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KATHY LITCHFIELD PHOTO; GILL FARMERS MARKET, JANUARY 9TH

LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 8 - NO. 18

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

FEBRUARY 4, 2010

BY SUDI NIMMS

TURNERS FALLS – If you were among the lucky individuals to get a free ticket to the Shea Theater’s “I Am The Shea!” celebration last Sunday, you were part of the full house of folks who came to celebrate and honor the grand old lady who is one of the longest-lasting gems in Turners Falls.

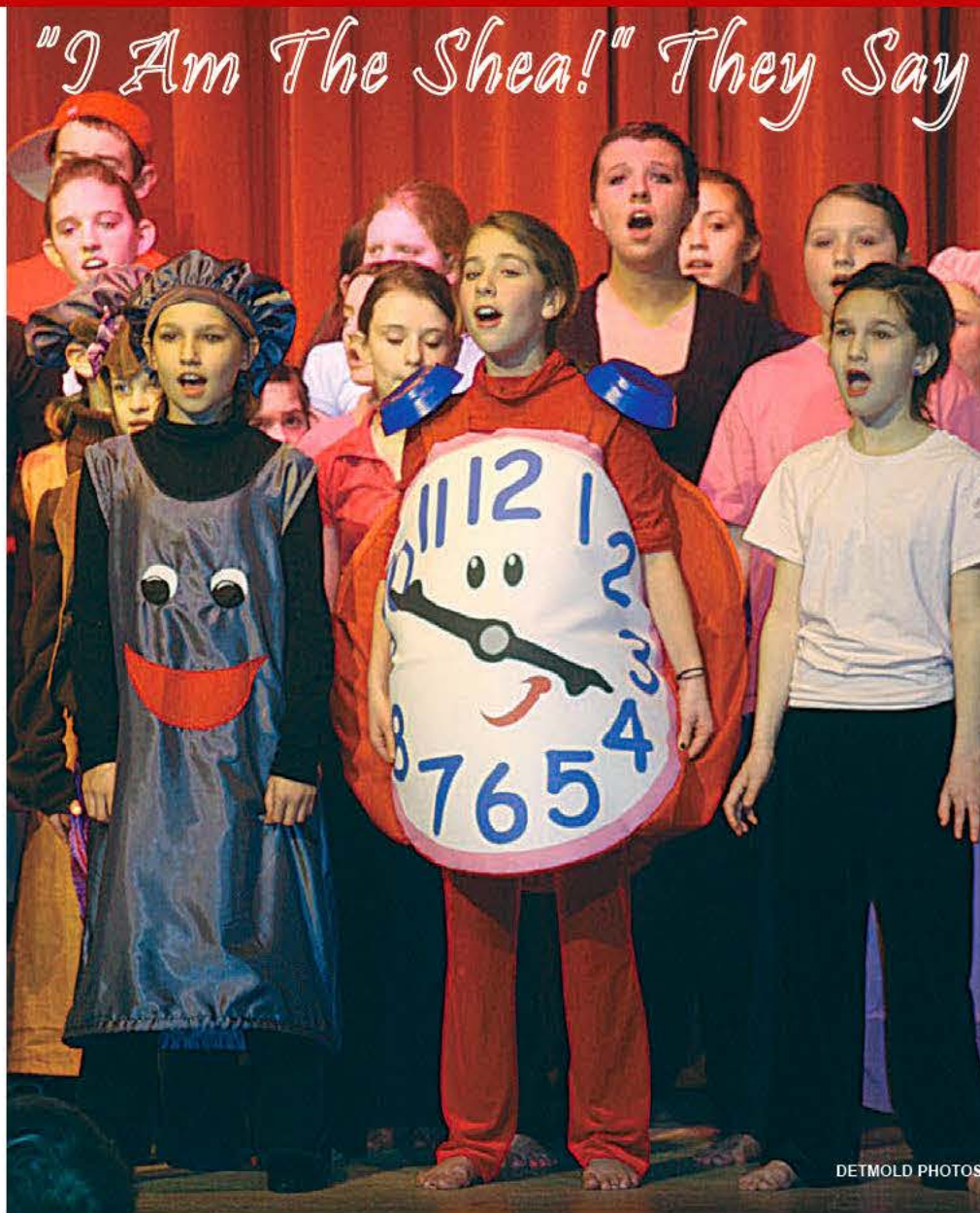
Served up as a fundraiser for the theater, donations were gratefully accepted in the lobby and every flavor of entertainment was served within its hallowed double doors. Billed as “An Open House and Celebration of Theater, Song, Comedy and Dance,” the event certainly lived up to its name.

Among the talented performances were showcases from the three resident theater companies whose work makes up the meat and potatoes of the Shea’s annual fare. These delightful acts were interlarded with the vocal talents of Valley Idol winner Abe Oyola, the comedy of Myq Kaplan, nimble dancers from the Celtic Heels School of Irish Dance, and to host the afternoon, dashing Nick Danjer of Greenfield’s own WHAI radio.

Ja’Duke Productions was up first with an appropriately welcoming opening number, “Comedy Tonight” reprised from their sensational musical, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. For the younger crowd, they performed “Blues Clues” and “Seasons of Love” from *Rent*. Then came an out-of-place, yet commanding performance of the duet “The Confrontation” from *Les Miserables*, awkwardly segueing to dance and musical numbers from Ja’Duke’s upcoming musical *Fame*.

If the numbers from *Fame* are any indication, it promises to be a show you will want to catch. Opening night is next Friday, February 12th, so call the Shea now for reservations. *Rent* will premier this summer.

It is very heartening to see girls and boys on stage singing and dancing in this age of video games, internet, and iPods, when so many young people hide behind their appliances. All three Shea resident companies do



Young actors from Ja’Duke Productions welcomed a full house to the Shea Theater on Sunday

their best to encourage children to come to the stage to explore their artistic talents in a way no other local venue does. If you have children or grandchildren, nieces, nephews, or other kids in your life, keep an eye out for

auditions throughout the year. The chance for young people to perform in live theater and make new friends is a challenging, fun, way to unplug from their passive media devices

see SHEA pg 12

Leverett Boards Clash over School Costs

BY DAVID DETMOLD – On January 27th, the Leverett selectboard, finance committee and school committee gathered for a math tutorial on the FY ‘11 elementary school budget.

This was the second meeting in as many months when the boards tried to agree on the numbers that will make up the revenues and expenses to run the town’s elementary school and pay for central office administration in Union #28.

Part way through the presentation, finance committee member Doug DaRif zeroed in on an anomaly in the increase in base rate pay for some classroom teachers in one of the budget sheets, which seemed to show teachers’ salaries rising from \$57,644 in the current fiscal year to \$60,264 in the coming fiscal year.

The teachers union accepted a 1½% cost of living increase for the two year contract governing FY’11, but this apparent jump in salary came closer to a 4½% hike, DaRif and finance committee chair Don Gibavic pointed out.

Union 28 business manager Charles Paulin said the FY ‘10 base rate for teachers reflected their base pay before the contract had been signed, and failed to include the negotiated COLA for the current fiscal year, thus

see LEVERETT pg 10

FURBISHING THE AVENUE

Local Artists Featured at Hallmark Gallery



The Brain created by Tim de Christopher

feature a new exhibition called Art+Space, a group show comprising work from artists and photographers from the southern New England area. There were a large numbers of entries, and a Hallmark jury selected 60 works – paintings, sculpture, photography and collage – by 35 artists, which highlight the rich and varied talent found in our area.

An opening for the new show will take place at the Gallery on Saturday, February 6th, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. and will include refreshments and live music. Art+Space will be on display Fridays through

see ARTISTS pg 8

BY JOHN FURBISH
TURNERS FALLS – Beginning this week and continuing through the month, the revitalized Gallery at Hallmark will

Towns, School and State Agree to Cooperate on Long-Term Plan for Educational and Fiscal Stability



PHOTO ELLEN BLANCHETTE

Left to right, Christine Lynch and associate commissioner Jeff Wulfson of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Pat Allen, Ann Banash, Carl Ladd, Michael Langknecht and Tupper Brown on Wednesday at Montague Town Hall.

BY DAVID DETMOLD

GILL-MONTAGUE – The finance committees of Gill and Montague, along with the selectboards of those two towns, and now the school committee of the Gill-Montague Regional School district have all agreed to

work in concert to “bring the state to the table” to develop a plan for sustainability in education and financing for the district schools.

On Wednesday, they nearly succeeded, with two state legislators – on speaker phone – joining local offi-

cials and representatives of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education at a crowded three hour meeting at the Montague Town Hall. The telephone was placed solidly on the table at the front of the

see COOPERATE pg 5

PET OF THE WEEK**Good Listener****Kelly**

My name is Kelly and I'm a five-year-old domestic shorthair cat in need of good home. I'm very charming, though a tiny bit shy... Just at first! I not only like to be petted but I also like it when you talk to me. So when you come to meet me, talk to me first...and soon you'll realize what a great feline friend I can be! For more information on adopting me, please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at (413) 548-9898 or via email: info@dpvhs.org.

IN MEMORIAM

Bo the dog died yesterday, 2/2/10. (Born 7/29/95). Beloved friend of Jamie Berger, Anja Schütz, and countless others, she is also survived by Mec Schütz and Pretzel Schützberger. Bo was a muse, inspiring the work of nearly 100 artists, the writings of Berger, art exhibits in San Francisco and Amherst, and an art book, *Bo's Arts*.

Donations to Pioneer Valley Dakin Humane Society in her name will be greatly appreciated.

Great Falls Middle School Students of the Week**Grade 6**

Tarah Dempsey

Grade 7

Ian MacPhail

Brittany Miller

Grade 8

Katerina Sankova

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Published weekly on Thursday. (Every other week in July and August. Wednesday paper fourth week of November. No paper last week of December.)

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The Montague Reporter

58 4th Street

Turners Falls, MA 01376

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ERVING LIBRARY NEWS**Craft Evening and Valentine Making**

Monday, February 8th, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. enjoy 'Paper Pleasures' with artist Luc Bodin. This is a free craft evening for adults and teens who want to learn more paper cutting techniques. Decorate your home with a mobile of paper creations and chase away the cabin fever blues with an artistic evening with a local

artist. Bring a scissors and a hanger. All other materials are provided. This is a free workshop.

Sunday, February 14th, bring the family from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. and make a Valentine. We will have paper, scissors, stickers, etc. Come and be creative. Refreshments all day!

WENDELL LIBRARY NEWS**Save The World With Nuclear Power**

BY KATIE NOLAN

WENDELL – *Whole Earth Discipline* presents Stewart Brand's analysis of and solutions to the environmental challenges facing our civilization. Brand considers city living, nuclear power, and genetically modified agriculture and concludes that these and other technological fixes may be necessary to meet the climate change crisis. His conclusions are controversial, especially within the green and anti-nuke community.

Wendellites, who are general-

ly not afraid to meet controversy head on, will have a chance to read Brand's book and then discuss his ideas on February 24th.

The Wendell Free Library will have six copies of *Whole Earth Discipline* available for borrowing, and more can be ordered from other libraries through interlibrary loan. The book discussion will take place from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday February 24th at the Herrick Room at the library. Bring a box dinner and eat while you discuss, if you want.

Friends of the Montague Grange Forming

MONTAGUE – The members of the Montague Grange are creating a separate 501(c)(3) non-profit organization called The Friends of the Montague Grange. This non-profit will be charged with fundraising for the many structural repairs and upgrades desperately needed, including repairing the roof, adding wheelchair ramps, and removing the drop-ceiling from the main hall. We invite all our neighbors and friends who

would be willing to join this new organization either as a dues-paying member, an officer on the board, or a committee member for the four events we plan to hold throughout the year. The first meeting will be held at the Grange Hall this Sunday, February 7th, at 1:00 p.m. The Montague Grange hall is located on the town common in Montague Center, across from the church.

Openings Available in Supportive Houses

Congregate housing for seniors and persons with disabilities at the Morgan Allen House in Greenfield and the Winslow Wentworth House in Turners Falls offers supportive housing near many community

resources. Both houses have openings now. For more information please contact Franklin County Home Care: (413) 773-5555, (978) 544-2259, or info@fchcc.org.

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES – Feb 8th to Feb 12th

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. "Love Letters" performance planned for February 8 at the Gill Town Hall has been postponed. The Friday afternoon Writing Group is continuing and has room for new members. Feel free to call the senior center for information on any programs.

Monday, February 8th

9:00 a.m. Foot Clinic
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics
10:45 a.m. Easy Aerobics
1:00 p.m. Knitting Circle

Tuesday, February 9th

9:00 a.m. Walking Group,
NO Yoga

1:00 p.m. Canasta

Wednesday, February 10th

9:00 a.m. Foot Clinic
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11:15 a.m. Mealsite Friends Meeting
1:00 p.m. Bingo
Thursday, February 11th
10:00 a.m. Coffee & Conversation,
NO Tai Chi
1:00 p.m. Pitch
Friday, February 12th
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., Ervingside (Old Center School, 1st Floor), is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for activities and congregating meals. For 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 necessity. Call the center for information on Flu Clinic, pneumonia shots and Cholesterol/Diabetes Clinic planned for the spring.



