



LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS

# The Montague Reporter

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

YEAR 15 – NO. 14

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

JANUARY 19, 2017

## Shea Theater Names New Director



NINA ROSSI PHOTO

Linda Tardif, who spent 2016 learning the ropes under acting director Penny Burke, has been named managing director.

By MIKE JACKSON

**TURNERS FALLS** – After an initial year under the guidance of a veteran administrator, the Shea Theater Arts Center (STAC), operator of the publicly owned downtown venue, has named actor and house manager Linda Tardif as managing director.

Tardif, a UMass-Amherst graduate who has recently moved back from New York to Northampton, steps into a leadership position as the nonprofit continues to fundraise and renovate the historic theater. She will be responsible for programming, and for planning around ongoing upgrades to the building's infrastructure.

"We have great momentum coming off last year," said Tardif. "Thanks to the town, we completely replaced the HVAC system in late November – there's actually heating throughout the entire building, which is a nice upgrade. And we just installed brand new theater seating, which went in during the first week of January."

Tardif said major upgrades scheduled for the coming months include a large new sign, as well as "state-of-the-art sound equipment, which we hope will help make the Shea a destination for national touring acts."

"We're continuing along with our fundraising goals set in 2015," she added. Future plans include a lighting overhaul, as well as the installation of a "big projector," see **SHEA** page A7

## Changes to Broadband Plan, Price Tag Elicit Frustration In Wendell

By JOSH HEINEMANN

A number of citizens came to the Wendell selectboard's meeting last week to express concern over what they saw as the board's endorsement of a new proposal for high-speed internet buildout, with high up-front costs to users.

In the days leading up to the January 11 meeting, nearly two dozen residents sent comments over the town's email list about the town's internet effort, and eight concerned citizens came to the meeting to voice their opinions, or to ask about the progress being made toward getting broadband service in town.

Responding to Governor Baker's preference, the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI), which administers a fund to support rural broadband buildout, had issued a request for proposals (RFP) for private companies to build networks in unserved and underserved towns.

The Wendell selectboard wrote to MBI supporting the proposal by Crocker Communications, a local company, over that of Comcast, which some residents worry would

cherry pick the most profitable connections. The Crocker proposal called for every connected household to pay \$3,000 to build the system, which would be owned by Crocker, a proposal which came under criticism from residents.

In response to the request by citizen Judy Bauman to explain the selectboard's letter, board member Geoffrey Pooser said that Crocker, as a small local company in competition with giants, had asked for support. The town already has a relationship with Crocker, he pointed out, and the letter did not commit the town to accept the company's proposal as written.

Just as the town has not left WiredWest, he said, it is too early to slash any potential suppliers, and keeping Crocker in the process helps keep the town's options open. A firm estimate of the project's cost will not be known until the pole survey and engineering design are completed.

Board member Dan Keller said the selectboard's letter supported Crocker, but not necessarily the plan the company submitted to MBI.

see **WENDELL** page A7

## Farmers Hear Case for an End to Tilling

By CARO ROSZELL

**WORCESTER** – Paul and Elizabeth Kaiser of Singing Frogs Farm in Sebastapol, California, came to Worcester last Saturday to speak to 800 farmers, gardeners, soil scientists, extension agents and others involved in New England food systems. They were the keynote speakers for the 30<sup>th</sup> annual winter conference of the Northeast Organic Farming Association's Massachusetts chapter (NOFA/Mass).

The Kaisers came with a message: that agriculture has been one of the greatest contributors to climate change in human history, but is also our best hope for mitigating climate change. They argue that by adapting their practices to sequester more soil carbon, farmers can simultaneously improve the health of their crops, soil, and finances.

The connection between the climate and soil has to do with soil



LADAWN STRICKLAND PHOTO

Elizabeth and Paul Kaiser of California were the keynote speakers at last Saturday's NOFA/Mass conference in Worcester.

organic matter, they told the crowd. "57% of soil organic matter is carbon," Paul pointed out. "Now, historically, the United States has had between 6 and 10% soil organic

matter in our agricultural soils." Today, it averages 1-3%.

Citing a study from Ohio State University, Paul went on to say that "globally, we have already removed about two-thirds of the soil-based carbon from the agricultural soils on the planet. That primarily happened in the past century. If we removed two-thirds of our soil carbon in one century, we don't have another century to keep farming and growing food."

Backed with quotes and data from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and United Nations (UN) studies, Paul explained that tillage breaks up soil aggregates, reducing soil particle size and increasing the ratio of surface area to volume. This causes nitrogen and carbon in the soil to become volatilized, and combine with oxygen to form nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), two of the most

see **FARMERS** page A5

## Again and Again, Montague Turns to Obear Construction



NINA ROSSI PHOTO

Owner Robert Obear, at work in his newly renovated Millers Falls office.

By JEFF SINGLETON

**MONTAGUE** – Anyone who has been following town politics in recent years will recognize the name of Robert Obear. Obear has appeared frequently before the Montague selectboard to discuss proposals to rehabilitate the town's aging infrastructure. In fact, the Obear Construction Company seems to be always first in line, winning the right to develop buildings that have fallen into the town's lap – and in some cases, may be on the verge of falling to the ground.

Obear grew up in the eastern part of the state, and moved to the area after attending UMass-Amherst. He serves on the Montague planning board, and is that board's representative to the Franklin Regional Council of Governments.

Originally in the used car business, his construction career began when he bought several "decaying properties" in Springfield. By the

time the 2008 recession hit, he had subcontracted to build "three or four houses."

Obear told the *Reporter* that when traditional construction work evaporated at the onset of the recession, his home-building business was forced to lay off most of its employees, and he began to research the possibility of buying "distressed properties" under the town's commercial homesteading program and the state's receivership program.

Under the homesteading program, the town sells property it has taken over – generally for unpaid taxes – to a developer for a nominal dollar amount. The developer signs a "land development agreement" which gives the town a significant amount of control over the development process, specifying the uses of the property, design, and financing. The goal, in part, is to avoid sale to a builder who makes big promises but lacks the resources to implement them.

see **OBEAR** page A3

## A PARTIAL DEMOLITION



ED GREGORY PHOTO

On Monday morning, a demolition crew hired by the town of Montague took down a number of walls, towers and support beams at the Railroad Salvage building, which was extensively damaged by a recent fire, and had also previously been extensively damaged. The work was done under a court order, in the interest of public safety. For the full story, see page A4.



# The Montague Reporter

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Patrons take it slow at the Lady Killigrew café in Montague Center, Wednesday morning.

## Hit Rock Bottom, Start Over

Tomorrow, the presidency of the United States of America, and a little satchel containing the codes to the nation's nuclear arsenal, will transfer to casino mogul, reality show star, professional bully and perennial punchline Donald John Trump.

Trump is by no means stupid or talentless, but his talents are uniquely unsuited for the position. He wears his insecurity on his skin, and on his scalp.

His rise to power may very well have been the accidental result of a ploy for attention, but in pursuit of that attention, he had a brilliant insight: to capture the loyalty of tens of millions of Americans, he need only make himself an empty vessel for the mute and coldly burning resentment they felt against the established political order.

Trump is a weapon against do-gooders, and do-gooderism; against egalitarianism; against starry-eyed inclusiveness; against cooperation and empathy and listening. In short, he is the simple negation of a 70-year political consensus borne of the traumas of World War II.

During the Cold War era, America was ruled by two factions, conjoined by a kind of shotgun marriage: those whose power was based in the ownership of property, and grew with its profits; and those whose power derived from the management of institutions, and in their involvement in the transmission of knowledge. Each depended on the other, but their values grew ever further apart.

Men like Trump stalked around the edges of this shaky consensus, and probed its weaknesses. It's no accident that one of the man's major scams has been the diploma mill Trump University, a brazen imitation of college that lured in its marks with coursework in such fields of study as "wealth creation."

"If I had a choice of making lots of money or imparting lots of knowledge," Trump said in a speech at the scam's launch, "I think I'd be as happy to impart knowledge as to make money."

Trump's ability to cash in by

parroting the very professional-managerial cultural values he so plainly rejected would almost be funny, if the people he ripped off could afford it.

Everything is moving at lightning speed now, the jaw-droppers coming in faster than even the most committed news junkie could possibly hope to follow. This week we've seen simultaneous confirmation hearings of Cabinet appointments who appear to be selected in direct refutation of Washington's meritocratic norms. The wrecking ball will swing and swing.

But on the eve of his inauguration, we should step back and remember:

Though Trump idly hinted at politics for decades, he really got in the ring in 2011, when he lent credence to the pornographically nationalist fantasy that our president was secretly born in Africa and therefore not really the president.

He bragged about sexually assaulting women.

He claimed that climate change is a hoax perpetrated by the Chinese, and plans to appoint the CEO of a company caught covering up its recognition of its own core business's contribution to climate change, and then sponsoring denial science, as secretary of state.

He surrounds himself with people who support a religious test for citizenship.

And he still pretends that he can somehow force the Mexican government to foot the bill for the militarizing and fortifying the border between our countries.

All of this *was* nothing more than an artfully crafted posture of belligerence. If things had gone according to plan, he would be spending this week astride a gold-painted toilet gleefully trolling the incoming president on Twitter while a team of ghostwriters hack out his next bestseller.

Instead, he was actually elected – because the postwar pact between economic capitalism and social liberalism was finally in full collapse, and nobody was able to assemble a coalition to stop him.

Consequently, the crazy-quilt coalition of everyone who used Trump as a weapon against the despised establishment is clamoring to promote their own politics: Owners of private prisons and mercenary armies. Proponents of gay conversion therapy. Self-described European chauvinists who also can't stand the actual Europe. Eccentric billionaire software developers whose vision of freedom involves being crowned king of their own decommissioned oil rig. Men who buy books and attend seminars explaining that they naturally dominate women. People who want to abolish the EPA and bleed public schools dry and cut taxes for the rich and expand the prison population and instigate trade wars.

We're in for an extremely bumpy ride, whatever happens next. Social programs, healthcare, education and environmental protection will be damaged, and groups already singled out for repression will need care and support.

The good news is that the entire country is finally paying attention to its government, and its government is certain to fail.

It was already failing under Obama's administration. Just ask the residents of Flint, Michigan, who need and deserve clean water.

What we need, and what we deserve, is the starting point of our politics. Shelter, food, clean air and water, medicine, and freedom from violence: everyone on the planet deserves these things. They are attainable. Building walls will not help. Building movements will.

Trump is still just a scammer, and most of his voters are marks. They deserve better than what is about to happen. It won't be easy, but if we organize to meet people's needs and affirm that they deserve to have them met, a very different order might emerge from the present catastrophe.

## Letters to the Editors



### Don't Close the Food Pantry!

Many have used the fully accessible food pantry at the United Arc on Avenue A in Turners Falls.

This is a unique food pantry. It is the only food pantry in Franklin County that has a ramp and is considered fully accessible under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). We have many residents in downtown Turners Falls in wheelchairs and disabled.

It has come to my attention that

the United ARC's board of directors has made a decision to close this pantry, effective February 2.

We all realize the importance of food for our families. This center also provides toiletries and pet food. It is so important to preserve this program, which serves a diversity of people.

Betty Tegel  
Montague

## Open Letter to the Gill-Montague School Committee

Changing the name and logo won't bring clean water, electricity, or better schools to Native Americans. It won't stop domestic abuse or alcoholism, or even bring them better educational systems.

It won't scratch the surface of any of the issues facing Native Americans today. But it sure will make a few do-gooders feel like they have righted the world's wrongs... for a day.

Fact is, this won't make national news, and no paper outside of Franklin County will report it. This is about us, *all* of us in our community. I believe that if you eradicate the name and logo, you will also be further removing the Native American history that it helps connect to this town.

I suggest that instead of eradication, you begin the process of education. Let's teach our school children about the real Native Americans that lived in this area, and their interaction with the settlers. In fact, the good, the bad and the ugly... all of it.

Let's take on a sister school from a reservation and begin to introduce children to other cultures.

Let's look at ways we may be

able to promote better living conditions, education, and free and open sharing.

If we can do that, we will have built something that won't just be a victory for a day – it will be a victory for generations to come. It will bring our community back together, it will be a learning experience for our children, and most of all, will showcase not only the Native Americans' place in local history, but bring them to light in society today.

Our plan is one that other communities will mirror. We have the opportunity to start something here that can spread and become much larger than us. A chance to make a statement about who we are. Divided on an issue, but unified by the results of healthy discussion and education.

If you can allow the town to retain its history, and with that the name and logo, while giving the Native Americans their rightful place in the past and present, you will have done just that.

Chris Pinardi  
TFHS '85  
Montague

## CORRECTION:

A photograph caption in last week's issue (*Hydrogeologist, Geographer to Towns: It's Time to Learn to Love the Floods*, page A7) incorrectly identified the river that runs along Greenfield's Deerfield Street. It is the Green River, not the Deerfield River. The

Green lets into the much larger Deerfield not far downstream from the site of the photo.

We usually apologize to our readers for any confusion we cause, but nobody was confused or fooled by this mistake. Thanks to everyone who pointed it out to us!

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JESSICA LARKIN ILLUSTRATION

## LOCAL BRIEFS

Compiled by DON CLEGG

**Calling all Sculptors!** Come to Greenfield Savings Bank's Turners Falls branch this Saturday, January 21, from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. for an indoor sculpturing session.

How is that possible, you say? Why, with Play-Doh of course! The bank will be hosting a creative sculpturing session, and provide one container of the popular compound as well as other additives to enhance the desired result.

Participants will be limited to eight in number, need to be at least eight years of age, and must call in to register for the event at (413) 863-4316.

Final creations can remain in

the community room for the week allowing all to see, and then be claimed by the owners on January 27 or 28. Come and be part of the action and this unusual event.

