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The Montague Reporter

YEAR 7 - NO. 26

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

APRIL 2, 2009

Gill to Consider Sale of Riverside Building



PHOTO EMILY MONOSSON

The Riverside Municipal Building may be put up for sale, if town meeting declares the former public schoolhouse 'surplus property'. The Four Winds School leases part of the building; the Historic Commission maintains a museum there.

BY DAVID DETMOLD

GILL – The Gill selectboard, facing tough budget options, is planning to put an article on the annual town meeting warrant this May asking the voters to declare the Riverside Municipal Building, 54 French King Highway, (the former Riverside School) and the 1½ acres of land it sits on surplus property. A positive vote would clear the way for the selectboard to explore the possibility of selling the property, which is assessed at \$480,200.

The building still houses a school on part of the first floor: the Four Winds School, a small private middle school, leases classroom space from the town for a lit-

tle more than \$10,000 a year, a figure close to what administrative assistant Tracy Rogers estimates the town spends to heat and maintain the building.

In addition, the building is home to the small office of the Riverside Water District, along with the museum maintained by the Gill historical commission. The Friends of Gill hold their annual fall arts and crafts festival on the municipal building's grounds.

As the town considers the proposal by Siemens AG to perform contracted energy saving rehab work on Gill town buildings – work to be paid for through savings on utilities over a period of up-

to 20 years – the selectboard wants the town's guidance on whether residents believe the town should continue to own and maintain the building for that period of time.

On Monday, the members of the Gill historical commission came to talk to the selectboard about the possibility of the building being sold.

"Have you guys come up with any plan or any thoughts – if you sell it – where we might go?" asked commission member Bob Perry.

"This is only a baby step," chair Nancy Griswold replied. "We're really just starting the process."

But with the annual town meet-

ing coming up in just a month, commission members urged the selectboard to slow the process down.

Lynda Hodsdon-Mayo said, "My feeling is this is too big a step to be taking at this time. How much is it going to cost to find another location for the historical commission? The minute you step over that line, the only thing left is for the selectboard to sell it."

Pam Shoemaker said, "We're doing such a good job of bringing people in, from the elementary school, from the craft fair, from people doing research." She said it would be a poor choice to place the historical collection into storage.

Rogers suggested one alternative, if the building were to be sold, would be to establish the historical museum on the second floor of town hall, and to hold town meetings in a Northfield Mount Hermon building.

The selectboard also plans to ask town meeting to declare a 2.9 acre plot on the corner of Center and Lyons Hill Road as surplus, in preparation for a possible sale of that land, an open field known as the Boyle property.

Both plots contain deed restrictions requiring the town to use the

see SALE pg 5

GMRSD Votes Assessments for Gill, Montague

BY DAVID DETMOLD

GILL – On Tuesday night, the Gill-Montague school committee voted to apply the district's entire certified free cash reserves – \$492,642 – toward reducing

MORE on the STORY PG 3

the anticipated assessments for the towns of Gill and Montague, to meet the committee's proposed 1% budget increase. On March 24th, the committee approved a \$16,792,890 FY'10 operating budget for the district.

On March 31st, the school committee approved assessment figures (including debt) for the member towns as follows: the assessment for Montague would be \$7,387,771, an increase of \$196,924 (2.7%) from last year; the assessment for Gill would be \$1,438,047, an increase of \$62,467 (4.5%) from last year.

Gill administrative assistant Tracy Rogers reacted positively to the assessment figure for her town on Wednesday. "It's good news. The \$63,000 increase from '09 puts us \$10,000 in the black for this year's omnibus budget," she said. At Monday's

see GMRSD pg 10

Theater Review

Laughter is Great Medicine

The Country Players' "Moon Over Buffalo" opens at the Shea



Nick DeRuiter and Christine Voytko parry and thrust in Moon over Buffalo at the Shea

BY GEORGE FUNK

TURNERS FALLS – The value of comedy in hard times has never been more obvious than during the two hours I spent with The Country Player's current production of Ken Ludwig's outlandish comedy, *Moon Over Buffalo*, at the Shea.

TCP could not have selected a better bill of fare to kick off their

company's 30th year in operation, or as a dedication to founder, board member, director and general mainstay, Richard "Dick" Martin, who passed away late last year. No doubt, Dick was sharing in the audience's laughter, the cast's energy and enthusiasm, and director Kevin Tracy's joy (and

probably angst and relief) on this opening night.

The show itself was written by the internationally acclaimed playwright Ken Ludwig and garnered multiple Tony award nominations. It also served as the vehicle for Carol Burnett's return to the Broadway stage after a 30-year hiatus.

The production has been described as "a love letter to live theater and a pitch perfect farce," and this offering certainly delivers nothing less. Ludwig's tale shares a day in the life of a theater couple (who are as married to their craft as they are to each other) and what takes place as both their vocations and relations are challenged in uproarious fashion.

The central characters are played by veteran performers Nick DeRuiter and Christine Voytko. They exhibit a brilliant chemistry as the battling but loving George and Charlotte, who open their onstage romance with a lively and well choreographed fencing match.

It's a pleasure to see Voytko on the Shea stage again. Her commanding presence and timing make her a perfect complement

see SHEA pg 5

Good Times in Montague



PARZYCH PHOTO

Tractor restorer Bruce Weston of Vernon, VT, considers the possibilities of a Farmall A basket case. The partially restored tractor sports many new parts, including new tires. Unfortunately, someone made off with the radiator, most likely the target of scrap thieves.

BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH

"Maybe the country is having hard times," said Ed Sirum, at Saturday's open house at Sirum Equipment on Federal Street, "but you'd never know it in Montague. It was Good Times in Montague. Sales went very well. Not dairy farmers, so much; but growers, hay producers and homeowners; they were in a buying mood. We sold an awful lot of

handheld motorized tools, like sweepers and other lawn and garden items. We never sell any big-ticket items, like farm tractors, during a show, but we got a lot of solid leads. Our salesmen are out talking to customers now."

On this beautiful spring day, people arrived from all over New England to greet old friends and make new ones. The greatest lure see GOOD TIMES pg 10

PET OF THE WEEK

Gorgeous & Silly



Tammy

My name is Tammy and I'm a female 2-year-old dachshund/miniature smooth-haired mix in need of a good home. I am a gorgeous, silly, little dachshund mix that fits just perfectly in any lap. I adore playing with toys! One or two short walks a day is all I'll need for exercise - I get lots of energy out just playing with my toys. Like most small dogs, I'm an independent minded girl. I tolerate dogs who let me be the boss but I'd be happy to be your only dog. I can live with confident cats who will put me in my place - and not run away. I would do best in a home with children over 12. For more information on adopting me please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at 413-548-9898 or via email: leverett@dpvhs.org.

CARNEGIE LIBRARY NEWS

Mother Goose Loose

BY LINDA HICKMAN

TURNERS FALLS - Mother Goose on the Loose will be held Saturday, April 11th, at the Carnegie Library at 10:30 a.m. The program is an interactive mix of guitar and banjo music, rhymes, stories, puppets, and other visuals. The free sessions

are designed for babies through preschoolers and are performed by children's librarian Linda Hickman and musician Michael Nix. Monthly Mother Goose on the Loose programs will not be held during the summer, but will resume in the fall. For more information call 863-3214.

NEW SALEM LIBRARY NEWS

Showing "An Inconvenient Truth"

The New Salem Public Library will show *An Inconvenient Truth*, Friday, April 10th at 7:30 p.m. at Swift River Elementary School. This award-winning film from former vice president and Nobel Prize winner Al Gore "is a wake-up call that cuts through myths and misconceptions to deliver the mes-

sage that global warming is a real and present danger." If you have already seen it, bring a friend who hasn't. Earth Day is just around the corner, April 22nd. Be part of the solution.

The film is free to the public and is sponsored by the New Salem Public Library and the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

Wendell Librarian Named an Unsung Heroine of 2009

BOSTON - The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women will recognize Rosie Heidkamp as the 2009 Heroine for Wendell. The MCSW will recognize women from cities and towns across the Commonwealth for their outstanding contributions to their organizations and communities

in a ceremony on Wednesday, May 13th from 1 - 4 p.m. in the State House in Boston. Rosie Heidkamp is one of 100 honorees carefully selected for this honor of Unsung Heroine for 2009 from nearly 400 nominations statewide. For more info visit www.mass.gov/women or mcsw@state.ma.us.

Four Candidates Running for Montague Selectboard

BY DAVID DETMOLD - At least four candidates are in the running for the three year selectboard seat being vacated by retiring selectboard chair Allen Ross. Mark Fairbrother, 53, of Meadow Road, chair of the conservation commission, is in the running for the seat, along with Joshua Gammon, 18, of Fairway Avenue, president of the student council and star center for the TFHS state semi-finalist basketball team. Also in the running is Ed Golrick, 23, of West Main

Street in Millers Falls, former board member of Montague Community Cable, and Jack Nelson, 74, of Canal Street, a town meeting member, artist, and businessman from Precinct 5. The race could get even more crowded if the Democratic town caucus nominates another candidate at the caucus on April 8th (7:00 p.m. at the town hall); letters of intent to run in the caucus are due to chair Jay DiPucchio by Friday, April 3rd, at 5:00 p.m. Call 863-8656 for caucus info.

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES - April 6th to April 10th

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 11:00 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, 6th

10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11:00 A.M. Easy Aerobics
1:00 P.M. Painting Classes, David Sund will be instructing this class. This painting class is with acrylic paints and is suitable for all levels of expertise. Registration fee is \$10.00 for 6 weeks Gill and Montague residents. All others pay \$15.00

Tuesday, 7th

12:30 p.m. All About Eye

Glasses, David Peloquin, licensed optician and student in the Greenfield Community College Nursing Program, will help people make informed decisions about what eyeglass lens styles, materials, and features would be most beneficial to individual needs.

1:00 p.m. Canasta

Wednesday, 8th

10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics

12:45 p.m. Bingo

Thursday, 9th

1:00 p.m. Pitch

Friday, 10th

10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics

11:00 a.m. Easy Aerobics

WENDELL Senior Center is located at 2 Lockes Village Road. Call Kathy Swaim at (978) 544-2020 for hours and upcoming programs.

The Wendell Full Moon Coffee House show featuring John Sheldon and Blue Streak on Saturday, April 11th will benefit the Center. Seniors willing to create treats to sell at the show should leave messages with Ginny Schimmel at 544-2924.



PHOTO ERIC PEIDA

Second graders Grayson Funk & Ethan Shilo-Draper collect sap from maples at the Gill Elementary School this week.

Laughing Dog Workshops

BY DAN BOTKIN

GILL - These practical skills workshops are designed for the beginning backyard grower, contemplating expanding into small-plot bio-intensive production.

Sunday, April 5th - *Raising Goats for Food, Fun and Compost*

Saturday, April 11th - *Spring Seeding and Propagation Shortcuts*

Sunday, April 19th - *Building Permanent Garden Structures with Black Locust*

These workshops include a lively review of the art and science of organic micro-farming, with hands-on experimentation, practice plus hot soup on the house, fellowship and further discussion at the end of each session. Bring your seeds, plants, tools, waterproof footwear, questions, inspiration and ideas. The time is right to build diversified, permaculture gardens everywhere!

Workshops run on a sliding scale basis, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. RSVP, email for directions at dbotkin@valinet.com

Correction

The caption on last week's front page photo from *the Music Man* failed to identify one of the school board members pictured. His name is Corbin Mallioux, and he appeared in the photo standing between Sam Letcher and Sam Colton. We regret the omission.

THE GRADUATING CLASS OF 2009 FUNDRAISER*

An invitation to have **BREAKFAST WITH THE EASTER BUNNY** on Saturday, April 4th 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Elks Club, Turners Falls Pancakes, sausage, bacon, eggs, orange juice and coffee
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MONTAGUE?

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Taylor Wiles

Grade 7

Emma Johnson

Grade 8

Trisha Pecor

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Postmaster: Send address changes to
The Montague Reporter
58 4th Street
Turners Falls, MA 01376

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Needed: Precinct Write-Ins

BY DAVID DETMOLD

MONTAGUE – The candidates for town meeting have turned in their papers, their papers have been certified, and a few races are in the offing for town meeting on May 18th. But eight openings have found no takers, as yet, so write-in candidates will be needed if the town hopes to have all 126 seats for precinct representative filled.

Precinct 6 (Montague City and the Patch), and Precinct 3 (the East side of the Hill) are lagging behind the other precincts in terms of fielding enough candidates to fill the open seats.

