



LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS

# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 8 - NO. 19 also serving Erving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell 50¢

REPORTER@MONTAGUEMA.NET THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES FEBRUARY 11, 2010

## Tessier Says: "I'm Not Running"

BY DAVID DETMOLD

**ERVING** – As the roster of candidates for Erving's May 3rd election shapes up, one name that has loomed large over the town's political life for many years will be missing from the ballot. Andy Tessier, the chair of the selectboard, has decided not to run again, at the end of this third consecutive three-year term.

Tessier, who served on the school committee for a similar length of time before joining the selectboard, said Monday night, "I'm not signing up," for another run. He added, "It's been fun. We got a lot of work done. We're in pretty good shape."

Andrew Goodwin, who will have completed two years on the selectboard in May, was absent from the meeting Monday. Jamie Hackett is in the first year of his term on the board.

Also present in the meeting room to hear Tessier's announcement was Eugene Klepadlo, of 26 Prospect Street in Erving, a manager at HCP Packaging in Hinsdale, NH, a manufacturer of cosmetics packaging. Klepadlo is running for the three-year seat now held by Tessier.

Klepadlo was the former owner of Geka Brush in the Turners Falls industrial park, which was bought out by Bridgeport Metal Goods, a firm acquired in bankruptcy by HCP, an international conglomerate

based in Shanghai. Klepadlo said HCP is transferring half the jobs from New Hampshire to Mexico at the present time, and the future of the Hinsdale plant is unclear.

"I'm as ready as I'll ever be," said Klepadlo, in response to Tessier asking him if he was ready to run for the town's top office.

After the meeting, he confided, "I've been thinking about it for a while. I grew up in town. I live next door to the house I grew up in."

Klepadlo serves as a Boy Scout troop master in town, and on the fire department. "I try to set an example for my son," he said. "You should give back in public service."

Over the next few years, if elected to the selectboard, Klepadlo said his main emphasis would be on the budget. "Revenues are going down," he said. "People's revenues are going down. It concerns me. This town used to have the tool shop and two paper mills – 1,500 jobs. Now we're lucky to have 150."

Klepadlo said the town should look into the possibility of making the former IP mill in Erving into a foreign trade zone, as Brattleboro has done at 14 sites totaling more than 316 acres throughout town. Foreign trade zones, which need the approval of the state and federal

see TESSIER pg 17



DETMOLD PHOTO

## Pump Test at New Well a Success

BY DAVID DETMOLD

**LAKE PLEASANT** –

On Friday morning at 11 a.m., after about 16 years of planning and permitting, the Turners Falls Water Department started pumping water from a new well off Green Pond Road. The well is 253 feet deep, and it was pumping 1040 gallons a minute on Friday.

"Its theoretical yield is 3,000 gallons a minute," said Stantec project manager David Harwood, consulting with the department on the new well. "We're not pumping at anything near its potential."

He called the first day of the "constant rate test" a success, and

*Dave Harwood examined the flow at Montague's new drinking water well, Friday morning, with Lake Pleasant in the background.*

said the water was pure. "There are no contaminants."

Turners Falls Water superintendent Mike Brown stood at the top of the hill, looking down through the pines to Lake Pleasant. Two temporary pipes carried the water through the woods to a temporary platform made of packing pallets. The water pumped out in steady streams and ran off down the slope to the Lake. It would run for five more days, until the pump test was complete.

On Tuesday afternoon, Brown said the pump test was going smoothly, though the water level

in the well had dropped from about 63 feet deep to about 104 feet deep. Next steps will include measuring how quickly the well recharges.

The Turners Falls Water Department supplies tap water to customers in all of Montague's villages except Montague Center, which uses its own well, located on Main Street opposite the property formerly owned by Rodney Beauchesne. The wells the Turners Falls department relies on are located off of Center Street in Montague Center. On the Tobin Farm well field, two arte-

see PUMP pg 17

## Valley Art Party

Art+Space Opens at Hallmark Gallery



On Display at the Gallery: To See the Summer Sky is Poetry, by Howard Karger

BY ANN FEITELSON

**TURNERS FALLS** – Saturday afternoon was a celebratory time in Turners Falls at the Gallery at Hallmark, where an extraordinarily diverse exhibit is hung. Dressed in their Saturday best, artists, neighbors of artists, friends of artists, and all-around arts lovers from all over the valley came to see a big show, a really, really big show, an Art Party.

Big, bold, colorful, gloppy paintings paraded with neat, tight, clean black-and-white photographs. Stone sculptures anchored

flights of fancy. Images of the familiar backyards of Turners and the UMass campus rubbed shoulders with pictures of the back of beyond. Twisting and twirling through the crowd was the music of Rosemary Caine's melodious Irish harp.

You know the arts are flourishing here, but you don't often see so many artists, or so many approaches to art in one place, at one time. Perhaps it is true that there are more artists per capita in Western Massachusetts than in New York City – that statement was attributed to Congressman John Olver by painter E. Joseph McCarthy, whose exuberant, even effusive, yellow abstract painting is near the door – but it's one of those sayings that may have gone around so many times

no one knows who said it first.

At the exhibit were artists with deep roots in the Valley, born here, briefly away, back for good, and local legends to boot; and people who were from somewhere else but who recently picked this very spot to settle because it would nurture their art. For years, people I've known have had a sighing way of saying "the Valley," meaning something about the way we are all interconnected. We tend to forget that sometimes, especially in winter, but are reminded of it at an event like this.

I'd bet every Reporter reader knows at least one of the exhibiting artists, though the artists certainly don't all know each other – this is not about any kind of 'in' crowd. At this month's Art+Space show at the Gallery are artists just starting out and those with impressive national reputations; recent grads

see ART pg 10

## PET OF THE WEEK

### Purrsonality



**Ally**

My name is Ally and I'm a two-year-old female short hair cat in need of a good home. I am just the nicest girl. You'd never know I was a stray. I have the purrsonality of the best friend you could ever dream of!

I love to be held and am sociable but not obnoxious. I'm elegant in black with a white star at my throat, and I can do adorable curly tricks with my tail. I am just a great cat companion. Come see about me soon. I know we're going to fall in love! For more information on adopting me, please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at (413) 548-9898 or via email: [info@dpvhs.org](mailto:info@dpvhs.org).

## WENDELL LIBRARY NEWS

### Pajama Story Time

Pajama Story Time has been rescheduled due to snow. The new program date is Thursday, February 18th, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Wear your PJs and come listen and participate with Paul Dubois Jacob and Jennifer Swender as they read stories, sing songs and tell tales for children of many ages. Their dramatic story reading is sure to engage and delight all who attend.

### Great Falls Middle School Students of the Week

#### Grade 6

Trevor Mankowsky  
Owen Boucher

#### Grade 7

Angelina Kosloski

#### Grade 8

Meghan Casey

## The Montague Reporter

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## MONTAGUE LIBRARY NEWS

### Vacation Week Programs and Hours

There are a variety of programs at the Montague Public Libraries during school vacation week. All week at the Carnegie Library there will be Art-to-Go kits available in the children's room.

On Saturday the 13th, Mother Goose on the Loose will be held at 10:30 a.m. at the Carnegie Library with Michael Nix and Linda Hickman. The interactive live music session is designed for ages 0 to 5.

Monday the 15th, the libraries are closed in honor of Presidents Day. Tuesday the 16th, there are two programs. At 10 a.m., there will be a Live Animal Show at the Carnegie Library. Creature Teachers will bring native animals, which may include a fox, opossum, and a raccoon. And at 3:30 p.m. the Millers Falls

Library Club will feature crafts, snacks, and a story for all ages.

Story Hour is held on Wednesdays at 10:15 a.m. at the Carnegie Library, also featuring crafts, stories, and snacks.

The popular Music and Movement for young children with Tom Carroll and Laurie Davidson happens Thursdays at 10 a.m. at the Carnegie.

During vacation week, the Carnegie Library in Turners Falls will be open Tuesday and Wednesday 1 to 8 p.m., Thursday 1 to 5 p.m., Friday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Millers Falls Library will be open Tuesday and Thursday, 2 to 5 and 6 to 8 p.m. The Montague Center Library will be open Wednesday 2 to 5 and 6 to 8 p.m.

For more information, call the Carnegie Library at 863-3214.



*Tamar and Madylan Allis of Turners Falls and over 50 other people enjoyed the chocolate fountain at the Carnegie Library's Valentines Party on Saturday, February 6th.*

**MILLERS FALLS** – *Karyn Lankowski and Abby Johnson of Millers Falls modeled the Valentine crowns they made at the Millers Falls Library Club on Tuesday, February 9th. The Library Club meets every Tuesday at 3:30 p.m. For more information, call the Carnegie Library at (413) 863-3214.*



### Help for Erving's Trask Family

On January 18th, raw sewage flooded the Trask family home, making it uninhabitable. Five family members are now living in a hotel. Friends of the Trask family are collecting donations of gift cards and monetary donations as checks made out to Freedom Credit Union, memo note: Sherri and Tim Trask.

Credit Union location addresses are 74 Main Street, Greenfield, MA 01301 and 1 Burnham Street, Turners Falls, MA 01376. Donations can be brought to the Erving Elementary School or the Erving Town Hall. Please contact Bill at (978) 423-3120 or Sarah at (978) 423-3336 if you have questions or further ideas to help this family.

## SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES – Feb 15th to Feb 19th

**GILL/MONTAGUE Senior Center**, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Congregate meals are served Tuesday through Friday at Noon. Meal reservations must be made a day in advance by 11:00 a.m.. Messages can be left on our machine when the center is not open. Meal site Manager is Becky Cobb. Council on Aging Director is Roberta Potter.

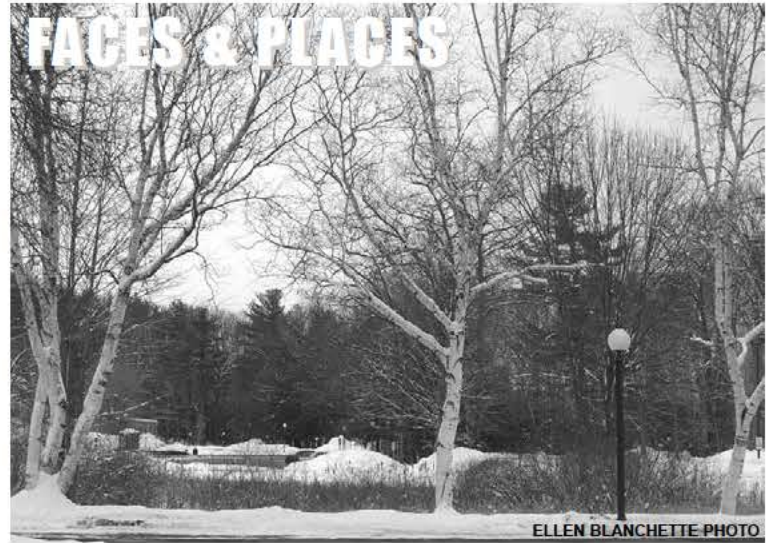
For information or to make meal reservations, call 863-9357.

The Friday afternoon Writing Group is continuing and has room for new members. Thursday Morning Tai Chi is free and open to the public. Call the senior center for information on any programs.

**Monday, February 15th**  
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics  
10:45 a.m. Easy Aerobics  
1:00 p.m. Knitting Circle  
**Tuesday, February 16th**

9:00 a.m. Walking Group,  
10:30 a.m. Chair Yoga  
1:00 p.m. Canasta  
**Wednesday, February 17th**  
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics  
1:00 p.m. Bingo  
**Thursday, February 18th**  
10:00 a.m. Tai Chi  
1:00 p.m. Pitch  
**Friday, February 19th**  
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics  
10:45 a.m. Easy Aerobics  
1:00 p.m. Scrabble  
1:00 p.m. Writing Group

**ERVING Senior Center**, 18 Pleasant St., Erving (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 info and reservations, call Polly Kiely, Senior Center Director, at (413) 423-3308. Lunch is daily at 11:30 a.m., with reservations 24 hours in advance. Transportation can be provided for meals, shopping, or medical



*Winter Scene, Greenfield Community College*

### Give Curling a Try!

The Petersham Curling Club will hold an open house on Sunday, Feb. 21st, noon - 5 p.m. and Thursday, Feb. 25th from 6-9 p.m. Come learn why curling is the fitness and finesse winter sport for all ages. Try curling and watch the Winter Olympics from Vancouver. Food, beverage, Gold

Medal cash raffle and more! Wear clean rubber-soled shoes (like sneakers) and gloves, and dress in warm, loose-fitting clothing. Watch regularly scheduled league games, Feb 22nd - 24th, 7 - 10 p.m. On Route 32 in Petersham, next to the Country Club golf course. Go to: [www.petershamcurling.org](http://www.petershamcurling.org) for more info.

## Chocolate Fest

Saturday, February 13th

9:00 a.m. till 2:p.m.

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### Food as Healing Medicine

**WENDELL DEPOT** – A time to gather in respect for the universal spirit that bonds us all as one people, hosted monthly by the Wendell Baha'i Community.

The Power of Enzymes will be the focus on Sunday, February 21st at the home of Charles and Shay Cooper, at 71 Kentfield Road, in Wendell Depot. The gathering takes place from 11:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.; a light brunch will be served.

There will also be a devotional exploration into spirit that supports our healing, with meditation, prayers, and open discussion. Participants will be invited to share personal insights.

For more information and directions, call (978) 544-2190.

## LEVERETT LIBRARY NEWS

### Open Mic Poetry

Open Mic Poetry Reading at the Leverett Library on Tuesday, February 16th, at 7:00 p.m. Come One, Come All.



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

# Great Falls Readies Big Read Exhibit



On Tuesday, Sheila Damkoehler (third from left) was a special guest, teaching paper making with the "pour method" to Craft Night participants at the Rendezvous in Turners as part of the Big Read.

**BY ANNE HARDING** – The Rendezvous was hopping Tuesday night as Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association's (PVMA) Sheila Damkoehler led the weekly crafters group in a

special program to create accordion-style books. This was the final workshop in this year's Big Read craft series celebrating the art of the book. This year's selection for the National Endowment

of the Art's Big Read program was Tobias Wolff's *Old School*.

Anticipation is building for the opening of PVMA's second off-site exhibit at the Discovery Center's Great Hall, "From Hornbooks & Samplers to facebook & SMART Boards – Living and Learning in the Connecticut

River Valley."

The show is a unique collaboration with students from the Pioneer Valley Regional School (PVRs) district, PVMA and Memorial Hall Museum. They are transforming the Great Hall into an interactive, family-friendly exhibit that explores the past, present, and future of education in our Valley. The exhibit will be open free to the public Fridays

and Saturdays, February 19th through March 27th. A community reception will be held from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 27th.

The exhibit explores each generation's educational experience and encourages visitors to think about the environment and cultural values that shape the era's learning – from 18th century Dame Schools, where students learned to read the Bible using hornbooks, to one-room schoolhouses, to the development of private academies, to the role of technology and today's 21st Century skills. Designed to offer students the opportunity to serve their community while gaining valuable real-world experience, the project was initiated through a Community Service Learning Grant offered by the Mass Department of Education.

The students' first challenge was deciding the title and themes of the exhibit. In discussing title ideas, the younger generation asked, "What's a Sampler?" while adults wondered, "What's a SMART Board?"

"We realized that finding words to represent the educational experience of each era that everyone would be familiar with was an exercise in futility," commented Damkoehler, PVMA's Big Read project leader. "When PVRs teacher Ariel LaReau concluded, 'Maybe, that in itself is the point,' we decided that letting people wonder a bit about the see **BIG READ** page 10

## Resources for Children and Families Expo

The 6th Annual Franklin County Area Resources for Children and Families Early Education and Care Expo will be held on Saturday, February 27th, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the First Congregational Church, 43 Silver Street, in Greenfield.

This free, fun event for families will look at options for early childhood education and care, play groups, story hours, out of school time programs, Head Start, family child care, preschool and other community resources. Franklin County early education and care providers will offer information, along with resources for families. For more info: Karen Green (413) 665-8928 or [GreenK@frsu38.deerfield.ma.us](mailto:GreenK@frsu38.deerfield.ma.us)

## Roots of War

Professor Michael Klare will deliver a talk on the Global Struggle for Resources on Friday, February 19th, 12:30 to 2:00 p.m. at Greenfield Community College's Stinchfield Hall as part of the Roots of War Speaker Series organized by Western Massachusetts Chapter of Progressive Democrats of America, Traprock Center for Peace and Justice and Greenfield Community College Peace and Justice Study Program. For more info contact Abbie Jenks at (413) 775-1127 or Les and Susie Patlove at (413) 625-9388.

## Turners Falls Fire District Nomination Papers Available

**BY EILEEN TELA** – Nomination papers for the annual Turners Falls Fire District elections are available Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the district office, 226 Millers Falls Rd. in Turners Falls. Open to all district residents, the offices to be decided are Prudential Committee member and Water Commissioner. These offices are for three-year terms. Completed nomination papers

must be returned to the district office no later than 4:30 p.m. on Monday, March 8th. The elections are to be held at the above address on Tuesday, April 27th. Polls open at noon and close at 7:00 p.m. All registered voters residing within the district are encouraged to vote. District residents wishing to register to vote may do so at the town clerk's office, 1 Avenue A in Turners Falls.

