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YEAR 7 - NO. 11

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

DECEMBER 11, 2008

Early Birds Have A Place to Go

For an Organic Cup of Joe

BY DAVID DETMOLD

RIVERSIDE - It's four a.m. and you're driving south from Northfield or Bernardston. The fog is so thick you can't see the pavement. Or is that the fog in your mind from too many early morning commutes with no place to stop for coffee?

Suddenly, as you shift into low and cruise slowly down the hill to Route 2, a giant cup of coffee looms in the mist, like a caffeine oasis on an early morning caravan. The welcoming sign of a coffee shop tugs you like a magnet; there's plenty of convenient parking; you can practically smell the aroma of Dark Roast wafting through the door.

No, you're not dreaming. Finally, there is a convenient place to pull over for fresh brewed coffee in Gill at four in the morning, and it has all the comforts of home. In fact, owner Jon Shaw has gone to great pains to keep the Great Falls Coffee Company looking very much like it did when it see **COFFEE** page 11



DETMOLD PHOTO

Manager Dawn Bodell of the Great Falls Coffee Company, intersection of Main Road and French King Highway, Gill

Gill Prepares for Override Vote

BY P.H. CROSBY

GILL - In their meeting on December 8th, the Gill selectboard reviewed options for a Proposition 2½ override, which voters will choose between at a special election election on January 6th. The board decided to give voters a choice of two override amounts, and stressed that cuts to town departments would be required should voters choose the lower amount.

Initially three options had been considered for a so-called 'pyramid' override. But the board decided not to include the lowest override amount on the warrant, for fear the cuts it would entail would be too severe.

The higher figure - an override of \$157,600.34 - would add \$1.00 to the tax rate, an increase of \$212.50 a year to the average household. If this amount were approved by the voters, it would basically fund departments at the level town meeting agreed to support in May, before the town discovered a \$154,000 accounting error.

The lower option will call for a \$35,679.33 override. This would constitute a 24 cent increase in the tax rate, or an annual increase of \$51 for the average household. Supporting an override in this amount would keep a 4.15% cost of living raise for town employees; would fund two (instead of three) full-time police officers, provide \$22,000 for part-time officers; and keep three police cruisers. However, it would reduce the fire department budget by \$5000, eliminate the animal control position, provide no funds to repair a faulty fire truck pump, reduce highway expenditures by \$43,200, and devote all the town's free cash toward reducing the tax rate.

A third option for an override, at the \$16,000 level, was rejected as requiring cuts in departmental budgets that would be too severe. [Voters have the option of voting against any override amount, triggering steeper cuts.]

The third option would have required, in addition to the cuts listed above, elimination of stipends for the selectboard, assessors, and board of health members, elimination of council on aging funding, and major cuts to the library, recreation, and historical commission.

State law prevents the ballot language from describing individual cuts, so Gill administrative assistant Tracy Rogers will need to seek guidance from the state on how to make the difference between the two ballot options as clear as possible.

Rogers said the town is banking on receiving at least \$9,684 in a supplemental 'Pothole' grant from the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to fully fund the Gill-Montague school budget this year.

Later, the selectboard began considerations of the fiscal year 2010 budget, calling on all departments — and the Gill Montague school committee — to provide them with two budget scenarios: one for a zero percent increase from '09, and one for a 10% decrease from '09.

Rogers explained that the Department of Revenue representative who spoke to town officials at a meeting on December 2nd at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments had predicted a 10% drop in state aid as a likelihood for the coming year, so town governments had better make their budget plans with that in mind.

An update from Doug Edson, chair of see **OVERRIDE** pg 12

GMRS D Reports 'Positive' Meetings with Greenfield

BY ELLEN BLANCHETTE

GILL - Meetings between the Greenfield and Gill-Montague school districts are continuing and have been "positive" and "productive," G-M school committee chair Mary Kociela told the committee Tuesday night, at the auditorium of the Gill Elementary School.

Kociela said the two school districts have been exploring how to work together to improve education for their students. Representatives of the two districts met most recently on Monday night, December 8th. Commenting on that meeting, interim G-M superintendent Ken Rocke said the districts are looking for opportunities for collaboration, "floating ideas". He emphasized these are very preliminary meetings.

Consideration has been given to sharing a human resources person, or a facilities manager between the districts. Rocke said the two districts are also looking at the pros and cons of a joint superintendent, but he warned the savings

from such a move would be small, and the workload, for a superintendent of two struggling districts, immense.

Rocke said the pace of the meetings with Greenfield are accelerating, sometimes featuring small groups of school officials, and other times with as many as 30 people in attendance.

The impetus for inter-district collaboration or some form of merger between Greenfield and Gill-Montague is the statewide fiscal crisis, which is compounding the financial difficulties both districts are experiencing. Rocke said meetings exploring collaboration between superintendents of all Franklin County school districts are ongoing.

Kociela said there is pressure for Greenfield and Gill-Montague to consider regionalization, but said the districts are moving deliberately. She added, contrary to what has been reported in some media outlets, these meetings had been set up before the Greenfield schools see **SCHOOL** pg 5



SHAWN WOOLSEY PHOTO

Pearl Harbor Recognition

National Guard Army Reserve Sgt. Joe Young, of Orange, who served two terms of duty in Iraq, spoke at the Pearl Harbor Day Memorial on the Gill side of the French King Bridge

There are three local veterans organizations I believe deserve the thanks of every veteran who resides in this area for the devotion they apply, day in day out, providing services to many of our local communities, and they are: the Marine Corps League, with Tim McCrory and his fellow members, the local Rolling Thunder Motorcycle Club, and Leo Parent, Jr. of the Central Franklin District Veterans Affairs Office.

Every year in addition to other veteran support activities, these three groups and individuals stand in the cold December weather and present a ceremony in honor of those who lost their lives on December 7th, Pearl Harbor Day.

For this, and for all that you do, I say, thank you.

- Art Gilmore
SMS USAF Retired
Millers Falls

PET OF THE WEEK

Say it Again



Sam

I'm Sam, and I'm a four-year-old male black domestic short hair cat in need of a good home. I'll come over and sit on your lap and just purr and purr. I've been told my deep purr is just sooo relaxing to listen to. I'd love to butt my head against your chin and cuddle with you.

Take me home and you will have the most affectionate companion you could imagine!

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

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ERVING LIBRARY NEWS

Teatime Book Talk

Join director Barbara Friedman on Wednesday, December 17th, 4:30 p.m., for tea and holiday cookies. There will be a short book talk describing some of the newest additions to the

library.

This is an opportunity to be the first to "check out" the new arrivals to our library collection at this Tea Time Booktalk for Adults.

MONTAGUE LIBRARY NEWS

Quilt Raffle Winners

BY LINDA HICKMAN - Two town residents won beautiful quilts from the Friends of the Montague Public Libraries at the Quilt Raffle on Wednesday, December 10th, at the Montague Center Library. Susan Mailer, of Montague Center, and Marcia Zutautas, of Turners Falls won the quilts made by library director Sue SanSoucie and Friends member Mary Melonis.

Stacey Langknecht, Chella Hubert, Alison Ryan and Phyllis Magoon won commemorative

Carnegie Library candles as door prizes.

The Friends of the Montague Public Libraries promote the libraries and sponsor library programs. Their current project is raising money so the very popular weekly Music and Movement program can continue. The Family Network has supported the program for eight years, but their funding was recently cut.

For more information contact the Carnegie Library: 863-3214.

Gill Town Committees Seeking Volunteers

GILL - Several Gill boards and committees currently have openings, including the agricultural commission, the planning board, the recreation committee, the zoning board of appeals, and the cable access committee.

Meetings are generally once a month and no experience is necessary to join.

For more information,

please contact the select-board's office at 413-863-9347 or email administrator@gillmass.org.

Interested residents are asked to submit an 'interest in appointment to a town committee' form, which is available at town hall or online at www.gillmass.org/committees.html.

Recover Project

5th Annual Winter Dance

Saturday, December 13th

8:30 p.m. - midnite

20 Sanderson Street Teen Center

\$5 donation suggested

12 and Under, Free

Light Refreshments Available

This is a Drug and Alcohol Free Event

Bake Sale Proceeds will Benefit Adopt-a-Family

For more info: 413-774-5489

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES -- Dec. 15th to 19th

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

For trips: Call the Senior Center 413-863-9357 or 863-4500.

Monday, 15th

10 a.m. Free bus trip to Hadley Mall and WalMart. Call the Senior Center for details.
10:50 a.m. Easy Aerobics

Tuesday, 16th

9 a.m. Walking Group.

10:30 a.m. Chair Yoga

Wednesday, 17th

10 a.m. Senior Aerobics

11 a.m. Holiday music and Christmas dinner at noon.

12:45 p.m. Bingo

Thursday, 18th

11:00 a.m. Caroling by Turners Falls High School students.

1:00 p.m. Pitch

Friday, 19th

10 a.m. Senior Aerobics

11 a.m. Easy Aerobics

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



Adab Harvey and Estella Nancy Larned pose above the dam in Turners Falls in this vintage photo, provided by Edwina Kreps

GREAT FALLS MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS OF THE WEEK

Grade 6:
Walter Botelho

Grade 7:
Nick Wells

Grade 8:
Christian Sawicki & Amanda Sicard

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Parking Ban in Effect

Gill's winter parking ban is now in effect. There will be no on-street parking from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. through April 15th.

LIVE IN MONTAGUE?

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www.MontagueMA.net
local gossip, news & business listings

Free Acupuncture Clinic for Veterans

TURNERS FALLS - Licensed acupuncturists Barbara Weinberg and Karen Adams will open an acupuncture drop-in clinic for veterans and their families at Equity Trust, 177 Avenue A in Turners Falls. The veterans clinic will be open Tuesday evenings beginning December 16th, from 6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m. Treatment is free, donations accepted.

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Buttoning Up Keeps Energy Costs Down



DETMOULD PHOTO
Anthony Sirum reacted happily to the news he was the first runner-up to win a fuel efficient furnace

Saturday's workshop generated quite a bit excitement in anticipation of the raffle of a new, fuel-efficient gas furnace, donated by Lennox Industries, to be installed by Paul Voiland and his Deerfield Valley Heating and Cooling crew. Energy committee member Sally Pick reached into the large cardboard furnace box where audience members had dropped their entry forms, and 'pick'ed the top three runners up. (The actual winner must be a Montague resident with a forced hot air furnace that is less efficient than the furnace being donated.) The first name drawn was Anthony Sirum, of Wonsey Road, who seemed very happy at the prospect of receiving an installed fuel-efficient furnace for free. Irene Kacpura and Kate Jones were the runners up.

BY DAVID DETMOLD

TURNERS FALLS - Failing to button up the basement and attic of your home this winter is a little like heading outside without socks or a hat, according to David Knowles, a home weatherization expert and energy auditor from Ashfield.

Speaking at last Saturday's home weatherization workshop at the Gill-Montague Senior Center, Knowles led about 40 people - many of them seniors - through a slide presentation outlining exactly what it takes to "button up" a home. The program was organized by the Montague Energy Committee and the Franklin County Home Care Corporation (FCHCC).

Knowles said heated air tends to rise and find ways to escape through unheated attics, by traveling through overlooked, un-insulated areas in a home such as the chimney well, or plumbing chases and vent pipes.

Weatherization requires a community approach, added Knowles, as he encouraged

attendees to share energy savings tips with others. "Help us work together as a community to get through this winter warmly and safely and economically, and in the process reduce our community's contribution to global warming," he said.

Paul Voiland, a member of the energy committee and owner of Deerfield Valley Heating and Cooling, added that in older homes, 10-15 percent of cold air infiltration occurs in the basement at the point where the sill meets the foundation - a condition he said was relatively easy to fix.

All of Saturday's speakers, including the Center for Ecological Technology's Tomasin Whittaker and FCHCC's Pam Kelly, stressed the best first step for people interested in reducing their energy bills is to call for a free home energy audit from the utility sponsored MassSAVE program: at 1-866-527-7283, or via the internet at www.masssave.com.

