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Earth Day Energy in Montague /
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JAMES MONTGOMERY BAND
Rocks the Roadhouse/
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LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 5 - NO. 28

also serving Gill, Erving and Wendell

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

APRIL 19, 2007

A River Rat's View



HEINEMANN PHOTO

River Rat Racers brave the cold and rain to compete in the annual Millers River canoe and kayak race.

BY JOSH HEINEMANN
ATHOL - A sudden April swim in the Millers River changes your whole outlook on the day. Before the swim you might be thinking about paddling, or maybe what you will be doing later in the day, maybe taxes or the laundry or whether the rain will ever stop. Once in the water all you think about is getting out; thoughts of the future go no further than getting warm and dry. We did not swim during the race, but at the end of our second practice we were in the water so suddenly I had no idea how it happened.

We were at the take out,

and close to shore. I was thinking about a nice meal in town, and then we were swimming. Kate got out while I held the boat and I watched uselessly as my paddle floated downstream. It was a good paddle too, but easier to replace than the boat.

I got out and then Kate went back in to save the bumper that protects the car roof from the canoe's gunwales, and I pulled the boat out of the water. Then I helped Kate out.

I decided right then that we would not go out to eat, because the restaurant would not want us dripping

see RACE pg 7

Intra-district Choice on the Agenda for Gill and Montague



PHOTO BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH

If the school committee's proposal passes at special town meetings in both towns on May 3rd, elementary students from Montague could choose into openings in Gill... and vice versa.

BY KEVIN FOLEY - Gill and Montague will hold special town meetings on Thursday, May 3rd (at 6:00 p.m. in Gill, at the town hall, and at 7:00 p.m. in Montague, at the high school) to vote on a proposal to implement intra-district school choice within the Gill-Montague school district. If passed, the proposal will enable parents or guardians of elementary school students in Montague to choose to have their children go to elementary school in Gill, if there are openings for them there, and it

will allow parents in Gill to have their children attend elementary school in Montague, if there are openings for them there. The current district agreement in place between Gill and Montague limits students between kindergarten and sixth grade to attending schools in their hometown.

Presently, parents of students from Gill and Montague are able to choose to send their children to elementary schools in any neighboring school district where openings exist, except for the town they

share the school district with. In the last four years, more students have chosen to leave GMRSD schools for schools in neighboring communities than are choosing into GMRSD schools from neighboring districts, resulting in a loss of state aid. This year, 80 students choiced into G-M schools, while 155 students choiced out. In the coming fiscal year, the GMRSD expects to lose \$1.3 million in state aid that will follow students choicing out to neighboring districts.

see CHOICE pg 8

AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH: PART 1 OF A 2-PART SERIES

Teaching Us the Meaning of Unconditional Love

BY LYN CLARK

TURNERS FALLS - The baby doesn't smile. She is beautiful, perfect in every way, but she doesn't smile. Long past the week when she should react with gurgles and laughter to the silly antics of her parents, she stares blankly, or looks away. Long past the month when she should say her first word, there is silence. She gives no indication of recognizing her name. She is autistic. Her parents have barely heard of autism, much less suspect it, but into their initial joy of parenthood a worm of anxiety has crept and taken up residence.

The label Autism Spectrum Disorder is an umbrella for a range of disorders that all share certain characteristics. This particular baby is a classic example

of the type of child that Leo Kanner had in mind when he coined the term "autism" in 1943. This baby is my granddaughter, Lexi.

Autism is a complex neurobiological disorder that typically lasts a lifetime, the result of faulty brain wiring or abnormal brain chemistry. It is also a whole-body disease, involving in many cases various types of illness: allergies, sleep disruption,



PHOTO: LYN CLARK

The author's granddaughter, Lexi, is autistic.

digestive problems, inflammation of the brain, abnormal intestinal tissues, low muscle tone, clumsiness, seizures,

heavy metal toxicity. These are children whose immune systems have been compromised.

Although the symptoms and the severity of the condition vary tremendously from one individual to another, there are certain characteristics that are common to all:

- Poor social engagement (lack of eye contact, a sense that other people are inanimate objects, failure to interact, failure to understand

the concept of personal space, inability to read non-verbal cues, preference for being alone);

- Difficulty communicating with others (slow to develop speech, or lacking speech altogether; may repeat what others say [echolalia], monotonous, mechanical tone with little control over volume and pitch);

- Stereotypical behaviors (Flapping of hands, rocking, spinning, engaging in repetitive activities with tunnel vision - whatever soothes and reduces stress).

The result is a child who will seem quirky to others at best, downright weird at worst; this is a child who cannot understand the strange and often frightening world in which she finds

see AUTISM pg 11

PET OF THE WEEK

Set Me Free



Crystal

Crystal is a one-year-old female long hair tortie cat in need of a good home. This is a cat you can just throw over your shoulder and she'll love it! And yet Crystal gets passed over all the time because she's FIV+ and people get scared off by that. She is beautiful and healthy and chances are good that she has a long and happy life ahead of her. Although FIV+ cats have to live indoors, they don't have to live in a bubble! Crystal is a terrific cat who enjoys kids and is very much a people cat. For more information on adopting Crystal, please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at 413-548-9898 or via email at lev-erett@dpvhs.org.

LIBRARY NEWS

Bookmobile Visits Libraries

BY LINDA HICKMAN

The Bookmobile recently visited the Millers Falls and Montague Center Libraries. The bookmobile is a vital resource that only serves towns under 10,000 in Western Massachusetts. It rotates books, movies and books on tape and CD to small libraries throughout the region. The Bookmobile

comes from and is funded by the Western Massachusetts Regional Library System.

The Bookmobile visited the Montague Center Library a month ago. Several of the Montague Public Libraries staff selected many books, videos and DVDs off the truck, which will be available for borrowing until the next visit in eleven weeks.

including action films, classics, family fare and children's titles.

The bookmobile visited the Millers Falls Library two weeks ago. Similar items were chosen, along with collections of westerns and large print mysteries and romances. They will also be available for the next eleven weeks.

If they can not find what they are looking for at the Montague Public Libraries, library patrons are encouraged to place orders for books, videos, DVDs, books on tape and CD, and music tapes and CDs at their local library or on-line at www.cwmars.org. Delivery vans from WMRLS transport library materials to and from libraries across western Massachusetts daily.

The Millers Falls Library, 23 Bridge Street, 659-3801, is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2 - 5 and 6 - 8 p.m. The Montague Center Library, 367-2852, is open Mondays and Wednesdays, also 2 - 5 and 6 - 8 p.m.



PHOTO: LINDA HICKMAN

MILLERS FALLS - Laurie Davidson, Solena and Alexander Davidson Carroll, and Tom Carroll of Montague Center perform Music and Movement for young children at the Millers Falls Library on Thursday mornings at 10 a.m. thru June.

The books for adults include general fiction, mysteries, science fiction and fantasy. For children and teens, there are picture books, easy readers, high interest non-fiction, novels and paperback fiction. Many videos and some DVDs were selected,

What's Cooking in Vermont? Senior Trip

"What's Cooking in Vermont?" On Thursday June 28th, the bus leaves First Street parking lot at 9:00 a.m.; returns at 6:30 p.m. Cost: \$65.00 per person, taxes and gratuities included.

Deadline for this trip is June 1st. Call Jean at 772-6356 or 863-9357 to make reservations. Make checks payable to Montague Council on Aging

Welcome to Killington, VT, home of the Cortina Inn. With the beautiful Green Mountains as a backdrop, this has long been a favorite and well-

known stop for those looking for the true flavor of Vermont. As you enter the Inn, spend a little time viewing the interesting art work, arranged in a gallery setting along the lobby and hallways. The Cortina Inn is also well known for their expert chefs from the New England Culinary Institute. Today you will enjoy a cooking demonstration taught by one of their award-winning chefs. Then sit down and feast on this gourmet meal. After dinner sit back and enjoy some good ole Green Mountain

entertainment! The menu includes salad of mixed greens with vinaigrette pan seared Statler Chicken Breast, chef's choice of rice or potato, seasonal vegetables, bananas foster, rolls and butter, coffee, tea or milk. We will also visit Quechee Gorge Village, and Timber Village, Vermont's unique shopping attraction with over 50 antique and collectable shops including a Vermont Country Store in addition to an original 1946 diner, miniature railroad and an antique carousel.

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES April 23rd - April 27th

MONTAGUE Senior Center, Gill/Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. for activities and congregate meals. Council -on Aging Director is Bunny Caldwell. For information or to make reservations, call 863-9357. Meal reservations need to be made a day in advance by 11 a.m. Messages can be left on our machine when the center is not open. Mealsite Manager is Chris Richer. The Center offers a hot noon meal weekdays to any senior. A reservation is necessary and transportation can be provided.

Monday, 23rd

10 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11 a.m. Easy Aerobics
Tuesday, 24th
9:30 a.m. T'ai Chi
12:30 p.m. Volunteer Appreciation

Wednesday, 25th

9-11 a.m. Health Fair at Congregational Church (use the T Street entrance). Health screenings and information sponsored by the Greenfield

Community College nursing students and Montague Board of Health and Council on Aging. Blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and other screenings will be at the Health Fair. Coffee, donuts, door prize.

10 a.m. Senior Aerobics

12:45 p.m. Bingo

Thursday, 26th

1:00 p.m. Pitch
Friday, 27th
10 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11 a.m. Easy Aerobics
1 p.m. "Memories and Moments" Scrapbooking class. Memory books have long been used as a way to record your personal history as a form of artistic expression. Through this project you will learn a fun and rewarding way to preserve and take care of the photographs you treasure. Led by Lorene Small; supported in part by a grant from the Montague Cultural Council and the Gill/Montague TRIAD.

ERVING Senior Center, 18 Pleasant St., Ervingside (Old Center School, 1st Floor), is open Monday through Thursday

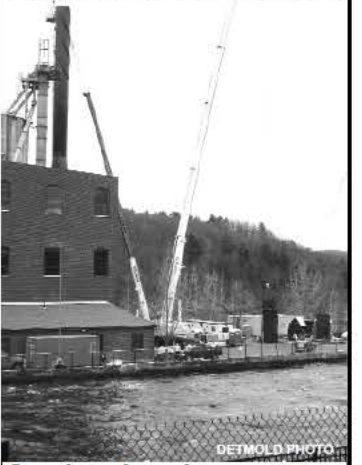
from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. For information and reservations call Polly Kiely, Senior Center director at 413 423-3308. Lunch daily at 11:30 a.m. with reservations a day in advance by 11:00 a.m. Transportation can be provided for meals, Thursday shopping, or medical necessity by calling Dana Moore at 978 544-3898.

Monday, 23rd

9:30 a.m. Exercise
9:45 a.m. Library
12 Noon Pitch
Tuesday, 24th
9 a.m. Aerobics
12:30 p.m. Painting
Wednesday, 25th
9:30 a.m. Line Dancing
12 Noon Bingo
Thursday, 26th
9 a.m. Aerobics
12:30 p.m. Shopping

WENDELL Senior Center, located in the town offices on Wendell Depot Rd. Call Kathy Swaim at 978 544-2020 for info, schedule of events or to coordinate transportation.

FACES & PLACES



Coming down!
Friday the 13th of April, workers begin dismantling the stack at Indeck

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Call 367-2483 to participate or email dradway@verizon.net

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Lest We Forget: The Story Behind Patriots Day

BY FRAN HEMOND
MONTAGUE CENTER - "The Redcoats are Coming!" It's early morning on April 19th, 1775, and the Minutemen are gathered on the Lexington Green waiting to confront the British force that has been sent to capture the rebels, John Hancock and Sam Adams, and destroy the arms and ammunition the colonists have been storing at Concord.

It's April 16th, 2007 and a reenactment of the 1775 resistance of Colonials to the attempt of George the Third to assert discriminating rule from England over his distant American subjects, who had been largely managing their own affairs for some time.

To everyone in Massachusetts to whom the anniversary of these events is a state holiday, shared only by Maine, the story of the start of the American Revolution is a familiar one. Longfellow's "Paul Revere's Ride," written in the meter of a horse's gallop, wakes the reader as the Minutemen rouse and meet at the tavern to consider how to halt a professional British army.

Seventy-seven American farmers and villagers stand in the way of 800 Englishmen. No one claimed the first shot that "rang round the world," and the continuing exchange left eight American dead and ten wounded. The others joined the

countless Minutemen who hid behind walls and trees and fired on the British all the way to Concord and back to Boston. Hancock and Adams and most of the stores of munitions escaped. A large relief force from Boston with heavy arms helped the British return, but 273 young Englishmen were killed in the sortie into the homeland of independent people.

It had taken relatively few years of unjust and demeaning actions by England to lose America. As a grandchild reminded me, just take a look at the Bill of Rights in our Constitution. It addresses the "inalienable rights" that George the Third and some of

his unwise counselors ignored. Massachusetts was mainly of English heritage. Our ancestors had been part of the British forces fighting against the French for the earlier part of the eighteenth century. They were children of the Magna Carta. They had fought with Braddock; they were the same men who marched to Ticonderoga with Lord Jeffrey Amherst. Sparked by Lexington and Concord, they rushed to Boston to drive out the occupying force that had closed the port. Western Massachusetts towns were well represented. They had members of the Committees of Correspondence; their communications were speedy.

Montague's Dr. Moses Gunn attended statewide meetings. Pressey's *History of Montague*, names about 40 Montague Minutemen ordered to Boston area on April 19th, 1775. Shortly thereafter an ox wagon of flour, peas, pork, tobacco and oats was sent. The other local town histories give similar facts.

So each year on April 19th, (the state holiday is the 16th this year, to accommodate the weekend) we face off the Redcoats on Lexington Green. The Revolution followed. And we may remember that our Bill of Rights came at a price.

The Great Flood of 1936

BY DAWN WARD
MOORES CORNER - The Leverett Historical Society presents a showing of the film *The Great Flood of 1936*, by Ed and Libby Klekowski of Leverett on Thursday, April 26th at 7:30 p.m. at the Moores Corner Schoolhouse in North Leverett. The film documents the Connecticut River in the spring of 1936 as the ice jams and raging spring waters rise and head downstream, taking out bridges

and drowning towns in its path. Dramatic film footage and factual detail make this film an extremely fascinating flashback into local history.

The historic Moores Corner Schoolhouse in North Leverett is located on North Leverett Road, three miles east of the junction of Route 63, diagonally across from the Village Coop. All are welcome; short business meeting precedes the show at 7:00 p.m.

Baha'is Justice Gathering

The Baha'is of Wendell are sponsoring a second monthly "Tranquility Zone" gathering, this time with a theme of "Justice."

The gathering, to take place Sunday, April 29th at 10:00 a.m., at 71 Kentfield Road in Wendell Depot (travelling south, first road on the left after Wendell Depot Post Office) will feature an hour of music, meditation and prayer from the writings of the holy scriptures of the world, Zoroastrian, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Islam, and Baha'i.

Brunch will be served. For more information call Shay and Charles Cooper at 978-544-2190.

CORRECTION

In last week's article on the study of shortnose sturgeon at the Conte fish lab in Turners Falls, (Nascar Fish: A Tour of the Conte Fish Lab, MR V#27) the following sentence contained inaccurate information: "Because collecting the endangered species from the wild is illegal, [fisheries biologist Alex] Haro said the Conte scientists obtained a permit allowing them to raise these fish from eggs."

To correct the record on this point, the Conte Lab's sturgeon specialist Boyd Kynard explained, "We have had federal and state permits to collect in the wild all life stages of shortnose sturgeon (egg to adult) for 28 years. We collect all these life stages each year. The female sturgeon photographed [on the front page of last week's paper] was captured in February 2007 from the Agawam wintering area. We allow some females like this one to spawn in the artificial stream [at the Conte Lab] where we study spawning behavior and habitat, and we rear them to obtain small sturgeon for experiments."