## Montague Nomination Papers

**BY DEB BOURBEAU** – Nomination papers for the annual town election, Monday, May 17th, are now available at the town clerk's office, until Thursday, March 25th, to be returned no later than Monday, March 29th by 5:00 p.m. Seats up for election include: selectboard, town clerk, treasurer and tax collector, assessor, board of health, and parks and recreation and tree warden, each for a three-year term. Library trustees: three seats, each for a 3-year term. Montague Housing Authority: one seat for a 5-year term. Soldier's Memorial Trustees: one veteran's seat up for a 3-year term. Nomination papers are also

available for town meeting members for each precinct. The annual town election will be held on Monday, May 17th. Deadline to register to vote in that election is Tuesday, April 27th. Nomination papers for school committee seats are provided by the Gill-Montague Superintendent of Schools at 35 Crocker Avenue in Turners Falls. The town clerk's office is open Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Wednesday 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Town hall is closed on Fridays. For more information please call the town clerk at 863-3200, ext 203.



JESSICA HARMON ILLUSTRATION

## Local Brief

**BY DON CLEGG** – The Great Falls Discovery Center, 2 Avenue A in Turners Falls, will be open the week of Winter School Vacation from Tuesday, February 16th through Saturday, February 20th from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Each day there will be an hour long program starting at 10:00 a.m. designed for younger children, and another program starting at 1:00 p.m. designed for students of late elementary grades and older. Scavenger hunts are always available; just pick up your hunt check list at the front desk. For more information on programming give the Discovery Center a call at (413) 863-3221, or check out the events listing on [www.greatfallsma.org](http://www.greatfallsma.org) Send local briefs to [reporter-local@montaguema.net](mailto:reporter-local@montaguema.net)



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## TWO MODEST PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVING EDUCATION IN GILL-MONTAGUE

Montague is in a bind. Because costs have risen faster than revenues, the town can no longer afford to adequately fund town services and our schools by relying on local property taxes and declining state aid.

But where there's a will there is a way, they say.

We have to create a healthy balance between the services our community needs to provide – for the security, transportation, health and well-being of our citizens – and our fundamental responsibility to the future: the education of our children. And we have to do this with the resources available to us.

We believe the people of Montague are up to the challenge of finding a positive balance on these accounts, on both the town side and the school side of the budget.

Last week, in partnership with the town of Gill, Montague sat down with our regional school officials and the state administrators who are now required to oversee the budget and turnaround plan for improving education in the Gill-Montague schools.

All parties at the table, including our state legislators, agreed to work together cooperatively to seek a sustainable school system, both in terms of educational goals and finances.

This is not an impossible task.

Gill and Montague have good schools, with great kids, great teachers, and administrative support. A lot of our children come to school eager to learn despite the disadvantages of poverty and the challenges of learning disabilities. The fact that our district test scores are not quite on par with Newton's or Wellesley's should not be held against us. We are doing our best to give all our children an excellent education with the resources at hand. That is what we aim to do, and it is the law of the land.

Given the economic circumstances we face, it is time to look for ways of delivering improvements in education to our stu-

dents that do not rely on raising property taxes or cutting essential town services.

One proposal we have made before, is to organize a group of volunteers, including retired academics, concerned parents and community members who have skills and knowledge and a little time to spare to commit to a regular stint in the classrooms. This could take place in the context of an after-school program, or in partnership with teachers during regular school hours.

However the school committee would see fit to organize and encourage it, volunteerism could go a long way toward filling the gaps in classroom education or extra curricular activities imposed by Montague's budget constraints.

Like all New England towns, Montague first organized schooling for its young by relying on the volunteerism – rather than simply the tax payments – of its citizens. Families volunteered to house a teacher while other families chopped wood to heat the school building; others contributed from their fields to feed her.

We're not suggesting a return to those days of yore. But even in the highly bureaucratized and regulated education system of today, the spark of community volunteerism is still alive, and it should be nourished, especially in tight economic times like these.

A community that is involved with its schools – in the classroom as on the playing field – is a vibrant community, and its public schools will be equally vibrant. It does not necessarily have to cost our townspeople more to work together to create excellence in our public schools.

By so doing, we could teach the Commonwealth a valuable lesson.

At the same time, we should work toward reducing the net loss to our district schools' balance sheet each year that results from families choosing to send students from our community to



schools in other towns, and to charter schools outside the district. The Gill-Montague schools are losing \$900,000 in state aid each year to charter schools and schools that accept students from our district. That is almost exactly the figure the school committee has determined as the "structural budget gap" built into the district's annual operating budget, essentially the amount of money we are supplying from town and school reserves and non-repeating federal and state funds to prop up the operation of our district schools.

We must close this gap, and close it soon, in order to stave off disaster in the delivery of education and services in both our towns.

Among the useless debts burdening Montague at a time when every dollar counts is the need to maintain and secure the Montague Center School building. That elementary school was once a vital learning community loved by parents from throughout Montague who sent their children there to learn. It could be that again, and it could bring money back into our school district rather than draining money from our town.

After putting a new roof on the school in 2008 for \$95,500, Montague has since spent \$75,000 to maintain the empty building. No buyers have expressed interest in the old school, which threatens to continue draining Montague's coffers for years to come.

Recent legislation passed in Boston, ostensibly to help underperforming school districts, placed a value on charter schools, but also made it easier to establish 'in district' charters

– so-called Horace Mann Schools, where the innovations of charter schools can be encouraged without sapping the finances of home districts.

Two years ago, a group of parents now trying to open a 240-seat K-6 charter school in the county got its start with a proposal to establish a Horace Mann school at Montague Center, based around a theme of environmental education.

We think the Gill-Montague administration should reach out to that parents' group, and open a dialogue to see if they would be interested in returning to their original proposal, now that state and federal Race to the Top funding are on offer to districts like ours, with resources that could help reorient the purpose and update the infrastructure of this older school building.

Last week, Gill-Montague superintendent Carl Ladd indicated a willingness to work on this or any responsible proposal for improving our schools and balancing our budgets.

He also said, "If we could simply not have any more children leave the district, we'd be in much better shape financially."

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education assistant commissioner Jeff Wulfson, also at that meeting, urged all sides to "be responsive to what parents desire. One of them is a very easy opportunity to be involved in the design of their schools."

Right now, charter schools are viewed as a threat to our county's public schools. We could turn one into an asset, and stop paying tens of thousands of dollars a year to maintain an empty school building. We could bring state and federal aid back to the district, rather than lose it to surrounding towns. We could keep all our parents and their children engaged and satisfied in schools in their own community. And we could take a giant step toward leveling off a badly out of balance budget that will fall further in arrears if we do not find ways to work together to solve the problem facing our town.

Race to the Top funds will flow to districts willing to look beyond their present economic straits and seize the moment to innovate and improve. Gill and Montague should not be left behind.

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Update the Bottle Bill

Advocates are hoping that Governor Deval Patrick, who included an update of the 27-year-old Bottle Bill in the state budget he released last month, will help lead the charge through the legislature, where the proposal has been stalled for over a decade.

When the Bottle Bill passed into law in 1982, many of the containers on store shelves today

did not exist. Vitamin drinks, iced teas, bottled water, and other "new age" beverages have all come on the market since that time.

While litter from containers covered by the bottle bill deposit system has practically disappeared, more than 70% of containers which are not covered by the bottle bill end up on our streets, in our parks, in our waterways.

Given that the update would bring in revenue, eliminate waste, save cities and towns disposal costs, and preserve valuable resources, the update is a win-win for residents and the environment. Opposing it simply makes no sense.

– Janet Domentiz  
MassPIRG, Boston

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**GUEST EDITORIALS**

# The Folly in Felling Bay State Forests

BY ERIC CHIVIAN

**BOSTON** – With one hand, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation is working to protect our land in perpetuity by encouraging people to take out conservation easements that prohibit development and restrict destructive forestry practices like clear-cutting. With the other, it is sending out its loggers – with their chainsaws, skidders, and trucks – to clear-cut and sell large swaths of state forests.

In recent years, thousands of acres have been leveled, and DCR (whose motto is “It’s your nature”) has plans to cut and clear thousands more. This degradation of our public lands is not at the hands of some greedy developer, but by the very officials we have entrusted to protect them.

When you are altering natural landscapes on such a scale by cutting down healthy, well-established forests teeming with life, you had better be certain you have considered and understood

all the critically important environmental and public health implications of what you are doing. I am convinced, tragically, that DCR has not done so.

These clear cuts have been justified by the belief that they create diverse forest habitats that are healthier both for the forests and the wildlife that live there. But many leading biologists – including professor Stuart Pimm of Duke University – strongly disagree, as do countless scientific studies.

In the Quabbin Reservoir watershed alone, which purifies Boston’s drinking water, DCR has clear cut many hundreds of acres, including one healthy forest on a slope near the east branch of the Swift River (one of the main sources of water for the Quabbin), removing majestic hundred-year-old oak trees and leaving deep muddy ruts alongside a beautiful public scenic road.

But clear-cuts are not just an aesthetic disaster. They:

- Encourage erosion and

lessen watershed protection, as the root systems of a living forest hold soils together and filter out nutrients and other pollutants that foul drinking water.

- Reduce the capacity of forests to filter and detoxify air pollutants, including nitrogen oxides that can trigger heart attacks and worsen chronic respiratory diseases such as bronchitis, emphysema, and asthma. These purifying processes take place on the surfaces of leaves.

- Threaten countless animals, plants, and microbes by destroying their habitats.

- Increase populations of white-footed mice, which can thrive in these degraded areas, by wiping out some of their predators and competitors. White-footed mice are the main host for



A commercial logging crew at work in the Quabbin last fall.

PHOTO FROM HTTP://WWW.MAFORRESTS.ORG

the bacteria that cause, and the ticks that transmit, Lyme disease. When forests are fragmented, people at the edges of these forests are at greater risk of getting Lyme, which can cause serious long-term health problems.

But most important, at a time when we are trying to increase every possible sink for capturing carbon dioxide so as to lessen the consequences of climate change;

when we need to plant more forests, not cut down those we already have; when leading physicians and medical academies the world over are calling climate change “the greatest public health threat of the 21st Century;” and when the nations of the world just met in Copenhagen and struggled to figure out how to reduce its cata- see **FORESTS** pg 15

## Good Time to Join a Time Bank

BY KAREN WERNER

**MONTAGUE CENTER** – I co-founded the North Quabbin Time Bank three years ago, and I am so excited there is now a new time bank in our region. Valley Time Trade started on December 2nd, initially with a focus on the greater Northampton region.

This past week at the Brick House in Turners Falls, we inaugurated the Leverett-Montague-Greenfield region to be part of the Valley Time Trade. I just joined. Membership is open to people and organizations in the Valley.

What is a time bank? It’s a simple web-based community currency that has taken off all over the country. There are a number of time banks in New England. Portland, Maine’s time bank has 500 active members who traded 8,000 hours between them last year. Cambridge has a relatively new time bank, growing by the month with over 400 members. Montpelier, VT, organized a time bank for 28 surround-

ing rural towns with 300 members and 5,000 hours of exchange.

In a time bank, everyone lists services they would like to offer and services they would like to receive. When you or your organization provides a service for another member, you earn one ‘time dollar’ for each hour you spent providing the service. You or your organization can then exchange each time dollar you earn for an hour of service from someone else.

The core values of a time bank are: we can all be valued contributors; some work is beyond a dollar value; helping works better as a two-way street; networks make individuals stronger; respect for all means accountability to all.

Here are some of the offers and requests currently listed in the Valley Time Trade time bank (you have to be a member to see who is listing what): mandolin, Irish flute, and banjo lessons; loan of a cider mill; converting vinyl records to mp3 files; ball-

room dance instruction; social media or website consulting; canning lesson; childcare and respite or elder care; rock climbing; giving a ride; Spanish lessons; graphic design; flier poster; reading instruction; gardening help; dog sitting; a listening ear; arbor work; help in making compost! Lots of other things are listed, too.

I have good memories from my exchanges in the North Quabbin Time Bank. I became friends with the woman who cut my hair several times (the best haircut I have yet received), and had meaningful and honest connections with two people I gave advice to about graduate school.

Four local Valley Time Trade members are now being trained to give orientations in the Leverett-Montague-Greenfield area. Upcoming Valley Time Trade orientations and outreach events in the next month will be listed in the *Montague Reporter*.

You can get more info at: [commwealthcenter.org/timebank.htm](http://commwealthcenter.org/timebank.htm), or you can call Jenny Ladd for more info: (413) 585-0373.

## Vermont Yankee: It’s Time to Die



Sen. Dick McCormack

BY DAVID DETMOLD  
**BETHEL, VT** – Vermont Yankee is emerging as its own worst enemy.

Even pro-nuclear legislators in Vermont are ready to dump the Vernon plant following the recent revelations about tritium leaks to the groundwater and Connecticut River, according to state Sen. Richard McCormack (D-Bethel).

“They’re saying, ‘I’m pro-nuke. But not this nuke,’” McCormack said in an interview last week. “The Vermont statehouse has a golden dome, and the

mood under the golden dome is shifting. I don’t know how much support they ever had in the first place.”

McCormack is a 20-year veteran legislator from Windsor County, and sits on two committees with jurisdiction over Vermont Yankee – Natural Resources & Energy and the Finance Committee.

Vermont, he said, is the only state in the union where a plant like Vermont Yankee needs an affirmative vote of the legislature in order to extend its operating license.

“If we do nothing, Vermont Yankee’s license expires in 2012, and it closes,” he said. “The burden of proof is on those who want to change that established order.”

As McCormack described it, the question among legislators is whether to kill Vermont Yankee, or simply let it die.

“There is the wish among some members of the legislature see **VERMONT** pg 12

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## GUEST EDITORIALS

## Greetings from Leonard Peltier



Leonard Peltier

LEWISBURG, PA – Thirty-four years. It doesn't even sound like a real number to me. Not when one really thinks about being in a jail cell for that long.

All these years and I swear, I still think sometimes I'll wake up from this nightmare in my own bed, in my own home, with my family in the next room. I would never have imagined such a thing. Surely the only place people are unjustly imprisoned for 34 years is in far away lands, books or fairy tales.

It's been that long since I woke up when I needed to, worked where I wanted to, loved who I was supposed to love, or

final days.

So often in my daily life, the thought creeps in: I don't deserve this. It lingers like acid in my mouth. But I have to push those types of thoughts away. I made a commitment long ago, many of us did. Some didn't live up to their commitments, and some of us didn't have a choice. Joe Stuntz didn't have a choice. Neither did Buddy Lamont.\* I never thought my commitment would mean sacrificing like this, but I was willing to do so nonetheless. And really, if necessary, I'd do it all over again, because it was the right thing to do.

did what I was compelled to do. It's been that long. Long enough to see my children have grandchildren. Long enough to have many of my friends and loved ones die in the course of a normal life, while I was here unable to know them in their

We didn't go to ceremony and say, "I'll fight for the people as long as it doesn't cost too much." We prayed, and we gave. Like I say, some of us didn't have a choice. Our only other option was to run away, and we couldn't even do that. Back then, we had no where left to run to.

I have cried so many tears over these three-plus decades. Like the many families directly affected by this whole series of events, my family's tears have not been in short supply. Our tears have joined all the tears from over 500 years of oppression. Together our tears come together and form a giant river of suffering and, I hope, cleansing. Injustice is never final, I keep telling myself. I pray this is true for all of us.

To those who know I am innocent, thank you for your faith. And I hope you continue working for my release. That is, to work towards truth and justice. To those who think me guilty, I ask you to believe in and work for the rule of law. Even the law says I should be free by now, regardless of guilt.

What has happened to me isn't justice; it isn't the law; it isn't fair; it isn't right. This has been a long battle in an even longer war. But we have to remain vigilant, as we have a righteous cause. After all this time, I can only ask this: Don't give up. Not ever. Stay in this fight with me. Suffer with me. Grieve with me. Endure with me. Believe with me. Outlast with me. And one day, celebrate freedom with me. Hoka hey!

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse.

– Leonard Peltier

\*Buddy Lamont was a Oglala Sioux Indian killed by an FBI sniper during the course of the Native American occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973. Joe Stuntz was an American Indian Movement activist killed in the course of a firefight with the FBI at Oglala, SD, in 1975. There were more than 60 unsolved murders of Native Americans on the Pine Ridge reservation during that time.

Two FBI agents, Jack Koler and Ron Williams, were also

killed in the Oglala firefight on June 26th, 1975; they were executed at point blank range. Peltier, a prominent AIM activist, was convicted of their murders, and given two consecutive life sentences. He has been denied parole repeatedly, despite the fact the prosecution has conceded the lack of any direct evidence that Peltier fired the shots that killed the two FBI agents

Around the world, Peltier is considered America's foremost political prisoner.

## Massachusetts Eagle Count Down to 71

### MASS WILDLIFE NEWS

WESTBOROUGH – Despite snow showers across the state, a survey of wintering bald eagles was conducted throughout the Commonwealth by ground crews on January 8th, and by a helicopter survey of the Quabbin and Connecticut River Valley on January 13th, 2010.

The preliminary results of these efforts yielded sightings of 71 birds. Last year, a record 81 birds were spotted.

Wildlife officials from the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife), volunteers, and interested citizens peered through the falling snow to observe birds from the ground and from the air during the event, which is part of an annual national survey. State data are pooled with national data and used by wildlife officials to track the progress of the recovery of the bald eagle.