In addition to an initial walk-through and analysis of potential ways to save energy in the home, MassSAVE auditors can also provide information about licensed contractors in the area who can perform needed energy-saving retrofits beyond the homeowner's ability.

Auditors can also describe rebate programs and zero interest loans available to help pay for the bigger ticket items the audit may turn up. Advanced audits, at an often refundable cost of \$75, are also available for residents who have completed an initial audit

Montague City landlord James Mayrand described one tenant who requested a MassSAVE audit. After looking over the apartment, the auditor



Paul Voiland, owner of Deerfield Valley Heating and Cooling

told the tenant her landlord would be eligible for a utility rebate to replace her refrigerator.

"I thought it was a perfectly good refrigerator," Mayrand said. But now his tenant has a brand new, \$475 model that uses far less electricity, for which the utility paid \$400 of the ticket price.

Besides replacing major appliances with more energy efficient models, the workshop gave lots of tips on easy ways people can button up their homes, including:

- installing foam gaskets, available at any hardware store, behind the switch plates on electric outlets and light switches on exterior walls (only requires a screw driver);
- caulking around window and door trim;
- installing plastic on windows;
- replacing old dial thermostats with programmable thermostats.

Here are just a few of the tips available in FCHCC handouts, which are available by calling 773-5555.

A programmable thermostat can enable you to easily lower the heat while you are sleeping or at work, and can be programmed to bring the house up to a warmer temperature a half an hour before you normally rise from sleep or return home.

Simply replacing an incandescent light bulb with a new compact fluorescent will save up to 75 percent of the energy use and utility cost of turning on that light.

Placing appliances like television sets or microwave ovens on power strips - and turning off the strips when the appliances are not in use - can save surprising amounts of energy dollars by reducing your home's so-called "phantom loads," from electronics that are programmed to always draw power, even when not in use.

Franklin County Home Care also provides emergency financial relief for seniors having trouble paying their heating bills, along with a wealth of resources on local weatherization contractors, the HEAT loan program (providing 0% loans up to \$10,000 for up to seven years to ease the burden of installing energy saving appliances, or insulating walls and attic), and fuel assistance programs that enable participants to also qualify for home weatherization funding.

FRANKLIN COUNTY TECHNICAL SCHOOL SPONSORS VETERANS EDUCATION PROJECT



Elyse Cann, sponsoring FCTS history teacher, and Tyler Boudreau

Fifty Franklin County Technical School seniors sat in rapt attention as 12-year veteran Tyler Boudreau of Northampton related his experience as a former US Marine who served in Iraq. The talk was the culminating event in two senior classes studying the impact of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq on US soldiers.

Boudreau told FCTS students how he led his infantry unit through Camp Suicide, irregularly being hit with mortars with nowhere to safely hide, and along Route Jackson, where the mission was to ride back and forth, clearing the road of improvised explosive devices (IED's) to enable the safe delivery of supplies. Committed to military life and the Marines, Boudreau left the service when he realized he had "more concern for my

Marines than the mission. I knew I had to get out".

His story moved students to ask thoughtful questions and to request Boudreau's return to speak in more depth. Humorous anecdotes were sandwiched with graphic remembrances of the loss of a friend and fellow Marine.

Tyler Boudreau of Leeds speaks with the Veterans Education Project in schools and community groups across Western Mass., but he has received much national attention with the publication of his memoir and healing book, "Packing Inferno: The Unmaking of a Marine". Boudreau's return home was punctuated with the stress and turmoil of adapting to civilian life and he hopes to help other veterans heal while exposing civilians to a perspective on the battlefield and the soldier.

For more information about this and other events, activities, community involvement and awards, contact Paul Cohen (Principal of Franklin Co. Technical School) or Peter LaFrance at 413-863-9561, ext. 119.

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This year, Deerfield Education and Conservation Corp. contributed \$500 to Our Lady of Peace Parish. In recent years, we have funded a handicapped access facility for a local sportsmen's club, put on CPR and First Aid Classes, and donated Turkeys to the Survival Center at Thanksgiving. These are a few examples of our charitable giving.

For more information, call Alan Lambert at 413-834-1692, or visit our website at www.decc.org.

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Response to Commissioner Chester

BY JEFF SINGLETON

MONTAGUE - I would like to briefly respond to Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Commission Chester's letter of December 3rd, explaining his rationale for the FY09 budget for the Gill-Montague Regional School District. The letter is detailed and thoughtful. It shows a willingness to engage our school district and towns in a constructive dialogue. In that spirit I would like to make two points.

First, the letter notes the dangers of the use of reserves and one-time revenues to support school budgets. Yet the Commissioner seems to feel this practice is warranted in this case because, "We are in the depths of the worst economic recession in half a century."

The problem is: the spiraling use of reserves in the district and its member towns over the past two years has not been a response to economic conditions. Quite the contrary, it is a response to unsustainable budget increases and inadequate state aid to the school district at a time when state Chapter 70 aid to most localities has increased substantially. Indeed, the increasing use of reserves for two years prior to potential state aid cuts creates a particularly dangerous situation for Gill-Montague. We are entering the state budget crisis already deep in the hole!

Secondly, the Commissioner once again expressed legitimate

concerns about the small size and declining enrollments of the school district. Yet the assumption seems to be that some form of regional consolidation will make our schools 'viable' financially. I think most finance committee members in the area are willing to look at new models of regional organization with an open mind. I certainly am.

Unfortunately, state officials do not seem to have an open mind to the possibility that regional reorganization may not have significant impacts on chronic budget gaps. So far all we have is speculation, impressionistic evidence, and, with all due respect, vague statements about 'viability'. We have seen no specific models or proposals with savings, educational benefits and potential negative impacts evaluated. It is not clear when any such proposals will be forthcoming. Yet state officials are assuming that regionalization is necessary, at times appearing to pressure us to embrace something that does not yet exist.

Finally, it is hard not to feel that the focus on regional organization, although clearly necessary, is also a way of avoiding the deeper causes of the local education funding crisis. These include inadequate state Chapter 70 aid, the budgetary impacts of state programs (Special Education, School Choice and Charter Schools, MCAS implementation, etc.), and a school aid formula that is just plain wrong about the budgetary impacts of declining enrollment. The dialogue between our school district and the state needs to focus on these issues as well.

Again, I applaud the Commissioner's informative and detailed letter and hope this is the beginning of a constructive, collaborative effort to address the chronic Gill-Montague school funding crisis.

Jeff Singleton is a member of the Montague finance committee. The opinions expressed here are his own, and don't necessarily reflect those of any other member of the finance committee.

BORDEAUX WHINE

by denis bordeaux



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Open Letter to Sal DiMasi, Speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives

Dear Sir:

I am an 87-year-old lifetime resident of Western Massachusetts, living in the town of Montague, village of Millers Falls. I am also a property owner, retired Massachusetts teacher, and retired military person. I have donated a considerable time in my life to serving in town government, without pay.

Now that you have read my background, I would like to present to you my feelings as to what a cut in local aid will do to my community. In this morning's paper, I read where you predict significant municipal budget cuts. My question to you, as a taxpayer, is where can this town cut? A number of years ago our highway department had over 30 individuals working to maintain our roads, parks and public buildings. Now there are 13 employees doing the same job. They are responsible for five villages. Our town hall employees are overworked

and understaffed.

The regional school committee has presented a budget this town cannot afford, and now the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is calling the shots as to just how much we taxpayers will pay to support the schools.

My argument to you is, with all of the mandatory hurdles the government has placed in the way of our taxpayers achieving a balanced budget, why not eliminate some, instead of just pulling back state aid? Why not get rid of Charter Schools and School Choice, for starters? These programs are creating major obstacles in loss of funding to our schools, and increasing the burden on us, the taxpayers, who support our schools.

- Art Gilmore
Millers Falls

Winter School Program Opportunities at Northfield Mountain

BY KIM NOYES - Northfield Mountain Recreation and Environmental Center is offering a variety of environmental education opportunities this winter. Programs for schools and organized groups explore winter ecology through hands-on activities. Our experienced educators provide students the opportunity to explore subjects and habitats through focused, inquiry-based programs in a fun, outdoor setting. All programs support the Massachusetts Science Frameworks.

"Winter World", for Pre-school to 1st Grade, uses games, puppets, songs and a variety of activities to explore the world of winter.

Through sensory exploration, students

will develop an awareness of winter and the challenges that this season poses to animal survival. A special focus is on shelter and the challenge of staying warm. "Pine Cones and Pizza" is for Grades 2 and 3. Games such as Eat and Run, Pizza Bingo and Hurry Up and Hunt introduce students to the difficulty of finding food during the cold season.

For students 3rd Grade and older, "Twigs and Tracks" focuses on the adaptations that enable plants and animals to meet the challenge of winter survival. As twig and track detectives, students search for signs of wildlife on snowshoes (snow permitting). "The Hunter and the Hunted", for 4th Grade and above, uses games, role playing and outdoor explo-

ration to study the ecological relationship between predator and prey. Students learn about animal adaptations through the study of skulls. Outdoors, using detective skills, students learn to read the signs these animals leave behind in the winter woods. Conditions permitting, snowshoes are used in this program as well.

These exciting educational opportunities are available Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays in January and February at Northfield Mountain Recreation and Environmental Center. Fees range from \$6.00 to \$7.00 per student. For more information or to schedule a program for your class please call Kim Noyes at Northfield Mountain at (413) 659-4462. For more info: www.firstlightpower.com/northfield/schoolprograms.asp.

American Dead in Iraq and Afghanistan as of 12/10/08



(Casualty sign temporarily located next to Wagon Wheel Restaurant on Rte. 2 in Gill)

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Holiday Tips from the Franklin County Police Chiefs

BY CHIEF DAVID HASTINGS GILL - The Franklin County chiefs of Police Association would like to wish the people of Franklin County a Happy Holiday season and offer some advice to help assure that you do.

Tips for the Home:

- Record your valuables. List the serial numbers of your appliances, photo equipment, VCR, DVD players, TV's, etc. Record descriptions of jewelry and expensive items.
- Have a locksmith make a security check of your home or apartment giving some assurances against break-ins. They can advise you on the best lock

for doors and windows. They can also tell you the weak spots of your home.

- Keep your valuables in a safe place. The master bedroom is usually the first place a thief heads for to look for our valuables and cash.
- Try not to leave gifts under the Christmas tree for long periods of time or visible from the doors and windows.
- Advise a neighbor when your home will be vacant for a period of time Ask them to keep an eye out for suspicious activity, pick up your mail or accept deliveries. Have them report anything suspicious to the police immediately. Be good neighbors and take care of each other.

- Beware of door to door canvassers. Be sure they have a permit issued by your town to solicit. If not, close the door and notify the police. If they are legitimate or are a utility person, they will have a permit or identification.
- When leaving your home empty, notify your neighbor, leave a light on (lights with timers are best), leave a radio on that could be heard from the outside of your home. Make the home appear lived in. Close garage doors and be sure windows are secure. Make sure you still have the driveway plowed and sidewalks shoveled. Do not allow mail or newspapers to build up in the box.

tion, have your keys in your hand.

- Keep cash and credit cards separate. Avoid displaying either as much as possible. Thieves may be watching for an opportunity to steal your wallet or handbag. Shoulder bags are considered safer and give you more control.
- Remember not to leave your handbag in a carriage or on a counter. A thief will prey on your carelessness.
- Put your purchases in a locked trunk of your vehicle or cover them from open view.

have been drinking. friends don't let friends drive drunk! An accident or arrest will most certainly spoil an otherwise great time. Arrange for a designated driver if you plan on drinking some Holiday Cheer.

Have a Happy and Safe Holiday Season!

— from the Franklin County Police Chiefs Association, David Hastings, President, and all of the members.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG Suspicious Activity Reports

Tuesday, 12/2
9:02 p.m. Suspicious activity at a Main Road residence. Area checked, unable to locate.
Thursday, 12/4
6:10 p.m. Report of breaking and entering in progress on Dole Road. Checked location, found to be otherwise.
10:50 p.m. Assisted with medical emergency on Main Road.
Friday, 12/5
4:30 p.m. Assisted Bernardston police with investigation on Boyle Road.
5:01 p.m. Alarm at a West Gill Road residence, all o.k.

