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LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 5 - NO. 27

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

APRIL 12, 2007

Town Administrator Analyzes Montague's Revenue and Expenses; Offers Budget Forecast

TO AVOID MILLION DOLLAR DEFICITS, PERSONNEL COSTS MUST BE REDUCED

BY DAVID DETMOLD - proceedings against the Town administrator owners of the former Frank Abbondanzio met Indeck co-generating with the heavy hitters of facility on the power Montague's budget canal. The settlement making process on Thursday, April 5th, and hit them with a 53-page analysis of the town's revenue and expenditure patterns over the last eight years, with several appendices thrown in for good measure. The selectboard, the finance committee, and the capital improvements committee received the report, which included a six-year forecast for the town's revenues and expenditures, as they weighed how to spend a \$1.7 million balance in the town's overlay surplus account, which swelled to that amount with the end of court

ABBONDANZIO ADVISED THE TOWN TO PARCELA \$2.7 MILLION INDECK SURPLUS ON CAPITAL PROJECTS SPREAD OUT OVER SIX YEARS

the town's free cash account this year, through the payment of back taxes, Abbondanzio said. During the eight years between 2000 and 2007 covered by the study, the town of Montague has been able to balance the budget through a combination of one-time sources of revenue (such as the Indeck settlement), annual infusions from the free cash account, and a shift in paying for

see **BUDGET** pg 12

Turners Hosts Statewide Creative Economy Workshop

DAVID DETMOLD & CHRISTOPHER S A W Y E R - LAUCANNO TURNERS FALLS -

On the morning of April 10th, despite the chill in the air, the downtown parking lots were full, and Avenue A and adjoining streets were clogged with throngs of well-dressed folks with Boston accents juggling coffee cups and notebooks, parading from artspace to artspace. It wasn't an arts walk in the conventional sense; instead the visitors were mostly out-of-towners who for at least a day made Turners Falls an arts destination. The hundred-plus participants had descended on Turners Falls for a statewide conference on the creative economy. It's no secret to us locals that over the last several years Montague has become the site of a burgeoning, and now flourishing, arts scene. Painters, sculptors, photographers, ceramicists, writers, musicians and fiber artists all make their homes or have studios in Montague. Turners Falls



Town administrator Frank Abbondanzio, right, led one of many tours around downtown Turners Falls on Tuesday, April 10th, showcasing artists' studios and renovated buildings. Store owners along the Avenue featured artwork in their windows to coincide with the statewide creative economy workshop that brought over 100 visitors to town.

RiverCulture, the umbrella organization that seeks to unite and push the town forward as a place for art and artists, has increasingly focused on marketing Turners Falls as a destination for art, and on marketing its artists to the larger world. The latest development on this front was the Creative Economy Workshop held Tuesday at the Shea Theater. Entitled "How Creative is Your Downtown?" the workshop was sponsored by the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI); the

Massachusetts Cultural Council; and ArtistLink. The event began with a tour of downtown Turners Falls. Small groups, led by locals, among them RiverCulture coordinator Lisa Davol, Patricia Pruitt, chair of the Montague selectboard, and Montague town administrator Frank Abbondanzio were guided around downtown, as the sun made a rare appearance. They ambled past storefronts festooned with new

see **CREATIVE** pg 10

NASCAR Fish: a Tour of the Conte Fish Lab

BY STEVE WINTERS

THE PATCH - Like knowing how to win a race, understanding migrating fish is all about knowing the course. At the Silvio O. Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center in Turners Falls (Conte Lab, for short), scientists are studying anadromous fish - fish that swim up rivers from the sea to breed in their birthplaces - over the course of their life cycles. Dr. Alex Haro, fisheries biologist and a principal investigator at the Conte Lab, agreed to talk with me about the lives and journeys of the Connecticut River's traveling fish.

First, I asked Haro about that long, funny word, 'anadro-

mous' (pronounced an-AD-dra-muss). The word comes from the ancient Greek word *anadramein*, meaning, "to run upward." So anadromous fish are, so to speak, those that race up rivers. Shad, salmon, and sturgeon are the NASCAR drivers of our region's fish world!

Comparisons to stockcar racing aside, the Conte Lab has a serious



Sturgeon specialist Boyd Kynard, Ph.D. holds a mature female shortnose sturgeon at the Silvio O. Conte Fish Lab in Turners Falls. The shortnose sturgeon population below the Holyoke dam is cut off from their only breeding grounds, which are located above the Deerfield River, along the rapids in Turners Falls.

mission: to improve the health of anadromous fish populations in the Connecticut River and its many tributaries, and to restore them to viable breeding numbers. To fulfill their mission, scientists must understand all aspects of fish movement through the developed and urbanized areas of New England -

especially over or around the many dams and other human-made obstructions we've placed along the fishes' migratory highways. The lab works with an impressive variety of fish: salmon, river herring, lamprey, American eel, striped bass, smelt, sea-run trout, and riverine species such as bass and suckers. The focus of my visit with Alex on this day was shortnose sturgeon. This ancient fish, which hasn't changed much in some 60 million years, suffers from a human-made obstruction of its Connecticut River breeding route: the Holyoke dam. Over the 160 years since the

see **FISH** pg 16

PET OF THE WEEK

Wish Upon a Star



Madonna

Madonna is a six-year-old female short hair cat in need of a good home. This pearly grey beauty purrs before you even get the word Hello out. She seems like a really happy cat. Apparently Madonna will get really devoted to one person and that's the only species she's fond of, the others you can forget about. Madonna is playful and curious but she can also be a bit shy and a bit independent. Her former home had too many pets so she's looking for one where she can be the star.

For more information on adopting Madonna, please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at 413-548-9898 or via email at levrett@dpvhs.org.

Montague Community TALENT SHOW

Sunday April 22
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ERVING LIBRARY NEWS

Birdhouse Building

The Erving Public Library will host a birdhouse building workshop on Wednesday, April 18th at 6:00 p.m.

Participants will construct and paint a birdhouse for their

yard. This workshop is free and open to all ages, with funding provided by the Erving Cultural Council. Registration is required by calling the library at 423-3348.

CARNEGIE LIBRARY NEWS

Baby Emus at Carnegie

BY LINDA HICKMAN

TURNERS FALLS - Baby emu chicks will be visiting the Carnegie Library on Friday, April 20th at 10 a.m. Dee Dee Mares of Songline Farm in Gill will bring

several newly hatched chicks and will talk about these amazing giant birds.

The All About Emu program is free and for all ages. For more information call: 413-863-3214.

Work Day at Highland Park

MILLERS FALLS - The Montague Parks and Recreation Department is organizing a workday at the Highland Park Playground on Saturday, April 14th. Starting at 8:00 a.m., volunteers will help to install new playground units that include a

rock slide, skyrail climber, and a motorcycle spring rider. "You provide the muscle, we'll provide the refreshments." Extra tools are welcome. If you are interested in being part of the work crew, please call 863-3216.

New Programs at Women's Resource Center

TURNERS FALLS - Two new programs will be starting this spring at the Turners Falls Women's Resource Center (TFWRC) at 41 Third Street in Turners Falls.

"Healing with the Seasons" is a year-long exploration of the seasons and how they affect us and our health. There will be five sessions over the coming year, one in each of the seasons (Spring, Summer, Late Summer, Autumn and Winter). Workshops are two hours; one hour inside learning about the season through the filter of Five Element Acupuncture and one hour outside discovering examples of what we've learned about the season to be photographed, drawn, collected or otherwise represented. Attendees will use what they've learned to create their own shadow boxes or books of meditations on the seasons. The Spring session of

'Healing with the Seasons' will be held on Monday, April 30th, from 10 a.m. to noon. Presenter is Karen Adams, Lic Ac, Dipl Ac, a Turners Falls Five Element acupuncturist.

Eight weeks of "Guided Meditation" with Jerri Higgins will be offered at the center starting Tuesday, May 1st from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Higgins has designed this small group setting to help women achieve or enhance a sense of physical, mental and spiritual well-being using breathing, object focus, visualization, and music to fully relax in a safe and supportive environment.

All programs are free to area women and, if needed, free childcare is provided during the programs. To sign up for these programs at the Turners Falls Women's Resource Center or for more information, call Christine at (413) 863-2455 or email christine mcs@m@crocker.com.

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES April 16th - April 20th

MONTAGUE Senior Center, 62 Fifth St., Turners Falls, is open Mon. - Fri. from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. Make meal reservations a day in advance by 11 a.m. Messages can be left on the machine when the center is closed (863-9357). Mealsite manager is Chris Richer. The center offers a hot noon meal weekdays to any senior. Transportation to the center can be provided. Special trip coordinator is Jean Chase. Make trip reservations by calling 772-6356. Payment and menu choice is due three weeks prior to trip.

Monday, 16th

10:00 a.m. Aerobics
11:00 a.m. Easy Aerobics
1:00 p.m. Canasta

Tuesday, 17th

Hemoglobin A1C Screening

9:30 a.m. T'ai Chi
10:00 a.m. Brown Bag
1:00 p.m. Council on Aging
Wednesday, 18th

10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics
12:45 p.m. Bingo
Thursday, 19th
Hemoglobin A1C Screening
1:00 p.m. Pitch

Friday, 20th
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11 a.m. Easy Aerobics

ERVING Senior Center, 18 Pleasant St., Erving (Old Center School, 1st Floor), is open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. For information and reservations call Polly Kiely, Senior Center director at 413 423-3308. Lunch daily at 11:30 a.m. with reservations a day in advance by 11:00 a.m. Transportation can be provided

FACES & PLACES



A Cute Little Kid

BY JOSEPHINE PARZYCH - Dolly Letoumeau bottle feeds Sugar Pie, who has been rejected by her mother. The mother gave birth to triplets, but has only milk enough to feed two. She rejected the weakest one, now named Sugar Pie. When the rejected kid tries to suckle, the mother sniffs it and walks away. "The goats are being raised for the ethnic market," Letoumeau said. The four does gave birth to six bucklings and three doelings. Three mothers produced twins, and one mother gave birth to triplets. Letoumeau plans to keep the does for breeding purposes. Bucks are sent to market. Letoumeau bottle feeds Sugar Pie and brings her into the house on cold nights.

Murph Trophy Races

The Montague Elks Lodge #2521 in Turners Falls will hold its annual "Murph" Trophy Races for adults on Saturday, April 21st at 7:00 pm at the lodge. The winner of the adult races will get their dues paid for the next year, if a member, or the equivalent in cash if a non-member. The children's races will be held on Sunday, April 22nd at 1:00 pm. Trophies will be given to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners of the children's races. A ribbon will be awarded to all of the children who race. DJ Ryan will provide music and entertainment at both of the races.

The "Murph" Trophy races began about 12 years ago when Francis C. Togneri, Sr., aka, "Murph", a life member at the lodge, suggested that the lodge should have its own Pinewood Derby Races. The track was built by the membership as a memorial to Brian F. Bogusz, who loved the "Murph" Trophy races. Car kits are available in the lounge at the lodge for \$12 for the adults and \$10 for the children. Make those plans now and get those kits made for the whole family. All proceeds benefit construction fund for the new lodge. For further information about this event please contact the co-chairs: John Perreault at 863-0207 or George Emery at 367-0382.

GFMS Students of the Week

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Samantha Caouette

Grade 8
Kelsey O'Brien
Nina Dodge

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Ice off the Lake Winners Announced



Lake Pleasant in colder weather

BY DAVID JAMES

LAKE PLEASANT - The 2007 Lake Pleasant Ice-Off the Lake Contest is now history, according to postmaster Joyce Cote.

At 5 p.m. Monday, April 9th, Cote and independent witness Katherine Mayfield verified from the traditional judging spot in the middle of the Bridge of Names that a bit of ice yet remained, so contest winners were those whose dollar bill and luck of the draw had yielded them tickets dated April 10th, the final day of contest. Contest dates ranged from March 10th through April 10th.

And the winners are ... Myryah Daehn of Millers Falls, granddaughter of Karla and Phil Bordeaux of Montague Avenue, contest #1, and Bob Emond of Massasoit Street, contest #2.

According to Cote, the 'Lake Pleasant Ice-Off Game' began in 1977 when Alfreda Casey was Lake Pleasant's postmaster, and has continued under Cote's

reign, which commenced in 1983.

For the first few years, Cote said, people could pick any date they wanted as their best guess for when the ice would be off the lake. However, because so many weather-wise contestants were trying to pick the same dates, a lottery style date drawing was instituted and has continued since.

The contest has become so popular that last year a second parallel contest was started, hence two winners now where formerly there had been but one. Cote was the contest winner in 1991.

Twice - in 1981 and 2002 - there were no winners, Cote said, because the ice had melted before the contests could get underway.

Given that all tickets for both contests sold out this year with people still lined up and waiting to test their luck, perhaps a third contest will be in order next year. Time, as always, will tell.

