

Uniting Over Food

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

In a bipartisan, joint venture, the Natick Democratic Town Committee is working with its Republican counterpart to collect food for a local cause.

Representatives from both organizations have reached across the aisle, and will do across the donation table, to benefit the Natick Service Council. The food drive, which is slated for Saturday, April 29, at Natick's Stop & Shop supermarket, will run from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

"They basically started the ball rolling on this," said Patti Sciarra about the NDTTC. She chairs the Natick Republican Town Committee.

"We sort of split up the outreach," added Sciarra, whose organization produced a flyer for the event. The Dems, for their part, wrote up a press release to advertise the drive.

Craig Bystrynski sits to the left of Sciarra on the ideological spectrum; he is chair of the Natick Democratic Town Committee. The two organizations held an in-house food drive during recent years,

he said, but aimed with this month's event to garner more goods for their cause.

"We thought we would organize something significant

and public," said Bystrynski. "We wanted to do something

FOOD DRIVE
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TO BENEFIT NATICK SERVICE COUNCIL

Food Drive

9AM-2PM
 SATURDAY
 APRIL 29, 2023

Sponsored By:
 Natick Democratic Town Committee
 &
 Natick Republican Town Committee

ITEMS OFTEN REQUESTED
 CEREAL
 COFFEE & TEA
 SNACK FOODS
 PASTA SAUCE
 SUGAR
 FLOUR
 SOLID WHITE CANNED TUNA
 CANNED SOUP

Location
 Stop & Shop
 9/27 Plaza
 Natick





Earth Day All Around Natick

Earth Day All Around Natick returns, April 29-30, a community-wide weekend festival of engaging, Earth-friendly events.

The EcoNatick organizing team is planting the seeds for another two-day, multi-location celebration where residents, families, community groups, and local organizations will create opportunities for all to get outside, interact, learn, and do something good for the Earth, its living things, and each other.

As part of this celebration, you can observe Earth Day by:

- Enjoying a hike, nature walk, or outdoor meditation
- Taking a test ride in an electric vehicle at the EV Petting Zoo
- Biking or paddling somewhere new
- Helping with a trail, park or school yard cleanup

EARTH DAY
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FOOD DRIVE

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that would have more of an impact this year. I hate the fact that we have this need in our community or any community.”

The two seemingly strange board-fellows have sat together over the course of town meetings, a working relationship that set the stage for collaborating on their food drive.

“We’re not looking at it from a political point of view,” said Sciarra, who noted that the town’s elections are non-partisan. “We’re looking at it from a community point of view.”

The Natick Service Council has been a cornerstone of community aid over the years. The NSC collects and directs donations of vital items and volunteer time to those in need. The assistance can come in the form of food, clothing, career coaching, financial aid, and other resources.

“The NSC is a great organization,” said Sciarra. “They do a lot of good work.”

EARTH DAY

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- Planting a tree
- Learning about native plant gardening or lawn care/replacement
- Repairing (rather than replacing) a broken item at the Repair Cafe
- Touring a home energy technology installation
- And more!

The organizing team expects to offer at least 25 events, spread around town and scheduled



throughout the weekend. Details will be available in April at EcoNatick.org, to browse events by time, location and category.

New this year, plan to visit the “Earth Friendly Fair” (on the Town Common, Saturday, April 29, 9am-1pm), with tables to meet the experts and take home information on a variety of earth-friendly topics, the EV Petting Zoo, and EcoNatick’s popular “Climate Wheel of Fortune” game!

“Earth Day provides an occasion to deliberately connect

with our life-giving planet in many meaningful ways, in our own homes, backyards, and the community spaces of our lovely town,” said Debby Marion, an EcoNatick volunteer. “Let’s get outdoors and find ways to appreciate and reciprocate for all that our amazing life-sustaining planet provides: water, soil, plants, animals, insects, micro-organisms... all that keeps us alive and healthy.”

Find out more about Earth Day All Around Natick by visiting EcoNatick.org.



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Cannabis Comes To Natick

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

The start of this new year brought an historic first to Natick; in January, the town's inaugural cannabis retailer set up shop.

Though if you're not paying close enough attention, you just might miss it.

Still getting settled into its new digs, the seller is located in the Cloverleaf Mall complex, a string of stores that's long stood in the shadow of the Natick Mall and the retail juggernaut known as the Golden Mile.

Victor Chiang is CEO of "Redi," the cannabis company he co-founded with a few longtime friends. The new Natick Redi is the younger sister store to Chiang's first retail cannabis venture, located in Newton.

Chiang and his partners settled on that name for their stores, perhaps in part to skirt some of the stigma that still sticks to the commercial cannabis industry. Francesco Redi, the 17th-century Italian physician, naturalist, biologist and poet, has been called the founder of experimental biology.

That Redi delved into the dis-

ciplines of science and art nominates him as an apt ambassador for cannabis culture. After all, the plant's pharmaceutical and recreational offspring embody both chemistry and creativity, objective experimentation and subjective experience. The name is short, simple and ripe for wordplay.

For his own part, Chiang said he didn't get into the business out of an affinity for cannabis or its culture, per se.

"I was a pretty strait-laced kid," said the Wellesley resident, who grew up in Weston. "It's funny to sort of be here now. This is kind of our old neighborhood." After a career in finance, he saw the cannabis industry as a good financial bet.

"I came at it from a much more investor perspective."

Jim Belushi is likewise a stakeholder in the industry, though one with a far-higher public profile. The actor is more renown these days as a commercial cannabis grower and seller, perhaps more so than he ever was for his career in film. In a third act that took a sharp and successful left turn, he's



recast himself as entrepreneur and evangelist for the plant and its potential.

Belushi can be found on social media streams delving his hands into a container of harvested greens, posing among glass jars stuffed with a cannabis harvest, at work inside the greenhouses that shelter his growing operation. The Hollywood veteran cultivates his own crop on the west coast, and sells from "Belushi's Farm" retail locations in states where cannabis is legal, including Massachusetts.

Belushi's older brother John fell famously to "hard-drug" ad-

diction decades ago, a loss that Jim highlights as a major motivation behind his becoming a producer and promoter of pot.

In a pinned post, he writes "If my brother John was a pothead, he'd still be with us today. I got into cannabis because I believe in the medicine, and I believe it can help me heal my traumas."

That sentiment echoes a growing consensus of studies, whose statistical sights have been trained on the negative impacts of drugs on societies. Their conclusion: alcohol is king, unrivaled dictator in the quality and quantity of a

vast array of health and societal harms. Though this century, the opioid industry seems intent on making a play for alcohol's throne, a newer and more-potent drug of choice causing so-called deaths of despair.

Cannabis seems almost boring by contrast, often falling far down on these lists of infamy, sometimes at the bottom of such rankings.

Belushi is playful with the tropes and memes of cannabis customs, co-opting promos culled

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CANNABIS

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from popular culture. Marvel Studio's "Ant-Man" has been altered, Belushi's face photo-shopped over the superhero, now rebranded as Plant-Man. The actor's superimposed face makes appearances also as the "Potfather," "Indiana Grows," etc.

Belushi's success in this arena speaks to another aspect of the current commercial cannabis industry - its high barrier to entry. The actor benefits from name recognition, powerful connections and access to capital. Lacking any or all of these resources puts the business of pot beyond the reach of many startup entrepreneurs. "Mom and pop" shops, for the most part, these aren't.

