



Welcome Yule

RETURNING TO THE SHEA
THIS WEEKEND

LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 10 - NO. 11

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

DECEMBER 8, 2011

Next Steps Considered for Mahar Regionalization

BY KATIE NOLAN

ORANGE – After the Wendell and Petersham town meetings voted down a proposal for a hybrid school region, the Mahar regionalization planning board (RPB) debated whether to go back to the drawing board or give up on the effort to change the regional agreement. After a frank discussion of the issues leading to the proposal's defeat in Wendell and Petersham, the RPB voted on December 1st to mull over the obstacles and reach a decision on next steps at their meeting on January 19th.

The rejected agreement sought to create a hybrid K-12 region for Orange and Petersham, with New Salem and Wendell continuing as 7-12 regional partners in Mahar. For grades K-6, New Salem and Wendell would remain part of a two-town elementary school region under the Union 28 superintendent.

Although the changes to the regional agreement were accepted by Orange and New Salem, they were narrowly rejected by Petersham and voted down overwhelmingly in Wendell.

Wendell sent finance committee co-chairs Jim Slavos and Michael Idoine and selectboard chair Christine Heard to the meeting.

Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools consultant Ken Roche laid out four possibilities for the committee: go back to Wendell and Petersham for a second try at passing the revised agreement; go back to all four towns with further modifications; take a break and return to the work in several months; or decide the towns have irreconcilable differences and end the RPB's work.

Roche called the process of attempting to revise the Mahar regional agreement "interesting and intense." He cautioned members if they continued to work on an agreement for a hybrid region, they needed to "design forward" and consider increased collaboration, with open discussion on resolving differences among the member towns.

Committee chair Mike LeBlanc of Petersham said after going to all four town meetings his view was, see STEPS page 12

Health Center Moves to Greenfield DENTAL CLINIC REMAINS IN MONTAGUE CITY FOR NOW

BY LEE WICKS

Moving is never easy, especially when a freak snowstorm in October causes additional delays, but for the Community Health Center of Franklin County moving into their new facility at the Cherry Rum Plaza in Greenfield makes it all worth while. With 11 examination rooms for adults and seven for pediatric care, a spacious waiting room, and an on-site lab, the center is positioned to serve a range of health care needs in Franklin County for all comers, regardless of ability to pay.

"Anyone who walks through the door will be cared for," said executive director George Barton.

The mission is not new, but the new space will allow the organization to serve more people, and the new location is easy to access. The FRTA runs buses right to the door, and the center is just off the exit ramp from Route 2. Barton said the move to Greenfield from the health center's former home in a wing of the Farren Care Center in Montague City has not



Community Health Center director George Barton

resulted in lost clients.

According to the organization's website, www.chcfc.org, "The Community Health Center of Franklin County serves everyone. Our practitioners can provide care for everyone in your family, from babies to elders. Most of our patients live in Franklin County or the North Quabbin, and we try to meet the needs of each patient by participating in numerous commercial insurance plans, Medicare, Commonwealth Care and MassHealth. We also offer a sliding fee scale program

for people without insurance."

Barton said, "People on staff stand ready to help with the necessary paperwork, and the portion of the facility dedicated to billing and records is separate from the treatment area, so that an individual's economic status is not known once he or she enters the examination room."

The center is now serving 9,800 people per year, and Barton says he hopes to add 3,000 more patients over the next three years, at a pace that's appropriate. He notes that people with

commercial health insurance also choose the center for its quality of care and convenience. This creates healthy diversity and reflects well on the center's dedicated doctors and staff.

Barton said, "The doctors who work here are special people. They understand the complicated patient base. Retention is good. This is not a revolving door for doctors. They stay and get to know their patients and families over time."

Barton, who grew up in the Berkshires, is dedicated to promoting public health. Prior to directing the Community Health Center of Franklin County, he held a similar post in Iowa at a community clinic that served 30,000 people a year. The smaller scale of this health center and its proximity to family drew him to the job.

In the brand new conference room, outfitted with computers so training can begin on electronic record keeping, Barton smiled often while reflecting on the mission of the center. "This is a patient-driven see HEALTH page 5

Furbishing the Avenue

Equi's Seasonal Candies



Walter Williams is the proprietor at Equi's Candy Store.

TURNERS FALLS – Once the unseasonal warm weather we have experienced departs, a beloved holiday candy tradition is waiting in the wings at Equi's Candy on 125 Avenue A in Turners

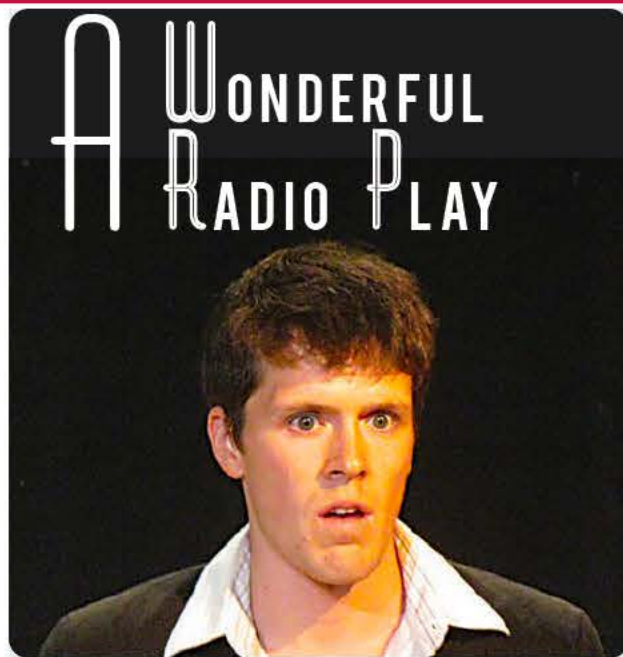
Falls. Candy chef Walter Williams has all the ingredients on hand and is just waiting for the temperatures to dip before turning out the candy canes that have come to be synonymous with the holidays in

these parts. Soon, you will be able to stuff stockings with tasty, colorful hand-made candy canes, and present special treats for Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Christmas or whatever tradition you celebrate.

Homemade popcorn balls might appear first on the shelves at Equi's, as they can be made in any temperature. Equi's popcorn balls follow a century-old recipe and are flavored with molasses, unlike the processed products we see in chain stores this time of year.

When the temperature gets cooler, Williams will turn out batches of his famous white chocolate. It's enough to make you pray for snow.

Cool weather is also essential to turn out Equi's homemade peanut brittle, see EQUIS pg 14



Matthew Clark is George Bailey in the New Renaissance Players' radio-on-stage production of It's a Wonderful Life.

TURNERS FALLS – The New Renaissance Players make great theater even when they just stand there with their scripts in their hands and read out loud.

In fact, their fine reimagining of Frank

Capra's Christmas classic, *It's a Wonderful Life*, adapted for radio-on-stage by Los Angeles based sonic showman Tony Palermo, manages to leave the luster of old Hollywood Stars like Jimmie Stewart and Donna

Reed undimmed while bringing the spotlight and audio up on their modern stage counterparts in Turners Falls.

It's an alchemical reaction involving an old On Air sign, a table full of bells and whistles, and an audience more than willing to splice the moving picture montages in their minds atop the sound effects and voices at the Shea to produce a wonderful night of participatory drama for young and old.

At first blush, you would not think a staged reading of an abbreviated movie script could work its magic as effectively as this one does. The house lights are up, and so is the curtain as the audience wanders in to find four microphones standing at the front of the stage, with the players arranged in chairs in a semi-circle to the rear. The cast is barefoot, wearing stockings or see RADIO page 13

PET OF THE WEEK

Off the Scale Cute



Tad

My name is Tad. I'm a one-year-old female American-English spotted rabbit in need of a good home. We rabbits are very social creatures and we love to play. We are easily litter trained and we form close bonds with our owners. And of course we are off the scale when it comes to cuteness. So, if you're looking for a new addition to your family maybe it's time to consider making a bunny like me your new best friend. To find out more about adopting me, please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at 413-548-9898 or via email at info@dpvhs.org.

RECYCLE
BOTTLES & CANS!
 Week of December 13th in Montague

 more info? call: 863-2054

Great Falls Middle School Students of the Week
Grade 6
 Kyleigh Williams
 Alex Gheorghita
Grade 7
 Kailie Lynch
Grade 8
 Nadia Hasan

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LEVERETT LIBRARY NEWS

Author Mark Vonnegut Book Signing

Mark Vonnegut, M.D., will discuss his memoir *Just Like Someone Without Mental Illness Only More So*, on Thursday, December 15th, 7:00 to 8:00 pm, at the Library. Signed copies will be available to purchase. "Two not unrelated challenges – being novelist Kurt Vonnegut's son and suffering episodes of schizophrenia – shape, but don't confine, this mordantly witty, slightly subversive memoir." —Publishers Weekly

depiction of normal life in between interruptions of mental illness. It's about how much one can accomplish, while a history of insanity follows close behind. ...[The author] writes vividly and personally about surviving bipolar disorder, about returning to a reality that's been snapped... Vonnegut's memoir is ultimately about how bipolar disorder can shape, but not define, a life." — National Public Radio (npr.org)
 The library is located at 75 Montague Road in Leverett, www.leverettlibrary.org.

"An honest, witty and vivid

CARNEGIE LIBRARY NEWS

Gingerbread House Workshop a Huge Success



LINDA HICKMAN PHOTO

TURNERS FALLS - Dawn and Dylan McLaughlin of Turners Falls were among the over 90 people who showed up to make easy gingerbread houses at the Carnegie Library on Saturday, December 3rd. There was frosting and candy everywhere as children of all ages, teens, and parents worked on their creations. For families with young children who missed the program, there will be another chance to make easy gingerbread houses during Story Hour on Wednesday, December 14th, at 10:15 a.m. in the Carnegie Library. For more information, call 413-863-3214.

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES – December 11th through 16th

GILL-MONTAGUE Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Congregate meals are served Tuesday through Thursday at noon. Meal reservations must be made one day in advance by 11:00 a.m. The meal site manager is Kerry Togneri. Council on Aging director is Roberta Potter. All fitness classes are supported by a grant from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Voluntary donations are accepted. For information, meal reservations, or to sign up for programs, call 413-863-9357. Messages can be left on our machine if the center is not open.

- Monday, December 12th**
 9:00 a.m. Foot Clinic by appointment
 10:00 a.m. Aerobics
 10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise
 1:00 p.m. Knitting Circle
- Tuesday, December 13th**
 10:30 a.m. Seated Health Program
 12:45 p.m. COA Meeting
- Wednesday, December 14th**
 9:00 a.m. Foot Clinic by Appointment
 10:00 a.m. Aerobics
 11:15 a.m. Friends' Meeting
 12:00 p.m. Birthday Lunch (Cake by Food City)
 12:45 p.m. Bingo
- Thursday, December 15th**
 9:00 a.m. Tai Chi
 1:00 p.m. Pitch
- Friday, December 16th**
 10:00 a.m. Aerobics

10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise
 1:00 p.m. Writing Group

ERVING Senior Center, 18 Pleasant Street, Ervingside (Old Center School, 1st Floor), is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for activities and congregating meals. For information and reservations, call Polly Kiely, Senior Center Director, at 413-423-3308. Mealsite Manager is Jim Saracino. Lunch is daily at 11:30 a.m., with reservations 24 hours in advance. Transportation can be provided for meals, shopping, or medical necessity. Please call the Senior Center to confirm activities, schedule and to find out when the next blood pressure clinic will be held.