The American Cancer Society **Relay For Life of Franklin County** will host a free community kick-off on Saturday, January 21 at 10 a.m. at the Yankee Candle Annex, next to the Yankee Candle Flagship Store in South Deerfield. All are invited to join the festivities and learn about how to help the American Cancer Society save more lives from cancer.

The event will celebrate and honor local cancer survivors, patients and caregivers, and showcase how funds

raised benefit the local community. Speakers will include Melissa Cushman, a cancer advocacy specialist with the American Cancer Society, as well as members of the volunteer planning committee. Attendees will have the opportunity to register a team for the Relay For Life event, which will be held on June 9-10 at the Franklin County Fairgrounds.

**Local writer, singer, musician, and storyteller Tracy Grammer** will perform a free concert on Monday, January 23, at 7 p.m. in the Greenfield Room of the Greenfield Public Library

Grammer, who lives in Greenfield, tours the United States and Canada regularly, and has traveled to Europe and Japan. She is a masterful storyteller with an ease and charisma on stage – not to mention a riotous sense of humor. One of folk music's most beloved artists, Grammer is renowned for her spring water-clear alto, perfectly intoned violin, and guitar playing that is by turns percussive and delicate.

This free concert, sponsored by

the Friends of the Greenfield Public Library, is free and open to the public. For more information, check [www.greenfieldpubliclibrary.org](http://www.greenfieldpubliclibrary.org) or contact Lisa Prolman at (413) 772-1544.

**Tuesday and Friday open swims** have started at the Turners Falls High School. Family swim is 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., and adult lap swim is 7:30 to 8:30 p.m.

For more information, call 863-3216 or visit [www.montague.net](http://www.montague.net), go to Parks and Recreation, and click on "Winter Programs."

Enjoy a "Girls Day Out" at the YMCA, 451 Main Street in Greenfield, on Sunday, January 29, from noon to 3 p.m.

The interactive day includes health talks, group exercise classes, cooking demos, and a scuba demo. Over 50 vendors will be available. This event is recommended for all girls, ages 6 to 106.

Send your local briefs to [editor@montaguereporter.org](mailto:editor@montaguereporter.org).

### OBEAR from page A1

The receivership program is part of the state attorney general's "abandoned housing initiative." A court appoints a receiver to bring an abandoned and "blighted" property into compliance with local sanitary codes. When the work is completed, the receiver places a lien on the property, and can initiate a foreclosure. The structure is then put up for auction; the previous owner of record and the receiver are both allowed to bid for purchase.

### Branching Out

Obear's focus on distressed properties has been a boon in recent years to town hall, which has had difficulty finding viable companies to redevelop infrastructure.

Take, for example, the Railroad Salvage Annex, which sits next to the larger crumbling Railroad Salvage building on Power Street in Turners Falls. Last year, Obear was awarded the right to develop the former storage building under the homesteading program. His

proposal for the structure envisions two live-in work spaces on the ground level, and apartments and an office on the second floor. Obear has applied for state historical tax credits to fund the project.

The annex would be the second major project Obear undertakes in Montague under the commercial homesteading program. The first involved a cluster of four decaying buildings that have long been an eyesore in the heart of the village of Millers Falls, centering on a structure known as the Powers Block.

Obear was granted the right to redevelop the property in January of 2015. The three smaller buildings are finished, and now house his own company headquarters, a laundromat, offices, and rental units.

He expects the largest structure to be ready for occupancy in the "late spring or early summer" of this year. He is negotiating with a client for the first floor, which was originally proposed to house a restaurant. The building will also include seven apartments.

Obear told the *Reporter* that the Powers project has "generally gone smoothly, considering the nature of the building." He said his company had "spent more money than expected, but I expected that."

Speaking of stressed properties, Obear has been granted the right to develop Building 11, a free-standing structure that is part of the town-owned Strathmore Mill complex. His plan, as currently proposed, would divide the six-story building into up to 20 condominiums.

Town planner Walter Ramsey informed the *Reporter* that the Building 11 project is on hold, pending the resolution of "access issues." These include the status of a key footbridge over the Turners Falls canal owned by the power company FirstLight, as well as vehicular access and parking.

The Strathmore complex is currently under an order from the state fire marshal, which requires the town to board up numerous openings, fix roof leaks, and address dangerous structural deficiencies. This work will probably require an appropriation from a special town meeting.

The Obear Company has developed two buildings on L Street in Turners Falls under the state receivership program. Obear now owns one of the buildings, 110 L, while the other will soon be up for auction. He declined to say whether he planned to bid to own it.

The company has also been involved in construction projects in other towns, including Shutesbury, Orange – where it took on two buildings through receivership – Whately, and Northampton.

As if this were not enough, the company is also branching out into residential solar installation, which Obear said he is offering as an "additional service" to his clients.

### Turning Around

Obear told the *Reporter* that although rehabilitating "distressed properties" is now an important part of his business, his "real focus and passion is building."

"I specialize in low-energy and net-zero homes as the primary focus of my business model," he said. "I am currently designing two new homes for private clients that will both be close, if not below, net zero, and have a minimum energy footprint and close to zero carbon

footprint."

Part of the reason for the emphasis on distressed properties is a desire to maintain the stability of his company during the ups and downs of the market. He currently keeps about eight steady employees on payroll. "I have a great team right now," he said, "and I don't want to lose them like in '08."

Obear is bullish about the future of the town. "I love Montague," he said. "I love the architecture. Things are turning around; properties are getting renovated. I think it's positive."

While Obear said he supports affordable housing, he thinks that redevelopment needs to be "balanced" to sustain a viable downtown economy. "You can't have too large a percentage of the population with no money to spend." He agrees with the town's current focus on the potential "young professionals market."

Obear also noted that this market is also changing. "People are being priced out of new construction. Nobody wants to own a big house any more.... There is a huge market for apartments, condominiums, and energy efficiency... and if you invest in solar or heat pumps, you can virtually eliminate utility bills in six or seven years."

Obear said he is aware that he has taken on a large number of projects in Montague that other developers would not touch. "I think it's realistic," he said. "If it wasn't, I wouldn't be doing it."

"A lot of the business involves subcontracting – it depends on your business model. I go back and forth on it. With [subcontracting], you lose control and quality."

Obear did not express concern about the state fire marshal's order targeting the Strathmore, or the demand by the Turners Falls Fire Department that warning signs with a red X be placed on dangerous buildings in the complex.

Regarding the recent fire at the main Railroad Salvage Building, he told the *Reporter* that it was "unfortunate, but could be a catalyst to take down the building and clean up the property."

He added, jokingly, that he was at home when that fire started. "And my son can verify that," he said.



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### A NOTE FROM OUR AD MANAGER:

By HANNAH SANCHEZ

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Placing a print advertisement in the *Reporter* does two things:

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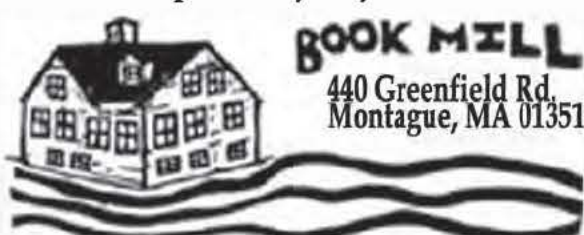
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RECYCLE

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### Great Falls Middle School Students of the Week

week ending 1/13/2017:

#### Grade 6

Eli Dresser

#### Grade 7

Caitlyn Jacobsen

#### Grade 8

Haley Bastarache



ED GREGORY PHOTO

## Layers Added to the Rubble of History

By MIKE JACKSON

**TURNERS FALLS** – It wasn't the last of Joseph Griswold's old Turners Falls Cotton Mill, but it was getting close to it. Ray Hogan, a laborer with Associated Building Wreckers of Springfield, watched appreciatively as operator Bill Babcock expertly swiped away sections of the building's brick walls with the long arm of a Caterpillar 330D hydraulic excavator.

"We both didn't think it would be this easy," Hogan told the *Reporter*. "He looks at me, he says, 'We might finish this today.'"

"He's our best operator," he added, grinning as Babcock danced the excavator's treads over fresh piles of brick. Hogan himself carried an oversized socket wrench, which he used to attach different buckets and extension arms to the machine's boom. Clouds of dust swirled in the crisp morning air.

The two-man demolition crew worked quickly and efficiently on the Monday holiday morning, taking down the building's eastern wing, toppling an ancient elevator shaft, and reducing its iconic western wall along Power Street to a single story in order to make the street safe again for traffic. Montague building inspector David Jensen and industrial historian Ed Gregory monitored their progress, while other onlookers dropped by.

"If you look down, you can see the old penstock that was built for the waterwheel," said an excited Gregory. "That's a pretty cool piece of history that's being exposed

there." Gregory also pointed out that the majority of the building's bricks were fired on the site.

The mill's northern wall, and tallest tower, have been left standing. "It doesn't immediately impact public safety," explained Jensen. "It's over the basement, and it's relatively stable. And it's hard to reach."

The work was being paid for up front by the town of Montague, which secured a court order for the building's partial demolition last week, following the fire that started in the early morning hours of December 31 and smoldered for nearly three days.

Jensen said he guessed that the eventual full demolition and clean-up of the site could cost someone "350, 400 grand," though the selectboard has currently only approved up to \$20,000 from a budget line item designated for "unsafe buildings."

The mill saw adaptive reuse as the Rockdale department store and the Railroad Salvage discount department store, but has been empty and deteriorating for years. Its last owner of record, Creative Solutions LLC, purchased it at land auction for \$200 but was apparently dissolved due to a lack of members.

Hogan, who said he had spent the previous week helping demolish a residential block in Holyoke after a fatal fire, inquired as to the structure's history.

"Buncha crazy owners in a row," Jensen began, before launching into the list.

TOP: Bricks fly as the building's western wall is reduced to a single story. MIDDLE: Operator Bill Babcock, working in an unbeated cab, checks in with the town building inspector. BOTTOM: The eastern wall of the main section falls.



JACKSON PHOTO



ED GREGORY PHOTO

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**FARMERS** from page A1

potent greenhouse gasses.

“And yet,” he said, “as a farmer, the two things you need most in your soil are carbon for soil structure, and nitrogen for plant growth. So tillage is taking the two things you need most in your soil, removing them, and causing greenhouse gas emissions.”

They also cited a USDA study which found that farm fields using moldboard plows – the most common tillage method – lose an average of 4,000 lb. of soil per acre per year to erosion, while no-till systems lose only 6 lb. per acre per year.

Turning to solutions, Paul cited a United Nations and European Union meta-study “finding that agriculture has the greatest capacity to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, at the cheapest cost... compared to all other sectors combined,” including energy, industry and waste management.

In fact, Elizabeth Kaiser said in a phone interview, current research shows that a 2% increase in soil organic matter in worldwide agricultural land – including annual cropland, but also orchards and pasture – would sequester enough emissions to bring us back to atmospheric carbon levels of 350 parts per million, the number that most climate scientists agree is a safe level.

**A Richer Soil**

How achievable is a 2% increase in soil organic matter? In the six years since the Kaisers switched to no-till farming practices, they have increased their soil organic matter by 400% at soil depths of 6 to 12 inches. They achieved this result by ceasing tillage; keeping the soil covered year-round with densely-spaced living plants; cutting finished crops just under the soil level, instead of pulling them out, to keep roots in the ground; planting lots of perennial hedgerows, to shelter soil and attract pollinators; and using lots of locally-produced

compost, to feed the soil life.

When one crop comes out, another crop is transplanted into the same bed within about two hours. Keeping the soil covered in living plants keeps soil organisms alive, because the organisms depend on living plants to pump sugar, the product of photosynthesis, down into the soil through their roots. The organisms then convert that root-sugar – known as “exudates” – into stable carbon compounds like humic acid, which is how carbon gets stored for the long term in the soil.

