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Friday, May 1, 2020

United Way announces merger with Webster and Dudley

SOUTHBRIDGE — The United Way of Southbridge, Sturbridge and Charlton announces its merger with the United Way of Webster and Dudley. In a joint decision between the local chapters' Board of Directors, the new local chapter will continue to provide services for all five towns from one location, with efforts focused on growing potential opportunities to connect communities with access to support services.

The merger formally went into effect on April 16, and will allow the sharing of local resources to create a stronger network of partners and agencies. The newly-formed United Way of South Central Massachusetts (UWSCM) will operate

out of office space at 176 Main St., Southbridge, led by Executive Director Mary O'Coin and a team of 32 Board members comprised from both entities.

"We are eager to help our communities by continuing to create a positive quality of life for families surrounding the organization," said O'Coin. "We have endless growth potential which we will be working toward through fundraising and volunteer work." During the 2018-2019 campaign year, the two chapters raised a combined \$582,000 and distributed 42 different grants supporting community programs at 22 local agencies. The 2019-2020 campaign has raised a total \$443,000 so far; UWSCM

will continue fundraising efforts over the next few months.

Newly elected Board President Bill Keefe of Webster stated, "It is a historical time that this merger is taking place. With the coronavirus pandemic and the need to stay home with only essential employees working, it is even more important that the organizations and programs supported by United Way remain available to those in need. By combining these two local chapters, we hope to continue pursuing vibrant campaigns, encouraging more local giving from residents and businesses in the future, so we can continue to help those who need it the most."

United Way of South Central Mass. functions as part of United Way Worldwide. United Way Worldwide is engaged in nearly 1,800 communities across more than 40 countries and territories around the world. United Way works with companies, governments, non-profits and other establishments to address complex challenges to help build stronger communities. The organization is focused on creating community-based and community-led solutions that strengthen the cornerstones for a good quality of life: education, financial stability and health.

For more information, call (508) 765-5491

Police seek man suspected of harassing teen



Photo Courtesy
A sketch was created of the suspect in a crime last week.

WALES – Police continue to search for a suspect who accosted a young woman last week near the Stafford border.

The April 23 incident occurred at approximately 5 p.m. on Route 19. In the area of Staffordville Reservoir, an 18-year-old woman was jogging when a man in a white van began to drive back and

forth several times. The suspect then yelled sexually explicit comments at her before attempting to block her in against the guard-rail with his van.

The woman was able to flee and hide in a nearby yard until the suspect left the area. Connecticut State Police and Wales Police responded and canvassed the area in Wales and Stafford.

"At this time, the male party involved has not been located. The van was last seen heading north toward Wales," read a statement released by the Wales Police Department.

The suspect was described as a white man with brown hair and brown eyes. He wore a neon yellow-green shirt, and his van had blue or black lettering on the driver's side.

If you have information on the incident, contact Trooper Buck of the Connecticut State Police at 860-684-3777.

Local author celebrates second book with virtual release party

BY ANNIE SANDOLI
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

STURBRIDGE—LGBTQ writer and speaker Sarah Prager is getting ready to celebrate the release of her newest book "Rainbow Revolutionaries: 50 LGBTQ+ People Who Made History" with a live streamed launch party scheduled to take place on Tuesday, May 26 at 1 p.m.

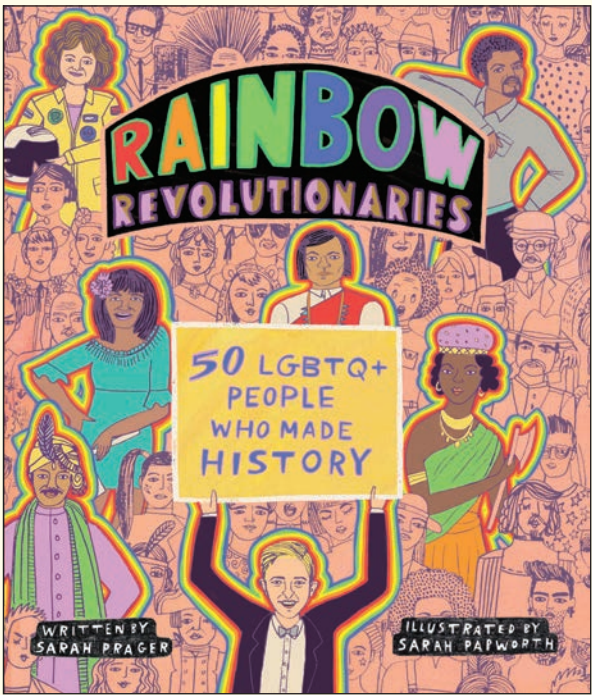
This is Prager's second full-length publication, following the release of her 2017 book "Queer, There, and Everywhere," which she discussed at a Joshua Hyde Library event last June in honor of Pride Month. Both titles tell the individual stories of of queer people who have changed the world.

"The 2017 book 'Queer, There, and Everywhere,' which went on to win a few awards, is for teens ages 12 to 18 and adults," said Prager. "The new one is a middle grade book for ages eight to 12. They feature some of the same people—there are 23 people in the first book and 50 in the new book. The main difference between the two is more illustration and shorter stories in the new book. It has illustrated pages, a world map that shows

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Sarah Prager



Charlton native chases musical dream

BY JASON BLEAU
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

CHARLTON –Over the past few months, a young local musician has been making waves across Worcester County declaring his dreams of becoming a star in one of the most popular musical genres of today.

At only 16 years old, Charlton's Liam Coleman has decided to follow a life-long dream bringing his musical talent to social media and even planning a trip to Nashville where he expects to spend time in the record studio and play shows in the country music capital of the United States.

Coleman, whose father Stephen Coleman is chief of the Auburn Fire Department, has been around music most of his life learning to play the drums when he was six and in sixth grade teaching himself how to play guitar. Now entering his later teens Coleman decided that his heart was leading him to a music career and country, one of his long-time favorite

genres, felt like the right fit.

"I always knew I wanted to do something with music, but I was torn about what genre. Country always had that special place in my heart, and it was the most fun for me to play," Coleman said.

While the young artist is versed in modern country regulars like Luke Combs, who he considers his musical idol, his influences include a range of different artists from beyond country and from different decades, including Johnny Cash, Bob Dylan, the Foo Fighters, and Green Day.

As a junior at Shepherd Hill Regional High School, Coleman plans to graduate before making any moves out of state to pursue his dreams, however he has plans to kickstart his musical aspirations in the fall. Coleman originally intended to visit Nashville in April however the COVID-19 pandemic forced him to reschedule his plans to August at



Courtesy Photo

Aspiring Country singer and Charlton native Liam Coleman.

School officials adjust to early closures

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

REGION – Gov. Charlie Baker announced last week that schools statewide will remain closed through the end of the academic year.

As the state continued to see an increase in COVID-19 cases, school officials knew it was only a matter of time before Massachusetts joined several other states in extending closures. Additionally, all non-emergency childcare programs will be shuttered until June 29.

For superintendents throughout the region, the focus is now entirely on remote learning. Districts had already been utilizing several online learning platforms, which will now be critical for continued education.

“All of our educators will continue to work collaboratively with each other – as well as with educators across the state – to provide remote learning for your children,” wrote Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District Superintendent Paul Haughey in a letter to parents. “Remote learning has been a huge learning curve for all of us, and I am so proud of how our staff, stu-

dents, and families have worked together to make it work in such a short amount of time.”

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will issue updated guidelines for schools to support remote learning efforts. These include expanded STEM learning guidelines, and the DESE will also provide recommendations for summer learning opportunities.

School officials are also scrambling to offer remote celebratory activities for seniors. At a time when the Class of 2020 should have been celebrating its accomplishments and looking forward to graduation, seniors are instead coming to terms with the abrupt end of all activities. Spring sports, class trips, proms, graduations, and all extracurricular activities were wiped out with the Governor’s latest announcement.

“My thoughts are with our students and all Quabog families, especially the Class of 2020,” said Quabog Regional School District Superintendent Brett Kustigian. “This should be a special time for them, and we are brainstorming creative ways to celebrate graduation – but nothing is concrete yet.”

Added Spencer-East Brookfield

Regional School Committee Chairman Jason Monette, “If I could talk to the entire senior class, I would tell them thank you for hanging in there, thank you for your dedication and loyalty to this district, and best of luck in your future endeavors. As tough as it is, try not to dwell on what could have been, but rather look toward what could be.”

The DESE has launched a remote learning initiative focused on addressing access to tools, internet connectivity, and educator training. Moreover, the department is conducting a survey of school districts to identify barriers that inhibit effective remote learning, including challenges around access to technology.

Over the next few weeks, an advisory group of administrators, educators, parents, students, and business leaders will engage external partners to mobilize resources for schools, including philanthropic gifts and in-kind contributions. The DESE will also solicit input from national and local education vendors regarding the potential to create a statewide online education platform for districts to opt into and customize, officials said.

State leaders also want to prioritize

remote STEM learning to ensure that students don’t fall behind in this critical area.

“The DESE has established online STEM education resources to provide continued support for remote learning opportunities,” read a statement released by the Baker Administration. “This includes virtual STEM learning opportunities for both students and teachers.”

Per the Governor’s order, emergency childcare programs approved by state officials will continue operating. Currently, there are 523 emergency childcare programs statewide serving families of essential workers.

Meanwhile, the Department of Early Education is reviewing its regulations to develop new approaches to incrementally restore childcare capacity for family and center-based programs.

Also, the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education is deferring scheduled repayments for its no-interest loan program for four months. These deferments will help approximately 12,000 students, officials said. All no-interest loan accounts currently in repayment will automatically be placed in deferment from April 2020 through July 2020.

Expert offers virtual class in ‘tasty wild edibles’



Photo Courtesy

Russ Cohen with a bucket of black walnuts. (Photo from his Web site, <http://users.rcn.com/eatwild/bio.htm>).

BY GUS STEEVES
CORRESPONDENT

REGION — With everyone social-distancing and in-person events in limbo, area groups are routinely trying to fill the gap with online events. Some of them are just for fun, but some aim to teach people key skills that may well be important in a hard economy.

Last Friday, the state branch of the National Organic Farming Association was in the latter group, offering a free Webinar on “tasty wild edibles” from Russ Cohen. A few years ago, Cohen brought a similar program to Southbridge in person, leading a walk at Westville.

Taking people on “a little virtual foraging trip,” he said his goal was to help people “connect to the outdoors through their taste buds.” He’s foraged wild edibles for decades, written a couple books on the issue, and noted there are dozens of them growing in our area, with some coming ripe throughout most of the year.

“In the northeastern United States, the risk of getting very sick or dying [from eating wild plants] is very low with a few exceptions,” he said.

Most of the time, he said, those exceptions “taste horrible,” so tasting then spitting out a very small piece is usually enough to identify them. Some of the most dangerous do not, however. He cited poison (or water) hemlock, a carrot family plant whose roots are very toxic but not nasty-tasting. Also, mushrooms are “much more risky than plants.” There are so many species, with many poisonous ones that look

like safe ones, and many deadly ones that don’t taste bad, that he strongly advised people not to gather wild mushrooms without a lot of experience.

He also suggested people not eat plants found in certain places, such as along roads, industrial parcels and other “obvious sources of pollution” and popular trails. Many other places are safe – “use your common sense.” Among the best sites, he added, are organic farms, but seek permission on any private property.

“Think of your taste buds as a backup identification tool,” he said, adding modern foragers should not just taste-test, but “benefit from the accumulated knowledge” of millennia in numerous books, websites and experienced people.

That said, Cohen dove into a long list of generally common plants that are safely edible, starting with invasives. Such plants are commonly described as “bad news” because they choke out native plants, but at least 20 are edible, some are medicinal, and some are both.

“Ecologists would be thrilled if we picked and ate as much of them as we can,” Cohen observed.

One of the most common, with huge stands of it all over the state, is Japanese knotweed. By the time it’s large and obviously bamboo-like, it’s too tough to eat, but when young,

“I harvest a lot of this in the early spring,” when it’s in what he dubbed the “wild asparagus stage.” At that point, the plant’s new shoots are about a foot tall, usually surrounded by the dead plants from last year. It’s still good a little later, in the “wild rhubarb stage” at about two feet tall. At that point, he said, remove the “stringy” outer layer and the inner green part is “tasty and juicy.”

In our region, he added, knotweed is in this stage now through early May, and “not worth eating” later.

Harder to see, but ubiquitous, is garlic mustard. That’s also most edible about now; Cohen said by the time it flowers, it’s too bitter for most people.

“The whole plant is very pungent and has a strong flavor,” he said, noting the early, tender shoots “are nice and soft and supple.”

Dandelions are likewise bitter if collected too late. He said that’s the plant “most responsible for turning people off wild foods.” If picked before flowering, when the buds and leaves are new, it has a flavor he described as a mix of spinach, artichoke, Brussels sprouts and corn and only needs boiling for about 60 seconds.

“It’s a very, very healthy plant to eat,” Cohen added. “It’s eating your medicine.”

Later, he added, “the entire plant is perfectly edible. Just rinse it off in your rain barrel water and pop it in your mouth.”

Other fairly small plants he mentioned included chickweed, chicory, stinging nettle, very young daisies, violets, sheep and lemon (aka wood) sorrel and purslane. Some plants do have chemicals that are dangerous in large quantities (the sorrels contain oxalic acid), but are “perfectly safe to eat in moderation with other things.”

In other cases, some people might have allergic or other mildly unpleasant reactions to certain plants. One such are day lilies, which cause nausea in about 20 percent of people, but are edible by others. Cohen noted people should

buds, young leaves and tubers are tasty; other colors might be hybrids with inedible species.

