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Friday, December 25, 2020

Our Lady of the Valley holds food drive

BY KIMBERLY PALMUCCI
TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT

UXBRIDGE — The Our Lady of the Valley Regional School recently collected 314 pounds of food through a food drive effort. The food was donated to the People's First Food Pantry in Uxbridge.

"We are extremely proud of our students and their families, as well as our outstanding staff at Our Lady of the Valley for putting together this very successful food drive, especially given the challenges related to the coronavirus," said Edward Reynolds, Principal of Our Lady of the Valley School. "As a Catholic school community, we maintain our focus on ministry and making the world a better place every day. It is one of the most important lessons we teach."

OLV is a Catholic school, pre-kindergarten to grade 8, located in Uxbridge. The food drive was held for two weeks in November. The school's mission centers on "compassion, character, and values."



Pictured are helpers Julia (fifth grade) and Peter (third grade) Colonero.

"The minute we announced the food drive, families reached out asking what they could do to help. This is what community is all about, lending a hand and supporting our neighbors," said Erica Colonero, Coordinator of the OLV Food Drive. "Even the kids were excited to get

involved by carrying bags and loading cars."

The school also recently hosted a red, white, and blue dress down day to support veterans. Participants were encouraged to donate at least \$1 to dress down, and the effort raised \$617 to be donated to the United Services Organizations (USO).

"The USO is a wonderful organization run by civilians to help military members and their families," the school released in a statement after the fundraising day. "They make sure military members can get a cup of coffee and something to eat on the road. In addition, they send care packages to deployed service members. The USO is famous for entertaining troops starting in WWII. This continues today. Of special importance, is the role they play in helping military members and their families keep in contact with one another."

Vaccine distribution underway throughout state

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

REGION — Gov. Charlie Baker recently announced updates on the state's distribution efforts of the first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Last week, the first doses of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine arrived in the Commonwealth. By Dec. 15, about 53,620 doses had arrived at 17 hospitals statewide.

Medical personnel are among the first to receive the vaccine this month. In addition to Pfizer's vaccine, the Moderna vaccine will soon be joining the mix.

"Pending the approval of Moderna's emergency use authorization, the Commonwealth,

based on federal guidance, has been told to anticipate 180,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine and 120,000 doses of the Moderna vaccine," read a statement released by Baker's office. "In all, the administration expects the Commonwealth to receive 300,000 doses by the end of December."

The state's Department of Public Health (DPH) will place all vaccine orders on behalf of individual providers. Vaccines will then be shipped to the hospital or facility directly from the manufacturer.

Hospitals will be responsible for reporting all vaccination data to the DPH, which has launched a command

center and dashboard to keep track of immunizations.

Over the next few months, staggered groups of individuals and personnel will be allowed access to the vaccines. Priority groups will include nursing home residents and employees, first responders, front-line workers, and seniors. The general public will then be able to access the vaccine by the spring, officials said.

Certain groups of residents like pregnant women, children, and individuals with a history of severe allergic reactions are not advised to receive a vaccine until further testing is com-

Turn To **VACCINE** page **A7**

Police warn of possible COVID-19 vaccine scams



BY KIMBERLY PALMUCCI
TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT

REGION — The COVID-19 vaccine is on its way—and scammers are not far behind. Local police departments and the Worcester County District Attorney's Office are warning residents of new vaccine-related scams that could arise.

"Please stay vigilant," the Millbury Police Department released in a statement. "New scams are always popping up. If it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is."

The Federal Trade Commission recently issued new information, with the National Association of Attorneys General, offering tips on how to recognize and avoid vaccine-related scams. According to the information, "with COVID-19 vaccines in the pipeline, scammers will not be far behind, and people should recognize the red flags of potential

scams."

Reports about the release of COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S. by the end of the year are promising, the information reads, but distribution plans are still being worked out.

"While we wait for a timeline and more information, people need to be wary of pitchmen claiming to have vaccine doses for sale," the FTC said in a press statement. "For most people living in the U.S., state agencies—not individuals—will be responsible for implementing vaccine distribution plans."

The FTC said that until a vaccine distribution timeline is available, if residents receive a call, text, email, or even someone knocking on their door, claiming they can provide "early access to the vaccine," it's a scam.

"People should not pay for a promise of vaccine access or share their

personal information. Instead, they should report the scam to the FTC at ReportFraud.ftc.gov or file a complaint with their state or territorial attorney general through consumerresources.org, the consumer website of the National Association of Attorneys General," the FTC released.

"The COVID-19 vaccine may be on its way, but scammers are not far behind. The logistics of distribution will take time," the Worcester County DA's Office released in a social media statement. "Do not respond to unsolicited calls, texts, or emails about vaccines. Visit the CDC and the FDA for the latest information on COVID-19 vaccines and potential scams."

For more information about COVID-related scams and tips on how to recognize, avoid, and report them, visit ftc.gov/coronavirus/scams.

Uxbridge High School receives \$40,000 in grants

BY KIMBERLY PALMUCCI
TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT

UXBRIDGE — Uxbridge High School and its Innovation Pathway has been named a recipient of two grants from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education totaling nearly \$40,000.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Frank Tiano recently announced that the first grant will enable Uxbridge High to build on its previous implementation of Innovation Pathways and plans for the implementation of a Pathway in Global Finance and Business Logistics. The second grant will support virtual and hybrid learning during the pandemic, looking specifically at

supporting the school's neediest learners, the school released.

"We are proud of our school for constantly looking to find ways to make learning authentic," said Dr. Tiano. "Should the new Pathway be approved, it promises to connect our students to areas of great interest with growing fields and the business community around us."

Uxbridge High School has existing Innovation Pathways in Manufacturing, Biomedical Science, and Information Science and Media. The Global Finance and Logistics program intends to build on these program's successes, school officials said, while emphasizing key elements of busi-

ness, entrepreneurship, and supply chain management, which includes the growing field of logistics. Should the final pathway be approved, Uxbridge would have the first finance and logistics program in the Commonwealth. Logistics includes "transportation, delivery, and the technical elements of manufacturing beyond production."

