

Auburn News

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Friday, December 18, 2020

Newsstand: 75 cents

BayCoast Mortgage Company opens office in Auburn



Daniel Kirschner and Amy Dufresne

AUBURN — BayCoast Mortgage Company, LLC (www.BayCoastMortgage.com) announces the recent opening of its Auburn, Massachusetts, Loan Production Office

at 489 Washington St., Suite 208.

The Auburn office will focus solely on loan requests, primarily handling residential mortgages in addition to other types of loans.

The office, BayCoast Mortgage's first in Worcester County, will be helmed by Mortgage Loan Officer Daniel Kirschner and Loan Origination Assistant Amy Dufresne.

Kirschner, a resident of Sturbridge, has more than 18 years in the mortgage lending industry. His honesty and integrity combined with a deep understanding of the

mortgage industry has gained him a reputation as a market leader in loan volume for several years running. Kirschner, who joined BayCoast Mortgage Company in June, is a graduate of Liberty University with a Bachelor's degree in Business.

Dufresne makes her home in Dudley. She joins BayCoast Mortgage Company with 21 years of experience in the financial industry, most recently with Savers Bank in Southbridge. She is a graduate of Worcester Vocational High School where she received her Certificate in Financial

Services and Retail Marketing. Dufresne recently completed several industry-related courses at Quinsigamond Community College in Worcester.

Daniel J. Briand, President and CEO of BayCoast Mortgage Company, said, "We're excited to enter the Worcester County market area with Dan and Amy, both highly-recognized mortgage lending professionals, taking the lead. We look forward to servicing the lending needs of new clientele throughout the region."

About BayCoast Mortgage Company, LLC

BayCoast Mortgage Company, LLC is a wholly owned subsidiary of BayCoast Bank, serving Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Florida, offering a wide variety of home mortgage products including FHA, VA, Conforming Loans and Jumbo Loans. Visit www.BayCoastMortgage.com or call 877-466-2678.

Baker orders rollback of COVID reopening process

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

REGION — With COVID-19 numbers heading in the wrong direction, Gov. Charlie Baker announced last week a statewide reversion to a previous reopening threshold.

As of Dec. 13, all towns in Massachusetts were required to return to Phase 3: Step 1 of the Commonwealth's reopening plan. The mandate also reduces indoor capacities across a broad range of sectors of the economy.

Baker announced the rollback in response to a sharp increase in new COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations since Thanksgiving. State officials are worried that a continued escalation of cases through the holiday season could cause many hospitals to reach capacity for ICU beds.

"More people are suffering from severe COVID-related illnesses and need urgent care. This sharp increase is putting a strain on our health system and healthcare workers," Baker said. "Hospitals are short on critical staff because many people are either in quarantine or they themselves have been infected with the virus."

The return to Step 1 requires the closure of certain businesses, including indoor performance venues and high-contact indoor recreational businesses. In addition, capacity limits will be reduced to 40 percent statewide for most industries, and the limit on outdoor gatherings will be reduced statewide from 100 persons to 50 persons.

The Baker Administration also announced additional guidance for certain sectors, including restaurants, office spaces, and gyms. Moving forward, all hosts of outdoor gatherings featuring more than 25 people will be required to provide advance notice of the gathering to their local board of health.

Meanwhile, indoor theaters and performance venues will be closed until further notice.

Restaurant-specific guidance includes the following:

Patrons must wear masks at all times, except when eating and drinking

Restaurants must seat no more than six patrons per table

Restaurants must impose a 90-minute time limit on tables

Musical performances at restaurants will no longer be permitted

Food court seating must be closed in malls

Restaurant patrons are encouraged to dine only with members of the same household. As much as possible, utilize take-out or delivery services to help minimize risks.

"These new measures are designed to prevent infection and viral spread, especially in indoor settings," Baker said. "They will create stronger mask compliance, more social distancing, and limits to the time spent with people outside of your immediate household."

The Baker Administration also announced new guidelines for workplaces and gyms. In offices, employees must wear masks at their place of work when not in their own workspace. Employers are encouraged to close down or limit the use of break rooms.

"We continue to encourage all employers to offer teleworking to their employees when possible," Baker said.

Patrons must wear masks at all times in gyms.

During the latest weekly state report, Leicester, Spencer, North Brookfield, and several other area communities were listed in the state's "red zone" for COVID-19 transmission risk.

Local officials remind residents to wear masks in public at all times and avoid large private gatherings.

The Worcester field hospital at the DCU Center has already begun accepting patients. A second field hospital was set up in Lowell.

For more information on statewide efforts to combat COVID-19, visit www.mass.gov.

Big Brothers Big Sisters host successful virtual event

REGION — Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Mass & MetroWest (BBBS) found themselves three weeks away from their largest fundraiser of the year, The Big Celebration, when everything came to a halt due to Covid-19. The Mayor of Marlborough, Arthur G. Vigeant, alongside Bob's Discount Furniture's Executive Chairman, Ted English, both committed to being Honorary Chairs of the event. The decision was soon made to postpone the event that was scheduled for April 4, 2020. The BBBS staff and event committee pivoted and began planning for their first-ever, virtual event, The Big Night In which was held on Oct. 29.

Unsure what to expect, the team at BBBS re-evaluated their event budget and goals before forging ahead. The team worked closely with an event planning company out of Newburyport called Ember and a skilled

audio-visual team at Blackstone Productions located in Uxbridge.

"Everyone has had to learn how to work differently. Whether you are a teacher and learned how to work remote, a store owner who had to find a new way to reach consumers, or an event planner in a world where events do not exist - we are all adapting to make the best out of a situation. Working with the team at Ember and Blackstone Productions on The Big Night In provided our agency with a new capacity which ensured that we offered the best possible virtual event experience for our supporters," said Lindsay McCarthy, Marketing and Special Events Manager at BBBS.

The Big Night In featured an online auction and a live-streamed event which was broadcasted from the AC Hotel in downtown Worcester on October 29th. During the event, former WCVB news reporter, Susan

Wornick, announced that BBBS of Central Mass. & MetroWest was one of 15 Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies from across the nation selected to receive a \$50,000 matching gift from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. BBBS used this donation to drive donations during the event and will continue raising funds which will be matched by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, up to \$50,000 throughout the giving season.

"We are so thankful and gratified by the support of our entire network during this challenging year," said Jeffrey Chin, CEO for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Mass & MetroWest. "Our supporters, and especially our staff and legions of volunteers, have shown how much of an impact we can have when we adapt and continue to provide mentoring to children facing social isolation and uncertain conditions."

The event can be viewed at www.youtube.com/bbbscmw. Thanks to sponsorships, auction sales, and donations, BBBS of Central Mass & MetroWest raised over \$130,000. Top sponsors were The Hanover Insurance Group, TJX Companies, Bob's Discount Furniture, and Avidia Bank.

About Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Mass. & MetroWest

The mission of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Mass. & MetroWest is to create professionally supported mentoring relationships, empowering youth to realize their potential and build brighter futures. Children's lives are enhanced when they have a mentor in their lives to celebrate their successes. To learn more about Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Mass & MetroWest, please visit www.bbbscm.org.

LPN to RN

DREAM COMES TRUE FOR GITAKA-MUCHIRI FAMILY

WORCESTER — Husband and wife John Muchiri and Esther Gitaka, both of Worcester, agree and understood the importance of education. Both completed high school overseas (Kenya), he at Dandora High School and she at Mugoiri High School. Both also completed the rigorous practical nursing program at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy in Charlton then bridging to the LPN to RN program at Quinsigamond Community College earning their Associate Degree in Nursing. Both passed the NCLEX-PN and NCLEX-RN take one, the first try! Both were LPNs first then both became RNs!

Their other dream came true recently — purchasing their new home in Worcester which they now enjoy with their three children.

As children themselves growing up overseas, both John and Esther admired "helpers" in their lives. They observed how compassionately healthcare workers dealt with the community, how kind the nurses are. John first applied to Bay Path Practical

Nursing Academy and graduated in 2015. He took the NCLEX-PN the same year and passed on his first attempt. He completed his Associate Degree in Nursing at Quinsigamond Community College and became an RN. His previous work background includes Mental Health Counselor at Advocates Inc., in Framingham (2007-2013); a nurse at Beaumont at the Willows in Westborough (2015-2016), at Pivot Point Home Healthcare in West Boylston (2016-2018); and at Holy Trinity Nursing And Rehabilitation Center in Worcester (Jan. 2019 -April 2020). Since February of 2020 he is an RN at the Adcare Hospital in Worcester providing direct nursing care, a frontline worker! Esther completed her Practical Nursing Certificate at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy in 2016. Her background as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA since 2013) helped tremendously. With her excellent academic performance Esther was inducted into the National Technical Honor Society (NTHS). She also completed her Associates Degree in

Nursing at Quinsigamond Community College and became an RN. Her work experience as a nurse includes Beaumont Rehabilitation and Skilled Nursing Center in Worcester

(2016-2017), Christopher House Skilled Nursing Facility in Worcester (since April 2017) and Seven Hills Foundation also in Worcester (since November 2019).

