing of Michael Green, MD, PhD, director of the UMass Cancer Center.

This year's walk is scheduled for September 24th.

Li Weibo Institute for Rare Diseases Research and as the Lambi and Sarah Adams Chair in Genetic Research."

Dr. Green was an avid fisherman, often launching into the waters off Woods Hole, and made



Dr. Green's scientific career was devoted to deepening understanding of the mechanisms that regulate gene expression in mammalian cells and how alterations in gene regulation cause and impact cancer and a wide range of other human diseases.

In a joint statement, Dr. Michael F. Collins, chancellor and senior vice present for the health sciences at UMass, and Terence R. Flotte, MD, executive deputy chancellor, provost and dean of the T.H. Chan School of Medicine, said that Dr. Green was among the most distinguished biomedical research leaders "in our academic community and, indeed, across the nation. He has been an integral leader of and contributor to the growth and preeminence of UMass Chan's research enterprise, serving also as director of the UMass Cancer Center, co-director of the UMass Cancer Center, co-director of the

the most of his catches through his culinary creativity.

"Undoubtedly, the loss of Dr. Green is deep and painful for those of us who have worked with him, learned from him and come to respect his diverse skills, sense of humor and countless contributions to the UMass Chan and broader scientific communities over the last four decades," Dr. Collins and Dr. Flotte said.

"We know that all members of the UMass Chan community join us in extending our deepest sympathies and condolences to Maria Zapp, PhD, his wife and a longstanding member of the UMass Chan faculty; Dr. Green's brother, Eric Green, MD, PhD, director of NIH's National Human Genome Research Institute; his sister, Wendy Lee, MD, a retired pediatrician; his extended family; colleagues; and friends."

St. Patrick's Day Fundraiser

The Harrington Hospital Auxiliary presents a Corned Beef and Cabbage Dinner on March 16. Two seatings: 4:30 - 6 p.m. & 6:30-8 p.m. \$16 pp. By ticket only. Purchase tickets at Harrington Hospital Gift Shop, 100 South St., Southbridge or contact the office at 508-765-9771, ext. 6472

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Webster's Routes 16 at 395 to be reconfigured

BY JANET STOICA

You won't see any changes for 18-24 months but it's finally going to happen. Yes, the rumors, the frustrations, and the final reconstruction of the traffic exchanges for Route 16 and the I-395 ramps will begin in this

decade. We hope. Let's face it, our Webster Highway Department is the best at what they do but they are not the almighty State Highway Department which is overseen by the Federal Highway Department when it comes to Interstate 395. We all know how slow the state and federal governments move,



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don't we? Leeway should be given to them I suppose because it's not like Webster or any other wonderful town like ours is the only municipality requesting highway construction assistance. Yes, there are hundreds of thriving towns like ours waiting (patiently?) to have

their turn at state and federal funds to improve heavy-traffic areas like our Route 16 and 395 interchanges.

But big changes are coming. We hope. The miserable wait for those cars, trailer trucks, and buses waiting to make a left turn onto Route 16 after using the Webster 395-southbound exit ramp will soon be but a distant memory. We hope. The vehicles trying to make a left turn onto Route 16 from Cudworth Road will finally be blessed with a rotary that will stop 4-way traffic and make it much easier to navigate as we enter the rotary. Just think of this rotary as Webster's version of the peanut rotary in Worcester's Kelley Square. It's not so bad. It'll still be a crazy gauntlet of driving antics but at least we all get a chance to enter that round-about, right? One-two-three Ready? Go!

Here's the deal: A draft Notice of Intent permit application was submitted to the Mass. Dept. of Transportation with approval slated for spring 2023. The Webster Conservation Commission then reviews. After approval, the right-of-way process begins consisting of property appraisals and negotiations with land owners that could take up to one year. Con-

struction bids will be advertised in the fall of 2024.

Construction entails new traffic lights to be installed at the I-395-South exit ramp into Webster. The new lights will be programmed and tied into sequence with the lights at Price Chopper plaza to prevent backups to the 395 exit ramp area. Additionally, a rotary will be constructed at the Cudworth Road/Route 16 intersection. There will also be bicycle lanes, pedestrian sidewalks, and a replacement of the Mill Brook culvert to a precast concrete box culvert.

Can't wait to have a smoother driving experience. Can't come a day too soon. From 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. daily the I-395-South ramp is sometimes backed up onto I-395. It's like kamikaze driving trying to make a left turn onto Route 16-East. It's like having the composure of a saint if you are an employee of Mapfre Insurance waiting to get onto Route 16 to head into Webster never mind trying to make a left turn towards Douglas although I'm sure that many Mapfre employees have learned different ways to escape their parking lot dilemma by now. Hope springs eternal!

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A bookstore, and more, in Webster

BY ROD LEE

Between plucking his guitar and singing tunes during a performance in concert with Raianna Richards on the night of February 11th, Mark Mandeville recalled visiting Booklovers' Gourmet in Webster when Deb Horan's shop "was the size of a broom closet."

Today's Booklovers' Gourmet, at 72 E. Main St., home of new and used books, journals, jewelry, gifts, sweets, coffee and more, is a bigger and busier operation than ever—as evidenced, for instance, by "Winter Light," a group art show with works on display in the café gallery all month long, through February 28th.

This exhibition followed a hosting of Author Leslie Wheeler by the store's evening book group in January. Signed copies of "Rattlesnake Hill: A Berkshire Hilltown Mystery," were available, as was the latest in the series: "Wolf Bog."