Montague Joins Nationwide Call to Action on Global Warming

MONTAGUE - At 10 a.m., Saturday April 14th, Montague residents concerned about the growing threat of global warming will rally for an event titled "Fixing Bikes to Fix the Planet," hosted by the Montague Grange, in Montague Center, for a public photograph and to help friends and neighbors prepare their bikes for a season of carbon-free travel. "All are welcome," said event coordinator Chris Mason. Participants will be photographed displaying their message: "Step It Up Congress! Cut Carbon 80% by 2050!" This photograph will be sent to Washington, D.C. along with photos from over a thousand other events across the country so members of Congress can see for themselves that their constituents are demanding bold action.

The event is part of the Step it Up 2007 campaign, the largest day of citizen action focusing on global warming in our nation's history. Organizers ask that people (with bikes if they have one) show up at the Montague Grange between 10 and 10:30 for the big photo-event and then invite them to stick around for help fixing up their bikes for the season. Bike repair tools and expertise will be available from 10 to 12.

Step it Up is a nationwide campaign comprised of over 1300 events in 50 states rallying around the need for substantial and rapid action on the issue of global warming. Events are being held in every corner of the country, from Maine to Hawaii, and Seattle to Key West. The events are being held in major cities, iconic locations and small towns across America. Rallies have been organized by groups and individuals from all walks of life who agree on one thing: the time has come for our elected officials to take bold and immediate steps to combat global warming.

"The groundswell of support for this effort is incredible. This is truly a vital grassroots movement, organized mainly through

word of mouth, email outreach among friends, and the online community," said Step it Up Organizer Bill McKibben.

According to a recent series in the *New York Times*, global warming's impact will be most severe in areas where the poorest of the world's population lives, those who contribute the least to global warming's cause. The droughts and stronger and more frequent storms combined with

rising sea levels caused by global warming will dramatically affect the already scarce resources relied upon by hundreds of millions for the basics of life. The organizers of Step It Up events see an opportunity and a responsibility to ensure that solutions to this crisis take vulnerable populations into account. For more information please visit the Step it Up campaign website: www.stepitup2007.org.

Doug Brown Wins Award for Combatting Child Abuse



PHOTO: RAY ZUKOWSKI

Doug Brown of Turners Falls receives the Ellen Sedlis Award from District Attorney Elizabeth Scheibel at the 8th annual Children's Advocacy Project breakfast.

TURNERS FALLS - Doug Brown was honored at the 8th annual breakfast of the Northwestern Children's Advocacy Project for his work in combatting child abuse.

April is Child Abuse Awareness Month. The Northwestern Children's Advocacy Project is a non-profit organization that raises funds to support the advocacy center which children come to who disclose abuse.

Brown received the Ellen Sedlis Award, intended to recognize someone whose work on the front lines has touched the lives of children. The advocacy project aims to honor the unsung efforts and the sustained commitment to help children heal, and to build a world in which violence is a distant enemy.

Psychic Fair in Lake Pleasant

The National Spiritual Alliance will sponsor a Psychic Fair Saturday (April 28) from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Thompson Temple across from the post office in Lake Pleasant. Divination methods include astrology, I-Ching, hand reading, vibration connection, and tarot cards.

Consultation is with a medium of choice. Reiki healing services will also be available. TNSA evolved from the New England Spiritualist Camp-meeting Association formed in 1874. Lake Pleasant is the oldest continuously-existing Spiritualist center in the United States.

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Are We Politicians or Citizens?

BY HOWARD ZINN

AUBURNDALE - As I write this, Congress is debating timetables for withdrawal from Iraq. In response to the Bush Administration's "surge" of troops, and the Republicans' refusal to limit our occupation, the Democrats are behaving with their customary timidity, proposing withdrawal, but only after a year, or eighteen months. And it seems they expect the anti-war movement to support them.

That was suggested in a recent message from MoveOn, which polled its members on the Democrat proposal, saying that progressives in Congress, "like many of us, don't think the bill goes far enough, but see it as the first concrete step to ending the war."

Ironically, and shockingly, the same bill appropriates \$124 billion in more funds to carry on the war. It's as if, before the Civil War, abolitionists agreed to postpone the emancipation of the slaves for a year, or two years, or five years, and coupled this with an appropriation of funds to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act.

When a social movement adopts the compromises of legislators, it has forgotten its role, which is to push and challenge the politicians, not to fall in meekly behind them.

We who protest the war are not politicians. We are citizens. Whatever politicians may do, let them first feel the full force of citizens who speak for what is

right, not for what is winnable, in a shamefully timorous Congress.

Timetables for withdrawal are not only morally reprehensible in the case of a brutal occupation (would you give a thug who invaded your house, smashed everything in sight, and terrorized your children a timetable for withdrawal?) but logically nonsensical. If our troops are preventing civil war, helping people, controlling violence, then why withdraw at all? If they are in fact doing the opposite - provoking civil war, hurting people, perpetuating violence - they should withdraw as quickly as ships and planes can carry them home.

It is four years since the United States invaded Iraq with a ferocious bombardment, with "shock and awe." That is enough time to decide if the presence of our troops is making the lives of the Iraqis better or worse. The evidence is overwhelming. Since the invasion, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have died, and, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, about two million Iraqis have left the country, and an almost equal number are internal refugees, forced out of their homes, seeking shelter elsewhere in the country.

Yes, Saddam Hussein was a brutal tyrant. But his capture and death have not made the lives of Iraqis better, as the U.S. occupation has created chaos: no clean water, rising rates of hunger, 50 percent unemployment, shortages of food, electricity, and fuel, a rise in child malnutrition and infant deaths. Has the U.S. presence diminished violence? On the contrary, by January 2007 the number of insurgent attacks has increased dramatically to 180 a day.

The response of the Bush

Administration to four years of failure is to send more troops. To add more troops matches the definition of fanaticism: If you find you're going in the wrong direction, redouble your speed. It reminds me of the physician in Europe in the early nineteenth century who decided that bloodletting would cure pneumonia. When that didn't work, he concluded that not enough blood had been let.

The Congressional Democrats' proposal is to give more funds to the war, and to set a timetable that will let the bloodletting go on for another year or more. It is necessary, they say, to compromise, and some anti-war people have been willing to go along. However, it is one thing to compromise when you are immediately given part of what you are demanding, if that can then be a springboard for getting more in the future. That is the situation described in the recent movie *The Wind That Shakes The Barley*, in which the Irish rebels against British rule are given a compromise solution - to have part of Ireland free, as the Irish Free State. In the movie, Irish brother fights against brother over whether to accept this compromise. But at least the acceptance of that compromise, however short of justice, created the Irish Free State. The withdrawal timetable proposed by the Democrats gets nothing tangible, only a promise, and leaves the fulfillment of that promise in the hands of the Bush Administration.

There have been similar dilemmas for the labor movement. Indeed, it is a common occurrence that unions, fighting for a new contract, must decide if they will accept an offer that gives them only part of what they have demanded. It's always a difficult decision, but in almost all cases, whether the compromise can be considered a victory or a defeat, the workers have been given some thing palpable, improving their condition to some degree. If they were offered only a promise of something in the future, while continuing an unbearable situation in the present, it would not be considered a compromise, but a sell-

SIGNS OF SPRING



KAREN WILKINSON ILLUSTRATION

out. A union leader who said, "Take this, it's the best we can get" (which is what the MoveOn people are saying about the Democrats' resolution) would be hooted off the platform.

I am reminded of the situation at the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, when the black delegation from Mississippi asked to be seated, to represent the 40 percent black population of that state. They were offered a 'compromise' - two nonvoting seats. "This is the best we can get," some black leaders said. The Mississippians, led by Fannie Lou Hamer and Bob Moses, turned it down, and thus held on to their fighting spirit, which later brought them what they had asked for. That mantra - "the best we can get" - is a recipe for corruption.

It is not easy, in the corrupting atmosphere of Washington, D.C., to hold on firmly to the truth, to resist the temptation of capitulation that presents itself as compromise. A few manage to do so. I think of Barbara Lee, the one person in the House of Representatives who, in the hysterical atmosphere of the days

following 9/11, voted against the resolution authorizing Bush to invade Afghanistan. Today, she is one of the few who refuse to fund the Iraq War, insist on a prompt end to the war, reject the dishonesty of a false compromise.

Except for the rare few, like Barbara Lee, Maxine Waters, Lynn Woolsey, and John Lewis, our representatives are politicians, and will surrender their integrity, claiming to be "realistic."

We are not politicians, but citizens. We have no office to hold on to, only our consciences, which insist on telling the truth. That, history suggests, is the most realistic thing a citizen can do.

This editorial first appeared in the Progressive. Reprinted here with permission of the author. Historian Howard Zinn, a veteran of World War II, is a Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Boston University. His most recent book is A Power Governments Cannot Suppress.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Eggstravagant Thanks

Montague Parks and Recreation would like to thank the more than 250 children and parents from throughout Franklin County who attended our 3rd Annual Peter Cottontail's EGGstravaganza. The event was held on Saturday, April 7th at Unity Park in Turners Falls, where children were given the task of finding well over 5,000 toy and candy-filled eggs placed

throughout the park. Parents also eggshibited a lot of spirit by joining their kids in egg decorating, face painting, and pictures with Peter Cottontail.

The EGGstravaganza would not have been possible without generous support from Hillside Plastics, Greenfield Savings Bank, the Franklin County Rotary Club, the Montague Elks,

New England Extrusion, Sheffield Elementary PTO, Sirum's Equipment, Equi's Candy Store, DJ Bobby C, and Boy Scout Troop #6. We would also like to make a special thanks to the Easter Bunny for setting aside some time from his busy schedule to be present during the festivities.

- Jon Dobosz, director
MPRD

American Dead in Iraq as of 4/11/07



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GUEST EDITORIAL



Hospice Photographs a Testament of Hope

BY JANE GILMAN

TURNERS FALLS - There are times when seemingly unrelated organizations and events join together with harmonious outcomes that could never be anticipated or predicted. In this instance, three local organizations, Hospice of Franklin County, Hallmark School of Photography and Franklin County Home Care have joined forces, and the end result of their partnering illustrates the true value of community cooperation.

At Hospice of Franklin County, we often say hospice is about hope, and our mission is to provide compassionate care to individuals and their families who are facing a life-limiting illness. Our patients will eventually die, yet their end-of-life journeys are filled with the essence of hope. The way they have lived and how they die offer unique representations of who they are as people, and how they connect with their loved ones. As development coordinator for Hospice of Franklin County I often wondered, "Is there a way to clearly portray our patients' hope?"

In the fall of 2006, I spoke to Andy Vechellio, newly appointed director of admissions at the Hallmark School of Photography in Turners Falls to explore the idea of a photo exhibit about hospice. I hoped Hallmark students would be interested. Vechellio was eager to support this project; his wife, Jennifer, is an active

Hospice of Franklin County volunteer. He offered to post a notice on the school's bulletin board.

Hallmark student Kimberly Morritt has a passion for photographing all aspects of the end of life journey. Most people in our society tend to deny the existence of death and yet, here was a mother of three who had her own mission to capture this part of life's journey on film. Morritt is a remarkable woman who followed a dream to complete her training at Hallmark. With the support of her husband Brian, she uprooted her family and relocated to Greenfield, leaving behind her secure life in Michigan. She enrolled her three children in local schools, and moved her family into an apartment. Brian found work at Sandri and she eagerly began her studies at Hallmark. When she saw the posted notice, she did not hesitate to contact me at hospice to express interest in the project.

Morritt noted, "I want to do a job that is emotionally rewarding and that I am passionate about. Photographing hope in patients and their families is a pretty awesome thing. My images will be very powerful memories to the families involved, and I feel privileged to be able to give them such a gift."

Last December, I happened upon a course entitled Images and Insights: Using Photography in Death and Grief Work, being offered online by the National

Center for Death Education at Mount Ida in Newton, MA. I mentioned the opportunity to Morritt, as the title appeared relevant to her interest in photography and the dying. She was enthusiastic about the possibility of a course that would enhance her skills in her chosen photographic specialty; however, the cost was not within her means. Given her situation, we brainstormed about possible grant or scholarship money to subsidize this venture.

Many of our hospice patients and their families have benefited from Franklin County Home Care Corporation programs and services for elders and caregivers. Morritt's project was an unusual one that supported caregivers and elders, so she applied for a grant. Within a few weeks, FCHCC agreed to pay for Morritt's course, which she has recently completed.

"FCHCC felt this was an opportunity to continue to collaborate with a community partner whose clients have benefited from caregiver grants in the past. We knew the photos would provide a special remembrance, for the caregiver, of their loved one. FCHCC felt this was a unique way to help support the caregiver during a very important time with their family," said Laurie Deskavich, director of FCHCC's Information and Caregiver Resource Center.

