

April 28 - May 26, 2023

## Timing is right for coin shop specializing in precious metals

BY ROD LEE

Dave Delaney has worn a number of hats in the town of Millbury over the years, including as owner of a laundromat, Sudz City, and as a selectman.

Now he is the dealer principal with Delaney's Coin Shop in the Felter's Mill on West St. He specializes in coins, currency and supplies—buying and selling.

The business is a natural for him.

"I have been collecting since I was seven, forty-six years," he said on the morning of April 19th. "My mom died of COVID-19 recently," which prompted a reassessment of his priorities. With his term as a member of the Board of Selectmen ending, "I felt it was time to focus on my family and business," he said. He was standing behind a display case, one of several in which all kinds of coins are available to peruse and purchase.

"One hundred percent of our business is online," he said. Nevertheless, his shop is open 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Tuesday through Friday.

"It's a great hobby," Mr. Delaney said, of coin collecting. "It's also a good one right now. With the economy the way it is, there is a lot of interest in it. With the price of silver and gold, people are investing in precious metals."

He advises against putting these in the hands of a company that deals in that commodity, like the ones that advertise their services on radio and TV. "These are tangible items," he said of silver and gold. "Don't send them out. What if they go belly up?"

Mr. Delaney revealed that he "kind of made world news" a while



**CHAMBER**  
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Dave Delaney, owner of Delaney's Coin Shop in Millbury, holds his favorite collectible, a set of beautiful Liberty silver dollars, minted in Philadelphia, West Point, San Francisco and Denver.



Flowers and more are in bloom at the Community Harvest Project farm. (photo courtesy of the Community Harvest Project website).

## Grafton businesses primed for a busy spring season

BY CHRISTINE GALEONE

Spring is finally here. The days are growing longer. More birds are tweeting outside our windows early in the morning. And in Grafton, there are many flowers in bloom. Likewise, there are signs of the season popping up in communities and businesses around town.

But like those flowers, Grafton businesses and organizations sometimes need a little encouragement and support to truly flourish. And some of them, in turn, are also helping nature's beauty to thrive.

A springtime event that's much anticipated is an annual plant sale. On Wednesday May 10, **Community Harvest Project** will give early access to its annual **Plantapalooza** online plant sale to its monthly givers. Then, it will hold its annual plant sale for everyone from Thursday, May 11 through Sunday, May 14. Plants can be ordered online and picked up on Friday, May 19 and Saturday,

May 20. The North Grafton non-profit farm that supports hunger relief in Massachusetts will have all kinds of plants for sale, from annuals to heirloom vegetables. Information can be found by going to <https://community-harvest.org/events/>.

**Perreault Nursery & Landscape Supply**, which is located in North Grafton as well, re-opened for the season recently. Among other things, it sells a variety of flowers, bushes, trees, mulch, soil, yard and garden supplies and gifts. Additionally, its landscape design and installation services are available for purchase.

One North Grafton farm that returns in the spring each year is **Houlden Farm**. The multi-generational family-owned business sells a variety of its produce along with dairy items, baked goods and more. Recently, it has been working diligently to be able to continue operations of its **Sun-**

**GRAFTON**  
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## GRAFTON

continued from page 1

flower Shanty beer garden. After working with the Town to draft Article 29, the farm has been encouraging Grafton residents to attend the **Town Meeting** on Monday, May 8 at 7 p.m. at the Grafton High School Auditorium and vote for the Article if they would like to see the full return of the Sunflower Shanty.

**Koopman Lumber**, the hardware and paint store in North Grafton, is also well prepared for the growing seasons. Besides selling a varied selection of items that shoppers can use to enjoy spending time outdoors, all of its locations now have an abundance of flowers in their greenhouses.

Over in South Grafton, **Pete's Oasis** at Blackstone River Farm

has annuals, perennials, hanging baskets, house plants, herbs and more to create beautiful gardens. The family-owned garden center recently re-opened for the season.

The **Grafton Garden Club** has an annual event for residents to look forward to. On Saturday, May 13 from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. on the Grafton Common, the nonprofit will hold its annual plant sale and raffle. This year's event will also include a planting activity for children. Additionally, the club is now accepting applications and fees to utilize a 20-foot by 20-foot garden plot for 2023 in the **Lee Knowlton Community Garden**. More information can be found on the club's

website, [graftongardenclub.org](http://graftongardenclub.org).

And those who want a frozen treat after all that gardening might want to head to North Grafton. **Swirls & Scoops**, the ice cream and frozen yogurt shop has re-opened its windows for the season.

Our local businesses and organizations need support all throughout the year. But spring seems to be a particularly perfect time to help them grow and flourish.

Contact Christine with your business news items at [cmgale-one15@gmail.com](mailto:cmgale-one15@gmail.com).

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## COIN SHOP

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back when he discovered and returned \$534 a woman had left in her clothing at the laundromat. He became an overnight sensation, with reporters and camera crews appearing out of thin air.

"It's one of the times in your life that you never forget," he said, laughing. "What an experience that was."

Returning that money typifies the creed he lives by, he says. "Be honest, ethical and legal."

Asked about stacks of "money" that looks real he has in the shop, he smiled and said "that's motion picture money. Worthless. I bought a million dollars of it. When I opened a suitcase full of that money my wife said to me 'my God, what have you done!'"

The money is "just a conversation piece," he said.



Stacks of "motion picture money" are good for conversation at Delaney's Coin Shop.

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**4th Friday:** Auburn, Charlton, Dudley, Oxford & Webster - other 1/2 of all addresses  
**4th Friday:** Blackstone Valley North: Grafton, Millbury & Sutton.

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# Xpressly Yours ... a letter from the editor

## A Hannaford remodel...and a Big Y coming to town?

Notes taken along the trail, while waiting to see how efforts to speed up the game of professional baseball play out in the major leagues and at Polar Park—and in anticipation of the Worcester Bravehearts' season opener against the Norwich Sea Unicorns at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, May 24th .

BY ROD LEE

The expression “can't find the chips!” and others like it are commonly heard at the Hannaford supermarket these days, as the store undergoes an extensive renovation and redesign—its first, customers say, in many years.

Along with this, there is widespread speculation that a Big Y is going to be setting up shop in the near future just down the road, at the former site of sand pits in South Uxbridge.

Google “Big Y in Uxbridge?” and the result is an “offering memorandum” from Horvath & Tremblay for space to lease in what appears to be a listing for a new-construction plaza just north of the towns of Blackstone and Millville that will apparently be anchored by a Big Y. “Nothing yet,” however, by way of commitments, according to Bob Horvath, executive vice president of Horvath & Tremblay.

The arrival of a Big Y would of course mean serious competition for Hannaford—the former Victory. Victory stores were started by the DiGeronimo family of Leominster in 1923 and sold to Hannaford in 2004.

Springfield-based Big Y boasts more than eighty locations in Massachusetts and Connecticut, and employs over 72,000 people.

Horvath & Tremblay notes that 222,000-plus individuals live within ten miles of the prospec-



Redesign of its produce area is a work in progress, as Hannaford Supermarkets' Uxbridge store undergoes a major facelift. The remodel is expected to be finished by mid-June.

tive grounds of a Big Y, with an average household income of \$115,889.

Caitlin Cortelyou, external communications manager for Hannaford Supermarkets, gave me the following statement about improvements being made to the company's North Main Street, Uxbridge store:

“We anticipate the upgrades currently underway at our Uxbridge store to be complete in mid-June. Designed to enhance the overall shopping experience, the remodeled store will feature a fresh look, as well as new products and services to make shopping as easy and convenient as possible for our customers.

“We're excited to introduce a greater variety of grab-and-go meal options to our already expansive selection of fresh, quality items, including hot soups, chef-crafted sushi, hot and boneless wings, ready-to-heat and ready-to-eat entrees and flatbread pizza, freshly made sandwiches and salads, and pasta and taco meal kits.

“An enhanced selection of organic and natural products and

dairy and frozen items will be available, as well as a greater variety of local products storewide.

“Customers will also enjoy more fine cheeses.

“As a thank you to customers, the Uxbridge store will offer a variety of special giveaways, coupons and offers for shoppers in June and July.”

Ms. Cortelyou (she/her) told me anything to do with the rumors about a Big Y would have to come from Big Y, a hard outfit to get in touch with.

Meanwhile, Hannaford's Uxbridge store is looking better by the week, as a familiar market gets a new look and feel.

▪ Speaking of the Bravehearts, the team has sold out their June 6 and June 7 games, for the earliest sellouts in the Futures Collegiate Baseball League perennial contender's ten-year history.

▪ Looking forward to the

Blackstone Valley Education Foundation's annual Business & Education Forum at the Grand View in Mendon on April 13th... more later.

▪ The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce is touting a ribbon-cutting ceremony on May 11th at 12:00 noon at Manchaug Mills, 9 Main St., Sutton, for the new Heirloom Emporium.

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## Ribbon cutting is May 3rd for Family Orthodontics in North Grafton

Join the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce on Wednesday, May 3rd at 10:00 a.m. for a grand opening ribbon-cutting event at Family Orthodontics, 80 Worcester Street, North Grafton.

Family Orthodontics is dedicated to providing outstanding orthodontic care and customer service to you and your family and is located in three convenient locations, North Grafton, Milford and Westborough. Family Orthodontics works hard to treat their patients the same way they would like to be treated: with respect,

professionalism, and sensitivity toward your needs. Their practice utilizes the most advanced techniques available, including Invisalign® clear aligners and Damon® Smile, to provide the most effective and efficient treatment for both children and adults.

From TMJ to braces, under bites and overbites, surgical orthodontics, or simply looking for that perfect smile, Family Orthodontics is your dental specialist for the proper treatment, prevention and care for your smile!

Jeannie Hebert, president and CEO of the Blackstone Valley

Chamber of Commerce, said, "The Chamber is excited to welcome Family Orthodontics to the Blackstone Valley offering such caring orthodontic services to all ages. Family Orthodontics works hard to ensure you and your family feel comfortable, safe and welcome while in their care. There has never been a better time to work towards that smile you've always wanted!"

This event is free and open to the public. We hope to see you there!

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Shop Small Spring Fling

## Merchants line up Spring Fling for Mother's Day weekend

BY CHRISTINE GUANIPA

Shop Small Spring Fling, it's a thing! Join us on Saturday and Sunday, May 6th and 7th, for another fun weekend of supporting local businesses and enter to win a \$100 gift card. Sponsored by The Women of Massachusetts Engagement Network, this event comes just in time for Mother's Day.

The concept is simple: for each participating business you visit, you'll be entered into a raffle to win a \$100 gift card (to your choice of one of the small businesses participating). There is NO purchase necessary to be entered into the raffle. You will simply email W.O.M.E.N. a photo of your passport at the end of the

weekend and you'll be entered into the raffle.

W.O.M.E.N. loves to support small local businesses. And we know this is a fun way for you to support them too! For a complete list of participating merchants visit [www.letsempowerwomen.com](http://www.letsempowerwomen.com). Register online so you can receive an email with the passport the week of May 1st.

Email questions to [WomenOfMaEngagementNetwork@gmail.com](mailto:WomenOfMaEngagementNetwork@gmail.com).

Participating local Whitinsville businesses include Little Man Originals, 110 Church St.; LuLu's Jewelry & Gifts; Maison de Manger; The Green Plate; and Katalina's Boutique.

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# New Law May Offer Financial Opportunities



Mark Freeman

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Your own decisions and actions typically determine your financial strategies. But outside events can affect your choices, too. And that may be the case with the recent passage of the SECURE 2.0 Act.

This piece of legislation covers many areas. But here are some changes that may be of interest to you, depending on your situation:

### If you're a retiree ...

- **Higher age for RMDs** – The

age at which you must take withdrawals — known as required minimum distributions, or RMDs — from your traditional IRA and 401(k) has increased from 72 to 73, effective this year. (If you turned 72 in 2022, but still haven't taken your first RMD, you will need to do so this year.) And in 2033, the RMD age will increase again, to 75. You don't have to wait until these ages before taking withdrawals, but the new age limits may affect your withdrawal decisions.