- Sunday, December 11th**
 Open House - 1 Care Drive
- Monday, December 12th**
 9:00 a.m. Tai Chi
 10:00 a.m. Osteo-Exercise
 12:00 p.m. Pitch
- Tuesday, December 13th**
 8:45 a.m. Chair Aerobics
 12:30 p.m. Painting
- Wednesday, December 14th**
 8:45 a.m. Line Dancing/Zumba
 12:00 p.m. Bingo
- Thursday, December 15th**
 8:45 a.m. Aerobics
 10:00 a.m. Posture Perfect
- Friday, December 16th**
 9:00 a.m. Bowling
 11:30 a.m. Lunch - Roast Pork
 1:00 p.m. Music is Love, a Christmas concert. This program is supported by a grant from the



JOSEPH A. PARZYCH PHOTO

Work resumed removing concrete on the Gill end of the bridge to Turners this week, on a rainy December day, with the SPS New England crew breaking up the old decking on the upstream side of the bridge. Two more years of one lane travel are projected before the bridge renovation is complete.

WENDELL LIBRARY NEWS

Playground Fund Benefit at Full Moon

Wendell Full Moon Coffee House to benefit the Friends of the Library Playground Fund is scheduled for Saturday, December 10th. Construction at the Wendell center playground (next to the Library) is finally underway and from the looks of the 12 feet tall, black locust post now embedded in the ground exciting plans are in the works.

So, put on your dancing shoes and come to Wendell's Full Moon Coffeehouse Saturday, Dec 10th to support the Friends of the Wendell Free Library Playground Fund.

Reggae sensation and local

talent, Rhythm Incorporated, will be the featured performers. Morningstar's Wendell Chorus, of recent flash mob fame, will perform at the Open Mic. Fabulous Dessert-O-Rama will be available all evening.

Doors open at 7:00 p.m. Open mic starts at 7:30 p.m. The main act comes on shortly after 8:00 p.m. and plays til 11:00 or so, with chairs often cleared away for dancing.

Sliding scale donation requested: Adults \$6-\$15; Children over 6: \$2-\$6. If you haven't been to a Wendell Full Moon Coffeehouse before this is a perfect night to experience Wendell's famous home town fun.

Bakers may still be needed for the Coffeehouse Dessert-O-Rama. Please call the library if you would like to bake at 978 544-3559. The library is located at 7 Wendell Depot Road.

ERVING Cultural Council, a local agency, which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

- LEVERETT Senior Activities**
- Take-It-Easy (Chair) Yoga – Wednesdays, 10:00 a.m. at the Town Hall. Drop-in \$4.00 (first class free).
 - Senior Lunch – Fridays, 12:00 p.m. Call 413-367-2694 by Wednesday for a reservation.
 - For information, contact the Leverett COA at 413-548-1022, ext. 5 or coa@leverett.ma.us.

WENDELL Senior Center is at 2 Lockes Village Road. Call Nancy Spittle, 978-544-6760 for hours and upcoming programs. Call the Center for a ride.

Sunday, December 18th
 7:00 p.m. The Wendell COA Film Series presents: *Bell, Book and Candle* plus *Cat Dreams*, an experimental video at Wendell Free Library. All ages welcome. Based on a hit Broadway show of the time, *Bell, Book and Candle* (1958), stars 50s superstars Kim Novak and James Stewart. Another important character in *Bell, Book and Candle* is a cat named Pyewacket. After the movie's successful release, thousands of cats across America were named Pyewacket. The short feature this month, *Cat Dreams*, also features a cat, but, unlike the main feature, has no plot, characters, or soundtrack. It's also mercifully short (4 minutes).

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Local Briefs

JESSICA LARKIN ILLUSTRATION

COMPILED BY DON CLEGG - The Franklin County sheriff's department, the Montague police department and Greenfield Savings Bank are partnering to provide **identity kits** for local children on Saturday, December 10th, from 9:00 a.m. to noon at 282 Avenue A in Turners Falls. These kits can be a tremendous life-saving aid for law enforcement if they are called to help find a missing child. Your child's photo and fingerprints will be recorded in a folder free of charge by the FCSD, MPD and GSB. For questions, please call Linda or Kerri at 413-863-4316

During the darkest time of the year, people everywhere gather for songs, stories, and celebrations. **Welcome Yule: A Midwinter Celebration**, brings those traditions alive at the Shea Theater in Turners Falls on December 9th, 10th, and 11th. This year, a huge polar bear and a fairy tale cast of puppets join the Welcome Yule chorus of adults and children. Stories and dances are interwoven with a mix of traditional English carols, boisterous pub songs, and rousing four-part shape note songs.

Friday and Saturday night shows start at 7:30 p.m.; the Sunday matinee starts at 2:00 p.m. Reserve tickets at 413-863-2281 or purchase in advance at the Jones Library in Amherst, Broadside Books in Northampton, World Eye Bookstore in Greenfield, or online at Brattleborotix.com. For information, call 413-665-3206 or visit www.welcomeyule.org

Digital cameras can pose a powerful but perplexing challenge for the uninitiated. Guy Biechele, a talented art photographer and teacher from Athol, will present a class at the Petersham Craft Center on Saturday, December 10th, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on how to **get the most out of the**

Digital Single Lens Reflex (DSLR) camera. The class will explore metering and exposure modes, lens choices, flash options, JPEG vs. Raw, and how to use your camera for its best effect for family portraits, landscapes and other subjects. Call the Craft Center at 978-724-3415 for information and to register.

Three artisans in Conway, **"A Potter, a Weaver and a Candlestick Maker,"** will host open studios on Saturday, December 10th from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., with a snow date of Sunday, December 11th. Blacksmith Bob Compton will have the Rising Sun Forge fired up to demonstrate the art of hand forged iron. Weaver and felt maker Sue McFarland will explain the workings of a four harness loom, while potter Megan Hart demonstrates the different stages of producing pottery. Bob Compton of Rising Sun Forge is located at 101 Wilder Hill; Sue McFarland is located at 86A Main Street; Megan Hart of Hart Pottery is located at 192 Academy Hill.

Carve a potato for printing and use it to make your own **recycled wrapping paper.** Or, use old calendars for arty envelopes. Other green wrapping techniques will be shared at "Art and Soul," a groovy gift store chock-full of great kids' toys and local crafts, cards and other creative and beautiful presents on Saturday, December 10th, from 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Northfield Mountain Recreation Area, Route 63 in Northfield. For ages 12 and older; more info at: 800-859-2960.

The **Wendell Fullmoon Coffeehouse** on Saturday, December 10th, 7:30 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. features Wendell's own reggae sensation Rhythm Incorporated. Sliding scale admission fee; all ages welcome. Partial proceeds go to

Donovan Receives MassRecycle's 2011 "Recycler of the Year" Award

BOSTON - Amy Donovan of Franklin County Solid Waste District received this year's Gold Award for Recycler of the Year from MassRecycle, the statewide Recycling Coalition.

Amy Donovan's outstanding outreach skills and countless hours of hands-on work has kept tons of recyclable and compostable materials out of landfills and incinerators. Her dynamic accomplishments include establishing the recy-

cling and organics program at the Franklin County Fair, which recycled one ton of bottles, cans and containers, and composted one ton of food and paper waste this year; creating the Shelburne Falls Compost Collaborative, which enables seven local businesses to send source separated food and paper waste to a composting facility; setting up organics collection programs at four municipal transfer stations; assisting thirty public schools

and numerous private schools with recycling, composting and waste reduction; contributing to Springfield Materials Recycling Facility's annual Reduce, Reuse, Recycle guide, and frequently sharing her wisdom at local and regional recycling conferences and workshops. It is for these accomplishments and more that MassRecycle is pleased to present Amy Donovan with the Recycler of the Year Award.

Montague will no Longer Sell Hunting and Fishing Licenses

BY DEB BOURBEAU - The town of Montague will no longer be selling Massachusetts Hunting or Fishing Licenses as of January 1st, 2012.

New rules and regulations from the Department of Fish and Game are making it difficult for cities or towns to continue selling

the annual licenses.

Locals will still be able to purchase the licenses at Pipione's Sport Shop, 101 Avenue A in Turners Falls, and at other area sporting goods stores.

Licenses can also be purchased online at: www.Mass.Gov/MassFishHunt

The Montague town clerk's office would like to say, "Thank you!" for your patronage over the years and continued good luck to all the hunters and fisherfolk we have come to know.

Deb Bourbeau is the Montague town clerk.

Mutton and Mead Auditions

BY MICHAEL MULLER MONTAGUE - Mutton & Mead, a Robin Hood-themed theatrical event and festival held in Montague at the Millers Falls Rod and Gun Club on June 23rd & 24th, 2012, will hold auditions for performers at the Montague Grange hall, 36 Main Street in Montague

Center (on the town common), on Saturday, January 21st through Monday, January 23rd.

At this year's festival, a medieval shire and tavern will be populated with characters who will tell the tale of Robin Hood through stage and street performances over the course of a day filled with great shop-

ping at a recreated outdoor country market, great food and great fun! There will be stage shows, games, demonstrations and activities for all ages.

Mutton and Mead needs actors, singers and musicians, both novice and professional, to help bring the streets of our humble village alive. Go to the website to sign up to audition.

Mutton and Mead also seeks "extras," performers who play a less involved but nonetheless important role as the day unfolds. Theater, stage and set crews, volunteers, demonstrators, crafters, vendors and other stage and street shows are also needed to help the shire town come to life.

Mutton and Mead aims to provide a creative venue for the community. We welcome ideas on how we can make that happen. For information, questions, to sign up or audition, visit our website: www.MuttonandMead.com.



DETMOLD PHOTO

the support of the Wendell Free Library. Open mic will be from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. before the band goes on. The coffeehouse is held in the historic Wendell town hall, on the common.

The Mid-Week Music concert series on Wednesday, December 14th, from 12:15 p.m. to 12:45 p.m. features the **Greenfield High School Select**

Chorus, directed by Paul Calcari, performing Christmas selections. Proceeds are donated to the Greenfield Recorder's "Warm the Children" fund. The performance will be held at All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church located at 399 Main Street, in Greenfield.

Send local briefs to: reporter-local@montaguema.net.

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Blessed with Love of Home

BY LEE WICKS – American Airlines announced bankruptcy last week. It's gone now, like TWA and Pan-Am, and a time when travel seemed glamorous and little girls wanted to be airline stewardesses when they grew up.

Apparently, travel is anything but glamorous these days, as evidenced by a catalog I received in the mail. How the company chose me, I'll never know. Occasional train tickets to New York from New Haven hardly make me a world traveler.

I am blessed with love of place, in my case the villages, farm fields and hills of Franklin County, and cursed by a fear of flying. So imagine my delight when this slim publication aimed at people who travel a lot confirmed my every fear, starting on page 6 advertising a wallet that "protects credit cards from thieves who can scan identity tags and steal your identity."

