

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 16 – NO. 8

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

DECEMBER 7, 2017

ERVING SELECTBOARD

Town Hit With Fine Over Elevators In Abandoned Mill

By KATIE NOLAN

"This is beyond ridiculous!" assistant assessor Jacqueline Boyden commented, as the selectboard considered the demands from the state Office of Public Safety and Inspections (OPSI) regarding four elevators at the former International Paper Mill.

The IP Mill, on Papermill Road, closed abruptly in 2000. In 2005, a real estate company bought the property, but it remained undeveloped and abandoned. While the property was abandoned, the buildings were stripped of all copper pipes and wires. In 2014, Erving acquired the property for back taxes.

This week, OPSI fined the town

\$80,000 for not inspecting and licensing the four elevators in the buildings during the period since their licenses expired in 2002 and 2003.

Administrative coordinator Bryan Smith said he contacted OPSI, telling them that the town has only owned the property since 2014, that buildings are not occupied and are boarded up, that the elevators have not been operating for years, that there is no wiring or power to the buildings to run the elevators, and that the Erving police department conducts surveillance at the property to prevent trespassing. He said he provided OPSI with photos of the boarded-up doors and windows and empty electrical conduits.

see ERVING page A7

Leverett Extends A Hand To Hopeful Homebuyers

By JEFF SINGLETON

"I definitely think we're on the right track," said Julie Shively of Leverett's recent efforts to promote affordable housing. "We now have young people whose families live in town, and people who work in town, able to afford housing here."

Shively serves on both the selectboard and the Leverett Housing Trust, which oversees a housing program funded under the Community Preservation Act (CPA).

At its annual town meeting last spring, Leverett allocated \$250,000 from funds set aside for community preservation to subsidize "affordable housing" in the town.

The program is part of the state-

wide CPA which Leverett voted to adopt back in 2002. That act, which is financed by a tax on property owners, is best known for the preservation of open space and historic buildings. But there is a requirement that cities and towns use some of the money to promote affordable housing.

The web page of the town's Community Preservation Committee (CPC) defines "community housing" as housing purchased by low- and moderate-income buyers. Low income is measured as below 80% of Franklin County's median family income, while moderate income is anything between that and the median.

The town has established two

see LEVERETT page A5

Hillcrest Friends Raise Cash For Play Equipment

By ELLEN BLANCHETTE

TURNERS FALLS – The students of Hillcrest Elementary, from pre-K to first grade, need new playground equipment, and the Friends of Hillcrest are determined to help them get it.

The Friends, a parent-teacher group that aims to bring enrichment activities and family programs to the school community, have formed a Playground Committee in order

to address the need for updated equipment on the kindergarten and first grade playground, which is a large wide field with some swings and slides, and a variety of climbing structures, all of which are aging and will need replacing. There is another small playground near the school entrance that serves the preschool.

Their effort began this week with a Free Soup and Games fundraising

see HILLCREST page A7



Recess on the old equipment at Hillcrest.

Federal Drive To Deport Hits Home



Neida Berdugo of Turners Falls emerged from her fiancé's deportation hearing in Hartford to find a crowd of hundreds rallying in support of immigrant rights. "It really helps to see that we're not alone," she told the Reporter.

By MIKE JACKSON

HARTFORD, CT – Even before Celerino "Ricardo" Ramirez Hernandez' number was called, it was clear to nearly everyone in the courtroom Wednesday morning – his fiancée, the supporters who packed the benches behind her, a sweaty young ICE lawyer, and a visibly irritated Judge Michael Straus – that something had gone wrong.

Only Mr. Ramirez' twin 5-month-old girls, burbling quietly in their matching pink bows, were oblivious to the fact that a paperwork mixup by the federal government had bought another week, and another little bit of

time in which lawyers might be able to build a case for their father to remain in the country.

All seven of the detainees on the Hartford docket on Wednesday were scheduled to appear by video conference from Greenfield. As it turned out, four had been transferred to the Plymouth County Correctional Facility, a jail in another immigration court's jurisdiction.

This came as a surprise to Judge Straus. It appeared that the Department of Homeland Security had failed to file the proper "I-830" forms notifying the Department of Justice that the men had been moved.

"Everything that happened today was confusing," Neida Berdugo, Ramirez' fiancée, said afterwards. "It was crazy. I was expecting these people to know he wasn't in Greenfield anymore."

Since Ramirez' surprise arrest by ICE in Springfield on his way to his roofing job on the morning of November 7, the Turners Falls mother of five has been traveling to the Greenfield jail with her children during visiting hours, three times a week. The couple believes he is eligible for a cancellation of removal – on the grounds that he has been in the country for over 10 years, and that it would pose the family a hardship – but they have not yet been able to track down documentation proving his arrival date in the country.

On November 22, Straus denied Ramirez bond, further hindering their ability to assemble a case. A week later, dozens of detainees were abruptly moved to Plymouth, after Franklin County sheriff Chris Donelan told ICE his office would no longer be able to provide transportation services for the federal government.

A Long Morning

On Wednesday morning, Berdugo woke up at 5 a.m. to get the babies ready, and to leave her three

see HITS HOME page A4

Open Enrollment: Local Navigators Scramble To Connect People With Plans

By NATAN COHEN

FRANKLIN COUNTY – In Massachusetts, it is the middle of open enrollment under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), although you might not know it. The open enrollment period, which began November 1 and ends January 23, is the one time each year many residents are able, or forced, to change their health insurance plan.

In August, the Trump administration announced it would be cutting funding for ACA advertising by 90 percent. As a result, local agencies nationwide are doing everything they can to get the word out.

Cameron Carey, development director at the Community

Health Center of Franklin County (CHCFC), located in Montague City and Greenfield, encourages anybody who knows about the open enrollment period to share with family, friends and neighbors.

"Even if you don't need it for yourselves, chances are someone in your immediate social circle does," he said. "We're doing as much as we can to create some general awareness with radio announcements on WHAI and Bear Country, and social media, as well as hanging printed information in our offices."

The Massachusetts State Health Connector funds a Health Navigator position at CHCFC to do outreach in the community and assist people with signing up for health insurance,

but that position has been vacant since October. "We have recently hired someone to fill that position," Carey shared. "Unfortunately, certification to become a Health Navigator is pretty comprehensive, and takes time."

"We are hoping to have that operable and that position filled within four or five weeks," he told us – meaning not until the last two or three weeks of this year's open enrollment period. In the meantime, according to Carey, it's been challenging for the Center to have so many people, both patients and non-patients, coming through their doors looking for help with open enrollment when the position is not filled.

see INSURANCE page A8

Alzheimer's Care – For The Caregivers

By JOE KWIECINSKI

GREENFIELD – Meet Linda Puzan. She's a woman on a special mission.

As clinical services coordinator at LifePath, headquartered at 101 Munson Street in Greenfield, Puzan receives referrals from colleagues regarding caregivers interested in dementia coaching.

A caregiver is anyone who looks after, supports, and supervises those who are afflicted with this difficult, merciless disease. Usually, family members step up to assume this highly demanding role: spouses, siblings, or other relatives.

"According to the Alzheimer's Association," said Puzan, "Alzheimer's is actually a type of dementia. It's an umbrella term that describes a wide range of symptoms

associated with a decline in memory or other thinking skills, severe enough to reduce a person's ability to perform everyday activities. Alzheimer's disease accounts for 60 to 80 percent of dementia."

Linda is a specialist who provides dementia counseling. "The coaching I provide," said the social worker, "includes safety issues in the home, environmental concerns in the home, behavioral issues, and communication difficulties. Along the way, I may suggest other activities and relay information and make referrals to other resources in the community that might help. Above all, we want to impart to caregivers that they are not alone."

November was National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month – and National Family Caregivers Month. The latter recognizes the



LifePath's Linda Puzan helps those caring for individuals with Alzheimer's.

nation's millions of dedicated people who accept the challenge of supporting a loved one.

As stated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Alzheimer's Disease strikes more than 3 million people in our country.

see CAREGIVERS page A3

The Montague Reporter

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Broader Horizons

The “tax bill” that passed the US Senate last week isn’t Congress’ final product, but it’s hard to imagine substantial improvement during reconciliation. It’s time to brace ourselves for the hit we know is coming. This is their cash-out.

It’s structured as a time bomb, with relatively larger cuts going to relatively poorer sections of the population in the shortest term, but shifting significantly – tax increases for most of those making under \$75,000 a year by 2027 .

It will create an increase in the deficit that is likely to trigger mandatory cuts in Medicare.

The central idea is a deep corporate tax cut that Republicans claim will serve to grow the economy enough to trickle down value to workers which will offset our eventual tax increases. But how many Americans would really take that bet if it were presented to them?

The US Treasury’s Office of Tax Analysis produced a report in 2012 that concluded that “workers pay 18 percent of the corporate tax while owners of capital pay 82 percent.” In anticipation of having to publicly argue that a giant corporate tax giveback would directly benefit working people, the department under Trump appointees removed the study, and instead insist that “70 percent of the tax burden falls on American workers.” Riight.

And then there’s the “tax reform” that includes opening up 1.5 million acres of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. (The House version would lift the ban on churches campaigning and fundraising for politicians.)

Our president tells his base that our country has the highest tax rate in the world, but this is not remotely true – both our individual and corporate rates are lower than the *average* advanced industrial nation’s.

The elephant in the room is the offshoring of capital. With 10% of the planet’s economic value stashed under flags of convenience, untaxable where it is produced, nationalists must show they, too, are willing to roll over for the rich if they’re to distract them from developing the logical foil to a global market – a global regulatory system.

This is a new era we are entering, through the looking glass. Or at least, those of us in the highly developed countries of the global North; another view is that the austerity rules we have imposed on the South have finally caught up with us. Any country that tries to ensure a decent amount of the social surplus goes toward provid-

ing a minimum standard of living is subject to a capital strike.

Cars, grain, pants, and phones may be produced through cooperative global processes, but tax policy and provisions for social welfare are expected be set in national silos. For most, it’s a race to the bottom. For the truly rich, it’s a very exciting time to be alive.

It took a world war for the Transatlantic ruling class to form the League of Nations, and a second one for the construction of the briefly much more serious United Nations. The founding documents of the UN and all of its agencies are a capsule from that forgotten time, the attempts of a deeply traumatized generation to prevent the the next and probably final cataclysm.

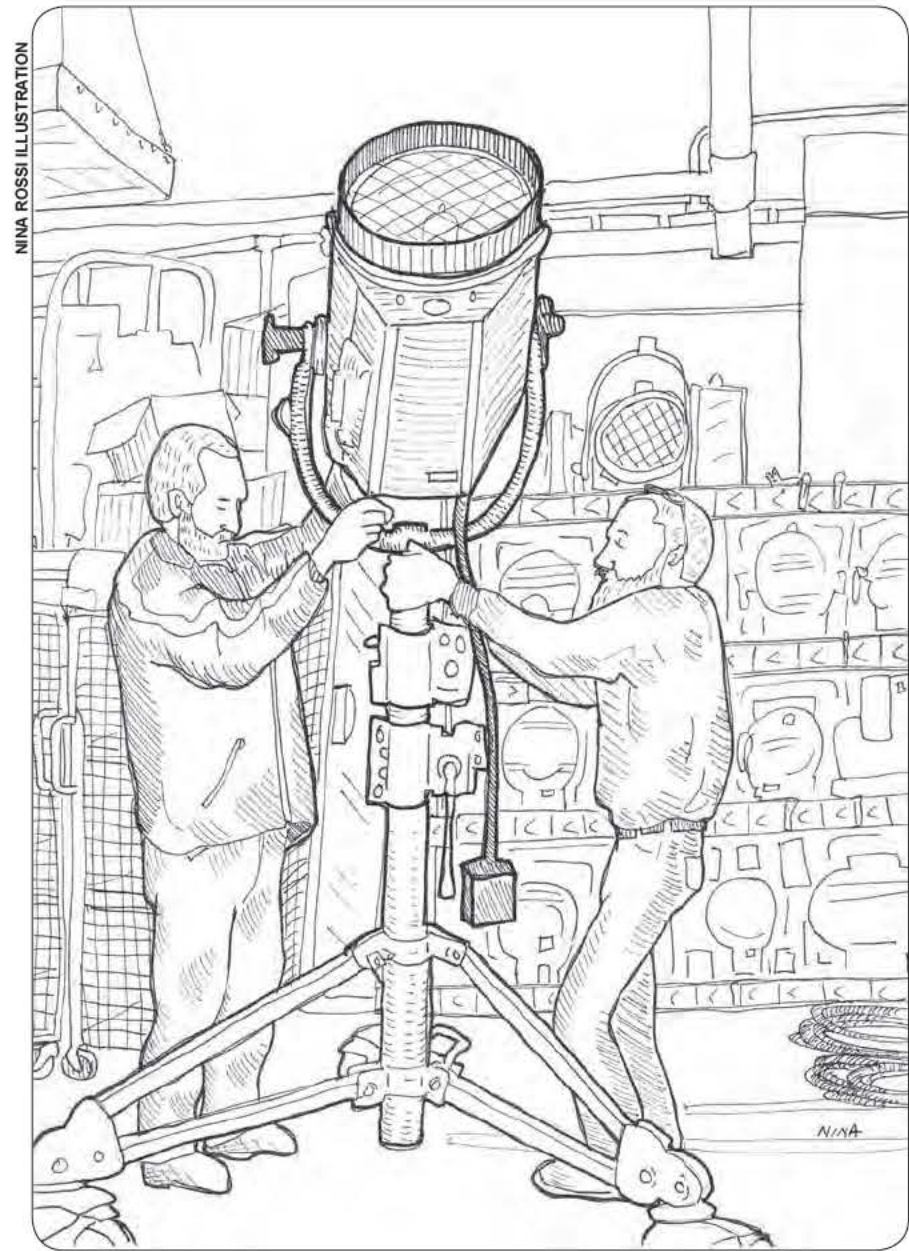
But this mechanism, dedicated to “solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character” without bloodshed, is a shadow of its former self. And it seems likely that global economic coordination will only come *after* the competition among nations becomes war.