DETMOULD PHOTO

The Montague Highway Department removed the Jersey Barriers and reopened Power Street — at least one way — into the Patch last month.

The barriers were recycled — to close Williams Way!

MONTAGUE CENTER LIBRARY NEWS**Ice Cream Social**

BY LINDA HICKMAN

MONTAGUE CENTER – There will be an Ice Cream Social at the Montague Center Library on Monday, February 8th, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. The Friends of the Montague Public Libraries are running this fun

event, which was a big hit last winter. Bart's ice cream and various toppings will be available free of charge. Quilt raffle tickets will be on sale. For more information, call the Carnegie Library at 863-3214.

2010 Montague Dog Licenses

BY DEB BOURBEAU

Montague dog licenses are now available at the town clerk's office. All dogs six months and older must be licensed and tagged each year, \$5 for a neutered or spayed dog, \$10 for an unaltered dog. The clerk's office requires proof of rabies vaccination and also requires proof of spaying or neutering unless previously provided. There is a late fee of \$20.00 for licensing dogs after May 31st. The town clerk's office is open Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Wednesdays 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Town hall is closed on Fridays. For more information you can contact the office at 863-3200, ext 203.

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JESSICA HARMON ILLUSTRATION

Local Briefs

COMPILED BY DON CLEGG – Ted Graveline of Gill is encouraging people to attend the church service at the **Gill Congregational Church** on Sunday, February 14th. Graveline will make a pledge in the name of each person that attends the service to **St. Jude's Cancer Research Center**. No donation is required, just your attendance and support for the fight against this awful disease. The service will begin at 10:00 a.m. and will include a performance of "Amazing Grace" by Barry Higgins and Ted's son Joe.

Ted lost his wife Edie to cancer two years ago, and has dedicated the profits from his most recent book to help seek a cure for the disease.

At the Gill/Montague Senior Center on 5th Street in Turners Falls, Annie Hassett will teach an hour long **Tai Chi** class on Thursday mornings at 10:00 a.m., and there is room for more participants. The class is free (though a \$2 donation per class would be welcome). Call the senior center if you'd like more information, at 863-4500, or just drop by on a Thursday morning at 10 a.m. to try it out.

Kick off the February school vacation week in style with some old-fashioned family fun. Grab your skates and head to Wendell State Forest on Sunday, February 14th, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Department of conservation and recreation staff will host a day of **ice skating**. This event is free, and is intended for families and people of all ages.

A rink side warming fire and

complimentary hot chocolate will be available in the warming room of the nearby headquarters, where everyone can stay warm and comfortable. The event is called "Skate Your Heart Out" because skating is more than just fun, it's healthy exercise.

Wendell State Forest is located at 392 Montague Road on the Montague and Wendell town line.



DON CLEGG PHOTO

The TFHS Reconnecting Youth Class was honored at the Community Awards Dinner at St. Kazimierz Hall.

Call the park for conditions at (413) 659-3797.

The **Second Annual Community Award Dinner** was held on January 21st at St. Kazimierz Hall in Turners Falls. Outstanding Community Service Awards were given to Tyanna Normandin, Dakota Roberts, Ellen Spring, Candance Sutton and both fall semester 2009-2010 TFHS Reconnecting Youth Classes. The second annual Cheryl Fox Youth Community Service Award was given to Doug Brown.

The evening event was attended by more than 100 people who got to enjoy musical performances by Dakota Roberts and

Heather Maloney, not to mention a delicious lasagna dinner. The Community Awards are sponsored by the Gill/Montague Community School Partnership.

Want to feel inspired before the Super Bowl? The Undergrowth Farm of Gill is sponsoring a **film showing** of "Neighbor by Neighbor" at the Brick House Teen Center, 24 Third St, Turners Falls, on February 7th at 1:00 p.m. The film deals with neighbors in Lewiston, Maine, who did not want to see their homes turned into a four-lane highway. An inspiring true story of ordinary people becoming community activists and owners of their own destiny. The film will be followed

by a discussion with filmmaker Craig Saddlemyre. Refreshments will be served.

MCTV will be holding classes on directing and producing multi-camera field productions. This is the same system which has been used for the broadcast of special town meetings, the 2009 Thanksgiving Day football game, and Valley Idol productions from the Shea Theater. The class includes how to use the Sony Anycast switcher along with three cameras, four microphones and the intercom system. MCTV will also train individuals in graphics design within the see **LOCAL** page 11

Second Annual TFHS Alumni Food Drive

BY NANCY HOLMES

TURNERS FALLS – One in eight Americans turned to food banks in 2009, overwhelming supplies. Locally, the need is great and growing.

Members of the Turners Falls High School Class of 1969, along with members of the TFHS Alumni, will hold their second annual food drive to support the Franklin Area Survival Center this month. Any non-perishable food items are accepted.

Items most requested are peanut butter, macaroni and cheese, and canned tuna or chicken. Also needed are household items, Kleenex, toilet paper, paper towels and baby diapers and wipes. Donation boxes are located at Scotty's, 2nd Street Baking Company, and the Survival Center itself.



DETMOLE PHOTO

Nancy Holmes (left) and Cathy Webber at last year's TFHS alumni food drive.

Alumni will be at Scotty's on Saturday, February 13th from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m., so stop by and say hello!

If you would like to make a monetary contribution, please make checks payable to FASC, at 90 Fourth Street, Turners Falls 01376, and in the note line say TFHS Alumni.

This year's drive is held in memory of Betty LaFrance, as we remember her generosity to those in need.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Breaking and Entering

Friday, 1/22

12:24 a.m. Domestic disturbance on Montague City Road.

no light on license plate.

Friday, 1/29

9:39 a.m. Burglary, breaking and entering, on East Main Street, investigated.

6:04 p.m. Arrest of

and both arrested for assault and battery, domestic.

Wednesday, 1/27

12:55 a.m.

marked lane violations and driving under the influence.

Saturday, 1/30

6:10 p.m. Assault and battery on Griswold Street, investigated.

Monday, 2/1

7:33 p.m.

Breaking and entering into motor vehicle at

Food City parking lot on Avenue A, investigated.

9:16 p.m. Assault and battery on Montague City Road, report taken.

Tuesday, 2/2

3:15 a.m. Arrest of

for vandalism, damage, and malicious defacement of property. Referred to other police.

Informational Meeting Scheduled for Gill-Montague Bridge Project

Senator Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst) and Representative Stephen Kulik (D-Worthington) announce that they will host an informational meeting on traffic management issues relative to the upcoming reconstruction of the Gill-Montague Bridge. The meeting will be held on Friday, February 26, 2010 at 2:00 p.m. in the meeting room at the Great Falls Discovery Center on

Avenue A.

Rosenberg and Kulik have arranged the meeting in response to a request from members of the Turners Falls business community, who have expressed concerns about the traffic patterns during the multi-year construction project. Business owners have asked for an opportunity for input before traffic management plans are

finalized in hopes of minimizing any adverse impact on downtown businesses.

The legislators are providing this opportunity for residents and business owners to offer input and pose questions to officials from MassDOT (formerly MassHighway). Town officials will also be in attendance, and the general public is welcome to attend.

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Layout & Design
Claudia Wells
Boysen Hodgson
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Karen Wilkinson
Suzette Snow-Cobb
"The Voice of the Villages"

Photography
Joe Parzych
Shawn Woolsey
Claudia Wells

Distribution Manager
Don Clegg

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Michael Muller
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Founded by
Arthur Evans Harry Brandt David Detmold August 2002

Circulation
Suzette Snow-Cobb
Janel Nockelby

MESSAGE TO OBAMA'S BUDGET CRUNCHERS: IS IT REALLY NECESSARY TO SPEND \$47,000 PER SALMON?

BY KARL MEYER
GREENFIELD – "There will always be a hatchery component to the program." That statement came at the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission's (CRASC) December meeting. Hatchery production must continue forever in order to produce a few returning salmon – 74 fish this year.

The Connecticut River salmon restoration program is now admittedly fish-farming.

This prompted the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Region 5 Connecticut River Salmon Commission representative to ask about hatchery costs: "How much are we spending per year?"

Answer: "\$3 to 4 million, for personnel and supplies alone."

"How much does that amount to per fish?"

That question was left hanging.

The answer is \$47,000 per salmon. Federal hatchery expenditures alone came to \$47,000 per fish in 2009. Millions more

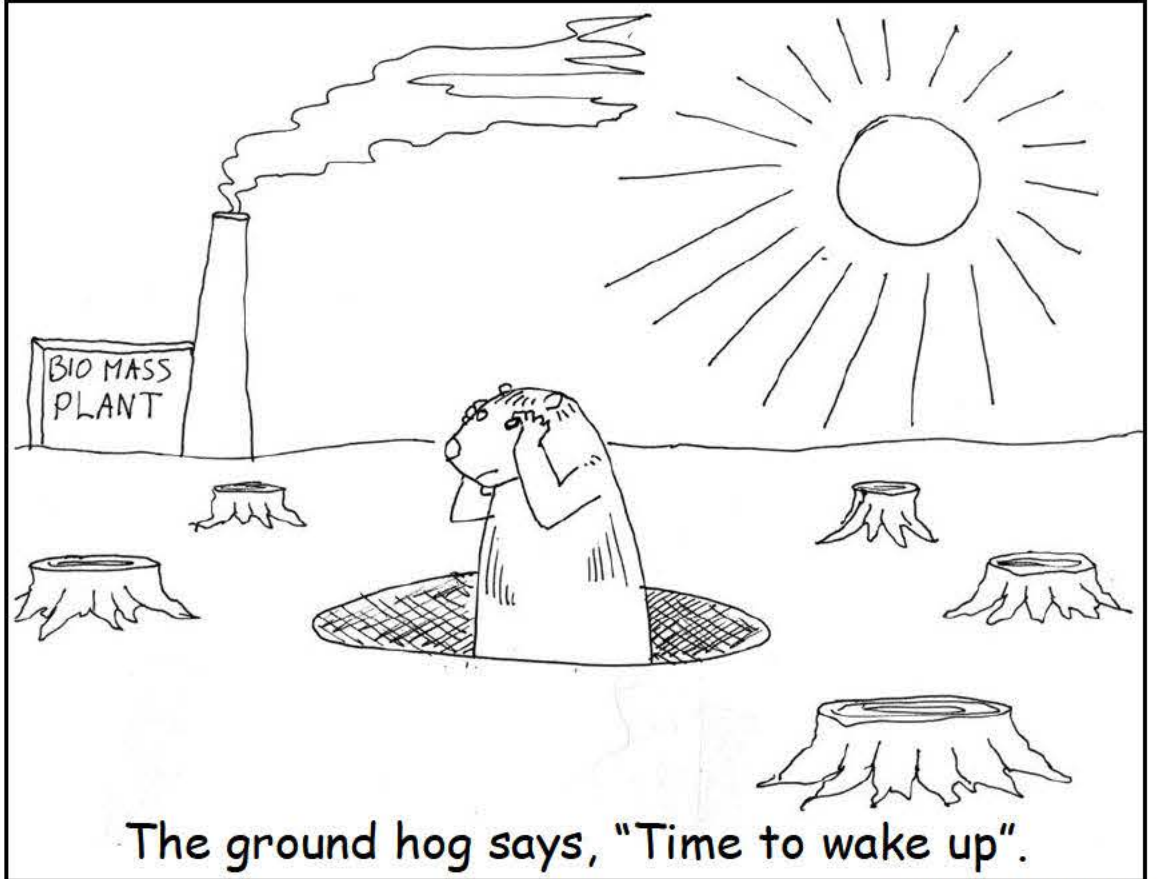
al fish would result from the different scenarios. In no case would more than about 300 hybrid salmon return upstream. The study also asked whether costs and low returns would continue to be acceptable to the public – and suggested public acceptance might be swayed if more spawned-out hatchery salmon were dumped in rivers for fishing.

"You are talking about a put-and-take fishery?" CRASC's chairman responded, incredulously.

"Put-and-take" is stocking fish in water bodies for anglers to yank out. This is how the salmon program essentially works now.

Expenses aside, hatchery fish are massively disruptive to ecosystems and natural populations. The difference here is there are no real returns to catch – though you could start charging \$100,000 for a hybrid salmon license.

This led to another question: "What are the goals of this pro-



The ground hog says, "Time to wake up".

BILL FRANKLIN CARTOON

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Get Real

I don't approve of the way you report. I hate one-sided news. I am not going to renew my subscription until you report the news fair and square, both sides. Don't be so against other

forms of power. Be fair! What is with you? Do you want to go back to candles and kerosene lamps? You splash everything that you are against on the front page! Shame.

Solar energy! Wind power! What a joke! Get real.

– Phil Desbien
Millers Falls

Massachusetts Legislators Say: Retire Vermont Yankee on Schedule

We are writing as elected members of the Massachusetts legislature who represent thousands of Massachusetts residents living in towns downwind and downstream from the Entergy Corporation's Vermont Yankee nuclear reactor in Vernon, VT, just a few miles from the Massachusetts border.

We recognize that under current law the residents and elected officials of Massachusetts have no official 'voice' in the much-debated matter of whether to allow Entergy to continue operating Vermont Yankee for an additional 20 years beyond March of 2012 when its original operating license expires. We very much support the legislation introduced in Congress by Vermont's U.S. senator Bernie Sanders that would allow a governor of any neighboring state within 50 miles of a nuclear facility to demand a full, independent safety assessment prior to any decision by the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission to re-license that facility.

