

Auburn News

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Frost announces unemployment assistance for self-employed workers

BOSTON — State Rep. Paul K. Frost (R — Auburn) announces the Baker-Polito Administration has opened up the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) portal for those who do not qualify for traditional unemployment assistance. The portal, created from scratch and originally scheduled to open on April 30th, has been made available today April 20th for Massachusetts only.

The new federal PUA program provides up to 39 weeks of unemployment benefits for those who are unable to work because of a COVID-19-

related reason but are not eligible for regular or extended unemployment benefits. This includes self-employed workers, independent contractors, gig economy workers, and those with limited work history.

Claimants can now file for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) by applying online at: www.mass.gov/pua

PUA is a program open to the following individuals:

- Self-employed individuals, including gig workers, freelancers, and independent contractors.
- Those seeking part-

time employment.

- Claimants that have an insufficient work history to qualify for benefits.

- Claimants that have been laid off from churches and religious institutions and are not eligible for benefits under state law.

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance is a separate program from regular unemployment insurance. It was created by the federal CARES Act, which the states administer. Please visit www.mass.gov/pua for more information.

SENDING A MESSAGE



Photo Courtesy

Reilly Doherty recently spent a fun afternoon chalk drawing in her driveway at on Westland Avenue in Auburn. Her father, Jeff, taped-out the design then after finishing her work, Reilly removed the tape and added the words, which send an important message at this difficult time.

COVID-19 cases by town

REGION — Gov. Charlie Baker's administration decided last week to release COVID-19 statistics for each city and town in the Commonwealth.

The decision was a reversal from the administration's previous stance of withholding town-by-town information in favor of broader tracking by county. But as conversations continue about when and how to reopen the country, Baker's team decided to release the most detailed statistics possible. This will help health officials pinpoint COVID-19 hotspots throughout the state and prepare for

possible flare-ups in surrounding communities, officials said. It will also assist hospitals and other facilities in making necessary preparations.

"Having the ability to look at this virus through the lens of its impact on specific cities and towns will help us to identify potential hotspots," said Marylou Sudders, the state's Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Below is a list of COVID-19 statistics for area communities, as of April 15. The information reflects the number of confirmed positive coronavirus cases in each town.

Communities are only listed if they have five or more confirmed COVID-19 cases.

Auburn: 34
Blackstone: 19
Brookfield: 5
Charlton: 15
Douglas: 18
Dudley: 19
Leicester: 14
Northbridge: 76
Oxford: 15
Southbridge: 31
Spencer: 8
Sturbridge: 17
Uxbridge: 20
Webster: 35
West Brookfield: 5
Worcester: 886

The Baker Administration will release weekly updates on COVID-19 statistics.

Charlton sets new date for town elections

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

CHARLTON — As previously reported, the town of Charlton has decided to reschedule its elections in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic to respect the need for social distancing. Originally slated for May 2, town officials have confirmed the election will take place on Saturday, June 13 instead with the Annual Spring Town Meeting to be held a few days later on Monday, June 15.

In addition to a new date, the official slate of candidates has also been released with three con-

tested seats to be decided and two new selectmen to be named to serve three-year terms. Selectmen John McGrath and Deborah Noble, both with terms expiring this year, are not on the ballot to retain their seats opening the door for new faces to join the town's highest elected board.

The two selectmen seats will act as their own items on the ballot; however, only one will be a true contest. Stephen George Koronis will seek one of the two seats with no competition save for potential write in candidates. He sits alone on the ballot for Seat 4 on the board and has pre-

vious dedicated his time to the town as a past President of the Charlton Lions Club and as a local coach for both soccer and little league. The second seat for the board, Seat 5, will see Patricia Rydlak attempt to move from her seat as Chair of the Planning Board to the Board of Selectmen while Joshua Saper, an entrepreneur who has lived in Charlton for eight years and has volunteered as a coach and with multiple nonprofits, will also contend for the seat.

While it appears outgoing Selectman John McGrath is taking a step

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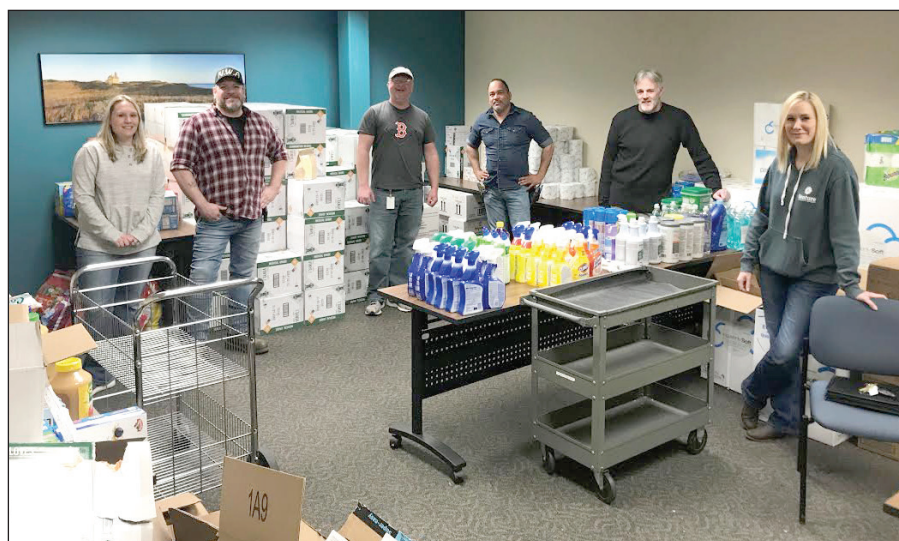


Photo Courtesy

The Venture Community Services staff has been working hard to overcome challenges and provide vital services.

Local company goes above and beyond for people with disabilities

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

STURBRIDGE — Even at the height of a pandemic, staff members from one local agency are going the extra mile to care for people with developmental disabilities.

Sturbridge-based Venture Community Services runs 44 homes and three offices throughout central and southeast Massachusetts. The company serves adults with developmental disabilities, in addition to providing community-based supports for people living independently. Moreover, Venture offers several free community programs to children with autism and their families.

For Venture Community Services

President and CEO Mike Hyland, it has always been important to hire staff members who are prepared for an array of challenges. Although no one could have predicted a pandemic, Venture employees have stepped up to the challenge and continued to provide vital care.

"The people our employees support need that help to remain safe, particularly now," Hyland said. "Without agencies like Venture and our dedicated staff, the people in our homes would require institutionalization or hospital care. That is not only a significantly less desirable lifestyle, but one that puts them at far greater risk during any public health crisis."

Hyland thanks his

team for rallying together and embracing the challenge. The tight-knit staffs at each location have developed strong rapport with those they care for.

"Our employees are the lifeline that keeps the individuals safe while also constantly engaging them and supporting their emotional needs every day," Hyland added.


Long before the coronavirus paralyzed the nation, it was a challenge for agencies across the country to secure experienced, dedicated employees eager to care for people with developmental disabilities. Venture is grateful for the experience and commitment of its team.

Like medical professionals nationwide, several members of the Venture team have made significant sacrifices over the last month to care for those they serve.

"This industry has, for a very long time,

Turn To **VENTURE**, page **A13**





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How to wear cloth face coverings

In an effort to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where it can be difficult to maintain social distancing measures. That means people are advised to wear cloth face coverings while shopping for groceries or in any other settings where it might be difficult to stay at least six feet away from other people.

In recognition that the notion of wearing face coverings while in public is foreign to many people, the CDC issued instructions on how to wear such coverings to ensure they provide as much protection as possible.