Much larger is the autumn olive (sometimes called a silverberry because of the silvery spots on its red berries), a very invasive bush about 10 feet tall. Cohen said they were introduced in the 1950s by people thinking those berries would be attractive to birds. They soon found birds love the berries, but the bush “doesn’t support native insects or caterpillars” and crowds out plants that do. (One place that has hundreds of them is the former golf course on Morris Street, Southbridge.)

“They fruit so prolifically that the picking is easy,” he said. At peak ripeness, the berry clusters will fall off “with just a tickle.” Generally, the redder, plumper berries taste better, but they “vary considerably in flavor from bush to bush,” he said. The berries can be eaten right off the plant, baked into pies and other things, or turned into “fruit leather” (pureed and dehydrated overnight).

Cohen said the USDA studied it and found the berries are very high in vitamin C and have 18 times more lycopene than tomatoes.

“We have a lot of wonderful edible native plants,” he observed. Unlike the invasives, “they play key roles in the ecosystem, so use forbearance and restraint so you don’t upset the ecological balance.”

Collecting berries and nuts has the least impact, while stripping leaves and flowers is “a lot more traumatic” to the plants, he added.

Several of those natives are trees. Oaks supplied Native Americans and countless animals with acorns for millennia, although the nuts need to be crushed and leached to flush out the bitter tannins. White oaks have the least tannins, while other species require more leaching (and more leaching also tends to eliminate the nutty flavor), he said.

Cohen said his favorite wild food is shagbark hickory nuts, which taste like “a pecan sprayed with maple syrup.” The best are found “out in the open, on roadsides or in the middle of a field, with many together.” Such copes make it more likely you’ll get a good

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“it’s really yummy,” he said.

taste-test it and pick only the orange w i l d ones, whose

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How to handle the mental challenges of social distancing

The concept of “social distancing” was no doubt a mystery to millions of people prior to 2020. But in the wake of the outbreak of COVID-19, a novel coronavirus that was first discovered in China in late 2019 but soon spread across the globe, social distancing became a household term.

Social distancing refers to actions deliberately designed to increase the physical space between people to avoid spreading illness. The American Psychological Association notes that social distancing typical-

ly requires that people stay at least six feet apart from each other while also avoiding gathering spaces such as schools, churches, concert halls, and public transportation. In an effort to prevent community spread, many state and provincial governments mandated the closure of all businesses deemed “non-essential,” forcing many working professionals to work from home full-time and temporarily putting millions of additional workers out of work.

Social distancing measures are designed to

serve the greater good, and these efforts can be effective at stopping the spread of harmful viruses like COVID-19. But social distancing also can produce unwanted side effects. The APA notes that research has shown that people who are social distancing may be vulnerable to fear and anxiety; depression and boredom; anger, frustration or irritability; and stigmatization. However, the APA also notes that research has uncovered successful ways to cope with social distancing.

- Make time for fun activities. Psychologists

recommend balancing time spent on news and social media with other activities unrelated to social distancing or quarantine. Make a conscious effort each day to read a book, listen to music or even learn a new language.

- Get news from reliable sources. Inaccurate information about COVID-19 can spread fear, making it even more difficult for people to cope with social distancing. The APA recommends people get their information from news outlets that rely on trusted organizations like the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization.

- Maintain virtual connections with others. Face-to-face interactions may not be possible, but the APA notes the value of phone calls, text messages, video chat, and social media. These channels of communication provide an opportunity to stay connected with loved ones and express emotions.

- Maintain a healthy lifestyle. The APA advises everyone to get enough sleep, eat well and exercise while social distancing.

Do not cope with the issues that result from social distancing by using alcohol or drugs, which may only exacerbate feelings of anxiety and depression. People also can consider their telehealth options so they can access psychotherapists to help them through.

Social distancing has proven challenging for millions of people across the globe. As difficult as social distancing can be, there are ways for people to cope and stay in touch with their loved ones. More information about social distancing is available at www.apa.org.

How to use protective masks and gloves the right way

Personal protective equipment is well-known and utilized often within the health care community and various other industries. It only is in recent months that personal protective equipment, or PPE, became something the general population learned more about as the COVID-19 outbreak took hold in the western hemisphere.

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, PPE is equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious workplace injuries and illnesses. PPE can include gloves, safety glasses, masks, earplugs, hard hats, respirators, or coveralls. In the medical community, PPE generally extends to gowns/aprons, respirators, face shields, and more.

Even though the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention were only advocating for the use of masks primarily for COVID-19 patients and the health care workers tending to them, many people began to use gloves and masks of their own accord to safeguard themselves against contraction of the virus. Gloves and masks are only effective if they are used in the proper manner. The following are some guidelines for proper PPE use.

Gloves

The CDC says that gloves should fit the users' hands comfortably. Gloves can only prevent the spread of pathogens if hand hygiene is performed before and after wear, states the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and

Epidemiology.

To remove gloves properly, pinch the outside of one glove at the wrist without touching bare skin. Peel the glove away from the body, pulling it inside out. Hold the glove just removed in the other gloved hand and dispose of it. For the remaining glove, slide your fingers inside the glove at the top of the wrist, being careful not to touch the outside of the glove. Again, turn the second glove inside out while pulling it away from the body. Dispose of the glove properly.

Masks

Masks, sometimes referred to as respirators, also need to fit to be effective. Masks should be tight-fitting to the face. Clean hands and put on the mask, molding the mask over the bridge



of the nose and sealing it around the face. One strap should be high on the head, the other low around the base of the neck.

To remove the mask, tilt your head forward and pull the bottom strap over the back of

the head, followed by the top strap without touching the front of the mask, says APIC. Keep straps tight during the removal process. Don't snap the straps or touch the front of the mask, as this can spread germs. (Directions provided are

for N95 respirators. Other mask designs should be removed according to manufacturer recommendations).

PPE has become a household term. Proper usage is necessary to stay safe if and when masks and gloves are utilized.

How religious organizations are confronting social distancing

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 changed life as people know it. In the wake of the outbreak, hundreds of millions of people across the globe were forced to change how they work, how they spend their free time and even how they eat their meals as social distancing measures were enacted in an effort to stop the spread of a virus that, by late-March 2020, had already claimed the lives of thousands of people.

Seemingly no aspect of life was unaffected by social distancing mea-

asures, including how people celebrate their faith. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, many religious organizations were forced to reconsider how they interact with their congregants. For example, in recognition of changes within the religious realm prompted by the COVID-19 outbreak, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism provided a free list of tools and resources (www.uscj.org/synagogue-resources) to help synagogues operate more effectively. Similarly, in accordance with an executive order from New York Governor Andrew Cuomo limiting social gatherings, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany

canceled all public liturgies, but also announced measures to livestream Masses and even provided a schedule of those masses through its website (www.rcda.org/livemass).

Livestream religious services allow people of faith to continue to celebrate their faith. Such services also provide access to non-members who might nonetheless be looking for guidance during a time that is unlike any many people alive today have ever experienced. The uplifting messages offered at religious services can help people confront and overcome feelings like depression and anxiety, which the American Psychological Association

notes researchers have linked to social distancing. Being part of a community, even if that community is operating exclusively online, can provide a lift to those struggling with the potentially isolating consequences of social distancing.

People interested in engaging in faith-based services and programs while social distancing are urged to contact a local religious organization to see how it is providing spiritual guidance during this unique time.

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Celebrating 42 years

Charlton teacher bids farewell after 35 years

BY JASON BLEAU
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

CHARLTON – It’s no secret that the closing of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic has presented a myriad of challenges to educators across the country, let alone here in Charlton. However, for one local teacher, the recent announcement that schools will not reopen until the fall means not only continued adjustments to online education, but an unceremonious conclusion to a career spanning more than 35 years.

Karen Potter is a second-generation educator who has taught for 37 years, 35 of which have been spent in the town where she was born, raised, and educated, Charlton. As a music teacher and Shepherd Hill graduate Potter has had the unique honor of seeing Charlton and its school district evolve not just as a student but as an employee experiencing the opening of numerous schools and teaching at Charlton Middle School from the day the doors opened. Potter was set to retire at the end of the school year in June and while those plans remain the closure of schools will sadly prevent her from giving a proper goodbye to her students and the district that has been a part of her life from the very beginning.

“I’m sad because I won’t get to see my students in person or go through those end-of-the-year experiences with them. Things like our sixth grade talent show, our spring musical and other concluding activities of the year we won’t get to experience together,” Potter said in an interview discussing her decades-long career. “It’s hard for me because I’ve built relationships with these kids, some over four years and others for shorter periods of time, but not being able to have any closure with them face

to face is difficult.” Still, Potter remains in high spirits filled with pride for a career that is somewhat of a family legacy. Her grandmother also taught for more than 30 years in Charlton and her daughter has continued the family tradition as an educator in Rhode Island. Looking back on the years Potter said it has been quite the experience seeing Charlton grow through so many different decades and she wouldn’t have had it any other way. “It’s changed so much,” Potter said. “It’s been very interesting watching the town and the schools change and grow. I feel very deeply connected to this community. My family has been part of this town for decades so it’s pretty special.”

While Potter said it’s disappointing that she will retire without seeing her students one final time, she has had opportunities to recollect on her long career thanks to a Facebook post her daughter set up to allow students of the past and present to share photos with Potter. Some of the memories are even among Potter’s own personal favorite achievements.

“My show choir has had wonderful success and achieved far beyond what I could have ever imagined. That was a role I was scared to jump into, but it’s been extremely fulfilling. That program has grown so much,” Potter said. “All the musicals we’ve done together have been fantastic. I’ve always loved musicals and bringing those to the stage at Heritage School and Charlton Middle School has been a wonderful experience. Knowing that I’ve touched these lives is so gratifying and that they’re sharing that musical legacy with others and their own children is great.”

Speaking about the changes she has endured as an educator due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Potter said that it’s been quite the adjustment especially since she doesn’t consider herself to be



Courtesy Photo

Charlton Middle School music teacher Karen Potter poses for a photo with a bus full of students. Potter is retiring after 35 years serving the Dudley Charlton Regional School District.

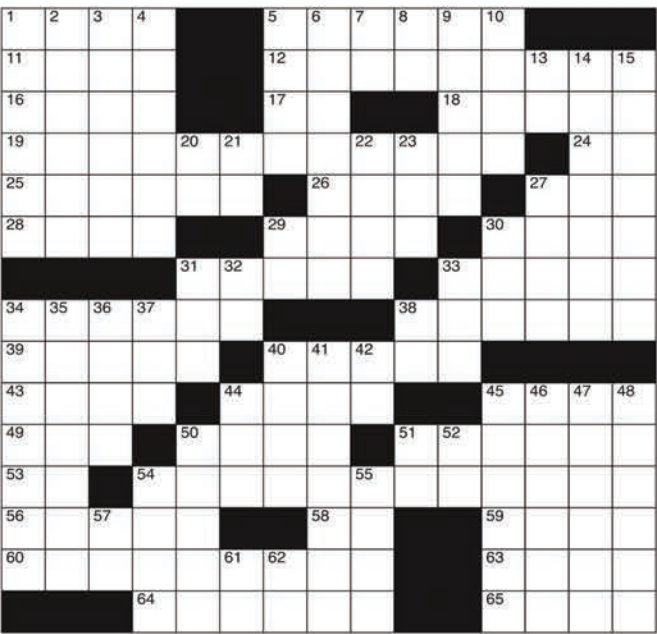
tech-savvy. However, she and others have worked hard to continue to provide a strong education for students even as their lesson plans and the format have had to evolve.

“In my particular area it’s challenging because it’s difficult if not impossible to do a chorus class in a remote situation with kids. We see it on television with people doing this sort of thing but most of them are professionals with great set-ups in their homes but for a general music teacher it’s very difficult,” Potter said. “I’ve been working in close conjunction with my music colleagues in creating remote lessons that we feel our children will be able to access covering a variety of musical topics from looking up different composers to checking out performances online and answering questions about

what they’re learning.”

While the health crisis might have put a damper on her final year as a teacher Potter confirms this won’t be the last anyone hears from her. She feels she owes herself some closure after dedicating so much time to the town she has called home her entire life. Even though she won’t have the chance to say goodbye in June, she fully plans to return as a visitor to Charlton Middle School to give a proper farewell.

“I don’t think I could go on without having some kind of closure like that. I can’t just walk away and shut the door. The students and this town have meant so much to me over the years. I need to go back one more time at some point to make sure I get that closure,” Potter said.



CLUES ACROSS

1. Curved symmetrical structure

5. One’s partner in marriage

11. Male admirer

12. Spend in a period of dormancy

16. Popular Easter meal

17. Doc

18. Bearing a heavy load

19. Gratitude

24. The Mount Rushmore State

25. Driving

26. Girl

27. British thermal unit

28. Makes a mistake

29. A defined length of time

30. Lions do it

31. Large quantities

33. Become less intense

34. Famed peninsula

38. Emerges
39. Rare Hawaiian geese

40. Dance style

43. Drove

44. Measures speed of an engine (abbr.)

45. Yankee hero Bucky

49. Midway between west and northwest

50. Monetary unit of Samoa

51. Makes clothing

53. Spielberg’s alien

54. Agreeable to the taste

56. Injury treatment protocol

58. Cools your house

59. Imaginary line

60. New convert

63. Some do it to their windows

64. Wore away

65. Work units

CLUES DOWN

1. Remove body tissue

2. Harvester

3. Roadside living quarters

4. Excessive self-confidence

5. Lapp

6. Bicycled

7. Entrance to a passage

8. Western U.S. state

9. Grain towers

10. “Westworld” actress __ Rachel Wood

13. Commercial

14. One who left a will

15. Makes it through

20. Within (prefix)

21. Sea patrol (abbr.)

22. Cigarettes (slang)

23. A doctrine

27. Constrictor snakes

29. Atomic #73

30. Baseball stat

31. Female sibling

32. A soft gray metal (abbr.)
33. Southern constellation

34. Belgian city

35. Go in again

36. In a different, more positive way

37. A place for sleeping

38. Blood type

40. Syrian news agency (abbr.)

41. A salt or ester of acetic acid

42. Millihenry

44. Populous Israeli city __ Aviv

45. Widen

46. Magical potion

47. Acknowledging

48. Private romantic rendezvous

50. Cavalry sword

51. Terabyte

52. Artificial intelligence

54. Bullfighting maneuver

55. Breezed through

57. Santa says it three times

61. __ and behold

62. 36 inches (abbr.)