At the Quabbin Reservoir, 21 adult and 16 juvenile eagles were spotted by the Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission helicopter crew, followed by their count of six adults and two juvenile eagles and one eagle of unknown age seen along the Massachusetts stretch of the Connecticut River. Four eagles (three adults, one juvenile) were spotted at the Wachusett Reservoir by a hardy boat crew of MassWildlife and Department of Conservation and Recreation staff. Other MassWildlife staff and volunteers saw six adults and three juvenile eagles at the Merrimack River, and two adults were seen in the Lakeville area. In Plymouth, three adult eagles and one juvenile were seen. Other eagle sightings were reported in Fall River, Carver, Arlington, Sandisfield, Pittsfield and the Housatonic River.

## Clarifying the Numbers for Leverett's Per-Pupil Costs

In the article last week entitled "Leverett Boards Clash over School Costs," the *Montague Reporter* accurately quoted me as having said that Leverett spends about \$10,000 a kid to educate its students in public schools.

This was a very rough calculation I did in my head at the meeting, but was not far off the mark. For the current school year, the appropriations from Leverett taxpayers in support of the elementary school (\$1.697 million for 161 kids) and the regional schools (\$1.142 million for 139 kids) come to a total of \$2.839 million. Thus, for the 300 kids enrolled in all grade levels, Leverett spends about \$9463 per kid.

You also accurately reported that I went on to note that the state average for per-pupil expenditures is \$12,200. The latter statement was also from memory as being the FY '08 figure from the website for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; the correct

figure was a tad higher, \$12,453.

However, my juxtaposition of those two figures was misleading, first because they were for different years (FY '10 vs. FY '08), but much more importantly because the \$9463 figure is the per-child contribution by Leverett taxpayers, whereas the \$12,453 figure is the state average for overall expenditures (town contribution plus state aid plus other grants).

I should note that the amount of state aid to towns varies widely according to a complicated formula (Chapter 70 of Mass General Laws) which seeks to level the playing field for all kids, but is in need of serious examination. I do not know what the state average for per-child town contribution is, but the overall per-pupil expenditure for Leverett Elementary in FY '08 was, according to DESE, \$14,521.

The two figures that are comparable, then, are \$14,521 for Leverett vs. \$12,453 for the state average (in FY08, the latest year

for which I have the available data), the former being 17% above the latter.

Let me also note that it's a subtle task to explain and interpret these numbers, but one in which many school committees are engaged. First of all, there are many different types of districts, K-12, elementary, regional, etc; some districts report expenses such as health insurance costs as part of the town budget and therefore show lower per-pupil expenditures than others merely as a result of reporting differences. Moreover, to what extent higher per-pupil costs reflect lack of efficiency vs. the existence of expanded educational opportunities for children is not immediately clear from these numbers alone.

I hope it is clear that though the comparison of the \$10,000 figure and \$12,200 figure were misleading, the error in making the comparison was mine. The reporting of it you offered was completely faithful to the conversation.

I would like to thank you for the detailed coverage you are giving to issues of import to the Leverett community.

Allow me to conclude by expressing my gratitude to the Leverett finance committee and selectboard. Through the efforts of school committee chair Kip Fonsh, who has inaugurated a new era of constant communication between the school committee and the other boards, these three governmental bodies have forged a very good relationship in which we collaboratively strive to offer the kids of our community the highest quality education at an affordable price.

– Farshid Hajir  
Leverett school committee member;  
Amherst-Pelham regional school committee chair

The views expressed here are the author's alone, and do not necessarily reflect the views of any other member of the Leverett school committee.

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# What Is Being Proposed for Our State Forests

**JONATHAN VON RANSON WENDELL** – After four hours of fervent but civil dialogue about Massachusetts state forests Tuesday evening in Amherst, the prospects may have shrunk for biomass-electricity harvests on state land, but sentiment favored continued timber harvesting on a reduced portion of them.

The wish for even more “reserve” (land exempt from tree harvesting) was heard, as was the perhaps contradictory desire to supply more of our own forest products in-state.

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) used Amherst Middle School to host two sittings – one at 5:00 p.m. and one that started around 7:30 p.m. – to present a draft report of its nine-month long Forest Futures Visioning process. They were part of a series of four statewide public comment sessions. Attending were several hundred citizens from Western and Central Massachusetts, many from the five towns covered by this newspaper.

The “visioning” process arose out of upset with DCR practices and policies – initially a rebellion at the marking of trees for cutting at Robinson State Park in Westfield, but soon growing to include a level of public unhappiness with cutting practices at other forests and in the Quabbin, where cutting is managed by DCR in conjunction with the Division of Water Supply Protection.

Aerial photos posted recently on the website of Massachusetts Forest Watch ([www.maforests.org](http://www.maforests.org)) show a veritable checkerboard of recent clearcuts in the Quabbin. The visioning process, however, excluded these and other watershed lands.

“There is concern that DCR is policing itself and not doing a good job of it,” said Claudia Hurley of Westfield, an activist with Mass Forest Watch. That concern, and other issues like parkland tree harvesting, clear cuts, forest reserves and biomass were addressed in the visioning report.

Foresters, among them Wendell’s Dave Richard, Massachusetts regional forester, have recently defended DCR’s

work, pointing out that many citizens are ill-informed about the rationale and techniques of forest management. Efforts to contact Richard for comment for this article were unsuccessful.

A technical steering committee (TSC) for the visioning process studied the DCR’s management structure and policies and, after input from an advisory group of stakeholders (AGS), produced the current recommendations. The recommendations cover ten areas, six relating to the land and its treatment and four to internal reorganization and process.

Areas designated ‘reserves’ would be off limits for harvest as one of three zones recommended in a new planning model for DCR, the others being ‘parklands’ and ‘woodlands’. In perhaps the most ambitious of its recommendations, the report suggests expanding ‘reserves’ from the current 40,000 acres to between 90,000 and 120,000 acres. Commercial harvests would be banned also on ‘parklands,’ which designation would be applied to 70,000 to 90,000 highly managed acres of the state’s holdings.

Only on the 100,000 to 150,000 acres designated ‘woodlands’ would harvests be carried out, according to the recommendations.

Language for managing reserves stresses natural processes, and if a problem arises that might suggest human intervention, “Where there is disagreement among qualified ecologists and foresters, the default management prescription should be to do nothing.”

Attendees expressed concern about how the zone decisions – total land area, and where – would be made. The report simply says DCR should “implement a detailed planning and public input process to identify feasible, on-the-ground configurations for reserves, parklands and woodlands, and solicit broad public input.”

Several of the task force’s recommendations suggest models and other strategies to rationalize the goals and policies of the agency. For example, “The fundamental guiding principle for all forest protection and management in the Commonwealth



Ground View, Gate 40, November 22nd, 2009 at the Quabbin Forest

PHOTO FROM HTTP://WWW.MAFORESTS.ORG

should be... a comprehensive suite of forest ecosystem services.” The term “ecosystem services” repeats throughout the document, and is defined as “including carbon sequestration; soil, air and water quality; biological and ecosystem diversity; nutrient cycling; culture, history and spiritual values; public recreation; and forest products.”

A point of contention, of course, was the relative emphasis the DCR should put on this last item, forest products – the service involving the strongest vested interests – versus softer values like carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling, and spiritual values.

Court Dorsey of Wendell was there and recalled the next day, “Probably the biggest applause line was when a guy said Massachusetts produces 3% of the wood products it consumes, and the rest come from out of state – tropical forests and the like. He called it a form of elitism to consume these things but not allow harvesting in order to manufacture them.”

The report itself envisions the Commonwealth demonstrating state-of-the-art forest management practices and generating – sustainably – more of its own forest products.

Dorsey said he noticed “good listening going on both ways – not perfect, but good. I talked to Leigh Youngblood afterward, and she said Mt. Grace Land Conservation Trust is doing some forest management on some of their lands, and she feels Massachusetts is being a leader

in this, and that we’re in pretty good shape.”

In his own remarks Dorsey said local forests have a guardianship of sorts, and spoke of “how we in Wendell protected the forest from Route 2, and how we’ll protect them again if we have to.”

The report takes a skeptical approach to biomass. “The TSC,” it reads, “believes that the expansion of biomass energy facilities in the state poses a potentially significant risk to the ecosystem services that are so important to maintain on DCR forests.”

The recommendations for the Woodland zone – where any such activities would be carried out – prohibit whole tree harvesting and require that tops and branches be left in the woods. This restriction, it said, should discourage biomass harvesting. It explicitly recommended that residues be “left in place to build soil carbon and protect nutrient stocks and habitat,” and allowed that “a substantial number of AGS members believe there should be no biomass harvesting on state lands.”

A number of attendees stressed their desire that forestry policy address climate change.

The format during the 5 p.m. time slot included breaking up into eight or ten groups, each facilitated by a trained facilitator. The size of the assignment, the sheer numbers in each group, and the noise level generated by nearby groups created a real communication challenge.

Nevertheless, individuals in the groups expressed their wishes and concerns and the facilitators took notes and reported back after everyone reassembled.

The responses covered dozens of areas, including objections to the state participating in commercial forestry at all, concerns (from both sides) about “stacking” the committees and “fixing” the outcome, objections to greater restrictions regarding cutting on privately owned lands (mainly more planning work and a proposal to require the sign-off of a licensed forester on a cutting plan), loss of snowmobilers’ rights, and alarm about new requirements for cutting in state lands.

On the last point, loggers, foresters and sawmill owners expressed strong concerns that the new regs would essentially shut down forestry on public lands. The proposals call for uneven-aged management and leaving branches and tops in the forest; they would prohibit whole tree harvesting, and require every tree to be marked. They propose mapping of wetlands, adherence to buffers, and full compliance with the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act.

One forester questioned whether there’s “any science behind these recommendations.”

Hurley, the activist with Mass Forest Watch and one of those whose concerns for public forests and parks precipitated the

see PROPOSED pg 18

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NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

# Selectboard Supports Bicycle Bridge on Greenfield Road

**BY BILL DRAKE** – Hopes to reconnect Greenfield Road over the Pan Am Railroad tracks came up for vote, as a motion to reconfirm the proposal to use Hatchery Road over to Turners Falls Road and make a new pedestrian bike bridge with enough capacity to allow a police car or an ambulance to cross over the railroad tracks.

Also included in the motion was a plan to upgrade the south portion of Greenfield Road – now a dead end – with new paving and drainage work.

The motion was approved on a 2-to-1 vote, with Mark Fairbrother voting nay.

“I’ll buy dinner when that bridge is built,” said Fairbrother. “When and if that bridge is built, I’ll buy dinner; I’ll be happy to.”

Fairbrother said that at a meeting with transportation officials on Friday, February 5th, he felt the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Highway) officials gave the town the run around.

“They said exactly what I expected them to say,” Fairbrother said. “They don’t want to do it. You’ll be lucky to get any sort of bridge out of that.”

Fairbrother supported the idea of having a graded crossing across the railroad tracks.

The former bridge over the railroad, then owned by Guilford Rail, began to collapse on April 4, 1999, shortly after Guilford Rail had lowered the tracks beneath the bridge to allow taller boxcars to pass beneath it. The town and the railroad were locked in ongoing litigation over the cause of the bridge collapse for years.

Mass Highway (now the Mass Department of Transportation) has expressed reluctance to rebuild the bridge to its former capacity, citing the difficult hydrogeological conditions in the area, which would make it difficult to secure footings. The department offered to rebuild the bridge for car and truck traffic

only if Montague would assume future responsibility for the bridge’s maintenance.

Instead, the current plan is to build a bicycle and pedestrian bridge that could be used for light emergency vehicles, and to route traffic on what had been one of Montague’s three main north-south arteries over a widened and reconstructed Hatchery Road detour, improving the roundabout route traffic has followed for the last eleven years.

The new bicycle bridge, estimated at \$1.4 million, and the Hatchery Road improvements, estimated at \$1.2 million, are still in preliminary design phase.

Until this week, the board had never formally voted on the six year old proposal to upgrade Hatchery Road and construct a bicycle bridge to join the two sections of Greenfield Road, Pruitt said after the meeting.

On the unanimous recommendation of the town website committee, Montague will hand the

redesign and ongoing maintenance of the town’s website to Virtual Town Hall, a Maynard company that provides website service to 110 municipalities in Massachusetts.

“Virtual Town Hall’s extensive municipal experience, along with their best practices approach,” said town clerk Debra Bourbeau, reading from the committee’s findings, helped sway the committee to unanimously vote to use Virtual Town Hall.

The training the company provides to use their service was cited as the biggest factor in their recommendation for the winning bid. The ability to network amongst peers from other cities and towns was another point in favor of going with Virtual Town Hall. Among the municipalities using Virtual Town Hall are Orange, Deerfield, and Greenfield.

Michael Muller and Patrick Davis had also made a bid for hosting and maintaining the town’s website on their local

company, Montague Webworks. They serve 200 clients including the town’s popular chat board, the Turners Falls Water Department, and the Fire Chiefs Association of Massachusetts, although their focus has been primarily on commercial clients.

Montague Webworks offered to set up the town’s new website for \$2,500, instead of the \$4,000 Virtual Town Hall bid, and to maintain it for an annual fee of \$600, instead of the \$2,750 bid by their rival.

Virtual Town Hall spokesperson Bill Letsky told the selectboard and website committee on February 1st, “We’re a strong, financially solvent business. We’ll be here in five years. We have a very strong, user-friendly, easy to use content management system.”

The new town website is expected to be up and running in the coming month, but it will take eight to ten weeks to move all town data to the new hosting site.

NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

## Lewis Appointed Temporary Assessor

**BY JOSH HEINEMANN** – Wendell’s two remaining assessors met with the selectboard at their February 3rd meeting to discuss the appointment of someone to replace Ken Holmberg, who resigned his seat on the board of assessors when he recently moved out of town.

The boards were seeking to appoint a new assessor until the next town election, in May.

Selectboard member Dan Keller said he had spoken with Ted Lewis, who served as an assessor in the past. Lewis is willing to take the post, at least until the town election.

Tom Mangan, senior member of the board of assessors, asked to discuss the possible appointment in executive session, because, he said, the matter involved personnel and character issues, but the selectboard disagreed.

Town coordinator Nancy Aldrich brought out the laminated list of exemptions to the Massachusetts open meeting law, and though personnel issues is one justification given for closing meetings to the press and the public, none of the selectboard members thought this exemption applied in to the discussion at hand.

Selectboard member Dan Keller admitted Lewis is quite a character, and that the job of assessing has grown much more

involved since Lewis last served on the assessing board. But he added Lewis is available and willing to serve, and said there must be office work he could start in on immediately as he is learning new rules and procedures. Lewis knows the town well, and is well known in turn, Keller pointed out, so he could accompany the paid assessor, Helen Williams, who is less familiar to residents, to make her house visits more comfortable for both Williams and the residents.

Selectboard member Jeffrey Pooser said his concern was how the appointment would affect the present assessors, and regretted if there were issues they were not comfortable speaking candidly about in open session.

Selectboard chair Christine Heard said Lewis has a fiery personality, but she said in her opinion Lewis’s main concern is always to move town business forward. She said he has shown he is willing to work for the wishes of the majority, even when they are contrary to his own feelings.

Assessor Todd Soucie agreed there is good deal of work someone could do while learning the intricacies of the new laws governing assessing, and said he was comfortable working with Lewis.

The selectboard voted not to go into executive session, and

then voted to appoint Ted Lewis as an assessor until May.

Mangan said then process was invalid and inappropriate, but he said no more.

Pooser said, “I wish you could feel OK to talk [in open session].”

### Repeat Pole Hearing

The selectboard held a second pole hearing for a pole to supply electric service to #133 Farley Road.

The first hearing was called invalid since not all abutters were notified. Significantly, the abutter on whose property a guying pole would have been placed was not notified for the first pole hearing on December 3rd of last year.

Though the board had granted permission for that pole to be placed as National Grid had planned, that permission was rescinded when the hearing was determined to be invalid.

Bob Wilber, representing National Grid, was in attendance on February 3rd, as were abutters Rose Heidkamp, Chris Neill, and the owners hoping to have electric service installed at #133 Farley Road.

Wilber said National Grid preferred their original plan, with a guying pole across the street on Neill’s property. Neill said that pole would create a hazard, as it

see **WENDELL** page 12

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# Family Displaced by Sewage Accident Threatens Lawsuit

BY DAVID DETMOLD

**ERVING** – On January 18th, every floor of Tim and Sherri Trask’s home on Warner Street in Erving was inundated with raw sewage when Bostley Sanitation, responding to a call from the town, attempted to unblock a plugged sewer line and instead caused backed up sewage to explode from every sink and toilet in the Trask home with fire hydrant force.

Since then, the Trask family has been living at a hotel in Greenfield with their two children and the children’s grandmother, all rendered homeless by what selectboard chair Andy Tessier called “a freak accident.”

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 258 limits the liability for damages to an individual from any incident “caused by the negligent or wrongful act or omission of any public employee while acting within the scope of his office or employment” to one hundred thousand dollars.

On Monday, in a tearful and emotive confrontation with the selectboard, Tim and Sherri Trask said the town’s insurer, the

Interlocal Insurance Agency (MIIA), is being unresponsive to their plight, as costs mount up for their temporary housing, the storage of their possessions, and for what they characterized as an intermittent, badly flawed cleanup of their property.