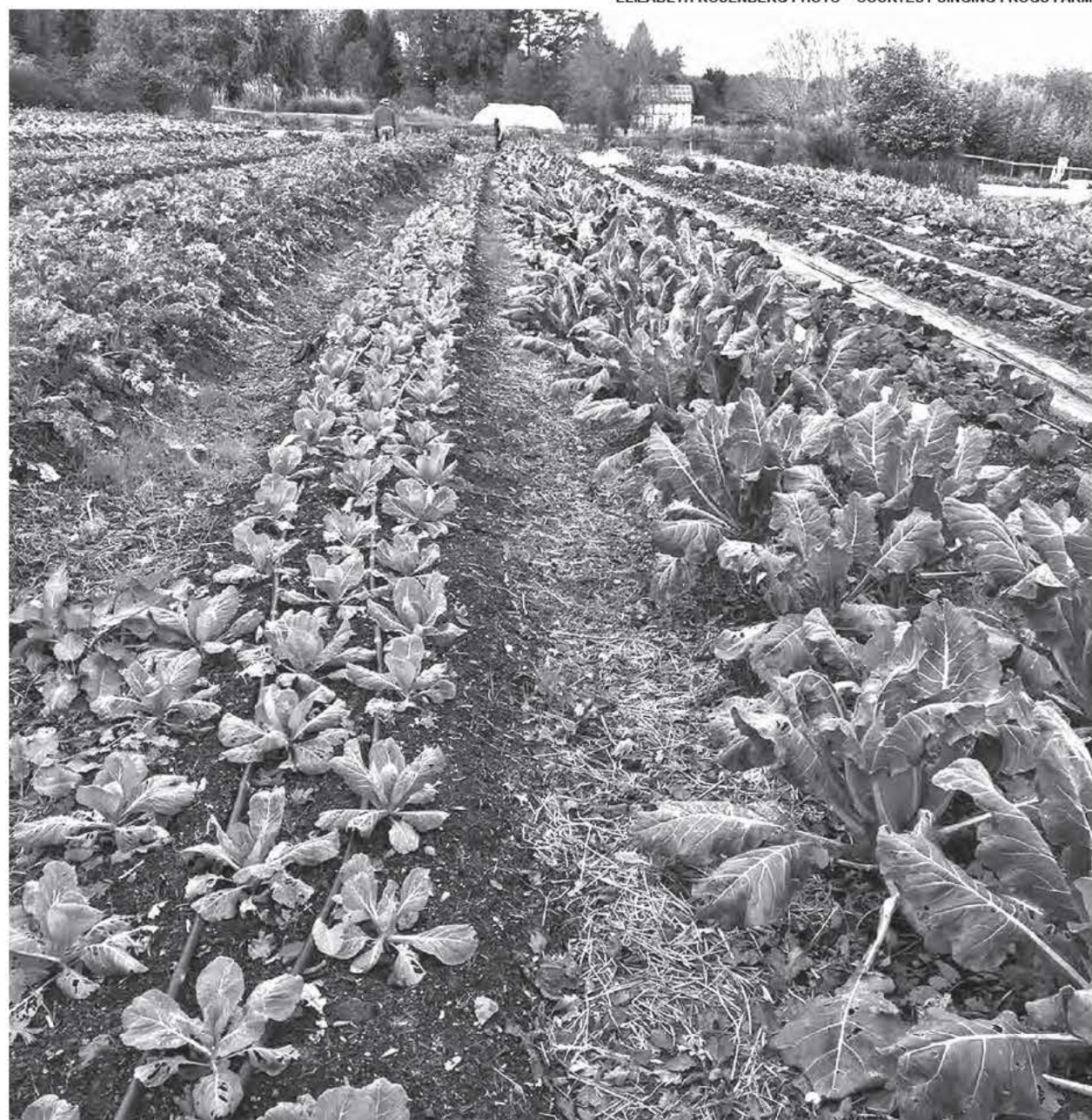
And how have these intensive practices affected the Kaisers’ bottom line? They were quick to point out that farmers too often fall into the trap of thinking that a farm is either ecologically sustainable *or* profitable. Yet the results of their practices clearly show that biointensive, no-till practices can offer a way to both economic and ecologic health.

In fact, the Kaisers currently gross over \$100,000 per acre—about 10 times the average gross for vegetable farmers in their area. In their post-conference dinner speech, Paul told the audience that, while Singing Frogs Farm has only three acres in cultivation, they serve 120 CSA members, two farmers markets, and several restaurant accounts. Yet they frequently get calls from a neighboring farm with closer to 20 acres in vegetable production and 60 CSA members. The neighbor calls requesting to buy produce from Singing Frogs Farm to help them, the bigger farm, fill those 60 boxes.

**Inspired by Success**

One local CSA farmer who attended the talk was clearly impressed. Jeremy Barker-Plotkin, owner-operator of Simple Gifts Farm in North Amherst, noted that the Kaisers “gross six times what we do, on a sixth of the land.”

Jeremy and his business partner Dave Tepfer have farmed 30 acres



*At the Kaisers' Sonoma County, California organic farm, roots decompose in the ground, the surface is kept covered with plants, and the soil is never tilled. These and other techniques aim to maximize the volume of microorganisms in the soil.*

– 19 in vegetables, the rest in livestock – for more than ten years. Though they have steadily improved their soil health with ecological methods like re-mineralization, mulching, multi-species cover cropping, and livestock integration into vegetable lands, they do – like most farms – till with tractors.

A couple days after the conference, Jeremy told me that Simple Gifts plans to set aside about a third of an acre to “start trialing the

Kaisers’ methods.”

Another CSA farmer, Julie Rawson, owner of Many Hands Organic Farm in Barre as well as executive director of NOFA/Mass, said the Kaisers exemplify “people who use their ingenuity, strong business sense, and knowledge of sustainable growing practices to build a viable business model.”

It was the carbon sequestration data that appealed most to Montague resident Ashley Schenk, who homesteads in the town center and is a project manager with the Montague-based ecological landscape firm Broadfork Permaculture. “As someone who has been thinking about carbon farming, and working to incorporate it into my work as a landscape designer,” he said, “I was very inspired by the success Paul and Elizabeth have found using these techniques.”

Another local homesteader, Sharon Gensler of Wendell, said that the Kaisers’ “growing insights and techniques were inspirational. They prove that big agriculture is a dinosaur, and small scale farms are our future.”

Gensler is the outgoing outreach coordinator at NOFA/Mass, retiring after a decade of service to the organization. Just before the Kaisers took the stage, she received the group’s Person of the Year award for her work on behalf of the organic farming, gardening, and homesteading communities. She said she plans to stay involved,

though, as a part-time soil analyst for NOFA’s developing technical support program.

Angela Roell, owner-operator of Yardbirds Farm in Montague, had a similar take on the talk as Gensler. She appreciated the Kaisers’ “philosophy that we should have hundreds of two-to-three-acre farms practicing no-till, close to cities and cultural epicenters, rather than a few hundred-acre farms isolated in rural areas.”

When I asked Elizabeth Kaiser how it feels to have such a big impact on the way that farmers and land managers think about both scale and soil carbon, Elizabeth laughed and said, “It’s overwhelming, because to us what we’re doing is just based in common sense and observation, so getting a lot of renown for it feels, in one way odd, but at the same time also powerful.”

Noting that the increase in publicity of the Kaisers’ methods have flooded them with requests for advice and guidance from other farmers all over the world, she added, “It does tax us a lot, but we are idealists. And if we can make positive change in the world, that’s what we need to do.”

*Caro Roszell owns and operates New Wendell Farm, and served as workshops coordinator at the 2017 NOFA/Mass winter conference.*



PHOTO/COURTESY SINGING FROGS FARM

*A mere three acres is cultivated at Singing Frogs Farm, but their efforts to continuously enrich the soil pay off in vegetable production, suggesting that carbon sequestration and business growth don't need to be at odds.*

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# The Children's Page



## “The Surprised Guests”

Story and pictures by BEVERLY KETCH

“I’m so happy to see you, Señor Cat! Have you been very busy this week?”  
“Junebug,” said Señor Cat, “Old Scratch told me you didn’t like my dinner last week, at least not very much.”  
“Well that wasn’t true, I loved it! I tried to cook the dish myself, but it wasn’t nearly as good as yours.

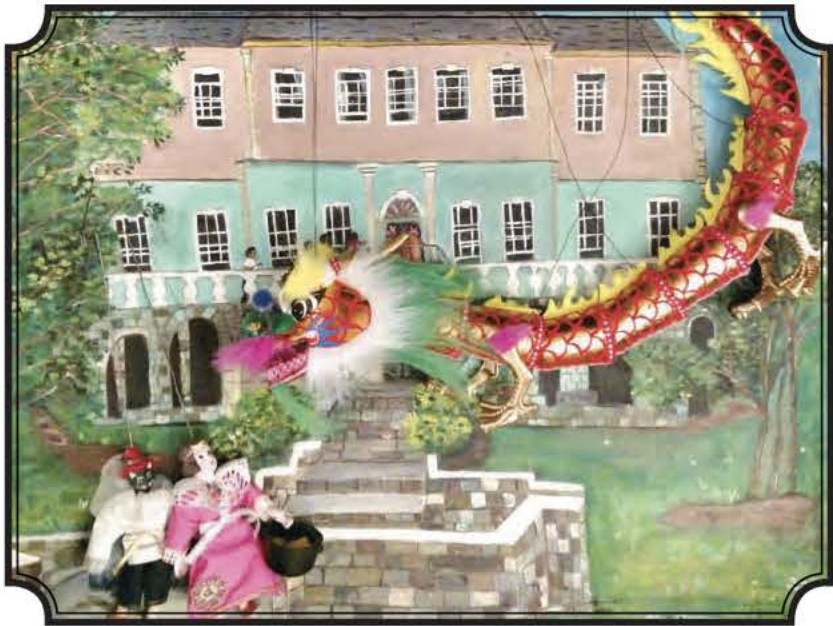
Thank goodness this lovely peacock took up residence in my garden, or I would have been just too lonely!”  
“Oh Junebug, I am so relieved!” Tears filled Señor Cat’s eyes. “How I treasure your company. It’s sad to miss your friends!”  
“Our dear friend Embla must miss everyone, since she moved to Winterland. It’s so far away. It takes a week to get there! I wish we could visit her.”  
“If we had some gold, we could travel by dragon! We could wait at the dragon stop until one came.”



“Look Junebug, it’s a rainbow! Let’s find the pot of gold at the end of it!”



“This is our lucky day! We can keep Embla company, and we get to travel by dragon! How exciting.”

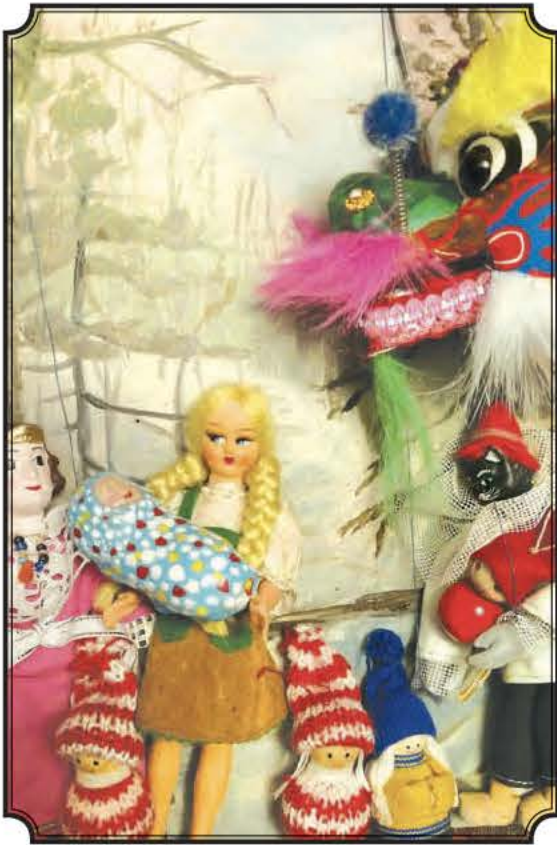


“Let’s meet the dragon in the town square.”



Off flew Junebug and Señor Cat, on a thrilling ride over hill and dale.

Arriving in Winterland, they soon found Embla. But much to their surprise, she was anything but lonely.



“Embla, you have so much company!” they both declared.  
“Yes, I sure do, but am I ever glad to see you! I am babysitting for Mr. and Mrs. Magician, but I fear their travel spell has gone wrong, because they should have been back long ago! Maybe you can search the world with this dragon?  
Mr. and Mrs. Magician have plenty of gold to pay him.”  
“I will stay and help you babysit! I will start by making a big meal for you all!” said Señor Cat.  
“And I will fly with the dragon to search for their parents,” said Junebug.



“My name is Percy,” said the dragon.  
“Let’s go, Junebug! This will be fun.”

Would you have fun helping with the children’s page? Your newspaper crafts, children’s drawings and favorite activity suggestions would be a wonderful addition!  
Contact Beverly Ketch at [kidspage@montaguereporter.org](mailto:kidspage@montaguereporter.org).

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WENDELL from page A1

The letter also asked that towns have a seat at the table when decisions are made about building and operating the network. Towns will contribute more than half the cost of the network even after the \$40 million in grant funding is disbursed by MBI.

Jeff Bauman said he felt the wording in the selectboard’s letter was “unfortunate.” He said few households in Wendell can afford a \$3,000 expense, and as an attorney he would not advise a client to put a lien on his home for property – the fiber-optic network – that he would not own.

Wendell has voted to approve borrowing \$1.9 million for construction of a fiber-optic network based on the WiredWest figure of \$49 per month for basic internet service. The current estimate for basic service is \$100 a month, and \$120 to \$130 of it includes voice over internet (VoIP) telephone service.

Pooser said that the state has changed its position to favor private construction of any network.

Ray DiDonato, a member of the former broadband committee, said it was important to project to MBI what the town supports. In June, he said, Crocker had a different plan, and the town’s current broadband committees, which focus on construction and operations, have not kept in contact with either Crocker or Holyoke Gas and Electric – the company that the former committee recommended as system operator – causing a delay of six months.

Alistair MacMartin, chair of the operations committee and member of the construction committee, said that there had been no such delay. The pole survey is under way, and the system design will follow, and after that decisions can be made based on real numbers.

Judy Bauman said that the cost of what she pays for a land line telephone, which she said is not dependable, a cell phone, which seldom gets reception at her home, and satellite internet service, which depends on weather, comes to \$250 a month altogether. She compared this with the cost of both financ-

ing the fiber-optic system through an increase in taxes and then paying a monthly bill, and implied she would be way ahead if the system were built.

Citizen Don Pugh said he came to the meeting because of the reference to \$3,000 per household. Selectboard chair Christine Heard said the fee could be looked at as an investment in the value of a home, like a new roof.

**Jeff Bauman  
said that as an  
attorney, he would  
not advise a client  
to put a lien on his  
home for property  
– the fiber-optic  
network – that he  
would not own.**

Pooser said that among the people he has spoken with, “if the \$3,000 personal input were the only option, many would take it.” He reiterated MacMartin’s statement that nothing has been delayed in the process of getting a system built and operating.

DiDonato disagreed, and asked the current broadband committees to review the recommendations the former committee made in June.

Heard thanked everyone for coming and compared the town’s position in trying to get an internet connection to townspeople, with changing conditions and the MBI’s changing positions, to being on “a storm-tossed raft.”

Appealing

The selectboard discussed the property at 131 Lockes Village Road where resident Andy Hamilton is appealing the building inspector’s report to the town’s zoning board of appeals. All ZBA members are relatively new.