Without such a law at this time, we feel we have an obligation to convey to the people of Vermont some of the concerns of your neighbors here in Massachusetts.

The concerns of our constituents – concerns that we share – have largely to do with public health and safety. We continue to be alarmed by the continuing pattern of frequent accidents, breakdowns, and other failures at the Vermont Yankee facility that have resulted from aging equipment, inadequate maintenance and inspection, and human error. These include, to name just a few that have occurred during recent months: the cooling tower collapse, the dropping of a cask of high level spent fuel due to the failure of a crane's brakes, temporary evacuations of workers due to excess radiation exposure, the discovery of additional cracks in the reactor's steam dryer, breakdowns of the phone and radio alert systems, back-to-back leaks of radioactive water, failure to carry out mandated monitoring of radiation from high-level waste stored on the banks of the Connecticut River, and failure to make significant progress in addressing most of the 80 areas

of concern identified a year ago by independent assessment of the reactor's reliability.

As a result, many people in this area have little confidence in Entergy's assurances that a serious radiological accident will never happen. If such an accident were to happen, it could have a devastating effect on the families, property, and environment of dozens of nearby communities, especially those that are in the downwind pathway.

It is our belief and, it appears, the belief of a majority of our constituents, that the prudent course of action is to retire this aged facility when its original license expires in 2012 and to replace its electricity as quickly as possible with a combination of energy conservation and efficiency measures coupled with new and currently available renewable energy generated by hydro, wind, solar, and biomass facilities. Last spring, when a resolution to this effect was introduced at annual town meetings in Franklin County, Massachusetts, 12 of 14 towns voted overwhelmingly to approve it.

Thank you for hearing these concerns from your neighbors in Massachusetts. We hope that they will be appropriately considered by the citizens and elected officials of the State of Vermont.

– Senator Stan Rosenberg,
Representatives Christopher Donelan, Denis Guyer, and Stephen Kullik
Franklin County and Hampshire Counties, MA



The Power Canal under maintenance; September 2009

went to genetic tests, smolt study, inoculations, electronic tagging, tracking and recapture – and state hatcheries cranking out salmon fry. Add in infrastructure and personnel, and you can guess at a real cost per fish.

More questions arose after a presentation by USFWS researchers investigating if salmon returns would improve if hatcheries raised output – pouring millions more fry and smolts into the river. Models predicted no more than about 50 addition-

gram?" There was a lot of looking at shoes until the Connecticut representative offered, "Well, we didn't have a specific number in mind."

In 1967 this program set 38,000 as its goal for returning salmon – with an annual recreational catch of 9,600 fish. The target for shad: one million at Holyoke, 850,000 at Turners Falls, and 750,000 passing Vernon dam.

see SALMON pg 11

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American Dead in Iraq and Afghanistan as of 1/29/10

US FORCES	Casualties in Iraq as of this date	4375
Afghanistan	973	
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Targeted Tax Increases Pass in Oregon

Oregon, like so many states in the recession, was facing difficult and painful cuts in order to balance their budget – until the recent, and historic, vote that took place on Tuesday.

Oregonians voted in favor of Measures 66 and 67, which passed at 54% and 53% respectively. These measures call for modest income tax increases on the wealthiest 3% of Oregonians, establish a \$150 minimum tax for most businesses, raise the tax rate on some corporate profits, and increase certain business filing fees.

Oregon had not voted to approve general tax increases since 1930. So why are they voting in favor now? Some speculate the change of heart is

due to the fact that these tax measures only affect those most able to pay – both at the individual level and in terms of large corporations. Most Oregonians and business will not be affected.

Though anti-tax opponents are still spouting messages of doom for Oregon, the taxes are estimated to bring in over \$700 million that will protect vital public services. This revenue saves schools from a 5% across-the-board decrease in state funding, and prevents drastic cuts in state-funded medical coverage, public safety and human services.

The remaining 49 states would be wise to follow in Oregon's footsteps.

– Karen Kraut
Boston

Enjoying Talking Pictures

I'm 63 years old; this is my first fan letter. Todd Detmold, I think your movie reviews are first rate: interesting, insightful, thought provoking, knowledgeable and humorous. Keep it up!

– Richard Andersen
Montague

AN APPRECIATION

Howard Zinn Made Me Look Beyond the Headlines

BY MARK HUDYMA
MONTAGUE CITY – Historian Howard Zinn has passed away at the age of 87.

Howard Zinn was the first writer to draw me away from the American Dream, the first to make me think and question. His writings were concise, grim, hopeful, depressing, and wonderful. Thank you, Mr. Zinn, for showing me the light.

History as it is still taught in school is biased, opinionated, and often glorifies mass murder. Mr. Zinn, was the first to question if George Washington cut down that cherry tree, the first one to bring to light the constant struggle of women, the poor, the oppressed races. He brought these struggles to the

main stream, raising the questions that were often ignored. Why is it like this? Why do we have so many poor, so many tortured victims of war?

Howard Zinn was the first to make me question, questioning every fact, every unexplained question, and I dug until I found an answer. He inspired me to look beyond the headlines, to find what forces are really at work in the country. He made me angry about our society, and hopeful of its future.

Thank you Mr. Zinn, for making me a citizen.

Mark Hudyma is a sophomore at Turners Falls High School

COOPERATION from pg 1 the room.

Representative Steve Kulik (D-Worthington) and senator Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst), in between legislative meetings in Boston, kept up with the conversation in Montague until first one, and then the other, had to break away to attend committee meetings.

Soon the line went dead – with a loud busy signal – causing the room to break into uneasy laughter, before the serious business of addressing a badly out of balance budget resumed.

The legislators' aides were present at Wednesday's meeting in Montague, however, and Rosenberg vowed he and Kulik would participate in the ongoing discussions. All parties agreed to work together cooperatively to come up with a long term plan for addressing the structural gap in the G-M budget, which the school committee has estimated as being more than \$800,000 out of balance.

School committee member Jeff Singleton pointed out there is more than just fiscal stability for the district on the line.

"The constant financial problem is eroding the educational goals of the district. And you do reach a point where people begin to lose faith in public education. We have seen five district meetings in a row where school budgets have been voted down."

That has certainly brought the DESE to the table. In fact, for the last two years, the DESE has been forced by law to assume fiscal responsibility for the G-M district, and has imposed assessments on the towns of Gill and Montague after they turned down the school committee's budget requests.

Associate DESE commissioner Jeff Wulfson said the state is now relying on local property taxes to fund 59% of school foundation budgets, on average, and that he is aware that may be as far as localities like Gill and Montague are willing or able to go.

"I'm not sure the financing is there. The irresistible demands of public education are meeting the irresistible object of property taxes."

As an afterthought, he added, "I'm amazed Proposition 2½ has survived this long."

Wulfson also said, "Historically, there has been very little correlation between higher spending levels and student achievement."

He noted that Montague and Gill are spending well above the foundation level set by the DESE for each community in the state to fund their public schools.

"If that's true," asked Montague finance committee member Mike Naughton, "then why aren't we all happy?"

Montague finance committee chair John Hanold did not address that question directly. But he said, "I don't want to repeat my personal experience from the past," where the watchword was, "Keep Flogging Us Until Morale Improves."

Although the discussion focused mainly on the sustainability of the school district's finances, Naughton noted, "On the Montague finance committee we're looking at sustaining a town we want to live in, and not just the skeleton of a town."

He said steadily rising school assessments had forced Montague to cut too deeply into other departments. "We need to expand some services that have been cut back. We've gone too far in some places."

Montague town administrator

Frank Abbondanzio backed him on this point. "As a result of increases in school assessments, we have had to defer capital spending. Every dollar deferred will cost us four dollars down the road. Montague used to spend \$300,000 on capital projects; we'd like to get back to that. In the last few years, we've been funding operating expenses through reserves," a practice he characterized as "disastrous."

He added, "We're basically cannibalizing all our budgets, because there is not enough money to do the job right."

School committee chair Michael Langknecht echoed his sentiments on the school side of the budget equation. Referring to the Gill-Montague schools, he said, "The problem is, we are running an \$18 million enterprise with a \$16 million budget."

Wulfson urged both sides to use cash reserves while the effects of the recession fade. "Fiscal year 2011 will still be a tough year, and we'll need [to use] some reserves. From 2012 on, we need to reverse that trend and build up reserves again."

But Montague finance committee member Lyn Reynolds said the town would exhaust its last \$1.2 million in reserves in see COOPERATION pg 6

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WENDELL POLICE LOG

Saturday, 12/12 2:15 p.m. Car accident on New Salem Road. No injuries, minor damage to vehicle.	resident reported guest bitten by neighbor's dog. Referred to dog officer.	Village Road. Locksmith called. Thursday, 1/23 10:30 a.m. National Grid reported one copper cable stolen from a temporary substation behind the former Maple Valley School.
Wednesday, 1/20 8:25 p.m. Stone Road	Thursday, 1/21 12:05 p.m. Motor vehicle lockout on Morse	

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Customers and vendors at the Gill agricultural commission's winter farmers market at the elementary school last month. Buy direct and skip the packaging!

BY DAVID DETMOLD – Gill will once again use the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative as the town's purchasing agent for bulk fuel oil. For the current heating season, the town purchased 7,200 gallons of oil through the collaborative, at a price of \$1.82 per gallon. Given the current price of heating oil in the area (above \$2.50 a gallon) the selectboard felt the town saved money by using the collaborative this year, and hopes to extend that record for the heating season to come.

However, since Gill has no place to store heating oil for municipal use, the board wanted next year's estimate to be pegged at no more than 80% of the amount of oil ordered this year, so as not to get stuck with excess fuel.

But after discussing the possibility of conservation measures the board hopes the town energy committee will take over the next few months, including a phased installation of interior storm win-

dows at the town hall and the Riverside Municipal Building, the board agreed to an even lower target figure of 70% of this year's order, or about 5,000 gallons of oil.

Volunteers have been working to reglaze the windows at the Riverside building, which should also cut down on fuel consumption.

The collaborative estimates the cost of heating oil will rise, even for bulk pre-purchased orders, to about \$2.15 a gallon for the coming heating season.

"Since we've been using Lower Pioneer Valley, we've gotten much better prices than we've been getting recently," said selectboard chair Ann Banash.

In related news, Gill will receive \$1,626 in reimbursement for recycled paper, cans and bottles for the second half of 2009 from the Springfield Materials Recycling Facility. The money will be held in escrow for the town at the Franklin County

NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

Gill Sets its Sights on Reducing Fuel Oil Use

Solid Waste Management District, where it can be used to pay down the town's annual assessment fee.

Town administrator Ray Purington said Gill was recycling .049 tons per person per year, slightly above the state average of .045 tons.

Selectboard member Nancy Griswold said the amount of packaging on products these days is very discouraging.

Banash said everyone should go to the Winter Fare farmers market at the Greenfield High School, this Saturday, February 6th, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Packaging will be minimal, and biodegradable.

Following a road by road survey by Western Massachusetts Electric Company of all the streetlights in town, utility representatives met with Purington last week to advise him that the town's annual street lighting bill will be rising by about \$70.

"That's a good result," said Purington. "Northfield's is going up by \$1000."

Gill maintains 44 streetlights, in addition to three lights on the Gill side of the bridge to Montague, and four floodlights at municipal buildings.

WMECO's representatives mentioned that Mass Highway pays the electric bill for all the streetlights on the Sunderland bridge, so Purington said he would investigate why Gill is being charged for any streetlights on the Gill-Montague bridge.

On another energy related matter, selectboard member John

Ward said, "I definitely think we should move forward and adopt the energy stretch building code in Gill."

Ward gave a brief presentation on the stretch code to the other board members, saying the new building standards would add 1% to 5% to the cost of new construction or major renovations, with payback through energy efficiencies. He concluded by saying adoption of the optional tighter building standards would put Gill in line to apply for a share of a \$10 million pot of annual state funding to make further municipal energy upgrades.

Banash told Purington, "You should probably put it on your list for town meeting."

A public hearing on the energy stretch code will take place beforehand.

The selectboard will send a congratulatory note to Sergeant Chris Redmond, who received a commendation from the Franklin County Chiefs of Police Association for helping to solve a series of break-ins in Southern Vermont, New Hampshire, Bernardston and Gill.

Redmond said he had been planning to attend a regional intelligence meeting in Vermont last fall to learn more about those break-ins. Two days before the meeting, the perpetrators struck in Bernardston and Gill, breaking and entering four times in a row, in daylight. The one break-in in Gill was more serious, Redmond said, because the homeowner was home at the time, and hid in the bedroom while cash and elec-

tronics were stolen.

Redmond said he worked together with the Vermont state police, the Keene police, and the Bernardston police to solve the case, using old-fashioned detective work like surveillance and crime scene forensic evidence to link 70 cases.

In November, James Monette, 29, of Millers Falls Road in Montague; Christopher Nichols, 29, of Troy, NH; John Parda, 23, of Brattleboro, and Kenneth Walkins, 32, also of Brattleboro, were arrested in New Hampshire. Their trials are pending.