From Open Mic Poetry Share to Drink Coupon of the Month to a Writers Group, a Mystery Book



Deb Horan introduces Raianna Richards and Mark Mandeville for "An Evening of Music" at Booklovers' Gourmet on February 11th.

Group, a Peer Support Group and other regularly scheduled activities and special offerings, Booklovers' Gourmet is a place of almost constant action, Tuesday through Saturday.

Several of those who attended

the hour-and-a-half concert by Mr. Mandeville and Ms. Richards were familiar with their work. One friend from Shrewsbury, waiting for the show to begin, said "there is no better song-writing duo in New England."

Another said he had been part of "a walking tour of the Berkshires, ten towns," that the couple had undertaken last year.

Webster residents, Mr. Mandeville and Ms. Richards come across as down-to-earth folkies with songs like "Hello Bill," in tribute to a late musician who spent his final days at a VA home; "When Love Comes Round Again" (to which Mr. Mandeville said "I'm getting mushy writing all these love songs"); and "Another Day Tomorrow"—the first song they wrote in tandem "after twenty years together."

They recently spent "a whole year in Canada, playing just house concerts," Mr. Mandeville said.

Musing on being asked "are there any musicians anymore with messages like Bob Dylan and Woody Guthrie," Mr. Mandeville replied "maybe not, but we can sell out Booklovers' Gourmet!"

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

Charlton Garden Club March meeting

Come and join us! The Charlton Garden Club's Monday, March 13, 2023 meeting will feature Dawn Pettinelli who manages the UConn Soil Nutrient Analysis Lab. She will be speaking on Successful Seed Starting. Charlton Garden Club meetings are open to all interested in gardening and related themes. Whether you're a

novice or accomplished gardener, the Charlton Garden Club is a great place to meet other gardening enthusiasts, learn about plants and planting, and to share your gardening tips and experiences. This meeting will be held at 7 pm at the Charlton Public Library. A \$5 donation is suggested for non-members. If interested in joining

the Garden Club, please contact Co-Presidents, Virginia Charette at (508) 248-7300 or Marcia Liedigk at (508) 434-0506.



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BY ROD LEE

The need for continuing adjustment as the Commonwealth slowly emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic is not lost on restaurateurs like Chef Elaine Cowan of The Uxlocale on West Hartford Ave. in Uxbridge. Just as it isn't for the Massachusetts Restaurant Association, which is pushing hard for legislators on Beacon Hill to make outdoor dining and cocktails-to-go a permanent fixture here.

Provisions for this allowance,

Innovation helps The Uxlocale coming out of the pandemic

which was granted to the restaurant industry during the health crisis, are set to end on March 31st.

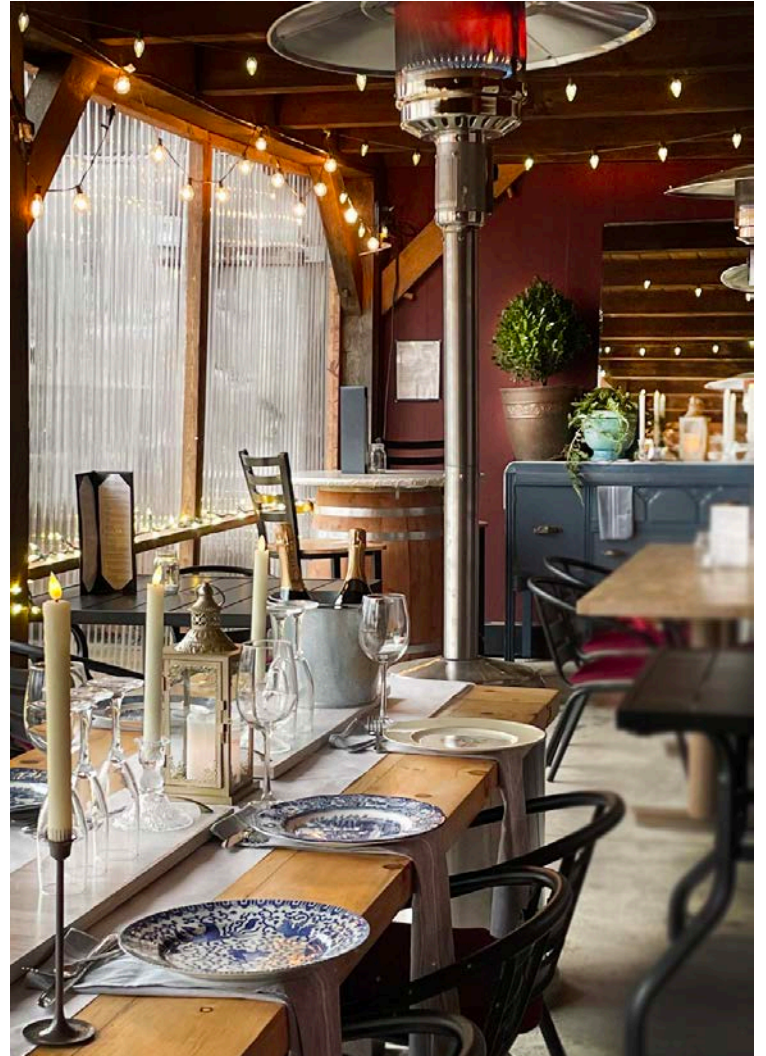
The Westborough-based MRA notes that while the state's restaurants received strong support from customers when they needed it most, many were still forced to close, or were placed at the edge of bankruptcy. Takeout was a huge help, but close to 5000 restaurants shut their doors. Those that remain are struggling with worker shortages, supply-chain issues, the loss of financial assistance and inflation—as the cost of food soars.

