



LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS

# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 11 – NO. 44

also serving Irving, Gill, Everett and Wendell

75¢

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

SEPTEMBER 12, 2013

## Leverett Elementary Enrollment Drop Spurs Concern

By DAVID DETMOLD

The selectboard was only half joking earlier this summer when they proposed a “Breed Leverett” program, to counteract the long term trend of declining school enrollment at the town’s beloved elementary school. With 24 fewer students this year than last, the elementary school, expanded in 2001 to include 12 classrooms, which could comfortably house anywhere from 200 to 240 students, now has an enrollment of just 120, with 18 of those students in the pre-K program.

Part of this decline stems from the graduation of the second 6<sup>th</sup> grade class last year, which included a high percentage of school choice students attending Leverett from neighboring towns. This year, with only one class for each grade, the school reduced the number of fulltime teachers by one. But that expected loss provides only part of the picture of the overall enrollment decline, which has been a multi-year process.

Principal Anne Ross told the school committee on Monday, September 9, that four categories of students leaving the public school system at their parents’ choice contributed roughly equally to the overall drop in enrollment. Those categories – students “that we know

see LES page 9

## The Traveling Rhubarb Circus: You Might Be “Blown Away.”



*Larkin Christie perches atop fellow Rhubarbers (left to right): Bella Lattanze, Ivy Muller, Solena Davidson-Carroll, Celia Bales, and Gray Davidson-Carroll.*

By ROSE JACKSON

**MONTAGUE** – “Kids’ Circus.” These words probably bring to mind images of shaky cartwheels, a toddler in a lion costume jumping through hoops, maybe even a couple of handstands if you’re lucky.

But I want to tell you about something else. This is something special. You might even be “Blown Away.”

Across from the common in Montague Center, down the driveway behind a plain white house, in an ordinary looking sort of barn, you will find the Traveling Rhubarb Circus! Now in its second year of operation, the TRC is a performing troupe completely composed of, organized, and run by young people under the age of 16.

They do it all – from choreography to advertising,

juggling money (and homemade balls), creating costumes, and snapping photographs for flyers and other publicity. Originally conceived of by Lucia Mason, a 15-year-old circus enthusiast, as a

see CIRCUS page 7

ERVING SELECTBOARD:

## Meatley and Five Supporters Resign from Fire Department

By KATIE NOLAN

Former fire chief Almon “Bud” Meatley and five other Erving fire department members resigned during the September 9 selectboard meeting. Meatley, Mark Kosloski, Raymond Mailloux, Herman Meatley, William Pease, and Kelly Potts entered the meeting room while the selectboard met with the former Usher Plant redevelopment committee and the finance committee. The firefighters piled their turnout gear on the floor and waited patiently. When they were recognized by selectboard chair Andrew Goodwin, the six fire department members filed up to the board’s desk and turned in fire station keys, pagers and badges without comment, letting their actions speak.

Chief Philip Wonkka, who was appointed on September 3, shook hands with the fire department members as they left the meeting and thanked them for their years of service on the department. The board, clearly sobered by the mass resignation, asked town administrator Tom Sharp to draft letters thanking them for their service to Erving.

Meatley, chief since 2005, was reappointed on an interim basis until August 31, when his most recent three-year term ended on July 1. His name was not forwarded to the selectboard by the fire chief hiring committee appointed by the selectboard. Wonkka was appointed when the other recommended candidate,

Mitchell LaClaire, Jr., withdrew his name from consideration.

Selectboard member Margaret Sullivan reported that organizational management consultant Sophie Parker of Sophie Parker & Associates of Boston had been in Erving over the last week interviewing firefighters and town officials to help plan mediated department discussions of issues and conflicts in the department.

**Erving Industries Donates Land**

The meeting had started on an upbeat note. Morris Housen, CEO of Erving Industries, Inc. informed the board that Erving Industries and the Housen family were committed to giving the town eight parcels of land on the east side of Keyup Brook adjoining the former Usher Plant property. Usher Plant redevelopment committee member Jeanie Schermesser said that the parcels would provide the town with “a significant portion of riverfront” that could be used for river recreation and as a conservation area. Committee member Jeff Dubay called the parcels “a very valuable property from an environmental standpoint” and envisioned green space, river access, hiking trails and possibly a parking area on the land.

Housen said that the annual taxes on the parcels (about \$3,000) would not be a great loss to the town and the space could be used as a meeting

see ERVING BOARD page 5

## Wendell Remembers Bob Ellis, 11/22/33 - 9/6/13



PHOTO GENEVE G. NARDI

By KATIE NOLAN and  
JOSH HEINEMANN

with contributions from  
FRANCIS DOUGHTY, RAY  
DIDONATO, JONATHAN  
von RANSON, SUZANNE  
WEBBER and many others

“We need all the critters to be healthy. The earth is more than mere scenery, it is me and I am it – it is us.” – Charles Robert Ellis, Jr., Bob Ellis, as known by his large community of friends.

Bob Ellis rode in an ambulance to Franklin Medical Center early Monday morning, September 2, 2013. He was admitted. On Tuesday he saw his oncologist, and Friday he was discharged to Fisher Home hospice in Amherst, where he died later that day. Donna Horn wrote,

“We went to see Bob at Franklin on Thursday. He was so sweet! He told us stories, he gave me a kiss, his spirits seemed high. He seemed ok with dying; he just wanted to finish his books.”

On Sunday, September 8, about 75 friends gathered at Wendell’s Osgood Brook cemetery, stood in the cool sunshine, and said goodbye with poems, stories, a mandolin tune, a song, Buddhist chanting and incense and then lowered the plain Wendell grown and made pine box which held his worn out body into its grave. A breeze stirred the small pines and aspens that shelter the cemetery from New Salem Road.

His burial was green, without embalming chemicals, his body washed with cedar and lying on a bed of goldenrod, amaranth and

boughs of soft cedar. When the pine box reached the bottom people dropped wild asters, zinnias, black-eyed susans, and then hands full of the sand that had come from the hole. As people were leaving, Wendell’s road boss, Rich Wilder, walked to the backhoe that was obscured at an edge of the clearing, started the engine and filled the grave.

On the night he rode to the hospital he told emergency responders his date of birth, 11/22/33, the coolest birthday ever, said one emergency responder. “John Kennedy was shot on my 30th birthday,” said Bob.

A green burial was not his first choice. He wanted a sky burial, to have his body left for the scavengers to eat and return his matter as fertilizer to the earth, but that option is not legal and he accepted the slower return underground. In life he gathered road kills and brought them home to feed his ravens, and one of the few gifts that he accepted from well-wishers was a dead porcupine. Margo Culley remembered, “He once came to pick up a coyote that had been killed by a car in front of our house, but somehow remained intact, in order to draw it.”

As well as transcendent connections with the various forms of life on earth, there are the objective facts about his life. He was born into a family of fourteen siblings in rural Virginia, where he rambled in the woods and hunted and fished. His younger brother Joe wrote that he was “One who led me on walks through the woods./Who showed me the wonders that Mother Nature

see ELLIS page 4

## Streetscape Committee Swoops Down on Madison on the Avenue



*Madison stands in front of his adorned planter.*

By CHRISTOPHER SAWYER-  
LAUÇANNO

**TURNERS FALLS** – Almost every morning around 8:30, Rodney Madison is out in front of his store, Madison on the Avenue, sweeping up the cigarette butts on the sidewalk and picking up the discarded wrappers and cans left behind by late night strollers along the avenue. Once this task is completed, he sets about arranging the planter he tends in front of his shop with a display of various colorful and odd objects. Between two small trees he often suspends a hammock in which he nestles a pink mannequin torso. It’s an eye-catching arrangement that halts many as they walk along the avenue. But all this may change if new regulations imposed by the Turners Falls Streetscape Committee are not amended.

On Tuesday, September 10, Madison received a set of regulations by the streetscape committee that in his view directly impact his using the planter as a platform for arranging

his wares. The new rules, drafted on August 20, state that “the function of planters is to enhance the beauty of the Village of Turners Falls. It is important to acknowledge that plants and plantings are to be the PRIMARY feature in the planter. Objects, Art, tchotchkes, are to be secondary. Items that are not plants are meant to merely embellish and not dominate the space. As a landscape planter and garden area, the planters are not to be used as a platform for advertising, promotional or political messages.”

“It’s pretty clear to me,” said Madison, “that these new rules are aimed at me and my store. I don’t want to be confrontational about it but I have asked [town administrator] Frank [Abbondanzio] for a meeting to try to straighten this out. I’m obviously non-compliant right now.”

When asked about the issue, Abbondanzio stressed that there have to be guidelines and rules. “This was not Madison Avenue-specific,”

see MADISON page 6



## Pet of the Week

### Private Eye



### “Gibbs”

I'm not with NCIS. I'm no relation to Mark Harmon. But I'm an investigator. Isn't that the job of all kittens? And, at four months old, I already have the personality and charm of a Hollywood star.

Perhaps I should tell you, I'm a girl. And a mighty cute one at that! Check out my little milk moustache – and that's not the only thing that is quirky about me!

One nice thing about adopting a kitten my age, my personality is quite developed so you can pretty much tell what I will be like when I grow up and yet I have still have all the charm of a kitten.

For more information about adopting me, come on down to the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at Leverett, where I'll be sleuthing around for an owner who will love me.

## LIBRARY NEWS

### Gill: Pastel Class at the Slate Library

Slate Memorial Library on Main Road, in the center of Gill, will host award-winning pastel artist Gregory John Maichack's workshop, “The Art of Georgia O’Keeffe: How to Pastel Paint Flowers,” on Thursday, September 19, from 6 to 8 p.m. This pastel painting workshop serves sheer adult beginners to advanced artists and is free and open to the public. Seats may fill quickly, so please email [gill.slate.library@gmail.com](mailto:gill.slate.library@gmail.com) to pre-register.

In this fun pastel painting workshop for adults, Mr. Maichack will provide insights into O’Keeffe’s life and painting methods, demonstrate how to use pastels, (as participants follow along), and coach participants as they attempt their own pastel paintings in O’Keeffe’s style, with the focus on flowers. Mr. Maichack provides all materials, including professional grade papers and hundreds of pastels.

Maichack, nominated twice for a Massachusetts Gold Star Program Award, will also display his original pastel artwork to illustrate his talk.

This work is funded in part by a grant from the Gill Cultural Council, a local agency, which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.



JESSICA LARKIN ILLUSTRATION  
By FRED CICETTI

*Q. If a very sick patient in a hospital is put on palliative care, does that mean they aren't going to make it?*

No. Recent evidence indicates that palliative care alongside standard care *extends* lives.

Palliative care is not the same as hospice care. Palliative care is designed to improve the quality of life of patients and their families. Hospice is for the end of life. In fact, hospice requires that a patient be certified as being six months from death, and it requires stopping most curative treatments.

Palliative medicine is a relatively new, fast-growing interdisciplinary specialty. A team of physicians, nurses, social workers, psycholo-



Joe Dodge and Billie Ann Hudson of the Montague DPW clear leaves from a plugged up storm drain during Tuesday's downpour.

### Wendell Free Library: Chéad Chéime sa Gaeilge (First Steps in Spoken Irish)

For ten Tuesday meetings beginning September 17, from 7 to 8:30 p.m., Jim Dunn will teach an introductory course in Irish at the Wendell Free Library.

Spoken mainly in the West of Ireland, Irish is a Gaelic language closely related to Scots Gael, Welsh, and Breton. With a goal of conversational skills, our meetings will

explore the cultural and historical context of Irish through film, song and discussion. The course will be fun and easy, and you will be able to converse in Irish by its end.