Here's how things are shaping up:

Precinct 1 (Montague Center) – Patrick Pezzati and Susan Dresser are both in the running for a three-year seat; there is one three-year seat open. Kathleen Burek and Malcolm Clark are both in the running for the one open one-year seat.

Precinct 2 (Lake Pleasant and Millers Falls) – Frank Abbondanzio returned papers for one of the open three-year seats. One three-year seat is open.

Precinct 3 (East side of the Hill) – Christopher Lapointe returned papers for one of the open three-year seats. One three year seat remains open. Two two-year seats also remain open.

Zachary Rogers failed to return his papers on time, but is willing to run as a write-in candidate.

Precinct 4 (West side of the Hill) – Gary Earles returned papers for the open three year seat.

Precinct 5 (Downtown Turners Falls) – Donald Clegg and Richard Ruth returned papers for the two open three-year seats.

John Donahue and Laura Thorne both returned papers for the one open two-year seat.

Precinct 6 (Montague City and the Patch) – Michael Nelson and Linda Davenport returned papers for two of the open three-year seats. One three-year seat remains open. Amy Podlenski returned papers for one of the two-year seats available. There are two two-year seats still open in Precinct 6, along with one one-year seat.

Nine Run for G-M Committee

BY DAVID DETMOLD

GILL - MONTAGUE – Nine candidates are in the running for five seats on the Gill-Montague Regional school committee. The election will take place on May 18th, a Monday, and voters in Gill and Montague can cast votes for candidates from both towns.

In Gill, incumbent Valeria 'Timmy' Smith of West Gill Road is running against Jennifer Waldron, of 15 Oak Street.

In Montague, incumbents Linda Kuklewicz, 66 Oakman Street, and Kristin Boyle, 73 Millers Falls Road, are running for two three-year seats against one other contender, Jeff Singleton, of 28 Center Street.

Emily Monosson, of 15 North Street, is running unopposed for an open two-year seat. Three candidates are lined up to contest the open one year seat in Montague. They are: Doug Brown, of 233 Turnpike Road; Patrick Pezzati, of 144 Dry Hill Road; and Gary Earles, of 28 Park Street.

NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Attorney Advises Against Petitioned Articles as Written

BY DAVID DETMOLD – Town attorney Donna MacNicol has advised the town of legal problems with two petitioned articles brought forward by businessman Eric Semb, who co-owns the French King Entertainment Center and the abutting lot, on the other side of Semb Drive, where the Cintree Living Restaurant once stood. Semb is seeking changes to town zoning to allow for the construction of a quick-stop gas station, drive-through fast food outlet, and convenience store on that lot.

Last month, Semb brought petitions signed by 176 Erving residents in support of a bylaw change to permit the construction of a gas station in the aquifer protection zone, where the lot is located. He also brought a petition with 108 signatures calling for a division of the Central Village zone into an east and west zone. In the west zone, where his new business would be located, Semb's petition calls for the right to establish a drive-through business by special permit of the planning board.

MacNicol said problems with the wording of the petitioned articles, and the lack of maps delineating the proposed sections of the Central Village district, would probably cause the Attorney General's office to disqualify the zoning changes if they were passed by annual town meeting in May.

The selectboard met with planning board chair Jeff Dubay on Monday, March 30th informing him of MacNicol's opinion, and seeking a solution that could satisfy the intent of the petitioned articles. MacNicol suggested residents hold a vote at town

meeting to instruct the planning board to explore revising the bylaws to allow the changes Semb is seeking.

"We're getting a clear signal that more than 170 people out there want a gas station in town," said town administrative coordinator Tom Sharp. "We can't ignore this. That's more people than typically come to an annual town meeting."

The discussion on this matter will continue Monday, April 6th at 6:30 p.m., with the planning board and the selectboard in joint session, Dubay said.

On the 30th, the selectboard met with representatives of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), executive director Linda Dunlevy and director of regional services Bob Dean. In February, selectboard chair Andy Tessier had called for the town of Erving to withdraw from the FRCOG, because he felt no clear accounting had been provided, when requested, to show how the town was benefiting from being a paying member of the organization.

With the finance committee and other town officials present, Dunlevy led the board through a Power Point presentation on the history of the FRCOG, and detailed the specific benefits the town of Erving has received. She said in the coming fiscal year, the FRCOG would provide \$15,000 in staff time to assist Erving in updating the town's open space and recreation plan, \$5,000 in staff time to update the town's green communities act, \$2,700 for priority development site work under expedited permitting legislation, \$3,000 for help revising zoning

bylaws (anticipated to meet the requests made by finance committee chair Eric Semb in his petitioned articles), and a number of other services the FRCOG will help the town with in return for Erving's \$24,500 assessment as a member of the organization.

Sharp said it appeared the presentation had been persuasive, and the board will drop the warrant article to withdraw from the FRCOG. Dunlevy's presentation, "helped the board understand we are getting good value in our relationship with the FRCOG," he said.

Highway superintendent Paul Prest signed the town up for a Ford Motor Co. fleet program, which will save the town about \$7,000 for purchase of a new F-550 sand-and-plow truck.

Erving seniors will hold their famous spaghetti supper on April 24th at the senior center, with seatings at 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. The annual townwide tag sale is scheduled for April 25th from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.; for information call Sara Meuse: 422-2383.

On March 23rd, the selectboard met with the architect for the proposed new senior center, John Caitlin of Quincy, who presented 75% design phase cost summaries. "The cost to the town of the project has now grown to \$2.8 million, up from the expected \$1.7 million cost," said Sharp. The revised estimates "floored us," Sharp said. A public hearing on this project will be held on April 6th at 7 p.m.

Sharp said the selectboard asked Caitlin to try to pare down the costs of the project. "Otherwise we have to rethink this," Sharp said. "I don't see the town paying \$3 million for a senior center."

process.

Tupper Brown, chair of the Gill finance committee, said the main problem the district and the towns are facing is a structural gap between required spending and available revenue. This ongoing problem is not related to the nation's current economic downturn, Brown maintained, and attempts by the superintendent or the committee to prop the present budget up with reserves and blame the shortfall on the recession was disingenuous.

Jeff Singleton of the Montague finance committee said, "All of these [budget assessments] are completely unaffordable to the towns." He said see **BUDGET** pg 6

NOTES FROM THE GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Heated Discussion on Budget Scenarios

BY ELLEN BLANCHETTE

GILL - MONTAGUE – After a long debate and several votes, the Gill-Montague school committee approved a general operating budget of \$16,792,134 for FY '10, a 1% increase over the FY '09 budget. The budget includes \$50,000 in promised funding from the federal stimulus package.

As the school committee had asked him to do at last week's meeting, interim superintendent Kenneth Rocke presented five versions of the school budget, based on a 1% increase. The committee looked at the


various scenarios and chose to vote first on the one with the second lowest assessments, not considering any of the higher assessments at all. This vote failed, and so they looked at the budget with the lowest assessments. The vote for this budget also failed.

The final decision required a compromise offered with some hesitation by Valeria 'Timmie' Smith to use all of the district's excess and deficiency (free cash) funds in order to reduce the towns' contribution.


Officials from the towns were present at the meeting and presented their own view on the school budget



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Layout & Design

 Claudia Wells
 Boysen Hodgson
 Karen Hoyden
 Karen Wilkinson
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Photography

 Joe Parzych
 Shawn Woolsey

Editorial Assistants

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 David Brule
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"The Voice of the Villages"
Circulation

 Suzette Snow Cobb
 Don Clegg

Founded by

 Arthur Evans Harry Brandt David Detmold
 August, 2002

Technical Administrators

 Michael Muller
 Michael Farnick

Food Safety Bills a Patch on a National Black Eye

JONATHAN VON RANSON WENDELL – Many of us have been getting emails warning of food safety bills recently introduced in Congress that “will cripple small farms, kill organic farming and criminalize seed banking,” etc. These claims are overblown, according to New England agricultural policy people I trust, but there is some fire in all that smoke: some legitimacy to the claim that additional regulation, if applied indiscriminately, will hurt the little guy more than the big one.

A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF BILLS FILED SO FAR (FROM NOFA/MASS):

- Rep. John Dingell (D-MI) filed H.R. 759 that, among other things, requires “traceability” of food back to farms, including standardized lot numbers and electronic records. Does not include meat.
- Rep. Dianna DeGetter (D-CO) filed H.R. 814, which requires similar traceability for all food, including meat, poultry and eggs.
- Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) filed H.R. 875, which sets up a Food Safety Administration with centralized authority (but not over meat – USDA still would have that) to require testing and traceability of food. Inspectors could visit farms, require “good practice standards” and recordkeeping. Can issue recalls.
- Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) filed S. 425, which requires FDA traceability and recall powers, leaves meat, poultry and eggs with USDA but sets up mandatory USDA recall authority
- Senators Durbin (D-IL), Gregg (R-NH), Burr (R-NC), and Kennedy (D-MA) filed S. 510, requiring FDA inspection of food plants, providing it with recall authority, and funding this with food industry fees.

The bills are largely a patch, designed to protect the big players in our nation’s food system. They address symptoms, not causes, of notorious food-borne crises like the recent salmonella in peanut products scare, or the *E. coli* spinach contamination episode last summer. The bills don’t so much try to improve the social or ecological performance of the food system, or the nutrition or chemical purity of the food it delivers, as they attempt to better trace problems once they show up.

Our food production and delivery system as a whole is dominated by corporate giants, where the norm is crowded factory farms and co-mingling of meat and produce from different sources, high-speed processing facilities and far-flung distribution networks. For them, an added testing, reporting and tracing requirement makes at least P.R. sense – perhaps even survival sense – and the bills under consideration would actually enable the problem-causers to retain the anonymity, speed and scale built into the system.

But our legislators would be well reminded of other problems arising from our centralized commodity food system, which plops relatively cheap edibles (not always real food) before us. Corporate agribusiness is not just front and center in responsibility for the roughly 76 million cases of food-borne illnesses in America annually. It is also implicated in our country’s epidemic levels of obesity, diabetes and asthma. Tests find residues of pesticides and antibiotics in its pretty, shelf-bred products. The big players have – in too many cases – opened their arms to crops from genetically engineered seeds and cloned, antibiotic-fed livestock. The larger farms and distributors are the ones most likely to employ irradiation to combat sanitation challenges inherent in their speedy, automat-

see **FOOD** pg 9



KAREN WILKINSON ILLUSTRATION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Vermont Yankee Writing at Deja Brew

The postponed letter-writing party on the subject of the decommissioning and not relicensing Entergy’s Vermont Yankee nuclear reactor in Vernon, VT has been rescheduled for Sunday, April 19th. The

letter writing party will be held at a new venue – the Deja Brew!

The Deja Brew will open at 4:00 p.m. for this Letter-to-the-Editor event, so bring your laptops, steno pads, talking points and ideas to share. We’ll enjoy

each other’s company, and hopefully effect some positive change.

Progress is being made, so let’s keep up the momentum!

– **Laurel Facey Wendell**

Reject the GMRSD Assessments

On Tuesday, a majority of the Gill-Montague school committee voted a school assessment that is unaffordable to the towns, and is propped up by nearly half a million dollars in one-time revenues from the district. If you take into account the fact that Montague would have to use at least \$190,000 in reserves to fund its assessment, the structural hole in this budget is close to \$700,000.

The problem is not the budget itself, which has been revised to reflect a reasonable 1% increase. The problem is that it passes a huge revenue shortfall on to the towns and on to the (not so distant) future.

The justification for this is

that we are in a recession, but in fact most of the school funding problem has nothing to do with the current state of the economy. It is a result of nearly a decade of inadequate state aid and fixed cost increases driven by inflation and mandates. Rather than embarking on a collaborative effort with the state to bring the situation under control, the school district leadership yet again dumped the problem in the laps of the towns.

Creative proposals to change the budget process and work toward long-term solutions have been completely ignored. The justification for this, according to superintendent Ken Rocke, is that state education commissioner Jeff Wulfson wanted to see a traditional assessment now. I never heard Wulfson say this in the meetings he has attended with the GMRSD. Rocke himself seems militantly

committed to the same old failed budget process.

The superintendent’s “plan” is to use various reserves to prop up this budget for two years and then something or other will happen to solve the problem. Assuming the district has the reserves to do this, what will magically happen in two years? Presumably Rocke was talking about regionalization, but since the school committee does not seem to support regionalization and there is as yet no evidence regionalization will address the structural budget problem, it was all left very vague.