Outdoor dining has helped to save the day, in numerous instances.

"It's played a tremendous role in the recovery of our hospitality industry," State Rep. Manny Cruz, D-Salem, points out. "And it's really been a net benefit for the city. We look like a different community, similar to what you would see in Europe, with respect to outdoor dining."

With the short-term reforms that were enacted during Covid-19 about to disappear, the MRA is asking state legislators to give restaurants the opportunity to sell beer, wine and alcohol with takeout and delivery orders.

Ms. Cowan is known not only for her fresh and flavorful fare with an accent on farm-to-table, but for



'Greenhouse' dining is one way The Uxlocale has dealt with space restrictions

her a willingness to think of new ways to increase the appeal of The Uxlocale—like a recent disco dance party she hosted.

This includes a step she took to expand the dining experience for her patrons.

"We are fortunate to have a great

enclosed (from the parking lot) patio space," she said. "I also added a 'greenhouse,' people have been eating outside all winter! It's been a saving grace."

Submit restaurant news to
rodlee.1963@gmail.com.



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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.

THROUGH MARCH 31

• "Transitions: Winter to Spring," paintings by Anne M. Tisdell, will be featured in the café gallery at Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 E. Main St., Webster and can be viewed during normal business hours: Tuesday-Saturday 10-5 and Wednesday 10-6. A Meet-the-Artist reception is planned for Saturday, March 11th from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. A native



Kerrie Evers and her band will perform at a New England Country Music Club event at the Uxbridge Progressive Club on March 19th.

of Swampscott on the Massachusetts coast, Ms. Tisdell has dabbled in art all her life with sketching and drawing. She has exhibited in various places in Central Massachusetts and started taking art classes with Bill Griffiths at the Worcester Art Museum "which brought me to a new level as an artist." Booklovers' Gourmet was her first exhibit in 2020 and 2021.

SATURDAY, MARCH 11

• St. Peter's Parish, 39 Church Ave., Northbridge, is hosting a Corned Beef & Cabbage Dinner starting at 5:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall. Families and friends are invited for a wonderful meal and Irish Music by Alto Vista. Tickets are \$17 per person for a meal that will include potatoes, carrots, salad and dessert. To-go meals will be available for pickup at 5:00 p.m. All orders must be purchased in advance. "Pay It Forward" by purchasing an extra dinner for delivery to someone in the community in need. Call the Parish Office at 508-234-2156 or email parishoffice@stpeterrockdale.org to purchase tickets or for more details.

TUESDAY, MARCH 14

• The Intrepid Readers of the Simon Fairfield

Public Library, 290 Main St., Douglas, will discuss Joshua Slocum's "Sailing Alone Around the World." Slocum died in 1909 and the book was published in 1956. He circumvented the world by way of the oceans in a 34-foot sloop over a period of three years. All are invited to attend this event. Books, audio books and Libby copies are available. Call the library at 508-476-2695 for further info.

FRIDAYS DURING LENT MARCH 17, 24 AND 31

• Lenten Fish Dinners, dine in or take out, are being offered at St. Denis Church, Douglas, from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m. (NOT on March 10 and NOT on April 6). Includes baked fish, coleslaw, tartar sauce and your choice of baked potato or white rice. For an additional cost, add a cup of homemade clam chowder. Prices to be determined; order online before 7:00 p.m. the Thursday prior, or tickets will be available at the door on Friday (while supplies last). Saint-DenisChurch.com/fish-dinners. Cash, check or Square payments accepted on arrival.

THURSDAY, MARCH 16

• Journey to the Polynesian Islands by attending the 29th annual Superintendent's Gourmet Dinner at Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School, 65 Pleasant St., Upton. The competition center will be transformed into a tropical dining oasis. "Polynesian" is the theme the students have chosen for this year's event. A variety of dishes reflecting this theme will complement carefully selected wines. The evening will begin with a social hour at 5:00 p.m. followed by a multi-course dinner at 6:00 p.m. This gala event is a major fundraiser for the school. Tickets are \$140 per person or \$1300 for a table of ten and may be obtained by calling 508-529-7758 x3020. After confirming your reservation checks made payable to Blackstone Valley Tech can be mailed to BVT c/o Anne-Marie Colonero, 65 Pleasant St., Upton MA 01568, to hold your seat(s).

MARCH 17, 18 & 19

• The Uxbridge High School Drama Club will present "Grease: School Version" with book, music and lyrics by Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey, with performances at 7:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday in the Uxbridge High School Auditorium. Grease: School Version is presented by special arrangement with Samuel French Inc., a Concord Theatricals Company. "Grease" is a turbo-fueled nostalgic musical road trip through the joys, relationships and dances—literally and emotionally—of the students of Rydell High in 1959. The UHS Drama Club boasts a cast and crew of sixty members, directed by Kathleen Penza and Mary Mangnall with assistance from Sue Hirtle. The production is a collaborative effort between several departments at UHS including Performing Arts, Visual Arts/Graphic Design and Technology and Construction. Contact the Uxbridge High School office to reserve tickets; tickets are free but are required for admission and will

be available to the public starting March 6.

FRIDAY, MARCH 17

• In observance of St. Patrick's Day, the Douglas Historical Society will serve a Corned Beef Sandwich Lunch at the E.N. Jenckes Store Museu, 283 Main St., Douglas, between noon and 6:00 p.m. Donations of \$12 will help support and maintain this historic building as patrons enjoy a corned beef sandwich on rye or pumpernickel with coleslaw, sour pickle and beverage, along with an Irish-themed cupcake or cookie for dessert.

