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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

JANUARY 24, 2013

G-M Superintendent Strathmore Mill: Search Begins Debris Cleared, New Plans Proposed

By ELLEN BLANCHETTE

The new superintendent search committee was sworn in by the Gill-Montague school committee last Thursday evening, Jan. 17, and charged with finding a superintendent for the school district. The members then sat down together in the Turners Falls High School conference room to begin their work.

Pat Correira of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) will assist the committee in their task. She opened the meeting by explaining her contribution to the process and some rules that will guide how they proceed. Correira suggested they consider selecting a chair person but the members hesitated to respond to that. She moved onto laying out the rules and obligations of the search committee.

The public has had an opportunity to share opinions on the selection of superintendent through an online survey completed by 97 members of the community and several focus groups held in the fall of 2012. The results of both of these were included in a packet provided to the search committee.

Criteria for the Gill-Montague superintendent

developed by the school committee include:

- Superior administrative skills;
- Strong business and financial management skills;
- Effective communication skills;
- Ability to promote and appreciate outstanding teaching;
- Success in curriculum and technology development;
- Knowledge of special education issues and programs;
- An understanding of how town government functions as well as the ability to build relationships with community leaders.

Hiring a local superintendent from the community, or at least from Western Massachusetts, is not listed in the official criteria for the position, but was mentioned repeatedly in the public responses. According to the MASC, the school committee can decide whether to give special consideration to local applicants.

Advertisements in various venues have already been published, including a print ad in Education Week magazine, and several online sites. The deadline to submit an application to the MASC is Feb. 22, 2013.

Correira told the committee their primary task at hand

see **SEARCH** page 5



PHOTO COURTESY OFTHRESHOLDCOOPERATIVE.COM

Building 11 of the Strathmore Mill is the focus of both proposals submitted to the Town of Montague on Wednesday.

By MIKE JACKSON

TURNERS FALLS - As one chapter in the Strathmore Mill's storied history reaches closure, the next may be beginning. This month the cleanup of Building 10, destroyed in a 2007 arson fire, was completed by the S&R Corporation of Lowell. And on Wednesday, the Town of Montague received two proposals for the redevelopment of the mill, both focusing on the freestanding Building 11.

Town appointed officials and staff will spend the next few weeks reviewing those proposals before making recommendations to the selectboard, who will have final say on whether to offer one or more sections of the mill for a nominal fee under the town's Commercial Homesteading program. The town is also considering two other proposals received last week for town-owned properties in Millers Falls; one for 30 East Main Street and the garage behind it, and the other for 34 East Main Street.

Built in 1874, the Strathmore now consists of ten handsome and structurally sound brick buildings between the Power Canal and the Connecticut River, with 227,000 square feet of interi-

see **PLANS** page 9



A Tribute to Vic Scutari

November 18, 1932 - January 12, 2013

By JOSH HEINEMANN

WENDELL - Asking me to write about Vic Scutari's life is like asking someone who didn't know Babe Ruth played baseball to write about his life. I met Vic and his wife Patti in 1993 when they bought the Wendell Country Store and brought it back to life. I never thought about their lives before they came to town.

I have learned that before that move, they had lived a full life in Long Beach, Long Island. Vic was a moti-

vating force in establishing a soup kitchen there, an institution opposed by community leaders who denied the reality of hunger or poverty in that seaside resort town. Vic traveled to El Salvador and Panama with other peace activists to investigate and communicate the effects of U.S. sponsored military violence. He organized and participated in "sleep outs" to raise awareness about homelessness on Long Island. He worked for the welfare of detained Salvadoran immigrants. He

wrote and published a weekly newspaper, The Long Beach Independent Voice, which Patti described as "very much like The Montague Reporter." Patti said he disguised the fact that he wrote most of the articles by inventing names for the bylines. With all this, he found time for his seven children and step-children. According to stepson Kevin Baleno, "he loved me unconditionally, as he did all his children...Pop was a giver."

see **TRIBUTE** page 6

The Road Less Traveled

The Fine Art of Heroes in Spandex

By RICHARD ANDERSEN and DIANE LYN ANDERSEN

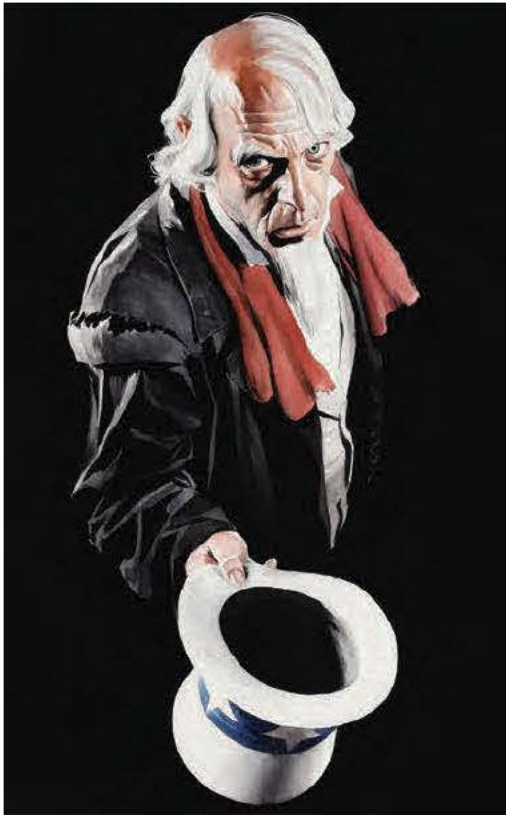
Stockbridge - SHAZAM! They're all here: Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Captain Marvel, and more. The whole gang. S for the wisdom of Solomon, H for the strength of Hercules, A for the stamina of Atlas, Z for the power of Zeus, A for the courage of Achilles, and M for the speed of Mercury. They've got it all. And all are photo-realistically rendered by Super Illustrator Alex Ross in Heroes and Villains, currently on display at the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge through Feb. 24.

Ross began drawing before he could barely grip a crayon. By the time he was three, he was recreating TV commercials from memory. By four, he'd graduated to colored pencils and the likes of Spider Man, Plastic Man, and a host of heroes that he would draw again and again for the next 37 years. He hardly took time to notice he was growing up in flat, colorless Lubbock, Texas. Encouraged by his mom, an accomplished illustrator in her own right, Alex entered the American Academy of Art in Chicago at age 17 and received his first assignment from Marvel Comics before he was 19. Five years later, he was creating covers. He won the Comic Buyers' Guide Award for Favorite Painter so many consecutive times for so many consecutive years (?!) the category was retired.

Remember reading the adventures of all your superheroes when you were a kid?

Almost certainly you were a boy, and almost certainly you were alone. In your room or perhaps your basement. Maybe even a barn. Someplace where you wouldn't be disturbed. But then something happened. You got older. Superman did too. He married, died, and came back to life to fight Al Capone and later the communists. All in tights. It was too much to bear. Seventy-three

see **ART** page 6



The portrait of Uncle Sam begging with his bat in hand.

PET OF THE WEEK

Bada Boom Bada Bing



Boomer

My name is Boomer, but if you take me home and want to change my name, that would be OK, although I might need a little time to get used to it. I am 2 years old, and I would really like a loving home. At thirty-five pounds, I'm a nice size. I'm a hound dog through and through, a mix of beagle and basset hound to be clear. I love to explore the world with my nose! I would absolutely love to go on long walks in the woods and get to chase a squirrel or two. Like many hounds, I tend to use my voice to share my excitement! I'm a very sweet boy and hope to find a home with the perfect match of cuddling and exercise. Please come in to visit me.

For more information on adopting me, contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at (413) 548-9898 or info@dpvhs.org.

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Wendell Free Library Pema Chodron Film and Study Group

The Wendell Meditation Group is offering a film presentation by American Buddhist nun Pema Chödrön teaching practical skills for working with fear.

"We all have fears, but when we look closely at them, we discover that behind each fear resides a basic fear of ourselves. We're afraid to look at our habitual styles of thinking and behaving because we might not always like what we see. Ironically it is this fear of honest self-reflection that keeps us trapped in patterns of stress and discontentment. Here is a vision for moving beyond this most basic fear to dis-

cover the innate bravery, trust, and joy that reside at the core of our being." - Pema Chödrön: *Smile at Fear*

Sections of Chödrön's DVD: *Smile at Fear* will be shown at the library on Sunday evenings Jan. 27, Feb. 3, 10 and 17 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Each one hour segment of Ani Pema teaching will be followed by a 30 minute discussion period. This program is offered for free.

Please come prepared to take notes to support your learning between these sessions at the library. For more information, call the library at (978) 544-3559.

Free Healthy Eating Workshop for Seniors

A free workshop, "Healthy Eating for Successful Living," will take place Mondays, Jan. 28 through Mar. 11 from 12:30 – 3 p.m., at the Shelburne Falls Senior Center, 7 Main St., Shelburne, MA 01370.

Enjoy fresh food, fun and better health. Learn more about nutrition and how small, "doable" lifestyle

changes can lead to a healthier life.

For more information or to register, contact Lesley Kayan at: lka-yan@fchcc.org, or (413) 773-5555 (x 2297). This workshop is open to all and brought to you by Franklin County Home Care Corp., Tufts Health Plan Foundation, and the United Way of Franklin County.



JESSICA LARKIN ILLUSTRATION

By FRED CICETTI

Q. Episodes of depression seem to be common over several generations in my family. Is depression genetic?

There is substantial evidence that depression is a hereditary disease. A depression gene known as 5-HTTLPR has been found.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that about 121 million people worldwide suffer from depression. WHO estimates that depression will become the first cause of *disease burden* worldwide by the year 2020. Disease burden is defined as years patients must live with a disability.

At least 10 percent of people in the U.S. will experience major depressive disorder at some point in

THE HEALTHY GEEZER:

The Genetics of Depression

their lives. Two times as many women as men experience major depression.

In 2011, Dr. Srijan Sen, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Michigan, and his team of researchers reported that people with a short variation of the serotonin transporter (5-HTTLPR) gene are more likely to become depressed under stress than those with the longer variation of the gene.

Serotonin is a neurotransmitter, a chemical substance that transmits impulses across the spaces (synapses) between nerve cells (neurons). Alterations in serotonin levels in the brain can influence mood. The 5-HTTLPR gene interferes with the serotonin process in the brain. Some antidepressant medications work by affecting the action of serotonin.

The Michigan research confirmed the findings of a 2003 study in which scientists for the first time established the link between genes and environment in depression. In 2009, however, an analysis in which scientists pooled 14 studies, found

no heightened risk of depression among those with different versions of the gene.