And this is why the coming tax cut is bound to be followed by military buildup. Global economic downturn makes the threat of conflict sound more salient, but boom times are argued to be the right moment to build the warmaking capacity; both logics point only to growth, and nobody in American public life ever seems to openly discuss benchmarks for when we should save some money by slashing the military budget.

The only path out of this inexorable downward spiral is internationalism. The seeds of global cooperation are already present in “civil society,” but up until now, that society has tended to be populated by those wealthy enough to travel, educate their children at international schools, and donate to NGOs (or work for them between college and marriage, etc.). Therefore, their goals have been lofty.

But why not build global solutions to *simple* problems? Why not organize around global supply chains to make diapers free to all baby humans everywhere? Or insulin to all diabetics? No offense to climate change and nuclear disarmament, but why not start with some of the ones we can win, and encourage literally everyone to help in some small way?

It’s a more likely way to build a safety net than national taxes, and the more we collaborate now, the less likely we all are to be duped into the war, when it comes.



John Ancil and Sam Robinson set a 10-kW fresnel on top of a stand at the FastLights lighting company, located in the former Saint Anne’s Church in Turners Falls.

Next week, FastLights will go to New York City to do a Matt Damon promo. The company has been based in Turners Falls for about five years, and employs eight people.

(Mr. Ancil offered to pay this reporter to write an article about light pollution from a particular sign outside a bank in town. This was declined, and a suggestion made that the eloquent business owner write a Letter to the Editor instead!)

GUEST EDITORIAL

By ROBERT HELLER

Why the Town Of Wendell Needs An Elected MLP Board

1. What exactly is a Municipal Light Plant?

A Municipal Light Plant (MLP) is a municipally-owned entity that is allowed by MGL Chapter 164*.

More than 100 years ago, when it was determined that the electric companies were unable or unwilling to serve small (rural) towns, MLPs were intended to allow small towns to build and operate their own electric generation plants and electric distribution networks.

Later, this body of law was amended to include other things, like the distribution of natural gas, telephone, cable TV, and eventually broadband Internet services. Again, this was to allow small (rural) towns to provide services that the private companies are unable, or unwilling, to provide to these small (rural) towns.

Wendell has, in fact, passed the town meeting articles to create a MLP for the purpose of providing broadband Internet services. And the town is currently in the process of actually building a fiber-to-the-home network.

This article will talk about the ways this broadband Internet network can be governed.

2. Municipal Light Plant governance options

Chapter 164 talks about three ways a Municipal Light Plant might be governed:

1. The “executive branch” of the town may act as the Municipal Light Plant’s board. In the case of Wendell, this would be the Selectboard. (It is also possible for the “executive branch” to appoint a municipal light board, although this has not been tested in a court of law.)
2. The town can choose to elect a municipal light board consisting of either three or five citizens of the town. (See Section 55 of MGL Chap. 164.)
3. A “municipal light commission” could be established by act of the legislature. (See Section 56A of MGL Chap. 164.)

Each of these options has some pros and cons, but before we get into that, it would be useful to understand how a Municipal Light Plant operates, and what its governing body needs to do.

3. How a Municipal Light Plant works

First of all, a Municipal Light Plant generally operates like a business: it provides services to customers. It manages its physical plant (like an electric power plant and power distribution wires); it sends monthly bills to cus-

tomers; it collects payments from customers, and so on.

In Wendell’s case, it is maintaining the fiber-optic cables on the utility poles, maintaining the central switching system, and so on.

Wendell, being a small town, will most likely contract out for all of these things, so the actual management work of the MLP should be very minimal – mostly just overseeing the contractor or contractors, and some light bookkeeping. Oh, the Municipal Light Plant manages its own books and its own accounts.

The Municipal Light Plant takes in money from customers, and spends that money to manage and maintain its physical plant. It generally does not get an appropriation from a town meeting vote, and does not need a town meeting vote to authorize its spending. It operates like an independent entity from the rest of town government.

This is necessary because the Municipal Light Plant is, after all, a business, that the town owns: a business that needs a level of autonomy to function properly on a day-to-day basis.

4. Advantages of an elected Municipal Light Board

Because the Municipal Light Plant is really an independent entity, having an independently-elected Municipal Light Board makes a lot of sense.

There could be a fair amount of specialized work to manage the Municipal Light Plant, work the Selectboard doesn’t need added to their already overfull “plate.”

The Municipal Light Board would most likely be a group of people who can concentrate on this one aspect of the town’s business, and not be distracted by other town business.

Since the Municipal Light Board needs to be elected at the annual town elections (in early May), the town needs to approve the enabling article some time before those elections, with enough time for interested people to take out nomination papers. A special town meeting in February or March would work.

Robert Heller has lived in Wendell since the mid-1970s. He was on the original broadband committee from its formation in 2005 until its reorganization as two committees in 2016, and he is currently the town’s WiredWest representative. His small software and Linux administration consulting business, Deepwoods Software, has been operating since 1993 out of his home deep in the woods on Locke Hill.

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JESSICA LARKIN ILLUSTRATION

LOCAL BRIEFS

Compiled by DON CLEGG

Due to an abundance of artisans, the **13th Annual Wendell Crafts Fair** will be held in two locations this year just a couple hundred feet from each other along the Wendell Town Common. The Old Wendell Town Hall, on Center Street, is the largest venue where there will also be music and food. The nearby Wendell Senior Center will hold additional crafters and vendors.

The Wendell Crafts Fair is free, as is parking. Both venues will be open from 4:30 to 8:30 p.m. this Friday, December 8, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, December 9.

Dinner will be prepared and served in the Old Town Hall on Friday between 5 to 7 p.m. On Saturday, lunch will be served from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The menu for both days includes New England clam chowder, haddock sandwiches, haddock nuggets, and pulled pork sandwiches.

This **Saturday, December 9**, is shaping up to be pretty busy in a number of other respects, too:

- **First Mountain Design**, at 142 Depot Road in Leverett, is having a holiday studio sale from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. You will find art to wear that is locally designed and locally sewn, along with fun, stylish, artistic, liberating clothing.

- **Leverett Crafts and Arts**, at 13 Montague Road, is having their holiday sale Saturday and Sunday, December 9 and 10, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Refreshments will be served.

- Local coin and antique dealer **Gary Konvelski** will be at the Greenfield Savings Bank in Turners Falls, starting at 10 a.m., to assess or appraise any treasures that you may be curious about a value. Konvelski has been a longtime collector of jewelry, coins, currency, books and other antiques.

- Hayrides, theater, caroling, Santa by the Fire, reindeer food, hot chocolate, ginger bread decorating, Celtic dancing, a bonfire and other activities to be announced, will have Northfield's Main Street alive with merrymakers during **Special Day in Northfield**.

The event runs from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Follow the blue and white snowflakes to event locations. Pick up a schedule card/raffle ticket at participating venues for times and locations. Visit five different locations and have your card initialed at each to be eligible for the Northfield Gift Basket drawing. Parking behind Green Trees Gallery and at the Town Hall is free.

- During the Special Day celebration, from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Kim Noyes, education coordinator

at the Northfield Mountain Recreation and Environmental Center, will lead a **nature-themed art activity** at the DVAA Center for the Arts at 105 Main Street.

Children ages 4 and older can create a "Birds and Birches" illustrated card using cardstock, crayons, stickers, construction paper, scissors and glue. All materials will be provided by Northfield Mountain, and children may join any time during the session.

- Adults and teens are invited to come **make holiday cards and enjoy home-baked cookies** at the Carnegie Library in Turners Falls starting at 2 p.m.

Please consider making cards for residents of local nursing homes. They will be distributed and greatly appreciated. Cookies and card-making supplies provided by the Friends of the Montague Public Libraries.

- Enjoy timeless holiday music performed by Steve Ciechomski and Tom Kostek at **Montague Congregational Church's Holiday Concert**. The concert takes place from 5 to 6:30 p.m. with optional pot luck dinner to follow – bring a dish to share! Free will donations will benefit the Salvation Army.

- All are cordially invited to a **Christmas Carol Sing Along & Concert** at the Greenfield High School at 6 p.m.

Spend a fun-filled evening singing carols and enjoying music from the 4D1G Gospel Quartet, Valley Revival Choir, and several other talented singers and musicians. This event is free of charge and open to the public.

The Turners Falls High School

Class of 2019 brings you **Breakfast with Santa** at the Montague Elks, One Elk Drive in Turners Falls, on Sunday, December 10, from 8 to 11 a.m.

Adult tickets are \$7, and children under 10 are \$5. There will be plenty of pancakes, scrambled eggs, and sausages.

First Parish Unitarian Church in Northfield is holding a **benefit concert** on Sunday, December 10, at 2:30 p.m. Funds raised will go to support ongoing efforts to help Puerto Rico recover from the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria.

The concert features the voices of the Amandla Chorus, presenting songs of freedom, justice, and peace around the world. Also featured will be Fire Pond, a Northfield-based duo offering an eclectic variety of instruments and songs from many traditions.

Admission is free, and donations are welcomed with gratitude. Refreshments will be served. Band together to lend a helping hand to our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico!

Hope for the Holidays is a gift drive run by the RECOVER Project's peers. They are accepting donations of new and gently used gifts, now until December 19. Age range is for kids newborn to 18 years old. Dropoff hours are Mondays through Fridays, 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Saturdays 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Gifts will be distributed from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. on December 20 and 21 on a first come, first served basis. If you have any questions please call the RECOVER Project at (413) 774-5489.

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

CAREGIVERS from page A1

"We salute the care and support provided by primary caregivers of



Alan and Deb Bachrach of Petersham enjoy the company of their dogs, Bella and Zoe, while Alan listens to music on his iPod, provided through a partnership between LifePath and the Alzheimer's Music Project in Pelham. Alan, who has dementia with Lewy bodies, finds the music to be soothing, and often sings along.

persons with Alzheimer's disease and dementia," said LifePath's executive director, Roseann Martoccia. "The whole family is impacted by these two illnesses. When caring for a loved one, you must take care of yourself, too."

There are 10 signs and symptoms of caregiver stress, according to LifePath. They are denial, social withdrawal, anxiety, anger and frustration, depression, irritability, lack of concentration, exhaustion, sleeplessness, and health problems.

Linda Puzan facilitates an Internet-based support group through LifePath, utilizing a media website, phone and webcam – cameras on computers. "Technology gives us a chance," she said, "to reach caregivers who have a problem getting out to a support group."

Puzan stresses that "it feels very satisfying to be able to offer information and support to caregivers, so they can have the tools that they may not have known about."

People might simply not know where to turn or think that their loved ones might get better or that their illness might go away."

Dr. Stuart Anfang, who serves

as chief of Adult Psychiatry at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield, clarifies why the mortality rate from Alzheimer's shot up 55 percent from 1999 through 2014. "As the population ages," said Dr. Anfang, "and people are living longer due to other medical advances and improved health care, they are more likely to develop dementia like Alzheimer's. It's a disease of brain aging."

Dr. Anfang is in charge of Bay State's Memory Disorders Program.

In addition, Puzan notes that there are critical signs that point to serious issues.

"It's normal to have occasional memory loss as we age," said Linda, "but certain signs indicate it's a much more severe condition. Examples are memory loss that disrupts everyday life, changes in personality, misplacement of objects, difficulty executing a familiar task, decreased judgment, and problems in abstract thinking."

There is a prevalent myth, Linda points out, that only elderly people are subject to Alzheimer's and dementia. "It's rare," said the clinical services director, "but individuals in

their thirties, forties, and fifties can be symptomatic. There are about 200,000 people in this age group."

The clinical services coordinator visits the affected person and his or her caregiver at home. The purpose of the visit is to ascertain "a better feel for what's going on."

According to Puzan, it's important to give both parties the reassurance that they are not alone, and that there are people out there who can help them in dealing with their problems.

"It's a wonderful experience," said Puzan, "to be able to know that I can provide assistance to help keep their loved one at home as long as possible. People indicate the information and services provided to them are very valuable and, in addition, enhance their skills as caregivers."

For more information on LifePath's Internet support group, please call Linda at (413) 773-5555 x 2213, or to get information on LifePath's many programs and services, visit LifePathMA.org.



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Izzy Vachula-Curtis

Grade 7

Madison Leborgne

Grade 8

Odalís Ramirez-Martin
Chloie Sumner

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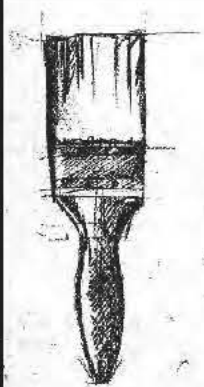


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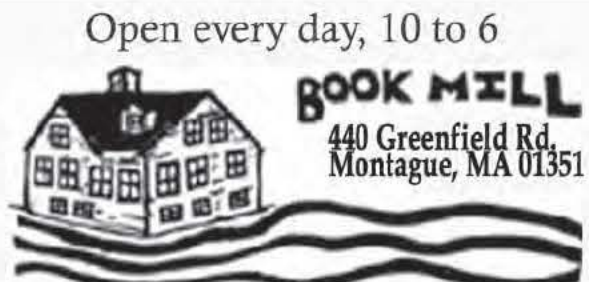


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HITS HOME from page A1

older boys, who are all in the Gill-Montague schools, with a friend. The family's case has quietly attracted attention and sympathy locally, and by the time the morning hearing opened, she was joined by 15 supporters – and a reporter – who had made the trek from Turners, Gill and Greenfield.

They came to support Berdugo with the knowledge that Straus – a former INS attorney who denies asylum claims at a rate 36% above the national average, according to the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University – might order the twins' father deported to his native Mexico.

A framed photo of Jeff Sessions smiled down at them from the waiting room wall.

The first detainee, a Jamaican national, was introduced via video conference from Greenfield. His wife was held up in the courthouse's long security line, according to his attorney. "Seems like there are a lot of people here who came through it," Straus said, eyeing the small room's packed pews. He ordered deportation, and the man's attorney indicated he would file an appeal.