Jim is an escaped academic, with PhD specialties in Old Irish and Modern Irish Literature. He has broad experience in teaching languages and literature at the college

level and is published in the field. He is an Irish citizen, visits the Gaeltacht yearly, and speaks Irish.

The text is Buntús Cainte, with CD. Class size is limited to 4-8 participants.

To register for this free course, contact the Wendell Free Library at (978) 544-7090, or email Jim himself at [marigold@valinet.com](mailto:marigold@valinet.com).

## THE HEALTHY GEEZER

### What Does Palliative Care Mean?

gists, chaplains, dietitians, pharmacists and rehabilitation specialists work together with a patient's other doctors to provide an extra layer of support.

It is for people with serious illnesses such as cancer, cardiac disease, HIV/AIDS, cystic fibrosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), kidney failure, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS).

Palliative care is a good option for someone with a serious illness who needs help managing pain or other symptoms, understanding and coping with a medical condition, and navigating the health care system.

The first principle of palliative medicine is to help people feel better. It focuses on symptoms such as pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, constipation, nausea, loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, stress and depression.

It not only brings physical, emotional and spiritual relief, but improves a patient's ability to tolerate medical treatments. Palliative care can begin at diagnosis, and can be

given at the same time as curative treatment.

Palliative care also strives to improve communication between patients, their health care providers and family members. It is also designed to coordinate care, especially as patients move from the hospital to home or to another care facility.

About 80 percent of major hospitals offer a palliative-care service. Palliative care is almost always covered by health insurance, including Medicare or Medicaid.

Because of improvement in health care, most Americans who live beyond age 65 can expect to make it to almost 85. However, those survivors may suffer from pain, medical complications, depression, and disability. This phenomenon has generated a greater need for palliative care.

“We need to think about palliative care not as care at the end of life, but as improving a patient's quality of life,” says R. Sean Morrison, M.D., professor of geriatrics and palliative medicine at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. “For the vast majority of patients with chronic illness, both

life-prolonging and palliative treatments are necessary and appropriate.”

Questions? Send them to [fred@healthygeezers.com](mailto:fred@healthygeezers.com).

RECYCLE

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## Senior Center Activities – September 16 to 20

### GILL and 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.

All fitness classes are supported by a grant from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Voluntary donations are accepted. Council on Aging Director is Roberta Potter. For more information, to make meal reservations, or to sign up for programs call 863-9357. Messages can be left on our machine when the center is not open.

#### Monday 9/16

10:15 a.m. Aerobics  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise  
12 noon Potluck & Bingo  
1 p.m. NO Knitting Circle  
3 p.m. Balance Boot Camp  
**Tuesday: 9/17**

10:30 a.m. Chair Yoga  
12 p.m. Lunch  
1 p.m. Knitting Circle

#### Wednesday 9/18

10:15 a.m. Aerobics  
12 p.m. Lunch  
12:45 p.m. Bingo

#### Thursday 9/19

9 Tai Chi  
12 noon Lunch  
1 p.m. Pitch  
**Friday 9/20**  
10:15 a.m. Aerobics  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise  
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 congregate 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.

#### Monday 9/16

9 a.m. Tai Chi  
12:30 p.m. Quilting  
**Tuesday 9/17**

8:45 a.m. Chair Aerobics  
10:15 a.m. “Name That Tune” with Steve Damon  
12:30 p.m. Painting  
**Wednesday 9/18**  
8:45 a.m. Aerobics  
12 noon Bingo  
**Thursday 9/19**  
8:45 a.m. Aerobics  
12 noon Cards  
**Friday 9/20**  
9 a.m. Bowling

### LEVERETT

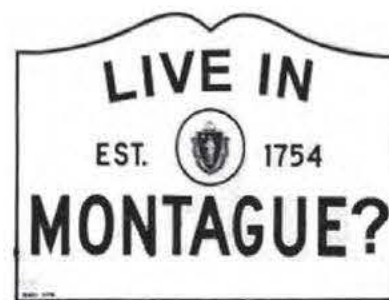
For information, contact the Leverett COA at (413) 548-1022, ext. 5, or [coa@leverett.ma.us](mailto:coa@leverett.ma.us).

Take-It-Easy Chair Yoga – Wednesdays at 10 a.m. at the Town Hall. Drop-in \$5 (first class free).

Senior Lunch – Fridays at noon. 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.



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## LOCAL BRIEFS

JESSICA LARKIN ILLUSTRATION

Compiled by DON CLEGG

The **Franklin County Tech Football team** opened their season with an 18-6 independent game loss to Monty Tech. on Saturday, Sept. 7th. CJ Daignault scored the lone touchdown and Kyle Laffey played extremely well in the effort. The Eagles are 0-1 overall and open league play on Saturday, Sept 14 at Ware HS. Kick-off is at 1:30 p.m.

Come and learn about this **latest craft craze** at the Turners Falls Branch of GSB with Bette Sokoloski of Crafts-Are-Us on Saturday, Sept 14, from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.. Sokoloski will demonstrate with a hands-on workshop the art of making miniature food items with the polymer clay. These diminutive, delectable delicacies, which look good enough to eat, include whoopee pies, hamburgers, hotdogs and French fries, to name but a few. Using your imagination, these food items will fit on dinner plates the size of a quarter. Impossible, you

say? Come and see....you will be amazed! To reserve a spot for this unique event, call Christina or Keri at (413) 863-4316.

The **Montague Common Hall** has a potluck and contra dance fundraiser on Sunday, Sept 15, from 6 to 9:30 p.m.. The supper is followed by contra dancing with David Kaynor and the Open Band. All are welcome. No previous dance experience required and anyone can enjoy this quintessential New England form of social dancing. Come with a partner or without one. Admission is by donation.

**Safe Kids** of Western Massachusetts offers a monthly child car seat inspection station at the Greenfield Fire Department, located at 412 Main Street in Greenfield. The next safety check will take place on Tuesday, September 17 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians perform the inspections by appointment.

Parents and caregivers are trained on the spot in the proper

installation and setup of their own specific car seats in their own vehicles. The car seat safety checks are free and open to the public by appointment. Inspections usually take 20 to 30 minutes to complete. For an appointment, please call Baystate Health Link at (413) 794-2255. The car seat checks are sponsored by the Kohls Cares Safety Crew, Safe Kids of Western Massachusetts, and the Birthplace at Franklin Medical Center.

Taking inventory and making room for the upcoming holidays, check out the bargains at **"Hidden Treasures"** annual clearance sale on Wednesday, Sept 18, 09:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. to benefit the patients and services at Baystate Franklin Medical Center. The sale is in the main lobby of BFMC located at 164 High Street in Greenfield.

Many **so-called "weeds"** are tasty, free, & nutritious. Forage in field and forest and discover new wild edible plant friends with author and filmmaker Blanche Derby at Northfield Mountain Recreation Center on Saturday, Sept 21, from 1 to 3 p.m. This relaxing "walkshop" around the center's grounds will be followed by a light snack. Derby has spent years foraging and preparing foods from the wild. Join her as she shares her knowledge and stories about these plants. Pre-register by calling (800) 859-2960.

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## MONTAGUE REPORTER OPEN HOUSE SEPTEMBER 19

The Montague Reporter invites you to join us on **Thursday, September 19 from 6 to 8 p.m.** for an open house at our new office. We are across from the Turners Falls post office at **177 Avenue A.**

We'll have **refreshments**, we'll have the wonderful classical guitarist **Edward Shamo** playing an extraordinary repertoire, and we'll have **our board members and staff** for you to meet and greet and even harangue.

You can view old issues of the paper, get a close-up look at our antiquated computers and beat-up desks, buy a t-shirt, renew or acquire a subscription, ask questions and get answers, and mix and mingle with us and your friends and neighbors.

Our event is part of September's Third Thursday night out, sponsored by RiverCulture. Shops and restaurants will stay open all over downtown. (See the ad on pg. 6.) We hope to see lots of our readers from all five towns at this special event!

## Anja Shutz Design Chosen for New Crosswalk



The prize-winning design. Courtesy of Riverculture.

By **CHRISTOPHER SAWYER-LAUÇANNO**

**TURNERS FALLS** – The Ad Hoc RiverCulture Steering Committee has chosen a design by Anja Schutz, of Turners Falls, to grace the crosswalk on First Street from Unity Park to the riverside recreation area.

According to Montague town planner, Walter Ramsey, Schutz's design was chosen from among five submissions. "It was the most Turners specific," said Ramsey.

Schutz's design is a very strong black and white statement that references a variety of elements associated with Turners Falls. Or as she put it: "My crosswalk concept celebrates a variety of different aspects

of Turners Falls, from the iconic and ubiquitous stray shopping carts, to the bike path, named by Yankee Magazine as the 'Best urban bike path in New England' in 2010. The fish represent the abundance of nature surrounding us, and finally, the cutlery gives a nod both to our industrial past as well as our growing culinary scene downtown."

Schutz is a graphic designer who has lived in Turners Falls for the past six years. She attended Hallmark Institute of Photography, graduating in 1999.

"Ending up here again after six years in New York City was something I never expected, but having the privilege of being a part of the Turners Falls evolution has been an incredible experience," said

Schutz.. "I love the community and its character, and find something new and interesting about it every day. The town has given me so many opportunities to express myself and contribute to the overall flavor of the town in the process. Turners Falls itself is a large organic, collaborative piece of art, due to the many creative people who are proud to reside here."

Ramsey said he expects Schutz to paint the crosswalk next spring. She will receive \$1,750 for her design and effort. The Montague Highway Department will donate the paint for the project.

Members of the Ad-Hoc steering committee were Ramsey, Sarah Doyle, Erin MacClean, John Dobosz and Lisa Davol.

## The Turners Falls Water Department

located within the Town of Montague  
is accepting applications for the full-time position of  
**Clerk/Collector.**

Applicant must have good basic math comprehension, proficiency in MS Word and Excel and be sufficiently familiar with common computer programs. Accounting background and knowledge of billing software highly recommended. Applicants should possess skills in written and oral communications, customer service and the ability to work in a small office environment with frequent interruptions and distractions. Must be bondable.

Applicants should submit a resume with two references along with an employment application no later than **September 20, 2013 at 4 p.m.**

Application forms are available at the Water Department office at 226 Millers Falls Rd, Turners Falls, Mondays through Fridays between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., or online at [www.turnersfallswater.com](http://www.turnersfallswater.com).

Please submit replies to:  
Kenneth G. Morin, Chairman  
Board of Water Commissioners  
Turners Falls Water Department  
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# The Montague Reporter

"The Voice of the Villages"

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August, 2002

## Shop Locally: It's Fun and Good for You and All of Us

As you, our readers know, *The Montague Reporter* is a great fan of the Third Thursday events in downtown Turners Falls. We've even decided to participate in the next Third Thursday on September 19 by throwing an open house to welcome the community to our new offices at 177 Avenue A.

We'll have some refreshments, and the incomparable Edward Shamo will be playing classical guitar. Our board will be hosting the event, but the editors will also be on hand to answer questions, listen to your ideas, and even hear your complaints. We hope to see a lot of you a week from today.

We know from the shopkeepers and restaurants in town that Third Thursday has been a success. But you don't need to wait until a Thursday evening to come downtown or buy goods or food or services from folks who live in our neighborhoods.