"One of the core values of our district is equity," said Dr. Tiano. "Support like this acknowledges the very real challenges that some of our families face, and that some of our students have, in accessing school during the existential crisis of a generation. For us to provide equitable opportuni-

Turn To **GRANTS** page **A7**



Courtesy

FALLON HEALTH EMPLOYEES RALLY FOR ANNUAL FOOD DRIVE

With the current health care crisis affecting the lives of so many of our friends, families and neighbors, it's not surprising that Fallon Health employees would want to give back in a meaningful way—but the outpouring of support for our annual Feed a Family campaign was even more than expected. Our 1,200 employees rallied together to fill 416 bags of food, which will benefit 28 organizations across Massachusetts—including the Webster Senior Center. Fallon also supplemented the bags with gift cards to local grocery stores to help with the cost of perishable items. A lot of hard work and dedication went into making this year's campaign a success. We are thrilled that our many Fallon volunteers were able to find a safe way to continue the longtime tradition of giving, even during the pandemic.





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~ Cindy and staff

We will be closed from December 20 to January 1.

Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year to All

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If snowflakes were hugs, I'd send you a blizzard. Thank you so much for all your support this past year. The merriest of Christmases and the healthiest of New Years to all!
~ Jean

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Bay State Savings Bank appoints Rachel G. Hall Assistant VP, Human Resources

WORCESTER — Bay State Savings Bank is proud to announce Rachel G. Hall has been appointed Assistant Vice President, Human Resources at the Bank's 28 Franklin St. location in Worcester. In this role, Ms. Hall will be responsible for the oversight of the Bank's human resource function including salary and benefits administration, employee development, recruitment and training.

Prior to joining Bay State Savings Bank, Ms. Hall was employed by the New England Center for Children where she served as a Human Resources Specialist. She holds an MBA from Assumption University and is certified SHRM-SCP from the Society of Human Resource Management.

"Rachel joins Bay State Savings Bank with valuable experience in the Human Resources field, particularly in employee benefits, that will help the Bank further meet the needs of our employees," said Bay State Savings Bank Senior Vice President, Diane Giampa. "The experience she has will also help us in repositioning our staff so that customer expectations can continue to not only be



Rachel Hall

met, but exceeded. We are so happy to welcome Rachel to our team!"

Ms. Hall volunteers at various events in the community geared towards children and looks forward to continuing her volunteer work as soon as the pandemic is behind us. She currently lives in Whitinsville.



ACCURACY WATCH

The Blackstone Valley Tribune 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 A3 in a timely manner.

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

The editor will return your phone call.

QCC offers hands-on learning experience to students from the safety of their homes

WORCESTER — At Quinsigamond Community College, hands-on learning is an integral part of student success. Students who have the skill sets that enable them to hit the ground running in a new job are more valued when they enter the workforce. Thus, when QCC transitioned to remote instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the College's programs developed in-home, hands-on learning modules for students to continue this important educational training.

"QCC is dedicated to providing quality education and this in-home learning module approach is a method that allows students hands-on experiences they would otherwise not be able to have in a remote environment," said Betty Lauer, dean for the School of Business, Engineering & Technology.

Students in courses that ranged from electronics engineering technology to computer systems engineering technology, and food service, have been able to experience hands-on learning from the safety of their homes, mimicking activities they would have normally performed in an on-campus lab setting.

"We have been reviewing our laboratory work to determine what projects can be done remotely, then modifying those projects so that students can do them at home. This is an iterative process to identify the best combinations of tasks and interaction levels for different students," said Jacob Longacre, professor of Electronics Engineering Technology.

In some of QCC's electronics courses, students received a learning module that included both instruments and components. The components enabled students to build simple circuits and the instruments enabled them to make various electrical measurements. Students in the embedded microcontrollers course received components

that included an Arduino programmable microcontroller, small electric motors, LEDs (single color and red-green-blue), pushbuttons, switches, a joystick, temperature sensors, and light sensors.

"With these components students can unleash their creativity and build program projects that involve controlling light (blinking, flashing, fading, multicolor), sound, motion and temperature," said James Heffernan, professor of Electronics Engineering Technology.

Other electronics students received "breadboard" devices used to make up temporary circuits, as well as myDAQ, a Student Data Acquisition Device. The myDAQ is an interface that includes a comprehensive set of plug-and-play, computer-based lab instruments for hands-on student learning outside the lab.

"The myDAQ is a bit like a Swiss army knife and allows students to do a variety of problem solving and experimentation at home," Mr. Longacre said.

In the food services programs, faculty and staff reviewed curriculum requirements and selected recipes for take-home learning modules, which demonstrated specific learning concepts and provided key academic knowledge and skills development. The modules contained non-perishable food items, small kitchen tools and miscellaneous items to enable students to work from their homes. They were mailed to students, or students were able to pick them up at QCC at the Senior Center, where the College's Hospitality Restaurant Management programs are housed. Students either obtained their own perishable food items or picked them up from QCC.

An example of a key learning concept in food service is the importance of cleaning protocols, required under

ServSafe requirements. In the food service module, students received a "glow" powder that they sprinkled on a food prep surface they had cleaned. Then, using a mini black light also provided in the take home packet, they could see any particles that remained on the surface.

Additionally, during the upcoming Spring semester, manufacturing students will be taking certificate exams for Precision Measurement in Associate Professor Lee Duerden's quality manufacturing course. The students will practice on measuring equipment they will receive in their "Metrology Tool Chest" that contains tools such as:

- Tape measure
- Rulers
- Steel rules
- Calipers
- Micrometers
- Combination sets
- Dial Gages
- Bore Gages

"QCC has been lucky to expand its capability and equipment in this area. Just packaging all this equipment up has proved challenging, but providing hands-on training is essential for the successful completion of this manufacturing course. It has been an incredible achievement from QCC and its faculty to provide this equipment that is so necessary to continue hands-on learning during this pandemic," Mr. Duerden said, adding that the tool chests will be returned upon completion of the course.