Saturday, 12/6
12:15 p.m. Assisted with medical emergency on Center Road.
Sunday, 12/7
11:32 p.m. Suspicious activity at a French King Highway residence. Checked same, unable to locate activity.
Monday, 12/8
5:35 a.m. Assisted with medical emergency on Main Road.
9:23 p.m. Suspicious person on Main Road and North Cross Road.
11:34 p.m. Past car vs. deer accident on French King Highway.

Advice for Shopping:

- Try to park in well lit areas and as close as possible to the entrance. If alone, try to walk to and from your car with other people. Have your vehicle locked, but before leaving the doorway of your shopping loca-

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG Suspicious Investigations

Saturday, 12/6
4:46 a.m. Officer initiated investigation of open door/window on Eleventh Street.
5:18 p.m. Report of a suspicious person in the area of Third Street. Investigated.
9:02 p.m. Report of liquor law violations in the Fourth Street area. Area search negative.
Sunday, 12/7
12:06 a.m. Report of suspicious automobile in the area of Main Street and Court Square. Investigated.
12:24 a.m. Report of suspicious automobile in the area of Norman Circle. Investigated.
1:03 a.m. Officer observed suspicious automobile at the pier, Unity Street. Gathering dispersed.
1:13 a.m. Officer observed suspicious person in the area of Avenue A shopping plaza Salvation Army Thrift Store. Gathering dispersed.
1:16 p.m. Report of unwanted person at an H Street address. Advised of option.
11:51 p.m. Report of domestic disturbance at a J Street address. Peace restored.
Monday, 12/8

1:26 p.m. Report of neighbor disturbance at a Fourth Street address. Investigated.
8:00 a.m. Officer wanted at a Mountain Road address. Advised legal help.
4:57 p.m. Following a traffic stop, arrested [redacted]. Charged with operation of a motor vehicle with a suspended license, possession of a class D drug and speeding.
8:11 p.m. Report of unwanted person at a Montague Street address. Peace restored.
Tuesday, 12/9
12:52 a.m. Report of suspicious automobile in the Turners Falls Road area. Investigated.
8:00 a.m. Officer wanted at Carol's Market. Services rendered.
10:54 a.m. Burglar alarm sounding at Millers Falls Rod and Gun Club, Turners Falls Road. Investigated.
4:34 p.m. Report of accident with property damage at intersection of Routes 63 and 47.
4:48 p.m. Report of suspicious incident in the area of Jarvis Pools, Unity Street. Investigated.

SCHOOL from pg 1

received a letter this fall from the commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education requiring them to meet with G-M to discuss collaboration before 'Pothole' money would be made available to that district.

Committee member Michael Langknecht said Gill-Montague is still looking for the "big old benefit" of collaboration, but so far has not found it.

The school committee approved an '09 operating budget of \$16,625,875, to meet the figure set for the district by DESE commissioner Mitchell Chester after the state assumed oversight of Gill-Montague on December 1st. This number required a \$40,000 reduction from the school committee's most recent budget, an amount Rocke recommended be deducted from the school choice line item.

Rocke said it is difficult to estimate school choice impacts on the budget until the state releases the actual figures for school choice in the next few weeks, but his best guess was that \$40,000 could be safely deducted from this line item.

The committee also approved increasing the amount of excess and deficiency funds to be applied to reducing town assessments to \$326,510.

see SCHOOL pg 11

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG Erratic Washing Machine

Monday, 12/10/08
12:10 p.m. Report of past accident at Poplar Mountain Road and Route 63.
2:45 p.m. Citation issued to [redacted] Erving for operating a motor vehicle after suspension of license and failure to inspect motor vehicle.
Tuesday, 12/12
3:50 pm. Report of erratic operation on Route 2 in Erving Center. Unable to locate.
Wednesday, 12/13
10:38 a.m. Call to State Road residence for overflowing washing machine. Water to washer shut off.
6:00 p.m. Officer at Zilinski Field observed evidence of vandalism.
Thursday, 12/14

7:44 a.m. Report of physical altercation on Church and North Street the previous night between a town resident and a passing motorist who fled northbound on North Street.
Friday, 12/15
3:15 p.m. Alarm sounding at Box Car Restaurant. Building secure.
Saturday, 12/16
10:20 a.m. Report of loose dog near Mountain Road. Picked up dog from reporting party and brought to kennel. Owner called and dog returned.
Sunday, 12/17
2:30 p.m. Assisted Northfield police with a one car motor vehicle accident on Gulf Road.
3:15 p.m. Report of gun fire on Old State Road. Unable to locate source.


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TFHS Students Help to WARM THE CHILDREN

BY LINDSEY WILSON GILL - MONTAGUE - Heather Batchelor's government classes are at it again. Every year Batchelor challenges her U.S. Government classes to make an impact on their community, and society as a whole.

This year, Batchelor's U.S. Government class decided to donate their time on several different community projects, including the annual Warm the Children campaign. To begin with, Batchelor's class decided to learn how to knit. The students secured yarn donations from local businesses and began knitting

hats and scarves to donate to Warm the Children.



As they focused their efforts on this project, Batchelor's students were joined by students from other classes and by community members. Batchelor's class of 18 students began knitting a little over a month ago, and have already produced 52 hats and 52 scarves.

Warm the Children is a non-profit organization that collects and distributes new, warm clothing for area families who otherwise would have done without. The items that can be donated include socks, boots, jackets, scarves, hats, and snowpants.

Jane Kane, a representative of Warm the Children, came to speak with the class a month ago to explain the basis of the foundation. "When we began this," Kane said, "I never imagined that we would collect \$100,000 in donations and still not have enough for local families."

The students, after studying the recent election and understanding the nation's economic troubles,

knew this winter would be a tough one for many families and were adamant about participating in the project.

Tranea Gallagher said, "This is an easy way to get involved in the community and to do something for the youth in the area."

Kelsey Kane, a student who has participated in the Warm the Children program for several years, suggested the project to Batchelor's class. "It is just so rewarding to see the appreciation on a single mother's face when her five children all get brand new winter coats. To lead these kids around the 'store' set up by volunteers and see their faces light up when they get to pick what scarf they want is so gratifying."

Recently, a local textile company donated \$50 dollars worth of fleece so students for whom knitting is not coming easy, or those who have already knitted several pieces, can now move on to hats. The hats take no more than half an hour to make, and the students have already produced five fleece hats within the last four days of school.

NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Municipal Projects Move Forward

BY DAVID DETMOLD - The Erving selectboard has allocated funds to move two major municipal projects forward. On December 1st, the board approved spending \$2,700 for a feasibility study on the potential of geothermal heating and cooling for the planned senior center, which will be located near the Erving Elementary School, off Route 63. For the same project, they approved \$2,500 to study the possibility of hooking the new center up to a gravity feed sewer line, rather than the proposed pump station and forced feed system.

Both these sums will go to pay Catlin Architecture, of Quincy, and the subcontractors the architectural firm has hired to conduct these studies and provide cost benefit analyses of the proposals.

Additionally, the selectboard approved spending \$22,771 to pay for architect John Catlin's work preparing design-ready plans for the new senior center, along with \$4,350 approved on December 8th to pay for test boring and \$1,500 to New England Environmental for a wetlands delineation at the site.

As for the \$6.4 million renovation project at the Erving wastewater treatment plant, which got under way in September, on December 8th the selectboard authorized payment of the first check for work completed to contractor R.H. White Construction, of Auburn, for \$258,762.

In other news, the board locked in the price of unleaded gasoline for town vehicles through June 30th of next year at \$1.82 a gallon.

"That sounded good three weeks ago," administrative assistant Tom Sharp said.

The board accepted the resignation of part time police officer David Clark, who has served the department in that capacity for over 18 years. The board sent a letter to Clark thanking him for his years of service.

The board issued a business license to Mark Longo, 72 Old State Road for his 'capitalized' construction company, DESAJANICO Builders.

The board reviewed a grant application prepared by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments for the town to pursue a three-part grant for funding under Massachusetts Chapter 43-D, for expedited permitting for redevelopment of properties in excess of 50,000 square feet. The grant application, which will be reviewed by the planning board at their next meeting, Wednesday, December 17th, at 7:00 p.m. at town hall, would seek: \$7,500 in state funds to hire a lawyer to update the town's permitting and zoning regulations to comply with the requirements of 43-D; \$42,500 to do a study on the sewer infrastructure at the former IP mill in Erving, which would need to be modified for smaller users to make that structure easily redevelopable; and \$10,000 to study the feasibility of lowering the road beneath the Arch Street railroad overpass in Erving Center, to permit truck access to the site of the former Usher Mill.

The Orange Fire Rescue EMS ambulance service notified the town by letter of an impending change in their method of assessing bills for coverage to surrounding communities. Erving's bill will more than double for ambulance service for the coming year, from \$3,000 to \$7,600.

Sharp wondered whether the Orange department's decision to hire four new fulltime staff had anything to do with the change in rates.

The board signed \$156,574 Chapter 90 reimbursement request to the state for reconstruction work on Swamp Road.

The selectboard will meet again on December 15th, before taking the 22nd and the 29th off for the holidays.

Wendell Holiday Fair
December 13th & 14th
 Sat. 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
 Sun. 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.
 Wendell Town Hall
 Free Admission & Parking
Come Holiday Shop with Local Crafters, Artists & Farmers!
Gourmet Lunch by Diemand Farm
 Daily 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
 All profits will be donated to the Swift River Music Department to benefit Students of New Salem & Wendell

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December 18th
5 - 7 p.m.
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BY DAVID DETMOLD - More than a dozen Montague bar owners and managers came to an informational meeting with the Montague selectboard on Monday, November 17th to discuss new regulations about closing hours, which the board had imposed on November 3rd. The owners and managers had criticisms of a number of the new regulations, which stipulated that 'last call' should be fifteen minutes before closing, closing for most drinking establishments should be at 1:00 a.m. (unless they close earlier) except on New Year's Eve, when closing hour can be extended to 2:00 a.m., all patrons need to be out of the bar fifteen minutes later, and employees need to complete their clean-up tasks and be out of the bar by one hour past closing time.

Bar owners particularly objected to this last requirement. Even though the selectboard made it clear that a courtesy phone call to the police department would be all that was needed in the event a bar employee needed to stay later, the owners felt that the requirement was unreasonable.

"I own my business, and if I can't sleep and want to go down there at three in the morning and do some paper work, I have every right to. I don't have to call anybody," said Bill Holbrook, of Jake's Tavern.

Lew Collins of Between the Uprights on 2nd Street said his workers routinely carried 36 cases of beer up from the cellar, cashed out, and performed numerous other closing tasks that would be likely to keep them at work at least an hour and a half past closing time.

He asked the selectboard to imagine they had just had 100 friends over for a cocktail party, and then had less than one hour after the last guest left to make their home look the same as it did before the first guest arrived.

Chris Janke, co-owner of the Rendezvous, said efforts were being made to make Montague a destination for people from other communities to travel to. He pointed out that Northampton, Springfield and North Adams allowed 2:00 a.m. closing hours, and so Montague establishments were already operating at a competitive disadvantage with clientele trying to decide where to go for an evening out. He objected to the 12:45 last call stipulation for this reason, and because he thought it gave the message to clientele to order another drink and drink it fast.

The board eventually agreed to stipulate merely that alcohol sales should end by 1:00 a.m., and that all patrons should be out of the bars by 1:30 a.m. No stipulation was made for an hour by which employees should leave the premises.

Parks and Rec Programs

Jon Dobosz, director of the Montague parks and recreation, gave the selectboard an update on his department's winter

program schedule, which includes popular programs like Open Swim at the Turners Falls High School and new entries like Tae Kwon Do for kids and parents. The parks and recreation department will team up with the Knights of Columbus for the annual basketball free throw contest at the Sheffield School gym, on Saturday, January 17th, at 1 p.m. For a complete program listing, pick up a copy of the parks and recreation department's brochure at any of the branch libraries, town hall, or the field house in Unity Park, or go to their website at www.montague.net and click on the parks and recreation department. For more information, call: 863-3216.