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RIVERCULTURE

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An Austerity Plan for Montague's Fiscal Solvency

BY MIKE NAUGHTON
MILLERS FALLS - An interesting thing happened at town hall on April 5th. Town administrator Frank Abbondanzio gave several committees his budget forecast. This isn't in itself all that remarkable (he does it every year), but it was a forecast with a twist. It looked ahead for the next five years, instead of just the upcoming fiscal year; and it based its recommendations on an analysis of the previous eight fiscal years, instead of just on assumptions about the coming one. In other words, it took a long view -- describing and learning from trends in the past, and then trying to apply those lessons to the future -- not just next year, but several years out. In my experience, for town budget discussions, this was a big (and welcome) change.

Some readers may shrug and say, "it's about time," and they will be right. But I think it's better to focus on the fact that it was finally done. Moreover, the effort produced two useful results. One was solid evidence for those who have been saying that recent revenue and expense trends are leading the town towards fiscal disaster, and the other was an imaginative plan for how to change course.

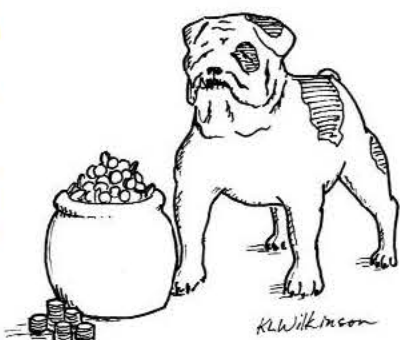
For many who have been following the town's budget woes over the past several years, the first result comes as no surprise. Abbondanzio isn't the first to have noticed that recent trends in spending can't possibly be supported by any realistic projections of future revenues. But I believe he is the

first to have documented this conclusion with facts and figures, and that may carry a lot of weight with those who have clung to the belief that "something will work out." Reading through the report, it becomes harder and harder to imagine what that "something" might be -- unless changes are made -- and the evidence it presents should form a good basis for future discussions.

One point that is likely to be debated is the conclusion that significant increases in state aid are unlikely. Many people believe that the state is not doing its share in funding local budgets -- particularly, education budgets -- and a recurring theme in budget discussions has been the claim that the solution to our problems is to get Boston to pay up. Abbondanzio cites reports by the Hamill Commission and the Massachusetts Municipal Association that strongly make that case. He also documents the erratic (and some would say inadequate) levels of state aid over the past few years, but he then pointedly argues that counting on the state to do more, at least in the near future, is unrealistic. The upshot is that we are left to deal with this problem on our own, for now.

That means that the town's revenues are unlikely to increase at a rate much greater than about 4% per year, and the corollary is that expense increases must stay at or below that rate for us to remain solvent. The fact that both the town and the Gill-Montague

see FISCAL pg 5



K.Wilkinson

Footrace at Unity Park



First one to the bike path gets a free set of Lincoln Logs

KAREN WILKINSON ILLUSTRATION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Respect is a Two Way Street

I am amused by Joyce Phillips' constant admonitions to R-E-S-P-E-C-T each other in our debates over elementary education in Montague. Yes, I too remember dancing to that song in the old days. (Are we dating ourselves?) But the tune this time around seems a bit ironic.

Phillips has constantly attacked, on a very personal level, the motives of those of us who support keeping Montague Center School open. Last fall she published one article in the *Montague Reporter* essentially arguing that those of us who support the school do so because we do not want our kids to mingle with low-income residents of Turners Falls. This was, quite honestly, one of the most insulting and divisive claims I have ever seen in a local newspaper.

Another article in the

Greenfield Recorder personally attacked the three "wise men" (their gender was apparently a problem) on the school committee who supported the configuration that kept MCS open. I have been to numerous school committee meetings over the past year where, when the issue of the elementary configuration came up, Phillips could be heard muttering insults at the school committee.

Then there is the issue of Phillips' misleading statements. For example, at one forum on the elementary schools she promoted the notion that renovations to Montague Center School would cost \$3.6 million dollars. This big number subsequently became the first item on a "fact sheet" that promoted a "taxpayers" petition to close MCS. In fact, this estimate was based on a totally out-of-date study that also estimated the

cost of renovating Hillcrest at over \$5 million (a "fact" Phillips did not mention). Is this "respectful" of the intelligence of the citizens of Montague?

We all get a bit emotional over the elementary school issue, to be sure. And Phillips is certainly entitled to her opinion on this matter just like anyone else. I also believe that Phillips has been a hard working and committed supporter of local public education in Montague. But I think if she wants to see more R-E-S-P-E-C-T on this issue she might try modeling good behavior.

- Jeff Singleton
Montague Center

Public Forum on Montague Town Budget

BY JOHN HANOLD - With the coming of spring, the budget cycle for the towns of Montague and Gill, and the Gill-Montague Regional School District (GMRSD) are drawing to a close, but town and school committees, and annual town meetings, still face some difficult decisions. The Montague finance committee and select-board will hold a public forum on Wednesday, April 25th, at 7:00 p.m. in the upstairs conference room at town hall, to obtain public input into the last steps of the process.

Since Montague's expected revenue is lower than the com-

bined spending requests by town departments and the GMRSD school committee, some combination of three actions will be necessary to close the apparent gap, which amounts to many hundreds of thousands of dollars. The first possibility is to cut back spending requests - but after several years of restricted spending, town departments cannot be cut enough to close the gap without eliminating entire functions. The way to do this is for the finance committee and select-board to recommend cuts to the

see BUDGET pg 5

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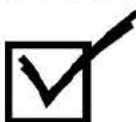
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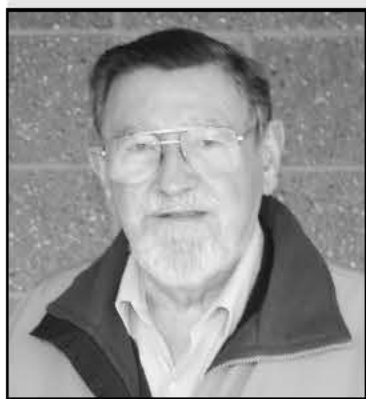
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Word on the Ave

Interviews and Photos by Kevin Foley

On Monday, April 16th, almost eight years to the day from the Columbine massacre, 32 teachers and students were shot and killed at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA. What should we do to prevent such tragedies from recurring in the future?



"It's a state of mind in the American society, with the violence. We need to change that before we change anything like gun control."
-Ced Bannister



"They'd have to keep a real tight guard and know what kids are bringing into school with them."
-Eunice Aiken



"When it's within a school, with a student, it's a tough call. Just because a kid is quiet and keeps to himself, doesn't mean he's going to shoot everybody."
-Kathy Pierce



"There needs to be more security. I know they say they can't spend a lot of money on security, but they spend a lot of money on the war in Iraq."
-Kyle Politis



"You'd have to have more security and that costs the taxpayers a lot of money. You just never know who your neighbors are."
-Nancy Pike

"I think the laws need to change in terms of buying guns. It's unfortunate that it takes a tragedy to open people's eyes and realize things need to change."
- Brenda Carr,

somebody who's depressed, talk with them about it."
-Colleen Mosca

ty is going, you can't stop that."
-Charlotte Atwood

"I think more psychologists should get involved to prevent these things

from happening."
- Jim Tomas

"There's certainly a lot we can do about limiting the sale of fire-arms."
-Barbara Alfange

"With the way our socie-

BUDGET

from previous page
annual town meeting. On the school side, town meeting rejection of the GMRSD assessment would affect the district's plans to address the educational

needs of our students as identified by state and district administrators. A chain of painful cuts and budget re-submittals would follow.

The second avenue is to increase revenues, but after incorporating the latest information on state aid to towns and schools, as well as expected income from property taxes and local sources, the only "revenue enhancement" left is an override of Proposition 2½ levy limits by town-wide vote.

The final alternative is to use reserves, but this only defers the problem for a year, at which point the likely gap will be much bigger and the resources to close it fewer. The selectboard and finance committee hope to get a sense of the town's desires and priorities on April 25th, before determining a final course of action by early May.

-John Hanold is a member of the Montague Finance Committee and a Town Meeting member from Precinct 5.

FISCAL

from previous page

Regional School District (GMRSD) have been seeing expenses rise at rates of five percent or better during recent years goes a long way towards explaining why the last two annual town meetings have been asked to fund recurring expenses out of one-time and stabilization funds. Normal revenues simply haven't been enough to cover them.

Abbondanzio suggests that there may be a way out of this situation, but it won't be easy. The uncomfortable but inescapable fact is that the majority of expense increases, for both the town and the school district, come from personnel costs, both wages and benefits. This means that if you want to reduce costs without also cutting services, wages and benefits have to be a big part of the picture. The figures show that for the "status quo" (i.e. what we're doing now), town personnel costs would rise an average of 5.0% per year, expenses 7.3%, health insurance 12.8%, and GMRSD assessments 6.35%. (Franklin County Tech has been 5.0%.) The plan proposes reducing these to 3.5% for town personnel, 3.0% for expenses, 6.5% for health insurance, and 3.0% for education assessments.

Even so, these reductions won't produce immediate results - according to Abbondanzio's fig-

ures, even with the "most optimistic" revenue assumptions, the town will continue to face deficits through FY 2012. That's where the Indeck monies come in. He proposes using a total of almost \$900,000 of these funds to provide cushions for the town each year until we're out of the hole. In FY 2013 (six years from now), the figures show a surplus of approximately \$75,000, and it would grow by something over \$100,000 each year after that.

Obviously, this will be a challenge. It will require coordination between the town and the school districts, which will have to start by having the selectboard and the district school committees agree that this is something they want to make happen. As far as I know, none of that has happened yet, and before it does there are likely to be lively debates about various aspects of the proposal.

If the proposal, or something like it, does eventually gain acceptance, that will just be the beginning. Wages and benefits, for both the town and the district, are determined by collective bargaining, which means getting four unions to agree to cut back on cost of living and step increases for the town, and more for the school districts. A big piece of reducing health insurance costs is tied to the town's being able to join the state's Group Insurance Corporation, which will require state legislation (as well as union

approval). Keeping expense increases to 3% in a time of rising utility costs will also be a challenge.

But Abbondanzio's figures make it abundantly clear that we have to do something. Continuing on as we have been will produce budget deficits in the millions of dollars within a very few years, and even the Indeck windfall won't help us for long. His isn't the only possible plan, but at least it is a plan, and it has the benefit of providing a reasonable hope that the town can maintain solvency. I think that's progress, and I think the town administrator deserves credit for getting us to this point. For the first time, we have something concrete to debate, along with a clear picture of the consequences of continuing to drag our feet.

Mike Naughton has been a Montague resident since 1974, a capital improvements committee member since fiscal 2002, and a Precinct 2 town meeting member before that. He also served on the finance committee for several years. He can be reached at mjnaught@crocker.com or by looking in the telephone book. The views expressed here are his own and are not necessarily shared by anyone else in town government, or even in Precinct 2 for that matter.

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



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NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Police Station Vote Put Off Until Fall

BY DAVID DETMOLD - Police chief Ray Zukowski told the selectboard on Tuesday, April 17th, that the police station building committee has decided not to go to annual town meeting in June for approval of plans for a new safety complex, to be built adjacent to the Turners Falls fire station on Turnpike Road. Instead, Zukowski said the committee will take additional time to pursue funding sources and grant possibilities, and bring finished plans to a special town meeting in August or September. The committee plans to take some time at the annual town meeting to bring members up to speed on the status of the building project. The town may also be asked to vote on abandoning the unused extension of Montague Road at that time, since part of the land under that road will be needed to accommodate the footprint of the proposed building.

Selectboard member Allen Ross asked Zukowski if the present police station had been shipping any water during the recent steady rains. "Oh, yes, we've had our mop out. It happens every year, even during thunderstorms," said Zukowski.

The next day, power at the police station went out for a period of time, when an electric line on the Avenue went down and the station's vintage back-up generator failed.

Newt Guilbault League

Frank Campbell, president of the Newt Guilbault League, received permission from the selectboard to hold a parade on Sunday, April 29th from the Turners Falls High School, down

Turnpike Road to Montague Street, and down Montague Street to the League's field near Sheffield School. Four hundred people are expected to take part in the parade, and 15 vehicles. The parade will start at about 11:00 a.m., and, weather permitting, will culminate in a sky-diving demonstration at the field with members of the Orange parachute team landing to hand out the first game balls of the season.

Newt Guilbault treasurer Mike Markol said, "We're hoping Ray [Zukowski] would throw out candy."

Zukowski responded, "I'll throw my arm out." The police chief's exploits on the ball field are a matter of local legend.

Hillside Road Sewer

The board approved an extension of the sewer line on Hillside Road to allow the hook-up of two new homes being constructed there by Rural Development Inc., (RDI) a non-profit development wing of the Franklin County Regional Housing Authority. The 1300 square foot homes, one a four bedroom ranch and the other a three bedroom Cape, are being built for homeowners who meet the federal definition of low income: below 80% of the median income level. RDI will pay the approximately \$5000 cost to extend the sewers, which will then be available for other households in the neighborhood to tap into. Anne Perkins, spokesperson for RDI, said, "The irony is, it's the low income homeowners who will pay for it."

The board approved the

permanent appointment of Sergeant Chris Bonnette, who has been working as acting sergeant for the Montague police, pending the results of his civil service exam. Those results have come back; the sergeant passed the test.

Zukowski talked about "the revolving door" between the Montague dispatch department and neighboring dispatch units, where the pay is better. "We train 'em, and they get 'em, is that it?" asked Precinct 1's John Reynolds. Zukowski agreed that was about the size of it. He said Montague recently raised the base pay for dispatching from \$9 to \$12 an hour, to try to remain competitive, but shortly thereafter Greenfield gave added responsibility to their dispatchers, asking them to handle calls for the fire department as well as the police, and raised their hourly pay.

Colleen Kelly, from the Amherst-based Hitchcock Center for the Environment, asked the board to put an official town seal of approval on certificates being awarded to third graders graduating from the Montague Center School's Sawmill River study. Students from all grades participate in the grant-funded program, guided by Kelly. The school uses the Environment as an Integrating Context (EIC); Kelly said all teachers participate in a training program to prepare for the program. Montague Center is one of four EIC schools in the Commonwealth.

The board approved her request. "I think that's a nice idea," said board member Pat Allen. Allen Ross made a

motion, "to create a certificate honoring students at the Montague Center School for the work they've done in studying the Sawmill River and for becoming Stewards of the Sawmill River." Kelly said the school's access to the neighboring pond, the river, and a nearby nature trail made an excellent field laboratory for the Montague Center students.

This past year, the Massachusetts EPA gave a \$9,468 grant to fund the program, which was matched with \$8,985 from the Massachusetts Environmental Trust.

The certificates will be presented to the students at the "All School Share" on May 30th at 2:00 p.m. Kelly invited the selectboard and the public to attend.

Peskeomskut Park

The Marine Forces Reserve Band from New Orleans will play a joint concert with the Montague Community Band at Peskeomskut Park on Monday, June 11th at noon. "Hopefully, we'll be able to walk on the sidewalks by then," said Allen. Town administrator Frank Abbondanzio said the town would be responsible for locating more than 100 chairs for the band to use.