- **Lower penalties for missed RMDs** – If you don't take at least the RMD for a given year, you could face tax penalties. Previously, this penalty was 50% of the amount you were supposed to have taken but now it's reduced to 25%.

- **New options for qualified charitable distributions** – If you're 70½ or older, you can make a one-time qualified charitable distribution (QCD) of up to \$50,000 to entities that previ-

ously couldn't receive these QCDs, including charitable remainder annuity trusts, charitable remainder unitrusts and charitable gift annuities that meet certain criteria. Because QCDs are typically excluded from your taxable income and could satisfy some or all of your required RMDs, which are otherwise taxable, these expanded opportunities may prove beneficial from a tax standpoint. Consult with your tax advisor to determine if and how QCDs make sense for your situation.

### If you're still working ...

- **Roth contributions to retirement plans** – Starting this year, if you participate in a 401(k) or similar plan, you can take your employer's matching and other contributions on a Roth basis. While these contributions will count as taxable income, they can ultimately be withdrawn, along with any earnings they generate, tax free, provided you meet certain conditions.

### If you're a business owner ...

- **Increased tax credit for starting a retirement plan** – If you have 50 or fewer employees, you can now claim a startup credit covering 100% — up from 50% — of the administrative costs of opening a 401(k) plan, up to \$5,000 for each of the first three years of the plan.

- **Employer contribution credit** – You may now be able to get a tax credit based on employee matching or profit-sharing contributions. This credit is capped at \$1,000 per employee and phases out gradually over five years.

- **Military spouse tax incentive** – If you have 100 or fewer employees who earn at least \$5,000 annually, you can earn a tax credit of up to \$500 for three years if you make military spouses eligible for a retirement plan, such as a 401(k) or SEP IRA. You can receive the credit for the year in which the military spouse is hired, plus the next two taxable years.

These aren't the only provi-

sions in the SECURE 2.0 Act that may be relevant to you, and some parts of the new law go into effect in the future. You may want to contact your financial and tax advisors to see just how you might ultimately be affected by this legislation, and how you could take advantage of it.

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## BVCC sponsoring new grant opportunity for small businesses

The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce announces that the deadline is Friday, April 28th to apply online for portions of the \$78 million for new grant programs to support Massachusetts small businesses being made available by the Healey-Driscoll Administration.

"Small businesses are the backbone of our communities and our economy," Gov. Maura Healey said. "Through these new grant programs, small businesses will have access to much-needed capital and resources to help them grow and thrive. We're grateful to our partners in the Legislature for allocating these crucial funds."

The inclusive Recovery Grant Program will provided up to \$75 million in funding through grants of up to \$75,000 for businesses owned by people of color, women, veterans, immigrants, individuals with disabilities, or those who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community; businesses that focus on reaching markets predominately made up of socially and economically disadvantaged and historically

underrepresented groups; and other underserved markets.

The Independent Movie Theater Grant Program will provide a total of \$3 million in funding to support movie theaters in Massachusetts. Eligible applicants can receive \$15,000 for each of the first two screens they add at a particular location and \$10,000 for each additional screen at a particular location.

These funds will be administered by MGCC and were appropriated through the Commonwealth's FY 2023 Economic Development Bill.

"Small businesses employ half the workforce in our state and account for the majority of all our businesses," Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll said. "We're pleased this targeted funding will support small business owners who have traditionally struggled to access needed capital and those serving historically underrepresented populations."

"Our small business owners and entrepreneurs, many of whom are women, people of color, veterans, and immigrants, need access to capital in order to

get their ventures off the ground and expand the footprint in Massachusetts," Economic Development Secretary Yvonne Hao said. "We are grateful to MGCC for playing an important role in empowering small business owners and advancing equitable business growth across the state."

"These programs provide an accessible and streamlined process for underserved businesses to access the capital that will be instrumental to their growth," Larry Andrews, president and CEO of MGCC, said.

"Our extensive network of community partners is actively reaching out to their local businesses to provide the necessary technical assistance to assist through the application process."

Businesses interested in applying must fill out and submit the online application along with required documentation at <https://www.empoweringsmallbusiness.org/>.

## Armenian Genocide scars remain more than a century later

BY REP. DAVID MURADIAN JR.

April 24th marks the 108th commemoration of the Armenian Genocide. Our Armenian history is well documented, save for a select few who seem to think that having a revisionist's view of history somehow changes it.

On April 24, 1915, most Armenian doctors, educators, writers, intellectuals, lawyers and community leaders were rounded up and viciously killed, or forced into death marches. This massacre left over 1.5 million Armenian dead from the actions of Young Turk Government members.

Genocide across the world has had a profound effect, and there is no doubt that this was a horrific incident, encased in a horrid part of history. Unspeakable crimes, committed by undeserving-to-mention individuals, and by a community and government who still to this day overwhelmingly deny this history.

We must recognize the

happenings of 108 years ago. Wounds heal, but scars certainly remain. The healing process truly begins when all involved take responsibility for their role. We will never be able to change what happened, but we can all help with continuing to educate, so that history never repeats itself.

Armenian-Americans and human rights supporters must continue to teach individuals of this history. We must take time to reflect and remember all of our family and friends whose lives were taken. There is no mistake that we have a dark cloud hanging over our heritage due to horrific actions from others. However, we also have a ray of sunshine shining through, and that is our successes and survival.

Sincerely,

Proud Armenian-American, and State Representative, David Muradian

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 "What's up bud?"

# Team effort results in crowd-pleasing Chamber Expo

BY ROD LEE

As members of the nine-person committee in charge of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's Home & Community Expo, Chris Whitten of Premeer Real Estate and Ashling Rowen of Infinity Events were pleased with this year's event, held on March 25th at Northbridge High School.

Chamber President and CEO Jeannie Hebert, staffers Liz O'Neil and Kristen Kearnan, Heather Elster of the Whittin Community Center, Wendy Brown of Uni-Bank, Ashley Daviau and Tony Romniou were also on the organizing committee for the Expo.

"I love it," Mr. Whitten said, of the 23rd version of the Expo. "I had clam chowder for lunch!"

Premeer was both one of the sponsors of Expo, and a participating exhibitor.

The Expo returned in 2022 for the first time since the pandemic, and was welcomed again this spring by a long line of people waiting to get in at 10 o'clock, as Mary Whittier's daughter Samantha (Whittier) Staebner from Whittier Farms handed out packets of cheese.

"Every year people ask 'is this



going to be the last one' because everything is going virtual," Mr. Whitten said. "For me, it's a chance for people in the Blackstone Valley to get together." In fact, that explains a name change, he said, noting the replacement of the word "Business" with the word "Community."

Premeer Real Estate is based in Smithfield, Rhode Island, but Mr. Whitten's roots are in Uxbridge. A Uxbridge High grad, Class of 1995, and the father of five children, he is active in town cleanups, fireworks and the Uniquely Uxbridge Day. His par-

ents and several siblings still live in Uxbridge. As a businessperson, he is proud of Premeer's giveback program; "\$150 of every closing is turned over to charity," he said.

As a planner of memorable events for her own clients, Ms. Rowen also appreciated having a role in the Expo.

"I was asked to assist with the logistical details for the Expo and worked with Liz O'Neil," Ms. Rowen said. "I felt that the day went flawlessly."

She developed an interest in coordinating "remarkable events" from the age of seven and used the Hospitality program at Endicott College as a springboard into an internship planning high-end events in Ireland and Europe and then a career in hotels and nonprofits before starting her own company.

Ms. Rowen noted that every feature of the Expo was planned to assure the satisfaction for both the exhibitors and the attendees, "from the exhibitor lounge for them to have a quiet place to go and get a coffee or a snack to the check-in process, everything was fantastic."



Above, Marcus Seedhom, postmaster in Linwood, asked for and received a Koopman Lumber bucket, a popular item at the Expo. Left, Harry Berkowitz and Russ Youmans were present on behalf of WCRN 830 AM at the Expo. The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce has a close working relationship with the radio station.

Each element of the Expo from Easter Bunny photos to a mascot dance contest to a performance by Murphy's Irish Step Dancers ran on time and people "enjoyed the entertainment," she said. "While walking around and checking on exhibitors and vendors," she saw that those in attendance "seemed to really enjoy their conversations at each booth and each exhibit was very engaged with the guests."

Ms. Rowen said the chowder competition was "a great hit."

Overall, Ms. Rowen said, Chamber staff "was on top of every detail. Nothing was overlooked. This was definitely a huge team effort."

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



Members of a younger generation helped represent Harbro Auto Sales at the Expo: Present were James Donnelly, Abby Donnelly, Emmet Hare, Ken Donnelly and Jonah Hare.

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# A fundraising Gala and special events mark WCC's 100th

BY ROD LEE

In this, its 100th-anniversary year, the Whitin Community Center has demonstrated an ability to stand the test of time. It would be easy to assume, then, that the sturdy, low-slung brick structure and grounds on Main Street, just west of Memorial Square, have never experienced challenging moments.

In fact, just the opposite is true, the WCC's executive director, Heather Elster, pointed out during a conversation in the main lobby of the building on March 21st.

Most recently, "the Gym," as the facility is called in local parlance—just as the former Whitin Machine Works, across the street, is referred to, affectionately, as "the Shop"—underwent a struggle as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Closed for several months and with each of its departments facing their "own set of regulations" in dealing with the crisis, the Community Center was knocked off its firm foothold.

"At one point we were down to 30% of our membership," Ms.

Elster said.

"We received PPP loans in partnership with UniBank" in surviving the ordeal, she said.

The Community Center has clawed its way back, as it did after a devastating fire in 1959.

"We always say the Whitins built it very well," she said.

A plaque recognizing George Marston Whitin hangs in the lobby.

Approaching two decades with the Community Center, and nearly ten years as executive director, Ms. Elster has proven to be a worthy successor (after two other short-termers) to Charlie Thompson. A

small-town Connecticut girl and graduate of Connecticut College in New London, she brings to the position of executive director the same commitment that guided Mr. Thompson's actions in establishing himself as a pillar on the business scene in the Blackstone Valley.

Ms. Elster has utilized her employment and outside-activities background to move the Community Center forward with a mix of social, recreational, educational and outreach programs designed to meet the needs of residents of all



Alice Bridges of Uxbridge trained in the Whitin Community Center pool and competed in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin.

ages in the Blackstone Valley. The competition pool was done over, the Rockdale Youth Center was opened ("our first big project"), roofs were replaced, and flooring in the child-care rooms was upgraded.

Her resume is extensive. She is a co-founder of Soccer Kicks for Cancer, a member of the Northbridge Coalition (civil rights and social action), part of the leadership team of the Blackstone River Bikeway Association, on the executive steering committee for the town of Sutton's 300th anniversary, part of a Sutton-Douglas support group, part of People First in Uxbridge, a member of CHNA 6 (a community health network) and a member of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's Women's Success Network—for instance.

She is a recipient of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women Unsung Heroine Award, and has been recognized as a Worcester Business Journal 40-under-40.

Overseeing the operations of the Community Center is the best job



The Whitin Community Center on Main St. in Whitinsville. The facility is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2023 with a fundraising Gala in May and other special activities throughout the year.

in the world, she says.

"I love working here. It's nice to be part of the community. We should feel grateful we're still here after one hundred years."

In observance of its milestone, the Community Center will host a 100th Anniversary Fundraiser Gala on May 6th. Appropriately, this black tie-optional sit-down event will take place in the WCC gymnasium and will include cocktails, dinner, dancing, a live auction, a commemorative photo gallery and more.

The gym is being renovated for the occasion. "It hasn't been touched since the fire in '59," she said. At a cost of \$250,000, repairs will be made and the floor will be replaced.

"We will do AC in there for the first time," she noted; though not in time for the Gala.

The Gala headlines a series of happenings associated with the anniversary. These began with a Kids Fair and Eggstravaganza on April 1st.