"We expect to continue using this method of learning in the future. Students have really embraced the idea of learning in their own space and many students have excelled in this learning style environment," Ms. Lauer said.

For more information about QCC, contact Josh Martin, Director of Institutional Communications at 508-854-7513 or jmartin@qcc.mass.edu.

QCC's credit for prior learning program makes college more attainable

WORCESTER — At Quinsigamond Community College, students are attaining their dreams for a higher education in less time through Credits for Prior Learning. By earning credit for life experience, students save time earning their degrees, as well as realize substantial tuition savings. In 2020, 1,472 credits were awarded to 310 students. QCC's Career Services and Credit for Prior Learning Office works with students to assist them in translating their life experiences into college credits. Students may earn college credit for acquired life experience in a variety of ways that include taking a challenge exam, having portfolio assessments, or through credentialing of prior certificates and trainings such as military service, firefighting academy and emergency medical technician training. Credit for Prior Learning offers a significant savings over QCC's already affordable tuition rates. The program offers a savings of between

\$130-\$205 per credit.

President Luis G. Pedraja, Ph.D. noted that these types of savings are extremely beneficial, particularly during a pandemic when many students are struggling to make ends meet.

"While financial concerns may be exacerbated by the pandemic, credit for prior learning not only offers a way for students to save money, but also enables them to graduate earlier and enter the workforce sooner with less debt," he said.

Student veteran Javier Viera spent 30 years serving in the Army before coming to QCC. During his first 12 years in the Army, he worked as a combat engineer and the last 18 years as an Army recruiter. Mr. Viera was awarded 69 credits for prior learning, of which he used 35 credits for a human services degree.

As a former Army recruiter, Mr. Viera said he has always promoted and was aware of credit for prior learning, however, "... seeing it applied when I came to QCC was

a great surprise," he said.

Mr. Viera said that while he could have used the majority of his awarded credits for a general studies degree, he chose instead to use all applicable credits toward the human service degree he really wanted. His plan is to graduate from QCC in Fall 2021 and then work with veterans.

"I can't say I wasn't tempted to go for a general studies degree," he said. "The applicability of my military time for credits blew me out of the water."


"The Credit for Prior Learning program is a great way for students to take advantage of the knowledge they've gained over the years and have it pay off in a lucrative way," Dr. Pedraja added.

To learn more, visit Credit for Prior Learning <<https://www.qcc.edu/services/career-services-credit-prior-learning>>.

For more information about QCC, contact Josh Martin, Director of Institutional Communications at 508-854-7513 or jmartin@qcc.mass.edu.

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Age 14 and 17

Hi! Our names are Aleeanna and Savannah and we would like to be adopted together!

Aleeanna, who likes to go by Aleee, is a fourteen year old girl of Caucasian and Hispanic descent. Aleee speaks both Spanish and English. Aleee is a funny, sassy and outgoing teenager. She enjoys watching television, being outdoors, and running. Aleee also spending time with her sister and friends. She is an engaging girl and does well in school with support from school staff.

Savannah is a seventeen year old girl of Caucasian and Hispanic descent. Savannah, similar to her sister, speaks English and Spanish. Savannah is a kind, easygoing, and creative teenager. She likes to help out around the home, spend time with her friends, and watch television. In school, Savannah does best with the academic support she receives.


Savannah and Aleee are legally freed for adoption. The siblings will thrive with a family that is patient, understanding, and supportive and have the ability to meet them where they are at. Savannah and Aleee would do best in a home with older or younger children as long as they are placed together and in separate rooms. They would prefer a family that will help them maintain contact with biological dad.

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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 617-6273 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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QCC to offer free healthcare training in the New Year

WORCESTER — Quinsigamond Community College's Workforce Development and Continuing Education Center (WCCC) is offering free, grant-funded Nurse Assistant/Home Health Aide and Administrative Medical Professional programs in 2021.

The free 120-hour Nurse Assistant /Home Health Aide Training program provides students

with the necessary theory and entry-level skills to safely provide basic nursing assistant care in a long-term care facility, acute care facility or home health care agency. Upon successful completion of the program, students will be eligible to take the Massachusetts Certified Nurse Assistant Competency Exam. A free virtual information session will be held Jan. 5, 2021 via Zoom to learn

more. Space is limited. For eligibility requirements or to reserve a seat in the information session, email QCC instructor Jo Sundin at jsundin@qcc.mass.edu. This program is funded through the Executive Office of Health and Human Services Nursing and Allied Health Initiative, SNAP Path to Work.

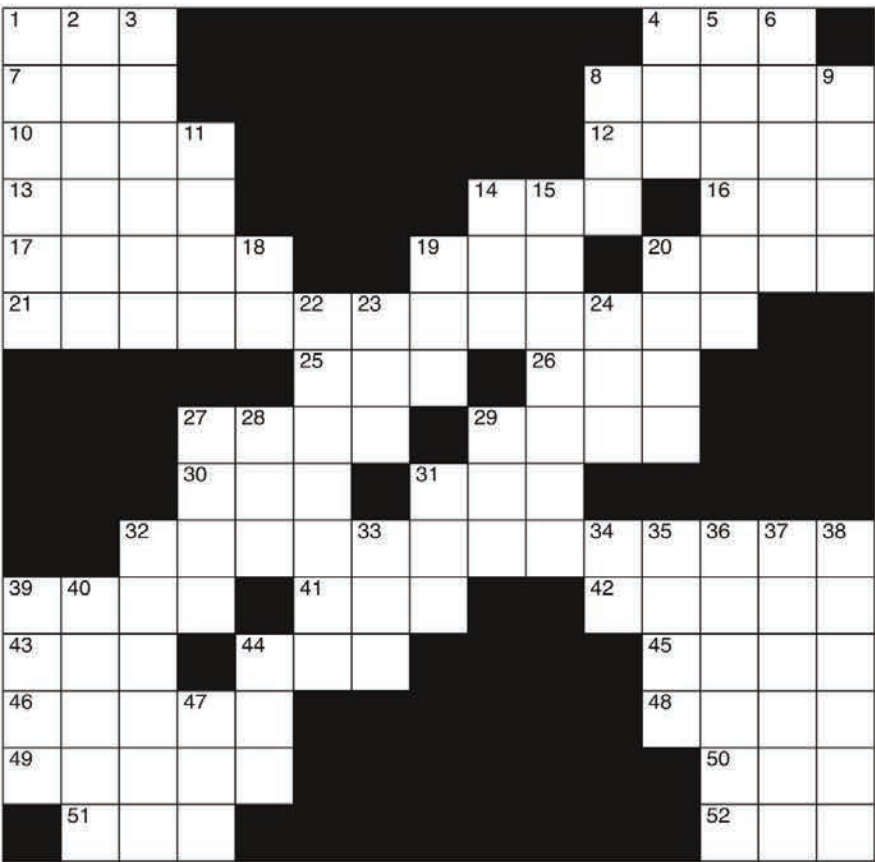
The Administrative Medical Professional pro-