Moving on to page 24, I found a double loop luggage lock that "prevents thieves from unzipping your bag while the other loop secures to any fixed object to prevent cut-and run theft."

I didn't know that a whole market exists in "undercover security," claimed to be the best defense against pickpockets. This is a line of pouches made to conceal in your underwear. These can be ordered in white or khaki, making me wonder why not black, since so many travelers wear black because it does not show the dirt that apparently lurks in all public places and hotel rooms.

Worried about that? Don't. You can order your very own collapsible travel cup and never again suspect that the bathroom glass in your hotel

room was casually swiped with a dirty cloth. Concerned about unsanitary bathrooms? Buy a biodegradable bag that ties around your waist for use as a disposable toilet and includes tissue and a wet wipe. Or, "When the toilet is too dirty to sit-down, a woman can stand with the help of a medical grade silicone funnel." Who knew?

And the bathroom is not the only concern. With a special UV black light that reveals the presence of bio-fluids, you can determine the cleanliness of hotel bedding. Finally, since bedbugs can be a problem even at the best hotels, one might want to bring along a natural bedbug-killer and some bedbug luggage spray and luggage liner to make sure none of the critters travel home with you. Of course, you can also bring your own silk sheets, but you would still want the bedbug spray to protect your own travel sleep pouch from infestation.

Since so many people catch colds while breathing the recycled air in plane cabins, there's now a device you can wear around your neck that purifies the air you breath. If you prefer a spray, there's an anti-fungal, anti-bacterial formula that prevents viral infections by creating an unwelcoming environment for germs to reproduce.

I love some of the featured clothing, especially the disposable underwear (leaves room in your suitcase for the stuff you buy along the way), and a vest with individual hidden pockets for keys, passports, iPads, sunscreen, money, cell phones and those aforementioned personal care items. I might use one of those here at home, but then I realized that I can never remember which pouch in my backpack

"Another lump of coal for the fire, Uncle?"



"Humbug! You're adding to Global Warming. Put on another sweater."

Humbug? Greenhouse gas emissions jumped by the largest amount on record in 2010 – 5.9% – according to the Global Climate Project. Heat trapping gasses in the Earth's atmosphere have increased 36% since the Industrial Revolution.

holds my cell phone when it rings. That said, there are some wonderful long-sleeved shirts that filter UV rays in tropical climates while wicking away odor causing moisture, otherwise known as perspiration.

Now I do know that most people travel without the fear and paranoia inspired by this particular catalog. Still, this publication gave me pause. Does it really portray the state of travel today? Globe trotting friends say that planes are crowded with very little legroom, and American travelers are very vulnerable to theft, which is not surprising as the gap between rich and poor widens worldwide. In November an old friend had his camera and laptop stolen in Greece. Fifteen years ago when my husband and I summoned the courage to travel to Italy, we were warned about gypsies. There are pickpockets in New York City so skilled that you won't realize anything happened when that person bumped into you until an hour later when you look for your wallet.

So I will stay home for the holidays and the foreseeable future. I will shop locally, enjoy food from my winter share CSA, and save money on gas, the anti-anxiety drugs I would surely need were I to get on a plane, and the costs of boarding the dogs. I will rely on the travel photos my friends post on Facebook, and on documentaries that tell me more about remote locations than I could ever glean as a tourist. I will also save money on luggage fees since carrying all those personal necessities would certainly put me over the weight limit.

TO THE EDITOR

Perfect Record on Alcohol Check

A total of 17 establishments selling alcohol in Montague were checked twice over the past year and all were in compliance with the laws prohibiting the sale of alcohol to minors.

The checks were implemented by a unique collaboration between a youth substance abuse prevention coalition, Communities that Care, and 15 towns throughout Franklin County and the North Quabbin

region that signed onto the Franklin County Alcoholic Beverages Compliance Initiative Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The Gill Montague Community School Partnership salutes those 17 Montague establishments for helping to prevent underage drinking.

- Cate Woolner
Gill-Montague Community School Partnership

Grateful for Return of Wallet

I am writing an extremely belated but completely heartfelt letter of gratitude to the honest citizen who found my wallet along the bike path by the river in Turners a few months ago and turned it in to the police.

Thank you!
I didn't even realize my wallet had gone missing until I got the call from the police station. I must have dropped it while get-

ting a piggyback ride to avoid walking through deep puddles (yes, really.)

The police said the honest person did not leave their name with them, but I hope you are reading this letter and know your actions are not only appreciated but confirm a goodness that still exists in the world.

-Anne Jemas
Turners Falls

Little Known Facts of Composting, Revealed

I enjoyed the story about the composting programs at the area schools (MR X #10 – G-M Schools Begin Districtwide Waste Reduction Program). I particularly liked the quote from the young man who said the compost is turned into soil and then fed to cows. I always wondered how that worked.

Thanks for keeping me informed.

- Laura Herbert Erving

Praise for the Gardeners Companion

Leslie Brown's column, "The Gardener's Companion," is a prize!

I always look forward to it and am never disappointed.

Her writing style is interesting, down-to-earth and always gives you something to ponder.

-Nancy Dole
Shelburne Falls

Give the Gift of Local News

Still thinking about what to get family, friends, neighbors, who are on your holiday shopping list? Want to give a meaningful, useful gift? Think the *Montague Reporter*.

At least once in every three conversations I have with fellow townspeople I now say, "Did you see it in the *Reporter*?" or "I wish you subscribed to the *Reporter*." Democracy, of the people for the people, depends on an informed population. Where else can you find your local school committee or selectboard meetings thought-

fully described, with the background information you need to be in the know? And I won't even mention all the other great features you could be sharing with those near to you.

For local delivery, the paper costs so little, and even the regular low price is reduced by \$5 for gifts this time of year. Just use the form to the left hand side of the page. It's a perfect way to show you care, and it lasts all year. (Although cookies are nice too.)

- Tanya Cushman, Leverett
for the MR Board of Directors



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U.S. Casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan as of 11/29/11



NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

Boiler Replacement May Wait for Spring

BY DAVID DETMOLD - Replacement of the leaking boiler at the Gill safety complex may have to wait until spring.

Putting the \$55,000 project out to bid would push the award date out almost to the holidays, and the selectboard has yet to take the matter up with the finance committee or set a date for town meeting to appropriate the needed funds.

So the selectboard is hoping the 33-year old furnace will make it through another winter without experiencing a "catastrophic failure."

If it fails, the town will have to take emergency measures to replace the boiler in the middle of the heating season, said Ann Banash. Banash was conferring with her colleagues by speakerphone from her vacation spot in Florida, where the weather was projected to be in the 70s all week.

Administrative assistant Ray Purington said town meeting had already set aside \$20,000 toward the boiler replacement, and the odds seemed good that Entergy Vermont Yankee, which uses the safety complex as a training center for evacuation planning drills, will also kick in \$10,000 toward the project.

But selectboard member John Ward said he had already been feeling the heat from at least one member of the finance committee for not yet bringing the plan to replace the old furnace with two smaller boilers, and changing other aspects of the heating system for long term efficiency, to the finance committee for review.

"If we're not going to do the work until April, there's no rush," counseled Banash.

The sound of a barking dog, followed by a slamming door,

came over the speaker phone at the mention of the finance committee.

Earlier in the meeting, Ward and selectboard chair Randy Crochier had approved the guidelines allowing for remote participation in meetings under the state's open meeting law, allowing Banash to join the discussion and vote. The board's approval of the guidelines clears the way for any other town board to allow members who are far from home (or kept from attending meetings in person by illness or military service) to participate in their board meetings, as long as a quorum is present in the room, and all members of the audience can hear (or see, in the case of Skype) the remote member as they participate.

The board joked that if the meeting had been videotaped, the camera would have had to zoom in for a close up of the speaker phone each time Banash talked. But MCTV, which had been providing a volunteer to videotape and rebroadcast the selectboard meetings for the last several years, has been missing in action in Gill in recent months.

In other news, the town expects to receive \$9,968, or 75% of the cost of the town's cleanup from Hurricane Irene from the Federal Emergency Management Agency in the coming months. No word whether the Hallowe'en snowstorm will receive similar federal designation for disaster relief, but the board remained hopeful on this score, since the town spent at least \$33,000 in the aftermath of that storm.

A draft open space and recreation plan has been posted to the town's website (www.gillma.org) for public

better utilization of recreational areas and facilities like the town forest, the ferry landing off River Road, and the playgrounds at the elementary school and the Riverside Municipal Building. Purington said a number of the three dozen comments on a preliminary open space survey called for the development of a trail system in town, and for more economic development (a theme that seemed surprising in an open space and recreation survey).

The board approved a conservation restriction to be held by the conservation commission on a 30 acre parcel owned by Dick French and Emily Samuels on the east side of Ben Hale Road. The CR will allow for continued agricultural use of the land, along with forestry, wildlife management and other customary uses by the owners, but will prevent its development in perpetuity. The Franklin Land Trust will conduct a baseline survey of the property; no costs will be borne by the town for the transaction.

The town's percentage of student enrollment in the Gill-Montague Regional School District will drop from 15% to 14.4% in FY'13, based on the district's October 1st enrollment figures. Last year, Gill paid \$1,369,741 for its share of the GMRSD assessment, which is divided between the two member towns on the basis of their student enrollment.

On the topic of percentages, the town will pay slightly more (\$114) for its assessment in the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District in the coming fiscal year, due to an upward adjustment in Gill's overall population in the most recent census. In the 2000 census, criticized in Gill for miscounting the population around Northfield Mount Hermon, the town was estimated to contain 1363 resident. In the 2010 census, that figure jumped to an even 1500.

One effect of the rise in population will be a concomitant rise in Gill's assessment at the see GILL pg 14

HEALTH from page 1 environment," he said, adding "Fifty-one percent of our board members are patients. Their input is vital."

Looking forward, he identified expanded dental care as an urgent need. State dental benefits are limited, while the need for good dental care is great. People who are struggling financially tend to neglect their teeth, Barton said, and this can lead to other health problems: periodontal disease, expensive crowns, root canal work, and more.

When the health center moved "over the mountain" to Greenfield, the dental clinic stayed behind in the basement of the Farren. Right now there are only four chairs for dental

clients, and there can be a months-long wait for non-urgent dental care, though slots are always saved for dental emergencies. The center also has a dental hygienist who visits local schools.

Finding the right location and landlord is essential, but Barton looks forward to a time when a new facility for dental care will deliver expanded services.

How is all this funded? Through federal and state grants and private donations. Gifts of all amounts are deeply appreciated and go toward the operating costs of providing health care for uninsured and low-income people. Tax-deductible donations can be sent to: CHCFC, 338 Montague City Rd, Turners Falls, MA 01376. MD

CLARIFICATION

In last week's article on the potential need for an override to fund an anticipated increase in the Leverett Elementary School's budget for FY'13, a paragraph on the June 15th vote to approve a one year renewal in Union 28 superintendent Joan Wickman's contract stated the outcome of that vote unclearly.

