

Dr. Fitzpatrick, award-winning BVT march forward together

BY ROD LEE

Nearly thirty years have passed since Superintendent-Director Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick arrived at Blackstone Valley Tech. During that time the vocational technical school for students in Grades 9-12 has witnessed explosive growth, and award-winning renown.

Founded in 1964, BVT's district includes the towns of Bellingham, Blackstone, Douglas, Grafton, Hopedale, Mendon, Milford, Millbury, Millville, Northbridge, Sutton, Upton and Uxbridge.

The first graduating class in 1970 consisted of one hundred two eager candidates who received training in such trades as auto body, auto mechanics, carpentry, drafting, electronics, machine shop, metal fabrication and plant maintenance.

Since then courses available to the now student body of more than 1200 have mushroomed.

Best of all, Dr. Fitzpatrick said while giving a visitor a tour of the sprawling building on the morning of March 8th, there is a blend of shops and academics; a "tie-in," as he puts it. A linkage.



BVT HVAC/R Instructor Joshua Dunton is pictured with students Travis Cook of Northbridge, Victoria Russo of Milford and Jacob Urquhart of Mendon.

"You can learn punctuation and syntax" and regular classroom instruction like that is "integrated" into eighteen different voke tech programs, he said.

There is even a moonlight program in practical nursing (post-secondary) and another in advanced manufacturing foundational skills.

Dr. Fitzpatrick was at the helm of the school when it underwent its most ambitious expansion, in 2001, when the district's communi-

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Grafton businesses ready to spring into new season

BY CHRISTINE GALEONE

The season of rebirth, renewal and new beginnings has arrived. The sunshine is brightening the morning much earlier these days. And the melody of birds chirping adds some gentle music to the season.

Between the arrival of spring and the anticipation of Easter, many people are looking forward to brighter days. And Grafton businesses and organizations are ready to help them prepare for and enjoy them to the fullest.

Off the Common Antiques will welcome shoppers to join them in celebrating spring at its free open house event, which will be held at its store Saturday April 1 and Sunday April 2 from 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday and 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday. There will be refreshments, a preview of the store's new addition and a wide selection of garden, outdoor and spring-themed décor to browse and shop. At the multi-artisan, multi-vendor shop, shoppers can find antiques, handmade items and reclaimed furniture to brighten their homes.

A nearby business that's also helping people prepare for holiday and spring celebrations is the Graf-

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ties overwhelming approved a \$36 upgrade. Recent additions and renovations include a two-story classroom add-on, reconfigured voke tech laboratories, a new media center and cable television studio and a unique 1400-seat training and competition center that employs the latest technology for distance learning, technology-based training, performing arts, athletics and exhibitions.

Today's BVT is leading the way on community projects, Elise Bogdan, communications specialist for the school, points out.

Here are some examples. 1) Students in Construction Technology worked alongside their vocational instructor to build office spaces on the upper level of the Uxbridge Police station. 2) Juniors

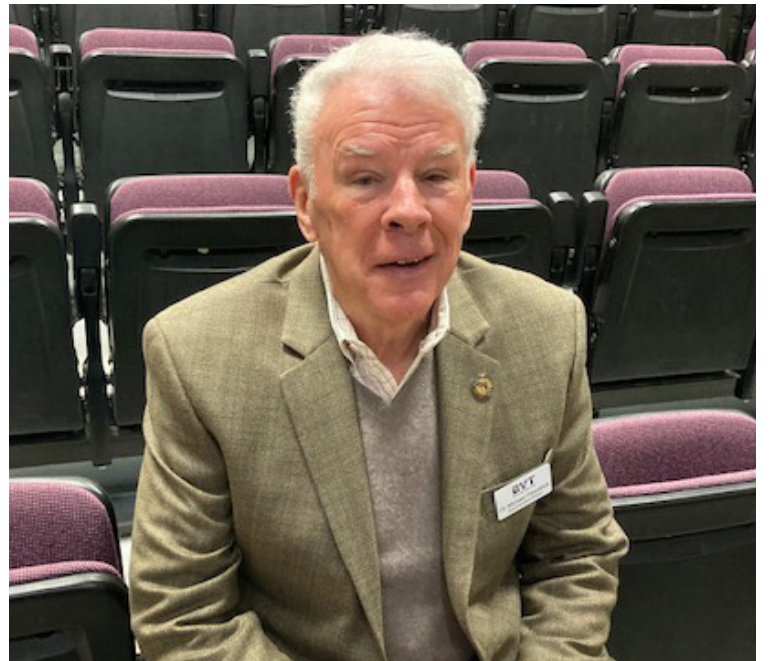
in Drafting & Design Technology met with Royal Family KIDS camp representatives in Huntington, Massachusetts, about their chapel needs. They measured the site and then created multiple conceptual designs using their architectural drafting and design skills. The project culminated with students presenting their finalized chapel designs to the camp. These were well-received. 3) When a weathered map of the National Register that showcased the Historic District of Whitinsville required a facelift, a creative collaboration between the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor and BVT's Painting & Design Technology program was born. Under the watchful eye of P&D Instructor Tm Lamont, students worked to flatten, clean and restore the original artwork that the BHC used to create a digital image. They were then able to use that digital image and the

technology in their shop to print a vinyl graphic of the map and new signage. They also freshened up the existing frame with a coat of paint.

BVT students have been involved in numerous projects like these.

Known affectionately as "Doc," or "Dr. Fitz," at BVT, Dr. Fitzpatrick has provided the vision that keeps the school moving forward.

Throughout its history, BVT has efficiently and cost-effectively served the workforce needs of the region. In partnership with local colleges, businesses and economic-development agencies, the system works towards enhancing the economic, social and historic strengths of the region while promoting opportunities for students and creating solutions for employers. The school has an enviable benchmark of 100% placement of graduates with career or educational paths suited to their talents and ambi-



Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick in the competition center at Blackstone Valley Tech. The day before, he had taken part in a staff-student basketball game.

tions and which address the needs of business and industry.

"It's been an incredible journey," Dr. Fitzpatrick said. "There were six hundred sixty students when I arrived." Now, there are twice that number. "We have almost four hundred industry advisors. We have well over eight hundred candidates for next year's freshman class. We have a 0% dropout rate. Nobody leaves. We have one hundred ninety three teaching days. No one does that."

Over nearly two hours, he pointed with pride to the components that make up the school. The competition center, added twenty years ago as part of that \$36 million expansion and renovation. An outside patio area. A lab and computer research center. A school-based health center emulating Milford Regional Hospital. A student dining commons with deli. An HVAC/R department with a

replica check from the state in the amount of \$425,000 displayed on a wall. A modernized manufacturing technologies department. The Three Seasons Restaurant with a bakery element.

Now in his mid-seventies, Dr. Fitzpatrick seems intent on foregoing retirement.

"I have one year left on my contract and I have told the school 'don't think long-term like the Red Sox'" in awarding him an extension, when the time comes.

He is an exception, in terms of longevity.

"More than ninety school supers have come through the district and a significant number of town managers, during my time here," he said.

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



BY ROD LEE

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 advertisement 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 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 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 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 assort-

ment 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.

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ton Country Store. The gift shop located on the Grafton Common also has a vast array of beautiful Easter and spring décor and gifts. It also sells elegant custom Easter baskets.

Treasures is another option for people who are looking for a bargain. The North Grafton upscale thrift shop that sells clothing, furniture, gifts and housewares has an array of lovely springtime décor. And its proceeds benefit the Whitinsville Christian School.