To their complaints, board chair Andy Tessier repeated over and over again, “You need to talk to MIIA.”

By the end of the meeting, the Trasks left, with Sherri in tears and both parents saying they intend to pursue legal action against the town.

“As a resident for almost 20 years in Erving, do I want to sue?” Sherri Trask demanded. “No. I’m left with no choice but to get an attorney. This is going to get ugly.”

She said she was making mortgage payments, paying electricity and heating bills for a house she could no longer call home. She was paying to store the family’s clothes. Her three year old is having nightmares, she said, and her six year old was asking why he could no longer

ride the bus to school.

Due to their present circumstances, Trask said she was forced to apply for food stamps on Monday for the family.

“We were a working family, just going about our business every day. I’m going to run out of money and have no place to live. I’m homeless with a handicapped mother and two small children. When the hell will I have my home back?”

She said, “This is not our fault,” and repeated that phrase several times.

Both Sherri and Tim Trask expressed the fear that the \$100,000 cap on the town’s liability would be exhausted by the slow pace of cleanup, leaving them with no recourse but to sue the town.

Sherri insisted the cleaning company hired by the town, Service Master, had not been back to their house since the middle of last week. She said the fouled carpets were still on the floors, the damaged insulation still in the walls, the inedible food still in the refrigerator and cupboards. “They cleaned the

knickknacks on the shelves,” she said bitterly. “You go into my house and it looks like they’ve been in there only three times.”

Trask said earlier it was costing \$13,000 a month to house the family at the Greenfield hotel.

“What happens when the \$100,000 runs out?” she repeated. “Where do we go? Where do we live?”

As calmly as possible, amid the palpable tension, Tessier replied, “The first step, we have to have Service Master get the house cleaned out. It is very unfortunate this has happened.”

“We’re just really emotionally upset,” began Tim Trask.

Terri Trask broke in, “You sit there and you say your hands are tied. MIIA is not doing their job.”

Tessier replied, “We have to call and talk to them and find out what they are doing or not doing. It’s the way it has to be.”

Terri Trask responded, “The house is going to be surface cleaned, and it won’t pass inspection. We’re going to be without a house.”

Tessier: “This is an unfortunate accident that occurred. We need to get things straightened around over there.”

Terri Trask: Since January 18th, that sewage has sat on every carpet. Now it’s probably in our subfloors. Why didn’t they do that [remove the carpets] the first day?”

Tessier: All we can do is call the insurance company.

Tim Trask: We just wanted to express our feelings to the selectboard.”

Terri Trask: I just can’t believe the town of Erving is treating us this way. The town of Erving is not accepting responsibility. You guys are not backing us up at all. That shit should have been removed the very first day!”

Tessier: We need to call MIIA.

Tim Trask: “I’m sorry. Thank you.”

With that, the couple left the meeting room, but Terri Trask returned moments later, and stood in the doorway long enough to say, “We want to know how much money is left [from the \$100,000]. We’re going to let the house foreclose and let you deal with it.”

The selectboard went into executive session to discuss possible litigation.

## NOTES FROM THE GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

### Ladd Takes Charge

BY ELLEN BLANCHETTE

**GILL-MONTAGUE** – “You’ve done your job, now let me do mine,” superintendent Carl Ladd told the school committee at Tuesday night’s meeting in Turners Falls. Ladd continued by saying it was time the committee lets him do the job he’d been hired to do: to take the lead in developing a plan for the district to move forward.

Ladd, in his report to the school committee, said the district has a lot on its plate, with pressure from many sides. The district schools are under pres-

sure to come up with a level funded budget for FY’11. He said he could not emphasize enough how difficult that is going to be.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has taken over budgetary supervision of the district for FY’10, for the second year in a row, due to a failure to find common ground with the towns on an acceptable budget.

The district needs to continue the process of implementing the turnaround plan. The DESE has designated Gill Montague as a Level 4, underperforming school

district, requiring the district to show improvements in educational outcomes.

What with pending decisions on Innovation schools, Horace Mann schools, charter schools, school choice losses, and Race to the Top requirements, Ladd said, “It is critical that we have an overarching vision of where we want to go.”

A February 3rd meeting at Montague town hall brought together Gill and Montague town officials, local legislative aides, school committee members and administrators to seek sustainable solutions for the GMRSD. Jeff Wulfson, DESE associate commissioner, said at that meeting he hoped the towns and the district schools would find solutions cooperatively to help the Gill-Montague school district resolve its budget problems, and perhaps provide solutions that could be useful statewide.

Wulfson suggested the state could be flexible on changing the formula for the local contribution to school funding, and in allowing schools to increase the percentage allowed in their free cash (Excess and Deficiency) accounts above 5%.

Having the state “at the table” has been a goal for many members of the Gill and Montague selectboards, finance committees and school committee. Ladd said he was cautiously optimistic that the positive tone of the meeting

on February 3rd signaled an opportunity to resolve longstanding budget issues. An oversight committee, formed at the February 3rd meeting, will meet every six weeks to report back to the towns and school district on their findings and recommendations for achieving sustainable educational and budgetary goals.

Michael Langknecht, school committee chair, asked, “Where do we go from here?”

There was a brief discussion of plans for future meetings, at which point superintendent Ladd said the committee should let him take the next step.

School committee members were unanimous in their support of Ladd’s suggestion. Ladd assured the committee he will base his plan for the district on the vision and goals they have already developed. He will present his report at the March 9th school committee meeting.

A committee of educators from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Public Secondary Education accreditation review will visit Gill-Montague from March 7th through 10th.

TFHS social studies teacher Vicky Valley and librarian Diane Hirtle presented a brief overview of the schedule for the visit, which will include participation by teachers, parents, and students. The process of evaluation for accreditation is repeated every ten years and is very important to maintain the status of the school.

Erving representative Scott Bastarache told the committee that Erving is considering becoming a “choice-in” school, pending the outcome of discussions with DESE regarding reimbursement. The question is what would happen if students choosing into Erving elementary school from other towns move on to GMRSD middle school and highschool. By becoming a school of choice, Erving could possibly become responsible for tuition for those choice-in students, instead of the student’s sending town. In which case Erving could lose money as a result of differing tuition reimbursements formulas. Bastarache said he expected the issue to be resolved soon.

Daniel Skarzynski, student representative, reported on the progress of the new recycling program at the high school said it is going very well. Asked by Sandra Brown, member from Gill, about the question of returning to flatware instead of the plastic, disposable utensils currently used in the cafeteria, Skarzynski said some students might consider this unsanitary.

Committee members, in discussion, felt this could be a learning experience for the students.

Emily Monosson of Montague said all of these recycling projects should “just be part of the school culture.”

Skarzynski agreed to gather student opinion on this subject and report back at the next meeting.

### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG

#### German Shepherd Abandoned

**Tuesday, 1/26**

12:35 p.m. Assisted Northfield Police with a domestic call on Captain Beers Plain Road.

4:50 p.m. Report of two suspicious people walking around International Paper Mill. Located male and female, found to be out for a walk, all OK.

**Saturday, 1/30**

4:40 p.m. Assisted Gill Police with a traffic stop.

10:40 p.m. Report of a stolen motor vehicle from Old State Road, under investigation.

**Tuesday, 2/2**

5:05 a.m. Loose dog on Warners Street barking. Located owner, advised would not happen again.

9:30 a.m. Arrested [redacted] on a default warrant.

11:34 a.m. Report of a dark colored jeep dropping off a German Shepherd at Arch Street and Route 2. Dog last seen chasing vehicle up Mountain Road.

**Wednesday, 2/3**

11:20 a.m. Report of dark colored smoke coming from a Lilian’s

Way residence. Technician was working on heater, no fire.

3:05 p.m. Assistance to Gill police with a building search for breaking and entering in progress. Subject placed under arrest.

10:30 p.m. [redacted] arrested for lights violation and unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle.

**Thursday, 2/4**

11:04 a.m. [redacted] arrested for negligent operation of a motor vehicle and marked lane violations.

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ART from pg 1

(Danielle Bardis graduated from Hallmark last year and exhibits a lovely oversized photo of glittering water droplets) to distinguished pros and even Distinguished Professors (Robert Hallock, Distinguished Professor of Physics at UMass, exhibits photographs revealing patterns, and patterns within patterns, in nature).

Thirty-five artists were chosen for the show. No single approach necessarily has anything to do with any other, except they all express our deepest quest for meaning, our desire to express something larger than the mundane in the day-to-day, to seize and celebrate the moment, to latch on to what we love, and to pluck the strings that connect us all.

But on to what's on view. First, classic black and white photography. Given the stewardship of the Hallmark School of Photography, it's not surprising this is the largest category on display.

Jim Slessinger's provocative diptychs are side-by-side images of vast, and vastly different places which become electrically connected. He allows us to discover amazing correspondences between unrelated yet strangely identical hill-sides in one pairing of an Italian city and a Utah canyon. The echoing topography of the two, one built densely in the Middle Ages, the other a wide-open frontier, suggest that the Earth tells us more than we realize. Another diptych juxtaposes an ocean horizon seen from a sailboat with a street and wall, making the finite and the infinite flip-flop, and making a surprising analogy between waves of water and zig-zags of pavement. The untitled works suggest similarity in difference, and point out hidden connections.

Stephen Petegorsky's remarkable photograph of a dead crow in winter, crunchy with detail, is eerily beautiful. All manner of winter detritus surrounding the crow – corn-



Trish Crapo - Push

stalks, weeds, seeds – is sublime in its bleakness. The crow, the epitome of blackness, is shockingly rimed with frost, like a negative of a crow. You just don't usually look at death so directly, and you shiver – not just because of the wintriness of the subject, but with shock at finding something dead so fascinating.

Katie Koti, a Greenfield resident now studying at the Rhode Island School of Design, shows photographs of burlap sandbags, close-up; so close you can see the irregularities in the weave of the fabric and the way it is distorted by the weight within. Titled "Pulse," "Navel," and "Hood," the forms look like cropped limbs, abstracted bodies – human, superhuman, subhuman, who knows? – viscerally recognizable, yet also alien.

Digitally altered photographs, or altered realities, make a subcategory here. Patrick Michael Collins shows mirror-imaged silos with spiral stairways against an azure sky, which become stairways to heaven. Doug Tibbles, drummer of the local band The Stone Coyotes, uses photos of Americana he finds at flea

markets and blurs and distills to reveal an essential timelessness. Jamie Sweeney fabricates dream world back-of-the-dollhouse scenes in which figures float and fly, borne by plastic bags, in and out of focus.

Next: sculpture, with figures by Joe Landry and Tim de Christopher. The work of each is stunning in this context, contrasting with the thin planes of the photographs. De Christopher's figures are weighty, rotund; Landry's are sinuous, rising. Both have delightful whimsy and appeal.

Moving on, faster than we want to, to paintings: Claudine Mussuto shows lyrical worlds incorporating maps and text. They seem weathered, distressed, survivors of a fire or a shipwreck, evocative of travel and uncertain destination, inward and outward exploration.

Karen Becker shows a watercolor of a nude arrived at indirectly by first monoprinting abstract smushes and splashes and then drawing and painting onto the cloudy page, combining abstraction and realism into a lifelike, almost breathing image. The movement of the paint, as much as the detail of the drawing, gives it life.

Defying categorization: Cathe Janke shows two large

surrealist paintings with attached branches and batting; Ruby Rice paints and prints women and embroiders over them, creating a beautiful veil. Rockleigh Wolfe shows a powerfully talismanic woman laden with Ghanaian Adrinka symbols. Jessica Fafnir Adamites shows felt vessels that are organic in feeling. This derives from the nature of the felting process, in which water washes over and through wool, drawing it together. The vessels seem seductively part animal, part vegetable, and mineral enough to be almost salty.

Also memorable are a mammoth photo by Howard Karger, titled To See the Summer Sky is Poetry, of two majestic trees against massive clouds; and breezy sketches of trees by Susan Crapo with no detail whatsoever, but conveying the same love of landscape.

There are many more artists I didn't get to meet and don't have room to tell about. You will have to go see for yourself. Go get to know your neighbors and see their dreams, desires, ideals, and maybe even their dark sides.

You will enjoy what you discover. Hidden meanings and hidden connections will be revealed.



Pier by E. Joseph McCarthy

BIG READ from pg 3

meaning of the words in the title was not such a bad idea. We hope they'll be curious enough to come and find out about them!"

Since early December, students in LaReau's 11th grade English classes and John Passiglia's industrial arts classes have been involved in discussions and actual hands-on preparations for the exhibit – from the basics of exploring what museums are and what makes an

exhibit compelling, to discussing changes in education over time, to choosing the color scheme, brainstorming activity ideas, designing the layout, and painting and assembling the room dividers. Some students are writing 'news feeds' for a fictitious interactive 'My Facebook, circa 1900' others have chosen Tobias Wolff's *Old School* as the novel for their assignment (their creative projects will be showcased at the exhibit). One class even crafted hornbooks and wood-

framed slates for visitors to practice their lessons on.

Bernardston Elementary School students are also contributing to the effort. Visual art teacher Althea Dabrowski led primary grade students through a lesson in an 'old school' didactic style, then through a related lesson using today's pedagogy.

According to Damkoehler, "Their work creates a colorful and provocative backdrop for the hands-on 'Creative Learning Center' incorporated into the

space."

"The exhibit features many historic images – photographs, documents and samplers – reproduced from Memorial Hall Museum's digital collection. Benches, desks and accessories representing the 1700s through today simulate the learning environment of each era, encouraging visitors to travel through time into the past, while also pondering the future. From those who will remember their c.1950 classroom, to the generation that

grew up with *Sesame Street*, to the youngest "scholars" just beginning to learn their alphabet today, the exhibit provides a perfect opportunity for members of different generations to have fun learning together, while exchanging stories of their own personal 'school days,'" Damkoehler said.

For information about PVMA and other Big Read events, visit [www.deerfield-ma.org](http://www.deerfield-ma.org) or call (413) 774-7476 x 10.



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# Storytelling Beneath a Tree of Many Cultures

**BY PENNEY ROBERTS**  
**TURNERS FALLS** – “Come on, Lord / You have the magic touch / To save Haiti / to set them free!”

Some stories are fairy tales; some are inspirational like a prayer. Other stories are real-life tales of triumph or despair.

The song lyrics of third-grader Rodney Duteau are all of the above and were sung to the audience by the eight-year-old who wrote the song to inspire healing in the country of his parents’ origin. That was only one of many touching moments in Tuesday night’s ‘Telling Stories’ event at Sheffield School.

Zoe Colby, Gill-Montague’s ELL teacher, was inspired to broaden the annual event this year to include not just the families of English Language Learners, but any Sheffield families who wanted to attend. Students and their parents gathered around circular tables and read out loud to each other, told stories, and shared a potluck meal. ELL students were

ones did a great job of showing the pictures to each listener, page after page. They were rewarded with proud applause, smiles, and encouragement from their eager audience.

A natural raconteur, Rodney Duteau wrote his own story called, “Weeloo Island: the Legend of the Giant” in which three friends must try to escape the giant, and their flooding island, and save the island people as well.

It was easy to relate Rodney’s fantasy story with a speech his mother, Marie Duteau, gave at a fundraiser for Haiti at St. Kazimierz Hall on February 1st. She spoke of the real disaster in Haiti during the January 12th magnitude 7.0 earthquake and the subsequent suffering of the people.

She wrote, “When God wants to speak to a nation, he always uses the poorest of the poor. Haiti, you must remember that you are a very strong tree. Even when you lose your branches, your roots are so deep and enormous you will

there is much hope for a similar outcome now for Haiti.

The Duteaus still have not heard word about some of their missing family. One of Marie’s cousins died from gangrene brought on by lack of care for her diabetes. Yet, Duteau remains hopeful that her country will have a resurgence.

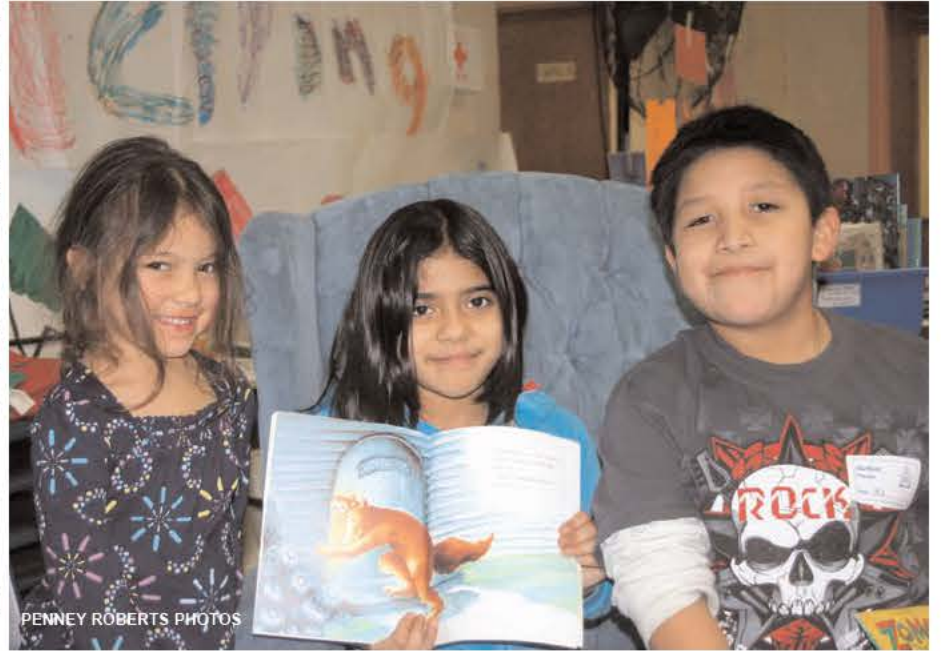
Because of a letter Rodney wrote to his school, a fundraiser was

started at Sheffield for Haiti relief. To date, over \$700 has been raised. Sheffield Principal Elizabeth Musgrave was proud to announce that the Masonic Lodge in Montague City will match all donations raised by the Sheffield school community for Haiti relief.