The Police Chief's Association of Franklin County honored Redmond for his "investigative skills and diligence in being a primary investigator in solving numerous breaking and enterings into homes throughout Northern Franklin County, Southern Vermont and Southern New Hampshire, by an organized group of burglars."

In the course of removing a dead maple tree from in front of the Slate Memorial Library, the highway crew discovered problems with one of the tires on the front end loader. Highway chief Mick LaClaire replaced two of the 18-year-old loader's tires, from Pete's Tire Barn, at a cost of \$350 apiece, considered a bargain. New tires cost \$2500 each.

The board received a written complaint about possible excessive signage at Green River Honda. The board forwarded the complaint to the Franklin County Building Inspector to investigate.

COOPERATION from pg 5 two years trying to plug the school district's \$800,000 budget gap. And Gill finance committee member Claire Chang said it would be imprudent to bank on the recession ending and state aid coming to the rescue of local schools and towns.

Wulfson held firm on that point. "As state aid comes back and state revenues increase, as it will, guaranteed, don't build that money into the base."

Use those promised increases to build up reserves, because state aid is cyclical, and lean times will come again, he said.

G-M superintendent Carl Ladd said, "We have been very

focused on providing quality education for our students." But he said he was committed to building the school budget from the bottom up, incorporating the needs of both towns and schools. "My issue is there is so much instability on the revenue side."

He called a drop in state Circuit Breaker aid for special education this year, "Unconscionable. The state has a moral obligation to provide for special needs students."

He noted one special education student who moved into the district this year cost the GMRSD \$120,000, money that had to be found somewhere in the district's tight budget.

GMRSD business manager Lyn Bassett added that the district is also responsible for transportation and medical costs for some SPED students.

Ladd said, "We're under a tremendous amount of pressure from the state and the federal government to turn our school around. We're supposed to do that with a limited amount of resources. It's going to be an interesting process."

He added, "If we could simply not have any more of our children leave the district," taking state aid with them as they choice out, "we'd be in much better shape fiscally."

Asked if the district would

reconsider hosting an in-district charter school – a Horace Mann School – at the former Montague Center School, removing a costly maintenance issue for the town of Montague in dealing with the empty school building and bringing choice-out students back to the district, Ladd said, "There's nothing that is off the table."

Wulfson 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. That's one of the advantages of a charter school. How do you bring that into a larger district? To that end, if you would all be

willing to engage in that discussion it would be tremendously useful."

Gill finance committee chair Tupper Brown proposed setting up an oversight group between the towns, the district, state legislators and the DESE to guide the process of developing a long term plan for educational and fiscal stability for the district, and all agreed. That group will analyze budget scenarios and report back before town meeting time.

"I find the enthusiasm of all parties to go forward something new, and I think we should recognize that cooperative spirit," Brown said.



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Hybrid K-12 Region Advances at Mahar

BY KATIE NOLAN

ORANGE – At its February 2nd meeting, the Mahar Regional school committee decided to move forward with a hybrid K-12 regionalization plan, accepted the joint declaration of the Franklin County School Committee Caucus, and discussed other issues, including the cafeteria budget, buying local produce, composting food waste, and procedures for school lockdown during drug searches.

Kenneth Roche and Stephen Hemman of the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools (MARS) presented an update on the current status of Mahar K-12 regionalization plans. MARS is working with Petersham Elementary School superintendent Patricia Martin, Orange Elementary superintendent Paul Burnim, and Mahar superintendent Michael Baldassarre to develop a “roadmap” for forming a hybrid Petersham, Orange, Mahar K-12 region. Under the hybrid regionalization, Wendell and New Salem would be part of the new region for grades 7-12, but for K-6 would continue to operate Swift River School as part of the Union 28 superintendency union.

Roche listed the goals of regionalization: unified structure, better use of revenue, and retaining local investment in the elementary schools. Currently, the superintendents and MARS are exploring ways the schools can collaborate before regionalizing.

Roche said creating a hybrid region would require reconsideration of the school committee structure and the leveling up of teacher salaries within the new region. He said the major challenges for creating the region would be: creating a new administrative structure, maintaining an emphasis on elementary education, developing a common health insurance program for regional employees, and developing a method for sharing and assessing costs between the towns.

Roche cautioned that any regionalization agreement would need the approval of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

He recommended regular communication with both DESE and town administrators about the regionalization process.

Superintendent Martin said “intense discussions” between the superintendents collaborative education group and MARS had led to a “strong collaborative consensus” that the administrative structure should consist of a regional K-12 superintendent, an assistant superintendent for elementary education, and a director of special education.

Superintendent Burnim felt the job of the group was to show the communities the superintendents can work together. “Can we show a central office structure that will work?”

Superintendent Baldassarre said the superintendents have started small collaborative efforts, and are working as “one team”. He said the Petersham school committee had approved continued work by the collaborative education group in creating a hybrid region on February 1st, and the Orange school committee would be voting on whether to approve continued work on February 8th. Baldassarre said, “We have made more progress than I ever imagined.”

Patricia Smith of Orange noted there had been talk of moving the sixth graders from the elementary schools to the middle school at Mahar, and asked whether there would be a separate building for sixth graders if that happens.

Baldassarre replied a sixth grade could be located at the Mahar building, but sixth-grade classrooms could be separate within the middle school and sixth-grade students could possibly remain in one classroom, with teachers moving from class to class.

Roche said moving sixth graders to the middle school “worked very well at Gill-Montague, and each town decided whether to send its sixth graders.”

Paul Gervais of Orange asked whether there was any interest from Wendell or New Salem in the new region.

Baldassarre said Union 28 superintendent Joan Wickman had been invited to join the dis-

ussion and that Wendell and New Salem school committees have been informed about the meetings. However, he said no one from Union 28, Wendell or New Salem had attended the meetings.

Roche observed it might be useful to give a presentation on the hybrid regionalization plan to the Swift River (New Salem and Wendell) school committee.

Michael Roche, representing the Mahar Massachusetts Teacher’s Association, said that K-12 regionalization had been discussed for many years, but he had not believed it would happen in his lifetime. “I feel positive for the first time,” he said. “I really believe the tide is beginning to turn.” He added, “A lot of the issues will involve the [teachers] union. We will do all we can to get cooperative agreements.”

Baldassarre recommended the Mahar committee ask the superintendents educational collaborative group to develop the design for a hybrid Orange, Petersham, Mahar K-12 region, including developing a cost allocation plan and governance model. The committee unanimously approved a motion to ask the group to continue to develop a design for the hybrid region.

At the January 5th meeting, John DeWitt of New Salem presented the joint declaration of the Franklin County School Committee Caucus and encouraged the Mahar committee to adopt the statement and become more involved in the caucus.

Because committee chair Maureen Donelan of Orange had concerns about how the statement would be interpreted, the caucus statement was moved to the February meeting agenda. The joint declaration of the caucus states, in part, the school committee will:

- work collaboratively with other districts in our area to develop and implement joint strategic plans to help reduce costs, and to preserve the community character of schools;

- work cooperatively to establish and meet goals that continuously improve educational and administrative efficiencies, while increasing educational opportunities;

- work jointly to design programs and systems to benefit all schools in our area while ensuring that students have a variety of excellent educational options; and

- participate cooperatively with other school committees in a shared advocacy and support body that will help us achieve these important goals.

A majority of the committee voted to adopt the joint declaration.

In old business, Baldassarre responded to a question from the last meeting about purchasing more food from local growers for the school cafeteria. According to Baldassarre, the cafeteria’s primary distributor buys all New England products during the growing season. In addition, the school is a participant in the Massachusetts Farm to School Program, a non-profit organization that assists schools and distributors in procuring locally grown foods.

However, Baldassarre said, the large quantities of local food available at harvest time may need processing. For instance, in June, it was possible to buy hundreds of pounds of strawberries through Farm to School. However, food services manager Jacki Dillenback decided the labor costs to hull, wash, and freeze the strawberries for the following school year were too high.

Baldassarre reported that Dillenback has used cost controls to reduce the deficit in the food service budget. He said the cafeteria is providing healthy lunches in accordance with the school wellness policy, and the price of

perishable produce is increasing. Based on the food costs and contractual increases in salaries, the deficit will remain unless changes are made. He recommended increasing the cost of full-price student lunches from \$2.00 to \$2.25 and faculty lunches from \$3.50 to \$4.00, and proposed to start the increase the Monday after February vacation.

Dick Baldwin of Wendell observed that if the lunch program had more money, it might be able to afford more local produce. The committee voted to increase the lunch prices as recommended.

Michael Yohan of New Salem suggested the costs of disposing food wastes could be reduced by composting the wastes. He said Clear View Composting, located in Randall Industrial Park near Mahar, charges for picking up food wastes based on mileage. He recommended the committee invite Amy Donovan, Franklin County Solid Waste Management District program director, to report to the committee on composting food wastes.

Smith questioned Baldassarre about lockdowns at the school, when police dogs are used to search for drugs. She said that frequent searches for drugs could set the wrong tone for the school.

Baldassarre said there have been two canine searches this year. During the search lockdown, students remain in their classrooms. He said no drugs were found in either search, and he will not submit a request to the state police for another canine search until the policy and planning subcommittee has finalized the search policy.

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Local Nature Notes February: Things to See, Hear, and Do



Great Horned Owl

BY JEN AUDLEY
TURNERS FALLS – The moon won't be full again until February 28th, but you should be able to see the planet Mars on any clear night this month. Mars is super-bright right now and easy to spot low in the northeast sky because of its yellow-orange hue. The new moon falls late on the 13th, and Chinese New Year (Year of the Tiger!) begins the next day. Look for buds beginning to

swell on some shrubs, and the new growth on willow trees starting to shimmer green. You may have to get close to see the buds, but the new green on willow trees should be visible from a distance. There will be signs that, for some, mating season has begun. Listen for owls hooting and birds starting to sing. In fields, meadows and woods, if you get a strong but fleeting whiff of "sweet skunk," it's likely you're in a spot where a red fox left a scent mark as a message for potential mates and rivals. (On the other hand, if you smell "regular skunk", keep an eye out for the skunk that's probably nearby! I saw one in my neighborhood last week.) Skunks mate in February, too. Keep an eye out for snow fleas, which are not fleas but tiny insects called springtails, pepper-

ing the snow near tree trunks on sunny days. Watch for signs of sap, which usually begins running at the end of this month. You may see tiny icicles at the end of sugar maple twigs – or tapped trees with buckets below them. The sun sets about one minute later each day. Right now sunset occurs at about 5:00 p.m., and it's dark by about 5:30, but by the end of the month that will all happen thirty minutes later. The sunrise is coming earlier, too – now the sun rises at about 7 a.m.; on the 28th, it will come up at 6:21. **Learn more:** Feb. 12th to 15th: **The 13th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count** Join tens of thousands of people who count and report on the types of birds they see over this weekend. Lists submitted by citizens in the U.S. and Canada help scientists understand how bird populations are changing over time. www.birdcount.org Feb. 13th, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. **DCR Universal Access Program** The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) sponsors a variety of adaptive recreation opportunities for people with disabilities, as

well as their friends and families. At the Wendell State Forest there will be cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, kick-sledding, and snowmobiling. Pre-registration required. For more information, visit www.mass.gov/dcr and click on "universal access," or call (413)545-5353. Feb. 19th, 1 to 4 p.m. **February Vacation Porcupine Tracking for Families** After an indoor exploration session, we will head outside to look for tracks and other sign of porcupines at Northfield Mountain. No previous snowshoeing experience is necessary. Wear wind pants or gaiters if you have them, and dress in warm layers. For ages 7 and older; \$5 per person, \$12 with snowshoe rentals. Pre-registration required. Call (800) 859-2960. Feb. 19th, 8 to 10 p.m. **Owl Prowl** Join local owl expert Billy Fregeau in search of wintering owls. Meet at the Millers River Environmental Center, 100 Main St, Athol, for carpooling. Limited participation; pre-registration is required. Call Billy Fregeau, (978) 249-8627. Sponsored by the Athol Bird and Nature Club. (Also, check out www.massaudubon.org/owls to see pictures and hear recordings

of all the types of owls that live in our state.) Feb. 20th, 1 to 2 p.m. What makes winter so special? DCR Interpreter Gini Traub will lead an **outdoor walk** around the Great Falls Discovery Center in Turners Falls. Free. All ages welcome. Please dress appropriately. Feb. 27th, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. **Family Moonlight Snowshoe** An adventure by the light of the moon. Learn how to navigate like nocturnal creatures. A cup of cocoa and snacks will warm us on our return to the Northfield Mountain Education Center. For ages 7 and older; \$5 per person, \$12 with snowshoe rentals. Pre-registration required - call 800-859-2960

Gill Police Log Highlights

Multi Car Crash

Wednesday, 1/27 12:25 p.m. Assisted resident with possible rabid raccoon on West Gill Road.

Thursday, 1/28 4:50 p.m. Single vehicle accident on Main Road, no injuries.

5:17 p.m. Five vehicles involved in accident on Gill-Montague Bridge, one subject transported for back pain.

Friday, 1/29 5:04 p.m. Report of traffic hazard on French King Highway, unable to locate.