I urge the town boards and town meetings to reject this approach as they did last year. There should be no school budget until there is an affordable assessment to the towns and a long-term plan, involving the state, to pull us out of this mess.

– **Jeff Singleton Montague**

American Dead in Iraq and Afghanistan as of 4/1/09



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Jeff Singleton is a member of the Montague finance committee. The views expressed here are his own, and do not necessarily reflect those of any other member of the Montague finance committee.

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GUEST EDITORIAL

New Salem Selectboard Letter to Mahar School Committee

To: Maureen Donelan, Chair
Mahar School Committee
Ralph C. Mahar Regional
School, South Main Street,
Orange, MA 01364

Dear Ms. Donelan,

We are writing to express our concern over the method by which the new superintendent for Mahar was recently selected. From all accounts, a vote to fill the position was a late, unpublished addition to the school committee meeting agenda; even some of the school committee members

were taken by surprise. There were no other candidates, no interviews, and no public input. We understand that the usual practice of having a search committee select and interview potential candidates for the position may seem unnecessarily long and costly. However, we believe this open and deliberate method is important to maintaining the integrity of the process and preserving trust and good will of the community, especially in light of recent discussions regarding K - 12 regionaliza-

tion. We do not dispute the qualifications of Mr. Baldassarre for the position, but we feel that both he and Mahar would be better served by a more complete and open selection process. We can then move forward, confident that our choice for superintendent will have the full confidence and backing of the entire Mahar community.

— **The New Salem Selectboard**
B. Steven Verney, Anthony Palmieri and Jennifer Sandova

SHEA from pg 1

to DeRuiter's George. As DeRuiter continues to grow in acting depth and stature, he has become the classic sophisticated comedian. In days of yore, he could easily have taken on the role of a swash-buckling movie hero. I never grew tired of hearing him say, "My God, Charlotte, you've come back!"

The cast surrounding the battling love birds is equally skilled. Martha King-Devine, David Peck, Cristen Rosinski, Dave Clooney, and Sue Hoyle portray their characters with confidence and flare. Mark Hildreth's performance as Howard was notably brilliant, anxious and confused throughout the show.

Another star worth mentioning

was the set, and more specifically, the doors. Yes, the doors, and lots of them — truly a Ludwig hallmark — employed by the cast and director to create a zany, rapid-fire sequence that had the audience breathless with laughter and helped to keep the first act moving forward at a furious pace. Act 2 featured more of the same breakneck pacing, as the gags culminated in the most hysterical balcony scene this side of Verona.

So if enjoying an evening of good old-fashioned laughter sounds like it might be on your to-do list, hustle on over to the Shea Theater for a dose of just what the doctor ordered. Shows are Friday or Saturday evening, April 3rd and 4th, at 8 p.m. and Sunday, April 5th at 2 p.m.



SALE from pg 1

land for a school, park, or recreational purposes. These deed restrictions would probably have to be removed, perhaps by special legislation, prior to a sale.

A two thirds vote of town meeting would be required to declare either parcel surplus.

"Old man Boyle would be turning over in his grave," said Dick French, another historical commission member. French said he would like the town to plan for developing more of a town center, since he believes future trends would favor more locally self-reliant communities, and holding onto the Boyle parcel would allow for future development in the center of town. Sale of the land might result in a couple of single family homes being put up there, French thought.

French called for a study committee to be established to look at the question of selling either parcel.

But selectboard member Lee Stevens defended the board's decision to place the article before town meeting in May. "We want to know what the people want to do," he said.

Hark! the Dogs do Bark

In other news, the selectboard heard a complaint from Jim Diemand, of Hickory Hill Road, about dogs barking at the neighboring kennel owned by Duncan and Jackie Elliot. Diemand,

whose complaint is a familiar one to the board, said he had called the police to come out to his property to verify that the barking of dogs being exercised at the kennel was plainly audible on his property.

Diemand cited a clause from the Gill bylaws on Dog Control, which states, "No person shall keep any dog which by biting, barking, or in any other manner disturbs the peace and quiet of the neighborhood..."

Griswold, who said she used the Hickory Hill Pet Center when she needs to board her own dog, and finds it, "an extraordinarily good business. It's clear they take good care of their dogs." She added, "They have every right to have a business there. We can't tell Mr. Elliot to shut down his kennel because it disturbs you."

Diemand said he wanted the Elliots to let the kenneled dogs out to exercise at specified times, so he could wear earplugs or leave his house, and at other times be able to enjoy the singing of birds or the peace and quiet of his home.

"From now on as long as I have breath I am going to be proactive to establish my rights," he said.

The board encouraged Diemand to take his complaint to the zoning board of appeals.

Duncan Elliot, who attended the meeting, said after Diemand left, "The conclusion I came to is

it will never be satisfactory to him unless we close" the kennel.

Griswold reassured him, "You're a good business in town. I wouldn't bring my dog anywhere else."

Spending Ceiling Raised

Acting on a memo from the police and highway departments, the board agreed to raise the ceiling for discretionary spending to \$500, since the prior \$50 ceiling was making it difficult for departments to conduct routine business.

Erosion Control

Carol Frost, of New England Environmental, asked the board to allow her company to perform erosion control work on town property near the Connecticut River. Her company will soon bring a plan to the conservation commission to install a novel form of bank erosion control along a section of the Connecticut River including the town owned land abutting the Split River Farm, owned by Doug Patterson, and other nearby farmland.

The narrow town owned section is the former extension of River Road, near the intersection of Pisgah Mountain Road. Once, the end of River Road led to a ferry landing.

Frost said that instead of using riprap to control erosion downstream from the Northfield

Mountain Pumped Hydro Station, her company plans to use sections of uprooted trees, with the root balls still attached, secured to the bank at even intervals, to act as checks to the current, and to collect woody debris as it floats downstream. Eventually, Frost said, vegetation could root in the woody debris around the breakwaters formed by the anchored trees, which would help stabilize the banks. She said this method has been used in the Northwest, to restore salmon habitat, and in other areas of New England.

New England Environmental is working under contract for First Light Power to perform bank stabilization south of Northfield Mountain, as required by the utility's FERC license. The board agreed to allow the work — which will proceed over the course of four years, beginning this fall, with conservation commission approval — on the town-owned property.

Town clerk Hodsdon-Mayo and treasurer Ronnie LaChance asked the board to reactivate the town personnel committee, so a section of the personnel policy which calls for annual review of elected position salaries, in comparison to other towns in the area, could be undertaken.

"We know the situation in town this year," said the two elected officials, but they wanted the board to get the review under-


way for future years, since they believe their compensation is low compared to their counterparts in neighboring communities.

The board tabled a recommendation by the finance committee to negotiate a one-year extension of police chief David Hasting's salary, which is up for renewal at the end of April, instead of a three-year extension. The finance committee made this recommendation because the town has been exploring the possibility of sharing a police chief position with the neighboring towns of Bernardston and Northfield, although those discussions have gained little traction.

The town of Warwick thanked Gill for the recent loan of a sander, which allowed Warwick to keep their school buses running and their roads safe, while one of their highway trucks was under repair.

Common Cause gave Gill an 'award of distinction' for the town website, as one of 49 towns in the state to post documents and proceedings of town government in a manner designed to promote transparency in government.


Entergy Vermont Yankee delayed their planned test of the emergency evacuation siren on the NMH campus. The test had been scheduled for April 1st, April Fools Day. The company did not provide an explanation for why the test had been delayed.

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Your Pace at Your Place

Much Ado with Five Actors

BY RHYS HATCH

NEW SALEM – Last Thursday evening, deep in the woods of Wendell, or perhaps New Salem, the sixth graders of the Swift River School put on a charming production of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Though the air outside was chilly and damp, spirits were high indoors. A sizable crowd had turned out to see this group of energetic entertainers tackle the Bard's great comedy of love and magic, and no one went home disappointed.

The evening began with a jubilant woman clad in purple robes and hat exhorting the crowd to "Pour out your pockets!" so that the sixth grade class might go on a "magnificent trip" to the Boston Aquarium. This harlequin, I gathered, was Sally Stuffin, the director of the evening's revels.

She went on to tell us how hard the sixth grade had worked to prepare for their performance. The class began in November with boundless enthusiasm and many willing actors and actresses. But as the months wore on, fewer and fewer students remained excited at the prospect of delivering lines in front of an audience. Eventually only five leading actors were left, and this of course presented a problem, as there were more than five sizable parts to be played.

Despite this difficulty, the sixth grade class was determined to make it work. Turning to Shakespeare himself for a way out of the dilemma, the five willing leads agreed to play multiple parts.

But what about the scenes in which more than five main characters appear on stage at the same time?

This problem was solved by ingenious costuming and amusing



John Stowell as Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. For more photos go to www.swiftroverschool.org

voice changes: the irrepressible John Stowell, while playing Lysander, wore a lifeless likeness of Hermia on his back and simply turned around to squeak out her lines as needed. Likewise, Raphael Gilliam played Demetrius when he faced forward, and Helena when he spun around. Though this was confusing at times, confusion is part and parcel of *A Midsummer Night*, and the effect was on the whole hilarious, if a bit eerie.

Every cast member did at least double duty. Stephen Houchins did a fine job as both Egeus and Thisbe. Django Skorupa played a lively Puck and an imposing Theseus, delivering every line with booming confidence, and frequently dashing over to the side of the stage to play piano with the band, whose music enlivened the performance a great deal, particularly between scenes.

While the lights were off and the actors changed costumes, the audience was treated to the deft bluesy stylings of Nathan Olszewski on guitar, while Heron Heath bounced around on a pogo stick wearing a green Afro wig, sometimes with one foot, or one hand, or no hands. This little gimmick was odd but amusing and only got better every time it happened. Also in the band were Ryan Cutler on the marimba and Henry

Frost on the guitar. When he wasn't strumming, Frost helped out on stage as Tom Snout the Tinker.

All in all the show was merry and quirky, just as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* should be. Beth Haggerty's sixth grade class did a terrific job of adapting Shakespeare's comedy – it never dragged and was full of brilliant sets, exceptional costumes and silly surprises, including several unexpected dance interludes.

All the actors performed happily and bravely, and though it would be hard to pick a high point out of the whole bravura display, I'd have to say I laughed loudest as Demetrius tried to rid himself of Helena.

"Follow me no more!" he shouted, and "Let me go!"

Following which he spun around to show us Helena, literally pinned to his back and yelping, "Oh, but I love you so!"

We could only shake our heads and ponder, "Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

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BUDGET from pg 3

he didn't understand why the entire gap between needed school spending and available revenues is "just dumped on the towns," instead of the school committee and the towns partnering with the state to seek a long term structural solution.

The school committee has agreed to send the budget approved this week to the Commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for review. The DESE assumed financial control of the Gill-Montague district last December, when the towns and the school district failed to reach agreement on a budget for '09.

Committee member Michael

Langknecht said he would like to see the committee send something to the state to indicate the gap between assessments and what the towns could afford. He suggested the GMRSD submit an "unbalanced budget."

Rocke said the committee could take \$17,000 from the district's health insurance rebate to help offset costs to the towns.

Brown said he was "horrified by the heavy use of E&D and one-time money" to fill the budget gap. There was some confusion about rules when a motion was on the table and committee chair Mary Kociela would not let town officials participate in the discussion before the vote. She explained that, once a motion has been offered, discussion is limit-

ed to school committee members. Town officials can offer comments between votes.

Rocke informed the committee that 50% of the stimulus money made available to the schools could be used to fill budget holes, but they would be required to use the other 50% for building capacity for the district, with projects and programs to improve the schools over the long term. He warned that the DESE has told him to expect cuts in SPED circuit-breaker reimbursement this year, and suggested the committee should try to hold onto some money to make up for those expected cuts.

After the failure of the vote on the budget with the lowest assessments, a heated discussion ensued, and several other motions were placed on the table for consideration.

Sandra Brown of Gill made a motion for a 0% budget. Kociela said they could not consider that since they had already voted a 1% budget at the last meeting, and the purpose of this meeting was to set assessments.

Langknecht's suggestion to submit an unbalanced budget got some support from other members, but ultimately the majority agreed this would increase the

likelihood the state would step in and set a budget of their own for the district.

After much criticism from town officials, joined by some school committee members, over the state's perceived lack of assistance in solving the school budget problem, Rocke said that DESE officials have a great deal on their plate and have been very generous with their time. He pointed out that assistant commissioner Wulfson has come to several meetings in the district, and would attend more in the future.