Sen's team wanted to settle the controversy that arose after the 2009 report. The group gathered *all* the 54 studies on the subject. This included data from about 41,000 volunteers. "This is the final word," Sen said. "This meta-analysis includes three or four times as many studies, and clearly there is an effect." Based on this much broader analysis, the team concluded that 5-HTTLPR does confer a greater risk of depression when combined with stress.

One of Sen's findings is especially interesting to me. He said that it seems that people with 5-HTTLPR are more reactive to all events, both positive and negative. Studies of artists reveal a high incidence of depression. Could it be that writers, musicians, painters, and other artists with higher sensitivity have the shorter gene? I hope science will explore art some day and produce data on this subject.

In 2011, a British-led internation-

al team found a DNA region linked to depression. This finding was replicated by another team from the United States. The researchers said they believed many genes were involved in depression.

"These findings will help us track down specific genes that are altered in people with this disease," said Jerome Breen of King's College London's Institute of Psychiatry, who led one of the research groups.

A recent Florida study reported evidence of a *happy gene* that affects females, but not males. The gene known as *MAOA* affects brain chemistry.

Send your questions to
fred@healthygeezers.com.

Great Falls Middle School Students of the Week

Grade 6

Kyle Dodge

Grade 7

Aliyah Sanders

Izaiah Adorno

Grade 8

Mark Waite

Mesa Verde

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SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES – January 28th to February 1st

GILL-MONTAGUE

Gill/Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Congregate meals are served Tuesday through Thursday at noon. Meal reservations must be made one day in advance by 11 a.m. The Meal Site Manager is Kerry Togneri. The Council on Aging Director is Roberta Potter. All fitness classes are supported by a grant from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Voluntary donations are accepted.

For more information, meal reservations, or to sign up for programs, call (413) 863-9357. Leave a voice message if the center is not open.

Monday, 1/28

10:10 a.m. Aerobics
10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise
1 p.m. Knitting Circle

Tuesday, 1/29

9:30 a.m. Chair Yoga

Wednesday, 1/30

10 a.m. Aerobics
12:45 p.m. Bingo

Thursday, 1/31

9 a.m. Tai Chi
1 p.m. Pitch
Friday, 2/1
10 a.m. Aerobics
10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise
11:30 a.m. Pizza Party
1 p.m. Writing Group

ERVING

Erving Senior Center, 1 Care Drive, Erving, is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for activities and congre-

gate meals. Lunch is at 11:30 a.m., with reservations required 24 hours in advance. Call Mealsite Manager Rebecca Meuse at (413) 423-3308, for meal information and reservations. For information, call Polly Kiely, Senior Center Director, at (413) 423-3649. Transportation can be provided for meals, shopping, or medical necessity. Call the Center to confirm activities, schedule a ride, or find out when is the next blood pressure clinic.

Flu Clinic – Call the Senior Center at (413) 423-3649 to find out when the next flu clinic will be held. This clinic is free to Erving residents, sponsored by the Erving Board of Health and available on a walk-in basis. The shot is recommended for those over 55, those who work with children or the elderly, and those with chronic illness. Pneumonia shots will also be available for those over 60 who have never been vaccinated.

Telephone Reassurance – Phone calls every morning for seniors who want someone to check in on them.

Shopping Trips – Thursday afternoon alternating from Turners Falls to Orange.

Quilting Classes Resume

A new series of 10 quilting classes will begin on Monday, February 11 and continue on every second and fourth Mondays of the month. The classes are held from 12:30 until 2:30. The Senior Center owns two sewing machines which participants may use or you may bring your own portable. The classes are led by

Dianne Cornwell and her assistant Sandy. There is no fee for the class but donations are gratefully accepted. Call Polly at (413) 423-3649 for more information.

Monday, 1/28

9 a.m. Tai Chi
10 a.m. Osteo Exercise
12 p.m. Quilting

Tuesday, 1/29

8:45 a.m. Chair Aerobics
12:30 p.m. Painting

Wednesday, 1/30

8:45 a.m. Line Dancing
10 a.m. Chair Yoga
12 p.m. Bingo

Thursday, 1/31

8:45 a.m. Aerobics
10 a.m. Posture Perfect
12 p.m. Cards

Friday, 2/1

9 a.m. Bowling

LEVERETT SENIOR ACTIVITIES

For information, contact the Leverett COA at (413) 548-1022, ext. 5, or coa@leverett.ma.us.

Take-It-Easy Chair Yoga - Wednesday at 10 a.m. at the Town Hall. Drop-in \$4 (first class free).

Senior Lunch - Fridays at 12. Call (413) 367-2694 by Wednesday for a reservation.

WENDELL

WENDELL Senior Center is at 2 Lockes Village Road. Call Nancy Spittle, (978) 544-6760, for hours and upcoming programs. Call the Center for a ride.



EDITE CUNHA PHOTO

Reclining Abominable Snowwoman in Downtown Turners

Meals on Wheels Seeking Sponsors

The 2013 Meals on Wheels Walkathon on May 4 seeks corporate sponsors. All contributions support the important work of Franklin County Home Care Corp. and the Meals on Wheels Program. Sponsor packages include valuable marketing bene-

fits.

Contact Jackie Belanger at jbelanger@fchcc.org or (978) 544-2259 x2225 or visit www.fchcc.org/MOW2013 to learn more about sponsoring this wonderful event.



Local Briefs

Compiled by DON CLEGG

The first Annual Meeting of the newly incorporated **Good Neighbors: Wendell/New Salem Food Pantry, Inc.** will be held at the Wendell Town Hall on Sunday, Jan. 27, beginning at 4 p.m. Stop by and vote for Board Members (President, Secretary, Treasurer, and 4 at-large members), ask questions, and learn about Good Neighbors' history and future plans. All are welcome.

Children of all ages and their families can make fun **Valentine-inspired crafts**, cards, and other heart themed projects with Ruth O'Mara and Linda Hickman at the Carnegie Library on Saturday, Feb 2, from 10:30 a.m. until noon. The program is free and all craft materials will be provided.

If you live in one of these neighborhoods and are interested

in being a co-captain, please call Christine at (413) 544-2282 or Nancy at (413) 544-6760, or contact Christine at cheard59c@netscape.net

Faith Baptist Church, 331 Silver St in Greenfield is offering a **free clothes giveaway** on Saturday, Feb. 2, from 9 a.m. to noon. There are plenty of winter clothes including coats and sweaters for men, women and children. Everyone is welcome.

The **Wendell neighborhood** emergency planning committee is working to update the list of co-captains for 2013.

The neighborhoods that currently need co-captains are: Morse Village Road, including Davis Turn Road; Locke Hill Road from Locks Village Road to Old Stage Road, including the upper end of Old Stage Road; Checkerberry

Lane; Mormon Hollow Road; and Farley Road from Kemsley Academy to "S" curves.

Looking for a different place to enjoy lunch on a Friday afternoon? Check out the **Apprentice Restaurant** at Franklin County Technical School, 82 Industrial Blvd, in Turners Falls. Menu selections change each Friday and lunch is served from 11 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Call ahead, (413) 863-9561, for menu and reservations or visit www.fcts.org.

An apprentice is a young person learning a trade or an art. The word apprentice was first used in the English language during medieval times. It was derived from the French verb, apprendre, to learn.

Send local briefs to reporter-local@montaguema.net.

Bank Event to Help SHINE a Light on Medicare

Celebrating that milestone birthday soon? Turning 65? Feeling uneasy about your insurance options? No problem!

Come learn about Medicare by attending "I am New to Medicare. What are My Options?" on Thursday, Jan. 31 at 1:30 p.m. at the Greenfield Savings Bank in Turners Falls.

GSB is partnering with Lorraine York-Edberg, SHINE Program Director from Franklin County Home Care, and Sarah Mancinelli, SHINE Counselor, who will bring their expertise to the program. Bring your questions and concerns.

Seating will be limited so please call Christina, Kerri or Linda at (413) 863-4316 to reserve your spot. Light refreshments will be provided.

Workshop Building Language

The Community Network for Children is holding a Building Language Workshop at the Swift River School in Wendell on Tuesdays evenings from 6 - 7:30 p.m. on Jan. 29 and Feb. 5. Free childcare and dinner will be provided at 5:30 p.m. with registration.

Research shows that early language is the key to later academic

success. Strong reading and writing skills come from strong language skills. Come learn and practice simple strategies that help children gain solid language skills while playing and having fun.

For more information, contact Gillian Budine, CNC Coordinator, at (978) 544-5157 or budine@erving.com.

Film Screening and Discussion *The Atomic States of America*

GREENFIELD - On Wednesday, Jan. 30, *The Atomic States of America*, a film, featured at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival exploring these issues, will be shown at Greenfield Garden Cinemas for one-night-only, starting at 6:45 p.m. The 90-minute film screening and the following discussion is organized by Greening Greenfield and Citizens for Emergency Preparedness, and is co-sponsored by the Safe & Green Campaign and Citizens Awareness Network (CAN). Donations of \$3-\$10 are requested.

Concerned Citizens for Emergency preparedness and Greening Greenfield will organize two more films aiming to increase understanding on how we can shape our future and build economic vitality and ecological resilience.

Each film will be followed by a discussion. The final two films will be held on Wednesday, Feb. 27, and Wednesday, Mar. 27. For more information, visit www.GreeningGreenfield.org or call (413) 772-3747.

CORRECTION

In last week's article on the federal court appeal of the State of Vermont vs. Entergy, due to a reporting error, the name of the proposed shell corporation to which Entergy planned to spin off its Northeastern nuclear power reactors was mistakenly referred to as Exelon. Exelon is the number one nuclear utility in the country. The name of the proposed shell corporation was Enexus. We regret the error.

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Wanted (ALIVE!) a Few Good Men and Women

Greenfield Harmony Reconvenes on Feb. 11 for Spring Session

Starting on Monday, February 11, Greenfield's large, multigenerational community choir, Greenfield Harmony, under the direction of Mary Cay Brass, will reconvene for its winter/spring session culminating in the annual spring concert on May 19.

Having established a strong local following for its eclectic mix of songs from many cultures, the new singing session will feature songs from the Eastern European countries of Macedonia, Serbia and Albania as well as a Yiddish love song. A South African dance song, an English pub song, a few New England shape note songs and Appalachian gospel music will round out the concert program.

As a special highlight of the winter/spring session, Brass is bringing back the great African American gospel piano player, singer and choral arranger, Dr. Kathy Bullock of Berea, Kentucky who will join the choir for workshops in early May preceding the concert. Bullock will co-lead the concert with Brass.