How to wear cloth face coverings

The CDC notes that cloth face coverings should:

- fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- be secured with ties or ear loops
- include multiple layers of fabric
- allow for breathing without restriction

Additional guidelines

The CDC says face coverings should be avoided by certain people. Such coverings should not be placed on children under age two. In addition,

people who have trouble breathing, those who are incapacitated and people who cannot remove coverings without assistance should not wear them.

The CDC also notes that cloth face coverings does not refer to surgical masks or N-95 respirators. The CDC urges everyone to reserve such supplies for health care workers and other medical first responders.

Cloth face coverings should be routinely washed. A washing machine should be enough to clean these coverings.

When removing cloth face coverings, do so carefully. The CDC urges people to avoid touching



their eyes, nose and/or mouth when removing their face coverings. Once the coverings are removed, people should wash their hands immediately.

Cloth face coverings can help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. While wearing such coverings is a simple gesture, it's also one that can save lives. More information is available at www.cdc.gov.

COVID-10 when grocery shopping



Safeguard against (447 Supermarkets and other food merchants are allowed to stay open as “essential” retailers amid the mass shutdowns prompted by the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Along with banks, gas stations and takeout restaurants, supermarkets are among the few places that people are allowed to visit to procure the necessities of everyday life.

Even with social distancing and other precautions in place, grocery stores remain high-traffic locations. As a result, many people feel concerned about how to best protect themselves when turning to in-store visits or grocery delivery services to stay stocked on food and other essentials.

• Maintain a six-foot distance. As with other locations, shoppers should keep a distance of six feet between themselves and other shoppers. Do not hesitate to move back or ask someone to move away if you feel concerned about

proximity. Shopping during “off-peak” hours may help thin out crowds and make it easier to maintain social distance.

- Shop small retailers. It can be beneficial to visit independently owned retailers, like local markets, delis and specialty food stores. Crowds at such stores will likely be smaller than the crowds at large chain stores.
- Wipe down products. Data published in The New England Journal of Medicine that tested how long COVID-19 survived on surfaces found the virus was detected up to 72 hours on plastic, 48 hours on stainless steel, 4 hours on copper, and 24 hours on cardboard. While infection from touch may not be as likely as it is from direct inhalation of COVID-19 from an infected individual, it can be helpful to wipe down surfaces, including non-porous packaging, once items are brought home, as well as counters or tables used to unload packages. Wiping down a shopping cart handle also may be helpful.
- Wash produce. Consumer Reports suggests washing fruits and vegetables in a mild soap-and-water solution to eliminate any possible live virus and pesticides.
- Avoid direct contact. Whether items are delivered or purchased in-store, avoid personal contact with cashiers or other store employees. Pick up and pack your own groceries. Opt to pay with a credit card or another digital pay option like Apple Pay instead of handing over cash. Use your own pen to sign receipts. Scan your own frequent shopper card or have the cashier use a scan gun, rather than taking your key ring to hold. Delivery services can place the bags outside of your front door. Tips also can be exchanged electronically for delivery services through an app or online or over the phone.

Some simple shopping strategies can help people prevent the spread of COVID-19.

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Tri-Valley's Front Steps project supports home delivered meals



REGION — Friends and families in Webster, Dudley, Oxford, Charlton and Sturbridge hopped on Tri-Valley's Front Steps Project to show their support and raise money for home delivered meals. It was the perfect chance to pose on the 'Front Steps' while a professional photo was taken in exchange for a donation to Meals on Wheels.

Restrictions stemming from COVID-19 have caused a dramatic increase in the critical need for meals and with the average cost per meal at \$10, program expenses have sky-rocketed. According to Executive Director Lisa Prince, "We were so pleased when professional photographer Brian Stone reached out to us with his idea of a 'Front Steps' project. This helped to replace some of the much-needed fundraising lost from canceled March for Meals events due to the pandemic."

Tri-Valley is grateful to the following professional photographers who donated their time to the Front Steps Project: Brian Stone of Charlton, Bruce Bishop of Douglas, Melissa

Borgeson of Charlton and Susan Bray of Oxford.

As an 'essential' service, Tri-Valley continues to provide services to seniors and younger disabled individuals. We are delivering Meals on Wheels, providing Care Management, In-home Services, Protective Services, and our Information & Resource team is fielding calls during this pandemic. If you need assistance, please give us a call at 508-949-6640; if you would like to make a donation, please mail to Tri-Valley, Inc., 10 Mill Street, Dudley, MA 01571 or donate online at www.trivalleyinc.org.

Tri-Valley, Inc. is a private, non-profit agency providing in-home and community-based services in 25 towns located in south central Massachusetts. The Agency receives funding from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through the Executive Office of Elder Affairs and from the Federal government, under the Older American's Act, processed through the Central Mass Agency on Aging.

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.

GOOD NEWS

CHARLTON NATIVE COMPLETES BASIC TRAINING



Photo Courtesy
U.S. Air Force Airman Bradley M. Szolusha, son of Michael and Donna Szolusha of Charlton, has graduated from basic military training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, San Antonio.

ELECTION

continued from page A1

back from town politics for the time being, his fellow exiting Selectman Deborah Noble is seeking election for a different post. Noble will be seeking a three-year stint as Town Moderator and will have competition from Noreen Smith. Both bring experience and knowledge of the town to the table as they seek to earn a spot leading the procedures for town meetings over the next three years. The third truly contested seat on the ballot will be a two-year vacancy for the Housing Authority. Cathleen Kuehl and Jeanmarie Vincent will each seek the single available two-year term in June.

Numerous incumbents will likely maintain their seats through uncontested elections while several new names are also slated to join town boards and commissions. Town Clerk Karen LaCroix faces no competition to maintain her seat for another three years. Assessor Richard Vaughan, Cemetery Commissioner Donna Neylon, Board of Health Chair Matthew Gagner, Tree Warden Seth Lamansky, Housing Authority member Michael Sullivan and Library Trustees Fiona Bycroft-

Ryder and Kathleen Therrien are also uncontested to retain their positions pending any write-in campaigns. Michael Tiberii is also uncontested as an incumbent for the Southern Worcester County Regional Vocational School District while Jamie Terry looks to return to the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee. John Smith seeks to rejoin the Planning Board for five years. New names on the ballot include Jordan Evans for a one-year term on the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee, Sheri Lee Zanca for the Recreation Commission, and Willis Bond for a single-year term on the Cemetery Commission.

A full list of candidates and election schedule can be found on the Town of Charlton Web site.

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Oxford delays election, town meeting

BY GUS STEEVES
CORRESPONDENT

OXFORD – Although all town ballots will state May 19, local Election Day this year actually won't be that date. It'll be sometime in June, but the exact date remains to be determined.

Selectmen made that decision unanimously April 14, at the same time they delayed the Annual Town Meeting, and for the same reason – the Covid pandemic. Town Meeting will also happen in June. They're aiming to set it a week or to after the election, and state law requires it to happen before June 30.

Whenever it happens, one unusual factor in this election is that all voters will be given the option of voting early by mail or waiting until election Day and doing it at the polls as usual. Town Clerk Lori Kelley said they won't be able to get a mailed ballot in person, but getting one is simple.

"Any form of written communication is acceptable," provided it has four things: name, address, date of birth and a written (not electronic) signature, she said. That means someone can scan in their signature on a letter requesting a ballot and send it by email, or fax it or mail it or drop it in the sealed dropbox at Town Hall. She noted, however, voters will

have to pay the postage to send the ballot in (or they can drop it in the box as well).