gram will prepare students for a career as a Medical Administrative Assistant in a variety of healthcare settings. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the projected employment growth rate for Medical Administrative Assistants from 2019 to 2029 is 19 percent more than the 4 percent average growth rate for all occupations. In QCC's pro-

gram, students will learn the roles and responsibilities of a healthcare team, interpersonal communication, medical records management and compliance with HIPAA, as well as diagnostic and procedural coding. The course will also include lessons in how to handle medical emergencies. After successfully completing the course, students are eligible to sit for the National Health

Career Association's (NHA) Certified Medical Administrative Assistant Certification Exam. To learn more, email Ms. Sundin at jsundin@qcc.mass.edu.

For more information about QCC, contact Josh Martin, Director of Institutional Communications at 508-854-7513 or jmartin@qcc.mass.edu



CLUES ACROSS

1. Crow species

4. Partner to flow

7. Male offspring

8. Sedate

10. Orange beverage

12. Pair of small hand drums

13. 12th month of Jewish civil year

14. Former Pirates star Jason

16. Computer company

17. Made angry

19. Beverage container

20. Charlize Theron film “__ Flux”

21. Localities

25. Consume

26. Don't know when yet

27. Bed style
29. Make a low, continuous sound

30. Wrath

31. Pollinates flowers

32. Association

39. Prejudice

41. Unhealthy

42. Hasidic religious leader

43. Distinctive philosophy

44. Short-term memory

45. In a good way

46. Emperors of Ethiopia

48. Imaginary line

49. Of barium

50. One's sense of self-esteem

51. Man who behaves dishonorably

52. Monetary unit

CLUES DOWN

1. Rear of (nautical)

2. He minds the net

3. Ring-shaped objects

4. When you hope to get there

5. Young children

6. Beloved hobbit

8. Pigpen

9. Wish harm upon

11. Quick-eyed (Scottish)

14. Scrooge's phrase “__ Humbug”

15. One more

18. A ballplayer who only hits

19. Once vital TV part

20. Sixth month of Jewish civil year

22. Advantage

23. Type of tree
24. Luke's mentor __-Wan

27. Life stories

28. Vase

29. Tiny

31. Package (abbr.)

32. A photog's tool

33. Wood

34. One of the six noble gases (abbr.)

35. Pueblo people of New Mexico

36. Wild goats

37. A way to comply

38. Horatio __, British admiral

39. Actress Leslie

40. Sir __ Newton

44. Pouch

47. Have already done

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Celebrate safely this holiday season

LOCAL SERVPRO FIRE RESTORATION SPECIALIST SAYS USE COMMON SENSE AND CAUTION TO HELP CONTROL RISK OF HOLIDAY SEASON HOME FIRES

WHITINSVILLE — In a year when large holiday gatherings may not be possible, fire damage restoration specialist Don McKendall of SERVPRO of Southern Worcester County says a focus on family decorating traditions and more intimate celebrations may take on extra significance.

“It’s as important to keep safety top of mind with a small family gathering as it is with a large holiday party,” says McKendall. “We all enjoy bringing the glow of the holiday season to our homes with Christmas trees or menorahs and candlelight, but these statistics from the U.S. Fire Administration1 show how easy it is for home decorating to turn into a home disaster.”

flame-retardant or not flammable. Check holiday lights each year for frayed wires or excessive wear. Don’t link more than three strands of holiday lights.

“In a year when so many of the things we take for granted have changed, we know people will still come together – in person or virtually – to celebrate family and holiday traditions,” says McKendall. “Stay safe’ has become a common expression in the context of public health, but this holiday season, we urge all Whitinsville-area home and business owners to think about ‘staying safe’ in their homes as they prepare for and enjoy the holiday season.”

The top three days for home candle fires are Christmas Day, New Year’s Day and New Year’s Eve. More than half of the home decoration fires in December are started by candles. A heat source too close to the Christmas tree causes one in every four winter fires. On average, one of every 52 reported home Christmas tree fires resulted in death.

In addition to exercising caution with candles and heat sources, it is important to follow manufacturers’ guidelines for holiday lighting, says McKendall.

“According to the National Fire Protection Association, electrical distribution or lighting equipment was involved in 44 percent of home Christmas tree fires.2 Though Christmas tree fires may not be common, they can be devastating to more than the house itself. They can destroy irreplaceable photos, mementos, and family heirlooms and even cost lives,” says McKendall. “To help keep your holidays bright and your home and family safe, use common sense with candles and tree placement, and follow these important home decorating guidelines3.”

Only use decorations that are

SERVPRO is an industry leader and provider of fire and water cleanup and restoration services. For more fire prevention and fire safety tips and information about fire and water damage restoration services, please visit www.servpro.com. For more information on SERVPRO of Southern Worcester County, please contact Don McKendall at (508) 234-3399 or Don@servpromckendall.com.

- 1https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/holiday_information.pdf
- 2<https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Seasonal-fire-causes/Winter-holidays>
- 3https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/media/social_toolkits/toolkit_holiday.html

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GRANTS
continued from page A1

ties for those students is an opportunity on which we will capitalize.”