"reLeaf," another cannabis retailer, is setting up shop in the former Papa Gino's locale on Route 9. Its location and the building's infrastructure made it a favored option for the cannabis company. In a zoom meeting with Natick officials a few years ago, reLeaf

principals summoned a small army of advisors to testify.

A traffic analyst, security professional, architect, and others appeared on behalf of reLeaf - to assuage and address the concerns of residents and town officials. Despite the assurances and polished presentations, reLeaf is only now approaching the finish line, slated for a grand opening later this year. Concerns about traffic flow were a key point of contention.

In 2016, Massachusetts' Question 4 proposed legalizing cannabis in the state, the ballot measure passing by just under 54 percent.

"Every community does it a little bit differently," said Chiang, adding that would-be cannabis companies must first garner approval at the local level before petitioning state authorities for the final green light.

State strictures say that each municipality can accommodate at least one cannabis retailer for every five "off-premise" liquor licenses the town has granted. In terms of off-premise, think of a dedicated liquor store, not a bar that resides within a restaurant.

Two is company, but three or more cannabis shops might be considered a crowd. When reLeaf moves into Natick, that would likely meet a threshold of maximum occupancy for marijuana retailers in the town.

By state decree, cannabis companies can only advertise through media wherein at least eighty percent of the audience is 21 years of age or older. That makes mailers and flyers, and many other forms of legacy media, a no-go.

"So advertising is very tricky

for us," said Chiang. "We're still trying to ramp up."

Still, the stigma and obstacles facing commercial pot seem melting away as cannabis diffuses into the background of daily life. In years since Massachusetts deemed the stuff legal for recreational use, the sky has not fallen.

Suburban Massachusetts streets have not come to mirror the mayhem portrayed in "Reefer Madness," the absurd 1936 anti-cannabis propaganda film. "Women cry for it -" proclaims a promotional poster for the anti-pot film. "Men die for it!"

"I think the stigma of it is becoming less and less prevalent," said Chiang, noting that studies have shown teen use of cannabis declines in locales where it's been legalized.

With online retail in general gobbling up a larger slice of the sales sector pie, brick-and-mortar renters and startups must do business ever more outside the box to survive. With so many purchases now just a few clicks away, even the Golden Mile has lost its formerly brilliant luster as a magnet for business.

To combat the nearly seamless and frictionless experience of buying from one's phone, said Chiang, sellers must offer something special to coax buyers from the couch. Commercial cannabis, he added, is no different.

That something, said Chiang, is a unique experience.

Back in the commercial era of yesteryear, nearby Sears served as a flagship of retail ethos. The store's (actual) array of flags fluttered high atop its looming gray

edifice, crowning the company's logo and namesake, visible to passersby on Natick's Route 9. In those days, Sears took point in an armada of shops that trailed behind it in that Natick Mall of old.

The company closed that location a few years back, supplanted by Dave and Busters, a sprawling video and entertainment arcade. It's a business that deals, as Chiang might say, in experience.

Now within view of the former Sears superstore, Chiang's Redi in Natick was dreamed up and designed to provide the in-person experience and connection that has thus far slipped through the grasping fingers of online sellers.

Redi's owners may envision their new store as a flagship of sorts itself. It's located on the east end of the Cloverleaf Mall complex, a smaller collection of stores that's seen many companies come and go over its decades.

Nestled on the periphery of Speen Street's tangle of off and on-ramps, Cloverleaf may be the most visible mall you've never been to. Redi now stands on the former site of "Service Merchandise," a retail chain that folded decades ago.

During those still-heady days of in-person retail competition, the chain seemed to grasp the value of a unique customer experience. Instead of sprawling shelves stocked with quantities of the same product, the store was a gallery of sorts, featuring unboxed, assembled wares customers could touch.

Buyers would bring an item's ticket to a portal near the store's entrance, and a boxed version of their product would appear atop a conveyor belt from the warehouse bowels beneath. The system allowed the store to sell more items in a smaller footprint, and offered customers a novel checkout experience.

It wasn't, of course, novel enough to save the store from extinction. Nor were subsequent innovations and iterations unique enough to keep the many businesses afloat that had set up shop there since. Redi's owners are invested in changing that dynamic, hoping to lead the local cannabis industry, and their newly-adopted commercial complex, into a new era.

To that end, Chiang and his partners designed their stores with a smooth, welcoming and educational shopping experience in mind.

Illustrative of what not to do, when one of the first local cannabis retail shops opened in the Boston area a few years ago, one might have been struck by the level of friction associated with the buying experience.

That early dispensary required customers to stand in line in an outdoor lot overlooking Route 9. As if corralled in a queue to get into a concert, patrons waited in columns flanked by metal gray barrier fencing, in full view of cars crisscrossing the busy thoroughfare. Uniformed police were ubiquitous on site.

That store was also housed in a former bank, its vaults and security schematics put to good use by its new tenant. The industry in its infancy has been primarily a cash business, as most banks have been reluctant to facilitate transactions for products ostensibly still illegal on the federal level.

Still, that old bank had been originally built like a fortress, and held within its walls all the warmth and welcome of a museum gallery. Barred windows, marble surfaces and thick glass abounded. Though products were colorfully named and arrayed within glass

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TOP FOUR SIGNS OF A TERMITE INFESTATION

Red flags that could indicate the presence of a termite infestation

This year, WPC Pest and Termite Control and the National Pest Management Association (NPMA) are working to spread public awareness about termites during the spring of 2023. With spring on the horizon, termites will begin swarming and could seek out your home for their new nesting space. Because the damage from a termite infestation can easily go unnoticed, WPC Pest and Termite Control is educating homeowners and offering FREE inspections to help identify the top

four signs that signal their home is infested.

“Experts with the NPMA estimate that termites cause \$5 billion in damage every year,” said

Jim Mazzuchelli, owner of WPC Pest and Termite Control. “This could mean a costly repair bill for homeowners if they don’t spot and stop an infestation in its tracks. Unfortunately, most homeowners don’t recognize the signs of an infestation until it is too late.”

While pest professionals don’t recommend a homeowner inspect their home on their own, there are a few red flags that they should look out for that could signal the presence of an infestation.

With the help from experts at NPMA, WPC Pest and Termite is sharing the top four signs that a home has termites:

- 1. Swarmer or Discarded Wings:** Swarmers, also known as reproductives, are young female and male winged termites. In the springtime, after the last freeze, termite swarmers will emerge from their nest to mate and search for a new location to start a colony, which typically includes our homes. Termite swarmers, or their discarded wings near windowsills and doors, are often the first (and only visible) sign of a termite problem.
- 2. Mud Tubes:** Subterranean termites, the most destruc-

tive termite species, build mud tubes to provide moisture while they travel between their colony and food source. Mud tubes are most often found near the home’s foundation and look like encrusted, dry dirt similar to the size of a drinking straw.

3. Wood Damage: Termites tend to eat wood from the inside out, so wood that sounds hollow when tapped often signifies a termite infestation. Additionally, homeowners should also look for blistering pieces of wood.

4. Uneven or Bubbling Paint: Uneven or bubbling paint is often a sign of moisture build-up, which could mean

one of two things – water damage or termites.