Turn To DREAM page A10



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Gifts that can make social distancing more enjoyable

Exchanging gifts with loved ones is a holiday season tradition. That tradition figures to continue this year, though families will almost certainly have to adjust the ways they exchange gifts.

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 in the winter of 2019-20 changed how people across the globe live their lives. Social distancing guidelines encouraged people to limit get-togethers, particularly indoor gatherings. Experts anticipate restrictions on indoor gatherings will continue in the early part of the winter of 2020-21, which could force families to rethink how they get together during the holiday season.

Families also may want to think outside the box when buying gifts for their loved ones, targeting items that can make social distancing easier. The following gift ideas can make a socially distant holiday season that much more special for a loved one.

Streaming subscription
Movie theaters have been closed for months

in many areas. But movie lovers still want to see their favorite flicks, so a streaming subscription to a service such as Netflix or Amazon Prime can be just what they need to stay entertained while social distancing this winter. For fans of classic films, including indie movies, foreign films and big studio productions, a subscription to the Criterion Channel might make the perfect gift. Curated by the Criterion Collection, this streaming service provides access to a library of more than 1,000 classic and contemporary films, making it an ideal gift for the family film buff.

Cooking classes
Many people have spent the last several months honing their culinary skills. Gift givers can help them take those skills to the next level by enrolling them in online cooking classes. The options are endless and some even include access to legendary celebrity chefs like Gordon Ramsay. Many online cooking classes feature monthly memberships or single classes,

making them ideal for loved ones of all skill and interest levels.

Technology
Technology has helped many people stay connected with friends and family while social distancing, so a new tablet, laptop or desktop computer can be just what people need to fully engage in family Zoom sessions or weekly virtual happy hours with coworkers and friends. If a new tablet or laptop stretches your budget, consider a pair of noise-canceling headphones, which can make it easier to concentrate while working remotely in a crowded house.

Crafting kit
Hobbyists may have had their passions for crafting reinvigorated while social distancing, making a crafting kit an ideal gift to help them fill their downtime. Beginner's kits also can make an ideal gift for novices looking for an engaging, time-consuming hobby.

Certain gifts can be a perfect fit during a socially distant holiday season.

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Bay Path students complete Mental Health First Aid training course

CHARLTON — The entire Practical Nursing Class of 2021 at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy completed the 8-hour Adult Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training Course recently and all became MHFA Certified.

Pictured above is Brianna Cloutier of Charlton, one of the first practical nursing students to receive her certificate for successfully completing the MHFA training. She welcomed the crucial education and training from health crisis to a mental health crisis.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported a jump in cases of anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts during the pandemic. The PN students as Certified MHFA givers can help adults get critical support when they need it most. The members of the Bay Path Practical Nursing Class of 2021 completed training in Mental Health First Aid held at the Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School following all the CDC requirements for physical distancing and face coverings. The Mental Health First Aid training emphasized to participants mental health literacy, understanding risk factors and warning signs for mental health and addiction concerns and strategies for how to help someone in both crisis and non-crisis situations. Just as CPR helps participants assist an individual having a heart attack, Mental Health First Aid helps participants assist those experiencing a mental health or substance use-related crisis. At the end of the training PN students met the goals of recognizing signs of mental distress and how best to respond.

Another PN student, Tianna Welcome of Oxford, stated "This was an amazing course. Nearly every topic touched on,



Pictured above is Brianna Cloutier of Charlton, one of the first practical nursing students to receive her certificate for successfully completing the MHFA training.

I have had personal experience with. I feel I can take what I have learned in my career as a nurse, support of family and friends, and in the community."

Gretheline Bolandrina, MSN Ed, RN, CRRN, Academy Director stated, "Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy has a strong advocacy for mental health."

She added, "like CPR in keeping the

blood flowing to organs until the EMTs or an MD shows up, with MHFA, your caring interventions reassure individuals that they can get help until a referral can be made for them to a mental health professional if necessary."

Even if MHFA Certified PN students never face a critical mental health situation, the training enables them to have healthier, more impactful and compassionate conversations with adults.

Mental health awareness is a highlighted program at the Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy, the PN students are grateful to have the support of the Academy and the partnership with Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services, Inc. under the leadership of Executive Director Christine Mowry. The training was made possible through the support of Simon Says Pizza Chef of Southbridge and Big Y, also of Southbridge.

At Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy, the program is a 40-week, (10-month), full-time, Monday through Friday, evening program. The program begins mid-August and is completed in late June. Graduates receive a Practical Nursing Certificate and are eligible to take the NCLEX-PN licensure exam. The Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy is fully approved by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services Department of Public Health Board of Registration in Nursing (www.mass.gov/dph/boards/rn) and is accredited by the Commission on Occupational Education (www.council.org). For more information, visit www.bay-path.net.



ACCURACY WATCH

The Auburn News is committed to accuracy in all its news reports. Although numerous safeguards are in place to ensure accurate reporting, mistakes can occur.

Confirmed fact errors will be corrected at the top right hand corner of page 3 in a timely manner.

If you find a mistake, call (508) 909-4106 or email news@stonebridgepress.news during normal business hours. During non-business hours, leave a message in the editor's voice mailbox. The editor will return your phone call.

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Charlton REAS Foundation, Inc. announces 2021 fundraisers

CHARLTON – Due to the COVID pandemic, the Charlton REAS Foundation will not be able to have our annual Taste of the Towns. This was our main fundraiser so now we must look at alternative fundraising. We will continue with the lottery calendar and draw names in March. Lottery calendars are just \$10 each and are available at the Charlton Senior Center, or download from the REAS website at www.reascharlton.org.

Last year, the Charlton REAS Foundation awarded 36 qualifying seniors citizens with heating/cooling assistance totaling \$13,150. REAS is now taking applications for the 2020-2021 heating season which began on Oct. 1 and will run until March 31.

Assistance for this program would not be possible if it weren't for our annual fundraisers and the generous donations of local businesses, organizations and individuals. Thank you for your support and please know your donation can make a differ-

ence in the lives of our most vulnerable citizens.

If you need assistance or you know someone who does, please call 508-868-5289. If you'd like to send a donation, address to Charlton REAS Foundation, P.O. Box 793, Charlton, MA 01507.

The Charlton REAS Foundation is a 501c3 non-profit organization providing qualifying senior citizens in the Town of Charlton with energy assistance including heat during the winter months and air conditioning or support with electric bills during the hot summer months.

Charlton REAS Foundation Board of Directors:

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Samantha Age 14

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and recess. She is a great problem solver who works hard to achieve desired outcomes.

Legally free for adoption, Samantha would do best in a home with a single mom or a two-parent family. If there are other children in the home, they should not be close in age to Samantha. Samantha would thrive in a family that could give her a lot of attention and help her reach her fullest potential. A pre-adoptive family will need to maintain contact with Samantha's relatives and her visiting resource through phone and visitation. Samantha would like a family with pets (maybe a dog) and older siblings.

Who Can Adopt?

Can you provide the guidance, love and stability that a child needs? If you're at least 18 years old, have a stable source of income, and room in your heart, you may be a perfect match to adopt a waiting child. Adoptive parents can be single, married, or partnered; experienced or not; renters or homeowners; LGBTQ singles and couples.

The process to adopt a child from foster care requires training, interviews, and home visits to determine if adoption is right for you, and if so, to help connect you with a child or sibling group that your family will be a good match for.

To learn more about adoption from foster care, call the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) at 617-6273 or visit www.mareinc.org. The sooner you call, the sooner a waiting child will have a permanent place to call home.



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St. Joseph School students help others prepare their hearts for Christ

WEBSTER — It is a tradition at St. Joseph School that each Sunday during Advent, a different grade is responsible for the Liturgy of the Word and Prayer of the Faithful during the Sunday 9 a.m. Family Mass. This year, the Third Sunday of Advent required even more preparation because hay is distributed to all St. Joseph School students and Basilica families who

attend the Mass. Therefore, Ms. Kelly Bailey's Fifth Grade students graciously volunteered to assemble the packets.

During Advent, for each good deed, act of kindness, well-said prayer, or sacrifice performed in honor of Jesus, children are asked to take a piece of hay and place it in their manger to create a warm, welcome, and comfortable place for Baby Jesus. By reflecting on their good deeds, children are also preparing their hearts for Christ to enter on Christmas Day.

