



**Gill 2nd Graders'**  
*fabulous puppet show*  
 Page 8

LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS

# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 8 - NO. 17 also serving Erving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell 50¢

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

JANUARY 28, 2010



## Turners Falls RiverCulture Receives \$36,000 Mass Cultural Grant

*RiverCulture's annual Block Party draws a large crowd each year to Avenue A*

**BY DAVID DETMOLD** – The Turners Falls RiverCulture project got good news this week when word came the program has received funding for a fifth consecutive year from the Massachusetts Cultural Council's Adams Arts Program. This year, the RiverCulture project asked for \$47,000 and received \$36,000 from MCC, according to coordinator Lisa Davol.

Meri Jenkins, program manager of the Adams Art Program for the MCC, said this was the most competitive year ever for the statewide arts-based economic development initiative. Jenkins said she received 68 proposals and funded 22 statewide, of which the Turners Falls proposal was among the top four.

Davol said she would need to raise about \$36,000 locally to match the MCC grant and another \$16,000 to meet budgeted

expenses; the town of Montague has committed \$15,000 in program income funding toward the project for 2010.

In the coming year, Davol said RiverCulture and its partner organizations would create a calendar of programming on themes such as 'fish,' during the spring months when the fish ladder is open, and 'footprints,' in the summer months, when a fossil roadshow (similar to the Antiques Roadshow) will be held at the Discovery Center in collaboration with Fossil Fuel for the Valley partnership. 'Confluence' is the third theme in the fall, when a juried fine art show of Franklin County artists, judged by the director of the APE Gallery in Northampton and the director of the UMass fine arts gallery, will come to Turners at the Gallery at Hallmark on Avenue A.

Davol said RiverCulture will

continue to support its regular programming, such as concerts in Peskeomskut Park, put on in partnership with the Brick House, and the annual downtown block party, which will once again feature a recycled fashion show to complement the Fashion Windows display on the Avenue.

Also new this year will be a focus on bird watching with a focus on the Migratory Way Canal and a producers series to bring performance-based, interactive art installations to reinterpret areas of downtown.

"We are very excited to be a part of this creative partnership working together to build a healthy and vibrant community. We are also grateful for the efforts of senator Stan Rosenberg and representative Stephen Kulik, for their efforts in making programs like the Adams Art Program possible," Davol said.

## Energy Stretch Code Explained

**BY CHRIS MASON**

**GREENFIELD** – On Thursday evening, January 21st, at the Hampton Inn in Greenfield, a panel of building professionals presented information and fielded questions about the new, optional 'stretch' energy efficiency building code available to Massachusetts cities and towns.

Over 30 area building inspectors, builders, energy committee members, selectboard members, and interested residents raised questions and wrestled with the pros and cons of this new option to the building code. The informational meeting, with a panel that included an area builder, two energy engineers, and a representative from the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER), was organized by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) to help local communities understand their choices for incorporating energy efficiency into town building codes.

The 2008 Massachusetts Green Communities Act requires, starting in 2010, that the state building energy code adopt higher levels of energy efficient building techniques in new homes and major renovations. The new building code went into effect on January 1st, 2010.

The legislation also gave rise to a second option for cities and towns, an even tighter energy efficiency code known as the 'stretch code.' Homes built to the stretch code would not only

be built to a higher level of efficiency than those built to the base energy code, but would also be tested to show the builder actually achieved the higher level of efficiency, similar to the current practice of building an Energy Star Home.

To encourage communities to consider adopting the stretch code, communities that meet five specific clean energy related criteria required by the Green Communities Act (with adoption of the stretch code being one of them) will be eligible to apply for state energy grants from a pot of \$10 million annually. The other four criteria include favorable zoning, and expedited permitting, for renewable energy manufacturing, research and development, or generation; establishing a baseline energy use inventory and plan to reduce energy use for municipal buildings; and adopting a policy to purchase energy efficient vehicles where practicable. FRCOG, which is helping many communities plan to meet these five criteria, noticed that for many communities adoption of the stretch code is the least understood component. For this reason, FRCOG organized Thursday evening's informational workshop.

At the stretch code workshop, people posed questions about the cost of building to the stretch code above the standard building code, how the code would be implemented, and whether the testing process would be free

see ENERGY pg 7

## Union 28 Discusses Surprise Amendment to Ed Reform Law

The amendment, filed by Representatives Steve Kulik and Chris Donelan, allows any town within a school superintendency union to leave the union by a simple majority vote of that town's school committee. The amendment includes no provision for consultation with other member towns or the timing of withdrawal.

**BY KATIE NOLAN SHUTESBURY** – The Erving School Union 28 joint supervisory committee debated the impact of an amendment to the Education Reform law of 2010 at its monthly meeting on January 26th.

Earlier this month, the state legislature amended section 6 of the law to allow any town in a superintendency union (SU) to withdraw from the school union by a simple majority vote of the town's school committee.

The last minute amendment was filed by representatives Steve Kulik (D-Worthington)

and Chris Donelan (D-Orange).

Representatives from Erving, Leverett, New Salem, Shutesbury, and Wendell discussed the amendment and other Union 28 business in a meeting that ran until 11:15 p.m.

Michael DeChiara, Shutesbury school committee chair, said he had asked Kulik to include the amendment in the Ed Reform law of 2010 because the existing legislation governing superintendency unions did not spell out a clear provision for a town to leave an SU except by dissolving the see REFORM pg 12

## Radar Results May Indicate Colonial, not Native Burials

**BY DAVID DETMOLD**

**GILL** – Like a scene from a science fiction movie, Doria Kutrubes focused her projector on a weird circular formation about three and half feet below the surface of the soil, just beyond the western edge of Main Road, across from the town cemetery. Was it a circle? Or was it an X-shape?

Highlighted in glowing reds and oranges, the image appeared to grow and fade as the ground penetrating radar images probed deeper into the soil of the Mariamante parcel. Crop Circles? X Files? Or the elusive traces of an aboriginal "spokes burial"

site, recorded in George Sheldon's *History of Deerfield* 115 years ago?

As the lights came up and the projected images faded on the screen at the Gill town hall, nothing was certain. Kutrubes, the president and senior geophysicist of Radar Solutions International of Waltham, had succeeded only in deepening the mystery about what may lie beneath the surface of the 10-acre parcel at the corner of Main and West Gill Roads.

Regional Native American tribes believe the Mariamante parcel may be the site where the unusual spokes burial of

historical record may have been located. At their request, Kutrubes came to Gill last October to conduct an exhaustive survey of the site, working with dozens of local volunteers to walk the land with magnetometers and sensitive ground-penetrating radar devices that provided images of the subsurface to a depth of 12 feet.

Representatives from the Wampanoag Tribe of Gayhead (Aquinnah), Mashpee Wampanoag, and Narragansett Indian tribes were present in the town hall on Tuesday evening to watch Kutrubes' presentation, along with town offi-

see RADAR pg 9

**PET OF THE WEEK**  
Crawl Space?



**Crawl**

My name is Crawl and I'm a seven-year-old male, declawed, super sweet, love bug cat in need of a good home. You will find I am a deeply affectionate cat. Since I am declawed I will need to be an indoors only cat, preferably in a home without small children. For more information on adopting me, please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at (413) 548-9898 or via email: [info@dpvhs.org](mailto:info@dpvhs.org).

**LEVERETT LIBRARY NEWS**

**Valentine Story Hour**

The Leverett Library will host a Pajama Night Story Hour on Thursday, February 11th at 7:00 pm with Georgie Schmid. In addition to listening to stories about Valentine's Day, we will make Valentines for the people we love.

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

**Grade 6**

Nevan Shattuck

**Grade 7**

Josie Miller

Alex Carlisle

**Grade 8**

Ashleigh Lovett

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**WENDELL LIBRARY NEWS**

**Movie Night**

The movie *Food, Inc.* will be shown at the Wendell Free Library on Friday, January 29th, at 7 p.m., presented by the Wendell Agricultural Commission.

All are invited to come watch this documentary film that reveals disturbing truths about our country's food supply.

Following the showing, there will be a short discussion and related books will be featured. There is no charge, and refreshments will be served. For more information, please call Linda Hickman at (978) 544-8604.

**CARNEGIE LIBRARY NEWS**

**Valentines Day Party**

BY LINDA HICKMAN  
TURNERS FALLS – There will be a Valentines party at the Carnegie Library on Saturday, February 6th, starting at 10:30 a.m. Children of all ages and their families will make fun Valentine-inspired crafts, cards, and heart themed projects with Ruth O'Mara and Linda Hickman. This is a free program and the craft materials will be provided. Refreshments will be served. For more information, contact the library, 201 Avenue A, Turners Falls, 863-3214.

**ERVING LIBRARY NEWS**

**Book Discussion and Craft Evening**

During the month of February, pick up a copy of *Julie & Julia*, so you can join the 'Tale for Ten Towns' experience! Book discussions will be held throughout Franklin County from February 22nd through March 20th. Erving's *Julie & Julia* discussion and cooking demonstration with Carol Gregory will be held March 14th from 4 to 6 p.m. Copies of the book and the DVD can be reserved. We will hold

the book for you at the desk. Call (413) 423-3348.

On February 8th, 6 to 8 p.m. the library will feature: Paper Pleasures with Luc Bodin, 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. Bring a scissors and a hanger. All other materials are provided.

**Ten Towns to Read One Book**

BY DAVID DETMOLD  
FRANKLIN COUNTY – Over the next two months, readers in Deerfield, Erving, Greenfield, Montague, New Salem, Northfield, Shutesbury, Sunderland, Wendell and Whately will all be reading the same book, encouraged by their public libraries and a smorgasbord of special program centered around Julie Powell's hit novel, *Julie & Julia*.

The Tale for Ten Towns program begins February 22nd and winds up on March 20th, with a rich and appetizing menu of

book discussions, learned presentations, and even a chocolate cake baking contest on Monday, March 15th at 6:30 p.m. at the Deerfield town hall!

Reading provokes us to think about ourselves, our environment and our relationships, according to the libraries' joint press release (go to [talefortentowns.wordpress.com/events-by-town](http://talefortentowns.wordpress.com/events-by-town) for a complete rundown). And in this case, it may even inspire a resurgence of local interest in French cuisine.

The book *Julie & Julia*, like the movie of the same name, is



DETMOLD PHOTO

**Seth & Eva's to Close**

BY DAVID DETMOLD

TURNERS FALLS – "It was a business decision," said Seth Licata, who with his wife Eva has operated Seth & Eva's at 115 Avenue A for the last three years. By the end of February, the store will close its doors for good.

"The store was supporting itself, but we weren't making a living," said Licata, matter of factly. "We're bummed for the town, but we're happy for our family."

The Licatas' entrepreneurial spirit, which first prompted them

to open Seth & Eva's as a consignment store with an emphasis on local arts and crafts, then to add a back room clothing boutique, then to grow the store into a guitar and amplifier shop that nourished the local music scene in Turners Falls, has still not exhausted itself. Seth Licata said the couple plan to start a silk screen t-shirt shop out of their garage on Third Street, and they have already purchased the equipment needed to get that enterprise going this spring.

Seth & Evas will feature rock bottom discounts on all inventory for the coming month. "Cheaper than you can buy guitars on the internet," Licata promised.

"We thank all our supporters and customers over the years."

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**SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES – Feb 1st to Feb 5th**

**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 8th at the Gill Town Hall has been postponed. The Friday afternoon Writing Group is continuing and has room for new participants.

Feel free to call the senior center for information on any programs.

- Monday, February 1st**  
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics  
10:45 a.m. Easy Aerobics  
1:00 p.m. Knitting Circle  
**Tuesday, February 2nd**  
9:00 a.m. Walking Group  
10:00 a.m. Brown Bag, No Yoga  
12:45 p.m. COA Meeting  
1:00 p.m. Canasta  
**Wednesday, February 3rd**  
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics  
1:00 p.m. Bingo  
**Thursday, February 4th**  
10:00 a.m. Tai Chi  
1:00 p.m. Pitch  
**Friday, February 5th**  
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics  
10:45 a.m. Easy Aerobics  
1:00 p.m. Scrabble

1:00 p.m. Writing Group

**ERVING Senior Center**, 18 Pleasant St., Erving (Old Center School, 1st Floor), is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for activities and congregat 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.