It's been a time of transition for Quite Fetching, the barkery and pet boutique located on the Grafton Common. It just celebrated its 6th anniversary. And although the barkery closed its shop doors this month, it will continue delighting dogs and their pet parents through its online business that will resume April 2. More information can be found on the Quite Fetching website, www.quitefetching.com.

In North Grafton, a seasonal business will re-open its windows on April 1. The return of Swirls & Scoops, the ice cream and frozen yogurt shop that's located at 68 Worcester Street, is anticipated by people of all ages and many local families.

Other businesses with Grafton locations, Koopman Lumber & Hardware and UniBank, are two



of the sponsors of another much-anticipated annual event. On Saturday, April 1 from 10 a.m. until 12 p.m. at the Whitin Community Center in Whitinsville, Beginning Bridges CFCE and Blackstone Valley Children's Place will hold Kids Fair. With the theme "Passport to Healthy Communities," the free event gives families with young children the chance to explore community resources in a fun atmosphere. There will be free healthy snacks, informational booths, giveaways, a bike raffle, an Easter egg hunt, a story walk and more.

Finally, the Grafton Food Bank, another nonprofit that provides vital services to our community, is holding its annual donations appeal. Due to inflation, high energy prices and the coming end of pandemic-related extra federal SNAP benefits,

the nonprofit expects an increased need by local families. Grafton Grill & Crust is participating by asking customers to round up their take-out orders for March to support the appeal. And Pepperoni Express donated 25 percent of its March 9 sales to the cause. Donations to the food bank, which provides food, resource referrals and emergency help with utilities to Grafton residents in need of a helping hand, can be sent to the food bank at PO Box 324, Grafton, MA 01519. Donations can also be made through its GoFundMe campaign, <https://gofund.me/11e87658>.

Days can be brightened in so many ways. It's nice to find such a variety of those ways so close to home.

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Open the (Back) Door to a Roth IRA



Mark Freeman

FINANCIAL FOCUS

There aren't many drawbacks to having a high income — but being unable to invest in a Roth IRA might be one of them. Are there strategies that allow high-income earners to contribute to this valuable retirement account?

Before we delve into that question, let's consider the rules. In 2023, you can contribute the full amount to

a Roth IRA — \$6,500, or \$7,500 if you're 50 or older — if your modified adjusted gross income is less than \$138,000 (if you're single) or \$218,000 (if you're married and filing jointly). If you earn more than these amounts, the amount you can contribute decreases until it's phased out completely if your income exceeds \$153,000 (single) or \$228,000 (married, filing jointly).

A Roth IRA is attractive because its earnings and withdrawals are tax free, provided you've had the account at least five years and you don't start taking money out until you're 59½. Furthermore, when you own a Roth IRA, you're not required to take withdrawals from it when you turn 72, as you would with a traditional IRA, so you'll have more flexibility in your retirement income planning and your money will have the chance to

potentially keep growing. But given your income, how can you contribute to a Roth?

You may want to consider what's known as a "backdoor Roth" strategy. Essentially, this involves contributing money to a new traditional IRA, or taking money from an existing one, and then converting the funds to a Roth IRA. But while this backdoor strategy sounds simple, it involves some serious considerations.

Specifically, you need to evaluate how much of your traditional IRA is in pretax or after-tax dollars. When you contribute pretax dollars to a traditional IRA, your contributions lower your annual taxable income. However, if your income is high enough to disqualify you from contributing directly to a Roth IRA, you may also earn too much to make deductible (pretax) contributions to a traditional IRA. Consequently, you might

have contributed after-tax dollars to your traditional IRA, on top of the pretax ones you may have put in when your income was lower. (Earnings on after-tax contributions will be treated as pretax amounts.)

In any case, if you convert pretax assets from your traditional IRA to a Roth IRA, the amount converted will be fully taxable in the year of the conversion. So, if you were to convert a large amount of these assets, you could face a hefty tax bill. And since you probably don't want to take funds from the converted IRA itself to pay for the taxes, you'd need another source of funding, possibly from your savings and other investments.

Ultimately, then, a backdoor Roth IRA strategy may make the most sense if you have few or no pretax assets in any traditional IRA, including a SEP-IRA and a SIMPLE IRA. If you do have a sizable

amount of pretax dollars in your IRA, and you'd still like to convert it to a Roth IRA, you could consider spreading the conversion over a period of years, potentially diluting your tax burden.

Consult with your tax advisor when considering a backdoor Roth strategy. But if it's appropriate for your situation, it could play a role in your financial strategy, so give it some thought.

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

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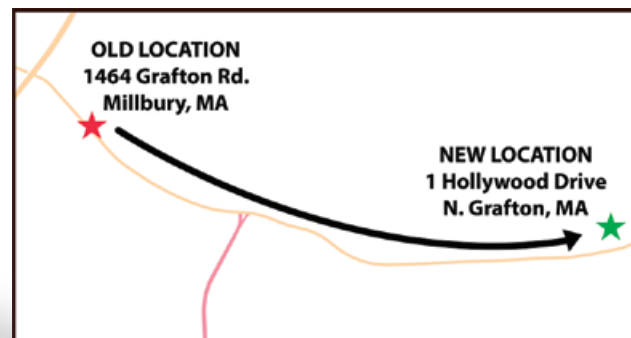
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Month of March a momentous one for the Blackstone Valley Chamber

BY ROD LEE

The month of March has come roaring in like a lion for the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce.

For starters, the Chamber announced on March 6th formation of a partnership with the Chamber of Greater Easthampton in bringing Easthampton's successful Ignite professional development conference to the Community Harvest Project

on Wheeler Road in North Grafton April 4-5.

The conference is aimed at professionals who want to improve their emotional intelligence and learn how to interact with co-workers, customers or donors more effectively. Through the power of storytelling, attendees will learn how to hone their decision-making skills and improve their chances for success in business.

The two-day conference will in-

clude keynote speeches from industry leaders, interactive workshops and network building opportunities. Attendees will gain insights into the latest trends and best practices in emotional intelligence, leadership, and communication.

"We are excited to partner with the Chamber of Greater Easthampton for this conference," BVCC President and CEO Jeannie Hebert said. "We believe that storytelling is a powerful tool for building and de-



Sisters Joscelyn Young and Ashley Bregman are pictured with their children Paisely Bregman and Rex and Vanessa Young at the Blackstone Valley Education Foundation's Open House on March 10th.

veloping leadership skills. We look forward to sharing our expertise and insights with the attendees and helping them achieve their professional goals."

Tickets for Ignite Blackstone Valley are available through the Chamber's website, www.blackstonevalley.org.

Then on March 10th, Joscelyn Young and her sister Ashley Bregman headlined an Open House hosted by the Blackstone Valley Education Foundation and the Education Foundation's Hub at the Chamber's offices in the Linwood Mill in Whitinsville. Both are new in their positions, as executive directors of the BVEF and the Hub, respectively.

Talking about her new job several days later, Ms. Young said she has experience working with nonprofits including as coordinator of Innovation Pathways and with the Green Bean Project in Sutton with its emphasis on social and emotional learning and mental health through the performing arts.

The BVEF's mission of expanding

and strengthening business alliances in and around the Blackstone Valley "is right up my alley," she said.

In addition to efforts she has undertaken to provide professional development for teachers, collaborating with Blackstone Valley Tech and Mendon-Upton on construction of a tiny house and building relationships with various partners, Ms. Young is looking forward to working with her sister in delivering technical and educational training through the Hub.

"We are playing the role of connector," she said. "My focus will be on grants and Ashley's will be on the science. We are the ying and yang."

The month's culminating event for the Chamber is the annual Home & Community Expo from 10:00 am. To 2:00 on Saturday, March 25th at Northbridge High School. Hundreds of businesses and organizations will showcase their products and services.