The second and third cases on the docket, men from Peru and Mexico, were represented by the same lawyer. "912 is not here, Your Honor," a voice from Greenfield announced through an intercom. "He was transferred to Plymouth."

"Oh," his attorney said, sounding surprised.

"This is the first that I was aware of this," the designated Homeland Security lawyer, a man named Patel, said.

"Pursuant to the administrative control list held by EOIR, he's not under this immigration court's jurisdiction..."

"He's on the docket!" she exclaimed.

Her other client was a man still held at Greenfield, and she requested time to prepare a case based on the United Nations Convention Against Torture. "It's relating to torture he'll receive at the hands of the Mexican authorities when he's deported, based on his criminal conviction," she explained.

Straus agreed to grant her the extra time, perhaps enough to recruit an expert witness, and scheduled a 2-hour hearing for early January.

Case number four concerned another man originally from Mexico, who beamed in over the screen and spoke through the court's interpreter. He did not yet have an attorney, but he tried to explain that a day earlier, he had spoken with someone at the ACLU's fledgling Immigrant Protection Project, who had promised to take his case.

"I need a real attorney!" Straus shouted, and initiated the removal hearing.

The man said he had come to the United States after becoming a victim of torture at the hands of the Zetas cartel. "They wanted me to work for them, and they hacked me in the head," the interpreter relayed. "They burned my back with cigars..."

After listening for a while, Straus told him he had better get a lawyer, and advised him to file an asylum application. He gave him one week.

"I have three other individuals," the judge said, scanning the docket.

"They were all transferred to Plymouth," the voice from Greenfield replied.

"You should have an '830,'" Patel told Straus.

"It's certainly concerning you don't."

Since Ramirez was unable to conference in, Straus called Berdugo, unprepared and nervous, to the stand. "He was first here three weeks ago, and I gave him time to get an attorney twice," the judge told her. "Why hasn't he gotten one?"

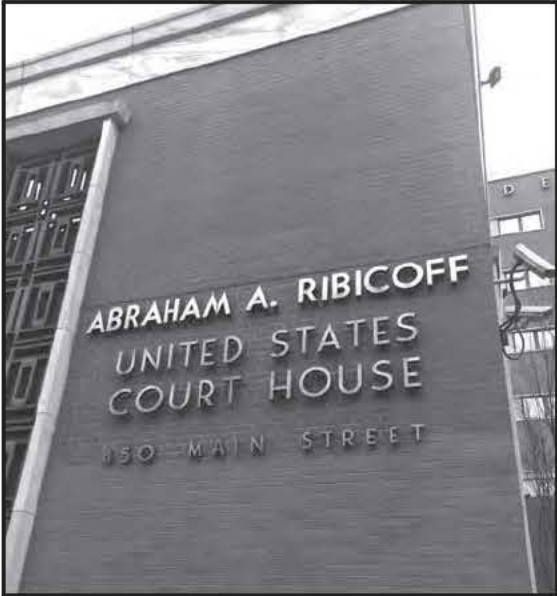
"We were only here one time, for the bond hearing," she replied. "He got moved to Plymouth, so we haven't had enough time to get an attorney for him."

"Okay, I'm sure that doesn't help things, being moved around," Straus conceded. "I'll give you another week, okay? And I'm not sure what's going to happen – this case may be transferred to

Plymouth. I have no idea."

Ramirez' hearing was followed by one for a Jamaican citizen from Bridgeport, Connecticut, whose relatives were in tears after learning he had also been moved. They said he had been detained for months without a promised psychological review, and that they had been unable to find him an attorney without the review.

"It's a mess, that's all I can say," Straus told them. "It's hard to get to Plymouth."



A Black Hole

"I wanted to be there to be part of the process," said Teresa Cordoba, a Latina outreach advocate at NELCWIT who traveled to Hartford for Wednesday's hearing. "The immigration system is a mess, and unfortunately, families are being separated."

Cordoba, herself a naturalized immigrant from Colombia, said that she worries especially about the impact on children of the fear parents face.

The Associated Press reported on Tuesday that while arrests by US Border Patrol "plunged" to a 45-year low in the fiscal year that ended in September, that decline is being offset by rapid growth in "interior removals" by ICE – in the period since the inauguration, up 37% from the previous year.

"It's not easy to find a lawyer unless you have a lot of money," Cordoba observed, "and people who have a lot of money don't need lawyers – the doors are open to you here."

Neida Berdugo told the *Reporter* that the reason her family had not yet retained a second attorney – after hiring one in November for Ricardo's unsuccessful bond hearing – was that they weren't sure if they would be granted enough time to assemble a case. The IPP had coached him on what to say during his video conference. "[Straus] could supposedly have signed his deportation today, whether there was a lawyer or not," she explained.

The potential for a change of venue to Boston, she said, was a ray of hope. "Hopefully this judge is better than Straus," she said. "If they end up moving him back [to Greenfield], he'll have to face this judge again."

Berdugo also said that after the hearing, she was able to speak with Ramirez by phone in Plymouth. "He was expecting to be called sometime around 10 to go to the video call," she said, "and he was surprised no one took him anywhere."

She added that she was very glad to see the number of supporters the family had received at the court, and that Ramirez expressed gratitude when he heard of the turnout. "He said to tell them that he said thank you to them," she said.

Abby Graseck, who works as a parent and family services coordinator at the Brick House Community Resource Center, also made the trek to Hartford. "The level of pain, and also frustration, was really pretty palpable in that room," she reported. "This experience is so painful and draining for the families involved. Even today, with the few cases that were heard, all of the people who had decisions come down were in tears."

Graseck said that neither she, Berdugo, nor attorneys with the Immigrant Protection Program were even sure in which state next Wednesday's

hearing will take place. "This is actually like a black hole," she said.

"The level of logistical and emotional preparation that goes into showing up for one of these hearings – and then for nothing to happen? It's so wearing."

A Gathering Crowd

Pushing the twins in a double stroller, Neida Berdugo left the federal courthouse after the hearing, but did not go far. By coincidence, a local rally for the National Day of Action for Immigrants was starting, right then, right on the front steps.

The lunchtime rally was sponsored by Connecticut Students for a Dream, the state AFL-CIO, the Congress of CT Community Colleges, the CT Immigrant Rights Alliance, as well as two large SEIU locals, and about 200 turned out for it. Ministers, politicians, and students seeking protection under the DREAM Act all spoke passionately about the dysfunctional and polarized state of immigration in America.

"President Trump and Jeff Sessions can dress this up as being about public safety all they want," Hartford mayor Luke Bronin told the crowd.

"But there is nothing – nothing at all – about tearing apart families that are simply trying to build a good life, that are hard-working, that are law-abiding, that are raising children, that in many cases have children that are American citizens: tearing those families apart doesn't make us safer."

Bronin and other speakers decried the federal administration's move to end temporary protected status (TPS) for migrants from Haiti and Nicaragua, and called for Congress to pass a "clean DREAM Act."

"It really helps to see that we're not alone, and that there's a lot of people supporting immigrants," Berdugo said of the rally. "It doesn't really matter if you're documented or not – we're all the same, we're humans. And that shouldn't be a thing that matters in this life."

Berdugo, who moved to the country as a child and has a valid visa, worked at a Turners Falls restaurant until partway through her second trimester with the twins. She is daunted at the prospect of being a single mother again. In recent months, Ramirez' roofing work had been the family's primary source of support.

"Right now I'm trying to find a job where I don't have to leave them for a long time," she added, "because that's the thing that Ricardo didn't want – for me to have to leave the babies for someone to take care of them."

"It's really confusing when you're going through this, and you have to think of having five kids and trying to figure out what to do with your life," she said.

"And how to do this stuff without having your kids be affected by it."



Hartford mayor Luke Bronin spoke at the rally.

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LEVERETT from page A1

programs to assist potential home buyers in these income brackets. The first, called the Buy Down Program, would loan “up to” \$50,000 to reduce the purchase price of a home, which can not exceed \$270,000. The loan would require a restriction, or lien, on the deed that ensures the future resale price of such a home remain “affordable.”

The second, known as the Down Payment Assistance Program, would loan buyers 5% of the purchase price, a lower amount, with a sale cap of \$280,000. This would be a smaller subsidy, but would not place a restriction on the resale price.

These programs have been a long time in coming.

Priced Out Of Living

The obstacles to affordable homeownership in Leverett are formidable. Many low- and middle-income residents – especially elderly people on fixed incomes – purchased their home decades ago, when housing prices were lower. Today, houses valued under the limits set by the CPA are few and far between.

According to estimates of housing values and income, the average home in Leverett was \$334,595 in 2015, as compared to \$220,800 in Franklin County as a whole. The town’s median household income is estimated at \$90,868, compared with \$55,221 countywide.

A 2016 draft report by the CPC cites high land values as a key obstacle to affordable housing. The report also notes that...[c]ommunity housing should ideally be where people can walk to services, but Leverett has few services, they are spread out, and suitable land is not available near them. For example the only place to buy groceries in town is miles from the library and even further from the post office and Town Hall. Public transportation is unavailable in most of the town.”

A survey of older residents conducted for the town’s Affordable Housing Trust found that their concerns about “affordability” focused mostly on taxes. “Our property taxes are \$8,500, and this is our biggest expense; more than our mortgage, health care and utilities,” said one respondent. “Leverett has priced us out of living here.”

According to another resident, age sixty-six: “I would like to stay, but high real estate taxes would make that impossible when I stop working.”

But despite these concerns about high property taxes, Leverett was one of the first towns in the state to approve the CPA, with its 3% percent tax surcharge. The town voted to exempt the first \$100,000 of assessed valuation from the tax, as well as property occupied by low income residents or senior citizens, to mitigate the impact.

One reason for support for the affordable housing program is the view that young people who grew up in Leverett, or work for the town, should be able to afford to buy homes there. The CPC report says that “[t]here is a strong feeling on the part of many that people who work for the town, retired people who have lived in Leverett and wish to downsize, and young people who grew up in Leverett should be able to afford to rent or own housing in town.”

A Workable Track

The affordable housing components of the CPA took some time to implement. According to a chronology in the CPC report, Leverett approved the Act in 2002, and the first funds became available, with a 100% match by the state, the next year. But these were initially allocated to the CPA’s open space and historical preservation components.

The first appropriation by town meeting to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, for \$77,570, took

place in 2008. There are no applications for affordable housing subsidies listed in the chronology, except a 2013 request from the Pioneer Valley Habitat For Humanity for \$150,000 to partially fund two units on Cave Hill Road. That application was withdrawn prior to the 2014 town meeting.

Then in 2015, town meeting approved a request from the Affordable Housing Trust for \$150,000 for the Buy Down Program, and in 2017 it appropriated another \$250,000, adding \$100,000 to create the Down Payment Assistance Program.

So far, four housing purchases have been made under the Buy Down Program, and one purchase is pending under the Down Payment subsidy.

When asked if she was positive about the results of the programs, Jenna Day of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (FCHRA) said, “definitely.” Day, whose agency works with low-income home buyers and renters, assists Leverett with outreach and implementation of the two subsidy programs. The FCHRA has also produced a glossy flyer advertising the opportunities in Leverett.

“To have four permanently affordable homes purchased in Leverett is a success,” Day said. “For every potential home buyer who comes to us looking for down payment assistance, Leverett is the only town in my area that has a program.”

Barbara Carulli, who serves on the Leverett Housing Trust, agrees that the program is now heading in the right direction. “People have been working on this for years, and met a lot of dead ends and a lot of frustration,” she told the *Reporter*.

“We feel we have found a track that is workable, and fits in with the realities on the ground here.”

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LEVERETT POLICE LOG**

Three Deer Struck, But Reported Uninjured; Househunter Tests Prospective Porch

Wednesday, 11/1

6:32 p.m. Officer Bancroft responded to North Leverett Road for a report of a car vs. deer motor vehicle crash with no injuries.

Sunday, 11/5

5:55 p.m. Officer Ramos responded to Shutesbury Road for a reported vehicle stopped in the roadway with the operator possibly asleep at the wheel. Officer Ramos located the vehicle and determined the female was having a medical issue. Amherst Ambulance was requested, and the woman was transported to the hospital.

Tuesday, 11/7

7:16 p.m. Officer Sawicki responded to a North Leverett Road address for pos-

sible harassment. Officer Sawicki arrested a subject for violation of a harassment prevention order.

Friday, 11/10

6 a.m. Officer Sawicki determined that a guard rail on the corner of Shutesbury Road and Cushman Road had been struck sometime overnight and the operator had fled the scene. Officer removed parts of the rail, and advised the highway department.

Saturday, 11/18

1 p.m. Officer Garvey responded to Cave Hill Road for a car vs. deer motor vehicle crash with no injuries.

Monday, 11/20

6:15 p.m. Officer Sawicki observed a suspicious ve-

hicle, with all four doors open, parked on Cemetery Road at Still Corner Road. Officer encountered a female who stated she was urinating. Officer spoke with the female about this behavior and sent her on her way.

Wednesday, 11/22

10 p.m. Officer Sawicki dispatched to Shutesbury Road, near the Shutesbury line, for a car vs. guard rail motor vehicle crash with no injuries.

Monday, 11/27

Chief Minckler responded to Long Plain Road for a report of car vs. deer motor vehicle crash with no injuries.

Wednesday, 11/29

Chief Minckler responded

to a Juggler Meadow Road address for a suspicious person sitting on a porch, of a home for sale. Chief arrived and spoke with an individual who stated he was looking to buy the residence. He was advised to contact the realty company if he wanted to look at the property. Sunderland PD assisted.

Thursday, 11/30

10:56 p.m. Officer Bancroft stopped a vehicle for speed on Shutesbury Road. After the stop she learned the vehicle had an expired registration. Through her investigation she located multiple dangerous weapons in the vehicle. This incident is under investigation.