Following the Gala in early May, on Saturday, June 10th, "we are bringing back Picnic in the Park," Ms. Elster said. "It's been over ten years since we had it. This should be fun," restoring to the calendar "a favorite," with food trucks, a dunk tank, carnival games, a doll and pet parade, vendors, "and maybe foam!"

On July 21st and 22nd, the WCC's free Youth Outreach Summer Theatre student-led production will take place at ValleyCast's Singh Performance Center at Open Sky.

Cars in the Park will take center stage on Saturday, August 19th in Whitin Park.

The WCC's Benefit Golf Tournament is planned for Monday, September 11th. That same month, on the 30th, features the Greenway Challenge, one of New England's premier adventure races.

The month of October includes a Halloween Haunted Swim & Roller Skating Costume Party on the

20th and "Nightmare on Main St." on the 27th. The former includes a kids open swim with Halloween music and pool toys and a kids open skate with Halloween costumes and music. The WCC's "Nightmare on Main Street" returns on the 27th in Whitin Park, which will be transformed into a spooky outdoor haunted trail for middle schoolers and up. There will be food trucks and goodie bags.

A WCC Appreciation, thanking "our hundreds of volunteers, donors, sponsors, members, guests and staff," will wrap up 100th festivities on Thursday, November 16th.

But there's more. "Santa's coming" on Saturday, December 9th.

Sidetracked temporarily by the pandemic, the Whitin Community Center has maintained its focus on health and wellness as "the most complete family and recreation facility" in the area with two swimming pools, a gym, a fitness center, early-learning programs, a weight room, summer camps and a seven and a half acre park.


The Community Center owes its heritage to George Marston Whitin, treasurer and CEO of the Whitin Machine Works from 1886 to 1920. Mr. Whitin prized service to community. He planned construction of a place where residents of the region could swim and socialize.

After G.M. Marston's death his daughters Elsa, Katharine, Lois and Elsa provided the funding that saw his vision through to completion of the gym and pool. During the 1920s and 1930s the WCC was known for its excellent aquatic program and served as a regional training site. Several local swimmers went on to compete nationally and internationally including Alice Bridges of Uxbridge, who finished second in the 100-meter backstroke in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin.

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



WCC Executive Director Heather Elster, right, with her Greenway Challenge team: Debra Moore, John Beaupre, Richard Nelson, Robert Naser and Stephen Witkus.



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# Early Learning Center provides nurturing, high-quality care to Grafton families

**Business**  
**spotlight**

BY CHRISTIE VOGT  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER



A sense of peace for the parents, a sense of love and security for the kids — that’s what Maureen Rosenlund hopes to give to the families enrolled at Connect United Early Learning Centers. Rosenlund, the executive director of the centers, oversees the organization’s three sites in Grafton (The Early Learning Center), Ashland (Dream Station) and Bellingham (Wee Folk). She began her career more than 30 years ago as a teacher at Wee Folk where her own children later attended preschool. “When we say that you’re part of a second family at our centers, I can attest to what that truly means,” she says.

That feeling of sincere connection was put to the test during the most challenging months of the pandemic. Rosenlund became emotional describing how Connect United, the nonprofit that owns the centers, continued to pay its employees during the lockdown and how families also supported the sites during a time of great uncertainty. “So many families continued to pay tuition, and Connect United walked out in faith knowing the burden that employees would have without any income,” she says.

Despite serious challenges, the pandemic has made Connect centers stronger, Rosenlund says. “It was an opportunity for us to show families they could trust us,” she explains. “As health regulations emerged, we met and exceeded those guidelines, and those changes have made us better.

We really raised the bar by adding staff, improving ratios and finding new ways for children to play and learn.”

Even as pandemic restrictions ended, the centers chose to retain certain changes that have benefited families and employees. “We didn’t just settle back in. We made a comeback,” Rosenlund says. “We learned to be more flexible for families as work schedules have changed, which has meant adjusting our hours, holding slots and showing parents extra compassion as they navigate the anxieties of both parenthood and COVID.”

The three sites offer child care for infants through preschool-age children in addition to after-school care. Connect Church owns the centers, although each site is secular and open to all families. Outside of its early learning centers, Connect Church has campuses in Ashland, Framingham and Bellingham where families can get involved with the ministry through various services and programs.

Rosenlund says that each learning center is committed to providing a nurturing environment where children receive individualized care. “We believe in a child-centered versus teacher-directed approach,” Rosenlund says, “because that’s how children learn best in the early years.” One

Grafton parent said her daughter has “grown so much” during her time at the center, and she is grateful to the staff for “being nurturers, educators and cheerleaders.”

As demand remains high for child care, the Connect centers are hiring additional staff. “If educators are looking for stability, we are a great fit,” Rosenlund says, noting that the core team has been with the organization for 15 to 20 years. “Whether you have a master’s degree or you’re just starting out in education, we’re here to coach you and be a team,” she says. “Everyone has the opportunity to contribute, and we encourage seasoned staff to mentor those who are newer to the field.”

In addition to supporting professional goals, Rosenlund says the centers are invested in the personal well-being of employees. “We want them to be the best version of themselves,” she says. One Grafton educator said: “I can’t thank [the administration] enough for allowing me to be part of this team. I have learned so many life skills and so much about myself.”

Speaking about the team’s goals,



Educator Stephanie Smith engages in an activity with children at the Early Learning Center in Grafton

Rosenlund concludes: “Ultimately, by providing a stable and loving environment, we hope children will leave our centers with strong confidence and self-esteem so they’re ready to venture off to school.”

For more information on the Early Learning Center (2 Elliot Trail, Grafton), contact onsite director Carolyn Vaccaro at 508-839-2442, or visit [elcmmw.org](http://elcmmw.org).

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# Foundation celebrates connections and partnerships

BY ROD LEE

Rob Knapp knows a little something about the importance of the Blackstone Valley Education Foundation. The BVEF in turn understands the worth of what he does as a teacher of physics and engineer-

ing in the Milford Public Schools.

Mr. Knapp was one of five individuals and organizations saluted as grant recipients of the Foundation during a forum held at the Myriad Ballroom in Mendon on the evening of April 13th.

"It's probably my third grant," Mr. Knapp said, beaming, the

award he was presented with in his hands as he watched the ceremony unfold. "I use it for equipment for a maker space. It's a way to get infrastructural purchases."

Like Mr. Knapp, the other grantees have put dollars received through the Foundation to good use. Jill Foulis of Blackstone-Millville for "Introduction to College Field Trips;" Amanda Gallerani of Uxbridge for "Robotics at the TAFT Learning Center;" Kerianne Kimble of Northbridge for "Preschool Social-Emotional Core Materials;" and Jill Redding of Northbridge for "Preschool Social-Emotional Learning Core Materials."

The night afforded Joscelyn Young, executive director of the Blackstone Valley Education Foundation, and Danielle Wence, marketing director, a chance to honor partners involved in "connecting activities."

Included among these were the Grafton Public Schools and the Blackstone Valley Education Hub for a strengthened collaboration to help shape current and future programs at the Foundation; Central MassHire for its steadfast support of the Foundation with funding; the "Tom and Tom Team" for providing such items as coolers, beer, glasses, T-shirts,



Blackstone Valley Education Foundation grant recipient Rob Knapp, left, with his award; and Foundation Executive Director Joscelyn Young inviting forum attendees to join her for the ceremony.

snacks and WooSox tickets; Mike Baldasarre and Peter Marano for their efforts in the area of professional development; UniBank and Osterman for their financial support of school grants to "help students grow and flourish;" and Lisa Donovan of Arts in the Valley and Macy Hutchinson of the Green Bean Project for "integrating arts" as a way to help children develop "high-demand employability skills."

"I want connections," Charlie Bateman, senior external relations manager for Saint Gobain in Northborough, said, in explaining his reason for attending. "We are looking to get more involved in the STEM pipeline. Sometimes the educational system beats that out of people."

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

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## M36 Jackson Tank Destroyer undergoes restoration at the AHM

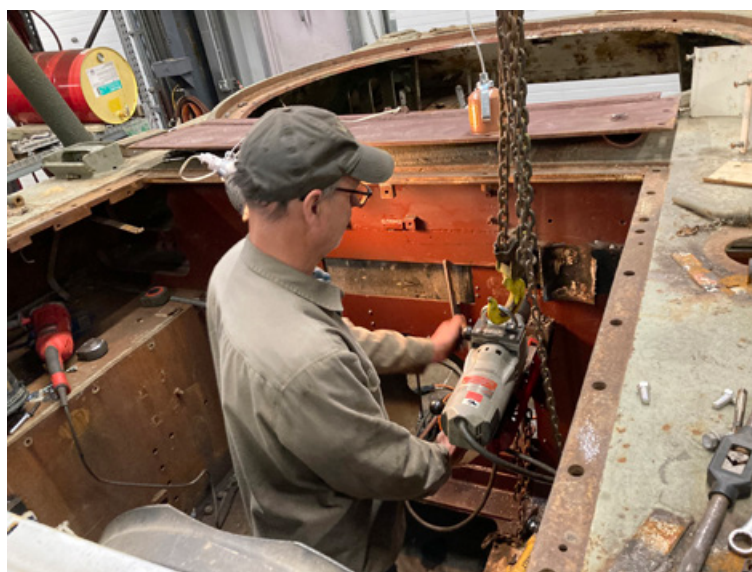
Under restoration in the American Heritage Museum's restoration workshop in Hudson is the original World War II vintage M36 Jackson Tank Destroyer. Under the supervision of Team Leader Dick Moran, volunteers have been hard at work reconfiguring the engine compartment and transmission back to original World War II standards with a Ford GAA V-8 engine as this particular M36 was one of 399 purchased by Yugoslavia and re-equipped with a 500 HP Soviet diesel engine used in the T-55.

Once complete, the M36 will operate as it did in World War II.

The M36 was completely stripped over the winter and has been fully sandblasted inside and out. It has been primed for paint. Internal compartments are being reinstalled.

The M36 will be on display along with other famous tanks during the American Heritage Museum's World War II Tank Demonstration Weekend, May 27th and 28th.

Tanks visitors can see include the M4 Sherman, the M24 Chaffee, the M5 Stuart, the M18 Hellcat, the M26 Pershing and the M36 Jackson



Volunteer Jim Winroth works with the newly rebuilt cabin firewall in the M36 Jackson Tank Destroyer at the American Heritage Museum.

Tank Destroyer for the first time.

Gates open at 9:00 a.m. and the grounds are open until 5:00 p.m. both days.

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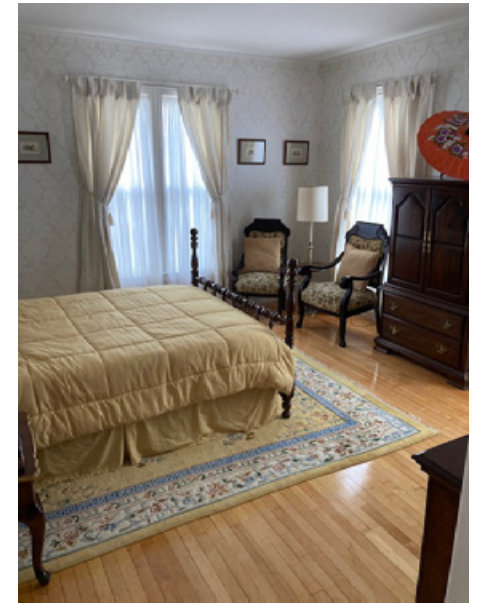
Group will be on site and tank driving demonstrations will be ongoing throughout the event.

The AHM is located at 568 Main St. in Hudson.

Visit <https://www.americanheritagemuseum.org>.

# A Walk in the Park

Four historic residences in the town of Uxbridge will be open for public viewing on Sunday, April 30th from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., as part of a spring house tour (A Walk in the Park) sponsored by the Uxbridge Historic District Commission. Stop by 46 Capron St., 236 Mendon St., 35 Capron St. and 115 So. Main St. to experience homes that have stood the test of time.