The Virtual and Hybrid Learning Support grant will enable UHS staff to collaborate with students

beyond the school day, particularly for those students who have struggled with learning during the pandemic or have difficulty accessing the school building due to other constraints, including medical reasons.

Uxbridge High will

be enlisting professional staff, counselors, and support staff after hours, they said, and on weekends to meet with students, both in-person and virtually, as well as providing access to other online resources for students who may have specific needs.

VACCINE
continued from page A1

pleted. Individuals with questions about vaccination phases should send an email to COVID-19-Vaccine-Plan-MA@mass.gov. Additionally, CVS and Walgreens will begin vaccinating in nursing homes during the week of Dec. 28. Doses will come from the state’s Pfizer allocation; between 40,000 and 60,000 doses will be shipped to CVS and Walgreens for Massachusetts skilled nursing facilities. Meanwhile, COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths are continuing at an alarming rate across the state. Last week, the

Department of Public Health released guidance to help residents celebrate the holidays safely. The following recommendations are in place through the New Year’s holiday: Limit in-person celebrations to household members only. Postpone or cancel travel this holiday season. If you do choose to travel, you must comply with Massachusetts travel order requirements. Follow the current state gathering size limits and sector-specific workplace safety standards.

The DPH guidance also provided tips for engaging in lower-risk celebrations and traditions this

holiday season, while discouraging high-risk activities. “Any time you gather with others outside of your household, you increase the risk of contracting or spreading illness,” read a DPH statement. “You are risking your health and others’ health if you host or participate in any large in-person festivities.” All residents are reminded to continue wearing masks in public and practicing social distancing. You must be masked in all public venues, even outdoor spaces. For a full list of the state’s holiday guidance and regulations, visit www.mass.gov/holidays.



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EDITORIAL

Making SMART resolutions

With New Year’s Day just around the corner, we, like many, are thinking about resolutions. We could debate that September is actually the start of a new year given the clean slate of grades to start a new school year, but a new year is a new year, and not all of us are still in school.

More than half of all resolutions end in failure, but we like the fact that generally, we, as people, seek to improve ourselves and our lives. One reason resolutions fail is that a person just hasn’t chosen the right one, something that has meaning. Many people fail before the end of January.

A resolution isn’t the right one for you if it’s too vague, if it’s someone else’s expectations for you, or if you have no plan.

The acronym SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound) can be used to help facilitate your success. If you make a specific goal of losing a certain amount of weight, your goal will be easier to obtain. If you set a time limit, (baby steps) by saying I will lose one pound each week, your plan becomes more effective. As a side note if you haven’t seen ‘What About Bob’ starring Bill Murray, you must.

We all like to see progress and to see it fast. One way is to make something measurable. If you want to scale back on something, say using social media, you can use the ‘see how much time you’ve spent on Facebook’ setting to watch your usage go down. Or if you’ve set out to watch as many old classic movies or read as many John Grisham novels as you can this year, you can make a check list, and as you finish each one, check it off the list. Or bring an empty bookcase into your house, and as you finish a book, pop it on the shelf.

Pick a goal that is achievable. By taking a leap that is too big, you might find yourself in over your head and likely frustrated. Having a goal of saving more money than you can will leave you hopeless; however, if you can put away \$50 per month, then you’re on to something.

Choose a resolution that is relevant. Doing something for the right reasons is key. A relevant goal is a lasting goal. If you want to do more research on your family’s ancestry, so that your family will have the information for years to come, then what you’re doing has meaning to not only you but to the people you care about. Choosing to bring others in on your goal is never a bad idea either. We all need a coach at times.

Using a timeline for your goals should be realistic. Knocking off small goals along the way will lead you to your larger goals and will also give you a chance to create your new habit.

Learning something new is one of the most refreshing things about being alive. Being able to continually grow and morph into the best versions of ourselves is what life is all about. The more you enjoy, the more meaning you get out of life.

As the poet T.S. Eliot said, “For last year’s words belong to last year’s language, and next year’s words await another voice.”

OPINION

Opinion and commentary from the Blackstone Valley and beyond

A MOMENT IN HISTORY
.....
BEVERLY GUDANOWSKI
UXBRIDGE

Have you ever considered how weather affected our nation’s history? It is a compelling story, one that flies in the face of those who blame climate changes on the polluting habits of the United States and the western world. They seem never to take into consideration the Sun cycles, or massive volcanic eruptions, or even God.

For example, the year 1816 (horse and buggy days) is known as the Year Without a Summer because of “severe climate abnormalities that caused average global temperature to decrease by 0.7 to 1 degree Fahrenheit.” Source: Wikipedia. Scientists have determined that summer temperatures in Europe in 1816 were the coldest ever recorded between 1766 and the year 2000. Crops failed. People died.

Let us remember in 1816, no one was burning oil in their furnaces. There were no massive factories belching smoke and pollutants. No plastics were floating in the ocean. If people were lucky, they lived in a warm climate. Otherwise, they were wearing five layers of clothes, if they could afford them, and standing near a meager fireplace. A few paces from the fireplace, the temperature in the house dropped to freezing.

Scientists believe the cold was caused by the massive 1815 eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia (what was then the Dutch East Indies). The eruption was the largest in 1,300 years. It was likely made worse by the 1814 eruption of Mayon volcano in the Philippines which killed 1,200. Nature killed 1,200 people.

Mark these words carefully: no human was responsible for the eruption of Mount Tambora. No corporation caused the massive dust cloud that obscured the sun in 1816. It was nature, pure and simple, all by its powerful self. For man to think he can control these massive climate forces is laughable. What hubris to think humans are powerful enough to control the climate or to be so powerful, so very powerful, as to cause climate change. Ice has been melting since the Ice Age. For example, where I am sitting right now in Uxbridge was once covered by a glacier!

Here is another example: the cruel winters during the American Revolutionary War. They were brutal. For those who do not study American history in high school because they can merely look it up on Google, I challenge you to look up the winters of 1779 and 1780 and their effect on American soldiers who were fighting for independence.