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FY 2018 CDBG Public Informational Meeting TOWN OF MONTAGUE

The Town of Montague will hold a public informational meeting on December 18, 2017 at 7:15 p.m. in the Selectmen’s Meeting Room at the Montague Town Hall, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA in order to solicit public response to the activities that the town should apply for in the FY 2018 Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application to the Department of Housing and Community Development.

The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss the application process and activities that the town should apply for. Representatives from the Town, Social Service Agencies and the Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA) will be present at the hearing to discuss potential activities. Any other activities that the town should consider for the FY 2018 CDBG application will be discussed.

The Town of Montague will contract with the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) to administer the FY 2018 Community Development Block Grant Program. The Town of Montague encourages residents to attend the meeting where any person or organization wishing to be heard will be afforded the opportunity.

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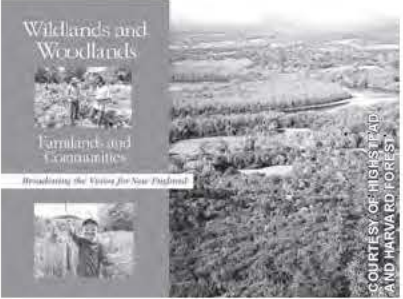


NatureCulture: The Science Page

If you have a scientific idea you'd like to write about, a science-related book to review, an activity to advertise, or would like to share your experiences with science or any related field, please be in touch: science@montaguereporter.org.

— Lisa McLoughlin, editor

A Vision for the New England Landscape



The cover of the 2017 “Wildlands and Woodlands Conservation Report”

By LISA McLOUGHLIN

FRANKLIN COUNTY – *Wildlands and Woodlands, Farmlands and Communities: Broadening the Vision for New England* is the latest report from Harvard Forest. It updates their previous 2010 report with new data and an enhanced plan for land use based on those findings.

Most of us are familiar with the story of our forests in New England. Old growth was quickly cut down by European settlers for their crop fields and animal pastures. Since that time, the forest has crept back in, and New England is now one of the most densely forested areas of the country.

The current development trend, which eliminated 24,000 acres of forest each year from 1990 to 2010 and converts farmlands to residential or other “built environment,” threatens our landscape and the many health, scenic, and economic benefits it provides.

Forests, especially mature forests, have large mitigating effects on climate change; they help filter water and create shady expanses that benefit people and wildlife. Farmland also keeps us healthier and happier by growing delicious,

affordable, local food.

To preserve the natural infrastructure, we will need to reverse the current downward trend on funding land preservation, and steward the lands we have in sustainable ways including how we grow/revitalize our cities.

In Montague, this would mean finding new uses for old infrastructure rather than abandoning them and building elsewhere; strongly supporting small rural farms such as Red Fire Farm, recently conserved with an innovative funding model by the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust; and reducing our resource consumption, something many local towns are actively working on through energy efficiency programs, recycling and composting, and green energy efforts.

This latest report is hopeful for New England’s future, while highlighting some of the many pressures that are keeping us from obtaining

their set goals for the year 2060: 30 million acres conserved forest, with 90% woodlands and 10% “wildlands”; three to six million acres conserved farmland, and five million acres efficiently developed land.

Woodlands are areas “voluntarily protected from development and managed for forest products, water supply, wildlife habitat, recreation, aesthetics, and other objectives,” while wildlands are “large landscape reserves subject to minimal human impact and shaped by natural processes.”

If you’d like to help preserve forest and farmland, either your own or at the community level, get in touch with a local land trust. You can find a list of accredited land trusts at findalandtrust.org.

A downloadable PDF copy of *Wildlands and Woodlands* is available for free from wildlandsand-woodlands.org.

Moon Calendar for December 2017:

Sunday, December 3: Full Moon	Sunday, December 10: Last Quarter
Tuesday, December 26: First Quarter	Monday, December 18: New Moon

Note: Thursday, December 21, 2017 Winter Solstice

Earth on Winter Solstice, 2010

NASA images by Robert Simmon, using data ©2010 EUMETSAT



Artistic Concrete Sphere Marks Arctic Circle in Iceland

By LISA McLOUGHLIN

ICELAND – In September of this year, an eight-ton concrete sphere marking the edge of the Arctic Circle in Iceland was officially dedicated. The sphere is on Grimsey Island, and it’s hoped it will be a tourist attraction.

The Arctic Circle is a ring of latitude at 66°33’39” north of the equator. It marks the southernmost point where the sun is above the horizon for 24 continuous hours on summer solstice, the longest day of the year in our hemisphere, and where the sun will be below the horizon for 24 hours on winter solstice, our hemisphere’s shortest day.

The position of the Arctic Circle is determined by the tilt of the polar axis of rotation of the Earth, which wobbles slightly over a 23,000-year period. As the pole, the center around which Earth rotates, moves slightly, so do all the circles of latitude that surround it.

The concrete sphere will have to



be moved about 14.5 meters each year to follow the Arctic Circle, the position of which is gradually drifting north. It first intersected Grimsey Island 300 years ago, and will move north off the island by 2050, to return in the next 23,000-year cycle.

“Grimsey is a very opportune place to enjoy this play of nature, or this force of nature really. The rock and roll of the earth,” stated Kristinn E. Hrafnsson, creator of the artwork alongside Studio Granda. The winning design in a competition held in 2013, its title is “Hringur og Kúla” (Ring and Sphere).

“The ring is of course the Arctic Circle itself and the sphere stands

on it,” Hrafnsson explained. “And the idea is that the sphere shows its location every year.”

Creators of the sphere took the Arctic Circle’s movement into consideration as “a direct reference to nature’s progress and perpetual motion.” But the people transporting the 3-meter diameter sculpture to its new home on the island were not prepared for quite so much motion. The truck transporting it from the ferry to its installation site didn’t make it – en route, the ball almost fell off and into the sea. It is now safely installed in a location near the town.

Source and image: Icelandreview.com

FEATURED WEBSITE

United States Geological Survey

(www.usgs.gov)

By LISA McLOUGHLIN

Surprisingly, there’s much more to the USGS than rocks. According to their website, this government agency covers fourteen overlapping areas: biology and ecosystems; climate change; coasts; data, tools, and technology; energy; environmental health; geology; mapping, remote sensing, and geospatial data; minerals; natural hazards; oceans; planetary science; and water.

I clicked on “climate change” to see how that section of their website was doing in an era when Scott Pruitt, head of the Environmental Protection Agency told CNN (September 2017) that he doesn’t believe carbon dioxide is a “primary contributor” to climate change.

Reassuringly, the climate change link still worked, and a subset of

menus allows more detail. Clicking on “climate change” again gave me access to 63,019 articles dealing with the subject, including a particularly interesting one on how climate change was affecting cultural heritage on the east coast. It informed me that the Interior Department has Climate Science Centers run by USGS, and that they are studying which National Park Service cultural resources, for example light houses, will need human intervention to survive rising sea levels and increased storm intensities.

I then went back and picked “geology,” which came up with an even bigger list of sub-topics. Everything from basic discussions about why minerals matter, to a form to report feeling an earthquake, was available in nested menus.

FEATURED SECTION

Earthquakes

(earthquake.usgs.gov)

Have you felt an earthquake? You can report it using the USGS website.

The earthquake section of the USGS site provides up-to-date reporting of recent earthquakes worldwide, and you can also limit the search to nearby.

I was surprised that just in New England, over the past year we’ve had about 100 earthquakes.

We think of damaging earthquakes in New England as relatively rare; however, the USGS says that “[n]oderately damaging earthquakes strike somewhere in the region every few decades, and smaller earthquakes are felt roughly twice a year.” The site goes on to say that although we have less frequent quakes than they do out west, ours are felt over wider areas, and sometimes at shallower depths.

Unlike in California, our fault lines are unmapped, and it’s therefore hard to predict where New England earthquakes will happen.

Using the Latest Earthquakes Map tool, I was able to isolate our region and found an earthquake that happened one kilometer southwest of Athol, at depth of 5 kilometers, on September 6, 2017. No one signed into the “report it!” site to say they felt this magnitude 1.7-ml quake.

Earthquakes are measured by seismographs which record the

vibrations as earthquake seismic waves travel through the earth. The one in Athol, being less than a reading of 2 and therefore a “microearthquake,” was unlikely to be felt by people.

This site is, of course, most useful for people affected by or likely to be affected by damaging earthquakes. It includes forecasts for aftershocks and other activity for individual earthquakes on a day-by-day basis.

You can also get safety information such as what to do in the event of an earthquake: Drop, Cover, and Hold On; links to FEMA-supported organizations that will train you for earthquake safety; and links to earthquake preparedness materials.

I found this area of the USGS website to be really fun to explore. It has a lot of answers to strange questions. (Apparently, some people think the government should send engineers to evaluate their houses for earthquake resistance. FYI: They don’t.)

It concedes that other questions remain a mystery, such as: we do not know why earthquakes sometimes produce light.

I ended up very impressed with the USGS website, and see it as a great jumping-off point for research related to earthquakes, rocks, climate change, and a bunch of other stuff.

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fredholmgren@gmail.com



ERVING from page A1

Smith said that the OPSI agreed to reduce the fine to \$16,000, but asked the town to formally decommission the elevators. However, the town has requested a hearing to appeal this reduced fine, in hopes that the OPSI will waive the fine entirely.

Meanwhile, to show the state that the town is acting in good faith, Smith had started the process for decommissioning the elevators. According to Smith, formal decommissioning could cost approximately \$10,000 and might require providing electricity to the building.

One resident at the meeting suggested that the town board up the interior elevator entrances with plywood: "It's much cheaper than \$10,000."

Smith said he had copied Governor Baker, state senator Stan Rosenberg, and state representative Susanna Whipps on his correspondence with the OPSI.

Boyden said she wondered if other small towns that own brownfields properties were also being fined by OPSI.

Since acquiring the property, the town has been working with Franklin Regional Council of Governments, engineering consultant Tighe & Bond, and state redevelopment agencies to find a new use for the former mill, with a vision of future light industrial, or mixed commercial and light industrial, use.

Removing Snow and Ice

At the annual town meeting in May, voters adopted a Winter Snow, Ice, Sleet and Parking Bylaw requiring property owners to clear the sidewalks abutting their properties. At the December 4 selectboard meeting, the board and citizens discussed whether the highway department should be clearing sidewalks in some portions of town.

Highway foreman Glenn McCrory said the highway department runs a snow blower on Main Street, Church Street and North Street sidewalks after all the roads and parking lots have been plowed. He said this practice dated from before he started at the department, and that he didn't know the reason it was done. "Those sidewalks are always plowed by residents before they see the snow blower," said selectboard member William Bembury, who lives on Church Street.

Selectboard member Scott Bastarache asked why the town clears sidewalks on certain streets, now that homeowners on other streets can be fined for not clearing walks. "There's an imbalance there," he said. "It doesn't sound like a service for all areas of town."

Saying that Amherst clears sidewalks for its residents, Linda Downs-Bembury said she was in favor of Erving clearing all the sidewalks in town. "I pay my taxes, and I'm feeling really out of sorts with this," she said.

Arthur Johnson agreed with Downs-Bembury, saying that if he has to walk in the road because

the sidewalk is not cleared, "it puts me at risk."

Bastarache checked the Amherst website and said that, while Amherst has a bylaw similar to Erving's, requiring homeowners to clear sidewalks, the town says it will "send a sidewalk plow around on the major sidewalks to assist with this task." The town of Amherst publishes a map showing which sidewalks will be plowed, and the justification for plowing each walk.

"Amherst has justification," Bastarache said. "Right now, we don't have that."

Selectboard chair Jacob Smith said, "We can have a discussion on this, on the timeline and staffing..."

The board asked McCrory to inventory the sidewalks in town, indicating how many of them are private property and how many belong to the town, and bring the information back to the selectboard.

At the annual town meeting in May, police chief Christopher Blair had said that he gets calls "all winter long" about sidewalks that are not cleared after snowstorms. However, voters expressed concern about requiring elderly or disabled citizens to remove snow from sidewalks that abut their properties.

Bastarache had told the annual town meeting that enforcement of the bylaw would include "reasonableness."

Capital Planning

The capital planning committee met jointly with the selectboard and finance committee to present its recommendations for approximately \$2.2 million in capital improvement requests for FY'19.

The committee recommended \$443,500 to fund town hall and police station servers, town hall and Erving Elementary School computer upgrades, road and sidewalk repair, a dump truck, a police cruiser, tennis courts repair, classroom and other EES furniture, and a storage shed at the senior/community center, all to be paid for by appropriations.

Erving's well pH monitoring for \$66,000 would come from retained water department earnings. At the Publicly Owned Treatment Works #1, replacement of the Arch Street forced main for \$1.6 million would be paid for by borrowing, while \$131,000 from wastewater department retained earnings would pay for evaluation of the double-barrel siphon.

Capital planning committee chair Ben Fellows said the committee had reviewed the documentation provided by town departments to come up with the recommendations.

During the meeting, finance committee member Johnson, who is also the animal control officer, was called to attend to an animal control issue. When he left the meeting, the finance committee was left without a quorum. According to fin com member Daniel Hammock, that emphasized the need for additional members to fill vacant seats

**HILLCREST** from page A1

event on Monday night at Hope and Olive in Greenfield. According to Playground Committee chair Julie Nolet, they raised \$1,300, a good start for their effort. Proceeds from their fundraising events will go into the school's community donation fund, flagged for the playground.

Nolet said the committee decided to begin the process by gathering input from the school community, and sent out surveys to parents and teachers to see what kind of equipment they would like to have

in a new playground. The teachers have also asked the students to offer their ideas, and have gathered drawings from the children of their "dream playground."

The survey asked questions that would reflect the overall use of the playground by the larger school community, such as: how often a household uses the playground; if they are satisfied with what's there; what they like best; what other local playgrounds they go to; and what they'd like to see in a new playground. It asked respondents

to rank specific things, like slides and monkey bars.

While the Playground Committee hasn't begun to consider what they might want to purchase, they plan to use the survey results as a starting point to guide their decisions. Their stated goal is to provide a safe and imaginative environment for these youngest students of the school district, one that will allow the children to develop their cognitive, social and emotional growth through play and exercise.