“If you suspect you have a termite infestation, it is best to contact a licensed pest control expert as soon as possible to stop the damage before it gets worse,” added Mazzuchelli. “It is also recommended that homeowners have an inspection done every year to ensure their home is safe from termites.”

For more information on this pest, or to contact a licensed pest control expert,

Please visit WPC Pest and Termite Control at www.nobugsnopests.com

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CANNABIS

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cases like candy at a movie theater concession stand, employees worked ensconced within the reinforced nooks of their bank teller predecessors.

“It’s a little bit like the Soup Nazi store,” said Chiang of the cannabis buying experience of the not-so-distant past.

But best practices for pot sales have evolved for the better in the few years since those early days. A store on Route 30 in Framingham allowed patrons to purchase items online, schedule a time most convenient for them to pick up their orders. The appointment system avoided a glut of customers waiting in lines outside or inside the store.

Redi’s solution is a sizable vestibule just inside its entrance, staffed by someone who makes a quick identification check. No appointment is required, though visitors must be 21 years or older to enter. Given the green light, potential customers are buzzed in through a door leading to a roomy retail space.

Redi’s colors are pastels of orange against gray. Its high ceilings and décor seem redolent of a recreation or break room one might find in a Google headquarters. Clean lines, open space, a welcoming and playful environment.

Walking into the store, Coolio’s “Gangsta’s Paradise” happened to be streaming from store speakers. It seemed a bit on the nose, but turned out to be just an oppor-

tune draw from the playlist deck. Other songs soon began to stream, a mix eclectic enough that Coolio blended into its shuffle history.

That mix of music echoed the balanced customer experience the store seems seeking to strike. It pays homage to veterans and acolytes of cannabis culture, while taking pains not to scare off the straits. And in the process, the store hopes to convert those cannabis-curious consumers who might be teetering in the middle.

Redi’s presentation and product is slick, but retains the subversive soul of cannabis counterculture. Electronic menu boards toggle among marijuana’s many mediums, displaying the store’s breadth of products on

offer. “Wicked Mint,” “Sour Diesel” and “Pineapple OG” among many. The overall style is Seth Rogan in a three-piece-suit.

Thus far, dear reader, we’ve largely avoided the weed word-play that’s bound to waft into any story about the Devil’s Lettuce. But do not despair. The new Natick store makes Redi use of the opportunity. Within these walls, pot puns prevail.

Emblazoned in block lettering on one wall, a visitor might agree that the place is, in fact, “My Favorite Joint.” Also, would you happen to be “Redi to Roll”?

The word games are at once a nod to customers already on board with cannabis, and welcome levity to those who might

still be sitting on the fence. A major facet of the Redi ethos, said Chiang, is introducing the public to and informing them about what’s on offer.

Customers are free to browse as long as they wish in a judgment and pressure-free atmosphere, perhaps recline on plush furniture in an open space. Redi staff emerge from behind sales counters to interact and ask questions. Private consultations are available by appointment. Use of debit cards to make cannabis purchases is becoming an industry standard, and that holds true at Redi locations.

As legal restrictions on pot recede ever more across the country, like a long fog lifting, Chiang

looks to America’s prohibition era for commonalities and contrasts. When the nation’s alcohol ban was repealed in the early 1930s, the liquid drug was nonetheless still a well-known quantity among the public.

That’s not the case with cannabis, said Chiang. As it’s being legalized across the United States in fits and starts, the plant and its products are emerging largely from the shadows. Shining sunlight on pot and its potential, said Chiang, is one of Redi’s core values.

“What is it you’re trying to address here?” he asked. “That was how we approached the retail industry. There’s a great need for education in this space.”

The advertisement features a large red circle on the left containing the text "VALUE" at the top, "Wegmans" in a script font, "FAMILY PACK" in large blue block letters, and "CONVENIENCE" at the bottom. To the right of the circle, the text "sized right for your family" is written in white on a red background.

'Spring' Into Trash Removal Action

BY SUSAN MANNING
STAFF WRITER

Kick your spring cleaning into high gear and rid your house, basement, or yard of unwanted junk by hiring I-HAUL Disposal Service.

Choosing I-HAUL for your trash removal needs means you'll be choosing to support a local business with long-standing ties to the community.

You will be getting something more than if you used one of those big box companies: You'll be getting Buz Bragdon, who was born and raised in Natick and runs I-HAUL as a detail-oriented, honest and friendly businessman.

I-HAUL takes the burden off of its customers by removing unwanted junk. It could be a pile of accumulated items in the middle of your garage floor, or it could be an entire house clean out.

It could include removing items from your office or your yard. You name it and I-HAUL can remove it. Bragdon takes the items and delivers them to the appropriate state and federally licensed facilities.

His is a custom service with fees based on each individual job because Bragdon knows each job is an individual situation and there is not a one-size-fits-all way of doing things.

Business spotlight

Buz can either work alongside you to help choose items for discard, they can place a container in your driveway or yard for you to load or they can do all the heavy lifting – you choose.

According to Bragdon, I-HAUL removes virtually everything including the kitchen sink—trash, furniture, large and small household items, carpeting, appliances: It all goes.

Outside of the house, construction debris, demolition materials, minerals, brush and other yard waste are all part of Buz's day.

They take all waste ban items and most hazardous materials. Occasionally, when Bragdon hauls away a piece that might still have life left in it, he attempts to find and new home for it.

Worried because some of your items are large and you don't have the capacity or time to break them down? Don't be. I-HAUL will do the necessary preparatory work before hauling large items. They'll demolish a shed or cut up a fence or swing set, for example. They'll cut down



Buz Bragdon hauls away almost anything for you. Courtesy photo

overgrown areas of your yard. I-HAUL is a full service company and performs exactly what you need done.

So what's the craziest thing he's ever hauled away?

"An old dentist's chair. It was big and heavy... And I was told I couldn't tip it to get better leverage because there was oil in the base that would spill everywhere if I did. We had to finagle it out carefully down the steps and then into the high back of my truck," he explained.

Bragdon has been doing removal and disposal for more than 35 years. Nights and weekends, he hitched up his small utility trailer behind his mid-1970s station wagon and picked up trash and junk to bring to the local town landfills.

"Because I had a trailer, people would ask me if I could pick up this or I could pick up that and help them out. I brainstormed that this could turn into more than just helping and that's how I started," he said.

Much has changed in the decades that followed: the kind of vehicles needed, where to bring junk for proper disposal or recycling, even the kind of junk. In the beginning, no one had heard of "e-waste," for example and recycling was practically nonexistent.

Today, Buz can recycle much of the debris collected and e-waste is a common compo-

I-HAUL takes away hazardous liquids such as the examples below:

- Automotive Liquids (antifreeze, brake fluid, etc.)
- Garden Chemicals (pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers)
- Paints and Stains
- Most household liquids

I-HAUL takes away appliances and metal, such as the examples below:

- Refrigerators
- Freezers
- Lawn and Garden Power Equipment
- Metal Sheds

I-HAUL takes away bulk items, such as the examples below:

- Mattresses
- Couches
- Furniture
- Treadmills

I-HAUL disassembles items, such as the examples below:

- Shed
- Fence
- Play Equipment
- Deck
- Pool

nent of what Bragdon deals with. Bragdon has also upgraded a few times from his old station wagon to a larger trucks to haul the kinds of stuff people have nowadays.