As for those walkways, Abbondanzio said the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (AAB) had denied the town's request for an extension until the middle of May to address concerns about the pea stone used to pave the surface of the walks in the recently renovated park. The

AAB said the pea stone surface did not meet accessibility requirements for people who use wheelchairs. On Wednesday, Abbondanzio met with the engineer for the Peskeomskut Park improvements, and worked out a plan to use a "finer aggregate mix with emulsion to fill any gaps" in the pea stone, to reduce the surface reveal to less than the quarter of an inch required by AAB standards. "We will address the concerns of the Architectural Access Board by April 23rd," Abbondanzio said.

On a happier note, the town administrator said the bidding environment had improved this year, so that C&A Construction of Ludlow, the low bidder for reconstruction of Avenue A walkways and crosswalks, came in 15% below the amount the town had budgeted for that downtown accessibility improvement project. The new curbs and crosswalks along the Avenue will be installed this year, using community development block grant funds. Abbondanzio said the lower than expected bid, if approved, will allow the town to create a healthy contingency fund and hire police details to handle detours during the course of construction.

Before the meeting adjourned, Ross weighed in on the town's financial position. "Given how difficult it is going to be to come up with a budget that will make everyone happy, I'll speak candidly. The way state and federal government has contributed [to the town's present fiscal predicament] is sad, but we have to come up with some specifics by June 31st." Stay tuned.

Why Move the Police Station to the Hill?

MONTAGUE PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING COMPLEX UPDATE #5

BY PAM HANOLD

TURNERS FALLS - Last Thursday, April 12th, the building committee received the final version of the space needs assessment from our architect, Brian Humes and began taking a hard look at all possible costs, and any sources of grant funding for the new police station. Homeland Security prefers to provide equipment, rather than deal directly with towns, for instance. Another possibility is

making the training room available to the International Association of Chiefs of Police for training of groups of at least 40, in exchange for the association providing furnishings. We agreed that we are interested in all possibilities, large and small.

As requested at the end of our last meeting, Humes had sent us a project budget worksheet, highlighting anticipated "hard" and "soft" costs for the station. Hard costs

cover sitework and construction. Soft costs list categories like telephone systems and wiring, fixtures, furniture, architectural fees, inspections, legal fees and bonding costs, construction testing, and computer and communications systems and wiring, which we looked at in detail.

Everyone will continue exploring funding sources. Police chief Ray Zukowski and town administrator Frank

Abbondanzio will report back with potential grant or funding sources at our next meeting on April 26th. Humes expects to be at that meeting with the final footprint of the building, and to answer any questions.

A couple of questions have come from townspeople about our decision process for moving the station from downtown Turners Falls to the location next to the fire station on Turnpike Road. The committee's process was as

follows.

In January of 2006, the committee asked Chief Zukowski to analyze statistics on police calls. He looked at the Incidents, Arrests, Accidents, and Citations reports from January 1st, 2004 to January 13th, 2006, and the following picture emerged. Total incidents during this time period added up to 2,868. Of those, 1,458 were in the downtown and Patch area,

see **POLICE** pg 13

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NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

Funds for New Senior Center Transferred

BY JOSH HEINEMANN - Twenty-three Wendell citizens and officials attended a special town meeting on April 11th and approved the entire warrant in a half an hour of discussion and voting. The warrant was largely made up of housekeeping items: moving money from one account to another where officials felt it was needed.

Article one transferred \$2,000 from free cash to the conservation commission conservation fund, for the purpose of open space conservation. The money was collected under a town bylaw that required a fee in order to obtain a back lot building permit; this bylaw has since been superseded, so this situation will not come up again.

Article two transferred \$30,000 from the town office construction account to an account for the design and construction of a new senior center in the present library building. The original plans for the town office building included a room for a senior center, but that room was cut in the final plans. Selectboard chair Ted Lewis opposed the transfer because he said the bills for the new town office building have not all been paid, and there are credits anticipated which the town may not receive.

Article three transferred \$66,673.31 from the library planning account, and \$57,346.23, from the library clerk of the works account, a total of \$124,019.56, to the library construction account.

Article four transferred

\$40,353.75 from the town office clerk of the works account to the town office construction account.

Article five increased the excise tax exemption for small personal property from \$1,500 to \$10,000, as requested by the assessors. Assessor Paul Sullivan said this will cost the town \$7,000 a year, but will save the assessors from having to chase down small amounts of personal property as defined by state law. Some inherited jewelry, or even a good baseball card collection could be taxable with the lower exemption.

Article six transferred \$7,357.16 from free cash to the veterans benefits account.

Article seven transferred \$21,357.16 from free cash to the short term interest account, to pay for interest on the loans covering the building projects until the town offices and library are completed and the USDA loan pays off the short term loans. The time frame for completing the buildings and then completing the paper work for the USDA loan is tight, and if the deadline is not met more interest will accrue on the short term loans.

After the meeting adjourned, Margo Culley announced that the friends of the Wendell library received a \$25,000 matching grant from Dilman Doland, a former student of Wendell's former librarian Marion Herrick. The check that brought the Marion Herrick fund high enough to get the grant was made by Robert Collini, a great library supporter who lives in the east but comes to Wendell to get his head straight.

Wendell Elections -- Monday, May 7th

BY JOSH HEINEMANN

Wendell town elections will be held Monday, May 7th, from noon to 8:00 p.m. The elections will be held in the meeting room of the new town office building, which is fully wheelchair accessible. The ramp to town hall, where voting has taken place for many years, does not meet current ADA requirements.

"We thought we'd try it out," said town clerk Anny Hartjens.

The deadline for submitting nomination papers has passed, but it is still possible to become a write-in candidate. The last day for voter registration was Tuesday, April 17th.

Announced candidates are:

Christine Heard, of 149 Wendell Depot Road, running for re-election to a three year term to the selectboard.

Thomas Mangan, of 45 Wendell Depot Road, running for re-election to a three year term as assessor.

Carolyn Hulslander, of 175 Montague Road, for a one year term, to fill a vacancy on the board of assessors.

Harry S. Williston, of 27 Wendell Depot Road, running for re-election to a three year term on the board of health.

Lonny W. Ricketts, of 15 West Street, running for a two-year term on the board of health, to fill a vacancy.

Heather Reed, of 90 Locke Hill Road, running for a five-year term on the planning board.

Prudence F. Smith, of 87 Bullard Pasture Road, running for a one year term on the planning board, to fill a vacancy.

Kathy Ann Becker, of 136 Locke Hill Road, running for re-election to a one year term as moderator.

Anne Diemand, of 131 Mormon Hollow Road, running for re-election to a three year term as constable.

Richard Mackey, of 17 Farley Road, running as a write-in candidate for a three year term as cemetery commissioner.

A one year term as cemetery commissioner has no announced candidate.

Harry Williston running for re-election to a three year term as a road commissioner.

Johanna Fitzgerald, of 133 Locke Village Road, running for one of the three year positions on the school committee. A second three year position has no announced candidate.

Richard Baldwin, of 90 Bullard Pasture Road, running as a write-in candidate for a two year term to fill a vacancy on the school committee.

Dan Bacigalupo, of 10 Posk Place Road, running for a one year term as tree warden.

Phyllis Lawrence, of 2 Old Egypt Road, and Laura Botkin, of 176 Old Farley Road, are running for the two three year positions as library trustee.

Montague May Day Celebration

Sunday, May 6th, 10:30 a.m.
all are invited to process from the Montague Center post office to the town common. The event is free of charge and participants are encouraged to bring along a blanket and picnic lunch. (413) 367-9923 for information.

Montague Center Fishing Derby



The annual Montague Center Fishing Derby, at the pond next to the Montague Center School, was held on April 14th, in a rare moment of spring sunshine. Pictured above, left to right: Kyle Dodge, Tyler Levin and Chip Dodge

RACE from pg 1

water all over their floor. We loaded the boat, and tied it down as the knots on the ropes were starting to freeze, and we drove home with the heat on as high as it would go. So much for my self assurance. I think I figured out how it happened, but so far I have not tried it again to test my theory.

At the race, my main goal was to finish upright and dry, and we were able to accomplish that. Kate, in the bow, got splashed pretty well, but in the stern I was fine, and we had less than an inch of water in the bottom of the canoe when we finished. There are two parts to the race; one is the contest for first, which this year was a photo finish sprint of

three race boats all by themselves in front of everyone, won by Brent Lyesiuik of Orange and John Berry of Petersham. I am told the finish was very exciting, but I did not see it.

The other part of the race is the rest of us, who maybe get a practice day in, or maybe not, maybe have had to call up a neighbor to borrow a canoe, a paddle, or a life vest. We come into April after mud season in less than peak condition. On the water, we see a friend who we did not know was entering the race, or someone from last year's race; we find ourselves passing, and being passed by the same boat again and again and being harassed by the boats the race committee hires to cross the river from side to side creating pileups.

Under the first bridge a swimming woman called, "somebody help!" but we passed her too far away, and too fast and we could do nothing. We were busy avoiding another boat in front of us on its side, bottom

"Under the first bridge a swimming woman called, 'somebody help!' but we passed her too far away, and too fast and we could do nothing."

facing upstream towards us and directly in our way. There must have been people swimming near it, but I did not see them. In another boat, also broadside to the current, the paddlers threw

themselves into a lean and saved themselves a swim. They turned out to be friends, and at the finish they told us they had to stop midrace and empty water from the boat.

Paddling in boat #162, we passed #81, and I helpfully told them how our number was twice theirs, but they were unimpressed. They were low in the stern, and low in the water also, maybe because they were carrying a few inches of water inside. I thought they were well behind us but on the last stretch they caught us and passed us, without even acknowledging that their number was half ours; with all our effort we still could not catch them again. It must have been the headwind catching us floating high, more than them

floating low.

The finish banner was blowing flat, straight upstream, when we went under it. In the last mile we passed no one, and several boats passed us. But we finished upright, and the Irish coffee on shore was warm. I looked one last time at the river before leaving for home and a cookout; the wind had stopped, and the finish banner was hanging straight down.

We entered in a posse of five boats. Starting #162 out of 314 boats starting, we finished #172. Our teammates, whom we met later at the cookout, finished #72 in a carbon fiber boat, #135 two women in a fiberglass boat, #200 in a fiberglass boat, and #288 in a big old heavy and banged up aluminum canoe.

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CHOICE

continued from pg 1

Michael Buoniconti, superintendent of the Mohawk Regional School District, said Mohawk has a policy of intra-district choice for their nine member towns. "There are benefits to enabling parents to enroll their students in schools in other member towns," he said. "It is an option that allows us to retain students in the district."

Sue Gee, superintendent of the GMRSD, said, "What the school committee is thinking is that parents will have a choice of what school they want their children to go to." She said the GMRSD policy subcommittee has been assigned the duty of writing the policy for how intra-district choice will be implemented, if the member towns agree.

Although that policy is still in the draft stage, committee member Michael Langknecht said it would be completed in time for review at the special town meet-

ings on May 3rd. There is broad agreement on some parts of the policy already, Langknecht said, and the school committee will hold a public forum on the topic at 7 p.m. on April 24th at the TFHS TV station.

Among the areas of agreement, Langknecht said, every request from a parent or guardian to choose a school within the district will be reviewed by the principal of the school the student is hoping to choose out of. Also, if there are more students trying to choose into a school than there are slots available for that grade level, the available slots will be filled through a random lottery process.

Presently, parents of school choice students leaving the district have to provide transportation for their children at their own expense. But as for choice within Montague and Gill, "There's really no point to intra-district school choice if you don't provide transportation," said Langknecht. "If we're going to do it, we're going to have to pay

for it." The proposal will likely include an additional bus route to provide transportation for intra-district choice students. The district would be responsible for paying about 25 percent, or \$15,000, of the cost of the bus, Langknecht estimated.

But Langknecht insisted, "We can save money by spending the \$15,000. Once you keep three kids from choosing out, it's paid for itself." (Five thousand dollars is a common estimate for the amount of state aid that follows choice students.) Still, Langknecht said the main reason for implementing intra-district school choice is not financial, but for the success of the students. "If we improve student achievement and improve test scores, it's paid for itself as well."

Gee doesn't anticipate any additional costs beyond the possibility of an added bus. "There may be a need to add another teacher if we get a lot of students choosing one school. But I don't see that happening," she said.

Gee said the subcommittee

will be able to follow the model of the Pioneer Valley Regional School District (PVRSD) and the Mohawk School District in implementing the program.

The Pioneer Valley system offers intra-district school choice based on the discretion of the principals at the school that would be sending the choice student and the school that would be receiving the choice student. The Pioneer Valley system operates on a very small scale, with only two students currently being choiced between district towns, according to Kevin Courtney, superintendent of the PVRSD.

"One of the reasons we don't have many school choice students is because we don't have many openings in Northfield and Bernardston," said Courtney. Another reason why the number of school choice students is so low is because the Pioneer Valley system doesn't provide transportation for students who would make the choice to attend another district school. PVRSD includes the towns of Warwick, Northfield, Bernardston, and Leyden.

Even with the limited number of students who utilize it, Courtney has been happy with the results of the program so far. "I think all of (the intra-district choice students) have been successful. They've all worked out."

Buoniconti said despite the benefits of the program for the Mohawk district (which includes the towns of Shelburne, Colrain, Buckland, Heath, Rowe,

Charlemont, Ashfield, Plainfield and Hawley), intra-district choice does create some budgetary controversy since, "Building budgets are increased if you are including students expected to be choiced in. Building efficiency is at the core of the question of building consolidation. Since finances are important at this time, the issue of intra-district choice becomes a part of that equation," he said.

The Montague special town meeting will be at 7:00 p.m. on May 3rd. There will be 10 articles on the agenda. The last four articles will involve intra-district school choice. The first six articles will involve the transfer of money, mainly from free cash, to make up for shortfalls in some town departmental budgets. The town will vote on: \$17,000 to be transferred from free cash to the public buildings and utilities budget, \$3,000 to be transferred from free cash to the town clerk's budget, \$28,000 to be transferred from free cash to the dispatch services budget, \$1,700 to be transferred from free cash to the board of registrars budget, \$10,000 to be transferred from free cash to the supplemental appropriation reserve and \$21,000 to be transferred from the snow and ice maintenance budget to the department of public works budget.

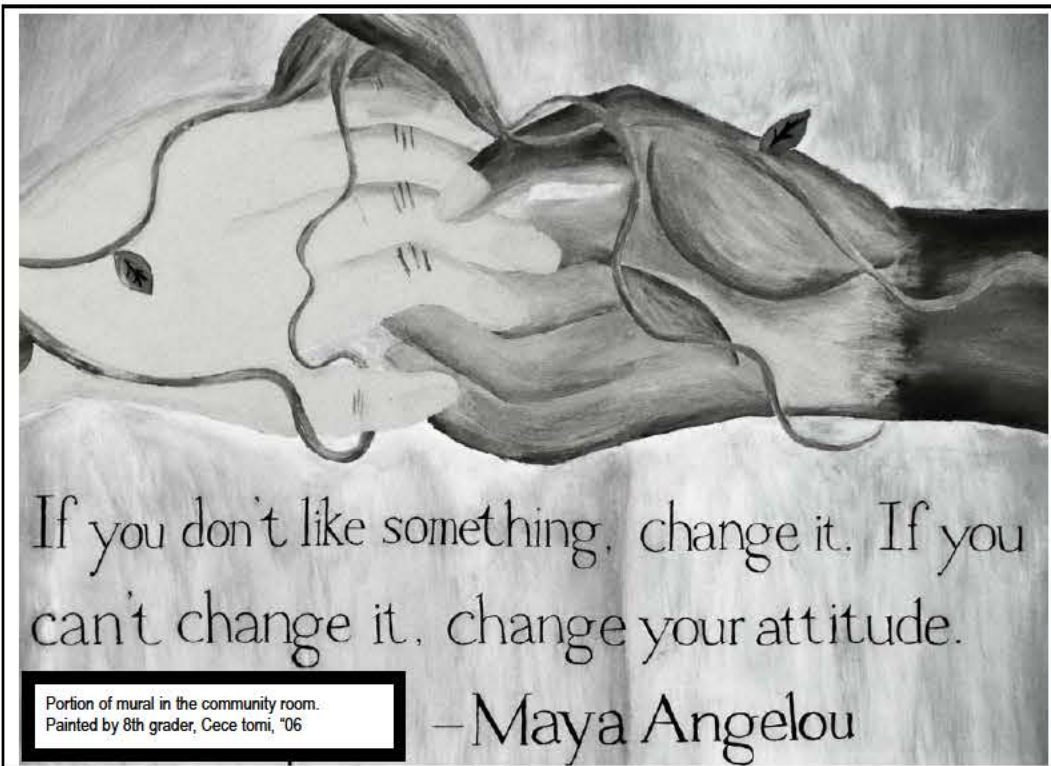
The Gill special town meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. on May 3rd. There will only be four articles on the agenda, all involving the matter of intra-district school choice.