- Monday, February 1st**  
9:00 a.m. Exercise  
1200 p.m. Pitch  
**Tuesday, February 2nd**  
9:00 a.m. Aerobics  
10:30 a.m. Brown Bag  
12:30 p.m. Painting  
**Wednesday, February 3rd**  
8:45 a.m. Line Dancing  
10:00 to 11:00 a.m. Blood Pressure Clinic  
12:00 p.m. Bingo

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**Thursday, February 4th**  
8:30 to 10:00 a.m. Foot Clinic, \$4 for Erving residents, \$8 for non-residents.  
8:45 a.m. Aerobics  
**Friday, February 5th**  
9:00 a.m. Bowling  
11:30 a.m. Lunch – Pizza

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

The Wendell COAs regular monthly Blood Pressure and Body Mass Index and Foot Care Screening will be held on Wednesday, February 3rd, 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. at the Senior Center. Call the Center if you need a ride.

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# 2010 Annual Montague Town Census and 2010 Federal Census

**BY DEB BOURBEAU** – Montague residents: did you get your annual census and street list form? Montague's 2010 annual town census and street list forms were mailed out January 23rd.

The board of registrars is required by statute to verify and update the name, address, age and occupation of all residents. Census responses are used as proof of residency to protect voter rights, veterans' bonuses, to assist the council on aging with service projections and to assist the school district with enrollment information and projections. Population figures are also used by the state in calculating state and federal aid monies to the town.

Census data is also used to compile the annual street list. The street list is made available to the police, fire and emergency medical technicians to aid in the daily performance of their duties as well as other municipal departments. Census information about children under the age of 17 is not made available to the public. Birthdates of residents

are not published due to the threat of identity theft.

If you are a registered voter and do not respond to the census, the board of registrars is required by law to move you to the inactive voter list, and you risk being removed from the voter registration rolls. Please help us make the annual town census as complete and accurate as possible. If you did not receive a form, call the town clerk's office at (413) 863-3200, ext. 203 and we will send out a blank form. Please fill in all the information for all the residents of the household and mail the completed form to the town clerk's office at 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376.

Do not confuse Montague's street list and census forms with the 2010 federal census. The federal census takes place every ten years, according to the Constitution. For this census, questionnaires will be mailed to every household in the United States between February and March of this year. The data collected during the federal census determines the federal funding

for our state and community and determines the number of representatives in Congress for Massachusetts. Right now, Massachusetts has ten U.S. representatives, so it is crucial that every Massachusetts resident is counted so that number does not decrease. All information obtained by the federal census is confidential and protected by federal law. A second mailing will be mailed if there is no response from the first questionnaire. If there is no response from the second mailing, the household will receive a call or a visit from a federal census worker.

Please take the time to fill out both the federal census and the annual town census. It takes less than ten minutes to fill out and it gives our state and community the federal funding and the local programs it needs.

*Deb Bourbeau is the town clerk of Montague. The same basic information applies to all towns in our coverage area; for specific information, call your town clerk.*



MarKamusic: Freddy, Ahmed and Jaime

**TURNERS FALLS** – Ristorante Dipaolo will present a benefit concert with the band MarKamusic to raise funds for Haitian relief. The concert will take place at St. Kaziemerz Hall, 197 Avenue A, in Turners Falls on Monday, February 1st, from 5 to 8 p.m.

MarKamusic, a danceable Latin music band deeply rooted in folkloric, popular and traditional genres will play Latin, South American and Caribbean music for the event. Chef Hilton Dotin will provide samples of Haitian and Dominican food. Raffles will be held, and more door prizes are being solicited (call 863-4441 if you

have a door prize to donate). Tropical cocktails will be for sale. Suggested donation: \$30 per person.

Proceeds will go to UNICEF and Partners in Health for Haiti Relief.

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### NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

## Sewer Relining Hits a Snag; Sewer Disaster Forces Ervingside Family from Home

**BY BILL FRANKLIN**  
**ERVING** – National Water Main, the subcontractor hired by Tighe and Bond to line parts of the sewer system in Erving Center, is demanding to be relieved of all future legal responsibility arising from their work.

According to town administrator Tom Sharp, the company stated, "We're not coming back until you absolve us of responsibility."

The Erving selectboard met Monday evening to discuss this and other matters, including the proposed budget for the 2011 fiscal year.

In response to the subcontractor's demand, selectboard chair Andy Tessier took a hard line. The issue stems from the narrowness of the pipe the subcontractor was hired to slipline. The pipe is six inches in diameter, the

minimum dimension they can get their robot through.

"They bid the job knowing it [the narrow pipe] was there. What's the problem?" asked Tessier.

The board voted unanimously to, "Tell them to do their job."

This impasse came to light in the wake of a sewer disaster affecting a private home on the other side of town, on Warner Street in Ervingside.

On January 18th, Tim and Sherri Trask's residence was inundated with raw sewage when the town hired Bostley Sanitation to clear a plugged sewer line. The line backed up and exploded through the bathroom fixtures, fouling both floors of their house with the force of a fire hydrant. The damage to their home and personal property was extensive.

Since that time, the Trasks

have been living at a hotel in Greenfield, waiting and wondering whether they will ever be able to occupy their home again. Attempts are being made to clean up the mess, but the Trasks are skeptical they will ever be able to occupy their home again.

The bill just for cleaning their clothing has already come to \$7,800, Sherri Trask said on Wednesday. The Trasks' homeowners' insurance policy does not cover damage caused by sewage.

In addition, the sovereign immunity law of Massachusetts, Chapter 258 limits the amount the state can be liable for to one hundred thousand dollars. Sherri Trask said this law has "left us high and dry," with less than will be needed to restore their home. The law, dating from 1938, is unique to Massachusetts. "A

see **SEWER** page 14

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**Editorial Assistants**  
Hugh Corr  
David Brule  
Michael Jackson

**Circulation**  
Suzette Snow-Cobb  
Janel Nockelby

**Layout & Design**  
Claudia Wells  
Boysen Hodgson  
Katren Hoyden  
Karen Wilkinson  
Suzette Snow-Cobb

**Photography**  
Joe Parzych  
Shawn Woolsey  
Claudia Wells

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## THE WORLD'S GREATEST DEBILITATIVE BODY

As the *Village Voice* put it last week, in the wake of Scott Brown's upset victory in the Massachusetts, Republicans have gained a 41-59 majority in the Senate.

How can a mere 18-vote (19 counting the Veep) plurality for Senate Dems spell legislative gridlock and the end of the year-long pig pile called the Health Reform Bill?

Since the 1850s, senators, who once actually debated legislation before failing to pass it, have employed a parliamentary tactic called the filibuster. The term was coined from a Dutch word for freebooter, a pirate engaged in an unauthorized military excursion in a foreign land. It is with this device that an implacable minority has so hogtied the "World's Greatest Deliberative Body" that no debate has to occur on a bill before the majority runs up the white flag of surrender.

Forty-one Senators merely have to serve notice they intend to talk a bill to death to make the Senate majority leader gavel his members into submission and move on - to something more pressing than providing 52 million Americans access to affordable health care. Something like a joint resolution increasing the size of the public debt.

When was the last time filibustering senators were actually required to put their threat into action and delay legislation the majority deems essential for the public good? The attempt by southern senators to block passage of the 1964 Civil Rights bill - where the obstructionists actually held the floor and talked against the measure for 75 hours - was probably the last notable attempt. Notable for its failure, and for the way it forever tarred its proponents as backward-thinking bigots.

The framers of the U.S. Constitution never anticipated

minority rule. Nowhere in the Constitution will you find a clause requiring the majority of senators to capitulate their agenda at the mere threat of debate from the party "out of power."

Senate majority leader Harry Reid is a former amateur boxer. He needs to fight for what he believes in now, and for the priorities of the people who elected him and his fellow Democrats to office.

The Republicans, bent on obstructing every effort Obama is making to address the ills of this nation, are backing Reid into a corner by threatening to talk about what they stand for. Let them do it.

Since 1986, the proceedings of the Senate are covered live on television. Let the Republicans take the floor and tell Americans why they do not deserve and should not get the same access to health care other industrialized nations of the world have long afforded their citizens. Let them talk themselves blue in the face.

Really, the Senate has nothing better to do.



If you only have nine lives to live, why not live them in Lake Pleasant?

JAN ATAMIAN CATOON

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Biomass Hurts the Pellet Stove Owner

Rhonda Morehouse, director of sales at Pennsylvania Pellets, LLC, reports that biomass generating plants in Pennsylvania are driving up the cost of pellets. Biomass plants compete for the same raw material pellet producers use - logs.

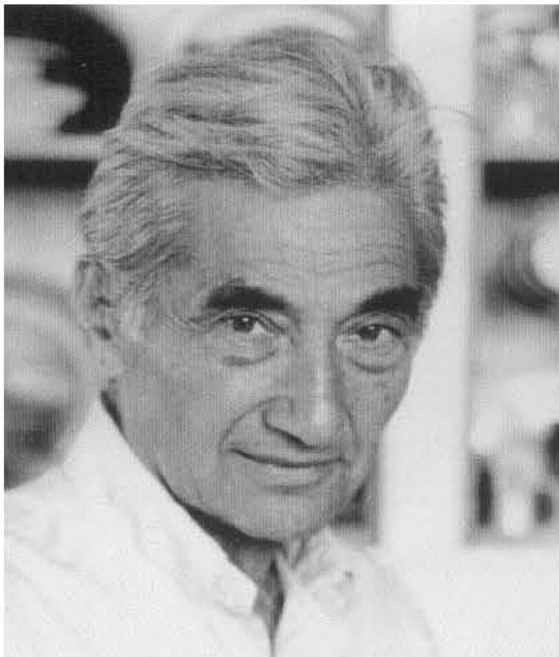
Don't be fooled. Proponents would have you believe that the

biomass plants are fueled with a few branches and twigs gathered by tidying up the forest or using material left over from logging. Not true. According to Morehouse, the same type of logs that produce pellets are what biomass generating plants use. The most important difference is that inefficient biomass

plants burn the chipped logs green. That's not only wasteful but creates a great deal of pollution, while driving up the cost of pellets for the homeowner right here in Franklin County, as well as the rest of the country.

- Joseph A. Parzych  
Gill

## Howard Zinn Dies on the Road at 87



Howard Zinn

Howard Zinn, the People's Historian, died of a heart attack Wednesday in Santa Monica, CA, where he had been scheduled to introduce his new documentary, *The People Speak*, at the Santa Monica Museum of Modern Art next week.

Zinn, professor emeritus of history at Boston University, lived in Auburndale, MA. He is best known for his seminal work *The People's History of the United States*.

Zinn served as bombardier in the Air Force in World War II, but came to the conclusion that the bombing of civilians was morally wrong. He spoke out against war the rest of his life.

He went to college on the GI. Bill, earning a doctorate in history at Columbia, before moving to Atlanta to teach at Spelman, a historically black women's college, and to work in the Civil Rights movement in the South.

Zinn's published an essay just last week in *the Nation* on the first anniversary of the Obama administration, where he called Obama "a mediocre president, which means, in our times, a dangerous

president."

In February, 2003, on the eve of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Zinn came to Moody Auditorium on the Northfield campus of Northfield Mount Hermon to deliver an address to the student body and faculty.

On that occasion, he said, "Saddam Hussein is a tyrant oppressing the Iraqi people. But in the course of this war, we will be killing the victims of the tyrant. There is a kind of irony about that.

"If we want to stop war, if we want to take the great wealth of this society and put it to a higher purpose, we need to create a new social movement to reclaim democracy. Hundreds of thousands of men going off to war. No money for housing, health, or the arts. Forty million people with no health insurance. They're cutting down on free school lunches for kids, saying some of them don't deserve it. Forty to fifty million added to the budget for war, and they're cutting down on money for school lunches. There is something profoundly undemocratic about that.

"This is our job. To take part in some social movement that will make us feel proud, to fulfill the principals of the Declaration of Independence."

Zinn was never afraid to speak truth to power, and to bring the lessons of history to bear on the evils of the present day. He supported the oppressed, and challenged oppressors wherever he found them, most often in the halls of the White House.

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We reached representative Steve Kulik (D-Worthington) last week and asked him to tell us about:

## Highlights of the Ed Reform Bill

Kulik said: "It is important to say at the outset that this bill, 'An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap' is not an omnibus, comprehensive education reform bill. It is more narrowly crafted to address underperforming schools, and the lowest performing school districts.

"The bill increases the possibility of forming Horace Mann in district charter schools, and lifts the cap on charter schools primarily in older urban areas, where they seem to want charter schools. It also allows for in district innovation schools.