EILEEN BLANCHETTE PHOTO

NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Plugging the WRATS Holes

By JOSH HEINEMANN

At the Wendell selectboard's November 29 meeting, road commissioners Phil Delorey and Mike Gifford spoke at length about the WRATS (Wendell Recycling and Transfer Station), and the project to replace the Wendell Depot Road bridge that spans Whetstone Brook in Wendell Depot.

The WRATS income has covered only a third of its expenses, and the highway commission, which oversees its operation, hopes to tighten some holes through which money has been leaking. Their plan would make no fee changes, and try to keep the cost to residents shared fairly.

They would require that all refuse for the compactor be in official Wendell yellow bags. Delorey said that some people have used plastic bags much larger than the standard bag, and have paid only the standard fee. They would tighten the bulky waste fee system, which is based on a volume estimate made by one attendant or the other. They would hesitate to raise the fees too much and have the result of more dumping on the roadside.

Delorey said that people "get on" attendant Alex Lankowski for policies that are set by the highway commission, and not by Lankowski.

They mentioned sand in the sand and salt shed as available for residents, but in small amounts: a bucket or two for spot sanding at home or on the road. People have been seen filling trucks full.

The Wendell Depot Road bridge project has been delayed for several years. Although the present bridge is sound, it is a narrow restriction in a wider road, and both the selectboard and the highway commission consider it a hazard, an opinion supported by the fact that a plow truck once went over the side.

The Kentfield Road bridge over Whetstone Brook was replaced by

the state Department of Transportation for access to state land south of the crossing. Now, the DOT is calling the bridge maintenance a town responsibility. The 1988 annual town meeting discontinued Kentfield Road beyond that bridge, and only one house that is occupied year-round depends on it for access. There are several camps.

Three large wood beams support the bridge's span, but "a fast log truck" cracked one of those beams, and the weight limit is now three tons.

Stantec Engineering drew plans for the lower bridge over Whetstone Brook, on Wendell Depot Road in Wendell Depot. Those plans were approved by the DOT, but too late for bidding and construction in the summer of 2017.

The plans that the highway commission has now are stamped, "Not For Construction." After the DOT approval, the reason for that stamp is uncertain. One person commented, "It may be worth a conversation with town counsel."

The engineers who drew the plans are no longer with Stantec, and highway commissioners voted to find a new engineer to oversee construction. One local and friendly engineer has shown interest.

National Grid has estimated it will cost \$43,000 to move utility poles for the project. Wendell has saved Chapter 90 money for this bridge, but Chapter 90 money may not be used to move the poles. Selectboard member Geoffrey Pooser said he thought \$43,000 is a high price for Wendell taxpayers to raise for a project that the state pays for, in theory.

Verizon, not National Grid, now owns those poles, and Verizon's cost to move the poles may be different, but they require a \$1,000 retainer just to give an estimate.

Shared town administrator Nancy Aldrich suggested contacting senator Stan Rosenberg or representative

Susannah Whipps for help.

Gifford said that the town could use Chapter 90 money for something it is allowed to cover, and free up \$43,000 for the pole moving. Aldrich said it's possible, but a similar use of Chapter 90 money caused problems in New Salem.

Other Business

Board members signed, and encouraged citizens to write letters supporting House bills 3400 and 2698, which would have gas pipeline companies find and repair leaks, and require that shareholders, not ratepayers, pay for any new pipeline construction.

Board members delayed signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with WiredWest until after the broadband committee meets on December 5. Keller also said he wanted town counsel to look at the MOU. The selectboard will meet next on December 13, two days before WiredWest's signing deadline of December 15.

Board members signed a thank-you letter to Good Neighbors for the \$500 donation Good Neighbors gave the town in appreciation for use of the town hall. They also signed and sent a thank-you letter to the Friends of the Wendell Library for their \$5,800 donation to the library.

Clean Energy Collective bought the solar farm project on private land off Wendell Depot Road that Sunnectivity carried through the regulation process. Clean Energy agreed to the PILOT payments that Sunnectivity accepted.

Jerry Barilla, of the Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse, came in and looked at the draft RFP that the selectboard wrote to facilitate transfer of the meetinghouse from the town to the Friends. He had only minor comments, and said he planned to bring the draft RFP to the Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse membership.

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INSURANCE from page A1

CHCFC does employ one other certified Health Navigator, whose time is dedicated to a 20-year-old program helping migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the area navigate the healthcare system. That program has seen 275 people so far this year.

While some of the Center’s farm-worker support is focused on helping with insurance and Health Safety Net applications, it also includes walking people through the complicated steps of appointment scheduling and referrals, and addressing basic needs around housing, immigration, food, and transportation.

Danna Boughton, coordinator for the Community Action’s Community Resources and Advocacy Program, supervises three Certified Application Counselors – a position with less training and access than a Health Navigator, but still able to offer many of the same supports. These people are able to assist consumers with their open enrollment applications.

“When the person is with us, we can call a special phone line to get info from the Connector about the person’s case,” Boughton told us. Compared to previous years, “there is an increase in people calling,” she said. “A lot of them have been referred by the Community Health Center because they do not have a staff person there right now.”

Community Action, located in Greenfield, does not receive any funding that is specific to their work with health insurance. Rather, they have cobbled together the program by drawing on funding from a number of state and foundation sources.

Aria Sampson, a Certified Application Counselor at Baystate Franklin Medical Center’s financial counseling office, tells a similar story. “I can’t even tell you how many more people we are seeing this year. We are slammed. We are currently booking appointments into the second week of January,” she said.

Surprisingly, only about 20% of that traffic is actually about open enrollment; the rest are general issues

with MassHealth.

“People have stuff sitting there for months and then the system cuts them off and they come in,” Sampson explained, “They can’t get through to MassHealth themselves, because the call volume is so high, and then they come in to us and we do a call with them.”

“We are so busy with this we have to turn people away sometimes,” she said. “We try to spend a few minutes with them to see if it’s something quick, or if they have to come back.”

Advice for the Public

Boughton emphasized the importance of dispelling myths and communicating changes in this system this year, compared with recent years.

“We have heard people have been on Facebook sharing that open enrollment is ending in December, but in fact that is not true in Massachusetts,” she explained. “Open enrollment is going through January 23, because the state applied for a waiver to get it extended. Only a handful of states received this extension.” Even this year, however, the open enrollment period is shorter than it has been.

Boughton encourages consumers to look at letters the Connector is sending to make sure all their information is accurate. “Some people may not have anything to do this year, but everyone needs to review the information,” she said. “Some plans that were previously offered may not be offered anymore and they definitely want to look and see if there’s another plan they want to take. There’s often a suggested plan on the selector, but that might not be the best plan for you, so they should be active in their choices.”

People who pay premiums without subsidies are likely to see the most dramatic increases this year. In particular, according to Boughton, “those who make more than 400% of the poverty line might want to contact health insurance providers directly, rather than use the Connector.”

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Sampson offered similar thoughts, adding how important it is that consumers keep their address updated with MassHealth. If they do that, she said, “I think people will be aware of open enrollment. They’ve been inundated with letters. There will be a couple people who come in in February who didn’t update their address. But a lot of times we

don’t need to do anything, it’s just to reassure them that since nothing’s changed we’re all set.” “Honestly,” Sampson concluded, “people need to make sure they open their mail.”

Residents seeking support with their open enrollment applications can contact Community Action at

(413) 475-1570 or Franklin Baystate’s Certified Application Counselors at (413) 773-2849. The statewide non-profit Health Care for All offers a Help Line at (800) 272-4232. The state Health Connector can be accessed at www.mahealthconnector.org or 1-877-MA-ENROLL (1-877-623-6765).



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The Possums of Montague: A Police Log Retrospective

Compiled by EMILY ALLING Illustrations by NINA ROSSI

Wednesday, 11/6/13

5:05 p.m. Possible sick opossum in an Oakman Street back yard.

Monday, 12/23/13

12:52 a.m. Burglar alarm at Food City. Possum observed in area appeared to have tripped sensor. Possum encouraged to leave area.

Wednesday, 7/31/13

6:32 a.m. Sick possum reported walking in circles in the middle of Central Street.

Saturday, 2/15/14

5:20 p.m. Caller reporting an opossum in a small shelter he built for his outdoor cat; worried that opossum may be ill.

Tuesday, 3/11/14

4:10 p.m. Caller reports a possible sick opossum in his yard; has it trapped under a trash barrel.

Thursday, 6/26/14

10:13 p.m. Report of possibly rabid opossum on East Chestnut Hill Road.

Sunday, 9/14/14

10:12 a.m. Caller re-



with an opossum that has been in her house for 2 or 3 days. Caller saw the opossum the other day; is not sure exactly where it is now.

Wednesday, 10/15/14

4:40 p.m. Report of a sick-looking opossum in a driveway on Warner Street.

Thursday, 11/20/14

7:25 p.m. Calls from tenant and landlord reporting an opossum in a Fourth Street apartment.

Thursday, 2/19/15

8:49 a.m. Caller from Gill requesting assistance with an opossum that she says is frozen to the side of their building.

Friday, 3/6/15

1 p.m. Caller requesting assistance with a deceased animal next to the dumpster behind her building. Caller does not know what kind of animal it is; just that it is not a skunk, raccoon, or opossum. Responding officer advises that it is an opossum. Removal will be a landlord issue.

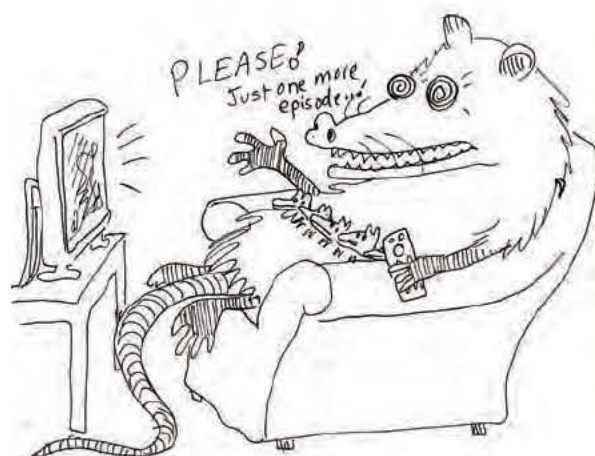
Thursday, 5/14/15

9:21 a.m. Worcester Avenue resident reports that while placing some trash into a barrel, she was bitten by an unknown animal that was still in the barrel. Caller placed the top back on the barrel, and believes the animal is still inside. The bite did break the skin. Animal control officer advised and en route. Animal found to be an opossum; it was euthanized, and delivered to a vet to be sent for testing.

Monday, 8/3/15

2:24 p.m. Caller from Street reports an opossum stuck in her trash can. The opossum

POSSUM page B4



MARY AZARIAN WOODBLOCK PRINT

By LESLIE BROWN

MONTAGUE CITY – COMPROMISE: something intermediate between, or blending qualities of, two different things. (*Merriam-Webster*)

Compromise is an intrinsic element in successful interpersonal relations.

Without compromise, little is achieved in the arena of government. President Obama once said, “No party has a monopoly on wisdom. No democracy works without compromise.”

Willingness to meet in the middle does not dilute the merit of another’s opinion nor of one’s own. Compromise does not mean sacrificing one’s beliefs; it simply means being open to discussion, and willing to concede on the details, while retaining a grip on the principles at hand. The history of international agreements illustrates the important role of compromise in achieving many resolutions.

Speaking to the 2016 commencement class at Howard Uni-

THE GARDENER’S COMPANION

The Value of Compromise

versity, Obama also said, “Change requires more than righteous anger. It requires a program and it requires organizing... If you think that the only way forward is to be as uncompromising as possible, you will feel good about yourself, you will enjoy a certain moral purity, but you’re not going to get what you want.”

Our Constitution was written to create the opposite of the ruling system the Puritans chose to escape. The system of checks and balances relies on a foundation based in compromise.

Some pundits have described Obama’s reliance on compromise to be his fatal flaw, and claimed that compromise led to the loss of any chance to move forward. Yet our current leader is a confirmed autocrat, and we continue to stalemate nationally and aggravate in the international arena. Little progress there.

Not only are we no longer open to compromise; we have completely withdrawn from participation in such critical conversations as those about the increasing pollution of our atmosphere.

Think of how often, even in our own personal lives, the willingness to listen to another’s point of view

see GARDENER’S page B3

A Honda Fit for a King

By NINA ROSSI

TURNERS FALLS – Alexis Petroff met me in a Fourth Street parking lot to show off his stealth camper, “Esmerelda.” To all outward appearances, the 2012 Honda Fit was a generic silver hatchback with Illinois plates. Peeking in the windows, it looked like the rear seats were folded flat, and there were no personal belongings visible.

“I live in Chicago, so when you look inside, there is nothing to steal. It is important that you don’t see anything of value. People will break into your car to get it, even if it is a quarter on the dash,” explained Alexis, who recently purchased this car so that he could travel and visit friends and family in his retirement. “This is my stealth camper, where everything is In, and not Out.”

Bicycle and public transportation were his usual means of travel in the city, and a certain frugality and conservation marks his living habits in general. An artist who works in gouache, organza silk, paper and wire to make three dimensional drawings – layered wall pieces that are like prints that have separated into discrete elements – he recently retired from working in the Art Institute of Chicago’s library system. Turners Falls was a destination for him because his stepsister lives here.



Petroff detaches a portion of the Honda’s custom made wooden sleeping platform to show off the T-bar brace he fabricated to stabilize and strengthen it.



With the front seats pulled up, he can fully stretch out on a three-piece mattress in the back of the car, with room to spare.



Alexis Petroff points out the rain guards he installed on the windows of his 2012 Honda Fit.

Alexis gestured to the rain guards over the windows. “The car is round, and if it rains it will come in the window. With these guards, I can get good cross ventilation and the rain will not come in.” He pulled out a “no-see-ums” window sock from some hidden crevice and slipped it over the top of the door while it was open, and then closed it. Sewn from fine mesh, the screening would be held down with magnets along the bottom edge for fair weather camping. According to Alexis, Esmerelda “is made for spring, winter and fall camping, not summer camping. If the weather is over 75 degrees, it is a little Dutch oven in here!”