Unlike some other homes in the neighborhood that have been “bastardized” over the years, Peter Frabotta’s residence at 46 Capron St. has undergone only enhancement from its original state, as depicted in these photos of various rooms. The home will be open as part of a spring house tour being sponsored by the Uxbridge Historic District Commission on April 30<sup>th</sup>.



Left, Tim and Kristina Johnson are pictured inside of the Zadock (Taft) House at 115 So. Main St. Right, The Donaldson Holdings Trust home at 35 Capron St. is undergoing continued restoration. The home has been the scene of many political functions, including a campaign event for John F. Kennedy.



Karen Beane’s home at 236 Mendon St. — the former “Keegan House” — is set back from the road and bordered by a wall, allowing for privacy. The living room, one of ten in the home, includes a beautiful fireplace.



Peter Frabotta on the steps of 46 Capron St., a home he has meticulously updated with beautiful furnishings and overall improvements.

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# Large home-building company donates \$10,000 to BVT

**P**ulteGroup, Inc. (NYSE: PHM), one of America's largest homebuilders, announced recently that its New England division has contributed \$10,000 to the Blackstone Valley Tech Educational Foundation, Inc. The donation will be used to improve the learning and experience of students in the Advanced Manufacturing & Fabrication (Welding), Construction Technology, Electrical, HVAC&R, and Plumbing programs at Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School (BVT).

"Giving back to the communities we serve is an important part of our culture at PulteGroup," said Brian Lupien, vice president of operations for PulteGroup's New England division. "At BVT, incredible work happens every day to prepare tomorrow's leaders for the many family-sustaining career possibilities in the homebuilding trades. We are proud to do our part to support their efforts and help more students get a head start on their future."

Located in Upton, BVT serves the 13 towns of Blackstone Valley and offers 18 vocational-technical

programs with a challenging academic curriculum, as well as post-secondary programs. The high school is known for meeting the rigorous and relevant standards of modern industry with its rich offering of career vocational-technical shops. BVT prides itself on how it integrates classroom learning and real-world, hands-on projects.

"On behalf of the BVT school community, I want to thank PulteGroup for their generous donation," said Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick Superintendent-Director of Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School. "Thanks to partners like PulteGroup, we are able to provide our students with the highest quality vocational-technical education that are central to the careers of today and tomorrow."

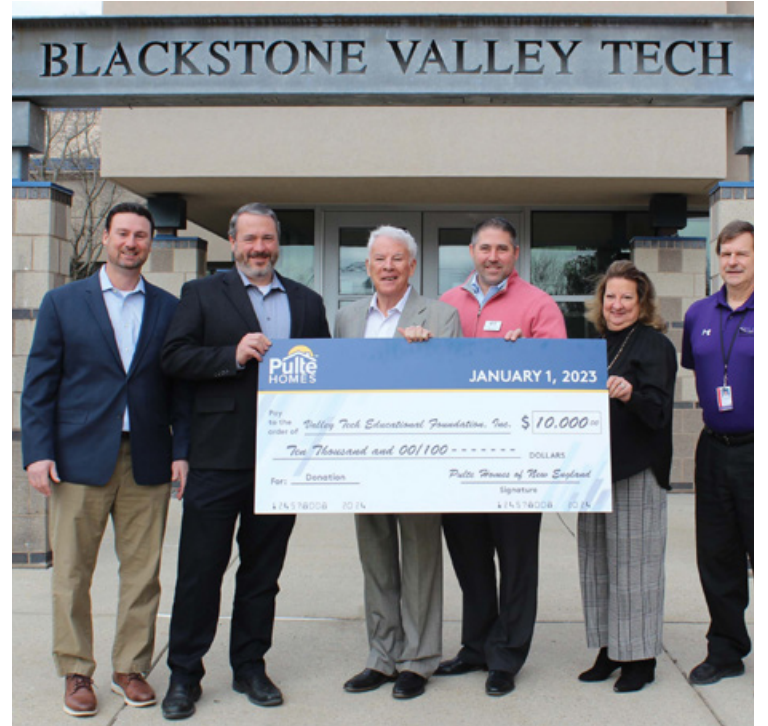
PulteGroup's New England division builds new construction homes and communities in the greater Boston area and Southern Connecticut. The company offers garden-style condominiums, townhomes, single-family home styles, under its renown Pulte Homes brand, and Pulte Homes

Active Adult and Del Webb brands for 55+ buyers.

For more information about Pulte's homes in Massachusetts visit: [www.pulte.com/homes/massachusetts/greater-boston-area](http://www.pulte.com/homes/massachusetts/greater-boston-area). To learn more about its homes in Connecticut, including The Links at Oxford Greens by Del Webb community visit: [www.pulte.com/homes/connecticut/southern-connecticut](http://www.pulte.com/homes/connecticut/southern-connecticut)

## ABOUT PULTEGROUP CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

Formed in March 2022, the PulteGroup Charitable Foundation is funded with a portion of PulteGroup's pre-tax income on an annual basis – including a \$3 million founding commitment made in 2022. As part of this commitment, each Division is allocated funds support local charities aligned with the foundation's priorities. The foundation is governed by a 9-member board consisting of PulteGroup employees across all disciplines and locations, with three pillars of focus: giving back to active military members and veterans, meeting housing needs, and educating the next generation of homebuilders. For more



From the left, Mark Mastroianni, PulteGroup New England Division director of land planning and entitlement; Brian Lupien, the company's vice president of operations; Dr. Michael Fitzpatrick, BVT superintendent director; Dr. Matthew Connors, vocational director, Michele Denise, vocational director; and Stephen Grabowski, assessment coordinator.

information about the PulteGroup Charitable Foundation and the

Company's values, visit [pultegroupcares.com](http://pultegroupcares.com).

# Booklovers' Gourmet poised for Independent Bookstore Day



Author appearances are a regular happening at Booklovers' Gourmet in Webster. Here Leslie Wheeler talks about Wolf Bog and other mystery novels she has written, during a visit.

**I**ndependent Bookstore Day across the nation on Saturday, April 29th will give Booklovers' Gourmet a chance to share with customers all that the store has to offer after three years at its current location at 72 E. Main St. in Webster.

Owner Debra Ostrokolowicz opened Booklovers' Gourmet in March 1995 with the idea of making the store a cultural oasis in her hometown of Webster. Booklovers' features new and gently used books, from the

hard-to-find to bestsellers, and a curated selection of staff picks. Books can be specially order at no additional charge.

Booklovers' also carries hand-picked unique gifts, journals, bookmarks, pottery mugs, local art, gemstone jewelry, incense, handcrafted soaps and soys, candles, jigsaw puzzles and children's toys.

To mark Independent Bookstore Day, Booklovers' Gourmet is hosting Tom Ingrassia, co-author of "One Door Closes:

Overcoming Adversity By Following Your Dreams."

Mr. Ingrassia will be in the store from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Another author will take center stage at Booklovers' on Saturday, May 6th when Coralee Dubeau signs copies of her new memoir "Language of the Sacred."

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# Sen. Moore: Millbury in line for water-quality loans and grants

*NOTE: Projects can receive reduced borrowing rates for participating in Housing Choice Initiative and principal forgiveness for financing renewable energy projects or by meeting affordability criteria*

The Healey-Driscoll Administration recently announced that 185 projects across the Commonwealth are eligible to receive approximately \$1.3 billion in low-interest-rate loans and grants to fund construction, planning and asset management projects designed to improve water quality, upgrade or replace aging drinking water and wastewater infrastructure and cut treatment plant energy use and costs. These offerings include nearly \$173 million in additional funding from the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).

The following projects in the Second Worcester District are eligible to receive loans and grants:

- Millbury Aquarion Water Company Jacques Wells Water Treatment Facility - \$6,731,250 Millbury/

Upper Blackstone Water Pollution Abatement District Standby Power for Resiliency – \$10,000,000

- Shrewsbury Rolfe & Maple Ave PS Upgrade and FM Replacement – \$9,820,000

- Westborough Oak Street WTP PFAS Improvements – \$6,311,731
- Worcester Quinsigamond Avenue CSO Facility Upgrades – \$14,090,000
- Worcester Lake Avenue Pumping Station Improvements – \$6,200,000

“Clean water is non-negotiable,” said Sen. Michael Moore (D-Millbury). “These investments announced by the Healey Administration will improve our drinking water systems and make our wastewater infrastructure more resilient, preserving our clean water supply while also protecting us from dangers like PFAS contamination. I will continue to support initiatives that put the health and safety of Bay Staters first – the way it should be.”

The State Revolving Fund

(SRF) financing is administered by the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust and finances projects implemented by cities and towns, regional water supply and wastewater treatment districts, and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA). The projects include 61 clean water construction projects (see Table 1) totaling approximately \$880 million and 50 drinking water construction projects (see Table 1) totaling approximately \$381 million. An additional \$4 million will be offered by the Trust as grants for 39 Asset Management Planning projects. Communities offered SRF financing in this round must decide to move forward with the project by June 30, 2023, and secure local funding authority.

In accordance with the Clean Energy Results Program under the direction of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), 35 of the water infrastructure projects receiving financing are for renewable energy, energy efficiency or green infrastructure initiatives. Energy use at wastewater and drinking water treatment facilities is a major contributor to overall energy consumption for many cities and towns, with communities statewide spending approximately \$150 million per year on electricity to treat 662 billion gallons of wastewater and drinking water. About 30 percent of municipal energy use derives from water treatment.

Sixty-four of the new projects are eligible to receive principal forgiveness. Principal forgiveness is awarded to renewable energy projects and for projects in communities that meet the affordability

criteria established by the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust. The affordability criteria factors in per capita income, unemployment rate and population trends.

The Commonwealth has also offered to reduce the SRF borrowing rate from 2 percent to 1.5 percent for communities that support the Housing Choice Initiative. Twenty applicants have the Housing Choice designation: Acton, Andover, Barnstable, Billerica, Brockton, Everett, Franklin, Lawrence, Littleton, Lowell, Melrose, Nantucket, Plymouth, Quincy, Somerville, Stoughton, Sudbury, Taunton, Tyngsborough, and Worcester.

The SRF is composed of two programs that have provided more than \$8 billion to Massachusetts projects: the Clean Water Fund, first capitalized in 1989; and the Drinking Water Fund, which began operation in 1999. More information on the two SRF programs can be found here.

This year, the Clean Water SRF provides \$903 million in financing for clean water projects across the Commonwealth. Approximately \$878 million will finance 59 new construction projects, \$2 million will be allocated towards financing two previously approved multi-year projects, \$3 million has been allocated to the emergency set-aside

account, \$5 million will be directed to the Community Septic Management Program to remediate failed septic systems in participating communities, and \$15 million has been set-aside to finance planning and PFAS design projects.

The Drinking Water SRF provides \$431 million in financing for drinking water projects across the Commonwealth. Approximately \$311 million will finance 39 new construction projects, approximately \$69 million will be allocated towards financing 11 previously approved multi-year projects, \$5 million will fund an emergency set-aside account, \$10 million has been set-aside to finance planning and PFAS design projects, and \$35 million has been set-aside to finance lead service line replacement projects.

An additional \$4 million will be offered by the Trust as grants for 39 Asset Management Planning projects, with 27 communities qualifying with Clean Water projects and 12 communities qualifying with Drinking Water projects.

Massachusetts awards subsidized infrastructure financing under the SRF, which is administered by the Trust – a joint effort of MassDEP, the Executive Office of Administration and Finance and the State Treasurer’s Office.

To be eligible for Clean Water or Drinking Water SRF loans, municipalities, wastewater districts, and water suppliers filed applications with MassDEP last year demonstrating that proposed projects offer significant public health or water quality benefits, have local funding authorization, and demonstrate that there is a commitment on the borrower’s part to file a timely loan application. The projects on the 2023 SRF list must now file loan applications and receive MassDEP approval to obtain funding.

The next SRF project solicitation for proposals to be considered for the 2023 intended use plan will open by MassDEP no later than June 5, 2023.