Bragdon said his turnaround is often the next day. To reach him, call 508-655-4968 or email

ihaul@aol.com. Have a discussion of your removal and disposal needs with your local junk guy. "As Bragdon says, "You call. I haul. That's all."

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Your Money, Your Independence

Peak Earnings Years Are Your 50's - Parents Maybe, You... Not So Much.

A myth young professionals face from family, peers, marketing and even financial professionals is that your peak earning years are in your 50's. There's trouble with this assumption in a financial plan. Let me explain.

Do you make over \$162,051 a year?

If you're age 42, then congratulations you're a Top 10% earner in the United States per the monthly Current Population Survey (CPS), conducted jointly by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Given your earnings at 32, you may believe a similar trajectory of promotions and compensation will occur over the next 10 years into your "peak earning years".

Let's find age 52 to see the Top 10% earn over... \$150,222.

Wait a minute, must be a mistake.

How about age 51?
\$160,822.



Glenn Brown

Look, if you're head of a division or executive entering your 50's, you're exceeding. But by age 55 or older, you're also in the ~1-3% of workforce at that age in those positions.

As I explain to new clients in their late 30's and 40's, ageism is

real in corporate America. Some dismiss it, so I ask, "How many peers on your level or above are in their 50's?" They answer, "There are some". Next I ask "How about over 55?". It's then that I get a pause with realization.

Several things can be done, start with 3 foundational steps.

Act As If. Apologies if you hear Ben Affleck's voice, but act as if you're at peak earnings today. What would you be doing differently? Do you save more? Do you invest differently? Is there a career change? Would one of you in the household take a risk to work for a start-up, start a small business or become self-employed? How are your future income streams?

Budget. I know, it's a dirty word. Especially in dual income households making \$250-400K. Yes, we all need our "play hard" moments and/or family experiences, but has a once or twice a year indulgence become a

monthly habit because you can?

Effective budgets are not envelopes, obsessive tracking or family meetings, but running a Cash Flow Analysis and review every 6-12 months to see if the projections are your reality. A proper analysis should show projected net free cash flow after all categorized expenses, taxes, and automatic savings allocations.

Savings Prioritization. In conjunction with your Cash Flow Analysis, you should have a clear rationale of where your savings are going. There is balancing between what's for today, the next 1-2 years and for the future unknown.

Is it 401k, HSA or FSA, 529 plans, IRAs, Roth, brokerage, bank, down payment, emergency or an upcoming experience? Defined percentages or amounts are best, however it's more important to understand the purpose for prioritization and impact of your

choices.

In closing, if you've done a financial plan see if the income assumptions are only adjusting for inflation and not bumping up in your 50's or worse, remaining constant until 65. If you haven't, consider a Certified Financial Planner that can help you build, execute and monitor.

The opinions voiced in this material are for general information only and are not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual.

Glenn Brown is a Holliston resident and owner of PlanDynamic, LLC, www.PlanDynamic.com. He is a fee-only Certified Financial Planner™ helping motivated people take control of their planning and investing, so they can balance kids, aging parents and financial independence.

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MetroWest Student Film Festival submissions due April 7

The Center for Arts in Natick is pleased to present the MetroWest Student Film Festival, featuring the work of talented students from the cities and towns of Boston MetroWest.

Now in its 5th year, MWSFF cordially invites high school age residents between the ages of 14 and 19 who are current high school students and live in the

MetroWest Massachusetts area, including students in the Town of Ashland.

The submission deadline is Friday, April 7.

The MWSFF is a student film festival dedicated to showcasing the talents and creativity of the region's youth by providing an opportunity for young filmmakers and production teams to explore and

create stories through motion pictures. Finalists among these student-created films will be shared with friends, families, and the community at-large in TCAN's state-of-the-art screening room.

Being part of this festival provides entrants the opportunity to share films with the regional community; screen films in an independent, state-of-the-

art cinema; network with a jury of judges from the industry, and other film makers in the region; and attend the festival premiere showcase on May 7.

Categories include: Outstanding Live Action Short, Outstanding Documentary Short, and Outstanding Animated Short. Winners will receive a festival prize in the form of a gift card.

For more information, including eligible towns, and submission definitions and criteria, visit <https://filmfreeway.com/MetrowestStudentFilmFestival>.

The Center for Arts in Natick is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) arts organization dedicated to presenting arts programs of the highest standard that are available to everyone.



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Dawn Porthouse, a long-time Bellingham resident, started Porthouse Tax Advisors five years ago, with her main goal being to help people. She has an MBA from Babson College, an MPA from Framingham State University and a business degree from UMass Dartmouth. With nearly 20 years of experience in the financial world, you're in great hands if you go to her with your tax issues.

Porthouse Tax Advisors is a boutique firm which specialize in helping individuals and business owners deal with tax problems. They help people who owe significant amounts to the IRS navigate the IRS maze. "I speak government," Porthouse says. "We are local and very methodical." The first steps to helping are pulling transcripts and analyzing the severity of the situation.

Porthouse Tax Advisors does not use a "one size fits all" approach. Instead, they will use an individualized approach, where they assess your situation in stages. According to Dawn, "Everyone's tax situation is different. No two are ever the same and require different solutions."

Porthouse states she loves "helping people navigate the complexities of taxes." Her employees are from local communities, and they do not outsource

the work. Porthouse Tax Advisors is open year-round, with their busiest season being from February through May. Their hours of operation are Mon-

Business spotlight

day through Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., by appointment only. This way they can ensure each client receives the time and attention they deserve, and no one is sitting around waiting to be helped.

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Sports

Kittlers Make Natick High Lacrosse A Family Affair

Coach, son, nephew Provide Spark For Success

By KEN HAMWEY
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Varsity boys lacrosse at Natick High is a family affair. And, that's a good thing.

Nate Kittler, who's beginning his 24th year at the Redhawks' helm, has been the only coach in the program's history. His son Brady competes as an attack and his nephew Jay is a defender. Both seniors, they're in their third varsity season.

Some might raise their eyebrows when they see the Kittler name on the roster three times. But, consider these facts before the word 'nepotism' is uttered.

Nate Kittler has guided the Redhawks to 15 tournament appearances and Natick currently has a streak of 13 straight berths. For the last two years with his son and nephew competing, the

coach's squads compiled an 18-2 record in 2021 and a 16-3 mark last year.

Kittler's son and nephew could play for any team in the state.

Brady scored 30 goals and assisted on 35 others for 65 points during his junior year. He was chosen a Bay State Conference first-team all-star and earned first-team honors on the Eastern Mass. Coaches All-Star team. Along with the Redhawks' other attackmen, Brady helped Natick's offense in a big way. Last year, Natick scored 208 goals in 19 games for an average of 10.9 goals per game.

Jay isn't in a position to score goals or pile up assists but he's dynamic in his approach to defense, constantly thwarting opposing attackmen as they maneuver towards the goalie. He's valued for forcing turnovers at key jun-

tures. Jay was chosen a Bay State Conference second-team all-star. Nate Kittler calls his nephew "the leader of our defense," and that's not going overboard. Last year, Natick's defenders and goalie allowed 74 goals in 19 games for a goals-against average of 3.9.

The Redhawks' leadership team this year consists of four captains. Brady and Jay are two of them. The captains were selected by a vote of the players, not the coaches. The duo no doubt has the respect of their teammates.

Brady and Jay also excel in the classroom. Brady is an honor-roll student and Jay is a member of the National Honor Society.