Alexis moved to the rear of the car and opened the hatch. “Here you see the platform. This is in travel mode. In sleep mode, you bring the seats forward, and deploy the head rest.”

He had to remove the rear seats entirely to construct this sleeping and storage unit out of half inch plywood. It was covered with a heavy duty grey fabric that matches the rest of the interior exactly, and looked like part of the car. Compartments were created with piano hinges, and the headrest was an extra eight inch flap that can be “deployed” – Alexis uses this word a lot when talking about the car – when the front seats are pulled forward.

Mattress pieces were made from an Ikea bed topper made of wool and latex that he bought on Craigslist for \$25, then cut in three sections and slip covered. He is a sewing expert, and sings the praises of his vintage Singer Featherweight machine.

“Under the forward hatches you have my zero-degree Marmot ‘Never Summer’ sleeping bag, two chairs, see FIT page B4

BOOK REVIEW

The Secret of Sooty Wick Inn, by Elizabeth Lindgren (Haley’s Press, 2017)

By CANDACE CURRAN

ORANGE – *The Secret of Sooty Wick Inn* raises a lot of questions. Number one is, this reviewer is friends with the author, so will the reader trust her to be partial and professional?

I hope so, and maybe I can add some intriguing insider information! Such as: this author is a naturalist, a wood nymph of sorts. On a walk, Elizabeth will point out plants, trees, birds, and identify them by name – the old ones. She knows the Quabbin gates and its forests like a sister; smells the deer before you see them.

She is pretty much the same as Beetle, her eleven-year-old main character, although chronologically much older. Lindgren is also very shy, reluctant to join in social media, a bit of a recluse and barely on the grid. So we may wonder how can an author sell a book if they can’t do public appearances and book signings and promote themselves?

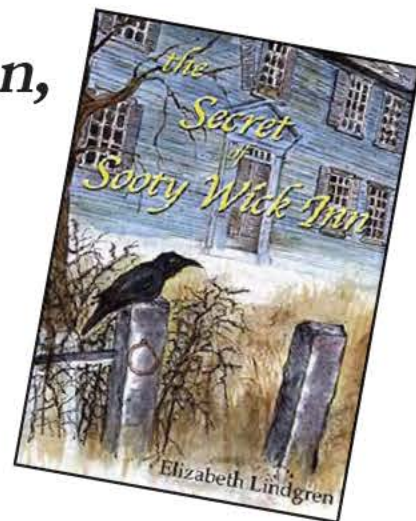
I hope to spread the word because

this book, ten years in the writing, is a treasure, and there’s two more in the trilogy patiently hiding out.

It’s a pleasure discovering what the secret of Sooty Wick Inn is, along with Beetle, who has been dropped off for a week-long Thanksgiving break from boarding school while her scientist parents are on expedition in the Amazon working to save an endangered spider. The inn keeper, Murtha, is a dear old friend of Beetle’s mother. She is also a hunting guide and leads small groups of men through the winter woods of Maine and feeds them well.

While the book is a great old-fashioned story of rural farm life, it has a surprising tension and magical element that threads itself through the book. It’s hard to put down, and stays with you. Lindgren’s illustrations are charming, capturing the deer, goats, and townspeople, capturing the “Boys on the Highway Department” to a tee on page 127.

The characters are alive. The animals, too, such as the devilish cat Jezebel that Beetle is forced to



share a room with. There is a great deal of humor and goodness inside. I really recommend it for fifth grade through the senior home.

The Secret of Sooty Wick Inn can be found at the North Quabbin Coop, the Petersham Country Store, the Petersham Craft Center, the New Salem Country Store, Boswell’s Books, Amazon, many local libraries, and at Lindgren’s farmhouse in Orange, where she is a farmer, an artist and a writer. A display of her dragons and other work is at the Wendell Library through the month of December.

Despite the author being mostly off-grid, you can visit the Sooty Wick Inn at facebook.com/beetlebeane, and her blog at sootywick.blogspot.com.

Pet of the Week

June Bug? More like Cuddle Bug! I will greet you at the door and rub on your legs until you pet me. Then I'll fall over (quite dramatically), show you my cute white belly, and "make biscuits" with my paws as you continue to pat me. If you stop, I'll get back up and head-butt you until you realize the

error of your ways! If you're looking for a super snugly affectionate cat, I'm your gal! Come on in and meet me! Contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at (413) 548-9898 or at info@dpvhs.org.



“JUNE BUG”

Senior Center Activities DECEMBER 11 to 16

GILL and MONTAGUE
The Gill Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. Congregate meals are served Tuesday through Thursday at Noon.
Meal reservations must be made one day in advance by 11:00 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. Kitchen Manager is Jeff Suprenant. 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.
Tues–Thurs Noon Lunch
M, W, F 10:10 a.m. Aerobics
10:50 a.m. Chair Exercise
Monday: 12/11
8 a.m. Foot Clinic appts.
1 p.m. Cookies & Carols
Tuesday: 12/12
9:30 a.m. Tech Help appts.
10:15 a.m. Chair Yoga
Wednesday: 12/13
9 a.m. Veterans’ Outreach
12:30 p.m. Bingo
Thursday: 12/14
9 a.m. Tai Chi
10:15 a.m. Chair Yoga
1 p.m. Cards & Games
Friday: 12/15
1 p.m. Writing Group

LEVERETT
For information, contact the Leverett COA at (413) 548-1022, ext. 5, or coa@leverett.ma.us.
Flexibility and Balance Chair Yoga – Wednesdays at 10 a.m. at the Town Hall. Drop-in \$6 (first class free).

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

ERVING
Erving Senior Center, 1 Care Drive, Erving, is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. for activities and congregate meals.
Lunch is at 11:30 a.m., with reservations required 2 days in advance. Call (413)-423-3649 for meal information and reservations.
For information, call Paula Batters, Senior Center Director, at (413) 423-3649. Transportation can be provided for meals, shopping, or medical necessity.
Call to confirm activities, schedule a ride, or find out about the next blood pressure clinic.
Monday: 12/11
9:30 a.m. Healthy Bones Balance
10:30 a.m. Tai Chi
NO Lunch
Tuesday: 12/12
8:45 a.m. Chair Aerobics
10 a.m. Stretching & Balance
Wednesday: 12/13
8:45 a.m. Line Dancing
10 a.m. Chair Yoga
12:15 p.m. Bingo, Snacks, Laughs
Thursday: 12/14
8:45 a.m. Aerobics
10 a.m. Healthy Bones
Friday: 12/15
9 a.m. Quilting Workshop
9:30 a.m. Fun Bowling
11:15 Music, Magic, Movement

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.



At the Shea Theater: “Communion” The Theme of Vaudeville Spectacular

From combined sources.

TURNERS FALLS – An exciting New Vaudeville Holiday Spectacular will be presented at the Shea Theatre on December 15 and 16 at 7:30 p.m. Hosted by drag artist Joe Dulude II, with movement artist Katherine Adler, the show features performers of all kinds who create upon the theme of “communion.” Linda McInerney, artistic director of Eggtooth Productions and producer of the event, explains, “Our intention is to create a holiday event that gives families and folks a chance to be together in communion and in celebration of the creative spirit of the talented artists in our valley. We have invited some of the finest performers in the region to try out their new ideas on stage, all wrapped around the idea of connection with one another in a heartfelt way.”
“And so many forms are presented: musical theater, dance, comedy, folk opera, devised theater, movement art – so many different and exciting gifts. This way you and your loved ones may share an experience of something new that is still tenderhearted. I think it’s what we all are looking for, particularly at this time of year.”
Some of the highlights include:
Excerpts from *Savage*, a new musical in development. *Savage* is based on the true story of Wanda Savage, a Native American sharpshooter who rose out of Oklahoma poverty to perform in circuses and vaudeville before taking on Hollywood as a stunt woman and actress in silent films. With Nicolette Blount (producer, writer, composer),



Joe Dulude II, one of the hosts of the New Vaudeville Spectacular at the Shea Theater on December 15 and 16.

John Waynelovich (musical director, composer, arranger) and Lindel Hart (writer, editor).
Also coming to the stage are The Ballet Belles, Myah Grant and Madalyn Lilly, performing three excerpts from *La Boutique Fantasque* – the Overture, Tarantella, and Waltz – using the Rossini-Respighi score. The two young dancers take on the role of dolls who come to life when the shop is closed. The Ballet Belles are directed, and work choreographed, by Karen Shulda, retired artistic director at Ballet Renverse.
“The Water Project Folk Opera” is Emma Ayres’ reimagining of her original play, *The Water Project*, set in the Swift River Valley during the year 1938, when four towns were flooded, 2,500 people relocated, houses moved on the backs of trucks, 7,500 graves dug up and reburied on higher ground, and “memories drowned and the water... keeps rising” to make the Quabbin Reservoir.
Alex DeMelo performs *The Concluding Speech of The Great Dicta-*

tor with Violet Walker on the saw. (Walker, clown extraordinaire, does some solos on her saw as well.)
There will even be standup comedy with Ellen Villani, who says, “So I gave up Holy Communion for Lent about 18 years ago and it stuck! I figured none of us is truly worthy anyway. In place of that I’ve become communion. I’m communing all over the place. I’ve got full blown relationships with grocery clerks, gas station attendants, and anyone elderly!”
Jack Golden rolls out with a movement performance, *13 Ways To Be A Black Dog*. Just back from a successful run at the Charm City Fringe Festival in Baltimore, Jack received this review of his piece: “It’s refreshing to see a work based on the real life of the performer that refuses to shy away from the vulnerability attendant to such an endeavor. Rather than covering any discomfort with sarcasm, cynicism, or any of the other shields we use when we feel exposed. Golden goes with the truth. He admits the unscripted, improvisational component of the show scares him; he owns his feelings about family and loss.”
There will be other performances by Jeremy Geragotelis, doing *John Berryman Reads My Poems, Feat. A Bottle of Whiskey*, and Phoebe Lord and Michayla Robertson Pine, offering an original theater piece with music called *The Blue Room*. Maureen McElligott sings, and John Lentz sings jazz stories accompanied by Michael Suter on double bass.
Tickets may be purchased online: sheatheater.org or eggtooth.org. Children under 15 are free.


LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was December 6, 2007: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive
A Tour Of Strathmore Mill
Walking through the Strathmore Mill is a bit like walking through an abandoned mine: dark and dripping with ice, with soot lining the buckling floors and walls, light coming in from distant openings and shafts, broken equipment, massive beams lying around where the last scavenging owner dropped them, doors jammed shut, stripped wiring, rusted radiators, rot, decay, broken glass, graffiti everywhere, and gaping holes in the floors.
And those are the floors that weren’t damaged by the fire.
Get up to the attic of Building #1 to look out through the burnt-out roofing timbers to the derelict Building #11, standing alone now by the canal, with broken windows and partially destroyed roof, and a frozen mound of rubble between, where Building #10 once stood,

and you begin to get a sense of the scale of destruction left behind by the arsonist who struck the 136-year-old mill in the early morning of May 26.
Report On G-M School Problems
On November 19, the Massachusetts Department of Education released its final report on the Gill-Montague Regional School District’s “District Leadership Evaluation,” following a visit to the district by a team of independent evaluators in October. The team conducted interviews with GMRSD teachers and administrators, community stakeholders, and the selectboards, along with the finance committee chairs of the towns of Gill and Montague.
The Department of Education placed the G-M Regional School District on their “underperforming” list on June 26, 2007, due to a perceived lack of leadership within the district, and a lack of financial resources to meet educational goals.
In their findings, the DOE evalu-

ators report that the G-M schools have experienced a 29% decline in enrollment over the past ten years, from 1,598 students in 1998 to the current 1,142.
The report notes the scarcity of academic coaches, and the perception among teachers that “None of the schools has full-time leadership, and the district lacks full-time curricular and instructional support for the elementary grades. Having part-time principals negatively affects relationship building, information sharing, and communication.”
Later on, the report criticizes the decision to keep Gill 6th graders at Gill Elementary rather than move them to Great Falls Middle School. The report also faults the school committee for failing to provide “sufficient leadership to enable the district to make academic progress. The committee’s inability to effectively address and resolve issues related to grade configuration and elementary school building closings impedes the district’s progress and undermines public support.”

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GARDENER’S from page B1 and try to reach some common ground is critical to maintaining ongoing relationships. If years of working with teenagers taught me anything, it was the value of respectful listening to their opinions. We did not have to agree, but mutual respect was expressed and often led to willingness on their part to hear another point of view.

Even at home in the life of the garden, compromise is necessary. We grew such a wonderful crop of early and midseason fruit. When, overnight, we lost every huge green beefsteak variety, imagine our considerable disappointment.

One choice would be to ban any further growing of this chancy fruit on our garden grounds. But even in mid-winter I am pining for the tangy taste of a vine-ripened, sun-warmed tomato on my tongue. Choosing not to grow them again is just not an option.

With the growing global warming we can expect with certainty more of the humid, hot weather which breeds fungal diseases. We

will continue to grow tomatoes, but will more carefully rotate the space in which they grow.

We will plant more cherry and midseason varieties, which ripen before the onslaught of airborne fungi. Where we do plant those gorgeous beefsteak heirlooms, we will try some of the recommended organic preventative treatments.

Water plants early in the day, and plant them with more space between cages to allow for improved drying and better air flow. Add half a cup of powdered milk and one tablespoon of baking soda to each planting hole. Side-dress plants with crushed egg shells.

As a gardener, I am adamant about continuing to grow my favorite crop, but I am very willing to try new methods and options in working with nature and whatever it brings.

Maybe I’m beginning to lose it with age, but I’m also willing to give garden space to my partner to grow crops I’m not particularly fond of. Soft-headed compromise indeed!

Happy gardening!