With the conclusion of the vote setting the assessments, the school committee will continue hearing budget presentations in future meetings. Even though there is an official budget for FY '10, the committee can still adjust it as more information becomes available.

At the request of technology director Marty Espinola, the school committee voted to approve \$5000 from capital improvement funds to hire a consultant to help them evaluate bids for a new security system and door access system for Turners Falls High School.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WENDELL POLICE LOG

Dangerous Driving on Depot Road

Thursday, 2/19

Safe and bolt cutters taken in post office break-in recovered in Winchester, New Hampshire.

Saturday, 2/21

1:12 a.m. One-car accident with no injuries on Depot Road. Additional one-car acci-

dent with no injuries on Depot Road. One-car accident with no injuries on New Salem Road.

Thursday, 3/5

Old Stage Road resident reported items missing from the residence.

Friday, 3/6

9:12 p.m. One-car acci-

dent with no injuries on Depot Road.

Thursday, 3/19

Depot resident reported that someone drove over the lawn and septic system in the night.

Sunday, 3/22

9:40 p.m. Maple Valley School reported a run-away student.



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NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Selectboard Candidate Reports from the High School

BY DAVID DETMOLD -

"Are you going to go to college?" asked retiring selectboard chairman Allen Ross the other day of one of the candidates running to take his place. This is not a question candidates for public office are typically posed, but in this case it seemed fair.

Sitting across the selectboard conference table from Ross on Monday night was Joshua Gammon, a senior at Turners Falls High School, who has been accepted at Tulane University in New Orleans and Emory University in Atlanta, among other places.

Gammon, 18, allowed that he had not yet made a decision about where or whether he would be attending school next fall.

"It's a long trip from South Bend on Monday nights, huh?" prompted town administrator Frank Abbondanzio.

Gammon would not be baited. "For now, I'm running," he said.

Ross followed up by asking whether Gammon felt he could "solve the school and town budget problem," which Ross described as "the most challenging" problem he had faced on the selectboard, since both sides claim to seek no more each year

than they absolutely need, yet available revenues continue to fall far short of their demands.

Gammon replied coolly that his time seated as the student council representative to the school committee and as president of the student council gave him a unique perspective on the budget problem. "I can see it both ways," said Gammon. "I think it's solvable."

Gammon attended the selectboard meeting this week as part of a delegation from the high school. Student leaders have been going to selectboard each month to provide regular updates about high school activities, as an attempt to better inform the town about how education tax dollars are being spent. Gammon was also part of a student delegation that brought a petition to the selectboard's attention a year earlier, in support of naming the high school auditorium after former music teacher and band director Steve Ciehomski.

On Monday, the selectboard asked Gammon how the discussion about the moratorium on the band's use of the Tomahawk Chop fight song was proceeding. Gammon said the dialogue was proceeding, with two forums attended by school committee

members in recent weeks where the majority of students defended the Chop, and listened to speeches from representatives of the local Native American community, who are on record saying they consider the fight song demeaning to their culture.

"The student council issued a statement in favor of the Chop, and criticizing the process," the administration used to ban the Chop, Gammon said.

Gammon also said the boys basketball team, on which he played center, reached the state semi-finals, before being knocked out by Springfield New Leadership charter school at UMass on March 5th. Gammon said the team was very proud of their accomplishment; they wound up with a 16-6 record for the season.

Nicholas Skarzynski, another senior at TFHS, said the school marching band won first place at the St. Patrick's Day parade in Worcester this year, topping their second-place showing last year.

Brooke Hastings, a TFHS sophomore, said a number of seniors from the TFHS government class, along with three sophomores, traveled to Elliot County, KY over spring break to work with a low-income housing

organization there, and to clean up a local park. "It was an awesome experience," she said, adding that the students in Kentucky who worked with them may pay a return visit to Montague in the future.

In other news, police chief Ray Zukowski announced the town has received a federal grant for \$26,645, which will help the department purchase equipment for the new police station. Zukowski said he planned to spend some of the money on up to four pieces of exercise equipment to be housed in the locker room for the use of the 30 full-time public safety providers (counting the Turners Falls firefighters in the adjoining building) who will be based at the safety complex on Turners Falls Road. Other equipment the chief had on his list included new computer work stations, and two foldaway emergency operation center tables.

Ross asked if a portable roadway radar speed sign might be a good item to consider purchasing with the grant money; Zukowski said those signs cost \$10,000 to \$12,000. Pruitt asked whether spending some of the grant money to help purchase a new cruiser for the department might make more sense than purchasing exercise equipment.

The board gave permission for the Shea Theater to hold the sec-

ond annual Tines and Tunes event at Peskeomskut Park, on July 11th. Shea board member Pat Friedman said care would be taken to make sure customer-parking-only signs were put up in the parking lot in front of Aubuchon's this year. The board also granted the Shea a one-day beer and wine permit for April 18th, for the appearance of a "mentalist" at the theater, as part of the Shea's 'date night' series.

The board granted permission for the RiverCulture program to hold the third annual Turners Falls Block Party, on August 8th.

The board appointed Richard Blier to the Montague energy committee.

Abbondanzio invited the board to an unveiling of a plaque honoring the contribution of the Colle family to the town's history, on Friday afternoon, at 1 p.m. The plaque will be placed in the rear lobby of the Colle Opera building.

Abbondanzio asked the board to include a parcel to the rear of the former St. Anne's rectory in the rezoning proposal for the rectory and the church, which will soon be advertised for a public hearing before the planning board. That parcel, which includes a barn and rocky ledge, was inadvertently left off the initial proposal to rezone the church buildings from neighborhood

see MONTAGUE pg 11

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Hit and Run Accidents, Burglary

Wednesday, 3/25

12:12 a.m. Alarm sounding at Lake Pleasant pump station. Investigated.

9:08 a.m. Report of vandalism at a Montague City Road address.

12:32 p.m. Report of a suspicious person on the bike path heading to the Patch. Area search negative.

3:31 p.m. Report of trespassing at Basically Bicycles on Third Street. Peace restored.

4:51 p.m. Report of neighbor disturbance at a Turnpike Road address. Advised of civil action.

7:44 p.m. Report of domestic disturbance at an Avenue A address. Peace restored.

Thursday, 3/26

7:33 a.m. Report of neighbor disturbance at a Turnpike Road address. Investigated.

4:30 p.m. Report of sex offenses on bike path behind Cumberland Farms.

Friday, 2/27

6:40 p.m. Report of vandalism in the alley by a Fifth Street address.

8:08 p.m. Report of disorderly conduct at an Avenue C address in the area of Scotty's Store. Advised of options.

11:41 p.m. Report of hit and run accident at a Montague Avenue address.

Saturday, 3/28

bance at a Fourth Street address. Advised of options.
8:09 p.m. Report of neighbor disturbance at a Bridge Street address. Peace restored.

Sunday, 3/29

12:52 a.m. Report of an assault at a Fourth Street address. Advised of options.
1:15 a.m. Officer initiated investigation of a suspicious person in the area of Fourth Street. Arrested [redacted]

[redacted] Charged with possession of a class C drug.

2:17 p.m. Report of an unwanted person at a Green

3:19 p.m. Pond Road address. Peace restored.

7:19 p.m. Report of domestic disturbance at a Turnpike Road address. Investigated.

Monday, 3/30

4:48 p.m. Report of neighbor disturbance at a Bridge Street address. Peace restored.

Tuesday, 3/31

8:31 a.m. Report of burglary / breaking and entering at a Hatchery Road address.

3:38 p.m. Report of trespassing at Lightlife Foods, Industrial Boulevard. Investigated.

6:14 p.m. Report of a hit and run accident at Scotty's Store, Unity Street. Services rendered.

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Burning for Birds, Bees and Butterflies: Management of Montague Plains Restores Rare Habitat



PHOTOS MIKE AKRESH

A prescribed burn in a treated pitch pine area in the sand plains

BY MIKE AKRESH
MONTAGUE CENTER – Did you know there is a rare, beautiful, and fire-loving animal living in your backyard? No, it's not your teenage kid – it's the whip-

poorwill, one of many unique species found in the Montague sand plains, an area that depends on periodic fires to restore needed habitat.

“Besides the whippoorwill,

there are over 20 declining, rare, or imperiled species that call the sand plains home,” said David King, a U.S. Forest Service wildlife biologist stationed at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, who has been working in the sand plains for the last five years. The Montague Plains include a 1512-acre wildlife preserve owned and managed by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife), a dry pitch pine-scrub oak barren that is home to numerous rare and threatened species.

Species like the blueberry sallow moth, the wild lupine plant, and the barrens buck moth depend on fire or other disturbances to create places to lay their eggs, sprout their seeds, and spin their cocoons. Because natural wildfires can be dangerous to nearby communities, controlled fires and other management techniques are used to restore the natural habitat these threatened species need to survive.

Historically, natural fires and other disturbances have occurred in dry areas like the Montague Plains. But uncontrolled fires can be disastrous; fires burned down buildings and threatened homes in Lake Pleasant in 1907 and 1957. To prevent these catastrophes, MassWildlife, the state agency responsible for managing

wildlife, and other collaborators conduct controlled burning, as well as mowing and thinning of the pitch pine and scrub oak forests in the sand plains. These practices reduce the fire risk by

pheasants in the fall. Local hunters have reported improved ruffed grouse hunting in the area since the start of active management.

The goals of actively manag-



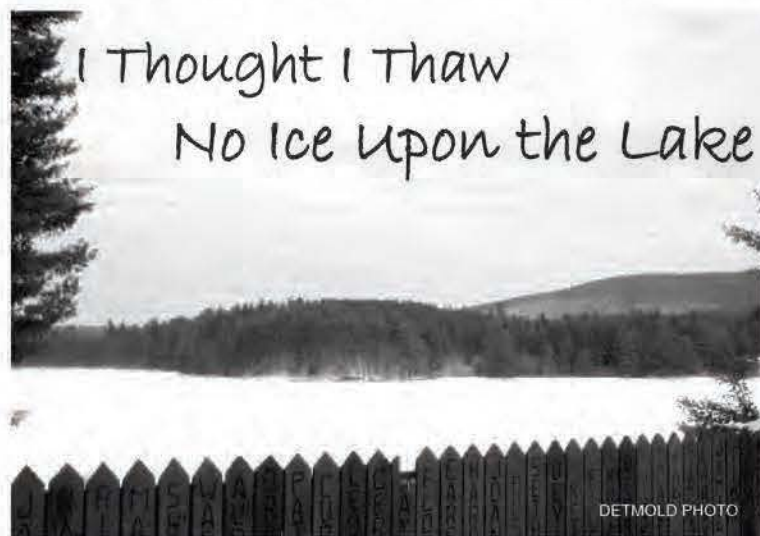
Female Prairie Warbler

removing excess woody material that builds up as a result of fire suppression.

MassWildlife forester Brian Hawthorne, who oversees forest management activities in the Montague sand plains, points out that managed burning is also a “great way for local firefighters and students to gain experience working with fire, in a controlled, lower-risk setting.” Additionally, this active management provides hunters with a great local spot to stalk deer and

ing the sand plains are not just to reduce the risk of fire and to provide hunting opportunities, but also to make sure the birds keep singing and the bees keep buzzing. King, who has been counting birds in the Montague sand plains for years, said “Whippoorwills and other declining shrubland birds are much more abundant in burned and mowed areas of scrub oak and pitch pine, compared to the

continued next page



DETMOLD PHOTO

BY DAVID JAMES
LAKE PLEASANT – At the height of every summer, a Lake Pleasant pastime is watching grass grow in Minnie Rutter Memorial Park in the heart of the southwestern half of the community known as the Bluffs. But each year as winter wanes village eyes turn to watching ice depart from the surface of Lake

Pleasant's namesake body of water.

Since 1977 that long-standing cyclical curiosity has become ritualized in an “Ice Off the Lake” rites-of-spring event. Participants draw a date and take their blind-luck chances.

The trial-by-ice competition has become so popular that a shadow version was instituted in

2005 to accommodate overflow interest of those still wishing to participate even after the last ticket for the traditional contest was gone.

The “Ice Off the Lake” contest began during the reign of long-term and now long-retired postmaster Alfreda Casey, who currently resides in Southwick. Native daughter Joyce Cote inherited contest management when she became postmaster in 1987. Cote coordinated the contest until 2008, the year after her retirement. This year the ice torch was passed to David James, a postmaster relief worker currently filling in for postmaster Ronald Croteau, who was temporarily transferred last September to the Blandford post office in the Berkshires.