Here's Nate Kittler on Brady and Jay:

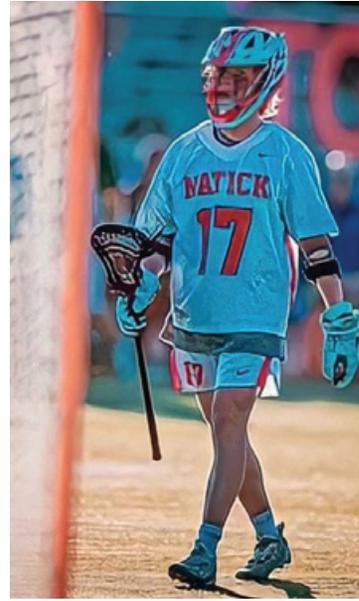
"Brady has strong hands, is athletic and a good finisher. His lacrosse IQ is high, he's tough and resilient, and he's got a very good relationship with his teammates. A high-quality captain, he leads by example and by being supportive of his teammates.

"Jay is an instinctive and intelligent player. His lacrosse IQ is very high and he understands defense so well. As a captain, he's highly organized and he leads by example and by being vocal. Jay and Brady both grew up in Natick and they're not only cousins, but also best friends. I coached them when they began playing lacrosse at age seven."

Following is a profile of Brady and Jay who discuss their goals for the season, their styles, and why they prefer playing attack and defense. They also provide a glimpse of their competitive philosophies and their futures.

BRADY KITTLER

Brady doesn't hesitate when listing his goals for this season — he wants the big prize.



Brady Kittler's goals this season are for Natick "to win the Bay State Conference's Carey Division title and the State championship."

"I want us to win the Bay State Conference's Carey Division title and the State championship," he said. "My personal goals are to be the best captain I can be and to repeat as an all-star."

Brady is acutely aware that this year's squad is young but he stands by his lofty objectives because of Natick's rich lacrosse tradition. "We'll need to develop team chemistry early," he said. "We've got talent and once our younger players gain experience, we'll be fine."

At 5-foot-8 and 140 pounds, Brady, who's now 18, relies on strong technique, speed, quickness, and athleticism. On the field, his instincts and intelligence are easy to detect.

"My style is a blend of being aggressive and patient," he noted. "I'm aggressive to the ball in front of the net, but I can be analytical and patient during the flow of the game."

He enjoys playing attack because that's where scoring opportunities occur, but there's other reasons.

"There's lots of moving and dodging," Brady noted. "An attack can pile up numbers but it's also a position where assists can be compiled. I try to play the position in an all-around way. And, the key to success is building team chemistry with the other attackers. Being able to anticipate our opponents' next move is also important."

Brady points to Colby LeBlanc, last year's top scorer and captain, as a role model. "Colby is playing at Siena College in New York," Brady said. "He was very helpful when I was an underclassman. I want to lead by example and be supportive. Building confidence in younger players is important."

Brady's best game came against archrival Framingham last year. Natick won decisively, 19-5. "I scored three goals and had two assists," he said. "I caused some turnovers and played an all-around game."

His top thrill isn't his two all-star selections but it's the relationship he has with his father and his cousin. "Jay and I have a great relationship," Brady said. "We've played together starting in the Natick youth league. I also like talking about lacrosse with my father. He answers all my questions."

Some may think Brady gets favored status since his dad is his coach. Not so, Brady says. "He treats me like any other player, he yells at me more than others, and he doesn't go light on me. But, I'm glad he's firm with me. He's a great motivator who knows the sport and his players. He cares about all of us. Every player is comfortable calling him for any kind of help."

Brady is quick to credit Natick's other two captains — midfielder/attack Gabe Elkin and midfielder Quinn Pinkham. "They've got great technique, they're talented and they're amazing leaders," he emphasized. "Gabe has committed to Union College in New York and Quinn has been accepted at Western New England College in Springfield."

Brady hasn't decided on a college yet but he's open to attending UMass-Amherst, the University of New Hampshire, Western New England or the University of Rhode Island. He's interested in sports management and may choose a career as a teacher-coach or an athletic director. He says he might play club lacrosse in college.

Relying on an athletic philosophy that focuses on having fun and reaching one's potential, Brady says that winning is the by-product of those two elements. "Sports also teach life lessons," he offered. "Athletes can learn how



Nate Kittler, Natick's boys lacrosse coach, with his nephew Jay, left, and his son Brady at right.



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Sports

to strengthen their work ethic, how to overcome challenges, and how to be a good teammate and quality leaders.”

Brady Kittler is the total package.

JAY KITTLER

Jay, who’s a tall defender at 6-foot-1 and 145 pounds, likes the responsibility that goes with the job and he’s quick to admit that scoring isn’t his strongpoint.

“I was never good with the ball,” he offered. “And, I never thought of myself as a scorer. I like playing defense because it’s a thinking-man’s position that requires anticipation and an instinctive nature.”

Relying on a style that’s both aggressive and patient, Jay has all the attributes needed to excel — he’s got a high lacrosse IQ, he’s instinctive, his technique is solid and he’s athletic.

“When I make a mistake, I know I can trust my teammates,” he said. “But, a defender must be capable of making the right call in a split second, especially when an opponent is closing in on the net.”



Jay Kittler excels on defense, relying on a high lacrosse IQ, an instinctive nature, solid technique and athleticism.

Now 18, Jay’s goals this season are basically team-oriented. “I want us to win the Bay State Conference’s Carey Division title,” he said. “And, we want to be successful in the tourney but the key will be helping our younger players develop their skills. My individual goal is to be a Bay State Conference first-team all-star selection. Last year, I was a second-team choice.”

A captain who’ll lead by ex-

ample, Jay believes there are other ways to fulfill the responsibility that goes with leadership. “As a defender, there’s continual communication with other defensemen and our goalie,” he said. “I’ve learned to be vocal and I’ll be vocal as a captain in a helpful and supportive way, especially with younger players.”

Jay’s best game and his top thrill in lacrosse are one in the same. As a junior, he played spectacularly in Natick’s game against Concord-Carlisle in the Coaches Cup, a tourney that’s held before the season gets underway.

“The tourney always has top-notch teams,” Jay noted. “Concord-Carlisle is in that category. We beat them in overtime. I was proud of our defensive effort. We played well, everyone contributed and we caused turnovers.”

Jay agrees with his cousin’s assessment of Natick’s other two captains. “They’ll be major contributors this season,” he said. “Brady is spot on when he talks about their strengths. Gabe and Quinn certainly are top-notch leaders. They’re great people, on and off the field.”

Jay says that playing for his uncle isn’t a problem, even though the coach admits that “it hasn’t been easy for Brady and Jay.”

“My uncle is super friendly to everyone,” Jay emphasized. “I’ll reinforce what Brady said. All our teammates will call him for advice, whether it’s about lacrosse or an unrelated issue. He’s a proven success and he’s a super-star coach.”

Jay deflates any hint of favoritism by his uncle. “On the field, he’s my coach and I’m his player. It’s that simple,” he emphasized.

Jay has not selected a collegiate venue yet but he plans on majoring in computer science and says he’ll probably play lacrosse at the club level. Both he and Brady have played AAU lacrosse for four years.