MONTAGUE COMMUNITY TELEVISION NEWS

This Week on MCTV

By ABIGAIL TATARIAN

It’s here at last! The 2017 Great Falls Festival can be viewed on our TV channel, or at *MontagueTV.org*. Join us again for a night of pumpkins, music, art & more!

Fear not about the end of fall, though, there are plenty of fun December activities coming your way. Maybe you’d like to bring some local events to Montague TV – your public access channel – and film the

festivities yourself! Find a list of things to do near you on *Turners-FallsRiverCulture.org*.

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

Contact us at (413) 863-9200, *infomontaguetv@gmail.com*, or stop by 34 Second Street in Turners between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Mondays through Fridays. We’d love to work with you!

MOVIE REVIEW

Thor: Ragnarok (2017)



By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – I saw Marvel’s first *Thor* movie with Chris Hemsworth in it. I thought it was alright. I didn’t see the second *Thor* movie, but I know enough about it to say that they have done an accurate portrayal of Loki as the trickster god that he is in Norse mythology.

Given my knowledge of the first two *Thor* movies, I decided to go see the third one, called *Thor: Ragnarok*.

First thing I will say is that Stan Lee, creator of many of the Marvel comics you know, continued his tra-

dition of doing a cameo in his films.

Another thing is that you will see the Hulk/Bruce Banner in the movie alongside Thor. The Hulk speaks far better than that character has in previous Marvel films. If people have seen a preview or two of the movie, they will already know that the Hulk is in the film before seeing it.

Loki is in there again, too. There is a new character which is a Valkyrie, which Thor encounters. Valkyries are also part of Norse mythology, so a Valkyrie in a *Thor* film fits very well.

Also, let me just say, Thor doesn’t need his hammer: he’s really the god of thunder.

The whole film had an offbeat tone that I liked. The plot was not predictable, which I think was an improvement in comparison with the other two *Thor* films. They didn’t have Loki be true to his character and pull one last trick in the film. His character went in a different direction this time.

This offbeat tone carried my attention nicely from the beginning of the film till the end. I also now believe the film sets up things nicely for the *Avengers: Infinity War* film that is coming to theaters.

The film wasn’t boring. I enjoyed it. There was a lot of humor in this one, and I believe that helped me enjoy the movie. I don’t regret going to see the film. People who go to see it probably could end up feeling the same way I did.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Grenade Scare; Dog Custody; Paintball Drive-By; Males “Posturing”; Petty Vandalism; Icy Roads

Monday, 11/27

10:31 a.m. Alarm at Hubie’s Tavern. Officer advises that bar manager had set off alarm and left due to smell of gas in building. TFFD and Berkshire Gas en route.

3:22 p.m. Walk-in party reporting that someone shot a BB through one of the windows in his apartment building on Montague City Road about a month ago. Report taken.

4:15 p.m. Caller states that he can see two people inside the Strathmore/Indeck building smashing out third-floor windows with a stick. Building searched; no one found inside.

5:39 p.m. Caller states that a male who was refused purchase of alcohol at Food City because he was very intoxicated has left and is now operating a vehicle. Vehicle located parked outside subject’s home. Investigated.

6:39 p.m. Officer approached by party reporting that someone stole a package of food that was delivered this morning from his doorstep. Report taken.

7:44 p.m. Report of hit and run accident at Canal and Third streets. Female driver of pickup truck took off towards Greenfield. Caller not injured. Greenfield PD alerted to be on lookout.

Tuesday, 11/28

6:55 a.m. Caller reports that a ladder and other items were stolen from her yard on Turners Falls Road overnight. Items were out for sale and were possibly mistaken for free items. Advised of options.

1:28 p.m. Officer shut down a Payne Gang crew working without a detail officer on Lake Pleasant Road.

5:13 p.m. Caller states that some neighbors yelled and charged at her over a parking issue on Third Street.

5:20 p.m. Report of a broken-down bus blocking traffic at Seventh Street and Avenue A.

5:34 p.m. 911 caller from K Street reporting heavy smoke from stove. TFFD and MPD en route. PD clearing; FD taking care of the stove problem.

11:01 p.m. Report of mother bear and two cubs in Dell Street area. Caller is concerned that bears seem to be attracting cars in area. Unable to locate.

Wednesday, 11/29

6:04 a.m. Officer advises of icy conditions at bottom of Unity Hill. DPW advised over radio; fleet of sanders is going out.

4:07 p.m. Caller states that she and her ex have broken up and they are having a custody issue over the dog. Advised of options.

6:30 p.m. Walk-in reporting that his boat was vandalized in Colrain. Officer advised party about proper steps. Number for Shelburne provided.

Thursday, 11/30

4:04 a.m. Caller from Linda Lane reports that his truck’s windshield has been smashed. Report taken.

8:29 a.m. Caller from Crocker Avenue states that someone smashed one of his car windows overnight. Report taken.

8:31 a.m. Caller from Hillside Road states that someone vandalized their mailbox overnight. Investigated.

10:32 a.m. Caller from Montague Village Store states that two vehicles got into a fender bender out behind the store. Caller is concerned that they may try to blame the store. Minor damage to both vehicles. Report taken.

12:23 p.m. 911 caller from Montague City Road reporting possible rabid fox in area. Animal control officer notified and responding.

8:42 p.m. Caller from airport states that a silver car drove past him and shot his truck with paintballs. Caller had moved along and is in Greenfield; does not believe there was extensive damage to vehicle; will try to clean off paint while it is wet. Area checked; unable to locate.

Friday, 12/1

10:47 a.m. Party from J Street calling on behalf of his mother to report vandalism to her vehicle. Report taken.

12:46 p.m. Caller from Hillside Road reports that her mailbox was vandalized overnight. Officer advises that incident is similar to other recent incidents in area. Report taken.

1:12 p.m. Caller from West Mineral Road requesting assistance with hunters trespassing on his property. Caller’s daughter was riding a horse on the property and was almost thrown from the horse when it was frightened by gunshots. Environmental Police dispatch contacted; they will have a unit responding. Area checked; unable to locate.

1:58 p.m. [redacted] was arrested on a default warrant.

3 p.m. Caller from Hillside Road reporting vandalism to mailbox. Report taken.

4:58 p.m. Caller from Avenue A reports being punched in the face by two females, who are believed to be outside the building. Medical attention declined. Dispatch remained on line with caller until officers arrived. Report taken.

6:17 p.m. Caller from Depot Street reports finding what appears to be a World War I or World War II grenade in her residence. Item found in a drawer that is built into a closet in the dining room under a staircase. PD, TFFD, and Massachusetts State Police notified; MSP prepared to activate bomb squad if necessary. Officer advises grenade appears to potentially be legitimate. Pin is still in device. TFFD on scene. MSP advised and will be sending a representative. Officer retrieved serial/model numbers from item. Depot Street closed. MedCare advised. MSP on scene. Item determined not to be a real grenade. Depot Street reopened.

8:55 p.m. Caller from Third Street requesting police assistance re: an ongoing parking issue. Verbal disturbance in progress at time of call. Line disconnected. Situation mediated for now. Parties advised of options.

10:06 p.m. Caller reports being the victim in an altercation a short time ago in the alley next to the Pizza House. Caller recognized

three out of four subjects, who were last seen leaving area in a truck. Units will be on lookout. No damage to caller’s vehicle observed; scuff mark was observed in area where caller states one of the subjects punched his window. Caller proceeded to pursue suspects’ vehicle and call with updates. Caller advised not to follow or pursue vehicle. Advised of options.

Saturday, 12/2

12:42 a.m. Greenfield PD requesting MPD K9 unit for search of car at Silver and Conway streets. Officer advised and en route.

3:16 a.m. Caller reporting threats and harassment over past month, most recently yesterday afternoon. Caller was harassed by two males while he was attempting to leave for work. Males were “posturing” and indicated with gestures that they may have a weapon. No weapon was seen. Caller concerned that this could escalate. Advised of options.

3:17 p.m. Caller from Second Street inquiring if it is illegal to dispose of a dead squirrel in a dumpster. Advised of options.

5:51 p.m. Caller states that while walking from his residence to Food City, a group of four to six teenagers started harassing him near Fifth and T streets and told him they’d be waiting for him when he returned. Advised of options.

9 p.m. Walk-in parties reporting fight on Fourth Street. Neither party wanted any action taken; requesting to have incident on record only. Advised of options.

Sunday, 12/3

9:14 a.m. Caller from Hillside Road reports that part of her holiday light display was stolen overnight. Caller very upset that someone would take holiday decorations. Item stolen was described as a multi-colored spotlight worth approximately \$20. Advised of options.

MONTAGUE CRYPTOJAM !!!

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FIT from page B1

a tent, a table, binoculars, a tripod, a kitchen setup, a toolbox, and my personal belongings,” he said. The wooden supports for the platform slide together with T-bars that he put together using his favorite Tite-bond II glue. There are very few screws in the whole thing, and he was able to do this conversion for less than \$200.

“I am 5’5” and this platform is 5’6”. I can lay down all the way, and be comfortable. If I have a short partner it is possible to sleep two in here, although you have to be intimate and scrunchy.” In some places, it is not legal to sleep in

your car. Alexis described his process for those situations: go to the gas station to clean up and fold the seats and take out the mattresses. Return to the scene of the crime, and deploy the black-out curtains which surround the sleeping area completely. Do not even look at your phone, he advises: no light must be visible.

He carries a tiny level in order to find the best place to park the car, as well.

However, if you do know the people around you and it is permissible to camp in the car, there is the “decorative set.” Alexis unfurled a series of curtains strung on para-

chute cord and affixed them to tiny hooks above the windows. “Once you install the curtains, it becomes a neat little space,” he said, “a tiny room. Because I am so small, I can almost sit upright and do some stuff seated.” Each curtain had a unique colorful design printed on it by Alexis. “You can be naked in here. I have little clips to hold the curtains together for privacy.”

So far, Alexis has done more tent camping than car camping, though. And even when it wasn’t too hot to camp in the car, some relatives insisted on him staying inside.

Only once has he “deployed” Esmerelda in her role as stealth camper: “The first time I did this, was about a week ago in a rest area in Pennsylvania, and I made myself a beautiful cup of coffee in the morning, with some creamers and sugar that I stole.” He showed me a short video on his phone of boiling water on his little alcohol stove, with tractor trailers in the background.

If you are interested in camping in your own car, there are helpful videos on YouTube about constructing these kinds of platforms inside of small vehicles for very little money. Alexis has put his own spin on Esmerelda’s conversion.

In learning about Alexis Petroff’s car, I opened a Pandora’s box revealing his (mostly) under-the-radar art career, and was amazed by the many projects he described and showed me pictures of – including the inside story on some spectacular “fails,” such as the 5,000 Millennium Park photo flipbooks he had printed with a serious typo, and which weighed too much to store in his apartment, and most of which he ended up throwing away.

His apartment currently holds five 7½ foot wide constructions and some forty smaller pieces, all of very light weight materials such as silk, paper, and wire. Of course, he has designed and built unique storage solutions to hold these.

He has been reviewed in *Art in America* magazine, but is not represented by any gallery. Thanks to the magazine review, he secured a solo exhibit at Swarthmore College earlier in the year. To see his art, visit alexispetroff.com.



Petroff removes his sleeping bag from a storage compartment in the Honda. In warm weather, he uses a tent, also stored under the platform. Other batches include kitchen supplies, a table and chair, a camera tripod, and other useful items for life on the road.



Petroff shows the privacy curtains that he designed and made, including the silk screened graphics.

Opossum are Beneficial Visitors

By REPORTER STAFF

FRANKLIN COUNTY – Are opossum dangerous? Why do folks freak out when they see one?

According to the Opossum Society of the United States, it is extremely rare for an opossum to get rabies – perhaps due to their very low body temperature, which makes it difficult for the virus to survive.

Some folks will assume that an opossum seen in the daytime is sick, because they are known to be nocturnal creatures. However, there are many reasons they may be seen in daytime: their nest may have been disturbed; they may need extra foraging time, particularly in winter; snow cover makes it difficult to find food; and finally, they may be ill or blind.

These creatures are basically solitary, and move from place to place every two or three days. They will set up an elaborate nest in a secluded area, but move on fairly quickly. So if you see an opossum in your yard, it has not settled for long, and you

can just wait for it to move along.

While the opossum visits, it is performing its role as a pest eliminator, eating snails, slugs, mice, rats, cockroaches, and other undesirable. According to the Cary Institute of Ecosystem studies, “opossums are the unsung heroes of the Lyme Disease epidemic,” “hoovering up ticks right and left” while not serving as carriers for the disease.

They will tolerate cats, and may sometimes be seen sharing a food dish with one. However, dogs will attack opossum, or at the very least bark at them and get all excited. An opossum may snap in self-defense but is more likely to play dead and lie motionless for up to four hours, during which time they release a putrid odor from their anal glands to keep predators away. Their body will be stiff, and their lips curled back from their teeth, and will not respond to poking, lifting, or carrying.

It is an involuntary response. Opossums have often been thought of as stupid for doing this.

The opossum is very opportu-

nistic, and will seek garbage to eat and foundation holes and such to camp in. Get rid of outside food sources, seal all openings, and cut back brush if you object to these visitations. However, they are beneficial to the urban environment by keeping pests under control.

If you have a dog and would still like to receive opossum visitors, it would be good to keep your dog contained at night and leashed when outside. Providing a drainage pipe about 8 inches wide and five or six feet long on the ground somewhere will allow the opossum to escape the dog.

Opossum are not rodents. They are the only North American marsupial, meaning they keep their young in a pouch on the female’s belly to mature. The most common opossum species in this country usually have thirteen nipples – arranged in a circle, with one in the center to feed the young inside the pouch.

They have the most teeth of any mammal native to North America, fifty of them, and live only about



OPOSSUM from page B1

is still alive; she just doesn’t know what to do with it. Contacted animal control officer, who advised that caller can just tip over the trash can so the opossum can get out, and it should run away. These animals do not carry rabies, so that need not be a concern. Caller remained concerned about letting it go in the street, but was reassured that the animal would probably be scared of people and run away.