The patients and families that

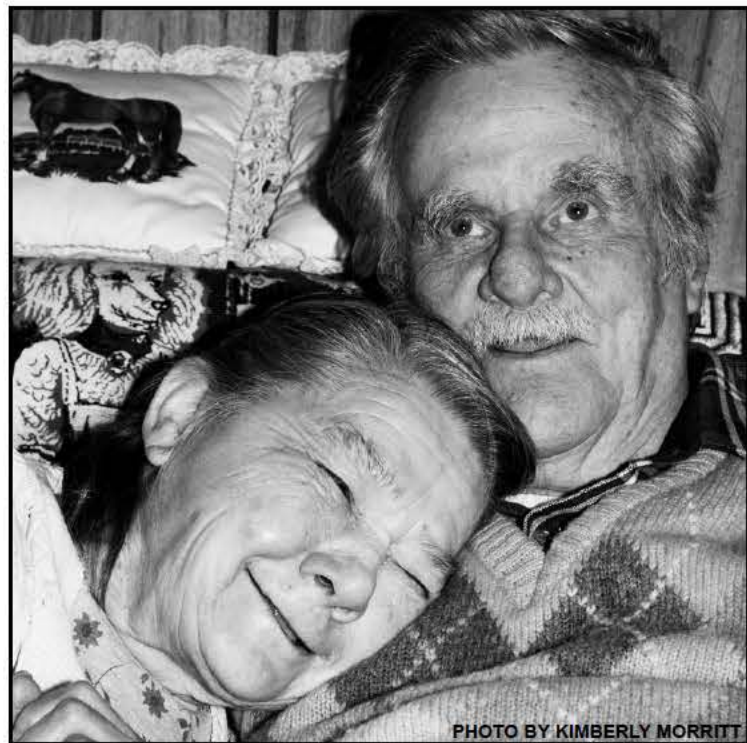


PHOTO BY KIMBERLY MORRITT

Shirley and hospice patient Dave from Franklin County.

Morritt has photographed have been touched at a very deep emotional level. They recognize the value of this particular period in their life and are grateful for a unique form of remembrance that only a picture can capture. Most of the patients and families have asked for copies of the photos to pass on to other relatives and some have arranged for other family members to join them for more group pictures. Without exception, the faces clearly represent hope through their commitment to remain involved in the natural ending of life.

Allowing someone to take a picture may seem like the last thing a terminally ill patient or their caregivers may consider. This is clearly not the case, as evidenced by the response to the hospice staff's offer of this unique opportunity.

Today, Morritt continues to capture the images of hospice

patients and their families, guided by her imagination, vision of hope, and respectful presence in the homes of those patients and families who desire a lasting legacy through a photograph.

Hospice of Franklin County, Hallmark School of Photography and Franklin County Home Care connected in an unlikely but fruitful partnership that exemplifies the commitment our rural towns hold for community. Working together with a generous spirit, as our agencies and individuals have in this project, reveals the lasting benefit of working together for the greater good of all.

A wine and beer tasting fundraiser to support Hospice of Franklin County will be held at the Pushkin Gallery, 4 Federal Street, Greenfield, on Thursday, April 19th, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. For more information, call 413-774-2753.

Please join the Friends of the Discovery Center for a celebration In remembrance of Tony Guglielmi

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE GILL POLICE LOG

Car vs. House on French King Highway

<p>Monday 3-28</p> <p>1:45 p.m. Assisted with medical emergency on Munn's Ferry Road.</p> <p>6:00 p.m. Responded to alarm on Green Hill Road; all OK.</p> <p>9:45 p.m. Assisted Erving police with alarm on Northfield Road.</p> <p>Tuesday 3-29</p> <p>11:27 a.m. Responded to a vehicle vs. house accident on French King Highway; no injury.</p> <p>11:33 a.m. Responded to a microwave fire at Stoughton Place.</p> <p>11:40 a.m. Assisted fire department with brush fire and downed electrical wire on Main Road.</p> <p>4:38 p.m. Assisted fire department with alarm on the Mount</p>	<p>Hermon Campus.</p> <p>11:54 p.m. Report of suspicious subjects at Main Road business. Left westbound on French King Highway before officer arrived on scene.</p> <p>Thursday 3-31</p> <p>12:56 a.m. Assisted Erving police with disturbance at French King Highway residence.</p> <p>11:21 a.m. Assisted with medical emergency at Main Road residence.</p> <p>11:40 a.m. ATV complaint on West Gill Road.</p> <p>Monday 4-2</p> <p>4:00 p.m. Three-car motor vehicle accident at Gill lights, minor injury and minor damage.</p>	<p>Tuesday 4-3</p> <p>12:16 a.m. Report of a motor vehicle rolled over onto roof on French King Highway near state boat ramp. Responded with fire department; unable to locate.</p> <p>2:16 p.m. Alarm sounding at Main Road residence; all secure.</p> <p>2:29 p.m. Report of injured animal causing traffic hazard on Main Road; unable to locate.</p> <p>6:57 p.m. Responded to vehicle stuck in field off of Main Road; subject issued citation for trespassing with motor vehicle. Assisted with tow truck.</p> <p>Wednesday 4-4</p> <p>12:05 a.m. Report of a vehicle off of the road on Main Road, possible accident; unable to locate.</p>	<p>9:53 p.m. Report of suspicious subjects at French King Highway business. Checked on same; all OK.</p> <p>Sunday 4-8</p> <p>1:50 a.m. Arrested [redacted], charged with minor in possession of alcohol, unlicensed operation of motor vehicle, and open container of alcohol.</p> <p>1:50 a.m. Arrested [redacted] Charged with possession of marijuana and carrying a dangerous weapon.</p> <p>Monday 4-9</p> <p>1:30 p.m. Report of a woman in labor on French King Highway. Cancelled on route; subject found at Erving police station.</p>
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The Eaglets Have Hatched

BY PAT CARLISLE

GREAT FALLS - Eagle chicks have arrived! Our nest in Barton Cove is busy.

chicks begin to walk around the nest on feet that appear too big. When they arrive at the upper edge to view their world, we wonder what they think or feel.



The eaglets of Barton Cove bask in a pool of sunlight on Wednesday afternoon, April 11th.

Unfortunately, just at this exciting time, our live eagle camera has developed problems.

The reception is sporadic; the 7:00 a.m. picture has been good and occasional afternoon viewing has been possible.

The many partners of the eagle camera project plan to visit the island when possible, in late fall or early winter, after the chicks have fledged, to assess and hopefully make repairs to the camera.

The first eaglet arrived on Good Friday, April 6th; the second baby appeared Monday afternoon, April 9th. The gentle care both parents take with feeding and protection is wonderful to watch.

We marvel at the rapid growth and agility as the

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Water Skiers Seek Support

Petitions are being circulated opposing the Barton Cove water ski course that has been in existence since 1978. The course has always been open to the public, and the Franklin County Water Ski Club is only a group of locals that spend their time and money maintaining and skiing the course. The eagles arrived in Barton Cove in the 1980s, well after the water ski course had been in use for years, and they have remained nesting there ever since. Most people that have recreated in Barton Cove have probably seen the ski buoys in the past, and did not realize they were actually part of a slalom course.

About four years ago, a house sold next to the boat ramp adjacent to Barton Cove. Since then, the new owner has

complained about the fishermen, the planes going over his house from the Turners Falls Airport, the duck hunters, the ice fishermen, and the water skiers. This resident has also strung buoys across an inlet by the access, which blocks anyone from using this public water. Ironically, these buoys have no DEP license. Now he has started a petition to try and ban water skiing from Barton Cove.

Our application is being sought because in the last four years, the course has been repeatedly vandalized and now needs major improvements. We already possess a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers, and First Light Generation has graciously signed off on our DEP application. The issue at hand is this. Does the public

want the DEP to put more restrictions on recreational activities on the Connecticut River? It may be a water ski course today, but it could be jet skis, or boat engine size limits tomorrow. I encourage people to write or call Tony Zaharias, DEP Waterways, 436 Dwight Street, Springfield, MA, 01103, 413 755-2147, Anthony.Zaharias@state.ma.us, in favor of leaving things the way they have been for thirty years, and not to be persuaded to sign a petition sponsored by a private property owner looking to control what happens in our cove. I would also encourage the town of Gill to hold a public meeting to discuss the possible impact of the DEP's decision.

- Greg Snedeker
Riverside

Health Board Shuts Down Bakery

BY DAVID DETMOLD

MONTAGUE CENTER - Gina McNeely, the town's health agent, received a complaint about Hunting Hills in Montague Center operating a bakery without a permit last week. She inspected the Route 63 facility, and ordered the bakery shut down until such time as the owner takes out a

permit to operate a bakery (\$75 annually) and a permit to operate a food establishment (\$175 annually), and corrects observed conditions. McNeely said, "Hunting Hills has certainly operated a nice kitchen in the past."

A phone message to Hunting Hills seeking comment was not returned at

press time.

McNeely said inspections by her department is largely complaint driven. She encouraged people to call the board of health at 863-3200, ext. 205 "if they have any questions about what they see in a food establishment in town."

MCTV Schedule

Channel 17: April 13th - 19th

Barton Cove Eagles: 7A-8A (Daily); 1P-530P (Friday, Saturday, Tuesday); 1230P-530P (Sunday, Wednesday, Thursday); 130P-530P (Monday)	9:00 am Montague Update: TBD 10:00 am Coffee House Series: Montague Community Band 11:30 am Sheffield Play: "Dancing Princess" 6:00 pm Montague Update: Josh Goldman 7:00 pm Over The Falls: Kim Gross Hughes 8:00 pm Discovery Center: Raptor Show with Tom Richardi 9:30 pm Coffee House Series: Katie Clarke Band 11:30 pm Rev. Carlos Anderson: "A House Divided"	#36 6:30 pm Kidz Art #1 7:00 Montague Select Board (Live) 9:00 pm GMRSD (4/10/07)
Friday, April 13 8:00 am Over The Falls: Robert Strong Woodward 9:00 am Montague Select Board 4/9/07 11:00 am Coffee House Series: Pat & Tex Lamountain, Russ Thomas, Joe Graveline 6:00 pm Nasa Destination Tomorrow #17 6:30 pm Kidz Art #1 7:00 pm GMRSD meeting 4/10/07 10:00 pm Velocity	Monday, April 16 8:00 am Montague Update: Josh Goldman 9:00 am Over The Falls: Kim Gross Hughes 10:00am Discovery Center: Raptor Show with Tom Richardi 11:30 am Coffee House Series: Katie Clarke Band 6:30 pm Montague Update: TBD 7:00 pm Montague Select Board (4/9/07) 9:00 pm Velocity 9:30 pm Coffee House Series: Michael Nix 11:00 pm Montague Music Train	Wednesday, April 18 8:00 am GED Connection #36 8:30 am Kidz Art #1 9:00 am GMRSD (4/10/07) 12:00 pm Velocity 6:30 pm NASA Destination Tomorrow #17 7:00 pm GED Connection #37 7:30 pm The Well Being: "Prevention of Injuries in Children" 8:30 pm Discovery Center: "Humming Birds" 10:00 pm Rev. Carlos Anderson: "Shalom"
Saturday, April 14 8:00 am NASA Destination Tomorrow #17 8:30 am Kidz Art #1 9:00 am GMRSD meeting 4/10/07 12:00 Velocity 6:30 pm The Well Being: "Prevention of Injuries in Children" 7:30 pm Montague Update: TBD 8:30 pm Coffee House Series: Montague Community Band 10:00 pm Sheffield Play: "Dancing Princess" 11:00 pm Montague Music Train	Tuesday, April 17 8:00 am Montague Update: TBD 8:30 am Velocity 9:00 am Coffee House Series: Michael Nix 6:00 pm GED Connection	Thursday, April 19 8:00 am NASA Destination Tomorrow #17 8:30 am GED Connection #37 9:00 am The Well Being: "Prevention of Injuries in Children" 10:00 am Discovery Center: "Humming Birds" 11:30 am Rev. Carlos Anderson: "Shalom" 6:00 pm Over The Falls: Kim Gross Hughes 7:00 pm Montague Select Board 4/16/07 (dvd) 9:00 pm Discovery Center: Raptor Show with Tom Richardi 10:00 pm Farmers Market: Tom Carroll 11:00 pm Memories Of Montague Machine
Sunday, April 15 8:00 am The Well Being: "Prevention of Injuries in Children"		

MCTV to Offer Montague Candidates Free Air Time

As a public service for the town of Montague, MCTV Channel 17, is providing any candidate running for election in May the opportunity to produce a ten minute video explaining their positions.

These tapes will then be broadcast many times prior to the election. We encourage all candidates to participate.

All videos must be completed by May 4th. Please call the station as soon as

possible to schedule a time for your taping. Ask for Dean or Robin. (413) 863-9200

Visit MCTV, Monday thru Friday 2 p.m. - 6 p.m. MCTV is always looking for producers and volunteers.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Operating Under the Influence

Thursday 4-5
5:20 p.m. Report of a two-vehicle accident on Avenue A at 3rd Street. No injuries reported.
11:10 p.m. Report of a disturbance at a 5th Street address. Found to be an argument over a parking space.