Conservation commission chair Robin Heubel said the con com’s site inspection scheduled for December 30 was cancelled because

of snow and surgery. A representative of the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) came to the January 10 con com meeting and gave a new enforcement order, with which Hamilton has not complied. The DEP suggested a tighter enforcement order.

Board of health member Shay Cooper said her board’s visit found no evidence of septic system issues. Neither the board of health nor the con com have much leverage for the junk metal on the property.

Town coordinator Nancy Aldrich said Hamilton had sent the town a letter stating that if any of the pictures that building inspector Phil Delorey took show interiors of the building, even through windows or other openings, they must be returned to him. His letter was put in the tax collector’s box, and brought to the town clerk, and then to the selectboard. Hamilton has no mailing address, but can be reached by text. Aldrich can give letters to police chief Ed Chase, who can deliver them in person.

In March there will be a joint meeting of the three boards that are dealing with this situation.

Other Business

On February 7, the con com will hold a hearing on the superseding conditions that the DEP gave for the proposed solar generating facility off Wendell Depot Road. With information from that hearing, the con com will make its ruling. The court date for the suit by Sunnectivity, developers of the plan, has been pushed back again.

Pooser said he will post a digital version of National Grid’s spraying vegetation control plan on the town website and email list. Control efforts will take place over an eleven-month period.

The selectboard chose Tuesday March 14 or Thursday March 16 as the date for a special town meeting, depending on the availability of the clerk and moderator.

The nonprofit organization Vehicles for Veterans asked for a link to be placed on the town’s website, an idea that board members approved in principle.



SHEA from page A1

and a big screen,” which would allow for “very regular movie nights in the theater.”

The STAC hosted 59 productions in its first year of management, during which Penny Burke, executive director of the Northampton Center for the Arts, helmed the organization. Burke’s tenure as acting director was intended to last one year.

“She’s been second in command,” explained Chris “Monte” Belmonte, president of the STAC’s board of directors, of Tardif. “She was hired to assist Penny Burke, learn from her, in the hopes that she would want to potentially become the managing director. That’s what has happened, and we’re thrilled.”

Belmonte said Tardif had worked with Burke during 2016 on “ticketing, negotiating deals with the different renters, and things of that nature.”

“It was great getting her up to speed on what we were trying to do all last year,” he continued, “and having her make the natural transition into being the one to spearhead it.”

“She’s really good with the nuts and bolts – there’s no question about that,” said Burke. “I think

it’s a really strong management group that’s in there now. I have a lot of confidence in them going forward.”

Burke added that she would continue to make herself available to the STAC during the transition.

Prior to her involvement at the Shea, Tardif toured the country with FoodPlay Productions, a Hatfield-based company that presents on wellness and nutrition in elementary schools. She worked as both a performer and production assistant. “There were circus tricks, like juggling, and a lot of audience participation,” she explained.

Tardif, who holds a BA in theater, has also worked with Serious Play!, PaintBox Theatre, Silverthorne and Eggtooth Productions. “One of my biggest plans,” she said, “because my background personally is in theater, is to expand – I’d like to offer some residencies to theaters that can partner with the Shea, and we can have very regular theater performances throughout the year.”

According to Burke, her time at the Shea helped the Center for the Arts “support regional theater during this period of time we don’t have a venue of our own.”

“It kind of just flew by,” she said

of her term managing the theater. “It was interesting for me – I’m sort of Northampton-based, so it’s not my backyard. I got to interact with a lot of groups that are more Greenfield- or Montague-based.”

Burke said that the Northampton group “introduced a number of our own resident companies to the Shea, and I expect them to be returning there.”

Though January is a quiet month, Tardif says that STAC is “in negotiations for a very busy February and March,” including a February 9 engagement with nationally reputed comedian and voice actor Eugene Mirman (“tickets are selling really quickly,” she points out). “I’ll be making sure the theater is in use as much as possible.”

And Belmonte said he was looking forward to the ways new equipment would help keep the theater lively.

“When we have a screen and projector,” he said, “when there are lighter times in the calendar, we can throw together a cheap movie night – plug up a lot of the holes, so that something is happening there every week, if not more than once a week. And I think it’ll be great that Linda is tapped to take care of that.”



**Turners Falls Hydroelectric Project  
Joint Meeting and Site Visit  
PUBLIC NOTICE**

Turners Falls Hydro, LLC (“TFH”), a subsidiary of Eagle Creek Renewable Energy, LLC (“Eagle Creek”), owns and operates the Turners Falls Hydroelectric Project (“Project”; FERC No. 2622) located on the Turners Falls Power Canal and Connecticut River in Franklin County, Massachusetts. In support of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing process, TFH is seeking agency and public input.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE THAT TFH pursuant to 18 CFR §4.38(b)(3)(i)(A)(3), hereby provides written notice of its upcoming joint meeting and site visit to be conducted in accordance with the requirements of 18 CFR §4.38(b)(3)(ii) for the relicensing of the Project. The joint meeting and site visit for the Project is open to all interested resource agencies, Indian tribes, members of the public, and other interested parties. The joint meeting will be held on Tuesday February 7, 2017 at 1:30 p.m. at the Montague Town Hall Upstairs Meeting Room at 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376. The site visit will be held the same day following the Joint Meeting. Those interested in participating in the Site Visit should meet at the Montague Town Hall Upstairs Meeting Room. Please note that a portion of the Site Visit will be outdoors and will begin at the Montague Town Hall with a walk along the Turners Falls Power Canal and ending at the Project Powerhouse. The Site Visit will be limited to the first floor of the Powerhouse, the generator deck, due to access restrictions.

The purpose of the joint meeting is to provide an overview of the Project and present the information provided in the Pre-Application Document (PAD) filed with FERC on February 26, 2016; discuss the licensing process and schedule; discuss any necessary studies to be conducted by TFH to support its license application; and receive input and feedback regarding the information presented. All interested parties and public are invited to attend the joint meeting to assist in identifying and clarifying the scope of issues to be addressed during subsequent phases of the relicensing process for the Project. A copy of the PAD is available on Eagle Creek’s website at <http://www.eaglecreekre.com/facilities/northeast-region/connecticut-river-ma/turners-falls-relicensing-information> or via the FERC e-library. A hardcopy of the PAD is also available in the Town Clerk’s Office at the Montague Town Hall. Comments on the PAD and study requests are due 60 days after the meeting. If you have any questions regarding this notice, please contact Bob Gates, Vice President, at (973) 998-8400 or [bob.gates@eaglecreekre.com](mailto:bob.gates@eaglecreekre.com).

**Joint Meeting**  
Date: February 7, 2017  
Time: 1:30 p.m.  
Location: Montague Town Hall Meeting Room at 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376

**Site Visit**  
Date: February 7, 2017  
Time: Following the Joint Meeting to 4 p.m.  
Location: Montague Town Hall upstairs meeting room

**Joint Meeting Agenda**

- Welcome and Introductions
- Review of the FERC Traditional Licensing Process and Schedule
- Overview of the Project
- Overview of Information Provided in the Pre-Application Document (PAD)
- Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act (PURPA) Benefits
- Proposed Resource Studies
- Next Steps
- Comments

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High achiever: Turners' Kylie Fleming takes a shot over the Ware defense as Turners Falls defeats Ware 40-39.

# The Week in TFHS Sports

For the Ladies, Jade Tyler took first place in the 100-yard butterfly (1:09.19) and the 100-yard backstroke (1:12.40), and Olivia Whittier won the 100-yard breaststroke in 1:18.33.

For the boys, Cameron Bradley won the 200-yard freestyle in 2:13.06 and the 100-yard freestyle in 58.75, while Nick Taylor won the 100-yard butterfly in 1:09.25 and the 500-yard freestyle in 6:52.54.

Both teams then hosted Sci-Tech on Wednesday after Tuesday's meet was postponed.

## Ice Hockey

Amherst 8 – TFHS 0

On Saturday, January 14, the Turners Falls Skating Indians were shut out by Amherst, 8-0.

Amherst scored six goals in the first period, and scored one more just seconds into the second. But for the rest of the period and the entire third, Amherst was held to just one more goal.

Goalkeeper Michael McGoldrick had an 82.6% save ratio, blocking away 38 of the 46 shots slapped at him. On the other end of the rink, Turners only managed 12 shots-on-goal.

The Tribe next lace up their skates on Tuesday, January 17 against South Hadley.

## Girls Basketball

TFHS 40 – Ware 39

Last Friday, the Turners Falls Lady Indians defeated Ware in incredible fashion.

The game was never in doubt for powerhouse Ware (6-1). At least not until 2:47 of the third quarter, when Turners finally tied it at 26. Before that, Ware had the run of the court. They shot out to a 10-2 lead and expanded it to a 10-point spread, 14-4.

But Turners scored the last bucket of the first, and after one quarter, Blue was down, 14-6. Ware expanded their lead in the second quarter to 20-11, but Powertown didn't give up as they inched their way back into the game. By the time the midgame buzzer sounded with the Tribe was within 7 points, 24-17.

Turners came out of the locker room on fire, outscoring Ware 9-2 and after 5 minutes and 13 seconds into the third, the game was knotted at 26. Ware hit a three-pointer, but Kylie Fleming answered with four points of her own, hitting a three to

tie the game and following up by hitting a foul shot. After 3 full, Turners was finally in the lead 30-29.

In the last quarter, with momentum on their side, Turners shot out to a 38-33 lead with only 1:08 left. Then everything seemed to fall apart for the Blue Ladies. Ware scored a bucket with 37.9 left, then scored another to make the score 38-37 with 28 seconds left.

Turners only had to kill the clock to preserve the victory, but the inbound pass was intercepted. Ware put it up, and with very little time left, Turners found itself down 38-39.

Turners moved the ball up court, Fleming drove to the hoop and... she missed the go-ahead basket. But she was fouled and went to the line, with 6.1 seconds left.

Friday's game was held in Turners Falls. This gave the home court advantage to Powertown. The True Blue faithful, who had been loudly supportive even when their team was down by double digits, cheered and clapped and groaned even louder as Turners took the lead and then gave it back again.

But with Kylie and the game on the line, even the Turners' boys in the near bleachers grew eerily quiet, making raining fingers in the hope she would at least tie the game and send it into OT.

She hit the first hoop to tie it up at 39 all, dribbled once or twice, shot and hit the second to take the lead, 40-39. The gym exploded. The boys in the bleachers, who were already on their feet, got on one another's shoulders and began to chant as Ware was forced to go the entire court in 6 seconds.

But then the unthinkable happened. Turners immediately fouled, and with Ware in the bonus, they went to the line with 5.2 left and one more chance to cement the victory. After Ware missed the freebees, it seemed that Turners might just escape with a W, but Ware again stole the inbound and was fouled. The refs ruled that the player was shooting so instead of a 1-and-1, Ware was given two shots at the line with only 1.2 seconds left.

The first shot hit the rim and bounced wide, giving Ware 1 more shot to extend the game to a fifth quarter. But the home crowd would have none of that. As the ball left the shooter's hands, the noise bounced off the walls – and the ball bounced off the

rim. Turners snagged the rebound, cries of relief echoed, and Coach Wilcox raised his arms in triumph. Kylie Fleming was the high scorer for Blue, pumping in a 3-pointer, five foul shots, and two from the floor. Maddy Chmyzinski also hit double figures with 10, including 2 from 3-point land and 2 from the line.

Two Lady Indians had 7 points, with Chloe Ellis getting three field goals and a free throw and Aliyah Sanders sinking a 3-pointer, a field goal and 2 freebees. Emma Miner also banged in a 3 and ended with 4 points, and Lexi Lacey, Abby Loynd, Dabney Rollins and Hailey Bogusz also helped out on the floor.

The Lady Indians next travel to Dupont Middle School in Chicopee to face the Pope Francis Cardinals on Wednesday, January 18.



DAVID HOITT PHOTOS



Turners' Josh Obuchowski goes up for a jump shot as Mahar's Bryce Cleveland defends.



Turners' Abby Loynd drives the ball past a Ware defender as Turners Falls defeats Ware 40-39 at TFHS.

By MATT ROBINSON

This week the Turners Falls sports machine faced some pretty tough competition. The swim teams traveled to Ludlow, the hockey team faced off against the seventh-best team in the region, the boys basketball squad took on undefeated Mahar, which is ranked 16<sup>th</sup>, and the Lady Indians toppled mighty Ware, a top-twenty girls basketball team.

## Boys Basketball

Mahar 77 – TFHS 51

The Turners Falls Basketball Indians fought an uphill battle against the Senators of Mahar last Thursday, January 12. The loss gives the Tribe a record of 7-2.

The Boys in Blue tied it at 2-2 at 6:45 of the first quarter, but Mahar's aggressive defense stymied Powertown's running O, and by the time the period ended, Blue was down 22-11. Mahar extended the lead to 41-25 at the half and cruised to a 77-51 victory.

Tyler Lavin was Blue's high scorer by sinking four 3-pointers for 12 points. Tionne Brown and Kyle Bergmann also hit double figures with 10 points apiece. Brown hit a 3-pointer, three foul shots, and two inside the arc, while Bergmann threw in six frees and two field goals.

Nick Croteau scored 5 points on a 3-and-2 from the line. Josh Obuchowski and Anthony Peterson each put up 4 points, while James Vaughn, Ricky Craver and Javonni Williams each scored 2. Turners hosted Athol on Tuesday, and this Thursday, Mohawk comes to town.

## Swimming


Ludlow 104 – TFHS Girls 46



Ludlow 85 – TFHS Boys 50

On Wednesday, January 11, the two Turners Falls swim teams traveled to the Ludlow Boys & Girls Club to take on the Ludlow Lions. As in previous meets, Powertown's lack of depth hurt their team score, while individuals excelled in their own events.