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BVT's Katelyn Steele, Maxwell Guyton saluted for academic excellence

Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT) Superintendent-Director Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick is proud to announce that Katelyn Steele of Upton and Maxwell Guyton of Uxbridge are the recipients of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents Award of Academic Excellence.

They are both in the Engineering & Robotics program at BVT. The annual commendation, also known

as a student-athlete Varsity Soccer, Basketball, and Track and Field Captain. Passionate about community service, she accrued over 140 hours throughout high school. Katelyn is analyzing multiple placement opportunities that will strengthen her workforce entry options. She would like to further her education and training by studying aerospace engineering at a four-year college.

Currently, Maxwell Guyton is the Class of 2023 Salutatorian

training in the Engineering field at Northeastern University, enrolling in the PlusOne program to earn a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in five years while still being able to participate in their co-op program.

"As educators, we are proud to see Katelyn and Maxwell exhibit extraordinary commitment to their vocational technical training and rigorous academics. It is an honor to have them represent our school," said Assistant Superintendent-

Director/Principal Anthony Steele. "They both exemplify what is possible in career-technical education, and it will be equally exciting to see how they apply what they've learned at BVT in their future pursuits."



Katelyn Steele of Upton and Maxwell Guyton of Uxbridge have been named BVT's recipients of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents Award of Academic Excellence. They will graduate in May from BVT's Engineering & Robotics program.

as the Superintendent's Scholar Award, is presented to the two seniors who exemplify the school's commitment to cutting-edge career technical training and rigorous academics.

Presently, Katelyn Steele is the Class of 2023 Valedictorian and the Vice President of the National Honor Society and National Technical Honor Society. Her dedication to academic and vocational studies was on display when she earned a gold medal in 2022 at the SkillsUSA State (Massachusetts) Leadership & Skills Conference in Related Technical Math. In addition, she is a Worcester Polytechnic Institute STEM Leadership Book Award Recipient. Recently recognized by MAVA with an Outstanding Vocational Student Award, Katelyn is a scholastically talented student who, in addition to her academic success, also excels

and a National Honor Society and National Technical Honor Society member. In 2022 he was a National Technical Honor Society Delegate, promoting the pillars of NHS/NTHS to general members and participating in nearly 40 hours of Engineering-related and general community service. He has made the Commendation List every term of his high school career. Maxwell, a member of the Student Council, served as a Senior Representative helping the Council to be named a Gold National Council of Excellence for the 2021 calendar year. As a sophomore, he was selected to attend the Student Ambassador of MA HOBY leadership conference and learned the importance of service and leadership. He was also a Project 351 Student Ambassador in 2019.

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Sen. Moore files 88-bill agenda for new legislative session

Sen. Michael Moore this week announced his legislative agenda for the 2023-2024 Massachusetts legislative session. His slate of 88 bills spans a wide range of topics including the cost of utilities, regulation of PFAS and other toxic chemicals, accessibility standards, tax relief, student safety, and more.

“The beginning of 2023 kicks off a new legislative session, and my team and I have been hard at work crafting a legislative agenda that responds to the needs of local residents while also tackling overarching issues facing the Commonwealth as a whole,” Sen. Moore (D-Millbury) said. I’m proud to share that I’ve filed 88 pieces of legislation to help make Massachusetts a better, more affordable, and more equitable place. I look forward to collaborating with my colleagues from Central Massachusetts and

across the Commonwealth to advance legislation that makes a real difference to working people.”

Highlights of Senator Moore’s agenda are listed below:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

An Act building a more accessible Massachusetts – SD.893

This legislation updates state disability regulations that have fallen behind federal standards in the past decade. This bill makes Massachusetts more accessible by making changes to the Architectural Access Board (AAB), a state-level board that develops and enforces regulations designed to make public buildings accessible to, functional for, and safe for use by persons with disabilities.

If passed, this bill will add an additional member of the disability advocacy community to the AAB. It also extends the AAB’s regula-

tory authority to employee areas of public buildings, expands its authority to spaces around buildings like parking lots and sidewalks, and aligns the body’s definition of “public building” with ADA regulations.

Resolve establishing a commission to study energy rate procurement related to investor-owned utilities and consumer relief – SD.1882

Bay Staters deserve more transparency in how utilities set their gas and electricity rates — especially after this winter’s rate hikes. This legislation would create a commission, comprised of legislative leaders, consumer advocates, and industry representatives, that would study and draft legislation to:

Reform regulations and policies that govern how energy rates are set by investor-owned utilities in Massachusetts

Establish an emergency interest-free payment plan program for Bay Staters who receive service through an investor-owned utility

An Act establishing an internal special audit unit within the Cannabis Control Commission – SD.1900

This legislation would ensure the quality, efficiency, and integrity of the CCC’s operational and regulatory functions through the establishment of an Inspector General Special Audit Unit. The unit will exist within, but will not be subject to, the control of the CCC, and mirrors special audit units within the State Police and the Department of Transportation. The unit would be authorized to receive funds from the Marijuana Regulation Fund. The bill also requires a memorandum of understanding between the CCC, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, and the Department of Public Utilities to promote communication and collaboration between

the agencies.

An Act protecting consumer rights in purchasing safe and habitable homes – SD.1504

In the hot housing market of the past few years, many buyers are pressured to waive their right to a home inspection to make their offers more attractive to sellers — risking financial disaster with no recourse if a critical flaw is found after the purchase.

This legislation will establish the basic right of the consumer to have a home inspection done of the home they are about to purchase by removing the home inspection contingency clause from the Offer to Purchase form. Once the offer is accepted, the buyer can state whether they want an inspection or not and agree on a timeframe with the seller.

PUBLIC HEALTH

An Act relative to chemicals in food packaging – SD.1912

This legislation would ban the sale or use of packaging that is manufactured with PFAS, chemicals that can linger in the body for decades and are known to have significant human health risks.

PFAS, or Polyfluoroalkyl substances, is a class designation that includes nearly 10,000 chemicals used to make everyday items waterproof, stain resistant, or non-stick. These chemicals have become ubiquitous in products ranging from cookware to furniture to children’s toys, despite posing dangerous health risks. Even at low levels, the toxicity of PFAS chemicals can be devastating — increasing the risk of cancer, immunosuppression, birth defects, colitis, and other diseases. Compounding these dangers is the persistent nature of PFAS chemicals, known as “forever chemicals” for their resistance to breaking down in the environment.

Eight states have already passed bans on consumer products manufactured with PFAS.

An Act relative to improving outcomes for sudden cardiac arrest

This This bill updates the existing Emergency 911 system to improve outcomes for individuals suffering sudden cardiac arrest (SAC). The Commonwealth’s E911 system responds to about 10 victims a day, but the survival rate is nearly ten times lower than other parts of the country. The legislation requires that all dispatchers be trained in telephone-CPR, adds a physician with a specialty in emergency medicine and a regional EMS expert to the State 911 Commission and adds Sudden Cardiac Arrest to the

list of reportable diseases, allowing the Commonwealth to collect improved data on these incidents.

An Act improving child eye care – SD.816

This legislation implements recommendations of the Children’s Vision Report, released in 2021 by the Childhood Vision and Eye Health Commission.

If passed, this legislation would create a comprehensive system to track children’s eye care — including screenings, follow-up appointments, and treatments — whether the interaction happened at a school or a doctor’s office. The legislation would also establish an advisory committee comprised of eye care experts and stakeholders to make recommendations to improve how we deliver eye care to children.