7:50 p.m. Suspicious activity at French King Highway business, all checked OK.

Saturday, 1/30 4:40 p.m. Arrested [redacted] arrested for default warrant.

Sunday, 1/31 5:01 p.m. Arrested [redacted] charged with possession with intent to distribute marijuana, uninsured motor vehicle and operating with a revoked registration.

Monday, 2/1 10:32 p.m. Report of domestic disturbance and larceny of a motor vehicle on Walnut Street. Charges pending.

ARTISTS from pg 1
 Sundays, 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., through February 28th. As soon as I heard that local artists were to be selected for a show at the Hallmark gallery, my question was whether Tim de Christopher would be included. A world-renowned sculptor and resident of 2nd Street who has a studio in a nearby former automobile garage, de Christopher said he heard about the upcoming exhibition through word of mouth in our local arts community. He made several submissions, and the viewing public is fortunate that two of his works, one older, one quite new, will be included. De Christopher is happy about that because, "There have been very few opportunities for artists to exhibit in Turners in a professional venue like the Hallmark gallery." De Christopher's older work, the 1996 *Angel of Hope and Despair*, carved from limestone, is an allegory for what artists contend with in making a life for themselves through artwork, said de Christopher. There is a constant struggle to make art and to establish a place in the world. De Christopher's angel depicts this struggle as one of "feast or famine" as she holds



Artist Fafnir Adamites will be among the local artists featured at the Art+Space show at the Hallmark gallery

out her hands, one with a loaf of bread, the other empty. De Christopher's *The Brain* reflects a lot of what has been going through his mind in the last turbulent year or so. Local artist Fafnir Adamites will display three works in her chosen medium of felt. Adamites is a Montague town meeting member who lives on Central Street and maintains a studio just off the Avenue. Trained as a photographer, she started to explore new approaches to making art through knitting about six years ago. Feeling constrained by

two-dimensional patterns, she was drawn to feltmaking, where a certain kind of magic, much like you might witness in developing photographs, can transform a chaotic pile of loose fibers into a tight, durable fabric that can be worn, trod upon or hung on the wall. Adamites submitted five entries for the show, and three of her works were chosen: two felt vessels and *Slice*, a wall hanging that combines hand-made felt, rough yarn, and cheesecloth. The Art+Space exhibition of 60 works by 35 artists will con-

tinue Fridays through Sundays until February 28. After that, the 85 Avenue A gallery will bring William Wegman back to town for "Out of the Box," including never-before-seen images from the famous photographer, whose work will be on display from March 5th through May 2nd, with an opening reception on March 5th and an artist's talk that evening at 7:30 in the Hallmark Auditorium. Turners Falls = Art+Space (and a few Weimaraners for good measure!)

COMEDY AT THE SHEA

Jimmy Dunn
 Saturday, February 6th
 His credits include the Emmy-nominated "Jimmy the Cabbie" Olympia Sports commercials on NESN With Stacy Yannett & Dan Gill.

The Shea Theater, 71 Avenue A, Turners Falls. Showtime 8 p.m., doors open at 7 p.m. Tickets \$15 in advance (\$16 at the door), available on-line at www.sheacomedy.com, and at the World Eye Bookshop, Greenfield. Beer and wine served in the lobby before the show. Call the Shea at (413) 863-2281.

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Note to Readers: In an effort to reach a truer definition of community journalism, the Montague Reporter has been meeting with students at the Turners Falls High School and Great Falls Middle School to encourage them to write more about their activities and opinions. We'd like to extend this invitation to other school communities in our coverage area as well. Please let us know what is happening at your schools, give us a heads up to come report on special events and share student viewpoints and poems with our readers.

We look forward to the insights younger writers will bring to our community newspaper.

Second Annual Service Trip to Kentucky: What the Students Expect



TFHS Students (left - right) Kali Stafford, Julie Seard, Ashley Sears, Tia Demers, Billie Lada, and Juliana Aprileo, raised funds for their service trip to Kentucky at Food City recently.

BY ASHLEY SEARS & JULIANA APRILEO

TURNERS FALLS – Last year, 17 students from Turners Falls High School participated in a community service trip to Sandy Hook, KY. There they worked to clean up local parks, and they also worked with Frontier Housing, a non-profit organization whose purpose is to provide low income families with more affordable housing.

This year, 11 TFHS seniors have the opportunity to participate in the second annual community service trip to Kentucky. Those attending will be Julie Seard, Jimmy Zellman, Alex Peterson, Billie Lada, Kali Stafford, Evan Pleasant, Dustin Rivard, Lucas Foley, Tia Demers, and the two of us. Our trip will take place the week of March 15th through the 19th. This single

week will allow all of us to reach out our hands to help another community.

The experience of the students who went last year was said to be "life changing." Lindsey Wilson, a 2009 graduate of Turners Falls High, described it this way: "It was an amazing experience. Not only did it benefit those we helped, but also us students. We learned to look beyond Turners Falls, and beyond ourselves."

The students who are going to Sandy Hook this year have already made a great impact in the Gill-Montague community for the past four years, and now

we are reaching out to make an impact in the community of Elliott County, KY (population 6,748). By doing this, we will be able to create a bond between our community and theirs, which will strengthen both.

When asked why she wanted to go to Kentucky, Julie Seard responded, "It's for a good cause; I'm there."

Billie Lada said, "I think it's good that we have the opportunity to go down and help people."

The excitement we all feel is apparent in Kali Stafford, who said, "I'm pretty pumped, and can't wait. If I can help the less

fortunate, then I'm definitely down. It's something that not many people get a chance to do. Here's to an epic adventure!"

The students are also looking forward to making a bond with one another. Tia Demers said, "I'm really excited to help out and get to know everyone better."

Our trip will start off with a long drive to Kentucky, expected to take about 13 hours. Arriving late in the afternoon, we will get a good night's sleep before the next day's service. Then we will be arriving at Laurel Gorge, where we will be cleaning and picking up the park. For the rest of our time, we will be assisting Frontier Housing with their latest project in Sandy Hook, the county seat.

On Friday, February 5th at 7 p.m., we will be hosting our second annual dodgeball tournament to raise money for our trip. This event will be hosted in the Turners Falls gymnasium. It only costs \$1 to get in to watch the games, and baked goods will be on sale. All of the proceeds will go towards the students to help them pay to get to Kentucky.

If you would like to donate toward our service trip, checks can be made payable to Turners Falls High School and sent to the attention of Heather Batchelor, at 222 Turnpike Road, Turners Falls, 01376, with "Kentucky Service Trip" in the note line.

When we return, please watch for our follow up on what our experience was like!

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Expert Numismatist Expands the Mysteries of Colonial Coins

BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH

GILL – Erik Goldstein of Williamsburg treated area people to a presentation on *Pounds, Pence and Pistareens* on Sunday, January 24th, at the White Church in Historic Deerfield, where I discovered a pistareen is neither a vessel kept under the bed in Colonial times, nor a little yellow hole in the snow.

A pistareen is a Spanish coin. English shillings and six pences often passed for pistareens. The term pistareen was a nickname for a two reales coin struck in Spain, worth one-fifth of a dollar. Reales struck in Spanish colonial mints in North America were worth one quarter of a dollar, or two bits, slang for a 25-cent piece to this day.



Harry Sharbaugh, Erik Goldstein, and Rufus Seward

Confused? Now I should tell you one English pound equals 20 shillings, and one shilling equals 12 pence. No wonder the colonies revolted.

A Spanish pistareen was worth

15 pence Virginia money in 1775, which is roughly equivalent to an English shilling.

Goldstein, who is the curator of Mechanical Arts and see COINS pg 16

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LEVERETT from pg 1 was not an accurate reflection of what those teachers were actually getting paid this year.

This admission caused temperatures to rise quickly in the town hall meeting room.

"Once you find a mistake, you don't trust any of the other statistics. Then you might as well throw all these papers out the window," inveighed Gibavic.

"This is unbelievable," said selectboard member Peter d'Errico.

But a few minutes later, it was d'Errico who was corrected by school committee member Farshid Hajir for fuzzy math.

D'Errico, adding the approximately \$1,200,000 Leverett pays to send its students to Amherst High to the approximately \$136,000 it pays for central office administration at Union #28, and dividing the resulting sum by the number of students Leverett graduates from 6th grade each year (about 20), said the town could withdraw from its regional affiliations and pocket enough money to send all its seventh graders to Northfield Mount Hermon for \$43,000 a year and keep the change.

"Your numbers can't possibly be right," responded Hajir, who proceeded to demonstrate that Leverett actually spends about "\$10,000 a kid," to educate students in public schools, well below the state average, pegged at \$12,200.

D'Errico seemed to concede the point, but stayed on the offensive.

"How do we deal with pres-

sure from charter schools with these numbers? I hear the talk on the street about withdrawing from the Union."

Hajir said, "By law, we can't operate a school without a superintendent and a business manager. We are too small to hire our own superintendent. One hundred and eight years ago, we got together and formed a union," with the neighboring towns of New Salem, Wendell, and Erving, adding Shutesbury one year later.

D'Errico, sitting across the table from Union 28 superintendent Joan Wickman, questioned the superintendent's salary increase and Leverett's \$1,600 annual share

Wickman's budgeted expenses for travel and conferences. Last year, Wickman's salary increased from \$107,500 to \$113,800, a 5.9% jump.

Hajir responded, "I was chair of the committee that negotiated the superintendent's contract, which was approved by a nearly unanimous vote of the joint supervisory committee. On the question of her salary, we did a cost comparison across the area. Our superintendent was at the very bottom ..."

"There is no high school in the union," interrupted Gibavic.

"But there are four different school committees, one of which represents a regional elementary

school with its own legal entity..."

"You can't compare our district to any other district in the area," insisted Gibavic

"Our union is geographically dispersed..." continued Hajir.

"It's not dispersed," corrected Gibavic. "One town is next to the other. Mohawk is dispersed."

"The five per cent increase to the superintendent's salary was negotiated one and a half years ago, before the economic downturn," continued Hajir. "What



Peter d'Errico, Farshid Hajir, Joan Wickman and Kip Fonsh discuss the Leverett school budget on January 27th

you have to realize is it's hard to find a good superintendent for Union 28. At any time, there are 30 to 60 openings for superintendents across the state. We would be hard pressed to replace her if she leaves. She does her work. She is conscientious. She understands the politics of the towns and has a working relationship with the 25 members of the school committees and the four principals in the union. She has brought down the extra overtime the union has been paying. Having worked with other central offices," said Hajir, who chairs the Amherst-Pelham regional school committee, "I know how messed up central offices can be.

My opinion is, it is worth it for the town of Leverett to keep the superintendent we have. She's a good superintendent. That's why we gave the salary we did: to keep the superintendent we have."

In her defense, Wickman said, "My colleagues think I am crazy to be out 120 nights a year," travelling to school committee meetings four nights a week. She said she has put 67,000 miles on her new fuel efficient car on district business. "My travel allowance does not cover the 50 cents a mile cost," for fuel and maintenance that is common to reimburse travel expenses in town government.

Although she has a doctorate, unlike some of her colleagues who superintend districts in Franklin County, Wickman said even with the salary increase, the committee "could not afford to bring me up to the middle of the pack right away. The new Mahar superintendent," Michael Baldassarre, "who was hired after a half an hour negotiation, who is not certified, does not have a doctorate, and is very, very green, he is at the bottom," receiving \$105,000. "But I am not sure you can compare a superintendent in her fourth year with a very green superintendent."

Wickman is second to the bottom in terms of superintendents' salaries in Franklin County, above Baldassarre, who she said is doing a good job learning the ropes at Mahar while doing double duty as the region's special education director.

Responding to d'Errico's concerns about expenses, Wickman said she goes to an annual conference, staying at the cheapest motel, to bring back information to her administrators on new regulations, legal concerns, and educational advances. "It is critical to keep on the cutting edge. Your superintendent has to have access to these things."

Selectboard chair Rich Brazaeu said, "You know where we're going. Town employees aren't getting cost of living raises," in the current economic situation. "And we see teachers and principals getting 1 1/2 percent, and 2 to 6% raises in Union 28.

"A lot of towns are going back and asking for relief. These increases, when we're in a situation where we're looking at cuts for our schools, brought increased scrutiny to those raises."

Brazaeu concluded, "If we're asking everybody else to bite the bullet, it would be nice to have everyone in sync."

But Hajir and Leverett school committee chair Kip Fonsh said the committee bargained with teachers and administrators in good faith before the economic downturn struck, and would enter a difficult renegotiating period soon. They noted the cohort of nine fulltime classroom teachers, most of whom have been work-

ing at the elementary school for 20 years or longer, had reached the top of their salary steps, and were now receiving only COLAs and an occasional modest hike in longevity pay to reward them for their continued service.

Fonsh asked the selectboard to inform the school committee of the big picture of town revenues, rather than isolate the school department for cuts without a clear knowledge of state aid forecasts.

Finance committee member Tom Powers said it seemed pretty clear, at this point, the town would see no new growth or increases in local taxes other than the 2 1/2% hike in property tax levies allowed annually.