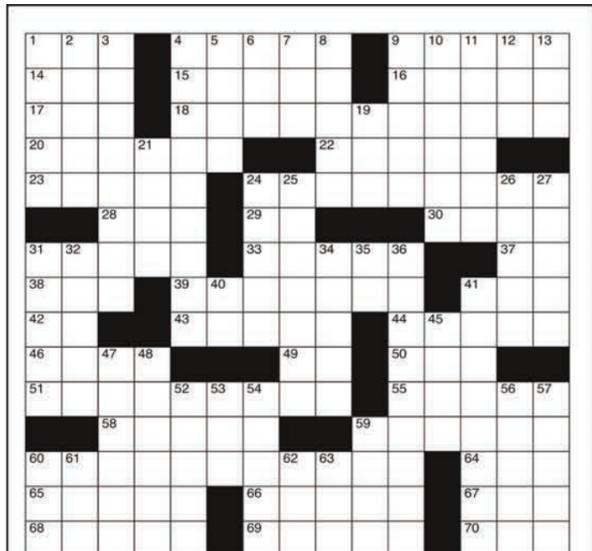
At the Christmas Vigil observance, Polish families prepare a simple meal containing twelve meatless dishes, all of which have a symbolic meaning. The table is covered with a white linen cloth that has a thin layer of hay and wheat grains beneath it. In addition to the hay and wheat germ reminding those present that the Infant Jesus was laid on hay in the manger, it is symbolic because hay is used as physical food for animals but also represents the feeding of our souls, God himself providing everlasting nourishment.

The 250 packets of hay prepared by the St. Joseph School Fifth Grade students were blessed by Rev. Allen Alexander, Campus Minister Marianapolis Preparatory School, who was the celebrant of the Family Mass at St. Joseph Basilica.



Courtesy

St. Joseph School Fifth Grade student, Alan Kulpa, assembles packets of hay to be distributed to students for use in their mangers as well as on their tables on Christmas Eve.



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- 4. Profoundly wise men
- 9. Camera company
- 14. Folk singer DiFranco
- 15. Passerine birds
- 16. Plum-shaped fruit used for preserves
- 17. Popular kids channel
- 18. Dodgers' skipper
- 20. Removes
- 22. The Atlantic is one
- 23. Badgerlike mammal
- 24. Foulness
- 28. Luke's mentor ___-Wan
- 29. Commercial
- 30. A type of gin
- 31. Temptress
- 33. Shuts in an enclosed space
- 37. Milligram
- 38. Actress Adams
- 39. Strive to equal or match
- 41. Health insurance
- 42. A detective's source
- 43. Small American rails
- 44. Alfred __, Brit. poet
- 46. Crest of a hill
- 49. Atomic #52
- 50. __ Caesar, comedian
- 51. Breaks apart
- 55. Register formally (Brit. sp.)
- 58. Worker
- 59. Chemical compound
- 60. Disgraced newsman
- 64. Born of
- 65. Chemical substance
- 66. Supernatural powers
- 67. Clothes
- 68. Indy footballers
- 69. Moves forward
- 70. Midway between south and southeast

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Driver
- 2. Bone cavities
- 3. Menacing
- 4. Where coaches patrol
- 5. Greek mythological figure
- 6. War-based board game
- 7. Midway between northeast and east
- 8. 18-year period in astronomy
- 9. Mid-century term used to describe Japanese-Americans
- 10. Large bodies of water
- 11. Eurasian ryegrass
- 12. Perform on stage
- 13. Greek island
- 19. 10th month of the year (abbr.)
- 21. One point east of southeast
- 24. Belgian city
- 25. Praise excessively
- 26. River in France
- 27. Edible lily bulbs
- 31. Quarterbacks take them
- 32. Organic compound
- 34. Tears down (Brit.)
- 35. Beloved Hollywood alien
- 36. Unconscious
- 40. Missouri
- 41. Firemen use them
- 45. Pig noise
- 47. Greatly dismay
- 48. Imitator
- 52. Moves by turning over
- 53. Boxing's GOAT
- 54. Swarms with
- 56. Margarine
- 57. Feudal superior
- 59. As fast as can be done
- 60. Reciprocal of a sine
- 61. Chinese city
- 62. Tell on
- 63. United

Icy weather puts school procedures to the test

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

DUDLEY/CHARLTON — While the Dudley Charlton Regional School District does have plans in place in case of snow events this winter, it was ice that truly put those plans to the test on Tuesday, Dec. 8, when freezing conditions in the early morning forced the district to cancel in-person classes and move to online learning for the day.

Superintendent Steven Lamarche discussed the day during a School Committee meeting on Dec. 9 saying the unexpected conditions caused him to make a late-morning call to keep students from coming into school for their safety and the safety of the bus drivers putting into play the district's strategy of moving classes to online learning if possible should the schools need to remain closed for unexpected reasons.

"We experienced a surprise weather-related day due to drizzle and mist that froze on contact with streets and driveways. With our half-day schedule, it

doesn't lend itself to any type of delay so therefore we have to move into a full remote day. Typically, that would have been a two-hour delay day. It would not have been in any way, shape or form a snow day," Lamarche said, admitting the call was made later that normal as the weather caught a lot of people off guard. "We continue to plan for remote learning days for weather related closures at our facilities. There's no question the exceptions of those weather-related closures will be if we have a state of emergency or widespread power outages. Those will obviously play a factor in if we call a remote learning day or a snow day."

The discussion offered a chance for members of the School Committee to chime in on any improvements they felt needed to be addressed or concerns they had from the first true weather closure of the new school year. Committee member Pauline Aucoin questioned what was expected from staff on a snow day to have a better understanding of how such a day works. Lamarche stated

that every building has its own protocol that the educators follow if schools are forced to close.

"What we learned was every building was slightly different in their approach to that particular day, so we met as an administrative team to discuss that further and plan that out better," Lamarche said. "We have some work to do. What was happening is we were developing plans for big things like if we went to full remote. We were a little flat footed on the weather-related day."

Lamarche said they received great feedback from teachers and parents and identified several areas they want to improve. Overall, though, he felt that the teachers and administrators handled things well and promised that they will continue to improve and evolve as winter progresses.

"We have not left the continuous improvement model on everything we do," Lamarche said. "This one day did not escape our attention to reflect, evaluate and improve on what we do on a full-remote day due to weather related events."

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THE AUBURN NEWS (546-680) is published weekly for \$45 per year (in county) by Stonebridge Press, 25 Elm St., Southbridge, MA 01550. Out of county rate is \$56 per year. Periodicals postage paid at Southbridge. To subscribe call (800) 367-9898. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Auburn News, P.O. Box 90, Southbridge, MA 01550

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Santa pays a visit to Dudley

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

DUDLEY – While the town of Dudley couldn't celebrate the holiday season in traditional fashion, that didn't stop them from inviting jolly old St. Nick himself to provide some Christmas joy to children throughout the town.

On Friday, Dec. 4, the Dudley Police and Fire Departments hosted their annual visit from Santa Claus which usually accompanies the yearly tree lighting. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic the 2020 event had to be cancelled, but rather than going without any holiday cheer the town coordinated a visit from the Christmas icon and brought him to the kids putting him on board a fire engine with the Grinch and traveling the streets of town throughout the night. Locals were able to use a special phone app to follow Santa's journey and greet him on his travels. His route was also posted on the social media.

The efforts of the Dudley Police and Fire Departments to continue Santa's visit in spite of the pandemic were commended during a meeting on Dec. 7 where selectmen called it a "larger than life event" and thanked Police Chief Steve Wojnar, Fire Chief Dean Kochanowski and



Santa arrives at the Dudley town hall during his ride around Dudley on Dec. 5

Courtesy

everyone involved to helping bring a smile to the faces of families across the town. Chief Wojnar called the event a team effort and credited others who helped make Santa's visit a reality.

"George Patrinos did a very good job driving the ladder truck. The fire chief was there helping out with everything. My

guys and everyone else did a very good job helping Santa and the Grinch get around. Everyone at the town hall did a good job too," Chief Wojnar said. "We had a couple things we tried with that. The Glimpse app was activated and that was a method for people to track the procession as it went around town. At

one point I think we had a thousand people that were on to that site, so it was pretty useful. We're getting a lot of good feedback on it."

Fire Chief Dean Kochanowski said he too thought the Santa ride was smooth and that everyone had a lot of fun making it happen.

"The Santa Claus tour

went really well. It was a good collaborative effort by police, fire, town hall employees. I thought it was very good to see (everyone) working so good together as one cohesive unit. We had a good time and I think it was nice to see a little Christmas cheer in a difficult time," the chief said.