"There was a conversation in Gill-Montague not too long ago about the district having a Horace Mann charter school, which is a charter school within the structure of a school district. This bill allows for Horace Mann charter schools with the agreement of teachers and administrators. [The bill allows for ten more Horace Mann schools to be formed outside of Boston, and four more in Boston.]

"So, there are alternatives out there that districts can look at if they want to. And there are some additional resources through the Race to the Top part of the federal stimulus bill, which was the motivating force that pushed the

governor and the legislature to access the \$250 million that would come to Massachusetts from Race to the Top funding. We would have been in a position to receive some but not all of that amount, had we not passed this bill."

*Does the bill reform charter school funding mechanisms?*

"The charter school funding reimbursement of communities for sending students to charter schools has been extended to six years, in a declining ratio. That's up from the current four, and increased to 225% of the sending cost over six years, as opposed to 200% over four.

"Gill-Montague has been categorized as Level 4, underperforming school district so they would be eligible for some of the management issues that are addressed in this bill. [The bill allows a school committee in an underperforming district to reopen a collective bargaining agreement with teachers or staff, bargain in good faith for 30 days, before going to binding arbitration; allows a superintendent to renegotiate a principal's contract, provides for annual evaluation of district progress from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE),

and allows DESE to appoint external advisors to advise and assist superintendents in implementing their turnaround plan after one year, among other things.]

Kulik added: "The Discovery Charter School [a proposed 260 seat K-6 charter school for Franklin County]... one of the real problems is declining student enrolment. I do not believe we should be placing charter schools in areas with declining enrolment like Gill-Montague.

"The focus in this bill in terms of granting new charters is to seek out experienced operators who have been operating charter schools elsewhere. My reading is the Discovery Charter School would not be competitive, but that's still a decision for DESE to make.

"In Level 5 [chronically underperforming] schools, DESE has new power to take over and reorganize districts, outside collective bargaining agreements."

*Does the state categorize schools serving a high percentage of students living in poverty as underperforming regardless of the quality of education being provided by the schools, simply because the populations they serve come to school with more disadvantages than students in wealthier communities?*

"That's a valid point, and a conversation we need to pursue separately. The criteria that cur-

rently labels Gill-Montague a Level 4 district is based on outdated and perhaps no longer relevant numbers. I promised them I would take a serious look at that."

*How did the amendment on leaving school superintendency unions come to be inserted in the bill?*

"During the Franklin County Public Schools study project many issues came up about school governance and affiliation. One of the things that came up is that the statutes are silent on how to withdraw from a superintendency union.

"Union 28 has been around for more than 100 years. The absence of any language about that process came up repeatedly. The Union 28 towns of Leverett and Shutesbury received a planning grant to work with the other towns in the Amherst-Pelham district to look at all the options. It came to my attention from the chair of the Shutesbury school committee [Michael DeChiara].

"We did offer an amendment that a town through the vote of its school committee may withdraw from its school union. The amendment passed in the House, and remained in the bill.

"I know some people in other Union 28 towns are concerned about it. My view is it addresses an oversight in the original legislation. It is included in this bill from the point of view of flexibility and local control.

"There are 17 superintendency unions in Massachusetts comprised of 52 different communities, mostly in Western Mass. They do work well in many circumstances. They provide the shared and collaborative services that really make sense for small towns. But there have been questions. Other memorandums of understanding may operate between union towns, and common debts will not be nullified: they will have to be worked out and negotiated. This amendment allows for an option, not a requirement."

Kulik said the bill also provides that regional transportation aid can not be cut at a greater percentage than Chapter 70 aid to any district in any given year.

*In a follow-up phone call, DeChiara said he did not think the amendment providing for a simple majority vote of a school committee to leave a school superintendency union was: "too easy. Any coalition works much better when there are willing partners. If New Salem wanted to go on its way, and the other four towns said no to that, that is not a better solution. Shutesbury, and myself, indeed have had recent difficulties with Union 28, but you don't change statewide legislation for that. This is a systemic fix that was needed. This creates a route toward local control. At the same time, Shutesbury is truly looking at what we want to do."*

## Leverett Approves Another \$30,000 to Test Wells

**BY BILL FRANKLIN** – A hint of rebellion hung in the air Tuesday evening at the Leverett special town meeting, as a large crowd questioned the wisdom of spending large sums of money to eliminate a threat to private wells that may not exist.

Among the three warrant articles presented to the voters, the issue that raised the most controversy was the motion to appropriate \$30,000 for the ongoing testing of wells near the site of the former town landfill. Modest levels of manganese have been recorded since 2008 in local wells on Teawaddle Hill Road and Cushman Road in the vicinity of the former landfill on Cemetery Road.

The town is under orders from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to conduct two

more rounds of groundwater sampling before July 1st for volatile organic compounds and dissolved metals at monitoring wells on the Duffey property at 7 Cushman Road, and also at residences at 102, 106, 111, 101, and 112 Teawaddle Hill Road, and also at the Kirley residence at the corner of Teawaddle Hill and Cushman Road. The warrant article #3, appropriating the funds, is intended to bring the town into compliance with the DEP directives issued in a letter signed by Daniel Hill, section chief of the Division of Solid Waste Management on December 21st, 2009.

A number of residents, irritated by the cost of testing and what they considered the high-handed methods of the DEP, challenged the wisdom of the testing regime,

even suggesting the town refuse to comply with the DEP directive.

"It's easier for them to ask for more information than to consider other options," said Chuck Dauchy, a board of health engineer. "We might be able to make an argument to use local geologists to challenge the DEP," said Dauchy, who noted Leverett has nearly as many geologists as lawyers.

"Why does it cost thirty thousand dollars?" asked Peter Reich. "I can take my water down and get it [tested] for a hundred and fifty dollars."

Reich went on to question whether there was any appreciable health risk associated with the elevated manganese levels. "Is there any danger to humans?" he asked.

Referring to an article published in the *Hampshire Gazette*, he stated the health risks of manganese have been exaggerated by the media and that the low levels detected at the Leverett wells pose no danger whatsoever. "The article published is wrong as to the danger to humans," Reich asserted. He added, "Ten milligrams per liter is the norm in over fifty percent of all water supplies in the U.S." The manganese levels detected at the Leverett wells are at or below that level.

Acknowledging that the manganese levels are below hazardous levels, selectboard chair Richard Brazeau stated, "There is no public health threat."

Brazeau responded to concerns over the cost of the testing program by explaining the town is under order to test twenty-two wells twice-once in February and

once in June. This, along with the protocols of testing that require, for example, a chain of custody, are adding to the cost. "This is getting real expensive to do," said Brazeau. "Right now were at thirty-three thousand per year for testing. It's consuming my time, but we're doing the best we can to reassure people that their drinking water is safe."

Brazeau said that although the manganese levels in themselves do not pose a danger the sampling has been trending upwards, sometimes steeply so, and therefore the manganese levels may be evidence that, "Something else is going on."

So far the testing has been done downgradient of the landfill, but the DEP also wants test results for wells above the landfill site, as a background survey.

see TEST pg 14

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**NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD**

# No Response on Circulator Pump Problems

**JOSH HEINEMANN** – Selectboard member Dan Keller told the board on Wednesday, January 20th, that he has written to Royal Steam Heater Company of Gardner about the problems that have plagued the circulator pumps in the new town office building and library. Royal Steam Heat has not answered.

Keller followed up by sending the company an email asking for new pumps. That got no response either.

Joe Koehler, the system engineer, thinks the problem might result from over tightening the clamps that hold the motors in place in the new town buildings. Architect Margo Jones has also sent Royal Steam Heat a letter requesting three new pumps for Wendell, because the pumps' failure appears to have resulted from faulty installation.

Finance committee member Jim Slavas has spent countless uncompensated hours repairing the pumps.

Aldrich reported that Whittier Plumbing provided a bid of \$4,661 to install one double walled oil tank to supply the two furnaces at the town hall. Orange Oil has not yet responded to the town's request for a bid on either one or two heating oil tanks.

Wendell's newly insulated town hall is getting more use this winter than it has in years. As the January 20th meeting opened, Donna Horn came to the selectboard on behalf of Shay Cooper and rented the hall for 3:30 p.m. on February 14th, to hold a yoga class.

The evening before,

Saturday, February 13th, there will be a contra dance, and after the yoga class, the Wendell Community Chorus will use the town hall for practice from 6:30 until 8:00 p.m.

Selectboard member Dan Keller said it was good use of heat, to bring the hall up to temperature once for several events in a row.

Town coordinator Nancy Aldrich said the town received a check for \$6569.67 from the Renewable Energy Trust (RET) for use in renewable energy projects or community outreach on renewables. Librarian Rose Heidkamp has looked at adding more photovoltaic panels to the library roof, but the cost is high even with the RET check as seed money for other donations, and the payback too long. Heidkamp is thinking of using the money for outreach instead.

The check represents the balance of Wendell's account, granted for citizens' participation in the Greener Watts program. Those who signed up pay an additional 2% on their electric bill to promote electric generation from renewable sources.

Nomination forms for Unsung Heroines are available at the selectboard office. Nominations can be sent to the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women by mail, fax or email. Forms need to arrive by Friday, February 26th.

Ken Holmberg is moving out of town and resigning from the board of assessors. Rebekah Patnode submitted a letter

of resignation from the open space committee because she is moving out of state.

Aldrich reported that Laurie Didonato of the town energy task force estimates \$195 would be needed for materials to make "winserts" for the town hall windows. The work to construct the custom interior storms can be performed by competent carpenters as volunteers. Keller thought the town hall maintenance account had enough money to pay for materials.

Selectboard member Jeffrey Pooser said the internet signal from the antenna mounted on the police station is not as strong as expected. The broadband committee is looking for other places in the center of town where the signal might be stronger. The town hall is taller than the police station, and so is the Meetinghouse, but the Historic Commission might object to an antenna being mounted at either of those buildings. The new town office building might provide a good location. The antenna needs a clear view of Mount Grace to work properly.

The United States Census Bureau is looking for workers for the 2010 census, and will be giving tests at the Wendell town offices on Thursdays, January 21st and 28th, February 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th. Tests will be given from 1:30 to 2:00 p.m. with someone on hand from 1:00 p.m. to answer questions.

The board of assessors, Todd Soucie, Ken Holmberg, and Tom Mangan, met the select-

see WENDELL pg 10

**NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD**

# Michael Longo Welcomed Aboard

**BY BILL DRAKE** – The Montague selectboard welcomed Michael Longo as the new manager of the Turners Falls Airport.

"Being up at the airport, and seeing the planes, and talking to the pilots; it gets me more and more excited," said Longo.

Longo's recent hiring completes a candidate search which began in September of last year to fill the vacancy left with the resignation of airport manager Michael Sweeney.

Since Sweeney's resignation, Peter Golrick, chair, and the rest of the Turners Falls airport commission ran the airport's day-to-day operations. In addition, Golrick and the other commissioners oversaw work by E.T. & L. of Dedham, MA, the contractor handling the recent \$5 million reconstruction of the airport runway. New runway end identifier lights completed the airport renovations.

"The position," of airport manager, Longo told the board, "presents pretty interesting challenges, and I'm sure there will be equal rewards."

Longo hopes to work with the commission to move the airport towards self-sustainability. He said he will look towards other regional airport managers for ways to make the Turners Falls Airport more community friendly.

A dispute over sacred Indian stones on a nearby hill sullied the airport's image during expansion of the runway in 2007. In January 2009, the sacred ceremonial hill became the first stone landscape in the eastern United States to become eligible for the

National Register of Historic Places on the grounds of its cultural and historical importance.

**New Website**

Town administrator Frank Abbondanzio requested a \$3345 reserve fund transfer to the website maintenance fund to update the municipal website from the old hosting service, eclecTechs of Westfield, to Virtual Town Hall, of Maynard, MA.

"The hope," Abbondanzio said, "is to make the website more user-friendly."

"Updating the current website is very cumbersome and time consuming for the two people who can update it," said Barbara Miller, director of assessing for the town of Montague. "The payments and calendar functions are still not working." Currently, eclecTechs hosts the Town website, but according to Miller, the company is "looking to retire the server."

The requested \$3345 would go towards the initial, upfront cost of creating a new town of Montague website. In addition to upfront costs, the maintenance fee for the town website would increase from \$1175 to \$2750, annually. There was some reluctance to vote on the transfer request, but Abbondanzio stated the need was "very time sensitive," because the calendar and payment functions are not working.