Jay’s competitive philosophy is similar to his cousin’s. “If players are striving to reach their potential and they’re having fun, then winning will occur,” he noted. “Winning and fun go hand in hand.”

The life lessons Jay’s learned from lacrosse will be valuable in

the future.

“Overcoming adversity enables a player to bounce back,” he said. “Other lessons are how to be a good leader and a good teammate, how to set goals and how to manage your time. One major lesson I’ve learned is how to handle criticism when I make a mistake. I’ve learned to take criticism and turn it into a positive.”

Jay Kittler understands that athletics and academics provide opportunities. And, he’s excelled on both fronts.

CONCLUSION

The coach, his son and his nephew have been key ingredients for Natick High’s lacrosse team, which opens its season on April 1 against Weston at Babson College. Other players certainly have contributed to the Red-hawks’ success and have helped to enhance the school’s tradition. Whether it’s the past or the present, Natick has a winning formula in lacrosse.

And, one aspect is undeniable this season — varsity boys lacrosse at Natick High is a family affair. And, that’s a good thing.



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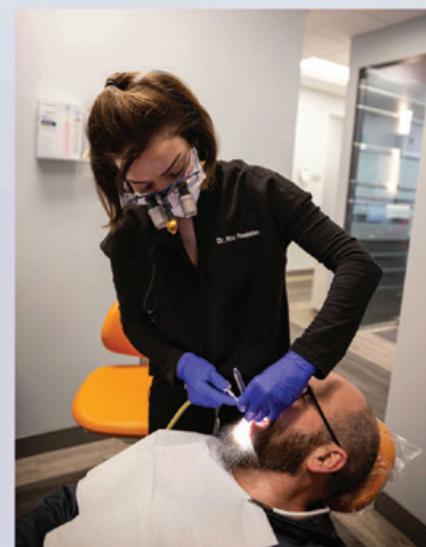
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Natick Community – Senior Center News

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WALKING GROUP - IN PERSON

Tuesday, 9:30-10:30 am, free-Drop-In

April 4, 11, 18, 25

Meet us for our weekly walk around the loop road. This casual walk is a great way to start the day, meet new people, get outside and move! Please wear sneakers/walking shoes, and any other outdoor stuff you need. Goes rain or shine. Meet in the FIRST parking lot after the entry on the left after the hill/next to the soccer

fields, 900 Washington St.

VINTAGE VOICES SINGALONG- IN PERSON

Wednesday, April 5, 1:30-2:30 pm, free

Join pianist Carlo Cocuzzo and enjoy listening or bringing your singing voice to join in! We'll sing along to well-known songs like It's Only a Paper Moon, Blue Skies, Ain't She Sweet, You are My Sunshine and lots more with lyrics provided.

BEEYONDER VIRTUAL TRAVEL- TULIPS OF THE KEUKENHOF GARDENS-ZOOM

Wednesday, April 12, 12:30-1:30pm, free

Every year millions of tulips are grown in the Keukenhof Gardens just south of Amsterdam. They are imaginatively and artistically laid out in a variety of different garden styles and are a riot of color and feast for the eyes. Our guide, Mark, will taking us around gardens LIVE and explain how and why tulips are such a big thing in Holland - and the world! Zoom link sent out a week in advance.

ROB NATOLI STRING SWING JAZZ TRIO- IN PERSON

Thursday, April 13, 1:00-2:00pm, free

String – Swing jazz trio with guitar, vocals, violin and bass guitar will bring us swing music from the “big

band” era of the 20’s, 30’s, and 40’s. You’ll recognize the songs and are encouraged to sing along and even dance.

CULTURALLY CURIOUS- GRANITE STATE- NH ART AND ARTISTS- ZOOM

Tuesday, April 18, 2:00-3:00pm, free

New Hampshire has attracted and inspired artists since the colonial era. What is distinctive about the art made here? This program will consider works by itinerant and folk painters, landscape artists drawn to the state’s scenic vistas, and modern artists that adopted bold styles to depict everyday life in the Granite State. Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Childe Hassam, and Maxfield Parrish are some of the artists discussed in this program. Thanks to Whitney Place, Natick for sponsoring this program!

MEETUP AT MT AUBURN CEMETERY

Wednesday, April 19, 10:00am-noon, free

Join our COA group, led by

Sharon & Emily from the COA.

Mount Auburn Cemetery was founded in 1831 and is a designated National Historic Landmark, as well as a bucolic garden and the burial site of many prominent members of Boston including- Nathaniel Bowditch, Isabella Stewart Gardner, Henry Longfellow and Charles Sumner. The classical monuments set in a rolling landscaped terrain, marked a distinct break with Colonial-era burying grounds and church-affiliated graveyards. Our tour includes history of the cemetery, people buried there, surrounding nature and a bonus is we’ll spot some spring migrant birds.

Meet inside the entry gate, bathrooms are available, please wear comfortable sneakers to walk on the paved roads. Free parking is available at the entry. Group size limited to 15. Allow an hour for the tour and feel free to stay and explore further on your own. Maps of the cemetery will be provided. The address is, 580 Mount Auburn Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138.

ELDERLY FRAUD: HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF- IN PERSON

Thursday, April 20, 1:30-2:30pm, free

An estimated five million

people fall victim to financial scams every year. Seniors are often targeted in these scams, as seniors might not be as familiar with technology as members of younger generations. This talk reviews the most common forms of Elder Fraud. Join Lynn Croft to learn ways to protect yourself from frauds and scams. Lynn specializes in teaching how to advocate for your healthcare decisions.

DE-STRESS YOUR LIFE- IN PERSON

Tuesday, April 25, 1:30pm, free

Join Sharon Nolli, from Summit Elder Care, Account Executive to improve your life by eating healthy foods, forgiving yourself and others, thinking positively and changing your mindset, incorporating more laughter and exercise as well as practicing gratitude and visualizing what you want which all help with lowering stress and taking care of yourself. Tips on getting started and continuing your practice.

DAY TRIP TO BLITHEWOLD GARDENS AND MANSION – HIGH TEA

Wednesday, May 24, Bus departs from Fisk Methodist Church, 106 Walnut St, Natick at 8:45am. Returns approximately 4:30pm. Fee is \$120.00 per person due at registration.

Join our motor coach tour to Blithewold, a 33-acre estate with grand views of Narragansett Bay in Bristol, RI. This nationally significant estate of a late 1800s was the ‘Country Place’ of the Van Wickle family. We’ll have a guided tour of the mansion and surrounding gardens (approximately 1 ½ hours) followed by a lovely High Tea at approximately 1:00 pm served in the mansion with sweet and savory sandwiches and treats. The property features a 45-room mansion filled with family heirlooms. The gardens with rare and unusual plants, specimen trees, greenhouse, and stonework all unique to Blithewold.

Registration deadline is Tuesday, May 2. Space is limited.

Please note: There is some walking, stairs, uneven surfaces and standing for this day trip. This is a non-refundable purchase. Questions? Please call Sharon at Natick CSC 508-647-6540 X1907, skirby@natickma.org.