Indeed, buying locally supports our community in many ways. Where we shop, where we eat and have fun – all of it makes our community home. Our one-of-a-kind businesses are an integral part of the distinctive character of our towns and villages.

But beyond the pure enjoyment factor of patronizing those who work and live where we work and live is that it has a significant impact on our local economy.

According to the Busi-

ness Alliance for Living Local Economies (BALLE), multiple studies show that the economic impact of spending money at locally-owned businesses or buying produce at a farm stand contributes much more money to the local economy than spending money at a chain store or restaurant.

Local businesses reinvest their profits in the local economy 60 percent more than chains. And buying on-line reduces the local return to virtually nothing.

The reason so much more money stays in the community is because buying locally enhances the "velocity" of money, or circulation speed, in the area. And if currency circulates more quickly, the money passes through more hands – and more people have had the benefit of the money and what it has purchased for them.

And since those who own the shops and fields and restaurants also live where we live, they are reinvesting in our towns in so many ways. They hire local folks, they pay taxes to our town halls, they send their kids to our schools, they buy from other local merchants, they participate in local government, business and culture, and since they are us, they have a true stake in the future of our community.

In short, we need local businesses to thrive if our community is to thrive.

## Letter to the Editors

### GMEF Makes Enrichment Gift For Accessible Swing at Unity Park

The Gill-Montague Education Fund, a non-profit organization, continues its ultimate goal of "Supporting Excellence and Innovation in Our Schools" with enrichment grants.

The awarding of \$84,450 in grants was made possible as a result of their Annual Gala and have aided enhanced learning through science, music, art, athletics, language and reading.

Members of the GMEF Board of Directors say they have discovered another opportunity to invest in the future, make a difference in the lives of children, and choose

responsible, positive actions that give them the privilege of serving our youth.

With that philosophy in mind, at their June meeting, the Gill Montague Education Fund voted unanimously to make an 'Enrichment Gift' of \$500 to "A Friend to Friend – accessible swing project" in support of their \$15,000 goal.

The swing will be the only one of its kind in Franklin County and will join only a dozen of its caliber in the United States.

– Joyce A. Phillips  
GMEF Board of Directors

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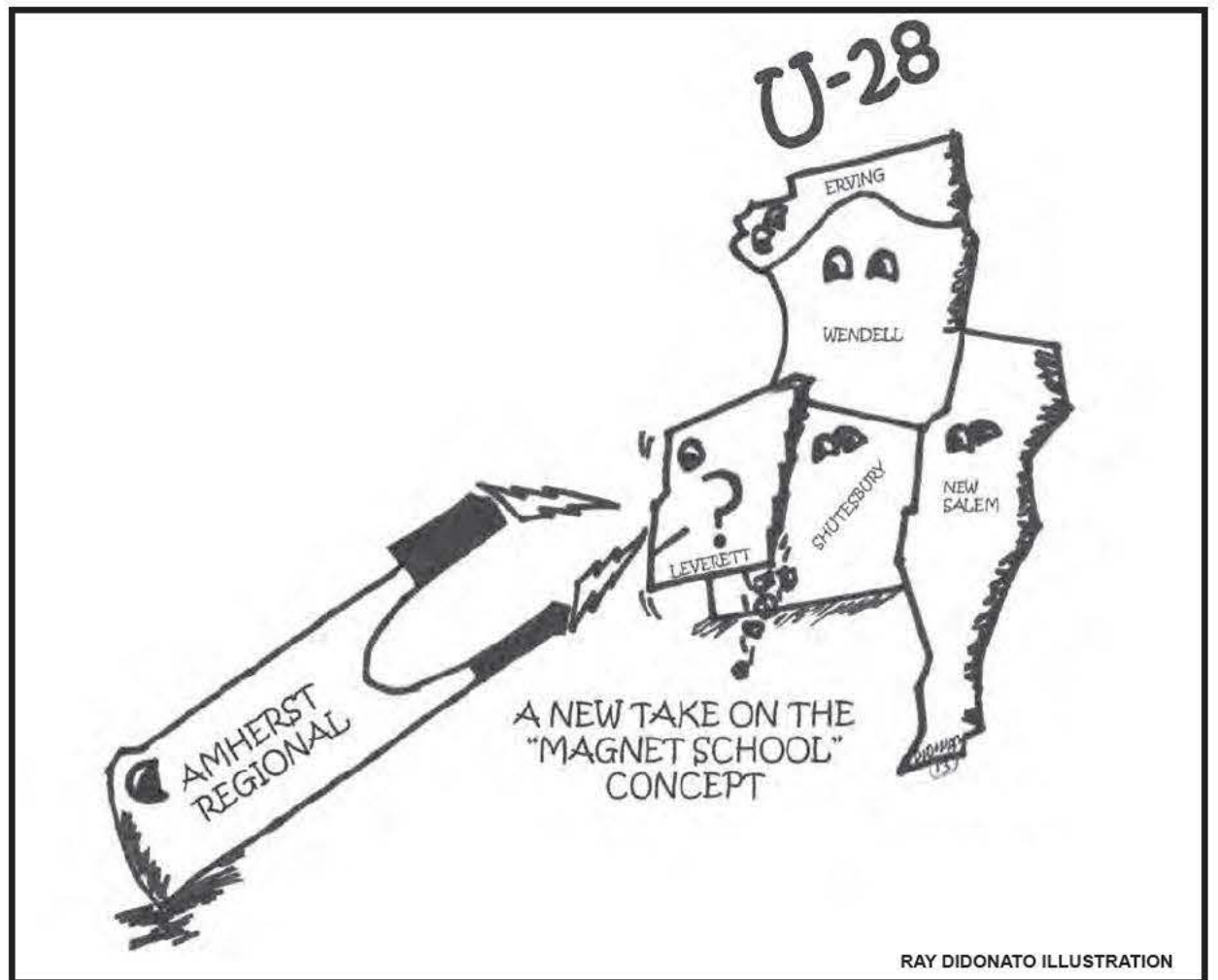
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## The Montague Reporter

177 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376

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### ELLIS from page 1

bestowed,

"While telling me what is real and oh, so good!"

He enlisted in the US Army in 1953, and was trained as an atomic weapons mechanical assembler, something he regretted at the time he was a soldier and for the rest of his life. He wrote about his army years in his memoir "Nuked: A GI Memoir".

Laurel Facey wrote: "I feel as though my efforts in campaigning against the use of anything nuclear in any way must be dedicated to his memory and what he was doing to wake us up."

He was honorably discharged from the army in June 1955. According to his friend Parker Cleveland, "He spent his first fifty years in a kaleidoscopic assortment of places, jobs, occupations and causes." He moved into a small cabin adjoining Wendell State Forest in 1989. "I had the choice between seeing the Grand Canyon and the great Northwest or being in community. I chose community," Bob said.

He was a fine artist, creating detailed drawings and watercolor paintings of the natural world. "The whole process is directly connected to nature itself: paper and brushes are organic, and many of the pigments come directly from the earth; I like that," Bob wrote. Kathy Becker wrote of him, "Everything we see in Wendell that we love, Bob saw. He gifted us with his vision of wild places, wild things, and the commonplaces, as his eye saw them. He was generous with his art."

Bob hunted, acknowledging the circle of life in eating wild game. In his earlier years in Wendell, he hunted deer for winter meat. In years when he didn't get his deer, Sylvia Wetherby said he appreciated the gift of meat from the excess goats in her herd. "I fondly remember his enthusiastic acceptance of surplus game from my hunts," said Joe Laur.

He was a founding member and volunteer with Franklin County's Reinventing Justice program, which aims to return justice to the community where it actually lives. "The goal," Bob said, "is reconciliation, not retribution. The healing of all parties is possible and necessary

for real justice – and we're seeing it happen."

He was an author, writing the army memoir, "Nuked", published in 2011 and "Backstory", the story of his upbringing. Because of donations from friends and neighbors, "Backstory" will be published soon by Levellers Press, under the guidance of Zenya Wild and other friends. The campaign to raise money to publish the book had been ongoing for several months; Bob was aware before he died that the critical amount had been reached.

He was a good friend. Zenya said, "I knew he was MY special friend, sometimes friendly and welcoming, sometimes angry and crabby, but always there, and, as several people said, always authentic. I had no idea until today how many people felt that way."

He wanted to bequeath his house to Mount Grace Land Trust, have it demolished and the land return to wildness. However, as Mt. Grace director Leigh Youngblood said, that was not possible. After years of discussions, he decided to leave it to Mt. Grace, to be sold to raise money to keep other lands wild.

### Francis Doughty wrote:

I hadn't checked email for a few days, and yesterday morning, everything stopped as I felt a strong jolt of sadness learning that Wendell's beloved Bob Ellis had passed away. Through some tears and with that tight feeling in the chest I read and I appreciated all of the email postings to the town email list. (Bob touched so many lives!) Many familiar notes resonated. A beautiful tree has come to ground and softly and peacefully fell, and yet the life that was Bob still feeds us.

My own times and experiences with Bob (always precious, sometimes too brief) share in the complex weave that is the Wendell community: our lives now and passing and imperceptibly moving just ahead -- in the weave of an invisible fabric that so many of us inexorably share and create.

Some memories fade, others stand out. The Wendell clock started for us on a winter day in 1983, and in earnest in 1990 when we moved into our building-in-progress house. (Like so many others here, we felt "land-rich, money-poor.") We were quickly welcomed (embraced!) by Tom and Sylvia Wetherby, and somewhere in that autumn, we met Bob Ellis at the Wetherby's house, a gathering of friends. And I recall talking with Bob, liking him right away, and how he easily quoted Thoreau, naturally in the flow of conversation, with his laugh and warmth, and I knew instantly that this kind man had an extraordinary inner flame.

He was deep, learned, passionate, an artist and to me he was a kind of philosopher. He obviously loved nature and was deliberate about things

and he demonstrated a deep affection for his place -- this place we all share, an affection strengthened by knowledge, observation, care and understanding.

Bob also had something which I think is rare inasmuch as he sometimes crossed that line that separates most of us from wild things. Now and then some fellow wild creature, in some chance interaction, as he vividly described to me a few times, would accept him with a kind of tolerance -- there would be a bridge of silent trust, and Bob felt transported, communing, occupying a kind of wild ground.

I was happy when he attended my 50th birthday party at our house, and gave me, really everyone there, a gift by offering to read a small essay he wrote. The gist of the story was a winter storm, howling outside at night, and coming upon a ravaged small bird who alighted in a side-room under cover, and the bird did not fear Bob. There was an understanding between them, a connection made -- something wild and caring in Bob was accepted by this wild bird, in need of shelter and care and Bob provided that, silently. And when the storm cleared, he let the bird carry on. And their respective lives were seemingly separated again, yet to Bob, he and this winter bird truly shared a larger world, the same one.

He left us his images created from his hand and eyes, and his mind and affection and his deep intimacy with the subject. His artwork consistently communicates a faithfulness to scenes and all of the natural things in this part of the world here that we know, and their truth and beauty make the artist invisible, allowing the viewer to be transported directly -- to identify, beyond words.

And this richly passionate, friendly, and maybe above all else thoughtful person left us with many of his ideas and experiences put down in print. I'm so happy for all of the people who helped him with his books and writing and publishing and gave something back to Bob -- good neighbors and friends offering the "helping hand", which is the blood of a vital community. (I too was honored when during early drafts of his first book, he asked me to read it over, be completely honest with him and give him editorial feedback.) The work was challenging, but most of all it was a precious gift from Bob, and thoroughly absorbing to read, and to learn some otherwise unknown parts of his world and life. I know that others carried on with that task, and I know it lifted Bob up, and helped so much to bring the story he needed to tell, to a form and kind of completion, to the light of day, enabling Bob to connect with people anywhere. I feel by entrusting us, those who knew him, with his story, it demonstrated his love and trust towards us in this place we

see ELLIS page 7

WE WELCOME

YOUR LETTERS!