Out in the fields of the Continental Army, in the tents, around the campfires (if they could find wood - remember, wood was the only available heat source in 1780), huddled in blankets (if they had blankets), were American soldiers from farms and small cities and towns. Most were not rich, white men. In fact, the first recorded death from the freeze-

ing cold temperatures at Valley Forge was that of an African American soldier, Jethro.

According to the book, “Henry Knox: Visionary of the American Revolution,” by Mark Puls, the winter of 1780 was the most severe that anyone could remem-

ber. It was said to be the coldest winter in the eighteenth century (1700’s). A three-day blizzard buried the Morristown, New Jersey, encampment of the Continental forces under snow 6 feet high. That season, 28 snowstorms blanketed the camp.

Puls wrote: “The previous winter at Valley Forge had been nearly unendurable, but this year (1780) proved to be even worse.” Troops were cold and starving.

Let us remember: there were no L.L. Bean boots, good to -30 degrees, in those days. No hand warmers or toe warmers. No Patagonia or Helly Hansen silk underwear proven to be warm even on recreational climbs to the Himalayas. No high tech North Face jackets lined with goose down and Thinsulate that keeps you warm even when temps plummet to -25 degrees.

Nope. These soldiers had home-knitted woolen socks, leather boots (if they were lucky) or leather shoes if they had not been worn out by tramping all over Pennsylvania and New Jersey. They wore woolen leggings and a woolen jacket. Maybe a wool cloak, again if they were lucky. Mother or wife or sister may have knitted a woolen scarf and hat. Or these intrepid soldiers wore the tri-corner hat made of beaver pelt. At least it kept the rain out of their faces.

By this time during the Revolutionary War, many soldiers wore rags. Some were barefoot. Wait, what?! Barefoot in the winter of 1780 which was the most severe winter than anyone could remember? Historians write about the bloody footprints of the Continental soldiers. It is said that Washington’s army resembled a parade of beggars. Our soldiers. Our history that students do not need to study in high school because students can merely Google it.

Somehow, Googling it does not have the same impact as sitting in your warm room and reading a book that brings to life the harsh realities of the people who sacrificed most if not all of their daily comforts to win independence for the American colonies. They were not hiding in safe rooms in case someone said something to hurt their feelings.

This is a challenge to any high school student. Try reading “Valley Forge” by Bob Drury and Tom Clavin, and then tell me if you think the American Revolutionary War was merely about rich, white men. Rich, warm and toasty, white men.

Do-it-yourself holiday centerpiece

Dress up your holiday meals with a centerpiece crafted from greens, colorful stems and seed heads collected from your garden. Or purchase fresh materials you need from your favorite garden center or florist.

Most gardeners spend some time gathering a few blossoms and creating a bouquet or arrangement for their summer gatherings. Don’t let winter stop you from crafting a festive centerpiece from materials collected from your gardens this time of year.

Start by gathering some greens. The fan-like sprays of arborvitae, blue-green sprigs of juniper as well as branches of yews, boxwood, pines and spruces can provide all the greenery you need.

Now look for items with interesting color or shape. Red and yellow twig dogwoods and paper bark birch add festive color to any arrangement. The interesting shapes of curly willow, contorted filbert and fantail willow provide intriguing form.

Next gather cones, berries, and fruits. Look for orange and red rose hips, blue berry-like cones of junipers, sweet gum seed-pods, and alder’s cone-like fruit. Gather a few evergreen cones to include in or around your arrangement.

Look for potential adornments that are lingering in the perennial garden. Coneflower, rudbeckia, and allium seed heads can add a bit of structure to your arrangement. Gather a few milkweed, balloon plant and lotus pods. And don’t worry, your milkweed plants will return for next year’s visiting monarchs.



GARDEN MOMENTS
.....

MELINDA MYERS

Honor their natural color or add a bit of bling with some gold, silver, or red paint.

Include a few shiny ornaments as needed. Glittered stems, ribbons and candles can add festive color to nature’s beauty in your centerpiece.

Visit your favorite florist or craft store for needed supplies. Pick up some floral foam to secure the stems. Cut it to shape to fit the size and shape of the container.

Moisten the foam before inserting fresh greens and cut flowers. Set the block of foam on top of a basin of water and let it sink. This allows all the air spaces to fill with water, ensuring your flowers and greens have the water they need. Use high density foam when working with evergreen boughs and branches.

No need to moisten the foam when using dried and artificial material. This material makes it easier to create your arrangement.

Consider purchasing a few seasonal flowers for added color for your special event. These

can be placed directly in the floral foam or water filled florist tubes set in the arrangement. Simply remove faded flowers and replace as needed.

Or use miniature poinsettias, kalanchoes and cyclamen for longer lasting living color. Tuck them in the bed of greens or use them to decorate each place setting. Check the soil moisture frequently as the small pots dry out quickly.

The possibilities are endless, and the results are sure to brighten your spirits no matter how you are safely celebrating this holiday season.

Melinda Myers is the author of more than 20 gardening books, including Small Space Gardening. She hosts The Great Courses “How to Grow Anything” DVD series and the nationally-syndicated Melinda’s Garden Moment TV & radio program. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine and her Web site is www.MelindaMyers.com.



Melinda Myers

It is possible to create a festive holiday centerpiece crafted from materials found in winter gardens.

Time for New Year’s financial resolutions



FINANCIAL FOCUS

DARREN PARENT

Many of us probably felt that 2020 lasted a very long time. But now that 2021 is upon us, we can make a fresh start – and one way to do that is to make some New Year’s resolutions. Of course, you can make these resolutions for all parts of your life – physical, emotional, intellectual – but have you ever considered some financial resolutions?