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Portion of mural in the community room.
Painted by 8th grader, Cece tomi, '06

—Maya Angelou

Montague Grange Hall Spring Cleanup

BY MIK MULLER - Members of the Montague Grange, neighbors and friends of the hall are invited to join an all-day Deep Spring Cleanup of the Grange Hall and surrounding grounds on Saturday, April 21st, from 11:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m. Snacks and music will be provided. Bring rakes, clippers, hand tools, gloves, and cleaning implements.

Our whole community frequently uses the Montague Grange; we hope everyone feels a sense of ownership in the hall.

Neighbors and friends with skills in carpentry, glass repair and replacement, organizing and general cleaning, and some interior design skills are most sought, along with people for general cleaning. Some items in the hall will also be up for sale. Donations of materials (paint, lumber, flowers, etc.) are also welcome.

Please contact Mik at 863-0030 or (413) 320-5336 to coordinate your time, skills and any materials. Your help will be greatly appreciated!

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NOTES FROM THE GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

GMRSD Schedules Forum on Intra-District Choice Policy

BY LISA MERKEL - The G-M school committee engaged in the first reading and discussion of the intra-district school choice policy at their April 17th meeting. The policy, if enacted and approved by town meetings coming up on May 3rd in Gill and Montague, would allow parents in Gill to choose their students into elementary schools in Montague, and vice versa.

On April 23rd, the GMRSD policy subcommittee will again take up discussion of the intra-district choice policy. This meeting will take place in the conference room of Turners Falls High School at 6:30 p.m., and is open to the public. To encourage public participation in finalizing the intra-district choice policy, the committee scheduled a public forum for the first 45 minutes of the next school committee meeting, on April 24th at 7:00 p.m.

Nancy Paglia, a parent of a third grader at the Montague Center School, read a letter to the school committee signed by thirteen parents of Montague Center School third grade students. The parents implored the school committee to follow through with their decision to offer third graders the chance to go to fourth grade at Montague Center next year. "Research shows that smaller class sizes are more effective in providing a better quality of education. In order to keep class sizes small we need to have another fourth grade class at Montague Center, instead of having two larger classes at Gill and Sheffield," the parents argued. Another point made was that the ability for students to choose to schools throughout the district would help achieve "a more balanced diversification of students in need and may potentially

increase funding to our district, as two previously non-eligible schools would become Title I eligible." In addition, the limited openings available in Gill warrants another option; "Montague Center School has empty rooms and can easily accommodate a fourth grade class."

Addressing the issue of school configuration, committee member Mike Langknecht announced that task forces have completed tours of all three elementary school buildings in Montague. At the next school building task force meeting, committee members will analyze the information gathered, and assemble lists of repairs that would be needed under different configurations. When their report is complete, the task force will bring it to the school committee for review and next steps.

GFMS Students of the Week

Grade 8

Jordan Bryant
Jocelyn Brown

CONGRATULATIONS

to students from Gill named to the Academic High Honor Roll at Northfield Mount Hermon School:
Class 10 • Harriet Booth
Class 12 • Grace Booth

Gill-Montague Education Fund Gala



Gregory Caputo

TURNERS FALLS - The Gill-Montague Education Fund in partnership with "Phil D." of radio station WIZZ 1520 AM will present the third annual Gill-Montague Gala, and this year's featured musicians will be the Gregory Caputo Big Band and his show "Velocity." Caputo and his band will perform "Velocity" at the state-of-the-art theater at Turners Falls High School on Saturday, April 28, at 7:30 p.m. Admission will be \$20. Tickets are available at Scotty's Store in Turners Falls, World Eye Bookshop in Greenfield, Turn it Up in Northampton, Turn it Up in Brattleboro, Vt., or by calling Sandy at Turners Falls High School (863-7218).

Turners Falls High School Third Quarter Honor Roll

Grade 12 First Honors

Laura Babij
Katelin Bailey
Shanna Clark
Julianna Felton
Richard Gallagher
Benjamin Garber
Jenna Lapachinski
Daniel Leveille
Julianne Rosewarne
Christopher Seymour
William Shattuck IV
Lauren Tela
Lauryn Zellmann

Grade 12 Second Honors

Rachel Banning
Krista Bascom
Adam Bastarache
Timothy Dowd
Anne Fish
Jason Grimard
Mitchell Guevin
Jesse Lucas
Patricia Richotte
Valeriya Shumilova
Ashleigh St. Peter
Timothy Stockwell
Haley Trenholm
Samantha Willard

Grade 12 Third Honors

Sarah Ambo
Nichelle Cocco
Robert Croteau
Michelle Dame
Ethan Kociela
Katelyn Mailloux
Joseph Reed Jr.
Aimee Shattuck
Christopher Sicard

Grade 11 First Honors

Alix Ackerman
Lara Ames
Aliza Broga
Aaron Cappucci
Katie Christenson
Abbey Daniel-Green
Amanda Golembeski
Samuel Johnson
Stephanie Joly
Shayna Langknecht
Kellie Lastowski
Colby Lavin
Corey Leveille
Melony Lucas
Kayla Pecor
Molly Perry
Samantha Stafford
Danielle Sullivan
Alexander Tufano

Alice Urban
Gina Varuzzo
Katlyn Vear
Kelly Willis
Erica Zajac

Grade 11 Second Honors

Brian Campbell
Walter Fitzpatrick
Jennifer Jason
Zachary Little
Brittany Mazor
Dawn Miner
Michael Radzuik
Tenzin Soepa
Jeffrey Tela

Grade 11 Third Honors

Krystal Ducharme
Katherine Eddy
Stephanie Ollari
Corey Shearer
Kevin Thomas
Courtney Wells

Grade 10 First Honors

Amy Baxter
David Bennett
Jordan Boisvert
Theodore Dunbar

Benjamin Foster
Tranae Gallagher
Joshua Gammon
Nicholas Imbimbo
Atma Khalsa
Angela Marguet
Sara Pease
Addison Ricketts
Nicholas Skarzynski
Samantha Wondoloski

Grade 10 Second Honors

Brandon Breault
Samuel Colton
Nadezhda Filobokova
Tyler Hagmaier
Christopher Humphrey
Kelsey Kane
Erin Kelley
Shamari Kelly
Kimberly Nelson
Jeremiah Wawrzyniak

Grade 10 Third Honors

Joseph Auger
Adrian Cook
Ashley Costa
Nicole Dubay
Eric Dumas
Adam Felton

Allison Giknis
Immaculata Gonzalez
Devin Guevin
Erika Romashka
Shelby Sayer

Grade 9 First Honors

Juliana Aprileo
Ashley Bailey
Jill Bernard
Nataliya Buhakova
Brandon Deputy
Danielle Dolhenty
Mackae Freeland
Matthew Garber
Ashley Gibson
Megan Grimard
Olivia Nicotra
Sergiu Placinta
Kathleen Rinaldo
Dustin Rivard
Elena Rushford
Suzi Ryu
Ashley Sears
Christopher Shattuck
Sarah Underwood
Alex Westfall
Matthew Wozniak

Grade 9 Second Honors

Chelsea Bailey
Kayla Breor
Timothy Carlisle
Daniel Cruz
Jacob Lapean
Jacob Lewis
Carlyn Perry
Cayla Pollard
Justin Sessions
Chelsea Tela
Yaritza Torres
Heather Willor

Grade 9 Third Honors

Eric Bastarache
Donna Bettencourt
Scott Brown
Emma Butynski
Jaryd Buzzell
Oengus Gallagher
Tyler Haskell
Abeni Hession-Davies
Samantha Horan
Joshua Lapachinski
Michael Longto
Alexander Peterson
Cassandra Rounds

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Power Out to Much of Downtown, Following Collision with Utility Pole

BY DAVID DETMOLD

TURNERS FALLS - Around 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, April 18th, Chester Rich, maneuvering a semi-tractor trailer load from Yarmouth Lumber, Inc. in Gray, ME, rounded the corner from Avenue A to 2nd Street on his way to the Southworth Paper Company, cut the turn a little close and clipped the utility pole. He knocked the pole on a 45-degree angle, a power line fell across the street, residents of the Crocker Building saw sparks fly, and the lights went out along

Avenue A up to 7th Street, at least as far as L Street. The Crocker Building and 2nd Street toward the canal also lost power.

At the police station, Chief Ray Zukowski said power went out at 11:31 a.m. An ancient generator came to life briefly, supplying the station with emergency power, and then died. "It's old," said Zukowski, laconically. "We're all old."

Zukowski muttered something about having to get out of that station soon or else, and then continued down the Avenue, where a total of five yellow utility trucks struggled to restore power to businesses and residents as the afternoon wore on. The Avenue was blocked off first by Turners Falls fire department trucks; the highway department then put up barricades at 1st Street and 3rd Street. Police vehicles and patrolmen roamed the blocks between. Over at Doggie Dips and Clips, a portable generator whirred in the alley, supplying one line of electric power in an otherwise darkened block.

Down at Southworth, the truck driver had pulled his rig out of sight into the subterranean loading docks. Zukowski said the driver's insurance company

would be held responsible for any damages to businesses and residences.

He looked at the cars angled into parking spaces on Second Street, narrowing the turning radius from the Avenue. "That's the second time they've hit that same pole in the past week. The [truck] drivers start to make the turn, see the cars, and panic. They overcompensate and hit the pole," he said. He pointed to the yellow danger tape still wrapped around the base of the utility pole; a trucker had clipped the same pole just a few days before. "We've got to close that street to commercial vehicles," Zukowski said.

At 12:50 p.m., Dan Gavin, line supervisor for Western Mass Electric Company said power had been restored to all of downtown except the northwest block of 2nd Street and the building that houses the 2nd Street Sports Bar. When Zukowski pointed out that the lights were still out at businesses between 2nd and 3rd on the southeast side of the Avenue, Gavin uttered a mild



A semi taking a right on Second Street on the way to the Southworth Mill clipped the utility pole on the corner, causing widespread power outages downtown on Wednesday

oath and got back on his hand-held radio, ordering his crew to divert power to that part of the block.

At Subway, restaurant worker Jessica Cyr said she helped direct traffic when she saw the line go down, until the police arrived. Subway continued serving despite the power failure, to customers who were able to pay in cash, until their serving table thermometer rose above 40 degrees. Next door, the Chinatown Restaurant was dark, and at Jay K's Liquor, owner Pam Kostanski closed up shop until power could be

restored. Residents from the corner of 4th and L Street complained of flickering lights or lost power throughout the noon hour. At the Greenfield Savings Bank, power began to fail at 11:30 a.m., allowing only one of the tellers' computers to function until 12:15 p.m., when all power went out. The bank closed for half an hour until power was restored.

Gavin warned businesses there would be a second loss of power, for about half an hour, around 4:30 or 5:00 p.m., as wires were strung to the righted utility pole.

NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

Gill Seeks a Total of \$450,000 in Overrides

BY DAVID DETMOLD - In advance of the Patriot's Day holiday, the Gill selectboard met on Friday, April 13th, at 3:00 p.m. Phil Maddern, who has been out on convalescent leave since the New Year, was back in the saddle. "He's doing well," said administrative assistant Deb Roussel.

The board advanced the date of the special town meeting regarding the Gill-Montague school committee's proposal to change the district agreement between the towns of Gill and Montague to allow for the possibility of intra-district choice. If the proposal passes, sixth

grade students from Gill could go to the middle school in Turners Falls, and elementary students from Montague could choose into classes with openings at the Gill Elementary School; elementary students in Gill could also choose into classes with openings at any elementary school in Montague. The Gill special town meeting had been scheduled for April 26th; the board advanced the date to Thursday, May 3rd at 6 p.m. at the town hall. The board made the move, according to Roussel, to hold the meeting on the same date as Montague, "so all residents of the district will

have the same opportunity to pose their response."

The board also notified the town clerk of their intent to place two override questions on the ballot for the annual town election, scheduled for Monday, May 21st. The first question seeks to raise the levy limit by \$300,000 to fund the general omnibus budget for town departments and school assessments. The second question seeks an additional \$125,000 to purchase a new single axle dump truck for the highway department, to replace one that has reached the end of its useful life.

The board appointed Kathy Augustine, a registered Republican, to the board of registrars, to replace Harriett Tidd, recently deceased, who shared that party affiliation. The three-member board must maintain an even representation of one Democrat, one Republican, and one registrar who is unenrolled.

The board met with highway department superintendent Mick LaClaire to discuss repair work recently completed at the Riverside pumping station. "Thanks to the wonderful work of George Emery," Roussel said, the repairs wound up being very minor.

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

Introductory Creative Writing Workshop
On Saturday, April 28th from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. - with local writer/artist/teacher, Edite Cunhã, M.F.A. All levels. Space is limited. Free. Call 625-6987 to register.

Film Showing
On Tuesday, April 24th or Thursday, April 26th at 5:30 p.m. - "The End of Suburbia." Free!

Acupuncture Wellness Clinic
On Wednesday, May 2nd with Amy Levitin, Lic. Ac.; 6:30-7:30, free.

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Costly Hoax at French King Bridge

BY DAVID DETMOLD

ERVING - On Thursday morning, April 12th, at about 9:00 a.m., Erving police chief Christopher Blair, responding to a State Police Crime Prevention and Control Unit 'be on the lookout advisory,' for a potentially suicidal subject, found the car in question, a gray Chevy Cavalier, parked on the Gill side of the French King Bridge. The car's doors were unlocked, the keys were in the ignition, cell phone inside the car, and a note was left lying on the driver's seat "that led us to believe the subject had jumped off the bridge," Blair said.

Blair and his department have had plenty of experience

with suicides. The French King Bridge, a scenic overlook popular with tourists from the eastern part of the state at leaf-peeping time, is also a popular destination for people plotting to take their own lives.

"I've been here 10 years," said Blair. "I've seen multiple people commit suicide from that bridge. It's pretty traumatic. It's horrible."

Last Thursday, Blair called in the state dive team, the Montague fire department, and the Erving fire department to help search the Connecticut River. Two officers from Gill and two officers from Erving also responded to the scene. First Light Power Generation

shut the dams at the Northfield hydro station to reduce the water flow in the river and aid in the search, reducing electric power generation. The combined cost of all these actions ran into the tens of thousands of dollars.

On Friday, Blair said, the subject of the search was discovered at his girlfriend's house in Greenfield, where the initial 'be-on-the-lookout' call originated. The suicide threat was a hoax, the chief said.