Dobosz said volunteer parent coaches were still needed for a number of activities.

He also announced that the parks and recreation department was resuming the popular Sawmill River 10-kilometer run on New Year's Day, 10 a.m., in Montague Center, which will now become a fundraiser for the department. Selectboard chair Allen Ross, who formerly organized the Sawmill River Run, congratulated Dobosz for picking up the reins on this annual event.

Ruth Nervig, the Americorps worker at the Brick House who has been coordinating the Turners Falls skate park during the course of the last year, asked whether there was some part of Unity Park where the popular skate park could be relocated, since the lease is up on the current lot. She said a recent survey at the Turners Falls High School elicited responses from 61 students who said they have been using the skate park regularly.

Dobosz said that his department was planning a redesign of Unity Park, with more parking areas, and perhaps the addition of volleyball courts. "There's really no space for the skate park," Dobosz told her.

Dobosz said the parks and recreation department may turn a 1200 square foot plot of land near the Masonic Lodge in Montague City into a play area, and move the play structure from the former Montague Center School to that location.

Fashion Show

Chris Janke, owner of Suzee's 3rd Street Laundry, asked for and received permission to hold the fourth annual leftover laundry fashion show, with a one day liquor license, on Saturday, December 6th, as part of the upcoming Arts and Icicles open studio walking tour of downtown Turners. Janke said the garments crafted for the show would be auctioned off on Sunday, December 7th at 3 p.m. at the Rendezvous, with a question and answer session with the designers. The proceeds from the auction will go toward the Brick House.

Pam Kostanski, president of the Montague Business Association, asked for and

received permission to hold a holiday tree lighting at Peskeomskut Park on Saturday, December 13th, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. She said the event will include lighted luminaries on the walkways, cookies and hot chocolate, and performers.

The board granted permission for the Montague Center Fire Department Relief Association to put up the crèche scene on the common in Montague Center from December 7th to the 28th, as they do every year.

The board approved a request from the capital improvements committee to spend \$20,000 from the program income fund to pay for a feasibility study of the possible reuse of the Montague Center School building. This follows town meeting action of earlier this year allocating \$30,000 for heating and maintenance of the building through the winter.

The board held a dog hearing in a matter of a complaint against a pitbull owned by Maria Lonergan, of 63 5th Street. Lonergan's dog is alleged to have bitten a dog owned by Laura Callahan, a neighbor of Lonergan's. The board ordered Lonergan to secure her front door, and only to allow the dog to be walked by an adult, with a leash and muzzle.

The board signed an annual monitoring agreement with Tighe and Bond for \$11,900 to monitor leachate from the capped landfill on Turnpike Road. Town administrator Frank Abbondanzio said the reported levels are low. "All we are seeing is iron and manganese and other chemicals in not too toxic quantities." Ross read from the most recent monitoring report, saying, "Little water quality impact to Randall Brook," was detected.

The board gave Abbondanzio the go-ahead, and considerable leeway, to write a grant application this week for a \$25,000 regional planning grant "to enlarge the Gill Montague Regional School District to include at least one other town." Or perhaps, one other city, since the Greenfield city council, under some pressure from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, has also agreed to seek such a grant.

The board approved the outlines of a spending freeze prepared by Abbondanzio, limiting all departments to essential spending for the duration of the budget year, without selectboard approval.

A special town meeting to deal with remaining budget items, pending resolution of the Gill-Montague school budget impasse, for Thursday, December 4th. The location is to be determined, since the high school auditorium is not available that week.

BY JOSH HEINEMANN One of the organizers of the Wendell Holiday fair, Barbara Caruso was unable to attend a selectboard meeting on the eve of Thanksgiving, but she asked through town coordinator Nancy Aldrich that the town hall rental for December 13th and 14th be reduced to \$25, because profits from the Holiday Fair will go to the Swift River School music department.

Selectboard chair Ted Lewis and member Dan Keller thought the fair and its foot traffic bring a lot of wear to the town hall, but they agreed with selectboard member Christine Heard and allowed the rent reduction.

The annual craft fair will be open to the public from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, December 13th, and 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 14th, with food and music both days.

Melissa Grader met the selectboard and rented the town hall for December 6th to hold a birthday party for her son.

Following the most recent Full Moon Coffeehouse, Kathy Becker of the Coffeehouse Committee brought up some maintenance issues at the town hall. The last Coffeehouse took place on a windy night, and vermiculite insulation drifted down onto the performers like snow through the gaps in the ceiling boards overhead.

There was a tornado watch that evening and she was concerned the building has no evacuation plan, and that the cellar is much smaller than the upstairs, and if it were used as a tornado shelter it would hold only about 10 people standing up, not a full Coffeehouse crowd.

Keller asked, "Didn't we appoint Lonnie (Ricketts) emergency coordinator?" and suggested the board should consult him about an evacuation plan for the town hall. The town hall is the designated building for evacuations in town. But for now, it appears evacuating the town hall itself means simply going out the front door. After that there is no plan.

Becker also said the men's room fan was not working, and the odor seemed to lack a clear evacuation plan as well.

Lewis asked, "Can't we postpone this?" after he looked at a proposed Right to Farm bylaw submitted to the selectboard for the December 17th special town meeting by the agricultural commission. He thought there should be hearings and meetings to refine any bylaw, and if a bylaw is modified too much at a town meeting the state Attorney General will strike it down.

Heard said it was not a hot issue and may be more appropriate for the annual town meeting, but Aldrich said the agricultural commission wants the bylaw brought up sooner.

Keller said he had gotten an email about possible plans for incorporating permaculture and forest garden ideas in the community garden. He said he had met the man proposing the design, and the design work

would be free. Keller thought that members of the building landscape committee should work with the community garden committee to mesh the various plans for use of the space around the town office building.

Too late to add it to the agenda, Aldrich received a notice from the Department of Conservation and Recreation stating that owners of low hazard dams must have them inspected by an engineer before August 2009. The dam that holds Fiske Pond is the town's responsibility.

Lewis said, "That's hardly a dam at all; it only holds back about two feet of water. It's a waste of money. The inspector will probably not even get out of his car. The state makes all these laws..."

When Dan Bacigalupo passed away he left open not only the position of road boss, but a place on the cemetery commission, and the position of tree warden. Peter Zera of Locke Village Road expressed interest in being appointed tree warden, citing his experience cutting trees for other Wendell residents. The position will be filled in spring at the annual town election.

Highway commissioners plan to attend the next selectboard meeting to discuss the job description and hiring of a new highway superintendent. Heard asked if supervision of the Wendell Recycling and Transfer Station (WRATS) should be included in the road boss's job description, or when and how the job was taken from the board of health and whether it was given to the road crew, or to the highway commission.

Aldrich volunteered to find out what that decision was and when it was made.

The selectboard agreed to a request from the highway commission that the probationary employment period of one of the two road workers be extended ten days to give him time to pass the next hoister's test.

NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Unity Park to be Redesigned

BY DAVID DETMOLD - The town of Montague prepared for the next cycles of Community Development Block Grant funding by holding a hearing on the 2009 community development strategy prepared by town planner Dan Laroche, and by advancing a design process for renovations at Unity Park in preparation for a quarter million dollar redesign expected to be the centerpiece of a CDMG application in 2010.

Laroche told the selectboard on Monday night, December 8th, some items had moved off the overview of pending community development projects since last year, such as the police station building project (under construction) and redevelopment of the Montague Rod Shop (sold to the highest bidder).

On the list for the 2009 CDBG application are two \$50,000 projects for downtown social service agencies, the Brick House's 'Community Green Jobs' and the Montague Catholic Social Ministries 'Bridge to Success' training program, along with \$45,000 to prepare bid-ready plans for a sewer extension for the planned expansion of the Franklin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority on the power canal in Turners Falls. Also in the works for next year's CDBG application are \$45,000 to prepare bid-ready plans for the Unity Park improvements, \$45,000 for a study of blight and slum conditions in Millers Falls (a precondition for future CDBG funding to remediate same), \$245,000 for zero interest housing rehab loans in Millers Falls and Turners Falls, and \$85,000 for housing weatherization programs in those same villages.

This year's CDBG application focused largely on a \$700,000 grant to defray the cost of the \$5.6 million police station building project. That application was turned down, resulting in the loss to Montague for 2008 of one of the few sources of federal and

state discretionary funds that flow to cities and towns on an annual basis.

When talked turned to Unity Park, where a volleyball court, new signage, expansion to the parking area, and other improvements are planned, the selectboard voted to approve spending \$8,250 from program income funds to pay for Berkshire Design Group, of Northampton, to develop a master plan for the park, a first step toward preparing bid-ready plans.

Although the parks and recreation commission director Jon Dobosz had indicated at a previous meeting there would be no room in the Unity Park redesign to relocate the Turners Falls skate park, which has had a home behind the former Chick's Garage until its lease ran out at the end of October, the selectboard voted unanimously to approve an additional motion asking Berkshire Design, as an additional scope item, to evaluate the potential of Unity Park as a possible skate park location.

The board also set aside time on their next meeting agenda, on December 15th, for a hearing on the future of the skate park, to which teen participants and parks and recreation commissioners will be invited.

The board held a tax classification hearing, approving a shift in the split between commercial/industrial and residential properties so both will experience roughly a 4% hike in their tax bills this year. If the Department of Revenue approves the proposed tax rate, director of assessing Barbara Miller said the owner of an average single family home, valued at \$191,430, will experience a hike of about \$116.

Miller said the average price of a single family home declined in Montague last year, by about \$1,755, less than 1%. She said four-family homes, and larger apartment buildings, increased in value by about 11%.

TF Fire District Taxes to Rise Sharply

BY DAVID DETMOLD

TURNERS FALLS - The prudential committee of the Turners Falls Fire District met with the Montague assessors on Monday, December 8th, to set the tax rate for the district. Mark Allen, prudential committee member, said, pending approval from the Department of Revenue, "everyone, residential and commercial customers alike, is going to experience a 15% to 17% increase."

Allen continued, "The bulk of the increase, percentage-wise, is due to special one-time spending approved this year by the annual district meeting."

Allen said two big ticket items were mainly responsible for the tax hike: the new geothermal heating system at the fire station and the relining of about a quarter mile of water line along Route 63, in Millers Falls.

Turners Falls Fire District accountant Eileen Tela said the cost for repairing and relining the water line amounted to \$210,000. As for the geothermal heating installation at the fire house, \$60,000 of that cost would come from taxation, \$30,000 from the district's free cash reserves, Tela said.

"The expense for the geothermal heating at the fire station will lead to a decrease in the annual expenses for heating the building, long term, that will more than pay for itself long term," Allen said.

Allen said the district was able to hold operating costs for the district to a 3% increase this year. And once the big ticket items are out of the way, he said, "It's possible there'll be a decrease next year," in the district tax rate.

Residents of the villages of Millers Falls, Turners Falls, and Montague City pay taxes to the Turners Falls Fire District, for fire protection, and the district taxes support infrastructure improvements

for the water department. Water rates are handled separately, and adjusted on an as needed basis.

Tela said the Turners Falls Water Department took over the Lake Pleasant Water Supply District, as of October, and there have been no infrastructure improvements to water lines in Lake Pleasant since that time. The lines are fairly new in Lake Pleasant, Tela said. Lake Pleasant is a member of the Montague Center Fire District, as far as fire protection is concerned, and Lake Pleasant residents pay district taxes to the Montague Center Fire District.

Montague director of assessing Barbara Miller said the proposed rates for the Turners Falls Fire District for '09 would be \$4.83 for commercial and \$2.93 for residential bills, as compared to \$4.19 per thousand dollars of valuation for commercial bills in '08, and \$2.49 for residential.

Miller said the average single family home in Montague in '08 was valued at \$193,185, and the average single family home's value had dropped slightly, this year, to \$191,430. Therefore, the owner of a single family home could expect to see an increase from last year's district bill of \$481.03 to \$560.88 this year, if the Department of Revenue accepts the new district tax rate.

Tela pointed out the district tax rate had dropped from \$2.74 in '07 to \$2.53 in '08, for residential bills, and viewed in this light, the hike to \$2.93 in '09 may not seem so severe.