PUZZLE SOLUTION



COHEN

continued from page A2

supply and still leave some for wildlife.

Black walnuts, by contrast, are harder to use; he described it as “a messy task” requiring a hammer, strong vise or rock to open the shell. But landowners are often “eager to get these messy, smelly nuts off their property,” and may let you collect them by the bucketful, he said.

Whichever nut you find, Cohen noted there’s two approaches to storing them. If you want to eat it, let it dry and “season one or two months,” and it will be easier to break open. But if you want to plant it, store it in a plastic bag in the fridge so it doesn’t dry out until planting time.

PRAGER

continued from page A1

the birthplaces of each person, and LGBTQ identity pride flags of the past and present.”

“Rainbow Revolutionaries: 50 LGBTQ+ People Who Made History” includes the stories of people such as Alexander the Great, Billie Jean King, Ellen DeGeneres, Greta Garbo, James Baldwin, and Sally Ride, some of which Prager will read during her live stream launch party.

“I’ll read multiple stories from the book,” said Prager. “The way its formatted is a two page spread for each person with a picture of them on the left page and a bio on the right, so the stories don’t take long to read. I’ll also be giving a little talk to the webcam about what the book is about, why it was important to me to write, and who the book is for and answering questions.

A local place made me cake with the book cover printed on top and there will be person-

alized signing for people who order a book and request an autograph.” Prager has been an LGBTQ activist since she came out at age 14 and has worked for queer rights organizations all over the world. In 2013, she created the popular Queer history mobile app Quist and was invited to the White House, the U.S. embassy in Mexico, and the offices of Twitter, Google, and Microsoft as a result. Her writing has been published in The Atlantic, The Advocate, Huffington Post, Bustle, QED: A Journal in LGBTQ Worldmaking, and It Gets Better Project’s blog, among others. She has also contributed to making the tech policies of large corporations such as Apple more inclusive of LGBTQ terms and presented to over 140 groups across five countries. Prager now lives in Sturbridge with her wife and two young children, who have been an influence on her books and are the reason why her next book will most likely be a picture board book.

ter, he said, “What it lacks in size it makes up for in intensity of flavor,” adding that’s also true of many wild versions of cultivated plants.

Regarding a question on fiddleheads, Cohen noted there’s only one edible true fern species – the ostrich fern. At this time of year, many of them look the same and are uncurling, so many people confuse them and sample nasty-tasting species.

“I’m playing the role of Johnny Appleseed for native edible species,” he said. He plants them in his own nursery so he can distribute them across the region. “It’s the way I feel I can give back,” he added.

Gus Steeves can be reached at gus.steeves2@gmail.com.

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Brimfield man arrested for threatening police with sword

BRIMFIELD – A man is facing several charges after brandishing a sword and confronting police last month.

Michael Jablonski, 46, was arrested on charges of assault with a dangerous weapon (two counts); resisting arrest (two counts); assault and battery on a police officer (two counts); and disorderly conduct.

The April 17 incident began when Brimfield Police were called to Holland Road for reports of an intoxicated man obstructing traffic and waving a sword. The first officer on scene was confronted by the suspect, who wielded an approximately

three-foot samurai-style sword.

The first officer was able to convince the man to put down the weapon, but the suspect then lunged at the officer. A second officer used a taser to subdue the suspect and take him into custody.

Jablonski was held on \$500,000 cash bail at the Hampden County House of Corrections. He will next appear in court on a date to be determined.

Photo Courtesy

Brimfield Police were confronted last month by a man wielding this sword. The suspect is facing several charges.



Cornerstone Bank donates to local organizations impacted by Coronavirus

WORCESTER — During these unprecedented times, Cornerstone Bank is making donations to help local organizations with the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. As a local, community bank, supporting the community is a top priority.

A \$15,000 donation was made to Harrington Healthcare System. This donation will be used to aid in the purchasing of personal protective equipment for front line staff. For more information about Harrington, ways you can help, and important information about COVID-19, please visit <https://www.harringtonhospital.org/>.

A \$5,000 donation was made to the Worcester Railers HC Small Business Stimulus Power Play. This donation will be used to purchase gift certificates to local businesses throughout Central Massachusetts. These gift certificates will then be given away to fans at Railers Hockey games during the 2020-2021 season. For more information, and to nominate a Central Massachusetts small business, visit <https://railershc.com/>.

A \$2,000 donation was made to St. John Paul II food pantry. This donation was matched by the Tri-Community Exchange Club and will provide extra funds at a time when the food

pantry is seeing an increase of people in need. For more information on the St. John Paul II food pantry, and ways that you can help, please visit <https://stjp2parish.org/food-pantry>.

“It is during these times that local organizations need our help the most,” stated Cornerstone Bank President & Treasurer and Chairman of the Bank’s Charitable Donations Committee Todd M. Tallman. “I am proud to be a part of an organization that places importance on our community.”

About Cornerstone Bank
Cornerstone Bank is an independent, mutual savings bank serving the residents, businesses, and communities throughout Central Massachusetts from offices in Charlton, Holden, Leicester, Rutland, Southbridge, Spencer, Sturbridge, Warren, Webster, and Worcester along with a Loan Center in Westborough. Deposits are insured in full by a combination of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and the Depositors Insurance Fund. The Bank is an Equal Opportunity Employer, Equal Housing Lender, and SBA Preferred Lender. For more information, visit online at cornerstonebank.com, on Facebook or call 800-939-9103.

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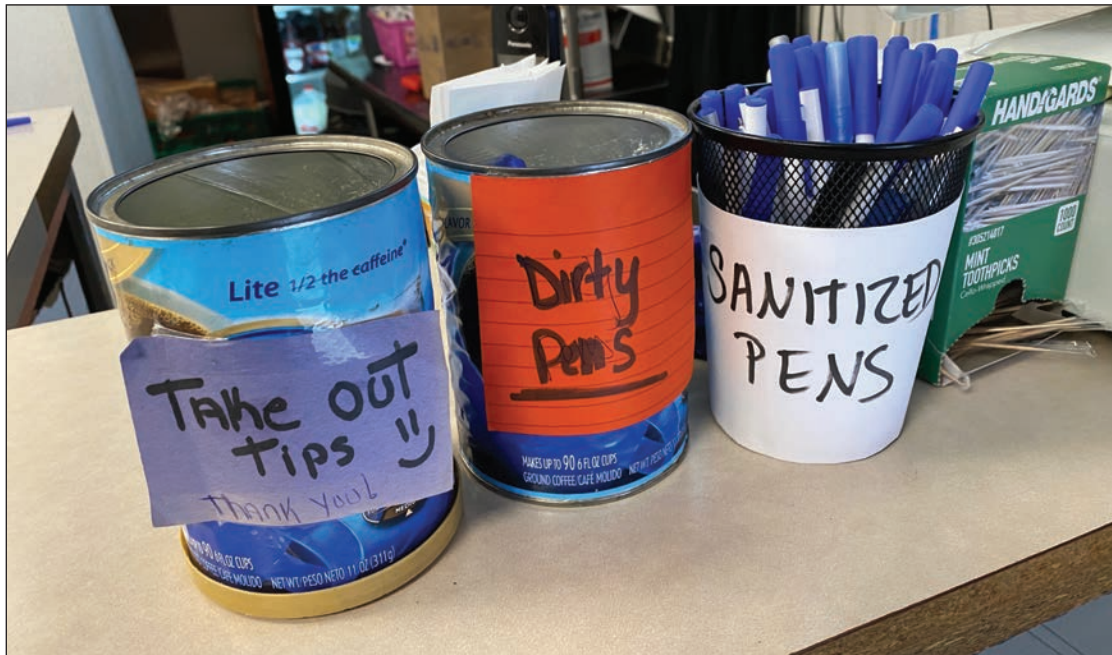


Photo Courtesy

The Elm Centre Cafe in Southbridge makes things easier for take-out customers in the age of COVID-19.

COLEMAN

continued from page A1

which time he will enter the studio and record new music in a city well known for sparking the careers of countless country music legends.

While he is home, though, Coleman is making the best of his time connecting with fellow songwriters and musicians and entertaining his fans and fellow Charlton residents on social media. Coleman recently did a takeover of the Charlton Happenings Facebook page where he played several songs on a livestream. Coleman has credited his hometown for showing him great support and feels proud to be able to help entertain them during the ongoing pandemic.

“I couldn’t ask for a better community to support me through this journey. I’m so grateful for everyone who has been supporting me and my dream. It means so much,” Coleman said. “I’m glad we have social media so that we can reach out to people and I can continue to be a part of the community. Some days I’ll work with a guest and

other days I’ll take people’s requests. I’m just happy that I can give back and distract people from everything that’s going on and make them happy.”

One question Coleman gets asked a lot is whether or not he will someday seek to jumpstart his career through shows like “The Voice” or “American Idol.” The answer was a firm “no” as Coleman wants to earn his career the hard way by forming relationships and a fanbase on the street of Nashville all on his own. While he is confident in his abilities and talent the young singer still says the prospect of chasing a musical career is intimidating, but he looks forward to the adventure.

“I know this is what I want to do. It’s a long, hard road of work and I’m up for the challenge. This is my dream and I want to achieve it,” said Coleman.

Fans can follow Liam Coleman’s journey and hear new music on his Facebook page, “Liam Coleman Music,” on Instagram by searching Liam P Coleman Music or on streaming platforms like Spotify and iTunes.

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Lush peonies add beauty and fragrance to early summer gardens



GARDEN
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Set aside a sunny spot in your garden or landscape for a few easy-care, herbaceous peonies. These traditional favorites are treasured for their bountiful early summer flowers, vigorous, shrub-like habit and amazing longevity. Peonies blend nicely with other perennials and are a good addition to both formal and informal garden designs.

The peony's sumptuous flowers and captivating fragrance have been admired by generations of gardeners. While many other plants come and go, peonies have staying power. The variety 'Sarah Bernhardt' was introduced in 1906 and has been popular ever since. Its plush, pale pink flowers have silvery tips and open late in the peony season.

To maximize your enjoyment, extend the peony season by growing an assortment of early, mid and late-blooming varieties. Choose wisely and it's possible to have peonies in bloom for a month or more. If you live in an area with rel-

atively warm weather, plant more of the early and midseason varieties so the plants have plenty of time to display their blossoms before the weather gets hot.

Add variety to your peony display by including plants with different flower styles. Options include single, anemone, semi-double, double and bomb types. Herbaceous peonies also come in many beautiful colors, including white, cream, coral, pink, rose and dark red.

Start the season off with a few of the earlier bloomers such as Coral Charm, Buckeye Belle, Festiva Maxima, Bowl of Beauty, Black Beauty, Purple Spider and Red Charm (longfield-gardens.com). Coral Charm's lightly fragrant flowers are a unique blend of coral and cream. This semi double peony is the recipient of the American Peony Society Gold Medal.

The large double ruby red flowers of Buckeye Belle are displayed on compact plants that are the perfect size for perennial gardens. Pairing this peony with the snowy-white flowers of Festiva Maxima is a striking combination.

Transition into mid-season with the heirloom variety Red Charm. Its long stems have few side buds, which makes it great for cutting. And the rose-like fragrance perfumes gardens

and bouquets. For a completely different look, consider the fragrant, double bomb flowers of Lady Liberty. Its frilly inner petals are cream and apricot, and form a tight ball resting on a double row of flamingo pink petals.

Anemone-style peonies have frilly centers surrounded by a single or double row of larger petals. The variety Sorbet features layers of candy pink and cream petals. It is deliciously fragrant, with sturdy stems that are excellent for cutting. Don't overlook other classic, mid-season bloomers like Duchess de Nemours, Celebrity and Red Supreme.

Close out the peony season with the large, raspberry-red blossoms of the classic French double peony Felix Crousse, and other time-tested favorites such as Lady Alexandria Duff and the beloved Sarah Bernhardt.

Peonies are known for their extravagant flowers, but the plants themselves are almost as impressive. Leaves emerge in spring with a tinge of red and reach a height of three feet within less than a month. By the time the flower buds appear, the plants are the size of a small shrub. After the flowers fade, the peony's lush, deep green leaves remain all season, providing a nice backdrop for nearby blooms. As temperatures cool in fall, the foliage



Photo Courtesy

Sarah Bernhardt peony, introduced in 1906, is one of the world's most popular peonies.

often displays a nice reddish fall color.

Bare root peonies may be planted in spring or fall. After planting, they will take some time to settle in. Young plants need 3 years or more to reach full size, but after that, they will flower every year for decades to come.

Melinda Myers has written numerous books, including *Small Space Gardening*. She

hosts *The Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" DVD series and the nationally-syndicated Melinda's Garden Moment TV & radio program. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine and was commissioned by Longfield Gardens for her expertise to write this article. Her Web site is www.MelindaMyers.com.*

FOCAS helping Charlton residents during COVID-19 crisis

CHARLTON — Friends of Charlton Animal Shelter (FOCAS) launched the Nutritional Assistance for Pets Program (NAPP) in 2019 to assist Charlton pet owners with food for their dogs and cats. NAPP was created after hearing stories of people sharing their own limited food supplies with their pets in times of financial struggles. Some people even surrendered their much loved pets to shelters when they could not afford to buy pet food.