There was some talk about a pending override attempt in Amherst - for perhaps \$2 million - partially intended to stave off deep cuts to the regional high school's extra curricular programs like wood working, metal working, jazz band, and physical education. The boards considered the likely impact on Leverett if an Amherst override passes - which might trigger a wave of assessment increases to the regional towns of Pelham, Shutesbury and Leverett.

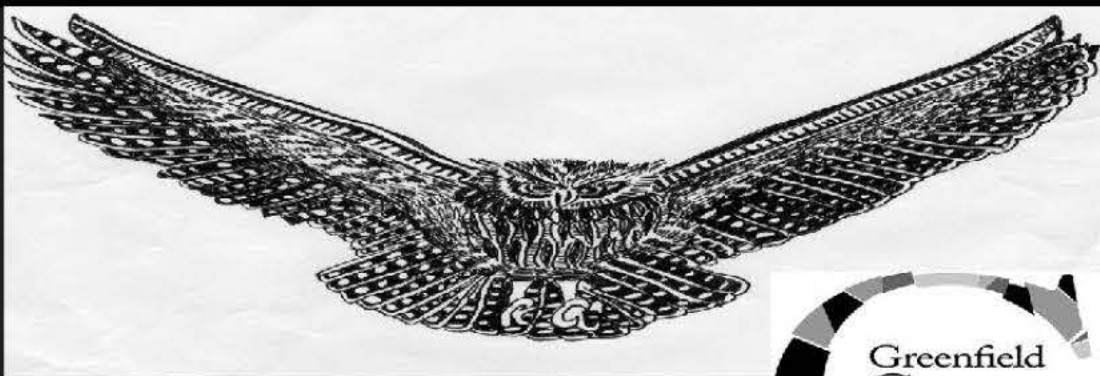
But all agreed the real picture of town revenues and expenses for the coming fiscal year will not be known by town meeting day, perhaps not until June.

The school committee agreed to return on February 9th at 8:00 p.m., and to bring with them corrected budget sheets, further reduced to reflect a 0% budget increase for LES. In order to do that, the committee is considering cutting the school-wide Spanish program at the elementary school, for an \$18,000 savings, reduce to five from ten the days a technology teacher is available to help students in the summer, cut \$12,000 in discretionary line items, and discontinue the Adventure Program for grades 4 through 6.

And Hajir made this promise. "As a member of the school committee, we are responsible to oversee the numbers given to the selectboard to make sure they are correct - and we will."

As the school department's math tutorial adjourned, Leverett fire chief John Moruzzi, who had waited patiently in the hall for hours, approached the selectboard with a request to fund repairs to one of the department's fire trucks. The 22-year old truck is leaking from a pump valve due to a split packing lens. "It leaks like hell," said Moruzzi, "and could fail during operation." He also said the electrical system on the truck is shorting out. Responding to a mutual aid call from Montague recently, Moruzzi said he was forced to use the truck's spotlights to light the road when the headlamps failed.

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NOTES FROM THE FRANKLIN COUNTY SCHOOL COMMITTEE CAUCUS

School Committee Caucus to Discuss Superintendency Union Amendment

BY DAVID DETMOLD

TURNERS FALLS – A dozen school committee representatives from around the county gathered for the Franklin County School Committee Caucus on Monday, February 1st at the Turners Falls High School.

Kip Fonsh, caucus representative from the Leverett School Committee, asked the FCSCC to consider adopting a formal resolution “critiquing the passage of the Education Reform bill, and particularly the provision that gives towns the right to secede from school superintendency unions by a majority vote of their school committees.”

Bob Decker, from the Frontier regional school committee, said this clause, inserted in the Ed

Reform bill with no public notice beforehand, “certainly raises questions. If towns have a joint contract with a superintendent that rolls forward for two or three years, who is going to pay the superintendent’s salary?” if one town withdraws from a superintendency union in the middle of the contract term.

Daniel Hayes, chair of Union 28 and a member of the Shutesbury school committee said, “You are talking about a very small number of people making a pretty monumental decision on the part of the town. Some of these committees have just three or five members. You’re talking about two or three people making a majority.”

Marcia Day, of Greenfield,

said the amendment, sponsored by representatives Steve Kulik (D-Worthington) and Chris Donelan (D-Orange), reversed the pendulum on school unions. “It went from being very difficult to get out of a union to being very easy.”

Fonsh said he felt the amendment should be altered by the legislature to, “make sure there is flexibility for towns but stability for unions.”

John DeWitt, from New Salem, said “This is a hot issue for us. The real ramifications will take a while to manifest. In all likelihood, no town will move precipitously,” because they would need to have a new superintendency union or regional district to join with, or be able to

stand alone as a school district.

“We need to make the union model viable, without losing local control,” DeWitt said.

Caucus representatives agreed to return to the topic of the new Ed Reform bill, and the superintendency union exit amendment in particular, after polling their own school committees for their views on the matter, at their next meeting, on March 5th.

In other business, the caucus discussed gathering ‘Big Ideas’ for improving education from parents, teachers, staff, administrators, and the general public in advance of a planned educational summit on Saturday, April 10th in Greenfield.

Keith McCormic, of Greenfield, said the caucus was seeking, “Well thought out ideas see CAUCUS pg 13

SALMON from pg 4

Program objectives were clear: create “high quality sport fishing” and “provide for the long-term needs of the population for seafood.”

Despite its name CRASC remains responsible for all the fish in the herring family here – the core of the runs: alewives, blueback herring, and the American shad, “founding fish” of this river’s restoration.

These fish fed people; an extinct salmon strain never anchored anyone’s larder.

In my dreams the Connecticut is as it was in 1991 – a four-state river recovering its age-old biological connection to the sea. May currents met a run of almost a million fish: 520,000 agitated American shad and 410,000 blueback herring lifted upstream at the Holyoke dam. There were 41,000 lampreys and a tiny return of 200 hybrid-Atlantic salmon. Fifty-five thousand shad pushed past the dam at the Turners Falls-Northfield Mountain hydro complex; a record 37,000 shad wriggled up the Vernon ladder to Vermont and New Hampshire. This was a legacy for coming generations.

Less than twenty years later, all that has changed. CRASC doesn’t stress accountability – laying claim instead to hatchery output and the latest low figures coming upstream as accomplishments. A salmon-focused

program with “no specific number in mind” costs us dearly. Today, two-thirds of that once-riveting shad bloom is gone; a scant 1 to 2 % of the tens of thousands of American shad that reach Turners Falls now squeeze through. Just 16 passed Vernon dam in 2009 – adjacent to warmed effluent poured in the river by Entergy’s nuclear plant. Only 39 herring swam past Holyoke in 2009. None have reached New Hampshire in a decade.

Occasionally I talk a little philosophy with Dr. Boyd Kynard of Amherst. Kynard’s a brilliant guy and a world-class expert on fish behavior, restoration, and the Connecticut River’s migratory species. This “retired” professor emeritus and USGS biologist has his feet wet most of the year – consulting with China’s EPA chief about Yangtze dams; fish passage on the Amazon; endangered sturgeon in Europe; or dam-disrupted ecosystems on the Columbia. Something he once said about the resources going to lab study of juvenile salmon struck me, especially from someone not prone to generality, “I bet more money has been spent studying this single life-stage of this one species of fish, than the money spent on all the fish species in the world.”

It’s all about priorities. There are bright, thoughtful people at CRASC, too – people who say

they would like to see a change of course. I believe them. The big problems are now acknowledged at the table: fish elevators ten years past-due at Turners, with fluctuations from the Northfield plant scuttling passage at that dam; thousands of young shad killed when FirstLight drained its canal in September; thermal effluent dumped in at Vermont Yankee – with record low passage at the Vernon ladder. These are all problems good on-the-ground science could begin turning around – on a path to a river we all could be proud of.

Karl Meyer’s “The State of the Snake” appears in the spring issue of Sanctuary. He tackles nighthawks and bald eagles for Birdwatcher’s Digest in May and November.

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LOCAL from pg 3

Ancast Video system.

The first class will be held on Saturday, February 20th, at 1:00 p.m. at the MCTV studio, 34 Second Street, Turners Falls. If you are interested in participating in this free class please call Robin or Dean at 863-9200 or email robin@montaguenvt.org.

Open Gym sessions are starting at the Montague Center town hall on Thursday evenings from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Gary Tum will be there to open up; you can reach him at (413) 522-2563.

Ever try an **emu egg**? I haven’t. But an article posted on MontagueMA net looked so interesting I had to pass it on to our readers:

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Each fresh egg costs \$15.00. **Songline Farm Store** is open Thursday, Friday and Saturday afternoons from 12 to 5 p.m. Call 863-2700 for more information. Egg laying is seasonal – so call or come in soon. Tough to hide for Easter hunts, but perfect

for pysanky.

After months of work, meetings and fundraising, an evening **Warming Center** has finally opened this week at the Congregational Church, Court Square, in Greenfield. Homeless adults are screened through the offices of ServiceNet and given a warm place to stay for the evening. Three men stayed there for the first night on Monday, February 1st.

The Franklin County Interfaith Council was the driving force behind this much needed center, and many businesses, individuals and services assisted in the process. Homelessness is a curse in our society. Everyone needs a warm place to stay. Congratulations and thank yous to all who helped make this warming center a reality! Send items for local briefs to reporter-local@montaguema.net

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NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD MEETING

Emergency Response Training Needed, Says Team

BY BILL FRANKLIN – What do flu shots and disasters have in common? Plenty, if you ask the members of the local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

Team members Brenda Silva, Tim Cronin and Deb Massey, along with Erving residents Harry and Sue Sharbaugh, and Franklin Regional Council of Governments [FRCOG] CERT coordinator Nina Martin-Anzuoni spoke to the Erving selectboard Monday evening, to make a case for persuading Erving residents to participate in a four-town emergency planning consortium with Wendell, Gill,

and Montague.

The Sharbaughs began the discussion by explaining the importance of having and using the four towns' designated Emergency Dispensing Site, where Erving residents can get free flu shots.

During the past year this site, located at the Sheffield Elementary School in Turners Falls, had low participation from the town of Erving, especially from the town's senior citizens. The CERT group would like to change that and to get Erving residents used to employing a single site for their flu shots, and for emergencies in general.

Last year most senior citizens received their flu shots at the Erving senior center, choosing not to make the trip to the Turners Falls. According to selectboard chair Andy Tessier, "If seniors are getting their shots at the senior center, they won't want to go to Turners, and if you can get the shot at work you're going to get it there."

"If they don't want it, we're not going to force them," said selectboard member Andrew Goodwin.

"If you push to take [the local site] away from the seniors," said Jacquie Boyden, "it will just create animosity."

"There's a bigger picture here," said CERT member Deb Massey. The state is giving money for drills and emergency planning so people can learn to work together and learn their roles. We want to do it under an elective situation like flu clinics, rather than wait for a true emergency. It's a way for citizens to go through the process."

"I don't know what the emergency plan is for Erving. That scares me," said Brenda Silva, assistant team leader. "What if a train derailed in town with contaminants, or what if we have an ice storm? No one in town knows what to do."

"You can look at Haiti. You can look at New Orleans," said Harry Sharbaugh. "During the first 72 hours, the local commu-

nity needs to be self supporting, self sufficient."

"Look at the example of the fire at the Usher Plant in Erving center," said CERT team leader Tim Cronin. "Thirty-six towns responded. Who took care of the fire departments? Who fed them? We are looking for people in the community to be trained – looking for volunteers beyond the public safety people."

"We need a second layer, not just the first responders," added Martin-Anzuoni.

The selectboard suggested talking to folks at the senior center. In addition CERT will offer a training course this coming May.

"It's not just about flu clinics," said Silva. "We want to make sure everyone knows what to do in an emergency."

SHEA from pg 1

and expand their horizons.

Valley Idol winner Abe Oyola offered two songs during the course of the afternoon, "It's So Hard to Say Goodbye" by Boys II Men, and "Just the Way You Are" by Billy Joel. He gave admirable performances and has a very nice range and strong stage presence. However, a dress shirt, pants, and shoes would have been preferable to jeans and work boots, in terms of maintaining his stature as an Idol.

Following Oyola in the first part of the program was comedian Myq (pronounced "Mike") Kaplan, fresh from his debut on *The Tonight Show with Conan O'Brien*. Clad in jeans and sneakers (when did we forget to dress for the theater, folks?), Kaplan projects, if that's the right word, a monotone, deadpan approach to comedy, akin to Steven Wright.

But we won't hold that against him; he is a very funny guy.

"Thank you all for coming out," he mumbled. "This theater really needs it. They don't even charge any money to come in here..."

Kaplan said other comics poke fun at audience members in the front rows, but he avoids that approach since the recession hit:

"Hey, what do you do?"

(Mumbling) "Nothing right now... I heard it was free. I thought I'd come to the theater and forget my troubles."

"Where do you live?"

"Actually, I'm between homes right now."

"Nice Shirt!"

"It's the only one I own."

He talked a lot about the differences between Jews and Christians.

"You guys don't eat pork? That's weird. We drink the blood of our savior."

And he talked a lot about the differences between gays and straights.

"Some people think gays are the ultimate evil. The same people think the devil is the ultimate evil. But they don't think the



Myq Kaplan

devil is gay. Why not? He's horny and he's flaming..."

Also, "You know why gay men don't come out of the closet much? 'Cause that's where all the shoes are."