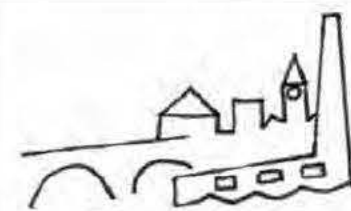
The 80-member choir is open to singers from early teens on up. With large soprano and alto sections already in place, Ms. Brass is seeking to expand the tenor and bass sections, with a special invitation to new tenors (men and women) and basses.

For registration information, contact Mary Cay Brass at: (802) 490-4094 or mcbrass@vermont-tel.net.

The Montague Congregational Church
Roast Pork Supper
Saturday, February 2nd 5:30 p.m.
Roast Pork, Gravy, Red Roasted Potatoes, Candied Carrots, Spiced Apples, Breads, Dessert, coffee, tea and milk



Adults: \$10.00; Children : \$6.00
For Reservations Call: 413-774-7256
Walk-ins seated as space allows.
Calls for Take Outs



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"The Voice of the Villages"

It's Back! The Public Option

By JEFF SINGLETON

It's a snowy, snuggly day. A great time to kick back with a nice Irish coffee and consider the "public option" again. It turns out the public option, which was eliminated from Obamacare early in the debate, is back on the table - at least in the sense that some liberal Democrats in the House have figured out a nifty way to raise it again, as discussed in the Jan. 15 article by Mollie Reilly, "Public Option Resurfaced By House Democrats As Deficit Reduction Measure," posted on the Huffington Post.

Not familiar with the public option? Well, it's essentially a proposal to offer Americans covered by "Obamacare" a publicly financed health care plan like Medicare to compete with the insurance-based plan. According to a Huffington Post poll conducted last month, only 30 percent of respondents said they had even heard of the public option.

It is a smart idea politically and fiscally. It would save billions compared to most current plans because it would eliminate or reduce the wasteful insurance industry. Cost controls would be much easier, as they are now in traditional Medicare. The Congressional Budget Office estimated in 2010 that a version of the public option that negotiated rates with health care providers would save the government \$25 billion over 10 years, while a version of the plan tied to Medicare rates could save \$110 billion over a decade.

The public option would compete with private plans so those who claim to support market competition should not oppose it. (Of course they do but it puts conservatives in a rather awkward position, which is always fun.)

There are problems. The biggest one is that it might actually work in terms of providing health care for millions at a lower cost. As a result,

many businesses that now have insurance-based plans would "dump" employees into the system, leading to something that looked like Canadian single payer. How terrible!

The second problem is that the idea has no support among Republicans, most of whom are stuck in an ideological box, nor among many Democrats who shake in their boots when anyone mentions "government controlled health care."

Third, there is the very real issue that it takes the biggest fiscal problem the government has now - how to finance health care - and makes it much bigger. But the subsidies in Obamacare have a similar problem and, quite frankly, so will Paul Ryan's voucher, err, "premium support" plan for Medicare. (Ryan's proposal, which claims it would give elderly Americans who retire in 2022 a fixed amount to buy health insurance or traditional Medicare, was originally called a "voucher." But Republican political consultants pointed out that surveys show that for some reason Americans don't like the word "voucher." It is not clear why. Maybe it is because voucher reminds us of those ugly green bags small businesses use to make their bank deposits. Ryan and his consultants came up with the phrase "income support," not exactly a household name but more innocuous. Liberals of course continue to insist it is really an evil "voucher.")

The estimates seem to suggest that the public option will be cheaper for the federal government, depending of course on your assumptions about how big the program will become.

For the time being, it is going nowhere but raising it now in the context of deficit reduction is smart. So relax, put a log on the fire and consider the public option.



The Unfinished Portrait of Barack Obama

LETTER TO



THE EDITOR

New Members Needed for the Wendell Finance Committee

In Wendell, the Finance Committee is supposed to be a five person Committee. When the FinCom was established in 1978 five members were appointed. In recent years we have been unable to fill all five positions. Now, we expect a further loss in membership by the end of this fiscal year.

"The prime function of the finance committee is reviewing departmental budgets and submitting a balanced budget to town meeting. All municipal officers authorized to spend money must annually provide

the Finance Committee with estimates of how much funding will be needed for the

proper maintenance of the departments under their jurisdiction." - Massachusetts Finance Committee Handbook

It is helpful to have at least one person who is a number cruncher to serve the Committee, but other members who are generally interested in the fiscal priorities of the Town are equally valuable. In fact, we have tried to recruit younger citizens and women to create a well-rounded-

board. If you have business experience and/or skills, that too can be helpful, but they are not required. An open and inquisitive mind can go a long way toward solving the problems the Committee addresses. If you are interested in serving on this committee, now would be a good-time to begin volunteering as we are beginning to develop the budget for FY2014. We would be happy to answer any questions you might have about how you might help.

— Michael Idoine,
Chairman Wendell Finance Committee

Chief Speaks on Downtown Burglars

Construction Co. Supply Co. and at Carriage House Designs occurred that night as well.

Last Wednesday night there were more break-ins at the Montague Elks Lodge, Ristorante DiPaolo, Ed's Barber Shop and the Shady Glen, all within an hour and a half.

Dodge said the perpetrators employ a fairly consistent modus operandi, which leads police to believe that they are the same people or group of people. "We do have suspects," said Dodge. Suspects try multiple buildings in the middle of the night and move on if they fail. Their pattern involves "prying open the doors, or attempting to, and then quickly ransacking the place until they get money."

There have been several spates of

break-ins targeting downtown businesses in the last year, crime the police believe can be attributed to heroin addiction. Dodge said "the motivation behind these break-ins is narcotics. People assume that businesses have money left in their shop."

"The problem is drugs, and it's not going to go away anytime soon. We have to protect ourselves from being victims, and that includes spending money on more security, including video cameras," continued Dodge.

Some of the same businesses have suffered repeated break-ins. Dodge said that finally, downtown businesses are ramping up security and installing cameras.

Dodge did say that a recently initiated community policing program

"has been extremely successful." Officer Michael Sevene spends the majority of his day shifts walking around on foot and visiting downtown businesses. "The goal is for him to get to know the public and be an approachable presence. He has collected a lot of information already about these crimes and others that has lead to strong leads."

Sevene is also working with businesses to update and improve their security systems. Dodge said that improved security helps police as well as residents. "If we can catch someone on camera, it's pretty hard for them to deny their crime."

"The police can't do this alone," said Dodge. "We do what we can, but protecting citizens from crime is a community effort."

By SHIRA HILLEL

TURNERS FALLS - Downtown businesses experienced a new round of break-ins, attempted and successful, last week.

Detective Lee Laster of the Montague Police Department is actively involved in the case. Chief of Montague Police, Chip Dodge, said that police have not yet arrested anyone, but are following up on evidence left at the scenes.

Apparent attempts on the night of Sunday Jan. 13 to break into Pipione's Sport Shop, Couture Brothers, and the St. Kazimierz Society on Avenue A, and the Montague Parks and Recreation office in Unity Park were unsuccessful. Break-ins at Shanahan

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By TEAGAN FELTON-LINNEL

The Gill-Montague Regional School District has again participated in the local Toys for Tots program, and helped children of underprivileged families have presents to open on Christmas.

Toys for Tots is a charity run by the United States Marine Corps Reserve that provides underprivi-

leged children with new toys on Christmas. Founded in 1947 by Colonel William L. Hendricks in California, Toys for Tots was shortly incorporated into the official mission of the Marine Corps Reserve, and national campaign in 1948. Toys for Tots has been supported by celebrities such as Walt Disney, Peggy Lee, Tim Allen, Billy Ray Cyrus, and more. Toy drives have also been conducted in the White House by First Lady Michelle Obama, one of Toys for Tots' biggest supporters.

Every school in the Gill-Montague School district has served as a toy drop-off location for four years running, and the large toys

bins stationed at each school have been filled to the top every year. All the toys collected have gone to families in the local community. In past years, the number of families helped has ranged from 55 to 60. The local Toys for Tots organization aided 48 families this year.

Heather Poirier, distributor of the school drop off boxes, said "Most families are very appreciative to receive help from this program. We've had many families hug us to thank us and some even get teary eyed because if it weren't for the Toys for Tots, their children would not have toys at Christmas time. It is very rewarding!"

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Cumbey Sale Hits Snag

By JEFF SINGLETON

TURNERS FALLS - The sale of the former Cumberland Farms building in Turners Falls to Montague's local access television station, MCCI, appears to be in jeopardy.

At a meeting of the Montague Economic Development And Industrial Corporation (MEDIC), the current owner of the building, a member of the MCCI board of Directors, Michael Muller, raised significant objections to a proposed Land Development Agreement (LDA) that would accompany the sale. The LDA proposes, among other things, that the local access station could forfeit the building if it is found not compliant with the agreement. According to a memo handed out by Muller:

"Upon review of the LDA... MEDIC appears to desire a situation where they continue to exert control over the property in question, to the point where they could simply walk into the building and issue a Writ of Default, whereupon if MCCI does not remedy, the MEDIC will assume ownership of the building."

The memo requested numerous changes in the proposed agreement, including the deletion of sections that require MEDIC approval of future design changes and renovations for a period of fifty years.

Muller also objected to suggestions by MEDIC that MCCI be required to construct a "gabled roof" and maintain the building as "the site of a gateway for Turners Falls." MCCI does not have the funds to build such a roof, Muller argued, and stressed that the organization's mission was to provide local access television, not serve as a tourist center.

Unfortunately the location of the former Cumberland Farms building has created concerns among local officials, particularly about the architectural compatibility of any renovation with the near-

by Discovery Center. The building is located on land next to the Center, a key tourist attraction, and faces Avenue A, a block from the bridge connecting Turners Falls to Route 2. Furthermore, any future work by MCCI must comply with an agreement with the state, known as the "512 Agreement," that requires renovations be "compatible with the aesthetics of the Great Falls Discovery Center and its use with the historical uses of said lot..."

The situation is further complicated by continued leakage in the building roof despite repairs.

In 1996, Montague town meeting appropriated \$32,000 to pay for roof repairs and remediation of hazardous materials prior to the sale. MEDIC then took control of the building in an agreement with the state, which owns the adjacent buildings and land. The original plan was to then sell the building to MCCI, which would finance extensive renovations, including a new studio and a public meeting room. The agency "RiverCulture," which promotes arts and culture Turners Falls, would be given office space as well.