Videos from Santa's trip have circulated social media in the day since the ride. The town itself posted a video of Santa's arrival at the town hall on the Town of Dudley Massachusetts YouTube channel.

Bay Path LPN gets accepted into Laboure College's ASN Program

CHARLTON — Although she always planned on academic progression with her career path, Ashley Rivera, LPN of Southbridge did not think it would come so soon! Yet here she is, ready to embark on another academic adventure.

Rivera received her acceptance notification into the highly respected Associate of Science in Nursing (ASN) program at Laboure College. To be considered for the Laboure College's ASN program (LPN to RN Advanced Placement track) candidates must meet application requirements for all programs, the general admission criteria for all programs, be an LPN with a current license in good standing and meet the program-specific criteria based upon the candidate's level of education. Some candidates will be required to take the Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS) on campus at no additional charge for acceptance or for course placement. Since Rivera graduated from Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy, which is an accredited, post-secondary institution, recognized by the Department of Higher Education and fully approved by the board of reg-

istration in nursing, she is eligible for advanced placement.

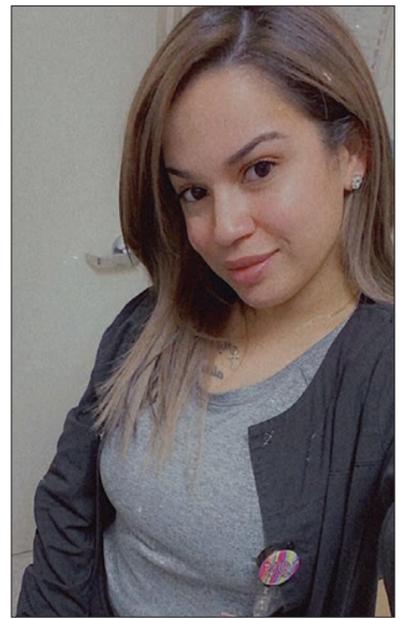
Justin G. Roy, Vice President of Enrollment and Marketing in his letter to Rivera commended her for her personal and academic accomplishments. Rivera completed her practical nursing education at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy in 2019. She was an officer for the UNICEF Club and competed for SkillsUSA district and state championship where she garnered a silver and gold medal respectively in the Health Knowledge Bowl category. She attended the Innovation Summit at Northeastern University in Boston. Rivera was a volunteer at the Paxton Senior Health Fair. She participated in "SafeTalk" developing suicide alertness and safety connection skills resulting in in-depth skills to recognize signs of suicide. Rivera also received certifications in Dementia Care, Mental Health First Aid (National Council for Behavioral Health), and Infusion Therapy/Central Line Care (Intravenous Edu).

Rivera said she has always wanted to be a nurse since she provided direct support at Jefferson Rehabilitation Center in Watertown, N.Y. in 2015-2017.

"I've always thought about being a nurse," Rivera said. "I love to help people and I like doing different things. Nursing is the best fit."

Rivera does not have second thoughts about picking rehabilitation nursing and home care. She has been with Webster Manor Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center (July 2019 to present) and Accessible Home Health in Auburn (September 2019 to present). Rivera, who is bilingual, (English and Spanish) is humbled by being called a healthcare hero amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The world needs more nurses like Rivera to care for patients or clients either in the rehabilitation or home health setting. Some nurses are willing to combine specialties, but only a handful do it. Rivera does it and does it with passion!

At Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy, the program is a 40-week, (10-month), full-time, Monday through Friday, evening program. The program begins mid-August and is completed in late June. Graduates receive a Practical Nursing Certificate and are eligible to take the NCLEX-PN licensure exam. The Bay Path Practical



Ashley Rivera

Nursing Academy is fully approved by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services Department of Public Health Board of Registration in Nursing (www.mass.gov/dph/boards/rn) and is accredited by the Commission on Occupational Education (www.council.org). For more information, visit www.baypath.net.

School officials discuss COVID concerns

BY GUS STEEVES
CORRESPONDENT

WEBSTER – As it has for a long time now, Covid-19 dominated the School Committee's business at their most recent meeting Dec 8. But the key item wasn't formally on the agenda, so it was nearly forgotten until member Linda Millet raised it.

Just as they were about to adjourn, she brought up the fact a few teachers sent the board letters raising concerns about having in-person classes. Teacher Sara Cole attended, and said they were all similar except for a paragraph giving personal experiences.

As read by Chair Kelly Seddiki, the letters called in-person school "not scientifically sound" and urged going back to entirely remote classes. They cited the fact the country has had more than 280,000 deaths and projects around 450,000 by Jan. 31, and evidence shows students can transmit the virus, although they tend to be asymptomatic. In school,

they're particularly concerned that Park Ave students spend roughly two hours a day without masks because of meals, "mask breaks," and other things.

"[Known] cases are only the tip of the iceberg," the writer of the one Seddiki read, Amanda Anderson, stated, noting she's had several family members test positive.

Cole agreed, saying not having a serious discussion about this is "a big disservice to the entire community." She said she "loves the job ... but it's not worth having kids in school at all cost."

Superintendent Ruthann Goguen said "there's nothing more serious I take than safety." If Webster does switch back to remote, she said, it'll depend on the data plus input from the committee, Health Board, and state; at this point nobody's sure what "the threshold" for doing so is.

That said, though, she acknowledged some teachers "are living in

fear" because they don't have the choice to stay home, while parents can choose to have their kids go to school remotely.

"Maintaining safety in our classroom will continue to be the guiding light," she said, noting earlier that balancing all of the changes and growing case numbers is putting a lot of stress on everyone.

"Please be kind to each other and those who have to make tough decisions," she said. "Nobody signed up for this."

At that point, Goguen was specifically talking about the fact Webster is awaiting receipt of its BinaxNow rapid test kits, but it equally applies to other areas the district has faced lately. One that has also sparked concerns is planning for a basketball season. While signups happened after the meeting, Webster won't know if the Southern Worcester County League will actually have a season until Jan. 4.

Goguen said Webster will "not isolate ourselves

as the odd-man-out," in saying no if the district opts for a season. She, Athletic Director Tony Perranto, other SWCL leaders, and Health Director Jen Sullivan have been talking about this repeatedly, trying to draft safety measures. Some leagues have already canceled, some have not.

"If SWCL's moving forward, we're moving forward, except of the Board of Health says no?" Seddiki asked for clarification.

"That's my understanding," Goguen replied.

"I am open to revisiting this Jan. 4 ... [but] right now, I cannot approve it as is," Sullivan had said just before that. She noted she has to follow state public health rules, which differ from SWCL rules.

Perranto said a couple players in the recently-concluded sports season did "come down with cold symptoms" and were "shut down," plus two soccer players who had to quarantine after the season, but nobody

tested positive for Covid. He argued some kids that aren't playing school sports are going instead to Amateur Athletic Union teams and other outside games where it could be far harder to ensure safety or to trace contacts if anyone does get sick.

Earlier, Goguen had noted "we're being forced to make decisions when the data is backwards." For example, she said, the state doesn't want to see contact sports, but MIAA is saying it's OK outside schools. District leaders want the kids to be able to play and get the benefits of it, but are concerned about safety.

Sullivan praised the district's nurses and staff for their cooperation and accurate information dissemination.

In other business, Business Manager Monique Pierangeli announced that the state's MSBA panel chose Flansburgh Architects of Boston over two other firms to be the architects for the Bartlett renovation project. Although

the firm was not the one the town's panel members wanted, she said she's "not disappointed with the quality of the architect we received."

The School Building Committee favored Dore & Whittier of Newburyport, who scored just one point less in their review system, because of Webster's history with them. Dore designed both the new Park Ave School and the Middle School renovation "on time and under budget," so "we trust them," she said.

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



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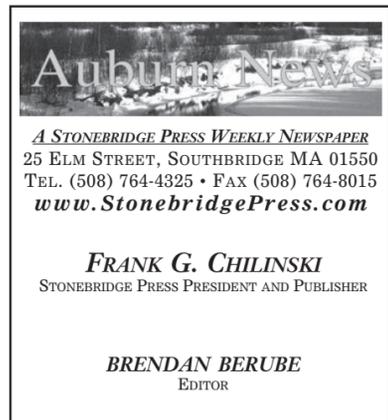
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OPINION/COMMENTARY



We all share responsibility for protecting the vulnerable

Something we've been hearing over the past few months with regard to COVID-19 deaths is the downplaying of elderly victims succumbing to the virus. When we look at the data and have conversations about the infection rate, and the numbers of those who actually pass away as a result, it seems to be dismissed in cases where the person is over the age of 65. "Well, they are old anyway, and in that age bracket" is often overheard.