And he protested discrimination against ugly people.

"Ugly people are discriminated against in our society. Why? They're the majority, and not just by volume."

He apologized for wrecking Conan O'Brien's career, and apologized for offending the children in the audience, and their parents, and everyone else, and generally kept the crowd in stitches until Danjer escorted him off the stage. (More comedy at the Shea on Saturday night!)

Next up was Celtic Heels, who dazzled the audience with a series of reels and jigs to traditional and contemporary Irish music. The age range of the dancers seemed to be from about 6 to 16, and they clearly were having a ball. This type of Irish dance is performed with arms at the dancers' sides a fair amount of the time, and light jumps and kicks accompany the jaunty tunes. It gives the effect of a ring of sprightly spring ponies playing together and weaving intricate knots of joy. It's mind-boggling to imagine how these youngsters remember the vast variety of toe steps, changes, and dances – there were seven in all – and it was enchanting how their faces shone with delight all the while.

At intermission, coffee and platters of giant chocolate chip cookies were sorely absent, upstaged by packaged goods and bottled drinks. Particularly upsetting was that people chose to bring chip bags into the theater and crumple and crunch their way through the second half of the show. The chip crunchers obliterated much of the lovely monologues presented by Arena Civic Theatre. ACT always brings an extraordinary touch of class and professionalism to the

roles: the bold Keara MacDonald as *The Artful Dodger*, Spencer Hubert as one of Fagin's boys, and the fabulous Emma Henderson, as Oliver.

Henderson will be featured in March as Helen Keller in *The Country Players' The Miracle Worker* – as well as Scout in ACT's *To Kill a Mockingbird* in April. Henderson is "going places," as they say, and everyone should make room in their calendars to see these two upcoming productions and find out what all the fuss is about. This diminutive actress is a dynamo, so be sure you can say "I knew her when..." by treating yourself to more live theater this year at the Shea Theater.

The board of directors at the Shea, with Suzanne Davis as chair, is an all-volunteer crew whose dedication and hard work shone on Sunday, with freshly painted interior walls and a standing room only crowd turning out to applaud their efforts. Everyone involved in Sunday's event should be congratulated. It was a great way to spend a wintery afternoon, and a great cause to be supported.

The historic Shea Theater is located at 71 Avenue A in Turners Falls, and the lineup of shows coming up this year is vast and various. For information on upcoming events and ticket reservations, log on to www.theshea.org, or call the Shea Theater at (413) 863-2281. Enjoy the show, every one!

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JESSICA HARMON ILLUSTRATION

THE HEALTHY GEEZER:

Three Questions about: Gout, Glaucoma and Memory Loss

BY FRED CICETTI

LEONIA, NJ – Q I'm having some memory lapses and I'm worried about Alzheimer's. What should I do?

If you're having some memory lapses, go to the doctor with a positive attitude. The fact is that many different medical conditions may cause Alzheimer's-like symptoms. You could be suffering from the effects of a high fever, dehydration, poor nutrition, reactions to medicines, thyroid problems, or a minor head injury.

And then there are those pesky emotions. Feeling sad, lonely, worried, or bored can affect people facing retirement or coping with the death of a loved one. Adapting to change can make you forgetful.

There are benefits to an early diagnosis of Alzheimer's. Knowing early helps patients and

their families plan for the future. It gives them time to discuss care while the patient can still participate in decisions. Early diagnosis also offers the best chance to treat the symptoms of the disease.

Q. I heard that gout is a form of arthritis. Is this true?

Osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and gout are the three most common forms of arthritis among seniors.

You get osteoarthritis when cartilage – the cushioning tissue within the joints – wears down, producing stiffness and pain. Rheumatoid arthritis, characterized by inflammation of the joint lining, occurs when the immune system turns against the body.

Stress, alcohol, drugs or an illness can trigger gout. It's caused by a build-up of crystals of uric acid in a joint. Uric acid is in all human tissue and in some foods.

Often, gout affects joints in the lower part of the body such as the ankles, heels, knees, and especially the big toes. The disease is more common in men.

Early attacks usually subside within three to ten days, even without treatment, and the next

attack may not occur for months or even years. Most people with gout are able to control their symptoms with medication.

Q. Who is most likely to get glaucoma?

Those at highest risk are African-Americans, everyone over age 60, and people with a family history of glaucoma.

Glaucoma is defined as a group of diseases that can damage the eye's optic nerve, which carries images from the eye to the brain. Here's how glaucoma works:

A clear fluid flows through a small space at the front of the eye called the "anterior chamber." If you have glaucoma, the fluid drains too slowly out of the eye, and pressure builds up. This pressure may damage the optic nerve.

However, increased eye pressure doesn't necessarily mean you have glaucoma. It means you are at risk for glaucoma. A person has glaucoma only if the optic nerve is damaged.

The most common treatments for glaucoma are medication and surgery. Medications for glaucoma may come in eye drops or pills. For most people with glau-

coma, regular use of medications will control the increased fluid pressure.

Laser surgery is another treatment for glaucoma. The laser is focused on the part of the anterior chamber where the fluid leaves the eye. This makes it easier for fluid to exit the eye. Over time, the effect of this surgery

may wear off. Patients who have laser surgery may need to keep taking glaucoma drugs.

Studies have shown that the early detection and treatment of glaucoma is the best way to control the disease. So, have your eyes examined thoroughly and regularly if you are in a high-risk category. And that includes all of us geezers.

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

Brick House Program offers Youth Training and Workshops for Green Jobs and Community-Based Businesses

The Brick House is partnering with Co-op Power to provide "green jobs" training to youth in Montague. This training will include energy efficiency work and solar hot water installations and will make a few area homes a little greener!

Trainees will not only learn the mechanics of solar hot water, plumbing and electrical systems and how to air seal and insulate homes, but also the life skills necessary to gain and keep employment in the growing "green" job market.

Sign up now by calling the Brick House at (413) 863-9559 or emailing jlibby@brickhousecommunity.org. The training will take place on Fridays from 9:00 a.m.

to 2:30 p.m., starting February 19th. The Brick House and Co-op Power will also facilitate four three-hour sessions about what it takes to start "green" community-based businesses and plug into the "green" economy. All are welcome to attend, and we particularly hope to support Montague residents with an interest in "green" business employment or ownership.

Participants will benefit from these free sessions regardless of experience. The workshops will meet on the second Tuesday of the month, 6:00 to 9:00 p.m., February 9th, March 9th, April 13th and May 11th.

For more information on this program call Prakash Laufer at the Brick House at (413) 863-9576 or email plaufer@brickhousecommunity.org.

CAUCUS from pg 11

that are feasible," to improve education in Franklin County.

Decker said, "Small ideas are welcome, too."

Anyone wishing to contribute ideas that could be helpful to improving education in Franklin County may do so at: fcsc@necnetworks.com.

The caucus also briefly discussed a possible "hand-off" of responsibility to the caucus of the

third phase of the Franklin County Public Education Project (FCPEP), which had been facilitated by GCC president Bob Pura and Linda Dunlevy, of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, with funding and participation from local legislators. The goals of the project were to find increased efficiencies and collaborations in order to channel scarce resources to improving education in Franklin County.

"The legislators who worked with Bob Pura and Linda Dunlevy to pull together the first two phases of the project accomplished a number of really useful things," said DeWitt. "A lot of their research and findings have been implemented."

DeWitt said Dunlevy sent around a letter last summer to public officials in the county asking if they would like the project to continue to a third phase, and the FCSCC responded affirmatively and said the caucus was interested in taking leadership in the project. "We have an agreement in principle to do that," DeWitt said. "We are trying to advocate for school committee members and their leadership in the domain of education."

"I was one of the school committee members who criticized the project for not including a broad representation of school committee members to begin with," said DeWitt, who noted the caucus came into being as a response to the threat of forced regionalization that was talked about during the early meetings of the FCPEP.

"We were spurred into action by the project, but we quickly found out we wanted to find and establish what we stood for, rather than to simply say we are against any form of forced regionalization. It's a natural progression."





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Gill-Montague Regional School Committee Openings

Nomination papers for school committee seats are now available at the Gill-Montague Regional School Superintendent's office, 35 Crocker Avenue, Turners Falls. Completed nomination papers are due in the superintendent's office by 4:00 p.m. on March 29th. Please note that all papers must be picked up and returned

to the superintendent's office and not the town clerks's office.

The Gill and Montague town elections will be held on May 17th, 2010. There is one 3-year Gill school committee seat up for election, and two 3-year Montague school committee seats. For more information or questions please contact Robin Hamlett at (413) 863-9324.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LEVERETT POLICE LOG

Vehicles In Trouble

Thursday, 1/28

12:20 p.m. Motor vehicle accident on Dudleyville Road. Vehicle slid off the road over a bank into a tree, during snowy conditions. Vehicle towed, minor damage, no injuries.

injuries.

5:45 p.m. Vehicle off road, with no damage. Operator cited for unlicensed operation.

6:25 p.m. Steering system failed on a disabled motor vehicle, towed to owner's house.

10:00 p.m. Alarms ringing at Shutesbury Elementary School, due to high winds, no sign of entry.

Sunday, 1/31 Damaged motor vehicle at logging site on Cave Hill Road. Owner located, accident the previous night from black ice, skidded off the road and struck a tree. Vehicle towed.



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300th Series



300th Combat Engineer Battalion repairing the under piling of a bridge destroyed by enemy fire along the Carentan - Cherbourg Road in France - June 30, 1944.

BRAD PETERS & JAN ROSS ERVING - As we follow the 300th Combat Engineer Battalion on their march to VE Day, 65 years ago, their role in the Battle of the Bulge is recalled by Floyd Wright, then a 2nd Lt. with the 51st Engineers.

"When I rejoined the platoon at the near shore bridge abutment, a lieutenant from the 300th Engineers claimed he had orders to relieve my platoon in that area. I said I would have to receive the

Battle of the Bulge

orders from the battalion. He was going there to order bridge materials so he invited me to follow him."

Marche was about a 15-minute drive in daylight. For the 300th, Lt. Gene Falvey was in a jeep with his driver, Cpl. Willie McGowan and radio operator Roy Sweet in the back seat.

"With Johnston driving and PFC Jordan in the rear of the jeep, I set off for Marche. The 300th jeep led the way, sometimes reaching speeds of 50 to 60 mph. I wanted my driver to pass the 300th jeep because I doubted the lieutenant knew the location of the 51st Headquarters. After two attempts, it was plain that it was too risky. I fell in behind him.

"The two jeeps were soon out of town and into farm country when a German armored vehicle approached from around a curve in the road. It immediately opened fire with machine guns at a range of about 200 feet. It may have been part of the 2nd Panzer Division, which was nine miles

northwest of Rochefort that night. Enemy fire hit the 300th jeep, and it stopped in the middle of the road.

"Johnston turned our jeep into a ditch beside the road. As it hit the ditch the horn started blowing. I dove into the ditch, while Johnston and Jordan raced to a nearby farm building for cover. The horn on the jeep continued to blow. The Germans stopped firing and backed out of sight around a curve. Evidently they thought there were other elements following and the horn was a signal.

"With the Germans out of sight, I got back into my jeep. As I turned the steering wheel the horn stopped blowing. A bullet had struck the steering wheel shaft and shorted the horn wires. My crew went to the 300th jeep and carried out the wounded lieutenant and his driver. The radio operator in the back of the jeep was dead."

Members of the 300th report a somewhat different version of the same event.

McGowan and Falvey, both wounded, took cover in a ditch until the German fire ended. McGowan, even while wounded, returned to the 300th jeep to recover his map case while under German fire. He was later awarded the Bronze Star for this action in combat.

The "German armored vehicle" was, in fact, an American Sherman tank which had been captured by the Germans. Falvey and McGowan escaped on foot and were later picked up by a jeep from another company. They eventually recovered from their injuries. Radio operator Roy Sweet died instantly in the German attack. His canteen, with his name on it, was found later by a Belgium civilian. It would later be displayed in a small museum in Luxembourg. Sweet is buried at Henri-Chapelle Cemetery in Belgium.

300th Engineer Randy Hanes talks about sledding in Belgium.

"Now, about Michelle and Nicole. The little Belgian village was built on the side of a pretty big hill, with the main road going down to a second-rate highway. They were riding their sled down this fairly steep road down to the



Randy Hanes with a young girl, Michele, sledding in Belgium

cross-country road. The mayor of the town came out and forbade them to ride their sled down to this road.

"He was right, as there were a lot of our military vehicles going by. I told Michelle to get on the sled with me, and we proceeded to sled down the road. The mayor was furious! I said to the mayor,

"You can't tell me what to do."

"When we went back up the hill into town, I told the two girls we would go across the road, into a field or meadow. Roger Bradshaw came with us and we pulled them around in this field. I really enjoyed playing like a civilian."

TOWN OF WENDELL PLANNING BOARD

In accordance with the provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 11, the Wendell Planning Board will hold a public hearing at 8:00 p.m. on February 15, 2010 at the Town Offices, 9 Morse Village Road solely to amend the term of the Auto Repair Services Special Permit granted to Paul and Melissa Newcombe for their facility at 58 Mormon Hollow Road under Articles VI of the Wendell Zoning Bylaws. The Planning Board seeks to amend the term of the special permit from an annual (one year period that can be renewed) to the term of the activity under previously established written permit conditions. A copy of the current permit may be inspected at the Town Offices during Town Coordinator hours, ordinarily Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., phone (978) 544-3395 or at the Wendell Free Library.