The vote was taken by the 15 members of the U-28 advisory committee, with three members appointed by each of the towns - Erving, Wendell, New Salem, Shutesbury and Leverett - in the union. The vote was 11 to 4 in favor of renewing

Wickman's contract, with two of the three members of the Shutesbury and Leverett contingents voting in opposition, and the members from the other three towns voting unanimously in favor.

At the May meeting of the U-28 advisory committee, twelve members of the committee voted favorably on Wickman's evaluation, with five members rating her performance as "above expectations," five rating her performance as "satisfactory," and one member each from Leverett and Shutesbury rating her performance as "below expectations."

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NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Montague will Promote from Within to Pick Permanent Police Chief

BY JANEL NOCKLEBY
Even though the hiring process may be slow for some town departments, care is taken along the way to make sure Montague can afford its staff.

Personnel board decisions made at Monday's selectboard meeting reflect these budgetary concerns.

For example, the permanent police chief position will be filled, hopefully by sometime next fall, in such a way as to use the state civil service exams and assessment center, without getting charged consulting fees by the civil services division. To do that, the selectboard had to agree not to consider police chief candidates from outside the current Montague police department. To ensure the town would have enough qualified candidates to consider for the permanent police chief position, the selectboard, with guidance from town administrator Frank Abbondanzio and administrative secretary Wendy Bogusz, chose to open up the position to patrolmen, including detectives, from within the department.

Now, a flurry of forms will be on their way to the state's civil service division to acknowledge the retirement of chief Ray Zukowski at the end of last month and the appointment

of Christopher Williams as acting police chief. Williams was promoted to that temporary post from the staff sergeant position. The board expects he will serve as acting chief for about a year, until a permanent chief is hired.

The board will also order civil service examinations for the permanent police chief position for the spring of 2012. The board will put in writing how criteria will be weighted during the evaluation of candidates for police chief, relying on civil service exam results for 40% of the determination, results of the civil service assessment center for 40%, and weighing other factors such as the candidate's educational background for 20% of the determination.

A civil service assessment center provides outside staff to help towns evaluate candidates, including detailed interviews regarding a variety of possible real world scenarios.

The board will also initiate the process with civil service to backfill, provisionally, on down the line, the now open staff sergeant position, an open sergeant position (moving an officer up from the reserve list to the patrolman roster).

Basically, if the guy at

the top retires, folks within the ranks of the current police department will move up in position as a result. It just takes time to work through the civil service bureaucracy. The results of the police chief exam and assessment will be available in the fall of 2012, at the soonest. The sergeant's exam is only available next fall, so it will be the spring of 2013 before a permanent sergeant position can be filled.

The selectboard also weighed considerations for staffing at the water pollution and control facility (WPCF) on Monday, when superintendent Bob Trombley made two staffing requests. The first request was to pay Tina Tyler more for her work, now that she has been working as both a department secretary and an assistant laboratory technician for nearly a full year. This pay upgrade would fall within the current WPCF budget constraints, Trombley said, but had not been explicitly budgeted for in FY '12, hence the special request.

The selectboard, especially Pat Allen, expressed concern at setting a precedent of town staff getting new responsibilities and then later getting retroactive pay raises approved, see MONTAGUE pg 11

NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

New Senior Center Ready for Ribbon Cutting

BY KATIE NOLAN - Town administrator Tom Sharp told the selectboard at their December 5th meeting that general contractor MCM USA is completing final construction details at the new \$2.2 million senior center project, and the highway department has started moving furniture into the nearly finished building. Sharp assured the selectboard the new building will be ready for its grand opening on Sunday, December 11th at noon.

Contacted after the meeting, Sharp said the ribbon cutting will take place at noon on Sunday, and that Franklin County sheriff Chris Donelan and state representative Denise Andrews will attend the event. Overflow parking will be available at the Erving Elementary School, with a shuttle to the senior center.

Sharp informed the board that senior center architect John Catlin has yet to provide specifications and a firm estimate for installing a generator in the building. The selectboard asked Sharp to solicit an estimate from a second contractor.

Sharp presented the selectboard with a memorandum of agreement for the regional dog officer

program initiated by the sheriff's department in conjunction with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments. Sharp said, if the town decided to participate, it would cost Erving \$100 for the remainder of FY '12 and \$700 in FY '13, amounts that would not represent a budget increase.

Selectboard chair Andrew Goodwin said he would like to see a policy letter from the sheriff's department spelling out the regional dog officer's role before signing any contracts. Goodwin said he wanted judgment calls for specific dog issues to be made by town employees who know the community.

Sharp replied that he would seek further input from the sheriff's office.

The Community Coalition for Teens wrote to the selectboard to report that during alcohol purchase surveys at Erving's two licensed alcohol retailers, the underage mystery shopper was asked for identification three out of four times. The coalition's goal is a rate of identification requests at 80% or higher.

The selectboard signed thank you letters to Gardner-based Bravo Division of the National Guard for their efforts in

Erving after the October nor'easter and power outage. The town is also sending thank you letters to individual volunteers Tom Easton, Donna LaClaire, Rebecca Meuse, Craig Moore, and Judy Moore, who staffed the Erving warming center after the storm.

Sharp announced that Tighe and Bond would host the December 7th kick-off meeting to start the Erving sewer rehabilitation project.

Eastern Salt Company of Chelmsford was selected to supply road salt, at a cost of \$58.40 per ton delivered. S. Wiggins Hydroseed of Northfield will supply sand at \$9.25 per ton delivered.

At the recommendation of town accountant Deb Mero, the selectboard will ask the December 12th special town meeting to pass over Article 8, concerning the transfer of \$750 from the Water Enterprise Fund to provide a containment system for stored sodium hydroxide at the well pump house. The system will be funded from continuing appropriations rather than the Water Enterprise Fund.

The selectboard accepted Jacquelyn Boyden's resignation from the school regionalization planning committee.

NOTES FROM THE MAHAR REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Superintendent Taken to Task for Blog Post

BY KATIE NOLAN - "For a superintendent to single out a member of the community and make him look like the bad guy is not what we want," said Johanna Bartlett, Wendell's representative to the Mahar school committee on Tuesday night.

Bartlett asked the committee to discuss a blog post by superintendent

Michael Baldassarre in which he characterized Wendell finance committee co-chair Jim Slavas as being an obstruction to the hybrid regionalization plan presented to the four Mahar region towns (New Salem, Orange, Petersham, and Wendell).

The blog post, now removed, appeared on the Mahar website the week

before Wendell's November 15th special town meeting where the revised regional agreement was on the agenda. The hybrid regionalization article failed in Wendell by a vote of 50 to 5.

"My town was upset," Bartlett said. She added the blog contained "nothing outrageous," but people in Wendell were concerned

"Mr. Slavas was called out by name in a tone that seemed disrespectful." Bartlett went on to say the fact that Slavas was singled out in the blog "implied he was acting on his own" although all of the finance committee members shared Slavas's position and voted unanimously to reject the revisions to the regional agreement.

"If you were trying to sway the people of Wendell, it was not working at all," Bartlett told Baldassarre. Noting he was free to state his opinions, she told the committee, "We should make sure we have certain expectations for a superintendent's blog."

Baldassarre apologized for writing the post and

said one lesson for him was, "Don't blog when you're ticked or feel mistreated." He told the committee he wrote the post after reading an Athol Daily News front page article reporting the Wendell selectboard, finance committee, and school committee had all voted to recom-

see MAHAR pg 11

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The Road Less Traveled

A New Way to Celebrate an Old Season

RICHARD ANDERSEN & DIANE LYN

AMHERST - Cancel all plans! Pack the kids in the car! Go see *Solstice*, Montague resident Miguel Romero's latest puppet extravaganza at the UMASS Curtain Theater.

"I want parents to bring their kids and spend time together having fun, coming together to see something live," Romero told us.

"Fun" is an understatement. The carnival of wit, joy, humor, and insight that is *Solstice* may have been created for kids, but like all great kids' stories, it is not a kiddie show.

For as long as there have been people, there have been stories. The ones being told at this time of the year often mark the long, dark nights and celebrate the coming of light. Whether told literally or symbolically, these myths offer

hope and renewal for all who gather to enjoy them.

Five traditional folktales from five different cultures (Apache, Amazon, Japanese, Greek, and Judeo-Christian) are the starting points for Romero's hour-long extravaganza. Each tale is told by puppets that have been fashioned from "found" objects that were of no apparent further use. The most striking of these objects, or at least the ones that Romero has most amazingly transformed from trash to life, are the shoes through which he has created the heads of the many characters that populate *Solstice*.

That he can infuse in these puppets the look and feel of real-life creatures is one measurement of Romero's genius. Another is the freedom he has given his students to give the puppets personalities and, yes,



JON CRISPIN PHOTO

A scene from Miguel Romero's puppet play - Solstice - at the UMASS Curtain Theater

even spirits. In the actor-audience talkback that follows every Friday night performance, some of the students explained how manipulating the puppets allowed them to express thoughts and emotions they otherwise had no outlet for. Perhaps without fully being aware of the reciprocal transformation that

had already taken place but was apparent to anyone listening, many of the puppets had also become a significant part of the students' lives.

And they're not the only ones. We too become part of the puppets' lives and they ours, not just for an evening but as long as we live. The word for this kind

of transcendent experience is "magic."

The last performances for *Solstice* are Friday, December 9th at 8 p.m., and Saturday, December 10th at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Go! Celebrate the turn from night to day and the corresponding enlightenment to take place within you as well.

BY MARK HUDYMA

TURNERS FALLS - The 2012 Powder Puff football game at Turners Falls High School began with the players being recognized by their chosen names: the Giant, the Punisher, the Tank. They streamed onto the field to applause and cheers from the stands, which filled quickly as the game started.

The annual Powder Puff game, organized this year by Deb Loomer, along with senior Haley Ozdarski is a charity flag football game between the junior and senior girls to raise money for Habitat for Humanity. This year, Turners raised \$500 for the organization, which provides volunteer-built low cost housing for families in need.



DAKOTA SMITH-PORTER PHOTO

Football for Humanity

Members of the football team acted as referees, and the junior class sold concessions as part of the fundraiser.

The juniors kicked off to the seniors, and the seniors quickly gained ground, with Jenna Costa earning the first touchdown. After making an early "tackle," senior Emily Pollard raised the pulled flag above her head in triumph before throwing it to the ground. The seniors continued their advantage, catching an interception, and gaining another touchdown.