Here are a few such resolutions to consider:

Don’t overreact to events. When the coronavirus pandemic hit in mid-February, the financial markets took a big hit. Many people, convinced that we were in for a prolonged slump, decided to take a “time out” and headed to the investment sidelines. But it didn’t take long for the markets to rally, rewarding those patient investors who stayed the course. Nothing is a certainty in the investment world, but the events of 2020 followed a familiar historical pattern: major crisis followed by market drop followed by strong recovery. The lesson for investors? Don’t overreact to today’s news – because tomorrow may look quite different.

Be prepared. At the beginning of 2020, nobody was anticipating a worldwide pandemic and its terrible consequences, both to individuals’ health and to their economic well-being. None of us can foretell the future, either, but we can be prepared, and one way to do so is by building an emergency fund. Ideally, such a fund should be kept in liquid, low-risk vehicles and contain at least six months’ worth of living expenses.

Focus on moves you can control. In response to pandemic-related economic pressures, some employers cut their matching contributions to 401(k) plans in 2020. Will some future event cause another such reduction? No one knows – and even if it happens, there’s probably nothing you can do about it. Instead of worrying about things you can’t control, focus on those you can. When it comes to your 401(k) or similar employer-sponsored retirement plan, put in as much as you can afford this year, and if your salary goes up, increase your contribution.

Recognize your ability to build savings. During the pandemic, the personal savings rate shot up, hitting a record of 33% in April, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economy Analysis. It fell over the next several months, but still remained about twice as high as the rate of the past few years. Of course, much of this surge in Americans’ proclivity to save money was due to our lack of options for spending it, as the coronavirus caused either complete or partial shutdowns in physical retail establishments, as well as dining and entertainment venues. But if you did manage to boost your own personal savings when your spending was constrained, is it possible to remain a good saver when restrictions are lifted? Probably. And the greater your savings, the greater your financial freedoms – including the freedom to invest and freedom from excessive debt. When we reach a post-pandemic world, see if you can continue saving more than you did in previous years – and use your savings wisely.

These aren’t the only financial resolutions you can make – but following them may help you develop habits that could benefit you in 2021 and beyond.

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

De-Stressing Strategies Promote Good Cheer

The holidays are around the corner, and despite the usual merriment of the season, this year is (not surprisingly) different. The CDC reports that symptoms of anxiety and depression have increased considerably due to COVID fears and since social restrictions have been in place. In fact, a recent study revealed that 27.8 percent of U.S. adults had depression symptoms compared to 8.5 percent before the pandemic.



TAKE
THE
HINT

KAREN
TRAINOR

With these figures in mind, the following strategies to combat stress and depression are offered. Some ideas have been previously published in this column, but bear repeating.

Read on for a variety of natural ways to halt high anxiety and greet the holidays with good cheer!

Note: Consult with your health care professional before taking any herbs, as they could have dangerous side effects.

Massage therapy: Did you know when you are anxious, your body produces an abundance of cortisol, a stress hormone? Massage has been proven to lowers cortisol levels. In addition, it relieves muscle tension caused by anxiety. In fact, according to a research study by the Touch Research Institute, experiencing a 15 minute massage for just twice a week can lower both anxiety and depression levels.

Carbs are calming: Complex carbohydrates such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains and starchy foods increase the amount of serotonin in your brain, a powerful neurotransmitter that boosts your mood, calms you down and is beneficial in reducing overall feelings of anxiety/depression related disorders. Studies also show pasta, which is rich in complex carbohydrates can help relieve anxiety and help fight depression.

Meditation mode: Meditation can be a powerful weapon in the fight against stress, and can work to ward off a panic attacks. Meditation and proper breathing can helps slow the heart rate and calm nerves. In fact, medical

studies reveal meditation may also ease anxiety for those who not only suffer from anxiety disorders, but for those who have obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) as well. A quick calming trick is to close your eyes and breathe slowly and deeply, focusing on the breaths.

Writer Carol Krucoff of the Seattle Times offered this advice on breathing to relieve stress and panic: “Slow, deep breathing is a powerful anti-stress technique. When you bring air down into the lower portion of the lungs, where the oxygen exchange is most efficient, heart rate slows, blood pressure decreases, muscles relax, anxiety eases and the mind calms.”

Chew away stress: Can chewing gum reduce stress? According to a NASA research it can! In a NASA-funded study, scientists from Wheeling Jesuit University monitored the responses of 25 college students during simulated driving scenarios. The volunteers reported that peppermint lowered their feelings of fatigue or anxiety by 20%. Peppermint and cinnamon each decreased frustration by 25%, increased alertness by 30%, and made the ride seem 30% shorter. Don't like candy or gum? Buy peppermint or cinnamon air fresheners or car diffusers for the same effect.

Paint RX for panic: The color yellow is not only bright, it's a mood booster too! Just be aware yellow a little goes a long way, and too much bright yellow can over stimulate the nervous system. Or try painting your walls orange, or at least a workable shade of orange, such as peach or terra cotta. Orange is the top mood booster and can dispel anxiety, according to experts. Painting a room a light green is therapeutic for tired, stressed nerves. And studies show bubble gum pink and cool blue are proven stress relievers.

Herbal Help: Ylang ylang: Ylang ylang has been touted as an anti panic treatment. When Ylang ylang essential oil is added to a warm bath, feelings of depression

can literally be washed away! Lemon balm: Lemon balm is a relaxing herb that reduces restlessness, anxiety and irritability. It is also used to treat anxiety that causes digestive problems. Note: Do not use if you have thyroid problems.

Passionflower: Passionflower is an effective depressant of the central nervous system which translates into a relaxing anti-anxiety effect. It not only helps general anxiety, but is especially touted as a remedy for nightmares and nocturnal anxiety. Note: Those taking an MAO inhibitor should not take passionflower.

Skullcap: An herb with fewer side effects, Skullcap helps calm the “worrier” who has racing thoughts and constant fret. This herb is useful for all types of anxiety but has also been hailed as an aid for stress caused by hormonal imbalances in women.

German Chamomile: A common garden herb, Chamomile is a muscle relaxer that has mild sedating properties. Chamomile tea has long been used to relieve stress and promote sleep. It is also used to treat anxiety in sufferers young and old. Note: Those who have allergies to ragweed, chrysanthemums or asters, should not use Chamomile.