Miller said the proposed district tax rate for Montague Center and Lake Pleasant, for commercial and residential bills alike, would remain the same this year as last: \$1.05 per thousand.

Allen, who had campaigned two years ago for a seat on the Turners Falls Fire District

prudential committee on a campaign of "holding down district taxes," said plans to institute an ambulance service through the district would "come back onto the front burner," next year, as the construction project at the safety complex nears completion. A town ambulance service could cut down response time and bring in extra revenue for the district, Allen said.

Approval from a district meeting would be required to institute an ambulance service, Allen said. The proposal would not be ready in time for the district's annual meeting in April, he added, but a special district meeting could be called to consider the proposal later in the year.

One volunteer has come forward to join the three present members on the district's finance committee; another volunteer is sought to keep the number of finance committee members odd. Interested district residents should contact district moderator Dean Elgosin at 659-3920 if they would like to serve on the finance committee.

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Fashion Spin

"I missed the glitter and the flash when I moved here from Boston," said Sarah Pruitt, one of the designers whose hot couture was featured at the 4th Annual Suzee's Third Street Leftover Laundry Fashion Show on Saturday, when asked what inspired her designs.

BY
AMY LAPRADE
PHOTOS: DAWN SPAULDING
TURNERS FALLS -

And glittery and flashy they were. In fact, that night at Suzee's was awash in more flamboyance, more color, more charisma, and more over the top fun than any other night I could hope to spend anywhere on a blustery December night in the Valley.

It had everything from swirling, mad, runway divas to superheroes, to drag queen MCs.



MC Furry McNuggets

held an anti-holiday subtext, with lines like, 'I hate Christmas,' lost amid a miasma of stumbling beats, droning guitars, and the clanging of a toy xylophone.

From the Rendezvous, where the overflow action was happening, the second band, Rust Knuckle Raptor: James Damon, Colleen Dowd, Kaleb Perry, Jamie Lavo, DeAngelo Nieves, and Ian Barret, clamored down Third Street, waltzed into Suzee's, and began performing like a gang of folkies from an old time movie, standing on top of the dryers, picking some tunes. Their bedraggled attire and tussled hair gave the whole scene an 'O, Brother Where Art Thou' vibe, although their performance was anything but subdued. They delighted the audience with "My Only Sunshine," performed in a minor key and delivered in a sardonic though humorous vocal style.

Meanwhile, down in the dim and musty basement,



Rust Knuckle Raptor

fashion designers Rachel Teumim, Mary Buckley, Anne Harding, Pruitt and their models were taking in waist lines, applying makeup, and putting the final touch on their costumes. When I asked Buckley what inspired her to come up with her ideas, she said she had Cinderella in mind, while Teumim, with the help of her models, thought of the five villages of Montague and the super heroes who represent them, like Tom Anderson, aka "the Terrible Termite."



Tara Gorvine - Model;
Mary Buckley - Designer

While the models and designers crammed the narrow passageways downstairs, flitting about like luminescent moths, more great music was beginning to unwind upstairs. In the back room of Suzee's, a fellow by the name of 'hnatow' pumped out experimental dance rhythms, along with a sound and presentation so fuel injected, it was enough to put any Springfield club to shame. This techno wizard, enshrouded in Christmas lights, lurched about the stage robotically, working himself into a frenzy on the beat box before unraveling the Christmas lights from his body, tossing them aside, and gyrating in wild abandon with the audience.

At eleven, a general sense of hilarity exploded about the place as the main course was served, with MC's Furry

FASHION continued on pg 9

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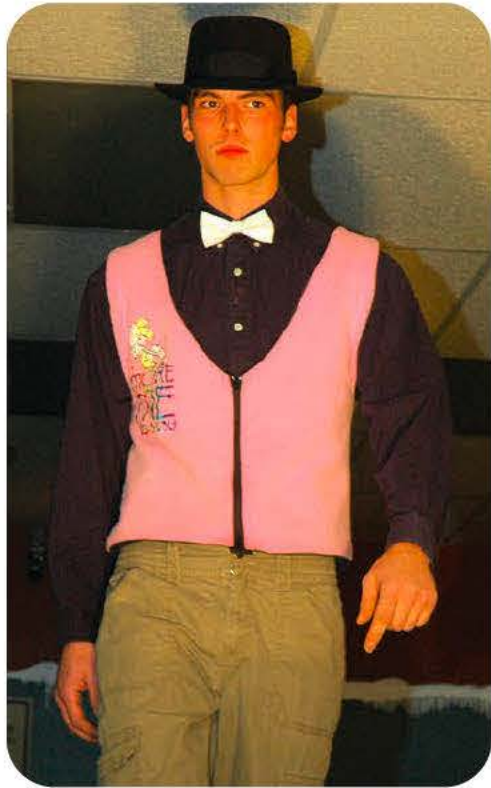
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FASHION from pg 8



Chris Wise - Model; Rachel Teumim - Designer

McNuggets and laundromat and down Brianna Cracker the makeshift runway hailing this year's to take their turn models in comedic amongst the stage style, as one by one the lights, camera bulbs, models came sashaying and pulsating music. A from the shadows in Tide of eighty or more the rear of the onlookers from all over



Nick Brule - Model; Anne Harding - Designer

the Valley: friends, acquaintances, fab scenesters, and the PowerTown glitterati, crowded up against the washers and dryers to Cheer the models on, as the spin cycle continued Bold into the night, all with color-safe bleach.

The first model to emerge wore a B-52s



Cheri Monet - Model; Sarah Pruitt - Designer

hairstyle and false eyelashes, a vivid sparkling red dress and gold glitter. The next had a GI Jane party dress with frills. Another sported a black and gold mini-dress and looked as bright as a bow on a

Christmas gift, while royalty, half-peasant another wore a Barbie Doll pink dress with Dr. Seuss stripes. once looked to have been someone's

One fellow sported a black and white cocktail dress with Obama stitched onto its tassels, while another wore a monk-like costume that looked like it may have been someone's bathrobe at one time.

Other garments on display were an evening dress constructed from long johns material, a t-shirt, and sequins. One fellow wore a sort of Captain America striped suit and scorch the eyes of any cowboy hat. Another had the look of a native. But the night was far from over, for the party continued next door at the Rendezvous, where people from all over the place gathered to dance, drink, and be merry.



Allison Sexton - Model; Mary Buckley - Designer

The show itself was fleeting, but enough to captivate the eyes of any jaded, sleepy-eyed fortune teller, another sported batman wings, another girl wore a night gown spun into an evening dress, with silver platform boots. The last model waltzed out in a half-



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Dorsey Road Conservation Land Purchase Back on Track

BY DAVID DETMOLD
ERVING - The purchase of 21 acres of land on Dorsey Road by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, which had been sidetracked when the town of Erving decided at a special town meeting on November 24th, that it could not legally contribute \$45,000 of town money to assist the state in its purchase of the land, is back on track again.

"Since the town had been counseled not to gift money toward the project, DCR and the owners ended up negotiating on a price that was agreeable," said Alain Peteroy, director of land preservation at the Franklin Land Trust. She said the state, which had originally come up with \$150,000 toward the \$195,000 purchase price of the land, which is in the vicinity of the French King Bridge and contains up to five building sites, had since found the remaining sum necessary to complete the purchase of the property, when another land conservation project fell through.

Jen Soper, land conservation specialist for DCR, confirmed that the state had found the necessary funds to complete the purchase, but cautioned that DCR had not yet closed on the property. Peteroy said the closing would probably not take place until June of 2009.

The land is owned by the heirs of the Carroll estate. Peteroy said the family had contacted the Franklin Land Trust about a year ago, seeking to preserve the property from development,

and the land trust had facilitated the sale to DCR.

"We're pretty excited that this is the outcome," said Peteroy, who noted that the parcel will join with almost all of the land visible to the north and south of the French King Bridge that has been permanently preserved from development.

Disappointing some who had spoken in favor of allowing all terrain vehicles or snowmobiles to have access to the land, when the town of Erving was considering helping with the purchase, Peteroy said ATV's would most likely be banned from access to the property once DCR completes the purchase. "It's too small a parcel to be attractive to ATV users anyway," she said.

Erving conservation commission chair David Brule said, "I'm seeing it from the whole perspective of a green corridor of protected land from the mouth of the Millers River to the Iron Bridge in the village of Millers Falls. This was a really important piece in terms of the habitat we are trying to protect. With this Dorsey Road parcel likely to be protected and added to other permanently conserved land, like the Waidlich Farm, a town-owned strip near Renovator's Supply, and my land [at the end of River Road], we are now very far along toward protecting that entire corridor."

Brule added, "This was a dream of [Millers River Watershed Alliance co-founder] Henry Waidlich's long ago. He and Betty were thrilled to hear the news."

REVIEWED BY LYN CLARK
MONTAGUE - Wicks writes that "this is a story about tragedy, community, love, despair and redemption." She takes us on a year-long journey in the small Vermont town of Cooper Hill (shades of Montague Center) as several couples muddle through real problems and obstacles to happiness as best they can. Brought together by friendship and geography, their stories unfold month by month to form a living, changing tapestry - complex, yet ordinary, and infinitely fascinating.

From the mélange of characters, this reader found four that intrigued her the most, and seemed to form both the tension and the glue that held the narrative together. Two participate in real time, two cast long shadows.

Jack is a good and caring man of many talents who - by his own admission - is not a self-starter; caught in the backwash of a tragedy of immense proportions, and feeling "survivor guilt," he drifts, rudderless. Blessed with a helpful nature, he fits himself into the nooks and crannies of his friends' lives, both figuratively and literally as he develops a need to enter their homes uninvited, and examine the minutiae of their private selves. He says he was "trying to find how people lived their lives," as if by doing so he could find a blueprint for his own.

Maud, the postmistress - bitter, lonely and judgmental - trespasses in a different way; she filches letters from the incoming and outgoing mail, and locks them away in her home, thereby delaying by months and even years the resolution of many of the townspeople's problems. The reader waits impatiently - hoping, trusting, that the cache will be discovered. Maud is a complex woman whom we dislike but who can startle the reader into sympathy at odd moments.

Cate, Jack's deceased wife, casts a long shadow. She was the doer, the mover, the one who made things happen yet was never completely content. Jack talks with her throughout the narrative, supplying her answers. "What am I to do," Jack asks, "without you to lead me along?" And what he

opportunities," as one of her women expresses it. Expectations are reexamined, and compromises embraced. There are no dramatic epiphanies, just gradual change that comes from dealing with real difficulties, and a willingness to grow as they strive for "some measure of happiness."

Lee Wicks lives in Montague, and has written for the Daily Hampshire Gazette, the Boston Globe, and essays for Salon.com. This is her first novel. It can be purchased at World Eye Books, Windy Hollow Veterinary Clinic, and The Bookmill, as well as through her website, www.singingdogpress.com.

Wicks writes that she has established Singing Dog Press with "the mission of supporting writers, bookstores and non-profits. The profits from this book will go to the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society.

"The book design was donated by Robert Moorhead, a local graphic designer; the cover art was donated by James Whitbeck, a Greenfield-based artist. Editing, proofreading and printing were all local as well. Small print runs, no book tours, no celebrity; just a love of literature and community have informed this endeavor."

Wicks' book is well-written and very much deserving of your attention. the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society is also not only deserving but always in need of financial support as they house and care for the overlooked, forgotten, and abused pets until those with hearts big enough step forward to give them a forever home.

Lyn Clark, is a local author, living in Turners Falls, who last year published a novel called The Bolt Hole

BOOK REVIEW

Some Measure of Happiness

A NOVEL BY LEE WICKS



imagines he hears is, "Get over yourself."

Then there is gentle Conway, the Newfoundland dog that Jack gives up for adoption, and then unsuccessfully tries to reclaim. Conway plays an important role even in absentia. Like Cate, he is often mentioned, never quite out of mind, and he is the force that pulls the narrative full circle and motivates Jack to find new purpose and direction. If Conway's story doesn't make you weep, you are made of sterner stuff than I.