School art students also became involved and made heart-shaped medallions out of colored pipe cleaners to give to every student who donated to the Haiti fundraiser. They called their project “Hearts for Haiti.”

Musgrave said Gill Elementary School has started their own collection, which they will add to Sheffield’s funds. The money will most likely go to the Red Cross relief efforts in Haiti.

Sheffield is fortunate to have English Language Learners from seven other countries in addition to Haiti:



Kiaya Colby (left) and Edison Ovalle (right) listen to Vanessa Moreno (middle) read.

El Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Moldova, Puerto Rico, and Russia, and some of their cultures were represented too at the storytelling night.

Interestingly enough, some of the fairy tales American children grow up with have roots in other nations.

One of the activity tables had stacks of books with different versions of popular stories from different countries, all beautifully illustrated.

The Egyptian Cinderella’s tale takes its cues from an story that began circulating before the Common Era, retold by Shirley Climo and illustrated by Ruth Heller. There were two other Cinderella stories on the table as well, one from China titled *Yeh-Shen*, retold by Ai-Ling Louie and illustrated by Ed Young, and *Cendrillon*, a Caribbean story from Martinique, retold by Robert D.

San Souci, with rich scratch-board illustrations by Brian Pinkney.

A Chinese version of Red Riding Hood seemed to be told from the wolf’s point of view in *Lon Po Po*.

Another table held children’s books told in both Spanish and English. And although it might not at first clear why this was so, on one table books with no words were present as well.

Because really, when you think about it, storytelling is an ancient and universal art by which humans have always communicated. Even if you simply understand the story by pictures, sharing experience is a common language.

Watching the ELL students read, sing, and interact with their teachers and families was a strong reminder of how lucky we are to have such diversity in our area, and how precious everyone’s stories are.



Marshall Sisson watches as his daughter, second grader Emily Sisson, (aka Cleopatra) creates a paper bag masterpiece at one of the many activities tables.

responsible for much of the planning, sign making, and activities at the many tables that lined the walls of the cafeteria.

After dinner, ELL students took turns reading their favorite stories to different circles of students and adults. The young

grow out of your pain.”

Mother and son are inspirational in telling their stories in rich language to elicit understanding in their audience. In Rodney’s story, there was a happy ending. With the help of the international community



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**WENDELL** from pg 8

would be located right next to his driveway, blocking the view of oncoming traffic from a driveway that is on the inside of a curve with a limited view.

He showed the selectboard pictures taken from the driveway with the width of a pole blacked out over the site of the locating stake.

Neill said he has been repairing and restoring his house, going out of his way to keep to historic standards, since they moved there in 1986, and placing a pole at the designated point would detract greatly from his home's appearance.

Wilber said because of the distance involved, the wire going in to the property has to be a primary wire, high voltage and high tension. A guy pole on Neill's property was the preferred option, but a vertical pole and push brace would work also. The push pole would have to be installed near the base of the existing pole, where underground service to Heidkamp's house might be affected. The line foreman and workers are good at avoiding damage to an existing service, he said, but since that wire belongs to the resident, Heidkamp would be held responsible for the expense of repairing any damage that might occur.

Heidkamp said she was willing to accept that responsibility, but she wanted to be around when the work is done.

The selectboard denied permission for the original proposal, and directed the parties to pursue the second option.

**Slow Delivery**

Treasurer Carolyn Manley told the board that changes in the postal service have resulted in bills not arriving at their destination in a reasonable amount

of time. The dental insurance payment she mailed out in early January had not cleared yet, and the town is getting late charges for bills sent out on time.

Postmaster Charlie O'Dowd said he is no longer allowed to hand-cancel mail in Wendell, which had speeded the delivery of mail. He said mail processing locations have been cut back, so he is not sure if the mail goes to Springfield, Hartford, or New Jersey.

**New Energy**

Joe Laur accepted an appointment to the town Energy Task Force. Mary Thomas, who is new to town, has been attending task force meetings, and the board appointed her to the Energy Task Force as well.

Aldrich told the selectboard the Franklin Regional Council of Governments is offering funding help for technical assistance for towns to pursue cooperative purchasing, sharing equipment and working on updating open space plans and complying with the Green Communities Act. Towns that meet criteria of that act, including making a commitment to reduce baseline energy use in town buildings by 20% in five years, are eligible for state energy conservation and renewable energy grants.

Heard said by starting early in its efforts to conserve energy, Wendell will get punished because the base line from which its energy reduction is measured has already been lowered.

**Infrastructure Problems**

Aldrich said that the town needs to provide liability insurance for two vacant houses it has taken for unpaid taxes, one on Wendell Depot Road that was never occupied, and one on Wickett Pond Road that Marion

Herrick used to live in, with a total cost of nearly \$800.

Heard said she spoke with town custodian Larry Ramsdell about the Herrick homestead, and he said the shutters on the house cannot be closed because the storm windows are in the way. Glass is broken in some storm windows, and on some of the interior sashes, but the rain and snow are still kept out. Ramsdell installed a lock on the front door.

On February 15th at 8:00 p.m. the planning board will hold a public hearing to address a change in the special permits for automobile repair belonging to Dave Arsenaault and Paul Newcomb, which would remove the need to renew the special permits annually, and allow them to run continuously as long as the businesses are operating.

Margo Jones, the architect who designed the new town office and library buildings sent a letter to Royal Steam Heaters, of Gardner, the company that installed the heating systems, telling Royal Steam Heaters it is their responsibility to replace the defective circulating pumps in the heating systems.

**Wireless Update**

Pooser said the wireless internet antenna to be installed on the town office building will have a clear line of sight to an antenna on Mount Grace. The town office antenna will bounce a signal from there to the police station across the common and establish a high speed internet connection in a line of sight elsewhere in the center of town.

Robbie Heller, who had come in to talk about the town website, said with the Massachusetts broadband initiative is considering a model where towns, individually or in cooperation, could serve as

internet service providers, establishing fiber optic connections to individual households, and charging monthly fees for the service.

Heller said not all town departments have been keeping their sections of the town website up to date. He suggested the website could become an official town posting place for meeting warrants.

Keller said that would require a town meeting vote.

**Fin Com News**

The finance committee came in to discuss three issues: ongoing school costs and organization, the plan to change town elected positions that involve money handling to appointed posts, and the proposal made by Steve Verney, of the New Salem selectboard, to have Wendell pay some Swift River School fixed costs on a 50-50 basis with New Salem as shared capital expenses, rather than on a per-student basis as is done now.

Finance committee chair Michael Idoine said he is trying to arrange a meeting with representative Steve Kulik, and possibly Chris Donelan, who were part of a quiet effort to amend the recent Education Reform bill to allow towns to leave a superintendency union – like Union 28 – by a simple majority vote of a town's school committee. In some circumstances, this amendment would allow two people to remove a town from a school union, he pointed out. Wendell school committee members and finance committee members want to know why they were not informed in advance or involved in a decision that might have a serious impact on Wendell's elementary school.

Idoine said there are now four members on the committee

to study the idea of changing money management positions from elected to appointed: Dale Kowaki, Joe Coll, Doug Tanner, and himself.


Keller responded, "...all men, never a good thing."

Other town departments will be consulted before any conclusions are made.

At the December 23rd selectboard meeting, Steve Verney and Don King of the New Salem selectboard suggested that Wendell and New Salem act both as tenants and landlords of the Swift River School. As tenants, the New Salem representatives said, the towns send students, and pay instructional costs according to the number of pupils sent. As landlords, the towns would pay for capital expenses equally, but there are also fixed costs that are included in the per-student assessment that could be justified as legitimate landlord expenses, such as heat, electricity, the nurse, secretary and maintenance workers.

Because New Salem now sends more students to the school, that town is paying the major part of those costs as well. Verney asked that Wendell pay half of those costs as capital expenses. New Salem does not want to cut the school budget, but cannot afford to pay as much as it is being assessed.

Idoine said the finance committee had examined the proposal, and had looked at the amounts paid by both towns over the years, and found that Wendell had paid extra for the school in other ways. The finance committee did not support the proposed change in the formula for Swift River School.

But there is more to consider. Heard said Wendell is showing a big increase in incoming three year old children. 

**VERMONT** from pg 5

to take a vote to make a statement, rather than to let the license expire. The legislature needs to say, 'This thing needs to close,'" McCormack said.

McCormack said he has tried to be reserved in voicing his opinion about the plant which was built with the understanding – and with the agreement of the state legislature – that it would cease to operate in 2012. Supporters of the plant, and particularly its owners, have made it difficult to remain reserved, he said.

"The supporters of extending Vermont Yankee's license, in my view, use a very deceptive vocabulary. They speak as if closing it is a controversial proposition. Closing it is what is

supposed to happen. It's been the deal for 40 years. It's up to them to make their case ... I have not heard any compelling argument for keeping the plant open," McCormack said.

McCormack added he has "never bought the idea that nuclear power is clean power." Vermont may have a small carbon footprint, but Vermont Yankee has meant that state is paying a very high price for that very small footprint.

"In fact, it's about the dirtiest power you can get," McCormack said of the plant.

"Now the damn thing seems to be falling apart before our eyes. In every episode there's always some excuse. When the cooling tower collapsed, they said, 'It's not radioactive.' When it was leaking inside the reactor,

they said, 'The leaks are contained.' When the leaks were external, they said, 'The levels were not high enough; they're contained on site.' Now we have tritium at way above acceptable levels inching toward the Connecticut River. Either they didn't know the underground pipes were there, or they lied; those are the only two possibilities."


Vermont, McCormack stressed, has a Green reputation that is invaluable, but one that is being jeopardized by Vermont Yankee.

"When you have two Vermont products, and you put Green on the label of one of them, sales go up 15%. We have a reputation for cleanliness and quality. We're a Green state," he said. "We let tritium into the Connecticut River

and we're irradiating New Hampshire, and on downstream to Massachusetts and Connecticut and Long Island Sound."

McCormack said he believes the indications are the Senate will vote on the question of whether to relicense Vermont Yankee before the House, since Senate president pro tem Peter Shumlin is pushing for the vote. He urged Massachusetts residents who are concerned about Vermont Yankee's continued operation to contact Vermont legislators.

"We tend to think of this as a Vermont issue. In fact, it's a regional issue, under Vermont's control."

He added, "It's a terrible position for Vermont to be in, irradiating our neighbors." 

**TFHS ALUMNI FOOD DRIVE**

TFHS alumni will be at Scotty's Convenience Store on the Hill from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, in support of their second annual food drive for the Franklin Area Survival Center. Non-perishable foods and other necessities can also be dropped off at the 2nd Street Bakery through Saturday afternoon. Items most requested are peanut butter, macaroni and cheese, canned tuna or chicken, tissues and toilet paper, diapers and baby wipes. Monetary donations can be made by checks payable to FASC at 90 Fourth Street, Turners Falls, 01376 with TFHS Alumni in the memo section of the check. Please stop by Scotty's with your donations on Saturday, and thanks!

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**NEIGHBORS**

# A Passion for Books

BY LYN CLARK

**LEVERETT** – Although Barbara Alfange is a founding member of the Leverett Book Club, and well-known in that village, area residents may also know her for her volunteer work behind the intake desk at the Survival Center in Turners Falls, an organization on whose board of directors she serves.

I first met her when we both attended Mission Wolf at the Discovery Center, but it was Alfange's passion for two other wolves, Thomas Wolfe and Virginia Woolf, that really aroused my curiosity.

After I have read a novel, I may mull it over briefly, but soon go on to the next. Not so Alfange. To her, a novel – a fine novel – is to be digested like a fine wine, first savored, then its provenance researched, its locale visited, its author's life studied.

Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward Angel*, a thinly-disguised autobiographical novel written in 1929 when the author was 29 years old, was for Alfange such a book. She traveled from Massachusetts by train – because trains permeate the writings of Wolfe, who loved them – to his hometown of Asheville, NC to help celebrate the 75th anniversary of his birth (he died young at 38). Years later she searched for, and located in a cemetery in Hendersonville, NC, the 'angel' of the title, carved from marble by Wolfe's father.

It was the author rather than any particular novel that sparked Alfange's interest in Virginia Woolf, although her book-length essay, *On Being Ill*, a Paris Press reprint, is perhaps her favorite.

"I was interested in her as an individual, as well as the whole group of artists and writers of which she was a part."

Best known for *To the Lighthouse* and *A Room of her Own*, Woolf was born into a literary British family of authors, critics and biographers, and as an adult was part of the

Bloomsbury group that included Lytton Strachey, Rupert Brooke, her husband Leonard Woolf, and *avant garde* artists such as her sister Vanessa Bell.

Alfange read both Quentin Bell's biography of Woolf and Leonard Woolf's autobiographies as related to his marriage to Virginia and the mental illnesses that finally led to her suicide. In 2008, Alfange went to New York City to attend an exhibit at the Grolier Club of not only Virginia Woolf manuscripts, documents, and photographs, but memorabilia of many of Woolf's friends and family in the Bloomsbury group.

Alfange has also read the writings of Frank Lloyd Wright, which along with his architectural drawings and photographs have inspired her, as she has traveled about the United States with her husband, to make whatever side trips were necessary to view his churches, office buildings, museums, and many homes – including Fallingwater – in which both she and I would very much enjoy living, leaky roof not withstanding.

It is her depth of interest in authors' lives that seems to set Barbara Alfange apart from the garden-variety reader. And so, of course, her interest carries over to libraries. Trips include the Library of Congress, the J.P. Morgan library in New York City, and the New York Public Library, "where," said Alfange, "you are not permitted to browse, but must request the book which a runner will then obtain for you, and where books are shelved by size, only the more popular (commercial) ones listed by the Dewey Decimal system!"

Alfange grew up in South Dakota, attended college in Denver where she met her husband Dean, lived in Ithaca, NY, and eventually moved to eastern Pennsylvania as her husband pursued his doctorate in constitutional law. Moving to Leverett in 1967, they purchased a "big old house that

needed work," and put down roots.

Alfange is a 'birder,' and their spacious property, through which wander the occasional moose and wild turkey, is perfect for bird feeders, and occasionally the bears bird feeders also attract. At first, Alfange worked with students in the work-study program at Smith College, and later with Round the World Women, a program designed to acquaint the wives of students and post grads from abroad – frequently lonely and overwhelmed – with the strange world in which they find themselves in the Pioneer Valley.

In 1974 she became actively involved in Leverett's bicentennial celebration, and remembers the 5,000 daffodil bulbs her committee planted around town that year. But through it all, books and their authors remained a magnet, and beginning early in the '90s and for the next fifteen years, Alfange engaged in book-selling, visiting second hand book stores, tag sales, estate sales, listing her finds and searching for others in *Bookman's Weekly*, a publication for buyers and sellers of antiquarian books. With its demise in 1999 and the increase of book-selling on the internet, Alfange decided to sell off many of her books, and she retired from the business about five years ago.

"I still have enough books that I will never need to go to a library for the rest of my life," she confides. But I wouldn't bet on it!

The Leverett Book Club is a spin-off of the Friends of the Library which was started

twenty years ago by Alfange and Lorna Rivers, town librarian at the time. Four of the twelve current members have been with it for nineteen years; the rest have all been members for over twelve.. They meet in their various homes eight months of the year, and have read and discussed about 150 books.

It was, again, a book and its author that began another journey for Alfange, albeit a shorter one this time. Quite by chance, she discovered on a "free books" rack (in a bank of all places) a paperback novel titled *A Visa for Avalon* by Bryher, a 'Sapphic modernist' born in 1894 whose work Alfange had first read 20 years earlier. The reprint, she was surprised to discover, was from a small publisher in Ashfield, MA, the non-profit Paris Press, "publishing literature by women that has been neglected or misrepresented by the mainstream publishing world."

Inspired by the novel, Alfange decided it would be a good fit for the book club, and contacted the editor, Jan Freeman, who not only offered to supply the needed copies, but agreed to meet with the club to discuss the Bryher novel as well as Paris Press itself.

Did it stop there? Of course not. Further contacts and conversations led to Alfange being invited to serve on the advisory board of the Paris Press, and to assist in the preparation of its latest publication *Sisters: An Anthology*. Released in December 2009, this book includes explorations by 40 authors into the relationships between sisters. Included is fiction, nonfiction, poetry and even a play by such luminaries as Margaret Atwood, Simone de Beauvoir, Barbara Kingsolver, Alice Walker, and the Delaney sisters – often heartwarming; often heartbreaking.