Ironically, the name of the contest can be a misnomer. A winner may be declared even though ice remnants yet remain

in the lake, for as with so much of life, what you see depends upon where you stand.

Traditionally, contest judges gather in front of a particular picket dead center above the sluiceway on the Bridge of Names, a wooden walkway which joins the two halves of the village, and survey as much of the surface of Lake Pleasant as is visible from that vantage point. If no ice can be seen, the contest is declared done, no matter that the judges may have passed ice pockets near the shore as they wended their way from one end or the other of the bridge to arrive at the midpoint. The picket centered above the sluiceway bears the name of Raisin Rosen, by the way. The sluiceway carries overflow from the lake to a stream which empties into the Sawmill River and thence into the Connecticut, now approaching its greatest strength in the

general spring thaw.

This year, judges Cote and Pat Otto, Sr., and apprentice judge James determined that – from where they stood in the shadow of Raisin Rosen's picket – the last cube of ice had left the lake on March 30th, as of 5 p.m. Consequently, the 2009 winner of Contest 1 was Colin York and the winner of Contest 2 was Pat Otto, Jr., both of Lake Pleasant.

Lest any impute impropriety to the judging, readers should know that both Cote, whose daughter and granddaughter would have been winners if the contest had ended on the 31st, and Otto, whose son was one of the winners on the 30th, withdrew from the deliberations at the last minute, leaving James as the suddenly elevated Chief Justice of the Supreme Ice Off the Lake Court.

continued next page

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PLAINS continued

untreated stands of pitch pine and mature forest.”

Initial findings indicate that some bird species, such as field sparrows, are successfully raising young in managed areas.

However, in these same areas, prairie warblers have had relatively more nest failures due to predators taking birds' eggs and young. Despite these nest failures, prairie warblers may be compensating by re-nesting multiple times during a summer. More research will be conducted this coming summer to investigate this possibility, and verify preliminary findings.

For other winged creatures, previous studies have found that many butterfly and moth larvae, including the endangered barrens buck moth,

only feed on young scrub oak bushes. These moths and butterflies cannot mature into adults unless fire or another disturbance creates these young shrubs. Pollinators such as native bees, which have been under-

the sand plains has successfully created habitat for threatened wildlife and plants while decreasing the risk of wildfires in the area. Despite this local success, habitat for these threatened species and this unique biological community are declining in the Northeast, primarily because of residential and industrial development. [For more information about the ongoing management at the sand plains, please visit www.umass.edu/nebarrensfuels/index.html.]

An ecologist, Baba Dioum, once said, "In the end, you must love what you conserve." So I invite you to stop by the sand plains on a crisp spring night, and fall in love with the flutter of butterflies, the mating dance of a woodcock, and the characteristic echoing call of a whippoorwill at dusk.

Without our help, these species may soon be gone.

Mike Akresh is a graduate student at UMass studying shrubland birds in the Montague Plains.



MIKE AKRESH PHOTO

Brown Thrasher fledgling on the Montague Plains

going steep population declines in recent years, also appear to be responding positively to management efforts by MassWildlife.

Overall, the active management in

FOOD from pg 4

operations, the demands of new reporting practices. None of these practices show Nature the respect she is due; none are sustainable or fitting, ecologically.

It would seem better for many legitimate ends, including food wholesomeness and safety, if Congress were to find ways to incentivize smaller, regional foodsheds, supplied by small, family farms, to help restore the farm as a community's heart, and food as its blood rather than a mass-produced, mass-marketed commodity. But the Tom who's running the USDA is named Vilsack now, not Jefferson, so I probably digress.

So for small farms, like most New England ones, a new testing procedure or an added reporting responsibility seems to be an inefficient solution to a problem I'm not sure has been identified. To these

operations, the demands of new reporting practices. None of these practices show Nature the respect she is due; none are sustainable or fitting, ecologically. It would seem better for many legitimate ends, including food wholesomeness and safety, if Congress were to find ways to incentivize smaller, regional foodsheds, supplied by small, family farms, to help restore the farm as a community's heart, and food as its blood rather than a mass-produced, mass-marketed commodity. But the Tom who's running the USDA is named Vilsack now, not Jefferson, so I probably digress.

At NOFA/Mass (Northeastern Organic Farming Association) we are urging people to call their Congressional representatives, write letters to the editor, and e-mail their friends with this message: Do not lump small farms and industrial farms in the same category. There are problems with the healthfulness of much of the American diet, but we need to repair our food system without hurting the providers of the highest

see **FOOD** pg 10

LAKE continued

There were 41 participants in the first drawing, which had a date range of March 11th to April 19th, and 34 participants in the second, which began one week later and also ended April 19th.

In the spirit of Lake Pleasant's legacy as the largest gathering place in the United States for Spiritualists during the last quarter of the 19th Century and the first quarter of the 20th, tribute chances were obtained this year for the souls of now-departed village notables Louise Shattuck and her longtime companion Varion Hicks. Shattuck is the author of "Spirit and Spa," which captures in words and photographs the old time essence of Lake Pleasant as a Spiritualist resort, and Hicks, renowned for his highway and byway 15-mile-per-hour chauffeuring skills, is the all-time leading lucky ticket picker. In mortal form he was a three-time winner (1987, 1994, and 1998) of the "Ice Off the Lake" contest.

94% of us would be upset if another adult gave our teens alcohol.

From the 2008 survey of Turners Falls High School and Great Falls Middle School parents.

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Montague Public Works News and Notes - SPRING 2009

MONTAGUE HIGHWAY - Superintendent Tom Bergeron

The Highway Department will start pothole repairs as soon as possible, and also street sweeping. Sweeping is accomplished during non peak times in an effort not to impede traffic flow. The parks department will start fixing damage from the winter season, and cleaning the lawns and park equipment for the spring and summer season.

TURNERS FALLS FIRE - Chief Raymond Godin

Spring is right around the corner, and with it comes brush-burning season and a high risk of forest fires. Homeowners need to get a permit from their local fire department before burning piles of brush. Burning hours are limited to 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. All brush burning must be attended at all times, and must be 75 feet from your house or other structures.

In the Turners Falls Fire District call 863-9023, in Gill and Montague Center call 625-8200 in Erving call 422-2463 and in Wendell call 544-3500 for permit information. Burning is limited to brush and branches. Stumps, whole trees, and other materials are not permitted.

Early spring is also the time of year when our local forests and woodlands are at greatest risk for fires. Once the snow cover is gone, the forest floor dries very rapidly; even the smallest spark can start a large fire. Please be careful when wandering through the woodlands.

FOOD from pg 9

quality food available right now: small, local organic farmers. Here are some talking points for such calls and letters:

Any produce safety bill must be:

- Scale-appropriate: Regulations should not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach that large operations can afford, but that put small farms and farmers markets out of business.
- Risk-based: Measures to implement food safety solutions must be based on actual risk assessments for different products and scales and types of farms, not assumptions or averages based on an industrial food model.
- Science-based: Specific measures to mitigate produce safety risk, or metrics used in produce safety solutions, must be based on science and specific to the growing conditions on individual farms.
- Provide tiered compliance alternatives appropriate to farm size, market served, and risk: A two-acre certified organic fruit and vegetable producer selling through farmers' markets or CSAs to buyers within 50 miles of the farm would occupy a different tier from a several-hundred acre producer shipping produce to multiple outlets in multiple states. A tiered compliance program would include training in on-farm produce safety for all producers, but commingling, tagging, and tracking measures would be scale and buyer-specific.

To learn more about food safety and how it impacts small farmers, visit:

www.nofa.org/policy/leafygreens.php,
www.mofga.org, www.caff.org/foodsafety,
www.foodandwaterwatch.org/food/foodsafety/background-on-h-r-875,
www.carolinafarmstewards.org,
www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_17256.cfm,
www.thehill.com/op-eds/agriculture--food-safety-2009-03-19.html

Jonathan von Ranson of Wendell is a former president of NOFA/Mass and its current newsletter editor.



MONTAGUE CENTER FIRE - Chief John Greene

Developing and practicing a home fire escape plan that everyone understands can mean the difference between life and death. Fire can grow and spread through your home very quickly. It's important that you be prepared to react as soon as the smoke alarm sounds.

Practice the escape plan at least twice a year, making sure that everyone is involved - from kids to grandparents. Allow children to master fire escape planning and practice before holding a fire drill at night when they are sleeping. The objective is to practice, not to frighten, so telling children there will be a drill before they go to bed can be as effective as a surprise drill. If children or others do not readily waken to the sound of the smoke alarm, or if there are infants or family members with mobility limitations, make sure that someone is assigned to assist them in a fire drill and in the event of an emergency.

GMRSD from pg 1

selectboard meeting, Rogers had estimated the town would face a shortfall of between \$10,000 - \$80,000, depending on how the school committee acted on the town's assessment.

Later in the day on Wednesday, Rogers had been adding back some items from a lengthy wish list of town needs, to drop the anticipated surplus in the tax levy back down to about \$1,000.

These figures would require Gill to commit "100%" of the town's certified free cash - or \$177,959 - toward reducing the tax levy, Rogers said.

Finance committee chair Tupper Brown was less sanguine about the school committee's proposed assessment figures.

On Wednesday, Brown said, "I and other members of the finance committees of both towns were very disappointed at the limited participation we were allowed to have in what we understood would be a communication between town representatives and the school committee.

"Second, the action of the school committee in voting an

TURNERS FALLS WATER - Superintendent Mike Brown

MONTAGUE CENTER WATER - Commissioner Gary Dion

Spring and summer mean more outdoor water use, and the Turners Falls Water Department is asking for your cooperation in a program to protect our water system from accidents. This program is important because of the possibility that used water may return to the public supply if certain conditions are present.

The program is called Cross Connection Control.

A cross connection is formed at any point where a drinking water line connects to equipment, a system containing chemicals, or water of questionable quality and where backflow may occur into the drinking water line. Examples of where cross connections may occur are at boilers, air conditioning systems, fire sprinklers, irrigation systems, laboratory equipment, plating trays, and chemical vats.

If you are a homeowner with a lawn irrigation system or an owner of industrial, institutional, or commercial property, you must have your home or facility's plumbing surveyed for cross connection hazards and install proper backflow devices, or eliminate cross connections entirely. For more information, contact the Turners Falls Water Department 863-4542.

Montague Public Works News and Notes is a new quarterly feature of the Montague Reporter, compiled by Nancy Holmes.

GOOD TIMES from pg 1

was Sirum's legendary spread of delicious food. There were several kinds of pastries, donuts and coffee in the morning. At noon, a line quickly formed at the long serving tables, featuring kielbasa, macaroni and cheese, salads, barbequed chicken wings, baked beans and several varieties of bread,

among the many offerings.

Ed Sirum gave out 685 John Deere hats. Films of new and innovative methods of profitable farming drew a rapt audience. Outside, displays of tractors and farm equipment crowded both sides of Route 63, stretching out into former farm fields.

"More people attended, but they came later in the day," Diane Sirum said. "We ran out of food, completely. Usually something is left over, but this year there was nothing left. Nothing at all."

The parts and supplies counters did a brisk business as people took advantage of show prices. With renewed interest in wood heat, a demonstration of a "Lickety Splitter" log splitter attracted a crowd. Inventor Dean Priebe, of Connecticut, demonstrated one of his patented splitters, mounted in place of a front end loader bucket. Operating from the seat of a sub-compact tractor, he quickly picked up thick stovewood-length logs and split them into four pieces to drop into the bed of a pickup, all with the greatest of ease. The splitter can be used as a grapple to carry full-length logs out of the woods. Once sawed into stovewood lengths, the splitter can make short work of splitting four foot diameter chunks. His Lickety Splitter turns a back-breaking job into fun.

Besides row upon row of new equipment, Sirum's has plenty of used machinery and fixer-uppers to interest collectors and backyard mechanics both. Stop by for a look-see.

assessment at this stage - that simply puts huge amounts of reserves toward reducing what otherwise would be, and may still be, an unacceptably high level of assessment - is wrong. It doesn't address the problem of the huge budgetary gap, it simply postpones the day of reckoning to a not very distant future year.

"Third, the fact that this action was justified by the superintendent and the school committee as necessary due to the difficult times of this recession ignores the fact that the budgetary difficulties we face arise not out of the recession: they existed before the recession, and will not be cured by any improvement in the national economy.

"Finally," Brown said, "I would not say this proposed assessment puts the town of Gill anywhere near 'in the black'. It is far too soon to tell what level of assessment will require an override in Gill or not."