• In celebration of its 125th anniversary, St. Patrick's Church, 1 Cross St., Whitinsville, will host a free St. Patrick's Day concert at 7:00 p.m., featuring Irish music by Chris Bilodeau. This event is sponsored by the

Northbridge Cultural Council. Jim from Peg's Diner will serve a meal of Fish & Chips. Dinner options also include Baked Fish/ Baked Potato and Coleslaw or Fried Fish/ Fries and Coleslaw for \$14. Jimmy's famous Clam Chowder will be available for \$4/cup or \$6/bowl. Mac & Cheese with Fries for \$5. Dinners will be available for in-house dining on Fridays during Lent through March 31st from 4:30 to 7:00 p.m. Payment is by Venmo, Square, or cash.

SATURDAY, MARCH 18

• A Floral Arrangement Fundraiser Class presented by Sandy Michalak of Herbert E. Berg Florist will be held at the Millbury First Congregational Church, 148 West Main St., Millbury, at 2:00 p.m. Cost is \$25 for instruction and all materials. Beginners

welcome. Advanced registration by March 14 is required by calling Janice Fortin at 508-826-6381.

• Irish Night will be celebrated at the Uxbridge Progressive Club, 18 Whitin St., starting at 6:00 p.m. Corned Beef dinner served at 6:30 p.m. Music by the Laura May Band 7:00-11:00 p.m. Tickets are \$20 for dinner and dancing and \$15 for dinner-only, takeout (5:30-6:30 p.m. at the kitchen door). Please purchase tickets in advance at the club. Call 508-278-9800 for more information.

SUNDAY, MARCH 19

HAPPENINGS!

continued on page 12

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HAPPENINGS!

continued from page 11

• The New England Country Music Club will host a dance featuring the “Kerrie Evers” band at the Uxbridge Progressive Club, 18 Whitin St. Doors open at 12:15 p.m. with live music from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. www.facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22

• Whitinsville Christian School, 279 Linwood Ave., Whitinsville, welcomes Dr. John Abbondanza, a specialist in vision therapy and vision-related learning problems, for an informative presentation about the critical link between vision and learning. The event

is scheduled for 5:15 p.m. Admission is free and all interested parents, guardians and educators are invited to attend.

SATURDAY, MARCH 25

• The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce’s Home & Community Expo will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Northbridge High School, 427 Linwood Ave., Whitinsville. This is one of the area’s premier events to advertise your business to residents and prospective customers. Single booths, double booths, nonprofit booths are available; a “golden egg” exhibitor add-on provides for a prime location on the floor with identification as part of the scavenger hunt. Small businesses from all over the

Blackstone Valley will showcase their products and services. Exhibitor registration deadline is March 8. For more information, contact Liz O’Neil, loneil@blackstonevalley.org or 508-234-9090 Ext. 102.

ON OR AROUND APRIL 1

• Southwick’s Zoo, 2 Southwick St., Mendon, opens for the season, with such attractions as a 35-acre deer forest, petting zoo, parakeet landing walk-through aviary, EARTH Discovery Center, Skyfari Ride, Woodlands Express Train, Rainforest Conservation Maze, Soaring Eagle Zipline and more. www.southwickszoo.com.
• The Town of Sutton will host its 2nd Annual Earth Day Cleanup. Anna Wence from the Genius Hour at Sutton Middle School is coordinating the event with friends Caitlyn, Taylor and Teagan. Last year’s cleanup resulted in the collection of two tons of litter. Ms. Wence and her colleagues are hoping to expand the initiative this year. Al’s Rubbish, the Sutton Police Department, the Sutton Fire Department, Sutton 4H, the Boy Scouts and the Board of Selectmen have all pledged their support.

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 7:00 p.m. Go to www.suttonhistoricalsociety.org for further info.

SATURDAY, APRIL 22

• Douglas’s Silver Club is sponsoring a bus trip to New York City to see the new Titanic exhibit. Cost is \$120. There will be lunch at Ann and Tony’s in the Bronx and time on Arthur Avenue (lots of Italian bakeries, butcher shops and delis). For more information call Sue at 508-476-5820.

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 7:00 p.m. Go to www.suttonhistoricalsociety.org for further info.



“After a Winter Storm” and other paintings by Anne Tisdell are on exhibit at Booklovers’ Gourmet in Webster through the month of March.

MAY 15-17

• Douglas’s Silver Club is sponsoring a three-day trip to Maine (Portland and Kennebunkport) that includes guided tours of both places, a tour of the Victoria Mansion, a visit to the Seashore Trolley Museum with a trolley ride, two nights lodging, two breakfasts and two dinners (one of them lobster) as well as some free time for shopping. Cost is \$399 per person. Call Sue at 508-476-5820 for further details.

SATURDAY, JUNE 3

• St. Peter’s Parish, 39 Church Ave., Northbridge, is hosting a Yard Sale and Vendor Fair from 7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Rain date is Saturday, June 10th. Volunteers will be available to pick up donated items. Vendors are welcome. Vendor tables may be secured for \$40. Call 508-234-2156 or email parishoffice@stpeterrockdale.org for more information.

SATURDAY, JUNE 10

• Get The Led Out performs at Indian Ranch, 200 Gore Road, Webster, 7:00 p.m. www.indianranch.com.