The story is told in a straightforward manner. There is no sentimentality even when there is pain. There are no histrionics. The writing is not showy, but clean and crisp. Wicks's people are multi-faceted; the most likable are often flawed, the least likable have kind moments. "Life seemed filled with missteps and lost

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COFFEE from pg 1

was the kitchen and parlor of Jan and Mitchell Lata, next door to Jan's Package Store, at the intersection of Main Road and Route 2, just opposite the Gill-Montague bridge.

"This was Jan's home," said Shaw. "We kept the color scheme just the way she had it, even matched her wallpaper, and we tried to maintain the feel of the place. I wanted it to be just like you were stepping into your mother's kitchen."

Indeed, Shaw took a number of antiques from his own mother's kitchen and hung them on the walls, on display shelves crafted for that purpose by Ken Noyes, of Colrain. There, you'll see Margaret Shaw's Baker's Pure Peppermint Extract, Durkee's Sour Salt and a bottle of Oil of

Wintergreen so old the brand name is practically indecipherable, sharing shelf space with a Chase and Sanborn coffee tin a can of Just Suits Cut Plug tobacco, and other antique containers.

Shaw, who has lived next door to Jan's for ten years, bought both the liquor store and the Lata residence this past summer. He has been busy renovating the new coffee shop since.

"I used all local contractors," he said, including Busy Bee Painting and Wallace Plumbing of Gill, E.W. Martin of Greenfield on the electrical, and Jack Nelson of Carriage House Designs, of Turners Falls, who carved the Great Falls Coffee logo into the marble counter top.

Mike Sliva, Erving resident and "talented graduate of the G.C.C. art program," designed

the new business's logo, and Hale Signs in Greenfield prepared the road side sign, which just went up on Tuesday.

The coffee shop opened for the first time on Saturday, November 29th, said manager Dawn Bodell. Since then she's been getting up in the wee hours to have coffee on for early birds at 4 a.m.

"People are very happy we're here at that hour," she said.

Less than two weeks old, the new business already has steady customers, including "a local worker who opens and closes the gates on the dam, Yankee Candle workers, a correctional officer," and others, Bodell said.

And the new roadside sign was already pulling customers in from the highway Wednesday morning.

"I'm on my way from Boston to Bellows Falls," said Amtrak supervising engineer Joe Burgess, a native of Walpole, "to drive a train to Brattleboro. I was just saying to myself, 'Jeez, I wish there was a place to get a coffee here. I looked up, and there was a Coffee Cup. It's a sign!'"

Burgess likes his coffee sweet, with three sugars, and Bodell was happy to oblige. She didn't mention that the sugar, the cream, the milk, everything is organic, purchased from Green Fields Market, in Greenfield. Shaw serves only Dean's Beans organic fair trade coffee and cocoa. The teas are organic too. Adams Donuts delivers fresh each morning, and Shaw has arranged to deliver fresh Italian pastries from Spinelli's, in Boston, on a regular

basis. The to-go cups are biodegradable, even the spoons and forks are made of corn starch rather than plastic, so they too will biodegrade.

Little touches like that matter to customers, Shaw said, in this eco-conscious area.

Shaw said he chose the name Great Falls for his coffee company because it is the translation of the original name of the area in the native language of the Pocumtucks.

The Great Falls Coffee Company is open from 4 a.m. to 1 p.m. on weekdays, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on weekends. Bring your laptop; they have wireless in the Internet Lounge, with four leather reclining chairs, each with their own wall plugs and coffee holders. Log on, get wired, and relax in style. 

SCHOOL from pg 5

As they debated how to implement the intent of a recent resolution committing the district to collaborate with the member towns on crafting the 2010 budget, a preliminary version of which is due at the end of February, committee members noted "there is a third party at the table now," in the form of the state fiscal oversight of school committee finances.

Though Sandy Brown called for a schedule of five working meetings with the finance boards of Gill and Montague to develop budget scenarios, other members noted that associate DESE commissioner Jeff Wulfson has been invited to a school committee meeting on January 13th, and said until Wulfson explains the ground rules of state fiscal oversight it would be difficult to proceed. Rocke said the state will remain in the driver's seat for G-M finances, or at least "keep a hand on the wheel, until such time as a locally decided budget" can be set for 2010.

Wulfson will also attend the Montague special town meeting scheduled for Tuesday, December 16th, at the high school, at 6:30 p.m., where town approval of additional funds to meet the Commissioner's budget will be sought.

The school committee discussed the issue of the Tomahawk Chop, which has been roiling the local chatboard (www.montaguema.net) for weeks, ever since the high school administration, in collaboration with Rocke and Kociela, temporarily banned the high school marching band from performing the song - with its characteristic hand gestures imitating the blow of a tomahawk - this fall.

Rocke, asked how the moratorium on the Tomahawk Chop came about, said it started when he and Kociela attended an Earth Day celebration at the Great Falls Discovery Center earlier this year. The Turners Falls high school band was playing, and as they played the traditional song and the high school students performed their 'chop,' Rocke said he saw little children at the Discovery Center activities imitating the hand gesture. At the same time, there was a ceremony going on with Native Americans overtones, and Rocke said he became aware of how inappropriate and potentially offensive to the Native American community the Tomahawk Chop could be.

He asked TFHS principal Jeff Kenney to direct the band to stop performing the Tomahawk Chop, to allow time for community dialogue on the issue, to which

members of the local Native American community were invited to participate.

Addressing the school committee on the subject, Tobin Wissmann expressed his concern that the consideration of 'the Chop' was just the beginning. "They'll come after the mascot next."

[The Turners Falls High School team mascot is a Native American wearing an eagle feather headdress typical of Plains Indian tribes. The sports teams are called the Turners Falls Indians. The village of Turners Falls was named after Captain William Turner, who led a surprise attack on the Indians camped by the Great Falls on May 19th, 1676, killing more than 300 and virtually eliminating the Pocumtuck tribe, in one of the first massacres of Native Americans on the North American continent.]

Langknecht responded to Wissman by saying he felt the issue should be looked at as a whole by the community. "If it's a cultural sensitivity issue, then it has to be all of it, including the mascot."

The school committee will hold a public hearing in January, prior to the next school committee meeting, to give people an opportunity to express their feel-

ings on the issue, and to inform the school committee debate.

Superintendent Rocke asked the school committee to approve the purchase of four large folding tables for the Gill Elementary School at a cost of \$5,028, to be taken from Pothole funds. These are to replace heavy folding tables used in the cafeteria.


Principal Rita Detweiler told the committee that in the absence of a school custodian, she frequently has to move the tables herself, and the older tables are too heavy for her. Because the room has a dual use, the tables are put up and taken down several times a day.

The committee approved Rocke's request, with one question of whether or not they actually have the power to do so, now that the state has taken over district finances. Rocke said, "We'll find out."

He said an email would be sent to the commissioner's office

informing him of their approval of these funds and the response would tell them if they have the power to make such approvals.

Marty Espinola, director of grants and technology, stated his opinion that the district needs to re-instate the position of data manager, and needs to replace aging computers. As software becomes more sophisticated, it requires newer, faster computers. The old computers can be moved from the high school to the elementary schools, Espinola said, where the software systems used do not require the faster computers.

Espinola said he would like to see the purchase of laptop computers and wireless systems in the classroom so there could be more than one location in the school where computers can be used. At the present time, there is only one computer lab at the high school, he said. 

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Banking on, and for, the Common Good

BY EMILY MONOSSON

TURNERS FALLS - As we worry about finances, question our financial institutions, and wonder if our cash is better stuffed away under the mattress, visionary banker William Spademan wants to introduce us to a new and different kind of bank — the common good bank.

A common good bank is one that is under democratic control, with socially and environmentally responsible investing, and profits that go to the community. It is also a bank, said Spademan, that can actually create local money, much like the Federal Reserve creates dollars, for the common good, rather than for private profit.

And so on a chilly Tuesday evening, December 9th, a small group gathered upstairs in the Carnegie Library, amidst an eclectic collection of stuffed birds, geologic treasures and wartime memorabilia, to learn first-hand about creating a common good bank 'community division.' Community divisions are nearly independent local

common good banks, guided democratically by depositors.

According to Spademan, common good banks will provide all the usual services community savings banks provide. Depositors will benefit financially without doing anything different from what they are used to, including withdrawing cash and using the equivalent of a debit card with participating merchants.

By shopping at participating local businesses, depositors will automatically receive a rebate on their monthly bank statement. Local businesses will benefit by saving on credit card fees. For example, a local food coop that might typically spend upwards of \$85,000 a year on credit card fees, would save that much if the majority of customers used common good bank cards.

"So, we'd be capturing what we're already spending, and spending it back in the community," commented

audience member Prakash Laufer.

Also, says Spademan, the banks will focus on small loans to local businesses, mortgage loans, car loans and so forth. As common good banks spread, they will be able to invest in larger projects together.

The concept of a common good bank is both new and old.

"Nearly every component of the common good bank plan has been done successfully elsewhere, but never in this combination."
— William Spademan, Ashfield

While Spademan is working to create the first common good bank ever, he notes that, "Nearly every component of the common good bank plan has been done successfully elsewhere, but never in this combination."

"Since common good banks have been designed expressly for economic justice, sustainability and strong local economies, they could well have

far reaching positive effects on the economy, employment and the environment," he said.

It would be fair to say that developing the bank has been a long-term passion for Spademan, a resident of Ashfield, a self-described "Social Entrepreneur" and a practical visionary committed to improving the world by "empowering all communities to make a difference for themselves."

Starting up a bank, however, takes more than vision and passion. It takes a good deal of leadership, planning, a broad range of experience, technological know-how, and an appreciation for "the wisdom of the crowd." With thirty years of experience as a software engineer, founder and director of several arts, education and peace ventures, Spademan is well positioned to direct his creative energy towards a new kind of bank.

When asked how a common good bank might benefit a community in these difficult

economic times Spademan responded, "common good banks will give us security as communities during a recession, because they will make it possible for communities to create credit for themselves, to fund new businesses and community initiatives." The more a bank is able to loan to its community, the more funds will be available to help build the community.

One of the first steps in turning the common good dream to reality is recruiting founding depositors. That is just what Spademan hopes to do through a number of local information sessions, including one upcoming at the Wendell Free Library on Thursday, December 18th, at 6:45 p.m.

For more information, go to the common good bank site, at www.commongoodbank.com.

For more on Spademan's philosophy, see: www.friendsjournal.org/common-good-bank-society-benefit-everyone.

DEERFIELD EDUCATION AND CONSERVATION CONTRIBUTES TO OUR LADY OF PEACE

BY JOE KWIECINSKI

TURNERS FALLS - Alan Lambert, who serves on the board of the Deerfield Education and Conservation Corporation, is proud of his organization's two recent monetary contributions to the community. Lambert, who serves as clerk of the non-profit organization, pointed to funds given to the Sportsman's Club in Deerfield and Our Lady of Peace Church in Turners Falls.

"I am glad to report," said Lambert, "two grants that were accepted in the name of our corporation for a total handicap accessibility project for our sportsman's club in

Deerfield, to allow access and facilities." The club is located on River Road.

Lambert was also proud to announce a \$500 donation to Our Lady of Peace. "We're delighted we could help Father Stan (Aksamit), so he could distribute the funding to needy people in our community."

According to Lambert, the DECC is a multi-faceted group. "We're dedicated to diversified education and conservation through tailored instruction," he said.

The DECC has given training and instruction, Lambert added, in firearm safety, conservation

education, shooting sports, home and personal protection, CPR and First Aid, along with law enforcement. The organization is planning a four-week hunter education course beginning April 8th, 2009.

The DECC will continue making small supporting grants to local community groups and charitable organizations.

"Any needy organization in the Franklin County area," said Lambert, "should feel free to contact me, and I'll be glad to bring their request to our board."

Lambert is reachable at 413-834-1692.

OVERRIDE from page 1

the board of health, included notice that his board may soon vote to raise trash sticker fees from \$2 to \$3. The cost of trash removal increased by 33% for Gill last year, and Edson said it has been a long time since trash sticker fees were raised to support that cost.