Brown made it clear he was speaking as one member of the finance committee, which has not had a chance to formally review the GMRSD assessment for Gill proposed on Tuesday night.



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G.C.C. Comes to the Brick House

BY BRIDGET SWEET

TURNERS FALLS – A small crowd of potential applicants and their parents gathered to hear administrators from Greenfield Community College talk about the programs G.C.C. has to offer last Tuesday at the Brick House. Among those presenting were director of admissions and diversity Herb Hentz, Shannon Coskran, coordinator of special programs, and Linda Desjardins, co-director of financial aid. Earlier that afternoon, G.C.C. music department chair Matthew Shippee hung out and jammed with musicians who frequent the Hot Spot Teen Center, on the first floor of the Brick House.

Turners Falls residents Chelsea Bocon and Mitchell MacConnell were among those listening as Hentz punctuated his brief, humorous, remarks with handouts for potential applicants

and mini-CDs of the college's 2008-09 catalog. (Reach Hentz at 413-775-1809, or at hentz@gcc.mass.edu.)

Bocon, a senior, and MacConnell, a junior, are among the 20 Turners Falls High School students taking part in the first year of the high school's Early Transitions Program with G.C.C. These dual-enrollment students attend G.C.C. full-time, earning the credits they need to graduate from TFHS while at the same time earning credits for their associate's degree at the college.

MacConnell called the dual enrollment program "fun and easy." He got into the program with the recommendation of his high school guidance counselor, who tested and enrolled him.

Coskran explained, "The Early Transitions Program started out for kids at-risk [of dropping out of high school] and for kids

who would do better in a different setting." Other high schools participating in the G.C.C. Early Transitions Program are Amherst Regional and Greenfield, and ETP students now make up 3% of GCC's total enrollment.

Coskran said she eats lunch with the dual-enrollment students twice a week to keep communication open. "I see students thrive, and become independent where before they might not have," she said. (Coskran can be reached at 413-775-1336, or at coskrans@gcc.mass.edu.)

Bocon picked up a packet describing the process for filling out a free application for federal student aid from Desjardins, who offered one-on-one appointments to guide anyone interested in applying for student aid at the college. (She can be reached at 413-775-1105, or at desjard@gcc.mass.edu.) Bocon

hopes to further her education this fall at G.C.C.

Shippee, lead guitarist and vocalist of Northampton's 'Swing Caravan,' mostly let his guitar do the talking, as he jammed with Jared Libby, coordinator of the Teen Center's Avenue A Music Project.

Shippee said, "The G.C.C. music department is seven years old. Music technology is the newest branch on the tree." He described the new fully-equipped Pro Tools audio recording lab at the college, which seemed to strike a chord with teen center guests.

G.C.C. will hold an open house on Thursday, April 16th, where there will be an opportunity to attend a college class, answer questions on the application process and financial aid, and, in the evening, view the opening of the student art show. The hours for this event are 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. for the day program, and 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. for the evening program.

Karen Stinchfield, outreach coordinator for the Brick House and a member of the G.C.C.

Community Access Scholarship Fund steering committee, arranged the visit of G.C.C. administrators to the Brick House. Stinchfield, who earned her associate's degree from G.C.C., said the college is a friendly place full of caring educators, "where everyone knows your name."

Speaking of Tuesday's gathering, Stinchfield said, "Valuable seeds were sown during the event, and the participants are enthusiastic about the possibilities and options."

Second Chance for Erving Conservation Land Trail Blazing

If you missed the opportunity to tromp through the mud with loppers, shears, and hand saws last Saturday, helping the doughty conservationists of Erving to clear trails on the town's newly acquired 118-acre public land off Old State Road, do not despair. There will be a second gathering this Saturday, at 9 a.m. Bring work gloves, and enthusiasm. Call 423-3027 for more details.

TURNERS SK8 PARK ON THE MOVE

BY RUTH NERVIG

TURNERS FALLS – It's the 11th hour, and the Sk8 Park needs your help! On April 11th at 11 a.m. the Turners Falls Sk8 Park will be moving to a plot of land provided by Jim Capen on Avenue A and 11th Street. The move comes sooner than expected, because anxious skaters have been using the ramps on Tim DeChristopher's land, which is no longer rented by the town of Montague. Please spread the word that skaters and BMXers

should head to the Greenfield Skate Park while the Turners Falls Sk8 Park is in transition.

The Mohawk Ramblers Motorcycle Club, and community members Ed Young and Joe Landry have offered their time, tools and trucks to help move ramps, but the land still needs to be paved and fenced. The Sk8 Park steering committee has raised and saved \$950 from past events and generous donations from community members.

The committee needs a total of

\$5,000 to pave and fence the 2,000 square feet on 11th Street and Avenue A. Businesses and community members can send tax-deductible checks to assist this effort to Ruth Nervig at the Brick House, P.O. Box 135, or donate online at www.firstgiving.com/skatepark.

You can also help by attending the first movie night at the Rendezvous featuring Dogtown and Z-Boys, on Sunday April 19th at 8:30 p.m. Donations will benefit the Sk8 Park.

MONTAGUE from pg 7

business to general business, Abbondanzio said.

The town administrator also said the finance committee and the selectboard had reached agreement on a proposal to privatize the handling of the town's curbside recycling program. If

approved by town meeting, the town will add recycling pickup to the contract of Allied Waste, the private company that is already picking up the town's curbside trash. Abbondanzio said improved compacting technology had allowed Allied to give the town a very good bid,

and the cost savings would be considerable over the town's current expenses for using the DPW trucks and crew to pick up curbside recycling. He said the town will try to sell its used recycling trucks, and will look to eliminate at least one job at the DPW, due to the switch to Allied. Recycling will still be picked up every week at the curb, and the town will still be able to retain the reimbursement, amounting to more than \$10,000 a year, from the Springfield Materials Recycling Facility, Abbondanzio said.



Montague Parks & Recreation Department presents The Annual **Peter Cottontail's Eggstravaganza**



Saturday, April 11 at 1:00 pm
Unity Park, First Street, Turners Falls

Children ages 4 to 12 are invited to take part in this great community tradition, featuring:

- Face painting (\$1 per face)
- Egg decorating
- Pictures with Peter Cottontail (\$1 per picture)
- Bake Sale
- And our Annual Egg Hunt where kids will have the challenge of finding well over 5,000 candy and toy-filled eggs placed throughout Unity Park.

Participants must bring their own basket/bag for the eggs.

THIS EVENT IS RAIN OR SHINE.

We thank the generosity of the event Co-Sponsors:

Hillside Plastics, The Montague Elks, Franklin County Rotary Club, Greenfield Savings Bank, Stream Equipment Co., Equi's Candy Store, and Boy Scout Troop #6.

Proceeds benefit MPRD programs and services.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

Bear Scare, Break Ins Investigated

Wednesday, 3/25

9:20 a.m. Report of a dog bite that occurred on Mountain Road reported at station.

10:35 a.m. Identity theft and larceny from Mountain Road resident reported, under investigation.

7:30 p.m. Car vs. deer accident on Main Road

Friday, 3/27

8:31 a.m. Report of suspicious vehicle at a Main Road business, investigated same.

9:33 a.m. Investigated

narcotic violation on French King Highway, two citations issued for violation of civil marijuana law.

Saturday, 3/28

4:53 p.m. Criminal complaint sought against

Charged with unlicensed operation of motor vehicle.

6:22 p.m. Criminal complaint sought against

Charged with unlicensed operation of motor vehicle.

7:33 p.m. Report of a bear on a porch, West Gill Road. Scared same off into woods.

10:15 p.m. Car vs. deer accident on Rt. 142

Monday, 3/30

11:20 a.m. Report of breaking and entering into a motor vehicle on South Cross Road, under investigation.

Tuesday, 3/31

11:25 a.m. Report of breaking and entering into a motor vehicle on Riverview Drive, under

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The Rogue Editor

Presidential Stimulus for Language Commentators

BY NEIL SERVEN

GREENFIELD – President Barack Obama is not the first person to use the term “shovel-ready.” It is actually more than ten years old, and perhaps older than that. The first recorded usage I could find appears in a March 18th, 1998 article by Marv Cermak in The (Albany) Times-Union. Concerning the proposed development of a metroplex in Schenectady County, Cermak quotes county legislator Robert Farley as saying, “Saratoga County has shovel-ready sites for developers, and that’s what Schenectady needs.” Other language commentators, including William Safire, claim they find evidence of usage dating back to 1995.

Nevertheless, when Obama deployed the term in an interview with Tom Brokaw on Meet the Press shortly after the 2008 election, it pricked up a lot of people’s ears, Safire among them. The term’s meaning is easily inferred from its context – describing projects that have cleared the hurdles of planning, zoning, and other checkpoints for approval and that only need funding to proceed. In uncertain economic times, it is easy to imagine that the imagery of groundbreaking might strike a chord with a populace ready and eager for new work.

The reaction to “shovel-ready” is a striking example of how much attention can be paid to a new-ish or unfamiliar word when it passes the lips of the most powerful leader in the free world. This can work in both good and bad ways. When Republican candidate Warren G. Harding pleaded for a “return to normalcy” in the campaign for the presidential election of 1920 (in which Harding defeated

Democrat James M. Cox), he was chided by civilians and journalists alike who thought Harding was making up a word, having only been familiar with the more common noun “normality.” Little did those critics know that “normalcy” had been used for around 70 years up till that point, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, and was only slightly younger in that regard than “normality.”

Less prominent, and perhaps even more interesting than “shovel-ready,” was Obama’s use of the verb “to mag” in an interview with ABC’s George Stephanopoulos in January. “You don’t want to subject your fellow church members, the rest of the congregation, to being magged every time you go to church,” Obama said. (Hat tip to Jan Freeman of the Boston Globe for the quote.)

The word apparently means “to run or scan through a metal detector,” though it is not found in any standard dictionary. The word appears to reference the machine’s use of a magnetic field

to detect the presence of metal objects. It is somewhat analogous to another up-and-coming verb, “to wand,” which essentially means the same thing as “to mag,” only by evoking the image of the magnetic wands that security agents pass over a person’s body (as they do at airports).

If you are the kind of person who likes to read dictionaries for fun (and you’re my kind of person if you do), you may be excited to know that the Dictionary of American Regional English, more casually known as the DARE, is nearing completion.

The four-volume work, which records and defines dialectal phrases and other quirks of English limited to particular areas of the United States, was begun in 1965 by English professor Frederic Cassidy, assisted by researchers from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Cassidy and his staff tape-recorded interviews with ordinary folks in over 1,000 communities across the United States, noting any unusual words and phrases that surfaced. Aside from definitions and

variants, the DARE also includes maps for some entries showing in which areas of the U.S. a word’s usage is most predominant. The volume notes, for example, that what you and I call “hopscootch” (the schoolyard game) is sometimes called “potsy” by people in Manhattan and “sky blue” by residents of Chicago, and lists the myriad names used around the country for a submarine sandwich.

The current editor of the project, Joan Houston Hall, took over the project upon Cassidy’s death in 2000. Earlier this month, the Associated Press reported that the last volume, covering S through Z, is expected to be published next year, thanks to a new federal grant. More information about this grand achievement in lexicography can be found at <http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/dare/dare.html>

Neil Serven is an Associate Editor for Merriam-Webster. He lives in Greenfield.