The selectboard approved the transfer, but not unanimously. Mark Fairbrother voted nay.

"[A new website] is probably the way to go," said Fairbrother, "but

there are a lot of questions and I want to know what we're getting here. Specifics; because [the reserve fund transfer request] is being thrown at us here."

Before final approval, the finance committee must examine the request on Wednesday. Local municipalities such as Greenfield, Deerfield, and Orange along with over 200 other municipalities primarily in New England use Virtual Town Hall.

**Utility Pole Tax**

The selectboard also voted to support a cooperative appraisal by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments for public utility tax revenues.

"There's no commitment here," said Abbondanzio, "and that's the key."

The Special Commission on Municipal Relief, chaired by senator Stanley Rosenberg, highlighted a possible new source of municipal income with the March 2008 Appellate Tax Board ruling on a case against Verizon New England, Inc., which found that Verizon is responsible for the personal property tax on poles, wires, pipes, etc. found in the public way.

"It's a new law that allows towns to tax the utility poles," said Miller. The Department of Revenue, responsible for the valuation of the personal property, started implementing the ruling in the 2009 fiscal year.

The cooperative appraisal, Abbondanzio hopes, might save the town of Montague some money. "There's no cost or commitment if the town is unhappy with the terms

see MONTAGUE pg 10

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NOTES FROM THE GMRSD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

GMRSD School Committee Comes to Gill

BY ELLEN BLANCHETTE – The Gill-Montague school committee members and administration had a chance to stretch out a little more than usual on Tuesday night, as they sat at long tables in the Gill Elementary School cafeteria to hold their regular meeting.

Principal Rita Detweiler welcomed the committee to Gill. She talked about the plans for students to visit district schools this year as part of the school choice process. Gill fifth and sixth grade students will visit Great Falls Middle School towards the end of February, and Gill fifth graders will also visit the Gill sixth grade in early March. (Gill fifth graders may attend sixth grade at either school, as they prefer.) Parents of fifth graders will receive information about the school's sixth grade by early March, and will be asked to indicate their placement preference for the fall.

In the spring, the school will host an open house for interested kindergarten families from Gill and other towns. Kindergarten registration for Gill residents will be held on February 24th, 2010.

Detweiler talked about Gill Elementary's educational programs, with an emphasis on improving writing skills. Gill emphasizes the culture of community as a major path to school improvement, building a community with parents, teachers and students, making everyone feel welcome and safe. Gill has also made improving the food at the school a priority, offering more fresh food in the cafeteria, fresh fruit and vegetables, and more whole grains. The school also now offers oatmeal and smoothies in the morning.

Siemens Building Technologies representative Roland Butzke addressed the school committee regarding the company's preliminary energy audit report and next steps to be taken. The audit was done at no cost to the district. To move forward in the process, the district would now have to sign a contract with Siemens to perform a professional grade energy audit. Butzke explained that if com-

mittee agrees to this audit, there would be three possible outcomes. Siemens would be looking for ways to improve energy efficiency and provide utility cost savings to the district. If they do the audit and find nothing worthwhile, they would report that finding at no cost to the district. Or, Siemens could identify possible energy savings, but the district could decide not to move ahead with the work, in which case the district would owe Siemens for the cost of the audit.

But Butzke said a more likely outcome would be that Siemens would identify many ways to improve energy efficiency in school buildings, and if the district agrees to let the company do the work to make those improvements, the cost of the work would be amortized and paid for by the district from guaranteed savings on utility bills.

A deposit of \$26,000 would be required by contract to cover the cost of the audit but would not have to be paid up front. Should the district decide not to move forward with the recommended work, the deposit would be forfeited. If they do agree to hire Siemens, the deposit would be rolled into the overall costs of the project and paid through cost savings over the period of time agreed upon with the investors, most likely 20 years.

Sandra Brown, member from Gill, asked whether the district would have to find financing for the project themselves. Butzke replied Siemens would assist the district by making recommendations to their financial advisor, but the project would have to be financed like any other municipal improvement project. He said at this time bonds are the best method with the lowest interest rates.

The school committee discussed the matter for a short time and agreed they needed more time to review the preliminary audit report; a decision was tabled.

Next, superintendent Carl Ladd presented plans to deal with the \$120,000 cut to the FY10 Gill-Montague school budget mandated by the

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in December of last year. He said he would look for reductions and cost savings within the budget. He repeated his commitment to not cut district staff and said the state was surprised he was looking for ways to cut within the budget. Ladd said he does not want to use money meant for FY11, whether from reserves or stimulus funds, because that would only worsen the structural deficit the school committee is trying to address in their effort to move towards sustainable budgets.

Ladd warned there will be significant cuts in next year's budget.

Michael Langknecht, committee chair, asked if the committee wanted to come back to the issue of the structural budget gap. He said while the committee had agreed on the amount of the budget gap – around \$830,000 – they hadn't set a timetable for paying it down, something member Jeff Singleton recommended in his report to the committee on the structural gap last month.

Ladd said that his approach to the budget would reduce the structural budget gap as they moved ahead. School committee members agreed and took no action on the matter.

There will be a meeting on February 3rd at the Montague town hall beginning at 1 p.m. with town officials and representatives from senator Stan Rosenberg, representatives Chris Donelan and Steve Kulik, and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Ladd and Langknecht will represent the district and school committee, with other members participating as their schedules allow. This is a public meeting; the community is encouraged to attend.

Student representative Daniel Skarzynski reported that GMRSD students are doing all they can to raise money for Haiti. He said the date of May 8th has been set for the prom.

Joyce Phillips, of Montague,

see GMRSD pg 10

ENERGY from page 1

from abuse and reflect real-world energy savings.

The panel addressed questions with information and examples without whitewashing over uncertainties or unknowns, taking down questions they couldn't answer and promising to email out answers to people on the sign-in list as soon as possible.

Costs

At the workshop, Del Smith of Consulting Engineering Services, Inc. used a 2,672 square foot home and a 3,100 square foot home as examples to compare the mortgage cost plus energy costs for a home built to the stretch code over the standard code. In each case he used energy costs for 2005 and showed the homeowner of the more energy efficient home would spend \$750 to \$1,000 a year less on energy and mortgage payments. These savings would be even greater as energy costs rise over time.

Smith pointed out that in order to get those savings, construction will cost more than building to meet standard code. However, the homeowner will be eligible to receive several utility rebates for installing more efficient fixtures, and the homeowner will earn back those extra costs in energy savings. All told, the cost of building to the stretch code will probably add two to five percent to the cost of the building.

In Smith's 2,672 square foot

home example, he calculated the overall cost would go up by \$5,700, which would be paid off in about seven years through energy savings. Smith used 2005 energy prices in this example, and explained the payback time would be shorter with higher energy costs.

Both the Montague Energy Committee and FRCOG have decided to approach local banks to encourage them to carry mortgage packages that take into account energy costs as well as income when calculating the amount of a loan available to a customer. These types of mortgages, known as energy efficient mortgages, enable people to borrow more money than they otherwise could when building an energy efficient home.

Implementing the Stretch Code

Jim Barry, the DOER's Green Community Western Massachusetts regional coordinator, explained the process for cities and towns to adopt the stretch code. Following a public hearing, the stretch code can be adopted with a vote of town meeting or votes by the mayor and city council. To help communities prepare, the DOER is providing free training for all building inspectors.

Doug Snyder, of DS Greenbuild, LLC, described the rating system that would be used to test homes built to the stretch code. In 1955, the National

see ENERGY pg 16

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Advertisement for 'A Custom Touch' interior and exterior painting and home repairs, featuring a logo with a paint can and brush, and contact information for Anthony C. Tucker.

Advertisement for 'The Textile Co. Inc.' retail fabric store, listing various materials like cotton, silks, and polyesters, and providing contact information.

Advertisement for 'In-Town Self Storage' located at the upper end of Wells Street in Greenfield, highlighting convenient access and variety of sizes.

Advertisement for 'Animal Crackers' aquarium and pet supplies, featuring a dog illustration and promoting Saturday fish specials.

Advertisement for 'Montague Integrative Health' featuring Dr. Emily Maiella, a naturopathic physician, and her contact information.

Advertisement for 'Renaissance Excavating, Inc.' offering complete site work, septic and drainage systems, and contact information for Douglas Edson.

# Thaw and Freeze and In Between

**BY FRAN HEMOND**  
**MONTAGUE CENTER** –

The big event of mid-winter at the Breakfast Club was the arrival of a large woodpecker, that hardly managed to stay on the twelve-inch square tray that swings from the back porch ceiling and accommodates an assortment of customers. He found some bites of suet to his liking, while the usual attendants gave his long and large bill plenty of space.

He did not stay long, and has not returned.

The lovely little downy woodpeckers are regulars. Occasionally, a hairy woodpecker comes by. But this fellow seemed bigger than a crow. Perhaps a pileated; who else?

The bluejays and crows do come occasionally, but are not appreciated by the regular folk, who scatter.

At the other end of the



JAN ATAMIAN ILLUSTRATION

*Pileated Woodpecker*

spectrum, the sparrow visitors vary this year. For many, a

sparrow is a sparrow. I would like to easily tell them apart.

My American tree sparrows who used to be regulars, about four each year, have been represented by only one this season. A different little guy with a pink bill and no spot stops by. He has an eye ring and the book says he may be a field sparrow. Appropriate for the old Field Farm.

The white throated sparrow attends on occasion, and I am glad he announces himself properly by white throat and head stripes.

But the juncos are the birds who are becoming adept. Many have supplement-

ed their feeding ways. Some of these little dark birds with the off-white front and pink feet have put aside their scratching on the ground (although plenty of seed falls for the picking) and join other birds at the square feeder and even the song bird tube. Here the footing takes the expertise some cannot seem to achieve, and they flutter a bit and quit. A few become expert. All of which suggests that good food is worth striving for.

Almost every day, six black ducks still share the open spaces of water on the ponds. Their neat appearance, gray heads, yellow bills and food on the schedule suggest general order. A few mallards stop by with less apparent purpose and little discipline.

Perhaps this is the nature of January: thaw and freeze and in between.

## The Second Grade Gives A Puppet Show

**BY DAVID DETMOLD**

**GILL** – The classes filed in one by one, starting with the youngest grades. The students sat on the floor around the makeshift stage at one end of the community room in the Gill Elementary School. Three dozen parents and grandparents sat in chairs behind them. The room soon filled with the joyous chatter of anticipation.

“The second grade has worked tirelessly to prepare the puppet show you are about to see,” said principal Rita Detweiler, as music teacher Steve Damon and school counselor David Weidenfeld tuned up in a corner. She thanked parent Jocelyn Castro-Santos for helping the second graders fashion their hand held puppets.

Then everyone in the room burst into song, as Damon and Weidenfeld led a boisterous round of Woody Guthrie’s “This Land is Your Land!” Soon the kids on the floor were clapping as well as singing along, and the room filled with the warmth and camaraderie of a hobo camp around a cook fire.

It was the ideal moment for moral instruction, and the second

graders seized the opportunity with three little readings from Aesop’s *Fables*, acted out by puppets that would pop up and disappear again beneath the table top stage with comic unpredictability.

First, the wind and the sun engaged in a contest to see who could make a passing traveler remove his heavy coat. Blow wind though he may to crack his cheeks, still the traveler merely bundled tighter in his coat, until the sun came out and beat down upon him. Wouldn’t you know? “Gentle persuasion works better than force!”

Next, a dedicated grasshopper led the audience through a complicated round robin of negotiations with a cobra, a mongoose, and a tiger to get enough rope to rescue his friend, a stranded ant, from the middle of a torrential stream. This goes to prove, “Size is not important when it comes to friends!”

And finally, the students learned, courtesy of an impetuous, sleep-deprived hare that a stolid tortoise can beat a rabbit to the finish line, as long as she just keeps at it. “Slow but steady wins the race!”

This year, the Gill Elementary School is concentrating on a theme of Stories from Around the World, and the second grades’ puppet show on Aesop’s *Fables* was just one example.

In February, the school will host historical interpreter Kim Gregory impersonating the young George Washington, on Tuesday, February 9th. (I cannot tell a lie; our first president’s real birthday falls on the 22nd, even though we observe it one week earlier.) And on Friday, February 12th, Lake Pleasant author and illustrator Jan Atamian will be at Gill Elementary talking to students about her new book, *My Grandmother’s Lace*, about her Armenian grandmother.