Friday 4-6
7:11 p.m. Report of a possibly sick raccoon at a North Leverett Road address. Officer responded.
9:30 p.m. Report of disorderly conduct at a K Street address. [redacted] was arrested and charged with illegal possession of a class D drug, possession to distribute a class D drug, and possession to distribute within 1000 feet of a school zone.
11:45 p.m. After a motor vehicle stop at Cumberland Farms on Montague City Road, [redacted] was arrested and charged with operating under the influence of liquor (2nd offense), a number plate violation, and a marked lanes violation.

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NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

From Pet Peeves to Patio Seating

BY JOANNA FRANKEL

The start of Monday's selectboard meeting addressed a sticky (and stinky) situation. Montague City resident Brian Costa came forward to request regulations and fines to force dog owners to clean up after their pooches. He complained that people are increasingly leaving their dogs' waste on the street, on sidewalks, and in area parks, leaving others to feel like they're "walking around landmines." Costa told the board members present (Al Ross was absent) that regulations carrying hefty fines might make a dent in the amount of poop left behind by area dog owners. He argued, "A \$100 fine would make people think twice" about leaving "presents" behind for someone else to clean up or step in.

Town administrator Frank Abbondanzio suggested that the board of health may be the best people to set regulations around the responsibilities of pet owners to clean up after their animals. In

response to the idea of setting fines, Abbondanzio responded that town meeting would be the body to establish fines and amounts. He added that, "Pooper scooper bylaws typically have trouble passing."

So for now, keep checking your shoes, folks!

Next, Denise DiPaolo, owner of Ristorante DiPaolo on Avenue A in Turners Falls, came before the selectboard for advice on her expansion plans for the restaurant.

DiPaolo, accompanied by David Jensen, town building inspector, described her long-term goal of a three season room for additional seating. As she explained, the restaurant's liquor license covers this space, but there are some water and drainage issues she needs to clear up before construction on an addition can begin.

In the meantime, while attempting to resolve the larger drainage issues, DiPaolo plans to create a temporary patio with

fencing for outdoor dining. The outdoor seating space she is envisioning would also include a few small tables on the sidewalk out front where people waiting to be seated could congregate. Pat Allen, selectboard member, assured DiPaolo that, "It seems like a great idea and we ought to be able to find a way to make it work."

Last on DiPaolo's agenda was a proposal for the construction of fencing around her restaurant's dumpster and that of neighboring Power Town Apartments. These dumpsters, in the back of the building, would be enclosed with a permanent structure. Pat Allen made a motion to endorse this request and DiPaolo was granted approval for cleaning up the dumpster area.

The selectboard's final visitor for the evening was Deb Radway, a member of the safety building complex committee, who was present to report on the current status of the new police and safety building complex. Radway

described the recent work of the committee, now meeting every Thursday evening at the Turners Falls fire station. They have been meeting with architect Brian Humes and have designed a building that would double the size of the existing fire station. The committee has also been hard at work drafting an agreement to determine how space and maintenance costs would be shared between the town and the fire district prudential committee.

On April 12th, the committee will tackle issues of budgeting and costs. As Radway explained, "It's not going to be a cheap project and I think it's incumbent upon us to investigate and exhaust every source of funding outside of taxation." To this end, Radway and others are looking into alternative resources such as "green" grants, rural development money, homeland security funds, and other means of financing the new building.

Before retiring into executive

session, Abbondanzio reported on a number of items. A date has been set for a special town meeting to discuss opening district elementary schools in Gill and Montague to intra-district choice, along with a few budget items, on May 3rd at 7 p.m. at Turners Falls High School. In the good news section, the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District noted Montague had the second highest rate of recycling in the county, an increase in the town's standing from last year. Also, a resolution passed unanimously among selectboard members to support the service of National Guard and Reserves members, and to hold their jobs secure during any periods of service. Lastly, the resignation of Jane Gilman from the streetscape committee passed with sadness (on Gilman's part and that of the selectboard).

The next meeting of the Montague selectboard will take place Tuesday, April 17th at 7:00 p.m. in the Montague town hall.

NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Water Dispute in Farley

BY KEVIN FOLEY - The selectboard and the board of health held a joint meeting on Monday April, 9th to discuss potential regulation changes to the water supply for residents of Maple Avenue in Farley. The Farley Water Association, which is made up of residents of the six houses that share joint use of a nearby well that will be affected by the regulations, was present at the meeting. At one point a member of the association became so angered by the proceedings that he stormed out of town hall.

Traces of E-coli and other bacteria were found in the well water in tests four years ago, according to administrative assistant Tom Sharp. Those tests prompted health agents to request more tests to ensure that the quality of the water supply was improving. Deborah Palmer, a health agent hired by the board of health, said she has not received the results of those tests in a timely fashion.

"We haven't gotten one test without a hearing or a court case about it," said Palmer. "If we had gotten quarterly tests we wouldn't even be here... This

has been going on for two or three years and it took these regulations to get to this point."

The Erving board of health and the Farley Water Association have appeared in court in the past. The case was not presented to a judge, but rather handled by a mediator who tried to reconcile the two groups' problems. Another court appearance will take place on April 27th.

The residents of Maple Avenue are left with limited options for how to improve their water supply. Some of the residents presented an idea that included each house installing UV disinfection to purify the water on the way to their houses from the well. Palmer said this idea wouldn't be sufficient, because the source of the water has to be up to standards, not just the water entering the homes.

Another option was for each residence to have a private well. Jeff Dubay, selectboard member, sees an obvious problem with this method. "To these people, it's their homes. Not everybody has an extra \$5,000 or \$10,000 to install a

well."

According to DEP regulations, any water supply that could potentially provide for more than 25 people is considered a public water supply, and therefore must adhere to DEP regulations that define testing procedures and require a Certified Water Operator to oversee the maintenance of the water supply. The board of health will hire someone to determine how many bedrooms are in each house according to the Title 5 definition of a bedroom. If the number of bedrooms shows that more than 25 people can live in the six houses, the water supply will be considered public.

Andy Tessier, chairman of the selectboard, questioned why the Title 5 regulation is being applied in this instance. "It's my impression that (the board of health) is reclassifying because you know these houses won't fit Title 5 regulations."

The Maple Avenue residents were presented with a number of dates on which the number of bedrooms in their homes could be determined. Some of the residents felt certain dates were

inconvenient.

Tessier isn't a supporter of the DEP regulations. "I understand public safety, but I also understand common sense. Outside of I - 495, (the DEP) regulations don't make sense."

If the homes don't end up being bound to DEP regulations, the board of health has determined a set of regulations that the houses will have to comply with. Tessier believes these need to be clarified. "Do you need to test nitrates four times a year? I don't think you do."

Near the meeting's end, Palmer stressed the importance of improving the water supply. She said the town would be liable if anyone were to get sick as a result of drinking the water. "I don't know why the town would risk someone getting sick," she said.

The board of health's Mike Gralenski expressed his desire to reconcile the problem. "We want to work with these folks in Farley. We want to make this better."

After the joint meeting ended, the selectboard called their meeting to order. The first topic of conversation was the 167 acres of conservation land the town has agreed to purchase for \$800,000 from the Giniusz family. The town called numerous surveyors for

estimates of the cost to survey the land. The lowest bid came from Dan Werner, from Colrain, for \$12,700. The town will contact Werner and offer him the job at that price.

The three-person committee that was responsible for assessing the state of the Usher Mill complex completed their study and presented it to the selectboard. "It basically says that the buildings are horribly unsafe and in awful condition," said Sharp. "It gives the building inspector the ammunition he needs to force the owners of the buildings to do something about them."

Sharp said that children often enter the Usher Mill, which is extremely unsafe. The minimum action he expects to be taken is a fence being put up around the property. The plant is owned by a group of people who are related to Morris Housen, the CEO of the Erving Paper Mill.

Water bills were mailed out to Erving residents on Wednesday, April 11th. Residents who did not receive a bill should contact town hall. A total of \$42,182 was charged to residents in the bills.

The selectboard will not meet on Monday, April 16th because of the Patriot's Day holiday. They will meet again on Monday, April 23rd at 7:00 p.m.

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NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

First Meeting in New Digs

BY JOSH HEINEMANN - The Wendell selectboard held its April 4th meeting in one of the front rooms of the new town office building. The USDA has certified the building as substantially complete, meaning officials can move in, business can be conducted, and the rented office trailers that have served for interim town offices for the last year can be picked up and carried away at the rental company's convenience. There is still a punch list of details to be completed, and exterior work to be completed as weather permits.

Selectboard chair Ted Lewis brought molasses cookies.

Board member Dan Keller said the main hall echoes, with the hard walls, and said town treasurer Carolyn Manley has suggested a décor committee to soften the walls and maybe hang some old pictures of town on them. A tack board similar to the one in the back of the selectboard office might soften the echoes, and serve as a posting place.

Kate Nolan met the board to find out how to begin work on the community garden proposed for the back of the town office lot. Keller said the area had been a truck garden and had about an

acre of good deep fertile soil with a southern exposure; he and his son Caleb transplanted raspberries from the front of the property before construction began, and marked them to be protected, but he has not dared to look at them since. They are next to a large pile of topsoil. He said, "Any energy is welcome," and that an exploratory committee as suggested by Nolan might be a good start. She was made chair of an exploratory committee, and can be reached before 8:30 in the evening at 978-544-2306. Nolan said she will be writing an article to create a community garden committee for the warrant of the annual town meeting.

Lewis wants as many people as possible to use the space.

Town coordinator Nancy Aldrich asked for some clarification on the use of the new building's meeting room. Keller said it definitely should be available for boards and committees, but selectboard member Christine Heard suggested that people sign up to use the space. Lewis wanted to avoid a free-for-all, and thought it would be needed offi-



PHOTO: JOSH HEINEMANN
Town coordinator Nancy Aldrich working at her new desk in the new town office building.

cially as the town government is forced to grow larger; he wanted to allow no food or drinks there. (At least half the people in the selectboard office had brought a bottle of drinking water.) Heard said there is a difference between a meeting offering refreshments and someone bringing a cup of coffee or a snack into a meeting.

Town clerk Anna Hartjens wants to move voting from the town hall to the meeting room, and to store voting desks in the closets, but neither the room nor the closets can be locked. Aldrich said the new office building is certified accessible, but the town hall ramp is not considered accessible by standards created since it was built.

Keller said there might be gray areas for allowable use of the meeting room, like a citizen or town board member wanting to sit down and check through a law book.

Lewis said, "If we allow one person to use the room, we have to allow them all." He pointed out that the library will also have a meeting room.

Aldrich suggested that the selectboard decide on use on a case by case basis, as they do now with the town hall.

Then came, "Our favorite part of the meeting," the building update. Aldrich said that a bubble in the hall flooring has grown huge. Keller said that workers from the flooring company will come and push that down, by injecting more glue to soften

what is already there, and then pounding it down. That was done elsewhere in the new building, but that repair resulted in a tear that had to be glued together.

Some building committee members wanted to reject the whole flooring job, but the owner of the flooring company said he would fight that in court. In negotiation,

he offered a \$16,000 credit on a \$22,000 contract, agreed to replace a section of the hall flooring, and to increase the extra material given to the town to 10% of the floor area. Keller said some of the problems are not in the flooring, but in the concrete below. Lewis said, "Well, well, well." He said we bought a new building and what we are getting is second hand.

Three windows do not move, but Pella is coming to replace or repair them.

The library floor is another problem. Only the subfloor has been installed in a section of the library, not the hardwood floor as earlier reported. The hardwood flooring has been delivered, but the wood was full of holes, cracks, dead knots, bark, and curves from the outside of the tree. Librarian Rose Heidkamp, Stephen Broll, and a rotating crew of volunteers worked Tuesday to cut out the defects so that the floor installation crew could begin work installing the floor on Wednesday. After being confronted by Heidkamp, the flooring company representative agreed to make up the difference.

Handford Construction has put a fourth project manager, William Schuler, on the job.

The town septic system has been connected and is working, and will not need an operator because it is essentially an advanced household system. A loud alarm in the new office building will sound if the dosing

tank overfills, but it is designed to be emptied automatically, and overfilling should not occur. The town hall tight tank is a thing of the past.

Keller said the building committee had a strong interest in a high speed internet connection; a T1 line from Verizon connected to the library and the town office building would cost from \$500 to \$700 a month, expensive, but if that cost is carried by several departments it may be worth it. Aldrich considers a high speed connection a luxury for her work, but town accountant Janet Swem considers it a necessity.

Michael Idoine met the board and said the finance committee agreed with all the articles on the special town meeting warrant. He said that Jim Slavos and Janet Swem had developed a finance spreadsheet that would allow them to transfer figures directly to the information sheet given out at the annual town meeting.

Marianne Sundell, chair of the open space committee, came to the meeting to request a budget for the committee. The budget now is zero, but that leaves no allowance for photocopies, or conferences that members attend. She thought \$300 would suffice, though planning board chair Deirdre Cabral suggested \$500. The selectboard told Sundell to submit a line item into the warrant for the annual town meeting.