EDUCATION

An Act establishing a college tuition tax deduction – SD.1865

In a time when students and families across Massachusetts are struggling to afford college, we must do everything in our power to make higher education more affordable.

This legislation would allow students to deduct up to 50% of tuition and fee payments — significant relief to lower and middle-class families pursuing a degree.

An Act relative to school bus safety cameras – SD.1945

This legislation would allow school districts to equip their school busses with automated traffic enforcement cameras that fine drivers who illegally pass a school bus while it is stopped with its flashing lights illuminated. The bill includes data protections for citizens and due process provisions.

At least 24 states currently have school bus stop-arm camera laws.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Resolve establishing a sexual assault counselor certification

This bill, which passed the house late last session, would convene a task force to review and make legislative recommendations regarding the training and qualifications for sexual assault counselors. The current statute allows for a wide variance between service providers about exactly what training standards should be. For example, the training requirement in state statute is 35 hours, while some centers require 80 hours of training. The statute will also benefit from

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SEN. MOORE

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improvements relative to cultural competency and other workforce issues that are not currently addressed.

An Act improving protections relative to domestic violence

This bill expands the statutory definition of domestic violence to better reflect the experience of survivors in the Commonwealth. The language adds 'coercive control' as a form of DV, defined as conduct that substantially restricts a person's safety or autonomy. It also adds 'technological abuse' to encompass the range of abusive behaviors that occur through the internet, social media sites and mobile devices. These changes will allow survivors to secure protections for these problematic behaviors that perpetuate the cycle of domestic violence.

An Act relative to the ownership of pets by convicted animal abusers – SD.1888

This legislation prevents individuals who are convicted of animal abuse from possessing, adopting, or fostering an animal for a length of time deemed reasonable by the courts, with a minimum of five years. Any violation of an order may result in a fine of \$1,000 per violation.

Resolve establishing the Har-

mony Commission – SD1896

The Harmony Commission, formed in memory of Harmony Montgomery, will be made up of child advocates, welfare experts, legal professionals, and state legislators and will be required to issue a public report on its findings.

The primary objectives of the Harmony Commission are to:

Study how a child's welfare and best interest considerations are handled in Care and Protection cases and Petition to Dispense with Care cases

Study how cases disproportionately impact children of color, immigrant children, children with disabilities, LGBTQ+ children, children who have experienced trauma, and low-income children

Make recommendations on how we can better ensure the law balances the constitutional rights of parents with the best interest, wellbeing, and safety of children – particularly those who have experienced trauma

LOCAL AFFAIRS

An Act relative to local approval for charter schools – SD.1863

This legislation gives communities a role in the establishment of charter schools in their area – a process that can dramatically impact traditional public school funding issues. The bill requires a vote from either a school commit-

tee or city council to approve the placement of a charter school that would draw significantly from that community.

An Act protecting safety net access for Massachusetts residents – SD.1843

This legislation would require strict benchmarks be met before closing or moving community service offices, including:

At least 120 days for legislators, local leaders, and the community to comment

Detailed data, proposals, and plans for how the closure or relocating of the office affects the community and how low-income and underserved residents will be able to access the next closest location

In the next few weeks, the House and Senate Clerks will refer newly filed legislation to legislative committees for review. Senator Moore will be working to earn co-sponsors and supporters for his legislation.

For more information on the legislation filed by Senator Moore, including a complete list of all 88 bills, visit his website at <https://www.senatormikemoore.com/legislation-2024/>. Additional information, including bill numbers and co-sponsors, can be found on the Legislature's official website at <https://malegislature.gov/Legislators/Profile/MOM0/>.



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Hard work pays off for wrestler Anthony Vickers

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Like many younger siblings, Anthony Vickers looked up to his older brother and wanted to me just like him, so around the age of eight he decided to try out wrestling. Although he was not all that good in the beginning he stuck with the sport and is now reaping the benefits of all his hard work. “My older brother was wrestling for the high school and wanted to me like him so I gave it a try. I

found that I loved the hard work, the competition and of course the winning,” Vickers said. “It took me a couple of years to get the sport down, but I just kept trying until I got better. When I was 10 or 11 I made it to the Youth State Final in the 65 lb. weight class.” Although the Northbridge native had a love for the sport of wrestling he decided to take some time off to pursue another sport – boxing. Again, it was because his older brothers were into boxing, and he wanted to once again be like

them. About three years into his leave from wrestling as he entered his freshman year in Northbridge High School he was once again lured back into the sport. “I wasn’t going to start wrestling again, but Coach (Baird) Lashley kept begging me to come out for the team as there was no one really wrestling for Northbridge,” the now junior wrestler said. “He had heard about me through the previous coach and eventually I decided to try it again.”

His freshman season with the co-op wrestling team made up of Northbridge, Grafton, Whitinsville-Christian and Nipmuc just happened to be the Covid year, so the season was rather limited. Vickers only got to wrestle in four matches but the then freshman managed to win all four. Coach Lashley was looking for Vickers to take a step up during the following year.

“His sophomore season was his most accomplished to date, but it wasn’t something that I was looking for out of him,” Lashley said. “I was just hoping that he would fall back into love with the sport and enjoy getting on the mat once again.”

Vickers took to the mat and was more than productive that season. The sophomore, wrestling in the 113-lb weight class, finished third in the Division 2 West Sectionals, took third once again in the Division 2 State Tournament, finished sixth in the All States and got to



Northbridge's Anthony Vickers, a D2 state wrestling champ.

wrestle in the New England Divisions. In doing as well as he did he started to ponder what could have been.

“After that season I reflected upon how much I better I would have been if I had continued to wrestle and not taken those years off – I know I would have been State, All State and New England Champion,” Vickers pondered.

Coming into this season, Vickers’ junior campaign, Lashley saw a total change in the grappler.

“He was still wrestling in the 113-lb weight class, but he was bigger and stronger,” his coach said. “He went 35-0 this year and is now 71-8 over his career; won the Sectionals again and was named the Most Outstanding Wrestler of the Tournament, though all the

Divisions.”

Following his Sectional Championship, Vickers went on to become the first wrestler in Northbridge High School history to claim a state championship in the sport. He would then take second in the All-State Tournament and is scheduled to wrestle at the New England Tournament the first weekend of March in Providence, Rhode Island.

“Winning the States and becoming the first Northbridge wrestler to do so was very emotional; it made me realize all my hard work had paid off,” he said. “My father

VICKERS

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Dennis H. Rice named chair of Corridor Board of Directors

The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor recently announced new appointments to its Board of Directors. This action took place at its annual meeting in February.

New officers include Dennis H. Rice, chair; Lee Dillard Adams, vice chair; Harry T. Whitin, vice chair; Bill Beitler, treasurer; and Todd Helwig, secretary. In addition, BHC's immediate past chair is Richard Moore.

Directors re-elected for a three-year term on BHC's Board including Richard Moore, Lee Dillard Adams, Jeannie Hebert, Harry T. Whitin, Donna Williams and Robert Billington. The Board also elected a new director, Jon Roberts. Other directors include Michael Cassidy, Richard Gregory, and Daniel DaPonte.

Many opportunities to volunteer with the Corridor are coming up; with the Volunteers-in-Parks program, for instance. Reach out to Molly Cardoza at mcardoza@BlackstoneHeritageCorridor.org.

Sixteen volunteers served eighty-eight hours for a total value of \$2,635.60 during Maple Sugar Days at River Bend Farm in Uxbridge.

On February 12, the Uxbridge Historical Society hosted Susan Franz for a presentation of "Crossroads of the Underground Railroad-Part 2."