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HEALTHY BAKING IN THE BLACKSTONE VALLEY

# Daisy cookies, perfect for May and Mother's Day

BY CHRISTINE GALEONE

In a world that's overflowing with complications, the simple beauty of a daisy can brighten every day in May. And one of the most beautiful months of the year deserves to be decorated with one of the loveliest flowers.

Since May is also the month in which we honor some of the best people, our mothers, it seems like a cheerful cookie recipe is especially appropriate for this month's column. And undoubtedly, a plate full of these daisy cookies is like a plate full of sunshine.

Although these cookies are a little rich, they don't have more fat than the majority of cookies. And they contain less sugar. They're also a bit healthier than most cookies because of a couple of their ingredients.

Bananas contain important vitamins and minerals, including potassium, vitamin B6, vitamin C and magnesium. Potassium can help people maintain healthy blood pressure. It's heart healthy, and it helps with nerve and muscle function.

Apricots are filled with impor-

tant nutrients as well. In addition to potassium, they contain vitamin A, vitamin E, beta-carotene, zinc, lycopene and magnesium, among other vitamins and minerals. Apricots can benefit eye health, reduce inflammation – thanks to the flavonoids they contain -- and aid digestion.

## Daisy Cookies

### INGREDIENTS:

- 3 1/2 Cups of All-Purpose Flour
- 1 Teaspoon of Baking Powder
- 1 Cup (2 Sticks) of Salted Butter (Softened)
- 1 Very Ripe Mashed Banana
- 1 Cup of Granulated Sugar
- 2 Large Eggs
- 2 Teaspoons of Pure Almond Extract

### THUMBPRINT FILLING INGREDIENTS:

- Apricot preserves

### DIRECTIONS:

In a large bowl, combine the

flour and baking powder.

In a separate bowl, beat the butter, sugar and banana until the mixture is pale and fluffy.

Add the eggs and the almond extract, and mix them into the wet mixture.

Add and mix the dry mixture into the wet mixture in increments until everything has been combined.

Roll the dough into 1-inch balls, and place them on a cookie sheet.

Press a roughly 1/2-inch deep thumbprint into each ball.

Use the side of a tablespoon to press curvy lines into the dough to represent daisy petals.

Spoon the apricot preserves into the thumbprints.

Bake at 350 degrees for about 15 minutes.

Remove the cookies from the oven, and let them cool on the baking sheet for a couple of minutes. Then, let the cookies continue to cool on cooling



racks/plates, or serve them. Makes three batches (about five dozen cookies).

Daisies and cookies are two of

the simple joys in life. So, why not put them together just in time to welcome May? Happy (healthier) baking!

This major fundraising event for the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, BV Education Foundation and the BV Hub will fund essential programs to support students and schools in the Blackstone Valley. The mission of this tournament is to enrich education and strengthen leadership among students, teachers, businesses & communities in the Blackstone Valley.

### Program of Events

- ★ 10:00AM Registration, Coffee, Raffle & Silent Auction Bidding Opens
- ★ 11:00AM Tee Time
- ★ 4:00PM Cocktails & hors d'oeuvres
- ★ 4:55PM Raffle & Silent Auction Closes
- ★ 5:00PM Buffet Dinner
- ★ 6:00PM Event Concludes/Auction Check-Out

**Putting Contest on Practice Tee Throughout Tournament**

### Registration

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**[www.blackstonevalley.org/events](http://www.blackstonevalley.org/events)**



BY ROD LEE

With her well-established reputation for nutritious and wholesome food, Danielle Desrosiers of The Green Plate in Whitinsville was a natural to line up alongside competitors from Galliford's Restaurant & Tavern, Samuel Slater's Restaurant and the Grafton Job Corps in the chowder contest at the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's 23rd annual Home & Community Expo on March

# Chowder call for The Green Plate and others; The Lodge at 70

25th. Ms. Desrosiers declared her experience a satisfying one. "The chowder contest was great!" she said. "I offered a dairy-free clam chowder. It was so nice to see some familiar faces, but getting positive feedback from people who had never been to the café or some who had never heard of us was great too! The event was so well attended!" Liz O'Neil, director of programs, events and membership/marketing coordinator for the Chamber, said "the People's Choice winner was Grafton Job Corps and the Judge's Choice winner was Galliford's." By the way, Expo concessions were provided by The Neighbor-



The Galliford's booth at the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's Home & Community Expo. Galliford's was the Judge's Choice winner in the chowder contest.

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hood Kitchen, also in downtown Whitinsville.

Wood-fired pizza and more The Lodge is something of an institution on Gore Road in Webster. Celebrating seventy years in business, the restaurant's appearance has not changed dramatically over that time. Antique rifles are still mounted on the wall. Easter bunnies adorn the fireplace. But one thing that's different is a brick oven, which

commands a prominent spot in the vicinity of the bar, lounge and dining room. "That was added two years ago," Heidi, a waitress, said on the evening of March 30th. "Coming out of the pandemic, we asked ourselves how can we change things up?" The result is wood-fired pizza that is proving to be popular. On this particular occasion the choices were wood-fired chicken parm with linguine and baked had-

dock cooked in sherry and lightly covered in Ritz crumbs, served with hand-cut fries and smashed turnips and carrots.

Happy Hour at Samuel Slater's There has been a lot of talk about a possible return of the Happy Hour in Massachusetts, and Samuel Slater's Restaurant at Indian Ranch is doing something about it. In addition to "Prime Rib Wednesdays" (a 12-ounce cut plus two sides), Samuel Slater's has brought Happy Hour back from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. on both Wednesday and Thursday. Don't forget the events...Comedy Night with Tony V and Guests on April 21st, Music with Aquanett on April 29th and Music with Boombox on May 5th.

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

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**NOTE:** Community bulletin board-type items are welcome for inclusion in the *Happenings!* section of the Xpress newspapers. Please allow enough lead time for publication. Email your calendar or event notice to [rodlee.1963@gmail.com](mailto:rodlee.1963@gmail.com).

**THROUGHOUT APRIL**

• "Through an Artist's Eyes—Paintings & Carvings" by Wayne Yacino will be on display and available for purchase at Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 E. Main St., Webster, during regular business hours, Tuesday-Saturday 10-5 and Wednesday 10-6. The store will be closed for vacation April 10-13. Mr. Yacino is a native of Oxford, Massachusetts of Metis (French-Abenaki), Italian and Polish descent who began painting at the age of five. He is self-taught. He has exhibited his Native American imagery in Europe and the U.S. and has taught the Ancient American Skills the first weekend of October at Waters Farm Days in Sutton since 1996.

**THURSDAY, APRIL 27**

• The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce will host a Business After Hours with affiliate chambers from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at Southwick's Zoo, 2 Southwick St., Mendon. This networking event will be co-hosted by the Chambers of Commerce in Auburn, Central Mass South, Worcester Regional and Webster Dudley Oxford.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 29**

• A Selectmen's Candidates Forum will be held from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at the Gladys E. Kelly Library, 2 Lake St., Webster.

This is a chance for residents to meet the candidates and discuss with them topics that are important to voters in the town of Webster. Election Day is Tuesday, May 2 from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. [webstermassdems.org](http://webstermassdems.org).

• Hot Polish Dinners will be sold at St. Andrew Bobola Church, 54 W Main St in Dudley, MA. Dinners will be available from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. and 4-6 p.m. in the church hall. \$18 price includes 2 pierogi (one cheese, one cabbage), kapusta/bigos, kielbasa, and one gołąbek (stuffed cabbage). Looking forward to seeing you there!!



*Ken Warchol will again lead his popular Trolley Tour of historic sites in the town of Northbridge throughout the morning and afternoon on Saturday, May 13th.*

**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. Contact Uxbridge PSG FMI: [psguxbridge@gmail.com](mailto:psguxbridge@gmail.com) or on Facebook @Uxbridge-PSG2023-Parents for a Safe Graduation.

The Uxbridge Historic District Commission is hosting a Spring House Tour from 1:00

to 4:00 p.m. with magnificent architecture available for viewing including homes open to the public at 236 Mendon St., 115 South Main St., 46 Capron St. and 35 Capron St.

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 3**

• Music for seniors by Howie Newman will be presented at The Residences at Advini-aCare, 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.

**THURSDAY, MAY 4**

• The Uxbridge Senior Center is presenting an eight-week session of Zumba Gold classes for elders, from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. at the Uxbridge Senior Center Satellite Site at the McCloskey Building, 62 Capron St. Amy Smith, a licensed Zumba Gold instructor, will lead the exercise. The suggested donation for this eight-week class is \$25. Checks may be made payable to the Uxbridge Senior Center. Call 508-278-8622 for more details.

**FRIDAY, MAY 5**

• St. Peter's Parish, 39 Church Ave., Northbridge, will host a Trivia Night at the Knights of Columbus, 77 Prescott Road, Whitinsville. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. The trivia game starts at 7:00 pm. Tickets are \$20 per person and can be purchased in advance or at the door There will be a cash bar, food for purchase and a 50/50 raffle. To buy tickets or for more info call 508-234-2156 or email [parishoffice@stpeterrockdale.org](mailto:parishoffice@stpeterrockdale.org).

**SATURDAY, MAY 6**

• bankHometown invites customers and

members of the community to three free Shred Days at local offices. Events will be held on the following dates and at the following locations. No appointment is necessary. 9:00-11:00 a.m., Auburn office, 569 Southbridge St. Local residents can reduce their risk of identity theft by bringing old mail, receipts, statements or bills, cancelled checks, pay stubs, medical records, or any other unwanted paper documents containing personal or confidential information and shredding them safely and securely for free. A professional document destruction company will be on site in the bank's parking lot and can accept up to two boxes of documents per person.

• Open Sky Community Services is co-hosting the 8th annual Family Fun Fishing Day at River Bend Farm in Uxbridge, in

coordination with the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Volunteers-in-Parks program, the Blackstone River Watershed Association, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife. This year's event will take place from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. with a rain date of May 7th. Pre-registration is required. Contact Lori Girard at 508-234-6232 or [lori.girard@openskycs.org](mailto:lori.girard@openskycs.org).

• The Millbury First Congregational Church, 148 West Main St., is sponsoring a Flea Market from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. To reserve table space, call Jeri Stead at 508-865-

**HAPPENINGS!**

*continued on page 18*

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**UPCOMING DATES: SAT, JUNE 10 & SAT, JULY 8**

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COMMUNITY SERVICES

**HAPPENINGS!**

*continued from page 17*

5371. "The Kitchen" will be selling coffee and muffins, and hot dogs at lunchtime. There will also be a bakery table.

• Whitin Community Center hosts its 100th Anniversary Gala, a black-tie fundraiser featuring cocktails, dinner, dancing, a live auction, a commemorative photo gallery and more, 5:00 p.m., 60 Main St., Whitinsville. Visit [www.WhitinCommunityCenter.com](http://www.WhitinCommunityCenter.com) for more information.

• A Scottish Highland Game featuring nine events of strength and agility will be held from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at 4 Dresser Hill Road, Charlton. Robert Sims, athletic

director for the day, says "guys and gals in kilts will be throwing stupid heavy things: stones, weights, hammers and the most recognized one of them all, the caber toss, AKA the "tree throw." Athletes from New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York and even one from Canada will take part—from a teacher to active-duty Navy. For more information email [rsims@charter.net](mailto:rsims@charter.net).

• Booklovers' Gourmet, 72 E. Main St., Webster, is hosting a book release and signing event for Loreale Dubeau's new memoir "Language of the Sacred" from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. This event is free and open to the public. Signed copies will be available for purchase. For more information call 508-949-6232 or email [deb@booklovers-gourmet.com](mailto:deb@booklovers-gourmet.com).

gourmet.com.

• The Charlton Helping Hand Society Inc. announces the schedule for our popular, annual Saturday Summer Yard Sales. All held at the Dodge Chapel, 81 Hammond Hill Road, Charlton from 8 am to noon. All monies raised will help fulfill the mission of Helping Hand - "Help us to Help Others."