"I've seen several hoax attempts over the years, and we've intercepted a number of suicide attempts over the years as well." Blair estimated the number of thwarted attempts

and hoax attempts at "as many as 20 a year," at the French King Bridge. These repeated calls create stress on the departments, and exact a high financial toll on the towns that must respond. Add to that the emotional toll on rescuers who pull from the water those who do succeed.

"It's rough," Blair said. "I don't think people realize the stress on the survivors, or the responders."

He said the police are looking to the courts to see what remedy might be available to recover some of the costs associated with the search for Thursday's hoax. He said the subject of that search was com-

mitted for psychiatric evaluation after being located last week.

Blair said he had brought up the idea of erecting suicide prevention fencing at the French King Bridge, but the idea seemed to be a non-starter. "The problem is, if someone wants to kill themselves, they'd just go to a different bridge."

People struggling with depression or feeling suicidal do have help line services available to them 24 hours a day. Among the numbers they could call are: First Call for Help in Franklin Community, at 376-1108 (where an answering machine message on Wednesday, April 18th, said "Calls are returned in the order they are received. Due to the high number of calls, it may take one to two days to get back to your call.") A call to the Franklin Medical Center switchboard was forwarded to the hospital public relations department, who forwarded an inquiry about help line availability to Service Net in Northampton, where emergency services gave out the number of the Crisis Line at the Franklin Medical Center, which maintains an eight bed crisis stabilization unit and counseling help line. The Crisis Line number at Franklin Medical is 1-800-562-0112. Teens in crisis may also call a 24-hour "befriending" service line out of Boston, at 1-800-252-8336.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE GILL POLICE LOG

Possible Suicide Prompts Two-Day Search

Wednesday 4-11

10:10 p.m. Responded to verbal dispute on Main Road. Subjects advised of their rights. No crime committed.

11:29 p.m. Assisted Northfield police with motor vehicle stop on Main Street.

Thursday 4-12

6:50 a.m. Assisted residents with keeping the peace on Main Road.

9:32 a.m. Report of damage caused to trees on Mountain Road, subject identified and in

contact with tree owner.

9:50 a.m. Possible suicide at French King Bridge, responded with numerous other agencies.

Friday 4-13

8:45 a.m. In area of French King Bridge with state police dive team regarding possible suicide from Thursday. Subject later located in Greenfield; search canceled.

5:10 p.m. Assisted resident at station with ongoing noise complaint. Advised of legal

options.

Saturday 4-14

8:45 a.m. Report of possible larceny, suspicious subject at a Pisgah Mountain Road address. Under investigation.

1:20 p.m. Report of suspicious vehicle in area of state boat ramp. Subjects located, all OK.

11:43 p.m. Report of vehicle operating erratically on Main Road; unable to locate.

Sunday 4-15

1:20 p.m. Single vehicle accident with no injuries on Main Road.

11:40 p.m. Report of possible prowler at West Gill Road address. Checked area; unable to locate.

Monday 4-16

6:10 a.m. Report of tree down on wires in area of Factory Hollow. Assisted with traffic control at Gill Lights.

10:10 p.m. Loud noise complaint on Cove View Lane.

AUTISM

continued from page 1

herself, and copes the best she can.

Autistic children are as open and honest as babies, as deception requires a more developed set of social behaviors such as slyness, embarrassment or shame. When an autistic child throws a tantrum - a complete meltdown, as often as not in public - it is not a sign of willful misbehavior, but a signal that outside stimuli have become

unbearable, painful, and the child can no longer cope. She cannot take into consideration others' expectations for her since she cannot 'stand in another's shoes.' She sees life through literal lenses. 'Don't cry over spilt milk' is no metaphor to her, but means exactly what it says, and if no milk has been spilt, it makes no sense at all. Point to a birch and tell her it is a tree, and every birch will forever be a tree, but not necessarily a maple unless you call that a tree as well. The ability to generalize is

either difficult or entirely missing. Show her a doll's house and a doll, and she is apt to drop the doll on its head, remove the furniture and line it up all in a row. The imitative, fantasy play that comes naturally to very small children can be, in the autistic child, simply non-existent.

These are innocents, whose circuitry is misfiring, causing what some call 'mindblindness.'

To add insult to injury, an autistic's five senses can be a total nightmare. Recent experiments show that autistic chil-


dren (and presumably adults) are bombarded by their own nervous systems, which explains the meltdowns in situations in which normal children easily cope, and 'stimming' (self-stimulating stereotypical gestures and sounds to reduce stress). A fluorescent light may be perceived as many times more intense than it actually is, the smell of glue may cause nausea and panic, the murmur of voices may form an unbearable cacophony. The autistic brain cannot filter out extraneous

stimuli; raindrops might sound like gunshots; lights become a chaotic kaleidoscope; a light touch painful (the child who pulls away may crave to be held while unable to tolerate the pain, and another may want just the opposite: deep pressure). Senses may be so incorrectly wired that sound appears as color, touch as sound, smell as taste. No wonder then that at one time autistics were labeled schizophrenic. Not all autistic

see AUTISM pg 12

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Fixing Our Bikes to Fix the Planet

BY CHRIS MASON

MONTAGUE CENTER - About 50 residents of Montague and nearby towns made their way to the Montague Grange on Saturday, April 14th, to get their bikes tuned up for a season of carbon-free travel, and to make a statement to Congress to take action against global warming. The two-hour event, titled "Fixing Bikes to Fix the Planet," was one of over 1,400 events held nationwide to draw national leaders' attention to the need for action on the problem of climate change. Events ranged in size from thousands of people in some cities to two people scuba diving near coral reefs with a sign that read "It's Getting Warm Down Here." In New York City, blue-clad participants formed a line through lower Manhattan showing where sea levels could rise if the world fails to act soon



PHOTO BY MICHAEL MULLER

Local residents gathered at the Montague Grange on Saturday, April 14th as part of "Fixing Bikes to Fix the Planet," one of over 1,400 community events nationwide that day to draw national attention to the need to combat climate change. To see more photos, visit <http://stepitup2007.org/>.

to control heat-trapping emissions.

Montague's event, though smaller, had the benefit of directly preparing dozens of people to reduce their carbon emissions by getting them ready to leave their cars at home and begin commuting by bike. Most participants arrived on bicycles to demonstrate their support for earth-

friendly forms of transportation, while some drove and brought their bikes with them to be fixed. On hand to help with repairs, maintenance, and to teach people about repairing bicycles were bicycle fix-it wizards Howie Blodgett, Rich Schweitzer, and Chris Wise who demonstrated how to adjust gears, lube bicycle chains, tighten brakes, and tune up bikes.

Another highlight of the event was a community picture of participants taken against a backdrop displaying a banner that read: "Step it Up, Cut Carbon 80% by 2050." This photograph will join thousands of others in a petition to Congress to act on global warming now! To view the Montague Step it Up event photos, along with local actions from around the country, go to <http://stepitup2007.org/>

AUTISM

continued from pg 11

people experience these extremes - in fact some are undersensitive to stimuli - but it is likely that most experience, to some degree and at some times, a sensory overload.

From accounts of people living hundreds of years ago it is apparent that although there was no name for it, the condition existed as far back as written history. It shows up at all socio-economic levels, in all countries, ethnic groups, and races. With the exception of gender (four times as many males are afflicted as females), it is an equal opportunity disease. A subgroup of those mildly affected (about 10%), are said to suffer Asperger's syndrome, a group that includes some 'savants' with a variety of extraordinary talents. It has been suggested that Einstein, Van Gogh, and Darwin all suffered from this syndrome: brilliant, socially-inept men, all of whom were considered 'dull' or 'retarded' as young children. At the other end of the spectrum

are those who are, in fact, severely afflicted, locked away in a world of their own. The majority fall somewhere along the spectrum, with their own individualized sets of symptoms.

As recently as a decade ago, when I started searching out books on autism, it was estimated that 1 infant in every 2500 was autistic. A year ago that figure had skyrocketed to 1 in 166. This past month it had climbed again to 1 in 150 births. It could be argued that the figures have increased due to better diagnostic tools and a raised awareness among doctors, and that many who were diagnosed years ago with childhood schizophrenia or mental retardation were actually autistic; but even when that has been taken into consideration, one cannot explain away the dramatic increase in diagnoses of autism during the last decade. Autism is now, unquestionably, an epidemic, and what is most frightening is that there are no shots, no vaccines, and no magic bullets to stem the spread of this dread disease; despite the occasional anecdotal

reports of recovery, autism cannot be prevented and it cannot be cured.

Researchers tell us that there is a strong genetic component to autism. They have found abnormalities on several chromosomes in a cluster of genes in autistic individuals; certain cells in the cerebellum are, they say, dramatically fewer in autistics; neurons in the hippocampus - which is believed to play a role in emotional response and complex learning - have failed to mature fully, with fewer and shorter branches. When these pathways are defective, signals cannot reach their intended receivers. These defects that result in autistic behaviors may not actually cause the autism itself, but simply cause a vulnerability to it. What trigger, then, outside of the body can be found to explain what is happening suddenly to so many? Genes evolve slowly, unlike the rapid upsurge in autism diagnoses, and so researchers are starting to take a multifactorial approach that looks beyond the body for explanations; they are now looking at the environment

itself.

Some babies exhibit symptoms of autism soon after birth. (According to Margaret Bauman, MD of Harvard, the development of the brain goes off track sometime before the middle of the second trimester of pregnancy.) Other babies develop normally for the first eighteen months to two years, and then regress. To explain this latter group it has been argued that too many vaccinations - some involving mercury as a preservative - have overwhelmed the system, and triggered autism in the vulnerable toddler.

In the Autism Society of America's *Advocate Magazine*,

Fifth Edition, Martha R. Herbert, M.D., who is a pediatric neurologist at the Massachusetts General Hospital writes in her article "Time to Get a Grip": "The rise in autism diagnoses, along with the rise in other immune and chronic illnesses, is really a wake-up call. Put alongside the warnings about the ecological instability of our planet, it shows that our situation is serious. Autistic individuals may not be 'different' from the rest of us but simply 'more sensitive' to environmental injury - they may be the 'canaries in the coal mine' warning us of impending greater disaster."

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A Solution Australis Odor Letourneau and Allen Square Off for Prudential Committee

BY KEVIN FOLEY

TURNERS FALLS - The Montague board of health and representatives from Australis Aquaculture LLC met on Wednesday, April 18th to iron out an agreement for alleviating a persistent odor that has been bothering the neighborhood south and west of the industrial fish farm. Josh Goldman, managing director of Australis, announced that the fish farm will alter their method of releasing manure from the plant at the end of April or the beginning of May. The change will take place in order to eliminate an odor that residents and businesses near the Industrial Boulevard facility say they have been bothered by more or less continuously since the summer of 2006. Residents and representatives from local businesses attended the meeting to voice their displeasure with the rotten egg smell, and to ensure that a satisfactory solution is achieved.

Australis currently uses a 200,000-gallon airtight tank for storing manure from the fish farm for extended periods, before eventually using the waste to fertilize farmers' fields. The stored manure, while in the tank, creates high levels of hydrogen sulfide, a gas that is odorous even at very low levels. A three-gallon a minute waste stream drained the effluent from the tank to the town sewer; the sewer line was the source of the odor for neighbors further along the line. "The production of hydrogen sulfide only takes place when you store manure," said Goldman "The new system won't involve storing manure." Three gallons of manure per minute will instead be released from the farm in an effluent stream, in order to circumvent the storage and consequent build-up of sulfides. Australis will decommission the tank they currently use to store manure.

The 'new' method is actually an old one the farm used from 2004 until 2006, when they incorporated the storage tank due to increased production of barramundi fish, their signature product, following the completion of a \$2.5 million, 20,000-square foot addition to the plant last year. A popular food fish in Australia, barramundi grown at the indoor fish farm is now shipped from Australis to American markets at the rate of 1000 tons annually. Goldman promised the board of health

and residents that increased production won't change the amount of waste exiting the farm. Instead, they will implement a method of condensing the waste.

At the beginning of the meeting, Barry Kostanski, a Norman Circle resident who has been pressing officials to alleviate the persistent problem, recommended the board of health monitor the situation as a public nuisance, which would enable the town to set legal limits of hydrogen sulfide released by the plant. However, later in the evening, after hearing Goldman's proposal for eliminating the smell, Kostanski backed off on this stance. The board of health closed the meeting at 9:00 p.m., with plans to open it again on Wednesday, May 16th at 8:00 p.m. to gauge the progress of the plan.

"I'll be the first one to say that (Australis) is bringing jobs into the community, and that's great," said Kyle Cogswell, a Norman Circle resident. "But we have a right to sit in our backyards."

"As far as I'm concerned, if I wake up tomorrow and smell it, that's one day too many," said Kevin Murphy, another nearby resident.

"The goal is to decrease the hydrogen sulfide to (a level where there's no odor) or to eliminate it," said Bob Trombley, Montague wastewater treatment plant supervisor. "I think this system will do that." Goldman joined him in his optimism. "Before spring, in earnest, we hope this is over with."

But the problem might get worse before it gets better, during the drainage of the tank that is currently holding manure, Goldman said. "The flow that we historically had of three gallons per minute will be pushed up to ten gallons a minute during the drainage." However, he said that increased flow will be only a one-time necessity, and won't cause a long-term lingering odor.

At the end of the meeting, selectboard member Allen Ross and board of health member Jay DiPucchio expressed their gratification for the diplomacy of Australis's neighbors and for the fish farm's response to complaints. "This has been a good faith effort by everyone involved to try to solve the problem," DiPucchio said.

BY KEVIN FOLEY

TURNERS FALLS - An election for the Prudential Committee of the Turners Falls Fire District will take place on Tuesday, April 24th. The incumbent, Dean Letourneau, is running against Mark Allen for a three-year seat. Registered voters within the Turners Falls Fire District may vote in the election, which will be held from 12:00 noon to 7:00 p.m. at the offices of the Turners Falls Water Department, 226 Millers Falls Road.

The Prudential Committee is the administrative body that governs the Turners Falls Fire District, which manages the Turners Falls fire department and the street lights for the villages within the district, according to Eileen Tela, accountant for the Turners Falls Fire District. The fire district includes the villages of Turners Falls, Montague City and Millers Falls.

Letourneau feels that his experience makes him the most qualified man for the job. "I've been on the board for 15-odd years," said Letourneau. "In the last 15 years, the town budget has increased 85%, while the fire district's budget has only increased 16%. Also, we've increased services, while the town has decreased services." The increased services include purchasing two new fire engines and adding a fire boat to the fleet of fire district vehicles, according to Letourneau.

On the opposing side, Allen feels that despite his lack of experience in the fire district, he

has a lot to offer the community. "I have 30 years of experience in management with a large medical group," said Allen. The experience he is referring to includes being a member of the board of directors for the Valley Medical Group, as well as serving as chairman of the board for the Permanente Medical Group of Massachusetts.

"I'm not sure (good management) hasn't been happening, but it doesn't seem like the public has much input," said Allen. "I'm embarrassed to say that I missed the mini-advertisement in the Greenfield Recorder yesterday for the annual meeting." Allen, who thinks the small ad wasn't enough to inform the public that the meeting was happening, wants to make sure the public will have more of a chance to offer input in the future.

"All of our meetings are open to the public and are legally posted," said Letourneau. "I only wish more people would become involved, come to the meetings and realize how fiscally responsible we are."

Letourneau also noted that Allen wasn't present at the Tuesday, April 18th annual Prudential Committee meeting. "I thought it was kind of strange that he didn't attend the meeting," said Letourneau. "I wanted to introduce myself and I was looking for him, but he wasn't there."