What might we expect from Barbara Alfange next? I can only speculate that some author will grab her fancy and she'll be off again in hot pursuit. Books, after all, are her passion.



Barbara Alfange sitting in front of one of her many bookcases

LYN CLARK PHOTO

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# Writing Love Letters at the Senior Center



ROBERTA POTTER PHOTO

Left to right, Ellen Blanchette, Dorothy Hmieleski, Estelle Cade, and Laura Rodley. Posters display love letters written at the senior center workshop with photos.

**BY ELLEN BLANCHETTE**  
**TURNERS FALLS** – It's been a long time since I took part in a writing workshop, so I was pleased when I was invited by the *Montague Reporter* to take part in the workshop offered at the Gill-Montague senior center this January.

Laura Rodley, a writer and artist, was leading the workshop under the theme of "Love Letters." Part of the concept was that at the end of the workshop we would create posters with our stories and photographs to display in Gill town hall in February on the evening the play, *Love Letters*, was to be performed. A Valentine's Day theme was the connection for it all.

Since then, the play has been postponed until August. But workshop participants created the posters anyway, and stored them away for display at that time.

Going into the first workshop, I didn't know what to expect. My only experience with writing workshops were the ones I took years ago at Brooklyn College. Back then, harsh criticism was standard fare. At times students were driven out of the room in tears. That's probably why I never went to another writers workshop of any kind after I completed my degree.

It was clear from my first introduction to Laura Rodley that she would take a complete-

ly different approach. The writing group was small, with only two other women – Dorothy Hmieleski and Estelle Cade – and Rodley herself joining in.

The idea was to write a love letter to someone special to us. We had been asked to decide who we would write about before the workshop began and bring some photographs of that person to the first session.

Dorothy chose to write to her grandmother, Grammy Tanner. Estelle wrote a letter to her daughter Prudence. I wrote to my Aunt Marion, my mother's older sister, who was very important to me growing up. The photographs served to spark our memories. We showed them to each other and

talked about the concept of the workshop, but most of the time we spent writing.

Rodley used short prompts to get us going, a phrase or sentence as a starting point for writing. The prompt could be as simple as "I remember," or more specific as, "I knew we were meant for each other when ..."

The prompts had that feel of romance to them. Perhaps it had something to do with our being somewhat older (although surely not old) but as you can see, we didn't take that direction. Maybe that's because the mind, looking back over the years, goes to those who have meant so much to us and are now either distant or gone.

There is something very comforting about writing in a room with other people engaged in the same task. Writers talk about how lonely a profession theirs is, sitting with the "typewriter" and only their own thoughts to keep them company. That's one point in favor of being a reporter. It forces the writer out of her house and into the company of others.

But here in this small writers group I found another way to be a writer and not be so alone.

The process was for us to write on a short theme for a period of time, say 20 minutes, and then read out loud to each other what we'd written. We repeated that process several times, using most of the two hours to write and then share. Unlike those college sessions,

no critique was offered by anyone. Instead, Rodley asked us to chose a word, phrase, or line that particularly pleased us. That kept us focused on the positive aspects of the writing and allowed each participant to feel safe in sharing her work.

I found the experience enlightening and very nurturing. It was also lovely to get to know people through their writing. On the last day, we got to see those posters, and had a cozy tea party.

Laura Rodley's chapbook, "Rappelling Blue Light," was nominated for a Mass Book Award. Her poetry has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She works as a contributing writer and photographer for the *Daily Hampshire Gazette*. Also a visual artist, she assisted former Greenfield resident Thurston Munson in completing his mural at the Greenfield town hall, and donated the painting opposite it, "Indian Maiden Maple Sugaring," to the town.

She has been asked to continue the writing workshop with a new theme of "As You Write It." The new sessions began February 5th; it meets Fridays from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the senior center, located at 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls. They are seeking new members and anyone interested in attending should call (413) 863-4500.

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NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Spanish Program Cut in Most Recent School Budget

BY DAVID DETMOLD

LEVERETT – The Leverett School Committee brought back a zero-increase budget, keeping the town’s FY’11 assessment for the Leverett Elementary School to \$1.69 million at the selectboard’s request, on Tuesday night.

In order to achieve that figure, the school committee decided to make a number of cuts. Included among them is the complete elimination of the K-6 Spanish program at the elementary school, for a savings of \$18,086.

That loss brought a number of parents to the selectboard meeting on Tuesday, to speak out in defense of the Spanish program.

Among them was Nancy Paglia, who said even though her child was graduating from the elementary school this year, “I’m speaking on behalf of the children who will be coming into Leverett who won’t be able to take advantage of the Spanish program. I think it is penny wise and pound foolish.

“As you know,” she contin-

ued, “the greatest age is six to twelve to expose children to a foreign language. This is a great loss. If we could look at creative solutions... maybe offering it every other year, or half a year? If we stop offering Spanish, we are going to lose people. I know a number of people who brought students into Leverett because of the Spanish program.”

Another way the school committee sought to bring the budget in at a zero-percent increase was to dip more heavily into the so-called ‘school choice revolving fund,’ according to Kip Fonsh, committee chair.

According to figures the committee handed out, Leverett entered the current budget year with a beginning balance of \$66,880 accrued from school choice income from 29 students who came to the elementary school from other districts last year.

Projecting a steady number of school choice students coming to the elementary school in FY’11, the committee estimates a total

income from school choice for Leverett at \$155,000. But the school committee decided to take \$160,616 from the revolving account to achieve a level funded budget, dipping into last year’s nest egg, and drawing it down to \$61,264.

Fonsh said it was not out of the question to draw the account down more deeply in order to restore cuts or counter further losses in state aid, but it might not be wise to do so.

“I’d like to have as much as possible in a rainy day fund. I don’t think we are out of the woods yet.”

Paglia wondered whether elementary school parents could be a source of fundraising to support the Spanish program. “I think that is a smarter solution.”

Steve Ball used the Leverett highway department, which had been in earlier to defend its \$297,000 budget request to the selectboard, as an example when he said, “If you give the highway department a 5% cut, that could see LEVERETT pg 18

New Group Aims to Build ‘Resilience’ in the Community

BY DAWN MONTAGUE

TURNERS FALLS – Residents of Montague and nearby towns are hoping to form a new group that takes a proactive and grassroots approach to dealing with overarching, global issues of climate change and resource scarcity. The group would be part of the Transition Movement, a framework based on the idea that together, members of a community are best suited to develop practical solutions for a given problem, and to build “resilience” within the community before things get really bad.

On January 28th in Montague Center, and on February 2nd at the Brick House in Turners Falls, Tina Clarke led information sessions about the Transition Town model. Clarke said there were about 16 people at the Montague Center event, including several local farmers; the meeting at the Brick House was more sparsely attended. Participants at both events discussed ways they could work together, especially on local food issues.

The Transition model was developed in 2005 in the U.K. Hundreds of groups worldwide are currently using the model to face what proponents call the “triple challenge” of our time: an anticipated peak and decline in oil supply, the effects of climate change, and increasing economic instability.

Clarke, who was recognized by Massachusetts Environmental Affairs Secretary Ian Bowles last year as the first place winner of the utility-sponsored Zero Energy Challenge for her new energy-producing home in Montague City, gave examples of ways to build “resilience” in a community. One simple and direct suggestion: help people weatherize their homes now. She said a proactive project like insulating buildings,

undertaken before energy prices spike, equips a community to better respond to a serious economic crisis.

While Transition initiatives are still relatively unknown in the U.S., they are widely recognized in the U.K., which currently has the highest concentration of projects. A Transition Town is even featured on a popular BBC radio soap opera, and in 2008 members of Parliament listed the Transition Handbook as a top summer read.

Transition initiatives have popped up in a number of towns in the region. Northampton and Shutesbury both have active groups, and others are forming.

Clarke is a Montague City resident and one of only four Transition trainers east of the Mississippi.

“People learn faster by seeing than by hearing abstract information,” she said.

At both of the events in Montague, Clarke shared stories and photos from her recent visits to Transition Towns in the U.S. and Europe, showing gardens, pedestrian and bike-friendly cities, and members of the community working and playing together.

Transition literature includes a “cheerful disclaimer,” which says, in essence, “We aren’t sure if our approach will work.” But a couple dozen people in our area seem ready to try.

For those interested in learning more about Transition Town initiatives, an in-depth training will be held on February 27th and 28th at the Woolman Hill Retreat Center in Deerfield. Contact Catherine Ratte for details at (413) 781-6045. For further information visit [www.transitionus.org](http://www.transitionus.org), or contact Tina Clarke at [tinaclarke@transitionnet-work.org](mailto:tinaclarke@transitionnet-work.org).

expect the Commonwealth, which just lost its coveted Forest Stewardship Council “green certification” because of its destructive forestry practices, to do nothing less.

Dr. Eric Chivian, director of the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School, is co-editor and lead author of “Sustaining Life: How Human Health Depends on Biodiversity.”

This article first appeared in the Boston Globe; it is reprinted here with the author’s permission.



LEVERETT ENERGY CORNER

Town of Leverett Receives Clean Energy Grant

The Leverett Energy Committee announced the town of Leverett has been awarded \$6795 from the Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust Clean Energy choice program for projects that further the Commonwealth’s clean energy goals.

The funding comes as a result of efforts by Leverett residents to purchase clean energy through their electric utility bills, which generated matching funds from the Trust for use toward clean energy projects.

The grant funds will be used for a variety of projects, including renewable energy books and other media for loan from the Leverett Library, photovoltaic lighting for the Leverett Elementary School sign and the Leverett Library sign, renewable energy workbooks for the Leverett After School Program, renewable energy workbooks for community education workshops hosted by the Leverett Energy Committee, and funds for education and outreach activities of the Committee.

“We have been working with limited financial resources, but lots of people power, for several

years,” said Portia Weiskel, Leverett energy committee chair. “We are excited about these projects enhancing our work, and pleased our residents participated by signing up for the wind fund.”

“These communities are green leaders; it’s wonderful they are implementing clean energy projects that their residents, businesses, and public officials can see in practice,” said Trust executive director Carter Wall. “The Trust is proud to support these communities, and we hope these projects will help generate ideas for other renewable energy endeavors.”

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Peace Disturbed

Tuesday, 2/2

6:35 p.m. Domestic disturbance on Church Street. Investigated.

Wednesday, 2/3

1:50 a.m. Domestic disturbance on Fifth Street. Arrested [redacted] for disorderly conduct, disturbing the peace.

10:49 p.m. Breaking and entering on East Main Street. Investigated.

Friday, 2/5

4:01 a.m. Brush fire on

Lake Pleasant Road. 10:25 p.m. Fight at a Third Street address. Peace restored.

Saturday, 2/6

12:32 a.m. General disturbance at Second Street and Avenue A, Between the Uprights sports bar. Peace restored.

1:01 a.m. Fight at Second Street and Avenue A. Peace restored.

10:47 a.m. Domestic disturbance on K Street. Services rendered.

10:41 p.m. Domestic disturbance on Green Pond Road. Investigated.

Sunday, 2/7

12:43 a.m. Domestic disturbance on Oakman Street. Services rendered.

8:47 a.m. Assault near Shea Theater on Avenue A. Services rendered.

3:08 p.m. Shoplifting at Carroll’s Market in Millers Falls. Services rendered.

4:54 p.m. Arrest of [redacted] for driving under the influence, operating to endanger, marked

lanes violation, failure to stop for police, failure to wear seatbelts, and failure to notify RMV of change of address.

Monday, 2/8

9:49 a.m. Fire at back yard of house on Center Street. Investigated.

10:22 p.m. Arrest of [redacted] for trespassing, assault and battery on a police officer, and disturbing the peace.

Tuesday, 2/9

3:01 p.m. Hit and run accident on Seventh Street. Report taken.

FORESTS from pg 5

strophic impacts, the DCR, however well intentioned, is contributing to the crisis.

The science that the DCR is relying upon to justify its clear-cutting is selective, incomplete, and debatable. Until an independent and comprehensive scientific review by leading experts can show that these practices are not harmful to the environment and do not threaten public health, there needs to be a moratorium on all clear-cutting in Massachusetts state forests. As the owners of these forests, the people of Massachusetts should

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Advertisement for The Wagon Wheel Restaurant with logo, text 'COME SIT BY THE FIRE!', 'Hot Soups, Cold Beer', 'BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER', '7 days a week All Winter Long', and address 'Route 2, Gill • 413-863-8210'.

Advertisement for Kustom Autobody with text 'COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE', 'KUSTOM AUTOBODY', 'MA Reg #RS2066', '48 Randall Road Montague', 'Phone/413-863-3780', and 'Mike Fuller, Owner'.

## THE NEIGHBORHOOD TOXICOLOGIST

# Woodsmoke: a Dose of our Own in my Backyard

BY EMILY MONOSSON

**MONTAGUE CENTER** – “Do you have a woodstove?” the doctor asks as I sit, barelegged, in my too-small hospital gown, and give the respirometer a feeble puff. It’s my second try and I beg for one more, surely I can do better.

“Woodstove? Yes, but it’s one of those new ones,” I answer defensively. “You know, with a catalytic converter.”

Not one of those smoke belching dinosaurs, I’d like to add, the kind that blacken the cobwebs and send clouds of smoke throughout the neighborhood, like the woodstove in our old rental.

But I’m in denial. I ought to know better. Burning wood is dirty, pure and simple. No matter how hot the stove, no matter the catalytic converter devoted to reducing our share of wood smoke.

Chemically wood is about fifty percent carbon and forty-five percent oxygen, some hydrogen (around 6%) with a dash of nitrogen and assorted elements such as calcium, potassium and magnesium. That means that a cord of maple wood, roughly the amount we burn at our house each winter, which weighs around 4,000 pounds, depending on how dry it is, contains roughly 4,000 pounds of carbon, oxygen and hydrogen. But, once we stuff in the old pizza boxes, the Sunday Times, a little kindling from my husband’s workshop and add a few matches, all that is neatly

bound up in those logs will be transformed into heat, light, gas and particles large and small.

Some of those particles will end up in the ash pile at the bottom of our stove, and some, along with a mixture of hot gases, will flow up the chimney and into the air. Technically, our little stove should release no more than four grams of particulates into the air per hour – a tenth of what stoves used to emit before the EPA stepped in. But is that good enough?

Even though we’re talking as little as four grams an hour (and upwards of 30 grams over a day), it is primarily those small particles that concern my doctor. As our wood burns, no matter how efficient or tight our stove, particulates and gases will leak out – if not into our home, then up and out our chimney into the neighborhood, mingling with all of our neighbor’s wood gases and aromatic (in more ways than one) wood smoke.

The lovely smoky aroma that comes with wood burning not only indicates the return of crisp fall weather, but the slew of airborne chemicals – from carcinogenic polyaromatics to volatile organic carbons (VOCs), to gases like carbon dioxide (the major gas), carbon monoxide and methane, to minerals like potassium – wafting around our “fresh country air.” (I say this with some irony as our semi-rural valley sees its share of air pollutants hailing from NYC. And, depending on the weather, we can have some of the worst

air in the state, particularly in the summer.)

There are also very small bits of carbon in our wood smoke, known as particulate organic carbon, which make up in large part the particulate material or PM, released when wood is burned.

As with any science, the science of air pollutants like wood smoke evolves over time. What’s known to be released into the air when wood burns, and how much, is refined as technology allows scientists to measure increasingly smaller amounts and sizes of pollutants. Our knowledge of the dangers of exposure to such pollutants is refined as well.

The old adage you can’t manage what you can’t measure often accounts for the all-too-common phenomenon of the dropping baseline of “safe” or acceptable concentrations of exposure in toxicology. Think lead, mercury, and radioactive chemicals like strontium and plutonium, all chemicals once treated more cavalierly, back in the day, than they are now. And all chemicals for which “allowable” concentrations have continued to decline over the decades.

When EPA first regulated particulates in 1987, they focused on PM10, or particulates 10 microns and smaller. Subsequent studies suggested that the much smaller particles were likely more dangerous, leading EPA to regulate PM2.5, (particulates that are 2.5 microns) nearly 10 years later in 1997. Flash forward nearly another ten years, and further

concerns about these small particulates caused EPA to reduce the acceptable amount of PM2.5 exposures in a 24 hour period by almost half. And, as technology provides scientists with the tools to study smaller and smaller particles, the studies that led to reductions in PM2.5 are being supplanted by studies revealing the toxicological importance of smaller and smaller particles. Some studies suggest that the majority or peak size of particulates released by wood smoke range from 0.15 to 0.4 microns – a few hundred nanometers in size.

Not only are researchers figuring out that bigger is sometimes better (much like FOX television, which offered up a new Plus-sized reality show, *More to Love*.) they’re also realizing that mass or weight isn’t everything.

The current U.S. EPA standard for PM2.5 considers only the combined mass – essentially the combined weight – of these little particles, not the chemical composition or the number of particles, or the relative size of the particles. As scientists well know by now (or ought to), when it comes to very little things – like chemicals in the nanometer range (which include some of these particulates) – size does matter.

Typically, the smaller things get, the more surface area they have. Think about peeling a pound of granny smith apples, and a pound of crab apples. Which would you rather peel? More apple skin, more surface

area on those little crab apples. Same with particulates. As these little particulates get smaller, they reveal more surface area. Same amount of mass but more area to react with a body’s cellular surfaces. Typically, the more reactive a particle, the more toxic it tends to be.