**MONDAY, MAY 8**

• The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's Annual Charity Golf Tournament will be held at Pleasant Valley Country Club in Sutton to benefit the Chamber, the Blackstone Valley Education Foundation and the Blackstone Valley Hub. [www.blackstonevalley.org/events](http://www.blackstonevalley.org/events).

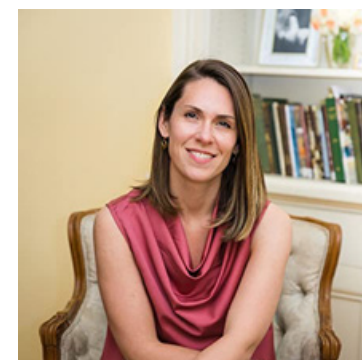
**TUESDAY, MAY 9**

• 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](http://www.suttonhistoricalsociety.org) for further info.

**SATURDAY, MAY 13**

• The Northbridge Historical Commission in partnership with the Northbridge Historical Society and will funding provided by a grant from the Northbridge Cultural Council hosts its popular Trolley Tours with three times offered: 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m. or 1:00 p.m. Space is limited. The tours begin at the 1770 Fletcher House, 1 Main St., former home of James Fletcher and now the home of the Northbridge Historical Society. Northbridge Historian and Teacher Ken Warchol will serve as guide for this two-hour tour of Northbridge Center and the Historic District of Whitinsville. The tour will take participants back to 1772, when Northbridge received its town charter. Information will be provided about the vital role Northbridge played in the Industrial Revolution with establishment of the Whitin Machine Works as the most prominent textile machine shop in the world by the end of the 1920s. There is no charge for the tour. Registrations are required. Maps of the walking district are available for \$5, and donations are accepted. To register and for more information contact Ken Warch at 508-680-3440 or email [kenwarchol2@msn.com](mailto:kenwarchol2@msn.com). Leave complete contact info including full name, contact number and email and preferred time and the number of seats requested.

• The Northbridge Fire Department will host



Author Elena Palladino will discuss her book "Lost Towns of the Swift River Valley" in an appearance at the Auburn Historical Society & Museum at 6:30 p.m. on May 18th.

its annual Spaghetti Supper with dine-in and pick-up options available between 4:00 and 8:00 p.m. at current NFD headquarters, 193 Main St., Whitinsville. Homemade meatballs, spaghetti, salad, bread and dessert will be served. All proceeds go towards the Northbridge fireworks display to be held on July 15th, organized by the NFD. Contact [eventsNFD@gmail.com](mailto:eventsNFD@gmail.com) for further info.

• Take a Hike for Hope & Wellness, sponsored by the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., Riverbend Farms DCR, 287 Oak St., Uxbridge. [www.blackstonevalley.org](http://www.blackstonevalley.org).

• The Grass Roots Coffeehouse's Spring Concert featuring the band Blackstone Valley Bluegrass will be held at the Rockdale Congregational Church, 42 Fowler Road, Northbridge. Admission is \$15; \$5 for students under 18. Doors open at 6:45 p.m. and the show begins at 7:30 p.m. Proceeds benefit the Rockdale Congregational

**HAPPENINGS!**

*continued on page 19*

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*People's Choice Best Food Truck winner last year was "Say Cheese"*

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## HAPPENINGS!

*continued from page 18*

Church. The band is beginning its 26th season. Members include original guitarist Bob Dick, Mandolinist Tim St. Jean, Peter Tillotson on bass and Pete Fein on banjo. Go to [www.rockdalechurchonline.org](http://www.rockdalechurchonline.org), email [aplantbob@aol.com](mailto:aplantbob@aol.com) or call 617-429-0347 for more information.

• The Upton VFW Post 5594 on Rt. 140 (15 Milford St.) in Upton will begin its summer series of flea markets at post headquarters on Route 140 in Upton. The events are held from 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. the second Saturday of each month through October, weather permitting. Reservations are not required. Coffee and donuts are available during the morning, then hot dogs, chips, and cold drinks for lunch.

### MONDAY, MAY 15

• "Social Security: Your Questions Answered," featuring Dennis Antonopoulos, a financial advisor with Edward Jones, will be offered at the Brookdale Eddy Pond West, 669 Washington St., Auburn. Registration is at 5:45 p.m. and the seminar begins at 6:00 p.m. Such questions as "how does Social Security fit into my retirement income plan," "when should I start taking benefits" and "what about taxes" will be addressed. Social Security will likely be the foundation of your retirement income. Before you retire, it's important to understand your options and the effect your decisions will have on your retirement.

### 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.

### THURSDAY, MAY 18

• The Auburn Historical Society & Museum will host Author Elena Palladino and the "Lost Towns of the Swift River Valley," drowned by the Quabbin, at 6:30 p.m.. The program will be presented at the Auburn Sportsmen Club, 50 Elm St., Auburn. Contact [auburnmuseum@verizon.net](mailto:auburnmuseum@verizon.net) or call 508-832-6856.

### SATURDAY, MAY 20

• Yard Sale, 46 Glen Drive, Whitinsville, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Host family recently downsized. Ping pong table, weight machine, poker table, full-length standing mirror and many other household items.  
• The Dudley Grange is participating in the Dudley Agricultural Commission's second annual "Dudley Grows Together" Plant Hop from 9:00 a.m. to noon. The Grange will be offering a variety of vegetable, herbs and some "uncommon" house plants for sale. There will also be Strawberry Shortcake tickets available for sale for the Grange's annual Strawberry Festival to be held on June 15th on Dudley Hill at 139 Center Road.  
• Historian Ken Ethier will talk about early transportation in Worcester County in a special appearance at the Samuel Slater Experience, 31 Ray St., Webster, at 11:00 a.m. Mr. Ethier is the Auburn town historian, board member of the Auburn Historical Museum, member of the Auburn Historical Commission, board member and past president of the Auburn Historical Society, board member of Waters Farm in Sutton, the Straw Hollow Engine & Tractor Club, and a member of the Central Mass Gas & Steam Engine Club. He is also a volunteer at Samuel Slater Experience. [www.samuel SlaterExperience.org](http://www.samuel SlaterExperience.org).

### SUNDAY, MAY 21

• 6th Annual Food Truck Festival and Craft Fair to benefit the Millbury redevelopment Authority. 11 a.m. - 5 p.m., rain or shine at the Millbury High School, Martin Street, Millbury. \$5, Children 12 and under free. Facebook: Millbury Food Truck Festival

### 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.americanheritemuseum.org](http://www.americanheritemuseum.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](mailto:parishoffice@stpeterrockdale.org) for

more information.

• The Charlton Helping Hand Society Inc. announces the schedule for our popular, annual Saturday Summer Yard Sales. All held at the Dodge Chapel, 81 Hammond Hill Road, Charlton from 8 am to noon. All monies raised will help fulfill the mission of Helping Hand - "Help us to Help Others."

### SUNDAY, JUNE 4

• The Sutton Preservationist 4H Club will host its second annual Coffee with Cows event on the Sutton Town Common. Last year the club reached out to other nonprofit organizations including the Lions Club, the Green Bean Project, the Congregational Church, the Historical Society and the Cultural Council to join in staging this event.

### TUESDAY, JUNE 6

• Join the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's Food, Beverage and Hospitality Network for a Business After Hours net-

working event hosted by Rushford & Sons Brewhouse, 8 Grove St., Upton, 5:30-7:30 p.m. [www.blackstonevalley.org/events](http://www.blackstonevalley.org/events).

### FRIDAY, JUNE 9

• The Millbury Women's Club will host "Under the Tent," a concert with singing sensation Dan the Singing Trooper and his wife Mary Colarusso a coloratura soprano performing. There will be a cash bar, raffles and an evening of "incredibly beautiful and inspirational" entertainment. Contact Jane Cheetham for tickets at [jane.cheetham@gmail.com](mailto:jane.cheetham@gmail.com). Space is limited.

### SATURDAY, JUNE 10

• Picnic in the Park, the Whitin Community Center's popular event with food trucks, live entertainment, community vendors, a doll and pet parade, a dunk tank and more, returns to Whitin Park, 60 Main St., Whitinsville. Visit [www.WhitinCommunityCenter.com](http://www.WhitinCommunityCenter.com) for further details.

• St. Patrick's Church's Spring Recycling Event will take place at 7 East St., Whitinsville, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Profits will benefit upcoming YIA service projects. Please keep items for each station separate. On-site paper shredding, electronics recycling, recycling of bottles and cans, textile collection and donated books are all part of the event. For more information and electronics pricing, call 508-234-5656 or email [officesupport@mystpatrick.com](mailto:officesupport@mystpatrick.com).  
• The Auburn Historical Society & Museum will host a Yard Sale, 40 South St., Auburn, 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. No Early Birds please.  
• Get The Led Out performs at Indian Ranch, 200 Gore Road, Webster, 7:00 p.m. [www.indianranch.com](http://www.indianranch.com).

## HAPPENINGS!

*continued on page 20*

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# Talk at GPL will focus on 'the first city on Mars'

BY HEIDI FOWLER  
GRAFTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

**H**undreds of novels, films and TV shows have speculated about what it would be like for us earthlings to build cities on Mars. To make it a reality, however, these dreamers are in sore need of additional conceptual tools in their belt—particularly, a rich knowledge of city planning and design.

Award-winning author and Tufts University professor Justin Hollander will draw on his experience as an urban planner and researcher of human settlements to offer a presentation on what a city on Mars might actually look like. Exploring the residential, commercial, industrial, and infrastructure elements of such an outpost, Professor Hollander is able to paint a vivid picture of how a Martian community would function: the layout of its public spaces, the arrangement of its buildings, its transportation network, and many more crucial aspects of daily life on another planet. Professor Hollander will then bring all these lessons to life through his own rendered plan for "Aleph," one of many possible designs for the first

city on Mars.

The event will be held on Monday, May 1st at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Meeting Room of the Grafton Public Library.

Justin B. Hollander, Ph.D., is a professor of Urban and Environmental Policy at Tufts University. He is an internationally renowned expert on the planning and design of human settlements, having written nine books and over fifty referred journal articles on these topics. He is a frequent speaker, having appeared on both TV and radio—C-SPAN's Washington Journal and the Diane Ream Show on NPR. He is also regularly called upon as an expert for a variety of media courses on urban planning and design issues, including by the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, TIME Magazine, USA Today, Crain's New York Business and the Las Vegas Sun. He was recently inducted as a Fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners and hosts the Apple podcast "Cognitive Urbanism."

Movie Night

Join us on Tuesday, May 2nd at 7:00 p.m. in Room 219 for a Community Read-themed Movie Night.

Due to the agreement with



Tufts University Professor Justin Hollander will present a vision of a first city on Mars during a talk at the Grafton Public Library on May 1st.

our movie licensing company, we cannot share the name of the film, but maybe you can tell from the description!

"A New York script reader writes to a London book seller about a mail-order shipment, and so begins a twenty-year friendship orchestrated through letters." Running time: 100 minutes. Rated PG.

Contact [info@graftonlibrary.org](mailto:info@graftonlibrary.org) for more information on programs and services.

## HAPPENINGS!

*continued from page 19*

### SUNDAY, JUNE 11

• Kip Moore performs at Indian Ranch, 200 Gore Road, Webster, 1:00 p.m. [www.indianranch.com](http://www.indianranch.com).

### MONDAY, JUNE 12

• Blackstone Valley Tech's 24th annual golf tournament will be held at Highfields Golf & Country Club, 42 Magill Drive, Grafton will proceeds benefitting the school's Education Foundation and Athletic Department activities and programs. Registration is \$150 for individuals and \$125 per person for a foursome and includes 18 holes on the championship course, golf cart and a buffet dinner. There will be a silent auction and raffles. To register, support the event as a sponsor or donate a raffle item, visit [www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/golftournament](http://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/golftournament).

### THURSDAY, JUNE 15

• The Dudley Grange's annual Strawberry Festival will be held on the Grange's grounds on Dudley Hill at 139 Center Road.