Montague Reporter

177 Ave. A, TF, MA 01376

editor@montaguereporter.org



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG

## Males Drinking Beer

Tuesday, 9/3

2:30 p.m. Assisted Gill PD with 911 call at Kuzmeskus Bus Company. No problem found.

Wednesday, 9/4

11:53 a.m. Suspicious male subject on Old State Road. Subject moved along.

6 p.m. Report of three males drinking beer at Church Street park. Subjects gone upon arrival.

7:30 p.m. Arrested [REDACTED], for a warrant.

Thursday, 9/5

1:30 p.m. Report of large pile of personal belongings left on

curbside at Lillians Way. Their owner was moving, and picked up the items.

6:20 p.m. Arrested [REDACTED],

for operating a motor vehicle with a revoked license (habitual traffic offender), failure to give name, and a seat belt violation.

6:20 p.m. Criminal application issued to [REDACTED],

for allowing unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle.

Friday, 9/6

2:05 p.m. Report of a raccoon under a vehicle at a Warner Street residence. Subject moved along.

Saturday, 9/7

1:04 p.m. Report of a fallen rock climber at Farley Ledges. Assisted on scene.

5:20 p.m. Criminal application issued to [REDACTED],

for operating with a revoked license and inspection sticker.

Sunday, 9/8

11:30 a.m. Verbal disturbance at a Mountain Road residence. Report taken.

## NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

## Fulltime Firefighter Proposed

By DAVID DETMOLD

"A real loss of leadership is imminent," at the Leverett fire department, Julie Weinthal, chair of the Leverett fire department study committee, warned the selectboard on Tuesday night, as she presented her five member ad hoc group's findings from an eight month survey of the recruitment, retention, and coverage problems at the town's call firefighting force.

The five senior members of the Leverett fire department average 59 years in age and 25 years of service to the department. The department's eight younger firefighters, who range in age from 18 to 41, have an average of 2 3/4 years of service. And, according to the study committee's final report, "It should be noted that all these individuals either hold jobs they cannot leave during their working hours, work too far from town, or have other obligations and thus may not be able to respond to calls when so engaged."

The central recommendation of the committee is that the town "act fast" to hire a fulltime firefighter, in the salary range of \$35,000 - \$45,000, to work under the part time chief's supervision. A fulltime firefighter would staff the department during the day, when 58% of the department's calls come in, on average.

Weinthal added that the town should hire a fulltime firefighter regardless of the availability of grant funds to support the position. If the SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Firefight-

ers) FEMA grant Leverett fire chief John Moruzzi recently applied for does come through, so much the better, said Weinthal. That grant would support the first two years of a fulltime firefighter's salary.

The selectboard responded cautiously to the committee's central recommendation, with both chair Rich Brazeau and member Julie Shively saying, in unison, that they were concerned about where the money to support a fulltime firefighter's salary would come from, in an era when the town typically spends to within a few hundred dollars of the property tax levy limit each year, and support for an override of Proposition 2 1/2 to fund municipal services is always a dicey proposition.

But board member Peter d'Errico said, "When you say the [department's personnel] budget would double... the department's budget now is laughable. We've been running the department on nothing."

In one of the report's central findings, the committee maintained, "... the length of service of current and recent Leverett firefighters shows clearly that the leadership and experience of the force has been provided by a small cadre of dedicated individuals who have served the force for approximately 20 years but who are nearing the recommended retirement age.... Hiring a full-time firefighter in the next fiscal year would support the department during the transition as the long-serving firefighters and officers retire."

The report looked at the demographics of Leverett, and found an aging population with only about

ERVING BOARD from pg 1 spot, for fireworks displays, hiking, or town fairs.

Finance committee chair Daniel Hammock agreed, saying that, although the fincom had not formally reviewed the donation, he personally felt that Erving Industries was being "fair, reasonable and generous to the town" and that the lost tax revenue would be negligible as a percentage of the town's total budget.

Housen outlined three conditions for the gift. He asked that the town make use of the parcels for redevelopment, that the town maintain ownership, keeping the land for town and public use, and that a plaque or stone be erected acknowledging the history of the parcels.

Selectboard member Margaret Sullivan observed that town meeting would have to approve acceptance of the donation.

Looking to the larger Usher Plant property, the redevelopment committee asked the board to approve hiring R. Levesque Associates, Inc. of Westfield to prepare an environmental resource study of the site.

According to Schermesser, the study will map out environmentally sensitive areas and buildable areas. She sketched potential future uses of the site for the board, including viewing platforms along the river, picnic areas, fishing spots, connection to the regional bikeway, farmers markets, a band pavilion or shed, commercial space, restaur-

330 residents falling into the prime firefighting recruitment age category of ages 20 - 39. Since 1960, the report found, Leverett's population has doubled in size, yet the proportion of residents 65 and older has more than doubled, from 7% to 17%. Over 1000 of the town's 1800 residents are 45 years of age or older. Residents younger than 14 declined from 329 to 276 in that same time period.

As these trend lines continue, the likelihood is that the percentage of the medical calls the department receives will continue to climb. Currently, that percentage is 48% of the roughly 120 calls the department receives each year.

"Even though all 13 of us are [trained] first responders, more and more we are not available to respond," deputy chief Stewart Olson said. "We don't have the people in town to do it. I've been on the department for 29 years, but we don't have that kind of response anymore."

The committee emphasized the need for ongoing outreach, through a variety of media, to educate the community at large about the needs of the department, in an era of professionalized fire and emergency response services.



KATIE NOLAN PHOTO

The resigning members' turnout gear, left in protest on the meeting room floor.

rants, and artist space.

The board unanimously approved hiring Levesque. Funding for the study (\$11,500) was approved by annual town meeting in May.

## Library Feasibility Study Grant

The board authorized library director Barbara Friedman to apply for a Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners grant to evaluate the Erving Public Library's space and needs. If the grant is awarded, the town will be required to fund \$25,000 of the feasibility study costs. Selectboard members

note that town meeting would decide whether to accept the grant and fund the town's share.

## Pumper/Tanker and FinCom


Review of the bid specifications for a pumper/tanker for the fire department was tabled until Wonkka has had a chance to research answers to selectboard questions

about the truck.

The board and the three finance committee members, Hammock, Arthur Johnson and Jacob Smith, discussed the timeline for preparing the fiscal year 2015 budget and agreed to have a budget in place by early April. Hammock asked the board if the town has a goal for the stabilization fund. All three board members agreed that the town should save money while it is able to.

## Selectboard Chairmanship

As the meeting came to an end, Goodwin, saying he might be out of sync with the other selectboard members, offered to give up his position as chair and moved to elect Eugene Klepadlo to the position.

The motion was not seconded. Sullivan moved that Goodwin remain as chair, Klepadlo seconded, and Goodwin was confirmed as chair unanimously. 

the selectboard, "It is a huge time investment. There is a vast amount of information you have to accumulate in that time. There is a 50% attrition rate for students who enter the class."

Although the Leverett department pays for his enrollment in the academy, Sengebusch said he had to take time off from his fulltime job to attend. He also noted the changing nature of firefighting, with new building materials contributing to the toxicity of smoke firefighters are exposed to, and an acceleration of the amount of time within which a room in a building hit by fire becomes fully involved.

This description, coupled with tales from the selectboard about drunken UMass students tying up the response time for the contracted ambulance service from Amherst, lent added weight to the committee's call for a fulltime firefighter and first responder at the Leverett fire house during the day.

Weinthal mentioned that her committee had found widespread ignorance in town about the needs and realities of the Leverett fire department, including the fact that some

see LSB page 10

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**BEER TENT**

**MADISON** from page 1

he said. "It's clear we need to find a balance. We don't want to stifle creativity. He may be an artist, but others might not be. Without some rules anything could be dumped into the planters, and we can't have that."

Abbondanzio also acknowledged that complaints from unnamed sources also triggered the new regulations. "The [streetscape] committee had a wide range of viewpoints, but we agreed that some reasonable regulations had to be in place."

Madison doesn't disagree that guidelines are necessary. But he sees a contradiction between the town's professed desire to foster the arts and small downtown businesses and rules that interfere with their activities.

"When Arnie [Houle] had his store here, this planter was filled with cans and bottles and trash. I put in plants. I take care of it. And yes, I also create something for people to eyeball when they walk in front of my store. Most of the stuff out here isn't for sale. It's here for people to enjoy, and mostly see." He noted that in late July he was asked to remove his displays along Third Street, which he did. "I'm fine with that..."

There were some apparent safety issues. I got that."

Montague Town Planner Walter Ramsey said the committee had some legitimate concerns. "The planters are public property

on town land. There is a water infrastructure in each of the planters. Sharp objects dug into the planter could put that infrastructure at risk." Ramsey also noted that the situation that has arisen with Madison "puts the town and the streetscape committee in a tough spot." He acknowledged that some people like what Madison has done with the corner. "We need to strike a balance," he said. "We certainly don't want to discourage initiative and creativity."

Abbondanzio said that he was going to set up another meeting of the streetscape committee so that they could meet directly with Madison and address his concerns. Madison said he'd be pleased to attend but that he needs some assurances in writing that whatever plan is worked out will allow him some flexibility. In the winter, for instance, he'd like to put a sleigh on the planter. And he has other ideas for enhancing the store and its surround.

The streetscape committee is comprised of Abbondanzio, Ramsey, DPW Superintendent Tom Bergeron, Building Inspector David Jensen, Librarian Linda Hickman, and new planter coordinator, Christa Snyder.



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## Poets Converge Saturday in Wendell for All Small Caps Anniversary



All Small Caps founders (from left to right) Jess Mynes, Charles Bado, Paul Richmond and Stephen Broll.

By **CHRISTOPHER SAWYER-LAÇANNO**

**WENDELL** – For seven years a determined group has kept the valley's longest continuously running poetry series not just alive, but thriving. This Saturday, from 3 to 7 p.m., All Small Caps will host an anniversary celebration to mark another milestone in valley poetry. Naturally, the form the party will take is short readings by 31 poets who were previously featured in the series. And naturally, the venue will be the Deja Brew Pub, where All Small Caps has always had its home on the last Monday of each month.

The line-up is impressive: Readers from season one are: Ilina Singh, Trish Crapo, Jess Mynes, Paul Richmond, and Bob Suskind; from

season two: Bill O'Connell, Howie Faerstein, Heather Willey, Brenda Iijima, Candace Curran, Dustin Williamson, and Janet MacFadyen; Arlo Quint, Betsy Wheeler, Ed Foster, Patricia Pruitt, and Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno; from season four: Deborah Poe and Lea Banks; from season five: Mike Mauri and John Mulrooney; from season six: Diana Gordon, Ish Klein, and Greg Purcell; and from the last season: Nick Fleck, Tom Timmins, and Emily Pettit.

All Small Caps began in January of 2006 with partial funding from a grant from the Wendell Cultural Council, a local agency that is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. Since then, the series has relied on donations from those who come to listen

to the readers. The ASC founders, Charles Bado, Stephen Broll, Jess Mynes and Paul Richmond are still presiding over the Monday evening events as they will this Saturday. Their photographer, Brian Jones, will also be there to snap pictures of the readers and the audience. The ASC crew is as enthusiastic now as it was seven years ago.