Castro-Santos, who besides being the Gill librarian also has a background as an art teacher, said she came in to help Mrs. Burnham’s second graders fash-

ion their hand puppets out of Styrofoam, clay, and plaster gauze. She came back again to help them paint their puppets.

Burnham assigned the children their roles and rehearsed the scripts with them.

“They loved it,” said Castro-Santos.

“The arts are very important at Gill Elementary,” Detweiler affirmed.

As the puppets took their final bow, the room burst into a round of applause, and the children took up a spirited chorus of “All God’s Creatures Have a Place in the Choir.” Aesop would have been proud.



DETMOLD PHOTO

The cast of the Tortoise and the Hare take a bow.

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# Taverns of Yore



MARC BELANGER PHOTO

Kim Gregory in the role of Town Crier at Historic Deerfield

**BY JEN AUDLEY GILL** – Entering the Gill Tavern last Sunday afternoon, it was easy to see what this new incarnation of a great colonial tradition shares with the taverns of yesteryear. The convivial gathering place brimmed with Gill neighbors enthusiastically catching up and swapping news.

In its heyday, Gill Center had three taverns, including one called the Golden Pumpkin, at the site of the Slate Library, and another one that boasted an 80-foot dancehall. This was back when news was harder to come by, before smartphones and CNN and even the *Montague Reporter* – when stagecoaches carried mail and travelers along ‘post roads’ connecting New York, Boston and Albany.

In those days, as Kim Gregory explained to a full room during his presentation “Taverns, Tippling, and Gentlemen Topers,” the General Court of Massachusetts required that every town have its own licensed tavern or “public house.” For a

stranger arriving in town, the tavern would be the obvious first stop.

It’s no different in Gill now! During his lecture, Gregory, assisted by his wife, Carol, playing the role of the ‘skinker’ or server, regaled his audience with information covering hundreds of years of history and several continents. We learned that a “gill” is a unit of measure equal to four ounces, or a quarter pint (the standard ration of rum for an English sailor in 1750), that the tune to “The Star Spangled Banner” was borrowed from a popular tavern drinking song, and that the first taverns in Britain were established by Roman conquerors at seven or eight mile intervals along the roads they built. They were intended to be rest stops for soldiers, but when the military occupation ended, the natives took the ‘tavernas’ for their own.

The British brought the concept to the American colonies, where taverns played a significant role in social, political, and

military life. Daniel Webster famously called Boston’s Green Dragon Tavern “the headquarters of the revolution,” and John Adams referred to the taverns of his time as “nurseries of the legislature.”

Although apparently Adams didn’t mean it as a compliment, in Gill last week these quotes evoked more than a few inspired grins – and who knows what plans were hatched over the spirituous syllabus Carol Gregory served us afterwards?

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**RADAR** from page 1  
cials and dozens of residents.  
The town purchased the Mariamante parcel for \$245,000 in 2004, and had hoped to use the land for commercial develop-

ment. Local lore provides ample support for the idea that the land has been a rich trove of Native arrowheads and artifacts, and recent surveys of the property by UMass archeologists bolstered

this, identifying one area of the parcel in particular the archeologists believe should be off limits to development due to its cultural sensitivity.

But the exact location of the spokes burial site, discovered on the land formerly owned by T.M. Stoughton in 1881 during the course of relocating Main Road, has so far proved impossible to pinpoint, and nothing Kutrubes displayed on the screen or reported from her findings changed that fact on Tuesday.

Still, Kutrubes said her preliminary findings (she has only had time to view 5% of the data recorded last fall) do show evidence of soil disturbances below the plow depth or beneath the actual roadbed of Main Road, (which has been relocated a number of times in the town’s recorded history). And in some of these locations, the radar images seem to show “multiple high amplitude reflections,” that may be the result of subsurface “pipes, boulders, burials, or void spaces,” Kutrubes said.

In particular, a seemingly regular pattern of such reflections beneath the surface of Main Road, continuous with the cemetery wall and extending up to the wall itself, suggest to Kutrubes that the road was relocated above

burials that might well date not from the Native prehistory of the site, but from Colonial times.

“There is strong evidence of burials beneath the pavement of Main Road, and immediately adjacent to the cemetery wall. You also see it in the western portion of the [Mariamante] site closest to the road. Some of the burials may actually be Colonial, not Native American,” she said. “There is strong evidence these burials have been excavated,” at a depth of five to six feet. The roadbed and its related fill only extends to a depth of 1½ to 2 feet, she said.

Kutrubes said her preliminary findings show evidence of up to 20 or more anomalies at this depth, which may be old burials.

Some of the residents in the room suggested the Stoughtons, who farmed the land for many years, buried farm animals in the field. But Kutrubes insisted the regular pattern of radar deflections near the cemetery itself suggested a different kind of burials had taken place there.

After the presentation, Doug Harris, preservationist for ceremonial landscapes for the Narragansett Indian Tribe, said, “Ms. Kutrubes indicated by their proximity to the cemetery and

the regularity of their pattern these are Colonial burials. They extend under the road. Why? We can’t say with certainty. Are they Native American, African American, Colonial, poor people’s burials? We don’t know that. In other places we have encountered the system of burials in family plots where people who worked for the family were buried nearby, often people of different ethnicity.”

Kutrubes said she herself had examined a graveyard in Bethlehem, NY, where Colonial burials had been placed “right on top of” Native burials.

All of which only deepened the mystery of what lies below the Mariamante parcel.

As to the glowing red and orange images in a circular or x-shaped pattern to the west of the road? Kutrubes said, “This feature with symmetric patterns of disturbance makes you wonder, ‘Is that the spokes burial we were looking for?’ It warrants further investigation.”

After the meeting, the town selectboard gathered in a circle with Harris and discussed next steps. Selectboard chair Ann Banash echoed the thoughts of many in the room by saying, “We need more data.”

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# Plans for Beauchesne Property Outlined

**BY DAVID DETMOLD**  
**MONTAGUE CENTER** – The contractor who bid on emptying out Rodney Beauchesne’s house and property of years of accu-

mulated salvage materials, Mike Skalski, of Ashfield, estimated there would be about five garbage trucks worth of material to be removed.

“He just finished taking out the 14th truck,” Rich Hubbard, director of the Franklin Land Trust, told two dozen Montague Center residents who gathered on Thursday, January 21st, at the Montague Grange to hear what the future holds in store for that 7.8 acre property.

“This has to be the most

unusual project the Franklin Land Trust has ever taken on,” said Hubbard.

“Unusual” is an adjective that followed Rodney Beauchesne around during his life, and it is one of the milder terms used to describe the grounds and buildings he left behind when he died of cancer in October of 2007, where he plied his salvage trade off Main Street just south of the village.

“Fort Apache,” one

Department of Environmental Protection employee dubbed the haphazard, multi-level structure he called home. Piles of building materials, salvaged doors and windows, insulating panels and every other potentially useful item Beauchesne picked up during his years of entrepreneurial recycling lay in heaps about the property, and stacked in storage sheds and barn. The

see **BEAUCHESNE** pg 14



S.T. & I SERVICES'S PHOTOS

Clean-up work is in progress at the Beauchesne property in Montague Center

**GMRSD** from pg 7 reported on Gill Montague Education Fund activities, saying that Brooke Martineau was elected unanimously to be the second student representative, joining Katie Kuklewicz on the board. Phillips announced a farmers market will be held at

Turners Falls High School on Saturday, February 27th, organized by Steve Damon. The sixth annual GMEF gala, to be held on April 25th at 2:30 p.m., will feature the fifteen piece “Aqua String Band.” The string band was founded in 1920 and has participated

every year since in the annual Philadelphia Mummers Parade held on New Year’s Day. The band features creative costumes and music drawn from a mix of Irish, Italian, Polish and German cultural traditions, performed in a style unique to the Mummers.

The sub-committee seeking to settle the issue around having a K-6 school at Sheffield by moving kindergarten there from Hillcrest asked that Ladd look at the issue and give them his opinion of whether this could be done. He agreed as long as they understood he was neither an architect nor an engineer, and so could not address those issues. They agreed and gave him no deadline to complete his evaluation.

The next meeting of the Gill-Montague school committee will be held on February 9th at Turners Falls High School at 7:00 p.m.

**WENDELL** from pg 6 board to report on the status of fiscal 2010 tax bills. Mangan said the assessors plan to send out a single bill that will be due May 1st, 2010. The other alternative would be to send out a preliminary bill in the second half of February, due a month later, and a final bill due May 1st.

The finance committee met the selectboard with what chair Michael Idoine called two jolly things.

Idoine said state representatives Steve Kulik and Chris Donelan attached an amendment to the Education Reform Bill that changes how a town can withdraw from a Superintendency Union, like Union 28. Under the amendment, a town can withdraw from a Union with a simple majority vote of their school committee. If any of the five member towns of Union 28 left to join another district, Idoine said, the remain-

ing towns would be left with an unsustainable structure. Jim Slavas added that none of the stakeholders were consulted when the amendment was crafted.

Keller asked if there is any chance the amendment could be rescinded.

Slavas suggested the town might start by inviting representative Kulik to town for a discussion of the amendment, why it was offered, and what the consequences of it might be for Wendell.

Idoine made a suggestion that officers of the town’s money management team, the treasurer, tax collector, clerk and the assessors, be appointed instead of elected. Aldrich added that in New Salem the tax collector and treasurer are appointed posts.

A town meeting vote would be necessary to make that change in Wendell.

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**THE NEIGHBORHOOD TOXICOLOGIST**

**Tritium in the Well. What's to Worry?**

**BY EMILY MONOSSON**

**MONTAGUE** – First we hear about tens of thousands of picocuries in the groundwater beneath Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant, within ten yards of the Connecticut River. Next it's over 100 gallons of water contaminated with over 2 million picocuries of tritium in some sort of concrete trench. Oops. Besides sloppy practices, lax monitoring, shoddy construction, and obfuscation (what underground pipes?), what do these numbers mean? Should we worry about all that tritium? And what the heck is a picocurie anyway?

Tritium is a radioactive isotope of the element hydrogen. What sets apart radioactive elements from non-radioactive elements is their lack of stability. They can disintegrate spontaneously, sometimes changing into other elements over time. Uranium, for example, decays into lead (although it may take billions of years), while on average tritium will decay into helium in just over a decade.

The difference between a radioactive element and a plain old element depends upon what's in the nucleus. The nucleus of any atom consists of protons (positive elements), neutrons (neutral elements) and electrons (negative elements). While the chemical properties of an element mostly depend on the number of protons in the nucleus, the radioactive properties are determined by the number of neutrons and the balance amongst the protons, neutrons and electrons. An element like hydrogen and its radioactive twin, tritium, have the same number of protons (and so, the same chemical properties). But instead of a single neutron, tritium has three neutrons. Tritium occurs naturally in small amounts, and is produced by man both purposefully, for research and consumer products (ever wonder about that glowing watch dial or that luminous EXIT sign?), and as a by-product of the nuclear industry.

Because tritium is chemical-

ly similar to hydrogen it can and does take the place of hydrogen. When this happens in water molecules, tritiated water, or radioactive water, is formed.

The radiation released by tritium is referred to as a beta particle. Beta particles, or electrons, are a form of ionizing radiation capable of stripping electrons from other atoms, causing a sort of chain reaction of destabilization, and breaking chemical bonds. Although the beta particles released by tritium are low energy, incapable of penetrating through barriers such as skin (unlike some other forms of radiation), should tritium enter the body through inhalation or umm...water, those emitted particles would then have full access to vulnerable internal organs, tissues and molecules.

Tritiated water is particularly insidious. Tritiated water lurking below Vermont Yankee could be absorbed by the root systems of nearby plants, or imbibed by unsuspecting animals. Once consumed, tritiated water distributes rapidly throughout the body of a plant or animal. Additionally, ingestion of tritiated water can lead to incorporation of tritium into organic materials like DNA, proteins and amino acids. Only, unlike hydrogen, tritium will eventually decay, leaving behind an atom of helium and releasing a beta particle with enough energy to break nearby chemical bonds.

In the body, the making and breaking of the chemical bonds between atoms is a highly coordinated process, normal and essential to life. The "unscheduled" breaking of chemical bonds can cause permanent cell damage, damage to the cell's DNA, or cell death.