Edson said the health board hoped that increased trash fees would lead to increased recycling in town. The new recycling vendor, Alternative Recycling, is working out very well for the town, with virtually no complaints from residents, he said. The funds earned from recycling go into an escrow account which covers the cost of the town's office paper supplies, and has also provided additional sums for the town to draw on.

The board received an update from Pam Shoemaker of the historical commission, which has been very busy organizing, studying, and scanning to CD a number of old diaries and other documents written by Gill residents in the 1800s, including the Munn, Marble and Hale families. As a group, these documents give a very detailed picture of agrarian Gill from 1860 to 1880.

Jeff Oakes, of French King Highway, brought a concern to

the board about a neighbor who appears to be constructing a third house on a two-acre parcel, very close to the Oakes' boundary line. There was considerable discussion about whether the planning board would have approved such an action, and, if they had, why abutters would not have heard about a request for a variance. The board suggested Oakes investigate the matter further with the building inspector and planning board.

The selectboard made no further appointments to the newly formed Commission on Education in Gill, deciding to leave two seats on the commission open for now, while welcoming more residents to inquire about joining the commission. Call Rogers at 863-9347 or contact her by email at administrator@gillmass.org if you would like to serve on the commission, which is charged with examining all options for educating K-12 students in Gill, holding hearings on the topic, and reporting to the annual town meeting next May.

The board renewed liquor licenses for the Schuetzen Verein, the Oak Ridge Golf Club, Jan's Package Store, the Wagon Wheel, and the Gill Tavern.

FAMILY CRAFT FAIR, TREE LIGHTING ON SATURDAY

MONTAGUE - Don't drag the family to the mall for holiday shopping! Come to the Grange on the common in Montague Center on Saturday, December 13th, from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. for affordable, guided craft activities for all ages. We'll have warm food and baked goods to fuel the holiday gift making.

Make cool jewelry, beeswax candles, glass ornaments,

jewelry boxes, candle holders, picture frames, gnomes, paper crafts, sachets. Proceeds benefit CISA's Senior Farm Share program and the Montague Grange building fund.

That same day, join the Montague Business Association for a tree decorating event at Peskeomskut Park, Turners Falls, from 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.

The public is invited to come and help decorate the tree. Free

refreshments will be served. Enjoy musical entertainment, as well as a visit from Santa. Cast members and Molly dancers from "Welcome Yule" will attend, along with the indescribable Bernie Goyner.

The public is encouraged to bring ornaments to help decorate the tree. Come enjoy a cup of hot cocoa and share the holiday spirit with your neighbors and friends.

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JESSICA HARMON ILLUSTRATION

BY FRED CICETTI
LEONIA, NJ - Q. *Can you get cancer from eating fish that contains mercury?*

High levels of mercury exposure can harm the brain, heart, kidneys, lungs, and immune system of people of all ages. There isn't enough human data available for all forms of mercury to conclude that it causes cancer.

However, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has determined that methylmercury is a possible human carcinogen.

Mercury, a liquid metal also known as quicksilver, combines

with carbon to make organic mercury compounds; methylmercury is the most common one. Methylmercury is made primarily by microscopic organisms in water and soil.

Methylmercury builds up in the tissues of fish. Larger and older fish tend to have the highest levels of mercury. Research shows that most people's fish consumption does not cause a health concern.

Almost all fish - and shellfish - contain traces of mercury. However, some fish have higher levels of mercury that can harm the developing nervous system of a fetus or young child. The risks from mercury in seafood depends on the amount and type that is consumed.

The EPA and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) give the following

advice to those at highest risk, such as pregnant women:

- Do not eat shark, swordfish, king mackerel or tilefish. These have high levels of mercury.

- Eat shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock, and catfish. These are low in mercury.

Albacore, or white meat tuna, has more mercury than canned light tuna.

- Contact your local health department to check local advisories about the safety of fish caught in nearby waters.

(An important added note: fish sticks and fast-food fish sandwiches are usually made from seafood low in mercury.)

Mercury is a naturally occurring element that is found in air, water and soil. In addition, mercury enters the air from mining ore, burning coal and waste, and from manufacturing plants.

It enters the water or soil from natural deposits, disposal of wastes, and volcanic activity.

Exposure to mercury occurs from breathing contaminated air, ingesting contaminated water and food, and having dental and medical treatments.

Pure mercury has been used to make thermometers, switches, pressure gauges, fluorescent bulbs, button batteries, thermostats, dental fillings and medicines.

In recent years, there has been a growing focus on the need to decrease the use of mercury in products and to prevent the mercury in existing products from entering the waste stream. Several states have passed legislation to reduce mercury in waste.

So how about those fillings in your mouth?

Dental amalgam is the sil-

ver-colored material used to restore teeth that have cavities. Dental amalgam is made of liquid mercury and a powder containing silver, tin, copper, zinc and other metals. Mercury concentration in dental amalgam is generally about 50 percent by weight.

Is dental amalgam safe? Here's the official answer from the American Dental Association:

"Yes. Dental amalgam has been used in tooth restorations worldwide for more than 100 years. Studies have failed to find any link between amalgam restorations and any medical disorder. Amalgam continues to be a safe restorative material for dental patients."

If you have any questions, please write to fred@healthygeezer.com.

ASK AMY:

WHAT TO DO WITH PACKING PEANUTS

AMY DONOVAN GREENFIELD - *Since WRATS (the Wendell Recycling and Transfer Station) no longer accepts styrofoam packaging peanuts for recycling, I have saved several bagfuls, which I'd like to donate to someone, or to a business that can make use of them.*

Do you know of a business in the Valley that could make use of them?

Please let me know as soon as possible.

- **Robbie Leppzer Wendell**

Dear Robbie,
 Thanks for reusing packing peanuts! Packing peanuts, as well as all other types of polystyrene, or Styrofoam, are not recyclable in western Massachusetts, even if they have a triangular recycling symbol on the bottom. Yes, this means that Styrofoam coffee cups are not recyclable.

The UPS Store at 21 Mohawk Trail in Greenfield accepts clean and dry packing peanuts and bubble wrap for reuse.

Polystyrene foam blocks,

like the packaging typically used to secure electronics or appliances in shipping, are called "expanded polystyrene molders" or EPS. Clean, uncontaminated EPS packaging can be mailed to:

Tegant Corporation
 29 Park Road
 Putnam, CT 06260

The EPS should be free from any significant dirt, tape, or any other contaminants and should be marked with the plastics symbol #6 (in the triangle or chasing arrows).

Foodservice items such as

meat trays, cups, or egg cartons are not accepted - only foam block packaging. The consumer is responsible for the shipping fees.

This information can be found on the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District's website, under the section called "What Do I Do With....?" This webpage is designed to help residents properly dispose of anything and everything: www.franklin-county-waste-district.org/what_do_i_do_with.html.



Jessica Harmon Illustration

Amy Donovan is the program director at the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District. Send your questions to her at: amy@franklincounty-wastedistrict.org

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JEP'S PLACE: Part CII

Kapusta



BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH GILL - I felt a pang of sadness to see our shabby but familiar tan Essex, still shedding wisps of red paint, being hauled away hanging from the tow truck's

Jep's Place will be on sale at the Christmas arts and crafts fair Dec. 6th - 14th at the Brick House (the old fire station on Third Street), and at the Great Falls Discovery Center in Turners Falls. It is also on sale at Baker Supply, the Visitor Center and World Eye Books in Greenfield, and at Mim's Market in Northfield. Here is a Christmas present that can be opened again and again.

hook. I had hoped Pa would push the tan Essex behind the barn as he had done with the old green one.

But Pa was not in the least distressed at its departure. Not only did the black beauty replacement Ford have a heater and defroster, but best of all it did not appear to have a skin condition like that of the shaggy beast Pa had created, now headed for the junk yard. Having paid out a fair amount for the fancy Ford, it was necessary to cut down on food expenditures to make the payments. We had soup of some kind, with potatoes, every night. Often it was brown soup, or kapusta - cabbage and sauerkraut soup - day in and day out. Once in a while Ma made a cream soup using juice from the sauerkraut barrel.

One evening after another meal of kapusta, I didn't feel I could stomach another mouthful. We sat crowded around the table, kids sitting on benches. Ma sat in a straight chair when she was not

jumping up to serve food. Pa sat in his captain's chair eating sausage links and mashed potatoes. He needed more

as a centerpiece. The spoon had a large area of silver plating worn away. I put it back and selected another one. I hated the taste of

the kapusta and mashed potatoes, then looked at Ma, and took a chance.

"Anything else? I'm still hungry."

Her eyes went to Pa and then to me, sending me a warning. Irene also gave me a quick glance, a sign to keep quiet. She quickly looked down. I knew she was terrified and couldn't eat, terrified he'd lose his temper and take it out on me.

Irene was Pa's favorite. She didn't talk back to him, didn't argue, just listened and complied. He praised her as the obedient and dutiful daughter. He never knew how she really felt about him.

She stopped eating and coughed, another warning. I disregarded it and looked Pa in the eye.

"Hungry?" he said. "Have another bowl. There's more on the

nourishing food to recuperate, and besides it was always important to have the breadwinner well fed.

"Kapusta, again?" I asked
No response. I ladled cabbage and sauerkraut soup into a bowl, adding mashed potatoes. I chose a spoon from the coffee can filled with silverware that served

the spoon's iron base metal.

"Don't be so fussy," Pa said. I didn't reply, not wanting to start anything. Mealtime was a time of silence. Kids were supposed to be silent. "Just shut up and eat," was the rule.

Pa liked mashed potatoes in the soup. Without teeth, it made the soup easier to gum. I finished

stove."

"I'm sick of kapusta; we had it all week."
"Maybe that's the trouble," he said, his face flushing with anger. "Maybe if you didn't have it for a week - had nothing to eat for a week - you wouldn't be complaining."

— Continued Next Week



KAREN WILKINSON ILLUSTRATION

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MCTV PROGRAM SCHEDULE 12/12 - 12/18

Friday, December 12th 8:00 AM Living Along The River 10:00 AM Mik TV#2 Grouse Attack 10:30 AM Falls Table Mike Ryan 11:30 AM Montague Business Association 11/12/08 1:00 PM Mont. Update: Jamie Berger 2:00 PM Naturalist Laurie Sanders 3:00 PM On The Ridge Bow Hunting 101 4:00 PM Over the Falls Jenny Goodspeed and Leo Baldwin 5:00 PM Physician Focus Atrial Fibrillation_title2 6:00 PM TWB Sky Awareness 7:00 PM GMRSD 12/9/08 10:30 PM Mik TV#2Grouse Attack 11:00 PM White House Chronicle#939-940	Saturday, December 13th 8:00 AM Wisdom Way Solar Village 9:00 AM TWB Ergonomics 10:00 AM Turkey Day Game 2008 12:30 PM Tiny Tim 1:30 PM The Western MASS Democrat 2:00 PM The Flow of Time 3:00 PM Skin N Bonz 4:30 PM The Katie Clarke Band 6:30 PM Journey to Wissatinnewag 7:00 PM Montague Machine 8:00 PM Living Along The River 10:00 PM Montague Update: John Ancil 11:00 PM Physician focus: Eyes Sunday, December 14th 8:00 AM Northfield Mountain Geology Story 8:30 AM Over The Falls Local Fiber Farms 9:00 AM Peoples Harvest1 10:30 AM Physician Focus 11:30 AM Franklin County Matters Center for Self Reliance 12:30 PM Girls Softball08 3:00 PM Green by 2015 3:30 PM Honky Thumbelina 4:30 PM Independent Voices 5:00 PM Independent Voices 5:30 PM Into the Way of Peace 6:30 PM The Katie Clarke Band 8:30 PM Keep Warm Keep Safe 9:00 PM MCTV Video Camp 2007 9:30 PM Mik TV#2Grouse Attack 10:00 PM Montague Update: Paul Mariani 11:00 PM TWB The Aging Eye Monday, December 15th 8:00 AM Surviving the Vernon Reactor 9:00 AM Tapping Maple Ridge 10:00 AM Preachin the Blues 11:00 AM Art Fest 2007 12:30 PM Bernanke 1:30 PM The Looming Crisis in Oil Depletion 3:30 PM Sculpture Fest "08" Firedance 4:30 PM Seabrook 1977. 6:00 PM The Flow of Time 7:00 PM Select Board (Live) 10:00 PM Sculpture Fest "08" 11:00 PM The Spirit of Lake Pleasant Tuesday, December 16th 8:00 AM The Western MASS Democrat 8:30 AM Franklin County Matters State Government 10:00 AM Honky Thumbelina 11:00 AM Independent Voices 11:30 AM Into the Way of Peace 12:30 PM Living Along The River 2:30 PM MCTV Video Camp 2007 3:00 PM GMRSD District Wide Budget Meeting 11/18/08 6:00 PM Special Town Meeting (Live) 11:00 PM Mind Control Wednesday, December 17th 8:00 AM Friends present Fall town string band 10:00 AM An Inside Look into Iran 12:00 PM Bech Interview	 1:00 PM Living Along The River 3:00 PM Martha and Clarkson Edwards 4:00 PM Falls Table Mike Ryan 5:00 PM Over The Falls The Eddie in Eddies Wheels 6:00 PM On the Ridge Keith McCormic 6:30 PM Mik TV#2Grouse Attack 7:00 PM White House Chronicle#939-940 8:00 PM Living Along The River 10:00 PM Encore Body Art #2 10:30 PM Encore Body Art Halloween 11:01 PM Encore Body Art #4 11:32 PM Encore Body Art #5 Thursday, December 18th 8:00 AM Women Girls & HIV: Role Models 8:30 AM White House Chronicles 9:30 AM Valley Idol Semi Finals 2008 12:00 PM Valley Idol Finals 2008 2:30 PM TWB Urinary incontinence 4:00 PM UNpanel1 6:00 PM The Western MASS Democrat Senator Stan Rosenberg 6:30 PM Senior Aerobics 7:00 PM Select Board 12/15/08 9:00 PM Mik TV#2Grouse Attack 9:30 PM Living Along The River 11:30 PM Keep Warm Keep Safe
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JACK COUGHLIN ILLUSTRATION