Doors for the anniversary reading open at 2:00 p.m. Readings begin at 3:00 p.m. (No open mic.) Weather permitting, the plan is to hold the reading outside in the courtyard behind The Deja Brew.

There is no set admission fee, but ASC asks for a suggested donation of \$1 to \$5. For further details see the All Small Caps facebook page or their blog at [allsmallcaps.wordpress.com](http://allsmallcaps.wordpress.com).

## September 19, 5:30 to 8:30 Downtown Turners Falls TurnersFallsRiverCulture.org

Put on your poodle skirt, slick back that ducktail, tie up your saddle shoes: Downtown Turners Falls will be ready for you in 1950s mode! See vintage cars, chow down some comfort food, get nostalgic with silly putty, eat a big puff of cotton candy. Live music by Lady Elvis and Furr. Alotta Hoopla hula hoops on the lawn – watch 'em go or try it

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MIETTE MULLER PHOTO

Rose Jackson, in a tree.

## CIRCUS from page 1

way to raise money to put up circus apparatus in her barn, the TRC has blossomed into a project involving 14 young people from the surrounding area.

Troupe members are: Amos Kohrman, Alex Davidson-Carroll, Larkin Christie, Ivy Muller, Solena Davison-Carroll, Grey Davidson-Carroll, Bella Lattanze, Celia Bales, April Weintraub, Rose Jackson, Lucia Mason, June Dickson. Other teens involved in the circus are: Miette Muller (organizer, publicity), Jesse Ball (lights and sound), Cecilia Ball (set and publicity), Nya Saunders (make-up).

This year's whimsical production, "Blown Away", is the story of a girl blown from her home in a storm and dropped into a mystical world filled with fairies, nymphs, trolls and the Evil Entity Leader. To get home the girl must fight the E.E.L. and her troll minions to retrieve her black umbrella and find her way home into fairy land.

This may seem like a combination of the Wizard of Oz and Star Wars but the plot is not the main attraction. Performed in an upgraded barn, the show includes trapeze, acrobatics, aerial fabrics, and humor from resident clown Jackson Blain, 15.

After their debut last year (covered in this newspaper) the Traveling Rhubarb Circus has trimmed, tucked, tweaked, and put together a whole new show.

Using the money raised from last year's ticket sales (all three shows sold out, raising a grand total of nearly \$1,000), the troupe was able to replace the worn out floor mats with a new "Grover" (affectionately named after a fuzzy

blue character from Sesame Street.), install temporary bleachers to accommodate a greater seating capacity, and upgrade to a new sound system installed by PVPA student Jesse Ball.

Still, life in the circus isn't all fun and games. There are a myriad of challenges that come with putting on a production. Being under age makes it all the more complicated.

With \$1000 in hand, the TRC got a crash course in money management from a friendly adult, who also opened a bank account for us. But when you have a bank account, you need someone to make sure some money actually stays there. That's my job. I budget for circus expenses including costumes, new apparatus, barn improvements and publicity.

Getting to practice can be complicated too. Homework, school, and family vacations all interfere with circus. And as a kid, "There isn't really anything you can do about that," says Jackson "When you're 7, or 11, or 13, you can't drive, you can't take yourself places without your parents help. Sometimes kids can't make it to practice, not because they didn't want to, but because their parents had something else planned. That's always tough."

And then there are the communication issues. Says Miette Muller, 16 "I really like being the producer. It's frustrating though, because sometimes I'll say something to the kids and it won't actually get to the parents, or I'll talk to the parents and someone will forget and it will never get to the kids. Part of it is that people see [the TRC] as a kids circus, and don't necessarily make it a priority. But parents have gotten a lot better. People are starting to real-

ize that we're serious."

Still despite (or perhaps because of) the organizational challenges, the Travelling Rhubarb Circus is determined to make this the best show yet. Why do we do it? Some might say circus is its own reward.

"It's a great experience," says Bales, "Lucia is a really good teacher. It's pretty remarkable to see how we go from practically bumping into each other...to the way we always pull it together for the show."

And then there's the straightforward reasoning of Alexander Davidson-Carroll, 9 "Why do we do it? So we can make a better show next year!"

We look to be well on our way. The troupe has high hopes for the future, including a potential change of location. "People want to make [our] space nicer. Maybe even move to a bigger space, although, that's a long way away," says Mason. Also on the menu is a new apparatus called a lyra, as well as revamped lighting.

But fancy devices are not the real beauty of the show and its production. Says Larkin Christie, 12, "[It's about] promoting kids to do these things all on their own. Everyone contributes. And it's going to be really awesome."

Awesome seems like the right word to me. Maybe I'll see you there.

*Rose Jackson, 16, plays the "girl" in "Blown Away." She lives in Greenfield and is a home-schooled high school student.*

*For information about dates, ticket pricing, and running away to join the circus, please visit [travelingrhubarb.com](http://travelingrhubarb.com) or call (413)367-9923.*



## ELLIS from page 4

share (I now have to say "shared") with him. His printed words, his story, gave us an unexpected dimension, yet a greater fullness, of who he was and how he came to be, enriching a friendship and understanding which was already rich and full.

Like so many others, I think of my last encounter, a chance meeting with Bob -- and it was like so many others. It was at the library, and seeing each other, he instantly smiled and started to get up from the chair, saying "Hey brother!" That warm smile, the firm hug.

Quoting Thoreau in our first conversation, Bob recited: "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

Bob lived deliberately. He lived.

## Jonathan von Ranson shared these memories:

He rode his bicycle for a number of years instead of owning a car because he saw it as more compatible with the great Earth-life system he loved and felt so much a part of. The vehicles he did obtain were very secondhand, at least one a donation from his brother. In riding with him I noticed that he drove slowly, shifted consciously and coasted on downhills to save on combustion.

His writing style was unique, with some of its curious force derived from lengthy, meticulously constructed sentences and one of the largest vocabularies. I think it's safe to say, in the rather literate town of Wendell. In the context of this masterful prose, the odd, unfamiliar word, rather than appearing ostentatious or frustrating begged to be explored with the help of a dictionary or maybe Bob himself: "Hey, Bob, where in Hell did you ever see, let alone absorb, the word 'depauperate'?"

One of his main objectives was to give all he could to nurture and preserve the living, non-hu-

man realm. His life largely revolved around his love of that world, with countless hours spent walking, sitting, canoeing in the wilderness. His field of knowledge was uncommonly broad, but on local wildlife it was encyclopedic.

Humble and blunt, he occupied the position of an elder in the Wendell community in the wisdom-related sense in which indigenous cultures use the term. He wrote a multi-volume autobiography that includes a book on his stint as an Army specialist

and three acres and put the money toward conservation purposes. (Bob saw it as the best way, under the circumstances, to continue his lifelong efforts past his death).

## Suzanne Webber wrote of his end of life:

The courage with which Bob lived his life was a courage he brought to his dying. He let go soon after receiving his terminal diagnosis, instead of undergoing painful procedures that would have given him little more time for a lot more discomfort. Bob lived close to the earth and he was buried in the natural way he chose. His body was brought home where his community kept vigil for fifty hours while the casket was built and his burial prepared.

Bob was a great teacher. For me, one of his greatest teachings came at the end. There is nothing to fear in a natural death. While the spirit is freed, the body is offered a dignified, wholesome, and intimate passage back to the earth. I am grateful for Bob's life and for his death, both profoundly, gracefully uplifting.

## After attending the burial at Osgood Brook Cemetery, Ray DiDonato wrote:

Always a gentleman to me, quick with a hand, and I know what folks were referring to when they described that sparkle in his eye. Eyes can smile, and to me, his smiled often. On the way from the funeral today, a fox crossed the road on its way to the pond - it stopped for a moment, looking back at my car from its safe place in the woods.

I can't help thinking Bob would have enjoyed seeing this; a creature that has a place as its home: A creature he had a certain fondness for.



Bob Ellis at his 75th birthday celebration.

JESSICA STAR PHOTO

in Albuquerque doing development and maintenance on the first generation of atomic bombs.

He had often spoken of his desire to let his Montague Road property go back to a natural condition, but he ended up creating a document last winter that deeded it to Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust on his death. Under the agreement, Mount Grace is planning to sell the rustic, hand-made dwelling

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NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Sewer Rates Up; Billeil's Pitbull Ordered Euthanized; Charles Kelley Resigns from CAC

By PATRICIA PRUITT

It wasn't a night with a lot of good news.

It began with a hearing on sewer rates for 2014. First the town can expend only \$120,000, not enough to hold the rates to last year's level. Superintendent Bob Trombley explained that sewer uses will see a 3.7% increase this year.

This works out to the following rates per 1000 gallons: rate 1: Gill, Southworth Paper Company, and Strathmore will see an increase from \$5.56 to \$5.75; rate 2: Lake Pleasant, Montague Center, Montague City and Turners Falls will go from \$6.00 to \$6.22; rate 3: the flat rate will go from \$334 to \$344; rate 4: Millers Falls will increase from \$6.00 to \$6.22 per 1000 gallons. Average use is about 61,000 gallons. The increase puts approximately \$13.42 more on the bill of the average user.

Charles Blanker from Southworth Paper Company spoke from the audience, saying that normally his company would not be happy with so little of retained earnings going to lower the costs to sewer users such as Southworth. However, he understood the demand the repairs to the industrial park and Millers Falls road had made on the retained earnings this year.

Trombley was also there seeking the BOS' approval for a requisition in the amount of \$35,152.49 due CDMSmith for work done on Industrial Boulevard. He also sought an

Approval to Proceed for Baltazar Construction, Inc., pending Town Meeting approval on Thursday. Both were approved unanimously.

Next was part 3 in the hearing on the Billeil pitbull. Chief Chip Dodge was before the BOS to report that indeed he had sent on two separate occasions officers to the Billeil residence, and that on neither visit was anyone home except the dog, locked inside the house. The dog both times behaved in a way that led each officer to think it would continue barking and growling until it could push open the door. In short, its behavior was excessively aggressive. Further, there were no signs of a chain restraint in the yard.

The result of these two visits by police was that on August 30, the dog, Ulysses, was removed to the animal Shelter on Sandy Lane and placed in an 8 by 8 foot kennel. He is too aggressive for volunteers to take on walks or to mingle with other dogs in the yard, according to dog officer Lesley Colluci, who felt the dog's circumstances were inhumane, and not what her shelter wanted to continue. She also thought the dog was not safe and was poorly socialized.

The selectmen, with stated reluctance, voted to euthanize the dog.

Jeff Singleton came before the board next, hoping to gain support from the selectmen for keeping bus route 23 through Montague to Amherst. It is currently a

candidate for discontinuance by the FRTA, which hopes to expand several other routes to accommodate GCC students and others. Two longtime Montague-to-Amherst bus riders added their concerns.

Chairman Mark Fairbrother said he would be at the September 19 FRTA meeting when votes would be taken on the new routes. He plans to vote for continuance of the Montague-Amherst route.

Charles Kelley came next and expressed bewilderment as to why he was there. Fairbrother pointed out that Kelley had had a month to tender his written resignation from the Montague Cable TV board after his appointment to the Cable Advisory Board. After much back and forth, Fairbrother accepted Kelley's offer to resign from the CAC, saving the board having to rescind his appointment.

Selectman Nelson stepped to the citizen's side of the table seeking permission to place a banner on the southern corner of Montague Town common from September 29 thru October 19, for the Franklin County Pumpkinfest.