The COVID-19 pandemic exponentially increased local need for assistance. FOCAS quickly stepped up and teamed up with Charlton Helping It's People In Need (CHIP-IN), our local food pantry. We also reached out to the Charlton Senior Center to make sure that seniors needing assis-

tance have a resource through FOCAS and CHIP-IN for their pet food needs.

FOCAS has been very busy since the State ordered a Stay-In-Place and has fulfilled dozens of requests by Charlton residents for pet food thereby allowing family to keep their pets healthy and in their homes during this unprecedented health crisis.

CHIP-IN Director, Darlene Emco-Rollins shared the following note recently: "I already dropped off the 20 pound bag of dog food and a few cans. I explained to them where it came from. The family could not believe it! They were so happy...and the dogs were also. I was happy to see the dogs were much loved..." So this came at the right time!"

FOCAS Board Member and NAPP Program Coordinator,

Kerry Breinlinger, provided this update to the Board Members: Yesterday, I delivered pet food to 7 Charlton homes (supporting 12 pets). Following the social distancing rules, I dropped food at doorsteps and went on my way, but many people caught me to say thank you and expressed their gratitude to our organization. One recipient called me later that day to thank us. She said that she had been very close to running out of cat food and was so relieved to have gotten a delivery. She explained that she has had her pets for over 10 years, they are her best friends and she couldn't imagine giving them up!

We could not be more proud!! Thanks to continuous and generous community support, including donations received via PayPal, snail mail, local

stores hosting FOCAS donation boxes, and our yearly fundraisers with Cornerstone Bank, FOCAS has been able to consistently provide assistance to those in need in the Town of Charlton.

For information on the NAPP program, whether you need our assistance or you wish to donate to help those who do, please visit us online at www.focascharlton.org or our Facebook page.

On behalf of the FOCAS Board of Directors, thank you! to all of our donors and sup-



Photo Courtesy

FOCAS Board member and volunteer Kerry Breinlinger making a NAPP program delivery in Charlton and following social distancing by dropping off the pet food.

House and Senate authorize virtual notarizations

BOSTON — The House of Representatives and the Senate have approved legislation authorizing notaries public to conduct electronic notarization of documents during the ongoing novel coronavirus State of Emergency.

State Rep. Todd Smola (R-Warren) said Senate Bill 2645 will allow Massachusetts residents to obtain notarization services for executing wills, real estate title transfers, guardianships, health care proxies, and other essential documents while using real-time videoconferencing to help maintain proper social distancing. The bill was enacted in both legislative

branches on April 23 and is now on Governor Charlie Baker's desk awaiting his signature.

Senate Bill 2645 establishes strict parameters for validating virtual notary transactions, including requiring the notary public and each of the principals involved to be physically present in the Commonwealth. Copies of the video recording and all related documents must be retained by the notary public for a period of 10 years.

The bill also requires each principal involved in an electronic notarization transaction to provide the notary public

with satisfactory evidence of their identity, which can include a government-issued ID containing the individual's photo and signature. The principal must also arrange for the executed document to be delivered to the notary public following the video conference.

For transactions involving mortgages and real estate title transfers, a secondary form of ID must also be provided, such as a credit card, Social Security card, municipal tax bill, or a utility bill. A follow-up video conference is also required for these types of transactions so the notary public can confirm the

document received matches up with the document that was executed during the initial video conference.

The provisions of Senate Bill 2645 will remain in effect until three business days after the State of Emergency is lifted. Representative Smola noted these temporary measures are needed to carry out notary work while eliminating the need for person-to-person contact to help slow the spread of the coronavirus.

For additional information, please contact Rep. Smola at Todd.Smola@mahouse.gov or (617) 722-2100.

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EDITOR

Where was the “Shot Heard ‘Round the World?” fired?

April 19, 1775 — a short 243 years ago, right around this time — marked the start of the Revolutionary War after the battles of Lexington and Concord. Normally, the event is commemorated with reenactments and various other celebrations; however, due to social distancing requirements, that did not happen this year.

The debate continues to heat up, however, as to whether or not ‘The Shot Heard Round’ the World’ took place in Concord, or in neighboring Lexington.

This time in our history, while brutal and necessary, brings with it much intrigue for many. The tenacity and bravery of those who fought for our independence is beyond admirable. The events that took place during the Revolutionary War, read like a novel in modern times and have been brought to life through books and films where we need to be reminded that this story is not fiction.

On that spring morning, more than 700 British soldiers who were given a secret tip on the whereabouts of colonial military supplies in Concord, marched towards town to confiscate the lot. The Patriots who had developed a top notch intelligence network, largely the work of George Washington’s Culper Ring, and the Sons of Liberty, had received notice weeks in advance and were able to move the supplies to safety.

Paul Revere and William Dawes had plans to ride ahead of the British troops to warn other Patriots. Knowing the task was risky, Revere secured the help of about 30 other men to make sure word reached Lexington and Concord if the two were captured. Revere told militia leaders to look at the steeple of the Old North Church each night for a signal. One lit lantern meant the Regulars would come by land through the Boston Neck. Two lanterns meant the British would come via the Charles river on row boats into Cambridge, ‘One if by land, two if by sea’.

The night before the famous battle, Dr. Joseph Warren sent Dawes to Lexington where he was joined with Revere to warn Sam Adams and John Hancock that the British were coming.

It was midnight in Lexington when Revere and Dawes were joined by a third rider, Dr. Samuel Prescott. Prescott had been courting a woman in Lexington and met Dawes and Revere by chance. Because he believed in the cause, Prescott joined the men. The three riders were stopped by a British patrol not long after. Dawes was able to escape by reversing his direction. Prescott jumped a stone wall and fled using a short cut only locals knew about. The doctor was the only rider to reach Concord. Revere who was now captured, was surrounded by six Regulars and was searched and interrogated.

“An officer clapped his pistol to my head, called me by name and told me he was going to ask me some questions, and if I did not give him true answers, he would blow my brains out,” Revere wrote in his diary.

The Regulars were spooked by the sound of gunfire in the distance, and let Revere go after asking him for an alternative route to town. Revere made his way back to Lexington where he regrouped with Hancock and Adams, who planned an escape to Woburn.

Throughout the night, the ‘Rebels’ gathered to intercept the British. When the red coats were seen marching onto the Lexington green, the local minutemen knew they were outnumbered. Out of the dawn a shot was fired, and no one knows to this day which side was responsible for it. After the scuffle on the green, eight minutemen and one British soldier were killed. There were accusations from both sides laying blame on one another.

William Sutherland, a British soldier, is on record saying, “I heard Major Pitcairn’s voice call out. ‘Soldiers, don’t fire, keep your ranks, form and surround them.’ Instantly some of the villains who got over the hedge fired at us which our men for the first time returned.”

Sylvanus Wood, a minute man had recalled something different, “he swung his sword, and said, ‘Lay down your arms, you damned rebels, or you are all dead men – fire!’ Some guns were fired by the British at us from the first platoon, but no person was killed or hurt, being probably charged only with gunpowder.

As many of you know, I am in the midst of a health challenge. During the last few days, I have spent most of my time indoors and in bed. It’s not like me, but we all have our moments of weakness. That’s okay as long as we do not choose to remain there. It is our job and our job alone to decide to get up and get moving.

Saturday, I got a little help from Arlene, as she insisted, I get up and come outside for a walk in the sunlight. I resisted but after almost forty-five years, I have learned to resist is futile. So, I got up, got dressed and we headed out.

I immediately felt better. As we walked and talked, I spied a colorful kite flying out from the neighborhood adjoining our property. I was mesmerized by the simple beauty of the red, yellow and blue kite framed by a clear blue sky.

I imagined a young child at the end of the string. Wide eyes and a big smile playing across his/her face. I reminisced about the joy of flying a kite as a child. I looked forward to our Cub Scout Pack annual kite flying festival. All kites were built from scratch and they came in all different shapes sizes and colors. I hadn’t thought about my kite flying days for years, but the joy filled memories flooded my heart ... and I wondered ... is it possible that the child at the end of the string was receiving as much joy from the flight of this kite as I was?

It reminds me of the many simple pleasures of life. They abound all around us, but we must be open to the experience. As I always say, what we look for we usually find. I was in need of finding a distraction to the combination of quarantine and chemotherapy and found it overhead at the hand of a child I’ve never met.

What is it you are looking for? You must be discerning at what you let into your head and heart at times like these.



POSITIVELY
SPEAKING

GARY W.
MOORE

I hear the talking heads arguing on TV and shut it off. I know there is pain and suffering for those needing to work but are prohibited. I know and grieve at the sickness and death at the hands of a virus we still do not completely understand. I don’t think anyone wants or is welcoming our current situation, but what purpose is served by dwelling on the negative?

Look for the positive in every circumstance. Too many people look for the misery and pain in the world and it’s easy to find. Instead, seek out and identify the beauty around you. Find your joy in the moment. Count your blessings and you’ll be surprised at the abundance. They are there but you must open your eyes and seek them. Look for the good, the clean, the positive and the beauty in this day. Catch and recognize the kindness of others. Dismiss the negative as unnecessary and unhelpful mind pollution.

And be encouraged. Great things are happening. In most states the curve is flattening, while in others it will flatten soon. Americans have pulled together in cooperation, and in mass, have quarantined and cooperated. The results are good and getting better. I believe we are winning this attack to our lives and livelihood.

Be positive. Be optimistic. Make the best of this bad situation and look for the joy wherever you are. It’s there to be found. It is our job to seek it out. It’s easier not to ... but it is worth the effort.

I’ve found great joy and happiness in this day from places I did not expect.

Will you join me? ■

Gary W. Moore is a freelance columnist, speaker, and author of three books including the award-winning, critically acclaimed, “Playing with the Enemy.” Follow Gary on Twitter @ GaryWMoore721 and at www.garyw-moore.com.

Planning a Summer Garden

Nothing jump starts “garden fever” like planning a bed of blooms! Whether you have visions of an elaborate formal flower garden or favor the simplicity of a side door cottage bed, plotting a flowering garden is a labor of love.

Prepping for plants allows for an infusion of personality, fosters visual creativity and paves the way for a spectacular season of blooms unique to each planner! Read on for some easy tips and tricks to help you along.

Blooming Bulbs Nothing adds color and beauty to a garden for less effort than bulbs. Even if you didn’t have the foresight to plant spring bulbs last fall, you can still enjoy summer blooms. Ideally, you should wait until the danger of spring frosts has passed before planting bulbs. If you think the threat of frost is over, think again. Garden experts give May 30 as the first safe planting date of the season.

Some summer flowering bulbs that have a history of success include Dahlias, Gladiolus, Cannas, Caladiums, and Daylilies. Just keep in mind in our zone you may have to dig up the bulbs and store for the winter for springtime planting next year.

To test whether soil is ready to work, squeeze some in your hand, then poke at the clump. If the clump breaks up easily into small crumbs, the soil is dry enough to till.

Getting a head start on bulb planting by starting them indoors increases your odds of success. Use deep pots and replant them outside once the ground has thawed.

Planning where you want to create “splashes” of color in the garden also includes how dramatic a statement you want your plot to make. Plentiful clumps of flowers demand attention and this method of planting has long been a favorite of gardeners.

Another popular planting pattern is to “drift” flower varieties, which has been compared to painting the garden with a brush of color. Drifts can encompass waves of complementing bulb varieties bordering each other, or each flower drift can stand on its own, perhaps creeping across an incline or making its way along



TAKE
THE
HINT

KAREN
TRAINOR

a stone wall. To ensure successful drifts, use a generous sprinkling of densely planted bulbs. Or, simply toss or scatter bulbs and plant them where they land for a natural meadow effect.

Perhaps the best rule of thumb for planting bulbs is the most obvious. Plant bulbs where you want to see color. Attractive uses include planting bulbs to border a perennial garden, to fill in a rock garden and as a decorative accent circling a mailbox post or light pole.

Garden experts recommend planting bulbs in crumbly soil with proper drainage, although hardy bulbs often thrive in less than satisfactory soil. Soil that has not been turned over in a while will benefit from loosening it up with a shovel. Your hole should be dug a few inches below where the bulb should sit to allow for fertilizer. Bulbs should be planted pointed side up. Flat tubers should be planted sideways for best results. Avoid any air pockets in hole which can inhibit growth.

Here are more tips and shortcuts are geared toward cutting time and effort in the garden.

*Plants that grow best in alkaline soil such as geraniums and hydrangea will thank you with better blooms if you water them with a mild mixture of baking soda and water occasionally.

*The first thing to check if your azalea leaves are looking yellow is the soil pH. Azaleas need a soil on the acid side. Alkalinity locks up iron needed for green color.

*Adding Epsom Salt to plants has been reported to enhance the color of blossoms and leaves, promote new flowers and fruit, improve the root system and improve the strength of stems. For roses: Sprinkle one teaspoon of Epsom Salts per foot of plant height and spread evenly around the base for better blossoms and deeper greening. Add 1/2 cup sprinkled around the base and then scratched in, for strong production of new flowering canes and healthy new basal cane growth.

*Did you know most fragrant flowers are lightly colored or white? If you want to add a scent to your garden, be generous with white or pastel blooms.

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How should Millennials respond to market decline?