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## Erving Company Keeps The Wheels of Commerce Turning in Four Counties



NINA ROSSI PHOTO

Brion Stracensky has built a niche delivery business.

By JOE KWIECINSKI

**ERVING** – When Brion Stracensky started Halo Couriers some six years ago in Northampton, little did he know how his small transport and delivery enterprise would grow into today’s unique and diversified business.

Quartered initially in Northampton, the fledgling courier service was pretty much a bicycle delivery outfit with a clientele made up of city businesses and residents. In 2012, Halo moved operations to Hadley. There the private transport company added motor vehicle delivery to the mix while still retaining bicycle transport.

Flash forward two more years and Stracensky’s business expanded enough to require relocation in

Erving at 1 River Street.

“I now provide routed and on-demand delivery serving any and all industries since moving here in 2014,” said Brion. “In addition to my residential and commercial delivery service, I can also transport and file legal documents at courthouses and transfer evidence, maintaining chain of custody.”

Stracensky is also proud of what he terms his Last Mile Solution. “The giant carriers like Federal Express and UPS, especially when delivering in heavy traffic or other difficult conditions, have their biggest challenge over the last mile. This is where I can fill that niche, providing same-day service at a much lower price. For example, if a customer is in a time bind, we can get the job

see **HALO** page B6



MARY AZARIAN WOODBLOCK PRINT

By LESLIE BROWN

**MONTAGUE CITY** – If you have been lucky enough to work at something which challenges and engages you and also gives you satisfaction and well-being, then letting go takes time and preparation.

For those who have found employment a form of drudgery and only a necessary evil, the letting go is a welcome release. Still, we humans are creatures of routine, and that itself has meaning and will be missed.

In my late fifties, I was consumed by my job and the care of my husband, who was increasingly debilitated by lung disease, and my mom, who also needed more help. Retirement was the furthest thing from my mind. I was fifty-seven when my mom died and I was a mere sixty when I was widowed.

Working saved me, gave a focus to my life; in fact, got me up each day. I put in long days and often

### THE GARDENER’S COMPANION

## Life After Retirement

brought work home on the weekend. I was working numbly, on autopilot.

When I came back to life it was slowly, but I began to find myself again: I read, I gardened, I got together with friends. That summer I made my first solo trip to midcoast Maine. I dreaded travel on three and four lane speedways and instead devised a gentler route across New Hampshire and a lot of rural Maine. I took many short breaks.

The spirits of my grandmother, my mom and my husband filled the car. It was a gentler way, but much longer; it was approaching dark when I pulled into the yard of our beloved rental. A large eagle in the top of the sole pine at the edge of the cove welcomed me. I knew I would survive.

I worked that way for five years, one week off in the summer and short bursts at the holidays. I loved my job: working with colleagues, with teachers and students and parents. It was intense, yet very satisfying.

In the spring of my sixty-fifth year, I began to realize that I was

see **GARDENERS** page B3

## OYSTERGIRL’s guide to REAL LIVING

by Vanessa Query

**TURNERS FALLS** – Fire cider is a popular folk remedy in the herbalist community. It’s a base of apple cider vinegar, infused with, traditionally, horseradish, onions, garlic, ginger, and local unfiltered honey. Usually taken as a daily tonic, it is believed to help promote circulation, immunity response, and digestion.

This preparation can change from year to year, and based on where you live and depending on what’s growing around you. Other ingredients may include hot peppers, turmeric, rosemary, lemon, and echinacea root.

I believe that consuming a fire cider that is locally-based and seasonally-appropriate will further increase your body’s capacity to adapt to and gain strength from your environment.

### The Origins of Fire Cider

It might sound like something from medieval times, but fire cider was first concocted – and the term coined – in the early 1980s by well-known herbalist Rosemary Gladstar.

As head of the California School of Herbal Studies, Rosemary’s goal was to develop recipes that were both medicine and food, used accessible ingredients, and were easy to make.

“The idea was to bring medicinal herbalism back into people’s kitchens, as part of their food and as a way of being, not just for medicinal purposes.”

### Rosemary’s Original Fire Cider Recipe

- half-cup grated fresh horseradish root
- half-cup or more fresh chopped onions
- half-cup or more chopped garlic
- half-cup or more grated ginger
- chopped fresh or dried cayenne pepper, whole or powdered, “to taste.” “To taste” means should be hot, but not so hot you can’t tolerate it. Better to make it a little milder than too hot; you can always add more pepper later if necessary.
- Optional ingredients: turmeric, echinacea, cinnamon, etc.

1. Place herbs in a half-gallon canning jar and cover with enough apple cider vinegar to cover the herbs by at least three to four inches. Cover tightly

## #22: Make Your Own Fire Cider



QUERY PHOTO

My fire cider ingredients steeping: garlic, ginger, and hot peppers in apple cider vinegar in a glass jar.

with a tight fitting lid.

2. Place jar in a warm place and let sit. Best to shake every day to help in the maceration process.

3. After three to four weeks, strain out the herbs, and reserve the liquid.

4. Add honey “to taste.” Warm the honey first so it mixes in well. “To taste” means your Fire Cider should taste hot, spicy, and sweet.

5. Rebottle and enjoy! Fire Cider will keep for several months unrefrigerated if stored in a cool pantry. But it’s better to store in the refrigerator.

Here are some additional ingredients I’ve come see **OYSTERGIRL** page B4

### REFLECTION

## An Exploration of Ancestral Responsibility



VOLTZ PHOTO

The view from the peak of Mauna a Wakea, on Hawai’i island.

By EMILY VOLZ

This is a story about ancestry: something we all have, and yet something that is incredibly personal. It is the story of a journey I am still on, a story still being lived without a conclusive ending. And it may forever remain this way, for

when we think of time not as linear, but as cyclical, then this story of patterns and repeating opportunities has no end point.

If there is no end point, it’s hard to say there is a starting point. But for the sake of this story, I will start it in Byron Bay, New South Wales, Australia in 2013. During my un-

dergraduate education at Long Island University’s Global College I studied in Byron Bay for eight months, and it was there that I was first introduced to full-bodied explanations of European settler colonialism in places such as Australia, New Zealand, the USA, and Canada.

Up until that time, I had learned the textbook versions of these histories, which protected my oblivious comfort in my privilege, but did not do much for my understanding of who I was, as a white middle-class woman, in relation to others. The more I learned, the less comfortable I felt.

Once I saw, it became impossible to un-see, so for the next two years I learned to identify the intricacies of settler colonialism. I finished school and moved to Hawai’i island in 2015, where I was blessed to dance hula in Halau Ka’eaikahelani under the instruction of Kumu Y. Ka’ea Lyons and Kumu Lily Kahelelani Lyons Dudoit. They assigned

see **ANCESTRY** page B4

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GARDENERS from page B1

losing my zest for taking on new changes from the department of education, new mandates for testing and curriculum, etc., etc., not to mention just the plain notion of another school year. The thought of retirement began to rise at the edge of my mind. I realized I didn’t want to run that far or fast anymore.

It wasn’t easy. That last year was bittersweet. I welcomed the last freshman class I’d ever meet and waved goodbye to the last class of graduates. Many activities came up for the last time. I was not without sadness, yet still did not regret. Living has taught me that I have a strong core of resilience which would help me move into whatever followed.

The next school year began without me, and that was ok. I began to volunteer, had more time to garden and to read. But I’d be lying if there wasn’t a strong sense of “who am I now?”

And five years later, now what?

The bounteous gift of time. The self-indulgence of an uninterrupted hour with a good book. The pleasure of an unscheduled day. Leisure to give proper care to the yard and garden.

The rekindling of joy. A partner for this next phase of life. The joy of regaining lazy, desk-bound muscle. The growth of the spirit in study and the practice of Tai Chi. New learning: a foreign language, the growth

of my practice of writing. Travels which polish the lens of life if you let in the experience. New peoples and cultures abroad and at home. More time with friends and family as you choose on your time.

Self-reflection. The letting go of things and business that no longer hold meaning. Learning to let go of wasting time on things that don’t matter in the long run. Guarding the preciousness of time and being. Walking this beautiful earth in all its colors and seasons. Sometimes just being.

Remembering always that life is a gift.

Coming soon, a trip to a new place: a beachside apartment in southern North Carolina. We look forward to exploring a new area, to walks on the beach and trying new restaurants, to meeting new friends. Then, soon after returning home, it will be time to start the tomatoes and to plot the new season’s garden. It hardly seems possible.

We can state with certainty that the passage of time speeds up with age, but it can be quite a ride. We lack the extreme energy of youth, but instead have a strong sense of the value of each moment and of looking forward, rather than back.

Whatever we or others around us do, life moves forward and soon the cycle of a new season will begin.

Happy gardening!



# Meals on Wheels in Massachusetts

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

Meals on Wheels delivers meals to seniors in their homes. It first started in the United Kingdom during the Blitz, for those who lost their homes and the ability to cook their own food along with them.

It went national in the United States in 1974, and goes by the name Meals on Wheels America, which is the largest and oldest national organization. The first states to undertake the program were Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York, Oregon and California.

Massachusetts refers people to local Meals on Wheels programs. One of the places in Massachusetts that runs a program is LifePath (formerly Franklin County Home Care), at 330 Montague City Road in Turners Falls. The Poet’s Seat Health Care Center in Greenfield makes referrals for their discharged clients to the program.

Gina, a social worker at Poet’s Seat, says they have been using Meals on Wheels for eight years. When the residents go home, they make a referral to LifePath, and get meals delivered. They do this with people “almost in every discharge,” she says.

Community meals are also served to people at the Second Congregational Church in Greenfield and Our Lady of Peace Church in Turners Falls by people from Franklin County Community Meals program, based in Greenfield.

I learned that the national program has “more than 5,000 community-based senior nutrition” programs to its name. A member service employee from a Meals on Wheels program in the Twin Cities,

MN named Aaron mentioned to me that they serve meals to “about 5,000 in the Twin Cities.”

A woman named Jane has been the nutrition director of LifePath for 9 years, and with the program itself for over 20 years. She tells me that LifePath “currently delivers 540 meals per day.”

“We cover 30 towns of Franklin County and four Worcester County towns,” she says. “We cover the North Quabbin area.”

Jane says she believes the program “has really helped to keep people in their own homes because the drivers check on them to make sure they’re okay.”

That is obviously a nice thing to do. I would also say that it allows these elderly people to have more control over their lives by being in their homes, especially at a stage when some of them are probably not in control of a lot.

If a program can do that for me when I am at that stage of life, I would be very happy. I am not great with being able to do certain things now. I hate to see what I would be like, when it comes to that, when I am elderly.

Some might say that the government isn’t kind to the elderly, at the moment, when it comes to getting their Social Security. Some paperwork problem could leave them without an income. That has occurred to me when it came to my food stamps – someone didn’t get some of my paperwork at one point, and I was without food stamps for a month.

This Meals on Wheels is a good program, that I believe doesn’t fail the elderly, which might happen when paperwork is involved with a program like food stamps.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

## Fence Jumper; Bag of Glass; Farm Theft; Loose Horse; Hacker; Drunk Driver

Sunday, 1/8

10:03 a.m. Walk-in report of hit and run accident near St. Kaz yesterday. Report taken.

11:43 a.m. Report of suspicious activity: newer model green Subaru Outback pulled up behind Jarvis Pools, white male exited and jumped over the fence, then came back over the fence a few minutes later, got back into the vehicle, and left. Officer contacted keyholder on file and left detailed message. Officer observed tracks in snow leading to the building. Later spoke with a party who advised that the subject in question likely has a key to the building and permission to be there.

7:49 p.m. Officer requesting DPW sanders come out and treat the main roads. Conditions are getting increasingly slippery. Message left for DPW supervisor. Route 63 is also getting very slippery; will reach out to MassHighway and advise them.

9:09 p.m. Caller from Randall Wood Drive feels that the DPW sanding trucks are driving way too fast through her neighborhood and that it is unsafe. DPW supervisor notified of complaint.

10:31 p.m. Caller from Third Street reporting that a known male just assaulted him. Investigated. Not exactly as reported. Report taken.

Monday, 1/9

8:46 a.m. Report of disabled vehicle on Canal Street bridge. Tow requested.

11:38 a.m. Trespass notice received; involved male no longer allowed at Judd Wire.

12:42 p.m. Animal control officer advising he responded to a Vladish Avenue address due to recent complaints and left a note for the homeowners, who were not there.

1:25 p.m. 911 misdial from Town Hall elevator.

2:12 p.m. Caller reporting two car accident at Seventh Street and Avenue A. No injuries.

3:40 p.m. Call from State Police advising of car vs. rock accident on Wendell Road. No injuries reported; however, there is airbag deployment and leaking fluids. Fire and MedCare en route. Incident under investigation.

7:48 p.m. 911 hangup call from I Street. Caller called back advising of verbal argument with neighbor. Officer en route. Caller upset with shopping cart that was left by her house; no argument with neighbor. Officer spoke to neighbor, who claimed he did not leave the cart there. Unit clear.

[Police log covering Tuesday, January 10 missing from document, provided by Montague Police Department upon request.]

[Police log covering Wednesday, January 11 missing from document, provided by Montague Police Department upon request.]

[Police log covering Thursday, January 12 missing from document, provided by Montague Police Department upon request.]

Friday, 1/13

6:08 a.m. 911 caller from Central Street stated she could see some type of flashing light from the rear of her house; at first she thought it was fire, but then the flashing light stopped. Caller indicated it may be coming from a brick house on the corner. When asked for additional info, the caller disconnected. Officer checking area; believes it was coming from the house directly behind the caller. Nothing showing at this time.