The seniors' domination continued in the second half of the game, with Costa making a dash

see **SPORTS** page 10

The TFHS

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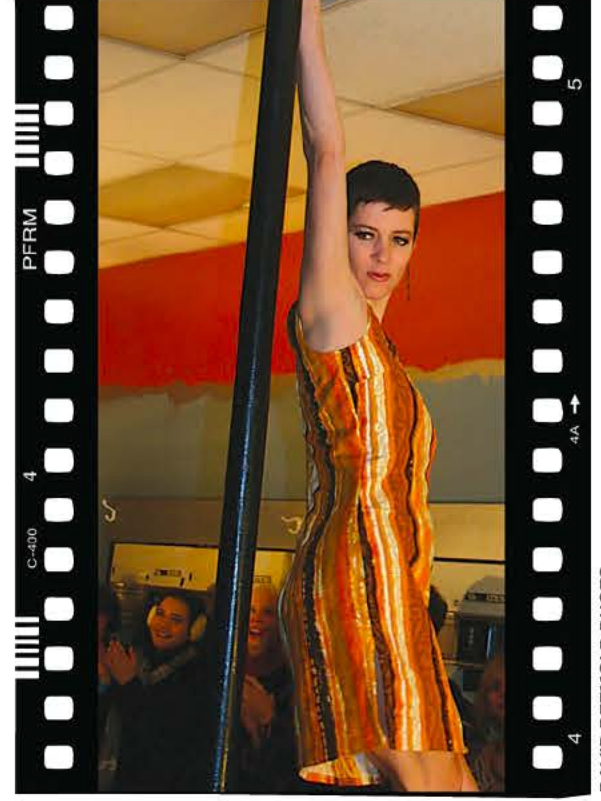
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Model: Cherie Monette



JANEL NOCKLEBY PHOTO

Design Team: Amy Podlenski & Sarah Swanson-Damon; Model: Krystal Glushien



DAVID DETMOLD PHOTO

Designer: Anne Harding
Model: Laura Herbert



JANEL NOCKLEBY PHOTO

Designer: Mary Buckley
Model: Maggie Nowinski



JANEL NOCKLEBY PHOTO

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Days of Yore in Wendell



HEINEMANN PHOTO

Ted Lewis

BY JOSH HEINEMANN - On December 1st, 30 people filled the Marion Herrick room in the Wendell library to hear former selectboard member, road boss, board of health member, firefighter and longtime resident Ted Lewis talk about growing up and

living in what is now Old Wendell. Lewis was relaxed, conversational and entertaining.

He was born in 1929, before the Depression. "Who knows?" Lewis said, "maybe I caused it."

He moved to Wendell with his family in 1933, living in one of

the two houses that stood on West Street in those days. There was no electricity in town, no telephone, and few cars. All the roads were dirt.

Lewis recalled going to the center school and taking the bus to New Salem Academy, with the big kids in back shifting their weight back and forth to make the drive wheels slip on the snowy hills to get the bus stuck. Somehow, even without modern communication devices like the telephone, his mother knew if he had acted up in school even before he got home, Lewis said.

"We kids brought in wood for the house. My father was a painter and couldn't sharpen an ax or a saw, so we brought it in any way we could. We thought different at the time, but it didn't hurt us. We had fun."

Lewis continued, "We picked blueberries and sold them for five cents a quart. On fair day, our parents would give us each a dollar to spend at the Athol Fair." He walked there.

On Saturdays the treat was to walk to the library and check out a Zane Grey novel. "Saturday night, we would walk to Orange, watch a movie and walk home," to West street, Lewis remembered.

In those days, a resident could work on the road crew in lieu of making a tax payment. On snow days the road crew first had to load sand in the truck with shovels, then spread it out on the road from the back of the truck with the same hand tool. Then, "We kids would sweep the sand off the road so we could go sliding." No salt.

People would help each other... Lewis thought a bit and then said, "They still do today." If someone's home burned down, neighbors would come and help rebuild. Wendell was always generous if people needed to be fed.

"During the war (World War II) we had no radio. No one had a radio (no electricity, and no batteries) so events around the world

were distant. My father brought the paper home from the store every day.

The Millers River had five dams from Orange to Millers Falls. The dam in Wendell Depot sold electricity to Greenfield, and paid taxes to Wendell. "We were rich," he said. Then the dams washed out in the hurricane of 1938.

In 1945, Lewis recalled, houses along West Street finally got electricity, coming from Amherst. TVs came to town sometime in the 50s.

Lewis ended the talk saying, "Don't ever take anything I say as gospel." Then people stood nearby to talk and to ask questions of the former selectboard member, who served 13 consecutive terms ending in 2009, a record for the town of Wendell if not for the state as a whole.

Dan Keller recorded the talk on a video recorder and will make a DVD of Lewis's reminiscences of Wendell in the old days for the library.

NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Leverett Elementary FY'13 Increase Falls Slightly in Revised Budget Draft

DAVID DETMOLD - The Leverett school committee held a hearing on a revised draft of the FY'13 budget on Monday. Although hard numbers in state aid are lacking and teachers' salaries are still subject to negotiation, the best estimate for the projected budget needed to run the elementary school in the next fiscal year has fallen somewhat, from a 7.8% increase over the current budget year to a 5.63% increase now anticipated.

The revised budget estimate, which would call on the town to come up with approximately \$96,311 more than the \$1,712,167 it spent to operate the elementary school last year, reduces the projected increase from the possible \$120,000 overage school committee chair Farshid Hajir alerted the selectboard to last week. But an override may still be needed to pay for the increase in the school budget next spring.

The school committee has held the elementary school budget to nearly level funding for the past four years in a row, but the hiring of three teacher's

aides over the summer and fall to help in classrooms with several new special needs students is in part driving the increase in FY'13.

The anticipated budget increase was revised downward after the administration recalculated the likely revenues from school choice students entering the lower grades. The new estimate finds room for five more school choice students than originally thought. Each student who chooses to enroll in Leverett Elementary from a neighboring town subtracts \$5,000 in state aid from the sending district and adds it to the ledger at LES.

Selectboard member Julie Shively attended the hearing, and said both the town and the school faced significant unknowns heading into the next budget cycle, which will begin in earnest next month.

In other news, principal Anne Ross said the elementary school population is holding steady at 149 students, although the committee granted a new home schooling application from one LES parent on Monday.

Plans are underway to hold a fundraising dinner and concert at the elementary school, on Saturday, January 14th, from 5 - 9 p.m. to support a children's home in Kenya, where LES graduate Shira Kaufman has been volunteering.

SPORTS from page 8

ing run downfield. As the clock ran out, the game became noticeably more aggressive, with senior Caroline Senna getting escorted off the field with an injury. Sena later called the game "really competitive," and noted her team's drive to win was "way stronger" than she thought it would be.

The juniors kept giving it their all until the last second ticked off

the clock. The seniors had won, hands down, but few seemed to notice, as the amount of money raised was announced to the crowd and participants.

Emily "the Punisher" Pollard called the game "amazing." She said, "I knew I was gonna bring my all." Pollard was a key player on the senior side, with several successful plays to her credit.

Brian Lux, a student teacher present at the game said, "It was a

lot of fun, and my first time ever going to a Powder Puff game."

While the seniors may have won this round, the juniors will get another shot next year. But of course, they'll be seniors then, and playing not only to uphold the unbeaten record of the senior class over the junior class. They'll be playing for humanity, and helping people to gain access to affordable homes.

You can't beat that.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Assault Arrest, Warrant Arrest, Larceny

Tuesday, 11/29
8:44 p.m. Arrest of [redacted] for domestic assault and battery, intimidating a witness, and threatening to commit a crime.

Wednesday, 11/30
9:55 a.m. Harassment at Franklin County Technical School. Investigated.

12:14 p.m. Domestic disturbance on Montague City Road. Peace restored.

5:43 p.m. Assault and battery on Chestnut Street. Report taken.

Thursday, 12/1
8:42 p.m. Arrest of [redacted] on a default warrant while at East Main Street in Millers Falls. Arrest of [redacted] for possession of a class B drug at East Main Street.

11:05 p.m. Threatening,

harassment on Avenue A. Services rendered.

Friday, 12/2
11:04 p.m. Domestic disturbance on Millers Falls Road. Services rendered.

Saturday, 12/3
3:35 p.m. Suspicious situation at Our Lady of Chestochowa. Advised of others.

7:31 p.m. Larceny at Jay K's Liquors on Avenue A. Report taken.

Sunday, 12/4
12:09 a.m. Domestic disturbance on George Avenue.

Services rendered. **Monday, 12/5**
2:30 p.m. Arrest of [redacted] on a straight warrant.

Tuesday, 12/6
9:41 a.m. Domestic disturbance on Fourth Street. Peace restored.

2:58 p.m. Assault and battery on Avenue A. Advised of options.

5:12 p.m. Arrest of [redacted] on a default warrant on Fourth Street.

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MAHAR from page 6
mend rejection of the revisions to the regional agreement and quoting Slavos as saying Baldassarre had received an \$80,000 raise. (Slavas has said he stated correctly that Baldassarre received an \$8,000 raise and the Athol paper misquoted him.)

Orange representative Peter Cross said, in general, electronic communication can be “very polarizing” because it is not face to face. He told Baldassarre the blog post probably made the Wendell vote more negative than it would have been otherwise. Cross did not think the committee needed to take any action, telling Baldassarre, “I think you’ve already learned your lesson.”

Baldassarre said he had discussed the effects of the post with his mentor, a long-term superintendent, and had been advised for the future to “talk about the issue, not the people.”

Reporting to the full committee on the regionalization planning board’s (RPB’s) December 1st meeting, RPB chair Michael LeBlanc of Petersham said,

“Communication to townspeople in the different towns would have made a big difference.”

Petersham rejected the hybrid regional agreement by just three votes at their recent town meeting, and at the RPB meeting, LeBlanc had taken responsibility for not communicating the issue well enough with his fellow townspeople.

Baldassarre also said he had felt frustrated after the negative vote in Wendell because the RPB “never had an opportunity to speak in the town of Wendell.” He said the RPB held four informational presentations in Orange, one in New Salem, and two in Petersham, but had not been invited to present their information directly to Wendell citizens before the special town meeting was held.

LeBlanc said some RPB members felt frustrated after the votes failed in Wendell and Petersham, but that it was encouraging that Wendell finance committee co-chairs Michael Idoine and Jim Slavos and Wendell selectboard chair Christine Heard attended the latest RPB meeting. “If they were

closing the door on regionalization, they would not have attended the meeting.”

Baldassarre told the committee the \$400,000 regionalization bonus from the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) was “definitely lost” after the negative regionalization votes. However, he received authorization from the committee to apply for a Community Innovation Challenge Grant from DESE for roughly \$100,000 to continue consolidation and regionalization efforts.

In other actions, Baldassarre provided a financial update stating there will be a health insurance premium holiday in December. Employees and retirees who get health insurance through the district will not have to pay health insurance premiums in December, in accordance with a memorandum of understanding signed by the school committee and Mahar Teachers’ Association in November 2010. The premium holiday is paid for by residual health insurance trust funds resulting from Mahar’s switch from self-insurance to a

paid premium-based insurance.

Baldassarre reported that Mahar would be renting a 13-passenger van until June and five staff members will be licensed to drive students in the van, to cut the costs of trips by small groups of students, such as the golf team or student council, from \$60 per day to \$30 per day.

Baldassarre presented statistics on faculty and staff use of sick time for the last three years. The data showed a decrease of use in sick time from an average of 10.54 sick days per employee for 2008-2009 to 6.00 sick days per employee for 2010-2011.

Baldassarre attributed some of the decrease to discussions between administration, faculty and staff about acceptable use of sick time.

Baldassarre recommended the committee develop a capital improvement plan, saying that without a written plan, necessary building maintenance or long-term capital improvements to the school could be overlooked. He said a capital improvement plan would allow advance planning for big-ticket items, such as a language lab. The committee

gave the task of developing a capital improvement plan to the finance and facilities subcommittee.