Another point Allen believes is important is facilitating the building of a new police station, which is in the planning stages to be built adjacent to the fire

department. "It's long overdue for the town to get this new space," said Allen. The possibility to save money exists, because the building will be in close proximity to the fire station, creating a safety complex for the town, according to Allen.

During their annual meeting, the Prudential Committee offered to donate a portion of the land that would be needed to build the police station to the town. "We're doing our share," Letourneau said. "There is a Montague Center Fire District as well. What are they doing to help?" he asked.

Securing money to provide the firehouse with necessities is a duty Allen feels he can help with. "Clearly the fire department is an area where there's an ongoing need for expensive equipment," said Allen. He believes his management skills will help in this area of managing the committee.

Letourneau believes the most important part of managing the fire district is keeping taxes low for residents. "There are 5,300 plus voters in Montague and 1,740 of them are retired people on fixed incomes," said Letourneau. "That's a huge percentage, and they've only got so much money."

Also on the ballot for Tuesday's election is one three-year seat for the Turners Falls water commission. Incumbent commissioner Stephen Call, faces no opposition for this election. The Turners Falls water commission manages the water supply for the district.

POLICE from pg 6

while 1,410 were in the outer precincts, closer to the Turners Falls fire station.

With this information in hand, the committee considered about a half dozen possible locations. Other sites had various disadvantages - too expensive to retrofit, on busy streets with difficult traffic or pedestrian patterns, too awkward for timely response to certain villages - that ruled them out. During our deliberations, we held meetings in Precinct 5 and at the Turners Fire Station for public input, and solicited opinions from the business community. Only the selected site was dead center for response time, and places the station closer to the anticipated growth areas on the Hill in Turners and around Montague Center, and closer to all schools.

In terms of changes in coverage in Turners, our most densely populated village, one mobile unit will continue to be assigned to the downtown area 24/7. Adding one position to the 15-member department would get us an officer back on the streets full

time, and move us halfway back to the 17 officers we had in Montague in 1991. In the meantime, moving the police station to Turnpike Road will not affect the assignment of officers to downtown Turners Falls.



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Local Filmmakers Offer Earth Day Films at Amherst Cinema

BY ALICIA McDONALD
MONTAGUE CENTER - Nestled among the pines and streams of Chestnut Hill you'll find the offices of an award-winning independent filmmaking company specializing in wildlife documentaries. Equilibrio Films' founder, Christian Muñoz-Donoso, a native of Chile, will introduce his work to the local film-going public this Sunday at the Amherst Cinema, with a showing of *Atacama; the Flowering Desert*. Three years in the making, the film offers quite a contrast to the scene outside Muñoz-Donoso's window these days; the Atacama Desert of Chile is generally described as 'the driest place on Earth.' In 1999, this film won in the "Newcomer Award" category at the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival. It offers a cinematic rendering of the surprising array of wildlife in the Atacama, and will provide rain-weary denizens of the Valley with a welcome vista.

Along with producer Wes Major, Muñoz-Donoso has digitally remastered this wildlife documentary and enhanced it with bonus materials and an

improvised soundtrack in order to present a special Earth Day screening to the public. This Sunday, April 22nd at 4 p.m., in honor of the national day of environmental celebration, the Amherst Cinema Arts Center has invited both filmmakers to show their work and stay for a question and answer session afterward. As an added bonus, on the 22nd, Equilibrio Films will feature a three-minute short from their upcoming Cinema Arts series called "Wild View". The short that will be shown on the 22nd, *Carnivorous Plants*, will take us around the eastern United States, showing the strange and fantastic adaptations of these unusual plant species.

When asked about the journey that led them into this field, the filmmakers recounted a childhood history filled with animals and a strong desire to engage with the natural world; so strong that not even 110 degree heat and a two week waiting period to catch three minutes of the elusive Andean Condor would deter their spirits. So strong that after a near fatal encounter with a mountain lion, Muñoz-Donoso hiked right back into its territory five days out of

the hospital, with no thoughts of revenge. He seemed only disappointed that his wounds were so severe that he couldn't take a picture of the cat as it paced around the little hut where he sought refuge all night.

"You see," he said, "we must change some of the current conservation techniques and thinking." Direct contact with wildlife is problematic. We should no longer support sensationalized approaches for entertainment's sake (*Crocodile Hunter*). As Major pointed out, "contact with humans disrupts animals' routines and stresses an existence already fragile due to habitat loss."

Through their documentaries, the crew behind Equilibrio Films Ltd. hopes to change public sentiment away from compartmentalized species protection and towards a more expansive view of conserving ecosystems. Through independent filmmaking like Equilibrio's, we can hopefully regain our original sense of wonder and reverence for the natural world. And just maybe we'll find the inspiration to reduce our impact on the Earth's resources.

A Shot in the Dark



BY DAVID DETMOLD
GREENFIELD - In conjunction with the 16th Annual Youth Conference at the Greenfield Middle School on Wednesday, April 11th, director Court Dorsey of Wendell brought his most recent Conflict Resolution Players production to the stage. The piece, written and performed entirely by the students of Dean Stanton's English class at Franklin County Tech was called *A Shot in the Dark*. Performed before an overflow crowd of high school students from Athol, Turners Falls, Greenfield, Holyoke and other area schools, the play was a cry from the heart of teenage wasteland, one that resonates with chilling import in the wake of Monday's college massacre in Virginia.

Played as one long flashback, the drama unravels the events of a single day in the life of a

typical rural high school, where bulemic cheer leaders vie for the boys' attention, drug dealers ply their trade, and the only adult figures on stage are an invidious Army recruiter trying to beef up his roster for the next platoon to Baghdad and an abusive father trying to bully his rebellious daughter into submission. Gay bashing, disdain of differently able youth, and alcoholism are added to the toxic mix, as a geek chorus of internet chatters provides detached, ironic commentary.

Violence is never far from the surface of school life for these kids, and it can explode on any given day, with fatal consequences.

The play was uneven, but brutally honest. As the nation tries to come to grips with the lessons of Virginia Tech, we should call on Dorsey and his players for an encore.

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THEATER REVIEW

"Sir, Yes Sir!"

Another Accomplished Mission for the Country Players

AARON SORKIN'S A FEW GOOD MEN, AT THE SHEA, DIRECTED BY RICHARD MARTIN



The Country Players take a bow.

BY FLORE
TURNERS FALLS - Had you realized, this dedicated theater troupe, in business since 1979, has been one of the resident companies at the community Shea Theater for the past 11 years? Their motto? Encourage everyone interested in acting, and provide them with adequate training.

Their goal? To promote educational awareness, both for the actors and the public.

Their priorities? An emphasis on creativity in drama, set designs and costumes, including dance, voice studies, as well as familiarity with the gamut of theatrical production from public relations to management.

The performance of *A Few Good Men*, a Marine courtroom drama set at

Guantanamo Bay in the seemingly more innocent 1980s, was still a timely choice for its themes of martial abuse, the treatment of minorities and the image of the military.

It was the third play written by playwright Aaron Sorkin. He was 28 when he wrote it.

Though Sorkin had never served in the military or even come close to a law school, still the play was inspired by the story of a Marine accused of murdering a fellow Marine.

Its Washington premiere, presented in 1989 at the Kennedy Center, was widely acclaimed.

The play is set at U. S. Naval Base at Guantanamo, in Cuba.

The set designs used at the Shea Theater provided for quick changes of place, using

basic office furniture, for the actors to move in and out of the spotlight.

A cast of 19 actors unraveled the murder of Santiago in this ambitious drama, brought vividly to life by the accomplished troupe. All carried their part convincingly, with just the right emphasis.

Bravo!

Ready for the Country Players' next program?

It will be *The Wizard of Oz*. Actors are wanted!

Auditions will take place on April 22nd at the GCC Downtown Center, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. and on April 24th at the Shea Theater, from 6.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. For more info, contact David Grout at 413-863-2491.

JAMES MONTGOMERY BLUES BAND

Rockin' R & B at the Route 63 Roadhouse

BY ALICIA McDONALD
MILLERS FALLS - Even before the first chord was struck last Saturday night at the Route 63 Roadhouse, the joint was humming for long-time Valley favorite the James Montgomery Blues Band. A must see for anyone who plays harmonica, James Montgomery embodies the pinnacle of harp playing. As Wendell's own Myron Becker said between sets, "Every time I see this guy he teaches me how to play the harp all over again."

From the Mississippi Delta, through cutting edge bluesmen like Muddy Waters and Little Walter, the James Montgomery Band has refined a Chicago-Detroit style of the blues, coming from what bassist David Hull refers to as the "cultural petri dish." These guys live and breathe the creative process through their music, and it sounds as vital as the day Robert Johnson first tried to hitch a ride north. Before tearing through an impromptu version of Muddy Waters' classic "The Same Thing," Montgomery recalled playing harmonica in his younger days with Otis Spahn, Junior Wells, and McKinley Morganfield

himself. Opening the show, Montgomery said, "This is where we got our start... Remember the tobacco barns and the Rusty Nail? Let's play some Allman Brothers from the old days." As they ripped into their set, each musician worked his craft with the greatest intent and ease, as if becoming one with his instrument. How can strings and skin on wood, and breath flowing through a fluted channel sound so alive, to express human longing and pain? These four white guys in black have perfected their artistry by channeling the energy of the crowd, unifying audience and performers with primal blues beats, sliding along pentatonic scales, amplifying the sounds, and finally by letting their passion flow. This is what a great musical experience is all about.

Although Montgomery's vocals fell short of the mark for me, it was great to hear originals in such a traditional genre. It came as no surprise that by the third song the dance floor was packed. And at the Roadhouse, the dancing only gets better as the night passes. For young and



James Montgomery leads his band through a torrid rendition of Muddy Waters' "The Same Thing" on Saturday, April 14th, at the Rt. 63 Roadhouse in Millers Falls.

old alike, long-time fans and those new to the music, the show that night provided a sense of release and celebration.

Owners Jaime Snyder and Carol Cameron run a great operation at the Route 63 landmark. They provide an excellent crew on sound, tending bar, and helping out at the door, so that Snyder and Cameron are free to do what they do best, aid and abet the good times for their customers. They achieve this with ease through their smiles and laughter and infectious appreciation of the music that fills their hall. Cameron describes the space as a comfortable living room where people greet friends and meet great people. She said the James Montgomery Blues Band draws a loyal and nostalgic crowd; when they're in the area they play exclusively at the Roadhouse now because of the room's ability to participate in some type of animated way, just like the musicians' instruments. In fact, Cameron calls the room "a good ol' girl." In these parts, it's only in Montague you can find such an interesting mix of "down home" hospitality and some of the world's top bluesmen.

From the first time James Montgomery heard the blues played live by a jug band back in Detroit in 1964, he has con-

tinually worked with the best. Before the show, Montgomery ran down a dizzying list of legendary names as influences and collaborators. He credits Tom Dowd (Aretha Franklin's producer) from Atlantic Records for his assistance in unifying his different influences and sidemen into an ensemble. In other words, what makes the James Montgomery Blues Band such a great band is the nurturing of that tight sound.

Montgomery spoke with pride about the consistent quality of his backing band over the years. "Rod Stewart, Bonnie Raitt, Ray Charles, among others, all looked to my band to fill out their players." Hull, the bassist, just finished a six-month subbing gig on tour with Aerosmith. Currently, Montgomery is working with Morgan Freeman, and has written a song called "Delta Storm" for one of his upcoming projects.

James Montgomery didn't just list showbiz people as sources of his inspiration. He spoke passionately about metaphysics, Christian theology, sacred Hindu texts, and finished by quoting James Joyce. Like any artist worth his salt, he thinks deeply about the meaning of existence and his role as a being of the Creator, now co-creating with the Creator. If

your head is spinning, suffice it to say that as a bluesman, Montgomery is tapping into "the source of life that creates our experiences of joy and suffering."

Blues, as a musical genre, has often been called a cry of lament. But what makes the James Montgomery Blues Band such a great live act is their ability to share what Hull refers to as "the transcendence, after the tragic events have been interpreted." Sure, it's great to articulate all that, but the fans know it just feels good to listen and groove to high quality blues.

Want to keep that feeling until the next time they bring the blues to town? The band's most recent recording, "Bring It On Home" will give you a smattering of the traditional elements combined with their "cultured dish" of great contemporary blues.

Meanwhile, help re-birth the blues by contributing to the Music Rising Fund to replace lost instruments and to redevelop choirs and ensembles that lost so much in the devastating hurricanes that hit the Delta two years back. Through the Gibson Guitar Foundation and Music Cares (go on any of their web sites), this is a great way to give back to the people of the land where the blues, jazz, rock, and R & B all have their roots.



PHOTO BY ALICIA McDONALD

Bass player David Hull, just back from a tour with Aerosmith


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ECLECTIC OFFERINGS ON TAP AT CUP O' JOE OPEN MIC

BY DAVID DETMOLD

TURNERS FALLS - Eclectic musical offerings, reubens on rye, dreadlocks and nose rings were on display at a packed coffeehouse open mic at Cup o' Joe on Avenue A Saturday night, April 14th. How many people do you think that place can hold? Wrong, more than that. And if they can't all fit at the tables, they'll sit on the floor, and line the sidewalk to get a chance to perform at one of these uneven but exuberant monthly gatherings.

We stopped by just for part of the show, but left amazed at the breadth of talent and potential in the teen and perhaps twenty-something scene in town. Which is not to say the performers were polished. Far from it. But that's part of the attraction: if you're looking for diamonds downtown you'd better be prepared to find them in the rough.

First up, while we waited for a sandwich, was a young man in a slouch cap named, appropriately, Dylan. He regaled the crowd with a well-worn ballad called "And the Cat Came Back," sort of a feline version of "Charlie on the MTA," from an earlier century. Dylan thought the folk song originated in Canada; actually it was written by Harry Miller in Chicago in 1893, as a comic Negro minstrel tune, back before Don Imus' day, but the audience let the imprecision go and got into the repetitive metrics and singsong melody, delivered in a *sotto voce* tenor.

Alyce, a flaming redhead, took the stage next, hefted a fiddle to her chin and, with the briefest of intros, tore into "Mug o' Brown Ale," a familiar Irish jig. People tapped their feet on the linoleum in time, as the café's fluorescent lights caromed off the brightly painted yellow, blue and green walls and clashed with the performer's flounced peasant skirt. Atmosphere is not Cup o' Joe's strong suit, but it makes up for that in authenticity. As the crowd urged her on, Alyce got a little distracted and the tune wandered off in the higher registers, but she simply



Bashful Tom and the Crooked Hats - This a cappella combo stunned the house with their sheer energy.

smiled and continued bravely on, to loud applause.

MC Hilary was stumped by the handwriting of the next group on the sign-up sheet. But just at that moment, Nick Picariello, burst through the door to interpret the hieroglyphics for her, and without further ado his duo - **B a s h f u l Tom and the Crooked Hats** - with Luke Eaton on lead vocals, took the stage.

This a cappella combo stunned the house with their sheer energy. They offered a kind of southern fried voodoo that sounded like a couple of tom cats on laudanum, howling in an echo chamber. "We going to make some noise for you," promised Picariello with his trademark smirk. And he was good for his word.

They started off with Tom Waits' "Lucinda", and just when they'd pushed that guttural stomp right to the edge, rebounded with another Waits anthem, "Cold Water," hitting an emo-

tional peak with "Pregnant women and the Vietnam vets, Beggin' on the freeway 'bout as hard as it gets." Tuneful? No. Deeply felt? Perhaps. But their energy was undeniable.