5:16 p.m. 911 caller reporting vehicle into tree on Mormon Hollow Road. No injuries reported. Vehicle towed.

10:30 p.m. Officer flagged down by somebody reporting a suspicious package on the ground at Avenue A and Seventh Street. Was just a bag full of glass plates. Bag being brought to station.

Saturday, 1/14

1:42 a.m. Officer checking on suspicious person at Cumberland Farms. Second unit requested.

[Redacted] was arrested on a default warrant.

4:03 a.m. Officer spoke with skateboarders who were riding in the street at Avenue A and Fifth Street. Same moved along.

9:34 p.m. State police requesting MPD assistance for Erving PD, who are on a traffic stop in Millers Falls with a possible stolen vehicle. Vehicle not stolen.

Sunday, 1/15

3:20 a.m. Caller reporting unknown male attempting to break into his apartment. Caller is at F.L. Roberts now to use phone to report. Caller states male was seen running from area on foot. Officers en route. Residence checked; no signs of forced entry, no damage, nothing taken at this time. Area checked; unable to locate anyone matching description.

3:07 p.m. Back-to-back 911 calls reporting single car accident with airbag deployment at Depot Street and Montague City Road. No smoke, fire, fluid, injuries reported; however, MedCare en route as precaution. Vehicle towed.

4:11 p.m. Call from Amherst PD stating that a subject stole a spreader, post hole digger, rototiller, and lumber from a farm in their town. Information regarding suspect and vehicle attached. Amherst called back; they spoke to attached male, who states that they are in Montague and only took a couple of boards to burn, not all the other said items. Amherst requesting MPD officer to go and confirm that other

items are not in male’s possession. Delayed response due to call volume. Amherst calling back to advise that they are all set; they have figured out the situation on their own; nothing further needed from MPD.

4:19 p.m. Multiple reports of loose horse in area of Judd Wire. Officers responding. Owner of horse called and stated that she would be en route to Millers Falls Road to pick up the horse from officers. Horse picked up; both units clear.

6:45 p.m. Caller states that her computer was hacked through a Microsoft ad and her card info was stolen; credit card company is advising her to file a report with MPD. Caller will be in tonight or tomorrow morning to file report.

7:54 p.m. Caller from Central Street reporting car parked across from residence with someone sitting in it for the past 10 minutes. Caller finds this suspicious and wants officers to check it out. Officers advised.

10:31 p.m. Caller states that he had his friend over for a few drinks and there was a small physical altercation; medical attention declined. Caller states that other party took off in a charcoal Toyota towards Chicopee and shouldn’t be driving after drinking. Officers advised.

Monday, 1/16

12:08 a.m. Caller from L Street reporting suspicious vehicle parked running with headlights on. Vehicle has been running in same spot for close to three hours. Officers advise male operator was sleeping; same is between housing at this point and has no place to go. Male advised to move along from area. Officer advises that male has been contacted in the past for same.

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LOOKING BACK:  
10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here's the way it was January 18, 2007: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

Petition Drive to Close  
Montague Center School

Shortly after the holiday break, yellow flyers began making their appearance at stores up and down the Avenue in Turners Falls. Produced by members of the Hillcrest PTO, the flyer, titled "Hillcrest Closing," urges people to "speak up today" about the closing of the Hillcrest Elementary School.

In December, the Gill Montague Regional School Committee voted to expand Montague Center School to a K-5 or K-6 elementary school, and to move grades K-2 from Hillcrest to nearby Sheffield School leaving only pre-K classes at Hillcrest.

The Hillcrest PTO flyers that have been distributed since early this month read in part, "Shortly, there will be a petition circulating around town.

Through this petition, we hope to bring the school closing issue to a town vote. We hope by doing this, it will give a chance for the majority of registered voters to make the decision and not the local minority."

Rodman Receives  
MLK Day Award

Maria Rodman, executive director of the Montague Catholic Social Ministries, the social service agency that under her leadership has expanded an interwoven network of support services for women and children in Turners Falls, is this year's winner of Greenfield Community College's "Living the Dream Award," at the annual celebration of the life and work of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.

In presenting the award on Monday, GCC president Robert Pura called the Cuban-born Rodman "a born leader who epitomizes the caring and compassionate presence in our community," through her work with MCSM, and credited her with "increasing the resources of that program and services that empower women and their children to heal and to grow," and "to recognize the basic rights to food and shelter and self esteem in their role in the world."

Montague Catholic Social  
Ministries Seeks \$62,000

The town of Montague held a public hearing on Tuesday to go over proposals for the town's \$1 million Community Development Block Grant request for 2007. Topping the list of projects the town would like to see funded are new sidewalks, housing rehab loans, and money to expand a family support program of the Montague Catholic Social Ministries.

Presenting the request for MCSM, Family Support Program Coordinator Lorena Norwood said, "The money will fund another full-time staff member to do family support work," for 18 months in Turners Falls. Adding another staff member to what Norwood termed "a very successful program" will allow MCSM to extend the home visit family support network beyond the program's current reach.

According to limits of grants currently received, MCSM can only serve families who are involved with the Department of Social Services, or families with children under the age of five, but the need for such services has grown to include a waiting list for families in both those categories, as well as families who are not in either.

ANCESTRY from page B1

us the task of researching our ancestry, telling us, "You need to know where you are coming from in order to know where you are going."

This resonated deep within me. I felt the responsibility and desire to connect with a culture I carried the lineage of, one that I truly belonged to. As much as I loved Hawai'i, I knew I needed to return to the place I was born to.

So in Spring 2016 I returned home to Northampton, Massachusetts, and since then I've embarked on an exploration of self, family, lineage, identity, and patterns. As I research I find that with every marriage, a new tree is added to my ancestral forest. As the forest expands, so does my understanding of the vastness of our relatedness.

For the first time in my life, hundreds of names of relatives I have never given thought to come across my consciousness. I am beginning to truly conceptualize the notion that we are all related, and I understand more deeply why cultures that actively honor their ancestry – such as many Indigenous cultures – seem to embody this, and why cultures that rarely honor their ancestry – such as mainstream US culture – do not.

As I research I find many patterns, but what most intrigues me is tracing lineages back to the European countries my ancestors emigrated from, such as England, Scotland, Switzerland, France, and Germany. Scotland, in particular, has caught my attention.

This heritage comes to me from my mother's father, and I remember him being proud of it. As I explore Scottish culture I can understand why. Within it I find ritual, meaning, and connection. The further back I go, the more central connection with land became. What is now deemed paganism was once, and to some still is, a rich part of Scottish culture.

I branch out and discover similar old traditions across western Europe, and I realize that the first space subject to English colonization was England itself, and then nearby places like Scotland. So within many European histories exists the dichotomy of being both the colonized and the colonizer.

This, of course, does not mean the colonization Scotland went

through is the same colonization Native American/American Indian tribes went through. Colonization has many different forms, and race, in particular, has been a brutal tool used by white colonizers that differentiates these processes.

I do not bring up the colonization of European countries to diminish the experiences of those who were then colonized by those countries. Rather, I bring it up to share my belief that land-based cultural knowledge is inherent to the human experience, and it has been specifically targeted by the process of colonization.

If any of us dig deep enough, we will find lost knowledge that once taught us how to live in harmony with the earth, because there was a time when we had no other choice. What differentiates us now is how much of our cultural knowledge is lost, how many generations have lived without it, and how much disconnection has grown in its place. Unfortunately, today I see many European settler descendants in the US lost without meaningful cultural knowledge and connection.

In this time we all need healing, whether it's from trauma, or for trauma done. As a society it is important to remember that settler colonialism is a process, not an event. We – European settler descendants – never left North America, and we are still repeating settler colonial patterns.

We are constantly given the opportunity to change our patterns, to make different decisions, and to transform our reality. We cannot change how our ancestors lived and the decisions they made, but we can learn from the results of their choices. And from that knowledge we can work to shift our thoughts, words, and actions.

There are many opportunities at this moment in time to shift cultural patterns. We can change an offensive high school mascot in Turners Falls. We can choose to respect the voices of those who say an area could be a Native American/American Indian burial site and go through due, fair process in Shutesbury.

We can divest from the corporations funding the Dakota Access Pipeline, and support the water protectors on the Standing Rock Sioux reservation in North Dakota. We can divest from the institutions funding

the Thirty Meter Telescope on top of Mauna a Wakea on Hawai'i island, and support Kanaka Maoli and their allies standing for their sacred spaces and clean water.

And in this capitalist society, I cannot say enough about the importance of where we choose to spend our money. We are given the opportunity to change our patterns every time we pull out our wallets, if only we educate ourselves about what we're giving our money to.

When I began this research I held a lot of shame and guilt, for even though I didn't yet know the details of my lineage, I did know I descended from white European immigrants and settlers to North America.

I understood that I existed on stolen land and that the culture I belonged to actively benefited from the displacement and genocide of hundreds of Native American/American Indian tribes across the continent.

I was aware that the enslavement and dehumanization of people of color was as central to the creation of the US nation state as was the claim of freedom and prosperity, and that this racist dichotomy continued to be central in our structures.

I struggled with what was mine to take responsibility for. And I strongly desired to find something good in my cultural heritage, something to be proud of that contrasted white supremacist hetero-patriarchal capitalism.

What I've found is that settler colonialism is one side of my cultural heritage, and while it absolutely needs to be acknowledged and addressed, it is not the only side. As I find connection, healing, and reconciliation with my ancestry, I understand more deeply who I am without focusing solely on shame and guilt. And my compassion for self and others strengthens.

In the book *Neither Wolf Nor Dog* written by Kent Nerburn, Dan (a Lakota man) tells Nerburn (a white man): "If you hate your own people you can't be a very good person. You have to love your own people even if you hate what they do."

We are in a pivotal time, when white supremacy is being both challenged and fostered. In this process we must remember that love trumps hate – always.

OYSTERGIRL from page B1

across in recipes online:

- jalapeño or other hot peppers
- fresh turmeric root
- fresh rosemary or thyme
- black peppercorns

The idea is to develop your own recipe, based on what you like and/or what's locally and seasonally available.

How I Made Fire Cider

I've only just made my first batch of fire cider. I collected my ingredients from local sources: Upinngil garlic, Red Fire Farm ginger, and hot peppers from a Greenfield Farmers Market vendor I can't remember. I steeped them in Shelburne Apple Company apple cider vinegar.

I let it sit in my pantry for about a month, shaking it and taking a big cleansing whiff every so often. On New Year's Day, I strained it and had my first shot. Wow! I'd had fire cider before, but nothing like your own to warm the cockles of your heart.

I hadn't added honey, so it was all heat and bitterness, with a stron-

ger garlic presence than I'd had in others' concoctions. My experience of it continues to change; most recently, it's the ginger that really shines through.

How to Take Fire Cider

Fire cider is most often used as a daily tonic: take about a tablespoon in the morning. Take more when your immune system needs an extra boost.

Some other ways to use it:

- in a tea—the steam will help to relieve congestion
- in a juice—to trick, er, convince your kids to take it
- in a marinade or salad dressing
- mixed into fried rice

What to Do with the Pulp

One nice thing about making your own fire cider is that you can decide to not just toss the pulp, once you've strained out the liquid.

A fellow foodie/wellness nut said she cooked hers up in butter. Another suggestion I found online was to mix it with shredded vegetables for a fire-y, cider-y stir fry.

Another fellow foodie/wellness nut said she'd made fire cider salt – dehydrating the pulp, blending it into a powder, and mixing it with salt.

That's what I did: I skipped the salt and made it as its own seasoning, by drying it in my dehydrator for maybe eight hours, then running it through my blender.

It's basically powdered ginger-garlic hot sauce. I'm calling it "fire pepper." It's really, really good. I've been putting it on everything.

I'd love to hear your experiences with making fire cider: what you put it in, how you use it, and how you recycle the pulp. Drop me a line!

Sources: Rosemary Gladstar; The Mountain Rose Blog; Mommy-potamus.

Vanessa Query, aka Oystergirl, digs all things local and sustainable. She writes about real food, natural movement, ancestral health, and more at theycallmeoystergirl.com. She welcomes responses and questions at oystergirl@montaguereporter.org.

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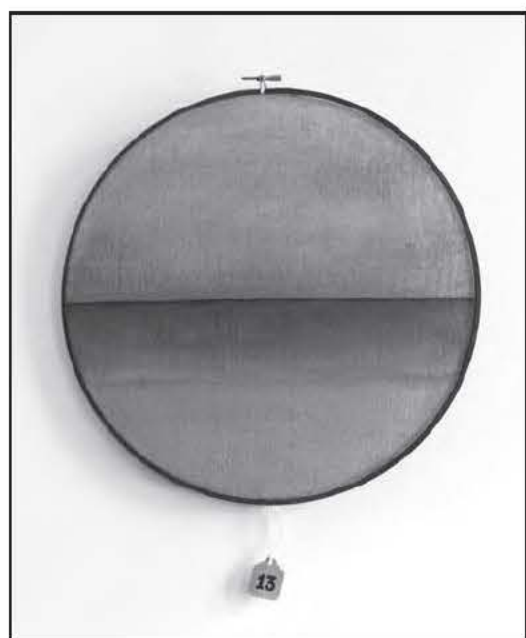
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# At Wendell Free Library: Two Exhibits by Leah Moses



A piece from Moses' watercolor-on-linen series *Breathing Room*. (Actual piece is in color.)

By HEATHER WILLEY

**WENDELL** – Leah Moses' *Breathing Room* and *Affectionate Tendrils* are two separate bodies of work on display until the end of February at the Wendell Free Library.