What an awful world view. True, when we hear about an older person passing, we can find some sort of solace knowing that they were able to live for a fairly long time and enjoy life as such. However, isn't the point to try to live as long and healthy as possible? Many of these elderly individuals who have fallen victim to this virus, would still be alive today, had COVID not come into all of our lives.

This outlook is a dangerous viewpoint to have, especially amidst a pandemic. Of course the younger, healthier population is less at risk; however the responsibility falls on all of us to protect the vulnerable, regardless of our odds of contracting a severe case ourselves. We may be fine if we catch it, and may decide not to take precautions, telling ourselves "I'll be fine." However, walking around asymptotically may infect someone who might not be OK. As a society of neighbors, co-workers, family and friends, it should always be our job to look out for each other. Despite our differences, we must always put humanity first and take care of one another. Whether that looks like helping someone with a flat tire, pulling someone out of a ditch who's car slid off the road, helping someone in need with groceries, or taking precautions during a pandemic to keep each other safe, it's our duty as decent human beings to do the right thing, not for ourselves but for each other.

In overhearing such statements regarding the elderly, we want to remind those that need to hear it, that these long lived lives are just as important as they always have been. Being elderly shouldn't mean we are automatically dismissed as a member of society. The golden years should be protected as best they can as we all age, and we all will.

Our elderly community are just as valuable now as they were when they were in their twenties. Remember that senior citizens still pay taxes, grocery shop, take care of family members including grandchildren. It is our grandparents that make up the highest number of child care providers, allowing their own children to continue to work, which in turn boosts the economy.

Our elderly population provides friendship and support to everyone around them. In addition, the highest number of volunteers come from the senior citizen population. Again, this in turn helps to contribute to our economy.

It doesn't seem like any of this hits home for some individuals, until they are affected personally. If you are not close with someone who is elderly, remember that many of us are. It is important to continue to value and protect the most vulnerable among us.

In an attempt to bridge recent political division, we want to remind everyone to look out for each other, despite your differences. What matters in the end is community and how we operate in our own small circles.

We have seen refreshing occurrences of both Republicans and Democrats, locally, who have joined forces to make our communities a better place...individuals who have not lost sight of what really matters in life.

Strategies for "Living by the List"



TAKE THE HINT
KAREN TRAINOR

Few simple tasks bring order to chaos better than making a list. Creating a list of "pros and cons" vividly illustrates points for contrast and evaluation, while crossing off a daily list of accomplishments (no matter how mundane) can be a powerful motivator. In fact, most avid list makers take great satisfaction in viewing their options and/or daily successes literally laid out before them.

Numerous studies reveal lists can greatly benefit the writer far beyond short term satisfaction. Writing a list not only has the power to help save time and money, but the act of "listing" has been shown to aid memory, prevent procrastination and boost decision making skills.

Whether you want to pay down debt, tackle a new project or just lay out the pros and cons of an issue, making a visual list sorts it all out for easy review and action. The following listing strategies, ideas, and suggestions reveal how list making list (and maybe even checking it twice) can be a valuable tool to everyday success.

Writing it Out: While today's world offers an abundance of internet downloads and phone applications to help us track our accomplishments and get our lives in order, perhaps none is more practical and effective than the old fashioned pen and paper list. The advantage over electronic apps is that you can simply jot down a list whenever and wherever the mood strikes. Not to mention a paper list can be folded and tucked away for easy retrieval and review.

If checking off a completed task in a "to do" list is a satisfying act, crossing it off in a big, bold way is even more effective. To make an impressive visual impact, line out items on a written list with a bright red marker. Or, make a list on a wall size whiteboard and check off items with a thick black marker. These "in your face" visuals of tracking each accomplishment throughout the day serve to motivate.

For those who need a jump start to begin a manual list, a few simple tracking tools may be all it takes to inspire "listing." Some people enlist the help of a day planner or other calendar based notebook to record daily diet, fitness or work goals. A fresh legal sized pad or lined notebook also inspires pen to paper as do long, narrow pads of paper made for listing. A good, comfortable pen is another valuable aid. In the home office or gym, a white board calendar that displays daily, weekly and monthly goals, commands attention and successes can be easily checked off when achieved.

Free List Maker Software: If you prefer to "type it out," there are many applications that support making, sharing and prioritizing lists. Here are some free ones to check

out:

· Google Docs is perhaps the most familiar way to make everything from simple, personal lists to multilevel lists you can share and use as business task tools.

· Online list maker Scribbles.com is another free and easy list maker to build lists to share with your friends and family.

· iPhone apps to help you organize and create lists are plentiful online. Some are free, such as Remember the Milk, a capable to-do-list app with some sharing options included at no cost, making it good for household use.

· For serious list makers, a social network for goal achievers, www.mylifelist.org, offers an interactive web destination that challenges people to fulfill their major aspirations by creating a life list. Through the website, members can create a life list, and are motivated to take action and encouraged to inspire others by sharing their successes through stories, photos and video.

Rx for Brain Clutter: Research reveals lists can relieve stress by organizing items and/or tasks. Listing items into order not only calms mental clutter, but cuts tasks down to a manageable size.

Making a list can also be good news for procrastinators as a list can be valuable call to action. From tracking a diet program to monitoring career success, listing can break down goals into workable segments. "Listing out" is often all that's needed to jump start a bigger project. Studies show writing and using lists exercises the brain and builds memory. In today's busy world, trying to remember everything is stressful! Placing items from your mental memory to a list alleviates stress and offers peace of mind that the important issues are "backed up" on paper (or computer).

According to Cynthia R. Green, PhD, a nationally recognized clinical psychologist and brain health/memory fitness expert, making and using a list is a memory tool that can "save your brain."

"Using lists, just like using any technique to boost your brainpower, will focus your attention more actively on the information you need to remember. Why? When we work with information, we pay closer attention to it," she said.

In addition, Ms. Green notes that making a list is good for overall well being: "Lists help us feel better. When we are organized we forget less and do more and generally are more effective and productive. Feeling effective is import-

ant to our self-esteem, since we feel better about ourselves when we see ourselves as capable. Being more productive means we are making the most out of our time, so we have more time to do things we really want to do. This is how list making can help us."

From Grocery Lists to Bucket Lists: Lists can serve as great organizers. Whether you want to recall past accomplishments for a resume, or simply need to write a weekly grocery shopping list, a simple list is a clear and concise tool to get the job done.

Those who "live by the list" advise making both short term and long term lists. Short term lists, which are completed daily or within a week include grocery lists, daily "to do" lists, diet meals, exercise tracking, etc. Long term lists typically include "bucket lists" of future accomplishments, work projects, home improvement plans, career goals, etc.

When writing a list, it's important to keep an open mind. While creating a list can boost enthusiasm, it's important not to get carried away and "over-list." For example, when making a pros and cons list, each point should be short and concise. Stick to basic positive and negative points only, to keep it simple and clear.

When making a "to do" list avoid listing more than can be accomplished. List only tasks that are manageable in the time allotted. It's often better to complete a shorter list than to carry over an uncompleted one. That said, a list is a tool to get jobs done, so don't be tempted to undercut the tasks. "To do" lists should be challenging, but do-able!

Win Dinner for Two at the Publick House

Your tips can win you a great dinner for two at the historic Publick House Historic Inn in Sturbridge! Simply send in a hint to be entered into a random drawing. One winner per month will win a fabulous three course dinner for two at the renowned restaurant, located on Route 131 across the town common in historic Sturbridge. Because I'm in the business of dispensing tips, not inventing them (although I can take credit for some), I'm counting on you readers out there to share your best helpful hints!

Do you have a helpful hint or handy tip that has worked for you? Do you have a question regarding household or garden matters? If so, why not share them with readers of Stonebridge Press newspapers? Send questions and/or hints to: Take the Hint!, C/o the Southbridge Evening News, PO Box 90; Southbridge, MA 01550. Or email KDRR@aol.com. Hints are entered into a drawing for dinner for two at the historic Publick House Inn.

Investment lessons from 2020



FINANCIAL FOCUS
DENNIS ANTONOPOULOS

As the year draws to a close, it's fair to say that we've all learned something about the social, political, physical and environmental forces that have affected everyone. And, in some ways, our lives will be changed, perhaps permanently. But as an investor, what lessons can you learn from 2020?

Here are some to consider: The markets look ahead. Here's something many investors discovered in 2020: Investment prices don't always move in the same direction as the overall economy. This might not have seemed apparent right after the COVID-19 pandemic struck in mid-February, as the overall economy and the stock market took big hits. But just about five weeks later, the markets began a rally that lasted several months. During this time, the economy also recovered somewhat, but still remains on weak footing.