The Northampton Cycling Club sought a registration for assembly, public demonstration, and use of public property for its upcoming September 21 cycling event from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. for a rest stop on Greenfield and Meadow roads.

**Special town meeting Thursday, September 12, at 7 p.m., at the Turners Falls High School.**

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Beaver, Raccoon Meet Grim Fates; Kittens Threatened

**Monday, 9/2**

12:40 a.m. Vehicle observed exiting new Unity Park parking area, barricades blocking entrance having been moved.

12:59 a.m. Possible drug activity on Fourth Street.

12:50 p.m. Noise and diesel odor reported coming from train that had been idling near Ferry Street since 5 a.m.

9:26 p.m. Suspicious activity/flashlights reported behind a Federal Street property. Area checked; nothing observed.

**Tuesday, 9/3**

10:17 a.m. Larceny reported on Third Street; jewelry stolen from residence.

11:48 a.m. Neighbor disturbance on G Street. Services rendered.

3:04 p.m. Report of a male party removing barricades and parking in the new parking area at Unity Park over the past few days. Extra checks requested.

5:51 p.m. Vandalism to vehicle and stolen cell phone reported on Fifth Street.

**Wednesday, 9/4**

1:20 a.m. Nuisance guitar playing reported on L Street. Report taken.

4:08 a.m. Severely injured beaver discovered and euthanized on Avenue A. DPW notified.

4:42 a.m. The operator of

a motor vehicle stopped at Federal Street and Wonsey Road was arrested and charged with operating with a suspended license; license not in hand; and speeding.

10:18 a.m. Bicycle reported abandoned in the center of the General Pierce bridge. Bicycle moved; bent rims noted.

3:57 p.m. Loud noise disturbance on Winthrop Street.

3:58 p.m. Second complaint regarding train idling for over six hours near South Prospect Street.

**Thursday, 9/5**

1:14 p.m. Report of a customer writing bad checks at a Montague Center business. Services rendered.

5:38 p.m. Report of stolen goods possibly being sold from a Montague residence. Advised of options.

**Friday, 9/6**

12:50 p.m. Sewage backup reported at a Marshall Street residence. DPW foreman Dick Clough notified, en route.

2:04 p.m. Burglary/breaking and entering reported on Denton Street. Report taken.

2:23 p.m. Request for assistance removing passenger from bus at Fourth Street and Avenue A. Passenger removed to Greenfield; peace

restored.

9:12 p.m. Suspicious auto reported at Turners Falls Road and Swamp Road. Responding officers found that operator had struck a raccoon and was unsure what to do.

**Saturday, 9/7**

9:42 a.m. Traffic congestion in conjunction with a large tag sale near Field of Dreams.

2:31 p.m. Report of dog left in pickup truck full of trash parked at Food City. Responding officer advised that there was no dog in truck; no room for any animals in there.

7:13 p.m. Report of two female children throwing rocks at cars on Turnpike Road. Unable to locate.

7:20 p.m. Report of female in F. L. Roberts carrying a dog and asking people if they wanted kittens, saying that if she didn't find homes for them, she would throw them into the river. Unable to locate.

**Sunday, 9/8**

4:12 a.m. Loud noise disturbance on Fourth Street. Peace restored.

5:08 p.m. Water reported bubbling from a pipe near the Bridge of Names in Lake Pleasant. Dick Clough notified; referred to on-call DPW employee.

9:55 p.m. Threatening/harassment on Woodland Drive. Advised of options.

A New Library Director for Montague

By PATRICIA PRUITT

The slim chance of Sue SanSoucie rescinding her date of retirement has disappeared, and, in a few short weeks on October 21, her newly hired successor, Mr. David Payne of the Tacony Library System in Philadelphia, will become the new Montague Director of Libraries.

According to Karen Latka, chair of Montague Board of Library Trustees, Payne impressed the Trustees with his experience and knowledge, his thoughtfulness and

long-range thinking in both the area of technology, as it increasingly impacts library services and patrons of the library, as well as the need for a new library building for the town.

He also impressed them as a director who would continue the outreach efforts to the community at all levels, and would work well with the staff and Board of Trustees. Latka noted that when asked about how he would work with the Board of Trustees, he answered, "If everybody only sings the same note, you don't have harmony."

There will be a farewell reception for Sue on October 23. The new director will also be there to meet patrons and friends of the library.

San Soucie has served her community for 30 years. She was first hired as Library Director of the main library and two branches in 1976 and left in 1979 to raise her family. She returned as Director in 1986. The Library trustees spent the summer searching for a new director.

Greenfield Harmony Seeks Singers

Greenfield Harmony, a 80-voice, multi-generational community choir based in Greenfield, will begin its tenth season under the direction of Mary Cay Brass. The choir sings lively, hauntingly beautiful, inspirational music from many world traditions.

This season will focus on dance songs from Macedonia, village songs from the Republic of Georgia, a fabulous dance song from Mozambique, and songs in the Sephardic, Appalachian and American folk traditions.

A special workshop in African American gospel music, will also be offered as part of the fall session.

The December concert this year will be in a new venue for the choir – the acoustically beautiful Wesley Methodist Church in Hadley on December 14.

There are currently openings in the soprano, tenor and bass sections. To sign up contact Mary Cay at (802) 490-4094 or by email at [mcbrass@vermontel.net](mailto:mcbrass@vermontel.net). For more information see [www.mary-caybrass.com](http://www.mary-caybrass.com).

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**LES** from page 1 about" leaving for charter school (5), choosing out to neighboring school districts (6), home school (7) or private or parochial school (6) – combine to total more than the overall one year drop in enrollment from 2012 to 2013, and contribute to a long term trend that has school committee members and town officials increasingly worried.

Moreover, statistics provided by Ross show that 19 of the students enrolled in Leverett Elementary this year come from neighboring towns, with the largest number (8) choosing in from Montague.

During the meeting, interim superintendent Bob Mahler called school choice a regional problem, universally disliked by superintendents, whether from districts that gain or lose state education aid as a result of the program. "School systems like Gill-Montague and Greenfield lose millions," said Mahler. "The schools that are struggling are the hardest hit."

Mahler called school choice "a pact with the devil," at which committee member Kip Fonsh rejoined, "I think it is a drug," on which receiving districts, like Leverett, become financially dependent.

This year's enrollment drop comes against the backdrop of very good academic news for the school. Ross reported on Monday that the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recently moved Leverett Elementary up on its rating system from a Level II to a Level I school, in large part due to a substantial, 19 point gain based on test scores for students with learning disabilities, English Language Learners, and students from low income households.

"I have serious concerns about the [population] numbers and what they tell us about the sustainability of the school," said Kip Fonsh, the senior member of the school committee. "I'm very concerned about the financial sustainability of the elementary school." Fonsh recommended the school committee "engage the people who choose to home school," and move their children into other educational settings "to find out what we can do to bring their children back into the schoolhouse," especially in view of the recent test score gains. Fenna Lee Bonsignore seconded Fonsh, saying, "We have a big building here. We have to have the discussion."

And with a nod to the upcoming debate on regionalizing the elementary school with the towns of Amherst and Pelham, Bonsignore added, "Maybe we need to give up some of our autonomy in order to share resources with other towns."

Newly appointed Union 28 (U28) interim superintendent Bob Mahler spoke up in favor of a larger community discussion about the sustainability of the elementary school.

"Sustainability should be on the agenda," he said. "That's a larger regional issue. It's happening everywhere. Let's look at it in detail." Fonsh said, "People ask, even with enrollment declines, why is the budget still the same. The changing needs of the students is part of the discussion." He referred to the high cost of educating special needs students, which hits small school districts especially hard.

Mahler said, "Compounding all this is the state's continuing emphasis on achievement and ever expanding targets. Nobody is willing to come forward with the kind

of cash needed to maintain these programs."

School committee member Sarah Dolven called for "more transparency," and a willingness to "increase information flow to all boards and citizens."

As the discussion continued, it touched on the barriers to growth in Leverett, such as the present lack of high speed internet access ("We're working on it," said school committee chair Catherine Brooks) that may be keeping young families from settling in Leverett, along with other obstacles like the town's by-laws governing lot size, setbacks, board of health regulations, the prevalence of unbuildable land and wetlands, and even state regulations governing the protection of endangered species.

Taken together, these ingredients may produce a menu for a graying population with fewer and fewer school age children, leading to smaller classrooms, less state aid for education, and harder and harder choices come budget time for the town and the school. "We need to involve all the boards in this discussion," said Bonsignore.

At the beginning of the meeting, with more than a dozen faculty members present in an unusual show of strength against a backdrop of ongoing contract negotiations between the administration and the faculty, the school committee unanimously approved a plan for teacher evaluations, required under new state law.

Mahler said the evaluations would alternate on a one and two year cycle, and include "a minimum of fifteen minutes of unannounced classroom visits" by the principal. "We're going to be working with teachers to provide the best education here.

Another set of eyes working in a trusting environment will only help to make that happen."

Reflecting on the rise in test scores and the achievement of Level I status for Leverett, Ross said, "The staff has invested a lot of time and effort into students who are struggling."

Fonsh praised the assembled teachers for their commitment to quality education, reflected in the recent test score gains. "Congratulations on an extraordinary performance for students who come in 'resource disadvantaged.' It's extraordinarily difficult to assure parents and residents of outcome. But the results show an equity of access of opportunity and a remarkable improvement."

School committee chair Catherine Brooks spoke of the awkward position the U28 personnel committee finds itself in, now that the town vote on regionalizing the elementary school with Amherst and Pelham has been delayed until next spring.

Interim superintendent Mahler's one year contract is up in July of 2014, and hiring a new superintendent will be difficult while the makeup of the school union is up in the air. Leverett currently entrusts the governance of its elementary school to a century old five town union with Erving, Wendell, New Salem and Shutesbury, but town officials and some school committee members have been pushing for a new region with Amherst and Pelham, in the name of administrative efficiency, academic alignment, and, perhaps, cost savings.

The U28 personnel committee will meet to discuss next steps in Shutesbury on September 24 at 7 p.m.



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LEVERETT POLICE LOG

### Gunshots Near Peace Pagoda?

**Thursday, 8/1**

6:58 p.m. Checked North Leverett Road area after reports of a speeding pickup truck. Could not locate.

**Saturday, 8/3**

10:15 a.m. North Leverett Road resident reported apparent Craigslist scam.

11:30 a.m. Checked the welfare of a Cave Hill Road resident.

**Sunday, 8/4**

9:40 a.m. Assisted Shutesbury PD with alarm at Shutesbury Athletic Club. No incident.

10:44 a.m. Accident on Shutesbury Road.

hit a tree on his motorcycle and was transported to UMass Medical Center in Worcester by Life Flight helicopter.

4:34 p.m. Accident on Shutesbury Road.

crashed his bicycle avoiding a machine in the road and was transported to Cooley-Dickinson Hospital by ambulance.

**Wednesday, 8/7**

3:11 p.m. Alarm at Leverett Library. No incident.

**Thursday, 8/8**

11:45 a.m. Accident at the intersection of Shutesbury and Cushman Roads.

crossed the median line and sideswiped

Damage to both vehicles. found at fault.

**Monday, 8/12**

10:17 a.m. Well-being

check on a Cave Hill Road resident. Found to be OK. 10:10 p.m. Disturbance reported on North Leverett Road. Verbal altercation between neighbors. Parties advised.

**Tuesday, 8/20**

12 p.m. Arrested

for failure to register as a Level 2 sex offender. St. Onge transported to Orange District Court after booking.