The early voting by mail sparked some objection from Selectman John Saad.

"It seems like an extra administrative step for a very low turnout for only one contested item on the ballot," he said.

In fact, Kelley noted, it's even more complicated than that. All mailed ballots will end up passing through multiple hands: her office, the Post Office, the voter, the Post Office, her office again upon receipt (when it's vaulted until Election Day), election workers remove and feed it into the counting machines, then take them out and return them to the vault for 30 days, she said.

"A lot of people handle it," she said. "There's a lot of germs going back and forth possibly. ...There's a lot of contact with those paper ballots."

Even so, many election activists argue paper ballots hand-counted in public is the best way to ensure an accurate count, citing problems with the programming for touch screen systems used in other states.

This year's ballot will include a debt exclusion question seeking \$15 million in three \$5 million chunks more than 15 years specifically to fund road repairs. A couple weeks ago,

DPW Director Sean Divoll told selectmen getting such dedicated money is crucial; without it, the best the town can do is maintain them at the level they are now (by spending state Chapter 90 aid and the extra \$500,000 a year Oxford adds to it). Spending just state aid, as many towns do, would cause them to continue to deteriorate, he said then.

That issue will also go to Town Meeting. Under state law, it has to pass both of them to happen, although Callahan said if it passes one and fails the other, the town can try the failed one again.

Kelley suggested having the election either June 23 or 30, but waiting until early June to set the date "so we'll have a better idea where we stand with the health of the nation."

The same rationale applies to Town Meeting, with a different factor. While municipal legislative bodies are exempt from the state's 10-person gathering limits, they still have to plan for social distancing.

"It would behoove us to think very clearly [about this]. Just to conduct a Town Meeting the way we're used to is not feasible," Town Manager Jen Callahan said. She said town attorney Marc Rich suggested looking at June 24. If something pushes it past June 30, the town's only option is to run

on a one-twelfth budget "which would be devastating" to town services, she warned.

"If things really improve quickly ... we'll shoot maybe for the ... 17th," Callahan added.

Traditionally, Oxford holds town meetings in the high school auditorium. This year, some towns are looking at alternatives, including holding it outdoors.

Kelley said she will set up two voter registration dates – one for the election, one for Town Meeting – when the selectmen finalize the events themselves. Regarding election, she also cited concern about having enough workers to staff the polls, since many of them are seniors most at risk from the pandemic.

"We already run with the minimum number" the state allows, and may have to seek a waiver to reduce it this year, she added.

She also told selectmen they'll have to vote on how long to have the polls open, but didn't need to do it then. State law requires a minimum of four hours, and no later than 8 p.m.

In other business, the selectmen also summarized Callahan's annual review, giving her first year in the manager's seat an overall score of 88 out of 100 ("outstanding" in

their scale).

"You can't get much better than she is" at organization and planning, said Chairman Dennis Lamarche, who personally scored her highest at 97. "... She burns the candle and more than two ends. I think she burns it in the middle and the sides, too."

although his was the highest rating, the others were generally equally complimentary, praising Callahan's ability to work with people, solve problems, communicate and use her contacts to get grants and other things for Oxford.

Specifically referring to the pandemic and the probably serious economic downturn we face, John Saad said, "We have the right person in that position to help the town get through it."

Even the lowest scorer, Cheryl Leblanc at 76 ("satisfactory"), described Callahan as "a strong leader" who has "succeeded in righting the ship" after previous years of problems.

"I think you managed remarkably under the circumstances," she said.

The board put off discussing what to do about giving Callahan a raise to their next meeting.

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

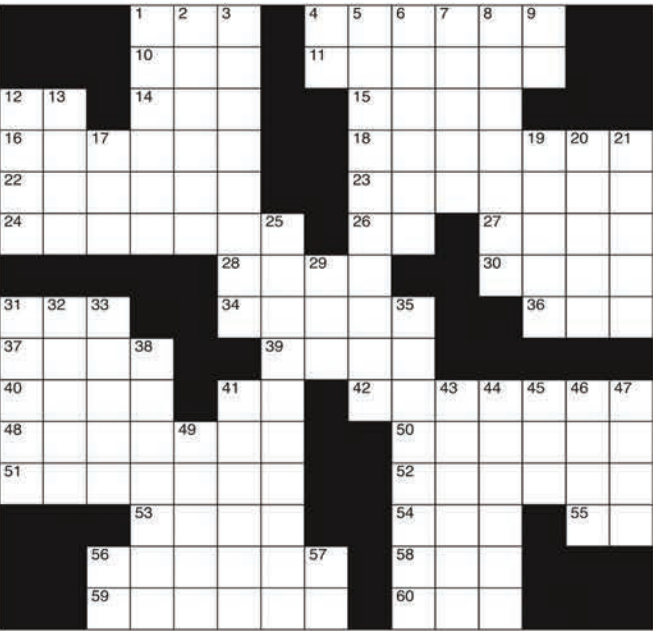
Cumberland Farms employee tests positive for COVID-19

S O U T H B R I D G E — Cumberland Farms has announced that one of its Team Members at our 357 Main St., Southbridge location has tested positive for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).

"We are taking all appropriate steps following guidance from local health officials," the com-

pany reported in a statement. "We closed the store at 12:30 p.m. (EST) on Saturday, April 18 to be cleaned and sanitized by an industrial cleaning crew. The store will re-open in the next few days. We are grateful to all our customers for your patience and understanding during this time.

"All Team Members that work at the store have been contacted and advised to follow CDC-recommended guidelines. We are making every effort to provide the affected Team Member and our broader team with the necessary resources and support."



CLUES ACROSS

1. Revolutions per minute

4. Hymns

10. Brew

11. Did not acknowledge

12. Atomic #77

14. Partly digested food

15. Not one

16. Lesotho capital

18. Copyreading

22. Living organism that feeds on organic matter

23. One's biological father

24. An aggregate of molecules

26. Equally

27. Khoikhoi people

28. Jump in figure skating

30. Lantern

31. TV network
34. Georges __, French philosopher

36. Sharp, shrill bark

37. Albanian monetary units

39. Launched Apollo

40. One who graduated

41. Exist

42. Passed by

48. Very unpleasant smell

50. Graduates

51. Seedless raisin

52. Self-protection

53. Clue

54. Life-savers

55. Ingest too much

56. Misrepresented

58. Small Eurasian deer

59. Most mocking

60. Soviet Socialist Republic

CLUES DOWN

1. Flower cluster

2. A form

3. Inner organ regions

4. Local law enforcement

5. A citizen of Senegal

6. Positively charged electrodes

7. Connects granules

8. Business practice

9. The Mount Rushmore State

12. Leader

13. Hindu queen

17. Proofreading mark

19. European country

20. Greek mythological nymph

21. Grandfather

25. Clears
29. Amount of time

31. Mollusks

32. German municipality

33. Body part

35. City of Angels hoopsters

38. Suffocate

41. Pleasing to the eye

43. Poplar trees (Spanish)

44. Ship officer

45. Individual investment account (abbr.)

46. Prefix meaning within

47. Ceased to live

49. Day by day

56. Not color

57. Condition of withdrawal (abbr.)



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Friday's Child



Daniel
Age 10

Hi! My name is Daniel
and I love to be active!

Daniel is a sweet and friendly ten-year-old boy of Caucasian descent. Daniel can be shy at first, however, he opens up as he gets more comfortable. Daniel enjoys being active and thrives in sports. One of his favorite sports to play is basketball. Daniel enjoys wrestling and karate. Daniel is also in a drawing club! During quiet time, Daniel enjoys building things using Legos. He likes dogs

but loves cats. Daniel is in the third grade. He is an inquisitive child who loves school and learning. He does well with the additional support he receives.