In August MCTV presented MEDIC with a proposal and requested that the sale take place in September so work could begin before the winter:

"The building needs prompt attention to remediate mold and to repair the roof before further damage is done to the structure. This is imperative...We are not interested in owning a building without having the time to remediate the issues before winter arrives."

The time frame proved unrealistic, in part because resignations from MEDIC made it impossible for the organization to meet with a

quorum in the early fall. Then in November, with a quorum obtained, MEDIC sent MCCI a draft purchase and sale agreement, a "Grant of Right to Purchase the Property", and the proposed LDA. In a cover letter MEDIC stated that the roof would be repaired with town funds. Medic explained their core concerns:

"Gateway aesthetics are a paramount concern. The final proposal shall demonstrate consistency with Downtown Turners Falls Design Guidelines for façade and siding. Design by a registered architect is preferred... A design with gabled roof is strongly preferred."

Medic requested a response by mid December and a discussion of the various documents at its Jan. 17 meeting. Delayed by the holidays, MCCI's official response was only received just prior to the January meeting. The discussion at that meeting was brief: Medic had only a temporary quorum due to an unexpected meeting conflict for two members. None of the outstanding issues were resolved.

The situation is further complicated by continued leakage in the building roof despite repairs. According to general contractor, Louis Hale, the developer working with MCCI, significant amounts of water has been absorbed under the floor tiles. This has made it impossible to encapsulate the floor, which contains asbestos. Thus the building will require a significant hazardous waste remediation no matter who owns it. There was discussion at the meeting regarding whether the entire roof, or only the work done to repair existing splits and cracks, was guaranteed for one year.

While last spring's Montague town meeting had appropriated \$30,000 for building repairs, they rejected an amendment that allowed the funds to be used for demolition if that became necessary.

To be continued...

SEARCH from page 1

was to develop questions for interviews they will conduct with candidates for superintendent. The MASC will do the initial vetting of applicants, examining resumes and credentials, and selecting those whose experience and background most closely meet the criteria set forth by the school committee. MASC plans to submit between eight and ten semifinalist candidates to be interviewed by the search committee in executive session. They will recommend three to five candidates to the G-M school committee for their final selection.

At the next meeting, the committee will be asked to select a chair and to formulate a list of 10 to 12 interview questions. Correia asked committee members to prepare by studying the sample questions in their packets. She stressed that too many questions restrict the opportunity for more thorough discussion of issues during follow-up questions.

The selection process will include two more public meetings of the search committee; one on Feb. 6, where they will finalize interview questions, and another on Feb. 28, where MASC will present the semifinalists to the search committee.

The search committee will conduct interviews over a period of two weeks in March. Each candidate will be asked a series of set questions with brief unscripted follow-ups allowed. Interviews will last one hour each with a 15 minute break in between.

Choices of final candidates will be submitted to the school committee at a Thursday, Mar. 21 meeting, at which point the search committee members will be discharged from their duties.

For confidentiality reasons, only the names of the candidates who go on to final consideration with an interview in an open school committee meeting will be released to the public.

Before revealing the candidates to the public, members of the

school committee, assisted by MASC, will conduct site visits. Site visits and final interviews are planned for the week of Apr. 8. The final vote to appoint a new superintendent will take place on Apr. 11.

Although the search committee members come from a wide range of backgrounds, some public officials, some members of the community whose children or grandchildren attend schools in the district, some former or current teachers, or retired administrators, all displayed a sincere intention to find the best person to lead the district and give the students, teachers and school community a sense of stability and continuity. Continuity seemed to be the issue most mentioned in comments from the community.

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ART from page 1

years old, and he never looked a day over 30. You tried to interest your kids in some of the early adventures that so excited you, but they'd already moved on to video games where the hyper violence made your comic books seem tame.

Did you know that 70% of today's comic book readers are adults who don't find the kinds of violence found in video games entertaining? They feel the same way about the superhero rereads that Hollywood produces.

Ross's appeal to these readers is not that he copies the heroes as they once were. Ross doesn't copy; he transforms. His modern heroes take on almost mythical qualities. They transcend the limi-

tations and insecurities of the early heroes as well as the pessimistic visions of their creators to embody a new kind of strength and optimism about people and their ability to triumph in spite of the human condition — even if occasionally they need a little super heroic help. Ross's Superman, for example, has a more modest sensibility to go along with the earlier incarnation's super human strength, x-ray vision, and ability to fly faster than a speeding bullet.

How does Ross accomplish this combination of power and humility in his drawings of the man from Krypton? "By keeping the feet together and pointed outward," he tells us in the exhibit catalogue, which is printed as a comic book. "By keeping the hands in fists, but

relatively relaxed and at his sides. The key is that his cape does all his talking for him — it creates a flamboyant sense of movement so he doesn't have to."

Similarly, Ross's Plastic Man is a combination of power and humor: "The liquid nature of his body is his defense against taking it too seriously." That he does what he does behind big, modern, sunglasses serves to underscore the fun.

In addition to his mother, Lynette, a successful fashion illustrator who was sketching Bat Lady long before Alex was born, Ross cites Salvador Dali, Andrew Loomis, and Andy Warhol as major influences. He also owes a special debt to Norman Rockwell: "Every time I see one of his paintings, the level of detail, the

amount of work he obviously put into it, just knocks me out." Nowhere is Ross's admiration more evident than in his painting of the earlier master. If it weren't for the flag draped over Rockwell's shoulder, you would think the painting was a self-portrait. "The American flag is his cape, and he's certainly not striking any kind of pose, not seeming majestic in that way, but showing a very humble dignity and strength."

Then there's Ross singularly best work. The one in which he uses his extraordinary talent to make his most powerful and prophetic statement: Uncle Sam. Working



The portrait of Norman Rockwell with an American flag draped over his shoulder

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from the image made popular during World War I by James Montgomery Flagg, inspired by the realism of Norman Rockwell used in the Uncle Sam he created after the second World War, and sobered by the clueless Uncle Sam Andy Warhol popularized during the rebellious sixties, Ross's 1997 rendition portrays our country's icon as a threadbare, homeless, saddened, and depressed as he wanders through a bleak, unidentified landscape that has become all too familiar to many Americans today.

"What: Heroes and Villains: The Art of Alex Ross" is on display through Feb. 24 at the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge. For more information, call the museum at 413-298-4100.



TRIBUTE from page 1

On Sunday afternoon, Jan. 20, the Wendell Meetinghouse bell rang at the beginning and end of the gathering celebrating Vic Scutari's life. The Town Hall was full to overflowing. The extended Scutari family sat on the stage, people filled all the chairs that would fit in the hall, people stood out to the edges of the room and in the storage room and still more people gathered in the street outside. Klondike Koehler of Klondike Sound provided and operated a sound system so people could hear the proceedings outside the hall.

The Scutaris first came to Western Massachusetts to stand in protest when the IRS seized and sold the Colrain house belonging to Randy Kehler and Betsy Corner who were withholding federal war taxes. Kehler was unable to attend due to illness, but sent a statement praising Vic's "great moral conviction and determination...sense of humor and playfulness."

In 1992, during the 500th year anniversary of the 1492 "discovery" of America, Vic completed a 28-day fast on the Capitol steps in Washington, in solidarity with American indigenous people. That fast uncovered symptoms later diagnosed as Parkinson's disease. In response to his diagnosis, Vic, Patti, and their children held a family meeting and decided to change their lives, buy the Country Store, and move to Wendell.

Ria Windcaller recalled Vic's advent on the Wendell scene, a cap on his head at a rakish tilt and wearing shorts, the better to show off his fit legs. Windcaller said she wondered at "these classy people from Long Island" - a "wave that came up from Long Island and cleared everything up."

Vic and Patti's warmth and generosity made the store and Deja Brew pub centers of Wendell community life. Patti told the gathering that, within weeks of buying the store, Vic envisioned a pub. The former video/soda/dog food corner of the store was renovated into the Deja Brew in 2005, financed in part by innovative community microloans from community members secured by coupons good for food and drink at the future pub.

According to Kevin Baleno, "he ran the store with my mother as long as he physically could." But the Parkinson's symptoms increased over time, and, as the years went on, Vic required more care from his wife, children and personal care attendants. His mind remained sharp, but his body was failing.

At the life celebration, people talked of Vic's kindness, dry humor and how much he enjoyed life and enjoyed people. Long Island friend Joe Hamilton said Vic proved that "the hard work of peace work doesn't have to be humorless." Hamilton recounted going to the Salvadoran embassy to get a visa with a letter of support written on the letterhead of the store that Vic was running at the time. As Hamilton sat at the embassy, he re-read the letter and noticed the motto Vic had written under the Sweater Loft store logo: "Put your tits in our knits."

Bill Brasotti, a fellow Bread and Roses worker of Vic's, told the gathering that Vic "wanted to make the world more child friendly, more peaceful for everyone... He chose to pitch his tent with the poor... and became rich in the only way that really matters - in meaning and truth."

Son-in-law Tom Donnelly said he was one of a few privileged people who had married into the family. "It

was easy to fall in love with Vic's children because it was easy to fall in love with Vic."

Vic was strong, both physically and spiritually, and did not back down in the face of opposition. Except once when he told Patti, "I won't marry you." She told him she would not live with him without marriage. He then said, "OK, so we'll get married."

He was born in the Bronx, played baseball on the Voice of Long Beach team and stayed a loyal Yankees fan even after relocating to New England. One day, while he was sitting in front of the country store, a Red Sox fan taunted, "Did you hear? The Yankees lost the playoff game." Vic replied, "I know... It's a sign of the last days."

At the celebration, Richard Chase sang one of Vic's favorites: Willie Nelson's love song "You Were Always on My Mind," with lyrics regretting not expressing love often enough or soon enough: "Little things I should have said and done/ I just never took the time.../ You were always on my mind..."

Summoning up Vic's lifelong work for peace and justice, Moonlight Davis sang John Lennon's "Imagine:" "...no need for grief or hunger/ a brotherhood of man..."

As the celebration of life ended, Patti invited people to the Deja Brew, where she said that Vic would buy everyone a drink. Potluck food covered four tables in the front room of the pub, and people were packed in so tight that it was almost impossible to move to the back room where there was even more potluck food.

Robbie Leppzer videoed the inspiring and humbling celebration of Vic Scutari's life and will give a copy to the Wendell Free Library.



Mars IS Boring

We may have seen photographs of Mars with canyons, ravines, and deltas. It would appear that Mars has had water which has eroded the landscape, much like the Grand canyon. This brings new and exciting hope of water under the surface.

I find it interesting how man's quest for discovering new things is so strong. It was not too long ago we went to the moon—you do remember the moon. In 2015 Russia plans to go there in search of water.