In fact, scientists are now linking inhalation of the smallest of these small particulates, the ultrafine particles (particles smaller than 100 nanometers in size) that comprise the smaller end of PM2.5, with a range of adverse health effects including asthma, chromosomal damage and cardiovascular effects.

Using the woodstove is one of those lifestyle choices we make every day. As I swear up and down that my asthma tends to worsen with the leaf-mold season rather than the wood smoke season (although admittedly the two coincide – so who’s to say?) we rationalize that for each cord of the old maple that fell into our yard years ago, we avoid burning the imported fuel oil sitting below in our basement tank.

Besides, we’re only burning a cord or two a year – and although could same can be said for our neighbors on either side, down the street and around the block, at least we’re not burning five hundred thousand tons of wood and releasing 54 tons of PM10, as proposed by Pioneer “Renewable” Energy for their Greenfield biomass plant... right? But that’s a story for another day.

## NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD MEETING

# Unmarked Cruiser for Erving

**BY DAVID DETMOLD** – Chief of police Chris Blair will be driving an unmarked cruiser now that the Erving selectboard has lifted a longtime ban against unmarked police vehicles in town.

“Before I came to work for the town,” recalled town administrative assistant Tom Sharp, “a group of citizens protested to selectboard about unmarked police cruisers.”

Sharp, who has worked for the town for the last seven years, said citizens at the time were concerned about being pulled over by a cruiser if they couldn’t be sure it was a bona fide police car.

But Blair said the town needed to have its own unmarked cruiser, now, in order to comply with state law that says juveniles cannot be transported to court in a marked police car. For the last ten years, Erving has relied on Greenfield to provide transportation for juveniles. Blair said the problem comes up several times

a year, mostly dealing with run-arounds.

But state budget cuts, retroactive to January 1st, eliminated the funding by which Greenfield was able to afford to provide this service, Blair said, and now Erving was left with no other reasonable alternative than to take the decals off the Expedition he uses when on duty. Blair said he will also use that cruiser for regular patrols.

Also at the meeting on Monday, February 8th, Blair reported to the board the circumstances of an incident that led to the towing of a private vehicle parked on the side of Mountain Road on December 28th of last year.

The truck, owned by Wayne Hastings, of North Eastham, was “definitely in the traveling lane, outside the guardrail,” on a day of bad snow squalls, Blair told the board. He had received a call from highway boss Paul Prest to

tow the vehicle, to make room for the snow plow to clear the road.

Blair said as he was stopped to examine the vehicle, Hastings’ nephew, who lives in town, happened to drive down the road, and stopped to tell him, “That’s my uncle’s truck!” He learned that Hastings was out hunting, and got his cell phone number from his nephew. He tried to call Hastings, and failed to reach him.

Blair went to the scene of an accident at that time, and returned two hours later to find the truck still there, at which point he called Arsenault Towing to have the truck removed. He saw Frank Savage try to negotiate the slippery hill around the park truck, fail on his first attempt, back down the hill and start again.

Blair said he did not give Hastings a ticket, although he could have, because he “didn’t want to rub salt in the wound.”

Hastings sent the town a certified letter asking that the towing

bill – for \$140 – be paid at town expense, but the selectboard denied this request.

Peter Valinski and Michael McManus of Tighe and Bond, consulting engineers for the town on a number of infrastructure improvement projects, told the board the \$6.4 million renovation of the Erving wastewater treatment plant is nearly complete, except for a few punch list items.

A recent incident where an external transformer shorted out, cutting power to the plant, was exacerbated by the failure of contractor R.H. White to see to it the wiring had been connected to a pump for the backup diesel generator’s 6,000-gallon fuel storage tank. This led to a total power outage at the treatment plant for an hour and a half, McManus told the board, and a service call to a technician to repair the generator, which had simply run out of fuel.

McManus promised R.H. White would be held responsible for the bill for the service call.

Work on relining a number of sewers in Erving Center should

be complete by the end of next week, McManus said, with another week of work to replace manholes on that side of town.

In other news, Carole Lyman came before the board to try to revive the former Memorial Day committee, which organized Memorial Day parades in town in years past, and tended to veterans’ graves with wreaths and flags. The selectboard sets aside \$1,500 for these activities, but lately has entrusted the money and the responsibility for Memorial Day activities to the recreation commission.

Membership on the recreation commission has changed in recent years, and last year the recreation commission appeared to be caught by surprise that they were supposed to be in charge of organizing a Memorial Day parade.

Lyman said she would be glad to do it, with help. Anyone wishing to volunteer to help with Memorial Day activities should call Tom Sharp at 422-2800, extension 100.



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JESSICA HARMON ILLUSTRATION

BY FRED CICETTI

LEONIA, NJ – Q Have you ever heard of sarcopenia?

This one made me go to the dictionary. Sarcopenia, a Greek word that means loss of flesh, is the decrease in muscle tissue that comes with age.

Sarcopenia (pronounced sar-ko-PEEN-ya) begins early in life. Studies show that after age 40, most people lose about one percent of their muscle mass each year.

However, strength exercises –

## THE HEALTHY GEEZER: Muscle Building for Seniors

also called resistance training, weight training and weightlifting – can rebuild your muscles and provide many health benefits. Research funded by the National Institutes of Aging (NIA) shows that even people in their nineties get a lot out of weightlifting.

In one study at Tufts University in Massachusetts, nine women and men, ages 87 to 101, strengthened their arms and legs by exercising with weights. In eight weeks, they increased the strength in their front thigh muscles by an average of almost 175 percent. Some studies have shown that, of all age groups, seniors benefit most from weightlifting.

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that adults age 50 and older work out with weights two to three times a week. The National

Institute on Aging also recommends weight lifting for older adults.

*Weightlifting can do the following for seniors:*

- Prevent bone fractures. The exercises boost your strength, balance, and agility, making falls less likely. And, weightlifting can also build bone mass in the spine and the hip, so it's especially important for people with bone-thinning osteoporosis.

- Help you lose weight.

- Control blood sugar. In one study of adults with diabetes, 16 weeks of strength training provided dramatic improvements, comparable to improvements from taking medication.

- Relieve depression and improve sleep.

- Increase stamina. A University of Vermont study of

healthy seniors ages 65 to 79 found that subjects could walk almost 40 percent farther without a rest after 12 weeks of weight training.

- Relieve arthritis joint pain. Weightlifting can cut down on pain by strengthening the muscles around the arthritic joint. Stronger muscles reduce stress on the joint.

You should always check with your doctor before starting a new exercise program. Weightlifting can be done at home with household items, but many health organizations recommend working out in a professional setting for maximum benefits. The number of facilities that cater to older adults is increasing.

*Here's a brief guide to exercise for seniors:*

Start out slowly with a pound weight, or no weight at all. You should feel challenged, but not close to your limits. You may feel some normal muscle sore-

ness at first. You should not experience exhaustion or pain.

Do strength exercises for your shoulders, arms, back, stomach, hips, and legs at least twice a week.

Avoid jerking or thrusting movements. Don't lock the joints of your arms and legs into a strained position.

Do eight to fifteen repetitions in a row of each exercise. Use smooth and steady movements. Once you can easily lift the weight fifteen times, increase the amount of weight.

Take three seconds to lift or push a weight. Hold the position for one second, and then take another three to five seconds to lower the weight.

Exhale as you lift or push the weight, and inhale as you relax or lower the weight. Don't hold your breath during the exercises.

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

TESSIER from page 1

government, allow international companies to import tariff free parts without for manufacture in domestic plants, among other benefits, Klepadlo said.

Town clerk Richard Newton said registered voters in Erving have until March 15th to turn in nominating papers for town office. Among those who have either taken out or turned in papers already to run for various offices this year are incumbents Shirley Deane, for tax collector; James Carpenter, for assessor; and Melanie Burnett for school committee. There may be an opening for school committee if Beth Lux decides not to run again. Newcomer Robert Fletcher is seeking the library trustee post held by Beth Bazler, who is not running again. Newton said he was also planning to run for tax collector, in addition to his post as town clerk. Other positions, from tree warden to constable, are also up for grabs in May. For more information, call the town clerk at 422-2800, extension 102.

Reflecting on the pending change to the selectboard, administrative assistant Tom Sharp said, "I think Andy Tessier is an exemplary public servant. All the decisions he has made on this board, in the forefront of his mind, has been what is best for the town of Erving. He certainly has done a lot in the last few years to get our infrastructure in good shape.

"When you lose somebody with the knowledge base that Andy Tessier has, it forces you to work harder. We'll definitely be digging into things that he could have answered right at the table," said Sharp. "But that's how we learn."



PUMP from page 1

sian wells pump up to two million gallons a day.

But the output from one of those wells is declining, Brown said. And on a hot summer day, residents of Turners Falls, Montague City, Millers Falls and Lake Pleasant can use up to 1.8 million gallons.

The new well is permitted at 1.5 million gallons a day, but the pump will be sized to handle up to 1500 gallons a minute, or 2.1 million gallons a day, if the Montague Center well were ever taken offline in an emergency, Brown said.

The new well will provide a "true backup water supply" for the four villages, Brown said. Right now, Turners Falls Water relies on Lake Pleasant itself as a backup water supply, even though the department would have to install an expensive filtration system if it ever was forced to use the Lake for drinking water for any length of time.

Not that Lake Pleasant isn't filled with clean, pure water. But the state has prohibited the use of unfiltered surface water for public drinking since about 1994, Brown said. Since then, Lake Pleasant has been kept off limits to swimmers simply as a backup source, but never used.

Green Pond, to the north of Lake Pleasant and connected to it only by water pipes to and from the water department's Lake Pleasant pump station, is considered the backup to the backup water supply, in the event Lake Pleasant were ever again to be called into use for drinking water.

Green Pond is also off limits to swimmers, although at one time it was the site of a great public swimming beach and diving tower used by people from all

over town.

Would it be possible to open up Green Pond again for public swimming, once the new well comes on line, and replaces Lake Pleasant as the "true backup water supply" for most of the town?

Bureaucratic hurdles are in the way of anything like that happening soon, Brown said.

Speaking of bureaucratic hurdles, the department's plans for the new well were delayed for years over permitting because of "interbasin system transfer issues," Harwood said. This was because Millers Falls joined the Turners Falls distribution system, and the village of Millers discharges wastewater under the Millers River to the treatment plant in Erving, theoretically in a different recharge basin.

"They treat about 40,000 gallons a day, which is nothing," Brown said. Still, it took years to satisfy the regulators on that point.

Brown said that if all goes well (pardon the expression), the new backup supply should be hooked up and on line by the summer of 2011. The Turners Falls Water Department will have to raise and appropriate another \$850,000 or so to bring the new well on line.

"We're looking at doing some of the work in-house, laying pipe and conduit," from the well to the pump house, a distance of about 1600 feet through the forest, Brown said. The department has already spent at least \$250,000 on the permitting phase of the new well, he estimated.

Last year, the water department saved the town of Montague about \$40,000 hooking the new police station up to the water main, by doing the work themselves.



### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

#### Arrest for Breaking and Entering

Wednesday, 2/3

3:15 p.m. House on Pisgah Mountain Road found to be broken into. Investigating.

4:31 p.m. Arrested

Charged with breaking and entering in the daytime to commit a felony, attempt to commit a crime, larceny from a

building, trespassing, and malicious destruction of property.

Thursday, 2/4

12:38 p.m. Civil dispute over an animal on West Gill Road. Advised of legal options.

Saturday, 2/6

11:45 p.m. Arrested. Charged with domestic

assault and battery.

Monday, 2/8

3:31 p.m. Report of identity theft/larceny on Hoe Shop Road.

Tuesday, 2/9

8:40 a.m. Assist with sick raccoon on Main Road.

1:05 p.m. Report of two deer carcasses on River Road. Referred to environmental police.

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# French King Bridge Isn't Falling Down



Springfield Steel Erector's crane lifts a steel pan filled with trap rock stone to lower to abutments beneath French King Bridge on Monday

BY JOE PARZYCH

**GILL** – The French King Bridge isn't falling down – yet – but danger to the bridge abutments on the Gill side appear imminent.

Bridge deck drainage is eroding the soil around abutment footings, according to a state employee who did not wish to be named on Monday morning.

Workmen were placing a mix of four-inch select riprap and 1½-inch trap rock next to abutment foundations to shore them up when I arrived at the scene. A crane lowered the mixed trap rock via a four-foot by six-foot steel pan to workmen below the bridge. They distributed the protective rock over the eroded soil to halt further erosion.

At that point, MIG Corporation's job foreman shut the job down. He was arrogant when I asked for information, and sent his crew into hiding

behind equipment and under the bridge until I left. After waiting about an hour, I left, turned around, and came back to find the job in progress. I got the photos I was after.

When I telephoned MIG Corporation's owner, Don Voghel, he was courteous and cooperative. He said his company was awarded the contract for the \$2.2 million dollar bridge rehabilitation project in 2008 and that they are now in "punch list mode." Meaning they are correcting incidental items found unacceptable by Mass Highway engineers.

The original contract, according to Voghel, included fixing the bridge expansion joints and approaches.

"We also repaired abutment cracks with epoxy and recoated them with a type of epoxy paint. We didn't resurface the bridge, which is concrete, but we did waterproof it with a coating of

waterproofing material."

MIG employees are redirecting bridge drainage pipes, and redoing drainage channels to send water away from abutments, according to Voghel, who expects his company to complete the entire project by April of this year.

By that time, he expects the state to solicit bids to repaint the bridge railings, which means MIG Corporation employees may have to deal with Montague reporters in the future, possibly in a more courteous manner.

Voghel thanked me for bringing his foreman's rude conduct to his attention. When I could not identify the foreman, other than "arrogant," Voghel said he knew exactly who I was talking about. He said he was working on improving the company's image and this incident comes at an opportune time, since he has a meeting scheduled to address this very subject.

We'll keep you posted on progress.

## PROPOSED from pg 7

state's self-examination, praised the spirit and civility of the evening, and lamented the foresters' view that there's no problem in the state's current practices.

"I've seen clearcutting that shouldn't have taken place," she said. "Cutting right down to the edge of a beaver pond, strip clearcuts of healthy Norway Spruce, cutting without proper inventories of natural and cultural resources, with resulting damage... landings that are too large, left in deplorable shape, damage to advanced regeneration...etc."

She said some foresters tend to "not want to admit anything that might make them more vulnera-

ble, so they deny, or call it a 'mistake,' a small event that a minority complained about. And a vicious circle develops: they won't admit it, we go out and find more, they won't admit that, and each becomes hardened to prove the other wrong."

Hurley questions at this point whether the DCR, under tightened budgets, "can afford the kind of exemplary forestry program that our public lands deserve," and advocates "a much smaller forestry program on a more limited number of acres." She worries there's been too little time to come up with an overall vision for our public lands.



## LEVERETT from pg 15

be considered deferred maintenance," and could be made up in a future budget year, when times improve.

He continued, "If you don't educate the children when they are young, you've missed many opportunities forever. I commend you for husbanding the town's resources. But..." he wondered, why doesn't the selectboard ask the school committee to present a level services budget, and put the difference to the voters of the town in the form of an override of Proposition 2½, leaving it to the taxpayers to decide whether they want to maintain educational programs.

"To start with budget cuts where there is no catching up... once you miss the opportunity in elementary school, you've missed it forever."

Newly appointed finance committee member Nancy Grossman took issue with this approach. She said younger families with children in the school might be working and able to afford an override, but seniors on fixed incomes could not, and might find their ability to remain in town placed in doubt if taxes were to rise further.

She asked Fonsh if his committee had considered asking teachers and staff at the elementary school to forego cost of living increases this year (a total amount in excess of \$10,000) since town employees would not be getting them, and in order to preserve programs at the elementary school. (In addition to the Spanish program, the Adventure program is also on the chopping block, and the summer technolo-

gy teacher will see her hours cut from ten to five.)

Fonsh responded, "We haven't discussed that yet. I don't see why we couldn't discuss it." But, he pointed out, "the agreements were bargained in good faith. The process didn't necessarily begin when the economy imploded." And, "there's something intrinsically valuable about a contract agreed to by both sides. That's something you enter with a good deal of hesitancy."

Grossman responded that some teachers she knew in Amherst had said they would rather give back raises in order to save their colleagues' jobs, as the Amherst regional schools continue to go through a painful period of downsizing.

Fonsh replied, "I lost my job at Smith Voke when teachers there would not give back, so I've been on both sides of this."

He added, "We also have an obligation to protect the property value of what we have in town."

Selectboard member Julie Shively responded, "We are losing value by not having high-speed internet. The values are eroding everywhere. These are the times we are in."

Selectboard chair Rich Brazeau said, "I think we are being more than fair. Amherst is going to be taking a 5% to 7% decrease," if an anticipated \$2 million override does not pass. "Last year they went through a 2.5% cut from level funding, plus increases in health care. This year, it's going to be worse than that."

Randy te Velde said, "I'd like to see a vote from the town," before the Spanish program is

cut, in order to preserve school choice in numbers, and to keep Leverett "what it is. The Spanish program is not something you can throw in in good years and take out in bad."