The human genome is contained within the DNA of our 46 chromosomes located in a cell's nucleus. Replication of these chromosomes during cell division is a critical process, requiring a number of complex biochemical interactions including copying and con-

struction of identical chromosomal pairs that are then split off into the newly divided cell. Because integrity of the genetic material is essential to life, not only are there biochemical systems involved in maintaining chromosomes during division, but there are also a number of mechanisms by which errors may be repaired.

Say a few molecules of tritium enter the cell and cozy up to nuclear DNA. At some point in their unstable lifetime they will disintegrate, releasing their energized electrons. Should the cells' chromosomes be in their pathway, the transfer of energy from electron to chromosome may be enough to break off a bit of chromosome. Sometimes, depending on conditions within the cell and location of the break, the broken pieces may rejoin the chromosome, leaving little or no evidence of damage; other times, a broken piece remains separate, becoming a chromosomal deletion; or both the deleted piece and the damaged chromosome will be copied as if nothing happened, only it will be altered. Or, instead of direct interference with DNA, emitted electrons may interact with other molecules such as oxygen, causing 'indirect' damage by creating highly reactive oxygen radicals.

Since DNA tends to be a target of ionizing radiation, tissues made up of cells that are rapidly dividing – such as blood forming organs constantly churning out cells – tend to be far more sensitive to radiation damage than say, brain cells. Similarly, embryos and fetal tissues are more susceptible to radiation damage than adult tissues.

There is some good news amidst all this havoc and destruction. That is, most if not all cells have some capacity for DNA repair. These include an array of enzymes and proteins that find and correct damaged DNA in addition to a number of antioxidants capable of disarming those reactive oxygen radicals. The presence of such

repair mechanisms have led some to speculate that exposures to very low amounts of radiation may be a good thing, "priming" these repair systems and leading to greater protection with low levels of exposure – a phenomenon referred to as hormesis. However, a National Academy of Science report on The Health Effects of Low Level Ionizing Radiation, published in 2007, found no available evidence of radiation-induced hormesis in mammals, and concluded that any single track of ionizing radiation (for example by a single ejected electron in the case of tritium) has the potential to cause cellular damage.

And, despite the capacity for repair, sometimes the system is overwhelmed, or sometimes the repair itself introduces a new error (think sloppy auto mechanic). At this point the genetic damage has the potential to become permanent, or "fixed." Permanent damage to DNA can result in the eventual development of cancerous cells, or a defect in an exposed fetus or as a mutation passed on to the next generation. While the evidence for carcinogenicity in human populations is strong for some radioactive isotopes like strontium-90, plutonium and radium, the health effects of tritium, a weak beta emitter are less clear.

Which brings us to concentration. How much is too much? What does it mean that the groundwater at Vermont Yankee has over 200,000 picocuries of tritium per liter of water, or that there are "troughs" with over 2 million picocuries per liter? A curie (named in honor of radiation pioneers Pierre and Marie Curie) is a quantity of radionuclide in which there are 37 billion disintegrations a second. That's a lot of disintegration, and in the case of tritium would mean a lot of beta particles whizzing about. But the amounts drawn from the ground water were measured in picocuries per liter – or one-

millionth of a millionth of a curie. So, every second, until all the tritium has disintegrated to helium (the half-life for tritium is 12.5 years) there could be roughly 7,400 electrons winging about in a liter of Vermont Yankee groundwater.

As a result of the current hypothesis that exposure to any amount of ionizing radiation carries with it some risk of cancer, the U.S. EPA's Maximum Contaminant Level Goal for all radionuclides in drinking water, a goal which aims for "zero-risk" to public health, is zero picocuries per liter. Unfortunately, achieving "zero risk" is not only wishful thinking but currently unenforceable and, because there is some naturally occurring tritium, impracticable. Instead, EPA has developed Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCL) for drinking water. While the MCLs are enforceable, they are calculated considering best available technology and economic feasibility. For tritium, the derived\* MCL is 20,000 picocuries per liter, while the derived MCL for strontium 90, a more powerful beta emitter associated with bone cancer and leukemia, is 8 picocuries.

Here's the thing. Right now we're talking two wells and a trench (where, incidentally, a small amount of radioactive cobalt has turned up as well.) While current concentrations in the ground water (the trench is another story) may not present an immediate health risk, who knows what a more comprehensive analysis – currently underway – might reveal?

*\* The MCL for beta emitters is based on a dose of 4mrem/year to the total body and assumes ingestion of 2L a day – the picocurie concentrations are derived for each specific beta emitting isotope depending on their strength. Over the years, there has been discussion of using different calculations for tritium that would dramatically reduce the MCL.*

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**REFORM** from page 1  
 union, which would require a positive vote from a majority of school committees of the member towns.

Massachusetts has 17 superintendency unions, comprising 52 different towns.

DeChiara noted that he and other Shutesbury residents and officials have felt their town's concerns were not being addressed by Union 28. He stated the amendment changes the power dynamic within the union's joint supervisory committee, and requires that "Everyone has to have a stake in making sure it works."

New Salem representative John DeWitt said his concern was that the new law made the union "unstable." DeChiara responded there was now a need for "relationship building" within the union, and that Union 28 doesn't have an agreement about governance issues, about "how towns will interact" within Union 28. DeChiara said agreements about governance should now be developed, and those agreements would provide stability.

Leverett representative Farshid Hajir said he is a member with DeChiara on the Amherst, Leverett, Pelham, and Shutesbury regionalization study committee and he was "saddened" that DeChiara had not informed the study committee about the amendment before it was inserted in the education reform law.

Hajir said he would like the Union 28 joint supervisory committee to have a fuller conversation about the new law and to advocate a change to it.

Hajir provided "a parable" about five poor people who can't afford to buy a house individually, but decide to pool resources and buy one together. After the house is purchased, one of the five sees a shared house he likes better, and leaves the four remaining people, who then live in a house they can no longer afford.

"This is the situation unions will find themselves in," Hajir said. "There are not enough safeguards in the law to protect towns."

He said the amendment proceeded from a "fundamental misunderstanding on the part of the legislators."

DeChiara replied the amendment should not have come as a surprise, because he has been discussing Shutesbury's dissatisfaction with Union 28 for a while. He added that before the amendment, the difficulty in leaving a superintendency union was "a barrier to flexibility" for the individual towns.

Wendell representative Ray DiDonato said, "I think it's a reckless law. It destabilizes the union. The Wendell finance committee and selectboard have great concerns about the amendment because it causes instability."

New Salem representative Randy Gordon said the amendment should be "thought over, re-written, rescinded."

He said he thought the amendment proponents have an agenda and that part of that agenda is the "destruction of Union 28".

Gordon said he felt there should be a middle ground. Speaking of DeChiara's actions in promoting the amendment

with legislators without talking with other Union 28 members, he said, "It decreases the trust," and makes other committee members wonder, "What is Michael going to do next?"

Leverett representative Kip Fonsh said he found the passage of the amendment a "very sobering political lesson." He added, "I thought I was fully engaged in the political process until I picked up the paper," and found out about the amendment passing.

To DeChiara, he said, "You have been pushing this point consistently. You have been saying there was no opportunity to be listened to. If you knew this was happening, you had a duty to talk about it," to the committee.

Shutesbury representative Daniel Hayes characterized the education reform bill of 2010 as "poorly written" and said the process for adding the amendment was "well concealed." He suggested the joint supervisory committee work with legislators to repeal or amend the amendment to Section 6.

Hayes said when he called state representative Steve Kulik's office and spoke to staffer Paul Dunphy, Dunphy told him that "this [a town voting to leave a superintendency union] could be done without notice." According to Hayes, "Dunphy repeated this three times."

Union 28 superintendent Joan Wickman said she was "taken by surprise" by the amendment. She said she called Kulik's office to comment, and he wrote a letter in response. She provided copies of Kulik's letter, which said, in part:

"I believe it's positive and pragmatic to provide choices for towns to make local determinations, whether the town is New Salem or Wendell or Pelham or any other community in the Commonwealth. There are 52 communities which belong to 17 SU's in Massachusetts. Most of them were formed decades ago under a statute that left a very important issue unaddressed: how to withdraw from an SU. If a town wants to use this new enabling legislation to change its administrative affiliation or structure, then it can do so. Otherwise, towns can ignore it. As far as Union 28 goes, there is no question that if any town should decide to leave the SU, it will have an impact on the

remaining member towns. Those impacts and details should be discussed among the towns at the time. But, there is no reason why any community should not have the opportunity to consider all of its options and to have the flexibility to make a decision that is in its own best interests - especially when it deals with something as important as education."

Several Shutesbury residents attending the meeting made comments. Stephen Banasche, who introduced himself as a former Shutesbury school committee member, said, "You need to get beyond the frustration with the amendment, and you must respond to the freedom of towns to leave the union." He said in the past, "I have argued for Shutesbury to leave Union 28," and that the only reason to remain in Union 28 is if the union "works together for all towns." He warned that if the joint supervisory committee or others take action to have the amendment rescinded or changed, "The political reaction in Shutesbury will be to push harder to leave the union before it is rescinded."

Rob Hayes, also of Shutesbury, said, "In my assessment, it is undemocratic if you can't leave the union if it's not working for you." Regarding Hajir's "parable" of the five poor people buying a house together, he said, "It's been at least a hundred years since that house was bought. Times have changed."

Hajir requested that citizens with concerns about Union 28 let the committee know, "when

you think the committee is not working for you and how you think it could improve. I would like to know more."

DeChiara noted that, "If this is going to work, it's time to move on. Since the amendment has passed [earlier this month], there has been more cooperation than I have ever seen."

For the next agenda item, in response to the previous discussion regarding the Section 6 amendment, the committee approved a motion made by DeWitt: "To re-charge the strategic development subcommittee to function as project manager for gathering data and formulating strategies for improving governance and to formulate strategies for reconfiguration of membership, if necessary."

Budget, personnel, and Union 28 protocols were also discussed and acted on at the meeting. Wickman presented the Union 28 fiscal year 2011 budget, showing an increase of 2.82% over the 2010 budget. DeChiara said Shutesbury would like to see no increase in the 2011 budget. Fonsh noted, "There is no fat in this budget."

Hajir agreed with Fonsh, but nevertheless presented a list of changes to reduce the increase to 1.4%. DeWitt presented a further list of reductions to bring the increase to less than 1%, but the committee felt the impact of those further cuts would be too severe.

The committee approved the budget with Hajir and Fonsh's cuts, for a total reduction of \$7159.



**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG**

**Larceny of Property**

<b>Saturday, 1/23</b> 9:50 p.m. Assisted Northfield police with breaking and entering in progress on Lucky Clapp Road. <b>Sunday, 1/24</b>	5:57 p.m. Motor vehicle accident on Main Road. <b>Monday, 1/25</b> 7:55 a.m. Vehicle off of roadway on Bascom Road.	<b>Tuesday, 1/26</b> 12:01 p.m. Assisted with traffic hazard on Main Road. 3:35 p.m. Report of larceny of property on West Gill Road.
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8:29 a.m. Alarm at Main Road business, all OK.

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LEVERETT POLICE LOG**

**Track Area Near Pond Traps Cars**

<b>Tuesday, 1/19</b> 10:16 p.m. Accident on Shutesbury Road. [Redacted] lost control of her vehicle on black ice, went off road, and	struck a guardrail. No injuries, vehicle damaged on the front end. 11:45 p.m. Assisted Shutesbury Police with arrest of a subject for domestic assault and battery at a Cushman Road	address in Shutesbury. <b>Saturday, 1/23</b> 3:55 p.m. Vehicle stuck by the railroad tracks at Cranberry Pond. Vehicle removed. 5:17 p.m. A second vehicle stuck by the railroad tracks at Cranberry Pond. Vehicle removed.
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JES-

**BY FRED CICETTI**  
**LEONIA, NJ** – *Q My brother-in-law was diagnosed with myasthenia gravis. Could you do one of your columns on this subject so everyone in our family can understand it?*

Myasthenia gravis (MG) is a muscle disease. The name comes from Greek and Latin words meaning grave muscle weakness. Myasthenia gravis (my-us-THEEN-ee-uh GRAV-us) affects the muscles that control the eyes, face, breathing, chewing, talking, swallowing and limbs.

MG usually strikes adult women under the age of 40 and men over the age of 60. However, MG can affect people of any age and ethnic group. MG is not contagious and is not inherited.

The cause of MG is a breakdown in the communication between nerves and muscles. This breakdown causes muscle fatigue and weakness, which worsens with repeated use of the muscle. Symptoms usually improve with rest. Treatment can help MG symptoms, but there is no cure for the disease.