Mahar principal Ishmael Tabales reported the school will insert the National Education Association’s code of ethics and conduct for educators into the faculty handbook. The code includes two principles: commitment to the student (“to help each student realize his or her potential as a worthy and effective member of society”) and commitment to the profession.

The committee discussed a draft concussion policy for student athletes that would include a pre-test for athletes on entering a sports program. The policy subcommittee received legal advice from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees saying the draft policy did not comply with state regulations, because the policy drafting team did not include a nurse and school athletic team physician. Baldassarre said he would contact relevant professionals for the next subcommittee meeting on January 23rd.



MONTAGUE from page 6
outside of the normal budgeting process.

Earlier this year, Tyler’s new job description had been approved by the selectboard to include the additional lab technician responsibilities. The selectboard unanimously voted to approve Tyler’s new rate of \$19.53, retroactively from July 1st, 2011, based on the obvious needs of the department expressed by Trombley for her to do this work and her ability to perform her new duties well. She had previously earned \$18.91 an hour.

Trombley’s second request – to add a new permanent laborer for his team – will have to wait until the next budget cycle,

however. The selectboard seemed sympathetic to the needs of the WPCF, but also mindful of the need to have permanent staffing properly budgeted for, so the board rejected Trombley’s request for the time being. Otherwise, hiring decisions could affect sewer rates in an unforeseen way, explained Abbondanzio. Postponing the decision allows town meeting members to ultimately approve or disapprove of the new expense of a permanent employee, noted Allen.

In the meantime, a temporary seasonal WPCF laborer position has been approved by the selectboard from January 1st to June 30th at a rate of eight dollars an hour, for no more than 30 hours

a week.

In other sewer news, the selectboard approved a letter of understanding with the town of Ashfield, allowing that town to truck influent to the Montague plant for processing, in case of excessive rains in Ashfield. Ashfield does not have a body of water it can use for dispensing of treated waste water, so it puts it into the ground instead. Heavy rains and snow melt, however, may cause the water table to become too high to take in the treated water, so trucking waste materials to Montague is one of Ashfield’s backup plans.

Trombley assured the selectboard the Montague plant could handle any additional material from Ashfield, that Montague

would be paid for any services provided, and that Trombley would retain the right to refuse the Ashfield waste should Montague be simultaneously experiencing its own waste water processing emergencies caused by severe weather or storms.

In other news, on a temporary basis until June 30th of next year the Turners Falls Pizza House, 119 Avenue A, will be able to experiment with keeping its doors open for pizza orders until 2 a.m. on Friday and Saturday nights, with no alcohol purchases after the last call of 12:45 a.m.

New owner David Argy had made the same request earlier this year, but as of yet has not had time to implement the new

hours, hence the extension. He hopes to try the new hours soon though, and promised to be on premises at that hour to ensure all went smoothly.

The selectboard also approved adopting revised fuel efficiency standards for new vehicle purchases, in accordance with Montague’s Green Community status.

Abbondanzio reported that the capital improvements committee is meeting next week to review criteria for considering the proposed use/purchase of the Montague Center School for green apartments. They hope to make a recommendation to the selectboard on the proposal by the end of the month.



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STEPS from page 1

"We're not that far off," from an agreement, and after four years of committee work, "I would like to try one more time."

Orange selectboard chair Bob Andrews recommended taking a break from working on the agreement and re-starting work in the spring, saying, "Many of [Orange's] internal problems will be corrected by then."

Franklin County sheriff Chris Donelan of Orange wondered whether it was a matter of "just tweaking" the proposed agreement. But the Wendell vote showed differences on that go "much deeper."

Responding to Donelan, Slavas called the problem "a combination of tweaking and major issues." Citing the Level 3 status (in the lowest 20% of state test scores) of the Orange elementary schools and the fiscal problems in Orange, Slavas said, "It's unfortunate the revised agreement came at a time when the situation in Orange highlighted problems with the agreement." He brought up many questions over the years, "not to torpedo the agreement," but to get "an agreement that is workable, that we can sign onto... We're close. If the Orange situation were not so iffy, I could see coming to an agreement."

Slavas said he wanted to insure the region was "insulated from a local fiscal meltdown." He had heard discussion of state receivership for Orange.

Donelan rejected that possibility, saying Orange was a long way from having its finances taken over by the state.

Andrews said, "That's off the table, that's way off the table." He reported that during discussions with the state Department of Revenue Orange had been encouraged to solve the town's financial problems on their own. The selectboard and finance committee were working to solve

Orange's financial problems.

After the meeting, Andrews commented further. The most recent town budget was "bare bones" and the selectboard and finance committee were combing next year's budget for additional savings.

Andrews said a committee will respond to the the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) determination that Orange has not met its required spending target (net school spending) for the elementary schools for the past three years.

Slavas said Wendell citizens are concerned that Orange elementary schools could sink to Level 4, making the entire region subject to state monitoring.

Mahar and Orange superintendent Michael Baldassarre replied, "Orange will be Level 2 in two years. We're doing everything we need to do. [Level 4] is not happening."

Slavas detailed four parts of the proposed agreement of special concern to Wendell: school assessments; the possibility of a single school borrowing from the regional excess and deficiency account; the "cost center" approach to the excess and deficiency account; and the disparity in spending in the three school systems of the hybrid district. Orange spends less per student than the state requires and Petersham spends more.

Slavas has continuously asked the Mahar school committee to respond to Wendell's perception that the Mahar assessment is unfair, because Wendell pays more per student than the other three towns in the Mahar region. The assessment differences are based on DESE's formula for determining how much each town is required to spend on education. According to Slavas, "It's stressing the region, with Wendell feeling their assessment is not equitable, resulting in long

term diminution of support for the region."

For the current budget year, the Mahar school committee voted to use an alternative assessment method that would have reduced Wendell's per pupil cost to the average cost charged to New Salem and Petersham. However, the alternative assessment needed approval from all four towns. New Salem and Petersham passed it along with Wendell, but Orange rejected the alternative assessment method (even though the result would have done nothing to increase the Orange assessment).

Slavas said, "We want some agreement we can all sign on to as a fair agreement." One reason he worked on the regional agreement committee and requested changes to the revised language to make it more acceptable to Wendell was that moving to a full K-12 Mahar region was an important option for Wendell.

"The current structure we have is vulnerable. If Leverett and Shutesbury leave Union 28, we'll need to find another option. If we could get a good agreement, we could consider K-12."

Andrews chimed in, "When you said you might consider K-12, I sat up. I would much rather have K-12 than a hybrid district." Slavas addressed the regional excess and deficiency account, saying the agreement's wording was problematic. Specifically loans could be made to an individual school and then "reconciled" within a year, without defining "reconcile."

The "cost center approach," partitioning off the excess and deficiency account by which school had generated the excess funds might face legal challenges. Slavas said disparity in school spending between the Petersham elementary school, Orange elementary schools, and Mahar may face challenges from DESE or a legal challenge from

Orange parents.

Slavas would like "a clear statement" from DESE that the cost center approach and the disparate student spending would not be challenged.

Donelan told him, "You look for black and white answers from DESE, but they live in a world of gray."

Slavas asked about broadening the RPB's mandate to look at all options, beyond the hybrid Orange/Petersham K-12 and Wendell/New Salem 7-12 region.

One option was an Orange/Petersham elementary region and a superintendency union including Mahar and Orange/Petersham.

Donelan commented that adding additional options would require more time from a committee that has already worked hard for four years. LeBlanc and Locke agreed.

Stephanie Conrod asked why the RPB presented the revised agreement in each of the other towns before town meeting, but not in Wendell.

Donelan said the RPB mem-

bers agreed to set up the meetings for their own towns. Slavas said that if that was agreed on, "I must have missed that meeting."

Slavas kept the Wendell selectboard and finance committee informed as the revised agreement was being developed. Idoine said Wendell citizens had a chance to ask the RPB questions at the special town meeting.

Conrod commented that the towns in the region were losing representation in Congress through redistricting and losing state funding because of the poor economy. She said, "We need to find a way to work together as a region. We're either going to sink or swim together. Trying to regionalize in the schools is one way to make the towns and local culture stronger."

The RPB voted unanimously to postpone any decision on the future actions of the RPB until January. Locke will present the obstacles and potential resolutions to amending the regionalization agreement. The RPB will meet again January 19th at 7 p.m. at Mahar.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG

Unlicensed Driving, Truck Crash, Assist Other Police

Monday, 11/28 12:20 p.m. Arrested juvenile on felony warrant on Route 2. Tuesday, 11/29 12:10 p.m. Criminal citation issued to [redacted] for operating a motor vehicle with a revoked registration and without insurance on Route 2. Wednesday, 11/30 9:30 a.m. Report of a tree on the railroad tracks. Removed. 9:15 p.m. Report of harassing phone calls at a Prospect Street residence. 10:30 p.m. Suspicious person walking on Route 2 in dark clothing. Located same. Was on way to Turners Falls. Thursday, 12/1 9:45 a.m. Tractor trailer truck crash on Lester Street. No injuries. 12:15 p.m. Suspicious motor vehicle at Freight House Antiques. Checked same. Friday, 12/2 9:30 a.m. Assisted Northfield police with two car crash on Route 10 with injuries. 10:30 p.m. Call of intoxicated male subject creating a disturbance by knocking on doors at French King Highway apartment building. Same transported by friend. Saturday, 12/3 12:10 p.m. Arrested [redacted] for operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license, speeding, possession of Oleoresin Capsicum spray without a permit, and no inspection sticker. 12:10 p.m. Criminal application issued to [redacted] for allowing an unlicensed operator to operate a motor vehicle. Monday, 12/5 6:45 p.m. Report of a suspicious light in the woods behind Lillian's Way. Found to be spotlight from a residence on River Road.

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JESSICA LARKIN ILLUSTRATION

THE HEALTHY GEEZER: Silly Science

BY FRED CICETTI
LEONIA, NJ - Q. As a health reporter, I have to follow as many studies as I can to stay on top of the latest research. The best part of this self-education is reading some of the weird stuff going on in academia. From time to time, I do a column on research about "Silly Science." Here's another... **Hungover Surgeons**

"Historically, the medical profession has had a reputation for high rates of alcohol consumption," Anthony Gallagher, of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, wrote in the Archives of Surgery. "It is likely that surgeons are unaware that next-day surgical performance may be compromised as a result of significant alcohol intake."

To measure the degree of impairment brought on by alcohol, the Royal College researchers invited eight surgeons and 16 students out for a night of revelry.

Half the students and all of the surgeons were encouraged to drink until they felt drunk. The

rest of the students consumed no alcohol. The next day, all the subjects performed surgery on a virtual reality system. Those with hangovers did worse than when they were tested before the night out.

See No Fat

Some people think they weigh less than they do, according to a study reported by the American Heart Association.

In the study of women and children in an urban population, most normal-weight women and children in the study correctly estimated their body weight, but most obese women and children underestimated theirs.

With her colleagues, Dr. Nicole E. Dumas of Columbia University Medical Center surveyed women and their pre-adolescent children attending an

urban, primary care center in New York City.

The researchers found that 66 percent of the mothers surveyed were overweight or obese, and 39 percent of children surveyed were overweight or obese.