**Friday, 8/23**

8:35 p.m. Medical emergency at a Montague Road residence. Subject transported by Amherst FD ambulance to Cooley-Dickinson Hospital for injuries sustained in a fall.

8:35 p.m. Report of gunshots in the area of the Peace Pagoda on Cave Hill Road. Checked area with negative results.

**Tuesday, 8/27**

8:10 p.m. Medical emergency at a Cave Hill Road residence. Subject transported to Cooley-Dickinson Hospital by Amherst FD ambulance.

**Saturday, 8/31**

10:55 a.m. Assisted Shutesbury PD with a serious bicycle accident on Locks Pond Road in Shutesbury.

3:10 p.m. Traffic stop on Shutesbury Road.

to be summonsed for a criminal complaint for operating a vehicle without a license, speeding, and passing violations. Vehicle towed.

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Leverett Elementary September 20

The first major PTO event of the year at Leverett Elementary will be an evening of African Drumming and Dance!

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## LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here's the way it was on September 11, 2003: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

### Sawmill Bypass Plan Questioned

The Connecticut River Watershed Council would like to excavate a short stretch of disused channel on the northern bank of the Sawmill river to create a fish bypass around the Spaulding Dam.

The idea has the approval of both landowners and met with a positive response from the Montague conservation commission.

But the Department of Environmental Protection has raised a red flag about the project's impacts. "The main concern we have," said spokesperson Anna Symington, "is that the Sawmill River is subject to periods of high flow. There is always the potential the water could accelerate and bypass the dam entirely..."

"If you change the hy-

drology, it could change the banks and ecosystem."

### Two Remarkable Turns

On a drizzly afternoon last June, Tracy and Gary Turn headed out on their Yamaha FJ 1200 motorcycle to begin their fourteenth wedding anniversary celebration with friends at Laconia Bike Week.

Two hours into the trip, they hit a moose. Initial reports were not good: Gary had a broken neck and Tracy was in a coma...

While not fully recovered, both Tracy and Gary are now well on the mend. Both have gone back to work – Gary at his Turn's Lawn Care business, and Tracy at SunBridge Rehabilitation Center in Hadley. Tracy even ran in the Montague Mug Race!

### Erving FD Wins Big

Last week Erving fire chief Mitchell "Mickey" LaClaire got good news on two fronts. First he received

a letter from FEMA approving a \$54,000 emergency preparedness grant, 10% of which will come in the form of the town's match. It will be used to buy personal protective gear, paging equipment, hose and radios.

Following on the heels of that announcement, the department took first place last weekend in the "best general overall" fire truck category in a competition held at the Franklin County Fair, for its 1946 International "Buffalo" fire pumper, a truck of vintage WWII surplus design and still in running condition.

### Keller, by a Landslide

Wendell town clerk Anna Hartjens reports that Daniel Keller swept all 70 votes in the special election held on September 8 to fill the year and a half remaining in the term of departed selectboard member Katherine Bentley.

Keller ran unopposed for the seat.

the ambience of the neighborhood. We think it is the wrong thing to do."

The selectboard agreed to cancel the pole hearing and explore working with Western Mass Electric Company to bury the fiber in conduit along with electric cables, which are apparently due for upgrading.

Hallock estimated the added cost of burying the cable, compared to mounting it on 27 poles, might come to something like an additional 87 cents on the average tax bill in town, although no one in the room, including the town's project manager for the high speed fiber build out, Tim Haas, could agree on a fair calculation of how much burying the cable would add to the cost. The agreement to cancel the pole hearing, at least for now, was not arrived at before d'Errico commented, "I feel a little disappointed that people get upset about poles and wires, when it is difficult to hire a full-time firefighter."


When former firefighter Nancy Grossman pointed to the robust turnout on the issue as a sign of civic en-

gagement, d'Errico cut her off, saying, "That's just what upsets me," when compared to the apparent apathy on the state of fire services in town.

### Solar Project Bids

The town received two bids to build a pole mounted solar photovoltaic project near the safety complex. If the project is awarded, it will represent the major investment from the \$138,000 check the town received from the state Department of Energy Resources for becoming a Green Community

The selectboard is moving to eliminate the town's participation in a police education program under the Quinn Bill, a legislative initiative that used to provide 50% state matching funds to incentivize police officers who pursued higher education. The state ceased providing funds two years ago, according to town administrator Margie McGinnis.

The union contract with the town's police department is up for renewal next year, and the town is currently involved in hiring a second full-time member of the department. 

## NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

### Elementary School Energy-Saving Plan On Track

By MIKE JACKSON

Year One of Gill's energy performance contract with Siemens Industry, aimed at reducing costs at the Elementary School, seems to have gone well. Much of Monday night's selectboard meeting was dedicated to a report delivered by a Siemens employee. Based on the company's methodology, improvements made to the lighting and heating systems resulted in \$14,711 of savings, well in excess of the \$11,620 it promised to deliver in the first year.

By combining a \$150,000 state grant with a \$127,000 bond, Gill financed Siemens' work on the building, and the town pays an optional annual fee of about \$2,000 for performance assurance aimed at guaranteed savings targets. Credits received from the school district will go toward repaying the bond over the next fourteen years.

The data from last July through this June is now in. On Monday, Colleen Fissette, a performance assurance specialist with the company, walked the board through the twenty-page report, which is on the town website. \$5,426 of the estimated savings came in measured consumption of fuel oil by replacing the building's boiler, and \$5,655 by replacing light bulbs.

A long discussion developed around the energy management system implemented by the school and company, which basically consists of turning the thermostats down to 60 degrees F during the 113 hours a week the building is probably unoccupied. Indoor temperatures last December did not make it that low – most rooms did not dip below 65 – causing Energy Commission chair and Finance Committee member Claire Chang to suggest the set point be dropped earlier in the day.

Principal Kathleen Adams and the district's facilities/energy manager, Ed Wilkins, offered their opinion that any more "pre-cooling," given the building's large thermal mass and central boiler, would have the unintended consequence of making it take too much time to heat in the mornings. As Adams pointed out, "it takes

significantly longer to heat it up on Monday mornings. The kids were often cold... Mid-week, it went faster." The heat turns on at 5 a.m. and switches off at 4 p.m. on weekdays.

However detailed Siemens' numbers, including additional fuel costs to make up for the heat lost with cooler bulbs, they will be borne out when the bills come due. As chair John Ward put it, "This is all modeling. It will be interesting to see the actuals."

But a direct comparison to what-would-have-been is not possible. "Schools are a dynamic environment," Wilkins explained. Since so many other factors change from year to year – computers and projectors added, usage schedules shifting – a model is all a town can hope for in assessing the value of the contract. How long the town continues to contract for performance assurance, and what will be done with any dividend it may see if credits from the district more than cover repayment of the bond, will be determined in years to come.

The next item was the lease for Four Winds, a small, independent alternative school that occupies the Riverside Municipal Building, formerly the Riverside School, on Route 2. A mandate was made by town meeting to keep the building in use, but as town administrative assistant Ray Purington described it, "we don't have the right kind of tenants and income to fully pay for that building."

The building now has three occupants. The Historical Commission Museum, a town body, pays no rent. The independent Riverside Water District Commission keeps office space in exchange for providing the building with water. The \$575 collected monthly from the school, Purington said, covers oil and electricity, but not "the cost of the roof, even over 50 years." And the roof is aging.

Enrollment at the school this year is now up to 10, and by the proposed agreement, once it hits 11, their rent will begin to rise by \$50 per pupil. Director Steve Hussey was not at Monday's meeting, so the conversation about the building's future was postponed to a later date.

Next, discussion continued about inflow and infiltration to the town's sewer system that seems to be adding some volume, and cost, to what is pumped across the river to Montague for treatment. With very little extra money allocated to it this year, the town opted to take on the investigation itself rather than contract it with Tighe & Bond.

Even the most minimal test – fill the pipes with smoke and see if any rises where it shouldn't – might break the bank. On the other hand, waiting until next spring, when the fourth-quarter bill is paid to Montague and a remainder might be diverted into an I&I project fund rather than rolled over, might cost the town more overall.

"I think we should do the legwork now," argued Ward.

"I can keep investigating what the logistics of a smoke test are," offered Purington.

"So maybe get [DPW superintendent] Mickey [LaClaire] working on it," suggested board member Ann Banash. The possibility was raised about recruiting volunteer firefighters to help, as they might be called up during such a test anyway, by any residents seeing smoke rising from their bushes.

Finally, Purington reported that FRCOG had contacted him asking whether it might use help assessing its broadband needs. "I replied that we'd love their help," he said.

Though in his mind, Town Hall does not need the added speed that might justify the cost of switching to broadband, the equation might change if the building's phone lines are converted to Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) and bundled into the internet.

Chang, a Riverside resident, mentioned that she had seen a Massachusetts Broadband box in the neighborhood, and asked if that meant neighborhood residents could hook in. No one on hand could answer the question.

Purington mused on the paradox faced by mostly-wired towns seeking last-mile coverage: "Are enough of the voting households covered that they won't vote to tax everyone to cover the last few?"

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## ONGOING:

## EVERY SUNDAY

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

## EVERY TUESDAY

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Kidleidoscope*, environmental program for ages 3-6 and their adults. 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., free.

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.

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

Avenue A & 2nd St., Turners Falls: *Farmers Market*. 2 to 6 p.m.

## EVERY THURSDAY

Montague Center 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 Schultzy* from Curly Fingers Dupree Band. 8:30 to 11:30 p.m.

## ART SHOWS:

Nina's Nook, Turners Falls: *Flotsam*, photographs and collage by Trish Crapo on display through October 12.

## MUSEUM

## EXHIBITS:

Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association: *Indian House*, open 11 to 4:30 p.m. Weekends in Sept. to Oct 6.

Memorial Hall Museum Music Room, Deerfield. *Poetry to the Earth: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Deerfield*.

## EVENTS:

## THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

Memorial Hall Museum Music Room, Deerfield. *Poetry to the Earth: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Deerfield*. Lecture and book signing by *Suzanne Flynt*, 7 p.m. Exhibit preview at 6:30 p.m.

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

## FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

Great Falls Coffeehouse, Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Pitchfork*, \$ donation, 7 p.m.

Mocha' Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Gregory Douglass* with special guest *Myra Flynn*, 7:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Ottomatic Slim*, Chicago style blues, 9 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Community Smokes*, reggae, rock, blues, 9:30 p.m.

## SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

Art Walk, Shelburne Falls, 4 to 8 p.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Zoe Sundra*, 8 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls:

*Beatles For Sale*, New England's premiere tribute to The Beatles, \$, 8 p.m.

Arts Block, Greenfield: *The Happier Valley Comedy Show-The Ha Ha's & Playbook*, \$, 8 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Reprobate Blues Band*, 9 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Ketch-Fyre*, 9:30 p.m.

## SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

Green Fields Market, Greenfield: *Kids at the Co-op*, photography display by *Lindy Whiton*, reception, 2 to 5 p.m. refresh-



"Beatles For Sale" tribute band at The Shea Theater on Saturday, September 14, at 8 p.m. [www.theshea.org](http://www.theshea.org)

ments.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Potluck & Contra Dance*. Hall fundraiser, 6 to 9:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Katie Sachs Farewell Show*, with *Span of Sunshine*, *Wishbone Zoe*, *Christa Joy*, *Carlyn Walker*, *Lexi Weege* and *Lisa Marie*, 8 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *John Sheldon*, 8 p.m.