Daniel is legally freed for adoption. Daniel will benefit from a home that has at least one male father figure. He reports that he would like a 2 parent household, ideally with some children older than he is. He responds well when he has a male to connect with. Daniel will thrive in a home that can keep him active and maintaining a full schedule of extra-curricular activities.

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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 617-964-6273 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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What crazy weather! Last week's snowstorm was no big surprise for New Englanders. Thankfully, it did not stick around long, and melted quickly the next day. It did give turkey hunters the opportunity to check out their favorite turkey hunting spot by following tracks in the snow, before it melted. Wild turkey hunting opens in Massachusetts this coming Monday, April 27, in zones 1-13. This year, turkey hunters can harvest two bearded turkeys in the spring and one of either sex in the fall. A hunter can harvest two birds on the same day this year during the spring hunt.

Hunting wild turkey can provide some great days in the field during the Corona virus outbreak. No problem doing social distancing while engaging in this sport. Although local hunters were not reporting on a lot of turkey's being spotted in local woodlots prior to the season, there are a lot of birds, as tracks in the snow last Saturday revealed.

The Wild Turkey youth hunt is scheduled for this Saturday, April 25, and can provide some great time with your son or daughter.

As mentioned in a previous column, hunting from a ground blind allows a hunter to conceal himself from the sharp eye of the wild turkey, and makes hunting a lot easier as you wait for the turkey to approach your set of decoys. Calling in a



wild turkey for a good shot is extremely exciting. If you do not get that rush of excitement as the bird slowly advances into your set up strutting and gobbling, you probably should find another sport.

Turkey hunters often do very well hunting in pairs. One hunter is set up a short distance from the setup of decoys, and another hunter is back at least fifty to one hundred feet, doing most of the calling. Turkeys can often calculate the distance of were the call of the hen turkey is coming from, and often stop short of the decoys. Hung - up are the word's that turkey hunters often use to describe the situation. Too much calling can often keep a bird from coming into shooting distance. If the bird's spot your set of decoys,

they will often go around and come into view from another direction. They often come in silent, surprising the hunter.

Turkey decoys are a bit expensive, but will last for many years to come. Each year that I harvest a tom turkey, I save the beard and wings of the bird. The wings are given to some local fly tiers, and the tail is spread out to dry on a piece of cardboard. Apply small amount of Twenty Mule Team Borax to the fleshy part of the tail, and store in a cool part of your garage or shed. The tail is attached to a stake and used during the next years hunt, which I use in back of an old turkey decoy. It sure works for me. This week's picture shows my brother Ken with a wild turkey he harvested a few years ago.

Talking turkey



Tautog fishing is picking up fast in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island waters. Green crabs are the number one bait using a number three circle hook for these hard fighting fish. They make excellent table fare when poached in a pot of boiling water and two tablespoons of white vinegar. It is unlikely that you will find this delicious eating fish in local markets, but you can find it at fish markets along the coast. This week's picture shows the late Steve Mercure with a monster tautog taken a few years ago while fishing with this writer on the Westport River. Steve is missed by his family and friends. He was my fishing partner for many years, and we had a lot of great times fishing together.

Massachusetts has had the recreational bluefish limit cut to three fish daily from the regular 10 fish per angler daily limit. There has been a dramatic

decrease in bluefish populations over the last 10 years. I have not received any notification on reduced bluefish limits from Rhode Island Marine Fisheries but would suspect that they too will have their limits cut.

A bright spot from this pandemic is the adoption of many dogs and cats from animal shelters. Some shelters have had every dog and cat adopted. Hopefully, they are all in good homes, and that they will keep their newly adopted family member long after the country gets back to some form of normality.

Trout fishing should improve when the waters start to warm. Hopefully, it will be soon. Water temperatures are still cold.

Until next week, stay safe and healthy. God Bless!

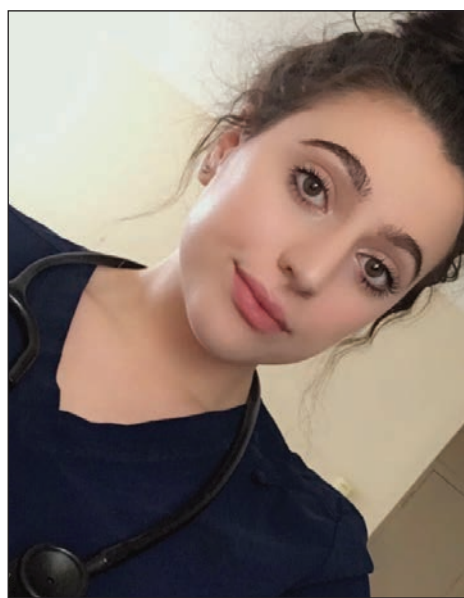
Take a Kid Fishing & Keep Them Rods Bending!

Bay Path Practical Nursing students nominated for Kindness Awards

CHARLTON — Sure, the COVID-19 virus put a lot of activities on hold but for some Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy students the pandemic does not mean stopping acts of kindness. With the practical nursing curriculum transferred to remote learning, kindness for the three practical nursing students goes a long way!

Rachel Hitchcock of Shrewsbury, Laurent Pellett of Norwich, Connecticut, and Fjolla Shehu of Worcester were recently named nominees for two Kindness Awards namely, the FEED project Kindness Giveaway (www.feed-projects.com) and the Yasso Game on Hero (www.yasso.com). The premise for both projects is to honor the thousands of people across the country who are putting the wellbeing of others in front of their own. Hitchcock donated masks; assisted a COVID-19 positive individual with care packages (food, blankets, & bath soaps), and pick-up/delivery of prescription medications from the local pharmacy.

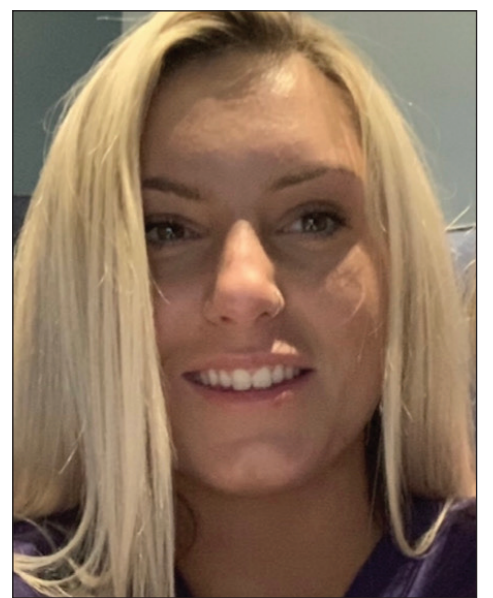
Pellett cares for an 83-year-old client, assists with her grandmother, and together with her mother made fabric masks for a local hospital.



Rachel Hitchcock



Laurent Pellett

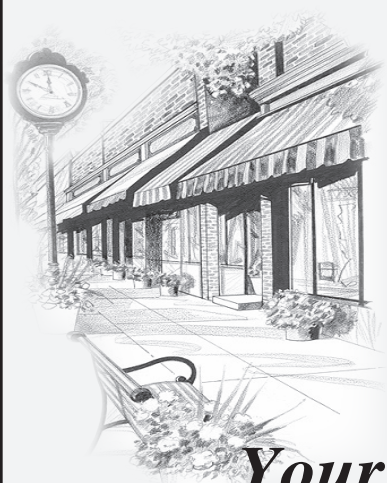


Fjolla Shehu

Shehu purchased four liters of hand sanitizer and distributed to those in need. She also volunteered to pick up and deliver groceries for her elderly neighbors on weekends. All acts of kindness are performed while still maintaining

employment (full-time or part-time), attending clinicals (face-to-face or digital) and completing all the requirements for progression into the final term of practical nursing studies to be ready for NCLEX-PN. In cultivating kindness,

the practical nursing student nominees are recognized as do-gooders, nice neighbors, and kind citizens who are well on their way to a successful nursing career.