More than 80 percent of obese women underestimated their weight compared to 43 percent of overweight and 13 percent of normal weight women. More than 85 percent of overweight or obese children underestimated their weight compared to 15 percent of normal weight children.

Anogenital Distance

Baylor College of Medicine researchers tell us that "anogenital distance"—the gap between a man's scrotum and anus—may provide info about fertility.

In a recent study, the Baylor group investigated whether anogenital distance differed in fertile and infertile men. They

measured the scrotum-anus distance as well as the penis length of 117 infertile and 56 fertile men visiting a clinic.

The infertile men had a significantly shorter anogenital distance and penis length than the fertile men, the study found.

"This could represent a noninvasive way to test testicular function and reproductive potential in adult men," said Dr. Michael Eisenberg, the study's lead author.

He said that more research into this subject is necessary.

"We would all like a simple, noninvasive way to predict potential problems with fertility in men, but unfortunately, this one is not ready for prime time," said Dr. Elizabeth Kavalier, a urology specialist at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York.

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

RADIO from page 1

soft slippers, so as not to disturb the illusion of a national on-air broadcast as they come forward by ones and twos to read their parts. Otherwise they are dressed in formal, period attire.

The cast limbers up, standing to shake out the jitters, performing silly tongue and vocal cord limbering exercises as we watch. The audience continues to chatter while the preparations continue. Later, the second string players form their own background radio audience, murmuring or commenting on the action in a confusion of voices while the principals take their turns at the mics.

The audience on our side of the stage is called upon frequently to clap, as a radio studio audience would applaud between commercial breaks. And those commercial breaks include static laden ads for local businesses as they might have sounded on a poorly tuned radio right out of the post-war years on Avenue A.

The illusion is handled effortlessly and seamlessly from start to finish, adding an extra fillip to

the experience of watching talented actors conjure up treasured characters from a TV classic that has become part of the collective subconscious of small town American life almost since it first debuted in movie houses in 1946.

Here we have a combative George Bailey (Matthew Clark) with a face every bit as handsome as Stewart's, standing in the spotlight next to his formidable counterpart (no, not Mr. Potter) — Erika Wolbach in the role of his devoted wife, Mary.

Wolbach swiftly erases any lingering sense of the saccharine in the memory of Donna Reed's film characterization. Wolbach is made of sterner stuff, and she's a knock-out. She turns in a cool performance, with a steady hand to her hot button helpmate as they navigate the shoals of mass foreclosures, bank panics and disaster. She plays it like she means it, reading to a country facing not the optimism of the post-war boom but the widening echoes of an earlier Great Depression, brought on by the same type of sleazy maneuvering

among the banks and financiers Capra pilloried in his day.

Jason Czernich turns in a slithering sleeper of a performance as the snakelike Potter, played not with the larger than life hubris of a Lionel Barrymore but more with the shiv in the back style of a Michael Milken. You want to wash your hands each time he reads his lines.

And Clark, as Bailey, emerges gradually, not to play the unvarnished hero of the remembered movie archetype, but as a mercurial battler for the underdog who at the same time seems — more

than Jimmy Stewart ever did — willing to give up the fight to his own interior demons. You can put a lot across in a radio play.

The whole cast is great (not least Paul Rothenberg as the winsome angel second class Clarence) and ably directed at the skilled hands of Kimberly Morin.

Bring your handkerchiefs, because when you least expect it — as when Violet, brilliantly sketched by Sue Davis, pays back her carefully hoarded nest egg to help save the Bedford Falls Building and Loan — this carefully crafted, lovingly staged read-

ing will have you smiling through your tears.

You won't need the signal from the lovely sound effects coordinator (Jillian Morgan) to burst out in spontaneous applause at the end of the show. You'll know — it's been another Wonderful Night in Turners Falls.

The New Renaissance Players' staged reading of *It's a Wonderful Life* returns to the Shea on Friday and Saturday, Dec. 16th and 17th at 7:00 p.m., and Sunday the 18th at 2:00 p.m. All proceeds benefit the Shea Theater.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

Vandalism, Bullying, Firearms Check

Monday, 11/28
11:10 a.m. Report that a resident issued a business a bad check. Investigated.
6:00 p.m. Responded to French King Bridge. Arrest made.
Tuesday, 11/29
7:50 a.m. Suspicious motor vehicle on West Gill Road called in by resident. Party moved along.
Wednesday, 11/30
7:20 a.m. Reported vandalism to personal property on Riverview Drive.
9:00 a.m. Assisted Greenfield police with locating a Gill resident for investigation regarding firearms.
11:30 a.m. Assisted elderly resident with motor vehicle unlock.
Thursday, 12/1
6:15 a.m. Reported annoying, harassing phone calls at

a business on Main Road. Suspects from Lee, MA.
6:30 a.m. Requested business check on Dole Road. All is secure.
6:00 p.m. Restraining order issued to residence on Main Road against party from Greenfield.
Friday, 12/2
9:05 a.m. Assisted Northfield police with motor vehicle accident with injury on Route 10.
2:04 p.m. Investigation of bullying case at Elementary

School.
7:10 p.m. Suspicious person reported at Gill Mobil Station.
10:30 p.m. Assisted Erving police with intoxicated subject. Removed from Weatherhead Apartments.
Saturday, 12/3
12:15 p.m. Assisted Erving Police with arrest of subject on Route 2.
5:55 p.m. Assisted with victory parade of Pioneer Valley Regional School for Football team.

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FALL INTO SOME SAVINGS!

Ferry Meadow Farm - part XVIII

Turners Falls, MA 2017

BY ELOISE MICHAEL - Three days later Jason is still at the house. He does not seem to mind being up most of the night. I like having the company until about 4:00 a.m., when he goes to sleep. Then I get four quiet hours to myself.

Jason gets up around lunch time, keeps himself busy until 5:00 and then has dinner with me. The arrangement seems to work well for both of us.

So I am not ready when he

tells me he will be leaving around midnight.

"I guess that makes sense, since you showed up at midnight," I say.

"I'll miss seeing you," he says, reaching out to touch my arm.

"Are you going to tell me where you're going?" I ask.

"Europe. I'll stay with some friends in Amsterdam."

"OK," I say. "Don't forget to write."

"OK," he says, and I can't tell whether he is joking. He kisses me, ruffles my hair like I am a little kid, then walks out of my life.

It's the end of May when my boss offers me a promotion. It's not so different from my old job except that the pay's better and I

will be working with different people. Also I have access to some computers in California that I didn't have before.

"So you're taking it?" Diana asks me on the phone.

"I guess so," I say. "I mean it pays better, and I won't have to work any harder."

"Yeah, it seems like it might be easier all around. Weird. I wonder why they picked you."

"Sorry," I say.

"Oh, it's fine, Resa. It's not like I really want the job," she says, and then adds, "I will miss having you on the team, though. It's nice having someone I can - you know - talk to."

"Yeah, I'll miss working with you, too," I say.

"Do you know anyone in the group?" she asks.

"It doesn't seem like there is a group," I say. "I'll be working on my own."

"Huh. Weird. Who did the job before?"

"I don't actually know," I say. I wish I could just tell Diana what's going on, but I know I shouldn't. Now I have another secret to keep.

"I guess you'll find out," she says.

My boss promotes someone from inside the company to replace me, so it happens fast. Diana is preoccupied with training this new person, and also getting used to the change. "Resa, I sure do miss you," she says. "You wouldn't believe how many instant messages I get from Richard."

Richard is the new guy, of course.

"He needs to check with me on eve-ry-thing," she says, stressing each syllable. "And then sometimes he's just bored and wanting to chat, but it's about stuff like the softball game. Of his local league! I mean, I know he's trying to be nice, but I don't always have the time."

I make sympathetic noises. "Have you ever met him?" I ask.

"Don't think so. He lives in Oklahoma, believe it or not. I've seen him once at a video conference. Looks like a nice guy, I guess."

I laugh and remember how Diana got me the job at Case Pearman in the first place and how thrilled she was to be working with a friend. I will miss working with her, too, and wonder, as I do several times each day, what in the world I am getting myself into.

As far as my job goes, it seems like an actual job. There is certainly enough work to keep me busy. Eventually I find out that the person who used to do my job is now my boss, but my work doesn't overlap much with anyone else's. Which is essential, I realize, if I am ever going to go in and mess up computers.

- Continued Next Issue

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from EQUIS page 1

peanut diamonds (also flavored with molasses), and colorful wrapped taffy.

The coldest weather, the temperatures that usually arrive by the second week in December, is needed for the most anticipated seasonal homemade, handmade offerings at Equi's: the chocolate covered apples, and the colorful ribbon candy and candy canes.

In past years, Williams and his nieces have turned out as

Gill Winter Parking Ban in Effect
 The winter on-street parking ban is in effect in Gill between the hours of 1 a.m. and 6 a.m., from November 1st to April 15th.
 Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

many as 3,000 handmade candy canes. They may not top that figure this year, if the season is short, but they'll be turning them out by the hundreds nonetheless.

None of these special seasonal offerings are refrigerated after being prepared, in order to preserve maximum crunch and flavor. After getting cooked at almost 300 degrees, the homemade candies are cooled on antique marble tables.

The original Equi Brothers store opened in 1897, and sold tobacco, ice cream, and candy made in the same kitchen out back that Williams uses today. The current owner said he learned to cook when he was young, and worked in several area restaurants. When the Equi's Building became available, he jumped at the chance to buy a candy store.

The previous owner, Kathy Brown, passed along the origi-

nal recipes with the storefront keys and taught Williams the tricks of the candy trade. But Williams said he has learned more by doing, in the seven years since then that he has been operating the candy store.

Equi's still sells ice cream novelties, tobacco, coffee and other drinks, snacks, gum and 'penny candy,' in the old glass covered counters, and lottery tickets. Even before this year's homemade candy arrives, the cases are already filled with a wide variety of manufactured sweets, including: multi-colored fruit slices, gummy beans, Jordan almonds and the multi-hued chocolate Jordan almonds. There are red licorice bites, red cherry bites, skittles, cinnamon Imperials, cherry rock candies, and strawberry rock candy, as well as green watermelon rock candy.

So come to Equi's on the Avenue and brighten up your holiday!

GILL from page 5

Franklin Regional Council of Governments, the county inspection program and the solid waste district. Another will be an expected increase in state aid, such as Chapter 90 highway funds, which are partly based on population.

The selectboard will consider whether to pay \$700 for Gill to join a regional dog kennel program being coordinated by the Franklin County sheriff's department at their next meeting, December 19th. While acknowledging this would be a new cost to the town, Purington said, "We really don't have a good way to offer those services right now."

Purington allowed that stray dogs in Gill with no collar or tags were a rarity. The police and the town clerk normally work together to reunite stray dogs that have identity tags with their owners, without the need for kenneling, he said.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Psycho Magnetic, 9:30 p.m.
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *The Ellingtones / Something Else*, Free.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11th
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Wendell's own *Corwin Ericson* has a *Swell* book release party, 4 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *TNT Karaoke*, 9 p.m. - 1 a.m.