*Live Birds of Prey Program with Tom Ricard at the Great Falls Discovery Center, Friday, September 20 at 2 p.m.*

## MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bingo!* Free, 8 p.m.

## WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Quiznite with Quizmaster Alex*, \$, 8 p.m.

## THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

Just Roots Community Farm, Greenfield: *Wild Edibles Plant Walk with Felix Lufkin*, 3 to 5 p.m. Register [justroots.org](http://justroots.org)

Nina's Nook, Turners Falls, artist reception, *Trish Crapo*.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Stephen Cahill Art opening*, 7 p.m. *Half Shaved Jazz*, 8 p.m.

Turners Falls, *Third Thursdays Night Out*, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Deja Brew Wendell: *Tommy Filiault Trio*, acoustic rock with *Sturgis Cunningham & Klondike Kohler*, 8 p.m.

## FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Live Birds of Prey Program* with *Tom Ricard*, 2 p.m.

Mocha' Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Randy Smith with Hooly Mae Brown* and special guest *Keeghan Nolan*, \$, 7:30 p.m.

Arts Block, Greenfield: *Ellis Paul*, \$,

8 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Josh Levangie & The Mud, Blood and Beer Band*, 9 p.m.

Montague Bookmill, Montague Center: *City of Four*, \$, 8 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Lake Side Drive*, classic rock, \$, 9:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Winnie and the Pooh Bears*, the CCR cover band formerly known as *Willy and the Poorboys*; *Sandy Bailey*, and *Maybe Marlene*, 9:30 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Reprobates*, 9:30 p.m.

## SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Gender Role Free Contra Dance* with caller *Jim Fownes*, music by *Becky Hollingsworth* and friends. \$ Experienced session 4 p.m., supper 6 p.m., all level dance, 7 p.m.

Memorial Hall, Shelburne Falls: *Robin and Linda Williams*, *Pat & Tex Lamountain* open, \$, 7:30 p.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *The Peachy's*, 8 p.m.

Arts Block, Greenfield: *Tony Vacca*, \$, 8 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Burrie & Friends*, progressive folk, 9 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Turn It Loose*, classic rock, \$, 9:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Rockit Queer* dance night with Guest DJ *Bobby Roastbeef*, \$, 9:30 p.m.



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## West Along the River

# The Millers Falls Scrapbooks (Part 1)

By DAVID BRULE

**MILLERS FALLS AND ERVINGSIDE** – Two scrapbooks made their way into my hands the other day. For the time being, the person who collected all the clippings and photos sometime in the 1950s, remains unknown. No one had signed the collection, donated to the Erving Historical Commission. But it did wind up in the right hands, as though it were meant to happen.

The following series, over the next few weeks and months, will be a compilation and recounting of the history and humor of village life in Millers Falls, culled from the scrapbooks. The series will evoke, for a short time at least, the age when this village was a vibrant and thriving community, where people knew their neighbors and knew where they were from.

### Where is Millers Falls, really?

Sixty years ago, according to these scrapbooks, people from Millers Falls knew who they were, and especially where they were from. Now maybe it doesn't matter so much anymore, with new considerations separating Millers from Erving.

"Millers Falls is in Montague, and in Erving too!" proclaimed the headline in 1954, preserved in the scrapbook, and dated 1954, the year of Montague's bicentennial. So, it had to be true.

Let's see, the Millers Falls Tool Company opened in 1868 in Erving.

ers Falls Post Office received and distributed mail to the whole village, on both sides of the river, too. All of which will add to the confusion of future historians.

But once these corporations and districts disappeared, modern bureaucratic imperatives and emergency management systems required clearer distinctions.

So the technocrats resorted to the boundary line on the map drawn down the middle of the Millers River, effectively cutting the village into two halves. So I guess that culturally and demographically we are still a village, but politically and financially (especially tax-wise) our little village is cleaved in two.

But you still have to cross the river to get almost anywhere, and that's where the bridges come in.

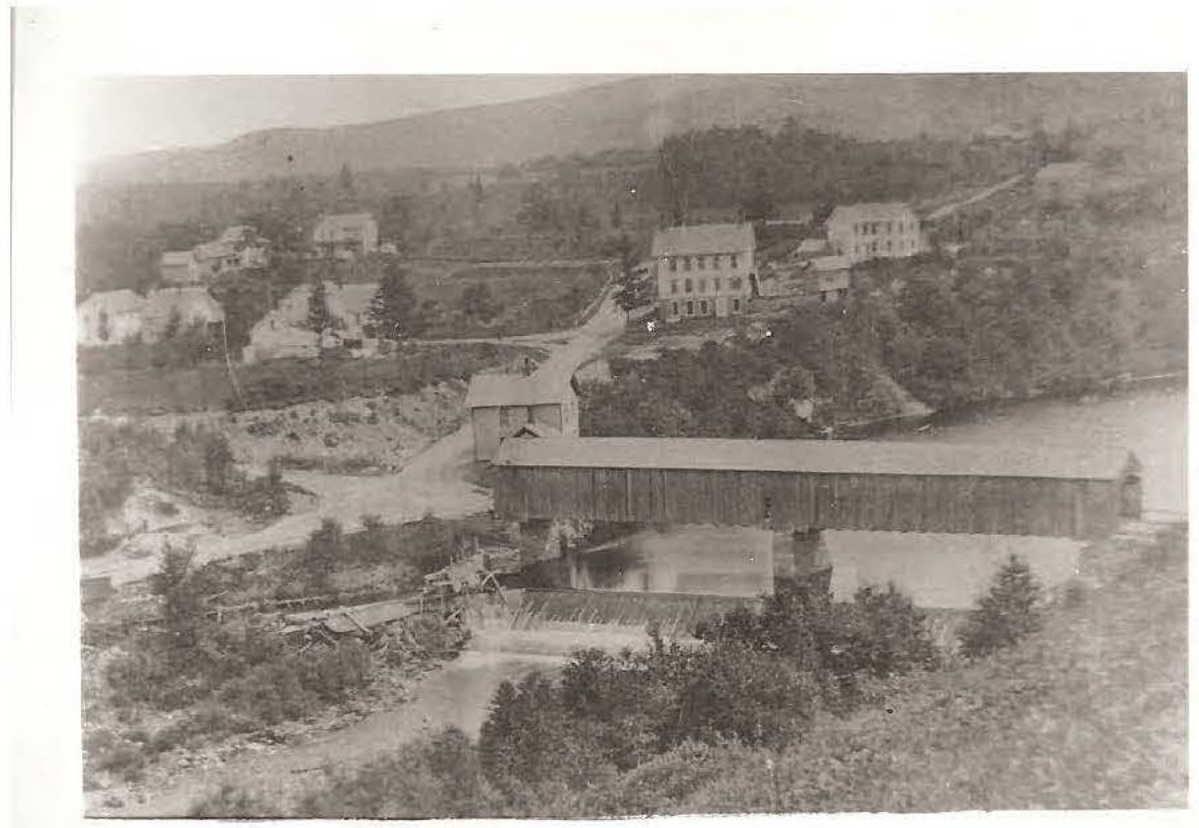
### The Bridges of Millers Falls

The first bridge noted in the scrapbooks is the Old Covered Bridge that connected the two banks. Presumably there were other ways to cross above or below the falls at Millers, and perhaps further research will clarify this.

With the advent of the Millers Falls Tool Company in 1868 on the Erving side of the river, there of course needed to be a dependable bridge to get products to the railroad junction in the upper Millers village, then still called Grout's Corner. And the workers, many of whom lived in the village on the Montague side, needed to get across to work.

Records show that the covered bridge was built in 1872. There was

rian J.A. Taggart wrote in 1878 that the lamp threw a very feeble light, and being situated in the middle of the bridge, it was exceedingly difficult to see your way across.



The Old Covered Bridge, 1872-1892. Courtesy of the Erving Historical Commission.

He recommended that it was a good idea to be sure to take a lantern with you if you needed to cross the river on a moonless night.

The roof of the bridge was burned off at least once, likely due to that very oil lamp!

The covered bridge from 1872 was replaced by the "White Bridge" in 1892, which lasted until 1953.

over in the opposite direction to the Erving side for a shot and a beer at the Red Lantern.

The White Bridge earned the nickname "Bottleneck Bridge" when, after the War, automobile and truck traffic due to the robust manufacturing at the Tool Company put a strain on the 1892 bridge. It too was replaced, by the Veterans' Memorial Bridge in 1953.

That bridge in turn lasted from 1953 until 2007 when the latest version of the old covered bridge was inaugurated.

to being the first postmaster of the village post office, started in his home along with the First Congregational Church, he invented a system of mixing sand and concrete to bind stones more firmly together. We call this mixture "grouting". Whether we owe the name to Grout himself is a source of some local disagreement.

A humorous village story has been handed down via the scrapbook, involving Grout and a cheap-skate customer at this tavern.

It appears that a regular drop-in at Grout's Tavern was given to

### The Enterprising Mr. Grout

Martin Grout was born in Pelham in 1772, but his destiny lay a few miles away in what came to be known as Millers Falls.

But before being Millers Falls, the place got its name from Martin Grout. He opened a tavern here on the turnpike road, and by 1824, it quickly became a social center for the entire region, as taverns typically were in those days. His tavern was situated in the upper village, close to what is now the railroad junction. It seems that Grout sold land to the railroad for their lines, and it's likely that helped business also!

It is recorded that the tavern's taproom was on the ground floor and that upstairs was a hall, used for meetings of various sorts, including religious services!

The First Congregational Church held its early meetings there, after having started out in the Grout home on South Prospect Street. Apparently, the congregation could hear the beat of the toddy stick in the barroom below, which occasionally accompanied the hymns sung above!

By 1835, Grout bought 200 acres of land along South Prospect Street, which became known as Grout's Pasture. He built his house on the prospect hill overlooking the town, and it still stands.

Grout was a stone mason and inventor. Some say that in addition

hitching his horse in front of the tavern before going in to sit down near the fire and absorb the fireplace heat, day after day without ever ordering anything.

The exasperated Grout finally decided to confront the free-loader, to prevent him from leaving until he had paid.

Of course, the man refused, since he had consumed nothing.

Grout retorted "You've had the benefit of my fire and you've hitched your horse here daily for weeks. I'm charging you 25 cents!"

The customer refused at first but had to relent under the imposing Grout's determination.

After a lengthy argument, the man agreed to pay the 25 cents, but by then, Grout had upped the charges to 50 cents to pay for all the time consumed in arguing.

After more heated arguing, the fee went up to 75 cents for wasting the inn-keeper's time. The free-loader paid up and left.

Furious, he headed straight to the local Judge's office to complain about Grout.

The Judge retorted, "Grout was right in what he did." He added that his fee for the consultation was \$2. And it would go up to \$5 if the man didn't leave his office within three minutes!

Compiled by D.Brulé from various sources. For more of David's writing, visit his website [ancestryplaceandrace.com](http://ancestryplaceandrace.com).



The White Bridge, 1892-1953. Courtesy of the Erving Historical Commission.

The Millers Falls Paper Company produced paper in Erving. The Millers Falls Fire and Water District covered both sides of the river in, presumably Millers Falls. The Mill-

in those days a single oil lamp hanging from the rafters in the middle of the bridge. A villager was paid \$1 a month to light that lamp every night, which he did, mostly. Village histo-

Many of us today can still recall crossing the White Bridge to get across to the Montague side to get ice cream at Juddie Gould's, or the older folks will remember crossing

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