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The coronavirus crisis has unsettled every age group, as we are all worried about our health and that of our families and communities. And if you’re in the millennial generation, generally defined as anyone born between 1981 and 1996, you might also be concerned about your financial future, given the sharp decline in investment prices. How should you respond to what’s been happening? Your view of the current situation will depend somewhat on your age. If you’re an older millennial, you had probably been investing for a few years when we went through the financial crisis in 2007-2008. And you then experienced 11 years of a record bull market, so you’ve seen both the extremes and the resilience of the investment world. But if you’re a younger millennial, you might not have really started investing until the past few years, if you’ve started at all, so you’ve only seen a steadily climbing market. Consequently, you may find the current situation particularly discouraging, but this is also a lesson in the reality of investing: Markets go down as well as up. But no matter where you are within the millennial age cohort, you might help yourself by taking these steps: Enjoy the benefit of having time on your side. If you’re one of the younger millennials, you’ve got about four decades left until you’re close to retiring. Even if you’re in the older millennial group, you’ve probably got at least 25 years until you stop working. With so many years ahead, you have the opportunity to overcome the periodic drops in investment prices, and your investments have time to grow. And, of course, you’ll be able to add more money into those investments, too. Invest systematically. The value of your investments will always fluctuate. You can’t control these price movements, but you may be able to take advantage of them through what’s known as systematic investing. By putting the same amount of money at regular intervals into the same investments, you’ll buy more shares when the share price is lower – in other words, you’ll be “buying low,” which is one of the first rules of investing – and you’ll buy fewer shares when the price rises. Over time, this strategy can help you reduce the impact of volatility on your portfolio, although it can’t ensure a profit or protect against loss. Plus, systematic investing can give you a sense of discipline, though you’ll need to consider the ability to keep investing when share prices are declining. Focus on the future. You’re never really investing for today – you’re doing it to reach goals in the future, sometimes just a few years away, but usually much further out. That’s why it’s so important not to panic when you view those scary headlines announcing big drops in the financial markets, or even when you see negative results in your investment statements. By creating an investment strategy that’s appropriate for your risk tolerance and time horizon, and by focusing on your long-term goals, you can develop the discipline to avoid making hasty, ill-advised decisions during times of stress. As a millennial, you’ve got a long road ahead of you as you navigate the financial markets. But by following the suggestions above, you may find that journey a little less stressful.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Please contact Jeff Burdick, your local Edward Jones Advisor in Sturbridge at 508-347-1420 or jeff.burdick@edward-jones.com
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THE GREAT
OUTDOORS

RALPH
TRUE

The fantastic day we had last Saturday helped bring up the water temperatures a bit, but then the weather turned rainy and cold. It has set back many species of fish from becoming actively feeding in fresh water ponds, and it is also impacting the striper, & seabass migration. This writer spent almost four hours fishing Wallum Lake this past Saturday hoping to catch a few trout, but it never happened. Other anglers also had no success, including one angler that fished from 6 a.m. till noon, and never had a single hit. He trolled deep and everywhere in between. He tried lures, fly's, etc. No fish.

Unfortunately, Wallum Lake has not set up a thermocline (a depth of water that has a constant temperature and plenty of oxygen). Getting to know the body of water that you are fishing will help in finding the thermocline. Wallum Lake normally sets up a thermocline at about 15 to 20 feet of water. In the early morning trout tend to leave the thermocline to surface feed, at which time they can be observed fining the water as they feed on bugs and insects. This can be a very hard time to catch them if you do not fish with fly's.

Using down riggers or lead core line when trolling in a boat will get your lure or bait

to the proper level where trout have been feeding in the thermocline. It will take a few minutes to find the trout, but you will eventually find the correct depth. Changing lures and trolling speed can also be a way to catch the sometimes finicky trout.

Of course, if all else fails you can fish from shore or anchor the boat and try power bait!

A bit of history on Wallum Lake and what was expected or should have happened over the last 30 years or so. At one point, Wallum was on the list of reclaimed ponds and was poisoned by Massachusetts Fish & Wildlife, killing most species of fish. It was expected to hold some of the best trout fishing in the state along with numerous other bodies of water in the state. The program was a big flop and after a few years the ponds that were reclaimed were restocked with the fish species that were removed.

Wallum Lake was one of the best trout ponds in the state for a few years, but at one point, acid rain became a big problem in many states. In cooperation with Rhode island, as the body of water lies in both states, liming of the lake was done to alleviate the problem. After a few years of liming the lake and efforts to introduce smelt into the body of water, they too were abandoned. Soon, Massachusetts & Rhode Island stopped stocking rainbow trout into Wallum, because they

claimed that the PH was not suitable for rainbow trout.

A group of local sportsmen banded together to alleviate the PH problem, hoping to get rainbow trout back into the lake. This writer contacted Living Lakes, which was an organization that was funded by the huge utilities that were causing the problem with their emissions. Fortunately, Wallum Lake was chosen by the company to spread tons of lime into Wallum using a precision piece of machinery aboard a large boat. Numerous tractor trailers arrived at the Wallum boat ramp more than 30 years ago and the lake was limed. To make a long story short Wallum Lake was again stocked with rainbow trout, and have done exceptionally well over the years holding rainbow trout.

Soon after, under pressure from sportsmen to stocked shoal spawning alewives into the lake to provide a forage fish for trout was done, and to this day the alewives are still present at Wallum Lake. Around the same time, again under pressure from local sportsmen an agreement with both Mass. & Rhode island was reached to make Wallum Lake a trophy trout pond. Unfortunately, both states could not work together and the plan was scrapped. More on Wallum Lake in the coming weeks!

Turkey hunting opened this past Monday under dismal con-



Photo Courtesy

This columns picture shows 11 year old Nathan, son of Captain Mel True with his first tautog of the year.

ditions.

This writer's column needed to be in by Sunday noon, so I do not have any reports from successful hunters! Send me some of your pictures for publication in this column. Send them to oldsalt_65@msn.com. There are five different species of turkeys throughout the United States, with most states having an annual bag limits at two or three birds. Alabama has an annual bag limit of five birds, with a predicted population of half a million turkeys and an annual harvest of only 1,000 birds. Massachusetts has raised there harvest limit this year to two bearded birds in

the spring, and one of either sex in the fall.

Many turkey hunters are not observing many birds in their regular places this year. It may be because of the mild winter and a good supply of food this year. During bad winters, turkeys concentrated around farms and were constantly feeding at manure piles or whatever they could find to sustain them through the winter. One thing for sure — there are a lot of turkeys to be harvested this year, right here in Massachusetts!

Take A Kid Fishing & Keep Them Rods Bending!

Nursing student wins 2020 Yasso #gameonhero Program

CHARLTON — Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy student Lauren Pellett of Norwich, Conn. was pleasantly surprised and greatly appreciated winning the Yasso #gameonhero Program.

In an email sent by Taylor Hunt, Experiential Marketing Associate for Yasso, Pellett was acknowledged with a thank you and notified that Yasso received so many incredible stories of community heroes nationwide. Although overwhelmed with the outpouring of positivity of thoughtfulness of the entries, Pellett was picked for her caring actions toward an 83-year-old client, assisting her mother in making fabric masks for local hospitals and taking care of her grandmother, Shirley Whitney. All while Pellett maintained her academic standing through remote learning and completed clinical requirements through Digital Clinical Experience (DCE) at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy.

"It's wonderful to see and be recognized by such a great company doing great things for the healthcare system and community," Pellett said. "Such an inspiring thing to be a part of during a traumatic time."

Pellett will finish her certificate in practical nursing this June, then plans to work full time and further her education by pursuing a bachelor's degree in Nursing.

"I find it amazing that I could fulfill my nursing dream in the midst of a pandemic," said Pellett. "I've been working very hard, and it has made



Photo Courtesy

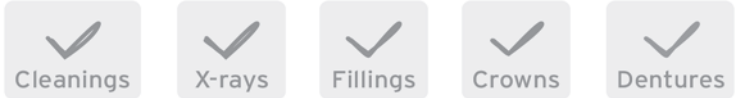
Shirley Whitney and Lauren Pellett

a lot of things possible for me that I never would have thought possible, I am extremely grateful."

Pellett's prize includes a Yasso care package and a \$500 donation to charity. Pellett's favorite Yasso flavors are Mint Chocolate Chip, Black raspberry, butter pecan, Coffee Chocolate chip, and vanilla bean. Hunt hopes the small token can spread a little more joy in this trying time.

Dental Insurance

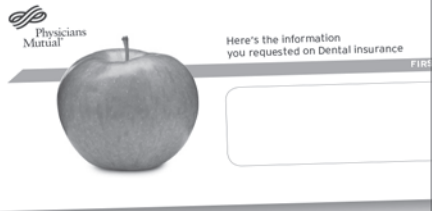
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OBITUARIES

Edward H. Pitts, 91



SOUTHBIDGE- Edward H. Pitts, 91, passed away on Wednesday, April 22nd, in the UMass Memorial Medical Center, Memorial Campus, after an illness.



His wife, Pamela E. (Self) Pitts, passed away in 2012. He leaves his daughter, Katie Ryan and her husband Joe of Lancaster; his step-daughter Lesle Mallon and her husband Jay of Sturbridge; his step-son, Paul Fortier and his wife Madelyn of Wakefield; his brother, George Tesniere of Woburn; his sister, Anne (Tesniere) Scanlon of Silver Springs, FL; his 9 grandchildren; and 14 great grandchildren. He was born in Boston the son of E. Howard

and Anna F. (Bendry) Pitts.

Edward served a 25-year career in the US Navy from 1945 to 1970. He was a veteran of World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, serving as a medical assistant. After retiring from the Navy, he became a medical assistant at the Somerville Hospital and later at the UMass Medical Center in Worcester before retiring many years ago. Ed enjoyed playing golf and was an avid bowler, belonging to several bowling leagues.

Due to the current health restrictions Edward's funeral services and burial in North Cemetery, Sturbridge, will be private.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to the Dana Farber Cancer Institute, P.O. Box 849168, Boston, MA 02284 or online at www.dana-farber.org.

The Daniel T. Morrill Funeral Home, 130 Hamilton St., Southbridge, is directing arrangements.

www.morrillfuneralhome.com

Sylvia Jane, 77,

BROOKFIELD- Sylvia (Wambach) Jane, 77, passed unexpectedly on January 29th. She leaves a sister Leona, daughter Rhonda, son Kenneth and many cousins, nieces, nephews, grandchildren and great grandchildren. She was very active in her church, Abby

House.

Sylvia was very proud of her 5 five star, Sunburst Restaurant of 36 years. She had many friends, always helping someone. She will always be in our hearts.

David "Tall Pine" White, 47

BRIMFIELD - David "Tall Pine" White, 47 of Brimfield, MA, died Thursday, April 16, 2020, at Care One at Redstone, East Longmeadow, MA following an illness.



Born in Worcester, MA, on July 18, 1972, he was the beloved son of Kenneth White of Sturbridge, and Joyce Green White of Brimfield. David is survived by his wife Amanda (Rossignol) White. He is also survived by his son Steven, US Army, his brother Timothy White of Sturbridge, his stepdaughter Allison L. Kania, and his stepson Logan D. LeBlanc; his step mother Ann White of Sturbridge, two step sisters, Keri Hoenig of Auburn, MA, and Lori Thompson of Sturbridge, MA, and his niece Emma and nephew Lukas.

David graduated from Tantasqua Regional High school with the class of 1990. In 1993, he became a Massachusetts Licensed Journeyman Electrician and worked for local contractors for many years. He later worked as an Electrical Instructor for Home Builders of America until his death.

Tall Pine was very proud of his Nipmuck heritage. He was a Tribal Member and Vice Chairman of the Chaubunagungamaug Band of Nipmuck Indian Council. In 1996, he became a student and researcher of the Nipmuck language, and later became a proud instructor of the language. He taught many Nipmuck language

classes on line and in person at many locations including the Hassanamisco Indian Museum in Grafton, MA.

Among his other achievements, he was Tribal Representative of the Muhheconnew National Confederacy, the U Mass Repatriation Committee, organizer and emcee at annual Nipmuck Pow Wows, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, and Family Advocate. He was also a board member of the Earthlands Institute of Environmental awareness, Language Consultant and film extra for PBS documentary "We Shall Remain" mini-series. He was a participant and completed ACTFL oral proficiency training at the Kahnawake Mohawk Reservation. He completed a two-week intensive Language Teacher training/ Research Workshop at the Breath of Life Archival Institute for Indigenous Languages at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. He was a board member of the Nipmuck Cultural Preservation and also Tribal Representative/Advisory Board member of the Montague/Turner's Falls, MA. Research project.

David was a gentle, dedicated and loving man to his family, and will be greatly missed.

Sansoucy Funeral Home, 40 Marcy Street, Southbridge, MA 01550 is handling arrangements. Due to current precautions, service will be held at a later date. The family would like you to pay your respects by sharing your memories of Tall Pine on line at sansoucyfuneral.com

Verna F. Vaill, 93

STURBRIDGE/MUNSON- Verna F. (Gracia) Vaill, 93, died peacefully in the comfort of her lake home, April 9, 2020.



Verna was a longtime resident of Monson and Sturbridge and for many years was a dispatcher for the Monson Police Department. She was an avid reader and a keen observer of nature especially those around her Big Alum home "Pookapoag". She enjoyed gardening, chatting with people, and being at the lake.

Verna was predeceased by her husband, Donald. She leaves her children James B. Vaill of Monson, Edward Matys (wife Leslie) of Woburn, Daniel Matys, and Daughter Nancie (Vaill) Shay (husband C.J.) of Ashland, KY; grandchildren Justin, Aaron, Abbey, and Alec Matys, Emily Shay; and KC, her beloved cat and companion. Verna was predeceased by siblings Frank Gracia Jr., Muriel Andesron, and Gladys Mott. She will be dearly missed by family and friends.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Lombard Funeral Home of Monson. Services will be private. Verna asked that Memorial Contributions may be made to Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary, 30 Peck Road, Monson MA 01057

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to Obits@stonebridgepress.news





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Please help your postal workers stay safe

To the Editor:

During these challenging times, postal employees are working hard to ensure residents stay connected with their world through the mail. Whether it's medications, a package, a paycheck, benefits or pension check, a bill or letter from a family member, postal workers understand that every piece of mail is important. While service like this is nothing new to us, we need our communities' help with social distancing.