What can explain this discrepancy between the markets and economic activity? Essentially, economic numbers, such as the unemployment rate and gross domestic product (GDP), reflect what's happening today, but the markets are always looking toward tomorrow, which means they are anticipating a stronger economic recovery and the results that come with it, such as greater corporate earnings in 2021. No one can say for sure what the future holds, but you can usually know the market's opinion by its performance.

Opportunities will always exist for investors. Although the coronavirus seems unprecedented, the equity markets have rebounded from many crises before it. From war to global financial meltdowns, the market has seen it all. But even at the height of these events, when the markets might be most affected, individual segments or industries can do well.

For example, in the current environment, when many people have been forced to work and shop from home, and get their entertainment online, it's probably not surprising that some parts of the technology sector have seen their economic activity grow, along with their stock prices. Here's the key point: Investment opportunities always exist, especially in times of market stress – and smart investors will find them and incorporate them into their portfolios in a way that's appropriate for their goals and risk tolerance.

Patience and discipline can pay dividends. As mentioned above, the stock market dropped sharply in the weeks immediately following the pandemic, but then gained steadily for months afterward. Investors who tried to "cut losses" and exited the market likely did so at the wrong time and missed out on the beginning of the upturn. Unfortunately, this is not uncommon – investors who overreact to market declines often find themselves on the investment sidelines just when a new rally begins. Rather than being reactive in this way, you may be better off sticking with a long-term investment strategy, and buying and selling investments only when it makes sense for your situation, such as when you need to diversify your portfolio.

For many reasons, it's unlikely that we'll see anything exactly like 2020 again. But some of the investment lessons we learned are applicable in every year – so keep them in mind for 2021 and beyond.

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

StonebridgePress.com

If it's important to you,

It's important to us.



Brothers on the hunt

The final day of the Massachusetts shotgun season was a good one, according to hunters that I spoke with. The weather was perfect during the morning hours. It was comfortable to sit on a deer run that had high hopes for this writer and many others. I hunted with my brother Ken, as I do every year. We both drew a doe permit for Zone 8, so we hunted in the town of Douglas. I met Ken at our usual spot at 8 a.m., which is a bit late because of our elderly status.



THE GREAT
OUTDOORS
.....
RALPH
TRUE

We do not hunt hard, and often have one of us take a stand on a good deer run, that also showed signs of deer activity like acorn feeding. My brother decided on taking a slow walk through the area, hoping to push a deer to my stand. I sat comfortably on my hotseat up against a large oak tree, waiting for my brother to come through. As I waited, I was being entertained by a couple of gray squirrels scampering across the ground, looking for acorns to sustain them through the winter months.

A couple of times one of the squirrel's scampered down a small log that was only a few feet

from me, when he noticed something wrong. He let out a loud screeching noise, alerting every form of wildlife in the area of my presence. A few red squirrels also joined in with their chatter. I spotted my brother walking towards me, and I slowly lifted my ageing body off from the ground, with the help of the large tree, and a couple of smaller trees. After we discussed the situation, we decided to hunt the lower part of the property, where I had left one of my tree stands that I no longer use.

I left Ken on the ridge and headed down to my tree stand to sit on the lower part. At least I could get up to shoot if the situation arises. I slowly walked down to my tree stand, but needed to cross the small stream to get to where I was going. Lucky I had my Muck boots on. I found an old stick that was laying on the ground, and used it to steady my

ageing body, hoping to navigate the water without falling in. "Whew!" "I Made it." I slowly walked over to my tree stand and placed my cushion on the lower part before I sat down. "This is a lot more comfortable."

There were all kinds of fresh deer sign in the area, and I just felt sure I was in a good spot. I called my brother on our two-way radio and told him to take a slow walk through the brush towards my position. I watched the area pretty good for a while, and then suddenly out of nowhere, this huge deer came gliding through the brush in slow but huge jumps. I quickly stood up and took aim at the large deer, but it disappeared into some thick brush. I spotted the deer again and let one round go on my 12-gauge shotgun. The discharged shell echoed through the woods.

I waited a few minutes to stop my heart from racing and to let my brother know of the situation. He stayed where he was because the deer could very well circle and head back in his direction. I was not so sure about my shot being productive, but I spent a while making sure there was no blood trail. It was as I had fig-



Courtesy

This week's picture shows Ken & Mark True ice fishing on one of our favorite spots in years past. We are all hoping for some ice this year.

ured. A clean miss! I guess I will need to borrow some venison from one of my buddies again this year! We worked our way back to the car and headed for the nearest coffee shop. There is still black powder season that ends on Dec. 31 in Massachusetts! But I am not to encouraged about scoring on some venison this year.

With Christmas only days away, we need to brace ourselves as families, that it will be like no other Christmas that we have ever encountered. That does not mean as families that the celebration cannot be meaningful as it has always been; it is just that the celebration should be done in smaller groups of family members & friends. We all need to

hope and pray that the recently approved vaccine to combat Covid-19 is safe, and will work to eradicate this terrible disease that has cost thousands of lives, and threatens thousands more. Our faith is being tested, and we better be ready. God bless!

Take A Kid Fishing & Keep Them Rods Bending!

Are we still a beacon of democracy?

I'm a lifestyle columnist that promotes optimism and positivity in our daily lives. I'm not a political pundit. Occasionally a subject arises that connects the two areas of positivity and politics and I feel it's important to address. We have a problem.



POSITIVELY
SPEAKING
.....
GARY W.
MOORE

Depending on which poll you believe, almost 40 percent of all Americans believe our recent election was either dishonestly counted or was unfair, while seventy-seven percent of Republican voters say their candidate was fraudulently defeated. There has never been so much distrust in our voting system.

Former US Congressman and retired Army Lieutenant Colonel Allen West is now floating the idea of secession for those states who feel election laws were broken to elect Joe Biden.

This was an unprecedented election, with new rules and extreme methods, designed to accommodate voters due to our current Covid-19 pandemic. Former President Jimmy Carter, a long-time global advocate and judge for free elections, a Democrat, says that mail-in ballots are wrought with the opportunity for fraud. Never in our history have we had the massive number of vote-by-mail ballots as we did in this 2020 election.

The Beacon of Democracy? The Land of the Free and Home of (because) of the Brave now floating a break-up of our Union?

Yes. I believe our Union is at risk, but let me be clear. I do not advocate overturning the recent election. I accept the results based upon the election rules that were in place. The problem I see, and it should disturb both sides, is that the looseness of rules, methods, techniques, and monitoring of the last election places our democracy at risk. This isn't about Trump or Biden. This

is about election security. We can and must do better.

You may say Allen West isn't representative of most voters on the right, but I'd say you may be wrong. This shouldn't be a left or right issue, it's an American issue. We should be united in preserving the integrity of our elections.

I'm born and raised in Illinois, and for as long as I can remember, there has been, and continues to be, a desire for the Illinois "outside of Chicago" to separate from the Windy City. The Chicago Machine rules Illinois with an iron fist and has for almost one-hundred years. Look no further than the 1960 presidential election if you want to understand the power of the machine and how a small dishonest group can impact an entire nation.

There has been a movement over the last few years for the vast expanses of red California to break away from the influence and control of blue Los Angeles and San Francisco. And red Western Washington and Oregon could not be more polarized from their fellow statesmen in Seattle and Portland. They are now discussing breaking away and joining Idaho. Then back to Texas, there's been a group calling themselves the "Republic of Texas" that has been pushing secession from the U.S. for years. And now a former congressman, retired Lt. Colonel (Army) and head of the GOP in Texas, calling for a discussion of secession.

The secession movement is growing and gaining momentum. It's fueled by a large minority (upwards of forty percent) that believe their candidate was cheated and the rightful winner was denied. Yes, the country is divided almost perfectly down the middle

by a different ideology but that alone isn't enough to fuel a dissolution of our Union that has lasted since 1776. A lack of trust in our elections ... just might be. If we believe our elections are not honest and fair ... how can we possibly be the Beacon of Democracy? Why should we vote if every legal vote isn't counted? It is a National dilemma.

To those calling for secession, let me remind you how well it worked for our nation last time this idea reared its ugly head. The southern states paid a devastating price, while the whole nation suffered the massive losses of our civil war. I cannot believe anyone would want to risk a second American Civil War, but there are those who do, and the numbers are growing. Ideology alone will not cause this break-up, but a lack of a reliable, honest, and trustworthy voting system can and maybe will.

If we want to secure our Union, we must secure our voting system.

How do we do it?

We must show picture identification for many less important reasons in our states and our nation. What's more important than voting? Picture ID must be shown to vote. And no ... this is not voter suppression but reasonable election security.