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11th
Deja Brew, Wendell: rock out with Betsy, Mark and Bruce, *Free Rangel* 60's & 70's Oldie Covers.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12th
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Wildwood Unplugged*, Indie Rock, 9 to 11 p.m.

The Great Falls Coffeehouse, Turners Falls presents *Back in the Day Night Variety Show* hosted by Lenny Zarcone of the *The Wright Brothers* comedy troupe, 7 p.m. Performers include percussionist Drew Hutchison, singer Sam Boyden, juggler Rob Peck, and hula hoop artist extraordinaire Shenandoah Sluter. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. with coffee & homemade baked goods. Museum Store open during intermission. Donation \$6 - \$12, children free.

At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Flashlight w/ DJs Studebaker Hawk and Andujar, \$3 cover, 9 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: Tracy & Co, rock & roll, 9:30 p.m.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12th & 13th
Pothole Pictures, Memorial Hall, Shelburne Falls: *Wuthering Heights*, 1939, b & w, directed by William Wyler, 7:30 p.m.; music before at 7 p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13th
At the Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: seasonal nature crafts with Rachel Roberts. For all ages! 1 to 2 p.m. Also crafting on 12/20.

Tree Decorating, Peskeomskut Park, Turners Falls from 4:30 - 6 p.m. sponsored by the Montague Business Association. We'll decorate an evergreen tree set up in the bandshell. Free refreshments. Seasonal musical entertainment and a visit from Santa. Bring any type of ornament to decorate; homemade ornaments encouraged.

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An English and American Christmas Carol Concert with The All Saints Choirs, a polished touring ensemble of 40 singers on Saturday, December 20th 7 to 8:30 p.m. (90 minutes, with Santa's Stretch Break in the middle) in Memorial Hall, Shelburne Falls. The Choir of Men and Boys and Choir of Girls and Adults from All Saints Church, Worcester awaken Christmas past in this delightful program for the whole family featuring carols from England and America such as "O little town of Bethlehem" and "Once in Royal David's City", other sacred favorites appropriate to the season (such as Biebl's "Ave Maria" and the Gloria from Mozart's "Coronation Mass") Included will be secular gems like "Jingle Bells," "We wish you a merry Christmas" and "Chestnuts roasting on an open fire," and audience sing-alongs. The choirs are fresh from a two week Tour of England, having received the rare invitation to sing with three of the most prestigious and famous English Cathedral choirs. Much can be seen and heard at www.allsaints.org.

Recover Project: 5th Annual Winter Dance, 8:30 p.m. to midnight, Greenfield Youth Center, 20 Sanderson Street, Greenfield. \$5 suggested donation, 12 and under free. Family friendly, drug & alcohol free. Light refreshments for sale. Benefit for Adopt-a-Family program. Music by DJ Laurie B.

Make-It-Yourself family craft fair, Montague Center Grange. Affordable, guided craft activities for all ages! Cool jewelry, boxes, beeswax candles, painted glass ornaments, gnomes, paper crafts, picture frames, lavender sachets, and more. Warm food and baked goods available. 10 - 3 p.m. Montague Grange & CISA's Senior Farm Share benefit. 367-9608, laurie-davidson@verizon.net

At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Voo and Ryan & Casey Bourbon Tasting with Bok Choy Jazz, 6 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Richard Chase Group*, Acoustic Folk, Singer Songwriter, 9 to 11 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Turn it Loose*, rock & roll, their only area show at 9:30 p.m.

FRIDAY TO SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12th TO 14th
Welcome Yule: A Midwinter Celebration. Music, dance, songs and stories celebrating the return of the light. A show for all ages at the Shea Theater, Turners Falls, 12/12 & 12/13 at 7:30 p.m. and 12/14 at 2 p.m. \$10/\$7 for seniors & children, four & under free. Reserve tickets at (413)

863-2281. Info. (413) 772-2213 or check www.wel-comeyule.org.

SATURDAY & SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13th & 14th
Wendell Holiday Fair, featuring local artisans, crafts people, farmers and musicians to welcome the holiday spirit. Selections of hand-made jewelry, pottery, paintings, drawings, and art pieces. Gourmet

Prison in Virginia. At The Brick House, Turners Falls. 7 p.m. Free. Refreshments donated by Green Fields Market. Donations to the Hot Spot teen center accepted.

How to Start a Common Good Bank in Your Community, a multimedia presentation, 6:45 p.m. at Wendell Library. For more information, visit common-goodbank.com or (413) 628-3336.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17th
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Quizmastah Chad's Quiznite Quiz, 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18th
Montague Business Association Third Thirsty Thursday social networking event at the Night Kitchen, Montague Center, 5 to 7 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: Open Mic hosted by Peter Kim & Jimmy Arnold, 8:30 p.m. no cover.

At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Lisa Davol & Steve Alves Holiday Song Night, 8 p.m. free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Wailin' Dave Robinson, Tommy Filault & Co.*, blues based roots music, 8 to 10 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19th
Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Joint Compound*, rockers, 9:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Josh Levangie*, country folk guitar featuring Johnny Cash favorites, 9 - 11 p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20th
Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Reprobates*, rocken/blues dance party Roadhouse Holiday party, 9:30 p.m.

At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *ROCKIT QUEER* (the dance party) \$3

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21st
Solstice services with *Eventide* choir, an all-volunteer gathering of singers whose sole mission is to provide songs of hope and healing for the terminally ill, their caregivers, and for life-affirming public events. *Eventide* sings at the

lunch by the Diemand Farm. All proceeds benefit the Swift River Music Department. Held in Wendell Town Hall, Wendell Common. Sat. 10 am - 5 pm and Sun. 11 am to 4 pm. Lunch noon to 1:30 p.m. amdandaand-joes@nwtzero.net

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14th
Breakfast with Santa at the Montague Elks Club, Turners Falls. Adults \$4, Students/Seniors \$3/10 & under \$2. Benefit for the Turners Falls High School Class 2011.

Scandinavian dance, Montague Grange, Montague Center. A Yuletide celebration and open request dancing follows teaching. Live music will be provided by Marilyn Butler, Joanna Morse and friends. 3 to 6 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Second Sunday Comedy*, three comics, \$5, lot of laughs at 7 p.m.

At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *TNT KARAOKE* 8 p.m.-midnight, free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Steve Crow, Peter Kim & Joe Fitzpatrick*, warped americana, 7:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16th
Undergrowth Farm presents, *Three Thousand Years and Life and Up The Ridge* two one-hour documentary film on prisons. The first film features live footage of Walpole Prison in the 1970s, as prisoners living in horrific conditions organized themselves into a prisoner's union and effectively took control of the prison. The 2nd film documents the current state of the prison industry, focusing on the Wallens Ridge State

Longest Night Service at 7 p.m. at the First Congregational Church, Greenfield. *Longest Night Service* provides a sacred, reflective space for people living through dark and difficult times, open to all.

ONGOING
At the Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Winning entries of the Massachusetts Junior Duck Stamp competition on display through December 13th.

Select Photographs: 1956 thru 2005 by Paul Caponigro in Gallery 52 & 56, Hallmark Museum of Contemporary Photography, Turners Falls. Gallery 85: Lois Greenfield - *Celestial Bodies, Infernal Souls*. Through Dec. 14th.

Memorial Hall Theater
POTHOLE PICTURES

Friday & Saturday Dec. 12th & 13th at 7:30 p.m. WUTHERING HEIGHTS
Emily Bronte's compelling and tragic book is captured wonderfully in this film by William Wyler. An Oscar winner for Cinematography, the film is both beautiful and sorrowful retelling of Heathcliff and Catherine's doomed love affair, with Laurence Olivier & Merle Oberon as the mismatched lovers in late-18th century England. 1939. NR. B&W. 104 min.

Music before movie at 7 p.m.
51 Bridge St., Shelburne Falls 625-2896

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Showtimes for Friday, Dec. 12th - Thursday, Dec. 18th

- BOLT**
DAILY 6:30 9:00 PG
MATINEE, FRI, SAT, SUN 12:00 3
- AUSTRALIA** R DTS sound
DAILY 7:10
FRI, SAT, SUN 12:00 3:30
- FOUR CHRISTMASSES**
DAILY 6:30 9:00 PG
MATINEE FRI, SAT, SUN 12:00 3
- QUANTUM OF SOLACE** PG13
DAILY 6:40 9:20
FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15
- TWILIGHT**
DAILY 6:40 9:20 PG13
FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15
- W** PG13 DTS sound
DAILY 7:00 9:30
FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30
- DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL**
DAILY 7:00 9:30 DTS sound
FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30 PG13

HOT SPOT TEEN CENTER
MONDAYS - Drop-in, 3 - 6 p.m.
TUES & WEDS - Ongoing Music Project, 3 - 6 p.m.
THURS - Drop-in, 3 - 6 p.m. & Movie Night, 6 - 8 p.m.
Free (except some trips), open to local teens. Some require permission slips.
Info: Jared at 863-9559.
Hot Spot Teen Center is in The Brick House
24 Third Street, Turners Falls, 01376

Dona Joe Cafe & Pub
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Friday, 12/12, 9 - 11 p.m.
Indie Rock: *Wildwood Unplugged*
Saturday, 12/13, 9 - 11 p.m.
Acoustic Folk/Singer Songwriter:
Richard Chase Group
Sunday, 12/14, 7:30 p.m.
Warped Americana: *Steve Crow, Peter Kim & Joe Fitzpatrick*

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Sun 12/14 | 8PM | FREE
TNT KARAOKE til midnight

Weds 12/17 | 8PM | Quizmastah Chad's Quiznite Quiz !!!

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IMAGES FROM ARTS & ICICLES

Photos
Lisa Davol



Bus Window Art, Carriage House Designs



Spencer Peterman,
Bowls



Great Lighting!



Juanita Benson, was among the artists whose work was on display at the Brick House Gallery



Helen Gibson and Jim Uguccioni admired the work of Lois Greenfield at Hallmark Gallery 85

BRICK HOUSE GALLERY
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 10am - 5pm
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 50 Local Artists, Authors, Musicians & More!
 www.thebrickhouseinc.org



Laura Pulbaski and Christa Snyder, with a work of art at 2nd Street Bakery

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