For everyone's safety, our employees are following the social distancing precautions recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

(CDC) and local health officials. We are asking people to not approach our carriers to accept delivery. Let the carrier leave the mailbox before collecting the mail. With schools not in session, children should also be encouraged to not approach a postal vehicle or carrier.

If a delivery requires a signature, carriers will knock on the door rather than touching the bell. They will maintain a safe distance, and instead of asking for a signature on their mobile device, they'll ask for the resident's name. The carrier will leave the mail or package in a safe place for retrieval.

We are proud of the role all our employees play in process-

ing, transporting, and delivering mail and packages for the American public. The CDC, World Health Organization, as well as the Surgeon General indicate there is currently no evidence that COVID-19 is being spread through the mail.

With social distancing, we can keep the mail moving while keeping our employees, and the public, safe.

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OXFORD – 10 Huguenot Rd! 8 Rm Colonial! 1.36 Acres! Country Setting! Country Kitchen w/Bay Window Overlooking Back Yard, Front to Back Living/Dining Rm w/French Doors to Deck! Office! Side Entry Breezeway! 3 Bdrms Plus a Study/Craft Rm on the 2nd Floor! 1 Car Detached Garage w/Workshop! Easy Access to Shopping and Highways! **\$179,000.00**



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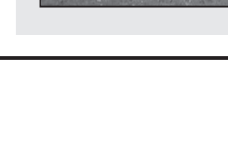
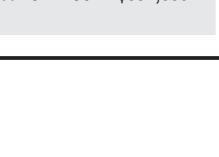
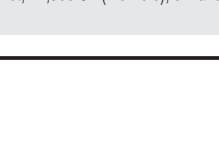
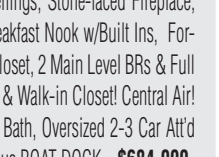
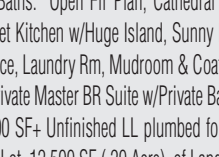
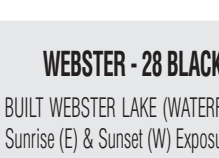
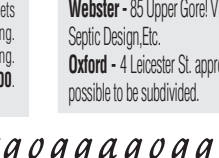
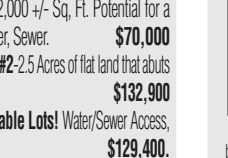
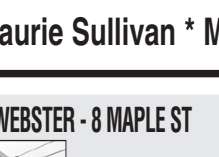
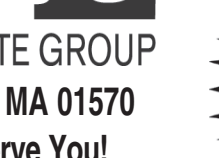
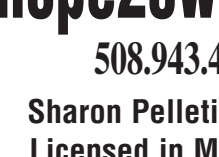
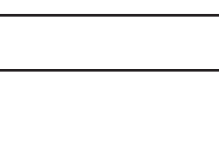
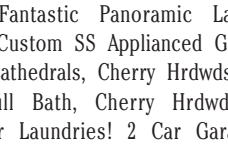
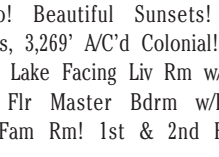
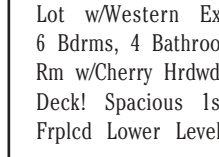
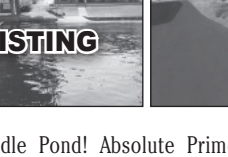
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Douglas-Mount Daniels Lot #2 2.5 Acres of flat land that abuts Douglas State Forest **\$132,900**
Webster - Potential 6 Buildable Lots! Water/Sewer Access, Zoned Lake Residential **\$129,400.**
Webster - 85 Upper Gore! View of the Lake. 1+ acre, artesian well, Septic Design, Etc. **\$130,000**
Oxford - 4 Leicester St. approx. 8.47 acres! River frontage! Highly possible to be subdivided. **\$99,900**

WOODSTOCK, CT - 64 LYON HILL RD



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Estate like long paved driveway! 3158 Sq Ft. Colonial! Geothermal built. Open floor plan, ash flooring throughout! Granite and s/s applianced kitchen! Large master bedroom, coffered ceiling, master bath, W/Jetted tub! Walk in closets. Two car garage. Radiused catwalk on upper level! A walk up attic. Walk out lower level! The third garage is accessed from the lower level. Generator hookup. One beautiful property! assisted sale **\$499,900.**

WEBSTER LAND - COOPER RD



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Thomas J. Bartholomew honored in Financial Times

WORCESTER — Bartholomew & Company, a leading provider of financial services in Worcester, Massachusetts, announced that its President & CEO, Thomas J. Bartholomew, AIF® has been named to Financial Time's list of the 400 Top Financial Advisors for 2020. The list is published on ft.com.

According to Financial Times, a leading financial publication, the ranking reflects advisors with a minimum of 10 years' experience and \$300 million or more in assets under management (AUM). In addition, list makers are determined based upon compliance records, industry certifications, online accessibility, and AUM growth rate.

"I am pleased to have been named to this prestigious list—a recognition that, to us,

speaks to our firm's commitment to providing trusted financial planning and investment advice that addresses each individual's and organization's needs," said Mr. Bartholomew. "I am grateful for the trust our clients place in us, and we remain committed to providing the guidance and support they need to achieve their unique financial goals."

About Bartholomew & Company

Bartholomew & Company has been providing individuals and organizations with financial guidance since 1994. Located at 370 Main Street, Suite 1000, Worcester, MA, with branch offices in Chatham and Bedford, MA, Bartholomew & Company's advisors pride themselves on crafting unique strategies for each client. For more information, please visit www.bartandco.com.

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Produced independently by Ignites Research, a division of Money-Media, Inc., on behalf of the Financial Times; the Financial Times 400 is based on each advisor's performance in several primary areas, including assets under management, asset growth, compliance record, experience, credentials, and accessibility. Approximately 1,040 applicants were considered, and 400 (38.5 percent of candidates) were recognized. For the full methodology,* please visit ft.com.

*Not indicative of advisor's future performance. Your experience may vary.



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Pay Equity Act to impact Charlton budget

BY JASON BLEAU
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

CHARLTON – Even with the roadblocks of the COVID-19 pandemic, Charlton’s town leaders are hard at work putting together the finance proposal for the next budget year and part of those discussions involves putting into motion plans to evolve pay equity for town employees.

During a live-streamed meeting of the Board of Selectmen on April 14, board members had an extensive discussion with Finance Director Donna Foglio who detailed ongoing efforts to revamp the town’s pay system to implement proper raises and insure fair wages for town employees. Foglio had previously met with the Town Administrator and Human Resources department at the beginning of the calendar year to address the required changes to adapt to the state’s Pay Equity Act, which took effect in 2018 and applies to noncollective bargaining units in an attempt to close wage gaps. Foglio said the town has been working to adapt to the act “piecemeal” and presented a plan for consideration that would be worked

into the upcoming budget to bring the town in compliance.

The plan includes cost of living adjustments and updates a pay plan that was conceived through a third party consultant in the 2015 fiscal year. Foglio said the final step in that process was never completed which would have involved placing positions on a plan matrix based on their years of experience and related education. The plan presented to selectmen in April is more in line with the specifications of the Pay Equity Act and includes 20 classification grades, double the number from the original draft, and pay increases of 10 percent between classifications rather than the previously proposed 20 percent in the 2015 plan giving Charlton a wider range of classifications to work with. According to Foglio all of this translates to a cost of \$77,641.43 to properly adjust, which would become a permanent part of the budget if implemented for the next fiscal year.

The money is proposed to be taken from new revenues but would still be a substantial increase put before the voters. Selectmen were aware of the potential backlash that would come from such a high proposal but the over-

arching opinion seemed to be that it is a required investment to bring the town in compliance with the Pay Equity Act and prevent any potential litigation against the town.

Selectman Deborah Noble was one board member who saw the investment as a necessity even if it creates a financial burden the town will have to work around.

“We have to be mindful of the fact that this isn’t going to be a one-time expenditure. We have to address this,” Noble said. “I see this as a situation where it’s not a want, it’s a need because the last thing we need is for somebody to come after us for triple damages when we knew ahead of time it was a possibility. We cannot plead ignorance on this. So, we might end up being the bad guys when it comes to the budget, but I see this as something we have to do.”

Selectman David Singer brought to the table the possibility of implementing the plan in stages starting with the lowest earning workers and then addressing higher paid individuals in the next fiscal year. While the concept was touted as an “interesting and creative” idea, the mentality of simply investing in full to bring the pay plan

in line with state’s act was the more agreed upon measure.

“I can see both sides of the argument,” Selectman Bill Borowski said. “I’m also looking at it as just a sense of parity and equality. The reality is this law was passed for a reason – I feel really uncomfortable putting it off another year because of our own financial issues. We’re basically saying our financial issues are more important (than the employees). I would rather just bite the bullet now and we’re just going to have to find a way to manage it. There’s really no point in putting off what they’re really supposed to be earning anyway.”

Borowski went so far as to make the motion recommending the implementation of pay recommendations for the next fiscal year and beyond. Selectmen unanimously agreed although Selectman John McGrath was absent from the meeting. Charlton officials plan to meet to discuss the 2021 proposed spending plan numbers with the Finance Committee in May before going to the townsfolk for a vote in June.

Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts provides \$371,000 in response to COVID-19 Crisis

WORCESTER — In response to the coronavirus public health crisis, The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts has expedited \$371,000 in supplemental funding to 27 non-profits serving Central Massachusetts.

The following non-profits were awarded funding:

Abby’s House, Ascendria Care Alliance, Community Legal Aid, Easter Seals of Massachusetts, Fitchburg State University, Friendly House, GAAMHA, Inc., Health Care For All, Health Law Advocates, Jeremiah’s Inn, LUK, Inc., Massachusetts Association for Community Action, Massachusetts Budget & Policy Center, Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance, Massachusetts Public Health Association, Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Neighbor to Neighbor Massachusetts, Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation, Quinsigamond Community College Foundation, RCAP Solutions, Riverside Community Care, Seven Hills Foundation, South Middlesex Opportunity Council, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, Worcester Regional Food Hub, World Farmers, and YWCA of Central Massachusetts.

“The Board of the Foundation devised a three-pronged strategy for helping area non-profits in response to coronavirus. The top priority to bolster current grantees’ projects and to address special circumstances has been accomplished with this distribution of supplemental funding,” stated Jan Yost, President of the Foundation.

The Foundation’s Activation Fund remains open, with Letters of Intent due April 30, 2020. Further allocations to address gaps and the long-term impact of coronavirus will be informed by government and private funding and determined in the months ahead, she explained.

The Foundation was established in 1999 with the proceeds from the sale of Central Massachusetts Health Care, Inc., a physician-initiated, not-for-profit HMO. The Foundation currently has assets of approximately \$67 million and has awarded grants totaling over \$44 million.

Open Sky Community Services releases “Coping During COVID” video series

WORCESTER — Open Sky Community Services has released a multi-part clinical video series entitled “Coping during COVID,” to offer evidence-based recommendations and tips to support the community through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Open Sky clinical leaders Suzy Langevin, Director of Dual Diagnosis Services, Stefanie Gregware, Vice President of Clinical Services, Barent Walsh, Ph.D, Senior Clinical Consultant, Andrea Wolloff, Director of Evidence-Based Practices and Kerrin Westerlind, Assistant Director of Evidence Based Practices are amongst those offering evidence-based recommendations to assist others in this time of need.

“Social distancing is essential from a public health standpoint but it’s wreaking havoc on us emotionally,” explains Dr. Oliver Joseph, psychiatrist and Chief Medical Officer at Open Sky. “It’s increasing isolation, anxiety, depression and other negative emotions.” The series is intended to

offer guidance and assistance for those looking to manage such emotions. The videos will be available on the Open Sky YouTube Channel as well as on the organization’s Web site.

While many of Open Sky’s direct care staff cannot work from home and are continuing to show up for shifts in residential programs, supporting individuals living in their own homes, delivering medication and needed supplies, others are rising to the challenge presented by the pandemic using non-traditional remote ways to support individuals and families, such as Telehealth counseling services, Zoom meetings, and telephone outreach. The videos in the series were created by clinicians working remotely in an effort to provide a helpful resource both for individuals served by the organization and the larger community.

More virtual and digital programming is upcoming from Open Sky Community Services as the organization adapts to the chal-

lenges of continuing to serve its communities through non-traditional means during this time.

For more information about Open Sky Community Services, please contact Lorie Martiska, lorie.martiska@openskycs.org.

About Open Sky Community Services

Open Sky Community Services is dba for Alternatives Unlimited, Inc and The Bridge of Central MA. Open Sky offers a wide range of services for adults, adolescents, and children with mental health challenges, developmental and intellectual disabilities, substance use disorders, brain injury, homelessness and other challenges throughout Central Massachusetts. Open Sky Community Services has over 1,300 dedicated employees and an annual budget of \$83M with more than 100 programs throughout the region. For more information, please visit www.openskycs.org.

Quinebaug Lodge thinks outside the box during COVID-19 crisis

BY BRO. VINCENZO JIMMY FALZONE

SOUTHBURIDGE — With Gov. Baker’s stay at home advisory and mandatory social distancing in effect, no groups larger than 10 can meet through May 4. Some Freemasons in Massachusetts are choosing to work at home, to be with family and playing it safe. But most of all, listening to our Governor, who is doing an incredibly awesome job during this crisis to save people’s lives.

The Grand Masonic Lodge of Massachusetts, located in Boston, is allowing lodges to gather online so as not to do any official business. The meetings are by invitations only to members and hosted by certain officers of the Lodge. Quinebaug Lodge is taking advantage of the different types of technology on the web to choose from and has chosen Zoom Meeting to do our video and audio-conferencing services from the safety of their homes. Some members with computer savvy skills have accepted the invitation by our Master Wor. Chris Kanz. The members are sent an e-mail with a link for the Zoom meeting schedule. The instructions put forth the Meeting I.D. # provided by the host and the password to gain access to the meeting. The host recognizes the attendee and allows this person into the meeting.