The North Smithfield Heritage Association (NSHA) is offering its



next Heritage Hike on Saturday, March 11th, visiting Union Village. Meet at 9:30 a.m. at Union Cemetery on Smithfield Rad. Find details at <https://fb.me/e/2oGe3xXjR>.

In preparation for National Learn About Butterflies Day on March 14, BHC's Bonnie Combs started reading "Bicycling with Butterflies: M 10,201-Mile Journey Following the Monarch Migration" by Steve Dykman. To learn more about Monarchs and what you can do to help their population, visit <https://monarchwatch.org>.

Celebrate World Water Day on March 22nd by attending an EnviroScape Training Skills Workshop from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at the Corridor offices at 670 Linwood Ave. in Whitinsville. RSVP to <https://bit.ly/EnviroScapeSW>.

VICKERS

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always told me that if I worked hard then good things would come. Ever since I got into Northbridge High School I knew that there wasn't a State Champion and I wanted to be the first one to do it."

Not only has Vickers collected numerous wrestling accreditations, but he has also added a boxing title to his resume. While taking time off from wrestling Vickers captured the 112-lb. Junior Lightweight Boxing Championship.

Vickers continues to box year round, but once the high school wrestling season begins in November he puts down the gloves and starts practicing on the mat.

Taking part in both sports I don't see a conflict. I'm trying to have success in other sports," the

two-sport champion said. "I love both sports equally and have the time to do both, I just need to focus on each sport individually during the year."

Usually once the wrestling season comes to an end Vickers walks away having nothing to do with the sport until November, but after the success he has had this season the junior is looking improve his craft for his senior season.

"I want to go further next year and in order to do that I need more mat time so there will be no off-season this year," he said. "I want to continue to work hard so that I stay sharp and win another state championship as well as adding an All State and New England Championship."

Showing that he is willing to put in all the hard work is why Lashley named the junior a captain of the squad.

"Although there were some seniors, Anthony has shown that he is one of the hardest worker on our team, as well as being a role model to the other wrestlers. He always comes in with the right attitude," Lashley said.

As the New England Tournament approaches the Northbridge junior is hoping to advance into the finals and even winning it.

"I believe in myself and feel that I can accomplish winning the New England Title," he said. "I just need to wrestle as hard as I can and don't take anyone lightly."

Depending on what happens in Providence Vickers is looking forward to become a four-time champion next year when he wins the Division 2 West Sectional, the Division 2 State Title, the All State Title and concludes it with a New England title.



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HEALTHIER BAKING

Homemade hot cross buns are worth the effort

BY CHRISTINE GALEONE

It doesn't matter if hot cross buns are made with currants, raisins or dried fruit, and it doesn't matter if the cross is baked into them or piped on with icing, I've hardly ever met one that I didn't like. So, last year, around this time, when I went to a couple of stores that had sold them in the past and couldn't find any, I was disappointed.

Since yeast was something I avoided baking with, I had never made them. But it's a new year. And learning how to bake with yeast has led to new baking adventures. So, this seems to be a good time to bake a healthier version of those sometimes elusive Lenten and Easter season treats.

The main reason that these hot cross buns are healthier than most of the ones you'll find in grocery

stores is because of what they don't contain. They don't contain artificial preservatives. They don't contain artificial ingredients or loads of sugar. And they don't contain candied/dried fruit that has sugar and artificial coloring added to it.

However, hot cross buns – which are believed to have been possibly created by Brother Thomas Rodcliffe, a 14th-century Catholic monk in England who gave them



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to the poor to have for breakfast on Good Friday – do contain nutritious ingredients. To begin with, raisins have been recognized as a healthy snack for generations. They're rich in potassium, which can help lower blood pressure and lower the risk of having a stroke, they contain plenty of fiber, which aids digestion, and they can help protect teeth and gums from bacteria. They also contain antioxidants, polyphenols and flavonoids, which is why they're additionally considered to be an anti-cancer fruit.

Likewise, cranberries are also a good source of fiber. And while some people – including those on blood thinners and those with kidney problems – should avoid cranberries, their antimicrobial properties, antioxidants, vitamin E content and essential amino acids makes them a healthy fruit for many.

HOT CROSS BUNS

Ingredients:

- 2½ Cups of Flour
- ¼ Cup of Sugar
- 1 Tsp. of Ground Cardamom
- 1 Tsp. of Cinnamon
- ½ Tsp. of Salt
- 2 Tsp. of Instant Yeast

- 1 Tbsp. of Orange Zest
- ½ Cup –plus 2 Tbsp. of Whole Milk
- 1 Egg
- 3 Tbsp. of Light Olive Oil
- 1 Tsp. of Almond Extract
- ½ Cup of Raisins
- ½ Cup of Dried Cranberries

Cross Ingredients:

- ½ Cup of Flour
- ½ Cup of Water

Glaze Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp. of Apricot Jam
- 1 Tbsp. of Warm Water

Directions:

Combine the dry ingredients except the cranberries and raisins. Scald the milk, and combine it with the egg, oil and almond extract. Whisk together the dry ingredients and the wet ingredients. Knead the dough on a floured surface. Cover the dough, and let it rise for at least an hour, so that it's doubled in size. Fold the raisins and cranberries into the dough, and divide the dough into 12 pieces. Roll the pieces into balls, and put them on a parchment-lined tray. Cover the tray, and let the rolls proof for about an hour until they've doubled in size. Mix together the flour and water to make a paste. Put the paste into a piping bag, and pipe crosses onto the buns. Bake at 375 degrees for about 18-20 minutes. Mix the warm water with the apricot jam, and brush the glaze onto the hot cross buns once they're done. They're best served warm!

It's true that this isn't a quick recipe. And there are many baked goods that are easier to make. But when they complement your spiritual journey or when you're enjoying them for breakfast or afternoon tea, you might find that it was worth the challenge. Happy (healthier) baking!



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Baby Brazilian Tapir joins Southwick's Zoo family

Southwick's Zoo recently welcomed a beautiful Brazilian Tapir calf to the family.

At just over two months old, "Tutula" is the newest addition to Southwick's array of wildlife. The

female calf, born on January 4th after a thirteen-month gestation period, is easy to distinguish from the older herd members by her striking spotted and striped coat. This unique coat acts as camouflage for

the young tapirs in the wild and will slowly shed as she ages.

Brazilian tapirs, also known as lowland tapirs, are a large hoofed species from South America. They resemble a cross between a pig and an elephant, but are more closely related to horses and rhinos.

One of the species' most notable

features is its long fleshy nose. A tapir uses its flexible snout when reaching to grasp branches and leaves. It also may use its elephant-like nose as a snorkel to breathe while submerged in water.

Guests will have the chance to visit baby Tutula when the zoo reopens for the 2023 season.

Southwick's Zoo is scheduled to open by April 15th, or sooner, weather permitting.

Tickets can be purchased online or at the gate upon arrival.

For more information on upcoming events or to play your visit to Southwick's Zoo, go to www.southwickszoo.com.



Giraffes are an attraction at Southwick's Zoo in Mendon, and a baby Brazilian Tapir will be now too, with the opening of the season in early to mid April.

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Innovation helps The Uxlocale coming out of the pandemic

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, 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



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

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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 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 was held on March 11th. A native 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.

**FRIDAYS DURING LENT
MARCH 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 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). SaintDenisChurch.com/fish-dinners. Cash, check or Square payments accepted

on arrival.

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. In addition to single booths, double booths and nonprofit booths, 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. For more information, contact Liz O'Neil, loneil@blackstonevalley.org or 508-234-9090 Ext. 102.