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OBITUARIES

Joan A. Davis, 84

WHITINSVILLE Joan A. (Wassenar) Davis, 84, of Whitinsville passed away Wednesday, April 15, 2020 at the Beaumont Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation Center, Westboro.

She was the wife of the late Richard C. Poe and the late Paul W. Davis who died in 2014.

Mrs. Davis was born August 22, 1935 in Whitinsville, the daughter of the late Harold and Lola (Peloquin) Wassenar and graduated from Uxbridge High School.

Joan was an artist and enjoyed abstract art as well as art with animals, particularly cats. She had attended courses at the Worcester Art Museum



and loved to paint.

She is survived by her sons, Michael D. Poe of Raynham, Kerry E. Poe and his wife Julia of Salisbury, Kyle E. Poe of Linwood and David W. Poe of Worcester; two step-sons, Glenn Davis of Marlborough and Keith Davis of Littleton; a daughter, Kim L. Poe of FL; two brothers, Byron Wassenar of Marlborough and Peter Wassenar of Uxbridge; a sister, Christine Graveson of Auburn and 3 grandchildren.

Visiting hours and graveside services will be private on Monday April 20, 2020.

Memorial donations may be made to a charity of one's choice and flowers are welcomed.

Arrangements under the direction of Buma Funeral Home, Whitinsville. www.bumafuneralhome.com

Donald E. "Rebel" Greenwood,Sr, 82



N O R T H B R O O K F I E L D - Donald E. "Rebel" Greenwood,Sr, 82, of North Main St., died Wednesday, April 15,2020 after a noble fight in the Overlook Masonic Home in Charlton.

He leaves a son Donald Greenwood Jr. of East Brookfield; daughters Rhonda Greenwood of North Brookfield, Lisa Greenwood of East Brookfield, Sheryle Morrow Gaudette of North Oxford, and Sheila Sugarman and her husband Donald Sugarman of Auburn, MA.; 9 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren. He is predeceased

by the love of his life Sally Greenwood, his son Robert Morrow and his grandson Geno Waugh.

He served his country in the US Navy. Rebel owned and operated his own trucking company for 28 years and later worked for the Local 243 Construction Laborers Union until he retired. He was a lifetime member of the Spencer Fish and Game Club.

Rebel loved playing cards and was and avid outdoorsman. He was well know in the community and will be greatly missed.

The family would like to extend a special thank you to the Overlook Masonic Home and Hospice in Charlton, MA for the care he received.

A Celebration of his Life will be held at a later date to be announced. Funeral services are under the care of Pillsbury Funeral Home 44 Gilbert St.North Brookfield.

Shirley M. (Banfill) Laplante, 82

AUBURN – Shirley M. (Banfill) Laplante, 82, passed away peacefully on Friday April 3, 2020 at Beaumont Rehabilitation and Skilled Nursing Center in Northbridge.

Born and raised in Worcester, daughter of the late Frederick L. and Martha (Russell) Banfill; Shirley was also educated in the Worcester school system. She met and married the love of her life, the late Henry V. Laplante, Jr., who predeceased her in 2011. They settled in Auburn to begin raising their family.

Shirley enjoyed crafts, especially



knitting and beaded jewelry.

She is survived by her daughter, Mary A. Laplante; sister-in-law/caretaker, Janet H. Desrosiers and her husband Edward of Auburn; sister-in-law, Karin Hutchinson of Auburn; several nieces and nephews; and special friends, Jeanne Tolomeo and Nancy Lane. Shirley was one of twelve children.

Per her wishes, there will be no services and no calling hours. The BRITTON-WALLACE FUNERAL HOME, 91 Central Street, Auburn, MA is honored to be assisting with arrangements. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to a charity of your choosing. To leave a note of condolence for her family, please visit www.brittonfuneralhomes.com

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Selectmen discuss tracking of employee hours

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

CHARLTON – A nearly 50-minute live-streamed meeting resulted in heated exchanges between Charlton selectmen on April 7 as members of the town's leading board discussed inconsistencies in reporting of town hall employee work during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In March, the Board of Selectmen unanimously decided to close the town hall while allowing numerous employees to work from home. Selectmen charged department heads to work with their teams on daily or weekly goals and to report back the work being done. After the first couple of weeks, some of the data had yet to be logged which led selectmen to hold a meeting discussing the situation.

Selectman David Singer led the conversation noting that it's illegal for the town to pay employees for work not being done. While he didn't insinuate that any employee was taking advantage of the situation to get paid for doing nothing, he did note that a failure to keep a record of what's being done not only effects the Board of Selectmen's ability to answer questions but also could lead to legal ramifications if they were to be audited.

"We did get some reports back, unfortunately there were a lot of reports that were missing," Singer said. "What we're hoping going forward is that the department heads will work with their teams to generate and provide the missing reporting going back to day one of working remotely and continue to do this. Obviously, our goal is to protect the employees as best we can, but we

want to do that within state ethics and legally."

Singer also mentioned the risks for the potential to furlough or lay off employees if the town can't validate what employees are doing. He said that would be a "difficult conversation" but later stressed that nobody is talking about layoffs or furloughs at this time, only how to avoid them. Selectman John McGrath questioned Singer's statements asking where this was all coming from.

"I think the way the state is approaching it is the way that we should approach it," said McGrath. "We have department heads - They are tasked with making sure the public is getting the services that they need to get from the departments and also that we are doing the people's work by processing all of the paperwork that we need to process."

Selectman Singer commented that the town had previously come under fire for paying a town employee to do work they weren't doing which led to a court case that the town won. From Singer's perspective he wants to avoid a similar issue in the aftermath of the pandemic. However Selectman McGrath called comparing that case to the COVID-19 situation is like comparing "apples to oranges." While Singer indicated that a simple public records request would be enough to hold the town accountable McGrath called that a "line of crap."

"What we want to do is if we think that the reporting is not being done correctly, we tell the department heads who we've already charged to take care of this to take care of it. Threatening to furlough the employees is way beyond the realm," McGrath said.

Singer proceeded to correct McGrath

that nobody is threatening furloughs, and that the board wants to protect its employees, not punish them.

The conversation eventually included the other three selectmen, who each had their own take on the matter. Selectman Deborah Noble said she understood both sides of the debate and felt there was a happy medium to understand.

"I don't like holding the threat of furlough over anyone's head," Noble said. "I don't think it's unreasonable to ask people once a day at the end of the day to send an email to your department head or supervisor saying 'this is what I did today.' The department head summarizes that, sends it to the (Town Administrator), who sends it to this board."

Selectman Karen Spiewak argued that she wanted to avoid the practice of micromanaging town employees and department heads. Selectman Bill Borowski said he doesn't believe that employees are not doing their work, but agrees that the town would only benefit from having something on hand to answer citizen questions when it comes to accountability under these unusual times.

As the debate progressed, Town Administrator Andrew Golas stepped up to take the blame for the inconsistent reporting. He acknowledged that the first two weeks of at-home work have been an adjustment period and said he would work harder to communicate with department heads and ensure those records were being sent.