This type of new technology adopted by our lodge demonstrates the forward-thinking progress needed to allow members to stay in touch and gather as friends in a safe environment in these difficult times.





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Deadline date:
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The students of Trinity Catholic Academy may have been on Spring Break last week, but that did not stop them from wanting to do something fun and meaningful! Many students gathered rocks and their painting skills to show appreciation for First Responders, Nurses, Doctors, Police, their teachers and parish leaders. Signs “Trinity Catholic Academy is praying for you” are at five strategic locations in Southbridge, setting a place to accumulation these artful offerings! The students painted colorful rocks with thankful and meaningful messages to express their appreciation to all those supporting others at this unique pandemic time. Feel free to add your creations in support of these heroes of our time. The signs are located at St. John Paul II Church, TCA Academy, Harrington Hospital, the Southbridge PD and Fire Departments. Trinity Catholic Academy represents more than 150 years of Catholic Education in Southbridge.



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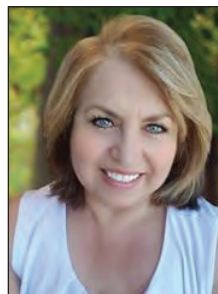
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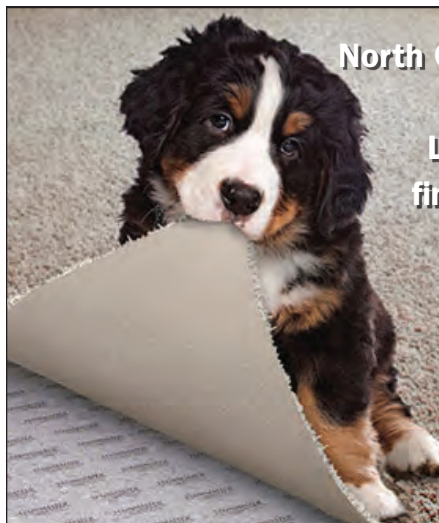
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Solar is a great way to reduce your carbon footprint and protect the environment. Traditional sources of electricity, such as coal and oil, emit byproducts such as carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, particle dust, and even mercury, which can be dangerous and unfit for the environment. Buildings, including your home, emit 39% of all carbon emissions in the United States. A solar panel system may eliminate three to four tons of carbon per year from these emissions, which is the equivalent of planting 100 trees per year! Your solar panel system will ensure that you, and future generations, can breathe easier knowing that you've done your part to protect the environment.

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HOME

Spring 2020
*A Stonebridge Press
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The right tool for the job is essential to working safely and efficiently. This is as true in the workplace as it is in the garden.

Novice gardeners may not know where to begin in regards to which tools they need. The following are eight items that can serve as a solid foundation for beginning gardeners.

1. Gloves: Your hands will be working hard, so it pays to protect them from calluses, blisters, splinters, insects, and dirt. Look for water-resistant gloves that are also breathable.

2. Hand pruners: Hand pruners are essential for cutting branches, cleaning

up shrubs, dead-heading flowers, and various other tasks. Choose ergonomic, no-slip handles that will make work easier. Rust-resistant, nonstick blades also are handy.

3. Wheelbarrow: A wheelbarrow can transport gear to garden beds or tote dirt, leaves, rocks, and other materials around the landscape. A good wheelbarrow is strong but light enough to maneuver when full.

4. Loppers: Long-handled loppers will fit the bill for thick branches. The long handles provide leverage to cut through branches an inch or more in diameter.

5. Hand trowel: A hand trowel is a handy tool that lets you dig holes or unearth weeds. While shopping for a trowel, consider getting a hand-held garden fork, which can aerate soil and cut through roots.

6. Hose/watering can: Keeping gardens hydrated is part of ensuring their health. That makes a hose and a water-

ing can two invaluable tools to have around. Invest in a lightweight, expandable hose if storage space is at a premium. An adjustable nozzle will enable you to customize the water flow as needed. A watering can is an easy way to tote water to hard-to-reach pots and containers.

7. Garden kneeler: Gardeners often bend and kneel while working in the soil. That puts pressure on the back and knees. A comfortable garden kneeler with memory foam or one made from shock-absorbing material can reduce aches and pains.

8. Garden hoe: Garden hoes till soil, remove weeds and perform many other tasks. A garden hoe can be used along with a full-sized shovel, trowel and garden rake.

This list is just the tip of the garden tool iceberg. Visit a garden center and speak with a professional about other tools that can be added to the mix.

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7 Advantages of Hiring a Licensed Realtor to Sell Your Home

It's unlikely that everything will go exactly as planned when you're selling your home. Whether you encounter home inspection issues, an unforeseen expenditure, a delay in closing, or some other unpredictable event, you aren't alone if you've hired a professional realtor. The unexpected happens quite frequently and an experienced realtor can help you solve problems related to the sale of your home.

GIVE THE HOME BUYER A NUDGE

Sometimes a buyer simply needs more information to nudge them toward purchasing your home. A real estate agent can provide the prospective buyer with positive information that they might not be familiar with. Neighborhood details, such as escalating home values, homeowner amenities, HOA covenants, low crime rates, and other valuable information might sway a buyer into purchasing your home.

NEGOTIATE HEFTY REPAIR COSTS

If your central air conditioning unit or furnace breaks down and needs replacing while your home is pending a sale, you are typically stuck with the bill. Your realtor can negotiate with the buyer's agent to subtract the cost of whatever needs replacing from the monetary proceeds that are due to you at the time of closing. In this scenario, you don't have to fork out big bucks prior to your home closing. The buyer has the money available to purchase a new water heater, furnace, or whatever has been agreed upon after they close on your home.

REMEDY A BROKEN SALES CONTRACT

When a buyer has signed a legal document to purchase your home, and then wants to break the agreement, what should you do? If both parties mutually agree, there isn't a problem. But, if you're not happy about the idea, your realtor needs to examine the buyer's real estate contract and circumstances. Next, your agent can check the real estate laws governing the state where your home is located. After gathering this information, your realtor will present to you the recourse for this unfortunate situation.



COORDINATE A CHANGED CLOSING DATE

Most closing dates for homes are coordinated and set between the home buyer, seller, real estate agents, lending institution, and title company. However, sometimes circumstances change and the closing date needs to be altered. Your real estate agent will find a date that's agreeable to all parties involved and take care of the legal changes to your real estate contract.

DETERMINE FINANCIAL QUALIFICATIONS

It's the usual protocol for a realtor to require an official letter from a potential buyer's bank or other lending institution before working with them to buy a new home. The document typically states that the buyer is financially able to purchase a home up to a certain price threshold and that the lender is willing to loan them the money. If a potential buyer cannot or will not obtain an approval letter from their lending institution, your realtor can inform them they cannot proceed to purchase your home without it.

SORT OUT A HOME INSPECTION LIST

After a buyer has signed a real estate contract to purchase your home, they typically will hire a professional home inspector to thoroughly examine your property for past, current, or potential problems. Sometimes the inspector discovers defective, unsafe, or broken items in your home that you were unaware

unnecessary repair items.

GIVE YOU PEACE OF MIND

Selling your home is an enormous undertaking -- especially without professional help. Give yourself peace of mind and fewer headaches by hiring a licensed, reputable realtor to help you navigate the house-selling process. Even though a real estate agent charges a sales commission, it can be well worth it to know you have a professional to arrange the house showings, advertising, legalities, and other selling-related items. When you have professional help, you'll have greater peace of mind.

As you just learned, a professional realtor can help you work through many different types of problems that can arise while your home is on the real estate market. Without a licensed, reputable realtor to assist you, selling your home alone is like venturing out into uncharted waters without a guide. As this article pointed out, there are many advantages to hiring a professional real estate agent to help you sell your next home.

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(MS) — An eco-friendly home offers many benefits. Besides reducing your carbon footprint and being better for the environment, you can save lots of money on your energy bills in the long run. Plus, many of the latest trends are simply beautiful. Here are some to consider for your next home or remodel:

Bamboo materials: Bamboo is a renewable resource that can be harvested gently, without disturbing the surrounding environment. It's also a great alternative to hardwood, since it can regenerate faster than trees. The timeless material is very popular for flooring and can also be used for bathroom and kitchen cabinets. When buying this material for your home, look for a high-quality, sustainable producer since cheaper versions can be less sturdy.

Passive house: Go beyond efficient appliances with an entire house that uses little-to-no energy. Derived from the German Passivhaus, passive house is a movement that refers to a design process that creates buildings that have a small ecological footprint and require little heating or cooling. Use the philosophy to guide decisions for your home — from adding solar panels on your roof to boosting your insulation.

Reclaimed pieces: One of the quickest and easiest ways to have a positive environmental impact is buying as little new as possible. The next time you need a piece of furniture, create something rustic by recycling or upcycling an old or vintage item with a new coat of paint or a fresh wood stain. If you're planning a demolition, try deconstruction instead — “un-build” the structure and find elements you can salvage or reclaim, like exposed brick and wood beams.

Water conservation: With more parts of the world experiencing drought, saving water is one of the top concerns for environmentalists. Wasting water is also expensive and leads to higher utility bills. Upgrading your home with water conservation features can go a long way, and most are designed to look sleek and minimalist. Opt for low-flow showerheads, toilets and sink fixtures.

Insulated concrete forms: Many homeowners now prefer to build with insulated concrete forms (ICFs) because the material offers better energy efficiency and performance than traditional wood. Homes built with Nudura ICFs also provide better fire protection and can help you save as much as 60 percent on heating and cooling costs. Your home is less likely to contain cold areas as the insulation is continuous around the entire house.

Find more information about the benefits of building with eco-friendly ICFS at nudura.com.

3 perennial gardening pointers

Gardening is an engaging hobby that can provide a host of benefits, some of which may surprise even the most devoted gardeners. For example, the Harvard Medical School notes that just 30 minutes of gardening activities burns 135 calories, making gardening a fun and simple way to incorporate more exercise into your daily routine. In addition, scientists have long proven that gardening releases the hormones serotonin and dopamine in the brain, each of which are associated with improved mood.

Perennial gardens can be especially attractive to seasoned gardeners and novices. Perennials are plants that come back year after year, and committing to a

perennial garden can ensure people stick with gardening for the long haul, reaping all of the rewards that come with making such a commitment.

Before planting a perennial garden, those new to gardening may want to consider these three tips.

1. Make a plan.

A perennial garden comes back year after year, which means any mistakes you make when planting are likely to haunt you year after year as well. Factors like space and location must be considered before planting. Many gardeners utilize garden planning applications like GrowVeg to make the process of planning a garden simpler and more organized. Such applications can be especially useful for novices.

2. Consider aesthetics.

Gardens can be awe-inspiring, especially when gardeners consider aesthetics prior to planting. The DIY Network advises gardeners to consider scale before choosing which perennials to plant. Tall plants and wide beds tend to look best outside large homes, while short plants in small beds tend to look better outside small homes.

3. Work with a professional.

Local garden centers can be excellent resources when planning perennial gardens. Representatives at such businesses can offer tips on native plants, which will be more likely to thrive year after year than non-natives. Such representatives also can help you choose the right plants based on the amount of sunlight the plants will likely get after being planted. Each of these factors can be easily overlooked by people without much gardening experience.

Perennial gardens can provide years of joy and inspiration, especially when gardeners give ample attention to certain details prior to planting.



Local garden centers can be excellent resources for gardeners planting perennial gardens for the first time.



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Brush It Off art studio is no different, they offer take out paint kits while it's not the food you eat it is healthy food for the mind and soul!

A new day! Take out is the way of this new day, although mostly for consumable food.

Painting is a 2-3 hour (more or less) escape from the moment. The escape begins when you start looking through the Brush It Off facebook post to view hundreds of

No bake ceramic figurines for the piece that is calling for you. If painting figureines is not your cup of tea, perhaps picking a canvas painting from Ms Morgan's Brush It Off Facebook album called "Gallery of our paintings" or the kids canvas painting album called "Gallery of our Kids Paintings" to find just the right painting you want to give your hand a try at.

Escape part 2 is picking up your kit(s) but the real magic begins as you unwrap your project at home and start to paint! At that point no longer are you thinking about anything else, you are in the moment of color!

The owner of Brush It Off, Denise Morgan is taking orders by Facebook Messenger where Ms Morgan will give you direction for calling in payment and when your kit(s) are ready for doorside or even curbside pick up.

Ms Morgan offers instruction on how to paint your piece(s) along with tricks to help slow the kids down on their paint project and also offers a follow up free 15 min. glitter and glaze to enhance the colors and protect the paint on your No bake ceramic piece(s). Just give a call to make a time you can bring your piece(s) back in at a later date.

What a fun Mothers Day, Birthday or just get your mind off in a new direction project! Gather around the computer, go to Facebook, type in "Brush It Off paint" look for the post with the "Heart Mom" flower painting followed by 35 pages of things to paint and escape for a bit of fun.

Brush It Off is located in an old Mill in Fiskdale MA on Rt. 20 called the Marketplace settled next to a lovely waterfall and walking paths to enjoy. While your picking up your kit(s) at Brush It Off the Mill has other businesses offering take out such as Altruists Brewery and a new Cafe you can order ahead to pick up some yummys from called the Stone and Sparrow offering healthy foods like salads, panini's, wraps, fruit smoothies, specialty coffee and more! Also is a store called the Thrifty Gypsy where you can get many gluten free snacks, pasta's, masks, CBD products and other necessities.