Iron Horse, Northampton: The Valley Rising Compilation album release party & performance, featuring Turners Falls' own Heather Maloney,

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17th
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *It's a Wonderful Life*, A Tribute to a Simpler Time. 7 p.m. Matinee on Sunday, Dec. 18th at 2 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Kurtyka Kills Christmas*, 9:30 p.m.

Element Brewery, Millers Falls: *Second Anniversary Party*, 6 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Reprobates*, 9:30 p.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Show of Cards* with Dan Blakeslee, 7:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Josh Levangie & The Mud, Blood & Beer Band*, 9-11 p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17th
Montague Grange: *Yule Concert* with *Kelliana and Friends*, 6 - 9:30 p.m.

Greenfield High School: *Family Holiday Concert*, *Pioneer Valley Symphony Chorus* with *Greenfield High School Chorus*. 7 - 9 p.m.

Roundhouse, Colrain: *30th Annual Winter Solstice Song and Story Celebration*. A benefit for the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts and Partners in Health, 6:30 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Heroes in Trouble*, 9:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Rockit Queer* (with DJ Bex). 9:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Nexus*, 9-11 p.m.

Leverett Town Hall: *Echo Lake Coffeehouse*, *John Sheldon*, 7:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18th
Deja Brew, Wendell: *John Sheldon*, 8-10 p.m.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 19th
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bingo*, 8 p.m. Free.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21st
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Quiz Nite* with the debut of *QuizMaster Alex*, 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22nd
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Uncle Hal*, funky-tonk, 8 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Guberman & Paradis*, classic rock duo, 8 - 10 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23rd
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Rhythm Inc.*, reggae, 9 - 11 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *The Miles Band*, 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24th
Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Second Annual Christmas Eve Get*

Together, 5 - 8 p.m.
MONDAY, DECEMBER 26th
Deja Brew, Wendell: *All Small Caps*, a night of spoken word, 7 - 10 p.m.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29th
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Larry Kopp*, country blues, 8 p.m.



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EVERY TUESDAY
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Craft Night*, 7 p.m.

EVERY THURSDAY
Thrive Project, Turners Falls: *Ping Pong*, 7 - 9 p.m.

Between the Uprights, Turners Falls: *Acoustic open mic*, with *Dan, Kip and Shultz* from *Curly Fingers DuPree* host. 8:30 - 11:30 p.m.

EVERY FRIDAY & SATURDAY NIGHT
Montague Inn: *TNT Karaoke*.

NOW until JANUARY 29th
Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Artwork by *Leonore Alaniz*.

NOW until DECEMBER 18th
The Gallery at Hallmark, Turners Falls: *Ellen Denuto's photographs in The Artist as Art*. Fridays through Sundays from 1 - 5 p.m.

All of DECEMBER
Leverett Library: Original collage illustrations by *Judith Inglese*, from the *I See the Sun* children's book series.

Nina's Nook, Turners Falls: *Scenes of Turners Falls*, Ariel Jones & Nina Rossi.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8th
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Sweetback Sisters Singalong Spectacular*, 8 p.m. Tickets at shop-westernmass.com.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Free Range*, 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9th and SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10th
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Welcome Yule*, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. And Sunday, December 11th at 2 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9th
Arts Block Café, Greenfield: *Joan Holiday* from WRSI presents *Lake Street Dive* for a free concert including light holiday fare, cider, and great music. 5 - 7 p.m. Free.

Turners Falls: *A Wonderful, Wonderful Night in Turners Falls*, caroling and shopping night. Caroling starts at 6 p.m. at The Rendezvous. Some stores open until 10 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Drew Paton's 1940s Hit Parade*, 7 p.m. Free.

Brick Church, Deerfield: Pioneer Consort presents *Third Annual Noel Concert*, 7:30 p.m.

Arts Block Café, Greenfield: *Garland Jeffreys* performs in support of his new release, *The King of In Between*, 8 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Captain-Salls Orchestra*, 9 - 11 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Groove Shoes*, 9:30 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Compromise*, 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10th
Northfield: *The 5th Annual Special Day in Northfield Holiday Celebration*, 10 a.m. 6 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Lenny's Lounge*, 7 p.m. Free.

Burrito Rojo, Turners Falls: *Zydeco Connection*.

Montague Grange: *Gender-role free contra dance*, caller *Paul Wilde*, 7 - 10 p.m.

Wendell Town Hall: *Full Moon Coffeehouse*, *Rhythm Inc.* 7:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Richard Chase Group*, 9 - 11 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls:



Kurtyka Kills Christmas: It's that time of year again, and it's John Kurtyka's Limp Flamingo's favorite. But instead of mindlessly buying things for their loved ones Zack Holmes and John Kurtyka have a big party full of humbuggery. Friday, December 16th at the Rendezvous they will have their Second Annual Kurtyka Kills Christmas. This year there will be live jazz from Nobody's Fat, the premiere of Kurtyka Kills Christmas, the movie, and a theatrical performance from Limp Flamingo called The Nutsmacker or Baby New Year's Diaper.

7 p.m.
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Steve Crow, Peter Kim & Joe Fitzpatrick*, 8:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15th
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Third Annual Holiday Spectacular*, 7 p.m. Free.

Leverett Library: *Mark Vonnegut, Just Like Someone Without Mental Illness Only More So*, book reading. 7 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Tommy Filiault & Friends*, Original Guitar Music, 8-10 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16th

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West Along the River

The December Journals

BY DAVID BRÛLÉ

December 1st - The calendar turned today to December. Outdoors, it seems pretty much like yesterday, when it was only November.

Ah, but December! The month of the year when those of us who are winter people thrive on the crisp biting air, when the winter birds both brilliant and somber jostle at the feeders, when we give ourselves permission to dwell a bit on our childhood.

Those were the days when the sharp cold air hit our lungs and we actually burst out into the outdoors, ready for anything. When parents let kids really play outdoors, in the yard, in the woods, even in the street, free from fear and danger.

This month gives us permission to forget our ominous modern times and let the childhood back into our thoughts. You can tell who we are, those of us who revel in this month. We have the big smiles, the bright clothes and ruddy faces.

There are not that many of us who can keep it up all month, but December should be for all of us a season of celebration, a time to savor the reality that we've made it through another full year.

We Decembrists do thrive on the holidays and feasting, song and ritual of this month. The arrival of our favorite season brings us anticipation, not dread. We're waiting for the snow to blanket our view, to give us something on which to glide on skis over hill and dale, to evoke that troika feeling, the shouts and calls in the woods of our youth restored again.

The New Year will be here soon enough, with its threats of financial disasters, crashing Euros, and other obstacles to surmount on our uphill climb to the next December. But for now we are arriving at the plateau of winter truce.

We're about to begin our one hundred plus days of winter. But each bright day like today, brings us closer to the returning light and nature's resurrection. Some of us, like bears, are denning up, putting on extra weight and hair,

pulling the covers up over our heads until spring. Others refuse to give in and venture forth in t-shirts and shorts, even as skin turns red and blue. Whatever!

December marks a seasonal cycle of loss and redemption, when everything outside the windows gets simpler. So light the lights and welcome December!

December 2nd - A hard frosty morning with the pale light creeping into the upstairs room only at 6:30. Mist rises in the cold air from the swift flowing river sparkling just beyond the birches along the shore. I settle into my Adirondak winter throne of a chair, in the nook of the woodpile near the back door. Porch boards creak and snap underfoot in the frost. Steam rises from my personal dark-brewed reservoir of inspiration in a cup of coffee, held just so to keep fingers warm. Birds move in to break the night fast, to replenish the inner reserves of energy spent shivering overnight in the pines.

This second day of December however, holds a sad task for us, the obligations of an ancient ritual to be performed. We need to go over to the Polish Church this morning, to see off our classmate of long ago who has passed away far too young and far too soon.

Our Lady of Czestochowa was filled today by 10 a.m. to bid farewell to Marty. Funny how we always called him by his two names as though they were one word, Martyarmac.

I had first met him when we were both five years old, and starting out on our twelve years in the local schools. That was in kindergarten down the Patch in the South End School. You could say he made an early impression on me, on all of us, and on our teacher Miss Molly Stratton.

Of course, we were all well-behaved in those days, it was kindergarten after all, no sass, just playing with blocks, cutting colored paper with safe snubbed scissors, or gluing one thing to another to make decorations and such. Working on life skills, you know.

Marty already had that grin

from ear to ear that would be his trademark, a sign of an attitude that he knew something we hadn't figured out yet. For the next 12 years our lives wove in and out, all of us native to this town until we finally graduated from the high school in '64.

So now, this morning, the shock of the news was setting in. Here was one of us, born in '46, and already gone.

You think about things when you're sitting in a pew at a funeral. I remembered how from time to time Marty would call to comment on things I had written here in this paper, and we'd laugh about shared memories of village characters. Now I'm writing about him, in the past tense.

Looking around the church, I could see many classmates, friends and family, all of us listening to Father DiMascola's eulogy, his portrait of our friend and his contributions to the church and the town. Of course, I was having my own thoughts, like those of kindergarten, or of basketball up at the Hibernian Hall

where Marty was a fixture. I was remembering how Marty and his good friend Richard "Kootz" Courtemanche invented their own jive pidgin English, in which only the two of them were fluent. John Carey's Shady Glen was their Shady E-Glix, and so on. And didn't he and some of his friends head out on an impulse to Washington DC on that cold November day in 1963 to be there for the funeral procession of our own Massachusetts president JFK, martyred that November 22nd?

His life trajectory brought him from one end of Avenue A to the other. From the Grand Trunk across from the Shady Glen to this church on the hill, overlooking the Avenue. He made his home in Gill straight across the

bridge, from which he could see the steeple of his church. The Avenue will be quieter now, without his workingman's bombast and definite opinions on just about everything, but that ear-to-ear smile will linger a while yet.

December 5th - Working in the quiet late afternoon woods. The sun slants from the western horizon under the last clouds of the day. The woods glow with that special golden light, dry leaves rustle underfoot. The evening is the time set aside to gather oak tops all fallen down and broken from last month's unseasonable blizzard. Under the massive Wolf Tree, there's plenty of cordwood for next year's

the midst of a cornfield near the river. This field was cleared by the Squakheag people, then abandoned by them under the pressures of white settlers 50 years before Tories, British, and Patriots skirmished in Concord. The field reverted to woodlands again after a series of floods in '36 and '38. For some reason, great grandfather Judah didn't cut it down, and now in its old age, it is the lord of our late autumn woods.

Cousin Annabelle and her spaniel Daisy started up a woodcock here just after Thanksgiving, but this afternoon my only company under the tree is a hermit thrush. He moves spir-



Hermit thrush, illustration by Louis Agassiz Fuertes.

woodstove. This ancient oak I sometimes call the Grandfather Tree, other times Wolf Tree, because it somehow survived as a lone wolf out here in the midst of the woods. It towers above all the other lesser, younger maples, birch, beech and ironwood. By the looks of it, it was a seedling around the time of the American Revolution in 1775, growing in

it-like through the downed branches in the fading light. His beautiful spiraling nightingale voice is quiet now until spring. He circles the grand oak near me in the evening, just out of reach, flicking his reddish tail in the dusk. Time for me to turn homeward, leaving the great oak with its arms holding up the gathering night sky.

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