Any person interested or wishing to be heard on the amendment should appear at the time and place designated.

TOWN OF WENDELL PLANNING BOARD

In accordance with the provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 11, the Wendell Planning Board will hold a public hearing at 7:30 p.m. on February 15, 2010 at the Town Offices, 9 Morse Village Road solely to amend the term of the Auto Repair Services Special Permit granted to David Arsenaut for Arsenault Towing and Recover Services at 107 Wendell Depot Road, under Articles VI of the Wendell Zoning Bylaws. The Planning Board seeks to amend the term of the special permit from an annual (one year period that can be renewed) to the term of the activity under previously established written permit conditions. A copy of the current permit may be inspected at the Town Offices during Town Coordinator hours, ordinarily Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., phone (978) 544-3395 or at the Wendell Free Library.

Any person interested or wishing to be heard on the amendment should appear at the time and place designated.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



JACK COUGHLIN ILLUSTRATION

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4th
At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Falltown String Band* with Hilary Graves, 7:30 p.m. no cover.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5th
NMH World Music Concert, a night of jazz, acoustic guitar, and world music at 8 p.m. at the Raymond Concert Hall in Northfield Mount Hermon's Rhodes Art Center. NMH music department and the NMH World Music Combo and Percussion ensemble showcasing the talents of the world combo members. Special guests *The John Mason Acoustic Guitar Trio* and the *Hampshire Regional High School Jazz Ensemble*. Admission is free; the NMH Haiti Relief Fund will be accepting voluntary donations. Info: Rachael Hanley, (413) 498-3357.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Samantha Farrell*. Sam's back in town! You have to hear her to believe it! 9 to 11 p.m.

The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *High Country, Low Fi* with Jeffrey Foucault and friends, 9 p.m. \$5 cover.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6th
Opening for Local Artist Group Show at the Gallery at Hallmark, 85 Avenue A, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Starbux Studio Rentparty featuring Joshua Burkett solo, RICEensemble, new video works by Cloaca, Half-lifers & more. Interactive sound by Lindsey French, with works by Stash White, Paul Root, Fafnir Adamites, & new studio-mate Rachel Garceau! Sliding scale admission. Our building is next to Burrito Rojo, in the alley behind /next to Seth & Eva's, 6 to 10 p.m.

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Irish music trio *Spencil Hill* at the Great Falls Coffeehouse on Friday, February 12th, 7 p.m.

Kids Movie Night at the Wendell Library Cinema: *Time Bandits*. Rated PG, 6:30 p.m. BYO popcorn, free. Eleven-year-old Kevin's adventures plunge him head-first into history, myths and legends. As he travels through an alternate reality, Kevin meets a number of famous heroes. This 1981 children's classic is a visual extravaganza that reminds us that those heroes are not always all they are cracked up to be.

Comedy at the Shea, with Jimmy Dunn, Stacey Yannetty, Dan Gill at The Shea Theater, Turners Falls. Showtime 8 p.m., doors open at 7 p.m. Tickets \$15 in advance (\$16 at the door). Beer and wine served in the lobby before the show.

Benefit for Haiti earthquake victims/Doctors without Borders at the Shutesbury Athletic Club: *Charismatic Megafauna*, 2009 winner of the Amherst High School Battle of the Bands, featuring Wendell-born Teryn Citino, and multi-dimensional local heroes *Bad Band*, 7 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *A Ghost Quartet*. Jazzy Blues with a taste of fist fight swing! 9 to 11 p.m.

The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Robot Unicorn*: DJs Greg 2000 and Amazing Love. Free. 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7th
Neighbor By Neighbor: Mobilizing an Invisible Community in Lewiston, Maine. This inspiring documentary follows low-income downtown residents as they organize to defeat an urban renewal scheme that would displace them, and in turn develop their own shared vision for their neighborhood. Discussion w/ filmmaker Craig Saddlemyre to follow. Refreshments. At The Brick House, Turners Falls, 1 p.m. screening.

Dead of Winter Film Series at the Montague Book Mill, Montague Center: *Midnight* (1939). Written by Billy Wilder

and Charles Brackett, directed by Mitchell Liesen. Claudette Colbert broke and stranded in Paris in a gold lamé evening gown. Of course. 7 p.m.

Birds of Prey Open House at the Greenfield Center School. Nationally known raptor rehabilitator Tom Ricardi brings several magnificent birds of prey to the school with a program at 1 p.m. After the program, from 2 to 4 p.m. bird-related activities, projects and explorations for students of all ages. www.centerschool.net.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Joe Laur on Guitar*, 8 to 10 p.m.

The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Talon of the Blackwater* 8 p.m. No cover.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8th
The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Slope Poetry*: Black Helicopter Review all-stars 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10th
Pajama Story Time! at the Wendell Free Library, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Wear your PJ's and come listen and participate with Paul and Jennifer as they read stories, sing songs and tell tales for children of many ages. Jennifer Swender and Paul Dubois Jacobs dramatic story reading is sure to engage and delight all who attend. Paul and Jennifer live in Shutesbury with their two young children and enjoy performing with children and adults. Free.



Soul and blues musician *Dave Keller* at the Route 63 Roadhouse. Saturday, Feb. 13th, 9:30 p.m.

Faces and Places Gallery, 26 Bridge St, Millers Falls. Poetry reading 7 to 9 p.m. Present gallery show includes paintings, photo's and other works of art. (413) 423-3203.

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 Graulty* 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.

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

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 60's. 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.

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.

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.

The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Ben and Ansel Have a Valentine's/anti-Valentine's Party* (with records and stuff) 9 p.m. Free.

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.

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. 863-9576.

ONGOING
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.

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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.
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3. THE LOVELY BONES PG13 FRI, SAT, SUN 12 3 DAILY 7 9:30
4. TOOTH FAIRY PG DAILY 6:40 9:20 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15
5. UP IN THE AIR DAILY 6:40 9:20 R FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15
6. DEAR JOHN PG13 in DTS sound DAILY 6:30 9:30 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30
7. FROM PARIS WITH LOVE R FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30 in DTS sound DAILY 6:30 9:00 No Sun Evening Shows
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West Along the River

Snow Falling on Cedar Waxwings

BY DAVID BRULE

ERVINGSIDE – On into February!

The calendar has finally turned a page and we are rid of that interminable month of January.

Mind you, January can be fine, a month of birthdays, anniversaries, new hopes and of course Robbie Burns feasts, but most of us are glad to see it gone.

Things have seemed to be a mess out there, what with stories of the leaking nuclear plant just up river, the earthquake in Haiti, the biomass plant proposed to look over our downtown, exploding toilets, undependable weather, and confused voters who forgot to elect a Democrat to fill the seat of the Lion of the Senate.

There's even been a survey published that says we Americans are no longer No.1 in optimism. The Chinese are more optimistic about the future than we are, and from the looks of things, the survey may be right. Seems like we can't be No.1 in anything these days.

There is solace for sure in nature, however, and once outdoors away from the media, there is some peace of mind to be found. The days are lengthening and our part of the Earth is finding its way back to the sun.

On mornings before it rises above the Valley rim, with temperatures hovering between 0 to 10 degrees, out the door we go for a jolt of that biting New England morning air and black coffee. Porch sitting is still a pastime for a few of us; even in winter; it certainly clears out the left-over cobwebs.

As I sit in an Adirondack chair

pulled up in a corner of the porch near the wood pile, the hungry creatures arriving to break the cold night's fast pay little attention to me. Waves of juncos pour onto the work table covered with seeds, and the feeders were stocked while the coffee was brewing.

Looking like little turnips, gray-blue above and white below, these slate-colored birds have filled the yard this year and unusually so, with their normally numerous cousins the tree sparrows almost totally absent. The jay clan arrives *en masse* as well, shoveling down any manner of nut in the mix they can find.

The jays are brash and blue and 20 strong. Some people may not care for this bird, but he's a winter favorite of mine and as good as any flock of geese in warning everyone of danger.

And danger there is, since the sharp-shinned hawk has been raiding almost daily. Predators have a hard time in this season too, but the open winter has made it easier for them to locate and catch mice and voles, who don't have the security of their winter snow tunnels.

The sharp-shin and its larger cousin the Cooper's are accipiters, bird hawks, and are very perfected hunting machines, capable of navigating through woodlands and trees with laser-guided precision. They knife through the yard, hoping for a meal of a hapless junco or sparrow destined to be eliminated from the gene pool.

One brazen and hungry hawk stood in the snow at the foot of the brush pile, waiting for a sparrow to panic and flee. At other



Cedar Waxwings – by Louis Agassiz Fuertes

times he beats the pile with his wings, trying to flush out a morsel on the wing.

When I stepped out to break the spell, all birds having instinctively frozen in place at the jays' and chickadees' alarm call, the hawk was dismayed at my intrusion, and flew up to a nearby tree. He landed with jaunty pin-point accuracy on a limb from which he could resume his surveillance of the yard, but then gave up and moved on. With peace and security restored, the birds became re-animated, and it's back to the chair on the porch for me.

Shortly after, my sassy summertime friend the Carolina wren zipped across the porch and perched on the tip of my Sorel boot before heading to the woodpile behind me to investigate the various fascinating crevices needing her daily attention. Jays flood the lilac grove again, hopping in the spread of cracked corn, blue against the patchwork of snow and brown earth. A cottontail ventures out to join them.

The rabbit's been missing from its ecological niche here along the Millers for about 20 years, as it has from many regions across the state. They seem to be making a comeback; we'll see how welcome they'll be in garden season!

Down along the river, black ducks flock to the cracked corn spread out on the ice, and their congregation has attracted an adult bald eagle who swings by regularly to check out the possibility of duck on the menu. The massive bird wings upstream through the vapor rising from the rushing river, the first rays warming the air.

It's been a month of harvesting firewood, the beavers having laid down and limbed a dozen trees for me, mostly maple and American hophornbeam. The cooperative relationship is holding up, with them getting what they need from the bark and branches while we are building next year's woodpile.

Fox tracks crisscross the

shoreline and into the woods and yard. The tracks of otter bounding and belly-sliding are also clear after last week's snow squall.

This morning, the light snow fell on a still sleepy flock of cedar waxwings. From time to time they spend the night in the rhododendron at the edge of the garden, as delicate and discreet as the Tao philosophers engraved in a Robert Francis poem. They know their sleek tan and pale yellow bodies blend in with the drooping leaves of this shrub. Their crests and black facial markings resemble the flower buds that will open scarlet in June. Almost 30 have crowded into the bush, and as their breezy call increases, they lift up and blow away in the snowy morning.

By nightfall, the Full Wolf Moon will rise over Dry Hill, helping the hunting foxes with a night so brilliant you could read the *Montague Reporter* by moonlight, indoors or out. The *Farmer's Almanac* tells us Candlemas has come, which brings to mind stories of great-grandmother Lizzie Smith who, true to her childhood days in Scotland, always turned out stacks of wheaten griddle cakes for the occasion in this old house. We'll do the same to bring in this new month.

Out from the frozen marsh, the horned owl's hunting call will boom, telling us the old nest is back in use. Soon there will be eggs and young to feed by early March. The *Almanac* announces that raccoons are mating, and so there's your proof that hope springs eternal, starting with the raccoons!

COINS from pg 9

Numismatics at Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia, presented a half dozen scenarios of "The first coins struck in America," including wampum. Just when he firmly established, "This coin was the first," he presented another "first coin" in the Americas.

Coins circulating in colonial America were English, Dutch, Spanish and French to name a few, because of extensive foreign trade. The variety of coins result-

ed in a fair amount of confusion and uncertainty as to a coin's value. Adding to the confusion was the practice of clipping coins to make change.

Clipping reduced the amount of precious metal making up the coin. Coins were also cut in pieces to make change. Since early coins had plain edges and some were rectangular or odd shaped, all this clipping and cutting made it even more difficult to ascertain a coin's true value. Then, too, genuine coins, often

alloys of gold, silver, copper and Lord knows what, made counterfeiting coins an attractive proposition, since a coin needed to be assayed to determine its intrinsic value. When paper money began to be issued, the notes warned, "Counterfeit equals death!"

From Massachusetts to Virginia, archaeologists and people using metal detectors still find a variety of old coins originating in distant parts of the world, Goldstein said.

After the presentation, only

those who had not been paying attention left the White Church unconfused.

In the church crowded with white heads, the one person who seemed to have followed the lecture was Rufus Seward, age 7, of Greenfield. He asked questions complete with accurate dates, immediately making clear his extensive knowledge of coins.

Goldstein was so impressed by the precocious coin collector, he's sending him a comprehensive book about coins and col-

lecting.

In case you wondered, American money isn't real money anymore. A paper dollar (silver certificate) can no longer be exchanged for a dollar's worth of silver on demand. Our silver dollars are made of brass, quarters are silver-plated copper, and copper pennies are made of copper-plated zinc. At the rate of inflation, most of these coins may soon be worth about the same as that little yellow hole in the snow. 

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