Sunday, 8/9/15

1:09 p.m. Caller reports that her grandchildren were out playing and said that they saw one of their neighbors capture and kill an opossum. Officer, upon speaking with all parties, advises that the children admitted to making up the story after being spoken to about poking the opossum, who was caught to be relocated at a later time, with sticks.

Monday, 5/23/16

1:40 p.m. Caller inquiring who to contact to dispose of a dead opossum on the tree belt line near his apartment.

Friday, 9/2/16

9:10 a.m. Report of two dead animals, raccoon and opossum, in Montague City Road; vehicles swerving into oncoming traffic to avoid them.

Tuesday, 9/13/16

9:12 p.m. Report of injured opossum in road creating a hazard in vicinity of water treatment plant.

Thursday, 9/22/16

2:35 p.m. DPW responded to Stevens Street to dispose of a deceased opossum, per citizen request. Upon DPW arrival, animal was deter-

mined to still be alive, just not moving. Request PD [redacted]. Officer responded. [Redacted.]

Saturday, 9/24/16

1:51 p.m. ACO notified about an opossum that is hanging around Third Street.

Sunday, 10/30/16

5:58 p.m. Off-duty officer calling in for an injured opossum in his yard that may need to be put down.

Friday, 4/14/17

2:47 p.m. Report of opossum on sidewalk on Gill side of Gill-Montague Bridge. Caller expressing concern that opossum might be stuck.

Monday, 5/22/17

7:16 a.m. Caller reporting opossum walking around in circles in middle of X Street. Animal dispatched; officer will stand by with it until DPW can come up and grab it.

Monday, 6/5/17

6:25 p.m. ACO reporting that there is an opossum in a yard on Avenue B; possum appears to be suffering and has no use of its legs. Officer attempting to locate to have it put down. Taken care of.

Thursday, 7/20/17

11:35 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street states that he has one opossum in his basement; requesting animal control officer remove it.

Tuesday, 8/8/17

12:41 a.m. Caller from Fifth Street states that there is a possum on her porch.

Tuesday, 9/19/17

10:05 a.m. Officer flagged down on Third Street by a concerned citizen who is reporting a dead opossum on the sidewalk.

Tuesday, 10/10/17

4:22 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street requesting that an officer check on an opossum that has been hiding in the bushes and darting after people that walk by.



two years, on average, although some may survive until four.

Their feet have an opposable thumb that helps them climb. Their claws are very delicate; if you have holes in your yard, they are not the culprit, although they may use them for shelter.

They also have a long, hairless tail that can be used to carry a bunch of grass or twigs to build a nest, like a fifth limb. Young opossum sometimes hang from their tails when they are playing around, but an adult is too heavy to do this.

Like other marsupials, the males have a forked penis, and the females have a bifurcated vagina. They have another unusual reproductive trait not shared by other marsupials like kangaroos and koala bears: the sperm will pair up inside the male, and will remain paired until just before fertilization inside the female. No one knows exactly why this is, but it may improve mobility of the sperm.

Opossum were more prized as a food source in past times, particularly in southern regions. Their flesh is typically smoked and stewed, after the musk glands are removed. The fur has also been valued by hunters. Their fat is high in essential oils, and has been used for salves for arthritis and as a chest rub.

If you absolutely must remove an opossum from your yard, contact the local animal control officer or wildlife rehabilitation specialist. If one is in your house, you may lure it outside with a trail of pet food, or trap it by leaning a trashcan on some books and placing food in the bottom of the can, and then releasing it outside.

Visit the opossumsocietyus.org website for more details and advice. Most of the information for this article came from there, Wikipedia, and mammalsrus.com.



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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

ONGOING EVENTS:

EVERY SUNDAY

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

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

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

FIRST SUNDAY MONTHLY

Green Fields Market, Greenfield: *Co-op Straight-Ahead Jazz*. Balcony. Afternoons.

EVERY MONDAY

Greenfield Harmony Spring Session. No auditions. 6:45 p.m. Contact mcbass@vermontel.net for location and details.

2ND AND 4TH MONDAYS

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Scotty K's Open Mic*. 8 p.m.

EVERY TUESDAY

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

EVERY WEDNESDAY

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

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Tales and Tunes Story Hour*. Ages 0 to 5 and caregivers. 10:30 a.m.

1ST AND 3RD WEDNESDAYS

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

EVERY THURSDAY

Millers Falls Branch Library, Montague: *Music and Movement with Tom Carroll & Laurie Davidson*. Children and their caregivers. 10 to 10:45 a.m.

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

FIRST THURSDAYS

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

EVERY THIRD THURSDAY

Tilton Library, S. Deerfield: *Book Discussion*. 6:30 p.m.

EVERY FRIDAY

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

EVERY THIRD FRIDAY

Free Arms Library, Shelburne Falls: *Open Prose and Poetry Reading*. Arrive early to sign up for 5 to 10 minute slots. 7 p.m.

Element Brewing Company, Millers Falls: *Brule's Irish Band*. 6 p.m.

EVERY FOURTH FRIDAY

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

EXHIBITS:

Artspace Art Center, Greenfield: *Sensorium*. Local artists affiliated with GCC. Reception Friday, December 1, 5 p.m. Through December 20.

Greenfield Gallery, Greenfield: *Paintings by Paul Hoffman*. Whimsical worlds, intricate geometries. Through December.



Anne Patterson and Peter Blood's Two of a Kind delights audiences of all ages with their music, good humor and audience participation. An award-winning husband-wife duo, Two of a Kind's concerts for families and children of all ages include songs, puppets, movement and stories – all with an emphasis on interaction and participation. Themes of songs and stories range from friendship and animals to social issues such as the environment, conflict resolution and diversity. Saturday, December 9 at the Mount Toby Meetinghouse on Route 63 in Leverett, 2 p.m. \$

Nina's Nook, Turners Falls: *Rossi Round-Up!* Gallery owner Nina Rossi presents her favorite works: Chard, Railroad Salvage, and Turners Falls are some of the subjects of her art. Through December.

Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne Falls: *Andrew Quiet: An Intersection of Pottery & Architecture*: Ceramics & Drawing. Inspired by history, drawings on ceramic vessels. Through December 31.

Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne: *Bob Compton, "Drawing in Steel."* Fine art of forged steel. Reception December 2, 4 p.m. Through December 31.

Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls: *"Illumination"* brings light to a time of darkness. Paintings, prints, photographs, sculpture, fiber art, and glass relate to the theme of illumination in its many symbolic, metaphorical, and literal aspects. Through January.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Paintings by Janet Palin*. Through December.

EVENTS:

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *The Definite Maybes*. Blues

inspired, Americana-flavored originals. 7:30 p.m. \$

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *A Celtic Christmas*. A Silverthorne Theater production. 7 p.m. \$

Underdogs Lounge, Shelburne: *The Blackbird Effect*. John Caban and Pan Morigan doing blues, jazz, Americanismos. 7:30 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Welcome Yule*. Welcome Yule celebrates the return of the light at the winter solstice with festive music and songs, dance and stories. The 33rd annual show for all ages. 7:30 p.m. \$; free for ages 4 and under.

ages 4 and under.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Gaslight Tinkers with Mamma's Marmalade*. A joyously danceable sound around a core of traditional New England old time and Celtic fiddle music. 8 p.m. \$

Root Cellar, Greenfield: *She Said*. Rockin' originals led by Tanya Bryant and Margaret Fitzpatrick with Torie O'Dell, Cynthia Fritz, Nina Rossi and Gail Hegeman. 8 p.m., followed by *DJ Nikos* at 10 p.m. \$

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Zydeco Connection*. Lil'Cyn on accordion, Eileen Almeida on rubboard and lead vocals, Mike Rose on drums, and Dave LeBlanc on bass. Music at 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Tides, Greyhounds*. 8:30 p.m. \$

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Welcome Yule*. Welcome Yule celebrates the return of the light at the winter solstice with festive music and songs, dance and stories. The 33rd annual show for all ages. 2 p.m. \$; free for ages 4 and under.

Unitarian Church, Northfield: *Fire Pond and Amandla Chorus* will be staging a benefit concert for Puerto Rico hurricane victims. 2:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Valley Jazz Voices*. The only community jazz choir in the Valley. Under the direction of Jeff Olmsted, VJV will perform a swinging mix of jazz and Brazilian favorites accompanied by Ken Forfia on piano, George Kaye on bass, and Claire Arenius on drums. 4 p.m. \$

Wendell Town Hall, Wendell: *Wendell Community Chorus* The Wendell Community Chorus invites all ages to share in an evening of hope and light. Songs of: Matisyahu, Tina Turner, Stevie Wonder, with Gospel, Madrigals and Seasonal tunes that all can sing. 5 p.m. Donations accepted.

Underdogs Lounge, Shelburne: *Dennis Avery and John Clark*. 6 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Nate Martel*, double album release. 7 p.m. \$

Parlor Room, Northampton: Archival album release for *Philip B. Price of Winter Pills*. 7 p.m. \$

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *The Harvey Diamond Quartet*. Harvey Diamond is a bona fide master of the piano and an unsung hero of the jazz scene. Lena Bloch on tenor saxophone, Jamie Macdonald on bass, and Claire Arenius on drums. 7 p.m. \$

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Jeff*

Holmes with Dawning Holmes Vocals. Jeff Holmes plays piano and trumpet, and is a composer and arranger. He is the Director of Jazz Studies at UMass. Dawning Holmes is a vocalist and composer/lyricist. Together they perform jazz, soul, gospel, blues, contemporary, and more. 7 p.m. \$

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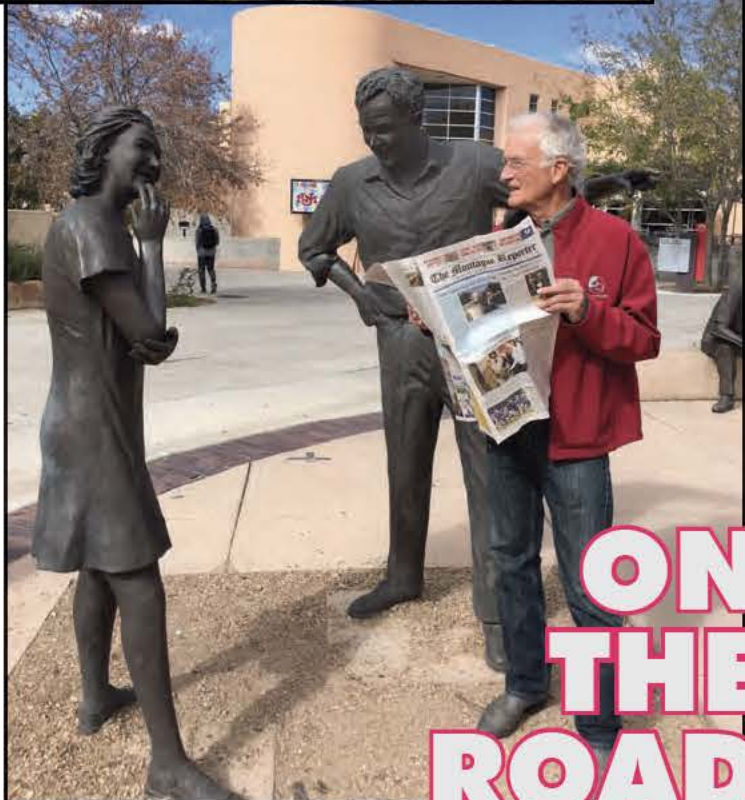
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Above: Jennifer Bennett, with her trusty Montague Reporter at Vatnajökull Glacier in Iceland.

At right: Peter d'Errico of Leverett discusses our coverage in the sculpture garden at the University of New Mexico.

Going somewhere? Take us with you! Send photos to editor@montague-reporter.org.



ON THE ROAD

Let The Nameless Be The Namers

By DENIS BORDEAUX

TURNERS FALLS — For the first time in school history, the Turners football team took the field on T-Day nameless. Some, by stretching cosmic and karmic vibrations to the max, will look you in the eye and argue that was why Turners lost: no totem, no mythical leader, no drums to put fear in the hearts of our enemies. *No damn name.*

After going to sixty consecutive games on T-Day — and playing in two — I was waiting, like always, for the team to thunder through the gates onto the field for our encouraging roar. It's a tradition we had done for us by ex-ball-players, and it still connects us to the team.

The 15 players stood at the gate in a huddle, and I just said, "Wow, fifteen — they're like the Spartans at Thermopylae!" Everyone liked the comparison, and that's what spurred this article, and submission.

Anyone who knows Turners football would say this was Coach Lapointe, and his staff's, finest coaching job. When you think of the league and Western Mass titles, the streak of winning seasons and the six T-Day wins in a row, that's saying a mouthful. We knew the team would be devastated by graduation last year, but when I read that only 15 kids came out, with only two seniors, I knew it would be more than a small rebuild.

But if you paid attention, the 15 got better, and were only out of one game early in the



year. Teams that they lost to wouldn't have wanted to play them at the end, including Greenburg (12-0).

Six victories, with a real possibility of a seventh, was amazing. How do you even practice with 15?

During the game I only saw one or two players ever come off the field for a breather. That means every kid played damn near every down, on both sides of the ball. Even with 30 Green Wave players substituting freely, Turners had the game in hand at 18-6 with 4 minutes to go.

And then it finally caught up with them. And like the 300 at Thermopylae, they just ran out of gas, in a last-second heart-breaker. But the effort by these unnamed and undermanned, for the game and the season, was truly Spartan-esque.

Although I've submitted three new names and designs, which are unique and area-relevant, I would also like to add the "Powertown Spartans" to the list. Is it unique? There are eight teams in Mass. who are Spartans. I would argue that none of those are named after 15 nameless heroes.

Let these nameless Spartans, a.k.a. "The 15," be the inspiration for team, spirit, hard work, and downright gutsiness. I know that for all TF football fans this nameless team was historic, and will be remembered with all the great Indian teams. Their legacy could be the start of a new history. *Go Spartans!*

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