### SATURDAY, JULY 1

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

### SATURDAY, JULY 8

• The Charlton Helping Hand Society Inc. announces the schedule for our popular, annual Saturday Summer Yard Sales. All

held at the Dodge Chapel, 81 Hammond Hill Road, Charlton from 8 am to noon. All monies raised will help fulfill the mission of Helping Hand - "Help us to Help Others."

### 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](http://www.indianranch.com).

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 5

• The Charlton Helping Hand Society Inc. announces the schedule for our popular, annual Saturday Summer Yard Sales. All held at the Dodge Chapel, 81 Hammond Hill Road, Charlton from 8 am to noon. All monies raised will help fulfill the mission of Helping Hand - "Help us to Help Others."

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 26

• The 2nd Annual Parking Lot Craft Fair sponsored by the Auburn Historical Society & Museum will be held at 41 South St., Auburn, 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., rain or shine. Vendors are welcome. Contact Helen at [auburnmuseum@verizon.net](mailto:auburnmuseum@verizon.net) to reserve a space for \$15.

### 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](http://www.suttonhistoricalsociety.org) for further info.

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# Bike, hike and paddle in the Corridor this spring

Adventure awaits in the Blackstone Valley this spring. Blackstone Heritage Corridor volunteers invite you to join them on guided bike rides, hikes and paddle trips, says Bonnie Combs, marketing director for the Corridor.

Explore different sections of the Blackstone River Bikeway/Greenway with the Corridor's bikeway ambassadors. Guided trips take place on Wednesday, May 10, Blackstone to Uxbridge; on Wednesday, May 24, Woonsocket to Lincoln, Rhode Island; and on Wednesday, June 21 for a pollinator bike ride in Lincoln, Rhode Island.

Bring your own bike, helmet and water.

Rides depart at 6:30 p.m. and return by 8:00 p.m.

Find details and RSVP at <https://bit.ly/BikeSpring23>.

Discover some great hiking trails with the Corridor's trail ambassadors. Part Two, a follow-up to the first, is scheduled for Saturday, May 13. Learn more and RSVP at <https://bit.ly/MidstateTwo>.

Explore the Mowry Farm and Conservation Area in Smithfield, Rhode Island on Sunday, April 30th. Find details and RSVP at <https://bit.ly/MowryHike>.

Take a hike around the India

Point/Fox Point area of Providence on Sunday, May 28th. Tour the neighborhood, stopping at churches, historic sites and old houses of yesterday while delving into the history of the Seekonk River. The sites have histories spanning from 1636 to the early 21st Century. Learn more and RSVP at <https://bit.ly/FoxPointWalk>.

[bit.ly/FoxPointWalk](https://bit.ly/FoxPointWalk).

The Blackstone Valley Paddle Club, a Volunteers-in-Parks program partner of the BHC, kicks off its paddle season in May with guided trips on Tuesday evenings throughout the Valley. Find program details and this season's schedule at <https://ricka.org/BV-calendar.html>.

There is so much more to do in the Blackstone River Valley this season. Don't miss the programming offered by the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park. Find out more at [nps.gov/blrv](https://nps.gov/blrv). To explore on your own, use the Corridor's interactive map at <https://ly/BHCIMAP>.

To learn more about other events this spring, visit [BlackstoneHeritageCorridor.org](https://BlackstoneHeritageCorridor.org).



## Birds Taking Flight highlights new season at Southwick's Zoo

Southwick's Zoo is officially open for the 2023 season with an exciting array of activities including new wrinkles for visitors of all ages.

"Birds Taking Flight" is literally the case with Avian Adventures presentations on Mother's Day weekend (May 13 and 14) in the Show Arena at 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Beginning Memorial Day

weekend (May 27), the Birds Taking Flight program will be offered daily at 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. in the Show Arena.

Brand new at Southwick's Zoo this year is Elm Farm Creamery on site, with hard ice cream, milk shakes and frozen treats.

Drop by Galliford's Restaurant & Tavern for lunch or dinner. Call 508-928-0928 for reservations.

Southwick's Zoo jumped into

the season with an Earth Day Trash to Treasure event, featuring workshops on Composting presented by Home Harvest Central Massachusetts, conservation info from EARTH Ltd., a fossil exhibit, recycled goods, conservation vendors, beer vendors and music by Matt Genese.

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LIVING WITH LUKE

amyleclaire@hotmail.com

# Away to Aruba and a vacation closer to home for Luke

BY AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

**P**lans to leave Luke for a much-needed Aruban vacation had not been easy. We needed the sun. We needed time away. We needed time to regroup. However

reasonable, we also needed Luke to be safe and cared for by someone who truly wanted to be with him. Dogs lie at the mercy of people, preferably good people, who also happen to be Dog People. We knew Luke would love and trust another person freely. The only problem was, who would love him back in the same way? Who would take the time to embrace his Lukiness?

“Amy, we would be honored!” My good friend JoAnne DiTommaso, a Golden Retriever enthusiast by nature, agreed to take him on. Since our initial plan to hire a Dog Nanny went sour, we couldn’t have been more grateful.

The Dog Nanny, I learned during an interview, was a kind Dog Person. However, she was also a busy lady. “I get up at four a.m. but will be home with him as soon as I’m done with my first job.”

“Your first job?” My mind saw a lonely Luke lying on the floor, head over paws. “I’m sorry I left the yard to chase after my girlfriend. I promise to do better.”

“I work nights at the restaurant, but I’ll be home with him on the weekends!” I did the math. Eighty dollars for eight nights equals \$640.00, a hefty expense, especially given that Luke would be a third job for this woman.

“We’ve found someone whose schedule is a bit more compatible with Luke’s. Thank you.” Leaving Luke at home just wasn’t going to work out. Little did I know, Luke was about to embark on his own brand of vacation.

### BRUNO LETS HIS GUARD DOWN

Luke first met Bruno, a nine-year-old senior Golden who once knew Lincoln (first protagonist for this column) when he was about twelve weeks old. “Hey, you look like me only your face is white! Let’s wrestle!” Uncle Bruno, who preferred humans, hid in the bushes. This pup was certifiably crazy.

Now that Luke was nearly full-grown and stronger, the gap in age had me concerned. Certainly, my pup had matured. But he was un-neutered and had sometimes



JoAnne and Pete DiTommaso create a happy family for Luke.

shown aggressiveness toward male dogs. Bruno, a Senior Pet, deserved peace and respect.

“Mom, why is this mini-me on my turf and how long is he staying?” Bruno questioned the decision during their first day together. He was tolerant but kept his distance. “Our family is fine just the way it is. Aren’t I enough?” Oblivious, Luke grabbed a stuffed turkey and paraded around the kitchen. “Let’s get this party started!”

Exuberance aside, days passed, and Luke had begun to earn the trust of his elder golden pal. He gave him space. He respected his boundaries. He even helped him bark at a suspicious dog outside of the property. “Woo, woo, woo, woo!!”

“That dog’s odor is off. I feel ya’ Bruno. Let’s bark at him together. Woo, woo, woo, woo!!”

The two Golden, young and old, had begun to synchronize. They walked together. They slept side by side. They sipped water together. They searched for each other in the yard. “Where’d you go Luke?” Bruno became protective of his young pal. They grabbed sticks together. They checked out the birdfeeder and played soccer with a basketball. Luke helped Bruno stay young. Bruno helped Luke stay wise.

“This is how you stay cool, little fella.” A fluffy Bruno, older and wiser, rubbed his back in the one patch of snow in the backyard. Luke watched intently from a high platform on the deck. “You are so good at snow angels, Bruno.” The two Golden bonded. They had numerous visitors amid shared rest times and playtimes. JoAnne felt her heart swell with joy, having ex-

perienced a double shot of Golden love. “I am crying just thinking about leaving Luke.” I sipped a rum cocktail on an Aruban lawn chair and counted my blessings. My friend loved my dog just as much as I do. I perused the pictures she sent. He looked so happy. Luke was not only safe. He was also loved. By the end of the week, Bruno even shared the Orvis king bed once owned by Lincoln. “You’re not so bad, Luke.” He even let Luke hog the middle.

### THE CAT

“There’s a live paw coming out of the crack beneath the door!” A mystery that was a black cat behind a closed bedroom door captivated Luke’s attention. She sensed Luke’s presence and teased him with affection. “Love me. Love me not. Love me. Love me not.” She extended a paw from beneath the door and pulled it back. As though playing a game of Wack-a-Mole, Luke tracked her paw and covered it with his own. “Who are you? What are you?”

DiTommaso daughter Angela, equally as supportive to Luke’s stay at the house, finally opened her bedroom door. Exposed, Luke’s intrigue came to life. “A whole other animal lives here!!” Regina, the mysterious black cat, hunched over and stared spookily at Luke, who stared right back. They even touched noses. “It’s love at first sight!” The DiTommaso family revealed at a first date that carried on with the world’s longest staring contest. “You have the pointy ears



Bruno accepts Luke...

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**LUKE**

continued on page 23

REAL ESTATE

# What's ahead for home prices in 2023?

Over the past year, home prices have been a widely debated topic. Some have said we'll see a massive drop in prices and



BY MARK MARZEOTTI

that this could be a repeat of 2008 – which hasn't happened. Others have forecasted a real estate market that could see slight appreciation or depreciation depending on the area of the country. And as we get closer to the spring real estate market, experts are continuing to forecast what they believe will happen with home prices this year and beyond.

While 2023 kicked off on a more optimistic note for the U.S.

housing market, recent mortgage rate volatility proves how much uncertainty remains. However, the continued shortage of inventory is likely to keep price declines modest, which are projected to top out at 3%.

The latest economic forecast is as follows:

- 2023 – down 1.91%
- 2024 – Up 3.6%
- 2025 – Up 4.25%
- 2026 – Up 4.44%

So, given this information and what experts are saying about home prices, the question you might be asking is: should I buy a home this spring? Here are three reasons you should consider making a move:

1. Buying a home helps you escape rising rents. Over the past several decades, the median price of rent has risen consistently. The bottom line is, rent is going up.
2. Homeownership is a hedge against inflation as I have stated

before. A key advantage of homeownership is that it's one of the best hedges against inflation. When you buy a home with a fixed-rate mortgage, you secure your housing payment, so it won't go up like it would if you rent.

3. Homeownership is a powerful wealth-building tool. The average net worth of a homeowner is \$255,000 compared to \$6,300 for a renter.

Experts are projecting slight price depreciation in the housing market this year (as noted above), followed by steady appreciation. Given that, you may be wondering if you should move ahead with buying a home this spring. The decision to purchase a home is best made when you do it knowing all the facts and have an expert on your side. Reach out to Marzeottigroup.net or a local real estate professional to make the most informed decision about your next move.

adored Regina.

Joanne sent me a picture of Cat and Dog staring at one another. Not having grown with cats, I confess to a mild cat fear. My heart stirred. Cats are unpredictable. I imagined coming home to greet Luke, one eye sewn shut. "The cat scratched my eye out, Momma. But I had so much fun!" Regina and Luke, I later learned, respected each other's differences just as he and Bruno did.

Our vacation to Aruba, one that marked our first time away from Luke, turned out to be a success in more ways than one. We were happy to be on vacation and, equally important, Luke was happy to be with his second family, the very wonderful

DiTommaso's. He was loved and he knew it.

Find Luke Valentino on Instagram @ livingwithlukevalentino

Write to Amy at amyclair@ hotmail.com

## LUKE

continued from page 22

of a fox. But you're not a fox. You have a small nose, but you're too frigid to be a small dog. Why so still? Want to play Chase?" Luke



The staring contest ...

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## Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil (intention), Amen.

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

# Douglas softball team eyes another tournament run

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

The Douglas softball team has advanced into the tournament for the past four seasons only to lose in the first round of the Division 2 Central Mass Tournament in 2018, 2019 and 2021 (there was no season in 2020 due to Covid). Last year in the Division 5 State Tournament the Tigers upset Rockport 10-0 in the first round before losing to number six seed Hoosac Valley 2-1 in a tough-fought battle in the next round. This year Douglas is looking to go further.