SUNDAY, MARCH 26

• Author Nathaniel Philbrick will present "Travels with George and the Importance of Local History" at 2:00 p.m. at the North Main Street Church, 23 North Main St., Uxbridge. Mr. Philbrick's latest bestseller, "Travels with George: In Search of Washington and His Legacy," was published in September of 2021. A book signing will follow Mr. Philbrick's remarks and books will be available for purchase by cash or check only, courtesy of the Samuel Slater Experience pop-up shop. This event is sponsored by the Uxbridge Historical Society, the Arthur R. Taft Memorial Trust and the Board of Library Trustees.

MONDAY, MARCH 27

• Ed the Wizard's Alchemy Laboratory hosted by the Gladys E. Kelly Public Library, 2 Lake St., will be presented starting at 3:30 p.m. Mixing real science with magic, patrons will learn and help perform magical transfigurations, vanishes and other amazing feats using everyday household items. This program is supported in part by a grant from the Webster Cultural Council, a local agency supported by the Massachusetts

Cultural Council, a state agency.

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.

SATURDAY, APRIL 1

• 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.

Blackstone Valley Children's Place & Beginning Bridges CFCE will present a Free Kids Fair at the Whitin Community Center, 60 Main St., Whitinsville, from 10:00 a.m. to noon. The event includes WCC's "Eggstravaganza"—an egg hunt with prizes.

SUNDAY, APRIL 2

• The Mumford Council #365 Knights of Columbus will host a Palm Sunday Breakfast at Mumford Hall, 77 Prescott Road, Whitinsville, from 8:00 a.m. to noon. The menu will include Omelets to Order, French Toast, Scrambled Eggs, Home Fries, Baked Beans, Sausage, Coffee and more. Cost is \$12 for adults, \$10 for seniors and \$6 for children under 12.

• The New England Country Music Club will

host dancing featuring "DJ Felicia" at the Uxbridge Progressive Club, 18 Whitin St. Doors open at 12:15 with live music from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. www.facebook.com/NECountryMusicClub.

TUESDAY, APRIL 4

• The Sutton Historical Society welcomes Joe lamartino 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.

FRIDAY, APRIL 7

• The newly formed Men's Discussion Group meets for coffee, doughnuts and conversation from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. at Plummer Place at the Northbridge Senior Center, 20 Highland St., Whitinsville. Call 508-234-2002 Ext. 1305 for more details.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12

• The Massachusetts State Police Museum and Learning Center invites patrons of Plummer Place at the Northbridge Senior

HAPPENINGS!

continued from page 15

Center to explore the facility's new home at Memorial Square in Whitinsville. \$5 cash admission; a pizza luncheon will be served. This is a self-drive, self-pay program. Space is limited. Sign up with Amy Cowen at Plummer Place.

THURSDAY, APRIL 13

• Celebrate the end of winter and design your own floral arrangements to take home at Plummer Place at the Northbridge Senior Center, 20 Highland St., Whitinsville. \$15 per person payable the day of the program. Includes all materials and instruction. Sign up with Amy Cowen. Space is limited.

SUNDAY, APRIL 16

• The New England Country Music Club hosts dancing featuring the "Crossfire" 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, APRIL 19

• Join Rainne Richards and the Plummer Place Pluckers for a ukulele sing-a-long concert featuring favorite songs from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s at Plummer Place at the Northbridge Senior Center, 20 Highland St., Whitinsville, at 2:00 p.m. Lyrics provided. All are welcome. Snacks will be provided. Sign up at the front desk.

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.

• A Home Baked Ham & Bean Supper is being offered by the Uxbridge Congregational Church at 5:00 p.m. in the Community House, 8 Court St., behind the Uxbridge Town Common. The menu includes baked ham, home-baked beans, potato salad, coleslaw, brown bread, beverages and dessert. Donation is \$12 per person. Children under six are admitted free. Raffle tickets will be available. RSVP by calling 508-244-7849. A limited number of tickets will be available at the door. Come enjoy good fellowship and good food.

THURSDAY, APRIL 27

• Come dance the afternoon away to music from the Disco era of the 1970s at Plummer Place at the Northbridge Senior Center, 20 Highland St., Whitinsville, 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Costume attire is highly encouraged. \$10 per ticket, limit two tickets per person. Sponsored by AdviniaCare and F.I.N.E. Sign up in the main office.

SUNDAY, APRIL 30

• The Uxbridge PSG 2023 is hosting a Spring Vendor Fair from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Uxbridge High School, 300 Quaker Highway. More than thirty local vendors will be on hand with unique gifts. Raffle items will be available. PSG-raised funds go towards the Uxbridge High School Class of 2023 graduation event to help students celebrate in a safe, alcohol and drug-free environment.



American Author Nathaniel Philbrick, an expert on his subject, will discuss the travels of George Washington at the North Main Street Church in Uxbridge at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, March 26.

Contact Uxbridge PSG FMI: psguxbridge@gmail.com or on Facebook @Uxbridge-PSG2023-Parents for a Safe Graduation.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 3

• Music for seniors by Howie Newman will be presented at The Residences at AdviniaCare, Northbridge, from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. Howie Newman brings music and laughter through his original songs. This program is sponsored in part by a grant from the Northbridge Cultural Council, a local agency supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

TUESDAY, MAY 9

• The Sutton Historical Society welcomes Carol Crossed curator of the Susan B. Anthony Birthplace Museum, with 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.

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.

MAY 27-28

• World War II Tank Demonstration Weekend takes place at the American Heritage

Museum, 568 Main St., Hudson, featuring the M4 Sherman, the M24 Chaffee, the M5 Stuart, the M18 Hellcat, the M26 Pershing and the first-ever event for the AHM's new M35 Jackson Tank Destroyer. Times are 9:00 a.m. on Saturday and 5:00 p.m. on Sunday. www.americanheritagemuseum.org or call 978-562-9182 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 Savoie 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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Proposed expansion of Uxbridge historic district gains momentum

BY ROD LEE

These are heady days for Jane Keegan and members of the Uxbridge Historic District Commission (UHDC). If a warrant article Ms. Keegan and her cohorts have drafted is approved at Town

A public hearing is also scheduled for April 11th.

“This is such a logical extension of what we had in 2004,” Ms. Keegan said. “And coming up on our 300th anniversary we have a lot of precious history we want to maintain.”

will succeed. “Two people on the UHDC then who voted against it” which resulted in its defeat at Town Meeting, are no longer involved with the Commission. Also, “we have shrunk the footprint,” she said; and because “there are so many exclusions,” she doesn’t anticipate widespread objections to its passage.

“If people want to build a chicken coup on their front lawn, they can, as long as it conforms to local zoning laws.”

Ms. Keegan points out that the UHDC aims to achieve three major purposes in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40c and the local bylaw: “to preserve and protect the distinguishing features of buildings and places significant to Uxbridge history; to maintain and improve the settings of those buildings and places; and to encourage new designs that are compatible with existing buildings in the district.”

Ms. Keegan is expected to tell Uxbridge selectmen that, “collectively, the public looks to the BOS as the town’s primary visionary leaders. While the town manager deals with overseeing day-to-day operational objectives within departments, most importantly, this board sets the ‘tone’ for policy implementation. The BOS chooses the overall ‘atmosphere’ Uxbridge projects to those who want to build homes and businesses here.”

Viewed in “modern marketing parlance, in this ‘image-driven’ society, you are responsible for creating the image that drives sales.”

Ms. Keegan adds “keeping in mind that the town will celebrate its 300th anniversary as independent of Mother Mendon in 2027, Preserve the Past; Enhance the Future should not be just a simple, unofficial UHDC motto but rather a town mantra! The local Historical

Commission agreed to co-sponsor our expansion article. The consensus was that expanding the historic district should not be viewed in a small, backward-looking context but as a town-wide effort to acknowledge our important past and speak to what is important to our future.”