Absentee ballots must be used for legitimate reasons for being absent on Election Day and should not be available to the masses because they don't want to vote in person. If you care about the future of your nation, show up at the voting booth, show your ID and vote. How is this asking too much?

Counting of every single vote must be done with poll watchers from each party. Any vote that is illegally counted under the view of only one side must be either thrown out or counted again,

with proper witnesses.

As for voting machines and the allegations they are easily open to fraud, I don't know enough to comment, but I've heard enough to believe they must be examined before they are used again.

Then you have our tech giants who I believe clearly favor one side over another and influence voters by their bias. Why is this allowed and how do we stop this?

Want to preserve our Union? Secure our elections. Taking the steps to secure our elections is not voter suppression but election security. Without election security, everything we say we stand for is a lie.

I love my blue friends and love my red friends. If we love our Union, we must join hands and engage in election systems we can all trust. The risk of not doing so is unfathomable.

My prayer for our nation this Christmas is that we can come together and reflect the values that have held us together for almost 250 years. If we only agree upon one thing, let's agree that our United States of America is worth preserving and saving. Imagining the world without our influence creates a frightening picture. Let's set aside our political and ideological differences and preserve our nation.

God bless America, and may God save and preserve our troubled Union.

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 @ GaryW Moore721 and at www.garywmoore.com.

What makes estate personal property valuable?

There are many components of estate assets, with home and land typically being the most valuable. Stocks, bonds, or bank accounts may be worth more in certain situations. Personal property is typically the least valuable, but there are times when there are some very desirable items in the estate.

Being an antique estate auctioneer, I focus on antiques, collectibles and other estate personal property and will explain in this column what we look for in determining whether estate contents are potentially valuable.

One factor is how long the family has been in the country. We've handled at least one estate where the family came over on the Mayflower. There were books and documents dating back to the 18th century. In an estate where items have been passed down through generations, you can usually expect to find some valuable objects.

The family's wealth is another important factor. Some families have the financial means to buy Rolex instead of Timex watches and to buy large sterling silver flatware sets instead of silver-plate or stainless steel. Even though



ANTIQUES,
COLLECTIBLES
& ESTATES
.....
WAYNE TUISKULA

formal dining isn't as popular today, sterling silver flatware can be worth thousands.

One of the rules that most collectors follow is to collect what you like. Collectors typically don't look at their collections as an investment. However, when the collection is auctioned and converted to cash, having collected popular items will benefit the collector or their heirs. Some common collectibles like coins, 1960s and earlier baseball and other trading cards, and comic books can be worth a considerable amount. We recently sold a collection of mainly gold and silver coins that brought nearly \$40,000 and sold a baseball card collection a few years ago that sold for over \$20,000.

The time period that the person collected their items also impacts the value of personal property. Over 20 years ago, we were contacted by a woman who had a large collection of Barbie dolls and other toys. She was at the age where she could've begun collecting when some of the first Barbies were manufactured and we had high hopes for selling her items after our conversation with her. Unfortunately for her and us, she col-

lected all of her toys later in her adult life and they had little value. When you've collected something in your youth, you don't have to worry about fakes and reproductions in your collection that have become more prevalent now.

Many people are uncomfortable when we first meet if the estate they are handling is packed with items. I assure them that there are never too many items as far as an auctioneer is concerned. Even if there aren't a lot of valuable objects, sometimes the sheer volume of items can make an auction or estate sale profitable. Around 15 years ago, we auctioned a collection of items from the 1920s through 1960s that a collector had acquired over many years. There was enough material to fill a box truck. Although there weren't any big-ticket items, 1950s hair dryers, 1940s household items and even circa 1930s rolls of toilet paper combined to bring in tens of thousands for the consignor.

We have a small online auction taking place with items from a Worcester estate. Included is a commercial tractor, dump truck, motorcycles, other vehicles, a large Coke sign and Ford Mustang pedal car. The first session of the large toy collection from a West Boylston estate will soon be ready for



online bidding. Session I will contain diecast toys. Antique and vintage toys will be in later sessions. You will also be able to bid online for equestrian and other paintings from artist Fay Moore's estate after the holidays.

Contact us at: Wayne Tuiskula Auctioneer/Appraiser Central Mass Auctions for Antique Auctions, Estate Sales and Appraisal Services www.centralmassauctions.com (508-612- 6111) info@centralmassauctions.com.

DREAM
continued from page A1

Both pursued a nursing career where they can hone their strong clinical judgment, excellent physical assessment skills, good communication skills, but also, provided financial security. Both John and Esther agree that they have the best of both worlds, as healthcare workers and have economic security

for their family.
"Choosing Nursing and Bay Path was one of the best decisions I have ever made," said John. "I have had the opportunities and experiences that have made all the difference."
"I knew Bay Path's program would help me achieve my dream," Esther said. "The Practical Nursing program gave me countless opportunities and exposure, which prepared me for suc-

cess in my nursing career."
Read on to learn about Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy, visit www.baypath.net. The program is a 40-week, (10-month), full-time, Monday through Friday, evening program. The program begins mid-August and is completed in late June. Graduates receive a Practical Nursing Certificate and are eligible to take the NCLEX-PN licensure exam. The Bay Path Practical

Nursing Academy is fully approved by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services Department of Public Health Board of Registration in Nursing (www.mass.gov/dph/boards/rn) and is accredited by the Commission on Occupational Education (www.council.org). For more information visit www.baypath.net.




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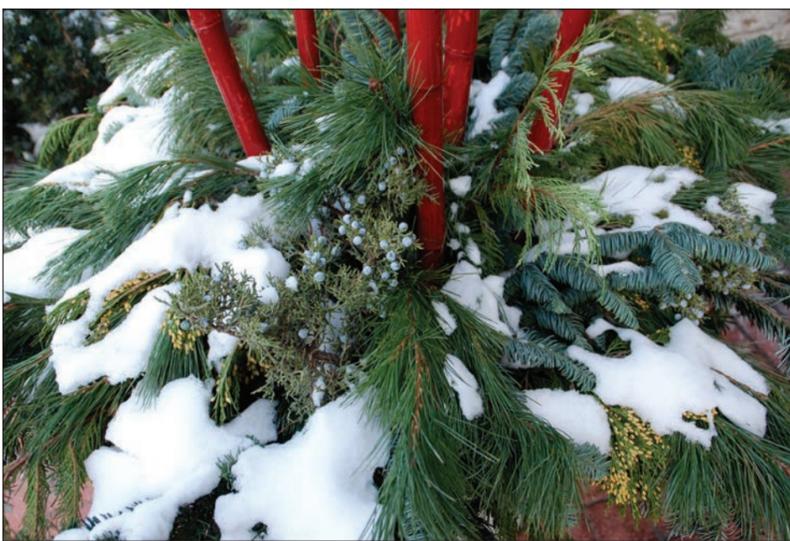
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Dress up your landscape with winter-inspired container gardens



Melinda Myers

Winter container gardens brighten up the landscape all season long.

Clear out your fall containers and make room for some winter greenery. These planters are sure to brighten those dreary winter days and add life to your landscape. Transform weatherproof summer and fall containers for winter. Fiberglass, plastic, cement and wood will

hold up to the cold, ice and snow. Don't subject terra cotta and glazed pots to the harsh elements that can cause them to crack. Remove faded fall flowers and add a bit of potting mix to fill the container within two inches of the top. Or select a new weatherproof container and fill it with potting

mix. Consider your overall landscape design and other outdoor winter decorations when creating or purchasing a holiday planter. Place a couple of winter planters on your front steps or dress up your patio, deck or balcony and enjoy the view from the comfort of your

home. Don't overlook those hanging baskets. Fill them with winter greenery to elevate your winter containers to a fun new level.

Fresh-cut needled evergreens like spruce, white pine, fir and broadleaf evergreen boxwood and holly combine nicely to form the backbone of your container design. Make it easy by using spruce tips to create vertical interest in a container. You only need to set a few in the center of the pot to look like a pro. Surround these with graceful white pine boughs to anchor the arrangement to the container.

Add sprigs of other evergreens for additional texture and shades of green. Next, it's time to put your creativity to work. For those that prefer a natural look, consider white birch branches and stems of red twig dogwood, corkscrew willow or contorted hazelnut. Add a bit more color with berry laden winter holly branches and dried seed rudbeckias, allium, and coneflower seed heads



GARDEN MOMENTS
MELINDA MYERS

or hydrangea flowers. Finish off your arrangement with a few evergreen cones and a bow.