With the new year only weeks old, I wonder what discoveries we have found about ourselves, internal things, that we have resolved to try to change. How many of these issues were on last year's list?

The Bible says: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

(II Corinthians 5:17)

Knowing Jesus Christ as Savior begins a new life for us. We, because of Christ, change internally. Old things pass away. New things take control, things of God. He recreates you and I

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UMass Amherst Study May Explain Why Wolves are Forever Wild, But Dogs Can Be Tamed

AMHERST - Dogs and wolves are genetically so similar, it's been difficult for biologists to understand why wolves remain fiercely wild, while dogs can gladly become "man's best friend." Now, doctoral research by evolutionary biologist Kathryn Lord at the University of Massachusetts Amherst suggests the different behaviors are related to the animals' earliest sensory experiences and the critical period of socialization. Details appear in the current issue of *Ethology*.

Until now, little was known about sensory development in wolf pups, and assumptions were usually extrapolated from what is known for dogs, Lord explained. This would be reasonable, except scientists already know there are significant differences in early development between wolf and dog pups, chief among them, timing of the ability to walk, she added.

To address this knowledge gap, Lord studied responses of seven wolf pups and 43 dogs to both

walking and exploring without fear and will retain familiarity throughout their lives with those things they contact. Domestic dogs can be introduced to humans, horses and even cats at this stage and be comfortable with them forever. But as the period progresses, fear increases and after the window closes, new sights, sounds and smells will elicit a fear response.

Through observations, Lord confirmed that both wolf pups and dogs develop the sense of smell at age two weeks, hearing at four weeks and vision by age six weeks on average. However, these two subspecies enter the critical period of socialization at different ages. Dogs begin the period at four weeks, while wolves begin at two weeks. Therefore, how each subspecies experiences the world during that all-important month is extremely different, and likely leads to different developmental paths, she said.

Lord reported for the first time that wolf pups are still blind and deaf when they begin to walk and explore their environment at age two weeks. "No one knew this about wolves, that when they begin exploring they're blind and deaf and rely primarily on smell at this stage, so this is very exciting," she noted.

She added, "When wolf pups first start to hear, they are frightened of the new sounds initially, and when they first start to see they are also initially afraid of new visual stimuli. As each sense engages, wolf pups experience a new round of sensory shocks that dog puppies do not."

Meanwhile, dog pups only begin to explore and walk after all three senses, smell, hearing and sight, are functioning. Overall, "It's quite startling how different dogs and wolves are from each other at that early age, given how close they are genetically. A litter of dog puppies at two weeks are just basically little puddles, unable to get up or walk around. But wolf pups are exploring actively, walking strongly with good coordination and starting to be able to climb up little steps and hills."

These significant, development-related differences in dog and wolf pups' experiences put them on distinctly different trajectories in relation to the ability to



BETH LOFT PHOTO

A Border Collie named Griff

form interspecies social attachments, notably with humans, Lord said. This new information has implications for managing wild and captive wolf populations, she said.

Her experiments analyzed the behavior of three groups of young animals: 11 wolves from three litters and 43 dogs total. Of the dogs, 33 border collies and German shepherds were raised by their mothers and a control group of 10 German shepherd pups were hand-raised, meaning a human was introduced soon after birth.

At the gene level, she added, "the difference may not be in the gene itself, but in when the gene is turned on. The data help to

explain why, if you want to socialize a dog with a human or a horse, all you need is 90 minutes to introduce them between the ages of four and eight weeks. After that, a dog will not be afraid of humans or whatever else you introduced. Of course, to build a real relationship takes more time. But with a wolf pup, achieving even close to the same fear reduction requires 24-hour contact starting before age three weeks, and even then you won't get the same attachment or lack of fear."

This story was contributed by the UMass Amherst Office of News and Media Relations.



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An Arctic Wolf at the zoo

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familiar and new smells, sounds and visual stimuli, and tested them weekly. She found they did indeed develop their senses at the same time. But her study also revealed new information about how the two subspecies of *Canis lupus* experience their environment during a four-week developmental window called the critical period of socialization, and the new facts may significantly change understanding of wolf and dog development.

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NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD MEETING

Wendell’s January 16 Selectboard Table Held No Treats

By JOSH HEINEMANN

The board began its meeting by passing around a card of sympathy for the family of Vic Scutari.

Nan Riebschlaeger, chair of the energy committee, was the meeting’s first attendee. She said Wendell, as a designated green community, is eligible for grants totaling \$138,125 to be used for lowering the town’s energy use, and making the town’s energy less reliant on fossil fuels. The town must submit its first grant application by Jan. 25.

Riebschlaeger had two suggestions for selectboard approval. First was a request for \$12,500 to conduct a level two ASHRAE (American Society of Heating Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineers) audit for town buildings. She said the buildings that can probably get the largest reduction in energy use are the highway garage and town hall, although the new town office building and library, along with the recently insulated senior center, may also have room for improvement.

Her second suggestion was to request \$4,000 for a town-owned thermal imager, coupled with software that can produce a CD. This thermal image could be used on town buildings to show heat loss, and with some guidance, could be lent to homeowners to help them direct their own energy conservation efforts.

The selectboard approved both requests by unanimous vote.

After the first Jan. 25 grant application deadline, the town will have time to think of other uses for the grant money. One thought Riebschlaeger voiced was a revolving loan fund to help homeowners insulate their houses, though she added that if the money is returned to the town, then the town will not be eligible for more in upcoming years.

Selectboard chair

Christine Heard reported that Wendell signed the Union 28 benefits agreement, including Provision 9, which states that Union 28 communities will continue to pay earned benefits to U28 retirees in the event that the union dissolves. Both Leverett and Shutesbury have recently paid their share of benefits, thus resolving the U-28 hostage crisis.

The school regionalization study committee chose to reorganize so that it no longer includes a quorum of the school committee, which has required double posting of their meetings.

School committee member Dick Baldwin quit the regionalization study committee, and Jess Zaykoski will be appointed.

Heard said that Shay Cooper, as owner of the only house found in the FRCOG maps of the town’s flood zones, will come to the next selectboard meeting to learn more about the national flood insurance program. If the town joins the program, the Coopers will be required to buy flood insurance through the program (at a reduced rate), but if the town does not join, they may not be able to get flood insurance at all.

The next quarterly meeting of the town’s money managers will be Jan. 30, from 6 to 7 p.m. just prior to the regular selectboard meeting. Heard said it seems like time to conduct a regular evaluation of the town’s chief financial overseer, Nancy Aldrich.

The town needs to send a representative to contract negotiations for the Swift River education association. Board member Dan Keller said that Ted Lewis has always attended those meetings, and that he, Keller, would ask him, Lewis, to go. The meeting will be held at Swift River School on Feb. 7 at 7 p.m. The contract negotiations will start later in the meeting.

Aldrich reported that the town is being charged

\$2,000 for each anchor institution that MBI (the Massachusetts Broadband Institute) connects to its “middle mile” fiber optic line.

Heard reported that very few co-captains have resigned from their responsibility to check on neighbors in a widespread electricity disruption or other emergency. She is looking for someone on the first part of Locke Hill Road and Old Stage Road, and someone else on the near part of Farley Road, between the town and the junction with Mormon Hollow Road.

As chair, Heard signed a contract extension for the Cronquist property acquisition by the state DCR, although the paperwork is not complete.

The meeting ended after John Casilio rented the town hall for the six days ending Saturday, July 20, 2013, as backup and overflow for an outdoor wedding planned on West Street on July 20. Casilio was reasonably sure that use of the town hall would be light, if at all, and that in the event of rain on the wedding day, not everyone expected on West Street would try to crowd into the town hall.

Correcting my own misunderstanding in the report on the Jan. 2 Wendell selectboard meeting, Riebschlaeger is not on the kitchen committee, but as chair of the energy committee, has paid close attention to its activity.

The kitchen group began at a town hall food security forum sponsored by the energy committee in May 2012. People at that forum separated into groups to discuss topics brought up in the general discussion that interested them most. The group focused on education, and decided to restore the town hall kitchen, not so much an energy concern, an education concern or a food security concern, but just something worth doing.

NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD MEETING

Budget Advisory Committee Has Its Work Cut Out for It

By DAVID DETMOLD

The newly formed budget review committee got handed a weighty brief from the selectboard on Tuesday, Jan. 22. Leverett residents Stuart Warner, an accountant, and Doug Darif, a banker, who will be assisted by former town accountant Terry Allen, have been asked by the board to take a fresh look at all town and school expenditures, and to then advise the board, in the words of selectboard chair Rich Brazeau, “Are we spending the money we take in wisely? Are there areas we need to adjust?”

Not only that, as board member Peter d’Errico said, “There has been very little discussion about how do you handle budgets in a time of real limits to resources, and no new growth.”

Board members said global and national fiscal instability gets passed down to the states and then to localities, which are forced to do more with less financially, while at the same time, individual taxpayers are feeling the same constraints, retirees in particular, and therefore the option of simply raising taxes to cover expenses locally is unpalatable.

Julie Shively asked the new committee to take a look at spending in comparably sized communities, to see if Leverett was being excessively generous with any of its outlays.

The board pointed out that the town has been taxing to

within a a hair’s breadth of the levy limit for the last few years, state aid is flat yet the town is being asked to pre-fund retiree health benefits to the tune of \$75,000 a year, and the town’s cash reserves are at their lowest levels in decades.

As if these dire portents were not enough for an ad hoc advisory committee to grapple with, town clerk Lisa Stratford has one more question she wanted the trio to address. “What would happen” to town finances, she asked hypothetically, “if the town’s biggest taxpayer falls ill and his wife decides not to stay in town and sells the property to a non-profit... what would the town do?” The figure of \$250,000 in annual property taxes was then suggested as hanging in the balance, in case her question proved to be more than hypothetical.

At about this point, Warner apologized but said personal commitments would prevent him from doing much work with the new committee for the next few months. The selectboard said they would still welcome his involvement, and hoped a time frame of a year would be sufficient for the budget advisers to gain a working overview of the town’s balance sheet and return with recommendations.

In the meanwhile, Brazeau offered his own assessment in support of comments made last week by

finance committee chair Don Gibavic, that despite a pending \$100,000 increase projected in Leverett’s share of the regional school budget, the town should be able to make it through the current budget cycle without resorting to an override of Proposition 2½.

D’Errico said the selectboard tends to focus on the school budget not only because it takes up the lion’s share of the town’s expenditures, but also because, as he put it, “It is the most resistant to new thinking. It’s like a religious issue, trying to make change there.”