Finally, the duo followed up with an original tune, this one written and sung by Picariello. The title was elusive, but it bore the timely refrain, "The Earth Died Screamin' While I Lay Dreamin' of You." Maybe that was the title. In any case, the crowd went wild.

Stately blues took the stage next, in the form of a young woman named Safir and her Gibson Les Paul knock-off. She's not Tracy Chapmen, not yet; her voice is a bit untrained and wavery, but she's got soul, and she will sing. She told the crowd to expect a series of original one-minute songs with no titles, including one she had just written, which she started out with. It dealt with lost or unrequited love, in miniature, and bore a barbed refrain, with a threat or a promise: "I don't know what I think of your demise, but I can make it worth

your while." O.K. Safir is someone to watch; she knows her way around a fretboard; she's got that inner assurance and commands attention on stage.

Called back for an encore by Hilary, Safir delivered an old Johnny Mercer/Nat King Cole ballad, in a style reminiscent of Dusty Springfield, called "Autumn Leaves". A class act.

Handrolled cigarettes and scribbled lyrics littered the coffee table tops. There were silver studded belts, ripped jeans and metal jewelry protruding from odd places on the faces in the crowd. Pollywog took the stage: Caleb Perry with a long brown and yellow scarf, mukluk boots and knee socks, rolled up dungarees and sporting a prominent nose ornament, shaggy hair sticking out from under his slouch cap. He played squeezebox, played it well, with his friend Kass on bow and hand saw. Disdaining a microphone, Perry ripped right into a mean sea shanty about his long lost daddy watchin over him, while Kass demonstrated a supple range on the eerie musical saw.

Dispatching that tune, the two tore into Folsom Prison Blues, restructured as a polka with a hectic saw blade melody wavering in the foreground. I bet the inmates in this infamous Johnny Cash tune would have been glad to get their hands on either one of this duo's instruments.

Pollywog's a great act. The song skirts faster and faster, Perry a manic figure with his squeezebox pumping, his arms akimbo, face absorbed, a

rhythm scarecrow pointing the way to an uncertain doom. It's the sort of music you'd expect to hear on the lower decks of the Titanic, after it had already shipped quite a bit of water, still moving on.

In the middle of the next song, the music breaks off abruptly. "You wanna just play the fast part?" asks Perry. Apparently not. Loud applause.

Safir comes back up to play a duet with Hilary. A fire engine pulls up next door, red lights whirling, filling the room with a free strobe show. Zach Fellows, Cup o' Joe proprietor, leans his elbows on the new stone counter, unperturbed. He's been in business four years on the Avenue; he's seen it all before. "Give me a reason to stay here," sings Safir, "and I'll turn it back around." They pull out the Red Hot Chili Peppers for an encore, with Brandon accompanying on bass and vocals. "Sometimes I feel like my only friend, is the city I live in, the city of Angels..."

They pull some guy named Eric up to sing with them. He's got a good voice. The song begins to take shape, as people walk in, walk out. Sort of jagged, rough around the edges, but more than half formed. It's got potential. Like all the musicians who dared the corner stage at the Cup o' Joe open mic.



MC Hilary brought soul to the proceedings.



Pollywog: Disdaining a microphone, Caleb ripped right into a mean sea shanty, while Kass demonstrated a supple range on the musical saw.



Safir told the crowd to expect a series of original one-minute songs with no titles, and that's what they got.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Larceny, DWI, Peace Disturbed

Saturday 4-7

12:55 p.m. Report of a larceny at a 5th Street address. A scooter was missing. Report taken.

7:48 p.m. Report of threatening or harassment at a 3rd Street address. [REDACTED], was arrested and charged with destruction of property over \$250, vandalizing property, and disturbing the peace.

Sunday 4-8

5:22 p.m. Report of a fight on 5th Street. Found to be juve-

niles arguing. Peace restored.

11:17 p.m. After a motor vehicle stop on Canal Road, [REDACTED], was arrested and charged with failure to stop at a stop sign, red light violation, marked lanes violation, and operating under the influence of liquor.

Monday 4-9

10:51 a.m. Report of a larceny at a Morris Avenue address. Jewelry, a TV, and other items were missing. Under investigation.

7:58 p.m. Report of a larceny from a Prospect Street address. Caller believes a relative stole prescription drugs. Report taken.

Tuesday 4-10

10:30 a.m. While assisting another police department, Montague police arrested [REDACTED] on a default warrant.

11:13 p.m. Report of a loud noise disturbance at a Turners Falls Road address. Neighbor's dogs were barking. Owner did not answer door.

A HOLISTIC HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

When It Hurts to Walk or Stand



BY JENNY CHAPIN

MONTAGUE CENTER – Plantar fasciitis ("PLAN-ter fash-ee-EYE-tus") is a condition that feels like stepping on a nail every time the foot hits the ground. The plantar fascia is a flat band of tissue that attaches to the rear of the heel bone and stretches fanlike along the sole of the foot to the toes. Its function is to provide support of the longitudinal arch, and shock absorption.

Plantar fasciitis is caused by straining the ligament that supports the arch. Repeated strain can cause tiny tears in the ligament, causing irritation or inflammation. The pain can be at any portion of the bottom of the foot where the fascia is located. It can move around, be mild or debilitating, chronic or sporadic.

The most common cause of plantar fasciitis is tight or short-

ened calf muscles and Achilles tendon. Shoes with heels cause the Achilles tendon to contract and shorten, causing strain on the tissue around the heel. Running, stair climbing, and aerobics tighten the calf muscles, and also place a lot of stress on the heel bone and attached tissue.

Being overweight is often a culprit. Carrying extra pounds can break down the fatty tissue under the heel bone, and also roll the feet inward, flattening the arches.

Having flat feet increases the stretch and strain on the plantar fascia; high arches create tighter plantar tissue; both lead to poor shock absorption. Sometimes people begin walking on the front of their foot because of heel pain, which causes more tension in the plantar fascia, pulls more on the heel, and worsens the condition. Flat feet, high arches, or an unbalanced pattern of walking can adversely affect the way weight is distributed when you're on your feet, putting added stress on the plantar fascia. Foot, knee, hip or back problems may develop if plantar fasciitis changes your

walking motion.

Ice helps reduce pain and inflammation. Hold a cloth-covered ice pack over the pain for fifteen to twenty minutes three or four times a day or after activity. Or freeze a water-filled paper cup and roll it over the site of discomfort for five to ten minutes.

Apply pressure to your heel by rolling a golf or tennis ball with the arch of your foot while you are standing and stabilized. This can help reduce pain and increase blood flow.

Strengthen the muscles that support your arches by picking up a golf ball or scrunching a towel with your toes.

Stretch your plantar fascia at least three times a day with these exercises:

Loop a towel or belt around the ball of your foot and pull your toes toward your nose for thirty seconds, three times in a row.

Stand facing a flight of stairs with your feet on the lowest step, your heels extending out beyond it. Slowly lower your heels below the level of the step. Hold for a count of ten, rest, repeat ten times.

Stretch the calf muscles on a step or slant board, initially three or four times daily for one minute each time. A modified stretch against the wall with the foot flat on the ground and the leg behind you, while leaning into the wall, also is adequate.

Over-the-counter pain medications may ease pain and inflammation, although they won't treat the underlying problem. Surgery may do more harm than good.

Be patient and stick with treatment; setbacks are the norm in dealing with plantar fasciitis, and preventing daily minor injuries is as important as preventing the less frequent big injuries. With treatment, you should have less pain within a few weeks, though it could take a few months to a year for the pain to go away completely.

Jenny Chapin is an acupuncturist, bodyworker, and yoga teacher in Greenfield. For previous articles, and to offer topics of interest for this column, visit her website, www.jennychapin.com.

THE HEALTHY GEEZER

Controlling Your Cholesterol

BY FRED CICETTI

LEONIA, NJ - In the last installment of the Healthy Geezer, we focused on triglycerides. This column is a companion piece about cholesterol.

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance in blood. You need it to produce cell membranes, protect nerves, and make hormones.

The body can make all the cholesterol it needs. Most cholesterol is made by your liver. You also get cholesterol from foods such as meat, eggs and dairy products. Too much cholesterol is dangerous, because cholesterol can lead to blockages in your blood vessels.

Cholesterol is transported through the bloodstream in packages called lipoproteins. Low-density lipoproteins (LDL) deliver cholesterol to the body. High-density lipoproteins (HDL) remove cholesterol from the bloodstream. LDLs are often described as "bad" cholesterol; HDLs are called "good" cholesterol.

If there are too many LDLs in the blood, they will combine with other material in your bloodstream to manufacture plaque, a waxy crud that builds

up on the inner walls of the blood vessels that feed your brain and heart. When this build-up occurs, you have a condition called "atherosclerosis," which is commonly referred to as "hardening of the arteries."

If a clot forms in blood vessels narrowed by plaque, it can block blood flow, which can cause a heart attack or a stroke.

The recommended levels of cholesterol are as follows:

Total cholesterol level should be less than 200 mg/dL. ("Mg/dL" stands for milligram per deciliter.) "Borderline high" is defined as between 200 and 239 mg/dL. You're risking heart disease if your reading is 240 mg/dL or more.

LDL cholesterol level should be less than 130 mg/dL. "Borderline high" is between 130 and 159 mg/dL. There's heart-disease risk if your reading is 160 mg/dL or more.

HDL cholesterol levels should be at 60 mg/dL or higher to cut the risk of heart disease. You're at high risk for heart disease if you have a reading less than 40 mg/dL.

If your total cholesterol level is high because of high LDLs,

you may be at higher risk of heart disease or stroke. If your total level is high only because of high HDLs, you're probably not at higher risk.

Some physicians use the ratio of total cholesterol to HDLs. The ratio is obtained by dividing the HDLs into the total cholesterol. The goal is to keep the ratio below 5 to 1.

(Interesting fact: Male sex hormones lower HDL levels. Female sex hormones raise HDL levels. Draw your own conclusions.)

What can you do to control cholesterol?

Diet

Cholesterol is in all foods from animals, so reduce your intake of meat, eggs and dairy products. Cut back on fatty foods such as snacks, desserts and anything fried. Eat vegetables and fruit.

Exercise

Regular physical activity increases HDL cholesterol in some people. Weight loss can help lower your bad cholesterol.

Smoking

Smoking lowers HDL cholesterol levels and increases the tendency for blood to clot.



ILLUSTRATION: JESSICA HARMON

Alcohol

People who consume moderate amounts of alcohol (one to two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women) have a lower risk of heart disease than nondrinkers. However, alcohol can be unhealthy. For example, a small amount of alcohol can make a big increase in triglyceride levels. Triglycerides are a fat in your blood that should be kept in check. Whether you should drink a moderate amount of alcohol is definitely a question you should ask your personal physician.

Medicine

Get your physician's advice, too, about drugs to lower your cholesterol. If lifestyle changes don't help you, you may need to take medicine to lower your cholesterol level.

If you have a question, please write to fredcicetti@gmail.com.

Google Earth Focuses on Sudan Atrocities

Google is using its popular online mapping service to call attention to atrocities in the Darfur region of Sudan.

In a project with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, inaugurated April 17th, the Internet search company has updated its Google Earth service with high resolution satellite images of the region to document destroyed villages, displaced people and refugee camps.

Google Earth allows those who have downloaded its free software to focus on satellite images and maps of most of the world. When users scan over the Darfur region, where the United Nations estimates that more than 200,000 people have been killed and 2.5 million displaced in four years of carnage, Google Inc. hopes to attract their gaze with icons.

The icons represent destroyed villages with flames and refugee camps with tents. When users zoom in to a level of magnification that keeps most of Darfur on a computer screen, the icons seem to indicate that much of the region is on fire. Clicking on flame icons will open windows with the village's name and statistics on the extent of destruction.

Google enhanced the resolution for certain areas of the region so that users can zoom in to see the burnt remnants of houses. Google says it will periodically update the images.

The online maps of the region also include an icon that links to a presentation by the Holocaust museum on the crisis in the region with photos, video, historical background and testimony on atrocities.

Sara Bloomfield, the museum's director, said museum staff members had approached Google about the project as they sought ways to highlight what they believe is genocide to many people who remain unaware. In Google Earth, which the company says has been downloaded by 200 million people worldwide, they found an ideal medium.

"This is like the world's biggest bulletin board," Bloomfield said.

On the Net: *U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum/Google Darfur project.*

www.ushmm.org/googleearth

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Churning Butter

BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH

GILL - One day when Pa was away, I poked a hole down through the floating soured cream in the butter churn with a long butcher knife, and poured off the whey collected at the bottom. I cranked the handle as fast as I could spin it. The paddles whipped the cream into froth. I became worried, but it was now too late to quit. I kept whirling the paddles.

"You're going to get it good when Pa comes home and sees the cream all whipped," my sisters warned.

But I wasn't to be deterred, and made the gears sing, beating at an even higher speed. Soon tiny nuggets of butter appeared. I added a glass of cold water to help congeal the butterfat. The

churn handle turned harder and harder. I slowed to let the paddles pat the nuggets into a ball of golden butter.

The next time Ma gave me the job of churning butter, I again drained the whey and churned like mad despite her threat to tell Pa. A ball of butter began bobbing in the churn in minutes instead of hours.

When Pa came home and heard of my disobedience, he frowned at me. "Leave it to Joe to find a lazy way."

In the heat and humidity of summer, sour cream was apt to grow a thick black mold with blue and orange edges. It made interesting patterns but gave the butter a musty taste. I chanced upon a solution when Irene and I carried Emaline's lunch to Clapp's farm, where she worked picking strawberries.

Ma had packed a quart of

fresh milk with Emmy's lunch, adding a generous portion of sweet cream. The rich milk sloshed back and forth as we hiked over the trail through the woods. At the farm, we put the jar of milk to cool in the spring-fed water trough, and left. When Emaline came home from work, she wondered why we'd brought her buttermilk. It then dawned on me that we'd churned the milk into bits of butter by sloshing the jar on the way over.

That set the wheels turning in my head. I reasoned that we could make sweet cream butter and eliminate the musty taste of rancid cream. Once again, I angered my parents when I began churning butter before the cream had soured. They reproached me, saying the sweet cream would never turn to butter.

"Why you be such a stubborn mischief-maker and not listen to

me?" my father asked. "I old enough and smart enough to know how to do things right. But go ahead, be a dumb. You'll find out you can't make butter that way. Be a good lesson for you."

I kept cranking, hoping he wasn't right. My stomach tightened, and I prayed the butter would gather. I was overjoyed to see gold flecks appearing even as Pa continued his harangue about me being so obstinate. I was saved - a big blob of butter bobbed merrily, as the paddles batted it about.

My mother wasn't easily mollified. She tasted the butter and declared it "niedobre," no good. "You lucky Pa doesn't hit you good, like you deserve - wasting good cream like that."

We kids all preferred the sweet cream butter, but that didn't sway our parents any.

- Continued Next Week

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JACK COUGHLIN ILLUSTRATION

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, 8 p.m. Sunday, 2 p.m. Continues **April 27th to 29th.**

SATURDAY, APRIL 21ST

Elks "Murph" Races 7 to 9 p.m. The Montague Elks Lodge #2521, Turners Falls, annual "Murph" Trophy Races for adults on Saturday, at the lodge. The children's races **Sunday, April 22nd at 1 p.m.** Info: John Perreault 863-0202 or George Emery 367-0382.

4th Annual Growing a Green Community Fair sponsored by the 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!

The Echo Lake Coffee House, Leverett: a night of poetry, 7:30 p.m. Open mike, followed by readings/performance by two hyper-political, feminist poets, Lenelle Moise and Arjuna Greist. Sign-up for open mic 7 p.m. 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, Cherry St. Band at 7:30 p.m. The Ambiguities, 8:30 p.m.