"Obviously, these are unprecedented times, and obviously, we're trying to do everything we can to keep the wheels moving really in a way that we've never operated before," Golas said. "Word to




Photo Courtesy

Selectman David Singer addresses his fellow selectmen during a live-streamed meeting on April 7 discussing recording of at-home town employee hours.

the departments of how to officially log (work hours) went to them last week so the fact that those haven't been done up until this point falls on myself. We're working together to try to find a happy medium that isn't a micromanaging system but also keeps track of the work that's being done."

The Town Administrator said he would be following a template provided by the Massachusetts Municipal Association which is based on the successful work of other communities to adjust to the times. The debate didn't stop there however as Selectman

Turn To **TRACKING** page **A11**



Freelance Writer WANTED

The Auburn News has an immediate opening for a local correspondent interested in producing two to three news stories each week focused on interesting people, places, events, and activities around town and in our local schools.

The ideal candidate for this position will have a familiarity with the area and a flexible schedule enabling them to cover occasional events or municipal meetings on nights and weekends. Compensation will be provided on a per-story basis in an amount commensurate with experience.

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OPINION/COMMENTARY



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FRANK G. CHILINSKI
STONEBRIDGE PRESS PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHER

BRENDAN BERUBE
EDITOR

The lost class of 2020

When schools across the country moved to remote learning, we weren't sure how long it would last, but many of us suspected that eventually it would last for the remainder of the year.

Many students use school as a respite and several thrive on having a consistent schedule. Younger students are facing many losses, but our hearts truly break for the seniors, particularly athletes who are missing out on their final sports season.

In our own experience, it was track season that would have had the most impact. As a senior, records needed to be broken, goals needed to be reached and rivals needed to be beat. To have that season abruptly "taken" would have been devastating. Thinking back, time spent on a Saturday at a sunny track meet with talented athletes, encouraging coaches and parents with coolers loaded with food are some of, if not the best, memories from high school.

Then there are softball and baseball players. Baseball, in all its various incarnations, is called the 'American pastime' for a very good reason. The adrenaline rush that comes after managing to hit an expertly thrown pitch and sprinting to first base is unforgettable. Making a catch in the outfield, or making the play for that all important out that could decide the game, is gold. Fortunately, many athletes are going on to play ball or run track in college.

For those that are not, know that we sympathize with you, and hope that you can continue doing what you love in some sort of league that will hopefully be available to you. No, it won't be the same, but this is when they say you need to "adjust your sails" and remember that what is happening is in order to keep you and your families safe.

Again, we know that all of our students, parents, faculty, healthcare workers, business owners and all community members are going through a loss, all to varying degrees but all just as important. For students, whether it's the last school theatre production or JROTC competition, we feel for you. Have faith that your administration will make up for all of this, as best they can, given the circumstances.

Certainly, our students understand the gravity of the situation. Lives are being lost, families are losing loved ones and people are heart broken. We are in the midst of a global pandemic, but that doesn't mean that the devastation those students are feeling shouldn't matter. We acknowledge your pain. Reading a recent Facebook post by a friend's daughter brought the situation home to us. In an emotional letter to her fellow members of the Class of 2020, she wrote that if she had one wish, it would be to go back to the last day of classes before the governor's office made the decision to close schools, with the knowledge this time that those eight precious hours would be the end of her senior year, and give all of her classmates — many of whom she might never have an opportunity to see together in one place again — one last hug or high-five before saying good bye.

Her words speak for all students across our region, and across the country, who have been denied the opportunity to experience one of the most memorable times in a young person's life, and we invite our readers to join us in recognizing the pain, comforting the sorrow, and above all, saluting the achievements and incredible fortitude of the Class of 2020.



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In Appreciation of Trees!

Spring has officially sprung and trees, both big and small, are coming alive with long anticipated buds of color. But the promise of lush, green foliage is just one benefit of planting trees. Hot on the cusp of Earth Day and Arbor Day, this column will celebrate the many virtues of trees - from showy shrubs to towering timbers!



TAKE THE HINT
KAREN TRAINOR

Hedge against fuel costs: The Center for Urban Forest Research proclaimed planting a tree can have a significant impact on lowering energy use. It claims: «If you plant a tree today on the west side of your home, in five years your energy bills should be 3% less. In 15 years the savings will be nearly 12%.”

Plant and pocket savings: Want trees to trim more of your fuel fees? According to expert landscapers, just three trees, properly placed around a house, can save between \$100 and \$250 annually in cooling and heating costs! That's because shading that blocks summertime sun on the east, south and west sides of a house, but not cool breezes, is an effective way to keep your house cooler. For quickest results, opt for fast growing varieties.

Proper placement: If you use an air conditioner, plant trees or shrubs specifically to shade air conditioning units, but be sure not to block the airflow. It's common sense that an air conditioning unit operating in the shade uses less electricity than one in the sun.

Chill out: Need more convincing? Consider this fact: Daytime air temperatures can be three to nine degrees cooler in tree-shaded neighborhoods. In fact, the U.S. Dept of Agriculture estimates the net cooling effect of a young, healthy tree is equivalent to ten room-size air conditioners operating 20 hours a day!

Tree Timing: Did you know trees can be used to time crop planting? The American Indians passed this reliable tip on to European colonists, and many farmers still rely on it today: Tender crops should not be planted until the leaves on an oak tree are as big as a squirrels ear (about an inch or so long).

Hike house value: “In one eye opening study from the Arbor National Mortgage & American Forests, 83% of realtors believe that mature trees have a “strong or moderate impact” on the salability of homes listed for under \$150,000; on homes over \$250,000, this perception increases to 98%!

Recovery Rates: According to Money Magazine, landscaping can bring a recovery value of 100% to 200% at selling time. As a comparison a kitchen remodeling brings a 75% - 125% recovery rate, bathroom remodeling a 20% - 120% recovery rate, and addition of a swimming pool a 20% - 50% recovery rate.

Quarantine is what we make of it

For years to come, pundits and historians will write about the wisdom, impact and results of this quarantine. Was it necessary? Was the result worth the devastation to the economy? Did it save lives? Of course, for the next few years, the discussion will be strictly partisan. If you support the President or your governor, you'll praise him/her. If you are not a fan, none of the decisions were correct. However, as time passes, a clarity of events will set in, and the true impact of quarantine will be measured.

A television journalist I deeply respect (and there's not many left) said last week, “When the decision is made to end quarantine and how the economy is restarted, will determine if the President is re-elected or not.” He didn't say so, but I think the same decisions will apply to our governors.

If they end quarantine too soon, the virus could explode again. As we lead up to the election, the death rate will climb. If quarantine remains too long, irreparable damage can be done to the world economy. We are truly in uncharted territory and the decisions made by our government leaders will impact our nation and world for decades to come.

For those of us who believe in the power of prayer, we should all be praying for wisdom to be granted to our governmental leaders as well as their advisors and influencers. For those who are not, positive thoughts and statements are always helpful.

What is totally useless, and damaging is negative partisanship. I've heard more than one political pundit wishing a recession or worse, only to damage the Presidents chances for re-election. Think about the negative impact of a recession or depression. Really? There are people who hate the President enough to wish damage to the world economy, unemploy-

ment, loss of homes and even suicide? Regardless of your political leanings, there is something deeply wrong in that type of hatred that some would wish this kind of damage and destruction.

I'm still old school. I pray for and support the President and governmental leaders whether I voted for them or not. To pray for the success of our President, whether he's your choice or not, is to pray for the success of the nation. To pray that he fails, is to pray for our failure.