He added, “The arguments are emotional, or based on political correctness. They say, ‘How can you do this? The kids need these things’ Well, I think the kids need a functioning community. They need that more than they need new iPads.”

In other news, the board appointed Tom Powers to be their representative to the school committee in ongoing contract negotiations with teachers. The board will also ask the agricultural commission to act promptly on a complaint from neighbors on Teawaddle Hill Road, who complained last year about the noise of a guard dog barking at night while on duty guarding sheep at Winterberry Farm. It is hoped the agricultural commission can help to facilitate a solution to the problem that meets the needs of all concerned.

see LEVERETT page 9

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

Motor Vehicle Accidents and Complaints

Monday, 1/14

6:20 a.m. Suspicious motor vehicle reported on Dole Road. Checked out OK; resident from Bernardston.

11:30 a.m. Motor vehicle accident at Main Road and Route 2. Tractor Trailer Unit vs. passenger car; under investigation.

1:20 p.m. Department of Children Services regarding past issue with parent/child on French King Highway.

9:00 p.m. Armed robbery at Main Street business. Assisted Northfield police.

Tuesday, 1/15

8:30 a.m. Juvenile Court for arrest-

ed resident from Chapell Drive.

5:05 p.m. Annoying behavior situation reported at Northfield Mount Hermon relating to a past restraining order.

Wednesday, 1/16

7:10 a.m. Past larceny of motor vehicle parts from French King Highway reported.

3:00 p.m. Harassment prevention order issued Mount Hermon Campus.

6:10 p.m. Restraining order issued to party on Mountain Road.

Friday, 1/18

8:55 a.m. Animal complaint on Hoe Shop Road; taken to county dog kennel.

6:30 p.m. Arrested resident on Boyle Road for three default warrants; subject transported to House of Correction.

Saturday, 1/19

6:10 p.m. Motor vehicle complaint of cars parking in roadway on Myrtle Street. Motor vehicle moved upon request.

Sunday, 1/20

12:15 p.m. Motor vehicle accident on Main Road at French King Highway; under investigation.

4:20 p.m. Suspicious person on the French King Bridge with no jacket; no one located.

6:00 p.m. Assisted Bernardston police with arrest warrant.

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PLANS from page 1
or space.

Building 9, one of the smaller buildings, contains a working, but idle, hydroelectric turbine belonging to the Swift River Hydro Company. Having taken the rest of the complex for back taxes in 2010, the town has worked hard to make it attractive to reinvestment, though any developer will face a tangle of legal and logistical challenges.

The town pointedly announced it was looking for “the most creative approach to the rehabilitation and reuse of the structures,” and “the proposal that promises to contribute most significantly to the economic development of the town.”

In its Request for Proposals (RFP) issued in November, the town split the property into three segments,

inviting proposals for one, two, or all of them. The town pointedly announced it was looking for “the most creative approach to the rehabilitation and reuse of the structures,” and “the proposal that promises to contribute most significantly to the economic development of the town.”

Whether either of the submitted proposals shows the right combination of those qualities has yet to be seen, though town residents and officials are likely to bear in mind that the most recent private owner, the Swift River Group (unrelated to the Hydro Company) was unable to align hoped-for investment despite its strong and creative vision for the buildings’ use.

Cleanup

Speaking in his offices at Town Hall last week, Town Planner Walter Ramsey was clear on the significance of the Building 10 cleanup’s completion: “It’s getting us closer to being able to redevelop the site.” Destroyed in May 2007 by a fire set by Jonathan Tanzer, a former

employee of the building’s then-owner, the building’s rubble posed a practical, aesthetic, and environmental hazard.

“We’re coming from experience in the Northampton area, where development has gotten to a point of gridlock - not a lot of room for alternative models...”

**— Andrew Huckins
of ThreshHold
Cooperative**

S&R Corporation of Lowell handled the cleanup job, which was designed and monitored for environmental compliance by Tighe & Bond. The bill was steep, but the town was able to secure a significant amount of outside funding. A \$200,000 federal EPA grant and a \$130,000 low-interest, revolving-fund loan from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments covered most of the cost, with a \$24,000 direct contribution approved by town meetings.

Ken Schelling, mill manager at the abutting Southworth Company, was enthusiastic in his praise for the work S&R did on a job “long overdue - we’ve been



PHOTO COURTESY OF THRESHHOLD COOPERATIVE.COM

Inside Building 11

looking at that pile since the fire happened. They did a great job: very thorough, very meticulous.” Schelling spoke of watching a heavy

machine operator “so accurate, he was segregating the piles into metals and salvageable brick - it was amazing to see the accuracy. He could

have picked up a peanut butter sandwich with that thing.”

Today, the site is a clear

see **PLANS** page 10

LEVERETT from page 8
cerned.

Shively reported that the regional school planning district board, which is made up of three members from each of the four towns in the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District, will hold its next meeting on Saturday, Feb. 2, at the Amherst middle school at 1 p.m.. The public is welcome to attend and ask questions of the group, which is studying the possibility of regionalizing Leverett, Shutesbury and Pelham elementary schools with Amherst. Educational and financial consultants hired by the planning board will give their report at this meeting.

If the planning board decides to go forward with the initiative, the timeline calls for town meeting votes to take place in November of this year to determine the future governance of the elementary schools in the four towns. “It’s really important for people to go and ask questions,” said Shively.

Finally, d’Errico reported that over 20 bidders showed up to pack the town hall

meeting room on Tuesday, looking for a chance to bid on Leverett’s \$3.6 million build-out and first year maintenance for the town’s municipal fiber optic network, which will allow every household and business in town access to high speed internet services. The bid will be awarded by March, d’Errico said.

Although the system is planned to be financed through an increase in property taxes, offset by a decline in current monthly charges to residents for internet or telephone service, the board is also seeking other funding possibilities to pay for the ambitious project. In particular, d’Errico has submitted a \$4.6 million grant on behalf of the town to the Economic Development Assistance Administration, hoping to tap into federal funds to pay for the fiber optic network, and for three cell phone towers in town, as well.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG Downtown Turners Break Ins

Sunday 1/6

1:52 a.m. Suspicious auto reported at Hillside Plastics Inc, 262 Millers Falls. Unable to locate.

7:34 p.m. Suspicious person at Scotty’s Convenience Store on Unity Street in Turners Falls.

Monday, 1/7

12:54 a.m. Annoying harassing phone calls to Third Street apartment in Turners Falls; Advised of options.

10:50 a.m. Illegal dumping on Sandy Lane in Turners Falls.

2:34 p.m. Vandalism in area of Bridge of Names in Lake Pleasant.

6:33 p.m. Domestic disturbance at 4th Street in Turners Falls. **Tuesday, 1/8**

3:36 p.m. General disturbance, Central Street. Services rendered.

8:43 p.m. Threatening/harassment, 4th St. Advised of options. **Wednesday, 1/9**

12:14 a.m. Motor vehicle violation, 7th and J Sts. Citation issued.

1:48 a.m. Medical emergency, 7th St. Removed to hospital.

8:06 a.m. Threatening/harassment, Griswold St. Advised of options.

12:38 p.m. Motor vehicle violation in front of Food City. Citation issued.

5:12 p.m. Annoying/harassing phone

calls, Randall Rd. Advised of options.

8:14 p.m. Threatening/harassment, G St. Advised of options.

11:47 p.m. [redacted], arrested on default warrant in alley behind St. Stan’s.

Thursday, 1/10

10:15 a.m. General disturbance, 4th St. Services rendered.

3:27 p.m. Vandalism, Central St. Referred to officer.

7:02 p.m. Medical emergency, 4th St. Removed to hospital.

Friday, 1/11

10:26 p.m. Motor vehicle accident, Lake Pleasant and Green Pond Rds. Vehicle impounded.

Saturday, 1/12

2:07 p.m. Larceny, Turnpike Rd. Referred to officer.

4:46 p.m. Restraining order violation on Montague City Rd. Summons issued.

11:20 p.m. Burglary, Pipiones Sport Shop, Avenue A. Investigated.

11:30 p.m. Domestic disturbance, Meadow Rd. Services rendered.

11:57 p.m. Domestic disturbance, 3rd St. Advised of options.

Sunday, 1/13

8:42 a.m. Burglary, Carriage House Designs, Canal St. Services rendered.

12:15 p.m. Cat struck, L St. Referred to other agency.

5:02 p.m. Suspicious persons at the Cumberland Farms, summons issued to two minors.

Monday, 1/14

7:06 a.m. Burglary, Shanahan Construction, Avenue A. Investigated.

8:53 a.m. Burglary, Parks & Rec office, Unity Park. Investigated.

8:57 a.m. Burglary, Couture Bros., Avenue A. Investigated.

9:30 a.m. Larceny, W Chestnut Hill Rd. Referred to other agency.

10:17 a.m. Fire, Federal St. Referred to other agency.

12:45 p.m. Domestic disturbance, 2nd St. Arrested [redacted], for domestic assault and battery.

12:57 p.m. Fight, Avenue A at 4th St. Services rendered.

2:04 p.m. Burglary, St. Kazimierz, Avenue A. Report taken.

10:41 p.m. Domestic disturbance, 4th St. Investigated.

Tuesday, 1/15

1:26 a.m. Domestic disturbance, 5th St. Services rendered.

3:05 a.m. Domestic disturbance, 3rd St. Investigated.

7:38 a.m. Vandalism, post office, Avenue A. Report taken.

12:50 p.m. Illegal dumping, [redacted]

Newton St. Investigated.

4:14 p.m. Attempted breaking & entering, 2nd St. Bakery, 4th St. Report taken.

6:06 p.m. Suspicious person, Aubuchon Hardware, Avenue A. Arrested [redacted], for shoplifting by asportation.

7:07 p.m. Larceny, Farren Ave. Report taken.

9:47 p.m. Motor vehicle violation, Federal St. at N. Leverett Rd. Citation issued.

Wednesday, 1/16

2:30 a.m. Burglary and Breaking and Entering at the Montague Elks Lodge on I Elks Avenue in Turners Falls.

3:13 a.m. Burglary and Breaking and Entering at Ristorante DiPaolo on Avenue A in Turners Falls.

3:37 a.m. Burglary and Breaking and Entering at Ed’s Barber Shop on Avenue A in Turners Falls.

3:43 a.m. Burglary and Breaking and Entering at the Shady Glen on Avenue A in Turners Falls.

12:12 p.m. Assault at Third Street in Turners Falls.

12:26 p.m. Assault at Third Street in Turners Falls.