An email from representative Steve Kulik said he or a member of his staff would be at the Swift River School to hear from constituents on Thursday April 26th from 3:15 to 4:15 in the afternoon. Selectboard member Dan Keller brought up the drop in PILOT (state Payment in Lieu of Taxes) money for Wendell. Overall state payments increased in 2007, but the amount earmarked for Wendell has decreased from \$250,000 in the 1980's to around \$80,000 this year.

Montague Plains Field Walk

Speaker Tim Simmons from MassWildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program will lead a field walk through the Montague Plains on Tuesday, April 24th, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. for ages 10 and older.

The pitch pine - scrub oak plant communities found in the Montague Plains are among the rarest, critically imperiled habitats in the United States. Without fire, these plant communities may be taken over by more common trees like white pine and red maple. The last large barrens complex remaining in the Connecticut Valley,

the Plains are fascinating ecologically, geologically and historically. Several organizations including Mass Natural Heritage, the University of Massachusetts and Harvard Forest are conducting research on the 1,500 acre Wildlife Management Area purchased by the Mass Division of Fisheries and Wildlife in 1998. Come explore this special natural area and learn how you can affect its current and future conservation status. Directions to meeting site shared upon registration.

Pre-register by calling 800-859-2960. The fee: \$5 donation appreciated.

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74 PROSPECT ST. TURNERS FALLS

Fire in Wendell Depot

BY JOSH HEINEMANN - When the call came in after midnight I knew I was in for a long morning. A lot of people were. The dispatcher said, "Respond to Depot Road for a fully involved structure fire." Just getting out of the house is a deal, waking from a deep sleep, finding clothing, grabbing boots, car keys, and not forgetting a station key in case I am the first person there. (Not much chance of that.) When I arrived at the station, Chief Everett Ricketts was leaving in the new pumper, and Deputy Chief Bob Bowers was leaving in Engine 2. Everett told me to follow in the tank truck, which I did. I think we all knew that the fire was not on Depot Road, but the two houses that had been condemned by housing court in Wendell Depot. I could see the orange glow over the buildings when I was half a mile away.



PHOTO BY JOSH HEINEMANN

All that is left of the two vacant houses that burned in Wendell Depot last week.

When I arrived at the scene, I was blinded by the rotating and flashing lights of the fire trucks from seven towns already there. I could not see what to do and I stopped a minute. A firefighter told me to wait until the truck ahead of me had emptied its water into a dump tank, and then I should back in and empty my tank. So I did that.

Another firefighter told me I should refill at a hydrant that was already set up with hoses and connections at the Orange sewage treatment plant, so when our tank was empty, Bob joined me and we went there.

There was nothing there. Bob said, "Nothing here, lets go back," and we turned around at the treatment plant gate and returned to the fire scene. An empty tank truck is no use, so I left it across the tracks and out of the way, and I followed Bob back towards the fire.

Someone radioed dispatch and had them stop train traffic. A pumper, I think from Turners Falls, had backed under the

Route 2 bridge and was setting up to draft from the Millers River. A four-inch supply line, still empty, was laid from there to another pumper that was supplying the fighting lines, and while it was still empty I joined another firefighter and we moved it across to the west side of Depot Road. Then I returned to the fire.

The buildings still looked like buildings, but flames were coming out all the windows that had not been boarded up, and they were well over the rooftops. It looked like there were three crews each manning a 2½" hose and nozzle. You can tell a 2½" line from a distance, because in order to hold it you have to run a loop of hose and sit on it. Usually two or more people are there to hold it. The pressure is enough to make it hard to move the nozzle, so you just pick a good spot and put water on it.

One person was standing alone with a 1½" line putting water into the upstairs gable end window. There should be two to do that job, so I fell in behind him to take some pressure off, so he could aim the hose with less effort. It was Bob on the line, from our Engine #1, and we put water

into the window until our tank was empty. It did not seem to make any difference. None of the water seemed to make any difference, except to create a mist over the fire. Through the window I watched blue flames racing up between the rafters.

The water supply stopped for a short time, and then the supply line from the river arrived, and all the 2½" hose came back to life. Bob and I took the deck gun off our truck, and the anchor, and set it up on a little rise connected to two 2½" lines and we joined the others pouring water onto the fire.

The Orange ladder truck had its ladder extended, with a mounted nozzle at the top so it could pour water down on the fire from above. When that began to add its flow, we began to gain on the fire. Occasionally, the wind shifted and all I could see was white mist lit by the floodlights from our Engine #1.

We were relieved, and I sat in the warm cab of our truck and dozed. Then I went with Bob to relieve a crew at the back of the house. We had to cross two streams of water, one in front flowing to the right towards Depot Road, the next

around the little rise that our deck gun was on, and flowing to the left. Bob knew the shallowest path that led to the back, so we were only in water halfway up our calves. Later, when a crew came to relieve us, they were too far away for me to call to them, and they waded almost up to their knees. I hoped that water did not go over the tops of their boots.

When the fire was knocked down, and we were shutting lines down, I went with an Orange firefighter to refill our tanker, and we found the proper hydrant on Sheridan Street, not at the treatment plant. I helped roll some hoses, and Everett let me go early so I would not be late driving my school bus. I got home with so much extra time I could take a quick shower and drink half a cup of coffee.

Seven towns, Orange, Erving, Ervingside, New Salem, Northfield, Shutesbury, and Turners Falls responded to the fire with a total of 30 to 35 firefighters. Montague stood by at the Wendell station with four firefighters.

The two buildings in Wendell Depot were ordered vacated by the housing court on December 1st, 2006 due to code violations; the tenants were provided with new housing at the landlord's expense. The buildings have been empty and boarded up since January. Arson is not proven, and evidence is largely destroyed, but there has been no electricity in the buildings. The fire started in the back of the smaller building.

Elks Moving Ahead on Plans for New Lodge and Pavilion

BY PAMELA LESTER
MILLERS FALLS - The Montague Elks Lodge #2521 has recently awarded a contract to architect Joseph P. Mattei of Joseph P. Mattei & Associates, AIA, from Shelburne to design the plans for the new lodge and pavilion. An architect with 25 years experience in the area, Mattei's business byline is Architecture Promotes Community, which nicely compliments the Montague Elks' mission.

The Montague order of Elks remains committed to the mission statement of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America "to serve the people and communities through benevolent programs, demonstrating that Elks Care and Elks Share."

In the fall of 2006, the Montague lodge purchased nearly 11 acres on Millers Falls Road, where the new lodge and pavilion will be constructed. The building committee is currently working with Mattei to complete plans for the pavilion. If the membership approves, the construction of the pavilion could start as early as this summer, as a first phase in construction to allow the membership and the public to use the land for events and functions. The membership has plans to erect a new lodge to better serve its needs for catering, functions, the members lounge, meeting halls, safety and accessibility.

Fundraising efforts have begun to fund the costs of erecting a new lodge. All contributions are greatly appreciated. Checks can be made payable to: Montague Elks Lodge #2521, attention, Donald Traceski, Capital Fundraising Campaign, P. O. Box 231, Turners Falls, MA 01376. For further information: Pamela Lester at (413) 863-4125.

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CREATIVE

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art installations, toured the studios of sculptor Tim de Christopher and artist Jack Nelson, checked out the performance space in the rear of Suzee's Third Street Laundromat, ogled the photographs at the Hallmark Museum, got a glimpse of Ristorante DiPaolo, and visited the Discovery Center. The visitors soaked in the sights; questions kept coming and coming.

Ambling by the renovated Cutlery Block, a woman from Rockport wondered, "Does Turners have a lot of artists?" A woman from Ayer, by now an authority on the local demographics, replied, "For a town this size." The Rockport woman mused, "There must be something promoting it, bringing artists like [de Christopher] here."

Two men from Eastern Mass discussed the town's not so distant past, as they approached the renovated Colle Block, former home to the Renaissance Community's rock n' roll recording studio. Referring to the 70's commune, one said to the other, "They used to run this town. They had their own bus company."

As they passed the last surviving mural from the hippies' glory days and approached the corner where a world class photography museum recently set up shop, it was evident that a different kind of renaissance had taken hold of this old mill town. "I have Turners envy," was how one gentleman from the Eastern part of the state put it.

As if on cue, students from the Sheffield School came parading down the Avenue, accompanied by the Turners Falls marching band, celebrating Earth Week on the way to the pristine natural history museum now occupying the former machine shop of the Montague Paper Company.

Back at the renovated performing arts center, the 1927 vaudeville-era Shea Theater, Pruitt kicked off the conference



Sculptor Tim de Christopher introduces conference participants to one of his latest works: *The Shackled Angel*, in his studio at the former Chick's Garage. De Christopher, who worked as a journeyman at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in NYC said stone carving ran in the family genes. His grandfather worked on the Bryn Athyn Cathedral in Pennsylvania. A Cathedral Project may be in the works for Turners Falls, if De Christopher's plans come true.

with a welcome to the scores of out of towners and locals in the audience. She noted that a regional incinerator had been planned for the site where the Great Falls Discovery Center now stands, until town administrator Abbondanzio had the vision to save and renovate the old mill buildings there, and she recalled that town leaders once called for the Colle to be demolished for a parking lot, until Abbondanzio and others pushed for the renovation of that corner block, now fully tenanted and spilling over to the alleyway behind. "It takes a long time to bring this kind of change about," Pruitt said. "We've been at it at least 20 years here in Turners Falls."

Like the daffodils pushing up along the brick walkways against the late wintry weather, Pruitt credited the artist community growing up in downtown for bringing new vitality. "We have moved beyond renovating buildings to bringing life to the town. Turners is more than an address where you live and receive mail. It has become a community where things are going on. The next time you are here, it will look different than it does today. It will continue to

change and evolve."

Emmy Hahn, from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development's Downtown Initiative spoke next. "I had been hearing the buzz about 'the creative economy,'" said Hahn. "But when I came to Turners Falls, suddenly the creative economy was real. I was blown away. We went into the buildings, saw how a professor from Hallmark had renovated a gallery space, and set up that huge Polaroid camera there. We went into a pet gravestone workshop, and found the artist's studio space upstairs. We went into a laundromat, and found a performance space in the back, and the poet who lived upstairs investing in more real estate. It was alive. I thought, 'We've got to get back here and show people about how they did this.'"

Regarding that poet above the laundromat, Meri Jenkins, who directs the John and Abigail Adams Arts Program for the Mass Cultural Council, the primary funder of the Turners Falls RiverCulture program, had this story to tell. She met the poet in question, Chris Janke, at a conference in Western Massachusetts four

years ago, and sat by him at lunch. He introduced himself to her.

"I'm a poet," he said.

"Oh, are you?"

"Yes, I am. I think I've finally hit on a way of making an income."

"Oh, you have?"

"I'm going to buy a laundromat."

"Oh, you are? Do you have one in mind?"

"Yes, I'm going to buy a laundromat in Turners Falls."

"I thought, 'He's completely batty,' and left it at that."

In 2005, former Montague town planner Robin Sherman met Jenkins at a Downtown and Village Centers conference in the eastern part of the state. "You've got to come to Turners Falls and see what we're doing in downtown, see the artists who've drifted in to find a place to work."

Jenkins did, and toured downtown with Sherman. "Wait, we've got one last place to go. A laundromat. With a performance space out back."

Jenkins, who speaks with a proper British accent, must have felt like she was stepping back into a scene from *My Beautiful Laundrette*. "Out of the mists of

time I said, 'I don't believe it. Poetry Slams in the back room?' Chris opens the door. 'It's you!'

"Yes, it's me!"

"What are you doing?"

"I've been living off quarters for the last three years."

The creative economy. Call it coincidence or call it fate, something has brought together a nexus of municipal support, entrepreneurial talent, and the extra push that comes from a well-placed infusion of grant funds, which Jenkins and the John and Abigail Adams Arts Program were uniquely positioned to deliver. The result, for conference attendees from Ayer to New Bedford, is a growing outbreak of Turners Envy.

Jenkins said her program, applying state funds to encourage arts based economic development in 28 towns and cities across the state, was unique when it began a few years ago, but is now being copied by other states. She noted that Massachusetts, through the Mass Cultural Council, already maintains "the largest decentralized funding program for the arts in the United States."

She said 40 million people attend cultural events, performances and cultural institutions in Massachusetts, and 30% of these come from out of state. The arts are a multi-billion industry in the state; interest in cultural activities is on the rise, and tourism is the third largest industry in the state, poised to become the top economic driver by 2010, Jenkins said.

She said an emphasis on arts and culture can change a community's self-image, as it changes outsiders' perceptions of a place. "Reputations about communities hang on much longer than they are deserved. We have a responsibility to re-describe our communities," fostering pride in the process.

Later, Jenkins posed some tough questions about some of the side effects of the very process her agency was encouraging. "Does downtown development come at the expense of neighborhoods?" she asked.

see CREATIVE pg 11

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CREATIVE
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“Can subsidized housing for artists be justified? What is the threat of gentrification? Where will creative people live once they’ve been used to raise the status of a place, and what is the responsibility of local government to them?”