SUNDAY, JUNE 11

• Kip Moore performs at Indian Ranch, 200 Gore Road, Webster, 1:00 p.m. www.indianranch.com.

SATURDAY, JULY 1

• Chase Rice performs at Indian Ranch, 200 Gore Road, Webster, 1:00 p.m. www.indianranch.com.

SUNDAY, JULY 9

• Rumours: The Ultimate Fleetwood Mac Tribute Show, takes the stage at Indian Ranch, 200 Gore Road, 1:00 p.m. www.indianranch.com.

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 7:00 p.m. Go to www.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 7:00 p.m. Go to www.suttonhistoricalsociety.org for further info.

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LIVING WITH LUKE

amyleclaire@hotmail.com

Lukey V. claims redemption

BY AMY LECLAIRE

In his defense, it had been a harried week. Dog owners understand. We do the best we can to give our pets the attention they need and deserve, but somehow, some way, we fall short.

"Luke, I just need to practice one more time. We're going to go for a walk. Promise."

Luke had been so patient with me (and family) all week. Daddy had another conference call. Momma had more dances and revisions. Bro was off to Boston. Again, my heart went out to Luke through all of it. He needed me, but I just couldn't grab the time to give back. One more SEND. One more POLISH. Luke didn't deserve such human craziness. Yet still, he waited patiently. He chewed his bone. He walked around the house. He collapsed on the floor and waited by the door. He held onto one thought, a fragile hope that I'd stop what I was doing and think about how it might feel to be a dog who can't grab his keys and go.

"If I can't bring my dog, I'm not going." The motto, a classic Dog Person quote, sits on the border of a frame, one of a few treasured gifts shared with me. The saying became my mantra. Luke's been on crowded buses, through fragrant Health & Beauty aisles, and on the cement floors of dog-friendly coffee-shops.

"Your dog is so cute! Do you mind if I pet him?"

"Of course she doesn't mind!" Luke puts his chin up and smiles like a dolphin for one more person who reciprocates his affection. I've developed a friendly observation throughout my dog-owning years. People seem kinder in the presence of pooches.

"Is he a service dog?"

I can't lie. Even though my dog absolutely "serves" the needs of the community, it's just not ethical to pretend.

"My name is Luke Valentino. My Momma writes stories about me!" Luke is proud of me, proud of the person he just met, and proud to simply be out in public. His expression, once again, brings out the best in people.

"He's not a service dog," I confess. "I'm a columnist. I take him along for story inspiration." Like jelly from a doughnut, the white lie oozes from my mouth. Writers are not entitled to such special treatment. Nevertheless, I want to keep Luke in the loop.

"Want to take a selfie with me?" Luke has no idea that most dogs don't go everywhere with their owners. He very well may think he's a service dog. "You can follow me on Instagram too!" Luke's personal web page, found at livingwithlukevalentino, features pieces of our excursions. The content of the posts tend to be light-hearted and humorous. However, the pictures do not tell the full story, I'm afraid. One picture features Luke Valentino playfully galloping along a trail in the forest of Wells State Park, Sturbridge. The date was Saturday, February 18th. Here's how things went down.

"Luke - Come!"

The command echoed with the stern sound of my teacher's voice. Luke has responded to this voice since he was an eight-week-old pup. My neighbors have heard the echo through opened bedroom windows, while I've watched Luke consider straying from the yard. "LUKE, COME!" I've caught him in the act so many times. My voice, aided by an electric collar which corresponds to a remotely charged "beep" sound, has always been effective. Add food rewards to the mix, and the deal is sealed.

His electric collar had been on during that hike pictured so nicely on Instagram. His recall



Luke takes the polar plunge at Wells State Park in Sturbridge

had been stupendous. "Luke, COME!" He heard my voice, then the beep, and ran back to me as though training for a horse race "Don't worry!! I just wanted to see what the pavement smells like up ahead! I'll never leave you, Momma!"

Off-the-leash time has proved an exhilarating experience for both of us. Watching my dog gallop amongst verdant pines reminds me of the easy way in which a tropical fish flows with the current of the sea. Dogs naturally need to run. I was about to learn, however, that freedom can also prove dangerous. Lukey V.



was about to claim redemption for a week of neglect.

He tiptoed to a charming cove bordering the lake and sniff. No problem there. Then he dipped a paw in to test the waters. Things were getting hairy. My husband sniffed out his next move and approached the shoreline. Before we had a moment's notice, he did the dirty deed.

"Ahhhhh. So refreshing." Our pup took the polar plunge. Worse, he was completely unapologetic about the move, and oblivious to our calls. Like a child surrounded by candy spat out of a pinata, he