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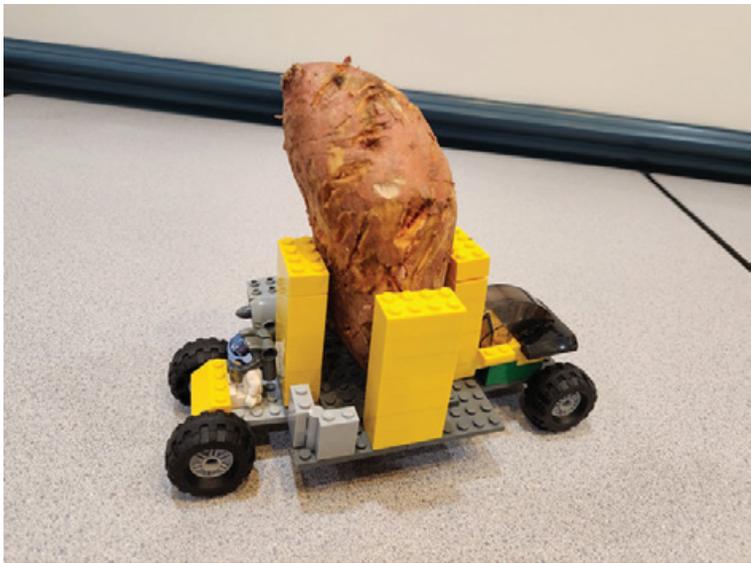


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There were 5 categories to win: Fastest, Furthest, Coolest Build, Most Ridiculous Build, and Best Explosion.



The winner of the Most Ridiculous Build - the Great Builders! This was the only vehicle to carry a Sweet Potato in the upright position. Photo: Morse Institute Library Natick Facebook page

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Tuesdays @ 10am -- Colorful Story Time. We'll feature stories and songs that highlight our color of the week.

Fridays @ 10am -- Baby Time: Join us for a cozy story time filled with lap bounces, rhymes, songs, and simple stories. Geared toward infants and young toddlers with their grownups.

Jammin with You -- Weds, April 5th @ 10:30am: Be pre-

pared to laugh, dance, sing, and jam your way through 30 minutes of non-stop family fun! This performance is geared for kids ages 1-7, but fun for the whole family. With modern takes on children's classics and classic original tunes, you'll be humming and bopping your way all the way home. Registration required. **If it is 55 degrees or warmer, this program will be held outside & will not require registration.

Saturday, April 15th, 10-11:15am: Read to a Dog: Build confidence and practice your reading skills by reading out loud to a registered therapy dog! Children ages 5 and up can sign up for a 15 minute reading session with Sophie, a gentle golden retriever who loves belly rubs, stories, and cuddles. Registration is required.

Tuesday, April 18th @ 3pm: Professor Bugman's Arthropod Petting Zoo: Professor Bugman will introduce you to some real arthropods, then you can create and draw your own creature with its own special adaptations. Recommended for ages 5-11. Registration required.

Weds, April 19th, 10am-12: drop-in paper flower wreaths: Stop by anytime between 10:00 and 12:00 to make a simple spring wreath with paper flowers. This craft program is geared toward children of all ages with their grown-ups.

Sat, April 29th, 10am -12: drop-in craft & StoryWalk: Join us for an eco-friendly craft, then stroll through the beautiful library grounds and enjoy our new StoryWalk®. All ages welcome! This program is part of EcoNatick's Earth Day All Around Natick.

(The StoryWalk® Project was created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, VT and developed in collaboration with the Kellogg-Hubbard Library. Storywalk® is a registered service mark owned by Ms. Ferguson)

All-ages Programs

Sat, April 8th @ 11am -- Container Gardening with Farmer Emma: Join Farmer Emma from The Natick Community Organic Farm to learn about container gardening. This program is geared towards ages 10+. Regis-

tration required.

Tuesday, April 11th @ 5pm: Felting with Farmer Emma: Join Farmer Emma from The Natick Community Organic Farm and learn how to felt with wool from the farm. This workshop is recommended for learners aged 10 and up. All materials are provided. Sponsored by the Friends of the Bacon Free Library. Registration is required.

Adult Book & Film Clubs - registration required for all clubs

Mystery Book Club - first Thursday of the month @ 1pm on Zoom

April 6th: Anywhere You Run by Wanda M. Morris

May 4th: Everyone in My Family has Killed Someone by Benjamin Stevenson

History Book Club - second Thursday of the month @ 11am on Zoom

April 13th: The other Madisons: the lost history of a president's Black family by Bettye Kearse

May 11th: Seabiscuit: an American legend by Laura Hillenbrand

Environmental Book Club -

third Tuesday of the month @ 7pm on Zoom

April 18th: Beloved Beasts: fighting for life in an age of extinction by Michelle Nijhuis

May 16th: Fen, Bog & Swamp: a short history of peatland destruction and its role in the climate crisis by Annie Proulx

Tuesday Night Book Club - fourth Tuesday of the month @ 6:30pm, both Zoom & in person

April 25th: The Many Daughters of Afong Moy by Jamie Ford

May 23rd: Fresh Water for Flowers by Valerie Perrin

Nonfiction Book Club - fourth Saturday of the month @ 10am, both Zoom & in person

April 22nd: Destiny of the Republic: a tale of madness, medicine, and the murder of a president by Candice Millard (this month, Zoom only)

May 27th: Beautiful Country: a memoir of an undocumented childhood by Qian Julie Wang

Cinephile Mondays -- last Monday of the month @ 4pm on Zoom; watch and discuss films. Check the BFL website for the film of the month and to register.

Mary Ann Morse Healthcare Center Outpatient Rehab to Host LSVT Big® Parkinson's Therapy Open House

April 27, 2023 In Support of Parkinson's Awareness Month

Mary Ann Morse Healthcare Center is proud to host an LSVT Big Parkinson's Therapy Open House on Thursday, April 27, 2023, from 4 pm to 5 pm at 45 Union Street, Natick, MA. The event will provide an opportunity for individuals living with Parkinson's disease, their caregivers and

family members, and healthcare providers to learn about LSVT Big physical therapy and its benefits.

The LSVT Big program is a research-based, intensive treatment approach developed specifically for individuals with Parkinson's disease. It focuses on improving functional movements and enhancing overall quality of life. The program includes exercises that target posture, balance, and coordination, helping

individuals with Parkinson's to move more confidently and independently.

At the open house, attendees will have the opportunity to meet and speak with certified LSVT Big therapists and learn about the program's features and benefits. Visitors will also have the chance to observe live demonstrations of LSVT Big exercises, as well as to ask questions and pick up useful resource materials. Light refreshments and giveaways will be provided.

Mary Ann Morse Healthcare Center is a leading provider of senior care services in the MetroW-

est area, offering a wide range of services, including physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech and language therapy, provided on an outpatient and short-term inpatient basis. Their team of experienced, certified rehab clinicians and therapists provide high-quality, compassionate care to individuals recovering from surgery, joint replacement, neurological and movement disorders, illness and chronic conditions, and other health challenges.

"We are excited to host this event, especially during Parkinson's Awareness Month, and to provide an opportunity for individuals with Parkinson's disease to learn about this innovative LSVT Big therapy program," says Marybeth Cellucci, Director of Rehabilitation Services at Mary Ann Morse Healthcare Center. "Our certified LSVT Big therapists have undergone extensive training and are well qualified to help individuals with Parkinson's disease learn techniques to help improve their functional move-

ments and overall quality of life. We look forward to sharing more about this program with the community."

The Open House is free and open to the public. RSVPs are appreciated, either via online at <https://www.eventcreate.com/e/mary-ann-morse-healthcare-c-343507> or via email at outpatient@maryannmorse.org.