Jenkins told her audience, “You need to be rooted in the cultural resources of your community, and I don’t mean theaters. I mean people, places, nature, industry and history: the essence of a place tied to its natural resources. Revisiting the past allows a place to reveal its intrinsic nature, retrieved for us by artists, who allow us to deepen our understanding of the place we live.”

Greg Jenkins, of the Somerville Arts Union, offered a look at the variety of initiatives his two and half paid staff members have been able to pull together to revitalize Union Square, in that most densely populated city in the Commonwealth. Attacking the problems of urban blight, traffic, and constant business turnover with an array of farmers and craft markets, ethnic market tours (constantly sold out), a series of citizen produced events and concerts, and a Marshmallow Fluff cooking contest with burlesque dancers in fluffy headgear (Marshmallow Fluff was invented in Somerville). Jenkins - no relation to Meri - said Arts Union has been able to turn Union Square into a destination point for city dwellers and tourists alike. He showed slides of a dance party held in the Brazilian neighborhood. Organizers there took a different approach from the typical block party, holding the dance beneath the elevated McGrath Highway, evicting the pigeons for one night, and reclaiming a huge unused swath of community real estate.

In order to enhance Union Square, Jenkins has employed artists to design benches, trash barrels and kiosks. The costs are



Graceful stainless steel work by Turners Falls sculptor Joseph Landry appeared in the storefront window of the AV House for five days and then vanished, leaving the downtown hungering for more of his work.

up to 200% more than “generic benches from Canada,” for example, but the money is put back into the local economy, resulting in distinctive, one-of-a-kind, functional urban art. For example, the artist who contracted to produce copper benches may have taken a loss after the cost of copper skyrocketed, and the Arts Union may have had to spring for 18” concrete footers beneath the copper benches to prevent them from being stolen, but the finished product is a real standout.

Jason Schupbach, director of ArtistLink, a new collaborative effort to create a dynamic environment for Massachusetts artists said his organization is taking a leadership role on artist space by providing individual artists, developers and municipalities with targeted information and technical assistance, and

by advocating for relevant policy changes at the state level. Schupbach told the crowd of recent achievements in Lowell, Boston and Worcester, then went to enumerate how ArtistLink is ready to benefit anybody in any town in Massachusetts who is interested in creating an arts-oriented community. Among the programs ArtistLink sponsors are Artist Space Initiatives. This program helps individuals and towns with predevelopment assistance, legal advice, financing models, and a list of “green” builders and architects who will work for discounted rents. Of particular interest to the participants was a list of design guidelines for artist space. Among the points Schupbach made was that artists need open and simple floor space with decent light. He noted that to carve these spaces out of existing buildings such as

old mills often requires less work, time and money than creating fancier condo units.

Following Schupbach, former Montague town planner Robin Sherman, now a graduate student at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, reviewed the long journey Turners Falls has taken from the early ‘80s, with the first streetscape projects, to the ‘90s rehabilitation of the Shea Theater and the Cutlery Block, and more recently the Colle Opera House. She noted, as well, that the reconciliation ceremony with the Narragansett Indian Tribe in 2004 truly inaugurated a new era in Turners, putting the grim past behind, making way for the future. She said the RiverCulture project was inspired by the hard work and creativity of individual artists, such as photographer Ariel Jones, who sponsored a dog parade;

Jack Nelson and Eileen Dowd, who organized studio tours, and sculptor Tim de Christopher, who transformed garages into working showcases for sculpture. She also gave a nod to Janke, whose laundromat has offered an annual fashion show featuring clothing and accessories by local designers, using material from the laundry’s lost and found. But she said arts-based economic development was not a panacea for a commu-

nity’s economic ills, and should be seen only as one aspect of an economic development strategy. She pointed to the fully tenanted Turners Falls industrial park as another long-term development strategy the town has pursued, alongside its efforts at downtown revitalization.

Joe Thompson, director of MassMoCA, which has redeveloped half of a 28-building, 700,000-square-foot mill complex in North Adams, the former home of the Sprague Electric Company, into one of the three top destinations for viewers of modern art in America since it opened in 1999, said MassMoCA was an economic driver for North Adams. “Downtown storefront occupancy increased from 30% to 78% in the last ten years,” Thompson said. He pointed to 600 new jobs created in North Adams during that time, a drop in unemployment from 18% to 6% over the same period, and \$14 - \$21 million in new business spending.

However, not every community arts project has \$35 million in state funding to back it, like MassMoCA. Clyde Barrow from the Center for Policy Analysis at UMass Dartmouth encouraged conference participants with his analysis of the economic benefits of smaller arts projects to downtowns, using New Bedford’s AHA! program as a case in point. After several years of surveying businesses and consumers about the impacts of this Thursday evening program, Barrow found that every dollar of state spending on the downtown arts initiative in that city created \$13 dollars in economic activity downtown.



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BUDGET

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capital expenses - like new vehicles for the police and DPW departments - from tax levy revenue to the stabilization fund. Abbondanzio noted that not once in the 25-year history of Proposition 2½ have Montague voters approved a tax override, although a number of debt exclusion overrides have passed to fund specific capital projects like the renovations to the high school and middle school and the combined sewer overflow project. The town manager said it is dangerous for the town to continue balancing operating budgets on one-time sources of revenue, because they will not be there in succeeding years to fund the increased operating costs, and with voters turning down attempts to build a permanent property tax hike into the base, the possibility for rising deficits looms - unless cuts in spending can be made or new sources of revenue found. According to Abbondanzio's report, the town's property tax levy has grown from \$7,038,946 to \$10,148,258 since 2000, a rate of growth of \$376,755 - or 4.6% - per year. In addition to the regular annual increase of 2½ percent of the levy allowed under Proposition 2½, these figures include new growth from residential construction (averaging \$70,731 per year, but flattening out in the last two years as the housing market has slumped) and commercial and industrial expansion, amounting to an average of just under \$100,000 a year. The town administrator credited the town's economic development policies, particularly the liberal use of tax increment financing (TIF) - to reward businesses for locating, expanding and creating new jobs in town - for the steady growth in revenues for the industrial sector. Some of this new growth will not be calculable in the town's revenue stream until the TIF agreements expire, Abbondanzio said.

During the same period of time, the town of Montague and the Gill-Montague Regional

School District have received levels of state aid that have "fluctuated wildly," according to Abbondanzio. In 2003-04, the town lost 27.9% of its state aid, which has only returned to pre-recession levels in the current fiscal year. State aid to the district schools declined by nearly \$400,000 at the same time. The GMRSD laid off 22 teachers and staff in 2003.

The town was able to keep growth in spending within the limits dictated by Proposition 2½ since 2000. To quote from the town administrator's study, "During the period from FY 2000 to FY 2007, the town operating budget (less sewer and educational assessments) increased by a total of \$933,364, or 17.8%. This is an average annual increase of 2.5%." But despite the layoffs in 2003, the schools were less able to control spending. "During the same period, spending on total educational assessments increased by \$3,949,289, or 99.1% This is a 12.4% increase per year," a figure that includes the voter approved debt exclusion for the middle and high school renovations. Minus the debt, the annual growth in GMRSD assessments during the period of the study was 6.35%. Put another way, Montague's spending for the GMRSD schools grew 2½ times faster than spending for the town side of the budget, since 2000.

Since the state recession of 2003, and the resulting layoffs in the schools, an accelerating exodus of Montague students to schools in other districts and to charter schools has resulted in a growing gap between what the state reimburses the GMRSD for students choosing in and what it deducts in state aid for students leaving the district. That gap has grown to \$576,679 in '07, from \$94,093 in '04.

"The schools do not get the growth in state aid they need to cover their costs," said Abbondanzio. "But they are penalized for school choice and charter tuition. That process has gotten worse in the last four years. In 2008, whatever state aid

they receive, the schools will lose \$1.3 million off the top," for sending students on school choice and charter school tuition.

Other than state aid, which has been inconsistent, and property taxes, which have been held to 2½ percent growth, the other main source of annual revenue the town relies on comes from local receipts, such as excise taxes and trash stickers. Abbondanzio described this category, which made up about 8.5% of town revenue last year, as "essentially flat." He said the town was considering a 50 cent increase in trash sticker fees, (stickers now cost \$2.50) to generate an additional \$40,000 in revenue, to help cover costs associated with trash pickup and curb-side recycling.

Sewer user fees increased from \$1,332,748 in '02 to \$1,516,315 in '07. Abbondanzio called sewer user fees a "true enterprise fund" in that most of the costs associated with running the sewer system are paid for by the users of that system through the user fees. But he noted that "inflow and infiltration," groundwater leaking into sewer pipes or non-metered water flowing into the system from sump pumps and drain spouts, amounts to more than 40% of the water entering the treatment plants in Montague City and Erving. The cost of treating inflow and infiltration is born by property tax payers, and averages \$200,000 annually. Abbondanzio said the town was seeking ways to reduce inflow and infiltration to town sewers.

In its attempt to reduce personnel costs during the state budget crisis four years ago, Abbondanzio said town hall and departmental staff had been reduced from about 80 employees to about 72 employees. For example, he said the percentage of town spending on the DPW has declined from 31% to 25% during the study period, largely due to cuts in staffing.

Despite these cutbacks, the spiraling cost of health insurance and retirement benefits "was unquestionably the biggest budget buster in the town's budget during the study period." Growth in health insurance at 8.3% a year accounted for 42% of the overall

increase in the town's operating budget since 2000. Employee benefits now constitute 28.1% of the town budget.

These same factors are even more pronounced in the growth the school budget. Abbondanzio said personnel salaries and benefits were the main driver of the steady increases in school assessments, since 85% to 90% of the school budget is pegged to personnel costs. "With 6% increases a year," for step increases and cost of living raises for school employees, "that number is growing very fast," Abbondanzio said.

Debt service, which declined as a percentage of the town budget from 12.1% in 2000 to 5.6% of the budget in '07 is due to rise again next year, when a \$1.3 million long term bond for a number of sewer projects (not including the present \$5.7 million CSO abatement project), town hall accessibility improvements, and the \$250,000 bond for sidewalk repair begins to be added to the town's annual debt service, to the tune of \$95,000. The CSO work will begin to be added to the debt service in '09, Abbondanzio said.

Looking at the total picture of revenues and expenditures, and the fact that many town departments are now reduced to a 1 or 2 person staff and cannot be cut further, and that mandates placed on the school system combined with the impact of school choice make further personnel cuts in the schools a risky proposition, Abbondanzio said, "We're in an unsustainable situation down the road, without changes at the state level." He said if the town and schools took no further cost control measures, and state aid remained flat, the town would be running "\$3 million deficits by 2013, which is huge."

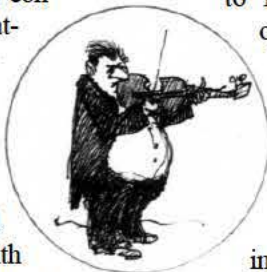
Hoping to avoid this, Abbondanzio projected three different scenarios of revenue and expenditures for the next six years, and called for the careful parceling out of the \$2.7 million surplus created in the free cash and the assessors overlay account

from the Indeck settlement over the course of the next six years. Abbondanzio said the Indeck money should be spent only on capital projects, such as new police cruisers or DPW vehicles, or other items that have at least a five-year life expectancy, rather than spending the money to balance the operating budget directly, and thereby throwing the following year's operating budget further out of line. Abbondanzio noted that the town used to fund capital projects primarily from taxation, but during the course of the study period had turned to funding 85% of them out of stabilization.

In order to follow best practices for stabilization funds, Abbondanzio said the town should attempt to build the fund up to 5% of the operating budget, and dip into it only for real need. This would improve the town's bond rating, and reduce the cost of borrowing for capital projects, he said.

The town administrator's forecasts called for reducing personnel costs in the schools and town departments by holding down cost of living raises (now at 3% for the town, coupled with 2% step increases; together those costs are closer to 6% for the schools) and by trying to join the state insurance pool (Group Insurance Commission), if the legislature allows towns to do so. GIC rates are rising at about half the rate of the town's current health insurance policy, Abbondanzio said. Even with these cost control measures, only the most optimistic projections of state aid would allow the town to avoid deficits by the end of the six-year forecast period, he said.

Pointing to the 2½ percent growth in town spending over the last eight years, Abbondanzio said, "This is not a case of out of control budgets. We're no different than any other town. There is a structural deficit beyond the town's control that needs to be addressed by the state."



JACK COUGHLIN ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH

Food-borne Illness: Part II of a Two-part Series

BY JOAN PAJAK



MONTAGUE - Most food-borne illness is caused by the transmission of disease causing agents (pathogens) such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites in the food we eat. This article will concentrate on how food gets contaminated, and what we can do to prevent contacting food-borne illness.