*Breathing Room* is a series of eighteen small to medium scale watercolor paintings exhibited in the Herrick Room. Moses credits her earlier days spent under brilliant coastal skies as the source of inspiration for this series. From the woods of Wendell, Moses journeys back through each painting to that earlier place of openness.

The majority of the watercolors are circular forms – linen stretched over embroidery hoops. There are four rectangular pieces, also on linen. Each canvas reflects the tone of a minimalist landscape, composed of two to three separate color fields.

There is a synesthetic atmosphere, a conference of vision and breath, that results from

Moses' exploration of these horizons where land meets sky. The compositions are, in effect, portals into the artist's mind, and speak of an openness contemplated from a more private interior space.

*Affectionate Tendrils* is a series of three-dimensional works on display in the glass display case greeting patrons in the main lobby of the library. It is a collection of small multimedia sculptures done with clay, wood, glass, linen cotton, moss, sand and stone. With each piece, Moses experiments with shape and texture. Inspired by earthen symbiotic relationships, *Affectionate Tendrils* is a collection that speaks of the artist's terrestrial curiosity.

The Herrick Gallery at the Wendell Free Library is free and open to the public.

Library hours are Tuesdays, noon until 7 p.m.; Wednesdays 10 a.m. until 7 p.m.; Thursdays 3 p.m. until 7 p.m.; Saturdays 9:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m.; and Sundays 11:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m.



From Moses' series *Affectionate Tendrils*.

## FCTS's 2016 Adams Scholarship Winners

**TURNERS FALLS** – Joyzan Gonzalez's mother Erica Colon always believed in her son, even when he didn't believe in himself.

"He's always had potential, he just didn't know it," Colon said.

On Tuesday, December 20, Gonzalez did more than reach his potential; he was rewarded for it.

Gonzalez, who is from Gill, was one of 27 Franklin County Technical School seniors who were awarded the 2016 John and Abigail Adams Scholarship. The scholarship winners and their parents and guardians attended a breakfast to honor the students at the FCTS Apprentice Restaurant, prepared by the school's Culinary Arts program staff and students.

"This is amazing," Colon said of the award. "It's a great opportunity for him. He's always been a good kid. This is his time to be focused and I'm very proud of him."

The John and Abigail Adams Scholarship provides a tuition waiver for eight consecutive semesters of undergraduate education at a Massachusetts state college, community college, or university for students who score at the advanced and proficient levels on the grade 10 MCAS tests in English and Math. To qualify for the scholarship, students must also have a combined score that puts them in the top 25 percent of all scores in their district.

Gonzalez, who is in the FCTS Cosmetology program, was surprised to find out he was to receive the scholarship.

"I didn't know I'd get it," he said.

FCTS Superintendent Richard Martin called winning the Adams Scholarship "a great achievement."

The names, towns and vocational programs of all of Franklin County Technical School's John and Abigail Adams Scholarship recipients are:

Alexis Barrett, Orange:

*Welding and Metal Fabrication*

Loreena Cushing, Montague:

*Culinary Arts*

Emmaline Devlin, Greenfield:

*Landscaping and Horticulture*

Jacob Fuess, Northfield:

*Automotive Technology*

Joyzan Gonzalez, Gill:

*Cosmetology*

Colin Gould, Montague:

*Plumbing*

Morgan Gradie, Colrain:

*Health Technology*

Michael Gullage, Orange:

*Automotive Technology*

Jillian Harris, Erving:

*Landscaping & Horticulture*

Ryan Howard, Orange:

*Collision & Repair*

Levi Johnson, Greenfield:

*Programming & Web Design*

Dean LaClaire, Leverett:

*Welding & Metal Fabrication*

Michelle Leh, Montague:

*Health Technology*

Caileb Milton, Northfield:

*Machine Technology*

Jared Nimtz, New Salem:

*Machine Technology*

Daisy Osowski, Northfield:

*Health Technology*

Seth Piescik, Northfield:

*Programming & Web Design*

Jacob Poole, Erving:

*Programming & Web Design*

Robert Rinaldi, Gill:

*Machine Technology*

Dylan Rogers, Northfield:

*Health Technology*

Joshua Rose, Bernardston:

*Machine Technology*

Rachel Shearer, Northfield:

*Health Technology*

Katherine Sheperd, Greenfield:

*Cosmetology*

Ronald Stanwood, Greenfield:

*Automotive Technology*

Blue Williams, Greenfield:

*Landscaping & Horticulture*

Chad Williams, Leverett:

*Machine Technology*

Dustin Williams, Leverett:

*Automotive Technology*

## MONTAGUE COMMUNITY TELEVISION NEWS

### This Week on MCTV

By ABIGAIL TATARIAN

The Gill-Montague School Committee's latest inquiry event took into consideration perspectives that support not changing the mascot/logo/nickname of the "Indians" at Turners Falls High School.

The January 5 event featured speakers Ronald La-Roche, alumnus of the class of 1947, and former Professor Singleton of Boston College who is a Turners Falls resident. They were followed with questions from the school committee and the public.

MCTV's recording of the meeting is viewable at [MontagueTV.org](http://MontagueTV.org). Check for this and other programs on our TV channel – for the full schedule, visit [MontagueTV.org/p/55/TV-Schedule](http://MontagueTV.org/p/55/TV-Schedule).

Something going on you think others would like to see? Get in touch to learn how easy it is to use a camera and capture the moment.

Contact us at (413) 863-9200, [infomontaguetv@gmail.com](mailto:infomontaguetv@gmail.com), or stop by 34 Second Street in Turners Falls between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. We'd love to work with you!



## OUT OF THE PARK

By JON DOBOSZ

cation of the type of dedication we all need when it comes to staying physically active during the winter.

According to a recent study conducted by the National Recreation & Parks Association, four out of five Americans make an effort to stay physically fit during the winter months. Walking, running, and hiking outdoors, and working out at home or at a gym are the preferred activities. However, it was walking, running and hiking outdoors that was the overwhelming favorite with 46% of the respondents. This brings to mind what we often say here at MPRD: *Recreate, Don't Hibernate!*

If, however, you prefer to take the "quiet" approach during the winter, one great activity we have on the horizon is our Cookies & Canvas event. Cookies & Canvas is scheduled for Saturday, March 4 from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. at the Montague Elks Lodge. It's a great opportunity for you and your "mini-Monet" or "pint-sized Picasso" to create a wonderful work of art for your home!

No experience is necessary to participate, and you will be guided through the painting process by a very talented instructor. If you would like to see the picture that

we'll be painting, please log onto our page on [montague.net](http://montague.net) and take a look. Don't wait until the last minute, register now!

If you're still not convinced with getting out this winter, then at the very least you can take solace in the fact that we've begun planning for spring and summer! The one event, in particular, we have on our mind is our Annual Peter Cottontail's EGGstravaganza!

We are in great need of additional co-sponsors to help defray the costs of purchasing 5,000 toy- and candy-filled eggs. We mostly solicit donations from local businesses, but would gladly accept individual donations as well. Please help us spread the word that Peter Cottontail needs help getting some eggs. You will most definitely attract some interesting looks.

That about wraps it up here. Please log onto our page at [montague.net](http://montague.net) and sign-up for e-notices, and/or "like" us on our Facebook page.

We'll appear here next month, and remember: *Recreate, Don't Hibernate!*

Jon Dobosz, CPRP is the director of parks and recreation for the town of Montague.

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MISS STEMPLE RECALLS THE PAST

Beginning with this issue, the Herald will publish a series of articles by Miss Antonia J. Stemple, formerly associated with the late Cecil T. Bagnall on the editorial staff of the *Turners Falls Reporter*. Miss Stemple, who at present is living in Florida, needs no introduction to older residents of this town, who recall her as Mr. Bagnall's "right hand woman." She assisted greatly in bringing the *Reporter* to a position of importance and respect in newspaper offices the country over.

Part I (May 7, 1941)

In browsing the archives of the *Turners Falls Herald* (1940-1942) we were delighted to find the paper had tracked down Antonia J. Stemple, who had worked in various escalating capacities at the *Turners Falls Reporter* (1872-1922), and encouraged her to submit a regular column of her recollections. We'll be reprinting that column, which ran irregularly in the *Herald* over an eight-month period under the title "Looking Backward," in our own pages.

— Montague Reporter eds.

Beginning with this issue, the *Herald* will publish a series of articles by Miss Antonia J. Stemple, formerly associated with the late Cecil T. Bagnall on the editorial staff of the *Turners Falls Reporter*. Miss Stemple, who at present is living in Florida, needs no introduction to older residents of this town, who recall her as Mr. Bagnall's "right hand woman." She assisted greatly in bringing the *Reporter* to a position of importance and respect in newspaper offices the country over.

The *Reporter* was published during what might be termed the "golden era" of Turners Falls. Miss Stemple's column will revive pleasant memories for older persons, and will provide the younger generation with fuller information about a newspaper which ceased publication in 1922, yet which they still hear mentioned with sincere admiration. Miss Stemple was a newspaper woman at a period when a woman was a seldom-seen personage amidst the cluttered papers, inky desks, and pastepots of the editorial rooms. It is a genuine tribute to her ability to hear older newsmen in other cities and towns speak highly of her writings.

One significant point is brought out in her column today: That Mr. Bagnall was not appreciated here until after his death. Recently, the editor of the *Herald* visited the office of the *Springfield Republican*, and learned from the suburban editor of that newspaper of the genius of the late Mr. Bagnall, whose editorials and editorial points were quoted in papers from coast to coast.

— *Turners Falls Herald* eds.

\* \* \*

By ANTONIA J. STEMPLE

There was a time, not too long ago, when I knew about every man, woman and child, cat and dog in Turners Falls, and not a few in the adjoining towns. I was aware of the history of many of the humans, and their secrets also, absorbed during a long period of service in the office of the *Turners Falls Reporter*, the town's first newspaper, which passed out of existence after representing its field for half a century. The *Herald*, now the successor to this pioneer journalistic enterprise, has evinced much interest in the life and times of the *Reporter* and its dynamic founder, editor and publisher, the late Cecil T. Bagnall. As I like to see and encourage ambition wherever it manifests itself and as I know from long tribulations — and joy and education — inherent in publishing a small town newspaper and as I still have a lively interest in the town and its people, it is a rather delightful task to attempt to shed a little light on the *Turners Falls Reporter* of the Gay Nineties and before, and for about two decades more after the turn of the century.

My acquaintance with the Turners Falls of today is limited but I always get a queer sensation in the region of my solar plexus when, on my too infrequent visits to my old home town, I see the prim brick "Allen block" on Avenue A, now owned by Frank Haigis, and recall how I trod up and down those stairs to the second floor mostly on the run, for upwards of thirty years and glance at the windows out of which I seldom had time to look, and where other printers "who knew not Joseph" now do business. A nostalgic thrill and a sigh are invariably invoked in the place where the heart is supposed to be, as I recall the weather beaten gold-lettered sign under the front windows. A brave, fine sign it was, the work of an honest, old fashioned craftsman, for it stood up under the assaults of time and change and the elements for decades with only a



For years the *Turners Falls Reporter* and Cecil T. Bagnall's printing business were housed upstairs in the Allen Block.

rare, if any, fresh application of gold leaf. The thought or sight of that block and that sign invariably makes me reflect on the fact that so often a man has to die before he or what he did and stood for are appreciated or even recognized. Cecil T. Bagnall, who established and maintained the *Turners Falls Reporter* and the printing business connected therewith against many odds and who made the name Turners Falls a familiar one throughout the state and New England, at least, was very shabbily treated and not at all appreciated locally — except by a few rare souls — but his worth and ability were recognized and esteemed by those outside the town with whom he did business. The people of Turners Falls as a whole never really knew the man. They secretly poked fun at the *Reporter*, especially during the latter half of its existence, and would not support it. The editor of the paper was not without honor save in his own town to which he gave such long, unselfish, splendid and constructive service. Yet, now that he is no more, I note with grim satisfaction from articles in the *Herald* and from letters, that he is now spoken of with admiration and respect and as though some inkling of the worth of the man and his publication had seeped through into the consciousness of present day inhabitants.

The people of Turners Falls were stupidly content to lose their newspaper. They refused to recognize that it was an asset to the community and had often saved them from foolish and costly community errors. Nor did they realize that a good local newspaper is an index to any town's intelligence, co-operation and enterprise.

After it was no more its loss was felt and various indifferent or ill-advised attempts were made to fill the gap. The new *Herald* gives unmistakable evidence of having been conceived in the right spirit and if this newspaper and its enterprising young owner is not accorded the recognition and support it deserves, then the people of Turners Falls have learned nothing from past experience.

Next: Bagnall steps into the breach!

HALO from page B1

done quickly. We can accommodate any urgent, same-day, rush job of two hours or under. If your delivery has to get to its destination within two hours, we can do it for you."

Brion notes that Halo Couriers has tremendous flexibility. "That's an advantage for us," he said. "We can offer a more customized service that the big companies can't. FedEx charges up to \$600 in major cities like New York, which can get gridlocked. It's a denser environment. This model, with its emphasis on a large metropolitan area, just isn't applicable to Franklin County."

Another feature of Stracensky's adaptive company is the dedicated young man's ability to offer routed and on-demand deliveries to four counties — Franklin, Hampshire, Hampden, and Berkshire — each and every day of the week.

"I've been called on," said the energetic Stracensky, "to deliver goods for just about any type of industry or individual you can imagine."

And Halo's uniqueness also lies, among other things, in its custom delivery solutions for commercial and residential clients. His service can aid in making the delivery from a wide variety of routed industries such as grocery, re-supply, computers and electronics, textiles, pharmaceuticals, documents, bank deposits and payroll. In addition, the client can contact Stracensky 24-7 by way of website ordering for the specific job.