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



St.'s Deli on Mendon Street is one of the mom-and-pop businesses that are part of the proposed newly defined historic district in the town of Uxbridge.

Meeting in May, the town’s historic district will undergo an expansion to include “additional significant properties” along North Main, Mendon and Capron streets.

The original historic-district bylaw was adopted in 2004 and updated in 2014. It initially encompassed the downtown core of South and North Main streets, adjacent Court St. facing the Town Common and a small portion of Mendon and Douglas streets heading east and west.

The enlarged historic district would include a total of ninety-four properties. Among these are such prominent buildings as St.’s General Store (also known locally as St.’s Deli), Andrews Survey & Engineering, the Polish American Social & Civic Hall and Buma Funeral Home.

Inclusion of the McCloskey Building “will be voted on separately within the article, because it is going to be developed in some way,” Ms. Keegan said.

Ms. Keegan is optimistic about passage of the revised version of the historic district bylaw. The Uxbridge Historical Society has accepted wording of the article by unanimous vote, the Massachusetts Historical Commission was scheduled to render its judgment for or against at a meeting on March 8 and the UHDC will seek an endorsement of the Uxbridge Board of Selectmen on March 13th—all in preparation for a hoped-for two-thirds vote embracing the article by residents on May 9th.

Jane Keegan is eminently qualified to chair the UHDC and to be the lead “squeaky voice,” as she puts it, in championing the article’s passage.

She is a member of the Uxbridge Historical Society, retired as town moderator and a member of the Uxbridge School Committee, a past regent of the Deborah Wheelock Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), and owner of the Simeon Wheelock House (1786).

Peter Pendergast is vice chair. Travis Do Rosario is clerk.

The UHDC’s enthusiasm for the proposed change is shared by homeowners whose properties are located in what would be the redefined historic district.

Peter Frabotta III is one of these homeowners. Mr. Frabotta’s home, “Barbaras Blue, circa 1908,” which he describes as “a center-entry formal Colonial,” is situated at 46 Capron St. The handsome home was built by E.J. “Johnny” Brady in 1908 and purchased by Mr. Frabotta’s family in 1968.

Mr. Frabotta has meticulously kept the home in its original condition with restoration work, and filled the residence with antiques. “It is period-decorated,” he said on March 1st.

“Barbara’s Blue circa 1908” will be showcased during a spring house tour being offered from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 30th.

Although a previous attempt at expanding the historic district failed, Ms. Keegan believes this one

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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.

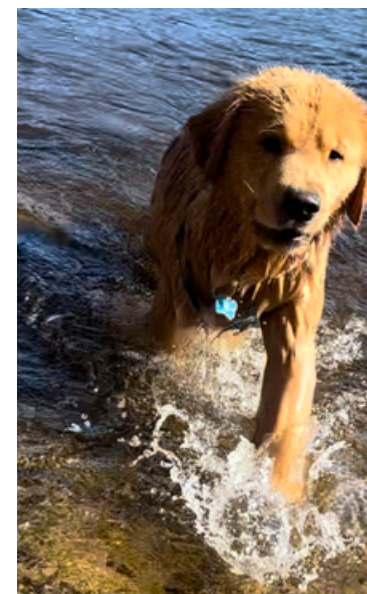
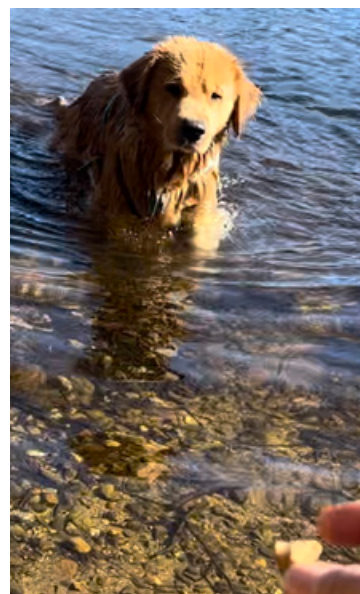
“Is he a service dog?” I can’t lie. Even though my dog absolutely “serves” the needs of the community, it’s just not ethical to pretend.

“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



Luke takes the polar plunge at Wells State Park in Sturbridge



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



Luke rests at Verizon in Sutton.

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 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 natu-

rally 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,

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LUKE

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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



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

know about today's 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 mortgage 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. Com-

pared 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 different. 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						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
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun						
FHFA						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
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun						
Black Knight						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
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun						
CoreLogic						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
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun						

Sources: Case Shiller, FHFA, Black Knight, CoreLogic

LUKE

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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 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 amyclaira@hotmail.com

Find Luke Valentino on Instagram: @livingwithlukevalentino

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

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SPORTS

Grafton softball looks to advance past Round of 8

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Last spring the Grafton softball team found itself to be competitive in each and every game. The Gators took home the Southern Worcester County League (SWCL) Championship and then found themselves as the number 12 seed entering the Division 2 State Tournament. Grafton would take out Dartmouth (5-4) and Burlington (3-2) before falling to Westfield (2-1) in the round of eight.

Historically the Grafton squad has found itself in the post-season on a regular basis and with a solid core of seniors returning to the diamond this spring second year Grafton Coach Kimberly Danish is very excited about the season.

“Everyone dreams of winning a State Championship and I believe that we have the personnel this year to do just that,” she said.

“The girls are chomping at the bit to get back onto the field and start the season. It’ll be a grind, but we’re hoping that we’re the ones still standing at the end of the season and believe that we

can be the ones.”

The Gators will once again find themselves playing a strong schedule, one that is very similar to last year’s and one that will test them throughout the year. In having the tougher schedule Danish believes that the girls will be battle tested and ready to go once the Tournament rolls around.

“The girls have the desire and work very hard, and I would love nothing more than to see them gel and develop into a successful team,” Danish said.

The squad’s success all begins with senior battery mates Taylor Coonan and Abby Dubois. Coonan, the team’s number one pitcher, transferred to Grafton last year and with Dubois behind the plate formed a formidable duo.

“Taylor is the first to practice and the last to leave,” the coach said. “I have been very fortunate to have been able to coach her.”

Dubois is a four year athlete who brings a positive energy to the game and in addition to her ability behind the plate she is also a force at the plate. The senior catcher is a very significant part of the Gators offense.

Junior Natalie Grass will be Coonan’s back-up hurler and when not taking her turn in the circle she will find herself playing either centerfield or somewhere in the middle of the infield. According to Danish, she is very strong defensively and is able to get a great jump on the ball in the outfield.

Senior Ella Molinari, who found herself sitting on the bench last year due to a knee injury, is due to step back onto the field this year and should provide the team with a lift. Most likely she will see time in the short-stop position.

“I am very excited to have her back this year, she is an incredible athlete that provides leadership both on and off the field,” the coach said. “Last year, although hurt, she was at all the practices and games providing leadership and encouragement.”

Other seniors returning are outfielder Melissa Labbe and third baseman Jillian Carmichael. Labbe is a hustler with super quick speed and can lay down the bunt with the best of them while Carmichael has a strong arm in the field and

provides power at the plate.

Another athlete who saw time in the outfield last year will also find herself playing first base for the Gators this year. Ellie Thomas has a keen eye while at the plate and



Rounding out the seniors will be infielder Cami Bernard, who has herself an excellent command of the glove and plays great defense. At the plate, she will bat in the heart of the Grafton lineup as she can hit not only with power but for average as well. Last season Bernard had numerous clutch hits for the Gators and Danish is looking for her to continue that this spring.