Brazeau said if the Amherst override passes, Leverett will face an additional \$105,000 to \$110,000 in expenditures just to keep up with the assessments for the regional schools. "We will need an override," for that. The Spanish program could be tacked on to that for a larger override, he said. Alternatively, if the Amherst override fails, there may be enough money within the levy limit for Leverett to keep the Spanish program without an override, and that will become clearer in the next month or so.

Finance committee member Tom Powers suggested placing the amount needed to preserve the Spanish program at the elementary school on the warrant for town meeting as a separate item, preferably to be paid for by an override, which would permanently expand the levy. "Let the town vote to raise its own taxes."

Lisa Stratford said if the Spanish program were saved, she hoped it would become more substantive.

"When my kids graduated, they could count to 10 and say, 'Hello' and 'Good-bye'."

Principal Ann Ross said the Spanish program had been thoroughly evaluated with school committee involvement, and to provide a more intensive program for K-6 classes would cost more money.

The Leverett school committee will hold a budget hearing at the elementary school on March 2nd at 6 p.m.



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# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



JACK COUGHLIN ILLUSTRATION

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11th**  
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Free Range*. Rock out with Betsy, Mark and Bruce to classic rock & dance music, 8 to 10 p.m.

The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Jesse Sheidlower reads from *The F-Word*, 7 p.m. Then: Peter Siegel, Rose Sinclair, and Lyon Graully play Texas Roadhouse, 8:30 p.m.

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12th**  
Deja Brew, Wendell: Richard Chase Group, acoustic driven originals, 9 to 11 p.m.

Great Falls Coffeehouse, Turners Falls: *Spencil Hill*. Spencil Hill has been performing traditional Irish music and original tunes written by Desmond Burke since 1980. Brothers Desmond and Sean Burke, along with Naka Ishii, sing and play guitar, mandolin, bouzouki, fiddle, banjo and whistle. Naka has studied fiddle in Ireland with Martin Hayes and Kevin Burke. Many of the songs the band performs are about County Mayo where Desmond and Sean were born. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Coffee & homemade baked goods will be available. Donation of \$6 to \$12, free for children.

NMH Benefit Features Sharpe, Gospel, and New World Choir. The leader of the modern gospel ensemble *The Kevin Sharpe Group* will be the featured guest at Northfield Mount Hermon's annual concert to benefit the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. 7:30 p.m. Rhodes Arts Center. The benefit concert is free and open to the public, donations accepted at the door.

The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: MAD MEN themed cocktail party. Dress your early '60s best. 7 p.m. Free!



Northfield Mount Hermon's annual concert to benefit the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. February 12, 7:30 p.m. in the Raymond Hall of the Rhodes Arts Center. Donations will be accepted at the door.

Unity in the Pioneer Valley Coffeehouse: Barry Higgins, Native American style flute, and Joe Graveline, singer & songwriter. 7 p.m. at 6 Arch Street, Greenfield. \$10 suggested donation.

BetweenThe Uprights at 2nd Street: Carrie Underwood Concert Ticket Giveaway from 9 to 11 p.m. Top 40, dance and hip-hop music spun in the Extra Point Nightclub with *Mass Mobile DJ's* at 10 p.m. No cover.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13th**  
Mid-Month Music Madness Concert Series at Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: Dave Keller, blistering guitar skills coupled with song crafting has made his name synonymous with authentic blues and soul. The current incarnation is a soul and blues quartet focusing on original, heartfelt songs that range from funk to ballads of a caliber reminiscent of *The Beale Streeters* or the Stax titans of the '60s. Most recently, Dave was recruited by Ronnie Earl, from *Roomful of Blues*, to provide songwriting, singing and guitar playing for Ronnie's new album. That album has received massive radio and press consideration nationally. [www.davekeller.com](http://www.davekeller.com).

Deja Brew, Bill Downes, acoustic classic rock, 9 to 11 p.m.

The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Valentines Day Aphrodisiac Massacre* with spin-the-bottle, sexy toys, and DJ Tommy TBA. Info. call: 863-2866.

Miller Pub, Millers Falls: *Ruby's Complaint*, 8:45 p.m. to 1 a.m.

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14th**  
*Skate Your Heart Out: Family Skate* at Wendell State Forest, 10 to 3 p.m. Free event for families and individuals of all ages. Bring skates, snack, extra beverages, and wear winter clothing in layers. Warming fire at rink side and complimentary hot chocolate. Sponsored by the Mass. Department of Conservation & Recreation. (413) 659-3797.

Deja Brew, Wendell: Steve Crow, Peter Kim & Joe Fitzpatrick, acoustic trio - warped Americana, 8 to 10 p.m.

Christina's Restaurant (formerly the Smokin' Hippo) in Erving, 6 to 9 p.m. An evening of love with SHAG the band (who you may know better as Rob and Laura)! We'll be playing an eclectic array of amorous songs from the '30s to '70s, including forgotten oldies and jazz standards.

Rendezvous Valentine's Day Event to Raise Money for NELCWIT. *Valentine's Day Aphrodisiac Massacre*, 9:30 p.m. No cover for the evening, which will include desserts, games, and dancing, with prizes and props provided by the Oh My! Sensuality Shop in Northampton.

Beethoven in Bars, a Valentines event with the Chiara String Quartet at the Bookmill, Montague Center. Beethoven was in love with many women in his time. His love letters were discovered

after his death in March, 1827, and became world famous. In his honor, and in honor of love, please join the Chiara String Quartet for a romantic night of classical music. 8 p.m., \$1. Food, drink and love available at the Lady Killigrew.



Kim and Reggie Harris at the Echo Lake Coffeehouse at the Leverett Town Hall on Saturday, February 20th at 7:30 p.m.

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15th**  
The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Yankee Trade White Elephant BINGO! Unload stuff and win other stuff! 8 p.m. FREE.

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16th**  
Local Live Animals, 10 to 11 a.m. Meet a variety of live native animals from *The Teacher Creatures* at the Carnegie Library. May include a fox, opossum, and a raccoon.

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18th**  
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Wailin' Dave Robinson, Tommy Filault & Co.* Blues Based Roots Music, 8 to 10 p.m.

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19th**  
The *Roots of War* speaker series continues. Organized by the WMass Chapter of the Progressive Democrats, Traprock Center for Peace and Justice, and the Greenfield Community College Peace and Justice Studies Program. 12:30 to 2 p.m., Michael Klare speaks

on *The Global Struggle for Resources*, Stinchfield Lecture Hall, GCC. Free, all welcome.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Josh Levangie*, singing all your favorite Johnny Cash tunes, 9 to 11 p.m.

Faces and Places Gallery, Millers Falls: Singer Songwriter *Heather Maloney* performs 7 p.m.. Local Jazz influenced singer Katie Sachs opens.

Chase Away the Winter Blues! Community Concert with *Moonlight and Morning Star* at the Erving Senior Center, Erving, 1 p.m. Free show sponsored by the Erving Cultural Council.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20th**  
*Kim & Reggie Harris* in concert at the Echo Lake Coffeehouse, 7:30 p.m. Kim & Reggie have inspired audiences around the world for over 25 years as singers, songwriters, storytellers, educators, historical interpreters and cultural advocates to bring new insights to the entertainment and educational spectrum on a variety of subjects, such as the Underground Railroad, Civil Rights, and African American Music for Social Change. 7:30 p.m. at the Echo Lake Coffeehouse, Leverett Town Hall.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Blame it on Tina*, Jen Spingla, Bob Rosser & of course...Tina Horn, will keep you happy with their amazing sound, 9 to 11 p.m.

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21st**  
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Acoustic Open Mic Night*, 8 to 10 p.m. All are welcome!

**ONGOING FRIDAYS**  
*Death Metal Knitting* at the Brick House, Turners Falls. Every Friday during regular drop-in hours, 3 to 6 p.m. Start a new project, or work on an existing one. Instruction available for all skill levels, info call: 863-9576.



*Chase the wintertime blues away! The Rendezvous has BINGO on Monday, February 15th beginning at 8 p.m. Daubers provided. Free!*

display through February 28th. Northfield Mountain trails open. Over 25 miles of trails designed specifically for cross country skiing and groomed for both classical and free-style skiing. These trails offer some of the finest Nordic skiing in the region. Trails vary from beginner trails to the demanding 800-foot vertical climb of Tenth Mountain Trail. Wednesday through Sunday, 9 to 4:30 p.m. Always call ahead first to the 24-hour Snow Phone for conditions: (800) 859-2960.

**HOT SPOT TEEN CENTER**  
MONDAYS - Drop-in, 3 to 6 p.m.  
TUES & WEDS - Ongoing Music Project, 3 to 6 p.m.  
THURS - Drop-in, 3 to 6 p.m. & Movie Night, 6 to 8 p.m.  
*Free (except some trips), open to local teens. Some require permission slips.*  
Info: Jared at 863-9559.  
Hot Spot Teen Center is in The Brick House  
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2. VALENTINE'S DAY in DTS sound PG13 DAILY 12:00 3:00 7:00 9:30  
3. UP IN THE AIR PG13 DAILY 7:00 9:30  
3. TOOTH FAIRY PG DAILY 12:00 3:00  
4. FROM PARIS WITH LOVE R DAILY 12:15 3:15 6:40 9:20  
5. EDGE OF DARKNESS R DAILY 12:15 3:15 6:40 9:20  
6. DEAR JOHN PG13 in DTS sound DAILY 12:30 3:30 6:30 9:00  
7. THE WOLFMAN R in DTS sound DAILY 12:30 3:30 6:30 9:00

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SAT: 2/13 | 9:30 PM | FREE Middle School Kissing Games, prizes from Oh My! Sensuality Shop and all around fun, hosted by Emily and Laurel to benefit N.E.L.C.W.I.T.  
SUN: 2/14 | 9 PM | FREE Ben and Ansel have a Valentine's/Anti-Valentine's Party  
MON: 2/15 | 8 PM | FREE Yankee Trade White Elephant BINGO!  
WED: 2/17 | 8 PM Quizmastah Chad's Quiznite Quiz!!  
THURS: 2/18 | 8 PM | \$5 sugg. donation Quarterly '4: benefitting Habitat for Humanity

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MARY AZARIAN WOODBLOCK

BY LESLIE BROWN

**MONTAGUE CITY** – I am sick of winter: the bludgeoning winds and the freezing temperatures. The irony is we haven't really had much winter to speak of this season.

Last December we had only ten inches of snow, with a couple of blustery days. In 2008, we had a memorable ice storm, the effects of which were felt in some communities for weeks. Many folks went without power for days. My casual weather notes from the calendar indicate 32 inches of snow in December of 2006.

This January we've had about a half a foot of snow altogether, with plenty of melting in between storms so that the ground has been barely covered. We did get an inch and a half or so of pouring rain on the 25th, which ended in 50 degree breezes. This was in turn followed by a doozy of a cold blast that featured high-powered gusts of wind and a nasty snow squall. Nonetheless, we had an agreeable thaw, with tempera-

tures above freezing for several days in the middle of the month. I'd be better off if I loved winter sports. I own a wonderful pair of snowshoes with metal ice grippers on the bottom. They are light and compact, and a pleasure to wear. But I didn't buy

them so I could tramp to the wintry woods and fields. I got them to make hauling stove wood up the slippery slope from the woodpile easier. The fact is I prefer my exercise to be connected to useful work, though I do like a brisk walk on my section of the bike path to limber up after hauling and stacking firewood. Unfortunately, at the end of the work day it's getting dark and cold, so I am forced to the Y for my workout. The irony of that is, there we all are in the room with the treadmills and bikes and weights, reducing stress and fat and building muscle while watching the food channel. Why my workout cohorts choose this channel is unclear. It just makes me hungrier, which is obviously counterproductive.

I want to be outside with my fingers in the dirt. Or at least in the sunroom planting seeds. Instead, I climb into the car and amble down the back roads to the indoor and outdoor spaces of the

Lyman Conservatory on the Smith College campus.

The original greenhouse at Smith dates from the 1890s, but it has grown like Topsy with the addition of extra rooms, one or two at a time, until it became the current expansive facility for plant growth and study it is now.

Nine of these plant growing areas are open to the public, and each boasts its own specialties and climate.

I began my tour in the physiology house and cold storage, which are now filled with pots of forced lily, crocus, tulip and daffodil bulbs already showing green leaves a good four inches tall in preparation for the famous early March bulb show. The rooms are chilly, with the roof transoms open to keep the space from becoming too warm from the bright sun outdoors.

Next I entered the Stove House, so called because it was originally heated by a wood stove. The warmth and damp immediately tames my electric hair and moistens my sinuses. This inviting space is filled with begonias, bromeliads, epiphytes (plants which grow on other plants), water lilies, sugar cane, and carnivorous tropical pitcher plants. Most spectacular are the *Dendrobium* orchids that drip with moisture and a huge range of blooms in pink, lavender, white and yellow. The large, languid Koi in their pools reflect the somnambulant mood that comes over me. I could curl up in that

space and doze.

Instead I cool down briefly in the Temperate House, which is filled with subtropical plants: avocado, eucalyptus, tea, coffee and olive. This room also has a lovely waterfall and a bench to admire it from.

Adjacent is another temperate corridor filled with flowering camellias, citrus amiable to growing in the domestic conservatory, English ivy, rhododendron, and the *Phalaenopsis* orchids that do not require the level of heat and moisture the *Dendrobiums* desire.

The Palm House, affectionately called the Jungle Room, is the tallest space and looks most like the original Victorian conservatory. Plants in this space easily touch the pointed peak of the ceiling in this warm and dripping atmosphere. These are tropical plants, useful as well as decorative. Bananas, cacao and cinnamon abound along with medicinal plants like quinine and snake-root. A curving path winds through the thick undergrowth where a bench invites the visitor to sit and refresh.

Next is the Fern House, the smallest place in the plant house. It holds large and tiny plants: staghorns, tree fern, and even a petite maidenhair, which can be found in damp and rocky spots in our own New England woods.

The adjacent space is called the Show House, although it does not serve as such anymore. Instead it is a scented space of

foliar and floral plants used for culinary, medicinal or perfumery needs. This fragrant spot is dominated by the scent of the huge fragrant olive, which reminds me of the south of France. There are also scented geraniums, ilang-ilang, salvias and mint.

Last is the Succulent House, full of plants highly tolerant of a dry and very hot climate. These leathery-leaved and spiny things exhibit the characteristics which enable them to survive the climate they live in: tough leaves to hold water and prickles to fend off thirsty predators who might otherwise make them their next meal. There were a few tiny ones in bloom but not many as this is not their season.

Outside again in the bright yet chilly and windy air, I walk back to the car after the pleasure of an hour spent in a different climate. I feel happy and invigorated. This welcoming place is open daily from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., except on Thanksgiving Day and from December 24th to January 3rd. Drive down to see this collection of over 2,500 plant species and take a free trip to tropical places at the same time.

Don't forget to mark your calendar for the conservatory's own version of the first days of spring, the Bulb Show, open March 6th to March 21st, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. There is a suggested \$2 donation towards the cost of the bulbs, cuttings and preparation of this ultimate display of spring flowers. Enjoy!

## The Outerspace Band at the Roadhouse

DAVID DETMOLD

**MILLERS FALLS** – Hey, we've all been there before. It's cold and you're sick of hanging around your living room huddled up to the wood stove reading Stendahl, waiting for the electrician. You drag yourself to the coat rack, bundle up, try to get the diesel started, borrow your girlfriend's car instead, and head off to the Roadhouse.

Warmth and cheer await you there, and on the last Saturday of January, hours after the full moon rose, some cosmic rock and roll, courtesy of the Outerspace Band, 43-year veterans of the Wendell music scene.

The Space touched down for their once a light year close encounter with the faithful in the Dead of

winter in Millers Falls:

"It's pretty exciting to be able to show up in the same place, and to be able to follow directions," intoned Elliot Osborne, from atop his Korg X5.

The crowd roared in affirmation.

Flanked by Professor Dave Lenson on sax and comparative literature, the band found the tightest grooves and played with an effortless style that comes from years on the Wendell town common, and on the road. It's like they can read each other's minds.

Wailin' Dave taught us all a lesson on "Love Somebody," delivered with supreme authority. The band tore up John Haitt's "She Runs Hot for Me," until we left Franklin

County behind for another galaxy, and all thought of the thermometer outside dropped away.

Soon the Roadhouse crowd was out of their seats and pounding the dance floor like a bunch of crazed hominids in a Stanley Kubrick film, but Johnny Moses did not fear to part their waves. Suddenly Saturday nite turned into Friday nite, and Moses was on his knees on the floor ripping out sparkling licks on his Stratocaster with Lenson echoing him in counterpoint on the sax, and we all felt fine.

"This is my favorite band!" cried Divya.

"Ev-ery year at Carnival Time, we Make a New Suit," said Bo Dollis.



DETMOLD PHOTO

Elliot Osborne, Dave Compton, Klondike Koehler, Johnny Moses, Michael Wiskey, and Wailin Dave Robinson rev the Outerspace Band to warp factor five on Saturday night at the Roadhouse.

And the Outerspace Band wore it well, with Michael Wiskey and Klondike Koehler tailoring the rhythm to the Mardi Gras style. The band was

hot, floating in a psychedelic gumbo on the reedy chords of Osborne's organ, cooking with the interplay of vocals and the twin sonic engines of Moses' and

Dave Compton's guitars.

Not everyone can live in Wendell in the '70s. But the Outerspace Band can take you there. Why stay home on a night like this?

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