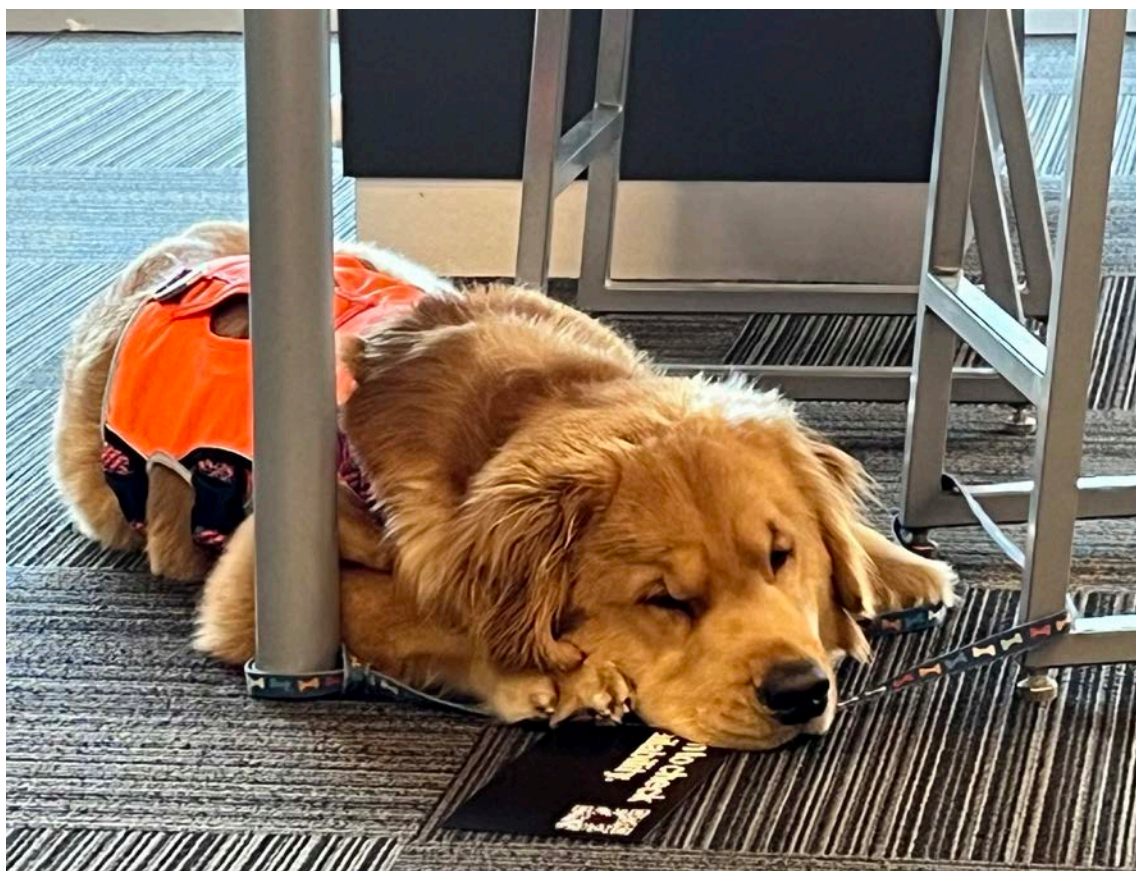
moved freely, biting at the air to catch bubbles. In my mind's eye, the song "I Feel Good" by James Brown played on.

Lukey V. had seized the moment and wasn't about to stop, just as his parents had not been to halt their activities a week prior. His paws flapped against the water while he created bubbles and swam like a confused duck.

"Luke!!" Our teaching voices failed us this time. Meanwhile a

LUKE

continued on page 15



Luke rests at Verizon in Sutton.

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REAL ESTATE

Wondering what's going on with home prices?

The recent changes in home prices are top of mind for many as the housing market begins gearing up for spring. It can be hard to navigate misleading headlines and confusing data, so here's what you should know about today's



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

home prices.

Local price trends still vary by market. But looking at national data, U.S. house prices were largely unchanged in the last four months and remained near the peak levels reached over the summer of 2022. While higher mort-

gage rates have impacted demand, low inventories of homes for sale have helped maintain relatively flat house prices.

This chart shows that the

average decrease in the last two quarters is about .47, which is less than half of 1%.

What does this mean for you? If you currently own your

house, you may be concerned about even the smallest decline in prices. But keep in mind how much home values grew over the last few years. Compared to that growth, any declines we're seeing nationally are likely to be minimal. While prices continued to fall from November, the rate of decline was lower than that seen in the summer and still adds up to only a 3% cumulative drop in prices since last spring's peak.

It's also important to remember that every local market is dif-

ferent. That's why it's essential to lean on experts from The Marzeotti Group or a real estate professional for the latest information on the home prices in your area if you're planning to make a move this spring.

To understand what's going on with home prices in your market and how they could impact your goals, contact The Marzeotti Group at 617-519-1871 or a local real estate professional today.

U.S. House Prices Largely Unchanged

2022 Month-Over-Month Percent Change in Home Values

Case Shiller

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
	1.1	1.7	2.6	2.1	1.5	0.6	-0.3	-1.1	-1	-0.5	-0.6	N/A

FHFA

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
	1.6	1.9	1.5	1.6	1.2	0.1	-0.6	-0.7	0.1	0	-0.1	N/A

Black Knight

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
	1.3	2.3	2.7	2.5	1.5	0.2	-1.1	-1	-0.5	-0.4	N/A	-0.4

CoreLogic

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
	1.4	2.2	3.3	2.6	1.8	0.6	-0.3	-0.7	-0.5	-0.1	-0.2	-0.4

Sources: Case Shiller, FHFA, Black Knight, CoreLogic

LUKE

continued from page 14

crowd of onlookers approached.

"Oh my gosh, look at him go!"

We tried to lure our one-year-old pup back with treats.

"He doesn't need food. He be like, 'I got water, Man!'"

The teen-ager's remark dripped with sarcasm. Nevertheless, it was spot on. We watched our pup grab minutes of unadulterated, joy-infused moments. Cliché as it may sound, Luke was in his own world.

We had to wait for him, just as he had for us. We snapped a few pictures (may as well capture the crazy) and, finally, something struck our pup. Perhaps the cold temperature had made its mark. More likely—

"Oooh-weee!" He shook his way to shore and accepted a few treats. "Swimming sure does work up the ol' appetite." He came back for food.