Grafton’s goals are simple – Danish would love to repeat as the SWCL Champions and crack the top ten of the power rankings as they enter the tournament so that they have some home games. And if that all works, who knows Grafton may be able to make a run through the Division 2 Tournament and capture a title.

Grafton will open the season on Thursday March 30 against Shepherd Hill and will then see Wachusett pay them a visit giving the Gators two very good challenges to begin the season. After those two contests Danish will have a good idea of what type of identity this team has and what they need to work on to accomplish their goals.



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Douglas athletes 'on track' for New Balance Nationals

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

The Douglas indoor track team under the guidance of Coach Jeffrey Thayer is sending five athletes to take part in the New Balance Nationals, occurring March 3 -11 at The Track in Boston.

The Tigers will be sending representatives to run in the medley relay and the 55 meter dash.

Domonic Rossi will open the medley relay running the first 200 leg with Luke Lightbown taking the baton and the second 200 leg before passing it onto Darius Buivydas, who will run the 400 and Colin Squier will look to run the 800 past the finish line to conclude the event.

The foursome got together during last year’s outdoor season when Coach Peter Mannka put them together with the goal of

running all the way to the Nationals in Boston.

The medley relay team punched their ticket to participate in the New Balance Nationals on Friday January 13 at the Northeast Invitational Meet when they ran a 3:46.77, just under the 3:47 qualification time.

NATIONALS
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SPORTS

NATIONALS

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“The Track is a brand new facility in which everyone wants to be able to run on it,” Coach Thayer said. “I think that they

will do pretty well in the Nationals, and I am hoping that they can put together a quicker race taking 2-3 seconds off their time from Sectionals.”

At the Division 5 Sectionals Rossi, Lightbown, Buivydas and Squier set a new school record in

this season. Currently her best time in the event is 7.81 and she was able to run a 7.86 as the only middle school participant running the event at the Division 5 Sectionals. That time of 7.86 gave her 19th place overall out of a field of 32 runners in the event.

“I knew of her from the middle school coach who had given me a heads up on the younger girls looking to make the team. Her very first race, she just blew me out of the water with how fast she was,” Thayer said. “Right from the start she was more than impressive. She is someone who always has a smile on her face, works hard and enjoys every meet she takes part in.”

As one of the younger girls to be going to the Nationals, Thayer

is unsure of how she will do as he has not seen any of the other entries or their times as of this writing.

“She since first qualified for the Nationals, she has continuously been able to decrease her times in the event throughout

the year,” the Douglas coach said. “She should be able to continue that trend and run a pretty quick race. Having someone as young as she is with talent is unusual for us; we haven’t sent anyone to the Nationals since 2014.”



Above, the Douglas High track team’s medley relay team. Below, Abigail Bilodeau, Douglas’s up-and-coming 55-meter dash competitor.



the 4x400 event, breaking the old record of 3:38, which they owned, by posting a final time of 3:33.72. In doing so the four qualified to take part in the All-States on Saturday, February 25.

As the boys were doing their thing in the relay Abigail Bilodeau was running her heart out in the 55 meter dash in order to get her shot at the Nationals. Although running for the high school, Bilodeau is only a seventh grader in the Douglas Middle School. In addition to the 55, she also participates in the 300 and 4x200 relay for the Tigers. She has also qualified for the 60-meter dash in middle school.

In order to secure a spot in Boston Bilodeau needed a time of 7.93 or less, which she has accomplished on numerous times



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THE CAR DOCTOR

jpaul@aanortheast.com

Infiniti JX35's wheel balance and suspension issue is tricky



BY JOHN PAUL

Q. I own a 2013 Infiniti JX35 (today's QX60) and recently have been experiencing a suspension issue: when driving at high speed,

as well when the car goes over a bump or over a pothole, I experience a vibration through the steering column. It feels as if the wheels are vibrating. Have replaced the shocks (Infiniti OEM parts) along with lower control arms and sway bars (also OEM parts). I have gotten the tie-rods checked out by a mechanic. Have also gotten the tires balanced as well as alignment checked. While the ride has improved with the suspension parts replacement (car has 120k miles) the problem has not been fixed. The mechanic has also checked out the steering column itself. Wondering what else could be driving this feeling of wheel vibration through the steering column.

Any ideas or suggestions?

A. This model Infiniti is very fussy about wheel balance and suspension wear. There are several technical bulletins about proper procedure balancing the wheels. In addition, there are notes about checking the ball joints and control arms (transverse link). Even the slightest movement requires replacement. Since those items have been replaced, the next step is to look at the power steering itself. The other tip that I have read is the power steering pump may need an insulator (a fancy foam ring) that isolates power steering vibrations and noise.

Q. I ordered a Chevy 2500 extended cargo van on April 30 2021. You read that right, 2021. It has still not been built. After finally contacting the general manager, where I ordered it from, I was told the holdup is that I ordered an 8-cylinder engine. They offered to get me a 6-cylinder engine that they felt reasonably confident they

could order through a dealership they own in Florida. However, it would be a GMC Savana. I have no problems with a Savana. (There has been a \$5000 increase in the vans since I ordered mine). I have followed a GMC blog that someone posted that 8 cylinder engines are not being offered in vans anymore, but I cannot find any info stating this. After they showed me the build sheet, I noticed that Bluetooth was not listed. When I questioned this, I was informed that it is only available with the 8-cylinder engine. That doesn't seem right to me as I cannot see what one has to do with the other. My questions to you are: are 8 cylinder engines being offered in vans anymore? Do you have any thoughts on the 6-cylinder engine for an extended cargo van? What, if anything, does Bluetooth have to do with an 8-cylinder? Do you know what the holdup is on building these vehicles after almost 2 years? Have you ever heard of GM price protection?

A. I looked on the GMC website and the 6-cylinder engine is quite robust at 276 horsepower and 296 foot pounds of torque, and it the standard engine for this extended wheelbase 2500 series van. The 8-cylinder engine is a little over 400 horsepower and shows available. This is the same configuration for the Chevrolet Express cargo van. The dealer is correct the Bluetooth communications package according to the website is only available with the V-8 engine as a factory option. Supply chain issues and semiconductor chips are still a problem. Looking at both GMC and Chevrolet's websites there is very limited inventory of both vehicles on dealer lots or in transit to dealers. In fact I found no 2022 V-8 engine extended wheelbase vans in stock within 250 miles of my zip code. Regarding price protection, from what I have read-the big print states, if the vehicle was ordered during a certain time frame, the price won't go up. The little print states, there are exclusions and commercial vehicles may be one of them.

A. All batteries give off fumes and when they are under the hood it is not a problem. In your Traverse the battery is located in the car so there is a vent tube to allow gases to escape and prevent corrosion. You should get the vent installed, and any mechanic or DIY'er should be able to put the vent tube assembly back in the car. These vent kits are available at most auto parts stores.

Q. What are your thoughts on using a torque wrench on oil drain plugs. I recently saw a mechanic changing oil using a battery impact driver. When I asked he said he has it set to the proper torque.

A. You can't accurately tighten any fastener with a power tool, battery or air. Drain plugs have different specifications. On one of my vehicles, the drain plug is tighten to 25-32 foot pounds on the other vehicle (both 4-cylinder engines) the other is 18 foot pounds. When in doubt use a torque wrench.

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 at mrjohnfpaul.

Q. I have a 2011 Chevy traverse, just got a new AAA BATTERY installed by AAA tech. While installing I noticed a black tube and asked what that was used for, and tech said to air vent battery but my battery was missing the elbow air unit to attach and advised I get one ASAP. Do I need one of these air kits and should I get a tech to install it?

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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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