MCTV Channel 17 Afternoon/Evening Schedule 4/3 - 4/9

visit www.montaguema.net for complete schedule

Friday, April 3

- 1:00 p.m. Why or Why Not Nuclear Power?
- 4:00 p.m. White House Chronicle 1011-1012
- 5:00 p.m. Wisdom Way Solar Village
- 6:00 p.m. Both Sides of the Bridge
- 7:00 p.m. GMRSD Budget Meeting 3/31/09
- 11:00 p.m. White House Chronicles#1009-10010

Saturday, April 4

- 1:00 p.m. Block Party Parade 08
- 1:05 p.m. Block Party 08
- 3:00 p.m. Both Sides of the Bridge
- 4:00 p.m. Cal Ripken Baseball
- 5:30 p.m. Child and Family: Children’s Mental Health
- 6:00 p.m. Coffee House Joe Graveline
- 7:00 p.m. Transportation
- 8:00 p.m. Allagash 2007
- 8:30 p.m. Over The Falls: Tree Steward Project
- 9:00 p.m. Physician Focus April 2009
- 10:00 p.m. Poetry Music Jam for Montague Reporter from the Vou
- 11:00 p.m. Both Sides of the Bridge

Sunday, April 5

- 12:30 p.m. Turners Falls vs New

Leadership

- 2:30 p.m. Three Rites of Spring in One Magical Evening
- 3:30 p.m. This is Montague Dec 06
- 4:00 p.m. They Are Still There
- 5:00 p.m. The Western Mass Dem: Chris Forgey
- 6:00 p.m. Allagash 2007
- 6:30 p.m. An Inside Look into Iran
- 8:30 p.m. Back In The Day Night Variety Show
- 10:30 p.m. Coffee House, Jeff Martell

Monday, April 6

- 2:30 p.m. Falls Table: Michaelangelo Salmon with Moroccan Tomato Sauce
- 3:30 p.m. Falls Table: Michaelangelo Salmon with Moroccan Tomato Sauce
- 4:30 p.m. Exploring New Worlds in New England
- 5:00 p.m. Gentling The Bull#2
- 5:30 p.m. Honky Thumbelina
- 6:30 p.m. Over The Falls: Tree Steward Project
- 7:00 p.m. Select Board (Live)
- 9:30 p.m. Girls Softball ‘08

Tuesday, April 7

- 1:00 p.m. Over The Falls: Tree Steward Project
- 1:30 p.m. Allagash 2007

- 2:00 p.m. An Inside Look into Iran
- 4:00 p.m. GMRSD Final Interviews for Superintendent (Live)
- 10:30 p.m. Both Sides of the Bridge Wednesday, April 8
- 2:00 p.m. Transportation
- 3:00 p.m. Art Fest 2007
- 4:30 p.m. Preachin’ the Blues
- 5:30 p.m. The Rise and Fall of Lake Hitchcock
- 6:30 p.m. They Are Still There
- 7:30 p.m. Turners Falls vs New Leadership
- 9:30 p.m. TWB Ergonomics
- 10:30 p.m. 2009 Worlds Largest Concert
- 12:00 a.m. Encore Body Art #11
- 12:28 a.m. Encore Body Art #10
- Thursday, April 9**
- 1:00 p.m. Seneca Falls
- 1:30 p.m. Surviving the Vernon Reactor
- 2:30 p.m. Tapping Maple Ridge
- 3:30 p.m. the epics at the vous
- 4:30 p.m. The Spirit of Lake Pleasant
- 6:30 p.m. The Western MASS Democrat
- 7:00 p.m. Select Board 4/6/09
- 9:00 p.m. White House Chronicles#1009-10010
- 10:00 p.m. Allagash 2007
- 10:30 p.m. Both Sides of the Bridge

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JESSICA HARMON ILLUSTRATION

THE HEALTHY GEEZER:

The Pain of Growing Old

a bike, skin her knee and climb back in the saddle without a whimper. The other little girl will cry inconsolably over the smallest splinter.

The ability to withstand pain depends upon emotion, too. Athletes have played with broken bones because they were so pumped up by the action around them that they didn't know they'd been injured. Later, in the locker room, the pain kicked in.

Pain may be acute or chronic. Acute pain comes on suddenly and subsides after a short time. Chronic pain persists. Many seniors suffer from chronic pain, which has a variety of causes.

Pain affects as much as 65 percent of independent older adults and up to 80 percent of seniors in long-term care facilities. The following are some of the causes:

About 80 percent of older adults suffer from osteoarthritis,

inflammation of the joints. You get osteoarthritis when cartilage – the cushioning tissue within the joints – wears down. This produces stiffness and pain. You can get osteoarthritis in any joint, but it usually strikes those that support weight.

People with diabetes, a condition that affects almost 20 percent of Americans over the age of 60, often have circulatory problems that produce pain.

Gallstones, appendicitis, bowel obstruction, peptic ulcer disease, abdominal aortic aneurysm and gastroenteritis generate abdominal pain.

Spinal problems such as herniated disks, spinal narrowing and arthritis are the causes of back and neck pain, which is very common in older adults.

The chances of getting cancer increase as you age. Pain is a common symptom of all types of cancer.

Fibromyalgia is a syndrome characterized by chronic pain in the muscles and soft tissues surrounding joints. Patients over 60 frequently cite fatigue, swelling, headaches, anxiety and depression as their most severe fibromyalgia symptoms.

Headache is a common difficulty for seniors. Headaches unrelated to underlying diseases are classified in three different types: cluster, tension, and migraine. Tension headaches are, by far, the most common type, affecting up to 90 percent of women and 70 percent of men.

Researchers believe more than 20 million people suffer from peripheral neuropathy. Neuropathic pain usually stems from nerve damage, which can be caused by diabetes and disorders of the kidney, liver and thyroid.

Pain in the face, mouth and teeth can be brought on by periodontal diseases, tooth loss, and

medication side effects.

Chronic pelvic pain affects up to about 10 percent of women and can be related to a number of different conditions, including infection, uterine fibroids, kidney stones, and pelvic inflammatory disease (PID).

Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) is an extremely painful condition that develops after an illness or injury.

When older people suffer from chronic pain, there are many complications. Pain can make them lose sleep, diminish their ability to function, lead them to be more dependent on others, dampen their appetite, isolate and depress them, and reduce physical activity, which can make them get out of shape and be more likely to suffer a fall.

If you have a question, please write to fred@healthygeez.com

BY FRED CICETTI

LEONIA, NJ – Q. Is pain a necessary part of aging?

It is very difficult to avoid physical pain as you get older. However, as many people age, they complain less about pain. This phenomenon may be caused by a decreased sensitivity to pain. However, some believe that seniors don't moan as much as juniors because they tend to be stoics.

People have a variety of inborn pain thresholds. I have two granddaughters who are so different in their ability to handle pain that it is almost comical. I've seen one of them tumble off

MONTAGUE ENERGY CORNER

Vunteer Neighborhood Coordinators Sought



KAREN WILKINSON ILLUSTRATION

BY CHRIS MASON

MONTAGUE CENTER – On Saturday March 21st, twenty-five Montague neighbors came together at the Montague Center Library to learn how they each could save up to \$2,000 on insulation and other home energy upgrades. The week before, eleven other neighbors did the same at the Maezumi Institute on Ripley Road. In addition, each participating neighbor was entered in a drawing to win a new high-efficiency gas forced hot air furnace that the Montague Energy Committee has been unable to give away!

Lennox Industries is donating the furnace, and Deerfield Valley Heating and Cooling will donate time and materials toward its installation. The Montague

Center energy efficiency workshop was co-sponsored by the Montague Center Congregational Church and the Massachusetts Municipal Association.

The Montague Energy Committee, which organized these events at which neighbors learned how to take advantage of the MassSAVE program and entered a drawing to win the new furnace, hopes to hold a series of these energy efficiency workshops across town. The workshops explain how Montague residents can fund 75% of the cost of home energy improvements for up to \$2,000 and receive 0% financing for up to \$15,000 from the MassSAVE program. At each workshop, neighbors sign up to receive a

free energy audit – the first step in the process – and learn how the Energy Committee will help them see the process through to a warmer and less costly home.

The Energy Committee is looking for volunteers to help bring this workshop to other neighborhoods in the five villages. Volunteers will be asked to help promote the workshop to their neighbors and identify a good location for the workshop. The committee's goal is to enlist a high percentage of households in each neighborhood in the MassSAVE program and to build a support network of neighbors to see each other through the installation of all cost-effective efficiency measures. If you are interested in bringing a workshop to your neighborhood, call Chris Mason at 367-9923.

Spring may be here, but now is the time to beat the winter rush so you can enjoy a more comfortable home and lower energy bills when the days once again turn cold. We hope to see you soon, at a workshop in your neighborhood!

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG

Rampant Dogs

Wednesday, 3/25
10:40 a.m. Found dog on Route 63. Transported to Montague police.

Thursday, 3/26
5:25 p.m. Officer at East Prospect Street address to speak with resident regarding loose dogs.

Friday, 3/27
12:45 p.m. Medical emergency on River Road. Assisted Baystate

Health ambulance.
5:45 p.m. Medical emergency at a Gunn Street address. Assisted Baystate Health ambulance.

11:30 p.m. Arrested [redacted] for stop sign violation and operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of liquor, third offense.
3:15 p.m. 911 misdial

from Pierson Road address. Checked same, all OK.

Sunday, 3/29
11:17 a.m. Citation issued to [redacted]

[redacted] for operating a motor vehicle after revocation of license and without insurance.

3:30 p.m. Report of tree down on wires on Paper Mill Road.

3:45 p.m. Report of a suspicious vehicle on Old State Road at about 4 a.m. on this morning.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



JACK COUGHLIN ILLUSTRATION

THURSDAY, APRIL 2nd
Jazz at DiPaolo's, Turners Falls: *John Kazinski*, solo guitar, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Kellianna*, 8 to 10 p.m.

Opening Reception at Gallery A3, 28 Amity Street 1D, Amherst for Gloria Kegeles & Helena Dooley from 5 to 8 p.m. Gloria Kegeles *Chrome Dreams*, automotive photographs and Helena Dooley's *Synesthesia: Music to Color*, painted images of sound. Conversations with Artists: **April 16th, 7:30 p.m.** Exhibition runs through May 2nd. More on Gallery A3 at www.gallerya3.com.

BEGINNING THURSDAY, APRIL 2nd
Hallmark Museum of Contemporary Photography, Turners Falls; In Gallery 52: *Blake Fitch - Expectations of Adolescence*, a ten-year photographic project documenting the emotional and physical growth and emotional maturation of two young girls. In Gallery 56: *Founder & Museum Collection's - Selections II*. Museum Curator, Paul R. Turnbull has selected a limited overview of some of the Museum's collection. And in Gallery 85: *Stan Sherer - Life Studies*. Three documentary projects. 'Albania' and 'Shopkeepers' are straightforward studies of people and places. 'Lantern Slides' is a more personal visual interpretation and construction by Mr. Sherer. All exhibits on display through June 14th.

FRIDAY, APRIL 3rd
American Music and American Poetry concert at Greenfield Community College, 7:30 p.m. in Sloan Theater. Margery Heins, conductor and Amy Roberts-Crawford, accompanist. Free.

The United Arc of Franklin & Hampshire Counties 10th Annual Spring Auction at the Montague Elks Lodge #2521, Turners Falls, 7 to 10 p.m. Silent and live auction with a broad variety of goods and services in a wide price range. www.unitedarc.org for listings, \$10.



An Eastern Ribbon snake in Petersham, photo by Dave Small. Learn more about the snakes of Massachusetts Wednesday, April 8th, 7 p.m. at the Millers River Environmental Center. Athol with a presentation by author and biologist Pete Mirick.

es in a wide price range. www.unitedarc.org for listings, \$10.

TNT Dance Group at St. Mary's Parish Center, Orange. Ballroom, rhythm & swing, 7 to 10 p.m. every Friday through May 15th, \$10 per couple, (978) 444-2237.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *The Instigators*, classic rock & roll! 9:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Mass Production*, 9:30 to 11:30 p.m.

The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Handsome Truants*, 9:30 p.m., \$3.

Between The Uprights at 2nd Street, Turners Falls: Top 40 and Hip Hop music spun by Mass Mobile DJs, 10 p.m.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, APRIL 3RD & 4TH

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Moon over Buffalo*, performed by The Country Players. Laugh until it hurts as the Country Players present Ken Ludwig's uproarious comedy. Share George's mid-life crisis, his wife's delusions of grandeur, kidnapping, mistaken identity, and attempted murder in scenic Buffalo, NY of the 1950s. The cast includes Nick DeRuiter as George, Chris Voytko as his wife Charlotte, Martha King-Devine as their daughter Rosalind, Dave Clooney, Dave Peck, and many more. 8 p.m. (413) 863-2281/ www.theshea.org.

Pothole Pictures, Shelburne Falls: *Young at Heart*. A stirring documentary on the Northampton chorus. Co-sponsored by the Shelburne Senior Center, 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, APRIL 4th
Breakfast with the Easter Bunny! A fundraiser for the Turners Falls High School graduating class' substance-free all night party. At the Elks Club, Turners Falls. Pancakes, sausage, bacon, eggs, orange juice and coffee. 8 to 11 a.m. Adults \$5/ \$3 children.

Great Falls Discovery Center: *Birds, Bees, and Other Pollinators*. What is happening in our gardens? Who visits the

flowers? 11 to 12 p.m.

68th Annual Sugar on Snow Supper, Montague Congregational Church, 4 to 5:30 p.m. \$9/\$4 children. Reservations: 774-7256.