How about praying for the health, happiness and prosperity of all regardless of political leanings?

As for quarantine ... how's it going? I'm an extrovert, so I am deeply missing my friends and basic social connections. I can whine about it, but what will that accomplish? Giving into it and complaining solves nothing and can potentially move me from missing other people into depression. Don't give in!

Count your quarantine blessings!

I work full-time as a writer. I love what I do and feel blessed to have a career that I truly love and adore. Quarantine, in many ways has been perfect for me. A major publisher is looking at my new book, “Fragrance of Lilacs,” and claims to love it, but asked for a rewrite of an antagonist's storyline. If not for quarantine, it may have taken months to accomplish, and in the process, given the publisher time to move on. Instead, quarantine has given me the time to complete the rewrite in ten days.

Forest Facts:

*One mighty oak tree may have up to 400 species of plants and animals living on it.

* Trees provide us with thousands of products that go way beyond wood and paper: Items derived from trees include: toothpaste, chewing gum, suntan lotion, paint, film, crayons, perfumes, soap, paper, shatterproof glass, cork, dyes, drugs, syrup, and more.

*It takes approximately 17 to 24 trees to make one ton of paper.

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 renown 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 E-mail KDRR@aol.com. Hints are entered into a drawing for dinner for two at the historic Publick House Inn.



POSITIVELY SPEAKING
GARY W. MOORE

Earth Day - Time to “Go Green” with your investments?



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DENNIS ANTONOPOULOS

Over the past several weeks, many of us have been working from home in response to the “social distancing” necessitated by the coronavirus. Nonetheless, we still have opportunities to get outside and enjoy Mother Nature. And now, with the 50th anniversary of Earth Day being celebrated on April 22, it's important to appreciate the need to protect our environment. Of course, you can do so in many ways – including the way you invest.

Some investors are supporting the environment through “sustainable” investing, which is often called ESG (environmental, social and corporate governance) investing. In general, it refers to investments in businesses whose products and services are considered favorable to the physical environment (such as companies that produce renewable energy or that act to reduce their own carbon footprints) or the social environment (such as firms that follow ethical business practices or pursue important societal goals, such as inclusion and pay equity). ESG investing may also screen out investments in companies that produce products some people find objectionable.

ESG investing has become popular in recent years, and not just with individuals; major institutional investors now pursue sustainability because they think it's profitable – and plenty of facts bear that out. A growing body of academic research has found a positive relationship between corporate financial performance – that is, a company's profitability – and ESG criteria.

So, although you might initially be attracted to sustainable investments because they align with your personal values, or because you want to hold companies to higher standards of corporate citizenship, it turns out that you can do well by doing good. Keep in mind, though, that sustainability, like any other criteria, can't guarantee success or prevent losses.

In any case, be aware that sustainable investing approaches can vary significantly, so you need to determine how a particular sustainable investment, or class of investments, can align with your values and fit into your overall portfolio. Specifically, how will a sustainable investment meet your needs for diversification?

For example, if you desire total control over how your money is invested, you might want to invest in a basket of individual stocks from the companies you wish to support. But if you want to achieve greater diversification, plus receive the benefits of professional management, you might want to invest in sustainable mutual funds. Be aware, though, that even though they may not market themselves as “sustainable,” many more mutual funds do incorporate sustainability criteria into their investment processes. You also might consider exchange-traded funds (ETFs), which own a variety of investments, similar to regular mutual funds, but trade like stocks. ETFs often track particular indexes, so an ETF with a sustainable focus might track an index including companies that have been screened for social responsibility.

Make sure you understand the fundamentals of any sustainable investment you're considering, as well as whether it can help you work toward your long-term goals. But by “going green” with some of your investments, you can help keep the spirit of Earth Day alive every day of the year.

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.



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Dudley - Marshall Terrace 12,000 +/- Sq. Ft. Possible potential for a 2 family to be built! Town Water, Sewer, City Gas! Nice level lot. **\$70,000**

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Webster - Potential 6 Buildable Lots! Water/Sewer Access **\$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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LAND FOR SALE

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TRACKING

continued from page A6

Singer added another layer to the conversation revealing that he had heard from two citizens who inquired about whether or not at-home employees were getting the job done. Singer didn't deny work was being done, he acknowledged had no way of corroborating that information which concerned him.

"To look a taxpayer in the eyes and say 'I don't know', that's not a good place to be," Singer said. "In both cases, they were flat out asking if we were paying people to stay home or to actually work."

The Town Administrator offered a quick response with and emphatic "yes" that employees are working, including those at home. His comments were followed by one such employee, Assistant Treasurer Nichole Neill, who said she was concerned about the questions Singer had received.

"We are without a doubt providing the same services that we provide

when we're working in the town offices from home. We are answering phone calls, we are answering emails, we are answering questions from lenders and taxpayers. It is constant," Neill said. "I'm a little confused as to who it is that are asking the questions and what it is specifically that they want to know and what it is they think that we're not accomplishing."

Selectman Singer clarified that selectmen are simply asking the department heads to "help us help you" and that nobody is asking for step-by-step explanations of what was done. They want summaries that the town can turn to in order to verify the work being done and justify the hours spent at home to the public if need be. Selectman Karen Spiewak added that selectmen need to guide the Town Administrator and to avoid micromanaging while still embracing best practices.

"We all need to be in agreement and if (Town Administrator Golas) believes these reports are deficient then he needs to reach out to the department heads and if we get questioned we send

them over to the Town Administrator and if people really want to look at the reports it's all public records. None of us asked to be put in this position, right? We have an obligation to the employees. We have an obligation to the taxpayers. I get it. We just all need to be on the same page on how we move forward," said Spiewak.

Selectman Borowski said he has faith in the Town Administrator and the department heads, and he believes the situation resulted in "lessons learned."

"It's a very unusual time. We don't know how long it's going to go on for either," Selectman Borowski said. "Let's just do our best as a collective town hall team, Town Hall Strong, and let's just make sure that we are all rowing the boat in the same direction."

Selectman Noble concluded that she wants town employees to feel comfortable to go to their department heads to make sure they have the tools to get their job done. "In the end I want everybody to have confidence that they can do their job well and if they don't have those tools then we need to do some-

thing about that, and we need to know about it. I don't want this to be an 'us versus them' situation. Nobody wants that," Noble said.

Selectman Singer brought the debate to a close saying that employees do have a lot of options available to them to make sure they are able to get the job done and he implores them to take advantage of those resources. However, he doubled down on the need for documentation while stating micromanaging is not the goal.

"Nobody is saying 'prove to me every minute of your day'. Nobody is asking for that. If someone feels they just can't do their jobs from home, but they would like something else to do then they can go to their department head for that too. The town has the power to give them other work outside their job description to keep them employed," said Singer. "The goal here is to keep them all employed – The bottom line is the board wants to do everything we can ethically and legally to keep everyone working."

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MOORE
continued from page A8

Quarantine has helped me be of service. I truly cannot keep up with the positive email I'm receiving from readers wishing to talk about a column and express their opinion. I think positive content in this, and all newspapers, has never been more important than now. To remain optimistic during a pandemic will help us all weather the storm, survive and once again thrive as it passes. And believe me, this too shall pass. My prayer for us all is that we remain positive and optimistic during the worst of times. In doing so we'll usher back into our world, and our lives, the best of times. I hope and pray that we all use this time to accomplish the things we previously wished we'd have had the time to accomplish and enjoy. Do not squander this precious opportunity with partisan bickering and complaining. Never in my lifetime of over six decades, has it been more important to reach across the political aisle and work in unison to save lives and recov-

er quickly from the impact of this terrible disease. Partisanship in this time of turmoil only guarantees prolonged misery and suffering. Optimism is a powerful choice in times when being optimistic is most difficult. Purposefully looking for positive ways to be encouraging during times of mass discouragement is not just helpful but is an honorable calling. Choose optimism. Act positively in thought, word and deed. Make the best of a bad situation and we may look back at this time in history and say we virtually held hands and together, we positively weathered the storm. And when the dark clouds break and the sun once again rushes in, our attitude in the worst of times will make us better people. ■ 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.garyw-moore.com.