Rt. 63 Roadhouse: *Loose Change*, rock & roll. Come to dance. 9:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Richard Chase & John Miller* - acoustic rock. 9 to 11 p.m.

Public Discussion with Actor/Playwright Bill Talen, a.k.a. "Reverend Billy" and members of the choir & band. The public is invited to an informal discussion with nationally-known playwright and performance artist Bill Talen 2 p.m. at Woolman Hill Conference Center, Deerfield. Free admission, all welcome. "Each of us is walking around in a swirl of gas and oil, plastics and foil. We should all hit our knees and weep and confess together. We are not evil people, but somehow we have allowed the Lords of Consumption to organize us into these mobs that buy and dispose, cry and reload. Yes, the Rapture of the Final Consumption, the Shopture, is underway."

SATURDAY & SUNDAY, APRIL 21ST & 22ND
Reverend Billy and the "Church of Stop Shopping" Gospel Choir & "Not Buying It" Band. Rev. Billy and his Church of Stop Shopping appearing at Memorial Hall Theater, Shelburne Falls, 7:30 p.m. on Saturday and on Sunday at The Church, 120 Main Street, Brattleboro, 3 p.m. Suggested donation of \$10 at the door, though no one will be turned away. www.RevBilly.com.



Jyosna performs traditional India Kiirtan and devotional songs at The Maezumi Institute on Sunday, April 22nd at 7 p.m. See listing below.

Deja Brew, Wendell: Jazz ~ *Ndigo Moon*. 9 to 11 p.m. No cover.

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.

Reverend Billy and the "Church of Stop Shopping" Gospel Choir in Brattleboro, 3 p.m. at The Church. See 4/21 listing for more details.

Kiirtan - Sacred and Ecstatic Chanting and dance led by the inspired Jyosna from New Zealand and the SOJA Kiirtan Band from Toronto perform at The House of One People - The Maezumi Institute, 177 Ripley Road, Montague, 7 p.m. Jyosna will be joined by the musicians of SOJA. Soja is a group of musicians dedicated to the spiritual awakening and transformation of human society and planet earth. They will perform traditional India Kiirtan and devotional songs in Sanskrit and English while mixing this ancient style with vibrant Western beats. 863-3221 ext. 3. \$10 admis-

sion.

MONDAY, APRIL 23RD
Live Jazz at Ristorante DiPaolo, Avenue A, 6 to 9 p.m. Info. 863-4441.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25TH
Friends of The Discovery Center Coffee House. A Cappella Festival with students from area high schools. In the Great Hall, 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, APRIL 27TH
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Nexus*, rock. 9 to 11 p.m. No cover.

Rt. 63 Roadhouse: *Heros*, rock & roll. Come to dance. 9:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, APRIL 26TH
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Larry Kopp*, blues. 8 to 10 p.m. No cover.

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!

Psychic Fair sponsored by The National Spiritual Alliance at Thompson Temple, Lake Pleasant, 11 - 4 p.m. Readings or Reiki \$25 for 20 minutes. Tag sale 10 to 4 p.m.

Rt. 63 Roadhouse: *John Sheldon* originals, rock & blues. Dance! 9:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Ray Mason*, rock. 9 to 11 p.m. No cover.

April Arts & Wine Tasting at the Village Co-op, Leverett, 2 to 5 p.m. Paintings of Kiran Bhowmik on display during April. Call the Village Co-op (413) 367-9794 for more info.

SUNDAY, APRIL 29TH
Family Dance at the Montague Grange. Family-style Contra Dancing for all ages. \$7-\$10 per family. Simple dances with easy instruction geared for little feet. Great for 3-11 yr olds, and their parents. 4 - 5:30 p.m. Includes a light snack. Last dance!

Deja Brew, Wendell: Classical Piano with *Adam Bergeron*. 7 to 9 p.m. No cover.

The *Wholesale Klezmer Band* concert "Jewish Music of Peace, Justice and Celebration." At Temple Israel, 27 Pierce Street, Greenfield, 7 p.m. Tickets are \$10 per adult \$5 per teen & child. Benefit for Temple Israel.

SATURDAY, MAY 5TH
Concert at The Bookmill, Montague Center: *Doug Hewitt Group* and *Same Old Blues*. Dennis Shapson opens the show with classic ragtime blues played on his National steel guitar. Jon Lawless on harmonica. 8 p.m. \$7.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, MAY 18TH & 19TH
Valley Idol is back! Karaoke singing competition, \$1000 for grand prize winner, cash prizes for runners-up. Competition takes place over 4 nights at the Shea Theater, Turners Falls (May 18, 19, 26 and June 2). Proceeds benefit the Shea. For info. call 863-2281.

THROUGH JUNE 17TH
Exhibit: John Willis' and Tom Young's "Recycled Realities and Other Stories". Haunting and surreal series of black and white images invite viewers into a vast paper landscape at Erving Paper Mill. Also Images from "View from the Rez" and "Timeline". Hallmark Museum of Contemporary Photography, 85 Avenue A, Turners Falls. Hours: Thursday through Sunday 1-5 p.m. 863-0009.

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

Ja'Duke Productions auditions for *Footloose & West Side Story*. **Sunday, April 22nd**, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at JCPA, 85 Ave A, Turners Falls. Rehearsals start Monday, 7/4. Must be 13 yrs or older. Performances: *Footloose*: July 20- 22, 27- 29 and *West Side Story*: August 3, 4, 10 - 12. Info Nick Waynelovich 863-4503.

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- GRINDHOUSE** R
DAILY 8:20
- THE LAST MIMZY** PG
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MATINEE FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15
- ARE WE DONE YET** PG13
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MATINEE FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15
- PERFECT STRANGER** R
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MATINEE FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15
- DISTURBIA** PG13
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MATINEE FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30
- AMAZING GRACE** PG
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Deja Brew
Cafe & Pub
Great Food
Draft Beer Fine Wine
Open Wed-Sun at 4 p.m.
Friday 4/20
Johnny Cash Covers ~ Josh Levangie
Saturday 4/21
Acoustic Rock ~ Richard Chase
Friday 4/27
Rock ~ Nexus
Saturday 4/28
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HOT SPOT TEEN CENTER
MONDAYS - Drop-in, 3-6 p.m.
TUES & WEDS - Ongoing Music Project, 3 - 6 p.m.
THURS - Drop-in, 3 - 6 p.m. & Movie Night, 6 - 8 p.m.
Free (except some trips), open to local teens. Some require permission slips.
Info: Jared at 863-9559.
Hot Spot Teen Center is in
The Brick House
24 Third Street, Turners Falls, 01376

Upcoming at the Discovery Center
Open Friday & Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (413) 863-3221
Groups by Special Arrangement, Tuesday - Thursday

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

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. First Annual A Cappella Festival with students from Frontier, Mahar, and Northfield Mount Herman High Schools. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. homemade baked goods will be served. Suggested sliding scale donation of \$5 - \$10.

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.

THURSDAY, MAY 3RD - 30TH
Nature Photography by JD Keating on display in the Great Hall. JD Keating has lived as a musician and artist in Western Massachusetts for over 20 years. He has produced an extensive body of photographs encompassing the Pioneer Valley.

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

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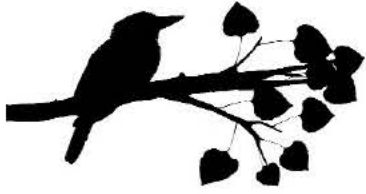


ILLUSTRATION BY ANJA SCHUTZ

THIS WILD PLACE

Please Don't Bait the Bears

BY KARL MEYER

COLRAIN - In April of 2002, I was bicycling through the Montague Plains near Route 63. I'd gone a short way up a dirt track when I came upon an unfortunate signature of the Plains: illegal dumping. Recently melted snows revealed junk piles and plastic bags ragged from exposure to the sun. Glinting from the seams of one bag was the rich black pelt and scuttled parts of a young bear - obviously dumped illegally, and likely killed the same way. There's a simmering black market for black bear parts and organs.

The scene was devoid of respect for such a remarkable, earthbound, and inoffensive creature. Still, the crime was already two seasons old, not much to be done. I couldn't resist some gesture to restore a bit of this animal's dignity. A mostly-clean skull lay exposed in the dirt, a few bits of fur and gristled flesh clinging to it. I grabbed some plastic and carried the thickened bone to a sandy bank, and buried it beneath an April sun.

Winter officially ended on March 22nd, so if you're still

putting out seed for winter birds, it really is time to stop! Each year there are news stories about black bears rummaging feeders in April's rural and suburban yards looking for scarce food in a just-awakening landscape. And each year, because people set out attractive wildlife-food, some of those 'problem' bears are subdued with narcotics. They are then corralled and removed to unfamiliar habitats by wildlife officials asked to 'fix' the problem. The fix comes at great risk to the bears, at a season when they are quite vulnerable. The problem isn't the bears. And, for them, the stressful encounters sometimes prove fatal.

We can all stop setting bear traps. Caring about wildlife includes respecting boundaries. Creating artificial dependence on human food serves no purposes but our own. It endangers wild animals. I often hear stories of 'harmless' baiting, about folks trying to attract bears, foxes, coyotes, fishers, turkeys, etc. Some are even about 'professional' wildlife photographers. None of this is classic 'bear-baiting,' which has been outlawed in



Black bears rummage in April

the Bay State since 1970. These snap-shooters don't 'waste' the animals. They want easy photos. The result may prove fatal to the animals - barely wild, they become easy quarry when hunting season rolls around.

Some bears do end up dead due to their attraction to human 'bait' - including trash left out for pick-up. And all wild species are more likely to share diseases at these man-made watering holes. They may also interact with pets, or blunder into humans. If anyone pays a price for these encounters, it's the animal. So, please don't feed the bears - or any other furry favorites!

I heard this story from my

neighbor a few weeks ago. A maple sugar farmer in Franklin County cut down one of his aging trees in March. Like many old giants, the tree was hollow. It was dusk when the tree fell. They returned in the next morning's chill to find two bear cubs huddled in the bottom of that stump--one dead, the other alive.

Bleating bear cubs are said to sound like babies crying. The mother was nowhere in sight. So they did what most people faced with this culpable tragedy might do - they took the cub home and began to feed it. Apparently it was taking some milk. Whether the mother would have returned was now a moot point: from that moment on that bear was destined to live out what remains of its life in an alien existence.

The cub's prospects are not cheery. Either it will have a lingering death because humans can't provide the nutrition a nursing sow would, or - in the best of circumstances, it will have to be turned over to wildlife officials who might find a spot for it in a zoo. A 100-pound bear won't take to the bedroom. A

third possibility, if the cub survives its brief human upbringing: they set it free in some unnamed woods. There it will be vulnerable to bears who have already claimed the territory. But, more regrettably, that young bear is again likely to seek out humans as food providers, making it vulnerable to an easy plugging with a shotgun. Not much sport there.

This bear will never actually get to be a bear. Much more humane to its bear-life would have been to have left it to possibly be found by its mom. Then it would at least be spared the lengthy suffering as humans vainly try to nurse it. There too, it might have at least been accorded a swift death in its own habitat, and ultimately provided sustenance to other animals. Wildlife officials have this long-reasoned advice for people who come upon apparently orphaned or injured animals: if you care, leave it there.

Cooling thought: It's spring. Two simple weapons against global warming: a clothesline and a bicycle. Wine, beer? Does your discerning palate really require bottles trucked across a continent, or an ocean? There are now many good local choices.

THE GARDENER'S COMPANION

Ready to Get Hands Dirty

BY LESLIE BROWN

MONTAGUE CITY - As I write this, wet snow is falling. Yankee old-timers called this "Poor Man's Fertilizer," a late spring blessing. As it happens, this appellation may be more than just folklore. According to Professor John Avers of the University of New Hampshire, snow contains nutrients as well as moisture. When it falls on ground that has thawed, nitrogen is added to lawns and gardens, which are often short on this important nutrient.

I have been itching to get my fingers into the garden dirt, so I'm none too pleased to see the snow. However, if the weather man is right and we'll be seeing warmer, drier weather by mid-week, I'll be grateful for this last snowfall which will green things up and ultimately feed my garden crops.

Speaking of fertilizer, if you didn't have time to turn some under at the end of last year's season, you'll want to do so before starting your spring planting. Both flower and vegetable plants need a good source of Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potash (NPK) to grow well and produce healthy crops. You will note that commercial fertilizers contain a ratio of NPK

(10:10:10 or 5:10:10). Composted manure is also an excellent source of these three nutrients. Chicken and horse manures are very rich in NPK, but are also 'hot', meaning if they are not composted before application, they will burn plants with which they come in contact. Composted cow manure has lower concentrations and therefore is safe to apply both turned into your garden soil and as a side dressing.

Some organic gardeners add composted vegetable matter for nitrogen, ground phosphate rock for phosphorus and green sand for potash. A heavy application of composted cow manure turned under in the fall will do the trick for all three. Since I have done that, I will supplement only with composted vegetable matter in planting holes or as side dressing.

These three basic nutrients for plants assist growth as follows. Nitrogen helps plants use carbohydrates to gain energy. It controls how plants take their form and how they function inside. Plants deficient in nitrogen have thin spindly stems, and generally their growth is stunted. Phosphorus helps plants breathe, store energy and use water efficiently. As in nitrogen



MARY AZARIAN ILLUSTRATION

deficiency, plants lacking enough phosphorus are spindly and unhealthy. Potassium assists in metabolism of food and in the absorption of water and chemicals. Plants lacking potassium are more susceptible to pests and disease.

This is a great time of year to send a soil sample to the Extension Service at UMass. They supply a report that will tell you specifically what your garden soil needs. Information about accessing this service can be obtained at their website at www.umass.edu/plsoils/soiltest. At the very least, you will improve your successful garden production by adding composted manure and composted vegetable matter to your soil annually.

April is a great month to start your garden. Cold crops like

peas, spinach, lettuce, and radishes can get a good head start this month and will provide you with delicious crops before summer's heat sets in. Since these crops fade with hot weather, it's great to get a head start now. If we're lucky, this Poor Man's Fertilizer will sink in and then with the warming temperatures, the ground will dry out to allow us to begin planting.

Test your garden soil's readiness by squeezing a handful of dirt in your fist. If it clumps together in your hand, wait. When a fistful of soil crumbles in your hand, planting time is here.

The garlic cloves I planted last fall are showing several inches of green shoots in their raised bed. These elevated beds will dry out sooner than the rest of the garden, so at the very least I hope to set out my leek and onion plants before the week is over. Their shoots are long again and are tending to lift the bulbs from the soil. They really need to be set out as soon as possible so they can continue their growth cycle in the garden soil where they can spread their roots and develop their bulbs more fully. That way they'll be ready to harvest in late July or early August for tasty, pungent

eating.

The peppers started late in February are showing the tips of true leaves. When these second leaves fully emerge, they will need transplanting into individual cells of two or three inches so that the roots can more fully develop. Before they go into the garden in late May or early June, they'll require one more transplanting into three inch pots with regular potting soil.

This seed starting, transplanting and re-transplanting may sound like tedious work. It's one way that the inveterate gardener can keep a hand in the soil almost year round. But if it's not for you, don't worry. There will be plenty of luscious pre-started plants to purchase locally when the garden stands and farmers markets open again this spring.

Meanwhile, the snow continues to fall, occasionally mixing with sleet and rain. In the yard, the grass under the pine tree looks bright green, the daffodil shoots stand proudly in their white dressing and the goldfinches sport a brilliant yellow at the feeder. Even a late snowstorm can't change the fact that spring is truly here and the garden season is only a few days away.