“We are a relatively young team coming into the season and will need to work through some stuff,” Douglas Coach John Furno said. “But once they become confident then this team is going to be one to look out for and who knows what they’ll be able to accomplish in the tournament.”

Due to graduation the Tigers only lost their first baseman and shortstop as they enter this season, but Furno believes that he has the talent to fill in those vacancies. Eighth grader Emma Kagels will slide over from second base to take over the shortstop hole and according to the coach has picked

up the position rather quickly.

First base is currently being manned by sophomore Madison McDermott, the team’s usual number one pitcher. McDermott is still recovering at this writing and will not take the circle until she is fully healed. In the meantime, the team’s regular first baseman junior Emilee Hamlen has been holding down the pitching duties.

“Emilee has been doing a great job in getting us through. She brings a much different style than Maddy; she relies on her movement and hitting her spots,” Furno said. “Maddy led all of Central



Mass in strikeouts last year and throws gas.”

Furno is hoping to have McDermott back in the circle by mid-April and once she does return he’ll take it game by game to see which girl gets the starting nod.

Behind the plate, one of the strongest catchers in the Dual Valley Conference according to the coach will be another eighth grader in Alya McDermott. The younger of the McDermott sisters will not only provide a strong presence behind the plate, but she will also lead off for the Tigers. She is a solid contact hitter who gets on base more times than not and once there she provides the team with great base running skills.

Freshman McKenna Chiasson will handle the hot corner for the Tigers this season after playing the outfield last year.

“It’s a big adjustment moving from the outfield to the infield, but she has done well and fitting in quite nicely,” Furno said.

Senior Shaylyn Emanuel will slide into centerfield to provide the Tigers with leadership in the outfield, as well as giving the two corner outfielders any help that they may need. Seventh grade

twins Addison and Jasmine Trudeau will be flanking Emanuel on either side out there. The Trudeau twins are also working on their pitching and catching skills to bolster the team’s depth for the future.

Ariana Delgado, another eighth grader, will be taking over at second base. Although a first-time softball player, Delgado is an athletic individual who also plays basketball and soccer.

Rounding out the team are outfielders Emily Torres, Alana Chang, Natalie Reade, and McKenzie Johnson.

Furno is looking for his young team to become fundamentally strong with their skills as the season progresses and with this being a daily thing at practice he is sure that it will eventually happen. After getting their skills in place the team’s goal is to once again advance into the State Tournament, where they have proven in the past that anything is possible.

Douglas opened the season 0-2 with losses to Uxbridge and Advanced Math and Science, but this is what the Coach figured. If things go as planned Douglas will turn things around and make a run at the Tournament.

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SPORTS

# Numbers low but hopes high for Suzie softballers

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Taking over the Sutton softball team, Matt Milaszewski knows that this year's squad is very young, and the sport doesn't have a lot of numbers to even put together a freshman lineup. Despite the cards he has been dealt, Milaszewski

has been a productive player for the Suzies for some time now. Milaszewski is looking for his lone senior to continue to play solid defense while taking a big leadership role on the team. Her continued leadership and ability to help the younger girls will bode well for the program's future.

Following Padula as the team's

has played softball in the youth program she has not stepped onto a field in some time. She is a player who was recruited by the coach to come out for the team being the numbers were so low.

Freshman Kaila Wheeler finds herself currently as the team's most likely number one pitcher as she has shown that she can handle the responsibility at this point of time. Sophomores Hannah Pratt and Audie Deshais are taking the next step at earning a spot in the circle and Milaszewski says they will most likely get a look at if needed and they keep up their hard work for the position.

"We'll see how things go," he

said. "I really don't want to really have to rely on only one pitcher, but right now Kaila is our top pitcher."

One other athlete, who also plays travel ball during the summer, that the coach is looking to help the team build its future will be Reagan Giguere. She is an experienced player that brings stability to the field and she has made herself quite comfortable at second base.

Playing in the Dual Valley Conference, Milaszewski knows that it's not going to be a cake walk, but believes his young team has all the assets to become a team that can compete.

"We are a young team and do find ourselves in somewhat of a building year. Right now, all we can do is take to the field and do our best," Milaszewski said. "Obviously you want to win as much as you can to qualify for the State Tournament, but things are still cloudy, and I just don't know at this point."

As the season moves along one game at a time the incoming coach is looking for his young squad to take what they've learned and apply it to the field; hopefully by the time the tournament rolls around Sutton will have not only qualified but be prepared to make a run through it.



The 2023 Sutton High School softball team.

wski is hoping to build the Suzies into a formidable team.

"We are definitely a very young team with only one senior and two juniors," the coach said. "Between the varsity and junior varsity team we have a total of 19 girls playing and we can not have the two teams play on the same day as the numbers really don't allow it."

Shortstop Carolina Padula is the team's one and only senior and has

next to eldest players are juniors Natalie Hayes and Emily Britton. Hayes is a versatile individual that can play numerous positions on the field and according to the coach each game will dictate where she plays that day. She is also very vocal as a leader and that in turn helps the younger players.

Britton, unlike Padula and Hayes, is relatively new to the Suzies' squad and although she



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THE CAR DOCTOR

jpaul@aanortheast.com

# ... In search of a softer and quieter ride ...

**Q.** I've worked for a GM car dealer for over 30-35 years in the parts department and am a former mechanic, so I know a little about cars. Now I've retired and have a 2018 KIA Forte 5 SX and want a softer ride than the 40 series tires give. What can I do to get a softer and quieter ride?



BY JOHN PAUL

**A.** I think you are stuck with the firm sport ride you have. The 40-series tire doesn't give you much choice. On less sporty models, there is a 17-inch wheel 45-series tire and I'm not sure the money spent on new wheels would be worth it. The ride is more or less determined by the height of the sidewall. Moving to a 235/45R18 is only going to gain .3 or .4 of an inch of sidewall while still keeping about the same overall diameter and might give you a slight improvement in ride quality. When shopping for tires I would also look for reviews that specifically mention a quiet ride.

**Q.** I have a 1998 Lexus ES with 155,000 miles on it. The timing belt was last changed 8 1/2 years and 40,000 miles ago. The manual calls for six years and 90,000 miles. Should I go by time or mileage to determine when to change it? The car is always garaged and goes about 6,000 miles a year.

**A.** It is entirely possible that the timing belt is in good condition, but there is no way to know unless you actually inspect it. Rubber timing belts (and many rubber parts) can fail due to mileage and age, if this were my 25-year-old Lexus and I planned on keeping it for a while, to be safe, and have a dependable car, I would replace the timing belt.

**Q.** I have a few questions about the insulation used in Honda car wiring. From what I understand, the insulation of Honda car wiring is soy-based. I've been the victim of critters eating the wiring of my Honda car, and the expense of getting it repaired. Now that Honda knows that little animals like to eat their

soy-based wiring insulation, has Honda switched to an alternative wiring insulation, or are they still manufacturing new Honda cars whose wiring they know will be eaten by critters? I suspect it's a money thing. It must be cheaper to manufacture car's wiring using soy-based insulation than whatever it was that was used previously (and never suffered critter nibbles). Is soy-based wiring used by any other car manufacturers? I'm contemplating buying a new car, or at least a newer used car, which will be parked outside since I have no garage and I'd like to avoid buying a car whose wiring is so tasty to little critters.

**A.** I too thought the soy-based wiring was an issue, but after talking to engineers at Honda, Ford and Toyota although the insulation is soy based it is not a food grade of material. The previous material was petroleum based and the soy-based material was developed to be more environmentally friendly than petroleum-based insulation. In many cars the seat cushions are also soy based. We recently had one of our AAA vans not start, and the issue was a huge nest under the hood. In this case based on the nest it was likely an opossum. Since rodents and squirrels chew through house and commercial wiring, walls and other building materials, I don't think the insulation is the issue. I think the rodent problem is just that, a rodent problem. As we build more and take over open space these

destructive critters move into our vehicles.

**Q.** I am having a problem with my 2018 Hyundai Tucson, it appears to be guzzling oil. Hyundai completed an oil consumption test and found it to be within range, so they will not fix it. As a result, I need to have my oil changed every 2000-2500 miles or it completely runs out. A quick Google search told me that there is a class action lawsuit from other Hyundai and Kia owners with the same problem, but Hyundai does not acknowledge that it is a problem. Any advice? Getting an oil change every two months is a huge inconvenience.

**A.** I would continue to work with Hyundai on this issue. Hyundai's guideline on oil consumption is, that if the engine uses more than one quart of oil in 1000 miles, the engine is replaced. Based on your comments that the engine runs out of oil every 2500 miles, your car's engine should qualify for engine replacement. In the interim, you don't need to change the oil every 2500 miles, but you do need to check the oil periodically and add as necessary to keep the engine properly lubricated.

*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.*



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TALES FROM BEYOND

tomdagostino.com

# Ghost Cats-Part 1: Return visits are not unusual

BY THOMAS D'AGOSTINO

Many people believe that animals cannot become ghosts. It seems rather implausible since they are living beings with a personality, life force, and intelligent energy that can remain behind after they are gone. There is also the residual factor, where the earth tapes a moment in time and replays it when the conditions are just right. In many cases, people have had their beloved fur family member return after passing over to the other side to let them know they are still there, in spirit at least. It seems the most common entity other than humans to come back and pay a visit are cats.

Cats are amazing creatures. They are highly intelligent, athletic, independent, and adaptable. Arlene and I presently have five of the lovely fur folk, having lost a few over the years due to age, and yes, they have visited us from the other side.

When we lived on Mowry Road in Burrillville, Rhode Island, we sometimes heard what sounded like a cat running around in the

room above us. The landlord, who later became a great friend, told us that section of the house was completely closed off, yet what sounded like a cat was running around. We would later add to our living space to include the upstairs, accessible through a door on our side of the house. We then witnessed the cat several times in the two upstairs rooms. No one knew the feline's identity, but for some reason, it always preferred to stay upstairs, never venturing down to the first floor.

Our friend Kevin once saw the ghost cat, which is a rather amusing tale. He frequently accompanied us on paranormal investigations, yet never saw anything unusual. His very first actual sighting of a ghost was seeing our little ethereal friend running around the corner. His only comment was, "wouldn't you know it, the very first time I see a ghost and it had to be a cat's behind."

Our cat, Cooneys, named so because she resembled a raccoon, passed away in 2008. She not only came back to visit, but we received a message from a "pet medium" telling us that our

little girl actually visited her and wanted her to tell us she was fine and doing 'the good work' of helping other fur people on the other side. If that was not enough, she appeared several times in our home. One time she even appeared on the stairs to have her picture taken by none other than paranormal investigator and author Chris Balzano while he was writing his book, *Picture Yourself Ghost Hunting*. When the photo was examined, there she was, stretching out across a few stairs, looking out at us like she always did.

Our beloved Arthur passed away in 2013. Arlene had him since he was very young, and he was the love of her life, so much so that she had a portrait painted of him, which still hangs in our living room in a place of honor. He was an amazing and intelligent little guy. Arthur loved going for rides in the car; he came along on vacations with us and accompanied us on shopping excursions, picnics and visiting friends. He was our constant companion.

When he passed, we were very heartbroken, but a few nights

later, we heard the distinctive sound of Arthur's voice in the house. A few nights after that, as we both sat in bed reading, the end of the bed suddenly moved as if something had jumped up on it. We both watched in astonishment as little paw prints made indentations in the blanket on the bed.

Arthur would one up coming back in spirit. We buried him outside and made a little yard for him. Early summer, we decided to clean his yard and put flowers in it. As we were planting the flowers, we heard Arthur cry. The cry permeated the air around the yard and froze us in our work. We heard it again and traced it to

the little hill behind our house. Upon investigating, we discovered a small kitten that we would later be able to capture and bring in the house. When we brought her to the veterinarian to have her checked out, it was discovered that she was born about the same time Arthur passed. As she grew, her mannerisms and habits were just like his. She loved to sit and sleep in the same places he did and knew the house instinctively. We feel that a part of Arthur was reincarnated into Freyabelle just so he could be with us again.



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