3:46 p.m. Vandalism at East Main Street in Millers Falls.

9:30 p.m. Domestic disturbance at Park Street in Turners Falls.

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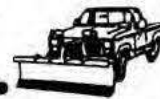
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PLANS from pg 9

patch of snowy ground, with a section of foundation left intact to help the site remain eligible for historic preservation tax credits, should a future developer seek to rebuild on that foundation.

Building 11: "The Most Ready"

Pedestrians and cyclists looking at the visually iconic mills from the bike path across the canal, and drivers turning onto Canal Street above, can see another recent improvement just to the left of the now-clear Building 10 lot. Last spring, four Northfield artists, commissioned by an award from the international Riverscapes project, affixed a curving grid of moving mirrors to the facade of Building 11. On a very windy day, these mirrors sway, evoking a rippling river of light across the red brick.

Both of the pending proposals now seek to fill that building with a river of artists, activists and entrepreneurs.

One, submitted by Flight Patterns, LLC, a team led by BJ Warshaw and Marie Rossettie of Union, NJ, and Joel Roston of Brighton, sees the adaptive reuse of Building 11 as the crucial first step in a phased project eventually encompassing the entire complex. The building, which appears alone as "Segment I" in the town's RFP, "is the most ready - further development should expand outward from there," said Warshaw on Monday night.

According to Warshaw, Flight

Though many would see the limited vehicle access to the buildings as a drawback, BJ Warshaw of Flight Patterns sees a silver lining: a chance to "make the island... into a model green community..."

Patterns' intent is "revitalizing the Mill with environmental activism in mind." He and Rossettie first saw the Strathmore while visiting friends in Turners Falls in 2011. They have been working since that visit on a plan to make use of the buildings. "We were just blown away to see the factory. I had been living for years in renovated factory spaces in Brooklyn ... I was used to seeing any similar spaces either renovated, or torn down to make condos. It's a really unique resource."

Flight Patterns hopes to transform the Strathmore into a "multipurpose facility," including artist live-work spaces, performance space, musician studios, a homesteading school, and



PHOTO COURTESY OF THRESHOLD COOPERATIVE.COM

Building 10 rubble

other facilities for adult education. Their website posted briefly this month a description of "a green community center devoted to arts, education, agriculture, commerce, and sustainability."

Though many would see the limited vehicle access to the buildings as a drawback, Warshaw sees a silver lining: a chance to "make the island... into a model green community, an example of what post-industrial spaces could be turned into, as opposed to just retrofitting these buildings without an eye to energy efficiency... We're inclined to see historical spaces reused in a way that's deferential to their past, but also [looks] toward preserving them for the next century."

He pointed out that the buildings are "well-positioned for solar energy," and expressed interest in passive heating and cooling techniques, as well as the hydroelectric turbine already sitting on the site. Though they have not approached Swift River Hydro at this stage of the process, Flight Patterns sees their 950 KW turbine-generator set and corresponding water rights as "very attractive, for trying to use the site with as close to a net-zero energy use as possible," an ideal that is nevertheless "going to be difficult, due to the age of the buildings." Further ideas for resource conservation use include rainwater harvesting and grey water reuse.

Warshaw spoke positively of Turners Falls, a village he and Rossettie "found to be very charming - it has a lot of things we were seeking in moving away from an urban environment, but without losing the

cultural amenities," citing "creative peers," art and music events among those amenities. But he highlighted the Strathmore's importance: "The mill is an asset to Turners Falls and the surrounding area. No matter what happens, we hope it gets put to good use. The Town has been through so much trying to have something happen with this landmark. We appreciate what they have gone through."

A Cooperative Approach

The second proposal, submitted by the ThreshHold Cooperative, sets its sights on Segment I - Building 11 - alone. ThreshHold, which has recently incorporated with the assistance of the South Deerfield-based Cooperative Development Institute, has made public its vision for the building as "a cooperatively owned and managed space," a confederation of smaller organizations of individuals seeking to own or rent sections as studio space, workshops and residential units.

ThreshHold's proposal was submitted with a stack of letters of interest from local stakeholders, "already more than enough to fill" proposed studio and residential units, according to co-op member Andrew Huckins. "Every day a new project comes out of the woodwork that needs space," 16 prospective tenants, and 10 prospective cooperative owners, have identified themselves as interested in studio space.

Huckins and fellow member Julia Handschuh met with this reporter last week in a rental apartment in the Patch that serves as a kind of advance camp for the project. Roommates, friends and project col-

laborators bustled in and out of the apartment, and the walls of the common space were papered over with maps, architectural drawings, handwritten timelines and the evidence of many group brainstorming sessions.

Handschuh, a native of Colrain and Greenfield, and Huckins, originally from eastern Massachusetts, spoke of their frustrations with previous efforts they have been involved with to secure space in Hampshire County.

"We're coming from experience in the Northampton area," explained Huckins, "where development has gotten to a point of gridlock - not a lot of room for alternative models... A lot of our friends there make art in their bedrooms. There's not a culture of finding shared spaces."

Handschuh agreed: "It was both the economic climate in Northampton, which made it difficult

The project shares Flight Patterns' interest in developing efficient resource use on the site. ThreshHold's website describes "state-of-the-art green systems including an alternative greywater system, green roof, solar hot water and photovoltaic panels."

to support affordable community space, and the town, which was not interested in finding ways to support a younger generation of people look-

ing for places to work, and create, and live. We're responding to the work of the Town of Montague, and of RiverCulture, that has started to prove Turners Falls as a place interested in supporting projects like ThreshHold."

The project shares Flight Patterns' interest in developing efficient resource use on the site. ThreshHold's website describes "state-of-the-art green systems including an alternative greywater system, green roof, solar hot water and photovoltaic panels."

Challenges Ahead

If either team is selected by the town to go forward with their plans for development, they will face many significant hurdles. Ways to increase parking and pedestrian access, questions of heat, electricity, water and wastewater, and relationships with the Town, FirstLight Power, and abutters of Southworth and Swift River are all on the table. So is the ever-present bottom line, which has been the undoing of the entire succession of owners dating back to the early 1950s, when Keith Paper sold the buildings to the Strathmore Company, saving them from the fate of the Russell Cutlery buildings next door, which were demolished in 1958.

"The RFP allows for creative solutions for the site's infrastructural challenges," said Ramsey. And if one of the proposals is accepted, the town's support may open doors for the chosen developer. As ThreshHold's Huckins put it, "there are a lot of moving parts that won't be figured out until a strong partnership with the town is developed."

By the rules of the procurement process, the submitted proposals are not yet publicly viewable. A committee comprised of Ramsey, town administrator Frank Abbondanzio, and building inspector David Jensen will evaluate the materials received from the two teams, weighing them by these criteria: the teams' experience, qualifications, responsiveness, and financial capacity; the projected economic impact, including job creation; and the improvements proposed to the site and facade.

That committee will then make recommendations to the selectboard, at which point discussion of the proposals will become public. The selectboard will have the final say in whether to turn the Strathmore Mill over to a new owner.

And if neither proposal is accepted?

"Well, it could be reissued," said Abbondanzio. "We'll evaluate that if it arises."




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Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Celtic session*, 10:30 a.m.

EVERY TUESDAY

The Millers Falls Library Club: Free after school program. 3:30 to 4:45 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: Free Texas Hold 'em Poker tournament, with cash prizes.

EVERY WEDNESDAY

Carnegie Library: Children and their families are invited to come enjoy stories, crafts, music, activities and snacks. 10:15 to 11:30 a.m.

Winterland, Greenfield: *TNT Karaoke*, 9 p.m.

Between the Uprights, Turners Falls: *Karaoke with Dirty Johnny*. 9 p.m. to midnight. Free.

EVERY THURSDAY

Millers Falls Library: *Music and Movement* with Tom Carroll and Laurie Davidson. Children and their caregivers are invited. 10 to 11 a.m. Free.

Between the Uprights, Turners Falls: *Open Mic with Dan, Kip, and Schultz* from *Curly Fingers Dupree Band*. 8:30 to 11:30 p.m. Free.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Open Mic Night*, 9:30 p.m.

EVERY FRIDAY AND SATURDAY

Montague Inn: *TNT Karaoke*, 8:30 p.m.

ART SHOWS:

NOW through JANUARY 29

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Paintings by Christine Winship*.

FEBRUARY 2 through MARCH 31

Nina's Nook, Avenue A, Turners Falls: *Sensual>Sexual>Smut*.

LOCAL EVENTS:

THURSDAY, JANUARY 24

Leverett Town Hall: *Geological History of Leverett*. Sheila Seamon and Mike Williams will present; later in the spring (date tbd) the talk will continue with a viewing of various outcrops. 7 p.m., free.

Deja Brew Pub, Wendell: *The Sidestreet Band*, rock/blues, 8 to 10 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Carolyn Walker*, singer-songwriter. 9 p.m., free.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 25

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Discovery Hour*, for children ages 3 to 6 and their parents. This month's topic is bears. 10 to 11:30 a.m., free.

Wendell Free Library: The Agricultural Commission will sponsor the screening of *Bananas!*, a documentary focusing on a legal case brought by Nicaraguan workers against Dole Food Corp. concerning banned pesticides. 7 p.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Kristen Graves*, folk, indie, pop. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Casey Williams* art opening, 8 p.m., followed by *Danceteria* with DJ JustJoan. Free.

Deja Brew Pub, Wendell: *Hobson's Razor*, rock, reggae & funk, 9 to 11:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26

Greenfield Savings Bank, Turners Falls: *Music to Your Ears* with *Ken and Corki*, pop, ballads, folk. 10 a.m. to noon, free.

Montague Grange: *Gender Role Free Contra Dance*. Please bring soft-soled non-street shoes to protect the wooden

dance floor. 7 to 10 p.m. \$.

Athol Town Hall: Film screening, *Wild Things of the North Quabbin*. Hank Cramer's film, shot over 5 years, features over 25 species in their natural habitat. Includes presentation by Mount Grace and a chance to meet animals rehabilitating with *Medicine Mammals*. 7 to 8:30 p.m., free.

Full Moon Coffeehouse, Old Town Hall, Wendell: *Paul Richmond, Karen Montanaro, Jack Golden, and Jackie Reifer*, spoken word, dance, theater, comedy and music. Open mic at 7:30, show at 8 p.m. Refreshments available.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Jim Gilmour*, singer/songwriter. 8 p.m.