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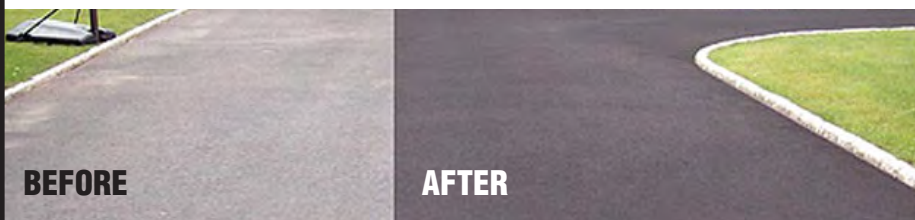
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Alternatives For Health Herbal Apothecary celebrating 10 years

On July 1st Alternatives For Health Herbal Apothecary will be celebrating 10 years at its current location, 426 Main St Sturbridge. Owner Salli Greene is hopeful that we will be really be able to celebrate by then. When they moved into this space in 2010, they slowly started building a strong customer base. "Now our customers are like an extended family," says Greene. They have a Customer Reward program which has helped them learn people's names.



The back-bone of Alternatives For Health is its Bulk Herb and Tea section. There are not many of these brick and mortar shops anymore. There are over 200 both culinary and medicinal herbs in this section, although Salli is quick to point out that culinary herbs are also medicinal. The Bulk Tea section has pre-blended teas, but any edible herb can be made into a tea. "It's fun to see customers experimenting and blending their own teas." In addition to that they carry Essential Oils, Flower Essences, Homeopathy, Vitamins and other herbal preparations. They offer Massage, Reiki, Polarity and other Energy Treatments. Classes on a wide range of topics are continually being offered. A variety of Readers also utilize the space. They send an monthly email newsletter which keeps people up on events. Their website www.alternatives-4health.com is also a useful way for people to check on products and events.

They have been able to be open during Cov-19 for curbside pickup and mail orders. "We are thankful to our customers who have been using this service and have, interestingly, increased the customer base during this time."

Salli has been busy renovating the shop while customers were unable to come into the building. It is totally repainted and rearranged. They have taken over the upstairs, which had previously been an antique shop. The classroom space has moved upstairs. There is also an additional treatment room and separate space for our Readers. "I think our customers will like the changes. The therapists are very excited to have extra space."

Please keep an eye out for celebration announcements for the upcoming Anniversary!!

HEALTH

Spring 2020

*A Stonebridge Press
Publication*

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Quaboag Rehabilitation and Skilled Care Center Receives a Deficiency Free Survey by Department of Public Health

FEBRUARY 14, 2020 WEST BROOKFIELD, MA – Quaboag Rehabilitation and Skilled Care Center, an elder care setting located in West Brookfield, received a deficiency-free survey rating from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Public Health during the Center's 2019 annual survey conducted from February 12 through February 14, 2020.

"This is a wonderful accomplishment by Quaboag's dedicated staff and a recognition for their compassionate care and dedication to our residents and families," said Lynn Corfey Quaboag's Administrator.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Public Health inspects skilled nursing facilities such as Quaboag annually to ensure compliance with a multitude of state and federal standards of care such as staffing, cleanliness of environment, nursing and rehabilitation services, activities and dining services, resident rights and administration. These rigorous surveys are unannounced and conducted by health care professionals such as registered nurses, licensed social workers and dietitians.

According to data by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) only about 10% of skilled nursing facilities in the nation receive a deficiency-free survey rating annually. This illustrates Quaboag's significant accomplishment and compliance with all regulations to ensure the highest level of resident well-being in a quality setting.

About Quaboag:

Quaboag Rehabilitation and Skilled Care Center offers a 147 bed Center for Short-term Rehabilitation, Traditional Long-term Care as well as a dedicated Memory Care Unit. Situated on the beautiful town common of West Brookfield, Quaboag offers a convenient location for towns in Worcester, Hampden, and Hampshire Counties.

Quaboag Rehabilitation and Skilled Care Center is a non-profit setting and a member of Ascentria Care Alliance. The Center is under the daily management of Sheehan Health Group.

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Do you really know what's in the food you consume? Food producers are always cutting corners to cut costs. In the end, your health loses out. From nutritional drinks and healthy snacks, to natural sweeteners and low carb pastas, we can help you improve your diet!

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Keep the lawn trimmed to make it less hospitable to ticks that transmit Lyme disease.

Lyme disease is a potentially dangerous condition transmitted by the passing of bacteria from deer ticks to their unsuspecting hosts. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says Lyme disease is the most common vector-borne disease in the United States. Lyme disease also is a cause for concern in Canada, parts of Europe and Asia.

Tens of thousands of people are diag-

nosed with Lyme disease each year. But Lyme disease also affects animals, including popular house pets like dogs. Tufts University says that the Lyme bacterium can cause serious illness in some dogs. Lyme disease can be difficult to detect and cause serious and recurring health problems. That is why it is essential for pet parents make concerted efforts to reduce the risk that

their dogs become infected.

The American Veterinary Medical Association says the best way to protect pets against Lyme disease is to emphasize prevention.

- Speak with your veterinarian about a tick preventive product that is right for your dog. These can include repellent collars, topical treatments and ingestible medications.

- Vets may recommend vaccination against Lyme disease if you live in an area that is home to high tick populations. Recommendations also may be based on your pet's lifestyle and overall health, among other factors.

- Address conditions in the yard that are conducive to ticks. Mowing the lawn regularly is one way to make the backyard less attractive to ticks, as is removing leaf litter.

- Keep a clean home and landscape. Rodents and other wildlife can carry deer ticks. Securing trash cans, picking up food scraps, removing hiding spots

and potential dens, and other strategies can keep these carriers away.

- Conduct a daily tick check if your dog spends time outside. Pay attention to bumps on the skin and part the fur so you can see where the coat meets the skin. Don't forget to look in the ears.

- When possible, avoid areas where ticks may be found, such as tall grasses, wooded areas and marshes. Stick to trails when spending time in wooded areas.

Dogs with Lyme disease may exhibit various symptoms. These include loss of appetite, fever, joint swelling, decreased activity, and lameness. Visit the vet promptly if symptoms occur and do not abate, or are causing considerable distress for your pet.

Lyme disease is a concern for pets. Avoidance, preventive measures and outdoor maintenance can help reduce the likelihood that pets will contract Lyme disease.

Allergies or COVID-19?

As winter gave way to spring, nature did not give any signs in relation to what the people of the world were going through. As trees and flowers bloomed just like they do every spring, the people accustomed to witnessing the awe-inspiring transformation on display each spring were experiencing a transformation of their own.

Social distancing measures enacted during the COVID-19 outbreak in late-winter 2020 forced many people to stay home, only venturing outside to run routine errands like buying groceries or filling prescriptions. People were urged to stay home to help prevent the COVID-19 virus from spreading, and those recommendations included people exhibiting mild symptoms of illness.

As spring hit its stride and pollen counts climbed, many people wondered if certain symptoms they were experiencing were byproducts of seasonal allergies or the COVID-19 virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention note that it's easy to mistake common allergy symptoms for COVID-19, and that's especially so given the level of concern many people have about the novel coronavirus that has already claimed thousands of victims across the globe. But it's important that people recognize the symptoms of allergies and COVID-19 are different. The following are some symptoms of allergies and some of COVID-19, courtesy of the CDC and the Mayo Clinic.

Allergy symptoms

- Itchy eyes
- Stuffy nose
- Sneezing

Doctors advise people who are exhibiting potential allergy symptoms to pay

attention to their body temperatures. People with allergies very rarely experience fever, so the absence of fever, even if other symptoms of allergies are present, might indicate that a person is suffering from allergies and not COVID-19. In addition, allergy symptoms tend to be mild and recur year after year around the same time, such as when plants bloom in spring and summer. So if symptoms that are currently present are the same ones a person confronts every year, then he or she is likely suffering from allergies and not COVID-19. People can err on the side of caution by discussing their symptoms and history with their physicians.

Coronavirus symptoms

- Shortness of breath
- Fever
- Cough

Some asthma sufferers experience shortness of breath as a result of allergies, so people with asthma should consider that before assuming they have COVID-19. Discussing shortness of breath with a physician can help asthma sufferers gain more clarity on their condition.

While symptoms of allergies and COVID-19 are different, the CDC notes that people suffering from the flu may experience the same symptoms experienced by people with the coronavirus. Symptoms such as fever, fatigue, body aches, and cough can affect both flu and COVID-19 sufferers, so people experiencing these symptoms should contact their physicians.

It's easy to mistake common allergy symptoms as indicative of the presence of the COVID-19 virus. But the symptoms of each condition are quite different. Learn more at www.cdc.gov.



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The benefits of eating local meat and produce

Do You Know Where Your Meat Comes From? Is it locally sourced? Do you purchase straight from a butcher? Do you shop at your local grocery store? Now more than ever, self-care is a number one priority. A big part of self-care includes being aware of what you ingest.

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~HEALTH BENEFITS~

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How to exercise during the pandemic

Life changed overnight for millions of people across the globe in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, which shuttered businesses and forced many people to follow stay-at-home measures issued by their local governments. These measures not only affected the overall health of those infected with the virus, but also those who experienced no symptoms and even tested negative for COVID-19.

In recognition of the mental toll that social distancing and stay-at-home measures can take, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advised people to exercise regularly. But opportunities to exercise seemingly dried up when stay-at-home guidelines were issued and gyms were shuttered. People without exercise equipment at home suddenly found themselves wondering how they could stay fit and keep their bodies in the best possible condition to fight a virus that has claimed thousands of lives. Thankfully, there are ways to stay fit and keep immune systems strong without violating stay-at-home measures.

- Access online exercise programs. Many gyms that were forced to close to help stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus began offering exercise tutorials and classes via social media or websites such as YouTube. These videos can be invaluable resources, teaching people how to stay fit at home even if they don't have weights or other equipment on hand. In addition to gym-sponsored exercise tutorials, the internet is loaded with free exercise videos and advice that can help people without access to a gym get fit or maintain their fitness routines.

- Go back to the basics. Many people no doubt recall gym class from their school days. Such classes teach youngsters the basics of physical fitness without employing dumbbells or advanced exercise machines. Those same basic exercises that work for youngsters, including push-ups, sit-ups and lunges, can be effective for adults as well. If it's been awhile since you've done your most recent push-up, access an online tutorial so you can be certain your form is correct.

- Do some yard work. It might not feel as high-intensity as a spinning class or a Pilates session, but yard work can be a great workout. Dust off the push mower the next time the grass needs to be cut, and get to work on pulling weeds in garden beds. The added benefit to yard work is it provides a great opportunity to get some fresh air without violating social distancing guidelines.

- Go for a jog. Perhaps the simplest way to exercise during the pandemic is to go



for a daily jog. According to the Mayo Clinic, aerobic exercise repeatedly moves large muscles in the arms, legs and hips while engaging the immune system and helping it to ward off minor viral illnesses. That makes an early morning jog an especially valuable, not to mention easily accessible, way to exercise during the pandemic.

Exercise can help people maintain their immune systems in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, and there are many simple ways to fit in a little physical activity even while social distancing.

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In 1900, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur viewed the undeveloped expanse of land that stretched from Plantation Street down to the shores of Lake Quinsigamond as an ideal setting for peaceful contemplation and retreat from the rigors of their teaching ministry. Since the Sisters purchased the property, its purpose has expanded significantly beyond its original intent.

Today, some 120 years later, this property has become home to Notre Dame Health Care, a non-profit organization that takes a holistic approach to the ministry of healthcare delivery. Following the teachings of Saint Julie Billiart, who founded the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, the mission of Notre Dame Health Care reflects the gospel message in every aspect of its programs and services.

The Sisters have driven innovation in health care, recognizing and addressing specific needs as the times have changed. Its first program, a skilled nursing facility for both the Sisters and the greater local community, delivers high quality care with dignity and respect. The success of this program prompted the addition of other, much-needed programs and services. Through the years, Notre Dame Health Care has enhanced its portfolio of services with assisted living apartments, memory care units, post-acute and short-term rehabilitation, hospice and palliative care for adults and children, and an educational “bridge” center.

Every program at Notre Dame Health Care offers distinct features that engage residents, encourage socialization and promote a better quality of life. Social activities, such as art and music therapy, along with social dining and field trips, help promote a sense of community for every resident. Notre Dame Health Care also offers daily Mass and the Rosary for its Catholic residents. We acknowledge the spiritual value in all faith traditions through the provision of pastoral care and ecumenical services for all.

The Sisters’ influence and “special touches” are reflected in many unique features which are present throughout our facilities. Peaceful gardens and serene landscaping surround each building; lavish court- yards and green space invite residents to experience the outdoors in a safe, pleasant atmosphere; exquisite photography and multi-medium artwork adorn the hallways. Differences in design abound in each of our facilities, giving each resident space its own distinctive character.

In addition to exceptional health care services, Notre Dame Health Care has created unique educational opportunities for staff and the local community. Emblematic of the Sisters’ ministry to educate for life, the Educational Bridge Center was originally founded as a way for employees to advance in their careers. Subsequently, the Bridge Center has become a lifeline for those seeking citizenship, adult basic education programs, or support in attaining a high school diploma or an advanced degree. Drawing upon their years of service in the classroom, retired Sisters tutor students as they embark on their personal academic journeys to a better quality of life.

Not only does Notre Dame Health Care lead the industry in top-rated programs and services, the organization also has an incredible staff retention rate. Every



employee exemplifies the organization’s mission and works synergistically to continually raise the bar and operate at the highest possible level.

Going forward, Notre Dame Health Care anticipates changes in the industry that will require innovation, creativity and wisdom to continue serving the spiritual, social, physical and psychological needs of the lay and religious communities through all stages of life. Guided and driven by our mission, our team is poised and ready to embrace the continually changing needs of our community!

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