He shook off the cold until his fur frizzed out like an afro

on a humid day. Then he rubbed himself, shoulder down, on the pavement. Thankfully, the mid-day sun was hot and full. We took him to a grassy meadow along the trail and let him shake, rub, and absorb the heat. I even surprised myself with a clever survival tool. Though I'm not known to be the G. I. Jane type of girl, the weapon came to me like a dream. "I have a blow-dryer packed in the car!"

We warmed and groomed our pup until he appeared fresh and fluffy. Then we drove home and counted our blessings while he curled asleep in plush blankets lining the floor of his travel crate.

Sometimes a dog needs to take what he needs. Just as we do.

Write to Amy at amy-leclair@hotmail.com

Find Luke Valentino on Instagram: [@livingwithluke-valentino](https://www.instagram.com/livingwithluke-valentino)



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TIPS ON FINANCIAL PLANNING

dennis.antonopoulos@edwardjones.com

Can you count on Social Security?



BY DENNIS ANTONOPOULOS

to contribute part of the income you'll need as a retiree?

There's been an increase in alarming language surrounding the solvency of Social Security, but in reality, its prospects are not nearly as gloomy as you might have heard.

Here's the story: Under current law, Social Security is estimated to exhaust its trust funds by 2035, after which benefits could be cut by 20%, according to the 2022 Social Security Trustees report. However, the large cost of living adjustment (COLA) (8.7%) for 2023 could cause the trust funds to use up their resources sooner.

But this outlook may represent a

worst-case scenario. For one thing, the cost of the 2023 COLA will be somewhat offset by higher taxes on workers contributing to Social Security. The maximum amount of earnings subject to the 6.2% Social Security tax jumped from \$147,000 in 2022 to \$160,200 in 2023. And in looking down the road, further increases in this earnings cap may also help reduce the gap in the trust funds. Increasing the payroll tax is another possibility for boosting funding to Social Security.

And here's a political reality: Social Security is a popular program and it's unlikely that any future Congress wants to be blamed for reducing benefits. Of course, there are no guarantees, but it seems fair to say that you can reasonably expect some benefits from Social Security when you retire.

But perhaps the bigger issue is just how much you should depend on Social Security for your retirement income. On average, Social Security benefits will provide about 30% of a beneficiary's preretirement earnings, according

to the Social Security Administration. But the higher your earnings before you retire, the lower the percentage that will be replaced by Social Security.

Still, you'll want to maximize the benefits that are available to you—and that means deciding when to start taking Social Security. You can begin as early as 62, but your monthly payments could be as much as 30% lower than your normal (or "full") retirement age, which will likely be between 66 and 67.

Even if you were to wait until your full retirement age before collecting Social Security, you'll also need to draw on other sources of funding. So, while you are still working, it's a good idea to keep contributing to your IRA and 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan.

The amount you contribute should depend on your overall financial strategy and your financial needs, so, for example, you probably shouldn't put in so much into your retirement accounts that you feel significant stress in your monthly cash flow. But when you do get a chance to invest more in these accounts, such as when your salary goes up, you may want to take advantage of the opportunity.

Ultimately, you should be able to count on Social Security as part of your retirement income. You may want to consult with a financial professional to determine when taking Social Security makes the most sense for you and how you can also get the most from your other retirement accounts. You'll want a retirement income strategy that's built for the long run.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Please contact Dennis Antonopoulos, your local Edward Jones Advisor at 5 Albert Street, Auburn, MA 01501 Tel: 508-832-5385 or dennis.antonopoulos@edwardjones.com. Edward Jones Member SIPC

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THE CAR DOCTOR

jpaul@aanortheast.com

Noisy lifters issue is best addressed by the dealer



BY JOHN PAUL

Q. I lease a 2020 Ford Edge ST with 24,000 miles. My lease started in September 2020, that means it is up this com-

ing September. I have a tapping noise which I believe is coming from the lifters. The drive train warranty is still in effect. Given the low mileage and the current status of used cars I was planning on purchasing this vehicle at lease end. I could not find any recalls or service bulletins on this. Do you feel this would be a deterrent for me to purchase this vehicle or would you know of any recalls?

A. This issue is usually caused by sticking components in the variable valve timing system. The problem which does sound like noisy lifters especially after sitting for six hours or more. At this point I would leave the car at the dealer so they can start it cold the next day. Once they hear the noise, they should be able to repair it. Once it is repaired, I would have no problem buying the car at the end of the lease.

Q. I drive a 2016 Nissan Maxima and when the temperature dips below freezing (32) my dashboard warning system turns on that one or several of my tires need air. Once the temperature warms up,

it shows normal pressure. It isn't always the same tire (s), but it does happen regularly. Anything I need to do or just live with it?

A. Tire pressure drops when the temperature in colder and expands as the tires and air temperature warm up. The first thing to do is to properly inflate the tires when the temperature is cooler. Also keep in mind that tire pressure drops about one pound for every 10 degrees change in temperature. If the tires were properly inflated at 70 degrees and the temperature drops to 30 degrees, the tire pressure could go from 32 PSI to 28 PSI. Also tires will lose about one pound of air per month. So if the last time the tires were checked was in September the tire could be under inflated a few pounds, add in the temperature change and the difference can be enough to turn the TPMS light on.