Food can become contaminated during production. For example, some types of Salmonella can infect a hen's ovary, so the contents of a normal looking egg can become contaminated with this common

bacteria before the shell is formed. Oysters and other filter-feeding shellfish that strain microscopic organisms (microbes) from the sea over many months are particularly likely to be contaminated if there are any pathogens in the seawater. Raw foods of animal origin are the most likely to be contaminated; that is, raw meat and poultry, raw eggs, unpasteurized milk, and raw shellfish. Foods that mingle the products of many individual animals, such as ground beef, are particularly hazardous because a pathogen present in any one of the animals may contaminate the whole batch. A single hamburger may contain meat from hundreds of animals. A single restaurant omelet may contain eggs from hundreds of chickens. A glass of raw milk may contain milk from hundreds of cows. Fresh fruits and vegetables can be also contaminated if they are washed or irrigated with water

that is contaminated with animal manure or human sewage. Unpasteurized fruit juice, including cider, can be contaminated if there are pathogens in or on the fruit used to make it.

Food can also become contaminated during preparation and handling. In the kitchen, microbes can be transferred from one food to another food by using the same knife, cutting board or other utensil to prepare both without washing the surface or utensil in-between. Even a food that is fully cooked can become re-contaminated if it touches other raw foods or drippings from raw foods that contain pathogens. Shigella bacteria, Hepatitis A virus, and Norwalk virus are a few examples of pathogens that can easily be introduced into food by the unwashed hands of a food handler who has the infection.

Many bacteria need to multiply to a large number before enough are present in food to

cause illness. One bacterium that reproduces by dividing itself every half hour can produce 17 million progeny in 12 hours. So, even lightly contaminated food left out on the counter overnight can become highly infectious by the next day. Refrigeration or freezing prevents most bacteria from growing, but it doesn't necessarily kill them. Microbes are killed by heat. If food is heated to an internal temperature above 160oF for even a few seconds it is sufficient to kill most bacteria, parasites, and viruses. A few precautions can reduce the risk of food-borne illness:

Cook: meat, poultry and eggs thoroughly. For example, ground beef should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160o F. Eggs should be cooked until the yolk is firm.

Separate: Avoid cross-contaminating foods by washing hands, utensils, and cutting boards after they have been in

contact with raw meat or poultry and before they touch another food. Put cooked meat on a clean platter, rather than back on a platter that held the raw meat.

Chill: Refrigerate leftovers promptly.

Clean: Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables in clean, running tap water even if you are planning to peel them. Remove and discard the outermost leaves of a head of lettuce or cabbage. Bacteria can grow well on the cut surface of fruit or vegetable, be careful not to contaminate these foods while slicing them up on the cutting board. Always wash your hands with soap and water before preparing food.

To view the video entitled "Foodborne Illnesses and their Prevention" or for more information on this topic contact the Montague Board of Health, 413-863-3200 x205.

Joan Pajak is the public health nurse for the town of Montague.

THE HEALTHY GEEZER

Controlling Triglycerides

BY FRED CICETTI

LEONIA, NJ - Q. My doctor told me my cholesterol and triglycerides are elevated. I have a vague idea what cholesterol is but I'm clueless about triglycerides. What are they?

Triglycerides are a fat in your blood. They are important to maintaining good health. However, if your triglycerides get out of control, you can put your heart at risk. People with high triglycerides usually have lower HDL (good) cholesterol and a higher risk of heart attack and stroke.

Calories you take in but don't burn immediately are converted to triglycerides to supply you with energy later. Your triglyceride level can be too high if you continue to consume more calories than you need. Of course, this causes obesity, too.

Other causes of elevated triglycerides - called hypertriglyceridemia - include diabetes, an underactive thyroid, kidney disease, and drugs such as beta-blockers, some diuretics, estrogen, tamoxifen, steroids and birth control pills.

The common guidelines for triglyceride levels are the fol-

lowing: normal, less than 150 mg/dL; borderline-high, 150 to 199 mg/dL; high, 200 to 499 mg/dL, and very high, 500 mg/dL or more. "Mg/dL" stands for milligram per deciliter.

The primary remedy for too many triglycerides is changing your habits. Here are some pointers on how to get your triglycerides down:

- Get off the recliner and exercise.
- Cut your caloric intake across the board. This means you have to reduce your consumption of not just fat, but carbohydrates and proteins. Substituting carbohydrates for fats can raise triglyceride levels. People with high triglycerides may have to limit their intake of carbohydrates to no more than 45 to 50 percent of total calories.
- Avoid saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol. This is a complex subject. A good starting point is to stay away from foods that come from animals such as meat, dairy and eggs. But there are plant-based foods that are bad for you, too. These include oils from coconuts, cottonseeds and palm kernels.



ILLUSTRATION: JESSICA HARMON

- Eat oily fish such as mackerel, lake trout, herring, sardines, albacore tuna and salmon, which are high in omega-3 fatty acids. Research has shown that omega-3 fatty acids decrease triglyceride levels

- A small amount of alcohol can generate a big increase in triglyceride levels. Cut down as much as you can.

- Quit smoking. If you're a regular reader of this column, you must know by now that smoking doesn't just cause respiratory diseases such as lung cancer and emphysema. It kills you in so many ways.

If changing your habits is insufficient to bring your level of triglycerides down, there are medications that can be prescribed. Fenofibrate, gemfibrozil and nicotinic acids often work to reduce triglycerides.

Hypertriglyceridemia can run in families. While high triglycerides don't usually present noticeable symptoms, people with a family history of very high triglycerides may have visible fatty deposits under the skin.

Elevated triglycerides are

often part of a group of conditions called metabolic syndrome.

This syndrome is the combination of high blood pressure, elevated blood sugar, excess weight, low HDL cholesterol, and high triglycerides. This syndrome increases your risk for heart disease, diabetes and stroke.

[In the next installment of *The Healthy Geezer*, we'll focus on cholesterol.]

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JEP'S PLACE: Faith, Hope and Other Disasters Part XXVIII

Cows, Milk, Cream and Cheese

BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH GILL - We kept milk cows. Since we didn't have electricity for refrigeration, or an ice house for ice to cool milk until the milk truck picked it up, what we didn't drink we processed into cheese and butter, feeding the rest to the pigs. I don't know why my father didn't have an ice house. We had a pond on our farm that froze solid. It would have only meant storing blocks of ice in a building with a layer of sawdust, or hay, insulating the ice. But without ice, we couldn't sell milk.

Ma made "farmer's cheese" by pouring soured milk into a

cheese-cloth bag and hanging it up to drain. She'd press the remaining whey out by placing the bag between two round boards weighted with a heavy stone. We ate fresh "farmer's cheese," but my favorite was the cheese she hung in a bag nailed to the woodshed wall, where it was exposed to all kinds of weather. After a month or two, the cheese got rock hard, taking on a cheddar cheese flavor that was a delight to chew. Ma would rest the blade of a butcher knife on the cheese and hit the back of it with a hammer to whack off a chunk. "Bam," and a hunk of cheese would come loose. Carrying a chunk in my pocket was insurance against going hungry when I knew I'd be gone from home all day. I could gnaw

on a small piece for hours, keeping hunger pangs away.

To separate cream from milk, we had a tall can with a glass window, about a half inch wide, going up the side. The glass had cracked, somehow, but Pa sealed it with window putty.

After the milk sat a while, the cream would rise to the top. To separate the milk we simply opened the spigot at the bottom and drained the milk down to the cream line. We had to guess a little because the putty blocked our view.

Sometimes we'd use some of the cream, after it soured, to make cream soups - beet borscht, kielbasa soup, or cream soups using sauerkraut liquid, or vegetable greens. Ma made a delicious cream soup with

pigweed, until I told her the English name for it. She never made it again and denied ever making it. Ma used all manner of herbs in cooking and making teas. She even used the tendrils of grape vines for a distinctive sour taste in her cooking or canning. When there didn't seem to be anything to eat, she'd dice salt pork, fry it crisp, stir it into mashed potatoes and add sour cream, garnishing it with fresh parsley. I loved it. But, we saved most of our cream in our Daisy butter churn, letting it sour. The butter churn had a square glass container that held about a gallon. A crank and gears sat on top of the cover. Four canted wooden paddles, attached to the shaft, beat the cream as we turned the crank. Pa

gave us strict orders to turn the crank slowly. Turning it fast would only whip the cream and it would never turn to butter, he said.

Sometimes in hot weather the butterfat would not gather, especially if the cream was not very rich. After I spent hours and hours of tedious slow churning, Pa would become irritated when I complained and tell me, "Don't be so lazy; just keep cranking."

- to be continued ...

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG

Raked Leaves in the Brook

Wednesday 4-4

10:15 a.m. Report of subject raking leaves into brook on Hanson Court. Spoke with reporting party about issue.

10:45 p.m. Call from a West High Street address reported someone was in the basement. House was searched. Nothing was found.

Thursday 4-5

10:40 a.m. Report of a suspicious vehicle in Smokin' Hippo parking lot. Vehicle pulled out upon arrival. Followed vehicle. No illegal observations made.

1:40 a.m. After a motor vehicle stop on Route 2, a criminal application was issued to [redacted] for operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license.

Monday 4-9

1:30 p.m. Subject into station possibly in labor. Requested EMT's and BHA ambulance. Assisted with first aid until BHA arrived. Subject transported to Franklin Medical Center.

Tuesday 4-10

9:30 a.m. Report of dirt in roadway on East Prospect Street. Checked area. Spoke with subject who agreed to shovel dirt out of road.

Friday 4-6

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JACK COUGHLIN ILLUSTRATION

THURSDAY TO SATURDAY, APRIL 12TH TO 14TH
The Country Players presents: *A Few Good Men* by Aaron Sorkin, directed by Richard J. Martin at The Shea Theatre. 8 p.m. and 2 p.m. on Saturday. Call and reserve your tickets now! 863-2281 ext. 1

FRIDAY, APRIL 13TH
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Evolve* - keyboard and drums. 9 to 11 p.m.

Rt. 63 Roadhouse: *Curly Fingers Dupree Band*, full band all electric. Come to dance. 9:30 p.m.

Concert at The Bookmill, Montague Center: Adam Bergeron and Robby Alan Roiter. Adam Bergeron plays inspiring improvisational classical piano. Robby Alan Roiter plays intricate improv-based jazz guitar. Arrive early for couches, armchairs, and to browse the books. \$10 cover. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, APRIL 14TH
Open Mic at Cup-o-Joe, Ave A, Turners Falls. Sign up at 6:30, open mic 7 to 10 p.m. Grill open, coffee and pastries available.

Concert - Travis LeDoyt with his All Star Nashville Band. A rousing night of non stop music, Orange Town Hall auditorium, Orange. Show time 7 p.m., doors open 6:30 p.m.

68th Season Pioneer Valley Symphony Brass and Brahms Under the direction of Paul Phillips, featuring Eric Berlin, trumpet soloist performing the Alexander Arutiunian Trumpet Concerto. Program also includes Jean Sibelius' *Karelia Suite* and Johannes Brahms' *Symphony No. 2*. At Greenfield High School. Pre-concert talk at 7 p.m. Concert at 7:30 p.m. 773-3664.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Blame It On Tina* - rock. 9 to 11 p.m.

Rt. 63 Roadhouse: *James Montgomery Blues Band*. Tickets \$12 advance, \$15 at the door. 9:30 p.m.

Concert at The Bookmill, Montague Center: John Coster. "Coster... is a songwriter of uncommon sensitivity and eloquence. His graceful [guitar] style spans lyrical pop and rock dimensions and with the right breaks, Coster could become a national figure." - Steve Morse - Boston Globe. \$10 cover. 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, APRIL 15TH
Deja Brew, Wendell: Classical Piano

with Adam Bergeron. 7 - 9 p.m.

MONDAY APRIL 16TH
Valerie Dee Naranjo performing an inspirational concert of Native American Singing and West African Marimba from Ghana. Joined in part by Jazz Pianist Barry Olson. At Four

Greenfield Business Association. Featuring displays and samples of environmentally friendly products, food, music and services. At Franklin County Fairgrounds. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. 774-2791. Free admission.

The Echo Lake Coffee House: a night of poetry, 7:30 pm. Open mike, followed by readings/performance by two hyper-political, feminist poets, Lenelle Moise and Arjuna Greist. Arrive by 7:00 pm to sign up for the open mike. Admission: \$12/\$10 seniors.

Concert at The Bookmill, Montague Center: The Ambiguities and Carrie Ferguson & Cherry Street Band. Vast, sonic crazy quilt of rock, punk, blues, pop, and disco \$5, 7:30 p.m.

Rivers Charter School. 7 p.m., sliding scale \$7 - \$15. Info. call 648-9793.

Live Jazz at Ristorante DiPaolo, Avenue A, 6 to 9 p.m. Info. 863-4441.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18TH
Deja Brew, Wendell: Open Mic Fiddle Tune Swa. 8 to 10 p.m.

THURSDAY, APRIL 19TH
Wine and Beer Tasting at the Pushkin, Greenfield. All proceeds to benefit Hospice of Franklin County. Includes wine, beer, music and hors d'oeuvres. 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. 774-2400.

Deja Brew, Wendell: Blues with Dave Robinson & Tommy Filault, 8 to 10 p.m. no cover.

FRIDAY, APRIL 20TH
Deja Brew, Wendell: Johnny Cash Covers by Josh Levangie. 9 to 11 p.m. No cover.