Or add a bit of glitz with painted and glittered cones, twigs, ornaments, or other holiday adornments. You can purchase these or create your own with a bit of paint and glitter. Just make sure your materials will hold up to the winter weather. Once your arrangement is complete, water thoroughly. The moist soil helps keep greenery fresh and in place. Once the soil is frozen you can stop watering. The cold weather will help keep your greens looking good throughout the holidays and beyond.

Extend the life of your greenery with an organic biodegradable anti-transpirant. These mate-

rials help seal in the moisture, delaying the browning of cut greens. Always read and follow label directions carefully. Most need to be applied to evergreen boughs outdoors and allowed to dry before bringing it indoors or beginning your arrangement.

For additional ideas and a bit of inspiration, watch my Create Beautiful Evergreen Containers video. You will find more ways to enhance your landscape with winter containers.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including The Midwest Gardener's Handbook and 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. Her Web site is www.melindamyers.com.



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Novembers' Single Family Homes Real Estate Market

DUDLEY			
	November 2019	November 2020	Trend
Median Price	\$244,950	\$297,450	▲
Market Volume	\$2,583,300	\$3,133,407	▲
# of Homes Sold	10	10	▶
Avg Days on Market	73	25	▼

AUBURN			
	November 2019	November 2020	Trend
Median Price	\$259,000	\$339,000	▲
Market Volume	\$4,008,000	\$7,929,500	▲
# of Homes Sold	14	24	▲
Avg Days on Market	48	28	▼

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Old Sturbridge Village hosts first virtual fundraiser

STURBRIDGE — Old Sturbridge Village (OSV) hosted their first ever virtual fundraiser, “Before and Beyond: A Virtual Fundraising Celebration of Where We’ve Been and What Comes Next!” on Thursday evening, Dec. 3.

The Village had 150 attendees from 16 states, including Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, New York, Maine, California, Illinois, Missouri, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Delaware. The event was free to attend but donations were encouraged. Those that donated were entered into different raffle drawings that took place throughout the evening. The event

included 24 raffle items unique to the Village in addition to autographed materials and prerecorded greetings from Norm Abram, of the TV show “This Old House” and documentary filmmaker, Ken Burns. All donors of \$25 or more received an Old Sturbridge Village ornament in the mail.

Attendees heard from key staff on Old Sturbridge Village’s pandemic response, how COVID-19 brought about innovation to the Village, and where program is headed in the future. Donors were given the opportunity to honor a person of their choosing by making their gift in honor or memory of someone. Names of those honored were read out and listed on the screen during the event.

Included were memorials to former Old Sturbridge Village staff members, volunteers, and supporters; and tributes to current staff.

President and CEO, Jim Donahue welcomed the attendees of the event sharing, “We are busy working on programs and ideas of the future for Old Sturbridge Village as we prepare to launch into 2021 when we will celebrate our 75th year.”

Donahue went on to thank all those in attendance for their unwavering support of Old Sturbridge Village not just during 2020 but throughout all the years. Special thanks to Savers Bank for sponsoring this first virtual event.



Courtesy

A scene from Old Sturbridge Village's ongoing Christmas By Candlelight celebration.

Dudley Planning Board approves DMA permit, site plan

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

DUDLEY – The Dudley Planning Board has given their final seal of approval for a special permit and site plan for DMA Holdings to set up a new marijuana cultivation, manufacturing and retail space at the Chase Mill.

Members of the Planning Board met virtually on Dec. 9 with Attorney Nicholas Adamopoulos repre-

senting DMA Holdings to certify their approval of the site plan and special permit. After brief discussion the board unanimously approved the document while will allow DMA Holdings to progress with their plans to transform the historic mill property at 35-37 Chase Ave. The property is owned by Verde Organica, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of DMA Holdings.

The document presented during the meeting included 23 conditions

DMA Holdings is expected to meet ranging from hour limitations for construction and renovation to requiring building plans be submitted for review once finalized. Among other items discussed were expectations for power supplies, street lighting, exterior building lighting, and ADA compliance all of which resulted in positive discussion between DMA representatives and the board. Attorney Adamopoulos confirmed some changes to the

property can be expected, such as an exterior door for the retail space, but the plan remains to try and maintain the historical looks of the mill.

“We stated that we were going to maintain the integrity of that old mill building so that it would fit in to its current scope and that we’re not going to touch that,” Antonopoulos said.

Probably the biggest item of discussion didn’t even involve the mill at all, but rather an off-shoot property across the

street where selectmen are hoping recreational space will be set aside for those wishing to embrace the beauty of the French River. Adamopoulos said that DMA could potentially work with the developers of the nearby Stevens Mill to help enhance the French River as a place of recreation and visitation in Dudley. He confirmed utilizing the added property they acquired with the mill is part of their discussions and planning.

Overall, the meeting

was a positive one further solidifying DMA’s commitment to Dudley.

“We don’t see anything in these conditions that would hamper our goal to open this project here in town. Well make sure we meet all of these criteria as we move forward and ultimately, we’re going to be working closely with this board and the selectmen,” Antonopoulos concluded.

Town Hall limiting traffic to appointment only



Jason Bleau

Charlton's Town Hall is moving to appointment only visitation in the wake of a second wave of the COVID-19 outbreak.

BY JASON BLEAU
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

CHARLTON – The Charlton Town Hall has been added to the growing list of municipal buildings in Southern Worcester County shifting to an appointment-only format of meeting with members of the local community. The shift is in response to the growing number of COVID-19 cases in the region which also led to a similar shift in nearby Dudley.

Town Administrator Andrew Golas said the decision to close the town hall to the public and make all visits by appointment only is an attempt to help offset any risk of exposure for town employees. The move will also allow the town hall to maintain a controlled response to any COVID-19 situation without having to close down completely and disrupt services to the community.

“We did receive word that the town is being designated as a red community,

so we’ve had that high-risk designation. As we’re seeing the increases in cases it will help ensure that we have continuity of government moving forward if there is an issue that involves us having to quarantine staff it limits our exposure to the public, but also allows for us to work remotely in a better fashion,” Golas said.

For the foreseeable future the town hall is asking that citizens call ahead to make an appointment with their specific department before visiting

the building or handle their business over the phone if possible. Anyone who does visit the town hall will be asked to certify that they are not displaying symptoms of COVID-19 and that they have not been exposed or ordered to quarantine.

Golas clarified that the closing of the town hall does not mean the offices are closing. No employees have been laid off or furloughed and no offices are being temporarily shut down. The move only restricts who can access the town hall and when. Golas could not say for sure when the town hall would reopen noting it will depend on what the next few months brings in terms of a vaccine or decreased cases in the region.

“We’re really trying to be responsive to the health and data metrics that we see coming from the state level. My anticipation is that as we see the rollout of a vaccination and things react from that point that is probably when we’ll see a return back open to the public,” said Golas. “My long range projection is to probably say we’ll be looking at March or by that time, but it depends on what we’ll see from the state level as far as guidance and how quickly the vaccination process rolls out or if there’s any other data metrics that show that case numbers are going back down.”

The town administrator concluded that Charlton citizens are remaining diligent about the virus and that the town hall had already seen a reduction of in-person business prior to the closure. He reminds citizens to remain vigilant as the region continue to manage a second wave of the pandemic.

Slow cooker meal makes holiday entertaining a breeze

The holidays wouldn’t be complete without a delicious meal to share with family and friends. A holiday roast is often the centerpiece of festive occasions. Having a go-to recipe for this classic main course makes holiday preparations that much easier.

Utilizing a slow cooker to make a beef roast reduces time spent in the kitchen, affording hosts more opportunities to mingle with their guests. That’s just the idea behind this recipe for “Beef Roast With Dark Rum Sauce” from “Crock•Pot® 356 Year-Round Recipes” (Publications International, Ltd) by Crock•Pot Kitchens.

BEEF ROAST WITH DARK RUM SAUCE

Makes 6 servings

- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 beef rump roast (about 3 pounds)
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup dark rum, divided
- 1/2 cup beef broth
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 whole bay leaves, broken in half
- 1/2 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 1/4 cup lime juice

1. In a small bowl, combine allspice, salt, pepper, and cloves. Rub spices onto all sides of roast.

2. Heat oil in skillet over medium heat until hot. Sear beef on all sides, turning as it browns. Transfer to a slow cooker. Add 1/2 cup rum, broth, garlic, and bay leaves. Cover; cook on low 1 hour.

3. In a small bowl, combine remaining 1/2 cup rum, brown sugar and lime juice, stirring well. Pour over roast. Continue cooking on low 4 to 6 hours, or until beef is fork-tender. Baste beef occasionally with sauce.

4. Remove and slice roast. Spoon sauce over beef to serve.



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"I am Definitely glad to be a part of the team as well. I feel like I'm home and everyone has been wonderful." — Nicole V. (LPN)

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