"The actual vehicle I use," said Brion, "is a state-of-the-art van which is extremely secure. It's a delivery van with a windowless cargo hold. That's for discretion and maximum protection for the client's all-important shipment."

In fact, Stracensky even refers to his efforts as a "white glove" transport without the usual extra charges. Proper care and handling during transportation, he points out, is standard service with Halo. Moreover, the local courier service provides an ultra-private, safe, and secure environment that features TUV Rhineland Certified Equipment — supplies that meet German standards of cargo transport safety, which exceed North American standards.

"With my company," said Stracensky, "your property never leaves my possession. This is always important, especially so in working with attorneys when I'm doing transfers of evidence, which require 100 percent chain of custody and time-sensitive documents — both conducted under strict, precise protocols."

What is the key to success in Halo Couriers' business? "Being flexible enough," said Brion, "to fit into existing industries' systems to help them fulfill their needs. I can tailor and adapt my services to accommodate my clients. Most of my work comes through word-of-mouth, repeat business, and random calls from people who see my services on the Internet."

"Although I love it," declared Stracensky, "this is a difficult business to be in. To remain competi-

tive, I'm 'open' 24 hours a day. If someone calls me, they have to be pre-approved for me to deliver on my 'off' hours. I take my job very seriously. My clients can rest assured — with my direct contact phone number — I'll always provide real-time delivery information and also allow en route changes."

Brion comprehends the full implications of his work as grease for the commercial and residential wheels of Franklin County, part of a chain that's crucial for companies and individuals. With his credentials, he's able to do more than just pick up and deliver goods. The young entrepreneur can enter different offices and buildings that other services, such as the Post Office, don't have access to.

Another aspect of Halo's services is postering. If you have an event or service you want to advertise, Brion will help you get the word out by putting your poster or flier up in various towns and/or college campuses. Encompassing twenty percent of his business, the service is billed by the size of the flier and the location: for instance, postering in Greenfield is \$25 to put up 25 8-1/2" by 11" posters, and \$35 for the same number of 11" by 17" posters.

Stracensky refers to his efforts as a "white glove" transport, without the usual extra charges.

It is now possible to electronically upload your poster file to one of several local copy centers, have them printed out and then picked up and distributed throughout several towns by Halo, without ever leaving your desk.

Stracensky may be effective and efficient, but he also sees a somewhat romantic variety in carrying out his missions. "I spend time in elevators, listening to lawyers talking about tennis; embarked on a beautiful, scenic ride through the Berkshires; or taking a lady's dog to the groomer's for her. The dog rides with me as my co-pilot in the passenger seat."

Brion gained essential knowledge in delivery and transport while working for the Center For Appropriate Transport in Eugene, Oregon from 2003 until 2006. "I was a bike messenger," said Stracensky. "I absorbed a lot and began to believe I could run my own similar business someday. I'm grateful to the company that I had the opportunity to learn so much that would later prove useful."

To contact Halo Couriers, call Brion at (413) 426-4620 or visit his website at [halocouriers.com](http://halocouriers.com).



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# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



Uncle Hal's Crab Grass Band is busy these days. They are playing at the Rendezvous on Friday, January 20, at the Underdog Lounge on Saturday, January 21, and they play at the Shelburne Arts Co-operative on Saturday afternoons!

## ONGOING EVENTS

### EVERY SUNDAY

McCusker's Co-op Market, Shelburne Falls: *Celtic Sessions*. Musicians of all levels welcome to play traditional Irish music. 10:30 a.m.

Underdog Lounge, Shelburne Falls: *Jazz Night*. 6 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *TNT Karaoke*. 9 p.m.

### FIRST SUNDAY MONTHLY

Franklin Community Coop/Green Fields Market, Greenfield: *Co-op Jazz*. Blues, Latin, Straight-Ahead Jazz. Balcony. Afternoons.

### EVERY TUESDAY

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls-*Play Group*. Unstructured play-group. Grown-ups can chat and connect with other parents and caregivers while supervising their children's play. 10 to 11 a.m.

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: Crafts and activities for children of all ages. 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.

### EVERY WEDNESDAY

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Story Time*: Thematic stories, projects, and snacks for young children and their caretakers. 10:15 a.m.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Tales and Tunes Story Hour*. For ages 0 to 5 and their caregivers. 10:30 a.m. to noon.

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Homeschool Science. Hands-on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)* activities for homeschoolers of all ages, with Angela or special guest. 1 p.m.

New Salem Public Library: *Teen and Tweens*. Program for 11 to 18 year olds. 1:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Root Cellar, Greenfield: *Jazz Series with Ted Wirt and his Hammond B3*. 7 p.m.

### 3rd WEDNESDAY MONTHLY

Root Cellar, Greenfield: *Roots at the Root Cellar*. Reggae DJs mixing up roots, dub, dancehall, steppas and more. 9 p.m. Free.

### 1ST AND 3RD WEDNESDAY

Arts Block (4th floor), Greenfield: *Creacion Latin Big Band & Late Night Open Mic JAM*. 20 piece ensemble play son, salsa, chacha and much more. 8 p.m. Open Mic starts at 9 p.m. Free.

### EVERY THURSDAY

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Music and Movement with Tom Carroll & Laurie Davidson*. Children and their caregivers invited. 10 to 11 a.m.

Root Cellar, Greenfield: *Open Mic*. 6 to 8:30 p.m.

Pioneer Tavern, Millers Falls: *Franklin County Pool League*. 6 to 11 p.m.

The People's Pint, Greenfield: *Derek Bridges*. Live acoustic guitar. 7 p.m.

### 2nd AND 4TH THURSDAY

Hubie's Tavern: *TNT Karaoke*. 9 p.m.

### FIRST THURSDAYS

Gill Tavern, Gill: *Trivia Night*. 8:30 p.m. \$

Underdog Lounge, Shelburne Falls: *Open Mic*. 7 p.m.

### EVERY THIRD FRIDAY

Element Brewing Company, Millers Falls: *Brule's Irish Band*. Food carts supplement the local beer. 6 p.m.

### EVERY FOURTH FRIDAY

Community Yoga and Wellness Center, Greenfield: *Greenfield Circle Dance*. 6 to 8 p.m. \$

### EVERY FRIDAY

Slate Memorial Library, Gill: *Sto-*

*ry Hour*. Stories and hands-on arts & crafts. 10 a.m. to noon.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: It's *Kidleidoscope!* Each week (except Jan. 13); includes a story, interactive games, and a craft to introduce you and your child to the natural world. Program recommended for ages 3-6 with a parent or guardian. 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

The Pioneer Tavern, Millers Falls: *TNT Karaoke*, 8 p.m.

### FIRST SATURDAY MONTHLY

Montague Common Hall: *Montague Center. Montague Square Dance*. Family fun, October through May. 7 p.m. \$

Pioneer Tavern, Millers Falls: *First Saturday Throwback Dance Party*. Ladies night. Free.

## EXHIBITS:

Hosmer Gallery, Forbes Library, Northampton: Paintings by Turners Falls own, artist *Mirian Wells*, and two other artists *Patricia Dorr Parker and Janice Doppler*. Through January 30.

GCTV, Greenfield: *Alice Thomas's "Whispers" series*; paintings about endangered and extinct species in nature. Through March 28.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *River Rooms by Alice Thomas*. "A unique series of paintings by Alice Thomas that brings metaphor and poetry to our rivers." Through March 2.

Madison Gallery, Millers Falls: Temporary space while Avenue A is being renovated. *DeBix Art - Released*, paintings by *Deborah Bix*, and wood turner *Jon Kopera*.

Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne Falls: *The Liquid Edge: Polar Regions*, photographs by *Sarah Holbrook*. Also *Painting Nature: Botanical Watercolors by Thayer Tomlinson*. Through February 28.

Shelburne Arts Co-operative, Shelburne Falls: *"Wintery Mix"*, Holiday Group Show. Music by *Uncle Hal* on Saturday afternoons. Through January 23.

## SUBMISSIONS CALL:

Sawmill River Arts Gallery, for their February show: *Small Works Art Exhibit and Sale*. No entries larger than 6" x 6". No jurying. Registration remains open. Reception Saturday, February 4, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

## EVENTS:

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 19

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Ghostlight Project*. National observance; see website for details. 5:30 p.m. Free.

Arts Block, Greenfield: Silverthorne will also be participating in the *Ghostlight Project*. See Arts Block webpage for details. 5:30 p.m.

Underdogs, Shelburne Falls: Underdogs and Boswell Books present *Spoken Word Night with Jim Cullen, Candace Curran, Gary Novak, Linda Black, Marcella Brown and Ann Boltz*. 7 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Longfellow's. Funky Blues featuring Doug Smith along with Tommy Filiault, Doug Plavin & Klondike Koehler*. 8 p.m.

### FRIDAY, JANUARY 20

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Kidleidoscope!* This week it's *Winter Birds*. There will be a story, a game, and a craft project. For ages 3-6; siblings and friends welcome accompanied by parent. 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Uncle Hal's Crab Grass Band. Americana-ana*. 6:30 p.m.

Underdogs Lounge, Shelburne Falls: *Jim Kaminski*. Lead guitarist for long time Valley band FAT in a solo acoustic show. 8 p.m.

Arts Block, Greenfield: *Skell Entertainment presents Bring Back the Ruckus Tour. Lowpoint, Regions, Hollowpoint, Vile, Brick-shot*. 8 p.m. \$

### SATURDAY, JANUARY 21

Greenfield Common, Greenfield: Local observance of *Women's March* taking place around the country today. 12:30 p.m.

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Donald Kroodsma: Listening to a Continent Sing*. Birdsong expert Donald Kroodsma [ed. note: in the birding world, this guy is a big deal] presents his travels with his son by bicycle across the country "listening to our continent sing". 1 to 2 p.m.

Northfield Mt. Recreation, Northfield: *Intro. to Snowshoeing for Women*. Call for details. 12:30 to 4 p.m.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Matt Damon in The Martian*. Part of the library's Science Fiction / Horror film for 2017. An episode of *Radar Men From the Moon* will show at 7 p.m. Feature at 7:30 p.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Lines West*. Americana, indie, pop, 8 p.m.

Underdogs Lounge, Shelburne Falls: *Uncle Hal's Crab Grass Band. Americana-ana*. 8 p.m.

Pioneer Tavern, Millers Falls: *Jimmy Just Quit*. 9 p.m. \$

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Desert Choir & Friends*. 9:30 p.m.

### SUNDAY, JANUARY 22

Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Franklin County Sweethearts*. Classic Country Crooning. 8 p.m.

### MONDAY, JANUARY 23

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Open Mic*. 8 p.m.

### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25

Wendell State Forest, Wendell: *All Out Adventures offers guided*

*snowshoeing or hike if no snow*. Call for details 413-584-2052. 10 a.m. to noon, and noon to 2 p.m. Free.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Open Old-time Music Session*. 8 p.m.

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 26

Northfield Mt. Recreation, Northfield: *Snowshoeing for 55+ year olds*. Call for details; pre-register 1-800-859-2960. 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Josh Hill & Friends*. Original Americana with Jen Spingla. 8 p.m.

Underdogs Lounge, Shelburne Falls: *David Fersh & Friends*. Folk, Blues. 7 p.m.



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## ART REVIEW

# Alice Thomas' *River Rooms*, at the Discovery Center



Thomas, between two of her paintings, at the opening reception of her art show *River Rooms* at the Great Falls Discovery Center.

By ELLEN BLANCHETTE

**TURNERS FALLS** — Alice Thomas brings her art and poetry to Turners Falls with a series of paintings entitled *River Rooms*, now on display at the Great Falls Discovery Center. Along with the large oil paintings hung around the room are some of her poems, framed and meant to enhance the intention of the artist's theme.

Her opening reception on Saturday, January 7 was well received, with friends and interested visitors

coming in to support her and view her art. A few days later, I sat down with her and asked her to describe her work and her creative process.

Thomas describes herself as a conceptual artist, and says this series is intended to express visually what our river waters contribute to our lives, along with the insults and challenges those waters face. *River Rooms* is about what lies beneath the beautiful waters that flow past our towns, of the detritus hidden in what Thomas imagines as rooms filled with all that gets tossed and

dumped in those life-giving waters: the sneakers, garbage, chemicals, all those things she sees as making the Connecticut River uninhabitable for fish and wildlife, and challenging its use for drinking water.

Thomas refers to these rooms she paints as "magical realism," constructing the rooms that are locked away in the river. "Under our skin, we have rooms where we lock away our feelings and thoughts where no one can see them," she says. "They can be poisonous."

She spoke of her view of all the dark thoughts of the risk to the river, versus loving care for the river and for our environment. The colors used for these paintings are deliberately chosen to represent different offensive materials that lie beneath the river surface causing chemical changes. Red represents metallic insult, green reflects algae bloom, and oil from boats she paints as black.

While these are what is in her mind as she develops her paintings, the structure of them is quite free. Her work appears improvisational as well as imaginative, with a freedom of paint application that invites the viewer in to engage. Each painting has a different mood that can be seen as reflecting the thoughts and feeling she is trying to express about the challenges to nature.

Speaking of her artistic process, Thomas says she has the concept first, then decides what or how to represent that concept. She reads, asks questions seeking to understand. She describes her vision for this series of paintings as, "A busy river with farm



"In the Hopper" by Alice Thomas

pesticides, paint, chemicals that have not disappeared, they are still there, just as what we have experienced still lies beneath the skin, festers."

Tying up in a final thought, she said, "Take care of the river, take care of yourself."

Alice Thomas' *River Rooms* art

show will be in the Great Hall at the Great Falls Discovery Center until March 2. Hours are Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. until 4 p.m., and admission is free. For more information, call (413) 863-3221 or see [greatfallsdiscoverycenter.org](http://greatfallsdiscoverycenter.org).

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