Rt. 63 Roadhouse: *Jen Toby Band*, rock. Come to dance. 9:30 p.m.

FRIDAY TO SUNDAY, APRIL 20TH TO 22ND
Arena Civic Theatre presents: *The Crucible* directed by Catherine King at the Shea Theater, Turners Falls. Tickets \$12.50 general, \$10 for Senior Citizens & Students. Available at World Eye Bookshop and at the Door. Call 863-2281 x3 for reservations. Friday & Saturday's performance at 8 p.m. Sunday performance 2 p.m. Continues **April 27th to 29th**.

SATURDAY, APRIL 21ST
4th Annual Growing a Green Community Fair Sponsored by the



Reverend Billy and the "Church of Stop Shopping" Gospel Choir & "Not Buying It" Band return to the valley! Two performances-Saturday, April 21st in Shelburne Falls. 7:30 p.m. Memorial Hall Theater and Sunday, April 22nd in Brattleboro. 3 p.m. at The Church.

SUNDAY, APRIL 22ND
The 1st Annual Montague Community Variety Show at 6:30 p.m. at the Grange Hall, Montague Center. Performers are encouraged to sign up early to guarantee time on stage. Proceeds to benefit the Turn Children Education Fund. Sign up or for more information, call 367-2483 or dradway@verizon.net, MCs Brendan Taaffe & Marina Goldman

Deja Brew, Wendell: Singer/songwriter Nicole Berke with Jessee Cafiero. 7 to 9 p.m.

FRIDAY TO SUNDAY, APRIL 27 TO 29TH
Arena Civic Theater presents *The Crucible* At the Shea Theater, Turners Falls. Friday and Saturday 8 p.m. Sunday 2 p.m. Info. 863-2281

SATURDAY, APRIL 28TH
Gill-Montague Gala-featuring The Gregory Caputo Big Band and his show "Velocity." Turners Falls High School theater, 7:30 p.m. Admission is \$20. Tickets are available at Scotty's Store, World Eye Bookshop or call Sandy at TFHS, 863-7218. Tickets on sale now!

ONGOING
Exhibit: John Willis' and Tom Young's "Recycled Realities and Other Stories" at Hallmark Museum of Contemporary Photography, Turners Falls. Haunting and surreal, series of black and white images invite viewers into a vast paper landscape at Erving Paper Mill. Also images from photographic projects: "View from the Rez" and "Timeline".

AUDITIONS
The Country Players is holding auditions for *Wizard of Oz*, directed by David Grout. Performances are July 6, 7 & 13, 14, 15. Auditions are **Sunday, April 22nd** from 2 to 5 p.m. at GCC Downtown Center and **Tuesday, April 24th** from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. at the Shea Theater.

Ja'Duke Productions auditions for "Footloose" & "West Side Story" scheduled for summer 2007. Performance dates are: "Footloose": July 20, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29 and "West Side Story": August 3, 4, 10, 11, 12. Auditions on **Sunday, April 22nd** 1 p.m.-3 p.m. at JCPA, 85 Ave A, Turners Falls. Rehearsals will start on Monday, June 4th. Need to be 13 years and older. Info Nick Waynelovich 863-4503.

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Showtimes for
Fri., April 13th-Thurs., April 19th
1. **BLADES OF GLORY** PG13
DAILY 7:00 9:30
MAT. FRI-THURS 12:00 2:00 4:00
2. **MEET THE ROBINSONS** PG
DAILY 7:00 9:30 in DTS sound
MAT. FRI-THURS 12:00 2:00 4:00
3. **GRINDHOUSE** R
DAILY 7:00 9:30
MATINEE FRI-THURS 12:00 3:30
4. **ARE WE DONE YET** PG13
DAILY 6:45 9:15
MATINEE FRI-THURS 12:15 3:15
5. **300** R
DAILY 6:45 9:15
MATINEE FRI-THURS 3:15
5. **FIREHOUSE DOG** PG
MATINEE FRI-THURS 12:15
6. **DISTURBIA** PG13
DAILY 6:30 9:00 in DTS sound
MATINEE FRI-THURS 12:30 3:30
7. **PERFECT STRANGER** R
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MATINEE FRI-THURS 12:30 3:30



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Upcoming at the Discovery Center

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Groups by Special Arrangement, Tuesday - Thursday

UNTIL APRIL 28TH
Museum of Industrial Heritage Display and Jack Coughlin Sketched Portraits in the Great Hall.

THURSDAY, APRIL 19TH
Educators Workshop: Turtles. Educators who attended the Turtle Symposium will discuss forming an educators working group for habitat stewardship education. Resources & develop activities discussed. 5 - 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, APRIL 20TH
Very Cool Vernal Pool. Refuge staff

show what's so special about vernal pools and explore the creatures that make vernal pools their home. Geared towards young children, will include art activity. 10:30 a.m.

TUESDAY, APRIL 24TH
Montague Plains Field Walk with Tim Simmons, Restoration Ecologist, Mass. Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. Held at the Montague Plains, Montague 6:30 p.m. For ages 10 and older. 6:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25TH
Coffee House-Friends of The

Discovery Center. 7 p.m.
FRIDAY, APRIL 27th
Freaky for Frogs! Join Refuge staff for a hands-on activity to explore the life cycle of frogs, and learn about some of our local frogs we share our environment with. Geared towards young children. 10:30 a.m.
SATURDAY, APRIL 28TH
Week of the Child - The Pop Rockets Perform! We used to be The Juice Pops, now with two new members are The Pop Rockets! www.poprocketsmusic.com 2 to 3:30 p.m

Great Falls Discovery Center - 2 Avenue A, Turners Falls - www.greatfallsma.org

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FISH from pg 1

dam was built, two nearly isolated populations of sturgeon have emerged - one above the dam and another below the dam. Although sturgeon can certainly pass downstream over the Holyoke dam by going through the turbines, this causes high rates of mortality for the larger fish. To return to spawn, it is possible for them to be lifted up over the dam in the fish lift, but they rarely do so. Without help from Alex and his colleagues, the shortnose sturgeon, which depends on a breeding population of about 400 individuals north of the dam, is now considered in danger of disappearing altogether in the Connecticut unless we humans figure out how to help.

Fish-style Obstacle Courses

On its 10-acre campus, the Conte Lab sports several fish obstacle courses of various sizes. Some fit on a lab bench top; others require a room the size of a small airplane hangar. But all are designed for one purpose: to study how anadromous fish move and respond to the sorts of natural and unnatural barriers they face in the big real-life race course humans have helped to create in their riverine habitat, in the great outdoors.

Haro explained that the Conte Lab, at the end of Migratory Way in the South End of Turners Falls is not only ideally situated for studying anadromous fish but also the only lab of its kind anywhere in the world. Sitting between the Power Canal and the Connecticut River, a major fish migratory pathway, the lab complex has access to wild fish habitat and lots of natural river water: up to 160,000 gallons per minute. That river water is directed into several laboratories, research facilities supplied with ample running water for tanks and large-scale flumes (inclined channels that mimic a natural river's slope up from the sea).

A Nice Cold Jacuzzi

Like two schooling minnows,

Haro and I wound our way among the labs, starting with the smallest first. It's a garage-sized room with about 30 tanks, each as big as a Jacuzzi. To please the cold-water-loving fish, the room is unheated. In one chilly tank, about six small short-nose sturgeons were resting on the bottom - looking a little shy, if not forlorn. Because collecting the endangered sturgeon from the wild is illegal, Haro said the Conte scientists obtained a permit allowing them to raise these fish from eggs.

These shy little fish were infants, a month or two old, and no more than several inches long. An adjacent tank held a dozen or so larger, more active sturgeon. Although only several months old, these fish were close to a foot long. Sturgeons grow fast at first, Haro told me - it's one of their adaptations for surviving in the wild. These toddlers swam quickly around and around the tank with their noses and mouths pointed curiously at us. "They're looking for food," Haro said. "They're hungry. Although they're picky eaters at first, after a while we can feed them trout chow."

Water workouts

Haro and I drifted on to a Plexiglas chamber fitted to plumbing in the wall. The scientists put a fish in the chamber (called a "flow respirometer"), seal it up, turn on a pump and see how well the fish swims at controlled water speeds. The fish actually goes nowhere inside the chamber; it's the water pumped through the respirometer that moves. Nevertheless, the fish gets a workout - carefully observed by scientists like Haro. Afterwards, the invigorated sturgeon is returned to its nice cold Jacuzzi to relax.

Bringing up Baby

The faster-moving older fish seem to get all the workouts, but, as with humans, it's really the newly hatched sturgeon infants that need the most attention. That's because scientists need to know more about what condi-

tions in wild rivers will help the inches-long babies hide from predators so they have a chance to grow into two- to three-foot-long adult fish. We do know that sturgeon like to live close to river bottoms, but when they're young we don't know what kind of river bottom they prefer - rough and dark or light and smooth.

Figuring out what these little guys need has presented scientists with a tough problem. They're so shy that they're rarely, if ever, observed in the wild. The Conte Lab tanks, therefore, give scientists important opportunities to observe hatchling behavior that would otherwise never be seen.

One observation tank is wired for high-tech video observation. It sports a video camera placed about two feet over a shallow tank, with one half of the tank bottom smooth and white, the other rough and dark, simulating natural stream bottom variations. As water is pumped over the tank bottom (simulating river flow) and the sturgeon hatchlings are released, the video cameras watch the little fish wriggle and slide from one simulated stream bottom to the other. Later, researchers review the tapes and note the sturgeon's preferences. These data help scientists figure out, for example, whether the fish prefer one surface when the water is moving fast and another when it's moving slowly.

Knowing what bottom types and water speeds the sturgeon prefer in the lab tanks helps scientists build life-size models of streams and rivers to study their indoor fish as they move along simulated watercourses closely matching those in the wild. These larger stream- and river-sized labs are located in a special building called the flume laboratory, the last stop on our watery tour.

An Indoor River

The flume laboratory connects to a labyrinth-like series of fish holding ponds behind a loading dock. Here, trucks fitted with fish tanks back up and empty their cargo directly into

the ponds. The ride in the truck tanks is sometimes hard on the fish, Haro explained, and it's extremely important to get them through the passages and on into the flume laboratory as soon as possible.

The inside of the flume laboratory is a marvel: thousands of gallons of water from the power canal rush beneath your feet under a metal walkway. The lab's largest room contains a model stream about 100 feet long and 20 feet wide, complete with plastic rocks of various colors to simulate a real New England watercourse. The simulated watercourse was dry during my visit - winter is a good time to make needed repairs and set up the flume for experimental runs in the spring and summer.

Baffling Questions

In a smaller flume to the right of the main simulated stream, a technician worked to adjust electronic sensors that will be placed in the flume to monitor water speed and depth. Haro said one of the most important research questions addressed at the Conte Lab is how to best design and build fish ladders and lifts so that migrating fish can safely navigate the dams and hydroelectric plants humans have placed in their paths. Typically, we've built ladders for fish - but the designs have not always been fish-friendly. One device, a 100-year-old design called the steep pass fishway, is an aluminum fish ladder with ridges or baffles along the sides, angled upstream. Power companies (which dam the rivers to harness water power to generate electricity) like the steep pass because it's simple, inexpensive, and easy to install. But is it good for the fish? Haro said, "Not always." Many fish, especially smaller or weaker-swimming ones, won't use it. Those that do risk injury. If a fish that has swum part way up the fishway decides to turn around and go back downstream, it gets hung up or cut on the angled aluminum baffles.

One new design Haro and his colleagues have been working on

is called the spiral side-baffle fish ladder. In the spiral fish ladder, baffles alternate on each side of the passage, and the ladder ascends and descends in gentle loops. Most important - especially for sturgeon, whose body shape is adapted for life on the bottom of rivers and lakes - the spiral staircase design does not require fish to rise significant distances above the river bottom to ascend or descend the ladder. Sturgeon and other anadromous fish have successfully passed the one- and two-loop designs of the spiral ladder. In fact, the same fish often passed up and down the spiral ladder multiple times during a test.

Finally, my journey through the Conte Fish Lab was over. Haro confided that, as with most government science programs, fish research faces tight funding, but through the efforts of an excellent staff at the lab, he's confident significant progress can be made. After all, this is a race anadromous fish must win if they are to survive.

A Chance to See for Yourself

This past year, during the U.S. Geological Survey's Earth Science Week in October, the Conte Lab held an open house during which it welcomed the public to visit and talk with several of the scientists about their research. Guests also got to see sturgeon and other fish going through their experimental paces. A date for the next open house hasn't been set yet, but if you're interested in seeing firsthand the fish research going on right here in Turners Falls, call Kathy Pietryka at 413-863-9475. She'll be happy to put you on the Conte Fish Lab Open House mailing list.

Steve Winters is a hydrogeologist and environmental science educator. Through Boston University's Prisoner Education Project, he teaches environmental geology at Framingham women's prison and astronomy at Norfolk men's prison. He lives in Turners Falls. Reach him at science_matters@yahoo.com.

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