Deja Brew Pub, Wendell: *The Roosters*, classic rock dance music by *Bruce Scofield & Mark Feller*, 9 to 11:30 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Psycho Magnetic*, classic rock. 9:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *And The*



Next Friday, Feb. 1, the Pioneer Valley's own Equalites bring Roots, Rock, R&B, Ska and Reggae to the Deja Brew Pub in Wendell, starting at 9:30 p.m.

Traveller, indie. 9:30 p.m., free.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 27

Between the Uprights, Turners Falls: Cornhole Tournament. Teams sign up before 1:15 p.m. Games and prizes from 1:45 to 5:15 p.m. \$10 entry fee per team.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Rick Murnane Band*, pop rock, 2 p.m.

Second Congregational Church, Greenfield: *Amanda Chorus 25th Anniversary Concert*. This 40-member, all-ages chorus sings joyful, justice-oriented songs from around the world. Tickets available at World Eye Bookstore. 2 p.m., \$.

Leverett Library: *Adventures in Orkney*. John Nove of South Deerfield will present slides and discuss his travel and work on these islands off northeast Scotland. 2 to 3:30 p.m., free.

Montague Bookmill, Montague Center: Dead of Winter Film Series, *Gates of Heaven* (1978, dir. Errol Morris). 7 p.m., free.

Flywheel, Easthampton: *Broken Prayer, Libyans, The Prowl, Foreign Bodies, Powerblessings, and Blessed State*, punk and hardcore. 7 p.m., \$.

Deja Brew Pub, Wendell: *The Surly Temple*, with Jim Henry, Guy DeVito, Doug Plavin and Tommy Boynton, 8 to 10 p.m.

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

MONDAY, JANUARY 28

Greenfield Community College, Dining Commons: *Casey Weston*, singer-songwriter from Season 1 of *The Voice*. Part of Student Life's Tunes at Noon series. Noon to 1 p.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: Play reading, *An Author in Search of Six Characters*, 6:30 p.m., \$.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 31

Deja Brew Pub, Wendell: *Blue Pearl*, blues/jazz, 8 to 10 p.m.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: Dan Charness, singer-songwriter, 8 p.m.

Deja Brew Pub, Wendell: The Equalites, reggae fantastic!, 9:30 to 11:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Valentine's Party*. Children of all ages are invited to make Valentine-themed crafts. Chocolate fondue fountain. 10:30 a.m. to noon. Free.

Powertown Pop-Up Shop, Turners Falls: Artist Reception for SSS exhibit at Nina's Nook. 5 to 8 p.m.

Montague Grange: Square Dance to old-time music. 7 to 10 p.m. \$.

Powertown Pop-Up Shop, downstairs, Turners Falls: *Nine Steamy Stories: a "Sexy Scribes Speaking" reading* will be hosted by local author Jeremy Edwards. The event features the kind of lineup you'd usually have to travel to New York to see: Michelle Augello-Page, Sally Bellerose, Elizabeth Black, Lana Fox, Sacchi Green, I.J. Miller, Teresa Noelle Roberts, Robin Elizabeth Sampson, and host Jeremy Edwards. Books will be available for purchase, and door prizes will include copies of major erotica anthologies that are hot off the presses! Don't miss this unique opportunity to let the unparalleled sexual power of language get you in the Valentine's Month mood. 18+. 8:30 to 10:30 p.m.

CALL for PHOTO SUBMISSIONS

Four Seasons on the Leverett Trails. March and April exhibit at the Leverett

Library. Sponsored by the Leverett Trails Committee. See www.rattlesnakeguttertrust.org/trails/photo-exhibit/ for more information. Deadline February 15.

CALL for POETRY SUBMISSIONS

Slate Roof Press, Greenfield: 1st Annual Poetry Chapbook Contest. Winner will become an active member and have a limited-edition, art-quality chapbook published by Slate Roof, a member-run non-profit collaborative. \$20 reading fee. Deadline has been extended to February 15. Visit slateroofpress.com

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By **LESLIE BROWN**

A few days before the holiday, the Christmas catalogs stopped clogging the mailbox. Then, right after the new year, came the breathtakingly bright-colored seed catalogs, a sure sign that spring will come.

What a pleasure to curl up in the armchair with the stack, to feast the eyes on all of the potential bounty to be grown. First, though, review the seed jar from last season for a culling of seeds likely no longer viable. A simple general rule of thumb is that flower seed is best used in the year of purchase and that most vegetable

seeds, especially the hard shelled variety, are good for three years at least. If you struggle with letting go of things, you can test the viability of seed by spreading a little bit between damp sheets of paper towel. Watch for sprouting within 7 to 14 days. If nothing happens, throw them out.

If you kept notes about the success of last year's varieties, look them up. Make a list of what you need for next year's garden. Now indulge in a review of all the gorgeous catalogs you have received. Dog-ear the pages you want to revisit. It's all so tempting: new varieties, things you've never grown but would like to try, not to mention your tried and true favorites. Given free reign, most of us gardeners order more than we can tend, let alone afford.

With a little restraint, maybe you can order what you love to grow and

then add a new variety or two to try. Some favorites I grow every year are: Knight peas and Sungold cherry tomatoes for their abundance and flavor, lots of leafy greens, and Rose, Brandywine and Celebrity tomatoes. I have gone backward and forward about bush versus pole beans, finally settling on the pole variety because they seem to be much less susceptible to both mildew and bean beetles.

It may seem early to order seeds, but if you plan to grow any plants from seed, you'll need to start them in late February or early March. If you have your seeds in hand, then you'll be ready to start leaf crops as soon as the soil can be worked.

This year I resolve to increase my non-toxic insect interventions by planting rows of marigolds throughout, and by edging the vine crops with nasturtiums, which will beautify as they draw aphids from others. I'll

fence well to contain the woodchuck and set out the mole busters, which seem to work equally well for the voles. Meanwhile, I'll continue to spread well-aged manure and last year's compost to feed the healthy organisms that already exist in the soil. Finally, I'll mulch well to preserve moisture and keep back the weeds.

If the above sounds like gardening resolutions, I guess they could be. After the most recent incidents of violence in the national news, there seemed to be little sense to a list of New Year's resolutions except, most importantly, to follow Ann Curry's advice after the loss of twenty small children at Sandy Hook. She challenged all of us to do twenty acts of kindness, one for each of those lost lives. Perhaps you are familiar with "plastic woman," who pounds a beat bicycle up and down the hills of

Greenfield and Turners Falls, collecting cans and bottles littered on the roadside. She also cleans out the catch basins. My partner surprised her one recent cold morning at her Beacon Field rest stop with a large cup of coffee and a couple of doughnuts, to her great pleasure. Others have paid the tab of strangers in restaurants, shared a meal or two with a neighbor, and sent items to the hungry.

The point is only to remember our humanity, to choose a positive thought and to think of others. The pain, suffering and madness in the world are overwhelming, and often beyond one mere human's remedy. An act of caring is simple and spontaneous. It will remind you and others that we're all in this together and that no one is truly alone. Not a bad resolve to start what we can only hope is a better year to come.

United Arc Coming to Town

By **PATRICIA PRUITT**

TURNERS FALLS - The Miskinis TV building on Avenue A will be the new home of the United Arc of Franklin County as of Feb. 1.

Kip Miskinis took over his father's established electronic business in Greenfield several decades ago when his father was ailing. Eventually Kip Miskinis realized the store was going to be his permanent place of work.

Although he had worked as an engineer for Pratt and Whitney for a time, he preferred the friendlier "warmer" area where he had grown

up. By the 1980's he and his brother Roge Miskinis had moved the business to its present location at 294-96 Avenue A, a building which they have improved and enlarged to triple its original square footage.

Kip Miskinis is proud of the service he and his employees provided to customers from Brattleboro to the Quabbin and throughout Franklin and Hampshire counties over the years. He remembers the early days of TV purchasing when a parent would stop in weekly to pay two dollars down on a TV that would be paid for in time for Christmas Eve. He and Roge would deliver the gift to the family.

He says he feels good about the United Arc organization coming to Turners, but says it's too bad the town will lose the tax revenue it has enjoyed from his store. Kip is looking forward to a well-earned retirement. He and his wife plan to spend some quality time flying here and there in his plane as the fancy moves them.

Miskinis is liquidating his inventory, and is offering 60% off all electronic media and audio equipment through the end of January.

For his part the Arc executive director Ed Porter is very pleased to have 296 Avenue A for his administrative staff and family support services, which work with families with disabilities. They will reorganize the current layout to include

offices, a large meeting room, and a reception area. This work will begin in early February.

The United Arc began in 1951 offering residential programs in western Massachusetts. Last year they served nearly 1000 people throughout Franklin, Hampshire

and Hamden Counties. Presently housed at 111 Summer Street in Greenfield, the Adult Services section of the Arc will take over all of the Summer Street facility after administration headquarters and family services move to Turners Falls.

Leverett Hires New Library Director

By **DAVID DETMOLD**

Leverett has a new library director. Three months after saying farewell to Linda Wentworth, who served as the director for the first nine years of the new library's existence, the board of trustees announced the top pick for her replacement. Ashley Blais, of South Hadley, was introduced to the selectboard on Tuesday night, and the board added their imprimatur by hiring her on the spot.

"I'm really looking forward to it!" said Blais, who received her master of library science degree recently from Simmons College, and has been working at the circulation desk at the Jones Library in Amherst. Which, coincidentally, is where Wentworth wound up after leaving Leverett, as

head of collections, where Blais reports she is up to her elbows in work and happy in her element.

Blais will receive some help from her predecessor. Library trustee chair Chris Condit said after acting director Jill Palmer, with the assistance of Sue LaClaire, who have kept the library shipshape while the search committee conducted interviews, familiarize Blais with the general outlines of the job. "In a week or two, Linda will come and fill in the gaps."

Welcoming Blais to Leverett Library, selectboard chair Rich Brazeau advised, "We've always tried to make it a community center for as many people as possible."

He gave her a preview of the town's budget policies as well.

"The budget hearing will be pretty low key. We don't want to give you

any money, and we don't want you to spend any money." But this advice was imparted with wry good humor.

In a press statement, the library trustees said Blais "has valuable expertise with recent library technologies, cataloging, and grant writing." She covered her home town of South Hadley for the *Hampshire Gazette* in the past, so will be able to transfer those skills to providing updates to the town newsletter and library website. Blais, who has two young children, is also "an avid reader of adult, young adult, and children's literature and welcomes the role of reader advisor," the trustees said.

The public is invited to a welcoming reception with refreshments for the new director on Sunday, Feb. 10, from 3:30 - 4:30 p.m.



Greenfield Center School Open House featuring Birds of Prey Sunday, February 3rd

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