The following are some specific signs of MG: drooping eyelids, double or blurred vision, difficulty speaking, swallowing, chewing, inability to smile, shortness of breath, and a change in your stride.

When MG strikes, the immune system produces antibodies that interfere with the muscles' ability to receive nerve signals. This interference causes weakness.

There's a theory that the thymus gland, a part of your immune system located under the breastbone, may be responsible for making these antibodies. The thymus gland is abnormal in most MG cases.

MG symptoms can be intensified by stress, illness, fatigue, extreme heat and drugs such as beta blockers, calcium channel blockers, quinine and some antibiotics.

Myasthenic crisis is a life-threatening condition that occurs when the muscles that control breathing become too weak. Emergency treatment is necessary to recover the ability to breathe properly.

People with MG are more likely to have the following additional problems: a malfunctioning thyroid gland; lupus, a chronic inflammatory disease, and rheumatoid arthritis, an immune-system disorder.

Drugs for treating MG

## THE HEALTHY GEEZER: Myasthenia Gravis

include cholinesterase inhibitors, corticosteroids and immunosuppressants.

Cholinesterase inhibitors enhance communication between nerves and muscles. Corticosteroids inhibit the immune system, limiting antibody production. Immunosuppressants alter your immune system.

Among the therapies for MG are plasmapheresis and intravenous immune globulin. In plasmapheresis, blood is routed through a machine that removes the antibodies interfering with nerve signals to the muscles. Intravenous immune globulin gives your body normal antibodies, which alters your immune-system response.

A thymectomy is the surgical

removal of the thymus gland. This surgery is done for people with MG who have tumors, as well as for some who don't have tumors. The surgery improves symptoms in most MG patients.

There are other ways to deal with MG:

MG was first described in detail in the late 19th century, when the outlook for patients was dark. Many died of respiratory failure.

In the 1930s, the nature of MG was better understood; cholinesterase inhibitors became a standard treatment for MG. In the 1960s, researchers discovered the autoimmune nature of MG, and began attacking the disease at its roots using immunosuppressant drugs.

Today the mortality rate of

MG is less than 5 percent.

*If you would like to ask a question, please write fred@healthygeezer.com.*

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## L.A.P.P.S. Dives into 2010

**BY KATHERINE KUKLEWICZ**

**TURNERS FALLS** – The Local Aquatic Program for Personal Safety, better known as LAPPS, is getting a jump start into the new year. Last year, we taught 20 children water safety skills in the Turners Falls High School pool.

LAPPS, which works with young people in the Sheffield School after school program, allows children to improve their swimming skills and learn different water safety techniques. It is amazing how many local young people don't know basic water skills, or even have the chance to swim. LAPPS is a free, five day program in which participants receive a water lesson, enjoy a snack, and then practice what they learned in the pool with a volunteer.

Each participant has a two to one ratio with a high school volunteer – all of whom have been trained in water safety techniques. The goal for the kids who complete this program is to feel more confident and comfortable in the water, while having a great time. Foremost, if they do end up in a serious situ-



BARBARA KUKLEWICZ PHOTO

*L.A.P.P.S. program volunteer Chris McManon teaches Jordan Llewelyn water safety skills, while having a great time.*

ation in the water, they will know what to do.

This year LAPPS will run from March 1st through the 5th. LAPPS is sponsored by Our Lady of Peace, St. Stanislaus Society, Tognarelli Heating & Cooling, Greenfield Savings Bank, St. Kazimierz, and Hind Team Sports. If it were not for the help of our sponsors,

LAPPS would not be able to provide this important program for the safety and recreation of young people in our community.

*Katherine Kuklewicz is a junior at the Turners Falls High School. She has been the director of the LAPPS program for the last two years.*

### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG

#### School Bus Goes Off Road

**Tuesday, 1/19**  
 4:15 p.m. School bus off the road on Mountain Road. No injury, no children on the bus at the time. DPW contacted to treat roadway. Accident report taken.

**Thursday, 1/21**  
 8:15 a.m. Assisted subject retrieving personal belongings from an Old State Road residence.

**Friday, 1/22**  
 8:10 a.m. 911 call from French King Apartments regarding

repossession of subject's motor vehicle. Spoke to resident, advised of the proper use of 911 and to contact the lender.  
 11:45 a.m. Arrested [redacted] on a warrant.

7:15 p.m. Assisted Northfield Police with an out of control male on South Mountain Road. Peace restored.

**Saturday, 1/23**  
 9:40 p.m. Assisted Northfield Police with breaking and entering in

progress, one male subject arrested.

**Sunday, 1/24**  
 3:47 a.m. Call from a concerned female subject regarding a male subject walking from Athol to Greenfield. Located male subject on Route 2 in area of Christina's Pizza.

**Monday, 1/25**  
 9:00 a.m. Report of domestic disturbance at a French King Highway residence. Altercation found to be verbal only.

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**BEAUCHESNE** from pg 10

clean-up crew found 30 saddles in the barn, for example, most of which were too chewed up to be saved and reused.

The FLT is purchasing the property for \$95,000 and paying Skalski \$56,000 to clean it up. By summer, Hubbard said, the land trust hopes to turn the property over to the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game to be used as recreational fishing area.

Hubbard said the state would construct a small parking area to access the land off South Street, and close off the current driveway on Main Street, due to poor sight lines.

He said once the house is clean of any potential contaminants, the Montague Center fire department will use it for a training burn.

"I've traveled past the property for years," said Hubbard. "You have to marvel at it. But as you realize it is probably not the best entryway to Montague Center... we're excited about cleaning it up and letting it

return to nature."

Sam Lovejoy, a Montague Center attorney who was instrumental in arranging the deal to purchase, clean up and transfer the Beauchesne property to the state for permanent conservation, said, "The Fish and Game department has designated the Sawmill River as a cold water fishing resource. This was a large piece of bank they'd like to see protected."

Lovejoy said Beauchesne originally persuaded an interim building inspector in town in the early 80s to sign off on a building permit for his house by delivering a letter from an engineer in Pennsylvania who attested the property was not in the flood plain. But the property does lie within the Sawmill's floodplain, and across from a town well. "Everyone looks at this as a chance to get rid of something that never should have happened," Lovejoy said.

Rodney's nephew, Jaime Beauchesne, was in attendance on Thursday, and he talked of the land, and Rodney's use of it, with respect.

"This was our family farm, since the 1950s." Felix Beauchesne, Rodney's father, farmed the land then, but that farmhouse was taken down in the 90s, Jaime said. Rodney added to the property, built his house out of 100% recycled materials, and though he never obtained the proper permits to do so, ran a salvage yard there for years despite town hall's best efforts to intervene.

"This was his business; this is what he did," said Jaime Beauchesne. Chances are if you asked the people in the Grange that night how many had purchased materials from Rodney Beauchesne, more than a few would have raised their hands.

And the business flowed both ways.

"I'd like to take some of the blame for the state of affairs on that property," said Les Cromack. "For 25 years I ran the church auction on Old Home Days. Rodney was an excellent customer."

Many of those same items are now being hauled off to the dump, courtesy of the Franklin

Land Trust. Hubbard said the land trust is still about \$4,000 short on the total cost for covering the purchase, clean-up, and legal work surrounding the property. Anyone wishing to make a contribution to help contact the Franklin Land Trust at PO Box 450, Shelburne Falls, MA 01370, or at (413) 625-9152, extension 102.

Jaime Beauchesne said his whole family was glad to see the property being returned to its natural state and conserved as a recreational resource for the town.

Hubbard said people had asked whether the split level, log cabin-cum-glass menagerie homestead could not have been taken apart and recycled - again - for its constituent parts.

"It's impossible to dismantle that building safely," he said.

At Beau's memorial service two years earlier, Montague building inspector David Jensen remarked, "The house was built like a battleship - vertical poles 12 inches round - it's solid."

And Beau probably didn't

spend \$100 building it.

Hubbard said the building will be burned down in February, the ash pile removed, remnants of barbed wire fences taken down, and the last materials hauled away. Then the homestead will be allowed to grow back to its natural state.

"In a few weeks it will only be a memory," he said.

Fort Apache, Montague Center.



**TEST** from page 5

In addition to manganese, recent testing has shown levels of toluene - a solvent and compound used in paints. The source of the toluene is unknown, but it has appeared in wells above the gradient of the landfill.

The voters approved the appropriation of funds for continued testing.

The voters also approved a warrant article to purchase 9.2 acres of land on Shutesbury Road by the land acquisition fund of the conservation commission, to be set aside for recreational purposes.



**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 Arsenault 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.

**SEWER** from page 3

hundred thousand was a lot of money then - but not now," she added.

Trask said the town's insurance company, MIIA, is spending \$13,000 dollars a month to put the family up at the Greenfield hotel. The allotted amount will soon be used up, and could be put to better use purchasing a modular home that could take the place of their old house.

She stated the sewage penetrated into the heating ducts and the water pipes.

When told the insurance company assured her their house

would be made livable again, Trask said she responded, "I'm not drinking that water. If you want to come over, I'll make you a glass of lemonade and you can drink it. They haven't even tested the sewage to see what contaminants it contained."

She added, "Everyone at the town of Erving has been great, but their hands are tied by the insurance company."

Asked at Monday's select-board meeting to comment on the recent sewage disaster at the Trask residence, board chair Andy Tessier demurred.

"We'll let the lawyers discuss it," he said.



**Solar Electric and Hot Water System Presentation**

On Thursday, January 28th, at 6 p.m., and again on Saturday, January 30th at 11 a.m., free workshops on solar electric photovoltaic and hot water systems will be given at the Solar Store of Greenfield, at 2 Fiske Avenue. The workshop will cover the basics of how you can reap the benefits of solar energy at your house and the current Massachusetts state incentives and federal tax credits. Call (413) 772-3122, or email [info@solarstoreof-greenfield.com](mailto:info@solarstoreof-greenfield.com) for more information.

**MCTV Training Class**

MCTV will hold free classes on directing and producing multi-camera field productions. This includes using the Sony Anycast switcher along with three cameras, four microphones and the intercom system. We'll also go over how to use the graphics generator in the Anycast.

The first class will be held on Saturday, February 20th, at 1:00 p.m. at the MCTV studio, 34 Second Street, in Turners Falls.

If you're interested in taking the class please call Robin or Dean to sign up at (413) 863-9200.

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# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



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## THURSDAY, JANUARY 28th

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Larry Kopp, Country & City Blues Guitar*, 8 - 10 p.m.

Transition Towns presentation, 7 p.m. A Positive, Community-Building Response in a time of Change. At the First Congregational Church of Montague, Montague Center. Transition Towns is a vibrant, global grassroots movement bringing people together to build community resilience. Long-term energy cost increases and climate change, together with economic instability, pose a "Triple Challenge" that requires bigger, more creative solutions. With change unfolding quickly, local action has become essential. This FREE evening presentation describes framework, resources, and serious, good fun and community-building at the heart of this exponentially-growing international movement. Tina Clarke, one of four TransitionTowns Trainers east of the Mississippi shares her first-hand study of the movement. [www.transitiontowns.org](http://www.transitiontowns.org)

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 29th

The movie *Food, Inc.* at the Wendell Free Library, 7 p.m. Presented by the Wendell Agricultural Commission. All invited to watch the documentary film revealing disturbing truths about our food supply. Followed by a short discussion and related books. No charge, refreshments. Info: Linda Hickman, (978) 544-8604.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Klondike & Friends*, an outer space get-together, 9 to 11 p.m.

At the Rendezvous: *Infinite August and Fine and Dandy Trio* is opening around 9 or 930 p.m.

Burrito Rojo, Turners Falls: *Jamie Kent & the Options*, 7 p.m.

## SATURDAY, JANUARY 30th

At the Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Investigation Stations! Family investigation day. "Hands on" experiences with activities to explore information about the



The Outerspace Band at Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls this Saturday, January 30th at 9 p.m. Wendell's most enduring band begins its 43rd year of original neo-Frisco R&B, a style formulated during the band's five-year residency on the Common and thousands of shows throughout New England and beyond. Special guest Professor Dave Lenson on tenor sax!

For your dancing pleasure, from Eliot, Compton, Dave, Johnny, Michael, and Klon. \$15

natural world. Touch boxes, crafts, games. 1 to 2 p.m.