Online auctions remain strong during the pandemic

Although auction houses are not able to run live auctions due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the demand to buy and sell at auctions remains high. Many auction houses have turned to online only auctions to meet this demand. Some items have brought strong prices recently and others will soon be sold that are also expected to sell very well. A hockey stick dating between 1850 and 1870 is currently being auctioned online, according to Bleacher Report. The "Morse stick" was found by Anthony Bean when he purchased his grandmother's Northfield, Vt. house in 1980. The stick was later gifted to Gary and Germaine Morse. The first recorded hockey game took place in 1875. "Hawkey" is reported to have been played in New England as early as 1845. Another hockey stick from the 1850's known as the "Rutherford stick" sold for \$2.2 million in 2018. The Morse Stick has a starting bid of \$100,000 and may set a record. It has a \$3.5 million auction estimate. Many people have been watching shows on live streaming platforms during the pandemic. One of the most popular is "Tiger King" on Netflix. TMZ reported that a pink sequined



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WAYNE TUISKULA

shirt worn by the main Tiger King character, Joe Exotic, was recently auctioned online with a \$650 starting bid. The owner told TMZ that the Greater Wynnewood (G.W. Zoo) Exotic Animal Park had previously sold clothes worn by staff members. He purchased the shirt from the zoo for \$100. The owner had also seen some of Joe Exotic's hats being offered online for \$800. The auction for the shirt ended on April 17. It received 43 bids and sold for \$10,400. ABC News reports that a "very special" Porsche 911 Speedster that was recently delivered to a California dealership will soon be auctioned. "Typically, we would not auction a car that has historic relevance to us -- it would go [to] a special customer or in our museum," according to Klaus Zellmer, president and CEO of Porsche Cars North America. The Speedster is the "last 991 generation 911 that rolled off the Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen production line in December." The two-seater convertible is one of only 1,948 produced. Porsche will donate all proceeds to the United Way Worldwide's COVID-19 Community Response and Recovery Fund. The car has an estimated value of \$312,000.

Movie stars, sports figures, and other celebrities are also helping raise funds for those in need during the COVID-19 pandemic. Opportunities to meet celebrities, buy memorabilia, and for other fan experiences can be found at allinchallenge.com. You can also buy raffle tickets for some of the events for only \$10. As of Sunday, April 19, \$11,646,495 had already been raised. We have been contacted by several individuals who want to auction their collections online to help them with their financial needs during the pandemic. We can auction larger collections of coins, gold jewelry, diamonds, Sterling silver, 1960's baseball cards, comic books or other valuable items



that are easy to ship. If you have items you'd like to auction, please reach out to us for no-contact options for receiving your items. When the current restrictions are lifted, we will be rescheduling many events. Keep checking www.centralmassauctions.com for details as things progress. In the meantime, I hope everyone is staying healthy and safe.

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

Take the hassle out of watering container gardens



GARDEN
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Growing flowers and vegetables in containers will allow you to expand planting space, grow plants right outside your door and elevate them for easier access and maintenance. Unlike growing in the ground, the smaller volume of soil in containers is exposed to heat and wind, so requires frequent, often daily, watering.

Don't let this watering schedule discourage you from growing in pots. Enlist one or more of these strategies to eliminate the daily burden of watering while still maintaining beautiful and productive gardens.

Grow plants in large plastic, glazed or other less breathable material to extend the time between watering. The larger the pot and less breathable the container material, the longer the

soil stays moist. Small pots made of breathable materials, like unglazed terra cotta, dry out more quickly.

No matter the size and type container used, monitor and adjust your watering schedule based on weather, number of plants in the pot and size of the plants. The more plants used and the larger the plants grow the more water needed; so, frequency will increase over time.

Use self-watering pots to extend the time between watering. Fill the reservoir in these containers as needed. The water moves from the reservoir to the soil where it is needed. This extends the time between watering. As your new plantings grow, you will need to fill the reservoir more frequently.

Use a quality potting mix that holds moisture and is well draining to avoid waterlogged soils that can lead to root rot. Most potting mixes contain peat moss, compost or bark to hold moisture. Vermiculite, perlite or rice hulls are used to pro-

vide drainage.

Add a long-lasting sustainable, water saving product, like wool pellets (wildvalleyfarms.com), to your potting mix. This organic product is made from belly wool and tags that cannot be used for clothing. The pellets promote healthier growth, increase soil aeration and reduce watering frequency by as much as 25 percent.

Mulch the soil surface in newly planted container gardens. This common garden practice is often overlooked when growing in containers. Cover the soil surface with shredded leaves, evergreen needles or other organic material. This helps conserve moisture until plants grow and shade the soil.

Automate watering with one of the many commercial or DIY container irrigation systems. These are designed to provide water to each individual pot with the turn of the faucet. Attach the irrigation system to the faucet, attach a timer and watering becomes a breeze. Regularly check



Photo Melinda Myers

Grow plants in large plastic, glazed or other less breathable material to extend the time between watering.

the system to make sure the lines that deliver water to the pot are intact and the watering frequency is adjusted throughout the growing season as needed.

Enlist one or more of these strategies to make container gardening a manageable growing system. Once you elimi-

nate the inconvenience of daily watering you may just find yourself planting more container gardens each season.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including *Small Space Gardening*. She hosts *The Great Courses* "How

to Grow Anything" DVD series and the *Melinda's Garden Moment* TV & radio segments. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for *Birds & Blooms* magazine and was commissioned by Wild Valley Farms for her expertise to write this article. Her Web site is www.MelindaMyers.com.

VENTURE

continued from page A1

faced a critical staffing shortage, and the people we have are truly amazing," Hyland said. "In the vast majority of our homes, we currently have a shelter-in-place model where staff have opted to remain in the home around the clock for 14 days to eliminate the risk of people coming and going."

Additionally, the agency built a quarantine center in one of its temporarily closed day program locations. The center is designed to house people who have tested positive for the virus in a comfortable isolated space, but thus far it has not been needed. Employees have already expressed willingness to staff the center if the need arises.

In addition to the logistical challenges presented by the outbreak, Venture has also dealt with financial implications.

"The financial challenges are daunting, as is the difficulty we face in find-

ing personal protective equipment," Hyland said. "Perhaps the greatest challenge lies in getting the world in general to understand just how essential this industry is and how critical it is to support it – and that includes our politicians in Washington."

Added Hyland, "Venture is fortunate to employ an incredibly dedicated team of professionals in each of our homes, and what they are doing throughout this crisis is truly heroic. I very much hope that when this is over, they all get the recognition that they have always deserved."

For more infor-

mation about the agency, visit www.venturecs.org.

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Publish Date:
May 8, 2020

Deadline date:
Friday, May 1 @ 5 pm

We would like to honor all Mothers and Grandmothers in the May 8th issue. The deadline for honors is Friday, May 4 at 5 pm.

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In the Spencer New Leader,
Auburn News or Sturbridge/Charlton Villager

SAMPLE: EXACT SIZE



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