The BIG Party, celebrating the 2nd annual *Go, Kids Art, Go!* exhibition. 10 to 5 p.m. at The Barnes Gallery, 13 Montague Rd. Leverett. Art, food, face painting, free workshops, music, theater and dance performances.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *A Ghost Quartet*, 9 to 11 p.m.

The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *The Clayton Sabine Band*, 9:30 p.m., \$3 cover.

Between The Upright at 2nd Street, Turners Falls: Easter ham raffle from 4 to 7 p.m. NCAA Final Four at 5:30 p.m. At 10 p.m. Top 40 and Hip Hop by DJ M.I.A., no cover.

SUNDAY, APRIL 5th
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Joe Laur* on guitar, 8 to 10 p.m.

The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Open Mic Comedy Night*, 8 p.m., no cover.

MONDAY, APRIL 6th
Sing-A-Long at Montague Center Library, 6:30 p.m. Children's Librarian, Linda Hickman, performs a variety of children's music & plays guitar & banjo. For children of any age and families. Info: Carnegie Library

Saturday, April 11th at 8 p.m., Wendell celebrates Spring with indie singer-songwriter John Sheldon and Blue Streak. A fine storyteller and a first-rate player, Sheldon has done a lot of things in his music career including a 60's stint with Van Morrison and writing credits for the James Taylor hit, "Bittersweet". For music that will pull your heartstrings and then make you laugh, bring a friend for an evening to remember.

863-3214 during the week or Montague Center Library 367-2852, Mondays.

At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: NCAA final game on the big screen, 9 p.m. free!

TUESDAY, APRIL 7th
At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Craft Night, 7 p.m. on. Careful mixing of knitting & drinking, bring a project to work on.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8th
Snakes of Massachusetts: Pete Mirick, a wildlife biologist with the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife and the co-author of *Massachusetts Snakes: A Guide* speaks at the Athol Bird & Nature Club meeting, 7 p.m. at Millers River Environmental Center, 100 Main St., Athol. The meeting is free and open to the public. Mirick's slides will help people identify the 14 snakes of Massachusetts: black racer, black rat snake, brown snake, copperhead, common garter snake, Eastern hognose snake, Eastern ribbon snake, milk snake, northern water snake, redbelly snake, ringneck snake, smooth green snake, timber rattlesnake, and worm snake. Info. about the ABNC is

available www.millersriver.net.

Deja Brew, Wendell: Knitting & Crafts Night, 7 to 10 p.m. Any craft/skill level.

THURSDAY, APRIL 9th
Jazz at DiPaolo's, Turners Falls: *Interplay Jazz Band*, John Michaels-guitar, Mark Dunlap-bass, Rick Tutunjian-sax, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Free Range*, rock out with Betsy, Mark and Bruce to 60's & 70's cover tunes. 8 to 10 p.m.

FRIDAY, APRIL 10th
Friends Coffeehouse: An Acapella Fest at the Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls. Join us for this community musical event at 7 p.m. Delicious refreshments. Suggested donation \$6-\$12; children free. Info (413) 863-3221.

Pat & Tex LaMountain at Bart's Cafe, Greenfield. Thirty years in the Valley and having more fun than ever. Folk, swing, acoustic rock, no cover, 7 to 9 p.m. Info: (413) 641-0030.

SATURDAY, APRIL 11th
Peter Cottontail's Eggstravaganza at Unity Park, Turners Falls: 1 p.m.

Wendell Full Moon Coffee House, Wendell Center: John Sheldon and Blue Streak, 7:30 p.m. open mic begins. \$6 to \$12. Partial proceeds to benefit the Wendell Senior Center.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15th
Super Fun Bowling Club, Noncompetitive bowling club open to all abilities and ages! Bad-Ass Bowling - Alright tough guys, let's see what you've got! Dress to kill or at least to beat someone up 7:30 p.m. French King Entertainment Center, Erving. www.superfunbowling.com.



THURSDAY, APRIL 16th

Performances for Young People Series at The Shea Theater, Turners Falls at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. Jim West and company perform a puppet extravaganza presenting a variety of the legendary fables of Aesop! From *The Goose that Laid a Golden Egg* on through to *Aesop's The Boy Who Cried Wolf* (and many others), this large-scale puppet production features more morals to the story, more classical music and more silliness than ever! Shea Theater (413) 863-2281 for reservations.

ONGOING
The Last Furrow, photograph by Frances and Mary Allen taken between 1901-1903. Part of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association collection on display in **Harvesting Yesterday, Cultivating Tomorrow** at the Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls.

HOT SPOT TEEN CENTER
MONDAYS - Drop-in, 3 to 6 p.m.
TUES & WEDS - Ongoing Music Project, 3 to 6 p.m.
THURS - Drop-in, 3 to 6 p.m. & Movie Night, 6 to 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

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Friday & Saturday
April 4th & 5th at 7:30 p.m.
YOUNG AT HEART
The Northampton chorus is comprised of folks in their 70's, 80's, and 90's who sing the songs of Hendrix and The Clash. You'll laugh and cry and tap your toes! Directed by Stephen Walker, 2008, PG, color, 110 min.
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2. **MONSTERS VS. ALIENS** PG in DTS sound DAILY 6:30 9:00 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:00 2:00 4:00
3. CLOSED FOR RENOVATIONS
4. CLOSED FOR RENOVATIONS
5. **KNOWING** PG in DTS sound DAILY 6:45 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15
5. **12 ROUNDS** DAILY 9:15 PG13 in DTS sound
6. **FAST AND FURIOUS** PG13 in DTS sound DAILY 7:00 9:30 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30
7. **HAUNTING IN CONNECTICUT** PG13 in DTS sound DAILY 7:00 9:30 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30

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Friday, 4/3, 9:30 to 11:30 p.m.
Reggae night with *Mass Production*

Saturday, 4/4, 9 to 11 p.m.
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Sunday, 4/5, 8 to 10 p.m.
Joe Laur on guitar

Wednesdays Knitting & Craft Night

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Local Nature Notes



Eastern Phoebe

BY JEN AUDLEY

EAST DEERFIELD – In April, look for:

- The full moon on April 9th, and the new moon on April 24th. Just before and after the new moon, notice how the moon is lit by “earthshine,” sunlight reflected off the Earth.

- The last patches of snow and ice, and the first wildflow-

ers! Spring ephemerals such as trout lilies and Dutchman’s breeches appear in the woods before the trees leaf out. Please don’t kill these fragile beauties by picking them!

- Tree swallows, which should be back by mid April. Look for them catching insects above the water of the Turners Falls canal. Barn swallows, which will be back by the end of the month. These are the ones that build mud nests inside barns and other structures. Look for them flying low over grassy fields. Eastern phoebes, which are probably here now and may already be nesting by May. These flycatchers say their name – “fee bee” – and pump, or “wag” their tails. For more information, photos, and audio recordings, visit www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide

nell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide

- Frogs, toads, and salamanders. Last weekend’s rain and future April showers should rouse amphibians from their semi-frozen winter state any day now. Listen and look for them on the next wet, warm night.

- Shooting stars! The annual Lyrid meteor shower happens this year from April 16th to 26th, as the planet we live on passes through the dust trail left when the comet Thatcher passed by. Look east, northeast between midnight and dawn.

- Dandelion greens. Now, before the flowers appear, is the time when dandelion greens are best to eat. You can buy these delicious, vitamin-packed greens in some grocery stores – or you can pick them yourself for free! Just be careful about where you pick – don’t put anything in your mouth that might have been nourished by dog



Dutchman's Breeches

poop, road salt, or lawn chemicals!

- The sunset, right now at about 7:15 p.m., at the end of the month at 7:50 p.m. Sunrise comes earlier each day – now around 6:30 a.m., by the end of the month at 5:45 a.m. Dawn and dusk last about thirty minutes each.

Learn more:

Saturday, April 11th, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Three-Mile Sunset Hike on the M-M Trail with Hors d'Oeuvres Potluck. Led by

Northfield Mountain’s hike leader Beth Bazler. Ages 6 and up. Pre-register by calling 800-859-2960.

Thursday, April 23rd, 7:00-9:00 p.m. Designing for Pollinating Bees in Your Yard: Getting Started. Join Tom Sullivan for this adventure in planning your yard and gardens. Tonight’s workshop, which begins a three-part workshop series on planning for pollinators, will focus on the ecology of plants, bees and soils. At the Great Falls Discovery Center in Turners Falls.

Saturday, April 25th, 9:00 am to 2:00 p.m. Park Service Day! Swing by anytime today to roll up your sleeves and help clean up the grounds of the Great Falls Discovery Center, or numerous other parks and open spaces in Turners Falls. Volunteers will have a choice of many tasks. Call 413-863-3221 for more information.

Rebirth of Cool at Sheffield



Harley Semm, of Millers Falls, showed her self portrait to her father on Thursday at the Sheffield Renaissance Art Show

BY DAVID DETMOLD

TURNERS FALLS – As parents walked up the cement path to the Sheffield School gymnasium on Thursday, March 26th, student docents came leaping from all directions to greet them and wave them on their way to the Sheffield Renaissance Art Show.

“Welcome to our art show!” they called gaily, as they tossed out fuchsia programs printed with a quote from Pablo Picasso on the front. Picasso missed the Italian Renaissance by a couple of centuries, but his quote was apt: “All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist as we grow up.” Well, it probably helps to live in the south of France.

But Turners Falls goes through a renaissance every decade or two, seems like, and if the budding crop of artists exhibiting at Sheffield on Thursday – all 280 of them – are any indication, there’s another one on the way!

GMRSD art teacher Nancy Meagher, who’s been teaching art to children for 30 years, organized the show, and said the chil-

dren’s work was actually inspired by the Harlem Renaissance, not the one in Italy. The Harlem Renaissance produced a flowering of black artistic, literary, and intellectual expression, re-examining the African American experience through the lens of urban life in New York during the Roaring 20s.

The work of artists like William Johnson and Romare Bearden, who developed a flat, collage style of portraiture, were echoed in the life-sized self-portraits of the students, encircling the walls of the gymnasium, and spilling out into the hall. Musicians like Dizzy Gillespie and Duke Ellington found all the colors of jazz, and the students were inspired by their music to work jazz influences into the art pieces in the show.

Hundreds of parents and their young Picassos swarmed the corridor, bleachers, and gym floor, sipping punch and peering at art, as music teacher Steve Damon serenaded them with “Take the A Train” on sax. A totally cool scene.

ABNC Wins Farnsworth Prize



(L - R) James MacDougall awarded the Farnsworth Prize to Athol Bird and Nature Club treasurer Robert Coyle and president David Small on Saturday

ATHOL – The Athol Bird & Nature Club, founded in 1963, was awarded the Farnsworth Prize for Excellence in Environmental Leadership on Saturday, March 28th, by the board of advisors of the Entrust Fund of Gloucester. The prize includes a grant of \$10,000 for the organization.

When choosing a recipient for the prize, Entrust’s James MacDougall said the advisors ask this question, “Who does the best for the environment?”

And this year the answer is the ABNC, for its “extraordinary achievements in environmental education,” according to the award citation.

“There aren’t many like you out there,” MacDougall said, “and it’s our job to find you.”

The citation continues: “The

Athol Bird & Nature Club has no peer within New England for its achievements in advancing the protection of the environment through education and collaboration. The dedication and hard work of its members to a common goal of understanding the nature of the Millers River and New England is the sweat equity that has led this club to such a high level of achievement.”

The ABNC is an active group of people sharing an appreciation of nature’s many forms. The club manages the Millers River Environmental Center and maintains a natural history collection there, holds meetings featuring members or outside speakers, organizes field trips all over southern New England, offers intensive workshops and

institutes on specific natural history topics, and organizes regional biological inventories, including biodiversity surveys, bird counts, and butterfly and dragonfly records.

On Saturday, April 4th, at 7:30 p.m., the club invites everyone to join them at the Alan Rich Environmental Park on Main Street in Athol for an expedition to Cass Meadow, in search of the elusive American woodcock, also called timberdoodles. Sunday, April 5th is the rain date for this event, call 978-544-3282 for more information.

On Wednesday, April 8th, at 7 p.m. MassWildlife biologist Pete Mirick will give a free slide show presentation at the Millers River Environmental Center, 100 Main Street, in Athol to help people identify the 14 species of snakes that live in Massachusetts, including the endangered black rat snake, with only one known population in Worcester County. For more on this event, and on the ABNC, go to www.millersrivernet.net.

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