Q. I own a 2018 Ford Escape SE with Eco-Boost 4 cylinder engine. The vehicle now has almost 60,000 miles. The Start Stop technology has not worked for a while. The vehicle runs fine in every aspect with the exception of this. At traffic lights, the engine no longer stops then starts when my foot is off the brake. When I brought it to the dealer for regular service, I mentioned this and after they looked at it, they thought that since the battery was more than a couple of years old, that could be the issue. The vehicle starts right away with no hesitation even in

cold weather, so I question the weak battery suggestion. Do you have any thoughts on a possible solution?

A. Stop/start technology will only work under certain conditions. Those conditions include engine temperature, engine load and battery voltage. It is possible that the battery voltage is low enough (limited driving and short trips) that the system in keeping the engine running to charge the battery. At five years old, the battery could be nearing the end of its useful life and a replacement may be money well spent.

Q. I recently ordered a 2023 Lexus NX350h and was curious about an option that enables the car to tow a 2000-pound trailer. The option costs \$160 and I wonder what adjustments are made to the car to increase its towing power? Will this adversely reduce gas mileage?

A. Generally, when a tow package is selected the manufacturer upgrades the radiator and engine/transmission cooler. In some cases, the brakes are also upgraded. In the case of the Lexus NX 350 according to the Lexus website all models of the NX are capable of towing up to 2000 pounds. It may be that the \$160 option is a trailer prep package which may be nothing more than wiring and a hitch. Even if the tow package includes upgrades to brakes, transmission and engine cooling it won't affect fuel economy.

Q. I have a 2005 Toyota Corolla with 88,545 miles. Last year I replaced the catalytic converter, radiator, and front brakes. This year when I step on the brake I hear a squeaking sound, the repair man said I'm missing the brake dust shield. He said the part is not expensive, but labor is. He didn't seem like he wanted the job. I'm not sure what I want, love the car but is it time to let go. Or keep putting money into it.

A. To replace the brake dust shield requires removing the hub/bearing, brake caliper and rotors. I would go back to the shop that did the front brake repair. I have seen two-piece dust shields for some models that don't require the hub to be removed. Also, some shops will simply cut a portion of the replacement shield to get it into place, saving time and money. If the brakes were replaced one year ago the dust shield if rusted out should have been replaced at that time. If your Corolla is structurally sound at 18 years old with only 88,000 miles, it should have plenty of mileage left in it and is likely worth repairing.

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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TALES FROM BEYOND

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Dudleytown II: The most haunted place in the U.S.?

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

The Carter family left Dudleytown for the wilderness of Binghamton, New York. The Dudleytown curse followed them to their new home. Not long after they settled into Binghamton, the entire family was slaughtered by Indians.

Ed and Lorraine Warren mentioned the village in their 1989 book "Ghost Hunters." The Warrens wrote about accounts from the 1930s where local youths would drive up the old roads to the highest point of the hill to make out. The deserted village was also the perfect place to scare their dates. One story pertains to a certain football captain who took his girlfriend up to the ghost town and began to tell her stories of ghosts and demons. He got so into the story, he spooked himself and ran from the vehicle, leaving the girl behind. Was it a prank, did he really see something, or did his imagination overwhelm him?

Many of the stories in regard to the early days of the town, its people, haunts and creatures began circulating around the 1930s. The town is mentioned in 1939 but again, not so much in regard to the

horrors, but in the famous people who founded it. In 1960, Fessenden Blanchard wrote about Dudleytown and mentioned the curse as it was related to him. He described the vanished settlement as, "a few crumbling cellars, massive stone walls and overgrown footpaths which were formerly roads."

The tales of monsters and cursed ground in Dudleytown have drawn people from far and wide and unfortunately, not all of them were harmless ghost hunters. Satanic rituals became a common problem in the woods, and many are certain this may have released negative energy into the air that still lingers to this day. If Dudleytown was never haunted, it most certainly may be now.

In 1971, Joseph Owens wrote about the history of Dudleytown. It was mostly a recount of the events that plagued the villagers through

the years, and once again, the "curse" was to blame.

In 1983 a film crew decided to do a story on the ghost town. Their accounts only helped cement the legend when the reporter got violently ill while trying to tell the story, and the equipment refused to work while in the confines of the village.

I was very fortunate to be able to visit Dudleytown many years ago before it was forbidden and illegal to enter. The trails, during our visit, were thinly defined in most cases with Dudleytown Road and Dark Entry Road meeting a few miles from their origin in the center of the old town. Any evidence of a once-thriving village was either long gone or covered by the overgrowth of time. The woods were eerily quiet and void of wildlife, yet there was a certain serenity about them. It felt as if the trees and remains of stone walls and foundations were eager to

speak of the history that made the place so famous. There are plenty of tales to peruse of the place and plenty of people who swear the stories are true, whether they have experienced the town for themselves or have only read about the history and haunts.

The area of Dudleytown is privately owned and has been for some time. Anyone caught within the boundaries of what was once Dudleytown will be arrested for trespassing. The town has gone as far as to rename the roads in order to confuse and thwart thrill seekers from going up there in the first place. Why Dudleytown? Is it the story of the ill-fated Dudley family

coming to New England to settle?

Is it the stories of cloven-hoof beasts that drove residents to the brink of their sanity? Was it the mysterious over publicized ill-luck of the townsfolk? Was it any of these or all?

Abandoned ghost towns create the perfect backdrop for the creation of scary stories and myths. The tales of ghosts, demons, curses, satanic rituals and tragedy have made many swear that Dudleytown is the most haunted place in the United States. Even if the place is now forbidden from the eyes, one may read about its history, using imagination to paint their own picture in deep corners of the mind.

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