About Mary Ann Morse Healthcare Center

Mary Ann Morse Healthcare Center offers a full range of outpatient and short-term inpatient rehabilitation services to residents throughout the MetroWest area. As a nonprofit senior healthcare provider, we continually invest in our mission to provide the best quality, affordable care for our patients and peace of mind for their families and loved ones. We are part of the Mary Ann Morse Healthcare Corp. continuum of senior living and healthcare services, including assisted living, home care, and short- and long-term care. For more information, visit maryannmorse.org

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Real Estate Corner

Recent Home Sales

Date	Natick	Amount
03/17/2023	73 Oak Street	\$440,000
03/17/2023	23 Florence Street	\$1.35 mil
03/14/2023	13 Milford Avenue	\$785,000
03/10/2023	59 Village Brook Lane #8	\$350,000
03/09/2023	53 South Street	\$1.33 mil
03/09/2023	6 Madison Street	\$1.13 mil
02/27/2023	3 Fairs Lane	\$2.10 mil
02/24/2023	48 Silver Hill Lane #21	\$293,000
02/24/2023	11 River Street	\$1.40 mil
02/23/2023	25 Florence Street	\$1.39 mil
02/22/2023	3 Silver Hill Lane #2	\$355,000
02/21/2023	71 1/2 Pond Street	\$950,000
02/17/2023	27 Marion Street	\$862,500
02/16/2023	31 Pond Street	\$831,000

Source: www.zillow.com / Compiled by Local Town Pages



6 Madison Street in Natick recently sold for \$1,125,600. Image credit: www.zillow.com

Home inspections are beginning to return and that's a good thing

Waiving a home inspection is a risk that many buyers desperate to find a home have been taking in hot markets.

In the flourishing housing markets of 2021 and 2022 where sellers dominated through unprecedented buyer demand, competition was greater than ever. Due to a historic lack of inventory listings were receiving multiple offers, many higher than the asking price. Buyers and buyer agents had to get creative while attempting to minimize increases in the offer price.

Price is important but the terms will frequently dictate the winner. While most sellers would prefer a cash offer with no contingencies and an accommodating closing, few people can afford to go this route. Most people need to take a mortgage. While I always suggest that buyers have a home inspection, this was frequently waved in order to strengthen offers that were already at their

financial cap. Waving an inspection is not something that should be taken lightly.

A home inspection is important and can uncover potential major structural and safety issues in the home. This is a deeper dive into what may not be present to the naked eye. Beyond cracked panes of glass or loose door handles: things that are not apparent and need to be more carefully reviewed by a professional. It's a matter of protecting the investment and making a smart purchase. Being one of the largest purchases most people will ever make, buyers need to make sure that they are educated and as aware as possible regarding deficiencies they may be willing to live with, and potential expenses down the road. It is safer to have one now that there is a bit more inventory and a building increase of competition amongst sellers.

When interest rates began to

rise and inventory slightly increased we saw mortgage contingencies returning frequently. Buyers are feeling slightly more confident as traditional, less radical offer terms reemerge and mortgage contingencies become routine once again.

It is easy to become overly eager; especially when buyers have lost out over and over in multiple offer situations. Keep in mind, you're going to be in your new home for a long time: focus on getting as much as you can at your price point and less on

competing toward a smart win. Set yourself up for long-term success.

If you are in a competitive / multiple offer situation you can be willing to assume a certain amount of potential inspection findings in the offer. This lets the seller know that you're not seeking perfection. Home warranties are also offered by many companies and can cover major systems and appliances (usually with a deductible.)

An inspection is a critical protective step when investing

in property. Waving one to acquire the property should be carefully considered. It's always best to consult with an experienced local agent to discuss the risks and benefits on a property by property basis.

To learn more contact John McHugh, Senior Sales Associate with Coldwell Banker for over 20 years.

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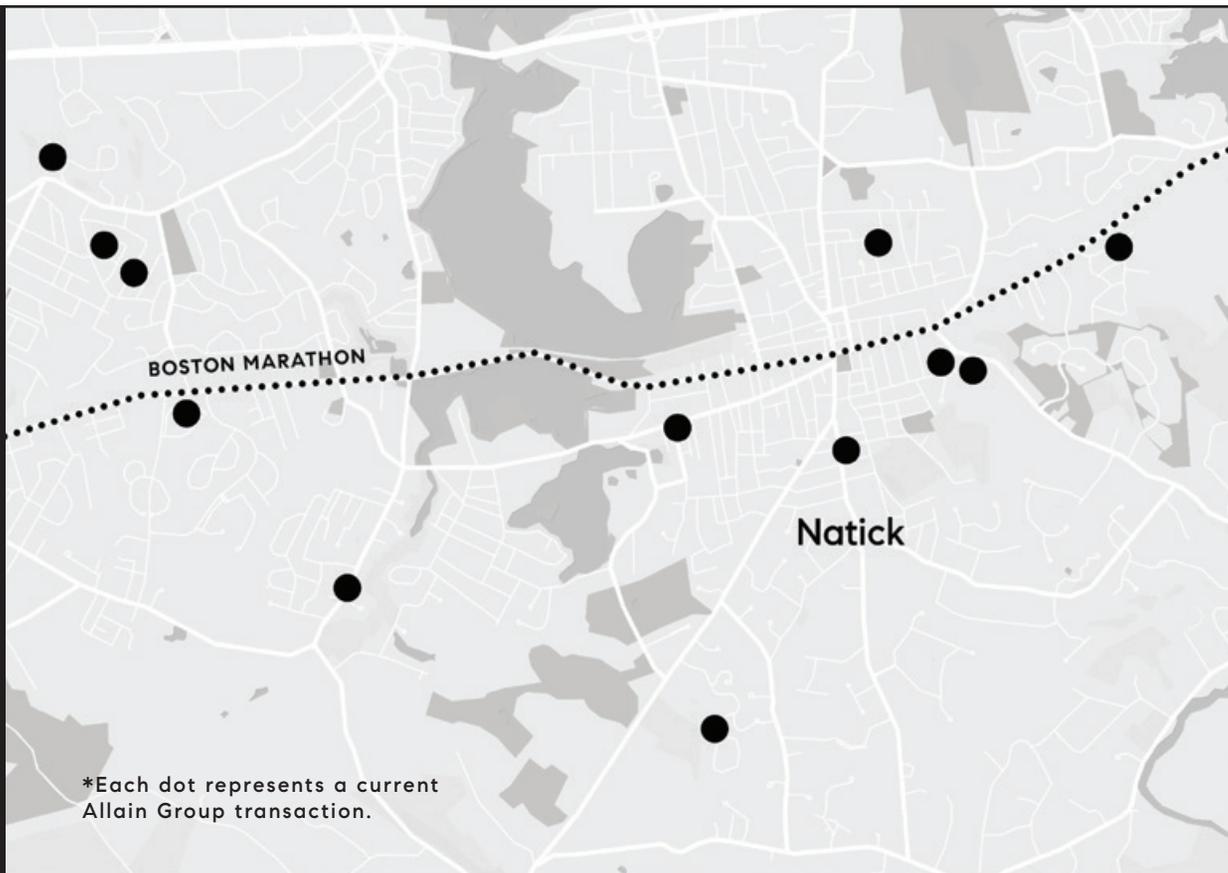
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