Snowshoeing Northfield Mountain in the Moonlight. The Mountain is a magical place on a moonlit evening. Join Northfield Naturalist, Beth Bazler 6:30 to 9 p.m. to explore how to best navigate at night, share inspiring quotes from literary lovers of the moon and stars, and take a short "solo" walk by moonlight. No previous snowshoeing experience is necessary for this adventure by the light of the moon. Ages 12 and older/ \$5 per person or \$17 with snowshoe rentals. Pre-register: (800) 859-2960. [www.firstlightpower.com/northfield/publicprograms.asp](http://www.firstlightpower.com/northfield/publicprograms.asp)

NELCWIT hosts its 34th annual Bowlathon, 1 to 5 p.m. at the French King Entertainment Center, Erving. The Bowlathon won't just be fun – it will be one of NELCWIT's most important fundraisers. If you want to bowl, organize a team, or be a sponsor for the event, please contact: [info@nelcwit.org](mailto:info@nelcwit.org) or (413) 772-0871 x116.

The Wendell Full Moon Coffee House: The Lonesome Brothers, 7:30 p.m. Benefit for the Millers River Watershed Council. \$6 to \$15. (978) 544-5557 or [www.wendellfullmoon.org](http://www.wendellfullmoon.org).

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Kristen Ford Band*, Indie Rock, 9 to 11 p.m.

At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Kathy Chapman & Box Car Lillies*, 9:30 p.m. \$5.

The Outerspace band at Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls, 9 p.m. Special guest Professor Dave Lenson on tenor sax! \$15 at the door.

## SUNDAY, JANUARY 31st

The Shea Theater, Turners Falls presents a free variety show, 2 p.m. Featuring performances from The Country Players, Arena Civic Theatre, Ja'Duke Productions, Celtic Heels, the 2009 Valley Idol winners, and comedian Muq Kaplan, as seen on Comedy Central Presents and the Tonight Show with Conan O'Brien. Donations requested at the door. Reservations: (413) 863-2281 or [shea@valinet.com](mailto:shea@valinet.com). More info: [www.theshea.org](http://www.theshea.org).

Family Dance, Montague Grange, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Bring a new family to the dance and you both dance for \$5/family.

Regular admission is \$4/person or sliding scale \$10 to 15/family, and includes a healthy snack at the break. *Shingle the Roof* concert of children's songs, 3:10 p.m.. Caller Cindy Green.

Dead of Winter Film Series at the Montague Book Mill, Montague Center: *Waiting for Guffman* – 1996. Written by Christopher Guest and Eugene Levy, directed by Christopher

jazz, acoustic guitar, and world music at 8 p.m. at the Raymond Concert Hall in Northfield Mount Hermon's Rhodes Art Center. Presented by the NMH music department and the NMH World Music Combo and Percussion ensemble showcasing the talents of the world combo members – Ke Wang on erhu, Amanda Lawrence on steel pan, Marty Jaffe on bass, Henry Lawrence on percussion – along with 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.

## 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.

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.

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7th

1 p.m. to 4 p.m. screening *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 to follow. Refreshments. At The Brick House, 24 Third St., Turners Falls.



Jamie Kent and The Options performing at Burrito Rojo on Friday, January 29th at 7 p.m.

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](http://www.centerschool.net)

## 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.

Guest. The *pièce de résistance* of the Guest oeuvre. If you don't love this mad and adoring tribute to small-town historical/musical/community theater, you are one of the bastard people. 7 p.m.

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

At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: A Winter Tea Dance with DJ Lori. 3 to 7 p.m. \$3 cover.

## MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1st

Greenfield Community College to Celebrate Black History Month and the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King presents Community Chorus, Music, Living the Dream and Bright Lights Awards, and Keynote Speaker: Paul Dedell, Teacher, Hilltop Montessori School, Brattleboro, VT. Reception to follow featuring photo exhibit "Love Makes a Family". Open to the community, noon – 2 p.m. Stinchfield Lecture Hall. Judy Raper (413) 775-1819 or Herb Hentz (413) 775-1809.

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2nd

Transition Towns presentation, 7 p.m. at the Brick House Community Resource Center, Turners Falls. See 1/28 listing. Free. All Invited.

Alliance for Peace meeting at Traprock Center for Peace and Justice, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. All welcome, planning actions and discussion of "What is Peace". Moving forward in our quest for peace thru contemplation and action together in community.

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3rd

Super Fun Bowling Club – Pajama Party! Wear your pajamas and meet us at 7:30 p.m. at the French King Entertainment Center. All ages and abilities welcome!

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5th

NMH World Music Concert, a night of

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1. AVATAR in DTS sound PG13 DAILY 7:15 FRI, SAT, SUN 12 3:30
2. EDGE OF DARKNESS R in DTS sound DAILY 7:00 9:30 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:00 3:00
3. TOOTH FAIRY PG FRI, SAT, SUN 12 3 DAILY 7 9:30
4. BOOK OF ELI R DAILY 6:40 9:20
4. THE SPY NEXT DOOR PG MATINEE FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15
5. EXTRAORDINARY MEASURES DAILY 6:40 9:20 PG MATINEE FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15
6. THE LOVELY BONES PG13 in DTS sound DAILY 6:30 9:30 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30
7. UP IN THE AIR R in DTS sound DAILY 6:30 9:30 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30

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Saturday, 1/30 9 to 11 p.m.  
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Sunday, 1/31 8 to 10 p.m.  
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SAT: 1/30 9:30 PM | \$5 Kathy Chapman & Box Car Lillies

SUN: 1/31 3-7 PM | \$3 A Winter Tea Dance w/DJ Lori

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## TALKING PICTURES

## Not Half Bad



## CRAZY HEART

1 eagle = the pits 4 eagles = the heights

BY TODD DETMOLD

**CHICAGO** – In the first minutes of *Crazy Heart*, a charismatic old troubadour pulls off the highway, stops his truck in a sleepy bowling alley parking lot and emerges holding a jug containing about a gallon of urine, which he empties onto the asphalt. Perhaps the deep golden color is intended as foreshadowing; that's the piss of an alcoholic. I simply thought it was a hilarious way to open a movie.

Unfortunately, that's about where the film's accidental sense of humor runs out of steam.

*Crazy Heart* is the story of a washed up singer-songwriter who descends into alcoholism then descends some more and finally descends some more. The *Wrestler*-style pathetic helplessness of Bad Blake (not his given name) is so relentless that by the time the film gets around to redemption it's not the third act but the fifth or the sixth. The film runs just shy of two hours, into which are crammed pants-less vomiting, a drunken car wreck, a lost child, a desperate one-night-stand, squirm-inducing surrogate parenthood and more bottles of

whiskey than I care to count.

Jeff Bridges is the man behind Bad, and like George Clooney in *Up in the Air*, his

Jeff Bridges plays Bad Blake in *Crazy Heart*

star-power (charisma, celebrity, raw talent, what have you) is the only reason there's any conversation to be had about the film at all. *Crazy Heart* does have some good music (courtesy of T-Bone Burnett and a cast of collaborators) and Bridges has implied that it was the opportunity to shred his acoustic axe that

hooked him to the role in the first place. But the film framing all the singing is meandering and overlong, the product of a first-time writer-director who hasn't learned too much about editing or structure.

Leave it to Bridges to shoulder the hot mess like a champion. He shows up with all his guns blazing, disappearing behind several pounds of beer

an Electra complex that is certainly creepy and the film never manages to conjure any hint of faith in their ability to unite as adults can, either through love or merely for the sake of her kid.

For Jean, Bad becomes some kind of last best hope that her son might have a man in his life. To Bad, however, she's a rare fan who shows interest in him professionally (she's a journalist) as opposed to sexually. Bad has grown tired of the lifer fans throwing themselves at him in dive bars and bowling alleys; Jean doesn't air a vested interest in Bad's singer-songwriter notoriety. The first time she meets him, she asks him his real name. In the hands of two good actors, it's an interesting relationship for a beat or two.

Of course, Bad belongs on the road, even with a beat-up truck and a busted leg. In another almost-interesting setup, Bad must get back to shadowing the tour of Tommy Sweet, a younger, sexier singer who learned the trade from Bad and has made millions of dollars recording and performing Bad's songs. Bad talks about Sweet like a foil that will be his undoing, but when he finally shows

up, the most affecting thing about him is the actor cast in the role (not giving up that one in case anybody's lucky enough to be in the dark).

I suppose alcoholics and outsiders can be tedious and so we might as well call it a halfway-honest portrait. Of course, the point where Bad bottoms out and makes his crucial decision to sober up is about as blurrily defined as his syntax. The parade of bad decisions is so poorly put together and episodic in construction that when he finally wakes up in his underwear and submits to rehabilitation it seems to come out of nowhere. It's a reversal especially lazy in construction for being a supposed crux in the story.

If the Golden Globe and the SAG Award are any indication, Kate Winslet will be handing Bridges an Oscar in a little over a month. This Academy Award will be of the 'unofficial lifetime achievement' variety, bestowed upon beloved sexagenarians that have been nominated four times already without a win.

As Bridges himself quipped in his acceptance speech at the Globes, "You're really screwing up my under-appreciated status, here." As for successful Oscar campaigns that earn fallacious merit, I suppose there are far worse things that can happen on Oscar Night than to recognize Jeff Bridges.

## ENERGY from pg 7

Association of State Energy Officials, the national mortgage industry, and Energy Rated Homes of America developed the Home Energy Rating System (HERS). The mortgage and financial industries and the federal government – which uses HERS for tax credit qualifications – now recognize this system. So does the EPA Energy Star homes program and the U.S. Department of Energy's Building America program. Sixteen states use the Home Energy Rating System for minimum code compliance.

Audience members raised concerns over whether the home energy raters would rate homes uniformly in all towns. Snyder explained the HERS program provides training, oversight, and quality assurance, including spot inspections of HERS raters.

After the presentation, Dave Jensen, Montague's building inspector, said he has been following the issue closely and has become comfortable with the quality of the HERS process. He said, "If we are going to adopt a higher efficiency energy code, I am becoming convinced that this is a good system to use."

## Are Builders Ready?

A few people in the audience raised concerns that the techniques needed to build more efficient homes would "not work," recalling ill-fated efforts of the 1970s. The panelists described how the building sciences involved are now well developed and widely used (for instance in Energy Star Rated homes). The high-efficiency techniques used – such as insulated basements, improved wall insulation, more attic insulation, tighter air sealing, more efficient heating and cooling systems, duct sealing, and improved windows – are designed as an integrated package.

For example, by constructing a more efficient building shell, the contractor can reduce the size, and cost, of the heating and cooling systems. This gives contractors flexibility in how to reach the required efficiency levels.

The panelists acknowledged it might take time for contractors to become familiar with the new techniques. However, the HERS rating system, with multiple inspections throughout construction, allows for builders to check their compli-

ance without having to go back and tear up already completed work.

Paul Voiland, general manager of Deerfield Valley Heating and Cooling said, "The issue really is whether or not the builders, installers, and contractors will know how to apply the science. I know for a fact there are many builders in the Valley that have been building beyond these standards for many years."

## Only Part Way There

Sean Jeffords, of Beyond Green Construction, closed off the panelists' presentations with an enthusiastic description of using the HERS rating system in his business and gave an example of renovating an existing home to an efficiency level that goes way beyond the requirements of the stretch code. His use of the HERS system, he said, allows for comparison of different energy efficiency improvements with a fairly routine software modeling program. The builder and client can then compare each improvement and see what impact it might have on the energy consumption of the house and then make economic decisions based on the different

'what ifs.'

Voiland noted, "This type of analysis is already done by HVAC contractors with regards to the impact that different furnaces will have on energy consumption and costs. Extending the analysis to window or wall systems will not be a very big stretch."

Jeffords went on to describe a renovation project that resulted in a 70% reduction in energy use and showed how homeowners have layers of choices that can result in ever-greater efficiency improvements. The stretch code will only result in a 35% to 40% reduction in energy use.

Noting how many construction jobs have been lost in the current downturn, Jeffords explained the U.S. has over 130 million buildings that are not up

to the new building code, all of which are wasting a lot of energy. The savings from energy efficiency that would result from renovating these homes would go a long way toward paying for the cost of renovations. Between building higher efficiency new homes and renovating existing homes, could we be looking at the next 'housing boom'?

*Chris Mason is the chair of the Montague Energy Committee.*

*The workshop was taped for rebroadcast on GCTV and MCTV. The Montague Energy Committee will work with FRCOG to make DVDs of the workshop available for loan at all Montague public libraries.*





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