Valerian: Valerian is one of the most popular anti-stress herbs. The herb contains valepotriates, which work to calm anxiety, much the way the drug Valium does, but without the addictive qualities. Note: You should not take Valerian if you have thyroid problems, adrenal fatigue, chronic exhaustion or depression.

(Heading) Did you know? Calcium, magnesium, and B vitamins are hailed for relieving anxiety symptoms.

Fresh peaches contain a natural sedative that aids in reducing stress and anxiety.

Keeping your body in balance

by eating a well rounded diet and taking a daily multivitamin helps ward off stress.

Laughter provides both a physical and emotional release. It relieves tension, stress, anxiety, anger and depression.

If you're trying to reduce stress, be sure to avoid extremely low fat diets because some fat is needed to fight depression and anxiety.

To keep stress at bay avoid (or reduce) consumption of alcohol, sugar and caffeine.

Just 20 minutes of relaxation or doing something you enjoy each day has shown to restore your mental health and lower overall anxiety level.

Aromatherapy can soothe frazzled nerves. Add some essential oils to a warm bath to induce calmness. Sandalwood, Lavender and Rose are a few “stress busting” scents to try.

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.

DOT renumbering highway exits

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

REGION – If you find yourself lost on familiar highways over the next few months, there's no need to get a new GPS program or consult a map. As part of a statewide project, highway exits across the Commonwealth are in the process of being renumbered.

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) is converting all exit numbers on freeways to a mile-based numbering system. The project is a requirement of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Currently, interstates and freeways in Massachusetts utilize a sequential exit numbering method. Under the new mile-based system, exits will now be marked based on the number of miles from the origin of the route. For example, the Sturbridge exit on the Mass. Turnpike – formerly Exit 9 – will now be Exit 78 (there are roughly 78 miles from the New York border to Sturbridge).

Exit numbers for Route 213, I-291, I-391, and the Lowell Connector will not be changing. Meanwhile, MassDOT is continuing the I-395 numbering along I-290 to replicate the present exit numbering, which is continuous from Webster to Marlborough. As part of this project, the existing mileposts on I-290 will be replaced with dual mile markers showing mileage for both I-395 and I-290.

The \$2.8 million project is being funded through the Federal Highway Safety Improvement Program. Over the next year, MassDOT crews will update all highway signage to reflect the exit numbering changes. Local businesses and organizations are encouraged to make updates as well, especially on websites featuring travel information and other materials.

“Businesses that reference existing numbers in their advertising or marketing materials will need to revise

these materials,” read a statement released by the MassDOT. “Old exit signs will remain in place for a minimum of two years, giving businesses time to adjust to the new exit numbers during this transition period.”

Several public meetings and virtual events were held throughout the state over the past year to provide residents with additional information on the project. The MassDOT will continue the renumbering project throughout the winter and spring.

For more information on the new exit numbering system, as well as a list of local highways and exit numbers, visit www.NewMassExits.com.



Happy Holidays

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My First Christmas in Heaven

I see the countless Christmas trees around the world below,
With tiny lights like Heaven's stars reflecting the snow.
The sight is so spectacular- please wipe away the tear,
For I'm spending Christmas with Jesus this year.
I hear the many Christmas songs that people hold so dear,
But the sound of music can't compare with the Christmas choir up here.
I have no words to tell you the joys their voices bring,
For it's beyond description to hear the angels sing.
I know how much you miss me, I see the pain inside your heart,
But I am not so far away, we really aren't apart.
So be happy for me dear ones you know I hold you dear,
And be glad I'm spending Christmas with Jesus Christ this year.
I sent you each a special gift for my heavenly home above,
I sent you each a memory of my undying love.
After all love is a gift more precious than pure gold,
It was always most important in the stories Jesus told.
Please love and keep each other
as my Father said to do,
For I can't count the blessing of love
he has for each of you.
So have a Merry Christmas
and wipe away that tear,
Remember I am spending Christmas
with Jesus Christ this year.

Author unknown.

Merry Christmas



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The Town of Douglas is seeking an individual to provide part-time (30 - 50 hrs/mo) assistance to the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Building Facilities Construction Committee, Board of Health and the Capital Improvements Committee by recording meeting minutes. Organizational, interpersonal skills, and proficiency in computers is essential. Ability to take shorthand is preferable. Availability to view remotely, online, up to 10 meetings per month is required. Upon demonstrated ability of efficiency, accuracy and reliability the possibility of transcribing some meetings from recordings may be possible. Compensation will be in the range of \$14.56 – \$15.22/hour, depending on qualifications.

Send resume to Matthew J. Wojcik, Town Administrator, 29 Depot Street, Douglas, MA 01516. Position will be open until filled.

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Novembers' Single Family Homes Real Estate Market

	November 2019	November 2020	Trend
OXFORD			
Median Price	\$260,00	\$2,311,250	▲
Market Volume	\$3,747,900	\$6,097,800	▲
# of Homes Sold	14	20	▲
Avg Days on Market	33	29	▼
WEBSTER			
Median Price	\$246,250	\$350,000	▲
Market Volume	\$5,746,900	\$4,055,100	▲
# of Homes Sold	20	11	▼
Avg Days on Market	52	51	▼

Contact us to find more about your neighborhood market & what your home is worth!
Happy Holidays from our family to yours!

Eve Patterson 508-341-4434
Nana Frimpongmaah 508-615-6149
Jeremiah Oichere-Nyarko 774-253-2082
Ava Fantasia 508-523-8337
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268 Dresser Hill Road - \$729,900

ON DEPOSIT
Dudley: Ranch, 2 bedroom, 5 acres, garage
11 Paglione Dr \$49,900

ON DEPOSIT
Oxford: Split, 3 bdrm, 1.5 Ba, 2 car garage, Family Rm
22 Whiting Rd \$38,900

ON DEPOSIT
Dudley: Cape, 3-4 bdrm, Country kitch, inground pool, garage
11A Paglione Dr \$239,900

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